(Anti?) Colonial Women Writing War

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the wartime literature of Sarah Selwyn, Mary Ann Martin, and Caroline Abraham, all wives of prominent church and government men in colonial Aotearoa/New Zealand. Along with their husbands these women became leading participants in the "pamphlet war" surrounding the justice and legality of the colonial government's survey and confiscation of Māori land at Taranaki, c. 1850-1860. I analyze the socio-spatial frameworks of these colonial women, linking them with their protest narratives of the Taranaki confiscations and ensuing war. The anti-colonial position articulated by these women must be viewed within the context of ideological constraints on women's participation in public life, but also within the context of expanded social and spatial boundaries of such high-placed colonials, the gendered space of the episcopal residences during wartime, the women's networks of communication, and their material and discursive links to public arguments taking place in England over colonial conflicts.

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Sarah Selwyn, wife of Aotearoa/New Zealand's first Anglican bishop, George Selwyn, made public her opposition to the Crown government's 1861 Taranaki land confiscation through publication of her letters in Extracts of Letters from New Zealand on the War Question (1861). The 106-page Extracts also contained protest letters of Sarah's close friends Mary Ann Martin and Caroline Abraham, also wives of prominent men — William Martin, the colony's first chief justice, and Charles Abraham, first bishop of Wellington. These women and their husbands, through the Extracts and several other written publications, including William Martin's well publicized The Taranaki Question (1860), participated in what became known as the "pamphlet war" surrounding the Taranaki confiscation and war (Starke, 1986:37; Gibbons, 1998:44). The Martins, Selwyns, and Abrahams were among the most vocal public figures opposed to the government's actions, but formal public statements were made on either side of the controversy by Crown representatives, other white settlers, and prominent Māori, including tribal leaders, missionaries, government officials, landowners, and the news press, in the colony as well as in England.

The material and discursive events surrounding the Taranaki conflict have been well rehearsed (e.g., Belich, 1986; Waitangi Tribunal, 1996; Orange, 1987). Responding to settlers' pressure for land, the government surveyed and then enforced the purchase of land at Waitara, which George Selwyn and his friends argued went against the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. They argued that the proposed government action was based on the (British) principle of individual ownership of land title rather than the communal system of Māori land tenure recognized in the Treaty. The Crown's actions at Taranaki in 1855-1860 brought Māori into open confrontation with British settlers and the Crown, and arguably began the land wars of the 1860s (Starke, 1986:43). After the government enforced the land purchase, fighting broke out between Taranaki Māori and British troops in early 1860.

The events and discourses precipitating and then surrounding the Taranaki War lend themselves to an analysis of how the socio-spatial frameworks of colonial white women during wartime created a particular discursive space through which they expressed their opinions. In the discussion that follows I examine the writings of Sarah Selwyn, Mary Martin, and Caroline Abraham, three prominent British colonial women who became leading spokespersons, especially back in England, against what
they saw as the blind greed of covetous white settlers, and an inept and corrupt colonial government.

Critical scholarship on these writers is limited, though excerpts of their works appear often in anthologies of colonial texts (see Laing and Coleman, 1998; Browne-Wilkinson, 1983; Drummond, 1960; Hankin, 1981). This research moves the study of these women’s writings into a geographical arena concerned with gendered space and the production of colonial discourses (e.g., after Blunt and Rose, 1994). My goal is simply to suggest some links between social-spatial practices in the colonies – in this case, during the tumultuous political and military scene at Taranaki – and narratives produced about them. It will come as no surprise that the dichotomous ‘colonizer-colonized’ model fails to capture the complex, multi-layered nature of the dominations and resistances played out within colonial Aotearoa/New Zealand. In the discussion that follows, I engage those complex relations by problematizing the ways in which Victorian bourgeois gender relations intersected with particular spatial configurations of high placed church and government men and their wives in 19th century Aotearoa/New Zealand during the land wars period. Thus this research demonstrates more generally that discourses of colonization must be viewed as products of very specific social spaces and discursive practices available to the people creating them.

The “Three Graces”

Biographical details on these colonial women can be found in Dictionary of New Zealand Biography (1990:1-2, 275-79, 387-89), Browne-Wilkinson (1983), Macdonald et al. (1991:1-2, 424-28, 595-99), Drummond (1960:97-100, 139-42), Starke (1986), and Porter (1986). The Selwyns, Martins, and Abrahams all had familial ties to church and government administration in England, and while the men had also been classmates, Sarah Selwyn and Caroline Abraham were first cousins. Their initial connection to Aotearoa/New Zealand was made when George Selwyn accepted the Archbishop of Canterbury’s offer to become the first Anglican bishop there. Selwyn then encouraged his Cambridge friend William Martin to apply for the position of chief justice, to which Martin was appointed. Thus George and Sarah Selwyn and William and Mary Martin all voyaged to the distant colony in 1841-1842. Almost a decade later, in 1850, Charles and Caroline Abraham joined them, also at the encouragement of George Selwyn, in order that Charles might assist Selwyn in the establishment of an Anglican theological seminary, St. John’s College, in Auckland.

Martin, and Caroline Abraham became prominent figures in Aotearoa/New Zealand colonial society. They were known collectively as the “three graces” who kept each other’s company and council during their husbands’ long absences (Macdonald et al., 1991:1, 424). Images of the three women together punctuate the colonial literature (see Figure 1). Like their husbands, these women’s missionary zeal lay in the Christianization and education of Māori. The women’s missionary activity took several forms. Although both Sarah Selwyn and Mary Martin sometimes accompanied their husbands on their journeys throughout the colony (and Mary Martin’s 1884 book Our Māoris discusses these in some detail), they as well as Caroline Abraham focused much of their missionary work at home (Drummond, 1960; Porter, 1986; Starke, 1986; Macdonald et al., 1991).

Like many colonial women who worked within strongly racialized and hierarchical patterns of relationship with indigenous men and women (Tinker, 1998:220; Rowbotham 1998:248; Ramusack, 1990:319-20), Sarah Selwyn became known by local Māori as “Mother Bishop” or Mata Pihopa. With the help of domestic servants and other faculty, she kept the bishopratic running during George’s absences, sometimes for months at a time, and gave birth to two sons (Starke, 1986, 1991; Brown-Wilkinson, 1983:51-53; Selwyn, 1961). She supervised and trained young married Māori couples and their children at St. John’s, and supervised a primary school for children of local working people. With Mary Martin she compiled reading books for the schools, and proof read translations of the Bible and Māori grammar books (Starke, 1991, 1986:41; Selwyn, 1961). Caroline Abraham likewise assisted at St. John’s College and acted as helper to her husband when he took up his own bishopratic in Wellington in 1859. However she is primarily

As women born into educated, clerical families in England and as wives of prominent men in the colonies, Sarah Selwyn, Mary

Figure 1: ‘The Three Graces’, from left Caroline Abraham, Mary Martin, and Sarah Selwyn, c. 1865.
remembered for her watercolor paintings of colonial missionary landscapes (Porter, 1991a, 1986; Browne-Wilkinson, 1983). Kirker (1990:1) regards her as a watercolorist of "considerable artistic talent" and her panorama of St. John's College, painted in 1851, is one among her paintings and sketches held today at the Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland Public Library, and Alexander Turnbull Library.1

Among the "three graces," Mary Martin — perhaps both because she received a formal education and remained childless — became the most active missionary in her own right. With the help of servants she kept an "open house" for clergy and missionary families at her home in Judge's Bay (Tauranga), near St. John's College, but her primary commitment lay in the hospital she opened for Māori (Martin, 1884:73-90; Porter, 1991b, 1986; Dalziel, 1990; Drummond, 1960). Prior to the outbreak of war, the hospital thrived. Martin combined use of the Māori language and an informal regime of simple remedies, — "good food, rest, herbal poultices, fresh air, and prayers" — in her healing techniques. While her associates accomplished much of the actual medical work, Martin advised, raised funds, and provided spiritual counsel (Dalziel, 1990:275). Martin attributed her hospital's success, "above all [to] the fact we could talk Maori" (1884:74). She also supported the clergy in establishing educational training institutions for young Māori men and women, including training and education of young girls at St. Stephen's School for Native Girls and in her own home (Drummond, 1960:141; Martin, 1884; Dalziel, 1990:275).2

The Taranaki scene and women's voices on war

It was at Taranaki, in the west-central region of the North Island, that Governor Browne claimed to have purchased 75,370 acres in nine blocks extending out from New Plymouth, between 1844 and 1859. These purchases, comprising some of the most valuable Taranaki land, and attempts to include others, led to the war in Taranaki. The complex background to these land sales and issues has been extensively detailed and debated elsewhere (see Martin, 1860; Waitangi Tribunal, 1996: chapter 2; Belich, 1986; Orange, 1987). The eventual catalyst for war was the governor's decision to purchase a block of land at Waitara in contravention of a tapu (prohibition) of such sales. The land was offered by Teira, a local chief, despite the fact that Wiremu Kingi Te Rangitake, senior chief of the Te Atiawa tribe, was living there at the time. As senior chief of the tribe, Wiremu Kingi had the right to veto the land sale, and in accordance with the tapu on sales he did so. Governor Browne, however, refused to acknowledge both the tapu and the veto and attempted to purchase the land at Waitara. As a result, fighting broke out between Te Atiawa Māori and British troops (Martin, 1860; Belich, 1986; Orange, 1987).

For their part in the "pamphlet war" that erupted over the justice and legality of events at Taranaki, the Selwyns, Abrahams, and Martins wrote against the actions of Governor Browne and the land-hungry settlers. Of course, the six also shared a paternalistic, humanitarian vision for establishing the British government and the Anglican Church in Aotearoa/New Zealand; they shared in the "moral imperatives" of colonization that entailed Christianization, 'civilisation', and education of Māori. Their active opposition to the government’s political and military actions at Taranaki collectively demonstrates the complexity, ambivalence, and multi-dimensionality of colonial discourses in settler societies.3

While many government officials criticized George Selwyn and his church friends for inappropriately extending their religious sphere into politics and government (Selwyn, 1961:65; Limbrick, 1990:389; Browne-Wilkinson, 1983:102-11), the women’s public statements against the government’s actions, especially Sarah Selwyn’s, might be seen as yet more transgressive. If clergy were supposed to remain aloof from politics, clergy’s wives all the more so. Yet these women were all involved in the issues of their husbands’ careers, and despite their attempts to play down their own influence (below), all three became public, outspoken critics of the government.

As previously noted, the principal venue for the women’s political voices was the Extracts of Letters from New Zealand on the War Question (1861). The letters contained in this document were written to family members and friends in England (such as Mary Ann and Louise Palmer, Caroline Abraham’s sisters), or between Sarah in Auckland and Caroline in Wellington. The writers intended and "knew the information would be made available to influential people in England" (Starke, 1991:597). In addition to news press correspondence and pastoral letters, the Extracts contain five letters written by Sarah Selwyn (dated May, August, and October of 1860), four by Mary Martin (also dated May, August, and October 1860), and two by Caroline Abraham (dated October and April 1860). Sarah Selwyn’s Reminiscences (1961), numerous letters and reprintings of letters from archival sources (e.g., Porter, 1986; Starke, 1986; Browne-Wilkinson, 1983; Tucker, 1879), and to a lesser extent, Mary Martin’s Our Maoris (1884), provide further elaboration of the women’s views on the events at Taranaki.

In a recent critical study of the writings of Sarah Selwyn and Mary Ann Martin, Laing and Coleman (1998) acknowledge that these women were both agents of colonization and its critics. Clearly, in many of their statements they and Caroline Abraham asserted that the actions of the Crown, the governor, his troops, and other white settlers at Taranaki were morally repugnant, driven by greed, and in fact illegal according to Britain’s own imported law. Against such forthright assertions the women began their letters with statements that downplayed the significance of their texts. Sarah Selwyn wrote that she "[did] not intend a pamphlet, leaving that to my betters" (1861:21). Mary Martin stated that, "I trust I am not writing politics or speaking evil of the powers that be" (1861:7; also see Selwyn, 1961:56; Martin, 1884:165).
Perhaps the women presented themselves as such 'proper' feminine subjects, ostensibly out of their depth in the public practice of politics, precisely to make their movement into that arena seem less transgressive to their readers.

Contrary to her stated hopes that she was not "writing politics," Mary Martin, in one of her Extracts letters, wrote that, "One cannot but be stirred up when we hear such malignant desires expressed by settlers. Many speak quite easily about a possible war of extermination, as if a necessity and doom even drove to this result, instead of the selfish passions of men" (1861:7). In a later letter she described what she saw as the deeply moral issues at stake at Taranaki:

The state of Taranaki alone is bad enough to sadden every thoughtful heart. That beautiful country laid waste, hundreds ruined, women and children sent off... these physical evils might well trouble us, and make a vigorous policy not very popular. But as you may well believe there are much deeper moral evils. Bitter relentless desire on the part of many of the settlers to see the natives exterminated, suspicion in the native mind, mistrust of the British government, not to speak of the general unsettlement of the people from their ordinary quiet avocations. The worst of it all is, the whole story grows worse and worse the more one sees into it (1861:18-19).

Sarah Selwyn's views on Taranaki reached the same conclusions. In her Extracts letter of May 1860 she asserted that the war was begun needlessly, and "begun in wrong on our parts" (1861:8). In a later letter she complained that the government had rushed into a bloody quarrel without trying all other methods of settling the dispute first; assuming that the natives are rebels before they have done one single thing to prove themselves to be so, and denying them the ordinary privileges of British subjects, which the Treaty of Waitangi declares them to be ... Oh! we are sinking so low in the eyes of the Maories. Where is our good faith? Where our assurances that the Queen would never do them wrong? ... it goes to our hearts to see a noble race of people stigmatized as rebels, and driven to desperation, by the means of those who are at the same time lowering their own people in their eyes (1861:23-26).

Caroline Abraham similarly denounced the British actions at Taranaki to her readers back in England. "So short-sighted," she wrote,

is the policy of the grasping and covetous Settlers, who would not rest without the addition of Waitara to their settlement; of course in this case the innocent suffer with if not for the guilty, and the many with the few, yet the language held by the press, without any remark or remonstrance on the part of the English, quite appalls [sic] one, showing as it does the spirit of the English towards other races (1861:1).

The views expressed in these passages sit in direct opposition to Crown's goals in the colony. In these and other public statements, Sarah Selwyn, Mary Ann Martin, and Caroline Abraham tended to state much the same arguments as their husbands, and in fact they quoted their husbands at length in their letters. An entire letter of Caroline's in the Extracts (1861:30-31), for instance, quotes a letter written by Judge Martin to her husband Charles, instead of containing Caroline's 'own comments on the matter.' Caroline attempted to summarize the actions of the governor from the point of view of the three women's husbands. In general all of the women's Extracts letters reiterate their husbands' arguments, which centered on the illegality of the land sales, the need to avoid posing the controversy as a challenge to the Queen's sovereignty, the need for national versus local control over the conflict, and as against home support for the war (also see, for instance, Selwyn, 1861:22).

One might argue, as Jenny Coleman does (1999), that these women entered public debates about Taranaki simply in defense of their husbands' reputations, in their roles as "good wives." Governor Browne had censured (by imputation) William Martin for "meddling" in politics in Taranaki (Porter, 1991b:426). For his part Bishop Selwyn had attempted to mediate at Taranaki, at the governor's suggestion, though with an outcome the governor rejected. Selwyn and Charles Abraham had walked to Taranaki (Abraham, 1856), where Selwyn preached against settler covetousness of Māori land. His sermons led to heated attacks in the local press, to which he responded in a pastoral letter (Limbrick, 1990:389; Extracts, 1861). He was later "hooted in the streets of New Plymouth (Browne-Wilkinson, 1983:104; Selwyn, 1961:63). In one of her letters Sarah worried that her husband was misunderstood: "... the warm cooperation and ready sympathy always at hand are so great a support to my dear Husband who has for the most part been little understood and less supported" (Letters from Bishop Selwyn and Others, vol. 4).

Thus it could be argued that in many ways these women occupied a social space of acceptable bourgeois femininity; they entered the public sphere of politics simply in the cause of defending their husbands' reputations. In that sense the women's writings about the war reflected and reinforced contemporary ideologies about the specific ways in which middle- or upper-class women might take on public roles, that is, as 'public mothers', duty-bound caretakers of husbands and children in the home extended outward. While this ideological explanation helps contextualize the women's participation in public debates about the Taranaki conflict, it raises other questions about how these colonial women materially encountered the war at Taranaki and thus came to write about it in specific ways.

**Social space and the production of colonial discourses**

The multi-faceted and multi-positioned figure of the Victorian 'Englishwoman abroad' has received considerable attention in recent years from geographers, historians, literary critics, and others. Many scholars have been concerned with the identity politics of colonial settler societies, which often materially and discursively placed white colonial women within the domestic sphere, primarily
with the job of articulating with and maintaining proper British households in the colonies (e.g., Strobel, 1991; Chaudhuri and Strobel, 1992). The extent to which many colonial women served as scapegoats for racist practices in the colonies has drawn much attention, especially over the role of memsahibs in British colonial India (e.g., Sharpe, 1993; Ware, 1992).

Geographers and others sensitive to issues of spatiality have been concerned with linking the discourses of colonization with the social-spatial practices of colonial life, especially focusing on mobility and spatial constraint. Some scholars have been concerned to show that colonial white women occupied the position of "honorary men" in the colonies; by virtue of their whiteness they became aligned with the ruling power and thus reconfigured their spatial frameworks in the colonies (e.g., Blunt and Rose, 1994). Other work has focused on the relative status of colonial women "at home" versus "away," especially in the ways in which travel across space altered and fragmented the identities of women writers as well as those 'others' represented in their texts (e.g., Blunt, 1994; Morin, 1998, 1999). Still other work has been more concerned with the nature of gendered spaces themselves in the colonies. Mills (1996), for instance, has challenged the fixity of colonial spatial boundaries in British India by showing the ways that British men and women and indigenous women maneuvered among differently gendered spaces, including transgressing the boundaries of women's "confined" spaces. In colonial Aotearoa/New Zealand, Laing and Coleman (1998:6) have asserted that colonial missionary communities maintained less rigid sexual divisions between the public and private spheres for women than those of home. Laing and Coleman do not elaborate on why this may have been the case, however, and therefore I offer some suggestions.

One might first of all argue that, with the power structures of both the Anglican Church and English law behind them, women such as Sarah Selwyn and Mary Martin were able to reconfigure their social and spatial boundaries beyond the private domestic sphere of other bourgeois white women. By contrast, as Rowbotham (1998:255-56) argues, British women married to missionaries in the later 19th century India were primarily expected to fulfill their duties as wives and mothers and stay close to home. While the men's roles were to travel long distances to spread the Gospel to as many people as possible, the women were not expected to do such itinerating. Instead, their primary responsibilities lay in their own private homes, while they served as 'adjunct' missionaries through interaction in daily life with the local people.

Rowbotham's analysis raises questions about the class structure of various missionary communities, as well as the changing class structure of colonial societies in which they were working. The Selwyns and their friends were certainly not 'typical' missionaries in that they were high placed professionals, at home and in Aotearoa/New Zealand, where they would become part of the emerging upper class. As women with close ties to high-level Anglican Church and government operation in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Sarah Selwyn, Caroline Abraham, and Mary Martin thus had opportunities to participate in public life beyond home. The women occasionally traveled with their husbands throughout the colony and beyond, in these professional capacities (see Selwyn, 1961; Martin, 1884; Browne-Wilkinson, 1983). All three of the women suffered from ill health, which predicated the types and extent of their mobility. Travel for Mary Martin, for instance, was only made possible because she was carried (kauhoe'd) by Māori in litters or canoes (Drummond, 1960:141; Martin, 1884:29). At any rate, their professional connections and their own travels allowed them access to a public, discursive space that included but also extended beyond the domestic sphere.

Identifying the boundaries of the "domestic sphere" itself is highly problematical when it comes to colonial "mission" life in Aotearoa/New Zealand, as are attempts to delineate boundaries between the so-called public and private spheres of everyday activity. Among 19th century missionary communities in general the boundaries between the two were porous, as both men and women worked and lived at the missions and schools. Though George Selwyn took long journeys throughout the colony without his wife, establishing churches and schools and so forth, the center of his and Charles Abraham's work were their episcopal residences; they both lived and worked at their bishoprics in Waimate, Auckland, and Wellington (Browne-Wilkinson, 1983:102). Furthermore, the women held powerful "public" positions within the missions, including running them during the men's absences. Sarah Selwyn noted, for instance, that when George was away, the governor referred to her for advice on church matters (Letters from Bishop Selwyn and Others, vol. 3).

While the dichotomous logic of public and private did not hold for missionary life in general, with men and women often occupying the same spaces and sometimes the same work, when it came to wartime Taranaki the women's and men's spatial frameworks diverged considerably. While it might be an exaggeration to portray the women's lives as "confined" during wartime - these women's episcopal residences were, after all, in the colonial towns of Auckland and Wellington - they in fact did experience the war quite removed from it, largely from the limited confines of the mission/home. The men, on the other hand, experienced the exigencies of war at a number of scales, including many that were "firsthand." Charles Abraham and Bishop Selwyn traveled to Taranaki in attempts to settle the dispute (Abraham, 1856); William Martin and Selwyn met with local Māori in their villages; and the two were also involved in negotiations at a number of governmental ministries and other sites, including discussing strategies at the home of the governor (Browne-Wilkinson, 1983:104).

In comparison to their husbands, then, the women had less direct access to the events they were eventually to write about in their letters and correspondences. While the women accompanied their husbands on some of their journeys, they did not travel around the colony during the
war, but instead spent many weeks and months at home. (Sarah did, however, visit her sons in England during this period.) In Our Maoris (1884:150-51), Mary Martin reflected on the women's space of the mission during the war period:

In 1860, to our great sorrow, the war began at Taranaki. It was spoken of at first as a local disturbance soon to be quelled, but it was destined like a bush fire to run on, now burning fiercely, now slowly smouldering over the face of the country. However, at that time things were all quiet and prosperous in our neighborhood... It was a happy time, though day by day we were occupied with the homely details of Mission work... Often there were anxious times of nursing. It was pleasant to gather together in the large hall for evening prayers, and to know that, while the war was raging in the South between the two races, this faithful band was being trained to go forth to help and teach their people.

At St. John's College, the hospital, and in their own homes, the women interacted daily with one another, other staff, as well as with Māori who had come to the mission, adopted the Christian model, and who were in fact studying for their priesthood. Physically removed from the war zone, the women received information about it chiefly from their husbands, and from other 'messengers'. Mary Martin wrote of hearing about the status of the war on her way to church, from Governor Browne's wife (1861:15). She also noted that the governor visited the Martin's home seeking her husband's advice, and of him being 'in constant communication with my husband' (1861:15). "Charles tells me," "it is rumoured that," and other similar statements attest to the networks of information into which the women were tied and thus the manner in which the war entered their lives — and even if such statements also, perhaps strategically, obscured their sources of information.

Both the women's relative detachment from Taranaki and their sources of information about it help explain why much of the content of their letters echoed their husband's views. And yet, the women also provided their own information about the war, chiefly about its effects on their Auckland mission. While Mary Martin portrayed herself as contented to be removed from the war (cf. 1884:150-51), in other (later) statements she appears despondent over the closing of her hospital due to its effects (1884:163). Sarah Selwyn wrote of her house becoming a refuge for "panic stricken [white] people, whenever an ugly rumour of invading Māoris (wholly unfounded) arose" (1961:63). The spaces of the war and its effects, then, were clearly not confined to the areas of fighting or deal-making. In the end, then, the women's limited access to Taranaki became textualized as a repetition of their husbands' views on the war, yet it also provided them a context within which to discuss the effects of the war at home.

Moreover, the women's writings emerge in the last analysis as more than re-presentations of their husbands' arguments: they presented their arguments in a different manner, and ultimately, to a different audience. The women's writings about the war primarily took the form of letters to people in England, while their husbands' documentation appeared in other venues, including published journals (Abraham, 1856), Selwyn's pastoral letters to colonial Anglican communities (e.g., in Extracts, 1861), and published legal documentation (The Taranaki Question, 1860; also see Selwyn and Martin, 1847). As Starke notes (1991:597), the women intended and knew the information they were providing "would be made available to influential people in England." At the time of their letter writing turbulent debates arose in London over the Waitara land purchase and funding of the war. The governor's reports and opinions, and the opposing viewpoints of George Selwyn and William Martin, were heard in Parliament and published in the British press, alongside disparaging comments about them and the "savage" Māori (Browne-Wilkinson, 1983:108-22, 132; Martin, 1861:35). Both George and William received censure in The Times, the House of Commons, and House of Lords (and resulting from a movement led by, among others, Lord Lyttelton, who himself had invested in the New Zealand [land] Company) (Browne-Wilkinson, 1983:122).

The women's audiences in England were those with considerable capacity to support or withhold support of the war efforts in the colony, with funds or troops or both. Sarah argued, to add just one final example, that the issue was being falsely misconstrued in the colony as a question against the Queen's sovereignty, rather than as the land issue she believed it to be; thus she was primarily concerned to attempt to clarify under what terms home support should appear (1861:12). Importantly, these and other arguments were posed to readers back home in England, perhaps in this way underscoring the women's strong connections to their distant homes to which they would ultimately return (see notes 1 and 2), and where the Selwyn sons were already attending school.

Conclusion

While Sarah Selwyn, Mary Ann Martin, and Caroline Abraham were outspoken critics of one aspect of British colonization, they were obviously agents of it in others. These women opposed the colonial government and settlers on many fronts, yet certainly in their own ways they were effective colonizers. Their Christian mission, and especially their dedication to educating Māori after an English model, helped to "entrench" education as an important institution for the colonization of Māori (Laing and Coleman, 1998:11). These women learned and valued Māori language — though perhaps not as Laing and Coleman (1998:4) suggest, as a means of helping Māori resist cultural assimilation — but rather to help speed it up. The close links demonstrated here among elite women's social spaces, especially those revolving around the centers of Anglican missionary activity, and the many contingencies working upon the production and reception of texts involved in the Taranaki conflict, all help to bring into focus the processes by which one set of colonial relationships came to be moderated within Aotearoa/New Zealand.
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'The Three Graces' photograph was provided courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa. Reference Number C- 10639-1/2.

Notes

1 The Selwyns finally returned to England in 1868, and the Abrahams in 1870.ollections of letters written from and to Caroline Abraham, Sarah Selwyn, and Mary Martin are held in manuscript form at several sites, including the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington (see Mead et al., 1988). Excerpts of many of them have been published in biographical works and/or anthologies (e.g., Browne Wilkinson, 1985; Sturke, 1986; Porter, 1986; Letters from Bishop Selwyn and Others 1842-1867; Drummond, 1960). Sarah Selwyn's memoirs, written in 1892 at age 83, were compiled from her diary and letters written in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Manuscript copies were typed and distributed as Reminiscences of Mrs. S.H. Selwyn 1809-1867 beginning about 1928.

2 Mary Martin also compiled her memoirs near the end of her life. The Martins returned to England in 1874, where Mary wrote her book, Our Maoris, posthumously published in 1884. The book covers her 34 years' residence in the colony, including observations about colonial life, the effects of the wars, her hospital, and Maori schools. Martin also published books on scripture history, and a recipe book of remedies, foods, and beverages (1869).

3 While they were actively opposed to the events at Taranaki, Bishop Selwyn and other members of the 'philio-Maori' group of missionaries and philanthropists were later to support the government's actions in the Waikato Wars two years later (see Limbrick, 1990:389; Belich, 1986:328).

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