

Caught Up: Indigenous Re/presentations of Colonial Captivity

Caught Up:
Indigenous Re/presentations of Colonial Captivity

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Abstract

“Caught Up: Indigenous Re/presentations of Colonial Captivity” examines the circulation and cultural function of what I call *contact captivity narratives*—written and visual accounts of interracial newcomer-native abduction and confinement in the (neo-)colonial period or contact zone. This project, the first sustained study of contact captivity in Canada, illuminates the extent to which Aboriginal peoples have been (and continue to be) subjected to technologies of capture and the degree to which Euro-Canadian freedom has been predicated upon Aboriginal confinement; it catalogues Indigenous response and resistance to such captures.

An understanding of the colonial project as an attempt to capture Indigenous populations on a continental scale has been impeded by the canonical literary genre of the “Indian captivity narrative,” with its untenable exclusion of non-white experiences of capture and its trade in racialized types. I propose a new set of classificatory labels: the contact, the colonialist, and the Indigenous captivity narrative. My dissertation studies the cases of five celebrated white women captives (in Australia, America, and Canada) to theorize sensationalized colonialist captivity tales as *narratives of absolution* strategically mobilized to mask contemporaneous captures of local Indigenous populations.

One such instance of competing captivity narratives occurred during Canada’s Northwest Rebellion in 1885 when the national focus on two ‘captive’ settler women and their autobiography, *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear*, obscured or overwrote the Canadian internment of the western Cree on reserves and in jails and residential schools. I look to three generations of *âcimisowina* (personal life stories) by mistahi-maskwa’s (Big Bear’s) descendents to grasp the implications of this massive capture and the often spiritual means of recuperating from it. The project concludes by considering how a selection of contemporary First Nations writing and painting imaginatively stages the repatriation of those once captured and how artistic self-definition is correlated to the self-determination inherent to First Nations sovereignty.

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Introduction: Kanata's Captives

In the contemporary American moment, at least, we see ... the obsessive will to proscribe the mobility of some and compel the mobility of others.

– Mark Simpson, *Trafficking Subjects*, 130.

Domagaya and Taignoagny look with some emotion from the ship towards the shore. They have not seen its familiar contours since they were forcibly removed from it a year ago. In hopes of being brought back to their homeland they have promised to help the man who stole them away. And so they guide his ship around a cape and into the mouth of a large river, navigating the vessel towards their home and family, towards their *ka-na-ta*. Thus, in the late summer of 1535, did the French explorer Jacques Cartier make his famed ‘discovery’ of the St. Lawrence River and the territory he would label Canada, after *ka-na-ta*—the name he believed Domagaya and Taignoagny used to describe their homeland. Twice over will these two young Iroquoian (or Haudenosaunee) men who direct Cartier’s course, and who will later save him and many of his crew from a lethal outbreak of scurvy, be carried by the explorer to France; each will die there as a captive in Cartier’s custody within a few years time.

Cartier had first met the two young men and their people, the Stadaconans, near Honguedo (Gaspé) as he reconnoitred the St. Lawrence Gulf in the summer of 1534. From Cartier’s account, the only known record of these events,¹ it appears that the two groups established an amiable trading relationship and a tentative alliance which soured

¹ The uncertain authorship of Cartier’s account, *Voyages*, is addressed in some detail by Ramsey Cook (ix-xi).

when Cartier lured and imprisoned the Stadaconan chief, Donnaconna, and his two sons, Domagaya and Taignoagny, aboard his vessel and announced that he would take the two young men with him when he departed for France the following morning to serve him as future interpreters; this he did. When he returned with Domagaya and Taignoagny the following summer, the Stadaconans evinced much joy in the arrival of their kin but tension between the two groups grew during Cartier and his crew's stay at Stadacona (now Quebec City) that winter.

While the paucity of historical records and the communication difficulties which beset the two parties hamper our interpretation of their interactions, it is clear that Donnaconna attempted to renew the alliance by offering to Cartier as a gift three of his young relatives; Cartier accepted the children and in return presented Donnaconna with two swords and brass wash basins (54). He declined, however, Donnaconna's request that he leave a French hostage in Stadacona when he ventured further inland.

Misunderstandings and suspicions multiplied over the next months and culminated in Cartier again designing a dishonest trap: as they prepared to depart for France in the spring of 1536, his men seized Donnaconna, Domagaya and Taignoagny, and two other headmen—while the rest of the Stadaconans, as Cartier put it, fled “like sheep before wolves” (84)—and transported them to France. None of these captives or the Iroquoian children presented to Cartier would survive long in France or return to their native land. Cartier, however, would make a third and final voyage to Canada to establish the Charlesbourg Royal colony near Stadacona in 1541-43 and at this juncture would tell

Donnaconna's people that while the chief had died, the other Stadaconans taken to France were so enjoying their lordly life there that they had declined to return with him.

Relations between the French and Stadaconans deteriorated quickly from this point, with the Stadaconans refusing contact and seeming to Cartier to be "in a wonderful doubt and feare of us" (qtd in Dickason 171). It is tempting to speculate that by this point the Stadaconans had come to the same conclusion about Cartier and the French as he had initially about them, namely that "They are wonderful thieves and steal everything they can carry off" (26).² In penning these lines with nary a trace of irony, at precisely the time when he had laid what he may have recognized was a questionable Royal French claim to the lands of the Stadaconans (Cook xxv), Cartier mobilizes what I will explore in the upcoming project as a rhetoric of *absolution*, in which the colonizer projects his wrongs upon the colonized and thus disavows them as his own.

Cartier's unsavoury habit of thieving on a human scale is suggestive of how practices of colonial captivity are wound into the roots and origins of the Canadian nation and yet have often been elided in the national mythologies generated and disseminated by this country's newcomers or settler-invaders. The case of Domagaya, Taignoagny, and Cartier is emphatically Canadian or *Kanatian*, but innumerable analogues, some celebrated and others unknown,³ are to be found in the historic and contemporary

² I am not the first to have noted the irony in Cartier's accusation of the Stadaconans of thievery; see also Ramsey Cook's "Donnaconna Discovers Europe" (xli) and Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories* (71).

³ Many of the historic Indigenous figures celebrated in newcomers' romantic stories of nation formation have in fact experienced captivity at colonial hands, though this frequently passes unrecognized in these narratives. Such figures include the Wampanoag Tisquantum (or Squanto) who is famed not for being abducted by the British but for having brought seeds of maize to the starving Pilgrims and taught them how to cultivate them (an act commemorated in the American Thanksgiving holiday); the young Powhatan Pocohontas who has been idealized as a welcoming Indian Princess who saved Captain John Smith from

interactions between newcomers and natives in the “second world” nations (such as Australia, Canada, America, and New Zealand) which were founded through western colonial expansion.⁴ Indeed, various techniques or technologies of capturing Indigenous peoples proved crucial to the colonial endeavour; the colonization or ‘capture’ of the continents of Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), and Turtle Island (North America) was enabled by thousands of instances of Indigenous enslavement, abduction, internment, and incarceration.

Passages in Cartier’s account point to how it might have been otherwise, how the general colonialist tendency to coercive capture might have been replaced by a more reciprocal and consensual mode of exchanging persons between nations. Scholars of Iroquoian culture note that Donnaconna’s presentation of his niece and young boys to Cartier and his subsequent request for what Cartier understood as a French “hostage” (56) adhere to the customary Iroquoian mode of cementing alliances and establishing kinship ties between trading partners through the exchange of people, commonly children or adolescents (Strong, *Capturing* 44; Dickason 167-8; Cook xxxi). While Cartier recognized the value of training interpreters to further his professional ends, his was what Olive Dickason describes as a “more limited goal than that of the Amerindians, who

death in captivity, but who was also taken captive by the British herself (Strong, *Capturing* 19, 47); the Aztec La Malinche who is commonly condemned as a traitor for being the consort of the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés but who in fact appears to have been his captive (Blanco-Cerda); or the Tasmanian Truganini and Beothuk Shawnadithit, each commonly celebrated as a tragic heroine and the last of her vanished race in stories which typically ignore the role of colonial captivity in both confining her and decimating her people.

⁴ My usage of “second world” nations denotes those countries founded by colonists from “first world” or western European countries and derives from Alan Lawson’s insightful theorization of “the Second World of the settler as a place caught between two First Worlds, two origins of authority and authenticity: the originating world of Europe, the imperium, as source of the Second World’s principal cultural authority; and that other First World, that of the First Nations, whose authority the settlers not only effaced and replaced but also desired.” (29)

sought to forge blood ties that would help to bind an all-embracing alliance” (168).

Cartier recorded that Domagaya had explained that Donnaconna offered the children “out of pure affection and in sign of alliance” (54), but he declined to reciprocate, refusing the essence of this gift “that would have sealed an alliance, even when the lord of Canada’s own niece and son were offered to him.” As Ramsey Cook argues, “Where complete trust might have been established, mistrust, on both sides, resulted.” (xxxii) A striking contrast emerges here between Cartier’s reliance upon relations of mastery and servitude,⁵ on the one hand, and Donnaconna’s attempt to extend networks of kinship, on the other. Two conflicting epistemologies of relationship and kinship, and their attendant ethical codes, collide.

This collision, or more specifically the European contravention of First Nations ethics, is at the heart of Thomas King’s treatment of Cartier in his acclaimed children’s book, *A Coyote Columbus Story* (1992). In this text, creative control rests with Coyote, the humorous and divine trickster who uses her spiritual powers to make other beings, including Columbus and Cartier, and who narrates this tale in ways which counter the conventions of colonial ethnography. Upon witnessing the individualistic and materialistic behaviour of her European creations, who promptly upon arriving in North America decide to abduct and enslave the local Indians, Coyote concludes that she must have made a mistake in calling them into being for they “have no manners [and] act as if they’ve got no relations” (n.p.). As King has elsewhere explained, the concept of

⁵ While the French are acclaimed for skilfully accommodating or negotiating with Amerindians in New France during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Olive Dickason notes that this was a hard-won skill based in part on the “painful” lessons of Cartier and Roberval (172).

respecting *all one's relations* is pivotal to most Indigenous North American cultures and constitutes not only a moral awareness of one's self and family, of the relationship shared by all human beings, of the web of kinship that extends to "all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined," but also "an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within this universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner" (*All* ix). Like King, poet Lee Maracle has pinpointed this, an Indigenous and moral "relation between self and community," to be the crux of *Ka-Nata* (108). What course, one wonders, would our newcomer-native history have taken had Cartier, like Donnacona, envisioned their alliance within such an extended ethical web of kinship?

Yet this collision or epistemological mismatch is not merely a matter for historical conjecture—it reverberates through the centuries and its dynamics continue to shape the relations which obtain between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the second world. This is a point made in *A Coyote Columbus Story* through King's prominent use of what we might call "anachronisms," though these are not misplaced or inaccurate but rather deliberately and strategically placed textual and visual references from a range of time periods which generate a host of connections between the past and the present. For instance, King's Indians are abducted by a Columbus who covets a Mercedes and are sold at a Spanish slave market to an audience that includes a baseball player in twentieth-century garb (Figure 0.1). In this fashion King refutes

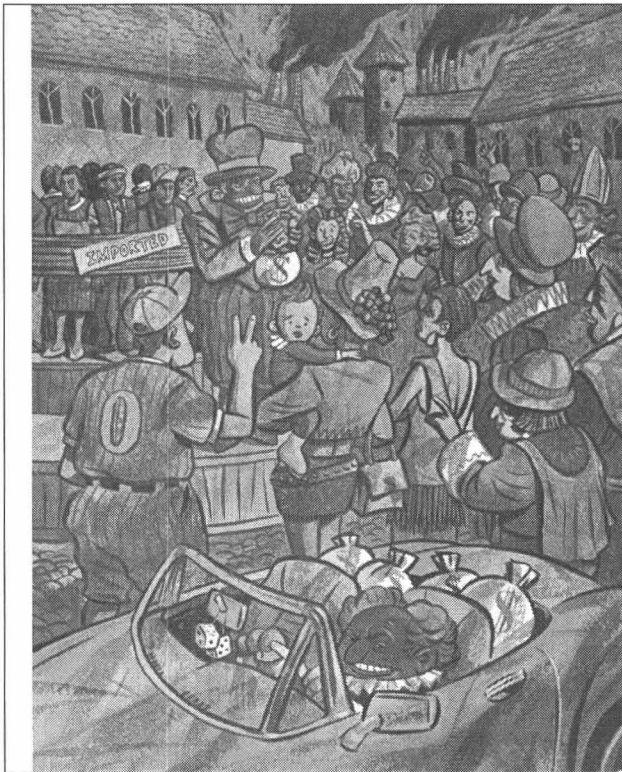


Figure 0.1:
William Kent Monkman,
Illustration from Thomas
King's *A Coyote
Columbus Story* (1992).

what Daniel Coleman has identified as one directive of normative Canadian codes of civility: that “settlers mourn the violence that established their presence in North America” and simultaneously redeploy this violence “to quarantine that uncivil past from the civil present” (34). Like Coleman, King rejects such a practice of temporal quarantine, working instead to illuminate the myriad ways in which the genealogy of colonial race relations is “continuous with and productive of the situation of the present” (Coleman 45).

King has noted that at least one reviewer of *A Coyote Columbus Story* fallaciously charged him with inventing this history of transatlantic abduction. “She was, it turned out, angry about my suggesting that Columbus had enslaved Indians. And when I told her this was the only part of my story that was accurate she refused to believe me.” (*The*

Truth 72) Many more Canadians will find King's interpretation of this historical encounter to be a plausible, and perhaps palatable, one after watching the inaugural episode of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's popular documentary series *Canada, A People's History* (2000), which showcases Cartier's kidnapping of Domagaya, Taignoagny, and Donnaconna and Gaspar Corte-Real's enslavement of the Beothuk in Portugal (not to mention an instance of Mohawk-Huron ritual capture, the confinement and rape of Nuu-chah-nulth women by Captain Cook's crew, and the more ambiguous 'capture' of Shawnadithit). In addition to being animated by a desire to revivify Canadian history by highlighting the conflicts it encompasses, I would speculate that this CBC production, and to a certain extent this present project as well, is informed by what Coleman identifies as an elegiac post-holocaust tendency to "demonstrate our humanity by manifesting an awareness of our own capacity for inhumanity" (42). Housed within this self-conscious tendency is the potential for an anti-colonial and non-complacent agency.

The initially dualistic nature of native-newcomer relations in Cartier's time undoubtedly has, after five centuries of interaction, adaptation, and métissage, developed a more complex and less binary character, but the mismatched epistemes of relation which confronted him and Donnaconna remain evident in more recent instances of (neo-)colonial capture, such as the incarceration of First Nations children in state run residential schools or the abduction of scores of Indigenous women known as the Stolen

Sisters from the streets of Canadian cities,⁶ to name only two—the upcoming chapters will consider a host of others.



“Caught Up: Indigenous Re/presentations of Colonial Captivity,” the first sustained study of colonial captivity in Canada and of Indigenous narratives of captivity as such, examines the historical circulation and cultural function of what I call *contact captivity narratives*—written and visual accounts of interracial newcomer-native abduction and confinement in the colonial period or “contact zone.” This latter term is Mary Louise Pratt’s well known and useful designation for the social spaces in which “peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). Pratt’s contact zone emphasizes the complexity of intercultural interaction and the agency and subjectivity as well as the subjugation of the colonized, both qualities which make it eminently better suited to describe the range of practices, experiences, and representations of colonial captivity which characterize(d) the (neo-)colonial project⁷ than the term traditionally utilized for this purpose in literary circles: the Indian Captivity Narrative.

⁶ A comprehensive report on Canada’s Stolen Sisters was published by Amnesty International in 2004.

⁷ A note on my terminology: I have chosen the term “(neo)-colonial” to denote the ways in which colonial practices continue anew in many locations which are nominally “post-colonial” or chronologically beyond colonization; this usage signals my accord with the vast majority of Indigenous scholars who reject “post-colonialism” as a descriptor of our contemporary period and insist the colonial period is far from over; it is important to note that the field of postcolonial studies employs its moniker with anti-colonial intent and with a self-consciousness recognition of its chronological limitations. I use “colonial project” in the singular, which suggests a uniform, self-consistent, or monologic entity, although clearly it is subject to any number of historical particularities and complexities which warrant nuanced study. As Renate Eigenbrod

This newcomer generic conception of “Indian captivity,” with its focus on the sensational (often sexual) victimization of the frontier settler by ‘savages,’ has long held an ethically untenable monopoly on the literary and cultural consideration of interracial captivity. I propose a new set of classifications: the genre of the *contact captivity narrative* which encompasses the sub-genres of the *colonialist captivity narrative* (those stories of white captives traditionally known as “Indian captivities”) and the *Indigenous captivity narrative* (the capture of Indigenous peoples by invader-settlers, a phenomenon which was much more widespread than colonialist captivity and which has yet to receive significant attention as such). In the project’s opening chapter I offer a rationale for this new classificatory schema and a detailed critique of the conceptual basis and subsequent scholarly implementation of the conventional Indian Captivity genre. Canonical in the United States, this conventional genre has a number of Canadian constituents and a long continental history in North America. Many of the most potent challenges and alternatives to this conventional conception of captivity are found in the creative works of contemporary Indigenous artists and writers; to this end I turn to the poetry of Gregory Scofield, Maurice Kenny, Louise Erdrich, and Sherman Alexie; the prose of Thomas King, Michael Dorris, and Gerry William; the paintings of Julie Dowling; and the oral history of Harold Eustache. All of these works encourage us to uncouple prerequisite whiteness from the hegemonic non-Indigenous conception of colonial captivity and pursue a broader, more historically accurate understanding of contact captivity in our scholarly and pedagogical pursuits.

has put it, “Colonialism spoke with many voices and was often deeply troubled about its own contradictions, while tending to override them with its own sheer power and momentum.” (xvii)

If the first chapter of “Caught Up: Indigenous Re/presentations of Colonial Captivity” advocates an overhaul or revision of the academic field of captivity studies, its second chapter examines how newcomers have historically been *caught up* in or engrossed by sensationalized accounts of colonialists taken captive at the expense of attending to the ways in which colonization *caught up* or captured Indigenous peoples. I posit the complex and causal relation which frequently obtains between celebrated tales of white captivity and incidents of Indigenous confinement and abduction occurring in the same time and place to be one of *white overwrite* in which the representation of white victimization by a demonized Indigene⁸ captor serves to obscure the racially inverse and widespread practice of colonial capture of the land and its Indigenous occupants. Two nineteenth century Australian captivity pairs—the White Woman of Gippsland and her overwritten “twin” Bungelene, and Eliza Fraser and the exiled Badtjala of *Thoorgine*—illustrate how colonialist captivity scandals have served—by way of mechanisms of justification, obfuscation, and projection—to overwrite and provide absolution from what Larissa Behrendt, among others, has identified as the “real” or most severe but often spectral or foreclosed captures of the contact zone. Contesting such foreclosure are a number of recent photographic and installation works by Badtjala artist Fiona Foley which visually reclaim or redeem from captivity a number of her ancestors.

⁸ Following Terry Goldie’s discussion in *Fear and Temptation*, I use “Indigene” in counterdistinction to “Indigenous” to denote an inaccurate, generally romanticized, native type or stock “Image” created and perpetuated by colonial culture; as Goldie puts it, “Each representation of the indigene is a signifier for which the signified is the Image. The referent has little purpose in the equation.” (4) Gerald Vizenor’s theorization, in *Fugitive Poses*, of the simulated *indian* is similar in emphasizing the constructed nature of this type and its absence (or inability to reference a real Indian presence).

A similar focus on Indigenous recovery from colonial captivity is found in this project's third chapter, which examines the broad range of incommensurate or "competing" contact captivities precipitated or exacerbated by the colonial conflict at Frog Lake in Alberta during the 1885 Métis uprising. This archive includes the popular double colonialist captivity narrative of the newest of the region's newcomers, Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney's *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear*; the more transculturated accounts penned by members of a local HBC family, Eliza and William McLean; and the *âcimisowina* or personal histories of a number of Big Bear or mistahi-maskwa's kin, Isabelle Little Bear, Mary Dion, and See-as-cum-ka-poo. This series of accounts provides the basis for a thick historical description of the colonialist captivity narrative as one of *white overwrite* and for understanding the extent to which mistahi-maskwa's Cree nation was subject at this time to systemic practices of colonial confinement and capture: the Canadian state's instrumental use of starvation to restrict their mobility, of the treaty process to intern them on reserves, of unwarranted incarceration to break their treaty rights movement. This state coercion had vast social, ecological, spiritual, and physical implications for the Cree, the legacy and perpetuation of which are documented in *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*, the recent prison diary of mistahi-maskwa's great-great-granddaughter Yvonne Johnson (which was co-written with Rudy Wiebe). Both *Stolen Life* and Louise Halfe's brilliant book of poems *Blue Marrow* consider how best to heal from multi-generational experiences of capture; each text theorizes and undertakes this type of restorative cultural work by gathering familial and spiritual history into cherished bundles of story and sacred memory.

My project's final chapter extends this consideration of art's curative capacity by analyzing a number of recent Indigenous texts and paintings which not only testify to the range of forms of captivity endured by First People but strive through a variety of means to mend the damage of these captivities and to figuratively bring their captives home. These works document the motivation for and restorative potential of returning home from captivity as well as the numerous challenges which beset this, and indeed most, processes of repatriation. The oeuvre of George Littlechild, a contemporary Plains Cree painter with a deep firsthand knowledge of colonial captivity, performs what I call *creative repatriation*: the use of artistic means to cognitively relocate an Indigenous subject from a foreign to a native space, a creative re-contextualization which can serve in certain ways to redeem those who have been captured. My concept of creative repatriation builds on Jennifer Kramer's recent theorization of figurative repatriation and aims to elucidate the correlation between artistic self-definition and the self-determination inherent to First Nations sovereignty.



"Caught Up: Indigenous Re/presentations of Colonial Captivity" joins an existent body of work which is both anti-colonial in orientation and which theorizes relations of power and subjectivity in terms of im/mobility. These theorists, as Mark Simpson has explained in his recent study of the *politics of mobility*, understand "mobility as a material and social resource" which, like many other means to power, has been vigorously contested and struggled for over time (xxvi). Indeed, as Jason Haslam and Julia Wright contend in their collection *Captivating Subjects: Writing Confinement, Citizenship, and Nationhood*

in the Nineteenth Century (2005), mobility—or more precisely its lack, that is, captivity—has served as an instrumental means for the modern nation state to consolidate pragmatic regulations and philosophical definitions of individual and national sovereignty. Other critics have mapped the contours of mobility’s contest in particular Canadian contexts. Sherene Razack’s stated aim in her collection of essays entitled *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (2002) is to “tell the national story as a racial and spatial story, that is, as a series of efforts to segregate, contain, and thereby limit, the rights of Aboriginal people and people of colour” (17). Zooming in on the former group, Renate Eigenbrod’s *Travelling Knowledges* (2005) engages Indigenous “roots and routes” or the histories of movement and migration represented in Aboriginal literatures in Canada.

Theorists like Radhika Mohanram, in *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space* (1999), have argued for the need to break with hegemonic or traditional western models of identity and development based on time, and its notions of temporality, progress, and maturation, and to turn instead to understandings of identity as a derivative or function of place and landscape (xiv). Simpson, Haslam, Wright, Razack, and Eigenbrod, among others, refine this focus to ascertain the degree to which one’s identity is determined by one’s ability to traverse or relate to place. This turn is a productive one and generates new insights, as Asha Varadharajan explains in regard to Razack’s work, because it allows us to “reconceive subjectivity in terms of movement and immobilization, to delineate how a sense of self is acquired in and through space” (101). For my project, this adoption of im/mobility as a primary unit of analysis has illuminated

the considerable extent to which newcomer migration, mobility, and freedom have been and continue to be predicated upon Indigenous capture, confinement, and restriction. So conceived, im/mobility and its problematics take on a renewed significance with respect to understanding the centrality of techniques of captivity to furthering the colonial project.

In “Caught Up: Indigenous Re/presentations of Colonial Captivity” I adopt a praxis which aims, to borrow Ward Churchill’s terms, to be a “viable counter-genocidal” one (*Little* 8). Many of its constituent parts coincide with Shari Huhndorf’s preferred methodology, what she identified in 2004 as a *transdisciplinary, Indigenous oppositional politics of reading*. We each utilize a broad and interdisciplinary rather than narrowly literary conception of culture; hence my attention to visual and oral as well as written depictions of contact captivity. Huhndorf’s practice calls for the reinterpretation of canonical works and “the reading of Indigenous and non-Indigenous texts together to illuminate colonial dynamics” (32)—a mode of juxtaposition I employ frequently in this project to probe how one “twin” of the contact captivity narrative pair has tended to overwrite or silence the other and to gauge the relative scales of practices of colonialist versus Indigenous captivity and their respective prominences in the public imagination.

Drawing, as I also do in the forthcoming pages, on Fredric Jameson’s influential arguments concerning the subtle cultural work performed by a text’s “political unconscious” (1981), Huhndorf advocates a mode of interpretation which “would analyze how cultural production, including literature, supports, represses, and in some cases, symbolically resolves exploitative social dynamics,” in this case those pertaining to

colonialism instead of predominantly to classism as in Jameson (32). I have taken critical inspiration from Diana Brydon's similar attention to the manner in which "English Canadian guilt and ambivalence about Canada's foundation on conquest... get converted into the literary in Canadian literature," a fact which demands "reading beyond thematics or apparent content to explore instead the whole realm of what cannot be told or what can only be told indirectly, through slippages, contradictions, or apparent ungrammaticalities in the narrative syntax of the text" (20). Attending, as Jameson, Huhndorf and Brydon suggest, to the covert dynamics which signal a text's unconscious intent has allowed me to examine the psychological motivations which appear to inform the operation of colonialist narratives of captivity as ones of absolution.

Huhndorf urges us to recognize "the ways in which indigenous writing challenges dominant practices and ideologies" (32). A transposition of this point to my particular study underlines the need to acknowledge that Indigenous testimonies to colonial captivity are what Foucault has termed fearless speech or *parrhesia* in that they fulfill his criteria of speaking frankly in the face of danger, of delivering truthful description from a position of inferiority to power (Rejali). Huhndorf elaborates that "critics must also attend to indigenous practices and worldviews, many of them derived from traditions, that are not reducible to colonial interactions"—a belief echoed by numerous other Indigenous scholars, including most famously, Craig Womack in his treatise on the need for interpretations of tribal texts which are grounded in the precepts of that text's particular tribal culture: *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999). In the Canadian context, Kristina Fagan has expounded and modelled an interpretive practice

which foregrounds “thinking about Aboriginal literature in terms of Aboriginal nationalism.” Such calls for research that “views Aboriginal literature in terms of specific First Nations traditions” (Fagan, “Tewatatha:Wi” 12, 27), in conjunction with a growing academic awareness of the need to distinguish postcolonial from Indigenous theory and to privilege the latter in studies of Indigenous cultural material (Leggatt), encouraged my attempt of a tribally-specific analysis of Cree *âcimisowina* in this project’s third chapter. As an entity “Caught Up: Indigenous Re/presentations of Colonial Captivity” conforms to Fagan’s assessment that (too) many critics in Canada “have tended to look [at First Nations literature] through the lenses of culture and colonialism” rather than nationalism (12); I hope my third chapter’s detailed engagement with Cree narrative conventions suggests the ample yield to be had in interpreting Indigenous captivity within a precise tribal context, even as it points to certain of the challenges inherent in this endeavor for non-Indigenous or outsider critics like myself. In this instance the Cree texts I read suggested that the means to recover from (neo-)colonial captivity were emphatically culturally specific in nature. This too concurs with Huhndorf’s politics of reading which holds “the recovery and perpetuation” of specific First Nations traditions to comprise a necessary “part of the anticolonial project” (32).

The general thrust of this dissertation is also broadly recuperative in that it aims to recover and draw critical attention to Indigenous contact captivity accounts which have traditionally been overwritten by their more prominent colonialist counterparts. As in Gananath Obeyesekere’s recommended decolonizing “strategy for research,” this project’s intent is to be both “deconstructive” (in its scrutiny and challenge of the

historical falsity and racist derogation which characterize many colonialist captivity accounts) and “restorative” (in its analysis and dissemination of Indigenous testimony and acts of self-definition). The project’s theorization of Indigenous creative repatriation seeks to further the reparative impulse of these imaginative works. In these ways, the functions of the project are outward-facing ones of facilitation, dissemination, and alliance. At the same time, this study’s intent is also “inward facing” in pressing newcomers like myself to consider our implication in historic and contemporary captivities and conquests. My critique of the symbiotic operation of practices and narratives of colonial capture is an academic attempt at the “auto-ethnographic homework” which Margery Fee cites as one prerequisite for current decolonizing endeavours in Canada. Another requirement identified by Fee (using Gayatri Spivak’s terminology) entails newcomers “unlearning their privilege as their loss” (“Getting”). The present study aims to contribute to this end by tracing the incalculable psychic and ethical costs incurred by newcomers in their mobilization of mechanisms of privilege and domination to capture and colonize the second world and its First Peoples.

Imagination Contra Capture: Critiquing the Colonialist Captivity Narrative Genre

1

Listen: imagination is all we have as defense against capture...

– Sherman Alexie, “Captivity,” 1993, (s7).

[Metacom] said they had been the first in doing good to the English, and the English the first in doing wrong...

– John Easton, “A Relacion of the Indyan Warre,” 1675, (117).

Mary White Rowlandson is amongst the most iconic of American captives. Until recently, it has been a scholarly orthodoxy to identify her colonialist captivity narrative, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God... Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), as both the first full-length prose text by a female author to be published in North America and the first example of what many claim as America’s earliest ‘indigenous’ literary genre, the ‘Indian’ captivity narrative.¹ Rowlandson’s elite status as the wife of a Puritan minister in Massachusetts made her a prized political hostage during Metacom’s War of 1675-6. Generated by the untenable pressure of colonial expansion into eastern Algonquian lands and by a number of additional eastern Algonquian grievances concerning land transactions, forced conversions to Christianity, and the sale of alcohol (Easton), the war pitted an eastern

¹ Among those who have argued that the Indian Captivity Narrative constitutes America’s first unique literary form are Amy Shranger Lang, Annette Kolodny, Alden Vaughan and Edward Clark, Tara Fitzpatrick, James Levernier and Hennig Cohen, Richard Slotkin, and Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (Logan 465; Sayre, *American* 4; Colley, “Perceiving” 201; Slotkin 56; Burnham 5). The most influential recent challenge of this claim for American exceptionalism is Linda Colley’s in *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World 1600-1850* (2002).

Algonquian alliance of Pokanoket, Pocasset, Narragansett, and Nipmuc forces against the United Colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, and New Haven and their Christian native allies. Rowlandson's account of her eleven week captivity, rendered in typological terms as a divinely-ordained trial of faith echoing that of the *Judea capta*, was, and is, widely-read: at the time of its publication it was second in popularity among American readers only to the Bible and it has remained almost continually in print since.² I focus here upon *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* in order to observe how a number of its narrative characteristics—its sensational framing, its demonization of Aboriginal peoples, its decontextualization of the war—are found not only in subsequent captivity narratives but also, inadvertently, in scholarly considerations of the genre; in order to examine how two preeminent Indigenous American authors, Louise Erdrich and Sherman Alexie, have recently taken on this seminal text; and in order to draw attention to the Algonquian histories and motivations which precede, inform, and are actively occluded by Rowlandson's account.

A key aspect of the history which subtends her story, but one ignored by Rowlandson and many subsequent analysts of her narrative,³ is the bloodiness of Metacom's War and its genocidal effect upon its titular leader and his allies: in proportion to total population, it claimed more lives than has any other conflict in American history (including the Civil War, the Vietnam War, and World War II); some

² Rowlandson's narrative ran to four editions in 1682 (one in each of Boston and London, and two in Cambridge) and to at least forty more in the next three centuries; not until the nineteenth-century would a novel gain comparable popularity (Derouian-Stodola and Levernier 14; Strong 86; Salisbury 51; Slotkin 96).

³ Neal Salisbury's exemplary contextualization of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* is an exception to this trend, as are the analyses of Pauline Turner Strong in *Captive Selves, Captivating Others* and Shari Huhndorf in *Going Native*.

5,000 eastern Algonquians and 2,500 English colonists, 40% and 5% respectively of the two peoples' populations, died in a war that effectively "ended the legal and political autonomy of the region's Native Americans" (Salisbury 1). Shortly after Rowlandson's ransomed release, Metacom was decapitated and quartered by the colonists, his captured wife, Wootonekanuske, and 9-year old son, along with at least a thousand other eastern Algonquians were sold into the Iberian and West Indian slave markets and hundreds of others were sold to colonists in New England as slaves or servants. All of the Algonquians in this region who survived the conflict became "captives of one kind or another": be it adults forced into slavery or indenture, children coercively adopted by colonists, 'loyal' natives interned in praying towns akin to reservations, or refugees exiled with the Abenaki and French to the north—a move which created an "Algonquian diaspora" (Strong 85, 94-5; Salisbury 35-7; Stannard 118; Hilden). While "captivity became the primary metaphor for conveying the tragedy of the war," it was Rowlandson's abduction that was thus remembered while that of the eastern Algonquians was generally elided in mainstream accounts (Strong, "Captive" 56). When juxtaposed with the capture of entire Algonquian bands, the attention allotted, then and now in public and literary discourses, to a single celebrated white captive seems lavish and disproportionate.⁴ Interestingly, Rowlandson's is the first of many colonialist captivity tales which flourish at precisely the moment when their supposed 'captors' experience

⁴ It is worth bearing in mind, as Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney have urged, that in many colonialist captivity cases subsequent to Rowlandson's "the focus on the victimization of the captives was a later artifact of nationalistic, expansionist-minded local descendants prone to recast the story of invaded native peoples as 'invaders'"—that is, the "European intruder-as-blameless-victim alchemy" often occurred at a considerable distance in time from the original captivity (Foster, "Review" 318).

much more extreme forms of capture; sadly, the apportioning of public and scholarly interest still too often resembles that of 1682.

A growing body of artistic work and literary, historical, and ethnographic scholarship points to the problematic nature—in historical, political, and pedagogical terms—of the American colonialist captivity genre from Rowlandson onward. This chapter will examine a collection of these critical and creative critiques of the genre as well as showcasing a selection of works by Indigenous artists in Australia and North America which depict capture in ways that antecede or radically diverge from this classic genre. While it is not novel to disdain the anti-Native hatred which fuels many of the texts within the genre,⁵ it is important that we continue to interrogate the genre. The persistence of the reductive, racially based, colonialist captivity paradigm (in classrooms, anthologies, and scholarship, as well as in visual media, popular films, and public and political responses to modern captivity or hostage scenarios), in the face of a much more complicated or *untidy* historical reality, necessitates the genre's active correction and reconceptualization—its reinterpretation within a frame that recognizes that the colonial project was, in essence, an ever-evolving attempt to capture Indigenous populations on a continental scale. Acknowledging this macroscopic colonial project of capture, and its advance by way of thousands of smaller scale captivities, such as the enslavement, indenture, internment, and extra-tribal adoption of Metacom's nation, shifts the traditional assumptions underpinning the colonialist captivity genre as such and

⁵ Roy Harvey Pearce, in *Savagism and Civilization* (1967), and Louise K. Barnett, in *The Ignoble Savage: American Literary Racism, 1790-1890* (1975), are among those who have identified such racial hate as a means to justify colonial conquest – a topic explored in depth in the next chapter.

illuminates it as an over-privileged, starkly ideological record of a relatively anomalous experience.

◇ Anatomy of a Genre

It is wise to underscore the distinction, as Gordon Sayre has done in his recent collection *American Captivity Narratives: Olaudah Equiano, Mary Rowlandson and Others*, between the historical phenomenon of captivity and its representation in American literary traditions. The historical phenomenon consists of (generally imperialistic) encounters between unfamiliar peoples, which result in an individual being forced to live in the other community, despite his or her usual desire to return home (4). Or, as Pauline Strong puts it, captivity in the abstract is “the assertion of power over a person or group resulting in dislocation, physical confinement, and social transformation” (“Transforming” 339). The prerequisite features of captivities acknowledged as such by the American Indian captivity genre are much more specific: limited geographically to North America and racially to white captives. The stereotypical plot of these texts features an ‘innocent’ white woman and her children “attacked at a frontier homestead, carried away by savages, and subjected to violence, privation, and humiliation, before finally being rescued or ransomed or escaping to the white community”—a tradition that Sayre notes “obscures others and casts Native American captors in an unfairly villainous role, given the larger historical circumstances of captivity” (5).

The genre of the American Indian captivity narrative, what I call *colonialist captivity narratives*, constitutes a narrow, albeit a densely populated, segment of the

global captivity compendium. At least two thousand, or perhaps double that number,⁶ of American colonialist captivity accounts were published from the late-seventeenth through the late-nineteenth century; they span a host of forms and media, from sombre Puritan jeremiads to bodice-ripping thrillers, from posters and broadsides to historical novels structured around captivity episodes. This latter group encompasses Ann Eliza Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle* (1790), Susanna Rowson's *Rueben and Rachel* (1798), Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntley* (1799), Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok* (1824), Harriet Cheney's *A Peep at the Pilgrims* (1824), Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827), and James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking series (1826-41), each of which includes an instance of captivity, the most famed being found in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). In the 1970s the 111-volume *Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captivities* reissued some 300 of the genre's best known texts (dated from 1682 to 1962). The editor of this sizable collection, in awe of the "kaleidoscopic complexity" of their varied forms and manifestations over time, identifies the phenomenal popularity of these texts as their most prominent unifying feature (Washburn 153). We glean a sense of the magnitude of this popularity from the fact that three of the four American bestsellers from 1680 to 1720 were colonialist captivity narratives; that two of the four works that sold more than 100,000 copies during 1823-37 were the captivity texts; that the captivity accounts of Rowlandson, John Williams,

⁶ The proliferation of these narratives, combined with their frequent publication in ephemeral mass media less likely to be preserved or commented upon in historical chronicles, has made estimating their numbers difficult. It is a common observation that many first editions were so popular as to have literally been "read to pieces" (Levernier & Stodola 14). The Newberry Library checklist of Indian captivity narratives which were written prior to 1880 and which were based on or presented as fact lists nearly 2000; if fiction were added the number would be much greater (Ebersole 9; Cohen & Levernier xiv).

Jonathan Dickinson, and Mary Jemison stand among the “great best-sellers of American publishing” (Ebersole 10; Levernier & Stodola 14). The remarkable popularity of Jemison’s acculturation narrative reminds us that while colonialist captivities have, in the main, espoused anti-Indian hatred, a number of the genre’s texts insist upon a preference for Indigenous over invader-settler lifeways; a fascination with Aboriginality has always animated the genre.

The colonialist captivity paradigm has enjoyed a “unique longevity in American letters” which extends into visual and film media as well (Kolodny, “Among” 28). A famed visual analogue to the stereotypical American Indian captivity plot and its legitimization of violence against the original owners of the land, is Horatio Greenough’s *The Rescue* (1851) which graced the east entrance of the Capitol Building in Washington until 1958 (see Figure 1.1).⁷ More recent adaptations or “retreads” of the colonialist captivity theme, often with a decided twist on typified traditional roles and values, can be found in numerous Hollywood films of the past half century (Mortimer, Foster 2)⁸ and in the plethora of historical pulp romances which utilize abduction as a vehicle for staging cross-racial intimacy (McCaffery, Smith 345-8). More broadly, the assumptions and logic of the colonial captivity *topos* remain both a prevalent paradigm for depicting Native-white relations and an implicit model for conceptualizing and representing threatening otherness, as has been particularly evident in public and mass media

⁷ Other renowned American images of colonialist captivity include John Vanderlyn’s painting *The Death of Jane McCrea* (1804); Frederic Remington’s painting *Captured* (1899); Henry Farney’s painting *The Captive* (1885); Irving Couse’s painting *The Captive* (1892); and Eratus Dow Palmer’s *White Captive* (1856) sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁸ Mortimer’s study stays closer to the original colonial captivity *topos*, examining films such as *The Searchers*, *Taxi Driver*, and *The Deer Hunter*, while Foster’s offers a more abstract and theoretically wide-ranging consideration of film’s fascination with tropes of bondage and captivity.

responses to contemporary cross-racial hostage scenarios (Strong 2; Salisbury 55; Huhndorf 167).⁹

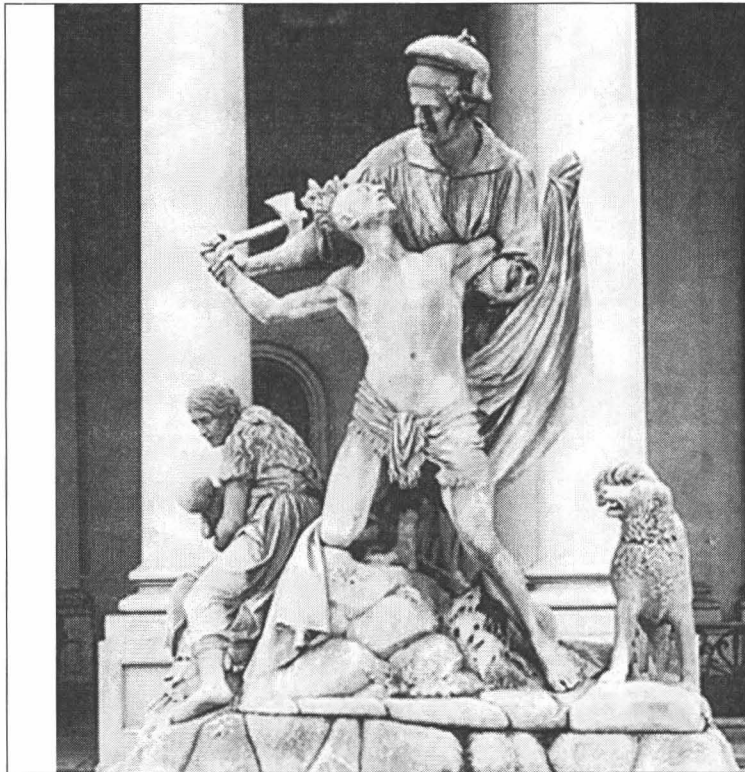


Figure 1.1:
Horatio Greenough, *The Rescue*, 1851.

The canon of colonialist captivity has been subjected to both literary and ethnohistorical study; an excellent survey of the latter endeavour, which is beyond my scope here, is found in Strong's "Transforming Outsiders: Captivity, Adoption, and Slavery Reconsidered" (2002). The cultural significances of the canonical colonialist captivity text have shifted significantly over time and can be traced in the manner of their anthologization and editorialization, first, by the new England church ministers who edited and circulated them as "indirect rhetorical salvos" in cultural battles over New

⁹ For an extended consideration of how the colonialist captivity paradigm has informed one recent hostage taking, that of American Private Jessica Lynch during the second Iraqi Gulf War (2003), please see my article: "Feminine Vulnerability, (neo)Colonial Captivities & Rape Scares: Theresa Gowanlock, Theresa Delaney & Jessica Lynch." (2005).

World sovereignty (Toulouse 22), and later as a “terroristic vehicle,” by those, like Hugh Henry Brackenridge, who hoped his 1783 edition would prove that “the nature of an Indian is fierce and cruel,” and further that it might be “serviceable to induce our government to take some effectual steps to chastise and suppress them... that an extirpation of them would be useful to the world” (qtd in Pearce 10-11, 16). Anthologies have continued to be issued, now primarily as pedagogical editions which draw on contemporary captivity criticism to instruct college and university students in the relevance of these texts. While early collections included more and less rigorous appraisals of their contents, the scholarly analyses of the genre by Phillips Carleton in 1943 and Roy Harvey Pearce in 1947 inaugurated formal literary criticism of the genre. While Carleton cited narrative plot and theme as the basis for a single unified genre, Pearce held the “variation in treatment of content, in specific form, and in point of view... so great as to make for several genres” which could be classified chronologically into three groups: the seventeenth-century texts with their religious tenor; the eighteenth-century texts with their political and propagandist aims; and the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fictions of sensationalism and sensibility. While “perforce selective and teleological” (Colley, “Perceiving” 204) this chronological schema has nonetheless proven useful for many critics as a rough navigational aide and remains the most common classificatory model. Following from this chronological approach were influential archetypal and psychoanalytic interpretations of the genre by Leslie Fiedler (1968), Richard Slotkin (1973), and Richard VanDerBeets (1984), and a famous feminist rebuttal of these by Annette Kolodny (1984) which initiated a number of subsequent

gender-based readings. A spate of captivity scholarship in the 1990s examined not only the canonical Puritan accounts but also the later more populist and sensational writing which Pearce, and others, had tended to dismiss as lowbrow. Recent literary studies, often theoretically grounded in cultural and women's studies, have been less interested in authenticating the narratives' historical veracity or ethnographic value, frequently choosing instead to explore captivity tales in relation to the development of Anglo-American ideologies of race, gender and nation.¹⁰ Most current critics would agree that "the cultural work of captivity tales has not been simple or uniform" (Ebersole 2) and many also recognize that these texts "require and repay the most complete interdisciplinarity" (Colley, "Perceiving" 215).¹¹

◇ Canadian Colonialist Captivities

Charles Brockden Brown's well known argument, in his preface to *Edgar Huntly*, for the prized place of "incidents of Indian hostility" (rather than European "Gothic castles and chimeras") in the arsenal of the American novelist is representative of the views of numerous American writers and critics who have claimed, with a certain pride of ownership, the *topos* of the Indian captivity as an expression of their early national psyche. The same cannot be said of Canadians, who have been much less proprietary with regard to Canadian colonialist captivity narratives. Admittedly, there are many

¹⁰ Prominent recent studies in the field include: Burnham (1997), Castiglia (1996), Carroll (2006), Ebersole (1995), Faery (1999), Levernier and Stodola (1993), Namias (1993), Scheckel (1998), Strong (1999), and Toulouse (2007).

¹¹ Two contemporary studies which demonstrate the rewards of rigorous transdisciplinary research are Colley's *Captives* (with its historical, political, geographical, and literary framings) and Strong's *Captive Selves, Captivating Others* (with its bridging of anthropology, ethnohistory and women's studies).

fewer of these than in the American case and they are of a more diverse nature than the relatively unified body of early New England narratives with their similar biblical framings. In addition, many of the texts we might claim as Canadian—by virtue of their setting—were first released in Europe or the United States due to the lack of publishing houses in early Canada (Atkinson 177).

In addition to these impediments, I would speculate that the Canadian reluctance to embrace these texts as a noteworthy genre within our national literature stems in part from our national investment in a mythos of the peaceable kingdom. The often extreme inter-racial violence constitutive of the colonialist captivity genre is markedly at odds with cherished notions of Canada as a tolerant and “civil” haven.¹² This dynamic is evident, for instance, in heralding Canada as the destination of the Underground Railway while simultaneously disavowing our nation’s histories of slavery, or in well-worn boasts of our “civil” treatment of “our” Indigenous populations in comparison with that of the United States.¹³ Bonita Lawrence notes that non-Native Canadians, in order to maintain a “self-image as a fundamentally “decent” people innocent of any wrongdoing” have “erased” the “historical record of how the land was acquired—the forcible and relentless dispossession of Indigenous peoples, the theft of their territories, and the implementation of legislation and policies designed to effect their total disappearance as peoples” (24). Such erasures of this history of dishonourable dispossession (what Ernest Renan has

¹² While Canadians frequently mask or diminish our history of colonial violence by way of comparison with the supposedly greater violence perpetrated by Americans, their dominant national mythos, as well as much cultural criticism, has similarly disavowed knowledge of (or responsibility for) American colonial conquest and imperial violence. For more on this see Huhndorf’s *Going Native* (9-10) or Amy Kaplan’s “Left Alone with America” (4-5).

¹³ For more on White Canadian culture’s “obsession... with the problem of its own civility” see Daniel Coleman’s recent study *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (5, 21, *passim*).

identified as the purposeful “forgetting” of the violence of nation formation) allow for the telling of more palatable, romanticized variants; the relation of newcomers to Natives has often been figured in Canadian art and writing, with a good dose of self-interest, as what John Ralston Saul characterizes as “some sort of marriage” (qtd in Hjartarson 1; Coleman 8). Other figurations of these relationships, typically less consensual or contented, arise from a consideration of Canada’s colonialist captivity texts.

This body of arguably Canadian texts, while only a fraction of the size of its American counterpart, actually lays claim to a significant portion of the more famed southern corpus. My perusal of six anthologies of classic “Indian Captivity” narratives, published between 1851 and 2000—using Anna Louise Atkinson’s criterion that a Canadian captivity narrative is one featuring a captivity primarily spent “within the geographical boundaries of what is now Canada” (177)—found almost a third of the texts included in them to be “Canadian”.¹⁴ The majority of the Canadian tales included in these standard ‘American’ anthologies derive from what American historians have labeled the ‘French and Indian Wars’¹⁵ which spanned the late-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century and detail the experiences of captives from New England who were

¹⁴ Thirty-one percent of the one-hundred and twenty seven tales included in the following six anthologies could in this manner be claimed as Canadian: 45% of Drake’s *Indian Captivities or Life in a Wigwam* (1851); 21% of Peckham’s *Captured by Indians* (1954); 33% of Drimmer’s *Captured by the Indians* (1961); 50% of VanDerBeets’ *Held Captive By Indians* (1973); 18% of Cohen & Levernier’s *The Indians and Their Captives* (1977); and 21% of Salisbury’s *American Captivity Narratives* (2000). In counting John Marrant’s “A Narrative of the Lord’s Wonderful Dealings...” as a Canadian item in two of these anthologies, even though he spent his captivity in the American south, I made an exception to the criteria laid out by Atkinson because of this text’s notable inclusion in the tradition of African-Canadian writing (see Clarke’s “The Birth and Rebirth of Africadian Literature”).

¹⁵ Such terminology has prompted Ward Churchill to note that “we hear only of ‘Indian Wars,’ never of ‘settlers’ wars.’ It is as if the natives, always ‘warlike’ and ‘aggressive,’ had invaded and laid waste to London or Castile” rather than trying to repel the “hordes” of pioneers “overrunning their homelands—often quite illegally, even in their own terms...” (*Little* 3).

carried to New France. Also included in half of these anthologies were stories of the Jesuit martyrs.

The Jesuits, the French Catholic order exclusively appointed in 1632 by the French King to minister to the Aboriginal owners or inhabitants of New France, worked primarily within Huron communities and were hence at times party to conflicts between the Huron and Iroquois nations of the Great Lakes region. It was during such conflicts that the celebrated Jesuit martyrs were taken captive by Iroquoian warriors and subjected to a host of tortures which the *Jesuit Relations* amply document. Indeed, it is this detailed chronicling of physical torture as a means to atone for sin that most distinctly characterizes Jesuit “captivity narratives.” A few critics have declined to classify them as such, citing the missionaries’ voluntary residence in an Indigenous community and their knowledge of the risk of capture this entailed as a reason to disqualify their inclusion in the genre (Peckham x)—a criticism that seems weak when we recall that all European invader-settlers also knowingly risked reprisal for their usurpation of Indigenous lands. Originally written as letters by the Fathers in the field to their superiors in Québec and Paris for inclusion in the *Jesuit Relations*—an annual compilation much awaited by the French public—many of the Jesuit accounts subsequently found a wider audience in North American editions such as John Dawson Gilmary Shea’s *Perils of the Ocean and Wilderness* which was published in Boston in 1857. Most commonly considered as captivity texts are Isaac Jogues’s account of his 1642 captivity, “Novum Belgium”—remarkable for interpreting his torture as divinely-ordained, “delightful and glorious” (11); Francis Joseph Bressani’s account of his 1644 captivity, *Breve Relatione d’Alcune*

Missioni—which credits his confidence in the “intercession of the Blessed Virgin” for allowing him to bear his much lamented trials (24); and Christophe Regnaut’s 1649 “A Veritable Account of the Martyrdom and Blessed Death of Father Jean de Brébeuf and of Father Gabriel Lalement”—which initiates a reverence towards the victims, and their bodily remains as relics, that culminated in their beatification by Pope Pius XI in 1930.

Inspired by the “courage, faith, self-effacement, endurance” of these men, E.J. Pratt dedicated his first epic verse, *Brébeuf and His Brethren* (1940), to them and what he termed their “great act in the national drama” (114). Another well known, and sympathetic, literary treatment of Jesuit captivity (from the vantage of protagonist Father Laforque) is Brian Moore’s novel *Black Robe* (1985) and its film adaptation by Bruce Beresford (1991). Mohawk poet Maurice Kenny takes a radically different, non-reverential, tack in his 1982 verse cycle *Blackrobe: Isaac Jogues, B. March 11, 1607, D. October 18, 1646*. Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, Kenny’s collection narrates this cross-cultural encounter in short poems from a variety of perspectives including those of the Mohawk leader Kiotsaeton, who in vain warns Jogues to “maintain respect” for Iroquoian customs (256); the kindly Mohawk Wolf Aunt, who adopts Jogues and likewise tries to caution the “obstinate, adamant” priest to curb his dangerous and disrespectful proselytizing (258); Jogues himself, cast as one dismissive of the “foolish” spiritual tenets of the Iroquois (257); and Rokwaho, a late-twentieth-century Mohawk who reflects upon the broader legacy of Jogues’s colonial project: on the ecological, biological, and commercial destruction which “out of his black robe came” (260). Using a chorus of various Mohawk voices, which spans the centuries and the differing opinions

of the Bear and Wolf clans, allows Kenny to produce a sophisticated, heteroglossic response to Jogues's dogmatic account. Kenny's *Blackrobe* replaces Jogues's individualistic emphasis on his capture and torture with a communally-oriented revelation of both Jogues's culturally aggressive behavior and his enduring negative legacy for the Iroquoian Confederacy. Joseph Bruchac has written that "for generations now, the Mohawk people have been told they must feel guilty about killing this holy man and approaching that story is like cauterizing an old wound for Kenny" (qtd in Fast 143). Thus does one modern Mohawk artist bypass Jogues's famed focus on torture to convincingly reorient the received version of this captivity and heal his community from the slander therein.

Another, sizable, subset of "Canadian" colonialist captivity narratives resulted from the arrival in New France of some 2,600 American settlers taken captive by French forces and their eastern Algonquian Indigenous allies during the Intercolonial Wars¹⁶ which ran, intermittently, from 1689 to 1763 as Britain and France struggled to control the continent (Foster 1). Typically, Native warriors, at times under the direct command of French officers, would abduct New Englanders and conduct them to New France where most were, eventually, redeemed by colonists or the colonial authorities for a bounty; the two colonial governments would then negotiate the exchange of prisoners, although often family members would also work individually, before or after the official

¹⁶ The Intercolonial Wars, as they are generally known in Canada, encompass (1) King William's War (1689-97), (2) Queen Anne's War (1702-13), (3) King Georges' War (1744-48), and (4) The French and Indian War (1754-63).

processes, for the return of their dear ones.¹⁷ The subset of tales thus generated includes many of the best known of the American “Indian Captivity” genre, such as Cotton Mather’s “A Narrative of Hannah Swarton, Containing Wonderful Passages, Relating Her Captivity and Her Deliverance” (1697); John Williams’s *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (1707); John Gyles’s *Memoirs of odd adventures, strange deliverances, etc.* (1736); Elizabeth Hanson’s *God’s Mercy Surmounting Man’s Cruelty, Exemplified in the Captivity and Surprising Deliverance of Elizabeth Hanson* (1780); Jemima Howe’s “A Genuine and Correct Account of the Captivity, Sufferings and Deliverance of Mrs. Jemima Howe” (1792); and Frances Noble’s “Narrative of the Captivity of Frances Noble, who was, among others, taken by the Indians...” (~1801).

Modern Canadian readers, accustomed to conceptualizing their nation as a tolerant sanctuary for newcomers, might be taken aback at the frequent characterization of Canada in these captivity texts as a horrendous and fearful destination. Yet, “either short- or long-term enslavement—referred to as such by the authorities of New France—became the defining aspect of intercultural contact between individual Canadians and Anglo-Americans between 1670 and 1760” (Foster 14). In their famed Puritan accounts, both the Reverend John Williams and Hannah Swarton ascribe the “primary horror” of their experience not to the Indigenous portion of their captivity—with its murder of their spouses and children and its grueling three-hundred mile or more march through the wilds in winter which claimed the lives of numerous fellow captives—but to what

¹⁷ Much scholarship on these narratives derives from the initial historical investigations by Charlotte Alice Baker in *True Stories of New England Captives Carried to Canada* (1897) and Emma Lewis Coleman in *New England Captives Carried to Canada* (1925).

Williams' calls their "Popish captivity" and the dire threat it posed to their souls (qtd in Sayre, *American* 178; Carroll, "My" 130). Swarton's narrative, written or heavily edited by Cotton Mather first as a sermon he delivered in 1697 and later as a portion of his opus *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), was designed, he explains, to "promote the general Repentance" and Christ's Goodness by making public the "terrible and barbarous things undergone by some of our English captives in the hands of the Eastern Indians" (qtd in Cohen 31).¹⁸ Yet, in Swarton's text, it is not the Indians, but the French who are the greater threat; as Swarton (or Mather) writes, taking up residence with New French colonists "was a great and comfortable Change as to my *Outward Man*," since she was free from previous hardships and "Hard-hearted Oppressours" but "here began a greater Snare and Trouble to my Soul, and Danger to my *Inward Man*" for they tried to "perswade me to turn Papist" (36).¹⁹

This Puritan zeal fades in many later Intercolonial War narratives. It is, for instance, not spiritual but rather sexual entrapment that most concerns Jemima Howe, who was captured in New Hampshire in 1755 along with her two adolescent daughters and five young sons. Ten years earlier, Howe's first husband had been killed and her father-in-law taken captive to Canada in an Abenaki raid; she loses her second husband in a similar fashion in 1755. In the earliest, unauthorized, version of her tale, Howe is

¹⁸ Cotton Mather was also a cousin of Williams' wife and urged the Reverend to write up a full account of his captivity experience; he also published a letter written by Williams in Canada in 1706 (Cohen and Levernier 132).

¹⁹ Interestingly, the appeal of Catholic Québec as the locale for nefarious captivity would surface again, *sans* Indigene, in the grossly sensational American convent captivity narratives of the mid-nineteenth century; one well known example is Maria Monk's slanderous *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* (1836) which sold 300,000 copies by 1860 (Derounian, "Captivity and" 112-13; Blair).

scripted as what Lorraine Carroll calls a “Canadian Clarissa,” the heroine of a captivity narrative cum novel of seduction fighting to preserve the virtue of her two daughters and herself—a feat she attempts via the intercession of a number of “gentlemen of note” (qtd in Derounian, *Women’s* 93). She pleads her case, on numerous occasions, to (i) the wealthy American Colonel Peter Schuyler, captured and awaiting exchange in Montreal, who tracked down the whereabouts of Howe’s four surviving sons, and redeemed and housed them and Howe with him in Montreal, and (ii) Governor Pierre de Vaudreuil of New France who intervened when both Saccapée *père et fils*, of the French family where Howe served after they purchased her from her Abenaki captors, showed all too much interest in her. The Governor ‘rescued’ her daughters from their encampments on the Saint Francis River, where the eldest was slated to marry a young Abenaki man, and placed them in the Ursuline convent at Québec; a few years later, when France lost the war in 1760, Vaudreuil returned to France and took with him the eldest daughter, without Howe’s consent, as a kind of godchild whom he later married to a French gentleman. After her own redemption to New England in 1759, Howe returned to Montreal to claim her younger daughter, now a French-speaking Catholic who left the Ursuline convent with much reluctance. Incidentally, her Mother Superior there, Ester Marie Joseph Wheelwright was a transculturated captive taken from Maine in 1703.²⁰

I tell Howe’s story as an illustration of the degree to which these early colonial captivity practices affected both families like hers in New England outposts as well as the eastern Algonquian, Iroquoian, and French communities which received them. The type

²⁰ Wheelwright’s story is found in Baker’s *True Stories of New England Captives* (5-35).

of conversion experienced by Howe's daughter and her Mother Superior is a common theme in this subset of Canadian captivity texts: Howe's, Hanson's, Noble's and Williams's tales all feature not only family members "lost" to death but also to French or Indigenous ways. The story of Frances Noble is affecting. Nobel was captured from Maine as a babe in 1755, redeemed and lovingly adopted by an eminent Montreal merchant family, recaptured by her original Abenaki captors (who had kept her brother) and re-redeemed to her adoptive French family, hidden for years from those governmental and private agents as well as from her father who sought to return her to New England, and finally tearfully "recaptured" or abducted by force from her Catholic boarding school and taken to Boston in time to witness her father's death. Her account is notable for giving voice to the acculturated captive, like Frances's brother, who does not want to "be obliged to leave his friends and return to the place of his birth" (170).

Well and away the most famed of these accounts of transculturation is that of Eunice Williams who was taken captive as a young girl with her family, and a third of the population of Deerfield, Massachusetts, and "carried to Canada" in 1704. A motive for the Mohawk raid was to seize her father, the prominent Reverend John Williams, as a hostage to exchange for the French captain Jean Baptiste Guyon then held at Boston. Close to three years later, Williams returned and negotiated a release for his two sons; however, the Mohawk at Kahnawake decided to keep young Eunice. She would later marry a French Catholic Mohawk man and decline to return to her family in New England, although she and her husband and children did on occasion visit them in Massachusetts and the descendants of each would keep in touch well into the nineteenth

century. Although John Williams had witnessed the deaths of his wife and two youngest children from this attack, it is this “loss” of Eunice, now named Marguerite A’ongote Gannenstenhawi, that is most regretted in his *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (1707), a contemporary bestseller that would become a canonized example of Puritan literature. Viewed through another episteme of kinship, captivity and adoption could be interpreted as a gain rather than a loss; Pauline Strong has noted that Eunice or A’ongote herself wished to maintain ties with her English family “viewing adoption as a way of gaining new relatives without severing her ties to the old.” So did her Mohawk descendents. In 1837, almost 50 years after her death, two dozen visited the town of Deerfield for about a week; an act which prompted Deerfield’s Protestant minister to deliver a sermon welcoming them as “brethren of a single, united, harmonious household.” As Strong observes, “the Mohawk pattern of “extending the rafters” through alliances based on kinship had shown its remarkable power” (“To” 473). Eunice or A’ongote’s story is retold, in a self-reflexive and historiographic mode, by historian John Demos in his acclaimed novel, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (1995). Demos is neither the first nor the last novelist drawn to this dramatic period; Augustine Duganne’s dime novel, *Massasoit’s Daughter: or, The French Captives. A Romance of Aboriginal New England*, was published in 1883, while Elizabeth Speare’s *Calico Captive*, which draws on a Montreal captive’s 1807 journal, was released by Houghton Mifflin in 2001.

Cumulatively, these captivity texts of the Intercolonial Wars instruct us on the scale, and implicitly the effect, of such practices of conversion or transculturation; it is

estimated that fifteen percent of this period's captive American population opted to stay in New France, a decision especially common among young women. As historian William Henry Foster explains, the small population of the fledgling French colony meant the entrance of a few hundred New Englanders was actually "more significant than the small numbers might at first suggest"—250 into the 1705 population of 15,000, for example. With French immigration being very slow in this era the captives formed a significant, skilled and acclimatized labour pool (16-18). They offer us a vector of insight into an earlier chapter in the history of acculturating foreign immigrants to Québécois life. They also offer us a glimpse, as Foster details in his study *The Captor's Narrative* (2003), of the under-acknowledged authority wielded by the Iroquoian and French women who frequently managed or commanded these captives using a "pure form" of coercion "undiluted by what nineteenth- and twentieth-century observers would essentially see as benevolent maternal acts of redemption and conversion"; that is, later renditions of these captive-captor relations, from the Victorian period onwards, have tended to elide the powerful positions these women occupied and the difficulty this posed to Puritan male captives unaccustomed to female authority (169). This gender conflict was, then, an unspoken factor at play in the Puritan desire to demonize and differentiate Canada; although, as these captivity texts attest, the spiritual, political, and cultural boundaries between these colonies and adjacent Indigenous nations were in fact notably fluid and porous. This fluidity accounts for the pronounced diversity of captivity experiences (running the gamut from short-term enslavement to contented kinship) chronicled in these narratives.

The periods following the Intercolonial War also generated a number of “historical,” more-or-less factual, Canadian colonialist captivity narratives. I’ll touch on a few of the best known. One of these is John Rodgers Jewitt’s account of his time with the Nuu-chah-nulth on Vancouver Island’s west coast from 1803 to 1805. Jewitt was a young British armourer on the American *Boston* which was travelling up the Northwest coast to procure furs; while moored at the village of Yuquot in Nootka Sound to trade with the Nuu-chah-nulth, the *Boston*’s Captain Salter insulted the *tyee* or chief, Maquinna, who, with an understanding of English language and trading protocol gained from previous meetings with Europeans including Captains Cooke, Vancouver and Quadra, perceived Salter’s insult and avenged it the next day by having his warriors destroy the ship and kill all the crew save Jewitt, whose smithing skills were deemed valuable enough to spare him, and John Thompson, whom Jewitt saved by claiming him as his father. Jewitt adapted quickly and well to Nuu-chah-nulth life—forging metal tools and trinkets for the *tyee* and his kin, learning the Nootka language, showing a cheerful countenance, making fast friends with Maquina who treats him as both slave and adopted son, winning himself four slaves during a raid on the neighbouring A-y-chart nation, and eventually, apparently at the *tyee*’s urging, taking a young wife with whom he has a baby. This latter “connection,” Jewitt describes as a “chain” Maquina designs “to bind me down to this savage land, and prevent my ever again seeing civilized country” (147).²¹ When an American ship, *The Lydia*, arrives at Maquina’s village in 1805, Jewitt orchestrates for the *tyee* to visit it, be taken hostage, and ultimately be exchanged for

²¹ Note that this pagination refers to Hilary Stewart’s 1987 edition.

Jewitt and Thompson—a remarkable reversal of captive roles. The “chain” of marriage was not enough to bind this captive: Jewitt left behind his spouse and son and married again in New England.

Like its subject, the publication history of Jewitt’s experience is fascinating.

While with the Nuu-chah-nulth, Jewitt mixed natural inks and used raven quills to record his daily activities in a salvaged notebook. This 48-page collection of sparse, point form, non-emotive notations was published in Boston in 1807 as *A Journal, Kept at Nootka Sound by John Rodgers Jewitt, One of the Surviving Crew of the Ship Boston, of Boston, John Salter, Commander, Who Was Massacred on the 22d of March, 1803; Interspersed with Some Account of the Natives, Their Manners and Customs*. Seven years later, this text caught the attention of writer Richard Alsop, one of the Connecticut Wits, who contacted Jewitt and worked with him to produce a more extensive, dramatic and novelistic treatment which was published in 1815; the difference in content and tone is signalled in the change of title: *A Narrative of the Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt, Only Survivor of the Ship Boston, During A Captivity Of Nearly Three Years Among The Savages Of Nootka Sound, With An Account Of The Manners, Mode Of Living And Religious Opinions Of The Natives; Embellished With A Plate Representing The Ship In Possession Of The Savages*. A fan of Dafoe, Alsop aligned Jewitt’s experience with that of Robinson Crusoe and other classic captives cum male adventurers like Daniel Boone.²² This version proved eminently marketable on both sides of the

²² For more on this conventional typecasting of masculine captivity as enlivening adventure, versus feminine captivity as paralyzing terror, see Kolodny’s “Captives in Paradise: Women on the Early American Frontier” (1985).

Atlantic, selling at least 9,000 copies in its first two years and having since remained continuously in print, through more than twenty editions. A fleet of adaptations appeared in the subsequent two centuries—inaugurated by Jewitt’s own performance of both a “Melo Drama” and a ballad about his captivity.²³

As a captivity narrative, Jewitt’s *Narrative* is notable because, despite Alsop’s conventional emendations, it diverges from what the colonialist genre privileges as “typical” in a number of respects: it assigns much responsibility for such incidents of Native violence to the “the impudent conduct” of European or American sailors (114); it demonstrates a respect and affection for many Nuu-chah-nulth and their culture; and rejects the conventional exceptionalist paradigm that would see his captivity as the sole one of importance, explaining instead that his captivity was one of many, part of larger extant systems of capture, enslavement, and prisoner exchange practiced both by the Northwest Natives and the Europeans. Indeed by the narrative’s close, Jewitt has occupied the roles of (i) the captive and slave of a Nootka master who has had other white subjects, (ii) the holder of Indigenous slaves from an enemy nation, (iii) the slave as the object of barter within an established slave trade between Northwest Indigenous nations, and (iv) the indirect captor of his erstwhile captor (and friend). Jewitt’s narrative is an “untidy” and refreshingly plausible multi-dimensional rendering of captivity in the inherently complex colonial contact zone.

²³ Adaptations of Jewitt’s tale include those designed for young audiences by Samuel Griswold Goodrich (1835), Shannon Garst (1955), and Margaret Anderson (1990), as well as an adult text by James Houston, *Eagle Song: An Indian Saga Based on True Events* (1983).

Published contemporaneously with Jewitt's *Journal*, was Alexander Henry's *Travels in Canada and the Indian Territories between the years 1760 and 1776* (1809): an energetic autobiographical reminiscence of a trader's adventures in central Canada, including his capture by a group of Chippewa at Fort Michilimackinac in 1763 during Pontiac's campaign. Written four decades after the event, likely with an eye to increasing its commercial value by exploiting its dramatic "representations of wildness and savagery" (Venema), a centrepiece of Henry's account describes the clever ruse by which the Chippewa gained entrance to the fort and his near-miraculous survival of this attack and subsequent captivity with Ottawa and Chippewa bands. It is through a series of averted near catastrophes and the providential intervention of Wawatum, a Chippewa who had adopted Henry the previous year after dreaming he would have an English brother, that Henry escapes death. Germaine Warkentin's assessment that Henry took "convenient refuge in the Gothic mode to shape the tense experience of captivity" (376) also applies to a later text it inspired and informed: John Richardson's *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy, a Tale of the Canadas* (1832).

Richardson had himself been taken captive during Tecumseh's last stand at Moraviantown in 1813 and spent a year as a prisoner of war in Ohio and Kentucky. His early Canadian historicized romance novel draws on Henry's factual chronicle of the penetration of Fort Michilimackinac, and replicates and amplifies the suspenseful gothic atmosphere of Henry's captivity account in its numerous incidents of 'Indian' (or, in this case, indigenized and disguised British) captivity, rescue and escape. For its renditions of capture, *Wacousta* draws as well upon another colonialist captivity—Cooper's *Last of the*

Mohicans – which shares with Henry’s a use of what Leslie Fiedler terms the “Myth of Good Companions in the Wilderness”: a cross-racial fraternal friendship which flourishes beyond the bounds of settler-invader communities and which typifies many masculine colonialist captivity novels. With its action frequently situated within and contained by Fort Detroit, *Wacousta* serves as a provocative literalization of Northrop Frye’s famed garrison mentality, providing suggestive ground from which to theorize the relation which obtained between actual abductions and self-imposed physical and mental captivities on the part of invader-settlers at this point in Canada’s development.

Other well known Canadian captivity chronicles from this period include Tanner’s *A narrative of the captivity and adventures of John Tanner* (1830), less a tale of captivity than one of an acculturated and turbulent life with his Ojibwa kin, and Rusoe d’Eres’ *Memoirs of Charles Dennis Rusoe d’Eres, a native of Canada who was with the Scanyawtauragahroote Indians eleven years: with a particular account of his sufferings...* (1800), long thought fictional but recently deemed historically authentic.²⁴ Later chronicles include Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney’s *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* (1885), a double colonialist captivity narrative from the Northwest Rebellion (discussed in detail in Chapter 3), which partially informs Rudy Wiebe’s award-winning historiographic metafiction, *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973), and which fully inspired Mel Dagg’s historical novel, *Two Women on the Bridge* (1992). This literary use of historic captivities also continues at an amateur level in works like

²⁴ A list of additional, lesser-known texts featuring vignettes or full-blown tales of classic colonial captivity set in Canada or written by Canadian authors, excepting those written during the period of Intercolonial War, would include: Edgar (1890), Forbes and Bradman (1794), Macdonnell (1898), Oxley (1898), Shafford (1840), Spencer (1836), and Wakefield (1810).

Diane Baltaz's *Mary Sitts: More Than a Captivity* (1995); interestingly, accounts of Sitts in local Ontario histories inspired Baltaz to take up the persona—or to listen to the ghostly voice of—this late eighteenth-century acculturated captive and adoptee of the Mississauga, staging her story as a (pseudo) autobiography.

A number of Canadian renditions of the stock scenario of the abduction of white settlers by Indigenes stand without this type of direct relation to a particular historical occurrence. I will mention only a handful here. James Russell's *Matilda; or, the Indian's Captive* (1833) is little known, though it can boast of being the second novel published in Canada.²⁵ Its obscurity is no doubt due, at least in part, to the purely formulaic plot of this sentimental novel which mobilizes the most clichéd form of the colonialist captivity scenario as a vehicle to remove the ever-virtuous young white eponymous heroine from her parents in Upper Canada—a “tragedy” the novel remedies with its climactic reunion of Matilda (and her chivalric husband) with her wealthy father at his newly inherited British estate. The most arresting aspect of the novel is, as Pilar Cuder Dominguez has observed, the way in which the vulnerability of the young captive and her movement from Indigenous to American to British hands functions as an analogue for the development of Canada as a British colony (21); here, “Indian captivity” is a moniker for a set of past relations superseded by the promise of a new nation.

A more nuanced mobilization of captivity as a component of a national “allegorical bildungsroman”²⁶ is found in Catherine Parr Traill's *Robinsonnade*,

²⁵ Pilar Cuder-Dominguez makes this chronological assessment (16).

²⁶ I take this terminology from Daniel Coleman, who notes the prevalence and popularity of this genre in early Canada (37).

Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lakes Plains (1852). A fable of the ingenious survival of three heroic pioneer children, Catharine, Hector and Louis, and their Mohawk compatriot, Indiana, for two years in the forests adjacent to Traill's Peterborough residence, this young adult novel is an amalgam of forms, blending the Victorian sensibilities and botanical detail we would expect from this gentlewoman naturalist with features of the adventure tale, captivity narrative, mythic romance, and Christian sermon. It is most famously an allegory of the emergent Canadian nation: its finale functions as a unifying national romance by staging the adoption and, ultimately, marriage, of the jovial Francophone boy and the orphaned and now Christianized Mohawk girl into the Scots-Canadian family of the text's principal protagonists. Traill's book features two captivities. In the first, Indiana, the sole survivor of an attack which destroys her entire Mohawk community, is taken captive by a neighbouring band of Ojibwa, who abandon her after she attempts to kill their leader. This series of incidents renders bloody and inhumane the traditional life of the Indigene, conveniently displacing responsibility for the decline of the region's Native population onto intertribal rather than invader-settler influences. In the second, Catharine plays the "hapless victim" and her Ojibwa captor the "wily serpent" who carries her away (270); Indiana tracks her beloved adopted "sister" and, in a move which validates her future inclusion in Traill's projected national community, offers herself to the Ojibwa in Catharine's stead. Her sacrifice is averted by Catharine's quick thinking.

This episode can be read, in accordance with the blunt assimilative thrust of the novel's ending, as an illustration of the superiority of Catharine's Scottish morality, as

shown through her Christian beliefs and ‘civilized’ codes of hygiene. To this end, Traill imports the virulently racist rhetoric of the colonialist captivity narrative—its bold derisiveness is at odds with much of the novel’s more tolerant tone: Catharine becomes “the poor captive... alone, mute with terror, among the half naked dusky forms” of this “savage” and “vindictive race” (273, 271). Yet, as Robert Fleming has argued, it is during Catharine’s captivity that she is most empowered by an alternate, dialogic and reciprocal form of cross-racial interaction—what he characterizes as a *supplementary* mode of identity formation in which “aspects of the perceived other [are added] in the performance of the defining self” (208) rather than being dismissed as inferior or being easily subsumed by an impervious and fixed Anglo-colonial subject. It is through listening to and pondering Indiana’s knowledge of Ojibwa culture that Catharine is able to orchestrate their escape; it is the culmination of a reciprocation of knowledge and cultural adaptation which the two “sisters” have practiced in the preceding chapters. Catharine’s empowerment through this more mutually-respectful and adaptive mode is clumsily denied in the novel’s quick move to a reductive comic conclusion (Fleming 216), a move emblematic of the difficulties generations of transculturated captive women have faced (and variously enunciated) during their processes of reincorporation into their original communities. Captivity in *Canadian Crusoes*, then, elucidates the text’s broad internal contradictions by providing a fertile cross-racial ground on which to model both reductive, assimilationist assertions of Anglo-superiority and more respectful, reciprocal interactions across cultures.

The abduction of a virtuous white woman provides the dramatic structure for two early twentieth-century historical romance novels dedicated to celebrating the emergence of a glorious new Canadian Northwest: Agnes Christina Laut's *Lords of the North* (1900) and Constance Lindsay Skinner's *Roselle of the North* (1927). The profiles of these two authors, successful in their time but largely disregarded in Canada until recent feminist scholarship retrieved and reconsidered their work,²⁷ are similar: both Laut and Skinner lived formative childhoods in the Canadian west before moving to the United States for professional reasons,²⁸ where their prolific journalistic, fictional, and historical writings about the Northwest proved popular. Each used the topic of captivity more than once.²⁹ *Lords of the North* is a "vigorous, nomadic narrative" dedicated "to the pioneers and their descendants whose heroism won the land" (Legge, "Introduction" xvii); in it, captivity functions as a fulcrum, a device around which to coalesce its cast of rather stock characters (and their respective vernaculars which animate the text) meant to represent the region's founding cultures: the vengeful Plains Indigene, the heroic Scots-Canadian trader, the fickle *courier du bois*, the imported Victorian gentlewoman, the dedicated missionary, the promising Anglo-Canadian settler. The traits of the novel's principal heroine—the wise, capable daughter of a Red River settler figured as the maternal future of the nation—are constellated vis-à-vis those of the novel's captive and captor:

²⁷ On Skinner see Jean Barman's "I walk my own track in life" (1997) and *Constance Lindsay Skinner: Writing on the Frontier* (2002) and Diana Relke's "Noble and Ignoble Savagery" (1997). On Laut see Valerie Legge's "Heralds of Empire" (1997) and her new edition of *Lords of the North* (2001).

²⁸ As Skinner wrote in 1920, "Alas! Canada has, as yet, failed to provide a market for her writers; and writers must live – at least we *think* we must!" (Barman, "I Walk" 129). For more information on the sizable group of Canadian writers in this period who relocated to the United States to pursue literary careers, see Nicholas Mount's *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York*.

²⁹ Skinner's *Becky Landers; frontier warrior* (1926) and *Red Man's Luck* (1930) each feature scenarios of colonial captivity and adoption; Laut wrote a version of a well known historical captivity: *John Tanner, Captive Boy Wandered of the Borderlands* (1930).

emulating the virtue but not the feminized vulnerability of the white captive from Montreal and the wilderness savvy and strength but not the immorality of the “malign [Sioux] goddess” who is her captor (425).

Many of the characters in Skinner’s *Roselle of the North* are cut from the same cloth; she too lionizes the Hudson’s Bay Company men (of which her father was one), but Skinner replaces Laut’s derisive depiction of the Sioux with an idealized portrayal of honest and generous Cree who harbour the novel’s eponymous heroine after she has been abducted by a pair of iniquitous trappers. In choosing a moral Cree community as a captive’s sanctuary from white villainy, Skinner inverts the colonialist captivity schema. This inversion of the genre’s norm is furthered by the novel’s assertion that Roselle, or Flying Heart as the Cree call her, has enjoyed a much greater degree of freedom living with the Cree and Hudson’s Bay men in the forests of the West than she could in the class-bound Montreal society of her erstwhile relations with their “cold and narrow ways.” As the revered HBC Factor puts it at the novel’s close, in his decision not to send the adolescent Roselle to Québec, “I’ve never known any good to come of trying to put wild things in cages”; in the Northwest Roselle’s “wings will never be caged, nor broken. They will fly free...” (243). Skinner’s edenic Northwest is the obverse of Rowlandson’s “desolate Wilderness” (71). Thus does Skinner invert the colonialist captivity topos and join a host of female authors who have flipped the conventional, racially-coded binary of freedom-capture in order to challenge the patriarchal and economic strictures inherent in their culture of origin.³⁰

³⁰ Christopher Castiglia’s *Bound and Determined* provides more detail on such (proto-)feminist inversions.

I hope this survey has suggested something of the diverse ways in which the capture of various invader-settlers in Canada has been rendered in our factual and fictional national literature. I have set my dissertation's analysis of the colonial contact zone primarily in the territory now claimed (and contested by Indigenous nations) as Canada, with occasional comparative forays into Australia and America, not because its abstract arguments could not easily be made by way of the historical and literary history of either of these other countries (they certainly could), but to highlight the existence of the colonialist captivity narrative in Canada, to challenge our nation's problematic attachment to false or over-simplified notions of Canada's historic and continuing civility and peaceful origins, and to draw attention to the large and rich body of texts, primarily by Aboriginal authors and artists, which testify to the history of Indigenous capture in Canada and to its ongoing operation. In recognition of the fact that, as Thomas King puts it, the 49th parallel and its international border are, for many Aboriginal nations, "a figment of someone else's imagination" (*The Native* 10), my analysis of Indigenous and colonial phenomena often elides or transcends this border even as it routinely returns to events and texts grounded within that portion of Turtle Island now labelled as Canadian. This need to upset the conventional definition of what constitutes captivity in North America through a consideration of Indigenous experiences of myriad forms of capture is a point well made in a recent article by Christine Kim which locates as productive challenges to the colonialist captivity genre the accounts of Aboriginal captivity chronicled in Harry Robinson's "Captive in an English Circus" (1989) and the autobiographical *Gabriel Dumont Speaks* (1903/1993). These Indigenous texts, Kim

persuasively argues, “reinvest the conventions of the captivity narrative with anti-imperial sentiment” and reveal the genre’s containment strategies and “complicity with the imperial expansionist project” (95, 105).

◇ Academic Critique

...that most starkly colonial of genres, the captivity narrative.
-- Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native* 18.

While Kim’s use of Canadian and Aboriginal content to “broaden the meanings associated with captivity” (95) is rare (and closely aligned with the aims of my project), her move to query the accuracy and capacity of the American Indian captivity narrative genre is one common to many recent scholarly considerations of it. Yet, in the face of these claims, the genre remains “alive and well in the American academy” (Sayre, “Captivity” 860). In *Marxism and Literature* Raymond Williams writes,

Tradition is in practice the most evident expression of the dominant and hegemonic pressures and limits. It is always more than an inert historicized segment; indeed it is the most powerful practical means of incorporation. What we have to see is not just ‘a tradition’ but a selective tradition; an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification. (115)

Pauline Turner Strong convincingly applies this concept of the *selective tradition* to reveal the colonialist captivity genre as a “radically selective” and “actively shaping” force that is intended to “connect with and ratify the present” (*Captive* 4). As Len Findlay reminds us, “there is no singularity without suppression” (“Lament” 40). What the singular classic captivity genre has suppressed in its *selective* selection process is a

question addressed by many. Some follow Pearce in declaring Anglophone accounts of capture too internally-varied to constitute a single class; Christopher Castiglia, Gary Ebersole, and William Clay Kinchen Smith would concur with Colley that to “impose order on their profusion by interpreting them in a monolithic fashion” is to impoverish (“Perceiving” 199), while Lisa Voigt, D’Arcy Randall and Kay Schaffer, among others, join her in directing our attention to captivity chronicles from regions other than America. A few critics muse on the place of fiction in an initially factual historical genre (Levernier & Stodola 9). Many others hotly question the identity traits seemingly prerequisite for inclusion in the genre: whether this be the sidelining of depictions of capable and independent rather than vulnerable and passive female captives and captors (Castiglia; Foster), the implicit refusal to see the many extant connections between classic white captivity experiences and texts and those of African Americans under white slavery or Aboriginal captivity (Gates & Davis; Saillant; Zafar), or the denial of the myriad of Indigenous experiences of capture and confinement during (neo-)colonial times (Behrendt; Clark and Vaughan; Creed; Foley; Hoorn; Huhndorf; Kim; Schaffer; Slumkoski; Strong; Sayre). While I find all of these critiques of “the politics of form and the form of politics” valid (Kim 91), I will focus on those addressing Indigenous exclusion.

Strong notes that “[i]n popular representation, and, until recently, most scholarship, captives, adoptees and slaveholders are racialized as White, captors as Red, slaves as Black.” These segregations have weakened with the publication of an interdisciplinary body of scholarship in the past three decades “revealing that a multi-

racial cast has played each of these roles, albeit in distinctive ways” (“Transforming” 353). With this in mind, I would like to take a moment to sample recent scholarship on Indigenous captivity and enslavement. Practices of pre-Columbian Indigenous captivity in North America were complex: nations took captives for a wide range of “subordinating” or “incorporating”³¹ purposes including various forms of adoption, servitude, enslavement, trade, or, infrequently, torture. An analysis of this long-standing and variegated group of pre-contact practices is beyond my scope here.³² The scale of capture skyrocketed with the arrival of Europeans on the continent, as forms of captivity (including enslavements, removals, internments, and incarcerations) constituted many of the means of effecting what is now identified, by a number of scholars, as the holocaust or genocide of Aboriginal America. Paula Gunn Allen argues that captivity narratives have a “particular application” to the lives of Indigenous women: they had long been the objects of abduction by “spirit people” but with the advent of colonialism captivity tales flourished “because abduction by Spaniards, Mexicans, Frenchmen, and Anglos, as well as by other Native people became a relatively frequent occurrence” (189). Metacom had been prescient in warning the Wampanoag nation that “these people from the unknown world will cut down our groves, spoil our hunting and planting grounds, drive us and our children from the graves of our parents and our council fires, and enslave our women and

³¹ I borrow these abstracted terms from Strong, who persuasively posits them as “more satisfactory analytical terms for the range of transformative practices that follow in the wake of “captivity” [since they] have the advantage of grouping together phenomena that might otherwise be viewed separately (e.g. kidnapping, incarceration, forced relocation and schooling, and various forms of servitude) while calling our attention to the ways in which incorporative and subordinating practices are combined in particular instances.” (“Transforming” 339)

³² For research on Aboriginal traditions of capture in what is now Canada, and in the Americas more generally, refer to the useful bibliographies by Magnaghi and Vaughan.

children” (qtd in Hilden). Indeed, it seems that the Wampanoag had, since first encountering Europeans, aptly associated them in oral history with a giant bird that abducted and devoured eastern Algonquian people (Strong, *Captive* 22).

Spreading far beyond Metacom’s eastern territories, the holocaust of the Indigenous Americas was hemispheric in range: arguably it is the “most massive act of genocide in the history of the world” (Stannard x). In the four centuries following Columbus’s famed exploits of 1492, some 95 percent of the at least 72 million Indigenous people in the Western Hemisphere were killed by introduced diseases, warfare, removal and relocation, and destruction of lifeways; this holds true for what is now Canada as well, where the population of 2 or more million fell to approximately 7 percent of its previous size by the end of the nineteenth century (Thornton 43). There has been a tendency in scholarship to over-emphasize the role of disease as the primary cause of this demographic collapse, thus, as David Stannard explains, “displacing responsibility for the mass killing onto an army of invading microbes” and creating the impression that “the eradication of those tens of millions of peoples was inadvertent”—which it clearly was not (xii). Academic lack of interest or selective focus is but one component of a well developed “ideological matrix” designed to deny or occlude the severity of this genocide (Churchill, *Little* 4). Patricia Penn Hilden, in a poetically rendered account of her personal “quest” to follow “small little markers—ephemeral traces” which tell of this buried history of Aboriginal slavery in North America and the Caribbean, attributes its hidden nature both to the “overculture’s” guilty silence about its own “bloody and terrible past” and to an Indigenous reluctance to claim their own active involvement in the large-

scale intertribal captivities which fueled the slave trade. Yet, as Hilden argues, the “entire past... matters to all of us.” She is joined by a number of other researchers working to uncover this dimension of North America’s past.³³ Among those who have mounted influential challenges to standard interpretations of American slavery is Alan Galloway whose *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (2002) documents that South Carolina exported more Native slaves during this period (at least 50,000 were sent to the Caribbean from Charleston) than it imported Africans, making “the trade in Indian slaves... the most important factor affecting the South in the period 1670 to 1715” (7).

More pertinent to the Canadian orientation of the present project is Brett Rushforth’s study of New France. While it is common knowledge that New France developed “the most far-reaching system of Indian alliances in colonial North America,” its practice of Aboriginal slavery has received much less scholarly or public attention. The two are not, however, dissonant phenomena: the slave trade having originated, Rushforth explains, in the New French desire to preserve its celebrated alliances during the late-seventeenth century when they were under particular threat from the English. The slave trade, perhaps more accurately labeled the captive trade, began with the French acceptance from their Aboriginal allies of captives taken from western North America as tokens or symbols of partnership and grew from there into “an extensive system of Indian

³³ With the exception of Almon Lauber’s 1913 study, it was not until the late twentieth century that academics addressed the topic of Indigenous enslavement in North America. Key works in this area include: Bailey (1966), Brooks (2000), Churchill (1994, 1997), Jameson and Armitage (1996), Galloway (2002), Newell (2003), Rael-Galvez (2002), Rushforth (2003), Stannard (1992), Thornton (1987), and Galloway’s anticipated collection, *Indian Slavery in Colonial America* (2007). Additional sources are listed in Strong (*Captive* 38; “Transforming” passim), in Churchill (*Little* 8), and in Magnaghi’s sizeable annotated bibliography, *Indian Slavery, Labor, Evangelization, and Captivity in the Americas* (1998).

slavery that transformed thousands of Indian men, women, and children into commodities of colonial commerce in French settlements.” Only ever constituting up to five percent of the colony’s total population, these slaves performed essential domestic, agricultural and trade work in a colony chronically short of labour. In some areas such as Montreal’s commercial district they were a sizable presence: there, at least half of the homeowners in 1725 also owned an Aboriginal slave (Rushforth 1, 4). The diverse array of nationalities of the participants in the slave trades studied by Gallay and Rushforth—including Chickasaw, Choctaw, Apalachee, Timucua, Tuscarora, Carolinian, and French in the former and Iroquois, Ottawa, Sioux, and French in the latter—not to mention the multiplicity of forms of abduction and transfer involved support Strong’s argument that colonial captivity was, ultimately, a *convergent* practice, that is a malleable fusion of Indigenous and European traditions of commerce, mediation, redemption, and revitalization (*Captive* 3, 7).

A number of modern commentaries on colonialist captivity texts have noted that their typical plot “serves ideologically to invert the true terms of the colonial invasion of America” (Sayre, *American* 6) or perform a “grotesque inversion of the truth about [colonial] race relations” (Dixon 114) and have thus labeled accounts by and of Indigenous captives as “inverse” or “reverse captivities.”³⁴ Peter Hulme explains that these latter texts constitute “what we have to call a ‘reverse’ captivity narratives—in recognition that the phrase ‘captivity narrative’ has long been captured to designate the

³⁴ Among those who use the terminology of “reverse” or “inverse” captivity are Gordon Sayre, Barbara Creed, Jeanette Hoorn, Shari Huhndorf, Robert Dixon, Larissa Behrendt, and Peter Hulme. Others who adopt this wider, racially desegregated conception of captivity without using the “reverse captivity” terminology include: Susan Schekel, Rebecca Blevins Faery, Michelle Burnham, James Brooks, June Namias, Neal Salisbury, and Pauline Strong.

distinctly minority experiences of whites, usually white women, held captive by non-Europeans” (“Preface” x). I am hesitant, however, to leave unquestioned the colonialist genre’s claim to this overarching label of “captivity narrative” and am wary of the ways in which the “inverse” terminology reinscribes the dualistic logic of the genre and its privileging of white experience as the unmarked norm. Hence my aim in this project is to keep visible, in productive tension, two truths. The first concerns the *untidiness* or the complexity of colonial contact zones which resist simple categorization and deserve nuanced analysis; it draws on Cheryl Suzack’s observation that there is a “fundamental untidiness to all systems of knowledge and explanation” and a risk, therefore, to “grand simplifications about the clash of civilizations” (2) and on William Henry Foster’s theorization of “the pragmatic frontier” which underscores the contingency, contradiction, and irreducible complexity of colonial “middle grounds” which renders stereotypes, even amended or inverted ones, absurd and inadequate (“Review” 318). The second concerns the overwhelming and horrific actuality of the genocide of Indigenous America and the urgent ethical imperative to recognize and testify or pay tribute to this reality. My project thus adopts an approach cognizant of the overarching historical fact that the vast majority of colonial violence and capture was—through one untidy route or another—visited upon Indigenous peoples.

We need, as Fredric Jameson has reminded us, to develop “a new, historically-reflexive, way” of using generic categories “which are so clearly implicated in the literary history and the formal production they were traditionally supposed to classify and neutrally to describe” (107). I am interested in the decided non-neutrality of the

colonialist captivity genre and in sourcing many of its particularly biased techniques to those of Rowlandson's text. Christopher Castiglia has condemned contemporary criticism's tendency to unify the diversity of captivity chronicles into predictable patterns as this sustains "the colonizing and paternalistic stereotypes endorsed by earlier editors" including Carleton, VanDerBeets, and Slotkin.³⁵ This standardization of the genre, Castiglia explains, rests upon what are asserted to be the "typical": (i) sequence of narrative events (opening with violent capture and building to the crescendo of return), (ii) roles or identities involved (the passive female captive and her evil native captor), (iii) individualistic perspective of the narrator (uncoupled from collective discourses of antagonism or identification), and (iv) providential interpretation offered. In holding to this false sense of what is typical, critics have contributed to "the regulatory circulation of images of white women as helpless, isolated, and xenophobic victims and of Indians as ruthless savages" (21-24). All of these falsely typical—and ideologically freighted—traits of captivity in America are present in, and arguably derived from, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*.

The first of these traits is Rowlandson's choice of narrative frame, her decision to open her text *in media res* with the attack of the Algonquian alliance upon her house and their killing of a number of its inhabitants. Skipping any introductory political or historical contextualization, she moves immediately to relatively lurid and lengthy descriptions of the violence she witnessed. Emphasized in the opening paragraphs are the

³⁵ The basis for this standardization can be seen in comments like this one: "The [Puritan] captivity psychology made only one relationship between white and Indian conceivable – that of captive to captor, helpless good to active evil" (Slotkin 144).

murder of innocent infants “knockt on the head” and the grisly techniques visited upon English victims of all ages; the text describes those shot down, “stript naked... and split open” (68). This maternally-oriented first-person witnessing of murder constitutes a “politically effective and potently affective” opening frame which would become a “stylized scenario” in the genre, one which later narratives mined for its sentimental potential (Burnham 50).³⁶ This framing of the text by an avowedly helpless female captive also attempts, as Shari Huhndorf argues, “to establish the validity (even the inevitability) of [colonial] conquest, even as it inverts the power relations at work... [Rowlandson’s powerlessness] signifying the national body [which] belies the fact of colonial aggression” (*Going* 171). What Phillips Carleton naively saw as the *natural* unity of plot arising from the scenario of captivity itself – the use of capture and return to mark the opening and closing of the account – in fact effectively peddles affect for ideological ends.

If the narrative’s frame works to highlight the villainy of the Algonquians so too does Rowlandson’s repeated depiction of them in terms associated with the Devil: they are “barbarous Creatures,” “Infidels,” and “merciless Heathen” (70, 69). This language, as Rafia Zafar has noted, de-personalized and de-humanized the “enemy,” facilitated the justification of colonial attacks, and bolstered the dichotomy of God’s “people” versus a heathen enemy that would “pave the way for generations of certainty [about] Native American inferiority.” Like many Puritan authors, Rowlandson utilized the war as an

³⁶ Louise Halfe’s Cree narrator in *Blue Marrow* inverts the roles of this stock scenario, observing that colonialists “Shot our children as they gathered wood. / Tore babies, crushed their skulls against the rocks....” (19).

opportunity for “definition by repudiation” (Slotkin 22). Such dichotomized language, together with two other long-serving instruments in western processes of othering—accusations of infanticide and cannibalism—were combined in Rowlandson’s and other Puritan captivity texts to form what Colin Ramsey has identified as a “demonology” which has had an unfortunate persistence in American popular imagination (55).³⁷

This demonization of the Indigenous captor was greatly abetted in the colonialist captivity account by omitting any mention of his grievances or motivations. A notable feature of Rowlandson’s narrative, and a significant source of its effect, is its “involvement with the singularity of her experience” as a spiritual trial and its uncoupling from attendant political or historical contexts; as Breitweiser puts it, if *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* were a “manuscript in a bottle,” if it were read in isolation, we would have “at best cloudy knowledge” of the events of the time (4-5). Omitting any discussion of the motives of the demonized Algonquians leads the casual reader of Rowlandson’s text to assume that these “murtherous wretches” attacked and burnt her town, Lancaster, without due cause (68).

An understanding of the historical events preceding her capture leads to a very different conclusion. The raid on Lancaster was staged in retaliation for the brutal British attack on the Narragansett stronghold, the Great Swampy Fort, which had left some 600 Narragansett women, men and children dead three months prior. Of this, the influential minister Cotton Mather noted with satisfaction that the Narragansetts had been “Berbikew’d” (Kolodny, “Among” 26). The use of *fire* by Rowlandson’s captors to

³⁷ See also David E. Stannard’s “Recounting the Fables of Infanticide and the Functions of Political Myth,” *Journal of American Studies* 25 (1991): 381-83.

smoke out their victims at Lancaster is detailed and derided in her opening pages, but in fact eastern Algonquian practices of war knew no such large-scale violence before the English arrived and burnt down entire Indigenous villages containing hundreds of non-combatants during the Pequot War of 1637 and again at the Swampy Fort in 1675. It was this “evident willingness of the English to attack, capture, and slay noncombatants” which led Metacom and his allies to “recognize the need to be equally ruthless” (Salisbury 23). The elision of this type of context from *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* gives readers of it an inadequate understanding of the conflict which constitutes its ground. Again, a radically different understanding of fire—as signifier of violence—comes when we adopt a more comprehensive perspective on post-Columbian Indigenous experience in North America, for as Russell Thornton puts it, the arrival of Europeans

marked the beginning of a long holocaust, although it came not in ovens, as it did for the Jews. The fires that consumed North American Indians were the fevers brought on by newly encountered diseases, the flashes of settlers’ and soldiers’ guns, the ravages of “firewater,” the flames of villages and fields burnt by the scorched-earth policy of vengeful Euro-Americans...” (xv)

I want to underscore the way in which this tunnel vision and the extremely limited historical understanding it fosters is perpetuated not only within Rowlandson’s text and subsequent readings of it but also by the use of the colonialist captivity genre as a whole. To conceive of colonial literature in terms of a category which permits only white experience or voice, rather than in terms of the broad multi-racial, multi-directional history of captivity, is to mimic and amplify the ideologically expedient, or racist, decontextualization pivotal to texts like Rowlandson’s. We have seen how blind her

account was to adjacent experiences of colonial violence and for us to solely study, or sanctify within a canonized genre, invader-settler perspectives like hers is to augment this impoverished and prejudiced perspective. Not only does the exclusive generic canonization of invader-settler accounts replicate the racialism of the texts themselves, it also gives a gloss of authenticity or credibility to their often inaccurate, though purportedly objective or eye-witness, versions of history. This is doubly at issue when these canonical writings are taught within a literary context that downplays the text's original historical milieu; without an alternate historical or ethnographic base of knowledge, instructors have little means to challenge the erroneous knowledge posited in the narratives as fact. Additionally, a too tight focus upon the traditional literary techniques of these texts risks leaving their demonologies or race hatred ignored and intact.

The framing typical of sanctioned colonialist captivities, and its potent affect, have also swayed many an editor into replicating the tone and claims of the captive author—a move dangerous because it too contributes to the reinscription of deeply troubling colonialist views. As Michelle Burnham has argued, we need to query the “traditional formulation of sympathy as an identification with those suffering figures whom we are or could be like” because it “reifies and segregates cultural, national, and racial identities” and fosters a national imaginary that “depends on remembering to forget the border transgressions and colonial violence that have secured it” (2, 4). We see the construction of such bonds of sympathetic allegiance in the framing choices and diction of editors like Stuart Trueman in his 1966 Canadian edition of John Gyle's captivity

narrative or Frederick Drimmer in his 1961 captivity anthology, *Scalps and Tomahawks*, which replicate that of their subjects: reappearing, despite the decades which separate captive from editor, are introductions replete with vivid sensationalistic opening scenes of Native violence and clichéd descriptions of “hordes of whooping Indian warriors... shooting, scalping, plundering, burning... in an era of unbridled savagery” (Trueman vii). Thus do emotional pleas take effect, forging alliances of national or racial sympathy by way of falsely construed history, over buried tales of Indigenous genocide. At stake in such affective alliances, Kimberly Blaesser reminds us, is physical survival itself, for “the creation and interpretations of histories” function to justify “possession or dispossession” (qtd in Fast 140). Or, as Ward Churchill explains, there is a “psychohistorical dynamic in which unopposed genocide begets new genocides” (*Little* 12). Hence my sense of the import of conceptually relocating the colonialist captivity text from its current status as the only record of experience validated by the genre to a recognition of it as a racially-sorted and ideologically-distinct subset of a much larger, predominantly Aboriginal, group of memories and texts which tell of colonial captivity.

◇ Creative Critique

Some of the most sophisticated and provocative published criticism of the colonialist captivity genre is staged in creative works by Indigenous artists. Joining Maurice Kenny (who so effectively recast Isaac Jogues’ Jesuit perspective on captivity in his poetic *Blackrobe: Isaac Jogues*) in mounting direct assaults on canonical captivity texts are a

number of celebrated contemporary Native authors, three of whom I will turn to now:

Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, and Gregory Scofield.

Erdrich is certainly familiar with the colonialist captivity genre: in 1994 she provided the introduction for a republication of John Tanner's canonized captivity narrative, although she holds that Tanner's transculturated Ojibwa status and the fact that his text possesses "the vigor and disorganization of an authentic life" without the sensationalistic framing typical of the standard captivity text should lead us to instead classify it as autobiography ("Introduction" xii). Nor is she new to challenging the conventions of these "cautionary and often inflammatory tales of abduction and redemption"; her poem "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways" (1984) and her short story "American Horse" (1983) are both, as William Smith has noted, complications of the typically dualistic colonialist captivity account (365). Laura Castor has also recently observed that Erdrich's novel *The Antelope Wife* (1998) features three captivity scenarios: that of a Cavalry soldier, Scranton Roy, who captures and subsequently adopts an Ojibwa baby, Matilda, after attacking her village in the 1880s; that of Matilda's mother who recaptures her from Roy; and that of Matilda's descendent, the titular antelope wife, who is captured by an Indian trader from Minneapolis in the 1990s. Castor contends that by combining these three scenarios with trickster discourse, upsetting the formulaic plot and identity-based expectations the captivity genre has fostered, grounding the novel in an Anishnaabe epistemology, and utilizing an indigenous conception of mediation rather than a western mode of closure, the novel rewrites the popular Anglo-American genre of the captivity narrative (122). One striking example of

Erdrich's disruption of the gendered and racialized categories enforced by 'typical' captivity narratives comes early in the novel when the urgency of baby Matilda's hunger provokes Roy's body to respond by making milk for her, his first step towards adopting her as his beloved daughter. "Good stories" like those constituting *The Antelope Wife*, Castor concludes, are "a continuing menace to grand narratives such as Manifest Destiny and popular forms such as the captivity narrative. They hook the reader with their new twist on the familiar, and simply don't let go before the conventional stories of conquest are rewritten." (133)

An antecedent to this novel's challenge to the hegemonic conception of captivity is found in Erdrich's representation of Mary Rowlandson's experience in "Captivity," a three-page poem first published in *Jacklight* (1984) and reprinted in *Original Fire* (2003). Paradoxically, this poem is both an inversion of many of the racial and religious mores promulgated in Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* and also a vision informed by the peculiar tensions at play in Rowlandson's account. Thus the poem's rendition of Rowlandson as enamored of her Algonquian captor and his culture is simultaneously antithetical to the values preached by the text and consistent, at a subtle psychic level, with the internal tensions and unresolved grief which animate it. The internal contradictions or "double-voiced" aspects of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, often interpreted in light of the editorial interventions wrought on this the first female-authored text of colonial North America by the male ministerial elite who

arranged for its publication and provided its prefatory apparatus, have formed the basis for many recent literary analyses of it.³⁸

Particularly compelling among these is Mitchell Breitweiser's *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning* (1990) which pinpoints *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*'s textual tension as that existing between its overt intention to serve as a project of providential explication (an exegesis designed to facilitate the captive's restoration to her previous elite position within the Puritan fold) and its actual, if unintended and unsanctioned, primary function as a (incomplete) project of mourning, an expression of grief incompatible with Puritan conceptions of providence. Breitweiser speculates that as Rowlandson composes her narrative "despite her best intentions, things get loose or come forward that do not reduce entirely to exemplary status without residue, things that therefore adumbrate or signal the vitality of a distinctly non-Puritan view of her experience" (9). Erdrich too appears aware of this "residue" and of the pivotal place of unresolved grief in Rowlandson's account, the captive's protestations of God's goodness and mercy notwithstanding, and in "Captivity" she unexpectedly posits as the source of this grief not the young daughter Rowlandson lost in captivity but rather the captor and his people with whom Rowlandson wishes she had remained. In this, Erdrich extends the argument of other critics who view Rowlandson's depiction of her social interactions with the Narragansett, Nipmuc and Wampanoag as, at times, characterized by an intimacy, familiarity or competency suggestive of a wavering Anglo-American

³⁸ Lisa Logan glosses this critical trend: "Over the years many scholars have noted that moments of ambiguity persist despite the captivity text's ostensibly dominant cultural aims... These moments have been read variously as signs of acculturation, Stockholm syndrome, transgression, or evidence of the captive's authorial voice" (473).

allegiance (Salisbury 6); as Breitweiser puts it, Rowlandson's captors in her account "undergo accretions of complexity that outdistance the typological schematizations she constantly attempts" (13). Michelle Burnham extends this line to argue that *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* "consistently disavows the transgression it documents" (48).

Erdrich's poem is a lyrical, elegantly-wrought intertext which draws upon an attentive reading of Rowlandson's narrative—especially its moments of illogic or dissonance—and its biblical sources in order to creatively envision anew Rowlandson's time amongst the Wampanoag, Narragansett and Nipmuc. At the close of the original narrative, having been safely returned with two of her three children to her husband and Puritan acquaintances, Rowlandson writes reflectively, in a passage which has provoked much critical speculation, "*I can remember the time, when I used to sleep quietly without workings in my thoughts, whole nights together, but now it is other wayes with me.*" She goes on to explain that "When all are fast about me, and no eye open, but his who ever waketh, my thoughts are on things past, upon the awfull dispensation of the Lord towards us; upon his wonderful power and might, in carrying us through so many difficulties, in returning us to safety, and in suffering none to hurt us." There is a dissonance at play here between Rowlandson's gratitude toward the Lord and her continued restlessness: the socially expected closure of her providential return is unsettled by her lingering meditation on "things past."

This dynamic repeats itself at numerous points in her narrative; later in this paragraph she again heralds her blessings and again undercuts this pronouncement with

an insistence upon her continued sorrow: “now we are fed *with the finest of the Wheat*, and, as I may say, *with honey out of the rock... I watered my couch with tears*. Oh! the wonderful power of God that mine eyes have seen, affording matter enough for my thoughts to run in, that when others are sleeping mine are weeping.” (111) Note the recuperative move in which her tears are explicated as ones of gratitude or awe rather than ones of sorrow or dissatisfaction and the residue of the latter which remains despite it.

In “Captivity,” Erdrich recasts Rowlandson’s sleepless state and musing on “things past” to both challenge the notion that her “rescue” constitutes a neat conclusion and to argue that her restlessness is in fact a longing for inclusion in the Algonquian community of her captors:

Rescued, I see no truth in things...
I lay myself to sleep
on a Holland-laced pillowbeer.
I lay to sleep.
And in the dark I see myself
as I was outside their circle. (11)

Even the material comforts of her Puritan lifestyle, its linens contrasted to the earthen ground of her captivity, cannot lull her to sleep. Instead, Erdrich’s Rowlandson reflects upon the allure of her captor and his culture, of the moment when she, “outside their circle,” watches him lead his people in ritual “until [she] could no longer bear // the thought of how [she] was” and so joins their rhythmic striking of the earth,

begging it to open
to admit [her]
as he was
and feed [her] honey from the rock. (11)

Thus does Erdrich close her poem with a dramatic image of the captive's desire for transculturation, a desire which has been building in intensity throughout the course of the verse.

The poem's pseudo-historic epigraph introduces, makes explicit, and parodies Rowlandson's fear that her captor will seduce her—a fear essential to the production and consumption of colonialist captivity tales for generations to come—and the subsequent stanzas trace how this seduction comes to pass, how fear is transfigured into longing via acts of Algonquian kindness, the appeal of a language “which was not human” (9), and the divestiture of power from a Christian God. The arresting act of eating the soft bones of an embryonic fawn, central to the poem's scene of implicit seduction, comes from *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. Erdrich yokes it with Rowlandson's subsequent mention of having had the pleasure that stormy night of sleeping in a dry “Bark Wigwam” (93) to concoct, between its lines, the sexual relationship of Rowlandson and her unnamed captor:

One night
he killed a deer with a young one in her
and gave me to eat of the fawn.
It was so tender,
the bones like the stems of flowers,
that I followed where he took me.
The night was thick. He cut the cord
that bound me to the tree.

After that the birds mocked... (10)

Adapting the strategy, particularly common in Victorian sentimental fiction, of utilizing an ellipsis to denote the unspeakable act of intercourse or rape Erdrich allows the

surrounding context to “speak” of this “unspeakable” intimacy:³⁹ the birds who mock, the shadows who gape, the trees who lash are at first interpreted by the poem’s protagonist as signs of “God’s wrath” and yet are unrecognized by her captor as such and soon fade away in a move which signals the poem’s defiance of the Christian superiority rampant in *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*.

On many levels Erdrich’s poem is an exercise in inversion: Rowlandson’s antagonism toward the “merciless Heathen” (69) becomes, in Erdrich’s hands, a desire to emulate them; her captor becomes her rescuer (saving her from drowning in the poem’s first lines) and “his woman” becomes the rescuer of Rowlandson’s child (by feeding her the “milk of acorns” when Rowlandson “could not suckle” (10)); Rowlandson becomes the liability to the safety of the Algonquians and not vice versa (it is her child’s wails which “put them in danger” (10)); and the original text’s rigid moral assertions give way to a relativistic vision where there is “no truth” (11). These moves contribute to what Robin Riley Fast has termed the poem’s “powerful dialogic reversal” (143). Food (or the nexus of issues and images of sustenance, fertility and divinity) in the poem and its source texts provides an effective way to understand the poem’s initial function as an inversion of, and later function as an alternative to, Rowlandson’s Puritan values.

For food, as any reader of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* can testify, is a principal, if often deceptively quotidian, subject of this text; what was ingested by whom and in what context is accounted for in minute, albeit not objective, detail—a trait that most subsequent colonialist captivity texts will adopt from Rowlandson. When we

³⁹ See my discussion of Gowanlock and Delaney’s *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* for a more thorough discussion of this technique (Higginson, “Feminine”).

remember that ultimately the Algonquian coalition's lack of provisions—their increasingly compromised reliance on securing food through raids and scorings of burnt fields as well as by harvesting wild foods in the shrinking territories left to them—was arguably the decisive factor in their loss of the war, Rowlandson's detailed monitoring of foodstuffs makes sense. But it is not only the paucity of nutrients available to the eastern Algonquians at this historical juncture which animates Rowlandson's text: food here serves a number of additional functions. It provides a means for the captive to measure her privation and assert her divinely ordained affliction; it provides a means for readers to trace, by way of its circulation and exchange for services rendered (Rowlandson essentially hired herself out as a seamstress for food) how she navigated the socio-economic structure of her captor's camps (Logan 477; Kolodny, "Captives" 95) and how that social structure was itself organized; it provides a window upon her moral conduct (which sinks low when she famously steals a morsel of horse meat from the hands of a starving English captive child (96)); and it provides a gauge of the extent to which the captive has acculturated. For eating, drawing as it does on what Freud argued was the oldest instinctual impulse of deciding what to take in to ourselves, is, as Maggie Kilgour has argued, the most basic model of incorporation and of delineating self from other (4, 6). Drawing on this logic, and on Rowlandson's narrative as a model, colonialist captivity texts have come to routinely utilize "foreign" food and the captive's relation to it as a metonymical figure for an entire foreign culture and the captive's relation to it.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ For instance, by 1815, when Jewitt writes both of the "disgusting" ways in which the Nuuchah-nulth prepare their food and of how hunger, powerful enough to "break stone walls," led him, nevertheless, to enjoy their repasts (61-62), this general pair of assertions—the claim of

Cannibalism, or its spectre, is mobilized by many colonialist captivity texts in this vein. Hence Erdrich's choice to use the eating of the fawn to represent her captive's larger incorporation of or yielding to Algonquian values is particularly apt.

Erdrich's "Captivity" refutes many of the colonialist captivity genre's gastronomic conventions by denying the captive a state of privation, by coding her hunger as the result of her (initial) refusal of proffered food, and by characterizing the Algonquian camp as a place of blessed abundance and fertility. Observe the diction of reproduction and barrenness at play in her captor's "cutting" of her "cord" and offering of the fawn embryo versus her inability to suckle or to "bear" how she was. This theme of English sterility versus Algonquian abundance is most pronounced in Erdrich's intertextual use of the Bible's Psalm 81 with its promise by God to bless his chosen ones by feeding them "with the finest of the wheat: // and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee." (v16).

Just before concluding her account, Rowlandson pauses to enumerate five "remarkable passages of providence, which [she] took special notice of in [her] afflicted time" (104); food plays a central role in the first and fourth of these. Firstly, Rowlandson, in a comment rare for gesturing beyond her individual experience to the larger motives for the war, describes how God preserved the "heathen for farther affliction to our poor Countrey" despite the fact that they were in "such distress for food, that our men might track them by their rooting in the earth for Ground-nuts whilst they

alterity to sanction that of acculturation—had become a well worn feature of the classic captivity genre.

were flying for their lives.” She soon relates why the eastern Algonquians were so short of provisions: the British colonists had destroyed all the Algonquian crops of corn they could, that “they would starve and dy with hunger,” and had driven them “from that little they had in store, into the Woods in the midst of Winter.” These violent attempts at extermination failed, in Rowlandson’s determination, because the Lord provided for the Algonquians, albeit with “that Hog or a Dog would hardly touch” (105). In a reiterative move, suggestive I think of Rowlandson’s struggle to accept her own analysis, she again notes that “Strangely did the Lord provide for them” before proceeding to extensively list which particular nuts, plants, roots, bones, birds, animals—in short, “all sorts of creatures” as well as scavenged scraps and provisions—constituted the wartime Algonquian diet (105-6). Interestingly this list is marked both by her own admitted lack of knowledge of such nutrient sources and her “admiration” for how God had provided for “such a vast number of our Enemies in the *Wilderness*, where there was nothing to be seen” (106); while overtly attributed to God, this sense of admiration, in conjunction with her studious listing of these edibles, suggests to me, and I think to Erdrich as well, that Rowlandson was in fact rather impressed with ingenious Indigenous modes of sustenance.

It is at this moment, having indirectly admired indigenous knowledge, that Rowlandson makes the recuperative move of pulling the text back to Puritan exegesis by introducing Psalm 81, a psalm she will cite again at the close of her text:

It is said, in Psal. 81. 13, 14. *Oh, that my People had harkened to me, and Israel had walked in my wayes, I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their Adversaries.* But now our perverse and

evil carriages in the sight of the Lord, have so offended
Him, that instead of turning His hand against them, the
Lord feeds and nourishes them to be a scourge to the whole
Land. (Rowlandson 106)

This shepherding of the text back to its typological function requires a feat of strained reasoning or justification, an illogic Erdrich remedies in her poem when she has Rowlandson come to a more direct interpretation of the Psalm's message. Why, the poem asks us, if God's chosen people are those rewarded with abundance, and if the Algonquians are stubbornly possessive of such sustenance even in the face of adversity, are not the Algonquians themselves the chosen ones? In such a reckoning the positioning of the Algonquians as a divinely sanctioned scourge to the English is convoluted and unnecessary. Erdrich's poem stands as this alternate scriptural interpretation. In it Rowlandson's husband "drives a thick wedge // through the earth" but "still it shuts // to him year after year." While, in contrast, it is her captor and lover who the earth "admits" and feeds on "honey from the rock" (11). At times, "Captivity" locates its captive analogously to Israel in Psalm 81: both forsake or doubt God, hark to a "strange god" (v9), and follow "their own hearts' lust" (v12); this analogous alignment reminds us of the grief which undergirds both the Psalm as a record of God's loss of Israel and *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. These aspects of the poem, in conjunction with granting the Algonquians possession of food and fertility, initially function to simplify or invert Rowlandson's interpretation of the Psalm, positing the Algonquians as the Lord's chosen ones or, to borrow the terminology of the preface to Rowlandson's work, "his dear ones, that are as the Apple of his Eye, as the Signet upon His Hand..." (65).

Soon, however, the poem proffers a second, more radical alternative: the existence of a mode of being separate from, and perhaps superseding or superior to, that of the Puritans. Erdrich's protagonist does "not know" whether the English who pursue her are "God's agents // or pitch devils" (9), moves beyond the reach of "God's wrath" (10), and, returned to Puritan society, "see[s] no truth in things" (11)—an indictment of her previous modes of knowing. At the poem's close, she wishes to join her captor in his spiritual ritual, one that notably cedes power and the ability to bless to the earth itself. Thus does "Captivity" provide a two step response to Rowlandson's contorted exegetical stance in relation to Psalm 81, first a defiant inversion and second a leap beyond its reach to an indigenous epistemology. While not a detailed explication of eastern Algonquian spiritual tenets, Erdrich's poem is an insistent sign of their presence.

God's chosen ones, according to Psalm 81, will be satisfied by the honeyed sweetness of his blessings, but neither Erdrich's Rowlandson nor her historical referent are thus satisfied. This dissatisfaction, dissonant with the overt aims of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, provides Erdrich an entrée for transforming this seminal colonialist captivity narrative into a narrative of transcultural seduction. "Captivity" is a lyrical vision of what, as a Puritan, Rowlandson could never have said of her experience with the Narragansett, Wampanoag and Nipmuc (and for Erdrich I believe this is less about speculating on what actually occurred than about exposing, through contrast, the constraints the Puritan hierarchy put upon Rowlandson as one seeking its sanction). Historian Neal Salisbury explains that at this moment in Puritan society there were rigid boundaries curbing female public speech that even Rowlandson and her prominent

mother were subject to despite each enjoying a relative freedom in this regard as members of the elite clerical class. Hence, Salisbury contends, the need to legitimate *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* by publishing it sandwiched between a ministerial preface which asks the reader to “excuse” the author, who is named only as her husband’s “dear Consort,” for “com[ing] thus into publick” (Rowlandson 67) and Joseph Rowlandson’s final sermon (Salisbury 46-48).⁴¹ The gagging of working-class or unruly British women within Rowlandson’s society is also the subject of Angela Carter’s “Our Lady of the Massacre” (1985), a short story that, like Erdrich’s “Captivity,” upsets the notion of Puritan rescue and redemption by featuring a captive who would rather not return to the Protestant fold and whose behaviour is proscribed when she does, a ‘captive,’ if we can define her as such, who led a happier, more moral and autonomous life with her eastern Algonquian family than she was able to in England or its American colony.

Not only does Erdrich’s poem “tell of a lost opportunity for a new vision of [interracial] relationship and community” (Fast 143), but its dense intertextuality instructs careful readers on a number of key aspects of Rowlandson’s text, including its overdetermined mobilization of food as cultural signifier, its subtle markings of dissatisfaction with the consolation offered by Puritan beliefs, and its specious imposition

⁴¹ Critical opinion varies as to the nature and extent of the editorial interventions performed on Rowlandson’s text, and indeed upon many other female-authored captivity texts published with male “assistance”: representing two extremes of opinion are Lorraine Carroll’s *Rhetorical Drag: Gender Impersonation, Captivity, and the Writing of History* (2006), which arrestingly posits that such male editors essentially impersonated the female captivity author, and Gary Ebersole’s *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Post-Modern Images of Indian Captivity* (1995) which rejects this focus on intervention as a diminishment of the abilities of an author like Rowlandson. See also Castiglia’s argument (1996) on the strictures imposed by male editors (16-40) and Toulouse’s monographic study (2007) of the politico-religious mobilization of such texts by the Puritan ministerial elite.

of typology onto experience. In rewriting one of America's seminal narratives of capture as a tale of seduction, "Captivity" has its own allure; I find it a testament to Erdrich's perspicuity and insight as an intertextual reader that her poem significantly altered my approach to *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. After Erdrich's intervention, I can no longer read Rowlandson's writing without wondering what in fact is the source of this captive's grief and dissatisfaction, what in fact was the discrepancy between what she could and what she desired to speak, what in her interpretation of her life with the Wampanoag, Nipmuc and Narragansett was in/adequate to the vitality and virtue which Erdrich so compellingly insists characterized this eastern Algonquian culture.

Sherman Alexie's "Captivity" shares both its title and its epigraph with Erdrich's verse, the latter being scripted so as to appear as an excerpt from Rowlandson's text though it is not:⁴²

He (my captor) gave me a biscuit, which I put in my pocket, and not daring to eat it, buried it under a log, fearing he had put something in it to make me love him.

— from the narrative of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, who was taken captive when the Wampanoag destroyed Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 1676.

In addition to its implicit querying of the veracity of invader-settler histories (Fast 141), the epigraph points to an issue central to each of these recent poems: cross-racial intimacy. Alexie's "Captivity," like Erdrich's, figures Rowlandson as enamored of a Native man but, while Erdrich crafts a compact, lyrical, and acutely intertextual riposte to *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, Alexie pens a sprawling postmodern prose poem,

⁴² Attributed to Rowlandson by Erdrich and Alexie, the quote in fact derives from the Canadian captivity narrative of John Gyles, *Memoirs of the Odd Adventures...* (1736), who, when offered a biscuit by his captor, a Jesuit, is afraid to eat it and buries it with the explanation that the priest "had put something in it to make me love him" and that "being very young and having heard much of the Papists tormenting the Protestants, I hated the sight of the Jesuit." (qtd in VanDerBeets xviii).

a text whose publication history indicates something of its hybrid form; originally published in Alexie's verse collection *First Indian On The Moon* (1993), it has been reprinted in *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology* (1997) and in *The Next American Essay* (2003). Alexie's text consists of fourteen numbered sections between which meaning reverberates and fractures; the piece contains both a dizzying array of distinct or unrelated subjects and riffs or repetitions of content which provide moments of narrative cohesion between these. Each section begins with the final phrase or word from the previous section—a device that allows for an accretion of meaning between often otherwise separate subjects. The character of Rowlandson appears as a thread pulled through at least four of the fourteen sections. The tone ranges from humorous to grim, the style from anecdotal to lyrical. Notably it is a piece in which content and form are carefully synchronized; it practices what it preaches: that each time a story is told something changes.

The text's thesis, variously reiterated in a number of its sections, is that "The best weapons are the stories and every time the story is told, something changes" (s9).

Altering the story is, as John Newton has observed, "a repeated refrain and strategic ideal in Alexie's work" that is motivated, at least partially, by the desire to escape the "loop" of colonial history "with its specular certainties and binary antagonisms" (420). Although such an escape can never be total, I believe that the power ascribed to the writer as the agent of narrative change is celebrated in "Captivity" when Alexie's unnamed first person narrator (whom I perhaps erroneously conflate with the author himself) makes a note of his ability to transport Rowlandson from the annals of her racist chronicle and

recast her as a character in a radically new story. Even while Alexie notes that Rowlandson has become “necessary” (to the American national imaginary?), I hear a certain pleasure evident in his metafictional documentation of his seizure of authorial control from her and her ilk:

I remember your name, Mary Rowlandson. I think of you now, how necessary you have become. Can you hear me, telling this story within uneasy boundaries, changing you into a woman leaning against a wall beneath a HANDICAPPED PARKING ONLY sign, arrow pointing down directly at you? (s3)

In a move of literalized “poetic justice,” Alexie revels in his ability to label as handicapped the perceptive abilities of a woman who so famously derided the Algonquian people. There are elements of historical correction and revenge, as well as mirth, at play in the narrator asking the now powerless Rowlandson if she can hear how he is “changing” her.

If *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* renders indigenous peoples as fallen, “Captivity” fells Rowlandson; no longer the privileged minister’s wife, Alexie’s Rowlandson is a comically pathetic, isolated, and jilted woman:

I saw you there chewing salmon strips in the corner, hiding from all the Indians. Did you see him, Mary Rowlandson, the Indian man who has haunted your waking for 300 years, who left you alone sipping coffee in the reservation 7-11? (s10)

What is, from a western vantage point, the striking anachronism of Rowlandson lurking in a 7-11 brings us to the way that the present and past are dynamically linked or fluid in this poem; Rowlandson, and others, move effortlessly between temporal moments which could be “1676 or 1976 or 1776” (s3)—a strategy suggestive of both non-linear Indigenous modes of chronology and of the need to recognize the manner in which

effects of past iconic figures continue to roll forward into the present and future. The casual mockery in this roast of Rowlandson does not belie its function as a serious critique of her narrative's colonialist politics and their legacy; it is an instance of what Alexie has termed "the humour of genocide," the mobilization of the comedic and flippant in service of the most pressing and somber of issues (qtd in Newton 415). Thus, there is a tight linkage between the laughable Puritan captive stuck in the convenience store and the markers of colonialism's destruction which litter the poem in its references to residential school, substance abuse, broken dreams, and the car crash symbolic of genocidal racial violence in which nine Indians die and only the white girl survives.

If Alexie's Rowlandson, like her historic referent, stands for a larger colonial community, then his rendition of her unrequited love for an "Indian man" allows him to imply a larger dynamic in which indigenous nations refuse the advances, ideologies, or histories of colonial America.

It's too late, Mary Rowlandson, for us to sit together and dig up the past
you buried under a log, salvage whatever else you had left behind. What
do you want? I cannot say, "I love you. I miss you." June, Mary
Rowlandson, the water is gone and my cousins are eating Lysol
sandwiches. They don't need you, will never search for you in the ash
after your house has burned to the ground one more time. It's over. (v12)

At moments like these "Captivity" allots power to its Indigenous characters, allowing them to refute or signal the termination of any need for collaboration with white Americans and to assert the priority of their own independent lives, even if these are pained (as the gesture to Lysol implies). This shift of romantic and authorial power away from sanctioned colonial sources like Rowlandson is furthered by the poem's use of

insider knowledge such as anecdotes, names and locations not fully explained or identified, which make it less penetrable to those outside the inscribed cultural circle.

In addition to symbolizing and inverting larger-scale relations of conquest and gleefully deflating the authority of a text which perpetuates anti-Aboriginal hate, Alexie's characterization of Rowlandson also facilitates meditation on a theme prevalent in his work, and personal life, at this time: the pitfalls and potentialities of native-white intimacy in the (neo)colonial Americas. Using Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to figure "transcultural misalliance" (Newton 420), Alexie quotes from *Romeo's* well-known listing of oxymoronic pairs—"heavy lightness... feather of lead"—to represent the "loving hate" (1:1, 176-80) which often characterizes and complicates these romances.

Although worlds apart stylistically, the choice to depict a white captive's love for her Native captor links Alexie's poem to that penned by Cherokee poet John Rollin Ridge in 1868. In "The Stolen White Girl," Ridge refuses the anti-miscegenation position prevalent in earlier and contemporary renditions of white captivity, such as *The Last of the Mohicans*, perhaps as a result of his own mixed heritage and his marriage to a white woman (Levernier & Cohen 257). Far from condemning such matches, Ridge's formally conservative verse, in rhyming couplets, insists that "the contrast" between white and Native "is pleasing and rare" and prays that their life together, far from social judgment in the sanctity of the wilds, may be blessed (259).

As Newton has noted, there are many forms of captivity to be found in Alexie's poem of that name—a "white boy" confined in a chicken coop, an "Indian in a Bottle," "the iron bars... painted on your U.S. government glasses"—but framing them all is the

constraint of writing in what Alexie dubs “the language of the enemy” (s3,4). Newton argues that Alexie, known for confronting racism head-on, tackles this issue in a characteristically direct fashion by targeting the genre of the Puritan captivity narrative in which “indigeneity has most derisively been enclosed” (420-1). I agree, and further contend that when Alexie provocatively asserts, “Listen: imagination is all we have as defense against capture and its inevitable changes” (s7), he is speaking to the potential of story (amongst other imaginative acts) to break from or evade the damaging ghettoization of indigeneity so prevalent in colonial logics. “Captivity” is a sophisticated postmodern text in which form and content synthesize, in which expository instructions on how to utilize creativity to escape colonial and cultural captivity are both explicated and enacted in Alexie’s metafictional wresting of authorial control from an iconic colonial captive and author like Rowlandson.

Such a poetical hijacking of narrative control from a famed colonial captive-authoress is also found in Gregory Scofield’s “Conversation my Châpan Mary might have had with Mrs. Sarah F. Wakefield” published in *Singing Home the Bones* (2005); like Alexie’s, Scofield’s verse humbles and discredits its historic captive subject. Scofield’s poem, as its title suggests, stages a dialogue of sorts between Wakefield and his Métis great-grandmother, Châpan Mary. Given that only Châpan Mary speaks, and in a derisive tone towards Wakefield, this conversation is perhaps closer to a tirade, riposte or monologue.

Wakefield was taken captive with her two young children in 1862 during the Dakota War in Minnesota and recounted her relatively positive experience with the

Mdewankanton Dakota in *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* (1863). Although the text's setting and dramatic tone emulate that of the classic colonialist captivity narrative, its framing, its avowed defence of her captor, Chaska or *We-Chank-Wash-ta-don-pee*, and its condemnation of the conduct of the American government are highly unusual within the colonialist genre. Despite, or perhaps as a result of, what was perceived at the time as a scandalous defence of Chaska as her rescuer and protector (a claim which opened her to charges of having willingly been his lover or wife) in print and at the American military trials which concluded the conflict, Chaska was, in what was officially billed as an unintentional error, hung to death, along with 37 other Dakota men in what remains the United States' largest mass execution. Had the original Minnesota tribunal not been reigned in by President Lincoln, 303 Dakota men would have been executed. Arguably generated by the government's failure to honour its treaty promises to the Dakota nations, and the marked hardship this caused, the war resulted in some 250 white captives being taken, 500 white invader-settlers and soldiers being killed, and ultimately the "banishing" of all Dakotas, some 1300 people, from Minnesota to less arable lands to the west where many died of starvation (Namias, "Editor's" 3-8).

This unjust dispossession of the Dakota, her erstwhile "neighbours," from their "most beautiful country" saddened and angered Wakefield (127); her "radical critique of white society's hypocrisy and political exploitation of Native Americans" has attracted renewed critical attention in recent years (Derounian-Stodola, *Women's* xix; Kolodny, "Among" 28). In her 1997 edition of *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees*, June Namias underscores Wakefield's courage in defending a Dakota man and Dakotan land rights in a

rabidly revengeful post-war climate, her humanist respect for Christian acts regardless of the race of their author, and her notably cordial relationships with Dakotan women. From her vantage point, as a scholar familiar with captivity texts far more virulently racist than Wakefield's and as a feminist looking for evidence of a universal feminine ethic of care or "moral force" (35), Namias interprets Wakefield as a heroine. In contrast, Scofield, while drawing on Namias's historical work, implicitly rejects her argument that Wakefield is a laudable heroine, choosing instead to paint a very different picture of Wakefield's position vis-à-vis Aboriginal women: he explains, in the notes to his poem, that "Miss Shara's" "hysterical and high-pitched voice" would not have been "well-received by native women of [his] châpan's generation" (104)—she would, as his poem reiteratively contends, have been perceived as a "shtupid ole biddy" (12, 13, 16). From his vantage point, as a Métis man versed in the particular brand of racism reserved for the Métis and in its pernicious material effects in Canada over the past two centuries, Scofield logically sees Wakefield as the perpetrator of such racist views, and as a woman writing to save her sullied and sexualized reputation.

Scofield's primary interest in Wakefield's narrative is evident in his construction of an epigraph which strings together a series of statements from *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* in which Wakefield generalizes that "half-breeds" are full of "art and duplicity" and hence are less trustworthy than "full bloods" (Wakefield 123, 124). The epigraph, its quotes taken slightly out of order and context and its standing as the first and last time Wakefield "speaks" in the poem, is a reminder of Scofield's authorial control. The persona privileged in this piece is that of his Châpan Mary, a respected "woman of hard

work, a woman not to be crossed” (104); in the poem she is given a witty and wry voice laced with Cree, a voice scripted in a phonetic rendition of oral Métis English. This transposition of colloquial Métis speech into a phonetic written form is akin to that performed in Maria Campbell’s well-received *Stories of the Road-Allowance People* (1995); it is a mobilization of what Campbell dubs “Village English” (Eigenbrod 149) and what Jeannette Armstrong calls “Rez English,” a contemporary, colloquial Indigenous usage valuable for its housing of “the sound and syntax patterns of the indigenous language of that area and subsequently the sounds that landscape speaks... [and] the view of reality embedded in the culture” (193). A distinctive rhythmic voice which begs to be read aloud, Châpan Mary’s is also one loaded with cultural nuance and meaning.

Scofield’s published endnotes to “Conversation my Châpan Mary might have had with Mrs. Sarah F. Wakefield” give us further insight into his appraisal of the two personages featured in the poem. He “likes to imagine” a scenario in which Wakefield has tea with his châpan, his “old granny politely sipping from a beautiful bone china cup” until, just as she finishes, “the floorboards holding up Mrs. Sarah,” who was, the poem will point out, a large woman, “come crashing down” beneath her (104). Ascribing the social manner and markers of British privilege to his great-grandmother, Scofield literally “fells” Wakefield here in a mode analogous to the verbal tear down she will receive in his poem. Here Wakefield’s characterization of herself in her text as one who charitably feeds the desperate Dakota women who visit her kitchen is unsettled and her self-aggrandizing position as a dignified benefactress crashes to the floor unceremoniously.

In the poem proper, Châpan Mary overtly challenges Wakefield on her claims to privation, on her honesty, and, indeed, on the relevance of her captivity experience at all. Wakefield was, Châpan Mary points out, fed, unharmed, and returned home—none of which could be said about the vast majority of the Dakota caught up in the war. Similarly, Châpan Mary jests about the triviality of the sexual rivalry between Wakefield and another white captive, Miss De Camp, and claims a total lack of interest in the status of their “virtue” (15). This rendering trivial of the drive which may well have principally motivated the publication of *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* reminds us that other matters were not so trivial: underlying this glib dismissal of Wakefield’s “rufflin” of her feathers is the unspoken but critical historical consequence of how white female virtue circulated at this moment in Minnesota, and in many other colonial rape scares, as an effective sensationalist tool in a propaganda campaign leading to the death of countless Aboriginal people. This colonial violence is again intimated when Châpan Mary, figured as a clever creative force as well as the repository of morality and judgment, states

you shtupid ole biddy
I mate you a fiddle dune
galled dah “Mish Mahkesîs [fox]
in dah Chicken Coop Jig” (13)

The animal metaphor serves both to chastise Wakefield for exaggerating her afflictions and to gesture to the operative colonial balance of power. In an inversion of Rowlandson’s figuration of the Puritans as “a company of Sheep torn by Wolves” (70), Châpan Mary insists that the white woman is, ultimately, predator rather than prey. These moves combine to launch a stinging critique of the self-serving ethics of the colonialist captivity narrative’s peddling of relatively minor invader-settler hardships as

dire calamities demanding significant attention and retribution, especially when juxtaposed with the attendant genocidal treatment of North America's Aboriginal peoples.

Notwithstanding the chilling violence of the implicit historical backdrop, the tone that predominates in Scofield's poem is one of vitality and mirth espoused by a Métis voice that radiates intelligence, autonomy, and resilience. There is no doubt that Wakefield's attempt to defend Chaska and her Dakota acquaintances was, as Namias argues, remarkable and laudable in its time; however, Scofield's poetic dismissal of Wakefield's text as racist and thoughtlessly privileged alerts us to the complexities involved in reclassifying such inherently messy or multifaceted records of cross-cultural colonial interaction as "alternative" (Namias "Editor's" 24) or ethical in any single or simple way.

Less overt than the direct criticisms launched in verse by Alexie, Erdrich and Scofield at specified colonialist captivity texts, are the revisions of the genre enacted in recent novels by Leslie Marmon Silko and Lois Beardslee. In *Going Native*, Shari Huhndorf presents a convincing analysis of Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999) as a refiguration of the conventions of the classic colonialist captivity narrative for anti-colonial ends.⁴³ In drawing parallels between a number of locations of confinement—from the Native residential school, to the small Matinnecock reservation, to the former slave market, to the cages of circus animals—Silko underlines the common colonizing

⁴³ William Clay Kinchen Smith also offers an analysis of how Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), *Storyteller* (1981), and *Almanac of the Dead* (1992) radically "revise" the norms of the colonialist classic captivity paradigm (30, 337-39).

function and connection of each to the other, refusing the overly narrow confines of the hegemonic colonial conception of captivity. The journey of the novel's protagonist, Indigo, a captured young Native woman representative (as her name suggests) of a larger Indigenous population, from the American west across the continent to the eastern seaboard and across the Atlantic to Europe's ancient heritage sites, is in some ways a travel back in time, a retracing of the path of colonial conquest. This reversal works, as Huhndorf explains, to "rewrite—even undo—these conventional colonial [captivity] narratives" (191). As does Silko's inversion of the conventional captivity tale's conclusion: here it is Indigo's people who are rejuvenated by the cross-cultural knowledge and seeds she has obtained in captivity, by the titular garden she plants in the dunes to generate a flourishing, rather than a vanishing, nation. Refusing static colonialist binaries, Silko posits the achievement of Indigenous prosperity through a syncretistic amalgam of tradition and modernity and a hybridization of race—a precept manifest in Silko's own adaptive anti-colonial utilization of a conventionally colonialist genre (197).

Another novel which uses, updates and upsets many conventions of the classic nineteenth-century captivity narrative is Lois Beardslee's *Rachel's Children: Stories from a Contemporary Native American Woman* (2004). This novel's pseudo captive is an ill-informed white researcher living "amongst the Indians" of modern day Michigan in pursuit of traditional trickster tales to publish as her own. While many colonialist captives penned sensationalized accounts for profit, it is Beardslee's 'captor,' the novel's eponymous Ojibwe educator and storyteller, who ultimately seizes control of the novel's

narrative, refusing appropriation and commodification of indigeniety and testifying instead to the complexity of contemporary anti-Native racism and to the persistent currency of trickster discourse. Dorothy Nason notes that in mimicking the form of the colonialist captivity narrative Beardslee reveals “the constructed nature and power dynamics of these narratives” and additionally proposes “the trickster narrative as the antidote to these disempowering ways of telling Native life stories” (154). Eschewing the role of docile informant or fictionalized villain, Beardslee’s ‘captor’ mounts an articulate critique of these ethnographic and literary roles from within an Ojibwe epistemology.

Both Beardslee and Silko incorporate clever reversals of the ‘typical’ colonialist captivity’s schematics into their recent novels. Other strategies effectively used in recent Indigenous works to rebut this outdated, but ever-self-renewing, genre include: substituting or supplementing interracial hatred with interracial intimacy; complicating colonial binaries; transferring authorial control and narrative voice to multi-faceted and compelling Indigenous characters; querying Christian typology and emphasizing Indigenous spirituality; modelling Indigenous conceptions of non-linear chronology and narration; drawing parallels to show the relatively minor scale of colonialist captivity; and utilizing the “humour of genocide” to disarmingly convey alarming material. Thus have a collection of talented Native writers adopted Alexie’s implied imperative to use “imagination as a weapon against capture”; they have penetrated the “ideological containment” of Indigeniety accomplished by the rhetorical mechanisms of texts like Rowlandson’s (Huhndorf, *Going* 176), deftly and drastically reconfiguring how colonial captivity can be considered and conceived.

◇ ‘Alternative’ Indigenous Narrations of Capture

In addition to such direct assaults on the colonialist captivity genre stands the powerful indirect challenge mounted by the sizable body of Indigenous-authored work which testifies to a plethora of alternative experiences and narrations of capture in colonial North America. I want to stress that these Indigenous experiences of capture are *alternative* only in reference to the normative genre; they are, as the statistics on the genocide of the continent’s Aboriginal population demonstrate, in fact much more the historical norm than what the genre ascribes as such. As we have seen, it is not uncommon for texts even within the genre’s canon to disrupt various of its conventions—Jewitt’s insistence on white culpability or Skinner’s assertion of urban life as confinement come to mind—but the challenge to the genre’s tenets made by narratives of Indigenous captivity is of a much greater magnitude in featuring Native captives and heroes, in drawing upon distinct Indigenous epistemologies, and in utilizing a range of media, formal techniques, and content exponentially more varied than that of the colonialist captivity text. The very existence of this extensive body of Indigenous texts (not to mention their oral antecedents) invalidates the implicit claim of the colonialist genre to be historically representative or accurate. The next pages will showcase a handful of these Indigenous texts, chosen for their diversity of form and mode of capture; analysis of a number of others follows in subsequent chapters.

A refreshing antidote to the colonialist genre’s trade in passive femininity and racial superiority is found in Harold Eustache’s *Shuswap Journey* (2004)—where the

cultural rejuvenation accomplished through the narration of capture occurs without deriding the nature or nation of the captor; absent here is the predominant western dynamic (starkly enacted in many a colonialist captivity) of constituting the self by abjecting the other. The English transcription of a factual story long preserved in the oral archive of Eustache's Secwepemc (Shuswap) family, *Shuswap Journey* tells of a young Secwepemc woman, Specqmic, who was abducted in the early nineteenth-century, from her community just north of modern-day Kamloops by the Sekewemc, or "far away people," and carried many miles through the Rocky Mountains to their homeland in the prairie foothills. She and her compatriots were seized with an eye to diversifying the bloodlines of "the enemy from over the mountains" (75)—both the Secwepemc and the Sekewemc historically raided each other's nations for women and children to integrate genetically into their nation by adoption or enslavement, and Eustache's text elucidates this "reciprocal" practice in a manner which contextualizes such abductions as painful but necessary steps for the sustenance of both nations rather than as mere acts of "savage" cruelty.

The essence of *Shuswap Journey* concerns cultural continuity. This is true at a basic level in that it narrates Specqmic's lucky escape from the Sekewemc camp (with the aid of two elder women who had been abducted long before from her Shuswap community) and her awesome solo trek back through the mountains in winter to return to her people. It is also true at more profound levels in that the text serves as a vehicle to transmit and perpetuate a Secwepemc epistemology. Not only does *Shuswap Journey* underscore the importance of preserving culture through story and oral teaching—a role

modelled in the novel by Specqmic's wise instructor, Old Auntie, many of whose lessons readers are party to—it performs this role itself by carefully introducing the reader to Secwepemc lifeways, spiritual beliefs, and right relations to kin, nature, and the Creator, Tek'eltkupi. Eustache even interrupts the plot with a number of ethnographic panels detailing culturally significant skills and customs. He also uses the novel as a platform for instruction in the Secwepemc language: it is generously laced with Secwepemc terms, includes a glossary and pronunciation key, and is dedicated “to my Secwepemc language, the heart and soul of our culture” (5). In these ways the novel is a vibrant Secwepemc entity—one that performs a procedure central to tribal cultural survival: transposing knowledge from the ancestral to the modern and shuttling this information between the individual and the collective. It thus carries out a tribal “aesthetic imperative” which stipulates “that new experiences be woven into existing traditions in order for personal experience to be transmuted into communal experience” (Allen 7).

In her recent study of Secwepemc discourse, anthropologist Andie Diane Palmer observes that as groups of Secwepemc travel across their land it is customary for anyone familiar with the territory to tell his or her narratives of personal experience with a key site as that site is passed. Here geographical features function as what I might call an *index*, linking particular locales with the “strings of anecdotes” which have occurred there over the generations. Winona Stevenson has likewise observed that for the Cree, “The land is mnemonic, it has its own set of memories and when the old people go out on the land it nudges or reminds them” (248). Traveling together and sharing their “personal maps of the landscape traveled... acquaint[s] those present who are less familiar with that

part of the territory with the resources to be found there” and facilitates the crucial process whereby “personal and ancestral knowledge of the land is pooled” which results in a “shared cognitive map of the area, where personal experience becomes group experience” (Palmer 116). The scope of such knowledge obtained by travelling the land has been somewhat compromised by (neo-)colonial influences (such as Secwepemc incarceration in residential schools or prohibition from lands now claimed by settler-invaders); as Palmer puts it, “Secwepemc lived space, and so their narrative space, continues to be compressed” (164). Eustache’s *Shuswap Journey* resists such a “compression” by staging a literary version of the traditional shared traversal of Secwepemc territory. That is, in tracing in detail Specqmic’s journey, in cataloguing the events, behaviours, flora, and fauna associated with each place she visits, the text passes on to the reader her personal experiences of place, her interpretation of them by way of ancestral knowledge, and her accrued wisdom. Hence, the novel’s narrated journey, like those historically taken by its characters and their ancestors and descendents, creates a shared cognitive map or a collective cultural knowledge.

As a captivity narrative, *Shuswap Journey* is notable for the self-sufficiency and strength demonstrated by its protagonist. Availing herself of the teachings of Old Auntie, the animals around her, the Creator, and her own dreams and inner being, Specqmic proves resourceful and wise. Hers is a story of triumph over both the enemy and the elements but neither of these adversaries is disparaged. Rather, she has a deep connection to the land and an understanding that her captors are “still human beings” whose behaviour is foreign but not inferior (86). Eustache’s rendering his female captive

heroic and her enemy human are traits common to a number of other written accounts of inter-tribal Indigenous captivity. See for instance the panther-like stealth and ingenuity of the young Dakota woman, Tusee, who bravely rescues her lover from his captors in Zitkala-Ša's short story "A Warrior's Daughter" (1921). Like Specqmic, Tusee is "triumphant" (153).

As is Green Blanket Feet, the Okanogan heroine who orchestrates her own escape from her Blackfoot captors in Humishuma's novel *Cogewea: The Half Blood* (1927). Green Blanket Feet's capture is a double one: first, she is snared by the false love of a white soldier at the local fort, with whom she has two children before he abducts all three of them, and second, as she and her baby escape from him, they are captured and enslaved by a band of Blackfoot. Her tale is one of triumph in relation to the Blackfoot and of victimization in relation to the deceptive Shoyahpee or white man. Her double captivity tale is carefully positioned within the novel to serve as a cautionary tale: it is presented as precious oral knowledge conveyed to Cogewea by her loving Stemteemä (grandmother) in order to warn the young woman of the danger of her attraction to the novel's white villain. Here the pedagogical utility of the captivity narrative, as a mode of transposing personal experience to collective knowledge and then to individual wisdom, is explicitly illustrated; as Paula Gunn Allen has noted, the way in which Stemteemä tells the story to Cogewea "points to traditional ways of using narrative to admonish, illuminate, and maintain personal identity within the traditions of the people" (117).

The story is also instructive of how colonization effected a change in traditional Indigenous tales of captivity, of how white colonial villains came to occupy the role of

abductor of Indigenous women or children once occupied in many tribal legends by evil supernatural beings. Allen traces this transference of roles in her brilliant pairing of the story of Green Blanket Feet with the traditional Okanogan tale “Coyote Kills Owl-Woman”—one of the Okanogan legends Humishuma collected and published in 1933, and one which she used as the basis for her novel *Cogewea*. A much feared being, Owl-Woman or Sné-nah, is famed for abducting and eating children; in this tale she uses lies to trick and then eat the heart of a little girl named Chipmunk or Cogewea who lives with her grandmother. The obvious parallels between legend and novel are underlined in the opening paragraphs of the latter which identify Cogewea’s name as the Okanogan term for chipmunk and note her imprudent disregard of her grandmother’s warning that her wanderings far from home will lead to her capture by Sné-nah (16). And it is far from the safety of their maternal homes that both Green Blanket Feet and Cogewea are entrapped by the modern-day Sné-nah, the white men who will, figuratively speaking, cut out and eat their hearts. This is an excellent example of the traditional tribal conceptions of capture stretching to accommodate the myriad confinements which constituted colonial conquest.

The way in which aspects of traditional tribal tales of abduction are incorporated into more recent chronicles of colonial capture remains a rich seam of confluence to be analytically mined; it is a project begun in both Allen’s tracing of Owl-Woman’s tracks in *Cogewea* and in her own rewriting of a traditional Cochiti and Laguna Pueblo legend, “Whirlwind Man Steals Yellow Woman” (1983). The celebrated set of Yellow Women stories tells of the abduction of this sacred woman or Irriaku or archetype by a malevolent

supernatural being or Kachina. Silko too, in her short story “Yellow Woman” (1981), reconsiders this archetypal captive from a contemporary feminist perspective; her modern Pueblo protagonist provocatively wonders if her own seduction cum abduction by a mysterious man from the mountains is in fact a new Yellow Woman story: Did the Yellow Women in the ancient stories know they were Yellow Women at the time? Can she, a twentieth-century woman surrounded by “highways and pickup trucks that Yellow Woman never saw” (191), be a Yellow Woman? Yes, the narrative seems to answer. Her abductor notes softly that “someday they will talk about us, and they will say, ‘Those two lived long ago when things like that happened.’” (192) Capture, in both supernatural and colonial forms, then, retains its relevance for the contemporary Indigenous woman and author and its record in traditional forms continues to offer much meaning and guidance.

A constant lesson in these ancient and modern tales of capture is the “survival value of alertness, awareness, and connection to others” (Allen 117)—a wisdom obtained by those who listen and adhere to the teachings of these stories. As Eustache’s judicious elder women explain, “your survival will depend upon how much of what you were taught you can remember” (116). These pedagogically oriented captivity texts, by Eustache, Zitkala-Ša, Humishuma, Allen, and Silko, proffer models of heroic and triumphant women and of cultural continuance. Their lessons stand in sharp contrast to those of the colonialist captivity genre which depend upon the demonization of the captor-other in order to reify the captive-self; which traffic in idealized feminine

vulnerability and subservience; which function, in the main, as instruments of fear rather than empowerment, as testaments to victimization rather than triumph.⁴⁴

Paula Gunn Allen has observed that for Indigenous Americans, “the whole issue of enslavement is part of the issue of conquest and colonization. In that context, it becomes a theme that shows up frequently in Native writers’ stories about jail, boarding school, war, and abduction.” (7) It is these captivities generated through (neo-)colonial contact which primarily concern me in this project: upcoming chapters will study these stories of jail and internment, residential school, and war. Many of these “captivity narratives” are easily identified as such given that interracial abduction forms their principal subject; this is not the case for the handful of texts I will touch on now, where the treatment of captivity is abstracted, oblique, secondary, or non-narrative, but nevertheless useful in presenting powerful lessons on how colonialism systematically seized individual Indigenous bodies in its attempt to capture their body politic. This set of texts stands at the periphery or marks the limits of my definition of the captivity narrative; they were chosen to demonstrate the diversity of media and approach being utilized by contemporary Aboriginal artists to chronicle such experiences of colonial capture.

Take, for instance, Thomas King’s “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens” (2005), a short trickster tale with a perhaps unexpected subject—that of Canada’s internment of

⁴⁴ Smith notes that tribal “Accounts of strong, resourceful captive women who rescue themselves... abound” and cites those in *Cogewea* and “A Warrior’s Daughter” as well as a lengthy list of other examples (125). Also useful is his observation of the pedagogical function of many traditional tribal captivity tales; he mentions in particular Charles Eastman’s didactic rendition of “Turtle’s War Party” in his *Wigwam Evenings* (1909), a widely taught story complex among the Lakota, Omaha, Seneca, Arapaho, and Iroquois (75-6).

Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War—told in King’s trademark interfusional style⁴⁵ which brings the dialogic qualities of Indigenous oral delivery vividly to the page. I cite it here for its subtle yoking of this internment to that of the First Nations through the reservation system: it is an oblique, but nevertheless effective, narrative of Native captivity. This roundabout mode of addressing Indigenous confinement parallels what I see as King’s strategic use of a number of other literary devices which jointly function to persuade the reader of the credibility of the story’s interpretation of these contested histories: the narrator’s direct first-person address of the reader immediately intimates that a relation, even perhaps an ethical obligation or contract, obtains between this teller and “you,” the listener (as what Louis Owens terms “coparticipants” in the telling of the story (qtd in Eigenbrod 157)); this relationship is coded as one of friendship through its implied familiarity, its use of humour, and the story’s emphasis on the narrator’s hospitality; the story also uses irony to empower the reader, giving her a sense that she is in the know, that she is being treated to an amusing story rather than a hectoring or belittling lecture. All of these devices work to relax the defenses habitually thrown up by those implicated in these histories of colonial violence, making this narrative space a welcome one for the (re)consideration of these often disavowed aspects of what King’s text insists is a “Canadian story” (58). Of this text, King has remarked that “the treatment the Canadian government afforded Japanese people during the Second World War is strikingly similar to the treatment the Canadian government has always afforded Native people, and whenever I hear these stories, a

⁴⁵ King coined the term “interfusional,” as well as those of “tribal,” “associational,” and “polemical,” to describe Aboriginal literature in his well known article “Godzilla Vs. Post-Colonial”.

strange thing happens. I think of the other.” For, as he goes on to explain, “hatred and greed produce much the same sort of results, no matter who we practice on” (“Contributor’s” 158). Like Silko, King draws lines of allegiance between groups which have similarly experienced the sting of white supremacy and (neo-)colonialist capture. His tale builds political solidarity, and perhaps what we might call literary solidarity too by way of its intertextual nod to the seminal work of Joy Kogawa, in its figure of the confiscated talking Kogawa Seafood truck which refuses to accept its status as an “Enemy Alien” (54). King’s story not only draws attention to the Japanese-Canadian internment, it also conjoins it to the history of First Nations reserves in a way that jostles and shifts mainstream conceptions of the latter as a benevolent and protective rather than inhumane form of containment.

As in King’s “Coyote and the Enemy Aliens,” the reference to Indigenous captivity is oblique but potent in Michael Dorris’s *Morning Girl* (1992). Designed for young adult readers, this acclaimed novella evocatively describes the comfortable familial life of a Taino (Arawak) brother and sister growing up in the Caribbean prior to colonial contact. It is only in the novella’s final pages that the eponymous protagonist, out for a characteristic early morning swim, observes the landing ashore of a group of foreign men and greets them with warm hospitality, and it is only in the epilogue—comprised of excerpts from Columbus’s journal on his arrival at Hispaniola—that readers come to realize that this is a tale of initial Columbian contact. The journal excerpts outline Columbus’s plans to capture and enslave a number of those people who have welcomed him ashore; most readers, being at least partially aware of the genocide

Columbus wreaked in this region, and having been privy through the text to an intimate Taino family circle, sympathetically drawn by Dorris, experience significant sadness at this revelation. In this text Dorris effectively shifts narrative attention from the typically climactic moment of colonial contact (featured in colonialist accounts the world round) to the life of the Taino before this encounter. This relatively novel strategy encourages the reader to bond maximally with the principal characters without the foreclosure that can hamper such identifications once one knows of their doomed fate; it allows Dorris to escape from the clichés of contact scripts; it focuses attention on Indigenous rather than white protagonists; and it ultimately serves to render all the more poignant the unspoken but inescapable future captivity and extermination awaiting the Taino. *Morning Girl* is thus what I might dub a *pre-captivity narrative*: a text in which the anticipated captivity of its protagonists is indicated and pivotal but not experienced or explicated.⁴⁶

A different—otherworldly—approach to Indigenous capture under colonialism is taken in Gerry William's *The Black Ship: Book One of Enid Blue Starbreaks* (1994), a pioneering First Nations science fiction novel which transposes abstracted Indigenous experiences of conquest, captivity, and cross-racial adoption into an inter-planetary sci-fi setting which owes much to *Star Trek*. William adapts a classic dramatic plotline: the orphaned and extra-nationally adopted hero who fights against his kin without full knowledge of their identity. Our heroine in this case is Enid, a Repletian who saw her parents captured and burnt alive by the imperial Anphorians, was subsequently adopted

⁴⁶ See Jane Yolen's *Encounter*, another young adult novel published in the same year as Dorris' *Morning Girl*, for a full-fledged captivity narrative of the Taino under Columbus. Smith's dissertation also discusses each (389-90).

by an Anphorian family, and has risen through their military ranks to command a ship on a mission to confront the Repletians, who are led by an elder intimated to be her uncle (a mystery the subsequent, as yet unpublished, books in the trilogy will presumably resolve). As the text unfolds, William ascribes to the Repletians a number of Indigenous practices and epistemes which cue the reader to their (analogous) Indigenous status. The emotional core of this space odyssey is Enid's continuous struggle to adapt to the Anphorian culture, remember her ancestral past, and somehow reconcile the two; in other words, it is a chronicle of the plight of the Indigenous captive adopted into a hostile imperial society, a plight experienced by thousands of First Nations children "scooped up" or forcibly adopted into white Canadian homes during the mid- to late- twentieth century. William's choice to relocate this common First Nations experience to a futuristic space-age setting allows him to emphasize the aspects of this history he considers most salient, severing them from their familiar historical context and the interpretive prejudices associated with these framings. This abstraction of action from historical context arguably facilitates fresh considerations of the injustices inherent in these colonial captures, both by moving away from established interpretive biases and by capitalizing on the popular appeal of science fiction to teach Indigenous history to a wide audience.

The final "captivity narratives" I will mention here are paintings selected from the prodigious corpus of the Western Australian Badimaya/Noongar artist Julie Dowling; to interpret her images as "narratives" is more credible when one considers their textual component: she typically pens a few paragraphs of context or story to accompany each of

her paintings on exhibition. Her oeuvre is bursting with representations of forms of Aboriginal captivity (I will turn to her striking series which visually *rematriates* or liberates archival images of anonymous Aboriginal women in this project's final chapter). For the moment, I want to introduce three of her works as a gesture to the ways in which contemporary Aboriginal visual artists in invader-settler nations are, not unlike their literary peers, creating arresting and provocative records of colonialism's capture of Indigenous bodies. Dowling's familiarity with one of the staple, stereotypical, elements of the colonialist captivity narrative is evident in "The Gauntlet," a portrait she painted in 2004 from a family snapshot of her grandparents shopping in downtown Perth—an act which for them, as a mixed race couple in 1953, was akin, as Dowling puts it, to "running the gauntlet within your enemy's camp" (Figure 1.2). Here the physical blows traditionally reigned on captives as they struggled through the gauntlet are replaced by "the gaze of mainly white people" and the constricting disciplinary power this gaze connotes. Writing of this image, Dowling further explains that it was shortly after this time that her grandparents escaped from (their captivity in) Perth to a rural family property where they were free from racial curfews and the scrutiny of native welfare officers ("Warridah" 3). The painting's title and dramatic depiction of her family encircled and confined by hundreds of coldly staring eyes effectively mine the meaning of the gauntlet as an instrument wielded by captors against their captives as a means to inflict pain, demonstrate racial superiority, and/or initiate processes of racial assimilation—all of which Dowling's painting and commentary suggest apply to

twentieth-century practices exploited by invader-settler nation-states in their attempts to confine, demoralize, and ultimately integrate Aboriginal nations.

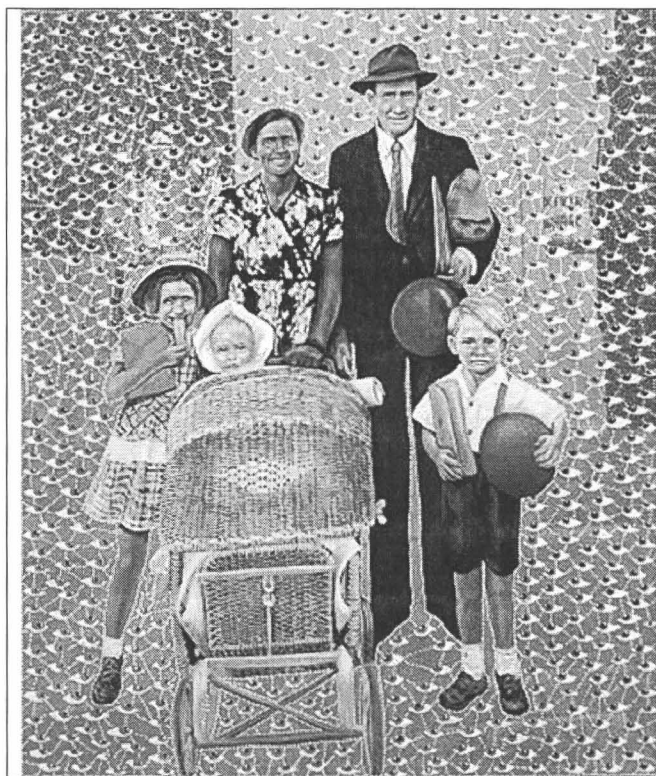


Figure 1.2:
Julie Dowling, “The Gauntlet,” 2004.
Acrylic, red ochre, and plastic on
canvas. (120 x 100cm). Artplace
Perth.

Numerous generations of Dowling’s Badimaya/Noongar family have been subject to one form of colonial capture or another. See for example “Uncle Freedom” (2000) which documents the capture by Australian colonial forces of Aboriginal “freedom fighters,” including her great-great-grandmother’s brothers, during the second half of the nineteenth century; Dowling explains that many of these men were enchained, starved, and buried in unmarked graves at Rottnest Island, where, in an “act of ignorance and insensitivity,” a “convention centre has [recently] been constructed on the[ir] bones” (Figure 1.3). “Uncle Freedom” works to fulfill Dowling’s written intention to testify to “the injustice we feel as Yamatji” through its strategic title, which forces a consideration

of who is free and who ought to be, and through its blunt mobilization of the iconography of incarceration (qtd in Clark); its chains occupy both a physical and a conceptual foreground: their visual “inescapability” for the viewer serving as an artistic analogue to, or echo of, their historical physical function .

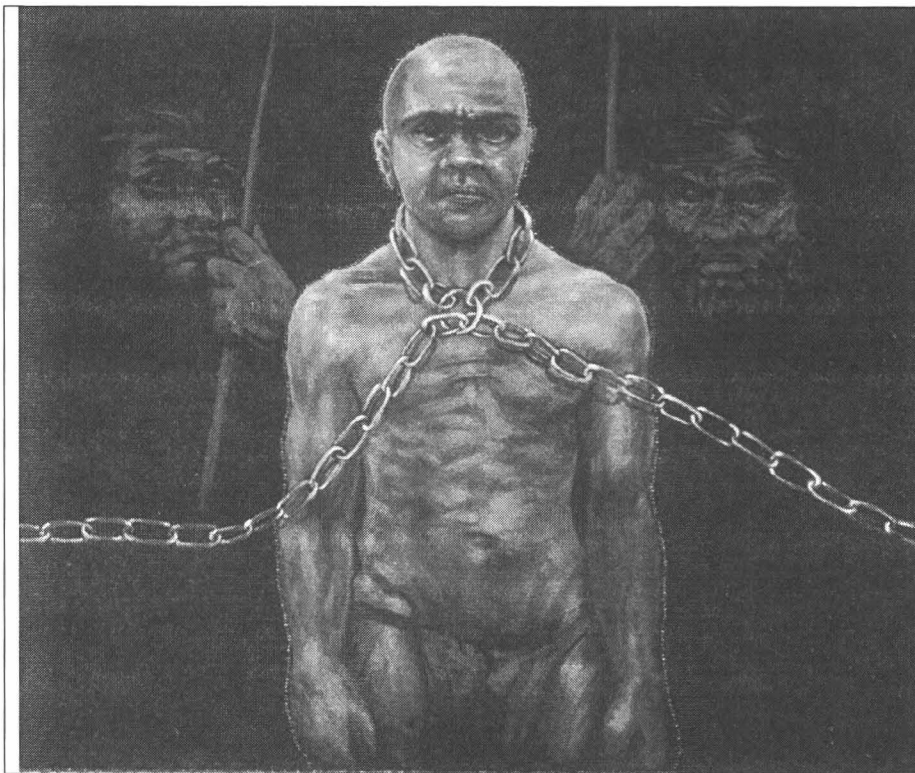


Figure 1.3:
Julie Dowling,
“Uncle Freedom,”
2000. Acrylic, oil
and ochre on
canvas. (100 x
120cm). Art Gallery
of Western
Australia.

A second, particularly poignant, example of Dowling’s family’s experiences of capture is documented in her 1999 portrait of her great-great grandmother, Melbin, who was forcibly removed from her community in the late nineteenth century and displayed as a curiosity at a number of public houses and fairgrounds in Britain and subsequently in Perth (Hoorn, “Melbin” 201). Dowling’s account of her ancestor, given to her by her grandmother, bears repeating:

Your great-great-grandmother was stolen after a battle between her older brothers and father and some colonial troopers, many in her family tribe were poisoned and massacred afterwards. The man who stole her, Edward Oliver, was your great-great-grandfather... When Edward took her, he couldn't speak her language, so he kept her as his servant. Finding out that he could procure money from Queen Victoria for marrying her, he waited until she was sixteen and then changed her name into 'Melbin', naming her after his favorite town. With the money and land from the Queen he half built a farm. Finding that he didn't have enough money for this, he set sail with Melbin for England as a sideshow exhibit. Melbin was on show in men's clubs, carnivals and sideshows across England and Wales until she became budjarri [pregnant] with their child, your great-grandmother, Mary. Fearing that he would have to give the Crown's money back to the Govourner [*sic*] if Melbin died in childbirth, he set sail for Western Australia again. (qtd in Hoorn, "Melbin" 208)



Figure 1.4:
Julie Dowling, "Melbin," 1999.
Artplace Perth.

A sense of this history of coercion and spectacle is present in Dowling's "Melbin" in the tag around the sitter's wrist: it bears her name, labels her as if she is a specimen,

and points to her experience of extreme objectification (Figure 1.4). Similarly, the manacles and ocean sailing ships which fill the halo around her head indicate her abduction overseas, disrupt the hegemonic Australian association of these symbols with the export of British convicts, and underscore the importance of another form of (Aboriginal) Australian incarceration.⁴⁷ For those with an Atlantic context, the ships and manacles also vividly recall the African slave trade. Additionally, by referencing the Italian renaissance painterly practice of including in the halo or orbit of a martyr the instruments by which his martyrdom was achieved Dowling imbues Melbin with a saintly reverence and further condemns those colonialists who made her suffer.⁴⁸

I interpret the faces “behind” Melbin to be those of her “past” community bearing witness to her tragic kidnapping. Their familiar gaze serves to revise the hostile outsider one experienced by Dowling’s family in “The Gauntlet” and by Melbin historically as an exhibit. Perhaps their presence also identifies them as being among the innumerable others who have been captured by such practices. At the least, their depiction suggests a communal alternative to the western portrait’s habitual focus on an individual (York). The painting endows Melbin with qualities of strength and dignity: her unflinching gaze and erect posture suggest resolve; the halo confers to her a blessed status; her elegant dress, beautiful and finely rendered face, and full frontal treatment indicate the artist’s reverence for her subject. This humane painterly treatment functions as a deliberate and marked contrast with the inhumanity of Melbin’s exhibition. Dowling’s “Melbin” thus

⁴⁷ While I am interested here in distinguishing British-Australian convicts from captured Aborigines, Jason Haslam and Julia Wright have productively linked their analogously abjected states as evidence of a wider “reliance of the imperial project on captive bodies” (8).

⁴⁸ One celebrated example of this Italian practice is Fra Angelico’s “Mocking of Christ”; I am indebted to Lorraine York for this insight.

not only testifies to a historical practice little-discussed in mainstream Australia⁴⁹ but also takes steps to restore a portion of the dignity stripped from Melbin by her ‘husband’ and to assuage the pain of the coercive capture that lies within Dowling’s family tree. In her assessment of “Melbin,” Jeannette Hoorn argues that this portrait (and its attendant story) constitutes a “reverse captivity narrative” and that the colonialist captivity genre ought to expand in order to include accounts of “the fate of black as well as white captives” (201). Certainly, I would concur that the painting and its commentary function as the type of captivity narrative that the colonialist genre has problematically excluded, though I would lobby not for its “inclusion” within the existent schema of classification so much as for a serious overhaul of the genre as such.

◇ Critical Retooling: The Contact Captivity Genre

The recollections and renditions of Aboriginal capture and colonial conquest offered in Dowling’s paintings, William’s science fiction, Dorris’s novella, and King’s coyote tale, as well as those in a host of other works (a number of which will be discussed in forthcoming pages), are personalized and particular, featuring Indigenous characters and ancestors that “are not ‘stick figures,’ nameless and unreal, but the living subjects of their own histories.” In this way these stories fulfill Bonita Lawrence’s call for “a new discourse, which will tell a fuller history” (45-6) and avoid the pitfall wherein the sheer magnitude of impersonalized death statistics overwhelms and desensitizes the writer and reader. These narrative texts effectively suggest the scope and character of colonialism’s

⁴⁹ For more on the long-buried history of the abduction and international display of Aboriginal Australians see Rosalind Poignant’s *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle* (2004).

genocidal attacks on Aboriginal nations without losing sight of the “treasure of a single life”; this cherishing of the value of each and every being is David Stannard’s prescription for how to avoid “becoming emotionally anesthetized by the sheer force of such overwhelming human evil and destruction” (xi). These Indigenous captivity narratives also attest to the function of capture, in its various modes, as a crucial instrument in this colonial project of genocide; they work in parallel with a body of recent ethnohistorical scholarship to demonstrate “the extent to which Europeans used captivity as a strategy of colonial domination” (Strong, *Captive* 7).

Notwithstanding the brutality of colonial captivity as conquest, these tales of Indigenous capture, it must be stressed, are far from serving as one-dimensional narratives of victimization; the act of testifying to capture—the creative or enunciative act in itself as well as its content—houses much emancipatory potential. Or, as the Crow Elder Pretty Shield suggested a century ago, the one who tells the stories rules the world (Allen 27). A sculptural installation by Edward Poitras, “Internal Recall,” speaks to this dynamic (Figure 1.5). The work’s seven life-size Indigenous bodies (in mixed media) and their prominent rope bindings immediately signify the oppressive weight of captivity; the inscription of “His X Mark” on the wall beside them suggests the coercive practice of composing treaties in European languages with those unable to read them and points to the colonial nature of this capture. What initially appears as a tableau of victimization, however, proves otherwise, or more, upon closer inspection. The ropes which bind the captives’ hands are not, it turns out, attached to the ceiling, but dangle freely from it, subtly conveying the piece’s principal insight: that the ‘victims’ here may well have the

ability to liberate themselves from a captivity that is, at least in part at this point in time, an internal one. The subtle depiction of this potential for emancipation, in contrast to the obvious treatment of confinement, allows Poitras to underline its importance without trivializing the magnitude of either the original physical colonial violence or its contemporary internalization. “Internal Recall” reminds us that colonialism’s use of captivity against the Indigenous world, while prevalent and effective, was and is not total; both the creation of the installation and its understated libratory credo support Alexie’s claim that in imagination lies a potent Indigenous defence against captivity.

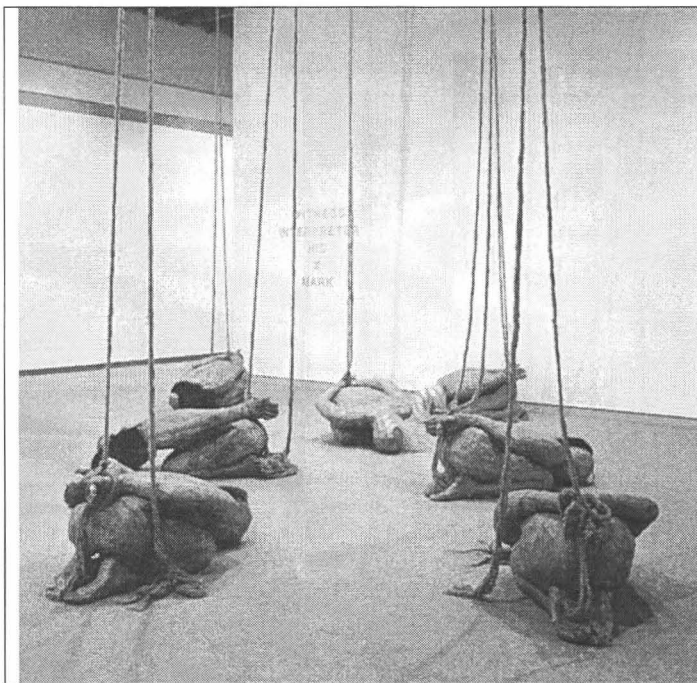


Figure 1.5:
Edward Poitras, “Internal Recall,”
1986. Mixed media installation (linen,
glue, cut aluminium, rope, horsehair,
wire). Woodland Cultural Centre,
Brantford.

More generally, Jason Haslam and Julia Wright argue that: “The writing subject raises the possibility of the imaginative and discursive transcendence of confinement, belying the aims of captivity to control all aspects of the captive’s subjectivity” (13).

Specifically analyzing Indigenous women's accounts of captivity and colonial conquest,

Paula Gunn Allen makes a similar observation:

These stories of women at war are about the metaphysics of defeat. They are about being conquered, about losing the right and authority to control personal and community life. No holocaust in the millennium has been more destructive... We are indeed Raven's captives in this historical period. But we are aware that, metaphysically speaking, there are greater, subtler victories than those of politics or economics. There are transformations occasioned by the endurance of communality, of aesthetics, of vision, and of truth. These stories belong as much to the literature of transcendence as to the annals of conquest... (21)

Allen's is an astute assessment of the way in which many Indigenous captivity narratives, and indeed much recent polemical or anti-colonial Aboriginal writing, simultaneously traces defeat or disempowerment and espouses and embodies spiritual transcendence or cultural persistence.

If Indigenous narratives of captivity often serve that communal function described by Daniel Heath Justice as "a meaningful complement to the healing process of decolonization and Indigenous empowerment," many colonialist captivity narratives have performed an opposite function he identifies as the use of the written word as a "powerful witchery... to destroy and dehumanize by corrupting the very nature of reality through lies, fear and hatred" (5). Many are the costs of this type of discursive "witchery": the popular slander of the Indigene captor has, to name only two broad consequences, (i) facilitated the physical process of Indigenous dispossession as the "traffic in narratives of white-red contact legitimated material (while inscribing ideological) tactics of displacement" (Simpson xv), and (ii) glutted the hegemonic American imaginary with a series of negative types which have made it all the harder for Indigenous people to

develop an empowered sense of racial identity, for, as Gail Valaskakis notes, “we actually construct who we are through a process that involves our individual identification with the cultural images and narratives that dominate our ways of seeing and representing the world” (3). How then might we, as scholars, best address or counter the witchery or racial hatred found at the core of many colonialist captivity narratives?

One possibility, which I’ve pursued in this chapter, is to juxtapose a body of (fictional and factual) Indigenous captivity accounts with their canonized colonialist counterparts in order to query the latter’s racially-exclusive basis and the historical inaccuracy accrued through its mobilization of a stock set of literary devices (including specific and narrow framing, derisive and racist characterization, and melodramatic emotive pleas). This approach has, in effect if not in name, assembled constituents of what I will term the *contact captivity narrative genre*: a category for all accounts of interracial abduction and confinement in the colonial period regardless of the captive’s identity and of the form her or his account takes. The contact captivity narrative genre encompasses, as sub-genres, the *colonialist captivity genre* (that select group of invader-settler texts canonized in America as the “Indian captivity narrative”) and the larger genre of *Indigenous captivity narratives* (not yet recognized or canonized as such). My terminology here is indebted to Mary Louise Pratt’s well known theorization of the *contact zone* as “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). Pratt convincingly uses the term as a replacement for the

Eurocentric concept of the frontier and as a means to highlight the mutual, interactive and improvisatory dimensions of colonial encounters (7)—characteristics which we have seen apply to the convergent and untidy practices of captivity in colonial Australia and North America.

Do these diverse Indigenous and colonialist accounts have enough in common to constitute a genre and is it fruitful to interpret them as one? Given that a *genre* denotes a type or species of composition which employs a series of conventions that enable a reader to identify it as such, contact captivity tales can indeed be classified as a (broad) genre: one organized by subject matter (as are the pastoral and science fiction), rather than formal structure, length, intent, or effect. The contact captivity is not, however, an exclusive genre and its texts may simultaneously be as credibly classified as belonging to a number of other literary categories. Hence, although I agree with Gary Ebersole that colonialist “captivity tales have often been told in diverse genres of popular literature and film (the jeremiad, the conversion narrative, the sentimental novel, the male adventure tale, the sexual fantasy, the classic western)” and can thus be understood as a *topos* of captivity (273), the variety of form and intent which characterize the contact captivity corpus is far from such a stock orthodoxy.

Bearing in mind that classification itself can troublingly be what Anna Marie Sewell calls “a reservation of ideas” (20) or Marie Battiste identifies as a “cognitive prison” (xvii), that is an ideological and intellectual confinement, and that neo-European scholars have for many generations tended to problematically impose western theories onto Aboriginal literature in what several critics, including Kimberly Blaeser, recognize

as “a new act of colonization and conquest” (53), it is particularly important to acknowledge that what I gather together here under the rubric of Indigenous narratives of capture are multiply located texts which perform numerous other functions, especially within their national (tribal) contexts. Although my project, and this proposed genre, centre on colonial contact, my aim is certainly not to “confine” these Indigenous accounts of captivity solely within this interpretive frame, especially when the need for tribally specific and culturally-based criticism of Indigenous literatures is so pressing, as Craig Womack, among others, has famously argued in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999). The two interpretative approaches are not necessarily exclusive, as the tribally-specific studies of Indigenous accounts of captivity by Paula Gunn Allen and Larissa Behrendt demonstrate.

Another caveat on the utility of the sub-genre of the Indigenous captivity narrative concerns what we might call the “direction” of critical interpretation; as aforementioned by Blaeser this entails ensuring that the path or “implied movement” of theorization does not merely mimic that of colonization, with “authority emanating from the mainstream critical center to the marginalized native texts” (54). This perspective informs my reluctance to merely “insert” or “include” Indigenous captivity narratives within the extant canon of colonialist captivity narratives—rather than significantly rework the basis of this problematic colonialist genre—and my reluctance to label them as the “reverse” or “inverse” of the canonized white texts—which serves to reinscribe the latter’s privileged status as historically and culturally normative. Hence, my aim for the contact captivity genre is that its interpretive movement be bi- or multi-directional, based on the dual

understanding that practices of capture in the colonial contact zone were both convergent (or multi-national) and predominantly involved Aboriginal captives. It is the experiences of these Indigenous captives, then, that claim the normative position in the contact captivity genre and that provide the genre's primary interpretive ground.

Outweighing these limitations or caveats about the nature of the contact captivity genre, in my estimation, are a number of reasons for its use. Among its interpretive yields are: its demonstration of the extent to which capture has functioned as an instrument of the colonial project and attendant Indigenous genocide; its exposure not only of the multitude of forms of confinement endured by Aboriginal communities under invasion-settlement, but also of what Annharte Baker calls her people's "mental mobility," their imaginative resilience, their intellectual and physical practices of travel and trade (qtd in Eigenbrod 31); its documentation of the vast variety of modes of captivity—ranging from incorporative to subordinating and transformative (Strong, "Transforming" 339) —which occurred in the colonial contact zone and continue to occur in our neo-colonial times; and its revelation of the scandalously narrow definitional boundaries mobilized to classify only a slim, racially-sorted cohort of these practices as suitable subjects for "the" Captivity Narrative Genre (that is the sub-genre I more specifically identify here as the colonialist captivity narrative). As I hope this chapter has suggested, this traditional definition of the captivity narrative genre is deeply problematic both in its historical inaccuracy (or non-representative nature) and in its basis in racist paradigms which essentially presuppose that only white suffering is worthy of attention, empathy, and redress. The racism inherent in this traditional generic classification has

implications well beyond what has traditionally been considered the domain of literature, for such cognitive separations and sortings arise from and foster what Allen identifies as a wider Western “abhorrence of mixing races, classes, or genders”; ultimately, “Intellectual apartheid of this nature helps create and maintain political apartheid” (2-3). Hence, my call for the termination of the colonialist genre’s monopoly on the literary terminology of captivity, my call for a genre based not on racial exclusion or supremacy or in invader-settler norms but on a historically proportionate accounting. One impetus for this conceptualization of the contact captivity schema is to redirect at least a portion of the sizeable sympathy which has, over many decades, been allotted the white victim or hero/ine of interracial captivity toward the more typical Aboriginal subject of this practice; another is to draw readerly attention, through the impressive array of Indigenous captivity narratives, to issues of Aboriginal sovereignty and the imperative to work to redress colonialism’s injustices.

The contact captivity genre is usefully probed along the analytical axis of im/mobility; to make use of Mark Simpson’s terms, it provides rich grounds from which to consider mobility as “a differential resource” and “a mode of social contest decisive in the manufacture of subjectivity and the determination of belonging.” Simpson urges us to attend to the *politics of mobility*, “the contestatory processes that produce different forms of movement, and that invest these forms with social value, cultural purchase, and discriminatory power” (xiii). This politics is particularly evident in the contact captivity corpus which documents a spectrum of im/mobilities from the outraged accounts of privileged neo-European interlopers accustomed to unimpeded movement to the

contemporary Indigenous chronicles of residential school by those from families who have endured generation upon generation of abduction and confinement at white hands. Indeed, the process of the struggle for North America since 1492 is one we can chart, with surprising accuracy, by following vectors of im/mobility, colonization having been, to a great extent, the capture of Turtle Island. As Renate Eigenbrod explains, “Against the background of the dialectic tension between ‘roots’ and ‘routes’ in Indigenous cultures, one may be able to understand the interpretation of colonization as both “imprisonment,” ending the freedom to move (change), physically, mentally, and in every other respect, and as *forced* migrations and changes” (122-23). Residential schools, Eigenbrod elaborates, “along with the ghettoized reserve system, the confining definitions of the Indian Act, and the racist preconceptions of Aboriginal people in the media of mainstream society, are just some examples of restrictions of physical, economic, political, intellectual, cultural, and artistic mobility through colonization” (xiv).

Utilizing the frame of the contact captivity also proves fruitful in terms of revealing the more and less obvious ways in which colonialist and Aboriginal im/mobilities are causally connected. In their recent study of incarcerated and enslaved bodies, *Captivating Subjects: Writing Confinement, Citizenship, and Nationhood in the Nineteenth Century*, Jason Haslam and Julia Wright examine “the modern nation state’s reliance on captivity as a means of consolidating notions of individual and national sovereignty—both of which meet in definitions of the ‘citizen’—as well as protecting economic and imperial interests” (4). Their appraisal can aptly be transposed to the

realm of interracial colonial capture, where it is arguably doubly demonstrated. In many instances, the colonial (or proto-national) community consolidated its identity (not to mention its freedom of mobility and its land base) not only through accounts of the redemption and reincorporation of exemplary white captives from Indigene captors but also through its coercion of the im/mobility of Aboriginal peoples. Upcoming chapters will draw on the contact captivity corpus to examine how colonialist captivity narratives have been mobilized, at critical moments of colonial conquest, to distract the mainstream populace from the plight of their Indigenous counterparts. Thus, the contact captivity narrative, a label more abstract and capacious than the two (or more) sub-genres it takes in, gathers together colonial and Indigenous phenomena that might (and have) otherwise be(en) considered separately, providing insight into their commonalities and connected causalities.

This reconceptualization of the conventional colonialist captivity genre gives rise to a number of pedagogical implications. Foremost among these is the imperative to reframe this canonized genre for students as the collated expression of a minority, invader-settler experience that stands as a small subset of a much greater body of work testifying to colonization as a conquest obtained, in significant measure, through the capture of Aboriginal bodies. Acknowledging this disturbing past and its present manifestations may fly in the face of cherished conceptions of Canada as a peaceable kingdom, but it is important, as Len Findlay reminds us, to counter the persistent academic trend to “reconceal, minimize, sanitize, or even justify colonial practices radically at variance with Canada’s professed sense of itself, domestically and

internationally” (“Always” 311).⁵⁰ Given the colonialist genre’s past monopolization of academic considerations of contact captivity, a redress of this imbalance seems in order through a teaching and anthologization of accounts of contact captivity in calculated *proportion* to their historical occurrence—representative representation if you will. The scarcity of printed Indigenous captivity narratives from the early colonial period (due to a host of factors including oral versus written cultures, language barriers, and myriad colonial depredations) presents an obstacle that can be overcome by supplementing early and original written documents both with orally-transmitted accounts and with contemporary Indigenous reflections on captivities from previous periods; I hold paramount the representation of Indigenous voices, even if this necessitates a turn to arguably anachronistic sources.

The conventional post-secondary instruction of colonialist narratives like Rowlandson’s, either within the context of the suspect “Indian” captivity genre or within a more general canon of early American literature, would be ameliorated by insisting upon nuanced and balanced historicization (which would perforce include Indigenous perspectives). Pauline Strong notes that the extent to which analyses of colonialist captivity narratives attend to the particular contexts of each text is the extent to which they avoid the pitfall of replicating their racist stereotypes and “reinscribing the selective tradition of captivity within new [interpretations] directed to new audiences”

(“Transforming” 340). Such historicization is necessary if we are to avoid compounding

⁵⁰ Michael Rogin’s “The Two Declarations of American Independence” (1996) makes a similar argument in the American context by examining the discrepancy which inheres between the purported ideals of equality in the official federal Declaration of Independence and the covert white-supremacist values of what Rogin dubs the second or *cultural* Declaration of Independence which are manifest in popular mass media from blackface through early and more recent cinema.

the biased depoliticization achieved in many colonialist narratives, such as Rowlandson's, through a focus on the captive's personal or spiritual state which forecloses an understanding of their capture as necessarily political, as a component of an inter-national struggle for sovereignty, or a war for the continent (Strong, *Captive* 86; Huhndorf, *Going* 171). Rowlandson's *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, for instance, might productively be taught using Salisbury's recent edition—which includes a substantial and even-handed historical introduction, a note on its inversion of the more prevalent contemporaneous Indigenous dispossession (55), and period documents on the fate of eastern Algonquian captives and Metacom's recorded rationale for the war—in conjunction with Algonquian (oral or written) hi/story, with a selection of Indigenous captivity narratives, and with recent rebuttals of Rowlandson's claims such as those by Alexie and Erdrich. Given that stories, as Gail Valaskakis explains, “express the dynamic cultural ground in which individuals and communities are formed through a continual process of adopting and enacting allied or conflicting representations and the ideological messages they signify” (4), how we consider and classify, transmit and teach them is worth contemplating. Inspired by the tactics of a number of the Indigenous works it studies, the contact captivity approach outlined herein aspires, to borrow Gananath Obeyesekere's terms, to be “deconstructive” and corrective of faulty or derogatory colonialist histories and “restorative” of the dignity they attempt to abduct.

Australian Exemplars: Anti-Trickster Absolution for 'Real' Captivities

2

Colonial culture, for both its victims and the perpetrators, is fundamentally a denial of the past and its moral implications... More than the moneyed privilege of the newcomers, more than the chaotic disadvantage of the original peoples, this is what we have inherited from our colonial past: relationships founded on hatred and violence and a culture founded on lies to assuage the guilt or shame of it all.
– Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, 120.

Australia, rather like Canada and unlike the United States, may not be renowned for its production of colonialist captivity narratives, yet a handful of such tales are among Australia's foundational national fictions and the critical and artistic response to these captivity tales in recent years has been rich indeed. This chapter will draw upon two cases of colonialist white captivity in Australia—that of Eliza Fraser (1836) and that of the White Woman of Gippsland (1840s)—and the analysis of them provided by a number of Australian critics and creators in order to survey the theoretical terrain of this dissertation. That is, these two exemplary cases furnish a means not only to assess the traits typical of the colonialist captivity genre, but to grasp how this genre has functioned—by way of mechanisms of justification, obfuscation, and projection—to provide absolution from the violence and immorality of another set of spectral and foreclosed colonial captures: those of the local Indigenous population. These latter

captivities, which Aboriginal scholar Larissa Behrendt identifies as the “real” captivities of the colonial frontier, share a complex and causal relation to the celebrated tales of white captivity which have often been mobilized to mask them.

This phenomenon of *overwrite*—the colonialist use of a story of white victimization at the hands of the demonized Indigene to write over (or “white out”), obscure, or justify the racially inverse and widespread practice of colonial capture of the land and its Indigenous occupants—is vividly illustrated in the case of the famed “White Woman of Gippsland” and her lesser-known foil, the Gunai leader Bungelene. Now generally acknowledged to have been a hoax or invention of the colonial imagination,¹ the existence of the White Woman was first suggested in 1840 when Angus McMillan, an early Scots squatter in the as yet unsettled region of Gippsland,² first caught a glimpse of what he believed to be a white woman being forcibly moved by a group of Gunai Aborigines.³ His account of this sighting was reported in the Australian papers,⁴ and subsequent rumours of this woman’s presence circulated, but it was not until mid-1846, when an officer in the Native Police Corps also reported sighting a light-skinned woman

¹ The historical existence of the famed White Woman remains questionable; many observers at the time and more now hold that she was a figment of the colonial imagination, a hoax, but a handful of local Gippsland historians persist in claiming her to have been a real entity. (Darian-Smith “Capturing” 14-16; Carr “Cabin’d” 168, 174)

² Gippsland, previously known as Gipps Land, occupies the southeast corner of mainland Australia; the region, comprising some 35,000 square kilometres, is bounded on the east by the Pacific Ocean and on the west by the Great Dividing Range.

³ The Gunai Nation is the collective name for the five confederated clans indigenous to the central and western region of Gippsland: the Bratowooloong, Brayakuloong, Brabuwooloong, Krauatungalung, and Tatunguloong clans. The term “Kurnai” was used to denote these clans by early colonists, but many of the nation now prefer the term “Gunai”; both terms are currently in parlance, but I will use Gunai here.

⁴ McMillan’s written account of his exploratory expedition of Gippsland in November 1840, including the claim that he saw a white woman in the distance amongst a group of Aboriginal people, was first published in the *Sydney Herald* on 28 December 1840 and subsequently also published in the *Port Phillip Patriot* and the *Melbourne Advertiser*. (Public Records)

in the company of the Gunai, that the story gained significant attention and the legend of the White Woman came fully into being (Carr, “Cabin’d” 168).

Contemporary colonialist response to this increasingly sensationalized story of a genteel European lady held against her will in the Australian bush by a band of supposed savages was significant: rumours about her spread quickly; meetings of concerned colonists were called; the Port Phillip District⁵ government was petitioned; the New South Wales Legislature discussed her; poets and novelists as well as journalists from Melbourne, Sydney and London took her as their subject; private and state expeditions were mounted to rescue her. Not surprisingly, they came home without having found any trace of the fabricated feminine captive. Given that this “invisible girl,” as Australianist Kate Darian-Smith notes, “has been granted more historical and imaginative space than any flesh and blood white pioneer woman in Gippsland or indeed elsewhere in colonial Australia” (“Capturing” 15), it seems imperative first to question why this hoax, this racialized fiction of the damsel in distress, gained such credence and sway in mid-nineteenth century Australia and beyond, and, second, to consider its impact and legacy. The legend of the White Woman fostered and enabled violence against the Gunai, who were themselves then enduring multiple forms of colonial capture: some directly as a result of the fabrication of this mythical captive. Thus, like many, arguably even most, classic colonialist captivity tales, that of the White Woman of Gippsland appears to have operated for the colonial public as a narrative of distraction and absolution from the searing violence of settler-invasion and its attendant capture and incarceration of

⁵ The present state of Victoria, in south-east Australia, was known as the Port Phillip District from 1802 to 1851.

Indigenous peoples.

Eliza Fraser's colonialist captivity narrative is similarly one of absolution. Her tale begins with the wreck of her husband's ship, the *Sterling Castle*, off the coast of what is now Queensland in 1836. After two weeks at sea in a pinnace, she, her husband, and a portion of his now mutinous crew (another group having separated and taken an alternate direction) landed at *Thoorgine*⁶—now known as Fraser Island—where they were met by a group of indigenous Badtjala who hosted them until they were “rescued” some fifty days later by a party of colonial officials and convicts sent out from the Moreton Bay settlement. A number of the group, including Captain Fraser, died during this time on *Thoorgine* and accounts vary wildly as to the nature both of these deaths and of the relations between the Badtjala and the new arrivals more generally. Eliza's accounts grow more sensational and accusatory of the Badtjala over time, culminating in charges that the Badtjala murdered her husband and cannibalized one of his crew, but the statements made by the other surviving crew and Badtjala oral histories discount such claims and attest instead to a much more peaceable relationship between the two races in what was, for most involved, the first cross-cultural encounter. The divergence in accounts is suggestive of both the way in which pre-existent pan-colonial expectations were brought to bear, rather fallaciously, on this particular encounter and of the significant cross-cultural misunderstandings which can arise in such situations and which

⁶ *Thoorgine* and *K'gari* are the Aboriginal names for Great Sandy Island. It is now known by most Australians as Fraser Island, lies off the southern coast of Queensland, is designated a World Heritage zone, and is a popular tourist destination. The Badtjala, indigenous to *Thoorgine*, numbered some 2000 at the time of contact but suffered great losses during the extremely violent invasion-settlement process in this region and had all been forcibly removed from the island by the beginning of the twentieth century. A Native Title claim has recently been filed by a family of Badtjala for the return of their land on *Thoorgine* (Mundine 16-17; Genocchio 28-29).

have plagued the colonialist captivity genre since its inception.

Eliza's narration of her experience evolved from a plain deposition to the Moreton Bay commandant (primarily concerned with the details of the crew's mutinous behaviour), by way of a lengthy classic captivity style account published in the *London Times* and *Courier*, to a full-blown, "blood and thunder" colonialist captivity narrative published in New York in 1838.⁷ She was the subject of significant scrutiny—in the form of a public trial, handbills, cartoons, a ballad and more—upon her return first to Sydney and then to London, and has since that point been "recreated in talk, writings, paintings, re-enactments, films and commemorations"—she is, to quote historiographer Chris Healy, "an event, a historical subject, an icon, an archetype, a sensation and a fable in the constitution of gender and race in Australia" (164). The style of her later narrative and its transatlantic production are instructive of both the pan-colonial nature of the colonialist captivity genre and its frequent mobilization as a device of colonial self-absolution via obfuscation and justification. Her tale omitted Badtjala voices, obscured access to authentic Badtjala history, and continues both to lay nominal claim to their land and to mask their colonial capture. Her rescue and subsequent description facilitated the colonial seizure of *Thoorgine* and her slanderous allegations against the Badtjala nation were used as justification for their removal. Her narrative, however, is increasingly being challenged. Foremost amongst these contestatory interlocutors is the Badtjala multimedia artist Fiona Foley; a discussion of her powerful revisionist work as a practice of visual repatriation, or more precisely *rematriation*, will close this chapter.

⁷ For details on the extensive textual and artistic body created by and about Eliza Fraser, please see Kay Schaffer's excellent catalogue of it: *In the Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories* (1995).

◇ Typifying Colonialist Captivity

...that long process of imaginatively and literally capturing the land for non-Aboriginal people.

– Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*, 167.

Both the legend of the White Woman and Fraser's autobiographical text contain a number of features characteristic of the classic colonialist captivity genre which are worth noting as such. Produced well after the seventeenth-century American emergence of the genre and its eighteenth-century peak, these nineteenth-century narratives demonstrate the longevity of the genre and certain characterizations within it: the Indigenes retain their unfortunate and predictable "savagery," the colonial males vie for the role of gallant knight, the captive must subscribe to the feminine virtues of the day. The role of the colonialist captivity genre as an instrument of social regulation is evident in the criteria prescribed for the classic captive and in the ostracization of she who fails to meet them. The stereotypes inherent in the genre are a portal to its social and psychic functions—shorthand for the values it transmits—but the genre's best-selling popularity is also derived from the sense that it discusses a matter of communal or national import and from its blatant use of techniques of sensationalism and sexual titillation, all of which combined in these Australian cases to make them particularly saleable.

"[P]rinted narratives of captivity and hair-breadth escapes," ethnologist Henry Schoolcraft observed in the nineteenth century, have long sustained the idea of the Indigene as "the very impersonation of evil—a wild sort of demon, who delighted in nothing so much as blood and murder" (qtd in Ebersole 1), and while there were certainly exceptions to this generic rule, neither of our Australian cases is one. In Fraser's

narrative, the Badtjala “are employed to play out the constructed role of savage” (Behrendt 171). In addition to blatantly proclaiming the Badtjala as immoral by charging them with “the capital sin of otherness” (Schaffer, *Wake* 106), anthropophagy, Fraser’s text renders their alterity by way of what Lynette Russell has identified as three strategies: (i) *an assertion of incomprehensibility and indistinctness*, which operates by textually representing “the absence of intelligible [Badtjala] sound” or speech and by generally failing to individualize the group members”; (ii) *an assertion of native absolutism*, which polarizes the Indigene as either pitiable or vicious and which “ensured a two way loss for the Badtjala as both types of native pleaded for the intervention of the settlers who were charged with bringing enlightenment and civilization” (52); (iii) *an assertion of Aboriginal homogeneity*, which draws on a minimal and abstract repertoire of spatial representation to claim all Aborigines as being the same (58). Thus the significance of Fraser’s textualized Indigenes lies to a large degree in their typicality, in their continental, even global, homogeneity. For as Jane Tompkins has reminded us in *Sensational Designs*, the familiarity or typicality of stereotypes rather than making the popular text “bankrupt or stale are the basis of their effectiveness as integers in a social equation” (xvi).

Nor were the initial characterizations by the press of the three main parties in the Gippsland captivity any less typical of the genre: the Gunai captors were written as inhuman brutes, as one-dimensional tribal chiefs ruled by their passions; the captive was said to be a heroine, a proper and genteel lady; the rescuers were cast as gallant knights on a quest to save their woman’s honour. There is a literal illustration of this chivalric

discourse of rescue in one of the material objects of the period: an illustrated handkerchief addressed to the White Woman which was produced by the first of the two official rescue expeditions as an aid in their search for the captive.⁸ In October of 1846 Christian de Villier's privately-funded party distributed many of the handkerchiefs throughout the Gippsland region, with the (rather misplaced) hope that they would be found by the White Woman or her supposed captors and would alert her to the presence of her rescuers. On their front the handkerchiefs bore a courtly illustration (Figure 2.1) while on their verso was inscribed the following message in Gaelic and in English:

WHITE WOMAN!—There are fourteen armed men, partly White and partly Black, in search of you. Be cautious; and rush to them when you see them near you. Be particularly on look out every dawn of morning, for it is then that the party are in hopes of rescuing you. The white settlement is towards the setting sun.

The *modus operandi* of the European chivalric tradition had the fair lady send her knight into battle wearing a scarf or handkerchief which denoted her favour.⁹ Julie Carr astutely argues that in de Villier's case the same associative elements—lady, knight, handkerchief, quest—were used “inversely”: the expedition was “styled by promoters and participants as a sacred quest by heroic men to aid a damsel in distress” but it was they, not she, that sought her and her favour by way of a handkerchief (131).

⁸ This was not the first such illustrated handkerchief sent out to Aboriginal communities; Julie Carr cites a few other examples from the 1840s which were designed to promote civilizing practices “but whether through contemplation of the illustration or through the adoption of the use of handkerchiefs as a European hygienic practice is not clear.” What is clear is that the Gunai had their own methods for integrating this found imperial object into their lifeways; in one instance a Gunai man tied two handkerchiefs together to form a hat to protect him from the sun (Carr, *Captive* 137-8).

⁹ One might also think here of the use of the handkerchief as a marker of a racialized sexuality in *Othello*.

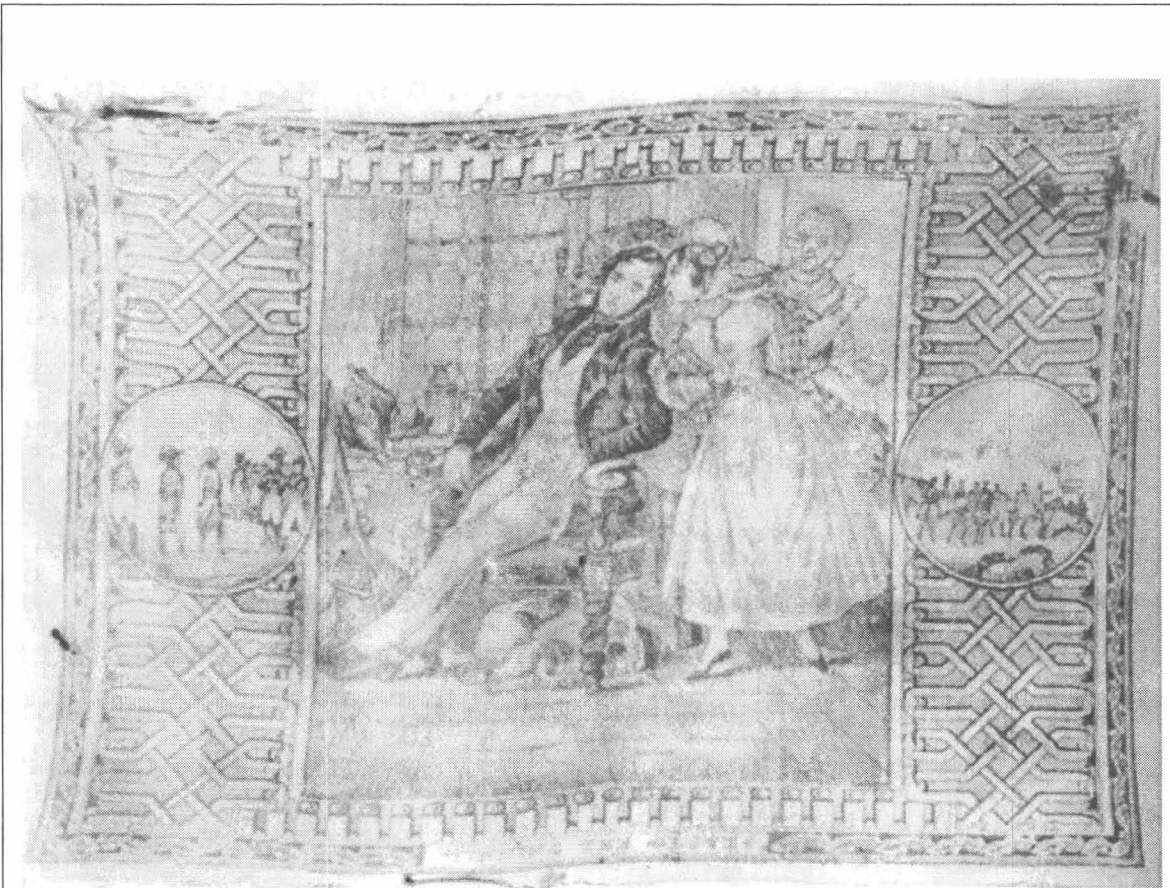


Figure 2.1

White Woman of Gippsland Handkerchief (recto). 1846. La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria. 12.1 x 16.6 cm. Accession No: H96.195/1. Call Number: PIC LTGN 101.

If the handkerchief's text and chosen illustrations are telling of how de Villier's expedition was perceived (at the very least by itself), they are also suggestive of how the captive herself was characterized. The central panel, bearing the caption "Winning the Gloves," portrays a custom of courtly love being played out within a genteel European domestic setting. As Carr explains, this particular custom is a courtship ritual which takes place on Saint Valentine's Day and entails a woman placing a kiss on the brow of

her slumbering beloved or chosen one in order to win a pair of gloves. The incongruity of the depicted European domestic scene with the actual Australian bush landscape into which it was inserted is striking and underscores the imperial imposition of imported ideals onto a terrain that was necessarily “already thick with alternative, indigenous logics” (Henderson, *Settler* 5). Presumably this image was meant to resonate with the White Woman herself when she came across it and thus it is indicative of who she was assumed to be. Certainly Carr argues that the image was designed to convey her genteel status, to “envisage her proper sphere” within a wealthy and elegant household (*Captive* 137). Similarly, the use of both English and Gaelic to present the handkerchief’s message signifies how the White Woman was coded as eminently respectable: she was presumed to be Scots, Irish, or Anglo like the majority of the area’s settlers and to be wealthy enough to have been educated and literate.

Generally colonialist captives were interpreted as symbolic representatives of their communities, a process heightened in this case by the invented nature of the White Woman herself. In recognition that the colonialist captivity genre, which originated with factual eye-witness testimony and evolved to also include obviously fantastical variants, is rife with questions of historicity or authenticity and habitually mixes and camouflages the fictional with the factual, Kathryn Derounian-Stodola has coined the terms “factive” and “fictive” to classify texts which are neither purely factual nor purely fictional but which lean, respectively, toward one or the other of these (xv). I am interested in how the *fictive* nature of the White Woman facilitated her transformation into a popular symbol of both white femininity and of colonial civilization itself. Unencumbered by the

positionality (ties of kin, class, race or ethnicity) and potential foibles or unruly enunciations of an actual human subject, the tale of the White Woman was easily rendered abstract and possessed a certain docility and malleability as a piece of propaganda. Darian-Smith argues that it was “her very anonymity which engaged the colonial imagination” (“Capturing” 29); I would add that it was her typicality which allowed her to stand as “the telegraphic expression of complex clusters of value” (Tompkins xvi). This legendary captive was assigned, with little historical basis, the traits the populace desired her to possess, such as a Scots ethnicity to match that dominant in the Gippsland settlements and a virtue and gentility prized in Victorian upper-class women. These assignments of character (which were conveniently changeable as circumstances demanded) were geared to cast the woman as belonging within the community, which allowed her plight to be more readily understood as a communal or national crisis, and to cast her as a worthy heroine, which augmented the moral outrage and drama inherent in her imagined situation. In both instances the traits assigned the White Woman served to bolster the scandal and marketability of the tale and to render her a more potent symbol of the ideals of the region’s colonists.

It is not coincidental that the central image on the handkerchief and most textual descriptions of the White Woman chose to envision her as a young, single and affluent woman, this construction of the captive as an embodiment of all that was then deemed desirable for Anglo women is a common tactic in colonialist captivity texts, not to mention an effective, eroticized, motivator for the potential “rescuer.” Both the captives themselves and their publicists or shadow-writers routinely tell these tales so as to

emphasize (or create) the virtue of the victim. In the Victorian period this meant emphasis on virginity or purity, wealth or accomplishment, and femininity. The autobiographical account of the historic captive was often designed to defend her reputation, but this claim to respectability also served to augment the drama of the story or generate excitement and/or moral outrage in its intended readership. Bluntly, within a Victorian economy of sex and empire it was the female captive's perceived degree of virtue which determined her eligibility as a captive in the first place: only those believed to possess enough of the requisite qualities of the virtuous Victorian woman were recognized as being captive and only those of particular virtue were lauded as worthy of civic attention and rescue.¹⁰ Hence the over-representation within the colonialist captivity genre of emphatically respectable women—self-styled or otherwise.

Standing in striking contrast to the general valorization of the fictive White Woman, and illustrative of the brutal lot of potential “captives” who lack the values deemed necessary to be recognized as such, is the cruel treatment of “the Cooktown woman”: a white woman observed by an Englishman in 1886 to be living with an Aboriginal community southwest of Cooktown in Queensland.¹¹ Shortly after a party from the township succeeded in capturing her, they washed her, paraded her naked about the town, and chained her to the veranda of the local police station for the night. She could not speak English. The next day she was dressed and strapped to the saddle of a horse to be taken to Cooktown. Enroute the party passed a group of Aborigines who

¹⁰ I discuss this in more length with regard to Theresa Gowanlock in “Feminine Vulnerability, (neo)Colonial Captivities & Rape Scars” (2005).

¹¹ The story of the Cookstown woman was published in Frank Reid's *The Romance of the Great Barrier Reef* (1954) and is summarized and analyzed by Chris Healy in *From the Ruins of Colonialism* (1997).

approached the woman in response to her cries to solicit their aid. To maintain control, one of the policemen in the party fired a shot into the air, which in turn scared the woman's horse, which bolted and fell on top of the rider bound to him. Severely injured, the woman was taken to the hospital in Cooktown where she was clearly grieving her Aboriginal community and family. The town's authorities charged one shilling admittance to the public to come and see the woman in the hospital; she died four days after being admitted. Originally pursued by the colonists as a virtuous white female captive in need of gallant rescue, the Cooktown woman was soon relegated instead to the debased hybrid category of "white *lubra*" or white Aboriginal woman.

Chris Healy argues that the determining factor in this demotion of the woman was her inability, in contrast to those like famed captive Barbara Thompson, to properly perform the expected white feminine role. Thompson, who was shipwrecked in the Torres Strait in 1844 and adopted by the Aborigines there until found by the *HMS Rattlesnake* in 1849, had, according to the Captain of the *Rattlesnake*, "lost none of the feelings of womanly modesty—even after having lived so long amongst the naked blacks" (qtd in Healy 184), for she immediately demanded of the crew clothing to cover herself: her modesty a marker for her willingness to perform a larger set of "proper" raced, gendered and classed values. For Healy the Cooktown woman is a prime example of the contradictions at work in the category of race at this time: failing to exhibit white femininity's prescribed modesty she was considered neither white nor black and thus was reduced to a shilling side-show at the hospital. Such "wild white women," Healy concludes, could be "a source of titillation in their capture, they could be celebrated in the

triumph of their rescue or they could be curiosities in a hospital bed as they died in service of their continued imprisonment in the categories of white men” (186).

No less publicly subject to these categories of classification and judgment was Eliza Fraser. Not only has her autobiographical account generated since its publication a host of literary, visual, and historical speculations about her propriety and sexual relations, she also endured intense public scrutiny at the time. The British and Australian populace had donated a handsome sum to Eliza upon her return from *Thoorgine* and when it was discovered that she had, less than a year after the death of Captain Fraser, secretly married Captain Alexander Greene and concealed this fact the better to appear as a penniless widow in need of public aid, the Lord Mayor’s Inquiry in London was struck to investigate her situation. Kay Schaffer notes that her trial was in essence a “performance of femininity” staged opposite the empire’s Others and became “an occasion for the regulation of sex, race and class within institutional networks of colonial power: the courts and the press” (*Wake* 84). A reporter at her trial, John Curtis of the *London Times*, went on to pen a substantive defense of her virtue, *The Shipwreck of the Sterling Castle* (1838), by emphasizing her feminine propriety in the face of “the excesses of native savagery, seaman’s treachery, convict depravity and the sexual license of the ‘lower orders,’ all of which are highlighted in the politically charged narrative” (Schaffer, *Wake* 95). Like other colonialist captives Eliza was only to be culturally celebrated as such if she stuck to the social script provided.

The fact that histories of Eliza Fraser have “relentlessly described an event which had been reduced to the character and body of a woman” (Healy 181) typifies the

colonialist captivity genre's anti-miscegenative fixation on the sexual status of the captive. The dual setting of Gabriel Josipovici's play, *Dreams of Mrs Fraser* (1972), in a large gilded circus cage and in her bedroom incisively comments upon her circulation as a sexualized spectacle. Investigations of what D'Arcy Randall and Kay Schaffer label "the sexual interface of the frontier" (119) were a mainstay of the colonialist captivity genre and its visual analogues. Images in the vein of Irving Couse's "The Captive" (Figure 2.2) have been interpreted by Leslie Fiedler as pandering "to that basic White male desire at once to relish and deplore, vicariously share and publicly condemn, the rape of White female innocence" (qtd in Schaffer, "Captivity" 1). Indeed, as Mary Louise Pratt has argued, survival literature in general, of which captivity narratives are one form, have "[t]hroughout the history of early Eurocolonialism... furnished a "safe" context for staging alternate, relativizing, and taboo configurations of intercultural contact." Staging transgression within the confines of survival literature plots is safe since the very existence of the text itself "presupposed the imperially correct outcome: the survivor survived, and sought reintegration into the home society" (87).

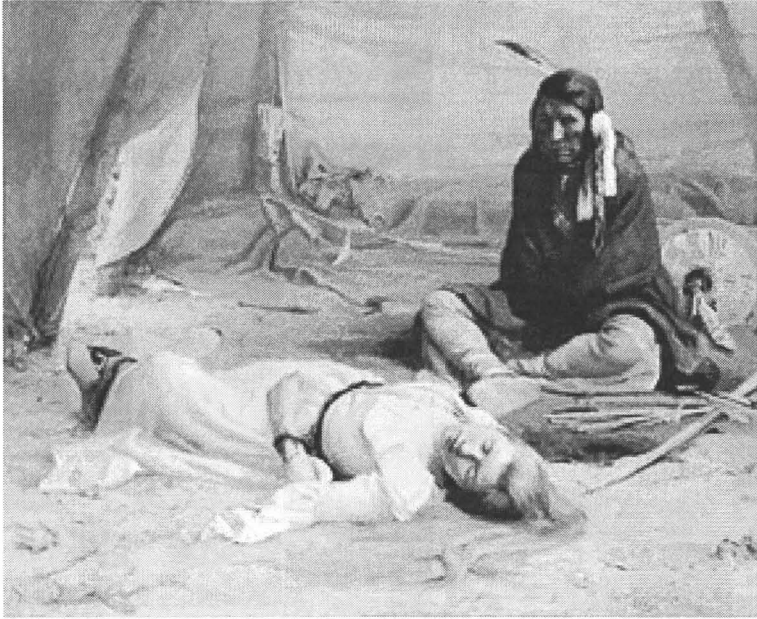


Figure 2.2
E. Irving Couse, “The Captive” (1891). Oil on canvas. Collection of the Phoenix Art Museum.¹²

The transgression at issue in our two Australian cases and in the majority of classic captivity stories is the that of miscegenation; the possibility of cross-racial sexual desire in these texts is almost always conceived of as rape to foreclose the possibility of consensual inter-racial intimacy. This is the ubiquitous “fate worse than death” that is typically construed as what a female captive most needed rescuing from. Although both Native American history and non-Native anthropological research on Native America have long demonstrated the relative rarity of the rape of white captives by Native captors, especially in the eastern states (Slotkin 125; Levernier 3-4; Castiglia), the figure of the

¹² Shown at the Paris Salon of 1892, “The Captive” is based on the 1847 Whitman Massacre in Oregon, during which the Cayuse took 40 white prisoners, including the young white female subject of the painting, all of whom were later released; five of the Cayuse involved were captured and killed by whites within three years. Couse’s painting is claimed to have “changed American perceptions of the Indian from Noble Red Man to murderous savage within one generation of westward white expansion” (qtd in Schaffer, “Captivity” 1).

violated captive has remained central to the colonialist captivity genre for a number of reasons, not the least of which are its propagandist and commercial uses. In the case of the White Woman “the erotic titillation inherent in many of the descriptions of her plight” served not only to foster the communal impulse to save the ‘captive’ but also to boost the circulation of the local papers which had played such a role in generating and maintaining her popularity (Darian-Smith, “Capturing” 28).

As with most well-known factive female captives, in these Australian examples the contemporary media and public discussion played a significant role in constructing the captive’s fate as one of interest, even responsibility, for the larger community: these were not scripted as individual or familial crises but as communal and national ones. Captives, as we have seen, were usually described so as to emphasize their affinity with the colonial reader, their membership within the colonialist community. In her analysis of Curtis’s *The Sterling Castle*, Schaffer observes how he mobilizes a set of notions of civility and normativity in order to produce an appealing, overarching, entity—that of the British race—a “monolithic, unified, and powerful ‘us’” which the reader is urged to identify with, despite any more subtle allegiances or affiliations they may have (*Wake* 83). Curtis went so far as to write that it would be “un-English” to discredit Eliza (qtd in Schaffer, *Wake* 95). Similarly, in Gippsland, as general concern for the captive grew so did social pressure to conform to the communal consensus on the issue. As one settler wrote in 1847, “I suppose if a person were to say in Melbourne that there were no white woman at all, he would be considered insane or put down as an unfeeling monster” (qtd. in Darian-Smith, “Capturing” 23). In the next chapter we will see a not-dissimilar

dynamic at work in the popular Canadian response to Gowanlock and Delaney's celebrated captivity.

Crucial to the development or assertion of a communal consensus is discussion of the issue in the local and national media. This was vividly illustrated in Gippsland by the significant role the *Port Phillip Herald* played in manufacturing the story of the White Woman and in driving the quest to find her; it was the *Herald* that called in 1846 on the government to mount a rescue expedition and that, failing this, declared that it was the "duty of private citizens to act." The *Herald* also heavily funded de Villier's private expedition, had exclusive rights to the journals of this expedition, and published excerpts from these journals to sustain significant public interest in the story and, no doubt, to boost newspaper circulation (Darian-Smith, "Capturing" 21-22).

The later versions of Eliza Fraser's story would also enjoy wide circulation through the periodical press. Rather like Roy Harvey Pearce's schematized model of the development of the colonialist captivity genre itself—which proposes the genre originates with tales characterized by direct and simple testimony and evolves to include ones of melodrama with a "blood and thunder sensibility" (12)—Eliza's narration of her 'captivity' changed over a period of two years from a simple deposition concerned with the loyalty of her husband's crew to a popular and sensationalized version full of "new and inventive details of her 'bondage' amongst cannibals." The catalyst for this transformation may have been Eliza's new husband, Captain Greene, a man with a history of writing about shipwrecks and captivities for the local colonial press. In any case, it was this sensationalized version which eventually "circulated to the colonial press

around the world” (Schaffer, *Wake* 45). As various accounts of Fraser’s adventure appeared Schaffer observes that they “spread their influence in two different but complimentary directions”:

On the one hand, official government reports, news items, testimonies from the Lord Mayor’s Commission of Inquiry and first-hand histories of the event helped to regulate knowledge under the guises of reason and ‘truth’. On the other hand, the sensational, melodramatic stories of the popular press provided fantasies of horror about ‘otherness’ which propelled anxiety and desire. The different narratives and their generic wrappings circulated in different fields of knowledge—providing not only ‘knowledge’ but pleasure as well. Over time, the more academic accounts were largely buried. The more sensationalized, populist materials supplanted them and influenced later generations. (*Wake* 31)

Thus in the archive of artistic representations of Eliza Fraser is an accumulated, inter-generational sediment of sensationalism, an ever more concentrated accretion of scandal.

The effect of this evolution is clearly visible in Michael Ondaatje’s long poem about this event, *the man with seven toes* (1969),¹³ which utilizes as its sole ‘historical’ source an infamously inaccurate paragraph penned to accompany the exhibition in London of Sir Sidney Nolan’s celebrated modernist paintings of Eliza, which in turn were based on fallacious accounts of Eliza having been rescued and romanced by an escaped convict named Bracefell.¹⁴ The chain of influence in this case begets a series of increasing inaccuracies which culminate in Ondaatje’s startling climactic scene depicting

¹³ Published by Anansi in 1969, and subsequently performed as a play, *the man with seven toes* is a vivid, often imagistic long poem very loosely based upon the history of Fraser’s contact with the Badtjala; it is one of Ondaatje’s least known works, in part because it has not been republished since 1969 and in part, perhaps, because it is a text he is not particularly fond of: as he puts it, he has “sort of kept it hidden in the closet” (qtd in Turcotte 142).

¹⁴ Of this paragraph, written by Colin MacInness for Nolan’s catalogue, Gerry Turcotte explains “[m]ost critics know how scurrilous this particular account is: for its sexism (and extraordinary sleight of hand which turns Mrs. Fraser into a betraying Eve), and for the canonization of Bracefell as convict rescuer over John Graham” (142).

the simultaneous enactment of rapacious cannibalism and cannibalistic rape. At issue for me here are not the factual liberties we might expect of a poet known for playing with or rendering mythic the events of the past (Solecki), but rather the way in which Ondaatje's text inherits from its predecessors only the most salacious aspects of Fraser's story¹⁵ and the way in which this accretion of scandal amounts to a legacy of *slander* for the Indigene cast as the ever more barbaric villain of the piece. If the poem retreats "to a sequence of stereotypes about blackness which has virtually always (mis)informed the Fraser tale, one which plays on the sexualized/fetishized black body as an agent of threat, insatiability and rapaciousness" (Turcotte 144), we must also note that it indirectly destabilizes and partially undermines the credibility of these stereotypes when it closes with a powerful rejection of the hegemonic colonialist distinction between civilization and savagery. Its use of the typology of savagery is certainly not an unconscious or simply conservative one.

Ondaatje's version of the Fraser tale is indicative of the dynamics of the circulation and augmentation of a particular, sanctioned or desired, type of information within the metropolitan imperial centre—a circulation which fosters a certain (scandalous/slandorous) interpretation and which precludes others. Precluded in this instance are the specific voices, humanity, and interests of the Badtjala, here homogenized as universal savages. Frantz Fanon has written of being "battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects" (qtd in Razack

¹⁵ This colonialist taste for scandal is explored in the first act of Allan Marett's Japanese Noh play, *Eliza* (1989), when Eliza explains that the British public only believe her true and sane when she falsifies and sensationalizes her history.

3). Likewise Badtjala, including Olga Miller (34-6) and Ethel in *Island of Lies* (Schaffer, *Wake* 243), speak eloquently of the shame and anger they continue to feel as a result of the spurious charges of cannibalism levelled against their people by Fraser and those writing of her. All of which lends credence to Fiona Foley's claim that for the Badtjala their silencing by colonialist narratives "begins in 1836 with the shipwreck of the *Sterling Castle* and the first English woman to come ashore at Fraser Island... A conspicuous absence is entered by an unsuspecting nation of Badtjala. The psychological impact was great..." (168).

◇ Transposing Experience to Genre

The captivity narrative makes no sense in Australia. New inhabitants were not taken captive. Convicts escaped *to* rather than *from* the bush...

– Kay Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact*, 65.

Having utilized these two Australian case studies to draw attention to a number of the most salient features of the colonialist captivity genre, it might behove us to backtrack for a moment to consider why these two experiences were considered ones of captivity or were transposed into the captivity genre in the first place. Legend had it that the White Woman of Gippsland was the sole survivor of one of the many ships wrecked off Victoria's south-eastern coast late in the 1830s and that she had been abducted by the Gunai who came upon her and murdered the remainder of the ship's crew. Like Eliza Fraser before her and Barbara Thompson after her, the White Woman—by a notable sleight of mind—was glossed by colonialist logic not as a marooned victim who was rescued, fed, and adopted by a hospitable Aboriginal community, but rather as a prisoner

or slave of a vicious Aboriginal tribe. Fraser and Thompson lived “because they had depended upon, and received, Aboriginal help in locating food and water,” yet in both instances, once the “castaways re-established contact with white society, the Aborigines were conceptualized not as friendly rescuers but as hostile captors, and whites not as recipients of their help but as prisoners” (Darian-Smith, “Capturing” 18). Historian Elaine Brown suggests that this transformation of the story was at least partially due to the fact that slavery was a concept with which Eliza would have been familiar; the practice had, until three years previously, been legal in many British colonies and was still at this time a subject of earnest debate. The Badtjala, unfamiliar as they were with slavery, faced a practical dilemma of how to care for and feed their new arrivals; their solution, Brown notes, was certainly not one they considered to be enslavement: they merely allocated each person to a family group and encouraged them to contribute to gathering food and fuel (20-1).

If Fraser was familiar with and predisposed to the terminology of enslavement, statements in, not to mention the typical title of her *Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings, and Miraculous Escape of Mrs Eliza Fraser*, make it clear that she was also familiar with the colonialist captivity genre and cognizantly chose it as her vehicle: “Many accounts have been presented to the public of the captivity and state of bondage of many of our unfortunate fellow beings among savages but there probably have been but few instances in which the sufferings of any have exceeded those experienced by me....” Thus, as Emma Willoughby notes in her interpretation of this passage, it is evident that the colonialist captivity genre had gained sufficient popularity within the British empire at

this time that many of its tropes were readily at hand for Fraser to adapt to her situation.

Her decision to import the primarily American genre to a fairly disparate Australian maritime context and the subsequent circulation of her text within America as well as Britain speak to the genre's saturation of the pan-colonial imagination, to what Willoughby terms the "cross-cultural colonial borrowing" that facilitated the genre's popularity and to the "transglobal influences" that fostered its transmission (Randall & Schaffer 106). No longer can the colonialist captivity genre be seen simply as an aspect of American exceptionalism.¹⁶

The decision to import the colonialist captivity *topos* in these cases entails using existent conventions to convert a raw or unstructured experience, which occurred in a "liminal" environment where meanings were somewhat indeterminate, into a familiar colonial myth (Schaffer, *Wake* 52). It is a striking illustration of Northrop Frye's contention that "Literature is conscious mythology: as society develops, its mythical stories become structural principles of story-telling, its mythical concepts... become habits of metaphorical thought." (232) Such an understanding of genre as a device which reiterates a set of values or communal myths is shared by Richard Slotkin who has written extensively on the way in which an experience of captivity—over time and through repetition—can be transformed first into convention and then into archetype or myth. He explains how the fairly common Puritan experience of "Indian captivity," translated into literature, first "recurred in the press with rhythmic persistence," then

¹⁶ The genre has been claimed as a uniquely American one by critics including Annette Kolodny ("Among" 26) and Richard Slotkin (95), but this claim has met with significant recent opposition, particularly in Linda Colley's *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850*; see also Randall and Schaffer, Navarre, Sayre.

evolved into a vehicle for justifying values that “may have been extrinsic to the initial experience.” These captivity stories, repeatedly recast in the literary marketplace, are then “reduced to an imitable formula, a literary convention... a sort of given between writer and audience, a set of tacit assumptions on the nature of human experience.” At this point, Slotkin concludes, “the convention has some of the force of myth: the experience it portrays has become an image which automatically compels belief by a culture-wide audience” (20-1). Or, in this case, a pan-colonial audience able and eager to process, interpret, and assimilate, through their belief in this almost mythic story of white captivity, a vast range of experiences. Framing their varied colonial experiences by way of this genre grants these diverse situations what Michel de Certeau called “intellectual edibility”: an automatic intra-communal recognizability (224).

What will provide intellectual, or psychological or social, sustenance at any given moment is highly contextual. Circumstances will significantly influence whether and how the colonialist captivity frame is brought to bear upon an experience. The case of the White Woman is instructive of how a communal impulse to recognize and abet a captive emerged, indeed could only emerge, in a particular type of moment. A useful synopsis is provided by Kate Darian-Smith:

The words ‘white’ and ‘woman’ were a powerful combination in the colonial imagination. They fused together multifarious racial, gendered and sexual ideologies, constituting women as both symbols of European civilization and chattels of patriarchal capitalism... Apprehensions about the racial and sexual threat to the status of white womanhood were echoed and amplified around the imperial world, and in Australia, as elsewhere, they rose to a pitch when localised friction between colonisers and colonised became intense—as they were in Gippsland in the 1840s. (“Material” 183)

As with so many other factive captivities which have seized the public imagination in various locales within the British empire, the circumstances had to be ripe for the tale's reception; this was the case in Gippsland and the Port Phillip District in 1846.¹⁷ It is a striking characteristic of colonialist captivity narratives, especially the historical or more factive variants, that they flourish at a specific stage in the trajectory of colonial expansion: that middle or frontier phase which entails settlers staking claim to the invaded land and struggling against its Indigenous custodians for possession of it, a phase which follows first contact and initial exploration but which precedes full or secure invasion and settlement. In the United States, particularly in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, the genre functioned as what Pearce calls a "popular journalistic, terroristic vehicle" with new episodes emerging apace with new frontiers (16). Hence, the captivity genre is often, and with a fair bit of accuracy, deemed a frontier phenomenon based within and motivated by an inter-racial war for control of the colony's land and resources.

One prominent aspect of the "phenomenon of the White Woman" is her invented status; that so many colonists embraced this fiction *as* fact points to their desire for such an event to be true, to the allure of the colonialist captivity genre, to the psychic and economic use value of such an archetypal tale within frontier society. The powerful way in which our ideologies and expectations determine how we will narrate the events which we encounter is evident in this quick, fallacious assumption that the reported sighting of a

¹⁷ For a more detailed analysis of the local Port Phillip District politics which facilitated the emergence of the legend of the White Woman in 1846 please refer to the first chapter of Julie Carr's *The Captive White Woman of Gippsland: In Pursuit of the Legend*.

light-skinned woman within the Gunai community must mean she is the heroine of a classic “Indian captivity” plot. The citizens of Port Phillip drew easily upon a long-established trope of the virtuous colonial captive rather than entertaining the many other potential relationships or circumstances (such as the practice of white squatters and explorers having children with Aboriginal women) which might account for the presence of a lighter-skinned member of the Gunai community. The confidence and ease of this foreclosure of ambiguity demonstrate the racist problematics which inhere in both the popularity and the traditional definition of the genre itself. Equally problematic is the expectation of oppositional racial violence or warfare which is encoded in the genre and which is transferred onto the unsuspecting Gunai when the White Woman is scripted as a classic captive (Willoughby). Similarly, the genre’s predilection for Indigene savagery facilitates the (mis)interpretation of Indigenous hospitality and skill as hostility and enslavement—a move Behrendt identifies as both “representative of the omission of the contribution Aboriginal people made to the survival of explorers and settlers on the frontier” and a “prelude to the playing down of the Aboriginal contribution to the pastoral industry” in general (172).

The colonialist captivity genre’s traditional reliance upon the tenet of Indigene barbarism is, arguably, part of the modern West’s cognitive dependence upon what James Youngblood Henderson critiques as the episteme, or “artificial context,”¹⁸ of the *state of nature* that has predominated since Thomas Hobbes famously proposed it in 1651 as “the

¹⁸ Artificial contexts, as Roberto Mangabeira Unger has theorized them, provide a “framework for explaining and verifying worldviews. These worldviews are artificial because they are dependent on assumptions made about human nature or society and not on what the world is really like independent of people’s beliefs about it.” (Henderson 12)

naturall condition of mankind” which rendered his life “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (qtd in Henderson 16). Given that Hobbes, and his many followers, attributed his “spectacular repository of negative values” to the Indigenous peoples of America, it is not surprising that Henderson urges Indigenous peoples to “transform the false assumptions behind the state of nature and its social theories [in order] to begin their transformation to a postcolonial order. It is the key to our cognitive confinement” (18, 31). Thus does the colonialist captivity genre operate as a mode of cognitive confinement for those it insistently purports are captors.

◇ ‘Real’ Captivities: Extreme Colonialist Violence

Certainly the colonialist captivity tale has functioned—in specific moments—as a mechanism of cognitive confinement, as a component in an “ideological war” (Darian-Smith, “Material” 181), but it needs to be underlined that this war was far from purely ideological, that it was also waged in the realm of gory physical violence. We glimpse this violence in the two medallion style images included on the handkerchief distributed by de Villiers in his search for the White Woman (Figure 2.1). The content and positioning of these two secondary illustrations, depicting a successful British militia at work, likely in the colonies, are suggestive of the role of military force in securing Britain’s imperial wealth: just as the two medallions flank and support the central illustration of the handkerchief in spatial terms, so too did the empire’s military apparatus support and sustain the elegant lifestyle of the central panel’s metropolitan inhabitants by way of colonial plunder. The medallions also vivify the sleeping male in the central image—he’s either tired from his military adventures or dreaming of them, and for either

one, he receives the maiden's approving kiss.¹⁹ The right medallion in particular, with its portrayal of several prostrate 'native' figures in the foreground, may, as Julie Carr argues, have an unintended relevance in this case, given that many Gunai were assaulted and killed by those seeking the White Woman (*Captive* 134). Underlying the romantic and chivalric rhetoric of both handkerchief and rescue mission is a lesser known and much more macabre history of genocide in Gippsland.

It is believed that the Gunai numbered about 4,000 when the first settler-invaders, primarily Highland Scots led by Angus McMillan, arrived in Gippsland in 1840. What are popularly termed "clashes" between the two groups occurred almost immediately and within three decades the Gunai population had "declined dramatically" and those who survived had been driven north and east into the hills, away from the central plains and lakes region suited to the pastoral interests of the Scots settlers (Morgan). Of the Australian colonies in this period, it is Gippsland that can claim the greatest settler-native violence and bloodshed;²⁰ the Gunai resisted the settlement of their land and in 1843 killed four white shepherds and a pastoralist. "Retaliation" (although one needs to be sceptical of the temporal precedence and moral righteousness embedded in this term that white historians have used to describe the event) from the Scots settlers was fast and brutal: at least two massacres of the Gunai were organized in response, one of which resulted in the slaughter of between 60 and 150 Gunai at Warrigal Creek (Darian-Smith, "Capturing" 26). It was the "Highland Brigade," led by Angus McMillan, that conducted

¹⁹ My appreciation to Daniel Coleman for this insight.

²⁰ The writings of one settler, Neil Black, newly arrived in Gippsland in 1839, testify to the degree of settler violence normative in the region at that time; he notes that one could "take up a new run, provided the conscience of the party is sufficiently seared to enable him without remorse to slaughter natives left and right... sometimes by wholesale" (qtd in Carr, *Captive* 28).

the mass murder at Warrigal Creek and that was the main perpetrator of such “reprisals” against the Gunai well into the 1840s. The Highland Brigade worked secretly to avoid being apprehended by the law for their crimes,²¹ but historians have now discovered enough evidence to agree that they were instrumental in violently stifling Gunai opposition to white settlement of their tribal lands (Carr, *Captive* 17).

There are also more concrete, less conjectural, connections between the phenomenon of the White Woman and the genocidal killing of the Gunai.²² The final of four major (and a number of lesser) settler massacres of the Gunai in the decade between 1840 and 1850 was carried out by members of the Native Police Corps who were, under government orders, searching for the White Woman at a tributary of the Snowy River; Charles Tyers, Gippsland’s Commissioner for Crown Lands, recorded, in an estimate some hold to be far too conservative, that “at least fifty [Gunai] were killed by the native police and other aborigines attached to the parties in search of a white woman” (qtd in Morgan; Darian-Smith, “Capturing” 27).

It is worth taking note, however, of the differing attitudes and actions of the two types of expedition searching for the White Woman; the massacre carried out by the Native Police Corps expedition was sharply and publicly criticized by de Villier’s privately-funded expedition. Although the two expeditions were instructed by the colonial government to cooperate with each other—and with the Gunai people—

²¹ Although Gippsland was, in the early 1840s, isolated enough to generally be beyond the reach of the law, such significant crimes by settler-invaders against Aborigines could be taken very seriously by colonial officials and so it made sense for the Highland Brigade to operate covertly. In 1838, for instance, white men had been hung for killing 28 Aborigines at Myall Creek (Darian-Smith, “Capturing” 26).

²² Emma Willoughby also notes that when the expeditions had returned without the White Woman, Melbourne papers began to advocate violence against the Gunai as the only reasonable means to “relieve the wretched woman from the thralldom of the savage.”

ultimately de Villier's expedition became a whistle-blower resented by many in the Gippsland community. Carr explains that as de Villier's expedition progressed "the political realities which confronted the expeditioners necessitated a re-evaluation of what they saw as the ambit of their role" and this led de Villiers and second-in-command James Warman to "pen searing exposes of systemic and widespread violence against Gippsland Aborigines... by settlers and Native Police under the command of government officers" ("Cabin'd" 170). The conflict between the two expeditions came to a head in December 1846 when de Villiers filed a statement against William Dana, leader of the Native Police expedition, for surrounding and surprising Gunai camps on the Snowy River at night in order to capture and shoot the Gunai (apparently as a tactic to gain information on the location of the White Woman) (Public Records). Thus the search for the White Woman facilitated and justified violence against the Gunai and also exposed and condemned such violence, and in this way can be seen as an enactment of what Homi Bhabba has delineated as the ambivalence of structures of colonial power: the potential for critique and subversion lodged within these instrumental institutions.²³

The genocidal colonist violence in Gippsland during the 1840s was to be matched, a few years later, in Queensland. As Shawn Foley succinctly chronicles it, in a document written for the recently established Thoorgine Educational and Cultural Centre,

1842 marked the beginning of the occupation of Badtjala land and the organised destruction of land and people. By the late 1840s a colonial frontier war raged. In 1850 it was so fierce that the Native Mounted Police Force was formed... By this time brutalities included open and indiscriminate massacres and an early form of chemical warfare in which flour was laced with arsenic. Badtjala resistance continued into the 1850s,

²³ I am indebted to Daniel Coleman for this point.

as did further land seizures by the settlers, with massive clearances for townships, agriculture, and pasture. All this had a devastating impact upon the life cycles of the indigenous plants and animals upon which Badtjala relied for maintaining their way of life. (qtd in Genocchio 29)

Schaffer concurs that extreme inter-racial violence characterized this region in the 1850s and notes that it is estimated that “for every instance of native violence, the settlers retaliated tenfold” (*Wake* 75). It is believed that some 15,000 Aboriginals died defending their land in Queensland alone (Foley 171).

In the decades following their hosting of Fraser and company, the Badtjala were effectively captured and confined in a variety of ways by settler-invaders and their governmental and military institutions. A Christian mission was established, in a rather inhospitable and mosquito-prone location, on *Thoorgine* in 1870 (Genocchio 29; Schaffer, *Wake* 254); when it closed in 1904, “the remaining 218 [Badtjala] were sent to mainland reserves and penal colonies. Only two families were left on the island, thought to be all that remained of the estimated 2000 to 3000 who were living in the Fraser Island and Cooloola region at the time of the *Sterling Castle* wreck” (Schaffer, *Wake* 75-6). Mechanisms of colonial capture utilized in this region of Queensland included the capture of live and deceased human “specimens” for exhibition in museum or circus settings (Foley 163; Poignant);²⁴ confinement on reserves, mission stations, or penal settlements; and the institutionalized abduction of children sanctioned by the state’s Stolen Generations policies. In the face of this was the ongoing and hard-fought resistance of

²⁴ Fiona Foley notes that the Leipzig Museum in Germany holds “artifacts” collected by Amalie Dietrich, including eight skeletal remains of Aborigines from Queensland and that Dietrich was “known to have offered a financial incentive to local settlers in return for the shooting of healthy Aboriginal specimens” (163).

the Badtjala in both large organized attacks and in individual actions. Fiona Foley speaks with pride, for instance, of Banjo Owens who heroically persisted in returning numerous times to *Thoorgine*, despite repeated police interference, after the 1904 removal of the Badtjala from their territory (168). It is an arresting fact that for many non-indigenous Australians the most known story of Fraser Island is that of its namesake and his wife who endured a brief ‘captivity’ there when this location has also witnessed the incalculably larger colonial capture of its Indigenous peoples.

The stories of these less-celebrated captures, these common instances of unprovoked violence against the Aboriginal nations, are what Larissa Behrendt terms “real” captivity narratives (183). To demonstrate how the phenomenon of the Stolen Generations is such a “real” captivity, she employs a particularly effective rhetorical strategy: she selects a series of phrases typical of sensationalized narrations of white captivity, phrases unanimously suggesting the cruelty and rapaciousness of “savage” captors, and pairs each hackneyed phrase with a segment of oral testimony on the same theme by an Aboriginal child abducted by the Australian authorities. The effect is powerful. Recorded during the landmark *Inquiry into the Forced Separation of Indigenous Children from their Families* by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of Australia in 1995-97, the recollections of these abducted children counter with their own experiences, blow for blow, each of the slanderous accusations which have so long been (mis)attributed to Indigenous people in colonies around the world by way of the traditional white captivity narrative. Behrendt demonstrates that if the colonialist captive was “captured by savages,” so too were the Aboriginal children

physically seized, without warning, from their parents to be immersed in a foreign culture; if the colonialist captive was “treated like a slave,” so too were the many Aboriginal youth who worked within white institutions without receiving their promised pay; if the colonialist captive “suffered a fate worse than death,” so too did the hundreds of Aboriginal youth who experienced rape or molestation while in white institutions (181-82).

This juxtaposition of the clichéd rhetoric of the colonialist captivity narrative with scores of Aboriginal recollections shows that many Indigenous experiences under colonialism were in fact forms of captivity according—except in racial designation—to the definition expounded in countless traditional white captivity tales. There is a depressing irony inherent in the way that policies of colonialism, in tandem with an attendant popular literature, forced those typecast by such literature as cruel captors to endure the suffering the stories reserved for their lily-white captives. Behrendt’s formulation and explanation of the “real” captivities of this colonial frontier is powerfully articulated and she is not the first critic to have taken this tack; a number of recent scholars of the colonialist captivity narrative have drawn attention to the larger phenomenon of Indigenous colonial capture.²⁵ I am interested in building on these critiques and examining in more detail the causal and correlated relation which frequently inheres between colonialist captivity stories and Indigenous experiences of capture.

²⁵ See, for example, the writings of Pauline Strong, Gordon Sayre, Fiona Foley, Susan Martin, Barbara Creed, Jeanette Hoorn, and Robert Dixon, and the discussion of their work in the previous chapter.

◇ Unsung Captives: Bungelene, Mumbalk, Parley & Jackawadden

Where everyone tolerates and condones scandal, scandal disappears.

– Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 193.

The case of the White Woman of Gippsland is of especial interest in that this fabricated captivity functioned specifically to detract attention from a host of (f)actual and little known Indigenous captivities; in this regard it is not atypical of the historical function of factive narratives of white captivity in general. The history of Gippsland contains numerous Gunai captives to be considered with or instead of the single woman of legend. These Indigenous captives occupy differing relations to the White Woman; some having been captured as a direct result of the propagation of her legend, others arguably already captive in the landscape that she would make famous, while still others would come to be confined due to the settlement her legend made possible. Together their situations instruct us in an alternate and pressing history of captivity.

Among those captured specifically as a result of the tale of the White Woman are Bungelene, Mumbalk, Parley and her two sons. Though they are not rendered heroic in any popular Anglo-Australian mythology, it is this family that were truly the captives in the saga of the White Woman of Gippsland. Bungelene²⁶ was an esteemed and influential Gunai elder who was alleged by colonial authorities, as the quest for the White Woman proceeded, to be her captor; based on information surmised in cross-cultural exchanges between Anglo-Australians and Gunai who knew little, if any, of each other's languages, this allegation was tenuous at best. Nevertheless, once he had been cast as "the villain of the piece" this "unsubstantiated charge that [he] was the White Woman's

²⁶ This name is also spelled as Bungaleena or Bunjil-ee-nee within colonial records.

captor was repeated endlessly” (Carr, “Cabin’d” 172). From mid-1846 he was, as Carr puts it, “the *bête noir* to the woman’s genteel white humanity” (*Captive* 164).

Occasionally mentioned in the journals of the first search party, Bungelene came to the fore when the drama demanded, when the second search party had little to report and was in need of a quarry to successfully pursue; it was his (coerced) participation in the narrative which held public interest in the story during the second expedition of 1847 (ibid).

It was April of 1847 when Bungelene and his family were apprehended by the Native Police Corps and brought to Commissioner Tyers’s station at Eagle Point, where they were detained for a month until Tyers—fearing that Bungelene was making “sport” of him by feeding him false tips about the White Woman (Public Records)—ordered the elder Gunai to accompany the party searching for the captive. To further “intimat[e to Bungelene] that concession to our demands is the surest means of recovering his freedom,” Tyers decided to hold Bungelene’s two wives and two sons hostage in exchange for Bungelene recovering the White Woman to civilization and forced the Gunai elder to sign a legalistic “memorandum of agreement” which read, in part: “I, Bungelene, promise to deliver the white female residing with the Gipps Land blacks... I also agree to leave my two wives and children with the said Charles Tyers, as hostages for the fulfillment of my promise” (qtd in Carr, “Cabin’d” 175). h—

It is troubling enough that the region’s appointed legal authority would force a man in his custody to sign under duress a document which he could not read and which ceded his family to captivity, but the situation appears all the more inhuman when we

realize, as Julie Carr deduced from a close examination of the historical record, that by this point Tyers had ceased to believe that the White Woman existed at all. One might wonder why Tyers, having stated that the White Woman was a “mere creature of the imagination” (qtd in Carr “Cabin’d” 174), captured Bungelene and forced him to participate in a search for a non-existent quarry. Carr’s answer is that the imprisonment of Bungelene was designed to pump up white confidence while demoralizing the Gunai and reducing their ability to wage their guerilla-style war against the squatters (*Captive* 165-66). Here again is an illustration of the colonialist captivity tale as a narrative of absolution, as a means to obtain an unspoken and unsanctionable end.

Tragically, Bungelene would die in custody in November of 1848. Although Bungelene had never been charged with any crime, and although government officials were both aware of the illegality of this incarceration and sceptical about the existence of the woman he was alleged to have harmed, he and his family were detained for 17 months, first at Eagle Point and later at Nerre Nerre Warren in Melbourne. Bungelene’s first wife, Mumbalk, predeceased him in custody; his second wife, Parley, and their two sons were sent to Edgar’s Merri Creek School which experimented with teaching Aboriginal children. Parley left the school and her sons, as did the Edgars in 1851 when their enrolment dropped. Without a home or guardians Bungelene’s boys, now twice re-Christened with English names, were placed in John Hinkins’ Anglican school at Pentridge. The Public Records Office of Victoria notes that “Though troubled, they began to assimilate into the European world and learnt its culture.” The author of a short profile on Thomas for the *News Letter of Australasia* in 1857 wrote of Thomas’s sensitivity to

removal or relocation without any mention of the past events which would surely have made such options traumatic—or indeed punishing—ones for him:

[Thomas] evinces a remarkable docility and attachment to his teachers, and is so far from inheriting the erratic propensity common among the blacks that, whenever punishment is necessary... a threat to send him away has always awakened in him the most lively apprehensions.

This callous framing of the treatment of a captured, orphaned, and twice “adopted” child one can sense this society’s blindness to the trauma inherent in such relocations and disruptions of Indigenous lives. Thomas’s brother died at age eleven, which is reported by the Public Records Office to have made Thomas “violent and angry.” Subsequently, at age 14, he was sent to the training ship *SS Victoria*; he died of gastric fever at age 18.



THOMAS BUNGALEENA

Figure 2.3

Portrait of Thomas Bungaleena, in *News Letter of Australasia*, 1857. La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

This bleak and truncated family history is indelibly marked by a series of forced relocations to and confinements within Anglo-Australian penal, educational, and military institutions. And it was this type of capture and confinement that hundreds of Indigenous Australians experienced during this period. Although contemporary commentators failed to register Bungelene’s incarceration as a “captivity” and sought to diminish its punitive

nature by calling it euphemistically a “safe keeping” (Carr, *Captive* 169), there is no doubt that this involuntary dislocation punctuated with episodes of mistreatment (which included Bungelene being chained to a gum tree for many days and nights on end) was as severe and brutal a captivity as many celebrated by the colonialist captivity genre. In light of all the ink spilled, and miles walked, in the name of a fabricated hoax, it is scandalous that the history of Bungelene’s multiply captive family, the “only confirmed captives” to emerge from the drama of the White Woman (Darian-Smith, “Capturing” 27), remains largely untold and unrepented.

This family, although possibly unique in being captured as a *direct* result of the legendary captive, were far from the only Gunai to be held captive in Gippsland during the mid-nineteenth century. While thousands of Aborigines across Australia would subsequently endure the confinement of mission school as Thomas Bungelene had, other Indigenous children, including a Gunai boy named Jackawadden, would experience a different form of capture: that of being kidnapped from their families by squatters and taken to work on their stations. Abducted at Lake King as a young boy by a settler-invader named Mr Wilkinson, who was chasing off a group of Gunai who had been spearing his cattle, Jackawadden would come to play an important role in the pursuit of the White Woman. After his apprehension, Jackawadden was taken in by John Paine, a shopkeeper on Lachlan Macalister’s station, who went to great lengths in a statement to his employer to assert that the boy was living with him of his “own free will,” “insisted upon remaining with Mr. Wilkinson and his party” at Lake King and “wants to stop with the whites” (Paine 87). Like Carr, I find the man doth protest too much: this “act of

taking a very young Aboriginal child from his people, a practice commonly employed by settlers, is elided in an expansive explanation of the boy's alleged complicitness in his own abduction" ("Cabin'd" 171). It was Jackawadden who told Paine he had heard of a white woman who was living with Bungelene; his word was cited as verification of the story. In 1846 Jackawadden was urged, likely coerced, to serve as a translator for the party of Native Police which was, as Carr recounts, ostensibly organized to negotiate the White Woman's release but which instead "pursued, captured and harassed Worrigals [Aborigines] over a distance of some 100 miles" ("Cabin'd" 172). In this instance we see how the celebrated captivity tale functions in conjunction with another, previous, capture.

At least two other forms of Indigenous captivity were in operation in Gippsland at this time. The first form, not entirely dissimilar from the practice of abducting Aboriginal children to serve on squatter's stations, is the coercion of Aboriginal women to serve as sexual or domestic partners for settler-invaders. As Healy reminds us, "white men in Australia routinely captured Aboriginal women to use and abuse their bodies and labour; the appropriating and colonizing of Aboriginal women's bodies and its attendant brutality were integral to broader colonizing processes" (186). The legend of the White Woman was seen by Paine and others to be substantiated by Jackawadden's claim that he had played with mixed-race children in his childhood Gunai camp; the logic being that such children must be the offspring of the White Woman and her Gunai captor, which pointedly overlooks the much more likely possibility that such children were fathered by local white men (Carr, "Cabin'd" 173). As in the American captivity oeuvre, "[i]t almost seems as if the only experience of intimacy with the Indians that... readers would accept

was the experience of the captive” (Slotkin 95). While such relations could well have been consensual, it is possible they were coercive.

The last form of Indigenous captivity I want to mention is one that the Gunai, as a nation, certainly did experience: their confinement to an ever-diminishing region of their territory, the rest of their land having been appropriated by the squatters for pastoral development. The Gunai had been driven to retreat to the higher and more remote land of the Snowy Mountains; as de Villiers wrote in the *Argus* in 1847, “The natives... frequent the most inaccessible parts, in consequence of being so constantly hunted by the native police and settlers should they dare to appear on any forest land.” Attention to the history of the Gunai during the nineteenth century reveals the multiple, brutal ways in which they were subjected to colonial technologies of capture. Gippsland may be famous for one fabricated captivity case, but its history is rife with other, highly correlated, examples of captive (Indigenous) bodies.

◇ Anti-Trickster Strategy: The Colonialist Captivity Narrative as Absolution

Indians, the original possessors of the land, seem to haunt the collective unconscious of the white man and to the degree that one can identify the conflicting images of the Indian which stalk the white man’s waking perceptions of the world one can outline the deeper problems of identity and alienation that trouble him... Underneath all the conflicting images of the Indian one fundamental truth emerges—the white man knows that he is alien and knows that North America is Indian—and he will never let go of the Indian image because he thinks that by some clever manipulation he can achieve an authenticity that cannot ever be his.

– Vine Deloria, Jr., “American Fantasy,” qtd in Huhndorf, *Going*, vii.

Underneath its masks, *racism is the racist’s way of giving himself absolution.*

– Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 194.

The mythologies of Eliza and the White Woman of Gippsland, like many other factive colonialist captivity tales, served, at certain points in their histories, as what I will call *narratives of absolution*: texts which exonerate the captive and by extension relieve the colony she symbolizes from responsibility for the inter-cultural conflict which generated her capture. In general terms, these colonial narratives serve to mask from public view, and from the settler-invader's conscience, the more wide-ranging colonial capture and control of the land, its resources, and First peoples. While individual historical tales of white captivity can and have productively be(en) read as examples of autobiography, personal testimony, sensational pulp, or ethnographic investigation, and while contextual analysis of individual texts is indispensable, it is also important to note that the compendium of these tales or the genre of the colonialist captivity considered as a whole over time performs an inversion of the basic elements of the process of colonial invasion-settlement: assigning the role of 'captor' to the Indigenous person whose land, and perhaps body or family as well, has or will shortly be stolen, and the role of 'captive' to a European who has ventured a great distance and demonstrated a marked mobility to arrive at and attempt to seize control of this land. This inversion of the overarching pattern of colonial contact, this attempt to overwrite the actual process of colonization's capture of the colony with an atypical or reversed scenario of the colonist as captive, demands our attention—especially since a prime function of these 'inverse' narratives of colonialist captivity was to distract or preclude the reader from attending to the implications and problematics of the violence enacted by this very process of colonization. These are tales which overwrite colonial violence with counter claims of

Indigenous violence, tales which obscure white culpability by emphatically asserting white victimization.

Liam Davison's 1994 novel *The White Woman* chronicles this absolving function of the White Woman's story when it explores how predictable colonial stories of Indigene violence comforted the colonist and relieved him of certain obligations. Short listed for both *The Age* Book of the Year and the Victorian Premier's Awards, and now also published in French translation, Davison's historiographic novel explores the motives and actions of de Villier's expedition via the voice of its last living member who recounts, both querulously and philosophically, his reminiscences of this "Quest" that was "more than an expedition" (4). Davison's aged narrator recollects that at the outset of their expedition in search of the White Woman he and his peers found it easy to believe the popularized tales of unprovoked Gunai treachery and cruelty because,

In a way the stories reassured us. Oh yes, we felt anger, disgust, the urge for retribution, even grief... but underneath it all there was the satisfaction of having our fears confirmed. They were beyond civilization, beyond goodness. There was nothing we could do. (36)

This passage pinpoints a principal attraction of the type of the anti-Aboriginal logic espoused in the classic captivity text: the settler who holds the Indigenes to be utterly savage is able to free himself from a duty to rectify or take responsibility for their situation. The responsibility to negotiate with Aborigines in good faith is displaced by the faux responsibility to protect the violated woman: an adroit substitution of obligations enables an (at least partial) absolution of the settler-invader. The Indigene violence typical of the colonialist captivity narrative might produce in the colonist not only sensationalized fear but also moral relief.

In reassuring the colonist of the savagery he had been trained by imperial discourse to expect, the classic captivity narrative operates as what James Youngblood Henderson calls *anti-trickster discourse*. Henderson explains that “Lessons are learned from trickster actions and transformations that encourage new interpretations and awakening” (73).²⁷ Henderson’s anti-trickster is also *transformative* but paradoxically so because it “represents a cognitive force of artificial European thought, a differentiated consciousness, ever changing in its creativity to justify the oppression and domination of contemporary Indigenous peoples and their spiritual guardians” (58). Anti-trickster strategies “appear in many guises” but are essentially a conservatism interested not in revelation but in obfuscation and in maintaining the status quo. While the traditional Indigenous trickster fosters new interpretations, the typical colonialist captivity narrative—bound by generic precedent and what Henderson identifies as the “artificial context” of imperialism and filled with formulaic reiterations of colonial stereotype and misinformation—embodies the obfuscating and conservative principles of the anti-trickster. The classic captivity is “ever-changing” and tailored to its specific circumstances, but it draws consistently upon three primary, interrelated, anti-revelatory or anti-trickster mechanisms: justification, obfuscation, and projection.

- Narratives of Justification: Strategies of Innocence

Very often history is a means of denying the past... To fit it, force it, function it, to suck out the spirit until it looks the way you think it should.

²⁷ Henderson explains that “Aboriginal traditions are taught through a paradoxical force in nature known as the “trickster.” The Mikmaq refer to him as *Klooscap* or badger, the Anishinabe call the force *Nanabush*, among the Cree the force is known as *wisakedjak* or coyote or crow, the Blackfoot confederacy call the force *nabi*, the Lakota refer to this force as spider, and the people of the western coast refer to this force as raven.” (73)

– Jeannette Winterson, *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*, 93-4.

Albert Memmi, among others, has made note of the clear correlation of practices of racism and justification: “Racism is the generalized and final assigning of value to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser’s benefit and at his victim’s expense, in order to justify the former’s own privileges or aggression.” Indeed, Memmi proposed the term “aggression-justification” to denote the primary mechanism of racism (*Dominated*, 185-6) and it would fit well most classic depictions of captivity. Scholars who have studied the factive colonialist captivity genre concur that these texts frequently served not only as personal justifications, designed to defend the captive’s reputation, but also as broad, communal justifications of settlement, in that they typically upheld and emphasized the (artificial) rights and rightness of the invasion-settlement project.²⁸ Lynette Russell notes that two of the most common justifications found in colonial texts for the removal of Aborigines from their lands “involved demonstrating the need of European intervention” by portraying the Aborigines as “either pernicious or pathetic” both of which solicited colonial intervention (57). Captivity narratives, writes Aboriginal scholar Larissa Behrendt, “attempt to prove the great need for non-Aboriginal settlement (to “tame” and “civilize” the “natives”) and to legitimate the colonizer’s theft of land and resources by showing Aborigines as ‘primitive’ and lacking attachment to their traditional lands” (166); they enact what Margery Fee, in the context of Canadian literature more generally,

²⁸ Among the earliest critics to write of colonialist captivity narratives in terms of the justification they provided for Indigenous dispossession was Louise K. Barnett, who argued in 1975 that the disproportionate attention allotted to the white captivity experience derived from a need to rationalize and justify the presence of the settler in the New World; it was easier, she contended, for newcomers to express outrage at the “cruelty of the Indian in capturing white women and children than to defend the policy of separating the Indian from his land” (4).

has termed a “white ‘literary land claim’” (17).

In the Gippsland case, this lust for land is evident in the content of the two surviving journals penned by the expeditionists in search of the White Woman, both of which are replete with descriptions of the region’s suitability for pastoral development; they are, Darian-Smith observes, as much records of the colonists’ desire to acquire this landscape as to rescue anyone from its inhabitants (“Capturing” 25). It is also useful to note the way in which the very idea of the White Woman allowed, even forced, perceptions of this landscape to change. Not only did the tale itself, by demonizing the Gunai, serve as a powerful counter to pro-Aboriginal sympathies in the Port Phillip District which threatened to impede the squatters’ access to tribal lands, thereby influencing the patterns of land use and allotment permitted in the region, but the idea of the Woman also changed how the landscape was seen: transforming it in the colonial reader’s mind from an unknown region or a contested tract of bush to the dramatic scene of a tragedy awaiting its comic resolution. Observing the manner in which the story of this legendary captive affected contemporary cartographic understandings of Gippsland, Carr notes that the White Woman was deployed as an “unwitting agent of spatial politics.” It was “not necessary for the woman to exist, or for expeditionists to encounter or rescue her, in order that the space of frontier conflict be reconceptualized as the site of the woman’s degradation and enslavement” (*Captive* 155). As in many colonialist captivity tales the land itself, through an associative pairing with the heroine captive awaiting her gallant knight, is rendered in need of chivalric rescue or settlement.

So too was *Thoorgine* reconceived, and renamed as Fraser Island, by the settler-

invaders following Eliza and her husband's time there. Not only did the various nineteenth-century versions of Fraser's experience depict *Thoorgine* exclusively as the site of her capture, they omitted any mention of the deep connections the Badjtala have to their land and constructed the Badjtala instead as "a nomadic primitive society" which "fed the legal fiction of *terra nullius*" and facilitated white theft of this far-from-empty territory (Behrendt 180). In addition to using an alleged nomadism to undermine Badjtala land claims, Chris Healy suggests that nineteenth-century Queensland histories focused disproportionately upon the alleged cruelty of the Badtjala towards Eliza as a strategy to legitimate a "European desire, at this early stage of the occupation of Queensland, to destroy Aboriginal society" (179). Kay Schaffer concurs that such "tales of savagery" regarding Eliza Fraser circulated in order to justify "the sadistic tortures devised by... white settlers against the Aborigines" (*Wake* 104). Both the Gippsland and Fraser 'captivities' appear to have been mobilized by colonists to justify as suitable, proper, or retaliatory not only the theft of Badtjala and Gunai land, but also attempts to decimate their culture and murder their people. In this sense these colonialist captivity narratives partake of what Mary Louise Pratt has termed the denying discourse of "anti-conquest" since they function as "strategies of innocence" or justification which proclaim innocence and disavow conquest while simultaneously asserting Euro-colonial hegemony and control (7).

- Narratives of Obfuscation: Sanctioning Ignorance

[The usurper] endeavors to falsify history, he rewrites laws, he would extinguish memories—anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy.

– Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 52.

Anti-trickster strategies of justification in the colonialist captivity narrative are usually bolstered by correlated strategies of obfuscation: in order to appear innocent, evidence to the contrary must be elided, omitted, hidden, sidelined. Bearing in mind Graham Hingangaroa Smith's description of a "politics of distraction" as one composed of ideologies promulgated by dominant non-Indigenous interests which purport to support equity but which, in fact, entrench existing settler or Pākehā²⁹ privilege and which distract the Māori from pursuing their own interests (211), I considered whether colonialist captivity narratives might usefully be interpreted as *narratives of distraction* given that they so often work to draw attention toward relatively rare instances of white victimization and away from other comparable instances of violence in the colony. Distraction, however, seems too meek a term for the active mobilization and invention of the colonialist captivity *topos* as a mechanism to discredit Aboriginal perspectives and overwrite history. In a similar vein, Chris Healy argues that the "silence" commonly believed to characterize white descriptions of Australia's Aboriginal history is "far too passive a notion to have performed such a violent task of memory work: we need more active metaphors" (44-5). Hence I read colonialist captivity narratives as ones of *obfuscation*: ones which actively obscure and confuse—not just distract us from obtaining—a balanced, minimally-partisan, view of history.

As Susan Martin argues, "in Australia any version of the 'white captured by Aborigines' narrative works to obscure the facts and histories of the common and

²⁹ Pākehā is a term in the Māori language generally used to describe New Zealanders of Anglo/European extraction; to many Māori it also denotes any non-Māori or foreigner.

systematic abduction and rape of *Aboriginal* women by white men, and the abduction of Aboriginal children by white men and women” (“Captivating” 154). This dynamic of *overwrite* is evident not only in the Gippsland case but in other Australian accounts of white captivity as well. Barbara Creed has convincingly argued that the first colour film produced in Australia, *Jedda* (1955), made specific use of the dramatic allure of the classic captivity plot, with its themes of sexuality and eroticism, to cover over the story of the young Aboriginal protagonist’s original captivity and suffering as a member of the stolen generations (“Introduction” xxii). Similarly, Robert Dixon, having observed that twentieth-century colonial legislation defined the Indigenous Torres Strait Islanders as “inmates,” reveals that Ion Idreiss’s historical romances about the Islanders holding whites captive “amount to nothing less than a grotesque inversion of the truth about race relations in colonial Queensland” (114).

Such inversions of historical fact, as well as other framing practices, misplaced emphasis, selective overrepresentation, and the elision of Indigenous voice and motive (as examined in relation to Rowlandson’s text in the previous chapter) have contributed to the obfuscating function of the colonialist captivity narrative since its Puritan inauguration. This selective and insidious framing of white captivity—a sort of tunnel vision blind to any violence or hardship excepting that perpetuated against whites—in conjunction with other literary devices of tone, characterization, and point-of-view (not to mention raw racism) combine to make the typical colonialist captivity narrative a potent piece of pro-settler propaganda. In addition to actively obscuring Indigenous motives and perspectives, the colonialist captivity genre has been complicit in the larger project of

concealing colonial violence. In her extensive study of the Eliza Fraser narratives and derivatives Kay Schaffer observes that the “unpleasant aspects” of the event—including the possibility of white cannibalism and murder—which were camouflaged by nineteenth-century versions of the story in order that the tale might be useful “in the construction of subjectivity for an emerging bourgeois English audience” have only in the last three decades begun to emerge within mainstream Australian culture (*Wake* 93, 103).

This “hidden history” is what Gayatri Spivak might term a “sanctioned ignorance.” Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick shrewdly reminds us that: (i) “[i]gnorance and opacity collude or compete with [power] in mobilizing the flows of energy, desire, goods, meanings, persons”; (ii) “ignorance effects can be harnessed, licensed, and regulated on a mass scale for striking enforcements”; and (iii) ignorances “are produced by and correspond to particular knowledges and circulate as part of particular regimes of truth” (*Tendencies*, 23, 25). Settler-invaders may be accustomed to thinking of “victorious” colonial (hi)stories as merely one-sided and generative of a rather neutral lack of knowledge about the “vanquished,” when in fact this ignorance is far from neutral or natural but is rather a “weighty and occupied and consequential epistemological space” which is actively produced for a particular purpose (Sedgwick, *Epistemology* 77).

To take a discrete example from our archive, the wide circulation of the captivity genre during the colonial period not only promoted a certain, formulaic interpretation of cross-cultural encounters on the frontiers of the empire, but it also actively produced a sanctioned ignorance of alternative modes of cross-cultural encounter. One of the latter, in Australia, was the common experience of white men, often convicts, “going native”

and being consensually incorporated into an Aboriginal community: a practice more frequent by many orders of magnitude than its publicized alternative of white captivity amongst the Aborigines. Ironically, far from being captured, certain of these white men joined with Aboriginal people in resisting “the incursions of constables and soldiers into the camps in search of women to be (ab)used as concubines” (Schaffer, *Wake* 103). The persistent circulation of the story of the Fraser ‘captivity’ fostered both an ignorance of this alternate history of incorporation and capture which “did not fit colonial objectives” (Behrendt 174) and a linked “knowledge” which accorded too much historical prominence to experiences of white capture.

A multitude of such ignorances and concomitant knowledges together form the larger, generally sanctioned ignorance of colonialist violence against Indigenous nations which has been operative, in many cases since contact, in North America as well as in Australia. Following Daniel Coleman’s transposition of Slavoj Žižek’s theorization of spectral history from a psychic to a nationalistic theatre in *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*, I am interested in how this produced ignorance of colonist violence functions as what Žižek describes as *spectral* fantasmatic history. Žižek distinguishes between two types of history:

symbolic history (the set of explicit mythical narratives and ideologico-ethical prescriptions that constitute the tradition of a community—what Hegel would have called its ‘ethical substance’) and its obscene Other, the unacknowledgeable “*spectral*,” *fantasmatic history* that effectively sustains the explicit symbolic tradition, but has to remain foreclosed if it is to be operative... the spectral fantasmatic history tells the story of a traumatic event that “continues not to take place”, that cannot be inscribed into the very symbolic space it brought about by its intervention. (64)

We have seen how the colonialist captivity narrative was mobilized at crucial moments in

the inter-cultural colonial contest as such an “explicit mythical narrative” or *symbolic* history; it is ethically compelling now to turn to that under-acknowledged experience which sustained or generated the need for the symbolic history which would, in turn, obfuscate or foreclose it. For those of us living in (neo-)colonial nations, it is important that we grasp the fact that in many cases it was Indigenous experiences of captivity and other colonial violence (foreclosed or misrecognised in official colonial accounts) which “brought about” or necessitated the invention, circulation or exaggeration of the colonialist captivity narrative. Frequently Indigenous captivity experiences were in fact the constitutive impetus for colonialist captivity narratives.

Žižek elaborates that it is necessary not only to identify with the evident symbolic tradition but also to “assume the spectral dimension that sustains [that] tradition” (64). This theory coincides with the description offered by Davison’s novel of the way in which a fantasmatic—known yet unknown, recognized but repressed—history of extreme settler violence “haunted” the colonial society of Melbourne in the generations following the invention of the White Woman of Gippsland. As Davison’s writing is particularly evocative of how this spectral history may have been circulated and received over time, I will quote it at length:

There were other stories though [besides that of the White Woman]—not fully told or fully admitted to—but more unsettling for that... They still linger after all these years, snippets of gossip, part hearsay, part conjecture, but always with the possibility of truth behind them; things about ourselves so far outside the realm of acceptability we couldn’t hope to face them. They didn’t reach the papers. Instead, they ran like a dark, heretical undercurrent beneath us. And we edged around them, not daring to test how deep they ran... And the [place]names: Boney Point, Butcher’s Creek, Slaughterhouse; they echoed around Melbourne, resonant with cries and shots and screams, until we couldn’t help but hear—soft at first

like the sound of wind through trees, then building—*Massacre, Massacre*,
passing from mouth to mouth in a persistent, unavoidable whisper. (36-
37)

This spectral history of the terrible massacre of the Gunai, this “dark, heretical undercurrent beneath us,” which has long been whispered and long ignored by Australia’s symbolic history has recently been the subject of literary and historical exposés.³⁰ This is a positive step, for, as Daniel Coleman notes, “A major antidote to nationalism’s required forgetting... comes in a refusal to forget the history of genocide and cultural decimation of Indigenous peoples... that is disavowed by the image of the peaceful settler” (7-8). Or, as Sedgwick puts it, we need to fight “against the killing pretense that a culture does not know what it knows” (*Tendencies* 51).

- Narratives of Projection

The barbarian is, in the first place, the man who believes in barbarism.
– Levi Strauss, qtd. in Trinh’s *Woman, Native, Other*, 54.

Economic and political considerations in and of themselves, as a number of theorists have suggested, offer an insufficient understanding of the colonial project: to obtain a more accurate analysis the psychic dimensions and motivations of the parties involved also require scrutiny. Anne McClintock insists that male colonists’ “unsavory rages, their massacres and rapes, their atrocious rituals of militarized masculinity sprang not only from the economic lust for spices, silver and gold, but also from the implacable rage of paranoia” (28). Likewise, Michael Taussig directs our attention toward the unconscious

³⁰ In addition to Davison’s searing novelistic treatment of settler violence in Gippsland, see Morgan’s regional history, *The Settling of Gippsland* (1997), and Gardner’s *Gippsland Massacres: The Destruction of the Kurnai tribes 1800-1860* (2001) and *Our Founding Murdering Father: Angus McMillan and the Kurnai Tribe* (1990).

and psychological motivations for colonial terror, noting that “behind the conscious self-interest that motivates terror and torture, from the heavenly spheres of corporate search for profits... to the more strictly personal equations of self-interest, lie intricately constructed, long-standing, unconscious cultural formations of meaning—modes of feeling... (9). I am particularly interested in one unconscious “mode of [not] feeling,” in the role *projection* has played in the germination of the culture of the classic captivity, in how this genre can be read as a psychic defence mechanism employed by colonists to repudiate the violence of their spectral fantasmatic history.³¹

Like Memmi, I subscribe to the theory that at root many racist accusations are derived from the racist’s own—often unconscious—sense of guilt towards his victim (*Dominated* 192); in order to rid themselves of this discomfiting guilt many colonists have taken up the self-defensive practice of projection. This ego defense mechanism, first mentioned by Sigmund Freud in 1895 in the context of the paranoia McClintock diagnoses as central to the British colonial enterprise, is an “operation whereby qualities, feelings, wishes or even objects, which the subject refuses to recognize or rejects in himself, are expelled from the self and located in another person or thing” (Laplanche 349). “The mechanism of projection is... employ[ed by infantile and paranoid egos] as a means of repudiating their own activities and wishes when these become dangerous and of laying responsibility for them at the door of some external agent.” The paranoid

³¹ Annette Kolodny has also written, in slightly different terms, of the Indigene captor as a European projection; she suggests that the Indigene demon becomes the receptacle for the socially unutterable anger felt by white pioneer women towards their husbands for bringing them to isolated and dangerous frontier territory. Kolodny explains, “the anger she feels at her husband for bringing her there can be channeled through the captivity narrative onto the dusky figure of the Indian, a projection of her husband’s darker side” (109).

subject “dissociates itself from its proxies and is excessively intolerant of its judgment of them” (Freud 123). It seems likely that the “excessively intolerant” condemnations of the Indigenes who populate colonialist captivity narratives are symptomatic of such paranoid projection.

Although the colonialist captivity genre has rarely been approached academically in primarily psychic rather than economic, historical or literary terms, one of its key tropes—that of ritualistic cannibalism—has been recognized for some time by a number of literary and historical critics to be, in the main, a colonial projection; I am interested in extending this insight to include the ways in which the colonialist captivity narrative often similarly works as a defensive dissociation. Ritual cannibalism (unlike the ethnocentrically-sanctioned practice of survival cannibalism³²) shares a good portion of its genealogy with the colonialist captivity scenario: its principal victims being captives, it and rape standing as the two prime (and primal) fears or devices that drive the plot of the traditional captivity tale, and it being the extreme endpoint of capture—the ultimate incorporation into a foreign culture. The colonist’s “fear of engulfment” may well “express itself most acutely in the cannibal trope” (McClintock 27) but it appears at least as frequently in the trope of captivity. In 1978, Hayden White was an early proponent of the now widely-accepted premise that European commentaries on cannibalism (and a number of other taboos) are “a projection of repressed desires onto the lives of the

³² Peter Kitson has traced the distinction drawn in European Enlightenment thought between *ritual* and *survival* cannibalism: “In using the word ‘cannibal’ anthropologists usually denote the social practice of the eating of human flesh in the form of a [sacred] ritual... by and large anthropologists do not find the subject of the other main type of cannibalism, survival cannibalism, to be a fruitful area of debate, despite the fact that survival cannibalism is well-documented and clearly occurs, whereas there is skepticism about the extent and significance of ritual or social cannibalism...”

natives” (qtd in Kitson). Or, as Peter Hulme explains, by way of induction from the Fourth Lateran Council’s literalist interpretation of the Eucharist in 1215, “boundaries of community are often created by accusing those outside the boundary of the very practice on which the integrity of that community is founded” (85, 187-91): an assessment also aptly applicable to the practice of colonial capture. Among those cognizant and condemnatory of the grim irony of accusations of cannibalism being launched by the selfsame colonists at work devouring the body politic of Indigenous America, is Edward Galeano who writes that “Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in the throats of the Indian civilizations” (11).

In the writings arising from both the Fraser and Gippsland ‘captivities’ there is a doubled projection at play: the projection of cannibalism onto the Aborigines is enclosed within a larger projection of captivity onto the colonial heroine. Eliza’s initial deposition made no reference whatsoever to the Badtjala as cannibals yet her subsequent much sensationalized account included this accusation, among others. Historians now concur that the only plausible contemporary threat of cannibalism came from the crew of Captain Fraser’s ship: his party being near enough to starvation after two weeks at sea to have discussed drawing lots; he being afraid to land on *Thoorgine* lest the Aborigines there proved cannibals; and Hodge, the lone survivor of the party who split from Fraser after the wreck, being suspected by many of having resorted to anthropophagy (Behrendt 147; Schaffer, *Wake* 116; Healy 168). It is the *excessive* quality of Hodge’s account of himself—symptomatic of projection—that prompts historian Michael Alexander to speculate that he is disguising his own cannibalism (Schaffer, *Wake* 116). This white

cannibalism is enacted in a recent filmic version of the Fraser saga (Healy 161). More certain than Hodge's actions is that Captain Fraser refracted his own fear of being anthropophagous onto the Badtjala—a nation of people never known to have engaged in this practice.

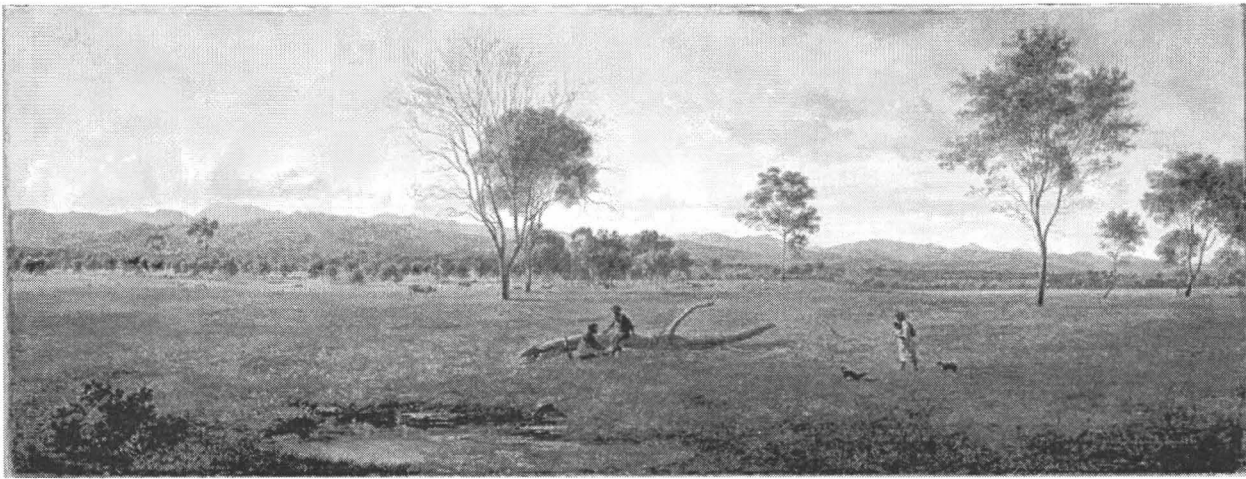


Figure 2.4

Eugène von Guérard, "Panoramic view of Mr Angus McMillan's station, Bushy Park, Gippsland, Victoria." Right-hand panel. 1861. National Library of Australia.

If Captain Fraser "saw" in the Badtjala a cannibalism akin to that his own crew were considering, what are we to make of the fact that the man who first wrote of "seeing" the White Woman is also the man arguably most responsible for the massacre of the Gunai? In his original letter to the *Sydney Herald* in 1840, Angus McMillan catalogued the items of European origin which he had come across in a recently abandoned Gunai camp in Gippsland and concluded that these items, some he thought perhaps soiled with blood, were evidence of "a dreadful massacre of Europeans, men, women, and children... perpetrated by the aborigines in the immediate vicinity of the

spot.” It seems more than chance that would have this man “discovering” one dreadful (unsubstantiated white) ‘massacre’ while manoeuvring to cover a series of others (of the Gunai). One might interpret McMillan’s accusation of the Gunai of acts which mimic in content those he and his peers enacted upon them an unconscious confession of colonial guilt.

◇ Illustrating Absolution



Figure 2.5
“America.” Engraving by Theodore Galle (ca. 1600) after a drawing by Jan van der Straet (ca. 1575).

Amerigo Vespucci the voyager arrives from the sea. A crusader standing erect, his body in armor, he bears the weapons of meaning... Before him is the Indian “America,” a nude woman reclining in her hammock, an unnamed presence of difference... An inaugural scene: after a moment of stupor... the conqueror will write the body of the other and trace there his

own history. From her he will make a historied body—a blazon—of his labours and phantasms... This erotic and warlike scene has an almost mythic value. It represents the beginning of a new function of writing in the West[:] a colonization of the body by the discourse of power. This is *writing that conquers*... It will transform the space of the other into a field of expansion for a system of production.

– Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, xxv-xxvi.

The inauguration of de Certeau's *writing that conquers* is staged in Jan van der Straet's famous engraving of Amerigo Vespucci's arrival in the continent which would come to bear his name (Figure 2.5). de Certeau contends this new mode of writing will make of the body of the native other a *blazon* of the colonist's history, labour, and psyche: a description befitting and multiply-resonant not only for this emergent, early modern stage of writing that conquers but also for a later variant of this initial mode: the colonialist captivity genre. As heraldry the emblazoned Indigene announces the identity and preoccupations of the colonizer and provides symbols or propaganda by which to read his actions; as a shield the blazon not only underlines the aggressive and militaristic character of colonial conquest but functions as a defensive device designed to protect the conqueror and his coterie from assaults of conscience or morality. Written into being, the emblazoned Indigene enables absolution.



Figure 2.6

Titlepage of the *Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings, and Miraculous Escape of Mrs. Eliza Fraser* (1837).

Indebted to a visual tradition which reaches back to that of van der Straet's drawing, the above pair of illustrations in Figure 2.6 grace the title page of the American edition of Eliza Fraser's narrative, published in New York in 1837, and depict that text's three climatic moments: the widowing of Eliza Fraser, the alleged anthropophagic roasting of Brown, and the fabricated forced 'marriage' of Eliza to an elderly chieftain.

(Neither of the latter two events is present in Eliza's original testimony or in that offered by the other survivors of the *Sterling Castle* wreck.) Replete with tomahawks, feather headdresses, and tepees, these illustrations and the accompanying prose narrative transpose the Australian incident to America and "transform" it to mimic the requisite plotline of the standard American pulp captivity; indeed this particular pair was used to illustrate at least one other subsequent American colonialist captivity narrative (Schaffer, *Wake* 52). Emma Willoughby has noted that this process of transcontinental cross-pollination provided an avenue through which colonists across the empire could create bonds of identification with one another, thus strengthening the imperial project as a whole. Both van der Straet's representation of America and these depictions of Fraser pivot upon the sexualized power of an armed man over a woman, with each understood as an iconic representative of her or his respective culture and their interaction symbolic of a much larger inter-cultural balance of power. Similarly both trade rather gratuitously upon the familiar ritualistic cannibal scene as a means to establish the alterity of the Indigene. The later pair inverts the schema of its antecedent in that the tools denoting mastery are no longer held by the sea explorer but rather by the Indigene captor and in that the races of the potential rapist and victim have been exchanged. However, the symbolic asymmetry of power along racialized and sexualized axes remains constant.

As part of the oeuvre of writing that conquers, these illustrations of Fraser are particularly suggestive of the enabling role played by mechanisms of absolution within this mode of literature. The excessive and inaccurate assignation of brutality to the Indigene in these American illustrations is symptomatic of their operation as colonial

projection; so too is their reliance upon the classic projected trope of cannibalism and their circulation at a moment when relations between the American state and the nations indigenous to the eastern portion of the continent were in crisis. In a brilliant deconstruction of van der Straet's "America," McClintock reveals that "the augural scene of discovery becomes a scene of ambivalence, suspended between an imperial megalomania, with its fantasy of unstoppable rapine—and a contradictory fear of engulfment, with its fantasy of dismemberment and emasculation. This scene, like many imperial scenes, is a document of both paranoia and megalomania" (26-7).

Paranoia, in the two Eliza Fraser images, has run rampant. It has left little sign of a colonialist megalomania which no longer needed heralding in this the age of the American Indian Removal Act, at this moment when the colonial state was exercising its control and was perhaps less interested in boasting of this mastery than of exculpating itself from the dehumanizing violence by which it had been obtained. Many Americans at this point were at least partially uneasy in their relation to the implications of this dominance. While a sense of colonialist mastery is deliberately banished from these two overdrawn images of white victimization, it is nevertheless obvious enough in the narrative which accompanies these illustrations: just as Eliza crosses the threshold of the "savage ruffian's" tepee, to be subjected to that fate worse than, as she puts it, "the devouring jaws of a lion," she is dramatically rescued and white male colonial control is reinstated—if indeed it were ever actually interrupted. The tale is at pains both to initially inflate and ultimately deflate the threat to colonial order posed by the Indigene captor. Thus, the colonialist captivity narrative, at least in this sensationalized instance,

operates not as a sustained fantasy of or longing for white victimization but rather as a strategic and temporary projection, an exercise in self-absolution.

Signed into law by President Andrew Jackson in 1830, the controversial Indian Removal Act enabled the—predominantly coerced—relocation of some 100,000 Native Americans from their eastern homelands to a new and generally more barren set of western territories; this relocation opened 25 million acres of land to white settlement and to slavery. While Jackson, in a resolutely paternalistic discourse, marketed the removal to Native Americans as a way he, as their “Father,” could protect them from their “white brothers” who were causing them trouble, it is clear that many whites supported the law as a means to gain access to the wealth of Native-held land. The effect upon Native nations was devastating; coerced into moving to a territory that fell far short of its promised attributes, forced to cede their ancestral lands and gravesites, huge numbers of Native Americans died in this removal process, either during the demanding and ill-provisioned trek west or from disease and starvation once they arrived there. In 1836, the year before Fraser’s narrative was published in New York, for instance, the Creek nation lost some 3,500 of its 15,000 members in the journey westward; those who resisted removal “were bound in chains and marched in double file” (Digital History). Although supported by the majority of non-Native Americans, the Removal Act was fiercely contested in Congress, was sharply criticized by many Christian missionaries, and was vigorously resisted on many fronts by the Indigenous nations themselves. For example, the Cherokee Nation filed two Supreme Court cases in 1831 and 1832 to prevent white encroachment on the territory, the Sauk and Fox launched the Black Hawk War in 1832,

the Creek fought the Second Creek War of 1836, and the Seminoles mounted an intrepid guerrilla war that cost Florida 20 million dollars to put down.

In this context of racial conflict the deliberate Americanization of this edition of Fraser's tale by the publisher by using the terms Indian and squaw rather than Aborigine or Black, altering the plot to match American convention, visually depicting obviously Native American people and landscape, etcetera, is noteworthy and points to a desire to have the tale read as directly applicable to, or even indistinguishable from, the current American situation. Readers of this transposed text could easily have mobilized it to justify the American removal process. Indeed, Kay Schaffer and D'Arcy Randall have argued that the boom in the publication of colonialist captivity narratives in the United States in the 1830s was at least partially due to the controversy of the removal process; they speculate that "[p]erhaps in an effort to justify these [Removal] policies... the pulp thrillers displaced the central issue of brutality and violence by white settlers towards Indigenous peoples" (120). For an American audience at this time the Fraser narrative's emphasis on the inherent incivility and immutable barbarism of the "Indians" likely would have worked to discredit the then-prominent resistance to removal mounted by the so-called "Five Civilized Tribes"—the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, and Cherokee. These nations, having partaken significantly in the process of assimilation that had for some time stood as the main American state policy alternative to removal, were vigorously opposed to this policy shift. As Cherokee chief John Ross, backed by fifteen thousand of his nation, put it to Congress in 1836:

Little did [we] anticipate, that when taught to think and feel as the American citizen, and to have with him a common interest, [we] were to

be despoiled by [our] guardian, to become strangers and wanderers in the land of [our] fathers, forced to return to the savage life, and to seek a new home in the wilds of the far west, and that without [our] consent.

In his petition Ross draws strategically upon the longstanding European binary pair of civilized-savage to assert his nation's civility and thus their right to remain in their homeland. Fraser, on the other hand, mobilises this same binary, in a move characteristic of western logocentric thought, to privilege the pair's dominant term: civilization. Fraser's Americanized narrative—with its arsenal of unimaginative images of universal savagery and tired tropes of Indigene cannibalism—appears a crude counter to the creative and varied means used by Indigenous Nations and their allies to resist the practice of removal.

In part, the effectiveness of such crude or hackneyed forms is a result of technological domination: Indigenous nations generally lacked access to large-scale apparatuses of dissemination like those of the imperial press which efficiently exported the colonialist captivity *topos* from colony to metropole to colony. The *portability* of this text or the ease with which it was co-opted to American ends indicates an inter-colonial fluency with the captivity *topos* which depended upon the mechanically reproducible nature of print and image.³³ This portability of Fraser's text also obscures Badtjala history and lifeways, relegating them, to borrow de Certeau's term, into generic blazons of colonialist desires.

The Americanization of Fraser's story is also suggestive of how it, like much writing that conquers, is an anti-trickster strategy. Tailored to its circumstance and able

³³ I am grateful to Daniel Coleman for this insight.

to transform itself like the trickster it imitates, this anti-trickster tale is less about any sort of true cross-cultural understanding or reparative revelation than about reinvigorating the threadbare tropes of exotic and barbarous savagery that had long served to bolster a dubious, dichromatic, dualistic project of conquest. Just as van de Straet's submissive "America allegorically represents nature's invitation to conquest" (McClintock 26), so too do these images of Eliza Fraser seem designed to acquit or provide the colonist with what Memmi has termed the racist's "alibi" (*Dominated*, 193).

The term *remove* is a resonant one for scholars of the classic American captivity narrative—it being the way Mary Rowlandson structured the genre's ur-text: with each successive remove, or chapter, she was taken further from her hearth into the "*vast and desolate Wilderness*" (71). Marked by physical privations and the loss of her loved ones to sickness along the way, her trek is not entirely dissimilar in content from that of the thousands of Indigenous Americans forced to remove on the "Trail of Tears." What is crucially different is the scale, impact, and context of the "Indian Removals." In numerical terms alone the quantity of Native Americans displaced in the 1830s (never mind the masses who experienced different forms of colonial dislocation before and after this policy) dwarfs the number of Euro-American experiences of removal. Nor are these experiences comparable when one considers either the ancient relation and culturally integral role which obtains between Native American nations and their homelands or the fact that such removals were not relatively rare components of a discrete instance of inter-cultural warfare but were rather part of a colonial process sustained over centuries whereby Indigenous populations endured numerous forms of severe, at times genocidal,

removal.

◇ Causal, Correlated, or Twinned Racial Captivities

A survey of the colonialist captivity oeuvre suggests that in many cases a published white captivity narrative will have what we might call a silent partner or an eclipsed twin: an Indigenous captivity from the same time and place which generated or was generated by the known white captivity but which is lesser known and often not even recognized as a captivity *per se*. Hence not only can we argue that the colonialist captivity text serves to invert the grand pattern of colonization and to distract or absolve the reader from the oppression caused by this imperial project of annexation, we can also see that these narratives typically emerge from or create an associated Indigenous captivity scenario, usually of much larger proportions. If the colonial imagination can be said to have birthed both forms of racial capture, the Indigenous captivity experience has remained the illegitimate, disowned offspring. That these related Indigenous captivities have been barred from the classic colonialist captivity genre due to a racial double standard is reason to demand the redefinition of the genre to acknowledge and attend to this larger set of Indigenous captivity experiences which so often occurred in correlation with precisely those historical cases of white captivity heralded by the genre.

As we have seen, the legend of the White Woman operated in correlation with a constellation of captures which both preceded and followed it, while Fraser's tale is, in many ways, a causal *antecedent* for the host of Badtjala confinements which would occur in its wake. As Fiona Foley states, "Mrs. Fraser's incarceration on the island would, in turn, imprison the traditional owners of Fraser Island, the Badtjala" (165). In stark

contrast to those who celebrate Eliza's fortitude amidst the reputed terrors of the bush, Foley insists that we look instead at the huge price extracted from the Badtjala as a result of her falsified account and at the series of actual captures authorized and facilitated by it. Schaffer concurs, noting both that Fraser's tale mobilized a set of discursive strategies to "accomplish an appropriation and an effacement of Indigenous cultures which were not in fact subordinated or colonised at the time" and that for many locals her "entrance into history signals the demise of Aboriginal culture in the region" (*Wake* 30, 244). There are a number of ways in which Fraser's story, while certainly not the only impetus for the subsequent capture of Badtjala bodies, can be seen to have aided and abetted in this process: the geographical information collected by her "rescue" party later served as military intelligence in the conquest of Fraser Island (Healy 173); Curtis's monograph on Fraser contributed to "the rapid extension of racial colonialism and the fatal imposition of Christianity" on *Thoorgine* (Schaffer, "Captivity" 10); and Fraser's allegations that the Badtjala were deficient mothers, homemakers and cooks were later cited as grounds for the removal of Badtjala children from their community by the Aborigines Protection Board (Behrendt 163). So does one captivity beget many.

◇ Recent Anti-Colonialist Revisionism

Although James Warman, after helping de Villier search for the White Woman in 1846, had publicly decried the Gippsland squatters who "think no more of shooting [the Gunai] than they do of eating their dinners" and want "nothing more nor less than their extermination" even though the Aborigines wanted to be on "good terms with the white fellows" (qtd in Carr, "Cabin'd" 170), for many decades there has been a profound

resistance to fully acknowledging or redressing this type of claim and it is only recently that the history of such genocidal violence against the Gunai has been more openly discussed and made the subject of academic study. It isn't that this grisly string of events has been forgotten, for they are remembered in oral histories and family records and even, as Davison's *The White Woman* suggests, in the land itself. In a poetic figuration of the fact that suppressed spectral history will out in the end, Davison scripts the calls of birds to serve as testimony to a story that refuses to remain fully submerged: "the unnerving mimicry of lyrebirds" replicates "dull sounds like shattering bone followed by low, drawn-out wails of mock grief and the sharp discharge of carbines" (27). Through this echoing "repertoire of stolen sounds" Davison encourages us to recognize that despite its technologies of control the imperial project could never fully delimit interpretations of it. The truth of the White Woman was contested even as her legend was first being reported and now, in the avowedly postcolonial late-twentieth century, anti-colonial understandings of her fiction and the violence it masked are gaining credibility in official and mainstream Australian discourses. Listening to the folk histories of Gippsland, scouring its records, considering place names and grave sites, historians such as Peter Gardner and Phillip Pepper have compiled authoritative documentations of the massacre of the Gunai. Their work informs a reconciliation movement which has recently petitioned the Electoral Commission of Gippsland to change the name of the McMillan District in recognition that Angus McMillan was, to borrow the title of one of Gardner's books, *Our Founding Murdering Father* (Morgan).

This revisionist approach to colonial history has encouraged many invader-settlers and their descendents who would once have subscribed to the type of racist imperial paradigm promoted by a narrative like that of the White Woman to reconsider their stance. What does one do upon realizing that one has bought into what was merely a narrative of distraction? That one's wealth and citizenship were purchased with brutal violence? That one's material possessions are likely derived at least in part from Indigenous dispossession? These are questions which apply to most newcomers now living in the nations founded upon British imperial invasion and ones the narrator of *The White Woman* is faced with early in his three-month expedition in search of the elusive captive of Gippsland when his party comes upon the site of a mass murder, a river bank desecrated with some hundred dismembered human corpses. Davison takes this chance to reiterate a central precept of the novel: the way pre-existing narratives influence interpretation. On first seeing the bones, our narrator comes to the predictable conclusion prescribed by the colonial logic dominant at the time: that these bones must evince black cruelty against white settlers, must be the remains of the White Woman's fellow passengers and crew, slain without provocation by the Aborigines. It would, the narrator reflects, have suited the newspapers' purpose, as well as the narrator's own, to read the evidence in this way, to run sensationalistic and moralistic headlines in the papers—"British Survivors Slaughtered by Blacks" (66). But, of course, the victims had not been white, though their killers had been.

Davison is keen to probe how de Villier's men, as those publicly charged to fight barbarism, would handle this evidence of it and he scripts a range of responses in the

party spanning satisfaction, indifference, and outrage at this huge loss of Gunai life. Davison has crafted the scene so as to underscore its current moral relevance for his readers by implicating the official “listener” of the narrator’s story—the unnamed son of a man who accompanied the narrator on his expedition to find the White Woman—in the violence and by playing on the reader’s natural tendency to be interpolated as that listener when the narrator addresses his comments to him in the generic second person. Counting on the reader’s tendency to be hailed by the narrator’s address of “you,” Davison’s text is structured so as to push readers to take on as their own some of the responsibility or guilt the narrator assigns the listener. The narrator pointedly interrupts his description of how carbines were wielded by the squatters and Police to smash the skulls of helpless Gunai to make the point that the listener’s father was “handy with a carbine butt” and to underscore the relationship and responsibility that obtains between the father and son: “Yes, you’ve got his shoulders, there’s no escaping it. Give me a look at you” (68). There is “no escaping,” the narrator seems to be signalling in his choice of words, the debt of guilt the father bequeaths to the son. Further, the narrator wants “a look at” or an assessment of “us.” What responsibility, the reader is asked to consider, do “we” have now for this series of massacres?

By this point in the novel our protagonist is a trusted (though not infallible) narrator and he, in contrast to the listener’s father, is shocked and disgusted by the massacre and determined that this wrong be righted and written. Shocked too is Davison’s character of James Warman:

It was as if he'd suddenly found himself on the wrong side of some line
he'd always imagined was there, or worse, that the line had disappeared
and he had nothing at all to hold to in the miles of scrub around him. (67)

In this single sentence Davison handily illustrates the potency of belief systems, of artificial paradigms, of stories which provide guidelines for how to understand the world's phenomena, and of the shock which can follow upon the failure of these stories. Habituated to orienting himself by way of a collection of colonial stories, not least of which was that of the White Woman, Davison's Warman suddenly finds these tales and their truisms terribly false. Without these usual tools for interpretation he is momentarily lost. He sees head on what these tales were to distract him from. Like the narrator he had donned the trappings of the gallant rescuer dictated by the script of the White Woman only to find himself on the stage, if you will, of an utterly different type of play. Thus, Davison's novel offers insight into how the average colonial citizen was able at this particular juncture of time and space to be seduced, defined, or empowered by the distracting classic captivity plot of the White Woman and how, conversely, they might be surprised, unhinged, or weakened by the discovery of the inadequacy and inaccuracy of the colonial mythology in which they had put stock.

Davison's image of Warman face to face with the utterly unpalatable residue of colonial brutality, bereft of the comforting role he had adopted for himself from the legend of the White Woman, is instructive of the allure of the classic captivity story as a narrative of absolution. For Davison's narrator this function of diversion becomes key:

You see why we had to find her? Why we had to believe? Which story would you prefer to hear; the virtuous woman lost in the bush, held by savages against her will, *left to undergo a fate worse than death itself* unless we rescue her. Or the other one about ourselves? You see how

attractive she becomes now, how much she justifies? You see what we'd have to face without her? (37)

In urging his readership to see through narratives of distraction and “face” the legacy of colonial violence against Indigenous nations Davison is part of a larger trend, visible in Canada as well as in Australia, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century to use literature and art as a vehicle to stage revisionist, anti-colonial, performances of pivotal or canonical moments of colonial contest.

Kay Schaffer has compiled a catalogue of how Fraser's iconic “contact” experience on *Thoorgine* has been subject to this type of remodelling: in the late 1980s and 1990s, Fraser became the “repository for white Australian guilt about its past relationship to black Australians” (*Wake* 228)—a status evident in the way in which her story was “revived and critiqued within Australia for its inherent racism, its silencing of Aboriginal voices and fates” (McNiven et al 9). Allan Marett's Japanese Noh play *Eliza* (1989) and Gillian Coote's film *Island of Lies* (1991) are two prime examples of this move toward examining the once-spectral racial violence of the Australian frontier. While Schaffer is careful to caution that these tales do not have a monopoly on ‘truth,’ she emphasizes that they “introduce a new ethos and a new responsibility into the discourse on Australian nationalism” as well as preparing the “ground for a new version of Australian history, one which acknowledges the hidden history of Aboriginal genocide and cultural dislocation brought about by white settlement” (Schaffer, *Wake* 245). The dynamics and implications of this recent revisionist turn deserve and are beginning to receive scrutiny.

One noteworthy aspect of this revisionist approach to colonial captivity, well illustrated in the case of Eliza Fraser, is the value of cross-cultural dialogue and respect for Indigenous knowledge. In her oral history of Fraser, Olga Miller, the *Caboonya* or Keeper of Records for the Badtjala, provides insights into Badtjala lifeways which radically shift any interpretation of Fraser's account and which highlight the cross-cultural misunderstanding which has characterized the colonialist captivity genre. For example, the application of sand to Fraser's body by a group of Badtjala women has long been read by many, in keeping with Fraser's own description of it, as an abusive punishment but is revealed by Miller to be a benevolent act: the ochre applied to her body serving both as a protection against sunburn and as a sign to others in the region not to harm her (35).³⁴ The application of Badtjala knowledge to the interpretation of what has become known only as Fraser's story is crucial to any attempt at a truly postcolonial approach to this episode in Australia's history and forms a powerful component in the revisionist work of Miller's niece, the eminent Badtjala visual artist Fiona Foley.

◇ Fiona Foley: Deposing Eliza & Rematriating Badtjala Heroines

to interrupt
 disrupt
 erupt
the text of the new world
 – Marlene Nourbese Philip, *A Genealogy of Resistance*, 99.

After examining Fraser's case, Larissa Behrendt proposes a two-pronged method for dismantling the "colonial legacies" inherent in Australia's legal system: first, deconstruct

³⁴ Elaine Brown's historical analysis of Fraser is also useful in illustrating the cross-cultural misunderstandings present in Fraser's interpretation of her encounter with the Badtjala.

and challenge “frontier parables” that have “become embedded in colonial psyches and institutions,” and second, construct competing narratives for such parables by way of reclaiming the Aboriginal experiences and stories muted by them (145, 184). Fiona Foley’s oeuvre of drawing, painting, photography, and sculptural installation exhibits both methods: not only does she mount a potent visual challenge to the classic understanding of Eliza as a heroine captive, she also documents the colonial victimization of the Badtjala which this captivity enabled and enacts a visual process of reclaiming those Badtjala ancestors lost to “real” colonial captivities.

Eliza serves as the subject for a number of Foley’s installation and painting works, predominantly those of her *By Land and Sea* exhibit of 1991. Foley is not the first prominent Australian painter to complete a series on this iconic captive; Sidney Nolan returned to Eliza as a subject a number of times during his career in the mid-twentieth century (Figure 2.7). However, Foley’s treatment is fresh and striking for the attention it pays to the Badtjala participants in the story (all but ignored by Nolan) and for the “strength and integrity” it draws from its thorough grounding in the landscape and culture of *Thoorgine* (Mundine 16). In contrast to Nolan’s famous modernist focus upon Fraser’s corporeality and sexuality, Foley refuses Fraser’s body; not only does she sever Fraser from her frequently fetishized and sexualized body, but also from her role as a reputable national figurehead or emblem of colonial authority.

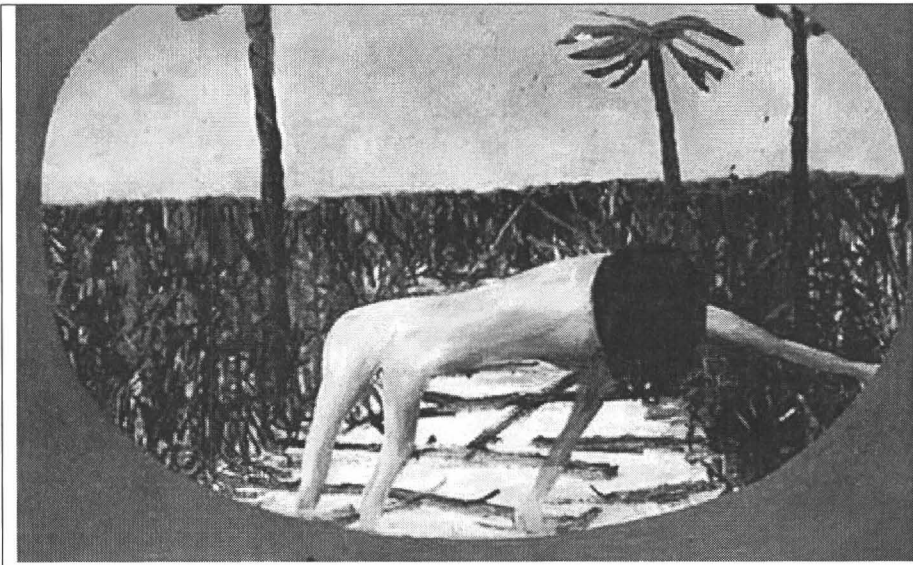


Figure 2.7
Sidney Nolan, "Mrs Fraser," 1947. Ripolin enamel on hardboard. 66.2 x 107 cm.
Queensland Art Gallery.



Figure 2.8
"Mrs. Fraser" printed in
*The Shipwreck of the
Sterling Castle*, 1838.

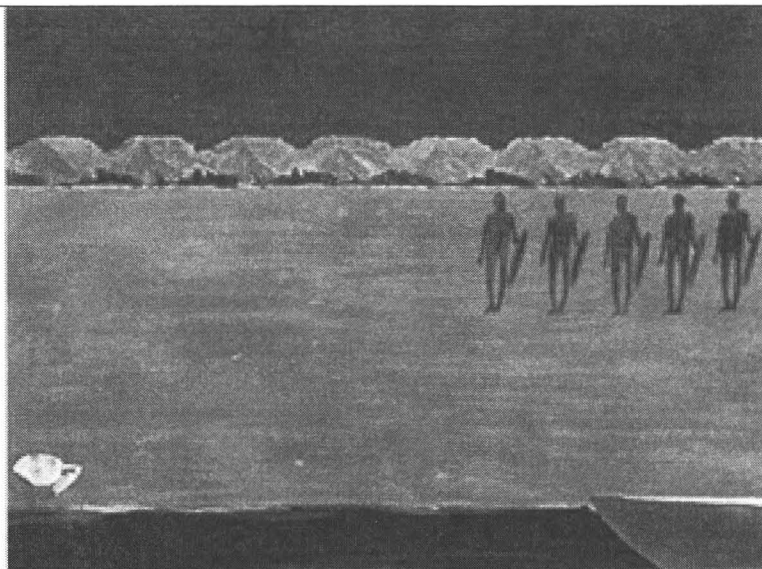


Figure 2.9
Fiona Foley, "Eliza's Ship Wreck," 1990. Pastel, aquarelle, ink, oil
stick and pencil on paper. 57 x 76.5 cm.

Foley's schematized rendition of Fraser's head, inspired by the portrait of Fraser made for Curtis' *The Shipwreck of the Sterling Castle* (1838) (Figure 2.8), is a recurrent motif in her work during this period.³⁵ In "Eliza's Ship Wreck" (Figure 2.9) the severed head tells of the overthrow of this reigning icon of Australian history. The position of the head in the corner of the canvas suggests the secondary nature Foley will have Fraser play in this new vision with its emphasis on the power and resilience of the Badtjala who walk confidently en masse toward the viewer and on the richness of *Thoorgine* (which Benjamin Genocchio astutely claims as the "undisclosed subject of these works" (53)). The flat graphic style used to render the head indicates Foley's manipulation of Fraser as an icon devoid of detail. Foley explains that for her Fraser is a symbol of

how primitive the European knowledge of the Badtjala people was, and how barbaric the white people were to the indigenous people across Australia. She also symbolises how the Aboriginal people were later entrapped in their own land by way of a quarantine station and mission, and then forcibly removed in 1904 to various parts of Queensland. (qtd in Genocchio 52)

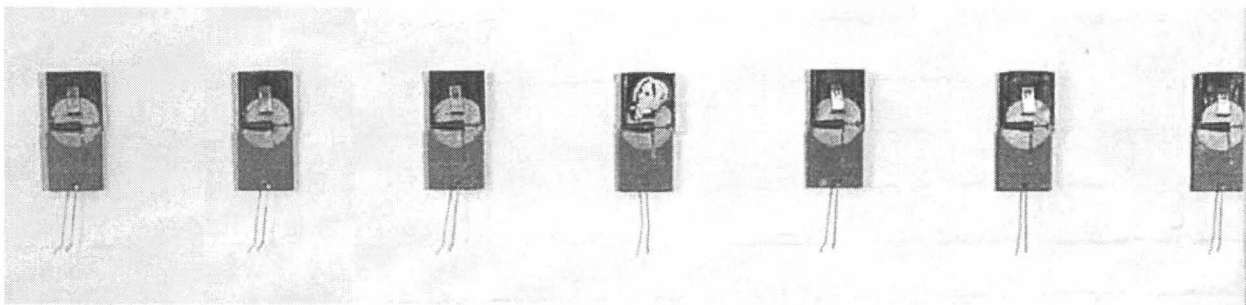


Figure 2.10

Foley, detail from "Eliza's Rat Trap," 1991. Seven rat traps with collage, oil paint and wax candles.

³⁵ Foley's use of Fraser's "decapitated" head has been variously interpreted by recent critics; for more details see Adams (114) and Genocchio (53).

The correlation between this entrapment of the Badtjala and Fraser's slanderous account of them is more explicitly the subject of a subset of Foley's works on Fraser which utilize rat traps as the vehicle of a forceful critique of colonial technologies of capture. In "Eliza's Rat Trap" (Figure 2.10) a row of rat traps, one decalced with the Eliza's iconic head, all painted in the red, yellow, and black of the Aboriginal Land Rights flag, encourage the viewer to ponder the relation that obtains between these elements of entrapment, Eliza, and Aboriginal rights and culture.³⁶ If, for Foley, Fraser is "the beginning of a cataclysm" for the Badtjala, then her position in this piece at the centre of, as the catalyst for, a collection of mechanisms of capture seems apt (qtd in Genocchio 52). More clear perhaps is the function of Eliza's iterated head in "Giviid Woman and Mrs Fraser" (Figure 2.11) where her positioning and colouring establish an oppositional relation between her and the anonymous Badtjala woman in the photographs above her. The four repetitions of each in opposite colour schemes, the higher or ascendant placement of the photographs over the traps, the detail of the Badtjala visage in contrast to the stylization of Eliza's, and the respectful placement of the Badtjala profile within a frame as opposed to on a trap are factors which combine to argue the importance and humanity of the Badtjala woman in relation to Eliza, that treacherous varmint now visually relegated to an entrapment somewhat akin to that she facilitated for the Badtjala.

Certain aspects of Foley's art, grounded as it is in a dense cultural and personal associative symbolism (Genocchio 39), remain ambiguous or foreign to me and in these

³⁶ For a series of insightful readings of the symbolic value of these rat traps, please refer to Carr (*Captive* 243), Schaffer (*Wake* 252-4), and Genocchio (56).

instances I mind Trinh Minh-ha's advice to "respect realms of opacity" (48). The significance of the traditional Aboriginal dilly bags on the left side of "Giviid Woman and Mrs Fraser" is for me one such opacity .

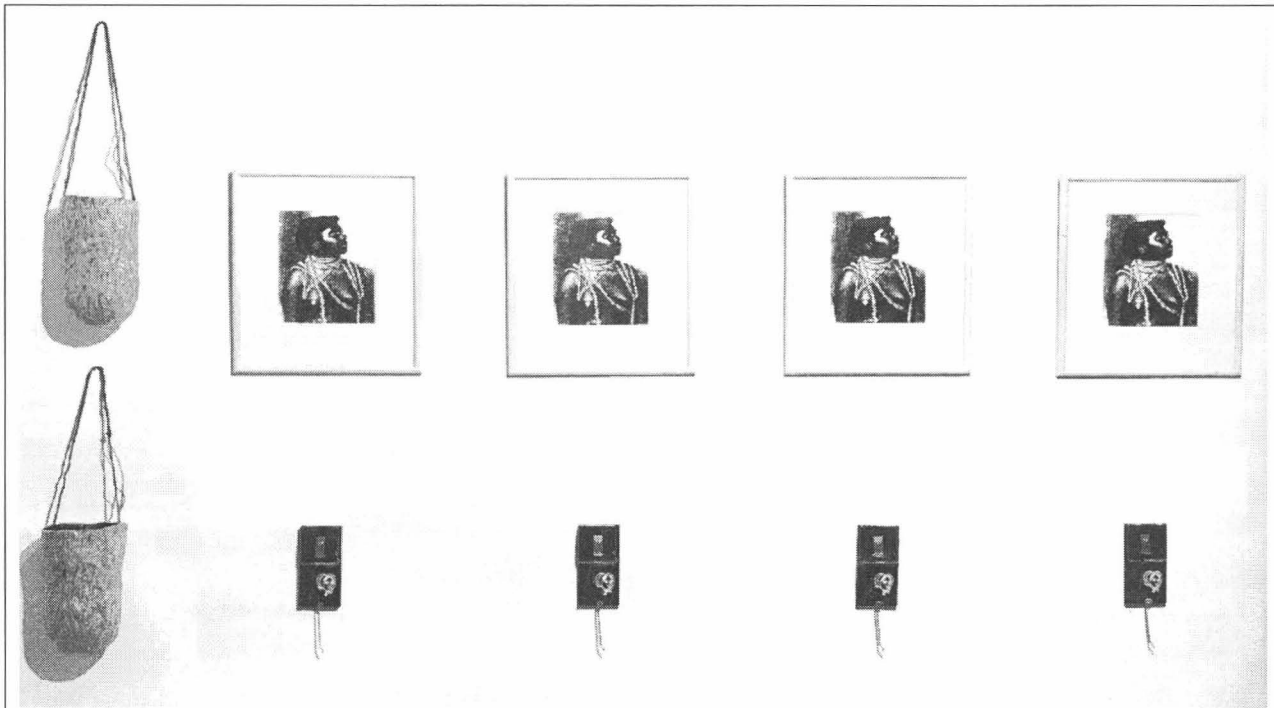
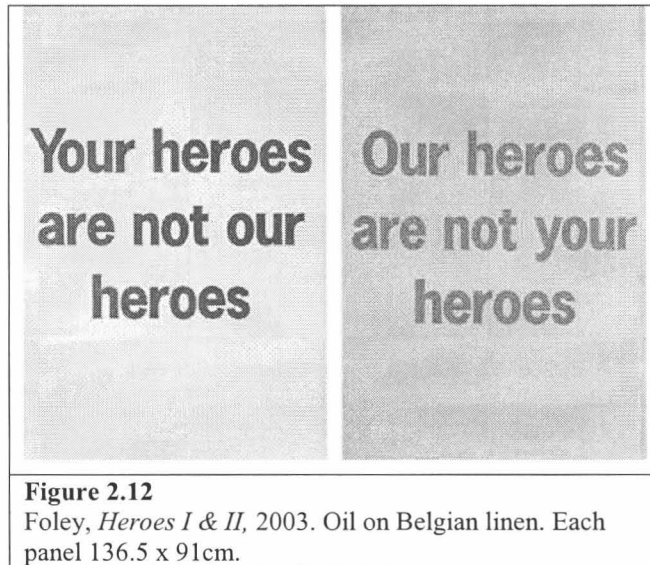


Figure 2.11

Fiona Foley, "Giviid Woman and Mrs Fraser," 1992. Photocopied images of Fraser Island woman, dilly bags, paper tissue, string, whitebait and rat traps. 130 x 200 cm.

Other aspects of Foley's oeuvre seem more transparent: the attention and respect paid to the Badtjala or *Giviid* woman in this work, for instance, assumes an added significance when one realizes that her image is one Foley has returned to a number of times over the years and that she is one of Foley's ancestral foremothers. The photograph is an anonymous one Foley found in the John Oxley Library in Brisbane, one which struck her for its rare documentation of a Badtjala presence on *Thoorgine*, for its physical resemblance to herself, and perhaps for its "sense of defiant resignation and muffled pride" (Genocchio 66). Foley's first series using this photograph, *Survival* (1988), paired

archival prints of the Badtjala with her own snapshots of the shell middens on *Thoorgine* which attest to the long-term Badtjala custody of this land. Subsequently the image of this Badtjala woman would appear in the installation *Lost Badtjalas, Severed Hair* (1991) and inspire the photographic series *Badtjala Woman* (1994-5).



I interpret Foley's continuing connection to this Badtjala woman as part of her mission to expand the canon of Australian heroines beyond the vulnerable white feminine type and more specifically to replace Fraser with more fitting Aboriginal heroines. This quest is addressed visually in works including *Heroes I & II* (Figure 2.12), *Badtjala Woman* (Figure 2.14), and *Native Blood* (Figure 2.13), and textually in an article Foley has authored on Eliza Fraser. In the latter Foley rightly fumes that after 30,000 years on the continent nary a trace of virtuous Aboriginal women is to be found in the Australian literary canon which is instead populated by "the white damsel in distress battling against the harsh forces of nature and native savages" (Foley 164). Unlike Eliza, who is the subject of books and symposia, films and poems, none of the outstanding Aboriginal

female leaders Foley looks up to “has had a symposium created around her life or is likely to in the foreseeable future” (167). This state of affairs prompted Foley to search through nineteenth-century photographic archives looking for “real heroines” who were “nameless, black and defiant.”

Drawing on bell hooks’ methodological advice to conquer “terror through perverse re-enactment, through resistance, using violence as a means of fleeing from a history that is a burden too great to bear,” Foley decides to stage her own “perverse re-enactment” in order to honour her foremothers and all “the unnamed Black women around the world... [whose] lives have never been recorded, yet [who] live on in our collective memories” (165). Foley writes that the only way she could “come close” to visually recreating this unnamed Badtjala heroine of the past was to “recast her in my image” and this she does in her *Badtjala Woman* and *Native Blood* photographic series, which consist of black and white portraits of Foley, variously adorned with traditional Aboriginal necklaces and baskets, often topless, and, in “Native Blood,” posed dressed in a Maningrida skirt and shoes painted to represent the Aboriginal land rights flag (167). With its traditional costume, use of the colours associated with the Aboriginal rights movement, and seemingly self-conscious parodic pin-up pose, “Native Blood” makes clear claims to the cultural persistence, entitlement, and confidence of modern Indigenous Australians. Foley has written of this piece, “I live in the hope that my heroine could be your heroine, as she defies all odds with an unspoken eloquence of spunk” (167); I see this spunk—strength, spirit, sass—at work in this portrait.



Figure 2.13
Foley, "Native Blood," 1994.
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery.



Figure 2.14
Foley, "Badtjala Woman," 1994.
Queensland Art Gallery.

Also at work are obvious references to and reproductions of the photographic techniques employed by anthropologists studying Indigenous peoples globally during the nineteenth-century; it was such photographs of her ancestors that Foley had found in the Oxley library archives. Indeed, many viewers on first coming across Foley's sepia-toned prints might take them to be examples of the ethnographic photographs made popular as postcard images throughout Europe and America during the late-colonial period. What are we to make of Foley adapting such a mode for her feminist and anti-colonial project when the original mode itself has come under harsh and fairly unanimous censure for its pornographic objectification of the Native woman? It is clearly more difficult to dismiss Foley's portraits as those of ethnographic objectification, much as they refer to this tradition, since she is here both object and subject, model and artist in control of the production of the piece. This is a provocative, fresh, risky, series which sparks debate. Whether one believes the series to have transcended the problematics of its referent,

whether one holds, with curator Stuart Koop, that these prints succeed in reclaiming, recovering or regenerating “the Badtjala peoples’ independence, strength, and humour,” one must concede that this series embodies Foley’s project of introducing Australians to alternative images of colonial heroines, to the type of woman left nameless not only in so many archival prints but also in the writings of those like Eliza Fraser.

This series on Badtjala heroines is part of a larger impulse towards cultural reclamation or rejuvenation in Foley’s work; she has commented that her aim is to write “Badtjala people back into history” (“Connecting”). An installation like “Eliza’s Rat Trap” obviously addresses the issue of captivity, but many other pieces in Foley’s portfolio also contend with colonial captivity and its consequences: they probe how to challenge the slander of colonialist captivity tales, how to heal from the colonial murder and theft of her Badtjala ancestors, and how to find, mourn, and reclaim those stolen ancestors. If the world has recently witnessed an outpouring of Indigenous testimony to the various violences of imperialism, it has also witnessed a groundswell in the Indigenous movement to reclaim and repatriate those bodies and artefacts which have long been locked in the West’s museum vaults. I interpret some of Foley’s work as participating, albeit in a visual rather than legal or purely physical way, in this push for repatriation, in this “finding” of stolen or lost foremothers.

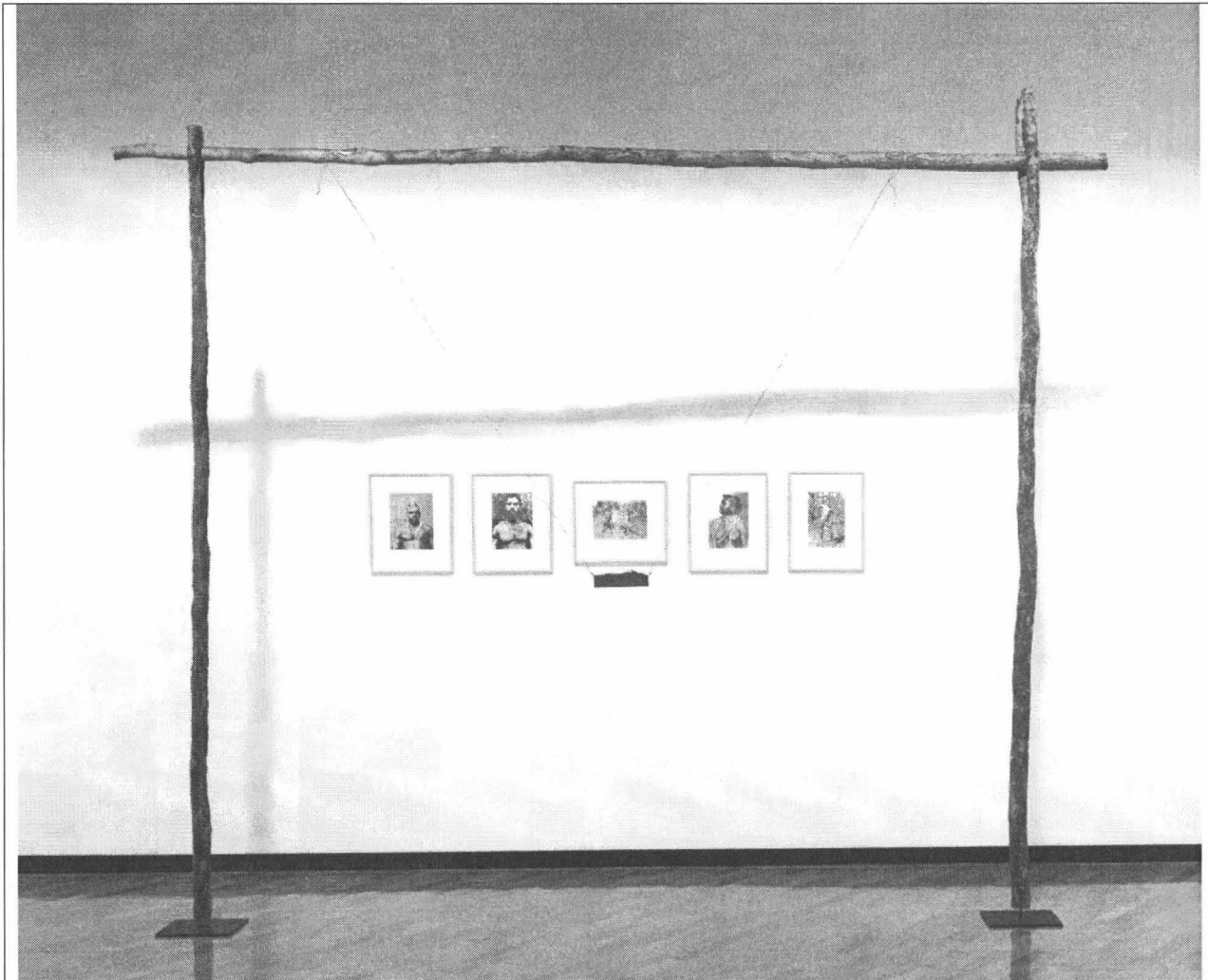


Figure 2.15

Fiona Foley, *Lost Badtjalas, severed hair*, 1991. Wood, string, hair, paper, framed gelatine silver photographs. 337 x 428 cm. National Gallery of Australia.

One enactment of *rematriation*—as I term the return of matriarchs or foremothers to a motherland—is Foley’s 1991 installation *Lost Badtjalas, severed hair* (Figure 2.15). The installation, now in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, is described in this way by curator Avril Quail:

Foley uses copies of ‘anonymous’ ethnographic photographs—taken about 1900—of Badtjala people who are, in fact, her forebears. From a traditional

‘forked stick’ frame hangs a box containing a sample of her own hair—a sign of mourning. The frame refers to those used to construct bark houses and also the burial platforms upon which the bodies of deceased are placed. The photographs are recontextualised by Foley as family heirlooms instead of museum pieces. A memorial to her family, the work challenges the historically common representation of Aborigines as a nameless, stone-age people.

Is this not an enactment of rematriation? A visual analogue to the legal process so many Indigenous groups and museums are now engaged in? While in no way diminishing the need for the physical transfer of objects, Foley’s project addresses another need: that of re-establishing or generating a relationship with those you were prevented from meeting and knowing, those who were stolen from your community, those whose only physical record is now an anonymous photograph in a foreign archive. Foley moves the photographs from an alien archival context into the familial realm; she personalizes the photographs by mourning them as her own ancestors. She uses her hair to bind these individuals to her, to demonstrate her kinship to them, to perform a ceremonial honouring of them. I see her—to borrow the title of the famous Australian report on the Stolen Generations—“Bringing Them Home.” This installation is an inspiring act of visual rematriation.

◇ In Sum...

In the previous pages we have catalogued the characteristics of the classic colonialist captivity narrative by way of two Australian exemplars and have speculated about the allure of this genre at specific stages of the colonial process. While the genre’s mobilization of many saleable elements and registers—from ethnography to erotic

fantasy, from chivalric adventure story to feminine etiquette manual—is striking, it seems insufficient to account for the longevity and extreme popularity of this genre within the British empire during the colonial period. Suspense, Gary Ebersole notes, certainly could not have generated the genre’s popularity, for not only were the plots utterly predictable in almost all cases, the lengthy titlepages invariably summarized or gave them away (11). This leads one to wonder if, in fact, repetition and predictability were precisely what was being marketed by the genre. Jane Tompkins has observed that the implausibility characteristic of many a popular plot derives not from a failed attempt at mimesis but from the intention to utilize plot elements as didactic integers in a social equation (xvi). What calculations then were characteristic of the classic colonialist captivity? One, to my mind, was primarily a psychic sum: the routine reiteration of the classic captivity plot denoting a colonialist defence mechanism, an entry to balance a moral spreadsheet, a need to be shielded from the implications of the known but repressed spectral history of genocidal Indigenous confinement which subtends the colonial project. The repetition of the hackneyed captivity plot demands consideration as a repetitive disavowal of and absolution from the “narrative of intense dispossession acted out across colonial deathscapes” (Healy 72).

1885 or *ê-mâyahkamikahk*: Competing Captivity Claims

The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.

– Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* xiii.

The broad range of incommensurate contact captivities precipitated or exacerbated by the colonial conflict at Frog Lake in Alberta in 1885 provide an excellent basis for a thick historical description of the colonialist captivity narrative as one of *white overwrite*, for this archive includes not only a celebrated colonialist narrative of absolution but many powerful Indigenous accounts of precisely what it served to conceal from public view.

In 1876 the respected Plains Cree chief and diplomat *mistahi-maskwa* (Big Bear)¹ called on Canada to offer better terms to his people than those of Treaty Six; his singular resistance to the treaty and reserve process led Canada and the United States to subject him and his significant following to extreme measures of coercion, confinement and starvation which, in turn, prompted the violence at Frog Lake.² On 2 April 1885, a small

¹ Big Bear is the English name of the Cree leader *mistahi-maskwa* (~1825-1888); while variations in the spelling and capitalization of his name exist, I follow Neal McLeod's usage of *mistahi-maskwa* in my writing. Where I draw from other sources I reproduce their conventions. With the exception of proper names, I have italicized Cree terms to denote my unfamiliarity with them. If I spoke Cree I would have followed the lead of scholars like Winona (Wheeler) Stevenson and Lorraine Brundige who foreground that Cree is their first language and query standard English convention and its inherent structures of privilege by utilizing a regular font for Cree words and an italic font for their English translation (Reder 64).

² This event is popularly known as the Frog Lake "Massacre," a terminology I avoid because its historic circulation in this instance fostered overly anti-Cree sentiment (Hughes x). Similarly, I follow the compelling anti-colonial logic of those who have renamed the Indian Mutiny a "War of Independence" to query the naming of the North-West *Rebellion* as such. Here I refer to it as an *uprising*.

number of warriors in mistahi-maskwa's band murdered the Canadian Indian Agent who had refused their request for food as well as eight other colonial traders and settlers who lived in the hamlet on the Frog Lake Reserve. It was the widows of two of these men, Theresa Delaney and Theresa Gowanlock, who were harboured in mistahi-maskwa's camp following the killings and who would become Canada's celebrated colonialist captives in this instance. As with the White Woman of Gippsland, sensationalized stories of these 'captives' circulated in the national media in ways which facilitated state 'retribution' against their Indigenous 'captors'; however, in this instance we have a record of how these historic women chose to represent their experience. In their double autobiography, *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear*, Gowanlock and Delaney adopt and adapt the form of the colonialist captivity narrative, particularly its Victorian conventions of feminine frailty, as an overt vehicle for their re-admission into central Canadian society and as a subtle critique of patriarchy and its victimization of white and Cree women alike. The widows were far from Frog Lake's only 'captives': others included a number of Woods Cree and Saulteaux peoples detained in mistahi-maskwa's camp and various invader-settlers who joined the camp under more and less voluntary circumstances. In this latter category is the family of the Hudson Bay Company Factor, William McLean—while both he and his daughter Eliza would go on to pen accounts of this event, neither makes extensive use of the conventions of the colonialist captivity genre, preferring instead the tone and devices of a diplomatic diary and adventure tale respectively.

On a more profound level, it was mistahi-maskwa's Cree nation itself which was subject at this time to systemic practices of colonial confinement and capture: including the Canadian state's instrumental use of starvation to restrict their mobility, of the treaty process to intern them on reserves, and of unwarranted incarceration to break their treaty rights movement. The nature of this state coercion and its vast social, ecological, spiritual, and physical implications for the Cree are documented in a number of *âcimisowina* or personal histories of 1885; here I will consider those of Isabelle Little Bear (mistahi-maskwa's granddaughter), Mary Dion, and See-as-cum-ka-poo (mistahi-maskwa's daughter-in-law). Together these recollections illustrate why the Cree call the conflict of 1885 *ê-mâyahkamikahk*—where it went wrong—and why Neal McLeod identifies it as the “culmination” of Canada's “spatial exile” of the western Cree (*Cree* 57).

The legacy of this exile is ongoing. *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*, the 1998 prison diary of mistahi-maskwa's great-great-granddaughter Yvonne Johnson (co-written with Rudy Wiebe) traces the unbroken neo-colonialist thread of dislocation and confinement which links her to her famed ancestor. After more than a decade chairing the United Nation's Committee on Indigenous Issues, Erica-Irene Daes pinpoints isolation as the “fundamental weapon” used by colonizers against the world's Indigenous peoples, the “antidote” to which is “the rebuilding of old [Indigenous] alliances and kinships” (7). It is precisely this type of restorative cultural work which both *Stolen Life* and Louise Halfe's poetic *Blue Marrow* theorize and undertake in their gathering of

familial and spiritual history into cherished bundles of story and sacred memory—
bundles which help to carry captives home.

◇ Historicizing Treaty Six, *mistahi-maskwa*, & Frog Lake

ê-mâyahkamikahk—where it went wrong, the events of 1885, including the violence—ended the possibility of intercultural dialogue and any meaningful notion of citizenship for Indigenous people within Canada.
– Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*, 82.

A sense of the historical context surrounding the violence at Frog Lake, with particular attention to the Cree motivations and perspectives which standard Canadian accounts have too often overlooked, is necessary to an understanding of what Clifford Geertz would deem an appropriately “thick description” of the competing contact captivity narratives which emerged from this conflict; so I will begin by setting the historical stage.

Cree historians often open their accounts of this late-nineteenth century period by emphasizing its difference from an ideal pre-treaty mode of life, what Joseph Dion in *My Tribe the Crees* identifies as an “erstwhile era of independence and plenty” (65). The Cree adapted well to contact with neo-European traders in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, maintaining their highly mobile lifestyle and benefiting in terms of prestige and territory from a commercial relationship with the newcomers that was based, as Neal McLeod explains, on principles of *miyo-wîcihitowin*: helping each other in a good way (*Cree* 35-7). A series of “severe social and ecological disturbances” (Hughes xv)—including epidemics of small pox, incursions of American whiskey traders and wolfers, the decline of the fur trade, and the extermination of the primary Cree source of sustenance and shelter, the buffalo—caused neo-European and Cree interests to collide,

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initiated interactions characterized by hostility rather than reciprocity, and led the western Cree to lobby the Dominion of Canada for a treaty to protect their rights.

Treaty Six was the result. Signed at Fort Carleton and Fort Pitt by a number of Cree, Saulteaux, and Dene leaders in the summer and fall of 1876 and covering some 325,000 square kilometers of western prairie land crucial to Prime Minister Macdonald's project of national expansion, it guaranteed to its First Nations signatories tracts of land for their use, instruction in and tools for agricultural cultivation, the protection of traditional modes of life such as hunting and fishing, and the provision of health care, schooling, and relief in times of famine. Other bands joined Treaty Six by adhesion in subsequent years; many of the northern Plains Cree signed in 1879. The most famed leader to hold out for more favorable terms than those of Treaty Six was mistahi-maskwa, an influential chief of the northern Plains Cree (or River People) regarded by many as the diplomat best suited to negotiate with the Canadian government. He had long advocated the creation of a large Indian territory, or set of contiguous reserves in the Cypress Hills, in order to preserve Cree autonomy and traditional ways of life.

mistahi-maskwa's position on Cree autonomy and his belief that the treaty process and its proposed reserve system were a means to capture the freedom of his people are evident in his oft-cited, and oft-misconstrued, address to those assembled for Treaty Six negotiations at Fort Pitt in 1876. Having arrived after many of his peers had already signed the agreement, mistahi-maskwa proclaimed: "Stop, stop, my friends... I heard the Governor was going to come and I said I shall see him; when I see him I will make a request that he will save me from what I most dread, that is: the rope to be about

my neck...” (qtd in Stonechild & Waiser 25). The official government translator having retired for the day, mistahi-maskwa’s words were inaccurately explained to Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Morris and his retinue (by the Reverend John McKay, whose mastery of Cree was imperfect) as a fear of hanging, *ayhahkotit*. In actuality, mistahi-maskwa was describing his fear of losing his freedom, like an animal with a rope about its neck, *aysakapaykinit* (Stonechild 161). This apparent request that the Cree not be punished for serious crimes surprised Morris, and he replied, “No good Indian has the rope around his neck.” Their dialogue concluded with this unresolved linguistic confusion and an agreement to meet the following year. In the interim, however, this misunderstood statement, circulated within Canadian government and media channels, helped to tar mistahi-maskwa as an “obstinate, possibly evil, chief” (Stonechild & Waiser 25-6). Certain mainstream Canadian sources on mistahi-maskwa continue to cite this erroneous interpretation of his oration; likewise, his nineteenth-century billing as “one of the most turbulent and troublesome chiefs of the North-West” (Mulvaney 89) has trickled into late-twentieth century academic assessments of Big Bear like that by Gerald Friesen who hints that this “recognized militant” and his implicitly unreasonable demands for “more generous gifts” from the government were “the problem” in the Northwest in the early 1880s (147, 150).

The story of this mistranslation is germane, at many levels, to my consideration of captivity. Not only does it demonstrate that mistahi-maskwa perceived living on a reserve as a form of captivity, it allows us to consider the figurative language he chose to relay this concept. The metaphorical vehicle he uses to signify enslavement—the

tethered animal—is one also used by a number of other Cree leaders and writers both at the time and subsequently to challenge colonialist practices of confinement.³ The act of tethering a human captive by the neck was practiced in parts of North America (Levernier & Derounian 8), but *mistahi-maskwa*'s usage derives instead from Cree figurative conventions and suggests the import of attending to the specificities of language with the utmost care. It is interesting to note that the previous year *mistahi-maskwa* had also invoked the figure of the ensnared animal to portray the reserve as entrapment and to express his distrust of government treaty promises: "We want none of the Queen's presents: when we set a fox trap we scatter pieces of meat all around, but when the fox gets into the trap we knock him on the head; we want no bait..." (qtd in Tobias 153). The mistranslation of *mistahi-maskwa*'s fear of the rope about his neck is indicative of how easily neo-European translators and commentators jumped to conclusions of *mistahi-maskwa*'s criminality rather than grasping the key issue at hand: the threat posed to Indigenous freedom. In retrospect, Morris's assertion that "No good Indian has the rope around his neck" would prove tragically ironic at both the literal and the figurative level. Figuratively, the Cree would be tethered, their freedom severely curtailed in the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries by the development of the reserve and pass law systems. Literally, the Cree would feel the rope about their necks on the gallows: six arguably "good" men from *mistahi-maskwa*'s band would be hung in 1885 for their alleged roles in the Frog Lake killings.

³ See, for example, Poundmaker's use of the phrase, "I felt that I had a rope about my neck and something drawing me all the time" to explain his limited agency during the North-West Rebellion (qtd in Stonechild & Waiser 167), or Little Pine's refusal to accept the treaty in 1877 because he saw treaties as a means by which the government could "enslave" his people (qtd in Tobias 153). Later in this paper I will also cite Isabelle Little Bear's, Edward Ahenakew's, and Louise Halfe's use of this metaphor.

Living freely, much as they had traditionally done, without feeling the rope's constraints, was a possibility for mistahi-maskwa and the sizeable following he had attracted in the 1870s for as long as they had access to the dwindling stock of buffalo. However, by 1880 "the Cree world was under siege": the buffalo, "their life blood" were almost extinct and famine loomed as the Canadian government failed to provide expected relief rations for those living on reserves (McLeod, *Cree* 56). This plunged the western Cree into what one medical historian calls "a hunger/disease nexus" (Lux 20), a destructive spiral of starvation, overcrowding, and illness that would claim all too many lives. In Cree history the years from 1880 to 1885 are known as "The Time of Great Hunger," a time when the combined effects of broken treaty promises, meager rations, harsh winters, crop failures, and the disappearance of the buffalo led the Cree to experience an annual death rate of close to ten percent (Stonechild 158). In the fall of 1879 mistahi-maskwa had taken his band south from what is now Alberta into Montana to pursue the buffalo and they spent the next few years moving between these locales seeking sustenance until in the spring of 1882, the American army, in response to ranchers' reports of missing cattle, mounted an expedition to confiscate their horses and guns and drive them forcibly from the United States. Back north of the line without the means to hunt and without a reserve and the access to (even inadequate) rations it provided, mistahi-maskwa's band were destitute; dire circumstance pushed him to sign Treaty Six at Fort Walsh in December of 1882.

The Treaty stipulated that each chief had the right to select the location of his band's reserve, but the government repeatedly denied mistahi-maskwa's requests for sites

close to the reserves of his political allies and refused to issue his people rations until they consented to relocate to the Frog Lake area; it was “a simple case of submit or starve” (Stonechild & Waiser 109; Friesen 152). Nonetheless, mistahi-maskwa continued working to build a broad alliance between the western bands as a non-violent means to pressure Ottawa to honour its treaty obligations concerning schooling, health, farming equipment, and, especially, famine relief. The uprising brewing in the Northwest was, as Friesen notes, “a political rather than a military” one (152). By late 1884 the successful coalition of mistahi-maskwa, Piapot and Lone Pine had gained enough momentum to provoke Indian Commissioner Edward Dewdney and Macdonald into planning a series of measures to terminate this Cree diplomatic offensive, including arresting its leaders, replacing resistant chiefs, and confining members to their reserves—all measures carried out after the North-West Uprising of 1885.

The spring of 1885 found mistahi-maskwa’s Plains Cree band camped, at the government’s behest, at Frog Lake with the four Woods Cree bands who had taken reserves in the region and were adapting to predominantly Christian and agricultural lifestyles. A harsh winter and a lack of work with which to earn rations had left the band desperate, its warriors agitating for their own reserve or another means to obtain enough food for their families. An autocratic Indian subagent, Thomas Quinn, famous in Cree accounts for his unswerving ability to say “no” to all entreaties, and a despised farm instructor, John Delaney, known to have taken advantage of Cree women, added to the tense atmosphere at Frog Lake. On April first, when mistahi-maskwa returned from a hunt with only a few rodents in hand, his son, âyimisîs (or Imasees, “the little difficult

one”),⁴ asked Quinn to provide enough provisions that the chief might host a meal for his people; Quinn’s refusal, in conjunction with the unrest generated by the start of Riel’s North-West Uprising in the weeks previous, appears to have been the proverbial last straw. The next morning a small group of warriors, including âyimisîs and kâ-papâmahcahkewêw (or Wandering Spirit who became the camp’s war chief), again approached Quinn and when he again rebuffed them, they shot dead him and eight other white men who lived in the hamlet, including the farm instructor, two priests, and various tradesmen. The wives of the instructor and miller, Delaney and Gowanlock, were taken into the now amalgamated Plains and Woods Cree camp where a number of those who were against the killings harbored them.

Although many non-Indigenous or non-local commentators at the time were quick to blame all of the Cree in the region for this violence and to single out mistahi-maskwa as a villain, it is important to take note both of the grievances which motivated the killings and of the fact that they were carried out and supported by a tiny fraction of the Cree populace. mistahi-maskwa attempted to stop the killings and the vast majority of the region’s Cree were saddened by the violence, especially by the death of the priests who had ministered to them. Although word of Riel’s uprising certainly sparked the coterie of young warriors to act, and although many white historians have since interpreted their violence as a Cree commitment to the Métis cause, this was not the case. Rather, as Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser have extensively documented in *Loyal Till*

⁴ There are a number of variant spellings of this name, including Ahyimisis (Dion 89).

Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion,⁵ it was an isolated and spontaneous incident: mistahi-maskwa's Cree, as a group, did not want to fight so they "tried to remain aloof while the rebellion ran its course" (170). This meant that after they had plundered the provisions at Frog Lake and at nearby Fort Pitt (where the forty-four primarily white inhabitants of the Hudson Bay Fort decided that joining mistahi-maskwa's camp was their safest option) they retreated into the bush, hoping to elude Canadian authorities (Friesen 153).

This would prove difficult given that accounts of the uprising, including grossly sensationalized reports of violence and rapine at Frog Lake, had prompted more than five thousand men to join the North-West Field Force to rout Riel and his supposed Cree allies. Later in 1885, Charles Pelham Mulvaney would write of the journalistic "intelligence from the seat of war" (20) which prompted him to join the Field Force; he observes that it was the "news of the Frog Lake massacre [that] was by all odds the most blood curdling that came over the wires during the war" (89). After Riel's defeat at Batoche on 12 May, Canadian military attention was directed to the capture of mistahi-maskwa's band and the redemption of his celebrated hostages, the widows Gowanlock and Delaney. During much of May and June, the substantial columns of troops under Major-Generals Thomas Strange and Frederick Middleton pursued mistahi-maskwa's amalgamated camp in a high stakes "game of hide and seek" (Dion 101) through the bush lands north of Fort Pitt and engaged them in two minor skirmishes,

⁵ While I have consulted a range of sources on uprising, Stonechild and Waiser's analysis is particularly persuasive in content (dismantling the persistent myth that the Cree were partners in Riel's uprising) and in method (resting extensively on knowledge gathered from Cree and Saulteaux elders interviewed for the project) and I have drawn on it frequently in composing this chapter.

at Frenchman's Butte and Steele's Narrows. Although successful in evading the troops, by early June mistahi-maskwa's camp was facing exhaustion and starvation and most of its "reluctant adjuncts" (Carter, "Two" 77), including many of the Woods Cree and all of the white hostages, had splintered off or escaped from the main camp; in late June the remaining Plains Cree also diverged: many turned themselves in to the nearest military column or settlement, while âyimisîs led a group into exile in Montana. What had become "the largest manhunt in Canadian history came up empty-handed": mistahi-maskwa waited until early July to turn himself in at Fort Carleton (Stonechild & Waiser 189).

Chiefs Poundmaker and mistahi-maskwa were charged with, and found guilty of, treason-felony, "despite Dewdney's knowledge that neither man had engaged in an act of rebellion" and despite presented evidence that mistahi-maskwa had opposed the killings and sheltered the hostages in his care; the supposed Cree involvement in Riel's uprising proving an expedient, if dishonest, means for the Canadian government to subjugate the Cree and shatter their treaty rights movement (Tobias 168, 164). One step in this process of subjugation was the conviction of over fifty Cree for their involvement in the uprising—more than twice the number of Métis sentenced—at trials far from ideally just (Friesen 153, 155). Many Cree defendants spoke no English, had no legal counsel and only sporadic access to translation services, and were sentenced by Judge Rouleau, whose impartiality, like his house, had gone up in smoke during the uprising. Again, the inability to effectively translate concepts between English and Cree would hamper any potential for reconciliation: one cannot blame the Willow Cree leader One Arrow, when

told by the court interpreter that he had been found guilty of “knocking off the Queen’s bonnet and stabbing her in the behind with the sword” or treason-felony, for wondering if the translator was drunk (Stonechild & Waiser 200).

Compounding these issues were the actions of officials like Rouleau who were determined the “Indians should be taught a severe lesson.” Assistant Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed arranged for the hanging of the eight Cree men Rouleau had sentenced to death to be a public spectacle, citing the need for “Indians to witness” and “meditate” on this “ocular demonstration” of their “thrashing”; Macdonald concurred, believing that this, the largest mass hanging in Canadian history, “ought to convince the Red Man that the White Man governs” (qtd in Stonechild & Waiser 211, 219, x). Many Cree did witness the public hanging of those charged with committing the Frog Lake murders by “Hanging Judge Rouleau” and, after having talked with their descendents, Stonechild and Waiser note that these executions “have remained a numbing event, comparable to an old scar on the soul of a people” (226).

The eight Cree hung and twenty-five sentenced to prison were not the only ones to experience incarceration: the Department of Indian Affairs was quick to implement a series of measures which greatly reduced the freedom of all of First Nations in western Canada. As McLeod puts it, “After 1885, the government imposed a series of policies that stripped the *nêhiyawak* [Cree] of our roots and caused us to move toward a state of spatial and spiritual exile.” (Cree 54) These measures and policies included use of the military to confiscate Cree horses, carts, and ammunition; the use of an expanded Mounted Police force to arrest resistant Cree leaders; the removal of noncompliant

leaders, dissolution of “disloyal” bands, and alteration of tribal governance systems; the denial of annuity payments to the sizeable number of Cree erroneously deemed to have been disloyal; and the internment of all natives on their reserves by way of the pass system which forbade any travel save that sanctioned by the resident Indian Agent. The pass law, as many Canadian government officials recognized, violated Treaty Six’s protection of Indigenous rights of free movement and choice of residence, and marked the institution of “apartheid” in Canada’s west (Jennings 229).

mistahi-maskwa’s band was stripped of its claim to even such a segregated reserve: in October of 1885 Macdonald approved the abolition of this band, and a number of others, and the seizure of their reserve lands. Hence mistahi-maskwa’s prime concern in the speech he delivered at his trial was for his people, who he figured as apprehensive refugees hiding from the authorities which had claimed their erstwhile homeland. Among the many Indigenous people who sought asylum in the United States following the uprising were those with mistahi-maskwa’s son âyimîsîs; they endured a life of scavenging and nomadism, returning at times to Canada, until granted a reserve in Montana in 1916. mistahi-maskwa himself served two years in prison until serious health concerns prompted the authorities to release him in January of 1887; he spent his final year living on the Little Pine Reserve and died there early in 1888. While incarcerated he and Poundmaker were rendered objects of scrutiny for the Canadian media. As one reporter for the Toronto *Globe* noted with a clinical coolness in late 1885, they are “amenable to discipline, but pine for their old, wild life, their wives and children; family affection appears to be strong among them” (qtd in Beal and Wiebe 189); while

accurately observing the crucial importance of kinship relations (*wâhkôhtowin*) in Cree culture, this column demonstrates no concern for the scores of beloved family members devastated by this series of Cree captures and incarcerations in 1885.

◇ Gowanlock & Delaney: Celebrated Captives—Damsels in Distress?

During the spring of 1885, Canadian concern for the safety of Gowanlock and Delaney reached “hysterical proportions” (Carter, “Cordial” 209)—their situation became a colonial rape scare.⁶ Their apparent suffering of that “fate worse than death” was portrayed in central Canada as an issue of national security and as a threat to the colonial body as a whole and accounts of it were widely printed in the Canadian press to rouse antipathy toward Louis Riel’s call for Métis and First Nations rights to responsible government. Like many a colonialist captivity before it, Gowanlock and Delaney’s derived a particular popularity from its circulation during a time of colonial warfare. The contemporary media⁷ paid little heed to the ambiguously captive state of the two women,

⁶ In “Feminine Vulnerability” (2005), I have written at more length on their case as an exemplary colonial rape scare and on the recent rescue of the American Private Jessica Lynch (a nineteen-year-old, white, injured, POW) from an Iraqi hospital in April of 2003 during the second Gulf War as a prime example of a neo-colonial rape scare. The American military mobilized approximately a thousand personnel in order to seize Lynch from the hospital in Nasiriya where she was reportedly being tortured (implicitly raped) by her Iraqi captors. In this rape scare—as in that of the Theresas in 1885—race remains pivotal to national belonging, feminine vulnerability remains widely coveted, and rape remains paradoxically both highly saleable (as sensationalized threat) and essentially unspoken (as personal female testimony). In not entirely dissimilar moments of (neo-)colonial crisis, both the Theresas and Jessica found images of themselves circulating in popular media accounts as the victim-heroines of nationally useful rape scares. Not only were their dramatized plights used to mollify the citizens at home as to the justness of the invasion at hand, they were also used to rouse the vindictive fury of the nation’s armed forces against the ‘barbarous violators’ of these emblematic women.

⁷ While there was obviously variation in the coverage granted the two Theresas, racist anti-Métis propaganda spurred English Canadians to set aside their usual differences and unite against Riel, and this relative cohesion is evidenced in the articles about Gowanlock and Delaney; hence we can talk fairly confidently of their general treatment by a nationalist English-language Canadian press.

tending to call instead, as in the following *Toronto Morning News* editorial, on Canadian men to avenge the women's wrongs: the Canadian Dominion was to "impress upon the Indians that the honour of a white woman is sacred, and that outrage and murder will be promptly avenged, no matter at what cost" (qtd in Carter, "Captured" xxvi). This editorial was one of many which falsely sensationalized the "outrages" (including slavery, sexual assault, dismemberment, and murder) Gowanlock and Delaney reportedly suffered at the hands of the Cree, and which served to mobilize support for the efforts of the Canadian Field Force to rescue the two women and capture mistahi-maskwa (Mulvaney 421-3; Dempsey 179). After weeks of vigorously pursuing the two captives on the pretexts of such accounts, Major-General Middleton was surprised and relieved to hear from firsthand sources that Gowanlock and Delaney had not "suffered any indignities" and wrote that it shows "what infamous lies are concocted in this North-West" (qtd in Stonechild & Waiser 190).

A fascinating glimpse of how such lies were transmitted through communal dialogue as well as media outlets is found in the autobiography of Nellie McClung, who was twelve years old and living on her family's Manitoban farm when she first heard of the two Theresas in 1885:

The fate of the women was a shivery subject for conversation. Up to that time the 'trouble' was a vague and abstract state, far away and impersonal, but now the menace had come out into the open, and the evil had assumed a shape and image; painted savages, brandishing tomahawks and uttering blood-curdling cries had swarmed around the lonely and defenceless farm houses, and overpowered those two women... (*Clearing* 182).

McClung's recollection provides an apt description of how media stories "assume a

shape,” how they are sold to us, and how, in this case, the Therasas were billed as what June Namias calls the “frail flower captive”: a typology which arose in conjunction with the popularity of sentimental fiction and Victorian True Womanhood during the mid-nineteenth century and which features a miserable, vulnerable, non-adaptive, helpless female captive confronted by unhygienic and cruel captors (24, 36). At the heart of what made Gowanlock and Delaney’s situation a “shivery subject” was the heightened interest in nineteenth-century North America in “the sexual interface of the frontier” (Randall & Schaffer 119). As historian A.I. Silver explains, in the eyes of many central Canadians it was Riel’s supposed “instigation of the savages to rapine and bloodshed” that was his chief offence (44).

Jenny Sharpe, in her assessment of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, has noted that “rape is not a consistent and stable signifier” but one that “surfaces at strategic moments” of imperial anxiety and is often implicated in the management of uprisings and in the consolidation of colonial control: “When articulated through images of violence against women, a resistance to [imperial] rule does not look like the struggle for emancipation but rather an uncivilized eruption that must be contained” (2, 7). Sharpe’s theorization of the tactical value of the colonial rape scare may be aptly applied to the case of Gowanlock and Delaney, whose captivity was repeatedly cited to justify the Dominion’s territorial expansion and repression of the rights of First Nations peoples.⁸ In 1885, images of First Nations men as threats to the honour of white settler women in the North-

⁸ Jennifer Henderson cites Gowanlock and Delaney’s agency and authorization to speak publicly as reasons to dismiss the applicability of Sharpe’s model of rape discourse to their case (104), but to do so downplays the fact that during their two months in mistahi-maskwa’s camp Gowanlock and Delaney had no such recourse to speak publicly to Canada and were vociferously spoken for and circulated as objects within the Canadian media.

West permitted the enforcement of increasingly stringent segregationist reserve policies following the North-West Uprising, which in turn freed up prairie land for Euro-Canadian settlement. The Canadian government rewarded each of the 5,000 ‘rescuers’ in the Field Force with 320 acres of western land or scrip valued at \$160 (“Reward”; Lalonde 62). The eventual surrender of mistahi-maskwa and other Cree leaders to Canadian authorities served as a coerced assent to Canada’s insistence that they confine themselves to their assigned reserves. The supposed outrages suffered by Gowanlock and Delaney were cited in Canadian Parliament in 1885 as a means to prevent the extension of the franchise to First Nations men in western Canada (Carter, *Capturing* 79).⁹ Thus, one sanctioned, sensationalized captivity was, in essence, used to justify another: the internment of First Nations people on Western Canadian reserves.

How did Gowanlock and Delaney respond to being, as Gowanlock put it, “the object of the tenderest solicitude, not only of [their] friends and relations, but of the whole continent” (3)? In the autumn of 1885, just months after their release, Gowanlock and Delaney composed autobiographical accounts which were published together as *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear: The Life and Adventures of Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney*¹⁰ by Gowanlock’s brothers-in-law in Toronto, with an eye to profits for the familial publisher, to securing federal pensions for the authors, and to reintegrating the supposedly violated women into respectable Canadian circles.

⁹ The act that was eventually passed gave the franchise to adult male Indians in eastern Canada who met the necessary property qualifications, but excluded western Indians entirely (Carter, “Two” 83).

¹⁰ Once studied primarily by Canadian historians, if at all, *Two Months* has recently begun to attract the attention of feminist and literary scholars; more details concerning the publication history of this volume are found in Higginson “Feminine” (42).

In *Two Months* Gowanlock and Delaney attempt to strike a balance typical of many female authors of colonialist captivity tales: to attest to the colonially useful threat of their violation without unduly critiquing the failure of the colony to protect them from such a threat in the first place, to shy away from analyzing the condition for the possibility of their violation and to foreclose criticism of colonial authorities through adamant praise of the colony (often in the form of policy endorsements or dramatically scripted rescue scenes). After emerging from ‘captivity,’ the two Theresas were suspect in a number of registers—not only colonially as failed “mothers of the race” or as daughters failed by colonial paternal protection, but also, within the socio-legal context of nineteenth-century Canada, as potentially violated women. For while vulnerability was frequently conceived as a desirable Canadian norm, violability was not: only “respectable” women were seen to be rapeable, because they, unlike other classes of women, were assumed to possess a defensible purity. A raped woman had to meet a stringent set of racialized and classed conditions in order to be deemed innocent and worth re-*patria*-ting into a paternally-defined Canadian society.¹¹ The repeated support for Canadian federal policy voiced in *Two Months* needs to be read in conjunction both with Gowanlock and Delaney’s pursuit of national worth and respectability, and with their concomitant anxiety concerning the economic and sexual vulnerability of ‘redundant,’ single or non-normative women within a masculinized colonial economy.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of Gowanlock and Delaney in terms of the rape and seduction laws of nineteenth-century Canada and Britain see Henderson’s *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada* (114-18).

The narratives of Gowanlock and Delaney have in common their (more and less subtle) critique of patriarchy, but one fascinating feature of this dual captivity narrative is how differently the two women position themselves in their respective textual bids for national approbation. Gowanlock's text overtly stages its acceptance of the feminine vulnerability proffered by colonialist captivity narrative conventions and by late-nineteenth-century Canadian domestic and legal prescriptions of normative femininity. Gowanlock accounts *for* herself: her text is a tampered ledger arguing her worth by deftly balancing the qualities requisite for a violated woman to be repatriated into the national family. She not only brandishes definitions of hygiene grounded in Victorian domestic ideology against the Cree, but also implements one of its techniques, that of household accounting, to further argue her worth. At one level, her half of *Two Months* functions as a domestic ledger, creatively tracing the debts and payments accrued during her captivity. As such it can be read as a product of a rationalized Victorian domestic discourse which instructed matronly women to embrace accountability, to measure accurately, to supervise, and to "invariably... punctually and precisely" keep an account-book (Beeton 6; Davidoff 86).

A rhetoric of debt and payment runs through Gowanlock's writing and is brought to bear in order to add credence to her judgments of moral standing.¹² Thus the Plains Cree are depicted as the recipients of "everything" (15) who owed a debt to Mr. Gowanlock and Mr. Delaney by whom they were "constantly fed" (12), and they are targeted as "ungrateful characters" (13) and "vicious...freebooters" (13) who do not

¹² Jennifer Henderson's analysis of Gowanlock's narrative offers a nuanced consideration of its use of logics of debt and gratitude.

honourably discharge their debts. Gowanlock is eager to keep the ‘Reds’ in the red as it were, and generous or chivalric acts done her by Indigenous peoples prove difficult for Gowanlock to account for without disrupting her claimed entitlements. Her narrative makes note of chivalric acts—like the Cree boys’ tendency to give her flowers (32) and Andre Nault’s kindly exchange of his dry blanket for her wet one (33)—but in each case Gowanlock quickly deflates the value of the act by sharply condemning the character of the Cree or Métis in question. The tension implicit in Gowanlock’s unjustified reprimands marks the limits of her colonial logic of accountability to integrate such acts of non-white chivalry into a system based upon assumptions of racial superiority.

In using this rhetoric of debt and gratitude Gowanlock participates in a larger late-Victorian deployment of economic logic to mask the oppression of colonialism. Jenny Sharpe notes that following a number of Native insurgencies in British colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century “the crisis produced by anticolonial rebellion [was] managed through a recoding of European self-interest as self-sacrifice and native insurgency as ingratitude” (8). This is precisely what Gowanlock attempts. She depicts settlers as the fearless agents of civilization who had left “comfortable homes in the east” in order to “elevate the Indian and make him a better man” (43). Despite noting that her husband took “every kind of work he thought would pay” (44), Gowanlock persistently identifies the motives of settlement as primarily moral (self-sacrificing) rather than commercial (self-interested). She conveniently blends the two to argue that the commercial was in fact moral, that settler enterprises like her husband’s mill operated as a “blessing to those Indians” (45). That mistahi-maskwa’s warriors did not recognize this

“blessing” is recorded as “unaccountable” ingratitude (43). Here, and in Gowanlock’s ridiculous refusal of the possibility that settlers could be “extortioners or land-grabbers” (43), we see her brutal erasure of prior Cree economies and claims to the Northwest.

Gowanlock’s use of economic rhetoric speaks to both an overt aim of her text—to garner economic recompense from the Dominion—and to the less acknowledged, more subtly written, anxieties that motivate the overt aim—her persistently marked fear of economic vulnerability. Fredric Jameson has labeled such hidden narratives the “political unconscious” of a text and argues that this “repressed and buried reality” will speak to a Marxian vision of an uninterrupted history of class struggle (20). Jameson’s formulation is useful in explicating the role of the vulnerable First Nations women who preoccupy Gowanlock’s text, and who appear to signify Gowanlock’s anxiety concerning her own class position and social use-value.

Gowanlock’s writing is everywhere stamped with signs of sexual and economic trauma: realms fascinatingly bound to each other in her text, and in late Victorian Canada in general. Her autobiography shows the (quasi)inscription of rape: it illustrates that the explicit telling of rape can remain a prohibited speech act—unsaid—yet be revealingly inscribed into the structure of the text through the exchange of objects symbolically representative of subjects. This preoccupation with traumatic vulnerability not only suggests Gowanlock’s anxiety about her class position and her fear of redundancy, but also signals her recognition of vulnerabilities common to Native and non-Native women that exist *beyond* the bounds of mistahi-maskwa’s camp within the Canadian settlement economy in general. In so doing, this preoccupation maps the psychic costs of feminine

frailty, and repeatedly fissures the surface of her explicitly pro-settlement, pro-nationalist narrative. To analyze the political unconscious of Gowanlock's text is to provide a necessary extension to her overt claims for national worth and to see an underlying, albeit muted, criticism of the norms of feminine vulnerability lodged in the narrative's discordant ruptures and images of abuse.

I am not alone in reading the substitutions and interruptions which characterize Gowanlock's text as a broad, if subtle, critique of the options available for women—be they white or First Nations—in colonial Canada: Mel Dagg's *The Women on the Bridge* (1992), a historical novel or set of interlinked short stories featuring Gowanlock, also recognizes in her autobiography a muted sympathy for Cree women as the ultimate exiles after the conflict of 1885. While Dagg's latter stories certainly discuss Gowanlock's captivity in mistahi-maskwa's camp, *The Women on the Bridge* is only with difficulty classified as a colonialist captivity narrative—its preoccupation being less with capture than with the psychology of colonialism and its impact on the mind of one rather naive nineteenth-century female pioneer in particular. Dagg draws from *Two Months* but chooses a different emphasis and tone, rejecting Gowanlock's self-styled Victorian propriety in favour of a frank portrait of the private emotions of a woman much less likely to tow the conventional line, be it the ethnographic racism of the conventional colonialist captivity narrative or the demure femininity of the frail flower. Dagg's Gowanlock is disoriented by her relocation to the frontier and skeptical of the colonialist narratives hailing it as a safe and progressive space. The quiet feminist empathy I noticed in *Two Months* is amplified by Dagg: his protagonist has a feminist, humanist, and

mystical sense of connection to victimized Cree women. Her concluding thoughts upon leaving the North-West are for the Cree Women in mistahi-maskwa's camp who "cared for her and kept her alive"—she "cannot help wondering" if these now exiled women "will ever again find a life and a home" (97). *The Women on the Bridge*, while focused primarily on Gowanlock's own internal struggle, takes careful note of the larger systemic capture endured by her Cree peers.

While Gowanlock's fashioning as a frail flower captive is haunted by the risks vulnerability carries, Delaney rejects such vulnerability by consistently scripting herself as a capable maternal and colonial agent instrumental not only in her own rescue from captivity (thereby deflating the claims of her male rescuers) but also in the rescue of young Cree women from "ignorance" by instructing them in 'civilized' domestic practices. Her half of *Two Months* becomes a political platform from which she asserts her value to the Dominion as a public maternal agent of colonization, a claim that anticipates (in both its scope and racial prejudice) the demands of Canadian maternal feminists at the turn of the century. Intent on depicting herself as a capable maternal teacher, Delaney exhibits a racist tendency then prominent in Anglo-evangelical women's missionary work to infantilize Indigenous women rather than see them as peers (Valverde 10). She writes more than once of the Cree as "her children" or "children of the forest" (61, 64). Of her "Indian protégées" Delaney notes that "With time and care good housekeepers could be made of many of them and it is too bad to see so many clever, naturally gifted, bright creatures left in ignorance and misery... How many a flower is left to blush unseen, and waste its fragrance in the desert air" (64). This

suggestion that Delaney's domestication efforts are *rescuing* these women from supposed misery is in marked contrast to the popular paternalistic rhetoric of rescue surrounding the Therasas' captivity.

Delaney appears to relish the opportunity the writing of *Two Months* gives her to voice her political thoughts in a public forum. Aware of the social prohibitions facing female politicians, Delaney nevertheless writes extensively about settlement policy, farming practices, and Indian Affairs. She explains: "It would not become me, perhaps, to comment upon the manner in which the country is governed, and the Indians instructed, for I am no politician... But I cannot permit this occasion, the last I may ever have, to go past without saying plainly what I think and what I know about the north-west and its troubles" (61). An unfortunate effect of her claim to this public platform is its simultaneous silencing of her infantilized "protégées," for Delaney derives much of her authority from pronouncing upon their affairs for them. In this sense her text has, as Jon Gordon argues, returned to the "inability to speak" which is at the etymological root of infantilization (95). The Frog Lake Cree were obviously, as we will see in the upcoming pages, more than capable of speaking for themselves and of refuting Delaney's authoritative claims that they had no legitimate grievances in 1885.

◇ Complexly Captive:

The McLeans & Cultural Layering in mistahi-maskwa's Camp

Gowanlock and Delaney were far from the only self-identified captives or prisoners in mistahi-maskwa's camp in the spring of 1885, but they were the only ones to embrace the colonialist captivity narrative as the vehicle for relating their experience. Although

frequently not acknowledged by the contemporary press as such, others detained in the camp included a group of Saulteaux travelers, fifteen or so Chipewyan families, the majority of the region's Woods Cree, and several dozen invader-settlers who, in the main, had "opted for the protection of the Cree camp upon the advice of Aboriginal leaders or friends" (Carter, "Two" 80).

This was the case of the forty-four civilians from Fort Pitt who choose to join the camp. Two weeks after the killings at Frog Lake, three hundred or so of mistahi-maskwa's band journeyed the thirty miles to the Hudson's Bay Fort to plunder its supplies. The small fort, with its makeshift palisade and guard composed of twenty-three North-West Mounted Police and a few dozen civilians, was no match for mistahi-maskwa's warriors. Wanting to avoid a violent confrontation, the chief initiated negotiations with the Fort's Chief Trader, William McLean, with whom he had enjoyed a good relationship since the latter's arrival in 1884. After some discussion, it was determined that the Cree would allow the police to peaceably escape the fort and region (by way of the North Saskatchewan River) and would offer the civilians the choice of leaving with the police or joining their camp. As McLean records it, kâ-papâmahcahk-wêw (Wandering Spirit) told him: if you swear "that you will not desert us... we will spare your life and take care of you" (249). After consultations among themselves and with their trusted First Nations advisors, all of the civilians at Fort Pitt opted to join mistahi-maskwa—a decision which turned them into what we might, at the risk of being oxymoronic, call *voluntary captives*. McLean's dialogic negotiation with mistahi-maskwa forms a sharp contrast to Quinn's autocratic approach. While

recognized by many familiar with the situation as a “wise” compromise and savvy avoidance of violence, he was condemned by some at the time, including the commander of the North-West Field Force, as a traitor for it (Stonechild & Waiser 122).

McLean, his pregnant wife Helen, and their eight children shared 62 days and 140 miles of travel with mistahi-maskwa’s people. Having been born into a long-standing Scottish-Canadian North-West trading family with a degree of Aboriginal ancestry¹³ and grown up primarily at Fort Qu’Appelle, the young McLeans were well versed in Plains Cree and Saulteaux language and culture. Their familiarity and comfort with their ‘captors’ lends credence to Stuart Hughes’ hypothesis that the region’s animosity ran as much along local and non-local lines of allegiance as along racial ones (3). During their captivity, the three teenage McLean sisters, Amelia (18), Eliza (16), and Kitty (14), were briefly “national celebrities” as rumors that they had been “made slaves of the lesser chiefs” and had suffered “the final outrage” hit the central Canadian press; never, however, as historian Sarah Carter notes in her extensive documentation of the Frog Lake conflict, did the sisters receive “the same level of frenzied attention that was directed toward Delaney and Gowanlock” (“Cordial” 200, 209). The experience of the McLean sisters—with their voluntary admission to mistahi-maskwa’s camp, sympathy for Cree causes, distant but unforgotten Aboriginal ancestry, company rather than government allegiance, and performance of a decidedly non-vulnerable femininity—could not, Carter explains, “easily be conformed to meet the needs of the hour” (*Capturing* 117).

¹³ Sarah Carter examines the McLean family history in some detail in her study of William’s daughter Amelia McLean Paget; she concludes that Amelia’s maternal great-great-grandmother was Aboriginal, probably Woods Cree, although this is not certain (202). While mention of this ancestry is omitted from McLean family memoirs, interestingly she and her siblings applied for and received Métis scrip (201).

Unlike the media's casting of Gowanlock and Delaney as frail flower captives, the lesser attention given the McLean sisters at times took a radically different form, one more akin to another of Namias's types—that of the self-sufficient, martial “Amazon”: see Figure 3.1. Namias has identified three captivity typologies as having held particular sway in North America during the nineteenth century—the Frail Flower, the Amazon, and the Survivor (*White* 24)—and the self-representations of the McLeans seem to fit best with this last type's highly adaptable, adventuresome, and easy-going nature.

Amelia was quoted in the *Charlottetown*



Figure 3.1:
Illustration entitled “Noble Women on the Defensive: The Misses McLean show great courage, each one, rifle in hand, stands at a loophole.” *Montreal Daily Star*, 23 May 1885. Reprinted in Carter's *Capturing Women* (65).

Daily Patriot in June of 1885 as saying that she would “not have believed the endurance they all manifested possible, but now looks back at most of it with enjoyment” (qtd in

Carter, “Cordial” 209). What has been described elsewhere as the “happy captive” was certainly not what the weary Field Force troops expected or desired after weeks of fruitlessly traversing difficult terrain in their pursuit. In the unpublished diary of one member of the Alberta Field Force, Carter finds a prime example of the disappointment generated by the McLean sisters’ rejection of conventional roles:

Instead of the young ladies rushing promiscuously into the arms of the soldiers, calling them their deliverers and rewarding the best looking with heart and hand, they took the matter very coolly [sic] and seemed... if the scouts are to be believed... to regret rather than otherwise having been compelled, through vulgar scarcity of grub, to sever their connections with their Indian friends. (qtd in “Cordial” 210)

The soldier’s exaggerated diction cues us to his self-reflexive use of these worn gender types, but his record of his disappointment stands nonetheless. It was not only the McLeans’ rejection of feminine vulnerability and masculine chivalry which was chided by certain soldiers, but also their distant Indigenous ancestry. This was a trait stripped altogether from one later novelistic treatment—Anne Mercier and Violet Watt’s *The Red House by the Rockies: A Tale of Riel’s Rebellion* (1896)—which rendered dark-haired Amelia as a fair Scots heroine (Carter, “Cordial” 210).

For his part, their father’s record of the period in his private journals, which were locally published many years after the fact,¹⁴ steers clear of the clichéd plots of colonialist captivity narratives. Instead William McLean’s is a diary of political intrigue, statesmanship, and diplomacy. By emphasizing his role in helping to dissuade the Cree from joining Riel, McLean’s writing serves to exonerate him professionally. His matter-

¹⁴ Excerpts from William McLean’s journals were printed in Hughes’ *The Frog Lake Massacre* (1976) and in the *Manitoba Pageant* in five installments in 1972 and 1973.

of-fact diary spends less time on personal or familial emotions or privations than on detailing the various councils and negotiations that took place in the camp and his significant (at times undercover) role as an advisor to members of the Woods and Mountain Cree—whom he lobbied in a series of secret meetings. Contrary to Delaney's insistence that the Cree had no grievances, McLean records that those in mistahi-maskwa's camp were "very dissatisfied with their condition since the government had taken them in hand" (246). McLean's diary attests to the plethora of tensions which animated the camp, especially those between Riel's agents who called for violent resistance and those like mistahi-maskwa who were arguing for peace (Stonechild & Waiser 171). It stands as a useful record of these varied allegiances and the range of states of captivity which they generated.

The captivity least understood by contemporary Canadian commentators was that of the Woods Cree, who as Rudy Wiebe would later summarize it, were detained by the Plains Cree—their "half-brothers and half-captors" (305). The son of Frog Lake's Woods Cree chief Ohneepahao, George Stanley or Mesunekwepan, explains in his account of the events that his people had no prior knowledge of the killings at Frog Lake, intervened to stop them, and were deeply dismayed by them. After the killings Mesunekwepan notes that mistahi-maskwa's warriors relocated and rearranged their amalgamated camp and placed Ohneepahao's lodge at the centre: "they had put it there purposely to show that we were captured" (164). This status is confirmed by the war chief, kâ-papâmahcahk-wêw, when he states that no one is to leave the camp without his permission (167). Joseph Dion corroborates this, noting that after the killings at Frog

Lake and news of the North-West Uprising reached them, “[m]artial law was proclaimed since it was believed that the whole country would soon be at war. No one was allowed to vacate the camp without first obtaining permission from the [Plains Cree] soldiers.” He elaborates that although the neighboring Woods Cree Chief Kehiwin disagreed with the murders and would have preferred to have returned to his own reserve (after having been summoned to Frog Lake with his people by mistahi-maskwa and Quinn to help “maintain the peace” when news of the Métis uprising had reached the reserve on 1 April), he was prohibited from leaving, was “caught in the turmoil and there was no turning back” (98-99). Hence Carter’s description of the Woods Cree (among others) as “unhappy campers” (“Two” 78). That an Indigenous camp would include such a range of tribal affiliations and perspectives was not unusual for this region and is a phenomenon Neal McLeod identifies as *cultural layering* (Cree 39). The nuances of such layering were ones the non-Aboriginal public found difficult to grasp or “impossible to believe” during the conflict of 1885 (“Two” 78) and it is worth pausing to consider the political ends fostered by this refusal, one of which was the Canadian government’s post-1885 blanket punishment of *all* western First Nations under the reserve pass law system.

Eliza(beth) McLean’s account of her captivity (as told to Constance James) was printed in installments in *The Beaver* in 1946 and 1947. Although it draws upon certain conventions of the colonialist captivity genre in terms of its framing, its documentation of Indigenous lifeways, and its occasional reference to privation, Eliza’s narrative makes an excellent foil to Gowanlock and Delaney’s more typical Victorian captivity narrative in that it emphasizes female competence and courage, details individual and complex Cree

characters and motives, and contains moments of cross-cultural camaraderie as well as privation. The markedly different circumstances under which these three women composed their accounts of this mutual experience perhaps anticipates their divergence. Even so, Eliza's tone and subject matter depart in radical ways from that of the widows: as in *Two Months* it details domestic life in the camp, but with curiosity and understanding rather than condemnation and superiority; similarly, while it follows the order of events noted in her father's diary, its domestic rather than political or international focus brings out a relatively untold story of female cooperation and courage during these two months, an as yet unrecorded angle of an event predominantly recounted by men in military terms. Occasional phrases, such as her description of her family's "two months of discomfort and anxiety as prisoners of Big Bear" (279), are stock colonialist captivity rhetoric, but these are few and far between and are outweighed by detailed portraits of "faithful friends" among the Woods Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux, especially Louison, Wandering Spirit, and Manoomin who are diligent in protecting the family from harm (290). The depiction of captivity here has many registers, from friend to hostage and prisoner, but the text's overarching tone and sentiments remain light and entertaining, with room for cooperation, diversity, and laughter.

Women are the principal actors in Eliza's account and they demonstrate a consistent competence and adaptability, embodying many of the maternal feminist ideals articulated in Delaney's narrative. Far from being overwhelmed by sentiment at the moment of "capture," as was the norm in the period's captivity novels, Eliza's mother demonstrates a calm composure which steadied them all (178). Likewise, it is her

mother's kindness and medicinal skill which averts a potential disaster: shortly after their arrival in mistahi-maskwa's camp, a "rebel" begins to threaten William McLean and it is an elderly Cree woman who steps between the trader and the rifle leveled at him, who declares McLean a friend, who proclaims he is not to be harmed because earlier that winter Helen McLean had prepared broths and medicines to heal this woman's ailing grandbaby (276). In this anecdote we see the cultivation of alliances between women in the domestic realm and the influence of these allegiances in shaping the region's extra-domestic, public, and political spheres. A wonderful example of this type of cross-cultural female alliance, the kind Gowanlock's text could only point to in subtle ways, is found in what Eliza labels the "sort of protective society the Indian women formed to save us girls from being carried away by any of the young braves" (283). The modus operandi for the society involved these women, upon hearing rumors about the camp, warning the sisters and then stealthily concealing them in their own tents for the night.

Eliza records both her gratitude for this protection and her and her sister's ability to defend themselves from such advances or assaults when necessary. Walking alone one day, Eliza has what she dubs a "little adventure" wherein she verbally dissuades a brave on horseback from abducting her (284). Her elder sister, Amelia, has to resort to a more physical but no less effective self-defense. Asleep one evening in a tent belonging to one of the protective society, Amelia feels the blanket under her being pulled towards the tent's edge; she carefully pulls her knife out of her belt, waits until she can see the assailant's hand, and then strikes "with all her might" using her knife's blunt end—not only does her assailant flee, but the sisters have the satisfaction of identifying him a few

days later as the brave with the bandaged hand (284). These are no frail flowers! The threat of rape is certainly noted in Eliza's narrative, but rather than serving as a melodramatic structuring device as it does in *Two Months*, it is defused by its contextualization within stories about how the women of the camp effectively protect themselves and each other; Gowanlock's rhetoric of vulnerability is replaced by one of self-confidence and proto-feminist solidarity.

If, as I've argued in the case of Gowanlock's captivity narrative, objects (specifically articles of her clothing) function to represent otherwise unutterable acts of sexual violence, how different are the tales "told" by the garments of Theresa Gowanlock and Amelia McLean. While the young widow was much distressed to have to helplessly watch as Blondin, the Métis arch-villain of her piece, parades in front of her wearing her dead husband's undergarments—a coded reference to his sexual abuse of her—the eldest McLean sister assertively grabs her hat from the hands of Lone Man who desired it for his dance costume, saying, "No one shall ever wear this hat! It belongs to me!" With that Amelia tore it apart and burnt it in the fire, prompting Lone Man to turn away, disgruntled in the realization "there was nothing more he could say or do" (285). The extent to which these intercultural exchanges of clothing might map or "intimate" the dynamics of a sexual economy is open to speculation, but at the least they provide a pithy summation of the divergent approaches to captivity embodied by Gowanlock and the McLean sisters—the one a frail flower, the others adamant survivors.

The respect for Cree women evident in Eliza's recollections is also present in Amelia McLean Paget's later work, *The People of the Plains* (1909), an ethnography

commissioned by Duncan Campbell Scott and the Department of Indian Affairs at the behest of Earl Grey, who wished to preserve for posterity what he deemed to be a fading Indigenous culture. Drawing from both her experiential knowledge and fieldwork conducted in 1906, *The People of the Plains* is remarkable for its period as a plea for cross-cultural tolerance. As Sarah Carter explains, “[d]erogatory representations of Aboriginal people are most directly challenged in Paget’s treatment of women”; her consultation of female elders and focus on women throughout her text is unusual for the time, as is her insistence that Cree women were good housekeepers and attentive mothers, industrious workers but not drudges (“Cordial” 216-17). Such a positive portrayal is a radical departure from the hegemonic and derogatory caricature of Cree femininity found in *Two Months* (which Gowanlock and Delaney mobilize as a self-aggrandizing tactic) and is crucially important at this time when Canadian condemnations of the maternal and domestic capabilities of Indigenous women were routinely used to justify removing First Nations children from their families and incarcerating them in residential schools (220).

Interestingly, Carter notes that Paget’s positive portrait of the plains First Nations would prove “unpalatable” to many contemporary readers, including the man who first commissioned it and then seized editorial control of it. Scott would reject both Paget’s suggested cover and Cree title for the volume, which he and the publisher agreed was a “deliberate attempt to provoke lockjaw” (221, 215). Scott’s introduction to *The People of the Plains* is another attempt on his part to “control reader’s engagement with it” (Hulan 60). In it he cites Paget’s personal childhood history among the Saulteaux and Cree

(which she does not in the volume) to cast her as an overly-nostalgic or “idealistic” chronicler of these cultures, as one who inaccurately “heightens” the “real felicities of the situation”; Scott writes, “If there were hardship and squalor, starvation, inhumanity and superstition in this aboriginal life, judged by European standards, here it is not evident. All things are judged by the Indian idea of happiness, and the sophistication of the westerner disappears.” (Scott 13-14) Threatened by Paget’s depiction of the pre-contact plains First Nations life as relatively ideal and content, and by the implicit critique of colonialist interference lodged therein, Scott retreats to a well worn defensive position, brandishing European standards as the obligatory lingua franca and panacea for the colonized Indigenous population.

Although unsettling for Scott, the positive portrait of traditional Cree life painted by Paget is in keeping with all the Cree histories I have read as well as with a more recent rendition of this period—that by Rudy Wiebe in his acclaimed historiographic metafiction, *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973). While the McLean sisters could not easily be tailored to fit the anti-Métis, propagandist “needs of the hour” in 1885, they prove timely templates for Wiebe, who uses Kitty McLean as a secondary heroine in his novel and endows her with the plucky nature evinced in the writings of her elder sisters. The authorial attention devoted to Kitty as an adaptive and admirable young woman is in contrast to the text’s dismissal of Gowanlock and Delaney holus-bolus as hysterical and naive frail flowers. It is through the voice of Kitty that Wiebe rebuts the widows’ choice of the colonialist captivity narrative as that best suited to convey their state. Having

noted that her father had the foresight before they left the fort to pack for them many provisions, Wiebe's Kitty proceeds,

Papa said an Indian captive had to supply himself, though I never noticed that in the books I read. Food usually appeared there without the least worry by the heroine, though she could rarely eat any and was always perfectly clean and disdainful and aloof about the fate worse than death suspended over her head and any instant about to fall if the hero continued not arriving; though in her heart of hearts she was dreadfully afraid in a way that only showed as brilliant courage outwardly. (275)

The colonialist captivity tale's conventions, Kitty suggests, are woefully inaccurate to describe the actual state of captivity she now finds herself in; the heroine of such an account being reduced, in Kitty's breathless enumeration of her implausible traits, to a laughable stock figure. Pilloried here as a mere sensationalist device, a clichéd "fate worse than death," the threat of rape was nevertheless a real one for most women in this time and place. Given the historic reality of sexual predation, this comic treatment of "the fate worse than death" and of Delaney's fear of removing her clothes in the camp (296) run the risk of eliding women's legitimate concerns in the rush to redeem mistahi-maskwa's reputation.¹⁵

Wiebe's novel, like the Cree personal histories I will turn to in the next pages, outlines both the ways in which the Cree themselves were captured by the state and the ambiguously captive state of those like the McLeans in 1885. Included in the novel's final pages is the transcript of an interview with mistahi-maskwa conducted by "G.H.H." and published in *The Toronto Mail* in February of 1886:

¹⁵ I have written at more length on this topic in "'The fact of blood that was the cause of so much pain': The Raced Female Body and the Discourse of *Peuplement* in Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* and *The Scorched-Wood People*" (2001).

“Why did you capture Mr. McLean at Fort Pitt?”

“I didn’t,” he *unblushingly* answered. “I sent him a letter and he came out.”

“But you detained him.”

“Oh yes,” he replied, *without moving a muscle*, “I was afraid he would get killed, and didn’t like that he should go back. It was only to save the lives of those people, and not to harm them, that they were detained. Were any hurt?” (411, my emphasis)

This testimony of mistahi-maskwa’s again corroborates the fact that the McLeans were *voluntary captives*—captives of colonial circumstance rather than of Indigenous cruelty. A grasp of the complex *cultural layering* of mistahi-maskwa’s camp in the spring of 1885 is necessary if one is to grasp the nuances of such forms of captivity. As our interlocutor’s pointed language here suggests, these ambiguities of contact captivity were ones many in Canada remained reluctant to acknowledge.

◇ âcimisowina: Little Bear, Dion, & Halfe Re-member Frog Lake in 1885

[Indians] clung to some 500 shards of land left over... from the vast age-old nations that had existed prior to the arrival of European invaders. And in those tiny fragments of earth known as *reserves*, the laws were thickly meshed. The Indian Act contained within it, as if in a jar of formaldehyde, the body of the captive Indian. It was meant to keep him in a state of *rigor mortis*.

— Robert Calihoo & Robert Hunter, *Occupied Canada* 70.

Although not explicitly named as such, the ultimate captives in *The Temptations of Big Bear* are those, like Wiebe’s eponymous protagonist, who feel “very sad to leave [their] large liberty for such choked little places where little iron pegs stick in the ground and where little instructors have nothing to do but watch [us] live” (204). The dynamics of this particular history of Indigenous confinement are amply demonstrated in the autobiographical recollections of Isabelle Little Bear and Mary Dion, and in a recent

verse collection by Louise Halfe, *Blue Marrow*. A profound or more complete understanding of these texts and their Cree moorings would require a sustained immersion in or familiarity with Cree culture which I do not have; this, my introductory consideration of Cree renderings of captivity in 1885, rests especially upon two instructive studies of Cree narrative and historiography by Winona (Wheeler) Stevenson and Neal McLeod.

In 1968 Alberta's *Bonnyville Tribune* newspaper procured and printed Isabelle Little Bear's "My Own Story," a five page *âcimisowina* or personal life story which I am interested in interpreting as an exemplary Indigenous captivity narrative and as part of the larger genre of contact captivity writing. Little Bear was the granddaughter of mistahi-maskwa, the daughter of his son âyimisîs. She was twelve when her father sought refuge in Montana after *ê-mâyahkamikahk* and rather than flee with him she remained and grew up on the Kehewin Reserve, near Frog Lake, with her adoptive family, the Thunders. Her text is a blend of firsthand recollections and received ancestral oral history.

It begins, as do many Cree histories, by situating itself in relation to her nation and by fondly recalling its traditions and pre-treaty mode of life. In Little Bear's words, "We roamed the vast prairie regions of Western Canada and lived as we were meant to live until one day our great chief Sweet Grass... signed the Treaty": the moment that Treaty Six is sealed is singled out by Little Bear as the end of an ideal era. Unlike many commentators, she goes on to note that Sweet Grass was murdered near Frog Lake shortly after he had agreed to take treaty because "our people resented being sold out of

land which rightly belonged to us all” (198). Thus, Little Bear’s story, like many *âcimisowina*, opens with a marked sense of “tribal solidarity” (Stevenson 267) or national pride in the culture of her people, but it also indicates the presence of contentious divisions within the larger inter-tribal Cree body politic at this time and highlights a long-standing Plains Cree resistance to Treaty Six as an unjust and undemocratic process.

From this point onwards, Little Bear’s people are subject to a host of colonial technologies of capture; her narrative documents these incidents, their ever-increasing severity providing her story with its crescendo-like narrative arc. After the signing of the Treaty in 1876, Isabelle and her immediate family choose to stay with the “great chief, Big Bear,” the leader the Canadian government will, over the next decade, work so assiduously to capture and confine. Among the early effects of these efforts at capture was the dispersion and exile of mistahi-maskwa’s people; Little Bear explains that her “people realized they had lost their lands and so they scattered all about like little birds” (198).

They were also losing access to sources of sustenance. Ineligible for rations and in competition for the few remaining buffalo, in 1881 Little Bear and her family travel with mistahi-maskwa, following the buffalo “south as far as we had to go” in what she calls the “last big hunt”—the culmination of a number of forays back and forth across the international border into the Milk River district of Montana. Without many horses or provisions, this expedition would entail terrible suffering and end “in near catastrophe” as the American militia forcibly evicted the group back to Canada. Little Bear remembers that

To make sure we did not stop along the way, we were escorted by many militaries right up to the big line where there was one lonely Red Coat to receive us. The trek back to our former home at Frog Lake was a hard one to live through because of the lack of food and the scarcity of game. We traveled forever northwards and ran into severe storms. Deaths were numerous, we stopped only briefly to bury our dead; among the victims of the cold and the hunger were my mother and sister. I survived and was cared for by Mrs. Peter Thunder, whom I learned to love as a second mother. My father, Little Bear performed many acts of bravery which contributed greatly to some of us reaching our destination. (198)

Identified by Canada's Indian Commissioner as "worthless and troublesome" and forcibly rejected from the United States, it was, as Stonechild and Waiser note, as if mistahi-maskwa's band "had no home" (40)—this was the start of a larger colonial endeavor McLeod recognizes as "spatial exile" or the physical alienation of the Cree from their land (*Cree* 56). The tightening constraints of colonial mechanisms of capture are evidenced in mistahi-maskwa's increasingly limited mobility. These constraints, however, are not accepted passively; Isabelle takes the time to commemorate her father's bravery and resistance: praise which is all the more notable in contrast to the disparagement âyimisîs often receives in non-Cree accounts which bill him as a young man "spoiling for trouble" (Friesen 152) or, in a mistranslation of his name, as a "Bad Child" likely to murder even an innocent man asleep in his own bed (Mulvaney 90).

Little Bear's description of this painful forced trek is not unlike that of the conventional colonialist captivity narrative: it bears the hallmarks of privation, hunger, extreme climate conditions, a cruel foreign enemy, and the wrenching act of witnessing the deaths of dear family members. Little Bear's account diverges, however, in its tone. In contrast to the dramatic lamentation typical of the colonial female captive (to which Gowanlock's Victorian sensationalist sensibility completely conforms) is the spare and

unsentimental approach Little Bear takes to telling of the death of her mother and only sibling. What could only have been a terribly traumatic event for a young girl is marked in a way we might call matter of fact. This restraint should not, however, disguise its emotional import. Noel Dyck has observed that it is conventional in traditional Cree narration to recount experiential stories derived from personal, familial or communal lived experience in an open-ended, non-didactic, non-prescriptive way that encourages listeners to actively draw their own conclusions (qtd in McLeod, *Cree* 13). This, it seems to me, fits with Little Bear's decision not to interpret this event for us, not to gloss in detail its emotional dimensions, but rather to leave it to us, as presumably intelligent listeners or readers, to deduce these ourselves from the evidence given us. The spare narrative style may also be partially due to the fact that Little Bear recollects these events some seven decades after the fact.

Plenty of additional evidence as to what would have motivated mistahi-maskwa to have undertaken this risky last hunt is to be found in Mary Dion's *âcimisowina*. Dion was twenty years old the day she witnessed the killings at Frog Lake and her son, Joseph Francis Dion, recorded and published her short personal history of this period in both the *Bonnyville Tribune* in the 1960s and in his book, *My Tribe the Cree*, in 1979. As in Little Bear's and other *âcimisowina*, the veracity and the genealogy of the story are clearly noted in its telling (McLeod, *Cree* 16). In counter-distinction to the narrow scope adopted in many Euro-Canadian accounts of the event, Dion's telling contextualizes it within a broader frame, devoting much time to the period which preceded the conflict. In her text, the murders take a backseat to the hardships which sparked them. This narrative

strategy was also chosen by Mesunekwepan or George Stanley who likewise deliberately focuses upon how things were at Frog Lake before *ê-mâyahkamikahk* in his retelling of the period. The son of Woods Cree Chief Ohneepahao, Mesunekwepan was in possession of his grandfather Chaschakiskwis's Holy Pipe Stem which was used to sanctify the signing of Treaty Six. That he cites or calls upon this stem in the opening of his account of the Frog Lake killings is suggestive to me both in terms of the ways in which it grants his account qualities of authority and veracity—alluding to the practice of presenting words or promises *truthfully* to the Creator through the pipe (Stevenson 250)—and in terms of how it privileges a history prior to that of white arrival by referencing Cree spiritual and political conventions and by describing the way his grandfather lived on this land well before treaty time (159).

Mesunekwepan, like Dion and Little Bear, places narrative emphasis on family lineage; as McLeod explains, *wâhkôhtowin* or kinship is pivotal to Cree collective memory as it “keeps narrative memory grounded and embedded within an individual’s life stories” (*Cree* 14). We see this clearly in Dion’s text, which begins with a careful mapping of her personal kinship ties. If kinship forms one major pillar of Dion’s story, food forms the other. Indeed the two are interwoven: as she introduces the members of her kinship web she notes their means of sustenance, be this the work her mother does as a char woman for the Indian agency for extra rations, the wood she helps her infirm father to chop in order to earn bacon, the rats *mistahi-maskwa* is reduced to hunting, or the free rations allotted the elderly residents of the “old people’s home”—an overcrowded “one-room shack” where she lives with her parents and sixteen others (91).

From this catalogue of how her kin subsist in this Time of Great Hunger, Dion's text moves on to present two detailed anecdotes which trace the politics of food in the hamlet in the year or two preceding the murders.

Winona Stevenson has noted that Cree history focuses on actors and deeds, rather than on time or notions of temporal progress (272), and this, in conjunction with the non-prescriptive nature of Cree personal narratives, suggests to me that Dion's anecdotes (as records of particular actors and deeds) were carefully, even pedagogically, selected in order to gently instruct us on matters of personal character which, in turn, signify or illuminate the larger dynamics of the conflict at Frog Lake. In one anecdote, Dion recalls a summer evening when she and a handful of her teenage girlfriends walked past the priest's residence where his servant, a young man from Kehewin's band, was butchering a cow for him. Having been instructed by the priest to throw away the tripe, the young man gave it to Dion and her friends who remembers "How pleased we were at being able to bring [home] this little treat for our old people." Her mother prepared it and "as the pot was always ready it was not long before we had eaten everything up. Imagine our chagrin when shortly afterwards the priest came and demanded back the "beef" his servant had given us." (93) The story showcases white excess against Cree deprivation, to illustrate the fact that even an often kind white person professionally charged with compassion could forget or remain unaware of the chronic hunger endured by his Cree parishioners, or, in short, to clarify for us the relations of privilege and privation at play in this place and time.

Dion's second anecdote concerns Mr. Delaney, the Farm Instructor tasked with administering rations, and Big Lie Day or April Fool's Day in 1884. On that morning, Black Whiskers, as Mr. Delaney was known to the Cree, sent word to mistahi-maskwa's camp that he wished to see all of them at his dwelling at once. Believing there to be rations at stake, even the infirm in Dion's care are determined to make the journey to the village: she helps to pull a crippled woman there on a sledge, while "our one-footed old fellow crawled on his hands and knees." After some exertion they arrive at Delaney's house only to find that it was merely an April Fool's joke to gather them all uselessly together: "we made a great laugh for the whites; but we failed to see the humour in it." Dion concludes that the whites "certainly liked to play jokes at the people's expense" (92). What else might this selected deed of Delaney's teach us? It certainly provides insight into how the cultural chasm between the Cree and the invader-settlers was widened by a startling lack of white empathy for the hardships facing the Cree. Under its thin (and culturally particular) veneer of humour, Delaney's summons is in essence a flagrant use of food as a tool of state control, a brutal mechanism of colonial management. The power inherent in the control of food during famine is reiterated when Dion notes that her people had no recourse against Agent Quinn's abuse of two Cree men: "under the circumstances we simply had to crawl or starve" (92). Given what we learn from Dion's anecdotes, it comes as little surprise that it is Quinn or Sioux Speaker's refusal of a request for food which brings the conflict to a murderous head in April 1885. Nor is it surprising that the denial of food to a starving people is the central theme in the Cree commemoration of this event to collective memory: Dion closes by recounting the

chorus of a song created on that bloody day by an elderly Cree man: “Sioux Speaker, will you again shake your head when I plead a piece of bacon?” (95)

Little Bear’s analysis of the role the food shortage played in the 1885 killings concurs exactly with Dion’s: she notes that in this period “conversation centred around the present poor supply of food;” that given the lack of work available, “To be told by Mr. Quinn to go back home and work was like saying “Go back home and starve;” that it was after this that there was talk of taking food by force (199); that Wandering Spirit’s first words after shooting Quinn were “Let’s all go in and get something to eat now”; and that if Quinn had only been less “stubborn” and let her people help themselves to the supplies the violence could have been averted (200). For Little Bear the killings are primarily the result of a plan to obtain food and clothing from the agency “by force if necessary” and she, like most of her people, takes “no pride in this crime” (199, 201). Her privileging of hunger as a motive for the murders is entirely consistent with the Cree histories I have studied,¹⁶ but stands in marked opposition to many contemporary non-Indigenous analyses of the event. Prime Minister Macdonald, for one,¹⁷ was quick to blame Cree grievances concerning starvation upon an “Indian” tendency to “grumble” and “never profess to be satisfied” and to counter-claim that the Cree had been furnished with “excessive” supplies (qtd in Stonechild & Waiser 52). This rhetoric of the

¹⁶ See also Kamistatam on Cree attempts to obtain food from Quinn for their starving people (qtd in Beal 44), Joseph Dion’s claim that the “main reason for the unrest was that the people were starving” (97), or Jennings’s more general observation that much Indigenous resistance to the government’s Indian policy in the late nineteenth century was “centred on food,” and that, although unacknowledged by Indian Affairs, hunger and insufficient rations remained a serious issue on western Cree reserves after the rebellion (231).

¹⁷ In 1885 Mulvaney too would cite the claim that “Indians grumble under almost any circumstances” as a justification for dismissing their grievances (89).

(mythical) pampered Indian is one Theresa Delaney also picks up in *Two Months*,

writing, with an over-emphasis I find suspect, that

there is one thing I do know and most emphatically desire to express and have thoroughly understood and that is the fact, *the Indians have no grievances and no complaints to make*. Their treatment is of the best and most generous kind... Many an English, Scotch or Irish farmer, when he comes poor to Canada and strives to take up a little farm for himself, if he had only one half the advantages that the government affords to the Indians, he would consider his fortune forever made. They never want for food. Their rations are most regularly dealt out to them and they are paid to cultivate their own land..." (61-62).

Delaney here exhibits a stubborn refusal to acknowledge either the radical difference inherent in Indigenous versus invader-settler claims and approaches to the land or the stark reality of starvation facing the western Cree at this time. After all, the statistics indicate that in the winter of 1884 one in ten Plains Cree died of starvation (Gilmour *et al* 30) and Stonechild and Waiser, as analysts attuned to Indigenous perspectives, contend that the Plains Cree population at this time experienced "a state of wretchedness that has had no equal in modern Canadian history" (28-9). At the time, mainstream Canadian accounts, especially those instigated by the government responsible in large measure for this destitution, frequently elided this aspect in favour of attributing the cause of the violence at Frog Lake to the irrational "outburst" and savage anger of a number of "unruly youths" (Friesen 152). Clearly, select young Plains Cree men were angry enough to kill, but in *âcimisowina* like those of Little Bear and Dion we recognize these acts as ones of retaliation; or, as McLeod explains, these killings were not "merely the actions of angry young men" but rather the result of ten years of trusting in the possibility of a

better treaty, of experiencing severe hunger, of enduring wide wandering in order to survive (*Cree* 51).

Little Bear's description of her people's experience of colonial captivity intensifies as she writes of the fates which awaited them after the Frog Lake murders. After weeks of being pursued by the North-West Field Force, she was among the group which surrendered and turned themselves in at Fort Pitt, where "We were herded into a compound, and guarded day and night" until the Canadian authorities separated those who had allegedly participated in the "uprising" from those who had not. The experience of internment builds as Little Bear writes, with diction slightly more emotional than that she has used to this point, that within a few days

our men were held in custody and taken East (Regina) under heavy escort of Red Coats and soldiers. I shall never forget the *pitiful* sight my people presented that day as they were marched away. Most of them we never saw again... some died in prison while others were hanged and still others were released from prison but never returned to us (201-2, my emphasis).

In this and a subsequent passage Little Bear casts these men of her tribe as unredeemed captives, as those the colonial authorities took and "never gave us back" (202); this description, following as it does from that where Little Bear notes how the government confiscated her people's tools and guns and then slowly returned them years later, highlights the objectified status of the captive who is treated by Canada in much the same fashion as the other controlled objects. What was for Gowanlock and Delaney a triumphal moment of Canadian justice is for Little Bear an object lesson in colonialist technologies of capture.

It is a lesson she is compelled to experience again with the introduction of the pass law system. Once the men of her tribe had been taken east for trial, Little Bear and the remaining women, children, and elderly men of her band returned to Onion Lake where their horses, ammunition, guns, axes, and knives were confiscated by the Police, which made hunting nearly impossible (201). It was soon after this, Little Bear recalls, that

we felt extremely hard times... we tried to move from place to place but found no suitable home where we could derive a living. Finally, we were told that we must not wander around the plains as we had been doing because it was against the law to do so. We were ordered to stay within the boundaries of the reserve (202).

Here the reserve becomes an instrument of internment: ancient Indigenous connections to land are complicated by this coerced relation to only a fragment of it. Arguably, Little Bear's description supports the contention by geographer Cole Harris that internment on reserves was "the primal disciplinary strategy in many colonial societies" (270-1). Certainly it evidences the truth of assessments which characterize this "reserve period" (from 1850 to 1930) as one in which the First Nations were forced "to live in geographical enclaves and were subject to extreme political and social control" (Frideres & Kalbach 98) and stands as a striking illustration of Frantz Fanon's observation that settler colonialism created "a world divided into compartments" (qtd in Harris xxiv).

At the close of her *âcimisowina* Little Bear reminds her audience that the Cree "do not like to be treated like animals"(202)—a phrasing reminiscent of mistahi-maskwa's caution that the reserve-bound Cree would be as a tethered beast. The Cree author Edward Ahenakew will also, many decades later, evoke mistahi-maskwa's

prescient metaphor in his retrospective description of the early reserve period; Ahenakew writes that after the Cree of the North-West signed the treaties they realized that “there was henceforth to be a definite systematized code of laws which was to *fence* around their spirits” and that as time passed they felt the “ever tightening hold of the law on them as the government kept pulling the *reins* of control” (355, my emphasis). Ahenakew further vocalizes his sense of the captive state of his people on early twentieth-century reserves through the character of Old Keyam in his best known work, *Voices of the Plains Cree*. Derived from the Cree icon of the wise Old Man and named after a Cree term denoting indifference, Old Keyam gives voice to a Cree perspective and addresses the apathy and demoralization rampant on reserves during the 1920s (Stevenson 180; Reder 50). As McLeod notes, Old Keyam compares himself, and his sense of confinement, to his ancestors who lived “a life of freedom”; Old Keyam concludes that

The one brings to its song something of the wide expanse of the sky, the voice of the wind, the sound of waters; the other’s song can only be the song of captivity, the bars that limit freedom, and the pain that is in the heart. (qtd in McLeod, *Cree* 58)

I find Ahenakew’s poetic use of language unusually deft, although his choice to limn the experience of reserve captivity by calling upon the idiom of incarceration—the “bars that limit freedom”—is a common one amongst Cree writers. As Plains Cree artist George Littlechild has succinctly phrased it in a recent book for young readers: “My ancestors must have cried much as they became prisoners in their own land” (9).

More typical of non-Indigenous accounts is the euphemistic diction employed by Joseph Hicks, a soldier in the North-West Field Force in 1885, who notes that the Cree were “collected on the reserves” (350); this is an indirect phrasing which evades

assigning responsibility for the act. Additionally, the connotations of *collected* are presumably intended here to be ones much more passive and humane than the rather brutal and coercive practice of internment referenced, yet the term, often associated with the privileged western collector of (exotic) inanimate objects, is unconsciously apt in its suggestion of the dynamics of power and objectification at play in this case. Writing a century after Hicks, Robert Calihoo and Robert Hunter refuse any such sanitized terminology. Descended from Louis and Bernard Karhiio, a pair of Iroquoian brothers who escaped the “unbearably restraining... small holding areas” allotted to the Iroquois at Caughnawaga through the Robinson Treaties of 1850 to establish a new Cree-Iroquoian nation at the western edge of the prairies (76), Calihoo repeatedly chooses forceful diction and the terminology of incarceration to describe the confinement of the western First Nations on reserves. In Calihoo’s autobiography, reserves, as defined and enforced by Canada’s Indian Act, “pin down” Natives (111), banish them to “internal exile” (122), enclose them within “the bars of an invisible cage” (142), serve as “concentration camps” in which “starving prisoners” are “watched over by soldiers and bureaucrats” (122), and, ultimately, create “more than half a thousand captive nations” (260). If the early reserve itself resembled a prison, Calihoo argues, from personal experience, that the modern reserve has come to occupy a slightly different relation to the carceral, that it has become “a gateway to jail” (67).

These figurations of the early reserve as imprisonment validate Harris’s contention that reserves “were fixed geographical points of reference, surrounded by clusters of permissions and inhibitions that affected most Native opportunities and

movements” (xxi). Yet, it is crucial to remember that reserves have also become more and otherwise; First Nations feelings towards their reserves, especially generations after their creation, are complex indeed and often involve a palpable, affirming, and abiding attachment. In the preface to her masterfully-wrought verse collection, *Absentee Indians and Other Poems*, Kimberley Blaeser conjoins the subjects of the reserve and prison, with a twist: the titular Absentee Indian being one who endures an involuntary exile from her or his beloved reserve community, whose soul is “held in a hot prison of longing” for this homeland. Blaeser’s collection writes what she dubs “a pathway” home (xi); it chronicles and preserves, with curatorial precision, the essential elements (be they familial, social, cultural, natural) of her reserve community, from the particular ambience and cadence of crib games in her mother’s kitchen to the nuances of a specific natural locale. These elements, beautifully caught in verse, stacked layer upon layer in the volume, coalesce to form a catalogue of essences embodying home. Thus, in general, Gerald McMaster’s précis that the reserve has been “both sanctuary and prison” (22) can be refined in temporal terms to describe a tendency towards the latter in accounts of the early reserve period, like Little Bear’s and Ahenakew’s, and a tendency to the former in more recent representations of the reserve, like Blaeser’s. This shift gives us a glimpse of how Indigenous people have adapted themselves to these much reduced relations to land; in this sense the recent reference to the reserve as “home” is a sign of resilience and adaptability, even as it requires a tragic elision of the “spatial exile” on which this “home” is based.

The rhetoric of incarceration is, however, applied with a uniform consistency in Cree narrations of their residential school experiences; as the judge at mistahi-maskwa's trial put it to him in 1885: "I cannot sentence your son to prison, but I can sentence him to residential school." (qtd in Campbell & PeeMee 50) Canada's residential schools, administered in partnership with a number of Christian churches, operated across the nation from 1879 to 1986; most demanded a compulsory and lengthy attendance, subjecting their pupils to practices of abduction, removal, and cultural segregation. The legacy of this federal system of 'instruction'—with its notoriously strict discipline, devaluation of Indigenous cultures, and frequent corporeal, mental and sexual abuse—"ripples throughout Native Canada, its fingerprints on the domestic violence, poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide rates that continue to cripple many Native communities" (McKegney 80). Thus, to borrow Neal McLeod's terms, the *spatial exile* inherent in the creation of reserves, as the Cree "were taken from [their] lands and confined to small areas... [becoming] alienated from spiritual sites and sacred places," was replicated and compounded by the *spiritual exile* of residential schools which aimed to alienate Cree children from their culture and stories (*Cree* 55).

Many of the same heavy-handed state tactics used to confine the First Nations on reserves were transferred to the incarceration of First Nations children in residential schools. The threat of starvation was again levied by the government; Plains Cree parents reluctant to send their children to these institutions were threatened with the termination of their rations and treaty money. As historian John Jennings writes, using phrasing like that we noted in Dion and Little Bear, it was a case of "deliver your

children to the assimilation process or starve” (227). Sub-standard buildings, inadequate food supplies, and negligent health policies characterized many residential schools, and forced “a captive generation,” or more, of enrolled students to experience shockingly high rates of mortality (Calihoo & Hunter 230). Not surprisingly, many pupils attempted to escape these institutions and return to their parents, a scenario which led Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney to enact an ordinance in 1886 which stripped the parents of children in residential schools of their rights and authority over their children while the school was in session. The terminology of this legislation converts the innocent child seeking his parents into a criminal: it requires the police to “apprehend such an offender and return him to the Institution from which he escaped, to be dealt with according to the law” (qtd in Jennings 227). McLeod’s 12-year old grandfather was one such ‘offender’—his punishment for having ventured home from the school at Gordon’s Reserve being his forceful apprehension by the North-West Mounted Police and three successive nights alone in jail as they transported him back to the school. He would escape again (Cree 59). The coercive and carceral nature of this “educational” experience is succinctly summed up in verse by Louise Halfe:

*Duncan Campbell Scott.
Captured.
Barbed Wire.
Squaw in mission school. (21)*

◇ Correlated Contact Captivities: Overwrite, Broken Trust, & Protocol

*Our feet were free
before da walk of da white skin.
– Louise Bernice Halfe, Blue Marrow 61.*

Halfe also provides an apt distillation of the dynamics of the events at Frog Lake, from a Cree perspective, in *Blue Marrow*—an acclaimed collection which reads, in many ways, as a long poem alternately narrated by a chorus of ancestral Cree female voices and by *âcimowinis*, a present-day Keeper of Stories with an autobiographical resemblance to Halfe.¹⁸ The segment on Frog Lake, in the voice of *âcimowinis*, is followed by one spoken by *sîpi-kiskisiw Grandmother* (Long Term Memory Grandmother) as “if she is sucking on a cracked thigh bone [and drawing] out the marrow,” and together these two segments do indeed bring to light the essential parts of this matter. This marrow tastes of genocide, hunger, incarceration, and broken treaty promises.

In Halfe’s verse I see the violence at Frog Lake occupying a turning point, a crucial moment in the shift of the region’s balance of power from Cree to invader-settler hands. It begins with a stanza notable for its portrayal of an empowered Cree grandmother figure: a woman whose spiritual potency is marked by associating her with a traditional Cree source of medicine and healing, the hummingbird (McLeod, *Cree* 29); a woman possessed of perhaps magical flight; a woman reverentially described, here at the outset of the segment, in her own language as *ê-mamâhtâwisit*—one gifted with arrival.

My Grandmother would fly
with the humming roll
of her tongue.
ê-mamâhtâwisit.
She is gifted

¹⁸ I think this autobiographical resemblance is fostered by Halfe’s use of possessive kinship terms from the Cree language. As Shelley Stigter notes, Halfe chooses possessive forms of the words for grandparents (*no-hkom*, *nimoso-m*, and *no-hkoma-k*) rather than the non-possessive forms (such as *kôhkum*) (54).

with arrival. (75)

The next stanza turns to the violence at Frog Lake and ascribes blame for it to the government's tactics of starvation:

The day the government agents
starved the people at Frog Lake
men paid with their breath. News
travelled fast.

It is not only news that travels quickly: the Grandmother of *âcimowinis* draws on her gifts of arrival and is fleet like the hummingbird, which may be her *pawâkan* or animal dream helper.

Beads dangling,
she hummed, her feet
hummingbird's wings.
Two days of running
from our reserve. (75)

Halfe's *Blue Marrow* is dense with meaning. It both engages in the linguistic technique of "code-switching"—moving back and forth between English and Cree concepts and terms—and frequently alludes to personal, familial, tribal, and national histories—only some of which I have access to. The segment on the killings at Frog Lake continues with such a compact historical reference, this time to the quick thinking of two Cree women, Mrs. James Simpson and Mrs. John Horse, who saved the life of a young Hudson's Bay trader, William Bleasdel Cameron, as the shooting broke out by wrapping him in a shawl and escorting him away from the village disguised as a Cree woman (Beal 57). Far from being rewarded by the Canadian authorities for this valiant rescue effort, Halfe's Grandmother is punished in the conflict's aftermath: a rendition consistent with Stonechild and Waiser's general contention that Cree loyalty to the

Crown during the uprising was betrayed by the Canadian government. Halfe's poetic account is similar to other Cree commemorations of the event in placing emphasis on the government's responsibility for the "Hungry bell[ies]" which plagued the Cree before and after this conflict.

Agents escaped dressed like women.
She guided them through thundering trees.
When that bloody battle was over
Grandmother lay. Tongue ripped.
Today at Frog Lake she sits. Barred
at the trading post. She watches.
Bits of paper signed, hundreds
of names,
provisions and hocking of wares.
Hungry belly. Sleeping spirits.

And them priests pitch
wailing tents, talking tongues,
bibles,
writhing warriors. (75-6)

The segment's concluding stanzas, cited above, complete Halfe's mapping of the shift in power that occurred at Frog Lake in 1885. She traces a trajectory for her Grandmother figure which moves from spiritual empowerment and physical prowess to muted or "sleeping" spirituality and a prostrate physical condition. The agents of this usurpation of power are implied: it is the colonial authorities who bar her from trade and sentence her to hunger, it is the "priests" who continue to have a sort of voice, with their "wailing tents" and "talking tongues," while her Grandmother lies, "tongue ripped." This disturbing image of the Cree woman's mutilated tongue is reiterated in the text and speaks to its overarching theme: colonial efforts to disempower and silence Cree women. Christian missionaries, especially the Jesuits, are a prime target of this critique; it is to the

Christian figure of the father confessor that the chorus of *kahkiyaw iskwêwak* and *nâpêwak* (All Women and All Men) pledge to swallow their tongues (37), and it is the Christian “tongues that speak damnation and burning” which silence the women of Halfe’s text (98). If Halfe’s segment on Frog Lake identifies those who seized control from the Cree in the wake of the conflict, it also, in the following segment, chronicles the legacy of this usurpation for the area’s Cree peoples.

Halfe uses the fates of individual unnamed familial characters or types—the Grandmother, the Mother, the Father, the Grandfather—to catalogue the main repercussions of the Frog Lake conflict for the larger Cree populace. In the first segment Grandmother’s loss of spiritual agency is representative of a larger colonial threat to Cree spirituality, while in this second segment, narrated by *sîpi-kiskisiw Grandmother* as she sucks her marrow bone, other *core* aspects of this usurpation are drawn out. Halfe’s figure of the Mother underscores the widespread contemporary phenomenon of chronic hunger; she survives “starving nights,” fights off the *wîhtikow* (which I interpret as the urge to cannibalism), and weighs “no more than a / coyote / feeding on mice.” She conveys Halfe’s poetic précis of this Time of Great Hunger: “how her ribs lived” (76). The description of her “Father” is characteristic of Halfe’s penchant for epigrammatic expression and startling juxtaposition and of the volume’s often brutally frank exploration of the charged nexus of consensual and coerced cross-racial sexual intimacy in the colonial contact zone.

*Father was a good man,
kept me on my feet.
His people slaughtered
my mother’s family. (76)*

Like the narratives of the McLean family, and in counter distinction to the dualistic racial binary utilized by Gowanlock and Delaney in *Two Months*, Halfe's *Blue Marrow*, with much of its cast of "Cree" kin explicitly descended from Euro-Canadian fathers in the fur trade, insistently cites the complexities of cultural layering, the nuances of identity politics crucial to understanding this particular contact zone.

Halfe, like other Cree commentators, refers to the Canadian state's violation of treaty promises as a factor in the Frog Lake bloodshed. Halfe's Grandfather figure witnesses the signing of Treaty Six, "watched / the flutter of the paper leaves / as spirit feather woke its / treaty promise," and, implicitly, takes up arms in response to its breach.

...He
fought with lance and arrow,
rotted behind bars
his treaty coat
a shredded ribbon. (76)

Halfe's wording suggests that after 1885 the integrity of the treaty itself is in *shreds*, just like the honorary coat her Grandfather was awarded as its signatory. Further it suggests the *rottenness* or corruption informing this incarceration. Like Little Bear's, Halfe's assessment of the violence at Frog Lake emphasizes the long and detrimental legacy of Cree confinement that was its outcome; her *âcimowinis* and *sîpi-kiskisiw Grandmother* testify to the spiritual, commercial, vocal, physical, sexual, and political dimensions of these confinements.

These Cree assessments offer an instructive means by which to reconsider the captivity and claims to privation of Gowanlock and Delaney. During the North-West Uprising, mainstream Canadians may have identified these two settler women as the

primary victims of the conflict at Frog Lake—in July of 1885 the Toronto *Globe* claimed they had endured “the severest trials of any concerned in the whole of the rebellion in the North-West” (qtd in Carter “Two” 71)—but Little Bear’s *âcimisowina* and Halfe’s *âcimowinis* prove otherwise; they testify to a range of long-term Cree confinements which form the *inverse* to Gowanlock and Delaney’s captivity. If we map the chronological trajectories of each set of confinements, along an axis of privation and plenty, their oppositional status becomes strikingly apparent. It was the lure of expansive land, physical and social mobility, and commercial and agricultural prosperity which brought settlers like the Gowanlocks and Delaneys to the North West at precisely the period when the traditional economies and migratory patterns of the region’s Indigenous populations were being constrained. More specifically, while the murders at Frog Lake were tragic and led to confinement and hardship for the widows Gowanlock and Delaney, for the Cree of mistahi-maskwa’s camp they manifested a certain potential for freedom and independence, and certainly a temporary relief from starvation. Thus, as mentioned above, whether one considers the effective surrender of mistahi-maskwa’s people to the North-West Field Force in June 1885 as a moment of rescue or as a moment of capture depends upon one’s location. This inversely correlated relation of freedom and capture is evident in Little Bear’s description of the spring of 1885, Gowanlock and Delaney’s time of captivity, as her people’s attempt “to recapture the freedom [they] had lost” with the arrival of such invader-settlers; likewise, her interpretation of the subsequent years as “the awful period” when her people were forced to “submit to the new regime” of the “White Man” (202) is the obverse to triumphalist accounts of prairie pioneer success.

It has long been a commonplace for liberal politicians, social scientists, and writers to herald Canada as a “nation of immigrants” (Iacovetta & Das Gupta),¹⁹ and recently it has also become common to note that the phrase does not apply to the First Nations. However, mainstream Canadians have yet to fully acknowledge the implications for Indigenous peoples of this famed foundational influx of immigrants and their nationalistic celebration as heroic pioneers. Much recent First Nations literature bears witness to the fact that one nationally celebrated set of migrations gave—and in many ways continues to give—rise to another reprehensible set of coerced migrations or internments.

Louise Halfe makes the causally linked nature of this freedom-captivity pairing explicit in *Blue Marrow* when her Keeper of Stories, *âcimowinis*, describes the reunion of her husband’s invader-settler family. Relatives who have come from across the continent “rejoice at recognizing one another,” “marvel at the trek of their ancestors,” and swap “lovingly compiled” histories of this “migration from England, Norway and into the Dakotas.” The figures of great-great-granddad who “preached the law of the land” and his wife, Isabel, who “taught the little savages to read,” are professionally akin to the Delaneys at Frog Lake. A witness to this celebration of invasion-settlement, *âcimowinis* sets herself apart from these immigrants, describing herself and her children as “Indians” who have been “adopted” into this larger familial structure; their history of mobility is adamantly not hers:

¹⁹ Margaret Atwood’s statement in her “Afterword” to the *Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970) that “We are all immigrants to this place [Canada] even if we were born here” (62) is one famous elision of Indigenous presence.

How many of my relatives were cattled
onto the reservation during their settlement?
How much of my people's blood was spilled
for this migration? (69)

As in mistahi-maskwa's famous oration at the signing of Treaty Six, Halfe utilizes the metaphor of the Cree as corralled animals to forcefully hit home her critique of the reserve as an inhuman(e) form of captivity. Nor does she shy away from naming the Indigenous bloodshed upon which invasion-settlement was predicated. With these two incisive queries, Halfe raises a history not told in many Canadian circles, a history that attests to the dispossession of Native peoples inherent in Canada's colonial "settlement" (a term which begs the question: for whom was it settled or reconciled?). She speaks of what Daniel Coleman, drawing on the terminology of Slavoj Žižek (64), has called Canada's *spectral history*—a suppressed supplemental history of violent trauma—that constitutes but is continually denied by its *symbolic history*—a set of mythical sanctioned narratives of nation, in this case the vision of Canada as a contented meritocracy of immigrants (28-9).

Although the captivity of Gowanlock and Delaney took centre stage for most Canadian commentators at the time, and although it remains the more celebrated of these paired or twinned captivities, arguably the fate of the two widows was simply an offshoot of the Canadian attempt to capture those who in turn captured (or more accurately harboured) the two settler women. That the captivities of Gowanlock and Delaney and the Frog Lake Cree are chronological inversions of each other underscores not only their *causal* interrelation but also the disparity between these two non-equivalent forms of settler versus Indigenous captivity: the former is typically individual, temporary, and

remedied, while the latter is long-term, collective and genocidal. It is a case of incomparable scales: the hardships of the two white widows, while not insignificant, “pale” in comparison to the systematic decades-long (neo-)colonial confinement of the western Cree. One obvious question which arises from such a comparison is why one case received so much more Canadian attention than the other.

In part this is a simple case of the “victor” telling all, of what Little Bear dubbed the “new regime” regulating or monopolizing the dissemination of history. Halfe’s *âcimowinis* marks the way in which the invader-settlers have gained economic as well as cultural control by noting the affluence as well as the merriment which surrounds the telling of these heroic tales of settler immigration: the reunion’s soundscape being the “click of wine glasses... through the arbour” (69). In part this is also a case of what I have called colonialist *overwrite*; of Gowanlock and Delaney’s story being politically expedient as propaganda and serving as a *narrative of absolution* which masks for the Canadian populace the immorality of the massive contemporaneous confinement of the Cree.

There is, however, more to the story of these stories, as it were. The Canadian public has remained largely ignorant of Cree perspectives on the Frog Lake killings and the North-West Uprising both because they lack an understanding of, and thus fail to implement, proper Cree protocol surrounding the transmission of hi/story and because the Canadian government’s response to the events of 1885 shattered Cree trust in the Canadian state. The Cree term for the period, *ê-mâyahkamikahk*—where it went wrong—aptly sums up the Cree position that these events “ended the possibility of

intercultural dialogue” (McLeod, *Cree* 82). As Blair Stonechild explains, Cree elders have been reluctant to tell “the full story of Indian involvement” in the North-West Uprising, especially to white audiences, as a result of the severe and unjust punishments meted out to their people in the uprising’s wake; interpretations of “the Indian role have remained very biased” because those involved were nervous that sharing their accounts would not only stir sad memories but potentially endanger others and lead to the further castigation of their people (155).

In “Decolonizing Tribal Histories,” Winona Stevenson’s discussion of the protocol surrounding the preservation and passing on of Cree oral histories points to another factor at play in the dissemination of Cree accounts of Frog Lake. In the case of Treaty Six, Stevenson reminds us that many bands designated specialists in oral history to maintain detailed remembrances of this negotiation, the authenticity of which are guaranteed by the binding nature of the sacred pipe and the telling of which are strictly regulated by ceremony—so “very few have the complete oral history of the event” (271). The passing of less formal personal histories has also traditionally been governed in Cree culture by a set of protocols, including the formation of a respectful and lifelong relationship between the Cree teacher or teller and the listener or student (Stevenson 242). I see evidence of a breach of this protocol in the editorial apparatus of Little Bear’s *âcimisowina* which was solicited, apparently with some exertion, by the non-Cree editor of the *Bonnyville Tribune*, Ovi E. Baril, in 1968.

Having heard of Little Bear’s “colourful past... during this particular era when the Indians rebelled against their white conquerors,” Baril informs the reader in his prefatory

comments that “we have been negotiating with her through an interpreter for an interview.” Apparently Little Bear, like the majority of the Cree elders consulted by Stonechild and Waiser, “was always reluctant to tell the White Men her personal experiences,” but she did (presumably after some persuasion from Baril) “consent” to tell him “her exact story as she lived it.” Here Little Bear ascribes to the high value placed on veracity in traditional Cree storytelling. In the next sentence she extends this value outwards to Baril and his colleagues, charging them to print her words “as she tells them, without embellishment, but truthfully as she herself would tell the story”: in her emphatic instruction not to alter or misconstrue her words is an unease with the non-Cree interviewer and unknown audience, a wariness born of a long century of more and less deliberate Canadian mistranslations of Cree words and deeds. I am fascinated by these glimpses into the editorial genesis of “My Own Story” and by Baril’s subsequent recasting of these dynamics: by the end of his preface Little Bear’s reluctance has morphed into “a firm wish to tell, once and for all, the story from an Indian point of view”—a description which elides any consideration of the racial distrust which clearly informed this story’s telling (197).

Little Bear’s distrust would not, I suspect, have been alleviated by the rather patronizing attitude towards her and the Cree, as “Indians of yesteryear,” evidenced in Baril’s preface (197). In contrast to Little Bear’s level tone, Baril’s diction tends to the melodramatic. Having hyped up Little Bear’s tale as unique and valuable—inaccurately billing it as the “first” Indian account of the Uprising, in a move which privileges white audiences and discounts the circulation of such stories within Cree contexts—Baril

proceeds to undercut Little Bear's authority as a historian. "The reader is asked to keep in mind the fact that Indians failed to record dates, therefore, the important occurrences, which have already been entered in history books, will suffice for reference." (198) More than simply contradicting his earlier claims for the import of Little Bear's story, this assessment is presumptuous in claiming that the "important" information concerning the event is already to be found in white accounts, and naive in suggesting that the Cree lacked a mode for recording chronological information. Governed by thirteen moons or seasons and delineated by "localized climatic and ecological phenomena" as well as by familiar national events, Cree temporal systems may not have an ascertainable beginning or end and are shaped by the continuous link between the past, present and future (Stevenson 233, 272). In order for a listener to grasp the chronology or timing of a Cree story, Stevenson explains that he may need both a familiarity with Cree concepts of temporality and an understanding of larger story cycles as chronological markers can be spread out through a number of linked accounts—neither of which are evident in Baril's assessment. This non-traditional solicitation and interpretation of Little Bear's *âcimisowina* undoubtedly altered both its delivery and its transcription, although how exactly its Cree traits may have passed unappreciated or unrecognized as such by the uninitiated listener remains open to speculation.

In contrast to Baril's deviation from the protocol of the *âcimisowina*, is the description (and enactment) of inter-generational story-telling in Halfe's *Blue Marrow*. After attending her husband's family reunion, Halfe's Keeper of Stories, *âcimowinis*, mends and strengthens her Cree familial fabric by "weav[ing] a story," by recounting a

set of maternal *âcimisowina* for her children. These function as an antidote to the narratives of invasion-settlement blithely celebrated at the reunion: *âcimowinis* notes that her children are not “yet aware” of how this history of European migration affects them, a situation she sets out to remedy, through story (69). Spanning registers of resistance and victimization, she tells her children

how *their* great-grandma rode sidesaddle,
waving her .22 in the air trying to scare
those relatives away. I tell them
how *my* relatives lived around the fort,
starving and freezing,
waiting for diluted spirits
and handouts from my husband’s family.
I tell them
how *their* little children died wrapped
in smallpox blankets.
My breath
won’t come anymore.
I stare
at the wheatfields. (69-70, my emphasis)

Not only does *âcimowinis* give voice to the history of Cree oppression inherent in Euro-Canadian colonial settlement, she testifies to Cree resistance and, as Mièra Cook has observed, uses the repetition of the pronouns “my” and “their” to perform a loving reclamation of her ancestors (102-3).²⁰ Passed to her children, this *bundle* of *âcimisowina* is typical in selecting choice actions and deeds and fostering tribal solidarity; in an echo of *Blue Marrow*’s main theme, these stories also serve as a balm for the damage of colonization which they describe, as a partial but not complete or simple remedy: *âcimowinis*, surveying the agricultural conversion of her plains homeland, is

²⁰ Cook’s analysis refers to the wording of the first edition of *Blue Marrow* which differs quite significantly from the second edition which I quote from here; thus I have extended Cook’s interpretation of the function of the pronoun “my” to include the new edition’s use of “their” as well.

pained and rendered breathless. These chosen anecdotes are medicinal for the named young Cree listeners in the text, but they are also told (or their telling at least is told) to us as readers of the collection. To non-Indigenous Canadian readers, like myself, Halfe's documentation of the violent spectral history which subtends more sanitized stories of Canadian settlement raises the pressing question of how to respond to the "ethical call" it issues (Schaffer & Smith 3), of how to address and redress it. Although we should be wary of "re-dressings" that become new disguises.²¹

◇ *Pastahowin*: Retreating into the Earth

The personal narratives of *âcimowinis*, Little Bear, and Dion provide us with an ample understanding of why the Cree would label 1885 *ê-mâyahkamikahk*, the time it went wrong, while the statistics concerning the thousands of Cree who were confined to their reserves under the apartheid-like pass system and the hundreds of Cree children who were abducted from their families and incarcerated in residential schools give us a sense of the magnitude of this egregious wrong. One may also gauge the vast damage of *ê-mâyahkamikahk* by turning to the event of the buffalo who retreated into the earth, a spiritually significant story related by Neal McLeod in *Cree Narrative Memory*. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis has reprimanded the western academic enterprise in general for failing to acknowledge and analyze "the phenomenological or affective experience of Indian testimony or ceremony" (161). McLeod particularizes this critique, reminding us that while mainstream historians have tended to ignore the spiritual dimensions of Cree

²¹ My appreciation to Don Goellnicht for this conceptualization of the terminology of re(-)dress.

philosophy, one “cannot understand the Cree experiences of making the transition to farming, engaging in treaty, and resistance to colonialism without taking these [spiritual] elements into account” (*Cree* 32).

The story of the buffalo’s retreat into the earth, at Redberry Lake south of the Sandy Lake Reserve (in present day Saskatchewan) during the 1870s and 1880s, is one McLeod received from his great-grandfather, Peter Vandall. It tells of thousands of buffalo, in long expansive lines, venturing out onto the lake’s thin ice in order to drown themselves

because the order of the land had been transformed: instead of being able to roam freely, the buffalo, like the Indigenous people, were increasingly confined to smaller and smaller areas. The whole order of the landscape was radically changing. The Cree words for reservation—*askîhkân* (“fake land”) and *iskonikan* (“left-overs”)—echo this process of alienation, exile, and confinement. (*Cree* 57)²²

The buffalo, like the First Nations, are facing colonial capture. Redberry Lake serves as a portal of sorts, allowing the buffalo to pass into the earth and enter a new realm or other world, permitting them to seek refuge from this world which colonialism was fast making unbearable.

In McLeod’s story, as in other Indigenous Plains narratives, the buffalo are figuratively aligned with the Indigenous people. Ahenakew too turns to the natural mobility of the migratory buffalo to explain Cree dismay at being confined upon the reserve:

²² Various English translations for the Cree terms denoting the reserve have been offered (I do not speak Cree myself and have not yet pursued an evaluation of these divergent interpretations): Renate Eigenbrod notes that “In the Cree language, reserves are called *shkoonigan*, leftovers”(135), while Harold Cardinal writes that “In the language of the Cree Indians, the Indian reserves are known as *the land that we kept for ourselves* or *the land that we did not give to the government*. In our language, *skun-gun*.” (25)

Imagine a people who have lived and roamed over this great North
Western land, breathing in the freedom of the prairies at every breath...
Such people must love freedom as did their God-given animal, the noble
buffalo. They must resent anything that tends to bring that freedom to
naught, or even to restrict it. (353-4)

Likewise, in *Cogewea* Hum-Ishu-Ma implicitly draws a parallel between the buffalo who “fight so desperately for freedom” as they are rounded up into trains by the American military and the Okanogan people who shed “silent tears” as they watch one break free from the freight car and fall to its death on the train tracks below (148). A recent poem by Marilyn Dumont, “Les Animaux,” stresses the close relation which obtains between the buffalo and the Métis by writing of the two in fraternal terms: “les animaux, the brothers that have left us they have moved to / another plain” (31). Dumont’s verse, like McLeod’s oral history, describes the journey of the buffalo to another world or “plain” in terms of what Deanna Reder has identified as *kisteanemerowin*, a Cree tenet which expounds an egalitarian and highly interconnected relation between humans, animals, and plants (56). Such a sense of parity seems to inform a comment Thunder Child recalls mistahi-maskwa making in reference to visiting the buffalo and the bears which were kept in Warden Samuel Bedson’s private zoo, which was adjacent to the Stoney Mountain Penitentiary north of Winnipeg where mistahi-maskwa was incarcerated in 1885: “I got chummy with these bears. They were captives like me.” (qtd in Beal and Wiebe 189)

It was not only the buffalo who sought refuge from the onslaught of settlement. McLeod notes that when “the forces of colonialism exerted their full weight,” people observed that the *mêmêkwêsiwak* (the Little People, who come through dreams and offer

medicinal instruction) and the *âtayôhkanak* (Spirit Beings) retreated in the same way the buffalo had (*Cree* 29). Similarly, the deer heard the noise of the “newcomers” and retreated into the earth (McLeod, *Cree* 6). Grounding these stories that mourn the exile of their animal and spiritual brethren is Cree epistemology’s emphasis on synergistic, non-hierarchical relationships.

In her poem, Dumont casts the “settlers rolling in by the thousands” as “the new herds” —but they bring not the joy the buffalo once did and leave the prairie “mute” (31). This image of the silenced land indicates something of the severity of colonialism’s impact and we find more detail about this in the Cree term which is often associated with these events—*pâstâhowin*: a transgression or breach of the natural order. Stevenson discusses *pâstâhowin* as the breaking of an irrevocable promise made to the Creator on the pipe (250), while McLeod uses it to describe how the European-wrought changes “caused various animals and spirit beings to retreat into the earth” (*Cree* 57). In each case, colonial Canadian practices—from failing to adhere to sacred treaty promises to exploiting the land and capturing its original inhabitants—violate the natural order, transgress Cree custom, and generate a wrong which demands retribution. Certainly these stories chronicling the many beings who fled the earth during the time it went wrong poignantly illustrate the profundity of the damage colonial technologies of capture wrought not only upon the bodies and psyches of the Cree themselves but upon those of their animal and spiritual kin as well.

◇ Reappraising Big Bear: Captor, Captive, *ê-mamâhtâwisit*?

A consideration of mistahi-maskwa in religious terms, as a powerful and venerated spiritual leader or medicine man, productively complicates any simple interpretation of him as solely a *captor* or a *captive* at this the time where it went wrong. Many articles in the contemporary Canadian press had been quick to vilify him as a “heinous beast” and cruel captor of Gowanlock and Delaney (Stonechild & Waiser 118), but mistahi-maskwa himself as well as most people familiar with the period’s events deny he ever played the role of captor. At his trial in 1885 mistahi-maskwa explained to the courtroom: “I am in chains. Never did I put a chain on any man.” He then turned to Cree precepts of the afterlife to refute the ability of the colonial regime to fully or permanently capture him: “In my body, I have a free spirit. When I cross the wide river to the Sand Hills, that free spirit will go with me.” (qtd in McLeod, *Cree* 53) His oratory makes the important point that while mistahi-maskwa, and his people, were subject to extreme measures of confinement by the Canadian state during this period, in many ways he was able to resist this capture, be it in body, in spirit, or in the memories of him housed in the minds of many of his people.

One such recollection of the famed chief’s spiritual potency and mobility is found in the *âcimisowina* of his daughter-in-law, Mary PeeMee or See-as-cum-ka-poo, which Maria Campbell recorded and published in *Macleans* in 1975. In her discussion of Cree oral history, Stevenson cites this collaboration between Campbell and See-as-cum-ka-poo as exemplary in its adherence to traditional Cree protocol for the transmission of personal histories; Campbell worked to build a close, long-term relationship as an apprentice to

See-as-cum-ka-poo and the two collaboratively edited the text (243). The form of the story itself—structured as a transcribed conversation replete with asides which describe the act and rhythm of the story’s telling—and its warm, respectful and often gently humorous tone provide insight into the nature of this collaborative relationship. It is typical in this piece for Campbell to try to replicate in text the cadence and pace of the elder’s oration; when See-as-cum-ka-poo pauses reflectively in her delivery, Campbell’s written transcription takes pains to mark this rhythm by inserting a phrase such as “We sat quietly together for a long time, smoking and enjoying our tea” (49). The resultant text is in many ways an intimate one which addresses sacred and romantic dimensions neglected in many non-Indigenous accounts of this period, but which does so prudently and with reserve, as Stevenson notes, in order to “protect spiritual aspects from outside judgments” (244).

In her editorial preface to the article Campbell distinguishes the received Canadian understanding of Big Bear as “a murdering savage, a traitor to Queen and Country” which she was taught in school from the oral history of her Métis elders who described mistahi-maskwa as a pacifist who lost control of his band. “Our children,” she writes, “might have been taught that he was a great statesman and leader... [who] fought for his people’s way of life, for their freedom and human dignity” (48). It is this interpretation she implicitly aims to further through the publication of See-as-cum-ka-poo’s testimony that “Big Bear was a great man, and his people loved him very much. He was very wise and gentle and his medicine was powerful. He went to prison, you know, but it was not his fault.” (49)

Not only does See-as-cum-ka-poo contest mistahi-maskwa's culpability, her *âcimisowina* challenges the assumption that the imprisoned chief was a *captive*. It is his captive state which is highlighted in the most famous visual portraits of mistahi-maskwa: the black and white photographs taken when he turned himself in during the summer of 1885 and when he was an inmate at the Stoney Mountain Penitentiary in subsequent months. Note in Figure 3.2, for instance, how the weaponry, stature, assertive stance, and arrangement of the Canadian soldiers aims to convey their dominance over their captive, who stands barefoot, surrounded, slouched, and shackled. The Canadian public was treated to many iterations of this type of image of the "defeated" chief, but See-as-cum-ka-poo offers a radically divergent interpretation of mistahi-maskwa's incarceration as a *voluntary* one. As she tells Campbell,

Big Bear could have escaped, you know. There were no handcuffs or jails that could have kept him locked up. They say he used to take his handcuffs off and play with them. He could walk in and out of the jail cell. When his warriors begged him to leave, he said, 'No, I am your chief. Because I chose to lead you in war I am responsible for what happens to you.' (50)

With the prison's walls and handcuffs inadequate to contain and bind the spiritually powerful leader, his imprisonment is an act of chiefly compassion, an act of solidarity with those of his warriors also in jail, an act of leadership designed to shield his people from further retaliation by the Canadian state.

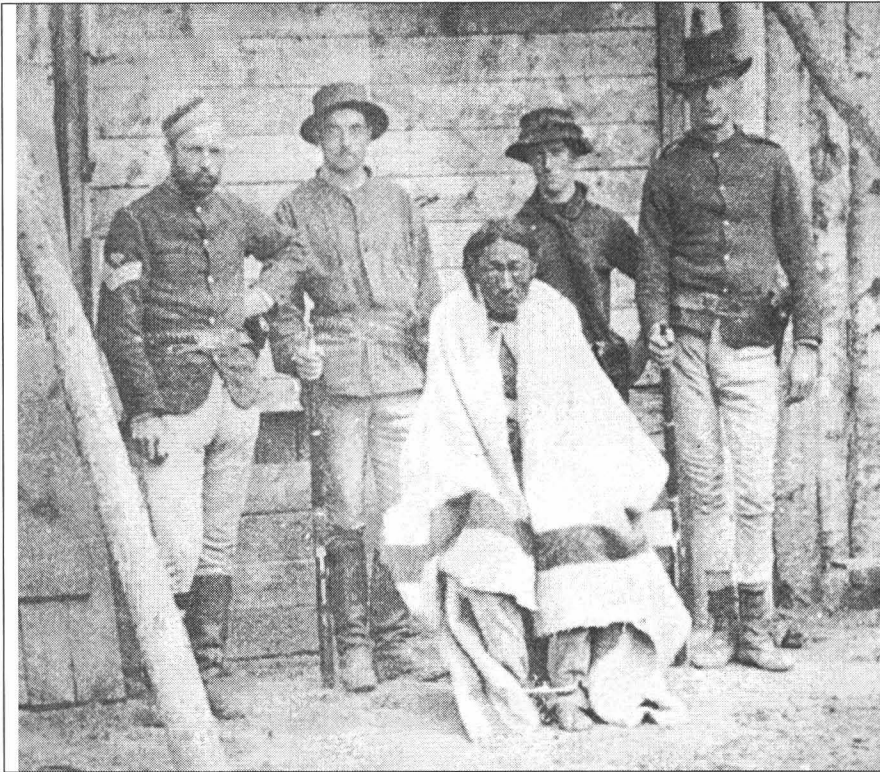


Figure 3.2:
Photograph entitled
“Big Bear’s Surrender
at Prince Albert, July
1885.” *Saskatchewan
Archives Board, R-
A8812.*

See-as-cum-ka-poo elaborates on mistahi-maskwa’s remarkable ability to use his spiritual powers to manipulate space in ways far exceeding the norm when she speaks of his bravery during 1885 when his people were pursued by the Canadian Field Force. At one moment when the soldiers were particularly hard on the heels of their quarry, mistahi-maskwa told his frightened people not to worry but to proceed to flee ahead of him while he would stay behind to face the troops. “You see,” See-as-cum-ka-poo explains,

Big Bear’s medicine was so strong he would always be safe. Around his neck he wore a necklace of beads. A bear’s claw rested in the hollow of his throat. As long as he wore that claw there, nothing could hurt him. Big Bear walked out into the open while his people fled. It was as if he placed an invisible wall between his people and the soldiers. The soldiers could not see him either. When his people were far enough away to be safe again, he caught up to them. (49)

mistahi-maskwa is remembered and revered by his daughter-in-law as a powerful medicine man capable of altering space and of escaping from jail, had he wished to. Likewise McLeod attests to mistahi-maskwa's remarkable spiritual power, noting that the term *ê-mamâhtâwisit* (he is spiritually powerful) is used to describe the celebrated trickster or mythical older brother *wîsahkêcâhk* as well as mistahi-maskwa because each "struggled to move beyond the ordinary, and to rethink the space and world around them" (*Cree* 100). Perhaps it was precisely this notable ability to tap into the "Great Mystery" and "rethink" or reconfigure space that both motivated the Canadian state to pursue mistahi-maskwa with such vigor and rendered his full or complete capture impossible.

◇ Mending Storied Bundles: *Blue Marrow & Stolen Life*

"Words have great power. They can heal, protect, and counsel, but they can also harm. One is advised early in life to speak with care because when words are spoken they are *manitôkiwin*—the act of speech is tantamount to doing something in a holy manner, making something sacred, making ceremony..."

– Winona Stevenson, "Decolonizing Tribal Histories," 249.

See-as-cum-ka-poo's recollections of mistahi-maskwa, as transcribed by Campbell, draw to a dramatic close in the anecdote of his medicine necklace. See-as-cum-ka-poo relates how her husband, mistahi-maskwa's youngest son Horsechild, accompanied his father to his trial in 1885, where a judge sentenced the aged chief to three years in jail and the adolescent son to residential school. Horsechild took this forced leave of his father with much sadness. At their parting mistahi-maskwa "talked to him for a long time. Then he took the medicine from around his neck and put it around the neck of Horsechild. Big Bear told him that it would protect and guide him and he was never to take it off." At 280

this point in her narration See-as-cum-ka-poo pauses, apparently reluctant to continue until Campbell asks her what happened to the necklace. “One night [Horsechild] took a woman. She broke it. He picked up all the beads and put them away. He never restrung them again and they were lost... No, the woman was not me.” (50) This anecdote’s emotional and spiritual poignancy is all the more apparent given the soft levity which characterizes much of the rest of this text; while its import as the story’s finale leads one to wonder to what extent it is meant to serve synecdochally to represent the band’s larger fate as a dispersed and exiled nation.

In counter distinction to the ominous dynamics of breakage and loss which mark the conclusion to See-as-cum-ka-poo’s oral history are those of retrieval and repair in Halfe’s *Blue Marrow*. Indeed, on a figurative level, Halfe’s collection can be seen to seek out, polish, and restrung beads of Cree memory, medicine, and story. In the first instance, *Blue Marrow*’s “protagonist”—âcimowinis, the present-day Keeper of Stories—tells us, in self-reflexive verse, of her process of looking for and listening to the lost or frequently overwritten stories of her “grandmothers” who are (in a broad cultural rather than a narrow familial sense of the term) the “country wives / bartered, traded, stolen, bought and sold” (61) during the colonization of what is now the Canadian prairies.

âcimowinis engages in a doubly *scriptural* process of writing the spiritual; in Méira Cook’s terms, our narrator becomes a conduit for the voices of her foremothers and “inscribes them in a writing act that is akin to dictation” (86). The epigraph for the first edition of *Blue Marrow*, taken from Pablo Neruda’s “The Unburied Woman of Païta,” speaks to its overarching recuperative and feminist goals:

Ferocious unburied woman.
Here I invoke you so that you return to become
A flickering ancient, a rose still radiant.
May whatever survives of you unite
Until your adored bones are named.

Halfe's invocation of her inspirational foremothers, her naming of their adored prairie bones, takes an explicitly and profoundly Cree form. Its structuring concept of intergenerational communication—the guidance and stories received from and the conversations held with the narrator's ancestral spirits—makes manifest the Cree precept that there exists a continuous link between the past, present, and future and that kinship relations are of paramount importance. The density of Halfe's poetics, her refusal to offer the reader an easily accessible "built-in analysis," conforms to Cree narrative tradition—as does her attention to two forms key to Cree historiography: stories of the mythical past (*âtayohkêwina*) and stories about this more "recent condition of the universe" (*âcimowina*) (Stevenson 272, 233, 258).

In *Blue Marrow*, the transmission and reception of these ancestral *âcimowina* or personal histories is rendered as a recuperative act, as a mending of familial and tribal fabric. A series of interlinked metaphors on this theme are, to adopt this language, woven as the weft through the collection's warp: bone is the material used to make needles; ancestral bones sing stories; stories, in turn, constitute the thread with which to repair a torn culture; and the communal act of sewing becomes a dance, a form of ceremony, a way to honour the ancestral bones. In this description of how the Keeper of Stories heeds the instructions of her Eternal Grandmothers and threads her needle with their "stories so small," pulling "them out" and "squeez[ing] them through" (64), is the collection's self-

theorization, its teaching on the importance of story to Cree cultural health. Shifting to a related figurative register, Cree culture itself is likened to the sustaining essence of the bone:

My relatives wake...
We've gathered splintered bones,
weave, mend
the blue marrow. (46)

These poetic riffs on sewing and story frequently coalesce around another of *Blue Marrow's* essential and multivalent concepts: that of the bundle. At times the bundle referred to is a traditional and sacred medicine bundle, what Valaskakis might call an "other-than-human-person, [or] animate being" (181). While the exact nature of such bundles remains appropriately veiled in *Blue Marrow*,²³ their importance is highlighted when *âcimowinis* recollects a traditional ceremony at the Rocky Boy Reserve (the territory in Montana granted to mistahi-maskwa's eldest son âyimisîs and his people in 1916) to which the bundles, those "Bones wrapped in red / cloth, tobacco, twisted hair," were carried "miles and miles / across the prairie" (72). The text also pays tribute, in the voices of the Eternal Grandmothers, to the bravery of the Cree Holy Women who preserved and "hid the Bundles" when Jesuits abducted and abused their children and the state banned their ceremonies (34).

For me, Halfe's innovation lies in her extension of the customary relation between bundles and stories. Traditionally, there are a set of songs which are associated with each bundle, which are sung when it is used, which evolve and are passed with the bundle

²³ Shelley Stigter has observed that Halfe purposefully does not clarify the precise content, function, or meaning of the medicine bundle for non-Cree readers, like myself, who likely lack a detailed knowledge of them (57).

within families over time. McLeod explains that the Cree term for a bundle, *nayahcikan*, denotes “something you put on your back, something you carry” and he makes a note of how Halfe creatively interiorizes this concept of the bundle, translating it to connote something one carries inside, in one’s memory (*Cree* 9). We first come across this concept of interiorized bundles at the end of the volume’s powerful opening invocation of Halfe’s four personal grandmothers or *nôhkomak*:

Oh Sarah, Adeline,
Oh Emma, Bella,
tongueless in the earth
Oh *nôhkomak*,
your Bundles I carry inside... (9).

These internal bundles are composed perhaps of genetic material and certainly of the stories and customs these foremothers pass on to the poet, once her caring and ceremonial attention to them “mends” or restores their tongues. The collection suggests that it is personal stories of empowerment and familial connection which earn a treasured place at the heart of the bundle (which customarily uses many layers of wrapping to protect its core elements); Halfe’s nameless *mâmâ* character explains that a particularly good memory is one she will “carry deep in [her] Bundle” (93). Halfe pushes this further when she muses on how the person, as a receptacle of memory, may also be a bundle, or, at least be bundled. *âcimowinis* writes that the grandmothers “sing to me *kîwêtinohk*. [carrying the bundles home] / North. They bundle me home... / My feet blister to their path” (60). This is a rich, mutual relationship: she will receive and carry the stories of her grandmothers, while they will carry, guide, and bundle her. As the final reference to

blistered feet suggests, this labour of cultural recuperation is a painful one at times and should not be too easily romanticized.

I believe that *Blue Marrow* is a poetic variant of what Winona Stevenson identifies as the *family history bundle*—the compilation of distant and recent-past stories which each Cree generation carries about the relations who went before them. “Some memories [in this bundle] bring laughter or dreamy reflection. Some teach. Others are a burden.” (Stevenson 270) Halfe’s verse bundle contains all of these types and works especially with the latter painful sort. Given this focus on the toxic results of colonialism for Cree women, her meditation on the bundle, with its sacred medicinal powers, seems all the more apt. *Blue Marrow*’s consideration of storied bundles takes up where her *Bear Bones & Feathers* (1994) left off; in the afterword of this earlier verse volume, Halfe draws a set of lyrical connections between her grandmother’s grinding of bones for medicine bundles and her own process of addressing the bones and using story as “medicine” (126-7). In *Blue Marrow* these connections are elaborated as stories are explicitly gathered and imbued with something of the bundle’s traditional healing power. This linkage highlights the recuperative role of Cree narrative memory. Halfe’s collection prescribes the cherishing (seeking, reviving, preserving) of one’s familial story bundle as one remedy for the ghastly ills of colonialism’s many technologies of capture.

A similar desire to tend to a familial history bundle is found in Yvonne Johnson and Rudy Wiebe’s *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*, which, like *Blue Marrow*, was published in 1998 and nominated for that year’s Governor General’s Awards. The genesis of this remarkable collaborative memoir of Johnson’s life is testament to the

persistent influence of story. While serving a life sentence for murder, Johnson came across Wiebe's famous treatment of her great-great-grandfather, mistahi-maskwa, in *The Temptations of Big Bear*—a novel which foregrounds its own, and indeed most history's, dependence upon previous iterations of hi/story. Johnson was, as she explained in her first letter to Wiebe, initially skeptical of what a white man could know of her family but was surprised by the depth of Wiebe's knowledge and hence decided to solicit his help in searching for more information about her famed ancestor, and, ultimately also about herself. For the result of this initial contact was, six years later, a lengthy "creative non-fiction" written by Wiebe and Johnson to document and attempt to account for her shockingly violent life. Even before Johnson's participation in the torture killing of a suspected pedophile, her life from its earliest years had been scarred by countless instances of intra- and extra-familial physical and sexual abuse; the bilateral cleft palate which impaired her ability to speak until it was corrected when she was sixteen; the devastating death of her teenaged brother in police custody; and cyclic familial poverty, relocation, and alcoholism.

Based on Johnson's numerous prison journals, *Stolen Life* interleaves edited excerpts from these with Wiebe's reflections, relevant historical context, and transcripts of court trials and family interviews; this fragmented, self-reflexive formal hybridity or "documentary collage" technique (Jones 210) will be familiar to readers of Wiebe's earlier metafictional novels, though the "generic dissonance" it yields continues to give pause (Egan 12). *Stolen Life* is primarily discussed in critical circles as an intriguing, perhaps problematic, cross-cultural collaboration, but what most interests me at this

juncture is its explicit portrayal of Johnson's situation in terms of mistahi-maskwa's: its contention that her incarceration is a legacy of his, its suggestion that the Cree are still subject to practices of Canadian neo-colonial captivity. Written by a woman who describes herself as having "lived a captive from the day I was born" (433), it is certainly possible to interpret *Stolen Life* as the latest captivity narrative to emerge from the events at Frog Lake in 1885.

The text explicitly sets out to map and explain the course of Johnson's thirty-five years of life and it utilizes her descent from mistahi-maskwa as a key interpretive frame in this endeavor. As Manina Jones notes, "*Stolen Life* is in many ways a sequel to Wiebe's historical novel that reads Johnson's troubled *personal* history—her 'life sentence'—as the inevitable outcome of colonial history and 'the Cree's eternal life sentence, Treaty Number Six'" (208). Susanna Egan agrees that the text's "one single and forceful meaning" is its contention that Johnson's history is representative of the fate of mistahi-maskwa's exiled nation, but the memoir's apologist tone and efforts to clear Johnson's name lead her to query its credibility and to ask if this meaning is capacious enough to accommodate its "mess of trauma" (24); Johnson's claims to the victimhood of captivity are scrutinized—much as the tales of generations of earlier colonialist female captives have been. For my part, like Johnson and Wiebe, I find mistahi-maskwa's legacy indispensable in coming to terms with Johnson's situation.

This legacy takes a number of forms, many of which Wiebe and Johnson flag for us in *Stolen Life*. Her lifelong experience of dislocation mirrors that of many of her maternal ancestors in the decades preceding and following *ê-mamâhtâwisit*. While

Denise McConney's description of the "ongoing displacement, relocation, and search for a safe place" that form a consistent theme in the lives of most native women (qtd in Razack, "Gendered" 136) undoubtedly applies to Johnson (and her shuttling between the white working class American world of her father and the Canadian Cree reserve and urban ghetto worlds of her mother in a fruitless search for a sanctuary from abuse), her experience also remains the particular result of the Canadian punishment of mistahi-maskwa's people in the nineteenth century. This is how she interprets it as well, writing in her introductory letter to Wiebe that, "I do not know where I truly belong. As you may be aware, in 1885 my family and band were spread all over this continent after the imprisonment of Big Bear" (4). Johnson's frequent and often 'illicit' traversals of the border between Montana and Alberta are reminiscent of those made by her maternal forebears as they sought sustenance and refuge from the law.

Her childhood reminiscence of her family's fraught journey from Montana to their Cree family in Canada after her brother Leon had escaped from jail—with her mother tensely guiding their car by flashlight along an "endless gravel road going north" (118)—seems in many ways a modern analogue to Little Bear's recollection of her childhood flight north to safety after the Last Hunt in 1881. Like Little Bear, Johnson grows up understanding what it is to be a Cree fugitive from invader-settler law. She learns early that the police are "dangerous" for Cree adults and children alike and that the appropriate response to them is to warn one's relations of their approach and "vanish" (370). This wariness turns to indelible dread after the unresolved death of her favorite brother Earl as an adolescent, likely at police hands, in the Butte jail. As she enters

adulthood, she too will flee from the American law and covertly seek asylum in Canada; an action which inverts the trajectory of âyimisîs's flight in 1885:

A hundred years ago Big Bear's son, Little Bear, escaped from the Canadian prairies to hide in the mountains of Montana; I was born and raised all over those mountains; now I was running back to hide north of the border. My mother, my sisters, me—running, looking over our shoulders, hiding—Big Bear's descendents, we had become nomads again; we were hunters hunting whatever we could find to stay ahead of hunger and homelessness. Still running from Whites. (152)

Thus do Johnson's experiences of dislocation and exile stand as both parallels to and legacies of the colonial capture of mistahi-maskwa: the state's nineteenth century eviction of her ancestors from their land by way of criminal persecution having fostered the racism and generated the poverty which will constrain Johnson's family a century later.

Similarly, as the familial history mentioned above indicates, Johnson's eventual residence in a prison on the Canadian prairies, not so far from where her great-great-grandfather served his sentence, both mirrors and arguably results from his imprisonment. Her family's distrust of the newcomers' "justice" system was, after all, very well founded given the Canadian state's excessive and punitive use of it during 1885. Nor, one might argue after looking at the statistics which show First Nations peoples to be incarcerated at one of the highest rates in the world, has this excess slackened much in the subsequent century and a quarter. Registered or status First Nations women composed 1 to 2 per cent of the Canadian population in 1997, but represented 19 per cent of federally sentenced women—a statistic only comprehensible within the context of colonialism (Razack, "Gendered" 127). As Jim Harding puts it,

perhaps the lessons of the mass Cree hanging in 1885 remain “deeper in our psyche [and] in our social structure than we would like to realize.” (qtd in Razack, “Gendered” 134)

These statistics prompt me to wonder if the disciplinary and carceral function of the early western Canadian reserves has merely been transferred to the more explicitly carceral institution of the state jail; I am interested in how Johnson’s autobiography, and other First Nations prison diaries, serve as modern renditions of the contact captivity narrative, as evidence of the ongoing (neo-)colonial capture of First Nations peoples. The ongoing nature of this captivity is underscored in Johnson’s powerful description of her people’s long history of incarceration in the North Battleford jail. In the spring of 1994, with Yvonne and her sister and cousin having pressed rape charges against her brother, four of the six living Johnson siblings are interned here; in Yvonne’s cell, “the names of my people surround me... scratched, cut deep into the bunks, the yellow walls. Relatives I recognize from storytelling, or a chance meeting, family friends whom I may have met once” on the reserve. These names are a poignant inheritance: bringing to Yvonne both bittersweet personal memories of those who have been before her and a profound sadness that she has “to search prison walls for news of one’s own people; to become like an archeologist trying to read the stones of tombs about your own ancient dead.” (368) For Johnson, the prison edifice has become what Manina Jones astutely identifies as an “unofficial monument to her own people” erected on “the site of her only remaining territorial claim”—a subaltern counterpoint to the official Canadian monument erected at Sounding Lake in Alberta which honours the North-West Mounted Police but elides the sacred history of this the place where the buffalo emerged from the earth,

where the Cree buried many of their dead, where mistahi-maskwa negotiated with the governor in 1878 (Jones 218).

Both the famed chief and his great-granddaughter, Johnson's mother, harboured hopes that his people would live at Sounding Lake, but, as Johnson puts it, "the government imprisoned and killed Big Bear with sickness before he ever got his land negotiated; over a hundred years and we, Big Bear's direct descendents, still had no land" (201). Instead they have been, in Isabelle Little Bear's words, "scattered all about like little birds" (198). If, to return to See-as-cum-ka-poo's description of mistahi-maskwa's medicine necklace, this national and familial dispersal echoes the scattering of its beads, Johnson's stated aim in composing *Stolen Life* is its reversal: the reunion of mistahi-maskwa's descendents, both her immediate estranged family and her more distant relations. "I wish," Johnson writes to Wiebe,

to clear [Big Bear's] name and to recover his medicine bundle as I try to find my lost family, and only under the Bear Spirit will it ever be true... now is the time to heal and to return to the land and reclaim our rightful place and to meet my family that has been sent all over the four winds. We need to come together as Big Bear wished. (9)

Johnson is not alone in aiming for such goals. In 1989, Jim Thunder ran over 4000 kilometers from Alberta in an unsuccessful attempt to reclaim mistahi-maskwa's power bundle from the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan, which acquired it in the 1930s. There have also been fairly recent efforts at Onion Lake and Hobbema to trace the modern-day descendents of mistahi-maskwa's band with an eye to reconstituting and formally recognizing it (Stonechild & Waiser 239).

Attending to the familial history bundle is, as we have seen in *Blue Marrow*, another means to re-collect that which has been lost; in *Cree Narrative Memory* McLeod articulates this as “coming home through story”—as recovering collective narrative memory and reconnecting to ancestral territory (71). As an exemplary instance, McLeod cites the case of his great-grandfather’s uncle who had been “forced into exile [in Montana] because he had made a stand for his rights and dignity” during 1885. Returning sometime later to his relations in Canada, he offers his nephew the gift of a story: an amusing personal anecdote of trading whiskey for frogs with a hungry snake, a story about generosity in lean times. This *wawiyatâcimowina*, or funny little story derived from personal experience told to entertain and instruct a younger generation (Stevenson 269), became an important part of McLeod’s great-grandfather’s oral repertoire and through its humour and transmission his uncle preserves his sense of dignity and Creeness, fosters familial bonds, and “comes home from exile” (McLeod, *Cree* 67).

Johnson expresses a desire similar to the uncle’s to reunite with her Cree brethren north of the line and to do so she begins to explore Cree spiritual history, a tactic McLeod has identified as central to coming home through story (*Cree* 71). There are, however, serious obstacles in her path. McLeod has explained that being “home” means “to be a nation, to have access to land, to be able to raise your own children, and to have political control” (“Coming” 17)—none of which describe Johnson’s situation as either an inmate or a member of a banished nation. McLeod equates the pivotal concepts of *home* and *nation*, but each of these proves particularly troubled for Johnson who has long been

separated from her Cree nation and abused in her family's home(s); in *Stolen Life* we find a diasporic and feminist complication of these linked concepts. At times Johnson's need to publicly testify to her personal trauma, to the sexual abuse Cree women frequently endure within their homes and tribal nations (often as a result of the colonial violence Cree men have internalized and redirected towards their female peers), flies in the face of the familial and tribal solidarity prized in First Nations communities and makes her text "a decided risk" to the Cree unification she overtly seeks (Thom). *Stolen Life* implicitly asks how to come *home* if that is the site of the trauma one is working to exorcize and underlines the need for safe domestic spaces if the nation is to thrive.

Traditionally Cree women's life stories have concentrated "on more private and intimate aspects—everyday and life cycle activities and events" (Stevenson 268) and the documentation of the violence which mars the quotidian lives of many past and present Cree women is a principal focus of both *Blue Marrow* and *Stolen Life*. Each text posits female testimony as crucial culturally reparative work and each concurs with Homi Bhabba's assessment that such "Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present." (qtd in Valaskakis 80) Indeed, both texts stage this re-membering in quite literalized physical terms: *Blue Marrow* by highlighting the colonialist mutilation and severing of the grandmothers' tongues and breasts; *Stolen Life* by describing how Johnson's cleft palette and inability to speak clearly as a child compounded her status as a victim of her family's internalization and replication of colonial violence. Critics have asked if mainstream Canada's apparently "unquenchable

thirst” for accounts of intra-tribal abuse and stereotypical Native spirituality turns popular accounts like *Stolen Life* into titillating and degrading “victim literature” (Thom, Anderson, Egan)—a reception entirely disparate from Johnson’s intent that her memoir be used to heal both herself and fellow survivors of abuse.

At the close of *Stolen Life*, Johnson’s ability to aid others is correlated to her own newly recovered spiritual identity as Medicine Bear Woman, Muskeke Muskwa Iskwewos. Prison, Johnson notes, is far from an ideal place to heal, but “if you’re a Native and you can get help to seek and find and claim your spiritual name, a lot can be changed. You can discover your destiny. Your life can bridge back to the origins of your family and people” (387). Not only does the name ceremonially bestowed by a visiting elder on Johnson at the Prison for Women in 1992 connect her, like mistahi-maskwa, to the Bear Spirit, it is the name she can then recall being given as a child by her grandmother Flora, herself a powerful medicine woman who had used ceremony to help heal her traumatized young granddaughter (429). Her naming as Medicine Bear Woman galvanizes Johnson’s alignment to her grandmother and great-great-grandfather, prompting her to reinterpret the cleft palette that had silenced her as a child as the “gift and legacy of the bear... the Bear’s Lip” (436). With this newly awakened spiritual awareness, Johnson “ponder[s] how to give birth to [herself], in a spiritual sense”; how to best share her insights with others as a survivor of abuse and as a potential medicine woman; and how she might liberate mistahi-maskwa’s medicine bundle from its museum vault and recover Grandmother Flora’s bundle from the place where she (like the Holy Women in *Blue Marrow*) has hidden it for safe keeping (438, 439). Thus does Johnson,

in the final pages of *Stolen Life*, use spiritual history to travel the “bridge back” to her people: mistahi-maskwa’s courtroom statement in 1885—declaring his spirit free and strong despite his shackled body—now assumes a particular aptness for Medicine Bear Woman as well.

That the bequest of 1885 or *ê-mâyahkamikahk* has for descendents of mistahi-maskwa like Johnson been a series of agonizing experiences of exile and captivity points to the lasting legacy (and arguably ongoing maintenance) of the Canadian state’s use of (neo-)colonial technologies of capture against the Cree. The particular implementation of this technology during *ê-mâyahkamikahk*, as well as afterward through mechanisms such as the reserve pass system and residential school, is well documented in the *âcimisowina* of Isabelle Little Bear, Mary Dion, and See-as-cum-ka-poo. Their tales also give the lie to the contemporary Canadian assertion that the most severe cases of captivity during this conflict were those of the widows Gowanlock and Delaney, revealing this assertion to be a narrative of absolution, an instance of what we might call white overwrite. Comparing the autobiographical narratives of Gowanlock and Delaney with those of the McLeans, Little Bear, Dion, and See-as-cum-ka-poo illustrates the complex cultural layering and relative degrees of privation and pain which informed this spectrum of incommensurate contact captivities—some of which were temporary, individual, and occasionally even enjoyable, while others were long term, communal, and genocidal. The Canadian state’s protracted internment of the Cree, among other First Nations, has generated what Taiaiake Alfred classifies as “a spiritual crisis, a time of darkness that descended on [the First Nations] when we became *disconnected* from our

lands and from our traditional ways of life” (31, my emphasis); *Blue Marrow* and *Stolen Life* first chronicle this multivalent colonial process of disconnection, capture, and exile and then work to mitigate and remedy its effects by staging a rejuvenation of Cree spiritual history. Halfe, Wiebe and Johnson implicitly concur with Alfred’s assessment that the resurgence of “sacred memory” is an essential step in achieving “meaningful change, the transcendence of colonialism, and the restoration of [First Nations] strength and freedom” (131)—hence their careful gathering, recording, and cherishing of the familial storied bundle.

Bringing Captives Home: Creative Repatriation

... they came for us, incarcerated
in residential schools, foster homes, jails...

– Lee Maracle, *Bent Box* 30.

We do not have a word for repatriation in the Kwak'wala language. The closest we come to it is the word *u'mista*, which describes the return of people taken captive in raids. It also means the return of something important. We are working towards the *u'mista* of much of what was lost to us... Our aim is the complete *u'mista* or repatriation of everything we lost when our world was turned upside down, as our old people say.

– Gloria Crammer Webster, "From Colonization to Repatriation," 37.

In the colonial period, especially during times of pronounced racial conflict, colonialist captivity tales frequently served as narratives of absolution and overwrite, as we have seen in the cases of Mary Rowlandson and Metacom, the White Woman of Gippsland and Bungelene, Eliza Fraser and the people of Thoorgine, and Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney and *mistahi-maskwa*. The capacity of these texts to mask colonialism's extensive use of technologies of capture against Indigenous peoples has diminished in the past decades as the popularity of the once ubiquitous colonialist captivity tale has waned (although it has not disappeared completely) and as a host of Indigenous voices, artworks, and writings have become newly audible or discernable to mainstream Canadian, American, and Australian audiences in what is often classified as a

“renaissance” of Aboriginal culture.¹ Many of these Indigenous works not only testify eloquently and persuasively to the range of forms of captivity endured by their people—from being collected as museum “specimens” to being interned on reserves, from being incarcerated in residential schools or prisons to being forcibly relocated as a community by the neo-colonial state—they also strive through a variety of means to mend the damage of these captivities and to redeem or bring their captives home.

◇ Thematic Return in Indigenous Narratives of Captivity

“History, like trauma,” Cathy Caruth theorizes, “is never simply one’s own, history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas” (24)—this is an invaluable lesson proffered by many Indigenous captivity narratives to their non-Aboriginal readers, a lesson in what Chandra Mohanty has labeled the “necessary acknowledgement of *co-implication*,” an awareness of asymmetrical but mutually constitutive histories, relationships, and responsibilities (qtd in Hoy 17). For invader-settlers to ignore this teaching is to risk remaining ignorant of their own problematic privileges as what Margery Fee terms “Citizens Minus”;² for colonizers and colonized alike, it is to risk “lying complacent” in what Taiaiake Alfred describes as “a narrow conception of the past

¹ For a critique of this label, see Gail Guthrie Valaskakis who contends that this is less a renaissance or rebirth than a new dissemination of existent knowledge from Indigenous to invader-settler circles: “In North America, the icons and ideologies expressed in Indian communities... became more visible to others in the 1960s and 1970s through the widespread circulation of pivotal Native narratives. For Native Americans and Canadians, 1969 was a critical year, a marker for events that those who are unaware of the tenacity of indigenous knowledge consider a Native cultural and political renaissance.” (4)

² Fee’s term describes the ethical impoverishment of the newcomer who benefits from, and remains ignorant of, the socio-economic privileges she or he has garnered directly or indirectly through colonial violences; it is formulated with reference to the Canadian government’s Hawthorne Report (1966-67)—which discussed First Nations peoples as “Citizens Plus” rather than as wards of the state (Fee, “Getting”).

[and] constrained vision of the future” because we have been paralyzed by fear and thus “forced to live with a state of unfreedom” (121). To move beyond this unfreedom Alfred argues that “justice must become a *duty* of, not a *gift* from, the settler. And for this to happen, settler society must be forced into a reckoning with its past, its present, its future, and itself...” (113). The majority of Indigenous captivity narratives engender precisely this type of reckoning, provoking a recalculation of the means, ends and ethics of the colonial project and the ways in which they continue to control many aspects of mobility and resource allotment in our contemporary neo-colonial state.

Collectively, Indigenous captivity writings stage a significant intervention in mainstream neo-colonial discourses of settlement and nation formation, but this is not their only, nor frequently their primary, intended cultural function. Most are characterized by an implicit or articulated orientation that is, to borrow Jace Weaver’s term, one of *communitism*: an activist commitment to Native community (qtd in Dewar 68). That is, the critique of colonial practices of captivity housed in these texts is typically animated by their pronounced reparative desire to help the tribal community and its members recover from such practices. This (re)turn to the tribal community or nation is not unique to Indigenous accounts of contact captivity; after a quick survey of contemporary Native North American literature, Thomas King concludes that Native writers “are particularly keen on the return of the Native” to their roots or home community (*Truth About* 116). King’s assessment is certainly applicable to First Nations stories of residential school, in which escapes home are frequently contemplated and

attempted, and to stories of extra-tribal adoption, which often feature (partial) reunion and return to the Indigenous community.

Colloquially known as the Sixties Scoop, Canada's coercive adoption of an estimated 16,800 treaty status First Nation children into non-Aboriginal homes during the latter half of the twentieth century has been condemned by the Assembly of First Nations as "effectively a form of genocide" and identified as an ideological and pragmatic extension of the residential school project ("Resolution"). In the American context, this phenomenon reached "epidemic" proportions in the 1960s when approximately 30% of Native American children were the subjects of extra-tribal adoption into primarily non-Indigenous families: it has been billed as a modern Trail of Tears (Strong "To" 469, 481; Fagan 254). Among the First Nations literature which tackles this recent iteration of "the white people... sneakin' off with our kids" (Wagamese, *Keeper* 36), and which does so by tracing an adopted protagonist's return to her or his tribal home, are three semi-autobiographical novels by Richard Wagamese, *Keeper'n Me* (1994), *A Quality of Light* (1997), *For Joshua* (2002), a trilogy of plays by Drew Hayden Taylor, *Someday* (1993), *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth* (1998), *400 Kilometres* (2005), and a new novel by Robert Alexie, *The Pale Indian* (2005). The solace each of these protagonists finds in his or her return home, however, is neither simple nor universal; all concur that interracial adoption is, to borrow terminology from Bernard Williams and Martha Nussbaum, "not resolvable without remainder" (qtd in Fagan 256). This fact sets these accounts apart from what Kristina Fagan has analyzed as the troublingly idealized and abstracted treatment of interracial relations and adoption in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*

(1974) and Barbara Kingsolver's *Pigs in Heaven* (1993), each of which situates the adoptee as a national allegory, as a "distillation of and the solution to national dilemmas," as a means to enact a non-Indigenous fantasy of a racially reconciled postcolonial settler state (252).

Such racial reconciliation is resolutely refused by Louise Erdrich in her celebrated short story "American Horse" (1989), perhaps because, as Paula Gunn Allen speculates, such a state of post-colonial post-captivity "has yet to occur in historical time" (41). Over-romanticized interpretations of reparation in recent Indigenous fiction are effectively deflated by Erdrich's brutal depiction of a beloved mother who is literally beaten into submission as she tries to protect (unsuccessfully) her son from abduction and of a son who is captured by the "great metal thing with hooks and barbs and all sorts of sharp equipment to catch their bodies and draw their blood" (43). The story concludes uncompromisingly with the son's "great rattling screams" which "rip out of him like pieces of his own body and whirl onto the sharp things all around him" (52). This insistence upon abduction rather than return reminds us of the limits of any generalization concerning homecoming as a theme in recent narratives of Indigenous captivity; yet Erdrich's unflinching portrayal of the pain of capture is shared by many writings on Indigenous captivity, even those boasting resolutions of reunion or return.

Even triumphal and generally successful escapes from residential school,³ like those of Niska and Xavier who, smiling, "walked out of there and back into the time of [their] ancestors, living on what the land would give" (87) in Joseph Boyden's *Three Day*

³ The recent Australian film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), based on Doris Pilkington Garimara's biography of her mother Molly Craig, is a widely circulated variant of such a dramatic escape and homecoming.

Road (2005), are tempered by captivity's costs, in this case a father killed by unjust imprisonment in a settler jail and social alienation from the majority of the band who were forced to leave the land and live in town. A much less celebratory "homecoming" is scripted in Lee Maracle's "Charlie" (1999), a short story which details a boy's plans to escape his detested residential school, his joyous travel homeward through familiar bush lands, and his eventual freezing to death in the forest. In setting his death in the natural world he so loved and in casting it as his welcoming of the beautiful Orion Queen or Wendigo who comes from the sky to gather his spirit, Maracle deftly brings Charlie "home," transporting him back to his land and spiritual world in a way that refuses to minimize or trivialize the damage done by such colonial captures.

These recent accounts join with traditional tribal stories, like the Sto:lo tale of Th'ówxeya (Mosquito Woman), which tell and teach of the return of abducted children. Sto:lo storyteller Shoyshqelwhet (Gwendolyn Point) notes that she interprets this legend as a metaphor, with Th'ówxeya, the cannibal woman who captures Sto:lo children, representing the predatory European society that swept into long-held First Nations territory to steal land, culture, souls and children: "Ever since the Europeans first came, our children were stolen from our embrace" (7). The children's ingenious escape is designed to "teach resistance and self-reliance," to assure us that these stolen children "will triumph in the end," that they will, against daunting odds, "find their way home... to the longhouse, to winter dances, to the sweatlodges, to the big drum and the powwows—to heal" (8). Indeed, Shoyshqelwhet notes, many already have.

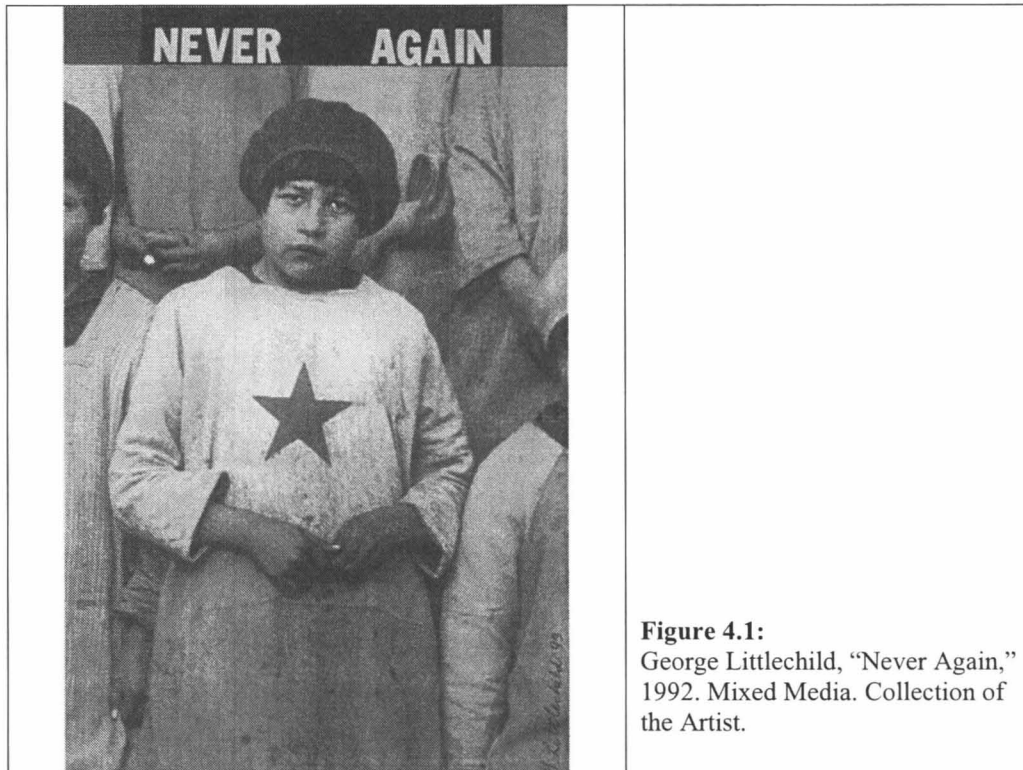
For all of those, like scholar Jonathan Dewar, who are grappling with “severed” cultural or tribal connections and seeking “rules and parameters that instruct people on how to connect or reconnect” (66), texts which deal thematically with issues of (re)connection and the return from capture prove particularly useful. As adoptee Shandra Spears has noted, such texts can constitute an empowering context through which to face the continuing challenges which remain post-repatriation (90-91). These works document not only the motivation for and restorative potential of returning home from captivity but also the numerous challenges which beset this, and indeed most, process(es) of repatriation. The routes these Indigenous captivity narratives map are fraught, their solutions at times partial or compromised: perhaps one’s “home” no longer exists; perhaps one must heal without full reconciliation; perhaps “home” can be internalized; perhaps return is a multiply-iterated process from a location of acute hybridity. It is the nuances and poignant complexities of these journeys, their rejection of simplified conceptions of home or return, which are their gift and teaching.

◇ The Paintings of George Littlechild as Artistic Reparation

The oeuvre of George Littlechild, a contemporary Plains Cree painter with a profound firsthand knowledge of colonial captivity, provides an ideal archive in which to explore art’s potential as a vehicle of self-definition, cultural recuperation, and decolonization. A number of his paintings enact what I will call *creative repatriation*: the use of artistic means to cognitively relocate an Indigenous subject from a foreign to a native space, a creative re-contextualization which can serve in certain ways to redeem those who have been captured.

Many of the acclaimed, whimsical, and colourful canvases produced by Littlechild during his particularly prolific period in the 1990s document his family's historical experience of a variety of forms of contact captivity. In pieces including "Dot the 'I' in North American Indian" and "Adjusting to Reservation Life" he visualizes the way in which his ancestors "were rounded up and confined in allotted reserves" (*Honour* 73). This sense of incarceration intensifies in paintings which record his relatives' time in residential schools, such as "Boarding School Angst," "Never Again," and "Red Horse Boarding School"—the latter of which features a red horse which is "torn in half because Indian children coming to the school were torn away from their culture, their language, their traditional ways, and their families." This was the case for his maternal grandparents and their children, a fact Littlechild correlates to the subsequent decades of familial dysfunction which plagued them: having grown up "without their families," these captured Cree children, "never learned to raise children of their own. Many boarding school survivors died on skid row of alcoholism, including my mother..." (*Land* 18). This tragic loss of his mother, Rachel, permeates Littlechild's corpus. She is the subject of "Never Again" (Figure 4.1) which features a hand-tinted photographic portrait of her as a nine-year old student at an Albertan residential school, standing, as Littlechild puts it, "with pained eyes and an ugly knowingness" (*Honour* 91). In this piece the caption and title are redolent of the World Wars we were never to forget or repeat, and the star upon his mother's breast recalls those the Jewish population in Nazi Germany was forced to wear, both of which suggest the similarities of Canada's residential schools and Germany's concentration camps—an analogy hit home by the

publication of this painting in a book which explicitly parallels the two, *In Honour of Our Grandmothers* (1994).



The effects of Indigenous captivity and displacement are all too often transferred from one generation to the next; arguably what Littlechild inherits from his ancestors' history of childhood abduction is a similar experience of his own. "As an infant he was taken by [Canadian] government agencies and put into a foster home, a fate he shared with his four brothers and sisters"—all of them subjected to the Sixties Scoop. He was shunted through five, at times abusive, non-Native foster homes before the age of four, and stayed with this fifth family until he turned eighteen and began to search for his Cree biological family (Alibhai 8). As an artist Littlechild has examined both his personal experience of adoption, in paintings including "Indian Foster Boy" and "Red Horse in a

Sea of White Horses,” and a wider collective Indigenous experience of adoption as abduction, in a multi-media group show he curated in 1996 on the subject, *Dis-Placed Indians: The Sixties Scoop*; the intent of the latter was *communitist* in its aim to help his numerous fellow “adult survivors” of the Scoop and to “tell the government to stop, stop doing this...” (qtd in Crey & Fournier 114). This is an explicitly curative artistic project, one Littlechild explains in terms of “healing the pain of the past and helping the next generation of Indian people” (*This* 12).

A selection of his paintings enact such a curative recovery from contact captivity for himself, his relatives, and perhaps a larger First Nations constituency, by working to re-forge the generations of family ties which were severed by this colonialist process. Littlechild’s efforts in this respect are foregrounded in his lushly illustrated children’s book *This Land Is My Land* (1993) which is dedicated to his ancestors and begins with a large graphic maternal family tree composed of old photographs he has retrieved from collections at the Provincial Archives of Alberta and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary (Gustafson 48). A number of these photographic portraits form the basis of the paintings in Littlechild’s series entitled *Plains Cree Ancestral Blankets*—see Figures 4.2 and 4.3. This series engages in creative repatriation in at least three ways: by reclaiming his ancestors, by releasing their images from ethnographic conventions, and by re-establishing his own relation to them. Littlechild “rescues” the images of his forebears from neo-colonial state museum vaults (spaces which have historically housed not only images but also the skeletal remains of many Indigenous peoples). He surrounds the portraits of his relatives with panels of bright and warm colour to imbue them with a

casual and contemporary tone and thus “melts” or frees them from their entrapment in what Audra Simpson has elsewhere dubbed the “ethnographic freeze” of such cross-cultural archival photographs (54). These panels also form a new and decidedly Cree back/ground as Littlechild incorporates Cree patterns, motifs and symbols into them. He also conceives of and titles them as traditional Plains blankets—a device which evokes not only his Cree heritage, but also connotations of being wrapped and sheltered by his culture in ways which counter the alienation of his extra-racial adoption.



Figure 4.2:
George Littlechild, “Plains Cree Ancestral Blanket No. 4.” Mixed Media (44” x 30”).

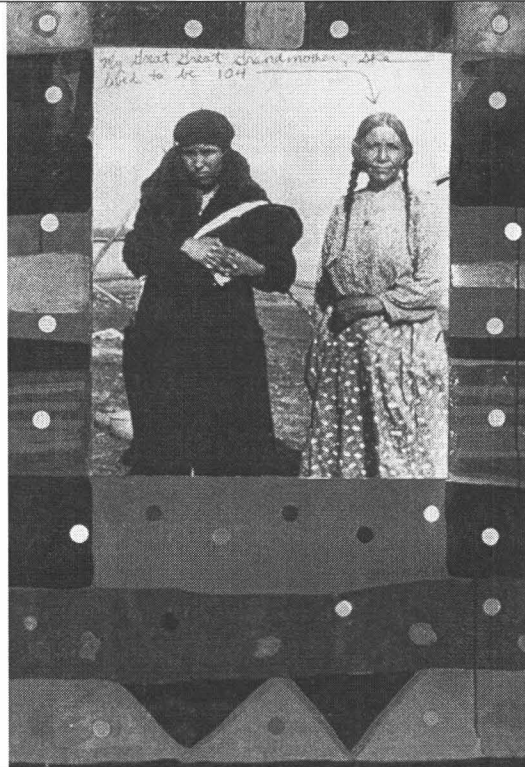


Figure 4.3:
George Littlechild, “Plains Cree Ancestral Blanket No. 6.” Mixed Media (44” x 30”).

In her analysis of Littlechild’s oeuvre, Cree filmmaker Loretta Todd argues that the paintings in the *Plains Cree Ancestral Blankets* series wield “a secret power to

decolonize the archival photograph” because they allow us to “experience the images in ways other than they were originally intended” as ethnographic documents of “nameless otherness” and because Littlechild reconfigures them to create a “much more sophisticated process of telling history and making art” (33). Littlechild is not alone in performing such an artistic reclamation of ancestral images and spirits by way of their conceptual relocation. Badimay/Yamatji painter Julie Dowling explains that her *Unknown Mother and Child* series (2005), operates in much the same way by “claiming” and “reinterpreting” the colonial period photographs she found in many Australian archival collections of anonymous Aboriginal women (see Figure 4.4). Dowling’s project is motivated by a desire to claim, honour, or somehow soothe the spirits of these women which remain “lost” because they are “unclaimed,” unknown, and “live on only in the drawers of museums” (“Story”). To this end, like Littlechild, she uses vibrant colour to resuscitate the pallid captured image and a new, tribally-appropriate painted background to return these Aboriginal women to their traditional cultural milieus. Nor is such creative repatriation limited to textual or visual media: Janice Acoose’s radio-drama *Acoose: Man Standing Above Ground* (1985) offers a potential oral variant in its cognitive and performative recontextualization of her ancestor, *Ekos*. Captured in colonialist sources including the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott and a painted portrait by Edmund Morris that hangs in the legislative building in Regina, the story of *Ekos* had, as Acoose notes, been removed from its Cree cultural roots, romanticized in a Eurocentric fashion, and reduced to a “museum relic”—traits she reverses by drawing on “important aspects” of Cree oral tradition in her attempt to “recapture” this important

familial figure (40). These works by Littlechild, Dowling, and Acoose function to repatriate archival ancestral portraits (and spirits) through paint, story, and oral protocol, to foster decolonization by “re-placing objects in new kinds of interpretive contexts...” (Phillips 109).



Figure 4.4
Julie Dowling, “Unknown Woman and Baby 2,” 2005.
Acrylic, red ochre, plastic on canvas (91x71cm).
Collection of the artist.



Anonymous, “Aboriginal woman and child picture,” Date unknown. Printed black and white photograph (9x 14cm). State Library of Victoria (Accession: H89.169/8; Image: a05000).

The creative redemption from capture staged in Littlechild’s *Plains Cree Ancestral Blankets* series is as much his own as that of his ancestors. His decolonized family portraits offer him what Todd describes as “a way into the space and time of his lineage” (33), a means to reconnect with the Cree kin and culture he was torn from at

infancy and diligently sought out and grew to know as an adult. Littlechild has established his connection to these ancestors in a number of more and less artistic ways: tracking their traces in archival collections, visiting their descendents on the reserve at Hobbema, striving to honour them in words, paint, and lived practice. He also, intriguingly, uses plexiglass to this end. This series of enlarged cibachrome ancestral portraits were exhibited sandwiched between panes of plexiglass and stand as what Littlechild identified as an “attempt to recognize himself in their faces and eyes, and finally belong somewhere” (qtd in Gustafson 48). Thus when the artist faced his paintings the physically reflective surface of the plexiglass would literally allow him to recognize or *see* himself in his ancestors’ facial features. In this sense Littlechild’s painterly familial album is not unlike Fiona Foley’s creative use of the *corporeal* to reclaim or rematriate her foremothers and rejuvenate her own sense of connection to them in her 1991 installation *Lost Badtjalas, severed hair* (see Chapter 2). This relation between artist and subject is made more explicit in the personalized, handwritten captions Littlechild adds to the enlarged portraits in the *Plains Cree Ancestral Blankets* group; they read, “My mother being held by her mother” (Figure 4.3) and “My Great Great Grandmother, she lived to be 104” (Figure 4.3). His mobilization of first person possessive pronouns, to impress a mark of his kinship onto these once decontextualized photographs, is akin to âcimowinis’s staunch defence of her colonized relations after the family reunion in Halfe’s *Blue Marrow*—each seeks to honour and name *their* Cree kin in the face of those who would capture or silence them. Littlechild’s choice of captions inoculates these portraits from anonymity, underscores the longevity and implicit strength

of his great-great-grandmother, Betsy Louis Natuasis, and highlights his family's tradition of maternal care. In an antithesis to his own childhood removal, the mothers here protect and embrace their babes. Using the curative cultural practice of creative repatriation, Littlechild figuratively gathers or re-collects his kin upon warm ancestral blankets and re-places himself into caring maternal arms.

◇ Towards a Theory of Creative Repatriation

The potential scope of artistic modes of Indigenous repatriation is extended in Thomas King's novel *Truth & Bright Water* (1999); featuring a "famous Indian artist" able to "restore" everything from captured ancestral remains to colonial edifices and the land itself, this text serves as a provocative illustration of the value of diverse forms of artistic reparation. In conjunction with the works considered above, it provides fertile ground for cultivating a theory of *creative repatriation*: the conceptual (non-literal) relocation—through diverse artistic means, self-definition, and/or reference to Indigenous epistemologies—of First Nations items or subjects from (neo-)colonial settings back towards their communities of origin. My concept of creative repatriation builds on Jennifer Kramer's recent theorization of *figurative repatriation*. Kramer turns to Arthur Gell's contention that material culture can act as a "social agent" to show how "First Nations artists can regain control of their material cultural objects by locating political artworks in western spaces as metaphorical acts of self-definition" ("Figurative" 172). I amend Kramer's model by viewing creative repatriation as a supplement rather

than an “alternative” to physical repatriation; by seeing it operate in spaces beyond the western museum and with audiences Indigenous and non- Indigenous; by applying it to writing and film as well as to visual art; and by altering the name from *figurative* to *creative* repatriation to underscore the non-figurative, powerful and material, potential effects of these acts. Acts of creative repatriation re-place subjects in new interpretive contexts, re-collect them, shift them from one “regime of value” (Myers 6) to another, access their potential as “repositories of self-determination” (Kramer, *Switchbacks* 90). These acts entail “a claim of Aboriginal title over images, culture and stories” (Martin & McMaster 17); their interpretation demands a recognition of the profound connection between artistic self-definition and the self-determination inherent to First Nations sovereignty (Rickard).

Colour Plates

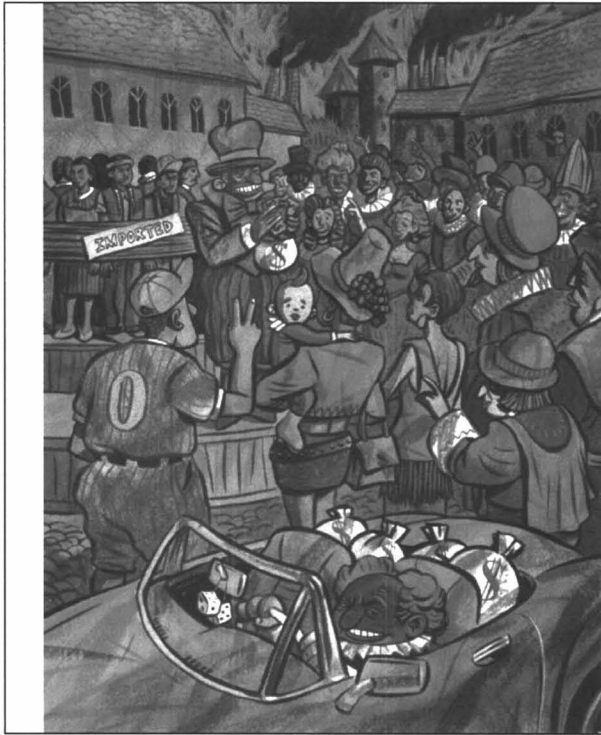


Figure 0.1:
William Kent Monkman,
Illustration from Thomas
King's *A Coyote
Columbus Story* (1992).



Figure 1.2:
Julie Dowling, "The Gauntlet,"
2004. Acrylic, red ochre, and
plastic on canvas. (120 x
100cm). Artplace Perth.

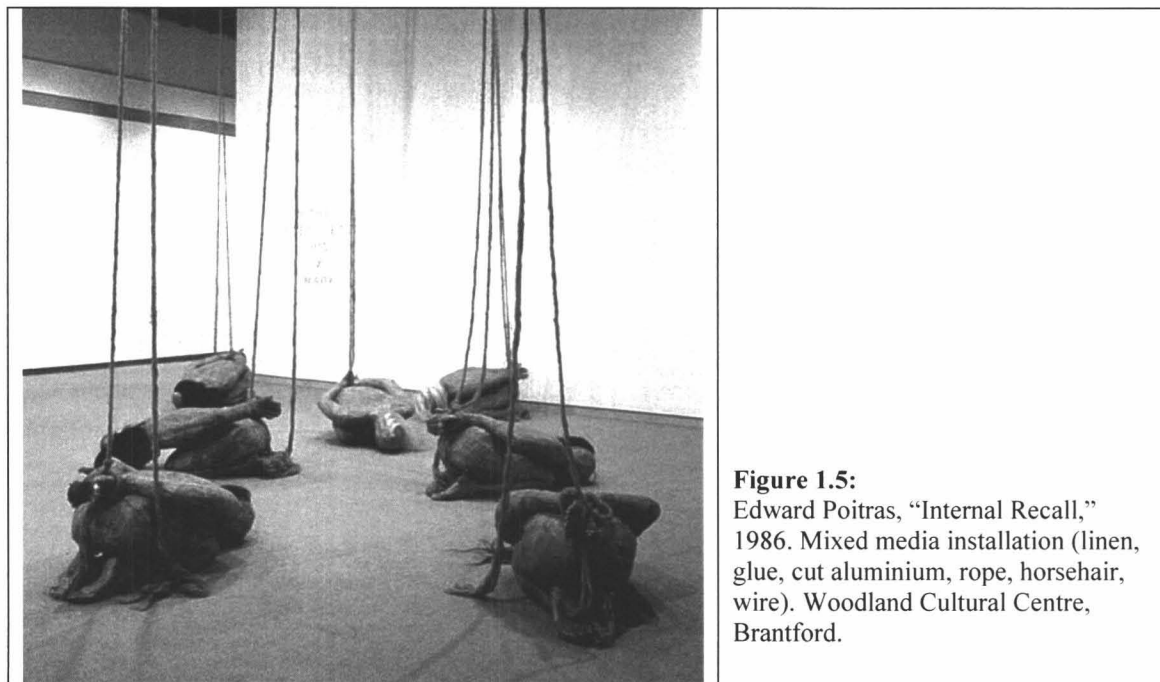
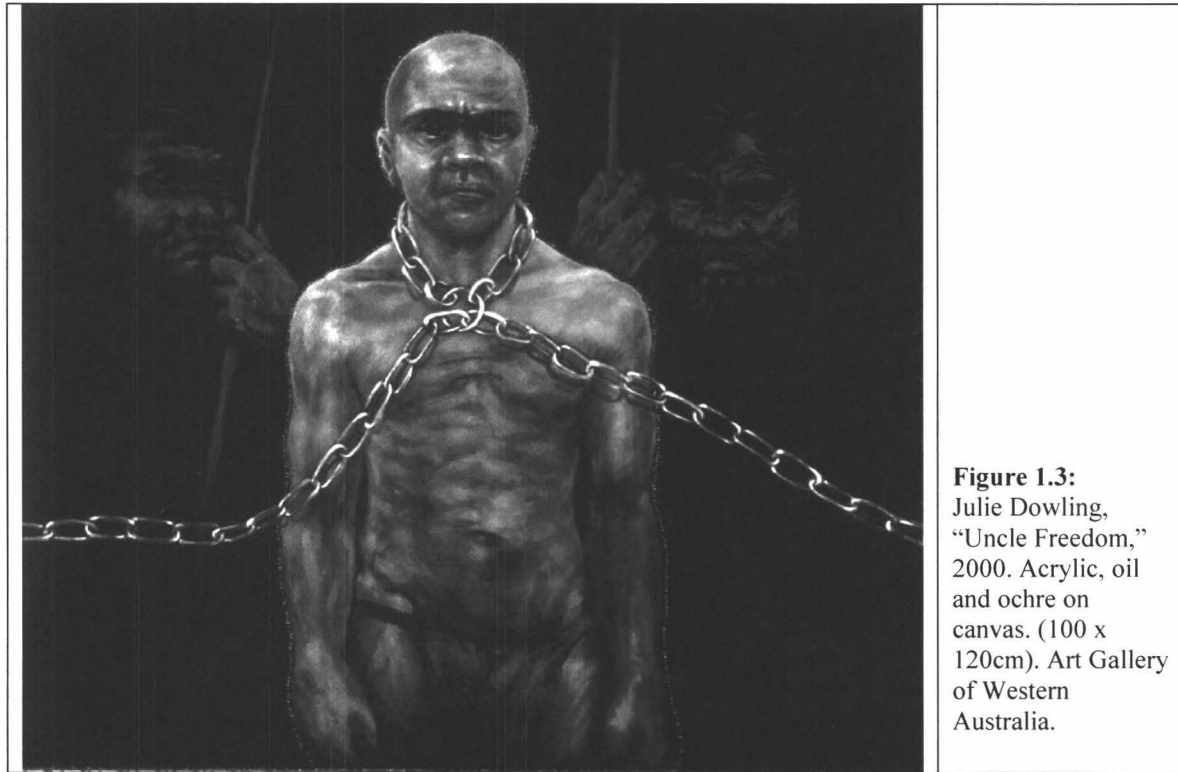




Figure 2.2
E. Irving Couse, "The Captive"
(1891). Oil on canvas. Collection of
the Phoenix Art Museum.



Figure 2.4
Eugène von Guérard, "Panoramic view of Mr Angus McMillan's station, Bushy Park, Gippsland,
Victoria." Right-hand panel. 1861. National Library of Australia.



Figure 2.7
Sidney Nolan, "Mrs Fraser," 1947. Ripolin enamel on hardboard. 66.2 x 107 cm.
Queensland Art Gallery.

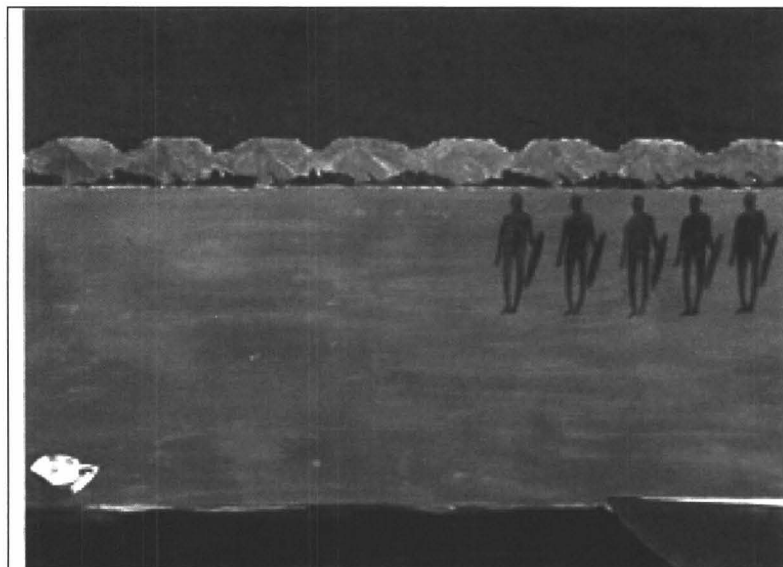


Figure 2.9
Fiona Foley, "Eliza's Ship Wreck," 1990. Pastel, aquarelle, ink, oil
stick and pencil on paper. 57 x 76.5 cm.

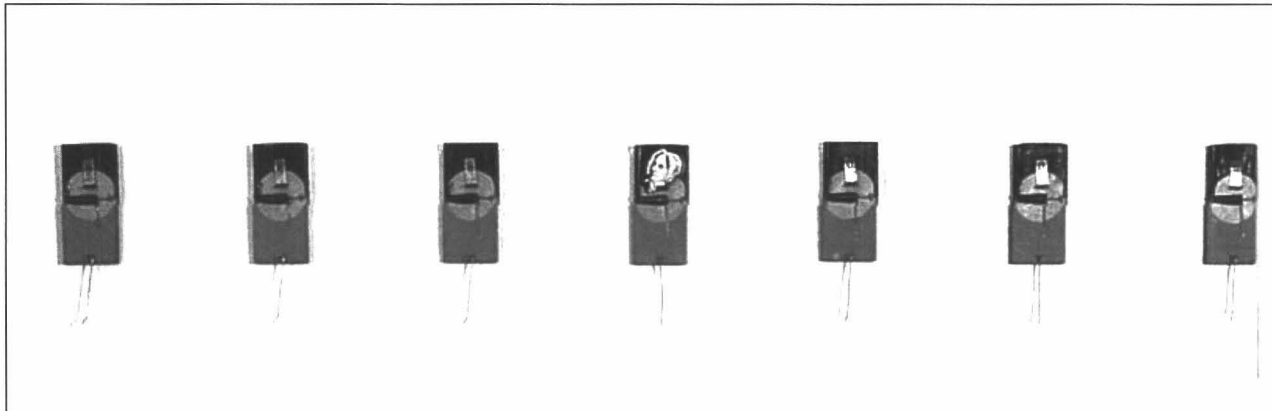


Figure 2.10

Foley, detail from "Eliza's Rat Trap," 1991.

Seven rat traps with collage, oil paint and wax candles.

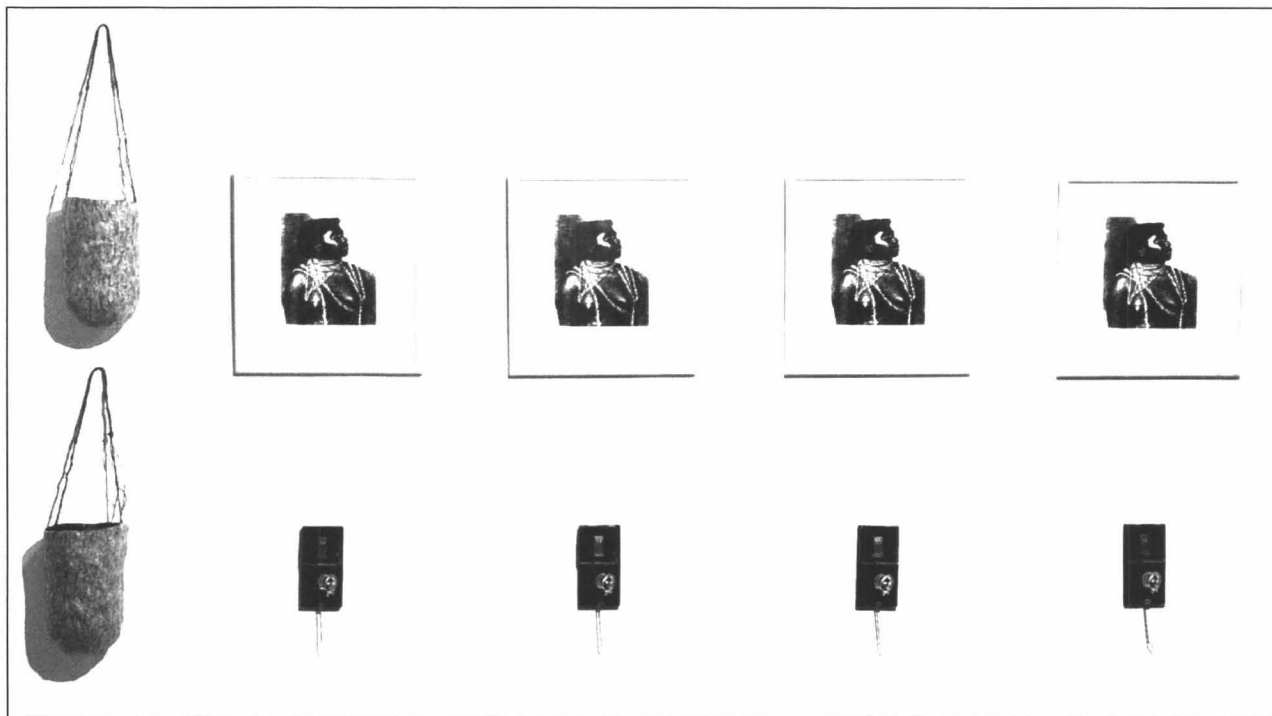
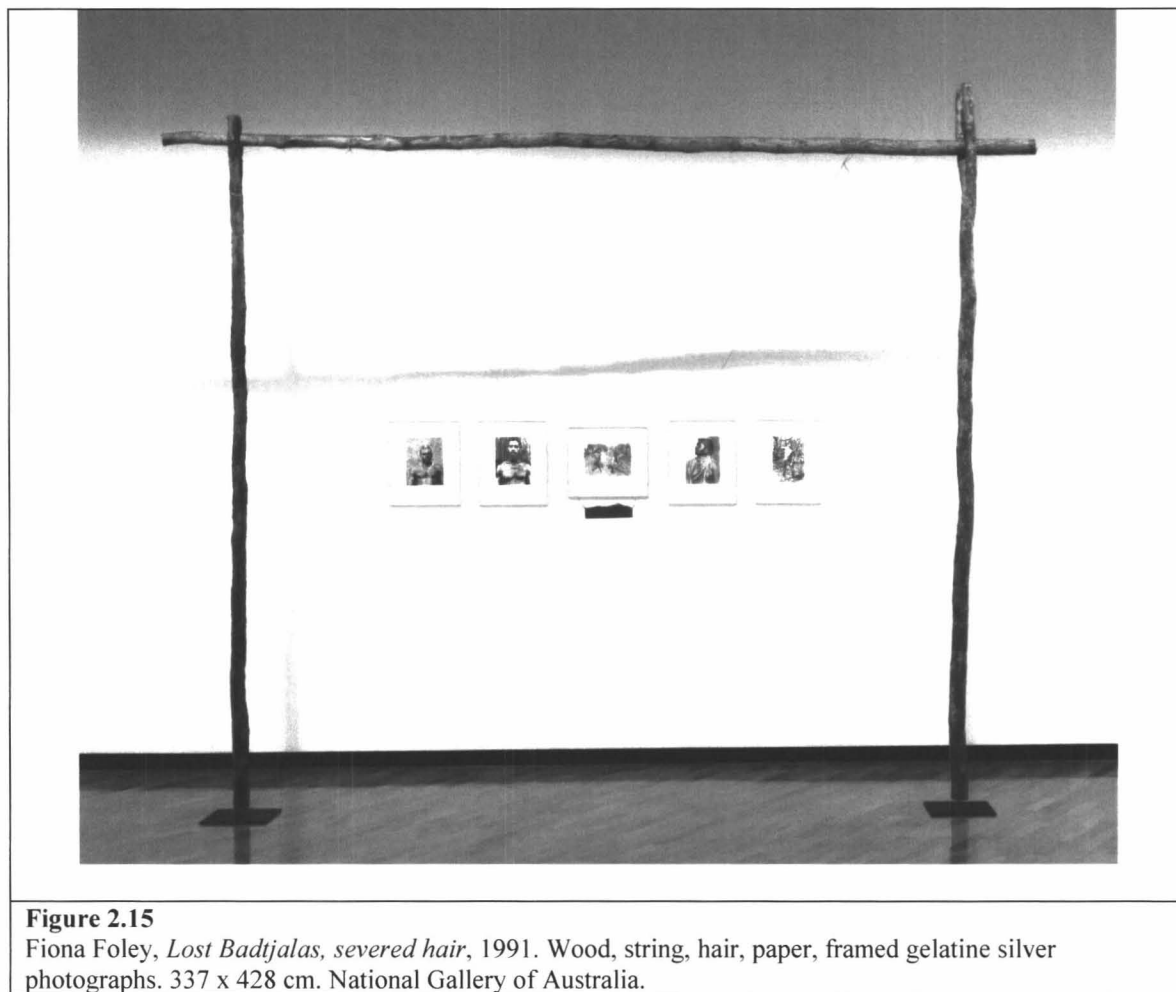
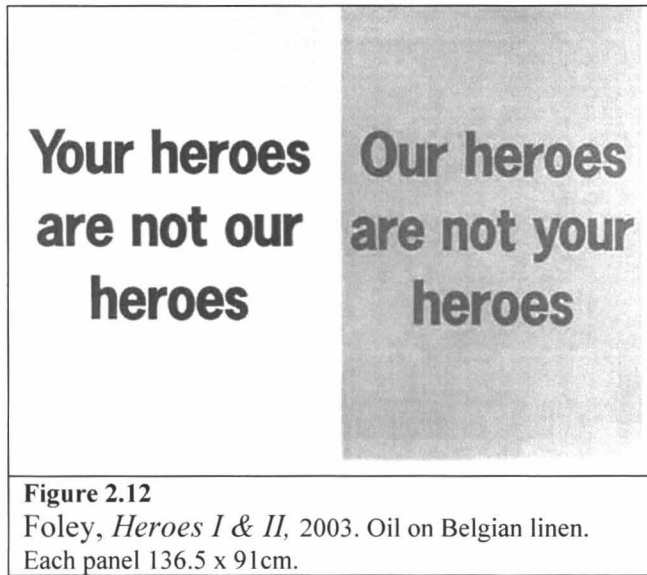
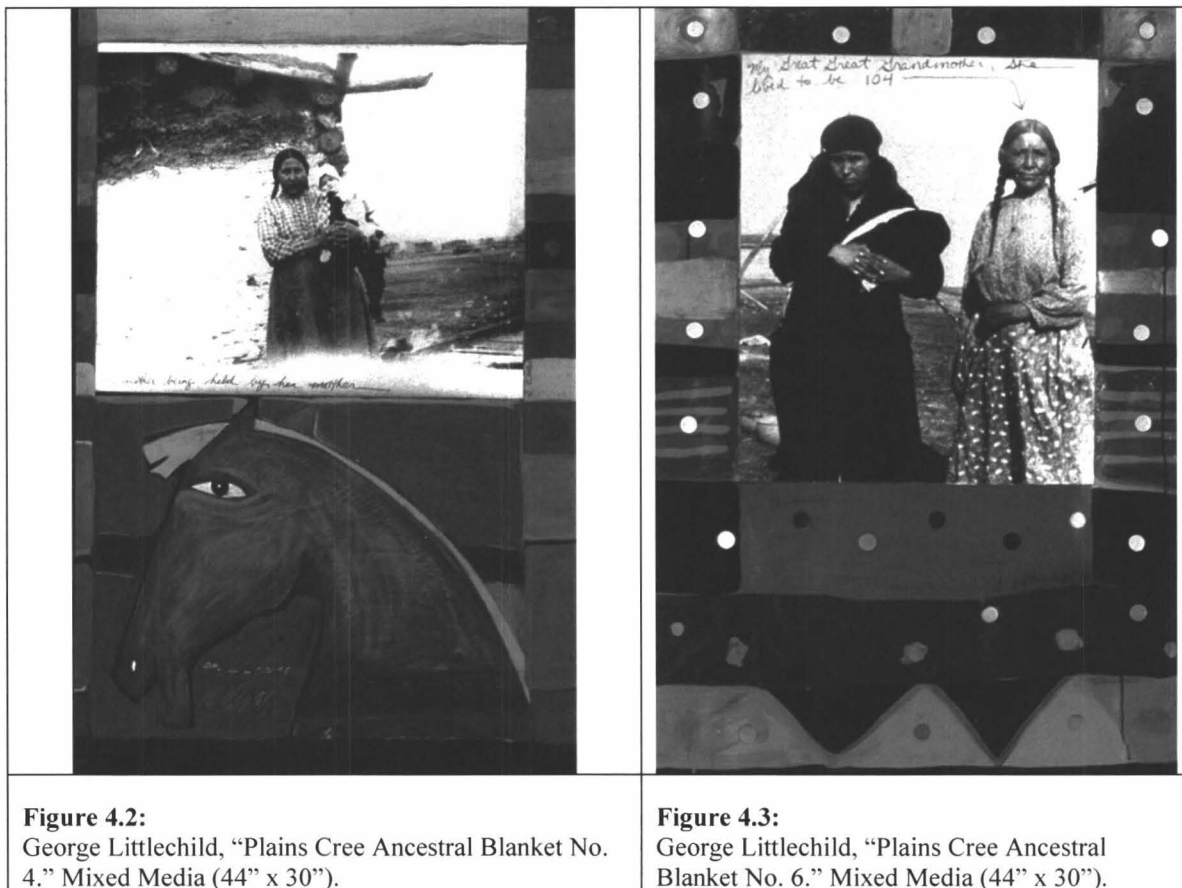
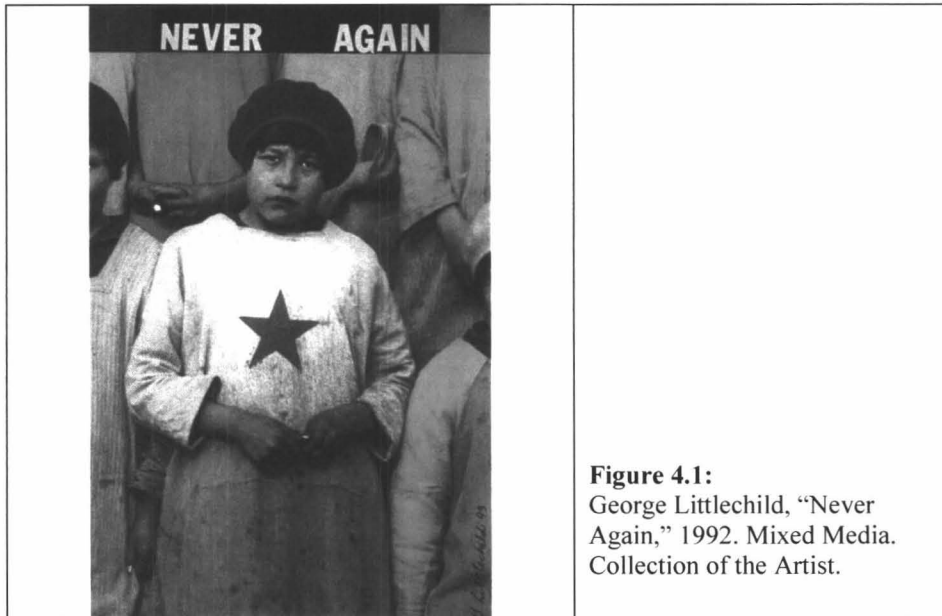
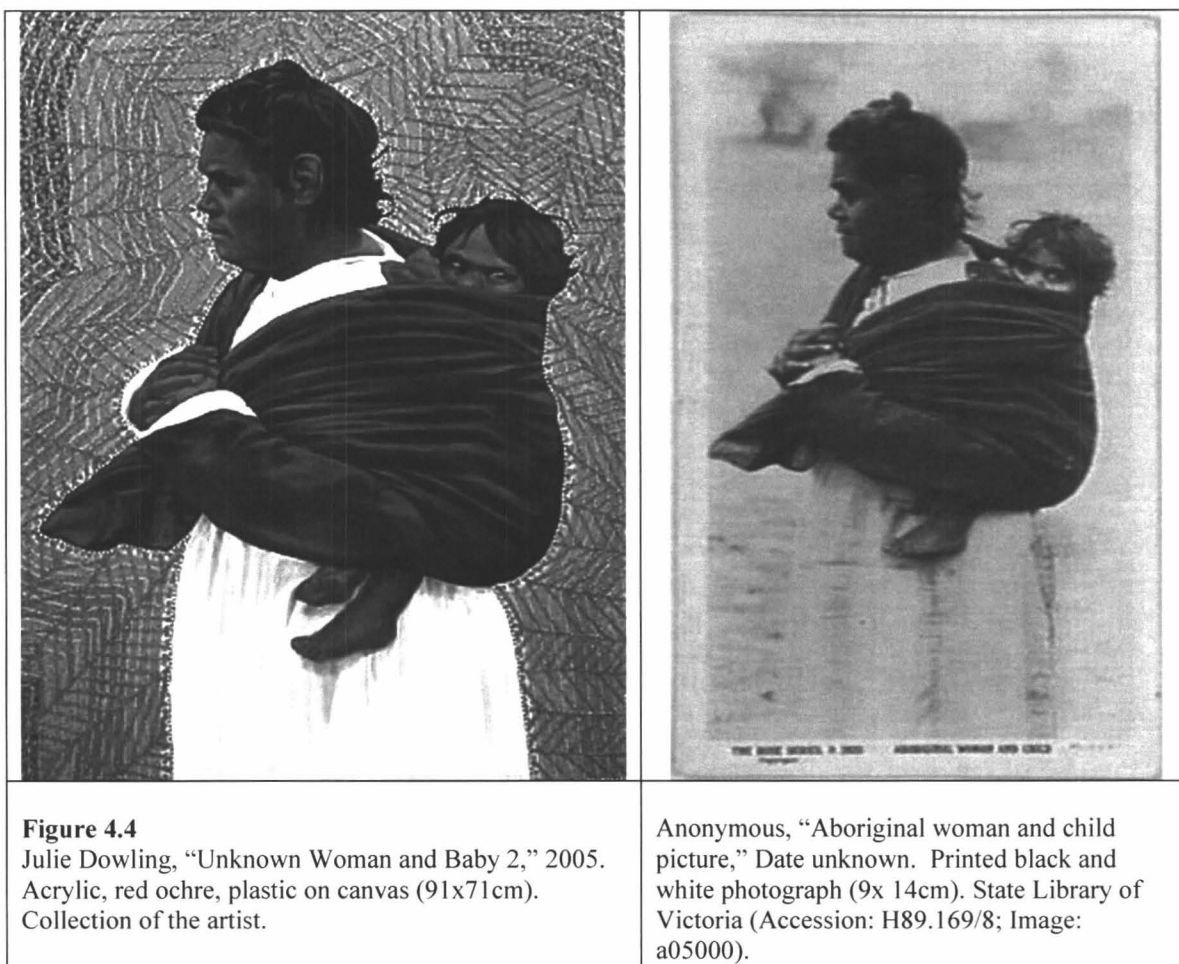


Figure 2.11

Fiona Foley, "Giviid Woman and Mrs Fraser," 1992. Photocopied images of Fraser Island woman, dilly bags, paper tissue, string, whitebait and rat traps. 130 x 200 cm.







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