Five Imperial Adventures in the Waikato

Kirstine Moffat

In 1894 Alfred Lyall declared that ‘the novels with which our fortunate generation is so abundantly supplied, may be divided broadly into two classes [...] the Novel of Adventure and the Novel of Manners’.¹ Lyall argued that while the ‘Novel of Manners’ was essentially feminine, concerned with the ‘analysis of character’ and the ‘play of civil emotions’ in familiar settings, the ‘Novel of Adventure’ was ‘masculine in orientation’, focusing on ‘heroic action and marvellous enterprise’ in ‘rough societies or remote places’.² Some late nineteenth-century exponents of the ‘Novel of Adventure’, or imperial adventure-romance, regarded colonial New Zealand as an attractive canvas for their tales of masculine daring in an exotic, rugged environment.³ Five such authors set their narratives, in part or in full, in the Waikato of the 1860s, drawn to the backdrop of inter-racial conflict provided by the New Zealand Wars. While references to specific events and people associated with colonial Waikato do ground many of these texts in historical reality, it has to be said that, regardless of whether the authors write from experience, careful research, or flights of imaginative fantasy, the Waikato that is described in their narratives has been selected for its frontier possibilities rather than its distinctive geography.

The texts under consideration, Jules Verne’s Among the Cannibals (1868), Joshua Kirby’s Henry Ancrum (1871), Emilia Marryat’s Amongst the Maoris (1874), Sygurd Wiśniowski’s Tikera (1877), and Rolf Boldrewood’s War to the Knife (1899), are linked not only by setting but by their engagement with two key tensions at work at both the structural and the ideological level. Firstly, there is an underlying dichotomy in many of the
adventure-romances under discussion, between the overt articulation of an imperial message and an implied rejection of 'civilised' norms through a movement away from the imperial centre into a frontier landscape that fascinates precisely because it is as yet untouched by the march of progress and Empire. The protagonists of these novels are not typically missionaries, settlers, or Empire-builders seeking to shape the new world into a simulacrum of the old, but travellers in search of the exotic. These adventurers rarely embrace a new identity as a colonist, preferring rather to return to the civilised comforts of home and the known at the conclusion of their explorations.

Secondly, there are similar tensions evident in the authors' engagement with gender and race. These 'Novels of Adventure' valorise the intrepid, solitary male explorer and warrior who ventures into the unknown, yet the narratives almost always return the hero to the safe arms of his faithful beloved at the conclusion of the novel. The values of civilisation and domesticity embodied by this European maiden triumph at the end of most texts, although much of the narrative recounts the male protagonist's journey away from her into a world where he is sexually and emotionally excited by the racial other; in these texts set in the Waikato, the woman is invariably a voluptuous 'half-caste' whose mixed blood makes her both enticingly exotic and somehow 'superior' to other Maori. While these Maori heroines are usually more fully rounded characters than their one-dimensional European rivals, the authors invariably retreat from allowing a permanent commitment between the racial other and the hero, reflecting European attitudes of racial superiority and fears of miscegenation.
Of course, not all of the authors under consideration treat these tensions in identical ways. The novelists who set their adventure narratives in the Waikato are diverse in terms of background, ideology, literary reputation, and personal engagement with colonial New Zealand. None of the authors were born in New Zealand or were long-term residents of the colony, and only two of the novelists visited New Zealand: Major Joshua Henry Kirby and Sygurd Wiśniowski. Kirby was a career soldier who joined the 68th Regiment of the Durham Light Infantry as Major in 1861 and who served in New Zealand from 1864-66, fighting in the Waikato and at the Battle of Gate Pa in Tauranga. *Henry Ancrum: A Tale of the Last War in New Zealand* was published in 1871 and is Kirby's only foray into fiction. In contrast, Wiśniowski wrote several novels and collections of essays in his native Polish. *Tikera or Children of the Queen of Oceania* was published in 1877 and was first translated into English in 1972. Wiśniowski had left his native land, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in 1860 to join the Hungarian Legion and later trained at the military academy established by the Polish insurgent, General Ludwik Mieroslawski. After travelling to Peru and Australia, he arrived in Auckland in 1864 and left almost immediately for the South Island in order to avoid being conscripted. His Waikato is thus based on the stories of other travellers rather than first hand experience. Unlike Kirby, whose British loyalties are evident in his profession, Wiśniowski had sympathy for Maori as 'a nation who like the Poles were under the rule of another'.

The remaining three novelists to set their narratives in the Waikato of the 1860s never visited New Zealand. They were all career novelists to whom the Waikato appealed because of its exotic potential. Rolf Boldrewood was a bestselling Australian novelist who modelled his fiction on his literary hero Sir Walter
Scott. *War to the Knife, or, Tangata Maori* was published in 1899. Lacking first-hand experience of New Zealand, ‘Boldrewood’s principal source of information about Maori life and history were G.W. Rusden’s *A History of New Zealand* (1883) and *Aureretanga: Groans of the Maoris* (1888).6 As in Scott’s Highland narratives, a foreign culture (in this case Maori) entices but is eventually found wanting when contrasted with Anglo-Saxon ‘civilisation’. Similar values underpin the fiction of Emilia Marryat. The daughter of Captain Frederick Marryat, the popular writer of sea narratives such as *Mr Midshipman Easy* (1836), Emilia Marryat combined her father’s gift for adventure story with moral lessons in novels targeted at children and young adults.7 *Amongst the Maoris: A Book of Adventure* was published in 1874 and is a coming of age story which advocates Christianity and mission.

The best known of the authors discussed in this paper is French novelist Jules Verne. His first three tales of extraordinary adventures, *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863), *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), and *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865), had taken his protagonists and his readers into the unknown. For his fourth and fifth fictional outings he turned to the slightly more familiar and accessible, yet still exotic, geographic distance of the North Pole (*The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, 1866) and the Pacific (*The Children of Captain Grant*, 1868). The third volume of the Pacific adventures of Robert and Mary Grant, *Among the Cannibals*, is set in a dangerous and savage New Zealand in which a French antipathy towards British colonisation sits rather uneasily with the stereotype of the ignoble savage. Less concerned with historical accuracy than Boldrewood and Marryat, Verne’s Waikato is more imagined than actual space.

Published in Britain, Poland and France respectively, and popular with both European and colonial readers (although Wiśniowski’s *Tikera* was only published in Polish), these novels are typical of publication practices in the late nineteenth century.8 An examination of the work of these five authors highlights the international connectedness and intersections of the literature of
the period, with authors from Britain, Australia, and Western Europe drawn to New Zealand as actual or imaginary travellers to write of the Waikato as a space of conflict, adventure and romance.

**Genre Conventions**

Before turning to a discussion of the novels themselves, it is helpful to have an understanding of the evolution and conventions of the imperial adventure-romance, a genre closely associated with the expansion of the British Empire. In the first part of the nineteenth century most adventure fiction was written for boys and was modelled on Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), and James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* (1826). However, 'in the period between 1870 and 1914' the genre was increasingly appropriated by authors writing for adults as well as children, and 'became more closely and directly imperial'. H. Rider Haggard's views are typical: 'All my life [...] by means of fictional and other writings [...] I have done my best to spread knowledge of the Empire and all it means or should mean to us'. The plots of many of these adventure narratives hinge on a dual 'possession of land' and 'possession of people'. Popular writers 'drew upon contemporary and anthropological theories of race, particularly scientific evolutionary theory' resulting in 'a stereotyped "primitive" or savage, inferior to his or her white counterpart, lower down the hierarchies of evolution and civilisation'. However, not all exponents of the adventure-romance shared these imperial views, David Damrosch arguing that Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad 'never simply endorsed the imperial project but probed its tensions and contradictions'.

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As highlighted by Lyall, the genre in the late-Victorian period was fundamentally masculine in orientation, although Fenimore Cooper’s earlier narratives certainly featured women as romantic interest and tragic victims. In Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* Allan Quartermain boasts: ‘There is not a *petticoat* in the whole history’.16 Gail Ching-Liang Low writes that the imperial adventure-romance tapped into ‘contemporary culture fears of urban softness and degeneration’, which was seen as ‘unhealthy and feminine’, in contrast to the ‘manly and healthy British morality’ of adventurers to the new world.17 The protagonists of these adventures are typically courageous and capable of violent action. Stevenson wrote that ‘Danger is the matter with which this class of novel deals’, while Andrew Lang claimed that the genre appealed to ‘the ancestral barbarian of our natures’.18 In these masculine narratives ‘relations with white women [...] are relegated to the background’, and while the colonial adventurer ‘often meets with beautiful native women’, his attraction is tempered by his ‘fears [of] miscegenation and racial degradation’.19 LeeAnne Richardson writes that while the genre ‘embrace[s] formal closure’, with the adventurer concluding his quest, the ending is reached ‘without recourse to a marriage ceremony’, ensuring that the protagonist remains ‘a lone actor’ free to pursue future adventures.20

The landscape into which the adventurer journeys is typically exotic and yet ‘generic’, ‘vaguely romantic’ and ‘reminiscent of European literature and artistic clichés and conventions’.21 In keeping with the themes of imperialism, masculinity and adventure, the setting favoured by adventure authors is the frontier; from a European perspective, uncharted, unknown and unsettled territory. What excites both the protagonists of these adventures and their creators is what Conrad’s Marlow describes as ‘the blank spaces of the earth’, which are conquered by the adventurer, both in terms of his triumph over the physical challenges of the new environment and in terms of his assertion of authority over the indigenous peoples that he meets.22
Empire Rhetoric and Frontier Landscapes

The imperial adventure-romances set in the Waikato highlight two key structural and ideological tensions inherent in the genre: the dichotomy between the imperial message and the escape from civilisation into a frontier landscape, and the contradiction between the declared masculine desire for an escape from the perceived unmanliness of 'the feminine' and the actual pursuit of relationships with both European and indigenous women.

The tension between the rhetoric of Empire and the romance of adventure is particularly apparent in Boldrewood's *War to the Knife*. Roland Massinger, an English gentleman who comes to New Zealand in search of adventure after a failed romance, is thrilled with his first encounter with 'these marvellous islands,' hailed as 'marked out' by 'Providence' as 'Another England, beneath the Cross of the South!'23 The 'transformation' of Auckland from bush to 'thriving settlement' is regarded by Roland as a triumph of the vision and strength of the 'British Empire' (p. 90). Fighting with the Bush Rangers at the Battle for the Mangapika River near Te Awamutu, Roland treats an injury to his arm as a badge of honour, boasting of 'having bled in the cause of his Queen and country' (pp. 255-6).

Yet, while Roland believes wholeheartedly in the superiority of the British Empire and is willing to fight for her interests, New Zealand fascinates not as a colony, a miniature Britain, but as a wild frontier environment in which his appetite for adventure can be fed and his masculinity can be tested. *War to the Knife* opens with a sense that an Oxford education and ownership of a country estate do not offer sufficient scope for a true man. Roland is described as possessing the qualities of 'calm heroism and Spartan endurance', but these are latent, waiting to emerge 'in time of need' (p. 10). New Zealand offers an expanded horizon, the opportunity to leave behind 'narrow and monotonous [...] provincial duties' for 'adventurous experiences'
Scorning warnings about the imminent war, he travels by foot into the Waikato interior, declaring that 'he had not come all that way to lead a feather-bed life. Whatever risk other men encountered, he felt equal to' (96). Indeed, far from fearing war, Roland relishes the opportunity for further testing himself on the battlefield. He values his initial contact with 'Nature, untrammeled by art' and his interaction with Maori 'in peace, in love and friendship', but embraces war as 'a rare and privileged experience, unknown to the ordinary individual' (p. 227). Joining the Forest Rangers, 'the most resolute, daring spirits of the colony', Roland’s military service provides the desired ‘succession of exciting adventures and dramatic incidents’ and demonstrates that when required he is capable of resolute, violent action (p. 245). His participation in the New Zealand Wars thus emerges more from his deep-seated desire for a life of incident and thrills than from his imperial ideology.

What Roland wants is to be plunged into the pages of a Fenimore Cooper novel and this is precisely what he gets: "I have got into the land of romance [...] It reminds me of the "Last of the Mohicans" and all the joys of youth. We shall have "Hawkeye", "Uncas", and "Chingachgook" turning up before we know where we are"" (p. 78). As this quotation suggests, Boldrewood is interested in the Waikato’s possibilities as a frontier landscape. He carefully researched the history of the region in the 1860s and refers to the battles at Orakau and Gate Pa and to historic figures such as General Cameron and Bishop Selwyn. However, apart from references to geographic landmarks such as the Waikato River, Lake Taupo, and the Pink and White Terraces, there is little that is distinctively New Zealand about Boldrewood’s descriptions of place. The Waikato appeals because of its wilderness qualities, its ‘wild profusion’ (p. 148). Roland’s journey down the Waikato River to Taupo is described in the language of Romantic excess. It transports him into a world that is ‘sublime’, ‘idyllic’, ‘weird’ and ‘magical’ because it is both unfamiliar and untouched by industrialisation.
(p.148; p. 95). The forests are hailed as ‘primeval’ and ‘unconquered’, Tongariro is ‘menacing, in dread majesty and sublimity’, Lake Taupo is ‘strangely beautiful’ (p. 103; p. 107). It is here, in the land of romance and adventure, away from his English homeland and at a remove from the colonial settlements of Auckland and New Plymouth, that Roland proves his manhood as an adventurer and warrior.

However, while much of War to the Knife seems to advocate the leaving behind of ‘civilisation’ and the machinery of Empire in order to seek out an environment that is wild and unrestricted, the novel’s conclusion rejects the excitement of the frontier in favour of the stability and continuity of the old world. Yes, Roland has adventures in the Waikato, but he remains throughout an English gentleman and at the end of the narrative he returns home to his Herefordshire estates to reclaim his inheritance as the local squire and leader of the hunt. For Boldrewood, ‘the ordinary course of the country gentleman of England [...] is surely one of the happiest lives in the world’ (p. 419). The novel ends with a feudal feast at Massinger Hall, with the aristocracy in the dining-room and the villagers in a marquee; a celebration of Englishness and class hierarchy. Robert Dixon writes that the novel’s climax ‘draws readers back into the safety of Anglo-Saxon racial purity and the institute of inherited private property’.24 This narrative closure certainly suits Boldrewood’s ideological purpose but is rather contrived; it is the ‘wild profusion’ of Roland’s adventures in the Waikato, not the calm pleasures of ‘Home’, that linger in the mind of the reader.

The novels of Kirby and Marryat are equally celebratory of the British Empire, but much more cautious about the enduring appeal of the unknown. Their protagonists are as much settlers as they are adventurers; they participate in and celebrate the building of the colony. Both authors use the techniques of example and juxtaposition, rather than rhetoric, to communicate the ideology underpinning their fiction. From a major in the imperial army, it is to be expected that Kirby’s novel reflects his
professional loyalties. Like his creator, Kirby's hero, Henry Ancrum, is on active duty in New Zealand and is unquestioning in his devotion to Queen and country. The superiority of the British military is assumed in the text and the novel also celebrates the spread of British settlement, with colonial Auckland replicating British society, complete with quadrille balls at Government House, courtship round the piano, and elaborate five course dinners. Like Boldrewood's Roland, Henry returns home to England and his inheritance as a country squire at the end of the novel, his name cleared of the sexual allegations that led him to join the army. Once again the source of Empire is regarded as superior to her colonial offshoots, and her true and loyal servant is rewarded with a return to the centre.

Marryat is more positive about New Zealand, with her two protagonists, Jack Stanley and Hope Bernard, making a success of their respective careers of art and medicine in Wellington, although Jack also inherits an English estate. However, she is just as accepting of the virtues of, and, indeed, need for, imperial expansion. Jack and Hope can stay in New Zealand, making the progression from adventurers to colonists, precisely because of the civilising influence and triumphant progress of British culture. The Waikato sequences of the novel are set on a mission station (perhaps modelled on those of Church Mission Society missionaries John Morgan and Benjamin Yates Ashwell) just before the outbreak of war. Here Marryat's ideological purpose is made plain. Under the tutelage of the missionaries, Mr and Mrs Grant, Waikato Maori have embraced both Christianity and a British lifestyle, tilling wheat fields, sending their children to school, and attending church on the Sabbath. This vision of a pastoral Christian paradise is mirrored by the sequences in Auckland and Wellington, with the cities replicating the customs and practices of British civil society.

In keeping with Kirby and Marryat's emphasis on the building of a replica Britain in the new world, the frontier environment is less attractive in Henry Ancrum and Amongst the
Maoris than in War to the Knife. Both authors share Boldrewood’s view of the Waikato as ‘luxuriant and wild and picturesque’, but use these very generic descriptions to critique a landscape that is un-English rather than to praise an exotic landscape that attracts.25

Kirby does acknowledge that ‘many a soul that has felt his energies cramped and confined in the old country has thought that it would find space and verge enough for their development in its adopted one’, but reflects that most adventurers quickly look back with longing on ‘the solid comforts of dear Old England’.26 This view colours the disposition and behaviour of his hero. Henry has all of the outward markers of the masculine adventurer, being built on ‘massive’ lines and wearing his army uniform proudly, but these are soon revealed to be a veneer.27 Unlike Roland’s escapade, Henry’s New Zealand adventure is enforced rather than chosen, the army offering him shelter when he is disinherited. He is a rather ineffectual officer, captured at Meremere, and then curiously passive in his captivity: acquiescing in his fate, marrying the ‘half-caste’ Celia, and settling down to a life of cultivating potatoes and yams on the East Coast. When chance leads to his escape he becomes so overwrought that he is confined to bed for weeks. As the novel progresses Henry becomes more and more of an atypical hero, a most unexpected development in a novel written by an army major, although Kirby was perhaps influenced by Scott’s Edward Waverly, who is also plunged into adventures for which he is rather ill-equipped to cope.

At times the protagonist of Amongst the Maoris displays a similar passivity. Jack has to be rescued by his travelling companion, Hope, on several occasions, most memorably from drowning in the Waikato River. However, Marryat’s purpose is different from Kirby’s. Jack is very young, in his late teens, and his travels in New Zealand are essentially a coming of age story. While Marryat does value masculine courage and enterprise, with Jack eventually becoming the rescuer rather than the victim.
when he saves Hope's father, the virtues which she most admires are moral rather than physical. The crucial significance of the Waikato in *Amongst the Maoris* is that it is the site not only of mission activity but also of Jack's conversion. Gazing at the beauty of the Waikato River he experiences 'the great day of his life', renouncing his plan to revenge the man who betrayed his father and turning to God with 'tears of repentance [...] his prayers for forgiveness'.28 It is this embracing of a path of Christian duty and service that ultimately makes Jack heroic, with Marryat using the frame of the imperial adventure-romance to communicate her moral message.

Not all of the novelists who set their fiction in the Waikato endorse the jingoism of Boldrewood, Kirby and Marryat. Significantly, the voices of challenge and questioning are evident in the fiction of the two non-British authors: Verne and Wiśniowski. On the one hand, Verne is very negative towards Maori in *Among the Cannibals*, regarding them as anthropophagous savages, as will be explored more fully later in this discussion. Yet he is also critical of the reach and practices of the British Empire. The French geographer Paganel speaks of the Maori warriors fighting in the Waikato as 'the independence army' and believes that they are conducting a 'holy war' against the British 'invaders'.29 Paganel's view of the British Empire is of a mighty juggernaut, quelling and crushing all those who attempt to resist its spread. He is half respectful and half scathing of the military might of General Cameron's army advancing into the Waikato, exclaiming: "'The English [...] think but little of war! [...] They fight, and lay themselves open to fighting, and think nothing of it.'"30 In the previous volume of the trilogy about Captain Grant's children, Paganel goes even further, accusing the British of genocide and referring to the Empire as a 'homicidal civilisation'.31 Richard Phillips describes Verne as 'anarchist and anti-imperial', mounting a 'specific attack upon British imperialism'.32 He makes the telling point that the true hero of *Among the Cannibals* is Paganel, 'the geographer [...] a wanderer, a
social outsider who is most at home in the liminal geography of the road'.

In keeping with this underlying relish for the 'liminal geography of the road', Verne spends considerable time communicating Paganel's excited wonder at the botanical and animal treasures he encounters in the Waikato. He and his companions (Lord and Lady Glenarvan, Mary and Robert Grant, and assorted navy and army personnel) do not seek out their New Zealand adventure—their journey into the Waikato is the result of a shipwreck on the coast near Kawhia—but they are alert to the physical beauties of the landscape through which they travel. Verne's Waikato is a fantastical exotic paradise that is not limited to the realm of the actual or possible, yet is paradoxically more recognisably New Zealand for all its flights of fancy and invention. As they travel from Kawhia to Ngaruawahia, the geographer Paganel tells his shipwrecked companions a tale of a tui which 'becomes so fat in the winter that it is quite ill, and cannot fly. Then it tears open its breast with its beak in order to relieve itself of some of the fat, and so make itself lighter' (p. 71). The travellers see kiwis 'covered in white plumage', which Paganel captures to take back as specimens for the Jardin des Plants, and even 'eighteen feet high' moa which are 'like immense ostriches' (p. 71; p. 144). Verne's Waikato is a land of plenty and contrasts, with 'immense prairies, which stretched far out of sight', hills that 'resemble gigantic animals worthy of antediluvian epochs [...] contorted masses essentially volcanic', kauri forests that are 'worthy rivals of the cedars of Lebanon and the mammoth trees of California', and waters that 'boil with the action of subterranean fires' (p. 72; p. 142; p. 82). There is little tension between Verne's anti-imperialist outlook and the frontier landscape he describes. The Waikato is presented as an environment yet to be tamed or controlled by the British and thus to be admired precisely because it is untouched by the detrimental forces of Empire.
Like Paganel, the unnamed narrator of Wiśniowski’s *Tikera* is a perpetual traveller, who arrives in New Zealand after adventures in Peru and who writes his narrative in a ‘hermitage by the Missouri River’. He describes himself as one of Poland’s ‘unwilling wanderers’, but in *Tikera* celebrates rather than bemoans this state, exclaiming: ‘How sad and stale this world would be if all its inhabitants stayed patiently in their tight little villages, living on potatoes and salt!’ (p. xxix; p. 129). He is a rarity in the world of the imperial adventure-romance, being proudly ‘working class’ (32). Having ‘no private means’, the narrator uses his ‘arms and legs’ to ‘see the world’ and believes that this makes him tough, resilient and open to experience (p. 16). Described by a fellow traveller as ‘a real rolling stone’, his journeying through New Zealand in search of employment and adventure celebrates the romance of outdoor travel where the ‘clean air, the silver moon, a rising breeze, and the gentle crackling of the fire together send the traveller to a sleep whose sweetness can only be appreciated by those who have managed without a roof over their heads’ (p. 78; p. 33).

The Waikato is the latest in a long line of frontier landscapes to which the narrator has travelled in his determined escape from modernity and oppression. As he enters the Waikato, the narrator of *Tikera* exults that ‘Everything round us was beautiful, new, and strange, and told me that I had come to a country scarcely visited by tourists, to be amongst people and plants which have seldom been described’ (p. 69). As in *War to the Knife*, Wiśniowski’s New Zealand is romanticised and exotic, an ‘enchanting place’, full of ‘cabbage trees, mountains and volcanoes’, ‘gushing’ waters, ‘luxuriant’ vegetation, and ‘primeval forest[s]’ (p. xix; p. 52; p. 49; p. 32). It is the wildness and the freedom, rather than the specifics of geography and place, which are celebrated.

As in *Among the Cannibals*, in *Tikera* there are few tensions between the attractions of the frontier environment being explored and the novelist’s ideological outlook. The Polish
Wiśniowski was very ambivalent towards British imperialism and, like his autobiographical narrator, sought refuge and respite from the march of Empire and progress in isolated frontier landscapes. While in New Zealand in 1864-65, Wiśniowski travelled from Auckland to the South Island in order to avoid being conscripted, writing in *Ten Years in Australia* (1873) that he was ‘convinced of the injustice of the English affair’ and would not ‘assist in the annihilation of this unfortunate people’.

Similarly, in *Tikera* Wiśniowski’s narrator, an unnamed Pole, is outspoken against British colonisation, railing against ‘the incredible talent of the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic settlers for destroying and dissipating all they find. At first they have to plunder, exterminate, uproot, to make a desert out of a living country, and then they implant a new life there. They don’t want to use what is already in existence’ (p. 272).

Yet Wiśniowski also exhibits a grudging, somewhat ironic respect for the successful machinery of Empire. The Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic settlers ‘seem to be the only successful colonizers’ and set out a template for ‘the only practical way of conquering a new land. They destroy to create’ (p. 272). This perception of Empire is very much to the fore in *Tikera*. The ‘Author’s Preface’ to the novel laments that the ‘Maori race is dying out like the snow in spring, melting away unresistingly’; Wiśniowski writes with ‘tears in my eyes and anxiety in my heart’ as he ‘listen[s] to the death throes of the tribes [...] whose land [...] has been conquered by the pale-faced step-children of New Zealand’ (p. xxvi).

This ambivalence is also evident in Wiśniowski’s attitude towards the New Zealand Wars. As Dennis McEldowney writes, Wiśniowski condemns the war ‘unequivocally as a war of conquest designed to rob Maori both of his land and of his liberty.’ Arguing that the war has been caused by Pakeha land hunger, particularly ‘the new law of confiscation’, the unnamed Polish narrator speaks of the ‘righteousness’ of the Maori ‘cause’ and responds to news of the decimation of European troops by
a Maori ambush with the remark: "I am delighted to hear that it was not the Maoris who were exterminated" (p. 128; p. 58; p. 113). However, while the narrator is happy to share his knowledge of making gunpowder with the Bay of Plenty iwi who capture him in the early part of his travels, his sympathy for the Maori cause never turns into active support. He complains about British injustice and rapaciousness, but takes the expedient and self-serving route of joining the Pioneers and fighting for a cause in which he does not believe.

Significantly, at the end of the novel, all of the sympathetic characters leave New Zealand, the narrator to continue his vagrant adventures and Doctor Abrabat and Tikera to relocate to Martinique. These departures work in the opposite way to the departures in War to the Knife and Henry Ancrum, with the non-British protagonists of Wiśniowski's novel leaving to escape from the 'gaucherie of colonial Anglo-Saxon life'.37 The narrator, already an exile from his Polish homeland which has been absorbed into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, continues his journeying while the 'half-caste' Tikera is banished from her 'own country' because of colonial bigotry towards her race (p. 291).

**Gender and Race**

In contrast to Haggard, 'petticoats' abound in these novels, which have more in common with early nineteenth-century works such as Scott's Waverley (1814) and Fenimore Cooper's Last of the Mohicans (1826) than with the masculine narratives of Haggard, Henty, and Stevenson. Even in Amongst the Maoris, which focuses solely on the adventures of Jack and Hope, 'firm friends and brothers', and excludes any female love interest, there is the maternal presence of Mrs Grant (p. 336). She nurses Jack when he is ill, guides him to Christianity through reading
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aloud from the Bible, and provides a feminine example of domestic industry and cheerful faith to her husband’s Maori flock. Marryat’s Maori regard Pakeha as ‘a superior animal’ and those who have been exposed to a European lifestyle are depicted as beginning ‘to appreciate the advantages of civilisation’ (p. 297; p. 212).

The treatment of gender and race in the work of the other four novelists under consideration is more complex. Once again tension is the leitmotif, this time operating at three overlapping levels. Firstly, there is a similar dichotomy in the relationship of the protagonist with his European love to that of the familiar interplay between imperial rhetoric and the romance of the frontier wilderness. The hero in several of the texts seeks to prove his manhood in the masculine world of adventure, only to be drawn back to hearth and home by a heroine who embodies the values of civilisation and domesticity. Secondly, the apparent initial rejection of the feminine by a protagonist determined to prove his masculinity is undercut by the hero’s dalliance with an indigenous woman, typically a ‘half-caste’. Thirdly, this sexual interest in Maori women sits uneasily with the stereotypical bigoted views of racial hierarchies and anxieties about racial purity expressed by the protagonists.

Once again it is in Boldrewood’s War to the Knife that these tensions are most polarised. The voluptuous ‘half-wild maiden’ Erena Mannering fascinates Roland, with her ‘flashing eyes and mobile face’, ‘rich low-toned voice’, and ‘figure like the huntress Diana’ (pp. 116-7). Dixon writes that Erena ‘stands to Massinger in the same relation as Flora Mac-Ivor to Waverley. Like Scott’s dark heroines, Erena is uninhibited by the codes and conventions of English life, and therefore an object of great sexual interest [...] she is both free and ready for the taking, just as New Zealand itself is ready for colonial possession.’38 Yet, while Erena is a ‘natural aristocrat’, Boldrewood stops short of sanctioning the union between Maori and Englishman.39 Erena sacrifices her life to save Roland’s, clearing the way for his
reunion with the reformed feminist Hypatia Tollemache. Throughout, it is Hypatia who articulates Boldrewood’s anxieties about the possible contamination of the European bloodlines, speaking of the proposed union between Erena and Roland as a ‘death-in-life’ for the Englishman, with the ‘direful consequence’ of his ‘absorption in a different class and race’ (p. 320).

This tension between racial purity and sexual desire, narrative containment and narrative excitement, is symptomatic of Boldrewood’s attitude towards Maori, which oscillates between admiration for a Rousseauian noble savage and a Darwinian atavistic ‘animal’. J.J. Healy writes that Boldrewood was unable to fit the Aboriginal people of his Australian home comfortably into his fictional world of romance. ‘What he wanted was a native civilization which made no heavy claims on either his self or his sensibility. The Maoris in War to the Knife (1899) offered him this opportunity.’40 Boldrewood admires Maori chivalry and hospitality and romanticises pre-European Maori life as in equal parts Edenic and excitingly strife-ridden. His protagonist, Roland, delights in a visit to a pa on the hills above the Waikato River where he observes ‘the noble Maori with his mere-mere, his pah, and his whare-puni, in all his pristine glory unsullied by pakeha companionship’ (p. 102). Boldrewood’s representation of Maori culture has much in common with Scott’s depiction of Highland life in Marmion, particularly evident in Boldrewood’s description of the bravery of Maori warriors at Orakau, which he terms ‘the Maori Flodden’ (p. 292).

Yet, while Boldrewood has respect for Maori as ‘a noble, aristocratic race whose existence is threatened by the intrusion of modern culture’, War to the Knife remains ‘grounded in his belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon type’.41 Like his literary hero Fenimore Cooper, Boldrewood uses the adventure staple of the captivity narrative to warn of the barbaric, animalistic self that lurks beneath the many virtues of the noble savage. Roland’s captor, Ngarara, is described as ‘a study of all the evil passions which degrade the human race to the level of the brute’, while
the Hauhau feature as ‘a company of anthropoids devoid of human speech, and capable of only the purely animal expression of the baser passions’ (p. 394; p. 386). Boldrewood goes even further than the bottom of the Darwinian evolutionary scale in his depiction of the Hauhau militant Kereopa Te Ua (Boldrewood’s version of Kereopa Te Rua), who ‘resembled less a human being than a monstrous demon from the lowest pit of Achera’ (p. 379).

It is within this context that Boldrewood’s attitude towards his ‘half-caste’ heroine can be understood. She has enough European blood to elevate her above her Maori family, but too much Maori blood to make her a fitting wife for an English aristocrat. Her death is thus a sacrifice to propitiate the requirements of the genre and the imperialistic attitudes of her creator. At the level of emotion, however, particularly for a modern reader, her death frustrates and angers in much the same way that Ivanhoe’s marriage to the Saxon Rowena dissatisfies in Scott’s Ivanhoe (1819). All of the emotional investment of the reader has been with the Jewess Rebecca in Scott’s novel and with Erena in Boldrewood’s narrative, for these women are much more complex and fully realised than their one-dimensional rivals, and this sense of connection is disappointed and betrayed by the authors’ insistence on the conventional marriages of racial ‘purity’ and ‘equality’ that conclude the narratives.

Henry Ancrum follows an identical pattern, although in Kirby’s novel the reader’s interest is more invested in the European heroine Edith Mandeville, with the narrative alternating between her life in Auckland and Henry’s military escapades in the Waikato. Consequently, the concluding marriage between Edith and Henry is much more integrated into the overall pattern and energy of the novel. Henry is the only male in the novels under consideration to have a sustained sexual relationship with a Maori woman, once again a ‘half-caste’ with just enough European blood to make her both exotic yet somehow superior.
However, while Henry marries Celia while in captivity, in part to protect her and in part enticed by her charms, she is depicted as rather predatory, the jealous woman who deliberately sabotages her rival Edith’s happiness. Kirby does not articulate his fear of miscegenation directly, but makes his feelings apparent through the narrative action, killing Celia off at the Battle of Gate Pa in a scene reminiscent of *Last of the Mohicans*, thus ensuring that Henry returns to the loving arms of his faithful English rose.

Kirby’s attitude towards Celia is symptomatic of his fictional treatment of Maori. Many of Kirby’s Maori characters behave with dignity and compassion towards Henry when he is captured at Meremere, yet he believes that while European education and example have an improving effect on Maori, making them ‘better informed and more intelligent’, underneath, Maori remain ‘savage, proud, haughty and vindictive’. For Kirby, the soldier, Maori are always the enemy.

European anxieties about miscegenation are articulated more explicitly in Wiśniowski’s *Tikera*, perhaps surprisingly given the author’s largely hostile attitude to imperialism. The narrator is open about his sexual needs, happy to ‘frolic’ with a ‘couple of Maori serving girls’, but he avoids a serious relationship with the ‘half-caste’ Tikera (a ‘dusky Juno’), flirting with her and playing on her emotions in order to facilitate his escape (p. 40; p. 68). For much of the narrative Tikera is criticised by the narrator as the embodiment of what he regards as an endemic ‘half-caste’ ambition to marry a European, or at least acquire a Pakeha lover. The ‘half-caste’ is portrayed as a kind of serial slut: ‘[...] the changeable and permissive nature of these women endures and forgets [...] easily [...] A tear shed after the departure of the first lover will be dried by the caressing phrase from the second’ (p. 114). Although he believes that a liaison with a white man would
save women such as Tikera from a miserable existence of ‘dog-like devotion’ to a brutal, polygamous Maori husband, the narrator recoils from marrying her: ‘who would undertake such a task? Who would dare to defy the mores of colonial society by taking care of this child of Nature [...] Even I, an undoubted radical, would never think that one could love, respect and marry a primitive coloured woman!’ (p. 142; p. 144). Tikera may have ‘the germs of the instincts’ which make European women the ‘equal of angels [...] concealed deep in her heart’, but it is left to Doctor Abrabat to ‘make these seeds grow’ (p. 144).

The conundrum of the novel is whether Wiśniowski endorses or critiques his narrator’s viewpoint. Tikera certainly emerges in many ways as the narrator’s superior, even he acknowledging that she is a ‘treasure’, yet this is the result of her taming her ‘passionate and wilful’ Maori blood through embracing European dress and decorum (p. 292; p. 76). McEldowney concludes that Wiśniowski’s attitude to Maori women is ‘ambivalent’, the narrator reflecting the author’s ‘perplexed conflict between attraction and disgust, between a conviction of white superiority and intimations to the contrary, between intellectual disapproval of uninhibited behaviour and emotional attraction towards it’.44

This ambivalence is also evident in Wiśniowski’s depiction of Maori. Significantly, there are no Maori villains in Tikera; the truly amoral acts in the novel, ranging from abandonment, to theft, to murder, are initiated by European characters, in particular the conniving German traveller Charles von Schaeffer and the selfish English Whittmores. Indeed, in a reversal of the typically hostile Maori and chivalric European paradigm, early in the novel when the narrator is attacked in an Auckland bar he is rescued from his European attackers by a Maori sailor, George Sunray. McEldowney comments approvingly on Wiśniowski’s ‘realistic and rational’ depiction of Maori, which he finds in Wiśniowski’s transformation of two of the recurring motifs of adventure fiction set in New Zealand, the captured European
and the evil tohunga. 45 Far from being threatened and abused, the Polish narrator is treated with kindness and hospitality by the Bay of Plenty iwi who capture him. Likewise, the tohunga is a loyal friend to the narrator, ‘a mild-mannered retired witch-doctor now practising as a physician’.46

Yet, even in Tikera, there remains an unease at certain perceived aspects of Maori culture, in particular cannibalism, polygamy, the smothering of new-born infants, and the drying of human heads as trophies (pp. 116-7). Wiśniowski reminds ‘sentimentalists’ that ‘the worst vices which the Europeans introduce do not in the least compare with the horrors to which even such a noble people as the Maoris shamelessly adhered’ (p. 117). Once again, the prescribed remedy for Maori barbarism is ‘the living example of the Caucasian race which showed them how revolting they were’ (p. 117).

Further evidence that a castigation of the British Empire does not necessarily go hand in hand with a more tolerant acceptance or celebration of racial difference is found in Verne’s Among the Cannibals. The Maori in Among the Cannibals are anthropophagous, barbaric, and brutal, an amalgam of all of the ‘savage’, non-European customs that Verne found most abhorrent and grotesque. This may seem surprising, given Verne’s anti-Empire sentiments, but the seeming contradiction is perhaps explained by the demands of his chosen genre of the extraordinary adventure. Maori are cast as the ultimate threat to the shipwrecked travellers, and as such have a symbolic rather than an anthropological identity, representing all the things Europeans most feared about the racial ‘other’, particularly cannibalism.47 Paganel describes Maori as ‘the most cruel, not to say the most gluttonous of anthropophagi. They devour everything that falls into their hands’ (pp. 37-8). He cites the example of Opotiki Maori who killed missionary Carl Völkner and then ‘drank his blood, and ate his brains’ (p. 38). In an authorial aside Verne does locate the practise of cannibalism within contemporary debates as to whether cannibalism resulted
from ‘superstition’ or ‘necessity’, and argues that Maori eat human flesh out of hunger and a protein deficiency due to a lack of large animal prey (p. 40).

However, when his shipwrecked protagonists are captured by the Taupo chief Kai-Koumou, the cannibalistic orgy that they witness (knowing that it will be their turn to be the ‘food’ on the next day) has little to do with necessity. At a tangi for Kara-Tété six Maori slaves are clubbed to death and then dismembered: ‘the whole mass of natives […] without distinction of age or sex, seized with a bestial fury, threw themselves upon the inanimate remains of the victims […] It was the delirium and rage of tigers, infuriated over their prey’ (p. 105). Verne goes as far as to claim that after the Maori community have eaten and drunk their fill there ‘was nothing human left in them’ (p. 105).

Sexual anxieties about miscegenation are heightened in Verne’s novel by the presence of two European women at the frontier. Lady Glenarvan and Mary are brave, refined, and active participants in the adventures of their male companions. Their key purpose in the narrative, however, is to titillate and horrify European readers through the specific danger they confront when captured by Maori. While their male companions face death, Lady Glenarvan and Mary are threatened with a ‘fate worse than death’: rape and sexual enslavement by their Maori captors. Here Verne gives voice to one of the ultimate European fears: the contamination and despoliation of pure and virtuous European women. Lord Glenarvan shoots Kara-Tété for claiming Lady Glenarvan as his ‘wife’ and then vows to kill his wife rather than see her ‘degraded’ (p. 96). Mary claims the same release from John Mangles: “‘Lord and Lady Glenarvan think […] that a wife may die by the hand of her husband in order to escape from a shameful existence. I think that a woman may also die by the hand of her lover to escape a like fate. John, in this moment of agony, it is useless to conceal that we love one another. May I count upon you as Lady Glenarvan counts upon her husband?’” (p. 101).
European novelists of this period readily entertained the possibility of sexual liaisons and even marriages between European men and Maori women, although typically restoring the protagonist to a European love before the complication of a child. However, relationships between Maori men and European women were not to be countenanced. By including two European women at the centre of the adventure narrative, rather than relegating them to the margins, Verne gives voice to European prejudices and fears. His heroines embody two of the most revered nineteenth-century female archetypes: the wife and the virgin. Lady Glenarvan and Mary may be angels outside of the house, rather than in the house, but their purity and virtue travel with them, keeping their menfolk refined. For them to be sullied is unconscionable and, having tantalised with this horrific possibility, Verne draws back and effects an improbable, but timely, rescue.

Conclusion

The suspicion of inter-racial sexual relationships and the fear of miscegenation present in all of the texts considered here is the ingredient which links the Waikato narratives most closely. Although some of the novels feature European women more prominently than is usual in the late nineteenth-century imperial adventure-romance, and end with the device of the marriage plot, the presence of these women works to reinforce the central message of the genre: that the male protagonist can test his masculinity in the frontier landscape of the new world and on the battlefield, but that he must return to the imperial centre with his gentlemanly values and European racial purity intact.

However, the figure of the ‘half-caste’ heroine in Boldrewood, Kirby and Wiśniowski’s novels complicates this overt message. On the one hand, Erena, Celia, and Tikera
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embody Victorian sexual anxieties, each being the daughter of a European father and Maori mother. They move uneasily between these worlds, reluctant to marry Maori men and fully embrace their mothers’ heritage, but patronised by the European community to which they aspire to belong. The refusal of each author to sanction an enduring relationship between the ‘half-caste’ heroine and the male protagonist works to reinforce European anxieties about miscegenation. On the other hand, the sexual energy, loving hearts, and innate refinement of these Maori women make them more attractive to both reader and protagonist than the staid, one-dimensional virtue of most of their European counterparts. Narrative closure may attempt to contain the desires these women release, but the temptation of the racial other remains powerful.

There is a similar tension at work between the rhetoric of Empire which these novels articulate and the frontier environments into which the adventurers travel in the hope of being liberated from the constraints of civilisation. As is typical of the genre, the Waikato in these narratives is a symbolic space characterised by independence, adventure, and a wild, exotic natural beauty. Most of the protagonists finally leave this world behind them to be reintegrated into either a European world or a colonial environment that is a simulacrum of ‘home’.

Only Wiśniowski’s narrator and Verne’s Paganel remain true to the ideals of the adventurer, continuing to journey to the wild and lonely spaces of the earth. In this respect they highlight one of the central conundrums of the imperial adventure-romance: can a man (or a woman such as Mary Grant) be both an adventurer, which necessitates a perpetual departure from the known and familiar in search of places and people untainted by modernity, and an agent of Empire, which requires the transportation of European culture into the new world in order to transform the wilderness? The Waikato texts suggest that the answer is no. Either the adventure is finite, ending with a return
to the point of origin, or it is perpetual, making the adventurer an eternal exile.

Notes

1 Alfred Lyall, ‘Novels of Adventure and Manners’, Quarterly Review, 179 (1894), 532-49 (p. 532).
2 Lyall, pp. 537, 533, and 545.
7 Emilia Marryat also wrote: Temper (1854), Henry Lyle (1856), The Early Station in Life (1867), Paul Howard’s Captivity and Why He Escaped (1876), The Stolen Cherries, or Tell the Truth at Once (1869), The Sea-Side Home and the Smugglers’ Cave (1875). Two of her sisters were
also novelists: Augusta Marryat wrote adventure fiction, such as *Left to Themselves: A Boy’s Adventure in Australia* (1878); Florence Marryat wrote over 70 novels, many of them focusing on themes of alcoholism and marital cruelty, such as *Love’s Conflict* (1865).


Phillips, p. 69. The novels of G.A. Henty, who wrote about New Zealand (although not the Waikato) in *Maori and Settler* (1890), are representative of the genre. Novels such as *With Clive in India* (1896) and *With Kitchener in the Soudan* (1903) plunge the reader into violent and exciting episodes of British expansion in which the central fictional character is inspired by the patriotic heroism of an historical figure.

Jolly, p. 385.

Richardson, pp. 21 and 123.

Phillips, p. 82.


Low, pp. 33-34.


Richardson, pp. 125 and 16-17.

Richardson, p. 17.
Phillips, p. 58.
22 Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, in Fictions of Empire, ed. by John Kucich, p. 252.
23 Rolf Boldrewood, War to the Knife, or, Tangata Maori (London: Macmillan, 1899), p. 91.
24 Dixon, p. 54.
27 Kirby, 1, p. 6.
28 Marryat, p. 324.
30 Verne, p. 56.
32 Phillips, pp. 117 and 137.
33 Phillips, p. 137.
36 McEldowney, pp. xvii-xviii.
37 McEldowney, p. xix.
38 Dixon, p. 55.
39 Dixon, p. 55.
41 Dixon, pp. 54-55.
42 Kirby, 1, p. 94.
43 Kirby, 1, p. 224.
44 McEldowney, pp. xvii-xviii.
45 McEldowney, p. v.
46 McEldowney, p. xvii.
47 This association of Maori with cannibalism is coupled with reference to a Maori woman following her husband to the grave in a ceremony reminiscent of Indian suttee (Verne, p. 103).