

Journal of Australian Colonial History

A Refereed Journal

ISSN 1441-0370

Department of Archaeology, Classics and History
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia

<http://www.une.edu.au/jach/>

Ian Duffield, "'Haul away the anchor girls': Charlotte Badger, tall stories and the pirates of the 'bad ship Venus'", *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 7, 2005, pp. 35-64.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

This material has been reproduced and communicated to you by the University of New England. You may download, display, print and reproduce this material in unaltered form only for personal, non-commercial use only, for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved. Enquiries should be made to the Editor.

'Haul away the anchor girls': Charlotte Badger, tall stories and the pirates of the 'bad ship *Venus*'

Ian Duffield
University of Edinburgh

So haul away the anchor girls!
Sail from this day,
Dance the mighty hornpipe
Into the blue.¹

Nowadays, Tasmania exemplifies heritage initiative. While aiming to benefit Tasmanians culturally, the boost to heritage tourism drives the process. Convict-site tourism began in Tasmania in the late 1870s, and today tourists flock to encounter the convict past at now tranquil historic sites. Collateral merchandise proliferates and sells, including two recent CDs, one containing the 'Ballad of Charlotte Badger' quoted above.² Convict heritage is no longer taboo — it never really was, when moneymaking beckoned.³

Textually, the 'Ballad of Charlotte Badger' is convict-centred. It naturally has imagined content but recalls actual events — the piratical seizure of the brig *Venus* in 1806, as it lay at anchor in Port Dalrymple on the northern coast of Tasmania. Charlotte Badger, an English convict, was among these pirates. Another, Catherine or Kitty Hagerty (variously spelled), was an Irish convict, pardoned in 1800, seemingly reconvicted by 1806. Benjamin Kelly, the American first mate, became Hagerty's lover and turned pirate captain. Discursively, Kelly and

¹ 'Ballad of Charlotte Badger', track 7 on disk VB29305, V. Brophy, *Between the Moon and the Sun*, 2004.

² *Between the Moon and the Sun*, 2004; Rowlie Walker and Jim Tracey, 'Mutiny on Venus', Ontrac performance, November 2003.

³ D. Young, *Making Crime Pay: The Evolution of Convict Tourism in Tasmania*, Hobart, 1996, chs. 2 and 3. For Tasmanian visitor arrival statistics see Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Statistics – Tasmania*, 'Tourism Overview' <www.abs.gov.au>. Of 703,100 visitors in 2002-3, 52.6% came for leisure/tourism purposes. To illustrate collateral merchandise, take two items sold at the Port Arthur Historical Site. H. Maxwell-Stewart and S. Hood, *Pack of Thieves? 52 Port Arthur Lives*, Port Arthur, 2001, has sold over 5000 copies. Sales remain brisk. An associated pack of cards, embellished with illustrations of the book's 52 convicts, has also sold well.

Hagerty stand beside Charlotte as heroic protagonists. Samuel Rodman Chase, also an American and the brig's legitimate captain,⁴ is the cruel villain who gets his come-uppance:

He whipped both females at the mast,
Scarred their naked skins,
For the pity of these women
Began the mutiny.⁵

The 'Ballad of Charlotte Badger' had its genesis at workshop sessions in 2001, conducted by Vince Brophy, for George Town and district residents. George Town and District Historical Society initiated the ensuing CD project with funding from the local Council, its release being part of the town's 2003-4 bicentennial celebrations.⁶ No rows resulted.

The brand new 'Ballad of Charlotte Badger' has a hidden genealogy in seventeenth to nineteenth century ballads about seafaring women, often featuring gender transgression.⁷ In that genre, women pirates took the biscuit. If land folk preferred unruly Jack — or Jill — Tar, especially if piratical, to be safely afar,⁸ their thirst for tall stories and lively ballads of life afloat constituted a market for them in performance and print. Some people aboard the *Venus* would have known such songs. They were embedded in the Atlantic world's popular culture, afloat and ashore. The *Venus* pirates were almost all from that world.

⁴ See 'Ship News' (name given as Chace), *Sydney Advertiser And New South Wales Gazette* (SG), 30 March 1806, p. 4. The obituary of his son, also called Samuel Rodman Chace (a variant found elsewhere too), in the *Hobart Mercury*, 12 November 1880, p. 1, gives Chase senior's birthplace as Newbern, North Carolina.

⁵ 'Ballad of Charlotte Badger'.

⁶ Notes to *Between the Moon and the Sun*.

⁷ D. Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850*, Cambridge, 1989; and "'Rambling Female Sailors": the rise and fall of the seafaring heroine', *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, June 1992, pp. 179-94.

⁸ There were exceptions. A *black* Jack became popular in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century London and hinterland, through astute street performance of popular patriotic maritime themes. I. Land, 'Bread and Arsenic: Citizenship from the Bottom Up in Georgian London', forthcoming in *Journal of Social History*, September 2005. For Atlantic black seamen, see W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*, London, 1997; I. Duffield, "'I asked How the Vessel Could Go": the Contradictory Experiences of African and African Diaspora Mariners and Port Workers in Britain, c. 1750-1850', in A. Kershen, (ed.), *Language, Labour and Migration*, Aldershot, 2000, pp. 121-45.

In 2003 across the Tamar from George Town another *Venus* ballad, 'Mutiny on Venus', appeared on CD. Captain Chase now became the focus, as hapless victim. Kelly and two other pirates, William Evans and Richard Thompson — neither a convict — are implicitly the pirate ringleaders.⁹ This ballad never barracks for the pirates and airbrushes away the *four* transported persons involved (including two men).¹⁰ Both ballads, however, reveal conflicting trends in how Tasmanians understand the past. The 'Ballad of Charlotte Badger' transmutes the convict pirate women into a contemporary culture-commerce asset. 'Mutiny on Venus', following older Australian (including Tasmanian) practice, consigns such 'nasty sluts' (and convicts generally) into oblivion.¹¹ The yawning cultural space between the texts *predicates* dissonant cultural effects.

Hugh Anderson has observed that colonial Australia's outlaw ballads operate a 'system of symbols' rather than reflect 'historical facts'.¹² Hence, both *positive* and *negative* evaluation of outlaw ballads in terms of factual accuracy, is barren historical theory and practice. The same applies to the recent *Venus* ballads. Seal analyses Australian outlaw ballads and tales alongside British and North American ones:¹³ for example, the cycle relating what 'everybody' knows as the 'true' history of 'Dick Turpin'. This appealing figure is largely fictional, his mare Black Bess entirely so, while Palmer, the original of 'Turpin', featured in a violently sadistic house-robbery gang.¹⁴ Nevertheless, early 'Turpin' ballads celebrated a heroic outlaw while Victorian ones

⁹ R. Walker and J. Tracey, 'Mutiny on Venus', Ontrac performance, November 2003. I am grateful to Hamish Maxwell-Stewart for sending me text of this ballad and the *Between the Sun and the Moon* CD.

¹⁰ See 'Public Notice' [of the *Venus* Piracy], *SG*, 20 July 1806, p. 1.

¹¹ T. Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australian History*, Cambridge, 1996, ch. 5. For recent debate about and revision of the 'nasty sluts' stereotype of convict women, see K. Reid, 'Moving On: Resolving the Convict Origins Debate', *Australian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Summer 1997, pp. 139-55; Reid, 'Work, Sexuality and Resistance: The Convict Women of Van Diemen's Land, 1820-1839', PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1996, ch. 1. The first all-out attack on the long-prevalent view that the convicts were the 'criminal classes' transported, was S. Nicholas (ed.), *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's Past*, Cambridge, 1988.

¹² H. Anderson, 'The Wild Colonial Jack Donahoe', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2002, pp. 57-80; G. Seal, *The Outlaw Legend*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 15-8, 37, and ch. 7.

¹³ Seal, *op. cit.*, chs. 2, 3 and 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-68; J. Sharpe, *Dick Turpin: The Myth of the English Highwayman*, London, 2004, ch. 4.

added ahistorical animal welfare pathos regarding Black Bess.¹⁵ Charlotte Badger, if not in that league, is a newly emergent Tasmanian heroic outlaw, also recognised in Bromsgrove, England.¹⁶ Add a 2002 Charlotte Badger novel from mainland Australia. In relation to current cross-Tamar dissonances, it harmonises with the George Town melody, though published in Victoria and authored by a suburban Sydney resident, Angela Badger (no relation of Charlotte's).¹⁷

So what, then? Well, the historical Charlotte Badger disembarked at Sydney from the *Earl Cornwallis* in 1801 and lived thereabouts till 1806.¹⁸ She never trod the Tamar's banks and only briefly viewed them. Many other places, peoples and nations could claim heritage ownership of the highly marketable *Venus* piracy stories. The stories form a magic layer-cake that remains intact, however often cut and eaten, and savours of exactly what different eaters desire. Drop those sharp elbows, relax, eat hearty and be thankful! At sea, especially in the earlier years of transportation to Australia, crews and convicts alike often suffered scanty rotten rations to their very real peril, in an experience akin to life aboard Atlantic slave ships.¹⁹

* * *

¹⁵ Seal, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-62.

¹⁶ A. Richards, 'Charlotte Badger — Buccaneer of Bromsgrove', *The Bromsgrove Rousler*, VVII, December 2002, pp. 7-12. Dr Richards is an Edinburgh-trained academic, now retired, and an active member of the Bromsgrove Society which publishes the *Rousler*, a lively local history magazine. I am most grateful for his advice on archival sources for Charlotte Badger's early life.

¹⁷ A. Badger, *Charlotte Badger — Buccaneer*, Briar Hill (Vic), 2002. I am most grateful to Mrs Badger for a free copy of her novel.

¹⁸ P. Robinson, *The Women of Botany Bay: A Reinterpretation of the Role of Women in the Origins of Australian Society*, Sydney, 1988, List A-1, p. 287.

¹⁹ E. Christopher, "'Ten Thousand Times Worse than the Convicts': rebellious sailors, convict transportation and the struggle for freedom, 1788-1800', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 5, 2004, pp. 30-46; 'The Sons of Neptune and the Sons of Ham: A History of Slave Trade Sailors and their Captive Cargoes', PhD thesis, University College, London, 2002; R. Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 80, 308-11; M. Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seaman, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 126-30, 222-4.

Charlotte, daughter of Thomas and Ann Badger, was christened at St John the Baptist parish church, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, 31 July 1778.²⁰ The baptismal record passes over her father's occupation and names him without a 'Mr' or 'Esquire', being evidently too menial for such niceties. When Charlotte was ten, the parish apprenticed her to Benjamin Wright, implying that Charlotte had become a pauper child. Wright thus acquired the most exploitable of child servants and Charlotte's bondage began then, not as a convicted felon. Wright's occupation remains unknown. Hand-forged nail making, however, was among Bromsgrove's long-established trades, so Wright was possibly a master nailer with Charlotte sweating at his forge.²¹ A girl who survived such an apprenticeship would develop a strong, bulky, upper-body physique. Whatever way Charlotte served Wright, she would have lived on his premises, probably a combined domestic residence and workplace. I can almost hear Wright bawling at sixteen-year-old Charlotte, while she hammers like Thor: and her stout riposte:

Wright: Sithee, yo' bloody-idle bitch, if yo' do' werk
'arder yo' wo' ate.

Charlotte: I'm a-telling yo' Mester, I cawt 'ear thee an' I
do' want.²²

Charlotte survived to be tried before Lord Macdonald, Worcester Assizes, 11 July 1796, and found guilty of 'feloniously breaking the house of Benjamin Wright in Bromsgrove, and stealing thereout four guineas and a Queen Anne half-crown', then a considerable sum.²³ The

²⁰ While the parish records list many Badgers, no other *Charlotte* Badger was christened till 1871. Worcestershire Library and History Centre, Worcestershire (WL), IGL, Worcestershire, fiche A 2295, p. 806; Parish Records of St. John the Baptist Parish, Bromsgrove, Vol. 5, 1753-84, 31 July 1778.

²¹ As a child in 1940s-50s Birmingham, my parents, both raised in the Black Country, used to astonish me with their anecdotes of the last of the area's women hand-forge nailers in the 1920s, the pitiful return for their labour, and their customary everyday consolations: smoking strong tobacco in clay cutty pipes and quaffing strong home-brewed ale.

²² 'Sithee = 'see you'; yo', do' and wo' are pronounced somewhat like yoe, doe and woe but with diphthong vowels. In standard English, they mean 'you', 'don't' and 'won't'; 'werk' is pronounced 'wairk' and means 'work'; cawt means 'can't'; 'mester', 'master'; 'ate', 'eat'; 'an I do' want', 'and I don't want to'. Potential scriptwriters please note: she spoke Black Country dialect.

²³ *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 14 July 1796, p. 3. The *Worcester Herald*, 9 July 1796 states Badger's theft as 'three guineas and a half-crown piece'. Breaking and entering was a capital offence, as was stealing goods/money worth at least 40 shillings. Capital punishment for these crimes was often commuted to transportation.

offence smacks of an opportunistic retaliation for perceived employee grievances.²⁴ Alongside six other offenders she was sentenced to death, but Macdonald respited all seven, commuting Charlotte's sentence to transportation for seven years.²⁵ Though harsh enough, *life* sentences were usual for capital respites transported to Australia. Because Britain had at that time more urgent wartime uses for ships and seamen than transporting prisoners, Charlotte remained in Worcester's County Gaol for four years.

It has been claimed that a magistrate's minute records Charlotte as 'a sober and upright person who had stolen Wright's money to get her sister's winter dress out of pawn'. Steal in mid-summer to redeem a pawned winter dress? Who was this parish apprentice's sister, to have apparel in pawn with a redemption value equal to \$800-\$1000 Australian? A Mr Pickwick might credit such gammon but hardly a magistrate. In truth, poor women did not only steal to remedy family poverty. They also stole to put some consumer gratification in their hard lives, in-servants often targeting tight-fisted employers who attempted to police their every moment.²⁶ Anyway, during Charlotte's time in gaol, prisoners' characters and motives ultra-peripherally concerned the visiting magistrates. Assign the sob story to the *Venus* apocrypha, where it can best flourish.²⁷

Members of the Quarter Sessions' bench who performed in rota as visiting magistrates, frequently reported on the dreadful conditions at Worcester's County Gaol. In February 1797, for example, after fruitless attempts to have the Water Works manager and commissioners attend to the broken plumbing, the magistrates Thomas Holbeck and John Amphlett reported:

²⁴ Larcenous or burglarious theft from an employer's premises was common among First Fleet transported women. M. Gillen, *The Founders of Australia: A Biographical Dictionary of the First Fleet*, Sydney, 1989. Also see D. Oxley, *Convict Maids: The Forced Migration of Women to Australia*, Cambridge, 1996, ch. 2; Reid, 'Work, Sexuality and Resistance', p. 62, Table 2.2.

²⁵ *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 14 July 1796, p. 3; Bound Indents of Convict Ships, *Earl of Cornwallis*, 1801, Fiche 630/1, State Records of New South Wales. Respite of all capitally convicted offenders at Worcester Assizes, July 1796, cannot be imagined at the Old Bailey at that time. The former may instance regional sentencing variables, as exposed in G. Morgan and P. Rushton, *Eighteenth-Century Criminal Transportation: The Formation of the Criminal Atlantic*, Basingstoke, 2004, p. 44.

²⁶ Reid, 'Work, Sexuality and Resistance', ch. 2, explores these issues in depth.

²⁷ The minute is mentioned in Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 7. I have read the visiting magistrates' minutes for the entire period of Charlotte Badger's incarceration and not found it—and almost never anything similar concerning any prisoner.

[We] found the Prisoners employed in carrying Water to fill the Bath with Intent to let it down the Sewers to cleanse of their Filth which is so great that they are stopped up and the Privys [*sic*] are so full and the stench so great that the worst consequences may be expected if a remedy is not immediately applied.²⁸

Wretched prisoner clothing was also recurrently minuted. In early November 1796, with winter looming, several women lacked 'necessary apparel'. The gaoler was ordered to provide six woollen gowns, six petticoats and six pairs of shoes plus two check handkerchiefs. In February 1797, many prisoners of both sexes were found 'ragged and absolutely in want of decent clothing'. In November 1798, Charlotte Badger and three other women lacked 'shifts shoes and stockings'.²⁹ Some reports were contradictory. In July 1798, visiting magistrates Thomas Holbeck and Reginald Pyndar found 'the Prisoners employed and everything is in due order', yet also that Charlotte Badger was 'destitute of cloathing' and another woman needed shoes. In February 1800, Charlotte and three other women had but one tattered shift each.³⁰ In every instance the gaoler was ordered to remedy things but resultant action remains opaque, while inmates were often so ill clad as to threaten health and violate decency.

With some women long awaiting transportation, others awaiting trial, a women's accommodation crisis was inevitable. In late January 1799, the gaol held seven women awaiting transportation and two awaiting trial. There were only two women's cells, evidently both very small, for seven of the women 'had to sleep in the Day room'. This arrangement was euphemistically described as 'attended with much inconvenience'. The gaoler described four of the day-room sleepers — one was Charlotte Badger — as 'very orderly and quiet'. Visiting magistrate Russell ordered all four 'removed for safe custody to the County Bridewell'.³¹ How the women took to the move is not recorded — supposing the order was ever implemented.

²⁸ *County Gaol Visiting Magistrates Minutes*, Vol. 1, January 1794-January 1821, Holbeck and Amphlett, 15 February 1797, Worcester County Record Office, Worcester, B.A.4/122. See also Perrott, 1 September 1796; Perrott and Russell, 1 October 1796; Andrew St. John and Phil. Gresley, 22 February 1797.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, B. Johnson, 7 November 1796; St. John and Gresley, 18 February 1797; A. Onslow and Thomas Holbeck, 17 November 1798.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, H.W. [Whembry?], 8 February 1800.

³¹ *Ibid.*, William Russell, 31 January 1799.

Nothing about Charlotte's life before or during her time in Worcester County Gaol presages a future pirate. True, she may have been involved in a plan to escape gaol,³² before settling into quiet endurance mode. Survival, however, of poverty, parish apprenticeship and long incarceration in a stinking midden, often woefully unclothed, suggests physical and mental toughness. So does her survival aboard the *Earl Cornwallis*. Its voyage took eight months, a very long passage.³³ Its convict women had a mortality rate of 8.42%. Among its male convicts, the mortality rate was scarcely under 14%. By contrast, the mean average mortality rate aboard major convict ships arriving in Australia 1788-1868, was under 1.8%. The mean rate aboard convict ships arriving in New South Wales 1817-40 was 1.5%.³⁴

The *Kitty* conveyed Catherine Hagerty, to New South Wales in 1792.³⁵ While no convict men died during the passage, ten percent of the women did.³⁶ The *Earl Cornwallis* and *Kitty* carried convicts of both sexes. These women were, presumably, more subject to the male gaze and were the object of more male desire, than those on ships *only* carrying women. Joy Damousi has shown, for the latter, that what was an endemic danger could also prove opportune for some. Consensual exchange of women's sexual favours for material rewards and protection from the male pack occurred, if under circumstances offering few options.³⁷ This should also apply to the 'mixed sex' convict ships, though they were more of a sellers' market for the women. Catherine 'Kitty' Hagerty's passage, however, had an additional feature, that might have given her ideas. Soon after embarkation the *Kitty* had to return to Spithead for repairs. Eight of the ten convict men aboard legged it and vanished. The *Kitty* eventually re-embarked without them.³⁸ Some speculation is legitimate, given the dearth of

32 *Ibid.*, 6 August 1796.

33 *Earl Cornwallis* mortality percentages extrapolated from data in C. Bateson, *The Convict Ships 1787-1868*, French's Forest (NSW), 1974 [Glasgow, 1959], pp. 338-9.

34 Nicholas, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

35 Hagerty was among seventeen Irish women sent from Dublin for Portsmouth aboard the *Four Brothers*, December 1791, for forwarding to NSW. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 259, n. 2; B. Reece, *The Origins of Irish Convict Transportation to New South Wales*, Basingstoke, 2001, pp. 267-8. A huge *lacuna* in Irish criminal records obscures Hagerty's offence, place of conviction and sentence.

36 Bateson, *op. cit.*, p. 144

37 J. Damousi, 'Chaos and Order: Gender, Space and Sexuality on Female Convict Ships', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 104, 1995, pp. 351-72; *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia*, Cambridge, 1997, ch. 1.

38 Bateson, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

positive evidence about Kitty's early life. Her surname is strongly associated with an area of County Derry where Gaelic speech and culture then flourished and she possibly knew Gaelic tales of Grainne O'Malley, 'Pirate Queen' of sixteenth-century Connacht.³⁹

In eighteenth-century England, tales circulated of Hannah Snell, a soldier and seafarer born in 1724 in Worcester. In 1747, assuming male clothing and identity, she joined the 6th of Foot, served for over four years, deserted, then enlisted in the Marines. She was sent to India and saw active service. After recovering from a serious wound, she was a naval rating for a time. On returning to England, she disclosed her sex, was granted her discharge, and became famous through press reports a hack biography and stage appearances.⁴⁰ Texts about Snell's life became a discursive model for others about cross-dressing women in the army and at sea.⁴¹ In Worcestershire, tales of this sensational life will, one imagines, have still circulated in Charlotte Badger's youth. They could have planted strange dreams in a downtrodden but tough female parish apprentice's head.

* * *

Charlotte and Kitty's putative cultural baggage opens the question of piracy and popular culture. Many printed trial records, books, pamphlets, plays and printed ballads, plus oral tales and songs, about pirates, circulated the eighteenth century English-speaking Atlantic. Hans Turley has recently produced an enlightening analysis of such cultural material.⁴² From 1788, this cultural current flowed into the

³⁹ I am indebted here for information and advice from my Edinburgh colleague, Owen Dudley Edwards, an historian of Ireland, who knows Gaelic. Recent studies of O'Malley include A. Chambers, "'The Pirate Queen of Ireland: Grace O'Malley', in Jo Stanley (ed.), *Bold in Her Britches: Women Pirates Across the Ages*, London, 1995; J. C. Appleby, 'Women and Piracy in Ireland: from Grainne O'Malley to Anne Bonny', in M. McCurtain and M. O'Dowd (eds), *Women in Early Modern Ireland*, Edinburgh, 1991, pp. 53-68.

⁴⁰ R. Walker, *The Female Soldier: Or the Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell*, London, 1750; S. Stark, *Female Tars: Women Aboard Ship in the Age of Sail*, London, 1996, pp. 101-7; D. Cordingly, *Heroines and Harlots: Women at Sea in the Great Age of Sail*, New York and London, 2001, pp. 77-83.

⁴¹ D. Dugaw, 'Female Sailors Bold: Transvestite Heroines and the Markers of Gender and Class', in M. S. Creighton and L. Norling, (eds), *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, Baltimore and London, 1996, pp. 38-43 and 49-51.

⁴² H. Turley, *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash: Piracy, Sexuality and Masculine Identity*, New York and London, 1999.

scattered, coastal enclaves of Australian settlement.⁴³ Isaac Land has since gone beyond Turley, by venturing far into the nineteenth century, when a crucial transformation occurred. White seamen won entry into white, patriotic, conventionally masculine, citizen identity — crucially by securing abolition of their own flogging at sea — but at the expense of Black and Asian seafarers.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, successful construction of a racially based white seafarer identity was well after the *Venus* era. Turley and Land, however, also track the powerful discursive elements in the earlier construction of the idea of *all* seafarers as tainted by equivocal or even transgressive sexuality and masculinity. Pirates realised these attributed traits in their extreme form. Here, Turley and Land provide better-grounded, better-nuanced interpretations of issues raised earlier by Burg.⁴⁵

Other gender historians have focussed on women seafarers. Again, eighteenth and early nineteenth-century popular texts have been disinterred. Discursively, pirate women even more 'thrillingly' transgressed conventional norms of womanhood, than pirate men did masculine norms. This only enhanced the market appeal of female pirates in popular texts and performances. As Anne Chambers has jokily put it, 'Brigand dominatrices for utopia-seeking male masochists' became 'the idea of a woman pirate'.⁴⁶ Take Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History ... of the Most Notorious Pirates*.⁴⁷ None of its pirates can have shocked and titillated contemporary readers more than Mary Read and Anne Bonny. Apart from the usual cross-dressing, Sapphic

⁴³ Demonstrated extensively in G. C. Ingleton, *True Patriots All, or News from Early Australia as Told in a Collection of Broad-sides Garnered and Decorated by Geoffrey C. Ingleton*, Sydney, 1952.

⁴⁴ I. Land, 'Customs of the Sea: Flogging, Empire, and the "True British Seaman, 1770-1870', *Interventions: The International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2001, pp. 169-85; 'The Many-Tongued Hydra: Sea Talk, Maritime Culture, and Atlantic Identities', *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures*, Vol. 25, Nos. 3-4, 2002, pp. 412-17. Among Land's imminent relevant publications are "'Sinful Propensities": Piracy, Sodomy, and Empire in the Rhetoric of Naval Reform', to appear in Anupama Rao and Steven Pierce (eds), *Discipline and the Other Body: Humanitarianism, Violence, and the Colonial Exception*, Chapel Hill, 2005. I thank Isaac Land for some stimulatingly informative discussions and for giving me copies of these recent and forthcoming publications.

⁴⁵ B. R. Burg, *Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition: English Sea Rovers in the Seventeenth-Century Caribbean*, New York and London, 1984.

⁴⁶ A. Chambers, 'Brigand dominatrices for utopia-seeking masochists: the idea of women pirates', *Bold in her Britches*, ch. 1.

⁴⁷ Edition used, Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, D. Cordingly (ed.), London, 1998. For its print history and authorship, see pp. vii-xiv; also Turley, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-6.

episodes, bearing arms and general assumption of male roles attributed to female seafarers, their ferocious courage *exceeds* that of manikins in their crew. They tongue-lash male shipmates' flagging courage (subtextually implying another kind of impotency) and even assault and kill such poltroons.⁴⁸

Some may prefer the different slant of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker. Their prime concern is the revolutionary nature of the Atlantic world's 'motley crew'. This shell-back and salty, polyglot, multi-racial and multi-ethnic 'many-headed hydra' of seafarers and allied sorts, fought class war.⁴⁹ Linebaugh and Rediker receive broad inspiration from Marx whilst avoiding reification or rancid hair-splitting about alleged 'false consciousness' and 'primitive rebellion' among pre-industrial workers. Rediker argues that early eighteenth-century merchant shipping anticipated the time-work discipline, harsh management and punishment regimes, and wage-cutting of the industrial revolution.⁵⁰ Linebaugh and Rediker may reek of the Marxist beast to some yet be accused of proffering 'Marx-lite' by old believers. Such yah-booing is trivial, belonging alongside any stray accusations of 'not taking theory seriously'.⁵¹ Also, Linebaugh and Rediker's works are as soaked in seventeenth and eighteenth-century narratives of seamen, slaves, pirates, indentured servants and transported convicts, as those of maritime cultural historians. True, unlike them, they are wary of discourse theory hermeneutics but there are strong synergies with the cultural historians. Both eat out of the same evidential pot and speak mutually comprehensible if differently accented languages.

⁴⁸ Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-24, 125-31.

⁴⁹ P. Linebaugh and M. Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, London and New York, 2000; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*; P. Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1991, pp. 123-42, 374-401; Rediker, 'The Lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, Pirates', in Creighton and Norling, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-33, 230-7; Rediker, 'The Red Atlantic; or, "a terrible blast swept over the heaving sea', in B. Klein and G. Mackenthun (eds), *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean*, New York, 2004. Rediker is now writing a monograph on piracy.

⁵⁰ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, chs. 2 and 3.

⁵¹ I am not implying their work is beyond critique: what work is? Concerning 'not taking theory seriously', see I. Duffield and J. Bradley, 'Introduction: representing convicts?' in Duffield and Bradley (eds), *Representing Convicts*, pp. 1-19; Duffield and Bradley, 'Introduction: Australian Archaeologies and the Tree of Knowledge', in Duffield and Bradley (eds), *Australian Archaeologies*, special issue, *Australian Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2000, pp. 1-11.

Why should this intersecting stream of publications and its theoretical variables matter a fig when considering the *Venus* piracy? That can be demonstrated quite easily. Johnson's book contained lively graphic illustrations, as pirate books should (and mostly do). One is of Mary Read, back to a shoreline, with two background sailing ships. She is having a frightful hair day, recalling 'Blackbeard' Teach's scary facial hair. She bears seafarer's arms: a brandished cutlass in her right hand; a tomahawk secured at her left side; two pistols inside her open seaman's bum-freezer jacket. Her legs are straddled and knees slightly bent, as if outfacing a foe. Her nether parts are clad in seamen's canvass breeks, with the usual convenience of the wherewithal to open them from waistband to crutch to facilitate male urination — or male copulation?⁵² As a 'gender-bender', this is hard to beat.

The semiotics yell 'Jack Tar as Pirate!', except that Mary Read bares her bosom in titillating transgression of female dress decorum. Now guess what? The front cover of *The Bromsgrove Rousler* for 17 November 2002, features a large illustration of almost exactly the same figure. The modest differences are, she carries a knife in her right hand and the background has been crudely replaced by a palm-fringed coastline with a couple of canoes paddled by fuzzy-haired 'natives' offshore. Some joker has culled and adapted the illustration from Johnson's book and given it the caption, 'Charlotte Badger The Bromsgrove Pirate'. Naturally, the original is nowhere acknowledged. That would stop the illustration from radiating discursive authenticity (as it does, unless you know the original). Comparatively few read the *Rousler* but Johnson still gets to countless millions who have never heard about him. When writing *Treasure Island*, R. L. Stevenson laid hands on *The General History* for 'authentic' information on piracy.⁵³ One of Stevenson's more vividly nasty pirates, Israel Hands, is named after one of Teach's right-hand men in the *General History*.⁵⁴ It is generally agreed that *Treasure Island* is the most widely read and culturally influential text ever written about piracy, and that still holds today.

⁵² Johnson, *op. cit.*, illustration, p. 121. See also p. 60 for an account of Blackbeard's appearance.

⁵³ I. Bell, *Robert Louis Stevenson: Dreams of Exile*, Edinburgh, 1992, p. 166.

⁵⁴ For Johnson's Israel Hands, see *op. cit.*, p. 59.



Figure 1: Mary Read, from the 1725 Amsterdam edition of Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, also reproduced in D. Cordingly's edition for Conway Maritime Press, London, 1998, p. 121.

Charles Johnson compounded historical facts and convincing fictions to constitute what Turley has aptly called 'fictional reality'.⁵⁵ The *General History* perfected a strongly emergent *genre*.⁵⁶ Its idea of pirates, male and female, has ever since infused innumerable texts (including pirate movies), endlessly reproducing its own powerful style of pirate 'authenticity'. Charlotte Badger's England was strongly exposed to this kind of 'fictional reality'. Also, with convicts, soldiers and seaman (all from the common people), ships carried such cultural baggage to Australia. Without grasping these matters, when considering any piratical episode we soon plunge into very deep waters. So did the *Venus* pirates in seizing the brig, but not unwittingly. Pirate 'fictional reality' had its cautionary aspects. It exhibited piracy as a forlorn hope, commonly leading to the gallows or other violent deaths. The state also advertised 'execution dock' as the destined pirate landfall. Necessarily and consciously, the *Venus* pirates experienced the tension inherent in the practice of 'death or liberty'.

* * *

Before 1806, small government and private ships already routinely connected the out-settlements with Sydney and each other.⁵⁷ They were a vital technology of rule, the only way to carry official communications relatively quickly between far-flung enclaves and to relocate convicts, troops, and civil and military officers conveniently. Government food supplies were shipped to very new settlements with chronic food deficits. Private vessels also traded between the settlements, and defying the East India's Company's monopoly rights, with New Zealand and beyond. Lucrative sealing activities on the southern coast of New South Wales and the Bass Strait Islands also needed private shipping. Sealing products were prime export commodities.⁵⁸ Gaining them generated much violence towards

55 Turley, *op. cit.*, ch. 5.

56 *Ibid.*, chs. 2 and 3.

57 For such shipping entering ports in Van Diemen's Land in 1806, see I. H. Nicholson, *Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Tasmania*, Vol. I, Canberra, 1983, pp. 17-19.

58 G. Aplin and G. Parsons, 'Maritime Trade, Shipping and the Early Colonial Economy', in Aplin (ed.), *A Difficult Infant: Sydney Before Macquarie*, Kensington, NSW, 1988, pp. 148-63; J. S. Cumpston, *Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Sydney, 1788-1825*, Canberra, 1977; D. R. Hainsworth, *The Sydney Traders: Simeon Lord and his Contemporaries 1788-1821*, Melbourne, 1981; W. G. Rimmer, 'The Economic Growth of Van Diemen's Land 1803-1821', in G. J. Abbot and N. B. Nairn (eds), *Economic Growth of Australia 1788-1821*, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 327-51; M. J. E. Steven, 'Exports Other

indigenous Australians.⁵⁹ There were three merchant ships named *Venus* to be seen at Port Jackson in the early 1800s. Chase commanded the 45-ton colonial brig *Venus*, built and registered in Calcutta and owned by the Calcutta merchants Campbell & Co. In 1800, these Scotsmen on the make sent brother Robert to establish a Sydney branch for its trade potential.

Campbell & Company's *Venus* first arrived at Sydney 8 May 1805, captained by John Calder and carrying 105 chests of tea, 60 bags of rice and 1,000 gunny bags. It had 12 crewmen and no guns.⁶⁰ Nothing seems 'bad' here. The tea, however, linked the brig and its owners to a vicious, illegal system of exchange — the opium trade between Calcutta and Canton. Bengal Presidency opium production was an East India Company monopoly. To evade the odium of illicit trading, the Company licensed private Calcutta traders to run the tea into the Pear River, where they sold it to Chinese smugglers who paid in silver. Part of these silver returns funded further purchase of China tea for the large, expanding British market. Before the opium trade, the tea was only obtainable by *paying* in silver. Once the opium trade was well under way, Q'ing China slid towards internal chaos, armed foreign coercion, unheard of semi-colonial concessions to Britain, European powers, the United States and later, Japan, culminating in regime collapse. By 1806, Sydney was a promising little side market for the tea and soon enough far exceeded that promise.

In Sydney, the *Venus* became the property of Robert Campbell, the largest merchant in town and already Sydney's Mr Big in sealing.⁶¹ Small, cheaply operated vessels landed and supplied gangs in the sealing grounds and took sealing products back to Sydney. The *Venus* was ideal for a sealing tender. It first embarked from Sydney 29 July 1805 for Australia's prime sealing grounds in the Bass Strait.⁶² Bass Strait island sealing gangs needed Aboriginal women's labour. White seafarers could then rarely swim. These women were fine swimmers, so were put to slaughtering seal colonies on otherwise inaccessible

than Wool', in Abbot and Nairn, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-87; M. Steven, *Trade, Tactics and Territory*, Melbourne 1983, pp. 87, 89-90.

⁵⁹ H. Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Re-examination of the Tasmanian Wars*, Ringwood, Victoria, pp. 4, 77, 191; L. Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, St. Leonards, 1996 [1981], ch. 3.

⁶⁰ *Historical Records of Australia, Series 1 (HRA 1)*, Vol. 5, pp. 639-40

⁶¹ Campbell is extensively treated in *The Sydney Traders*; also see Hainsworth, 'Trade in the Colony', in Abbott and Nairn, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

⁶² *HRA 1*, Vol. 5, p. 641.

skerries. Sealers kidnapped some women and acquired others by barter from Aboriginal men who seasonally camped on Northern Tasmania's coast. Sexual and domestic as well as seal-hunting services were extracted from the women and here force was always implicit, often explicit. Some Aboriginal bands eventually began capturing women from other bands to barter to sealers. Unprecedented internal slaving, we can reasonably infer, provoked a spiral of reciprocal violence.⁶³ As a sealing tender, the *Venus* was *directly* involved in another nasty trade that seriously destabilised another ancient culture.

In New South Wales, Twofold Bay sealing also led to violence between sealing gangs and the Thaua people. In March 1806 the *Venus* brought 'disagreeable accounts' to Sydney of recent bloody conflict, that were printed in the *Sydney Gazette*. As the print version went, 'for many weeks' the sealers had to provide two guards armed with muskets to safeguard their water bearers. Then, about five weeks before the *Venus* returned to Sydney, Thaua gathered *en masse* and threw volleys of spears. The sealers opened fire, killing nine Thaua. With macabre intimidatory intent, 'it was thought advisable to suspend those who fell on the limbs of trees; but before the daylight the next morning they were taken down, and carried off'.⁶⁴ The message is, 'native' aggressors come out of nowhere, deserve violent retributive ejection, and thus Twofold Bay space 'rightfully' becomes a sealer place.⁶⁵

Governor King perceived sealer culpability in this episode but without conceding Thaua identity and land rights. The *George*, he informed London, laden with sealskins, had stranded in Twofold Bay. Its crew found themselves surrounded by 'natives' who fired the grass and threw spears. Then, 'according to report' as King cagily put it, the sealers opened fire and 'some of the Natives were killed'. King,

⁶³ See Ryan, *op. cit.*, ch. 3, esp. p. 67. Internal African violence set off by the Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades is instructive here. See S. A. Diouf (ed.), *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, Oxford, 2003; J. Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888*, Portsmouth and London, 1994; Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830*, London, 1988; J. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, Cambridge, 2nd ed., 1998, chs. 3 and 4.

⁶⁴ SG, 6 April 1806, p. 2.

⁶⁵ For the transformation of indigenous Australian place, first into colonial space then colonial place, see P. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, London, 1987; S. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, Cambridge, 1996. For a map identifying Thaua territory, see H. Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*, St. Leonards (NSW), 1996, p. xiv.

however, was not taken in. 'I have cause to think', he wrote, 'the Natives have suffered some wrong from the Worthless characters who are passing and re-passing ... the coast'.⁶⁶ Whom but sealers? King also claimed the desire but begged his impotence to punish the culprits: 'nor would they escape punishment such Conduct deserves *if it could in any instance be proved*'.⁶⁷ The drift of the *Gazette's* report (courtesy of Captain Chase) shows how unlikely that was. For Campbell, the wreck of the *George* was another business opportunity. His brig salvaged the *George's* ironwork, landed more sealers and brought back Chase's convenient twist on events for his own and Campbell's interests.⁶⁸

When the brig made its first voyage to the Bass Strait in 1805, its master was William Stewart.⁶⁹ While it remains unclear when Chase and Kelly respectively became captain and first mate, there were advantages in employing American officers on sealing tenders. The East India Company monopoly, as granted by Parliament, barred export of Australian sealing products by non-Company British subjects and ships. Foreign citizens and ships were not thus obstructed because Parliament had no rightful jurisdiction over them. Americans were necessarily alert to that. Aboard the *Venus* then, who better than American officers to strike deals with American ships for seal pelts and oil? From the 1790s, American whalers and merchantmen flocked to Sydney as a port of call and refreshment and smartly penetrated its import-export trade. Inevitably some shrewd, experienced, American mariners in Sydney had sharp eyes for potentially lucrative local maritime employment. Chase entered Bass Strait sealing in 1798.⁷⁰ Kelly arrived in Sydney as first mate aboard the *Albion* whaler, making him seem an ideal first mate for the *Venus*. Robert Campbell, while safely distanced from fell deeds to secure his profits, was the motor force in making his brig *bad*, Chase the hard instrument at the nasty end.

Chase's canny opportunism is evident in another sphere. In early Hobart an ambitious convict, Matthew Power, opportunistically tolerated his pretty convict wife's liaison with Lieutenant-Governor David Collins. By Power's emancipation in 1805, he was already a

⁶⁶ King to Camden, 15 March 1806, *HRA 1*, Vol. 5, pp. 660, 843 n. 212.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 616: my emphasis.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 843, n. 212, which smugly adds 'The natives of Twofold Bay were a constant source of trouble in that locality'. Also see *SG*, 6 April 1806, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *HRA 1*, Vol. 5, p. 641.

⁷⁰ D. Currey, *David Collins: A Colonial Life*, Melbourne, 2000, p. 227.

trading associate of Chase's, and of Mrs Power's lover's dear friend, William Collins.⁷¹ Chase used the resultant entrée to the Lieutenant-Governor shrewdly. On 15 February 1806, he married 15 year-old Marianne Yeats at St. Phillip's Church, Sydney. Probably, her being David Collins's illegitimate daughter, not her youth, was the big attraction to Chase. Collins had always publicly acknowledged her, and had cared for her materially and emotionally. She lived happily with her father in Hobart from February to October 1805.⁷² Chase embraced the chance of future pull in high places. He would maintain Marianne and any future children. David Collins, as usual heavily in debt, ended a fifteen-year expense.⁷³

* * *

In early 1806, food shortages recurred at York Town and Hobart.⁷⁴ Campbell again seized a business opportunity. The *Venus* sailed from Sydney on 10 April 1806, laden mainly with government provisions — 11,184 lbs (about 5,000 kilos) of salt pork, 5,674 (2,570 kilos) of flour and meal — bound for Port Dalrymple and Hobart.⁷⁵ Other cargo included thirty gallons of spirits and a barrel of porter for Reverend Robert Knopwood,⁷⁶ among an array of consumer luxuries for the civil and military officers at Hobart and York Town.⁷⁷ Also carried were official despatches, Richard Thompson a soldier, Catherine Hagerty and the three others later gazetted as both convicts and pirates.

The two male convicts were dangerous cargo for a small brig. John William Lancashire was sentenced with two other men by the Sydney Bench on 5 April 1806, for stowing away on the ship *Tellichery*, with intent to escape. Lancashire was apparently thought the ringleader, as he received 100 lashes and three additional years hard labour, the others 100 lashes each.⁷⁸ He was a painter by trade, described as emaciated, and is said to have been a competent draughtsman and

⁷¹ Currey, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-9, 232-3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30.

⁷⁵ SG, 13 April 1806, p. 4; King to Collins, 26 July 1806, *Historical Records of Australia, Series 3 (HRA 3)*, Vol. 1, p. 336.

⁷⁶ R. Knopwood (ed.), Mary Nicholl, *The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood 1803-1838, First Chaplain of Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart, 1977, entry for 6 July 1806, p. 112.

⁷⁷ King to Castlereagh, *HRA I*, Vol. 5, p. 753.

⁷⁸ SG, 6 April 1806, p. 4.

water colourist.⁷⁹ The other man, Richard Thomas Evans, had come to Australia as gunner's mate aboard H.M.S. *Calcutta*. He subsequently deserted and was sentenced to transportation.⁸⁰

As for Charlotte Badger, her primary sentence had been due to expire in 1803. Either she had troubled authority sufficiently to have that sentence extended before it expired, or she had landed in further trouble after it expired — otherwise, she would not have been a convict in 1806. Catherine 'Kitty' Hegarty had spent her first several years in NSW in the household of Richard Atkins, the acting Judge Advocate, and had borne him a daughter (her second colonial-born child). In 1800, Atkins secured her an absolute pardon and a passage back to England on the *Reliance*. She had since returned to Sydney, only to find herself supplanted by Atkins' newly arrived wife.⁸¹ The fact that she was named a convict as well as a pirate in an official notice in 1806, posits a further sentence since her return.

Then there were the so far unnamed free persons who became pirates: Richard Edwards, the second mate; John Redmonds, a 'mulatto' seaman who first arrived in Sydney aboard the *Venus* whaler; an unnamed Malay cook (presumably a Muslim);⁸² two ship's boys, Thomas Ford and colonially-born William Evans; and the soldier, Richard Thompson.⁸³ With the convicts they indeed formed a 'motley crew' of both sexes, varied ethnicities, colours and religions, and overlapping experiences of life at sea and in bondage. Redmonds evidently had African (presumably slave) ancestry. 'Mulatto' plus his surname suggests Irish descent too. He was from the turbulent, freedom-seeking 'Black Atlantic' culture.⁸⁴ Five dutiful Jacks aboard remain anonymous.⁸⁵ The pirates achieved a kind of fame — notoriety.

⁷⁹ SG, 20 July 1806, p. 1. Also see Ingleton, *op. cit.*, p. 262, n. 29. A water colour of Sydney Cove, dated 1813, in the Mitchell Library, is attributed by Ingleton, *op. cit.*, p. 262, n. 29, to Lancashire, who some say never returned to NSW after 1806.

⁸⁰ SG, 20 July 1806; M. Tipping, *Convicts Unbound: the Story of the Calcutta Convicts and their Settlement in Australia*, Ringwood (Vic), 1988, p. 133, gives his name as David Evans.

⁸¹ A. Atkinson, 'Richard Atkins: The Women's Judge', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1999, pp. 122-3.

⁸² To be understood as a person speaking a Malay language, originating anywhere such languages were spoken on the coasts of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malayan Peninsula. His anonymity speaks volumes of his low status on the ship.

⁸³ SG, 20 July 1806, p. 1.

⁸⁴ Bolster, *Black Jacks*; J. S. Scott, 'Afro-American Sailors and the International Communication Network', in C. Howell and R. Twomey (eds), *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life*, Fredericton (New Brunswick), 1991, pp. 37-52;

The *Venus* departed Sydney for the last time on 10 April 1806.⁸⁶ What followed is mainly known through Chase's version of events.⁸⁷ Just after they were printed, he placed a notice in the *Gazette*, cautioning 'all persons from trusting my Wife Mary Ann Letitia Chase, as I will not be responsible for any Debts she may hereafter contract'.⁸⁸ As a comic coda to Chase's loss of his brig, he came home to find his wife had meanwhile engaged in a credit binge, contrary to all domestic order and good discipline. Following his previous mishap, this surely made him a laughing stock in Sydney, with its scandal-mongering and subversive street cultures.⁸⁹

The pirates' unrecorded voices, when speaking of events aboard the *Venus*, would necessarily differ from those of Chase, the colonial press and the authorities. We can be pretty sure the pirates spoke of Chase as a cruel tyrant, a common trope for officials and colonial employers in convict narratives and ballads.⁹⁰ Likewise, the pirates would probably have justified their actions as 'death or liberty' imperatives, like the (mainly) Irish convict rebels at Castle Hill in 1804, of very recent memory: nor was that the last time that slogan was used in New South Wales.⁹¹ In a striking phrase of Tamsin O'Connor's, concerning the convict Thomas Matthews, 'even [a convict's] notion of

Linebaugh and Rediker, 'The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves and the Atlantic Working Class in the Eighteenth Century', in *ibid.*, pp. 11-36; Duffield, "'I Asked How the Vessel Could Go'".

85 See 'Piratical Capture of the *Venus* Colonial Brig', *SG*, 13 July 1805, p. 4.

86 'Ship News', *SG*, 27 April 1806, p. 4.

87 'Piratical Capture of the *Venus* Colonial Brig' (declaring itself based on depositions made by Chase before magistrates at Yorkton, 17 June 1806); *SG*, 27 July 1806, p. 4.

88 *SG*, 20 July 1806, p. 4.

89 K. McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850*, Melbourne, 2004; I. Duffield, 'Billy Blue: Power, Popular Culture and Mimicry in Early Sydney', *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 33, No.1, 1999, pp. 7-22.

90 For example, 'Jack Bushman', *Passages in the Life of a "Lifer"*, serialised in *Moreton Bay Courier*, 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 April 1859; Frank McNamara (attrib.), 'Moreton Bay', reproduced in B. Reece (ed.), *Exiles from Erin: Convict Lives in Ireland and Australia*, Basingstoke, 1991, pp. 171-2; William Ross, *The Fell Tyrant: or, The Suffering Convict*, London, p. 211; anon. 'Jim Jones at Botany Bay', undated, sung by The Band that Never Was', track 12, CD *South Wind*, a Roberts and Smith Production, Port Arthur, Tasmania, 2001; 'Memoranda by Convict Davis Servant to Mr Foster, Superintendent of Convicts, Norfolk Island—1843—Relating Principally to Macquarie Harbour', c. 1842, Norfolk Island, in Evans, *Norfolk Island Convict Papers*, MS. Q168, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. This is merely a small sample.

91 P. O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, Kensington, 1987, pp. 37-8; Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-4; P. J. Byrne, *Criminal Law and Colonial Subject: New South Wales 1810-1830*, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 129, 130-1 and 138-9.

freedom deserves a hearing although he thought it best reached via the gallows'.⁹² In these senses, the *Venus* pirates' recorded actions claim meaning, for they constitute action *statements* even when mediated through the words of 'cruel tyrants'. Under interrogation, the tyrants' 'prose of counter insurgency' is inherently unstable and what it seeks to silence gains an eloquent, if ghostly voice.⁹³ From embarkation, Catherine Hagerty cohabited with First Mate Kelly, an action visible to all aboard and causing an incipient breach of established order and discipline. In her gazetted description, Catherine Hagerty is thus: a convict, 'middle sized, light hair, fresh face, *much inclined to smile*, hoarse voice'.⁹⁴ This effectively constructs the levity of a coarse-sounding but fine-complexioned wanton: convict woman as slutty temptress. Her liaison with Kelly lit a fuse that eventually exploded a magazine of explosive grievances.

Things turned decisively for the worse for Chase when the *Venus* anchored at Twofold Bay to contact the gang previously landed. The sealers had disappeared and were presumed killed by or fleeing from the Thaua. Landing was opposed by 'several hordes of the barbarous inhabitants', though the crew remained unscathed. Then they took aboard a ton of flour cached by the missing gang.⁹⁵ This flour plus the provisions on the *Venus* effectively victualled the brig for a far longer voyage than Chase intended, a fact obvious to the disaffected element. Discipline and conduct worsened. Property was pilfered. Chase accused Kelly of broaching a cask of spirits. Kelly denied the charge.⁹⁶ Emma Christopher shows in a path-breaking new article how subversive shipboard combinations of convicts, soldiers and crew were rife on major convict ships between 1788-1800.⁹⁷ How much more

⁹² T. O'Connor, 'Buckley's Chance: Freedom and Hope at the Penal Settlements of Newcastle and Moreton Bay', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1999, pp. 115-28.

⁹³ R. Guha, 'The Prose of Counter Insurgency', in R. Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, II, *Writing About South Asian History*, Delhi and Oxford, 1998, pp. 1-42. Guha's ideas here are highly applicable to convict resistance in Australia.

⁹⁴ SG, 13 July 1806, p. 4, and 20 July 1806, p. 1. My emphasis.

⁹⁵ SG, 27 July 1806, p. 4.

⁹⁶ SG, 13 July 1805, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Christopher, "'Ten Thousand Times Worse than the Convicts'". for comparable works on colonial Indian convict ships, and on slave ships, from Africa, see C. Anderson, "'The Ferringhees are Flying—the ship is ours!' The convict middle passage in colonial South and Southeast Asia, 1790-1860', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (forthcoming); Harms, *op. cit.*, ch. 5; D. Eltis, S. D. Behrend and D. Richardson, 'The Costs of Coercion: African Agency in the History of the Atlantic World', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 54, 2001, pp. 454-76; D. Richardson, 'Shipboard

dangerous then was that combination aboard a little brig, with its first mate hating its captain.

Experienced first mates usually aspired to future captaincies, so what drove Kelly beyond Kitty's arms into mutiny and piracy? The answer may sound like this: 'no man shall keep me from a woman'.⁹⁸ Those words thundered from a male convict at a magistrate.⁹⁹ At sea, Captain Chase *was* magistrate, with extraordinary powers over all aboard. Kelly perhaps felt Chase was subjecting his honour and manhood to unbearable public affront. This recalls Greg Denning's understanding of Fletcher Christian's honour, Mr Bligh's bad language, and what ensued. Also, the Kelly-Chace conflict clearly involved 'passion, power and theatre'.¹⁰⁰ The *Bounty* mutiny was still a recent event in 1806. Those aboard the *Venus* surely knew its script in outline (a matter of common knowledge). Oppressed people who have a hidden transcript will spring surprising deeds, seemingly out of nowhere, when authority's façade crumbles.¹⁰¹

Chase later deposed that Kelly's conduct threatened that the brig 'would be run away with'. He tasked the master of the *Marcia* schooner, then also at Twofold Bay, to communicate these fears when the *Marcia* returned to Sydney. This panicky note rises in Chase's further deposition: 'the crew were robbing and plundering the vessel, and he did not think his life safe'. This may be a *post facto* effort to incriminate the pirates comprehensively. A grain of truth grain can be seen, however — the 'motley crew' broke Chase's confidence in his effective authority. His claim to have told the *Marcia's* master, however, that should a colonial vessel enter the bay, 'he would give up the brig to her', rings false. What was the *Marcia* then and why not hand over the *Venus* to her master?¹⁰²

Revolts, African Authority and the Atlantic Slave Trade', in Diouf (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 199-218; J. E. Inikori, 'Measuring the Unmeasured Hazards of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Documents Relating to the British Slave Trade', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, Vol. 85, 1996, pp. 53-92.

98 B. Hindmarsh, 'Yoked to the Plough: Male Convict Labour, Culture and Resistance in Rural Van Diemen's Land, 1820-1840', PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2002, pp. 226-57 explores this theme.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 261.

100 G. Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*, Cambridge, 1992.

101 Theme of J. C. Scott's influential work, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven, Connecticut and London, 1990—a big influence on my work.

102 'Piratical Capture'.

Once underway from Twofold Bay, one more reported incident occurred. Chase spotted a small box overboard, put about, and recovered it. He later deposed 'it was thrown overboard by Catherine Hagerty'. Was she flogged for this, and Charlotte too for good measure, as a brutal bid to stop the rot? I have yet to locate that in any contemporary source. Lieutenant-Governor Paterson, to whom Chase talked after arriving at Port Dalrymple, later wrote: 'I learnt that *by Accident* a Box of Letters had been thrown overboard'¹⁰³ — not what Chase deposed. Till 1817, flogging was inflicted on delinquent convict women by the colonial authorities on land. Such action was also within authority of a merchant ship captain at sea but if Chase *did* flog the women, he kept it quiet afterwards. This episode remains unproven. If it occurred, it would have greatly hardened mutinous dispositions. In the 'golden age' of piracy, flogging motivated seamen to turn pirate.¹⁰⁴ It also aroused the burning resentment and periodic mutiny of Britain's French Revolutionary and Napoleonic War naval seamen. Impressment, and confinement to ship in port to prevent desertion had similar effects.¹⁰⁵

Once at Port Dalrymple Chase speedily disembarked, with the excuse of having dispatches for Lieutenant-Governor Paterson, whose headquarters were at York Town. It has been claimed Chase dallied there to court Marianne.¹⁰⁶ This too is self-evidently *Venus* piracy apocrypha. After seeing Paterson, Chase boarded the schooner *Governor Hunter* anchored off York Town and stayed overnight, at the invitation of Mr House, the port officer. Paterson, however, had provided him with a soldier for extra security and ordered him: 'on no Account to quit ... [the *Venus*] until he brought her ... in sight of my House'. 'Next morning', wrote Paterson to Governor King, 'to my great surprise I was informed She was carried to Sea, and that neither Mr.

¹⁰³ Paterson to King, 19 July 1806, *HRA* 3, Vol. 1, p. 660: my emphasis.

¹⁰⁴ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, pp. 258-61.

¹⁰⁵ For eyewitness accounts, see Samuel Leech, *A Voice from the Main Deck: Being a record of the Thirty Years Adventures of Samuel Leech*, Boston, Mass, 1857, edition used, London, 1999; W. Robinson, *Jack Nastyface: memoirs of an English Seaman*, London, 1973 [1836]; W. Spavens, *The Narrative of William Spavens, a Chatham Pensioner, Written by Himself*, London, 1998 [1796]. John Nicol's narrative records merchant seamen knocking a St Kitt's white man over the side of their ship, in retaliation for his flogging of a slave woman sent aboard to sell fruit and sexual services: John Nicol, T. Flannery (ed.), *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol Mariner*, New York, 1999, [Melbourne, 1997], p. 36. His sympathy with slaves is also revealed in ch. 5; his horror at the spectacle of a naval flogging, p. 50; his affectionate sexual relations with the convict Sarah Whitlam aboard the *Lady Juliana*, pp. 120-2.

¹⁰⁶ Tipping, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

House or the Master had been on board'.¹⁰⁷ King later informed Lord Castlereagh about the seizure, acidly adding, 'the Master had in the most imprudent and unjustifiable Manner left her to go 10 Miles to wait on the Lieut-Governor when he ought to have remained in charge of his Vessel and what was in her until the Ship reached the settlement'.¹⁰⁸

When the pirate brig *Venus* got under way, all still aboard crowned mutiny with piracy. The cream of it was, just then a boat brought Chase in sight of a spectacle that crowned his loss of nerve. Later Governor King, having named Kelly the ringleader, whistled up some comfort: 'it is certain that the Pirates differed very much among each other before seizing the vessel'. The five dutiful Jacks may have set this idea afloat. King, however, admitted recovery of brig or cargo were 'equally improbable'.¹⁰⁹ As for the new pirates, they perhaps felt a similar sentiment to this: 'Lay on your golden trumpets, boys, and sound their cheerful note! / The *Cyprus* brig's on the ocean, boys, by Justice does she float!'¹¹⁰ Where was Charlotte Badger in all this? In the closest sources to events, she was unremarkably present, art-and-part by implication, but nothing more.

The *Venus* seizure later generated more colourful apocrypha, as if the actual events might appear inauthentic because not up to the pirate legend. Thus James Belich erroneously stereotypes Charlotte Badger as a London thief and has her the brains behind the brig's seizure. She manipulated Kelly, Belich says, via Catherine Hagerty to engender piracy: assumed co-leadership with Kelly, but showed who really commanded men by flogging Chase before putting him off the *Venus*.¹¹¹ There is reason to suppose Charlotte was brawny — seemingly verified by her subsequent 'Public Notice' description: 'very corpulent, with full face, thick lips, and light hair': convict woman

¹⁰⁷ Paterson to King, 19 July 1806, *HRA* 3, Vol. 1, p. 660.

¹⁰⁸ King. to Castlereagh, 27 July 1806, *HRA* 1, Vol. 5, p. 753.

¹⁰⁹ King to Collins, 26 July 1806, *HRA* 3, Vol. 1, p. 336.

¹¹⁰ Anon. ballad 'Recherche Bay', celebrating the piratical seizure of the brig *Cyprus* by convicts en route to Macquarie Harbour in 1828, quoted *in extenso* in Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-5. Another version, attributed by Ingleton to 'Frank [Francis MacNamara] the Poet' and celebrating freedom from 'cruel tyranny' is in Ingleton, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

¹¹¹ J. Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders, Vol. 1: From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Auckland and London, 1996, pp. 132-3. I am indebted to James Belich, for I first heard of Charlotte Badger and the *Venus* piracy in his pages and was inspired to follow the story up.

represented as fat slag.¹¹² The additional words, 'has an infant child', provide a less squalid interpretation of her girth: post-parturition waistline spread, plus lactation. As for our latest instalment of *Venus* apocrypha it is too palpably shot with factual errors to explain them.

Nevertheless, there is always meaning in tall stories. This tale of a guileful female leader of oppressed men, who inflicted people's justice on a cruel tyrant, forms a small episode in James Belich's history of New Zealand, *Making Peoples*. It is a fine work offering a rich synthesis of New Zealand's cultures and identities from Polynesian settlement to 1900. Its brief Charlotte Badger passage derives chiefly from much older Pakeha antiquarian sources. They are evidently informative about the long-established *idea* of Charlotte Badger and the *Venus* piracy in New Zealand. Like Johnson's *General History*, they seem to have created vivid 'fictional reality'. In both cases, the 'fictional reality' still beguiles, in both senses.¹¹³

* * *

The *Venus* piracy was not unique, but that only heightens its historical significance. Since 1788, Australia's transported convicts had been making out to sea (or attempting to) with stolen craft, from tiny boats to sea-going sailing ships. As Tamsin O'Connor has shown for convicts at the Newcastle penal station, the sea and ships were constant reminders of the possibility of escape to liberty and the scene of its repeated practice.¹¹⁴ The same was true for convicts in and around early-settled havens such as Port Jackson, the lower Hawkesbury River, the Tamar estuary and the Derwent estuary.¹¹⁵ Nor did such escapes end with the *Venus* episode. They continued for decades after

¹¹² SG, 20 July 1806, p. 1.

¹¹³ My follow-up on Belich's and similar sources, and also on Maori memory of Charlotte Badger and the *Venus* piracy, will have to await another occasion, for reasons of space and ongoing enquiry,

¹¹⁴ T. O'Connor, 'Charting the New Waters with Old Patterns: The Black Marketeers, Pirates and Those Who Just Dreamed of the Way Home. The Penal Station and the Port of Newcastle, 1804-1824', unpublished paper presented at 'Colonial Places, Convict Spaces' conference, Leicester, 9-10 December, 1999. O'Connor has informed me that the same pattern occurred at Port Macquarie and Moreton Bay.

¹¹⁵ Many are related in Hughes' short survey of Australian convict piracy, in *The Fatal Shore*, pp. 212-20; others in Tipping's similar survey for Van Diemen's Land, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-6; and O'Connor, 'Charting the New Waters'; Carter, *op. cit.*, ch. 10. O'Connor's remit excluded the *Venus*. Hughes and Carter do not mention it (Carter is more concerned with land escapes to utopian interiors). I know of other incidents not mentioned in any of these historians' cited works.

the *Venus* piracy. Strangely, they have never received sustained scrutiny by historians of Australia and so remain little recognised as a major historical phenomenon. International historians of piracy, too, have not latched on to this rich seam. Contemporaries could, nevertheless, 'Read All About It!' in the colonial press. The *Venus* episode is not even unusual in combining convicts, seafarers and a soldier, if the broader picture of conspiracies aboard major convict ships is taken into account.¹¹⁶ It seems unusual, in the light of limited existing knowledge, however, in having women prominently involved, whether in fact or via 'fictional realism'. Given how very few named women pirates can yet be placed in positive history that has a value of its own, in view of the current intense interest in pirate women.

Convict piracy in Australia demands recognition as a major convict resistance practice, not just known about piecemeal, as in the widely known cases of Mary Bryant and her fellow escapees and the seizures of the *Wellington*, *Cyprus* and *Frederick*.¹¹⁷ Convict pirates sought not plunder (in most known episodes) but escape to a zone, however notional, of liberty outside the bounds (in every sense) of the established colonial order. Convict piracy was probably at least as important as convict bushranging and for all is known, may have actively involved significantly more convicts over time. Nor is this the entire wider context to the *Venus* piracy. Many convicts stowed away on ships (with or without the connivance of the captain or crew) and not all were detected like John William Lancashire. Some reached Mauritius and Bengal.¹¹⁸ New Zealand, however, probably saw far more than either, especially before British rule began in 1840 — though as Belich has aptly said they 'did not advertise their existence' there.¹¹⁹ J. D. Hainsworth has suggested that as many as 3000 convicts escaped

¹¹⁶ Christopher, "'Ten Thousand Times Worse than the Convicts.'"

¹¹⁷ Gillen, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-8, 57; C. H. Currey, *The Transportation, Escape and Pardonning of Mary Bryant*, Sydney, 1963. Mary Bryant appears in *Australian Dictionary of Biography: I, 1788-1850, A-H*, Melbourne, 1966, pp. 174-5, a very rare notice for a convict woman. On the *Wellington*, *Cyprus* and *Frederick* seizures, see Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-20; on narratives concerning the *Frederick* pirates, see H. Maxwell-Stewart, 'Seven tales for a man with seven sides', in L. Frost and H. Maxwell-Stewart (eds), *Chain Letters: Narrating Convict Lives*, Melbourne, 2001, pp. 64-76.

¹¹⁸ C. Anderson, *Convicts in the Indian Ocean: Transportation from South Asia to Mauritius, 1815-1853*, Basingstoke and New York, 2000, p. 70; 'Multiple Border Crossings; "Convicts Escaped from Botany Bay and residing in Calcutta"', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2001, pp. 1-22. See also J. Moloney, *The Native Born: the First White Australians*, Carlton, Victoria, p. 34; G. Karskens, *The Rocks: Life in Early Sydney*, Carlton, 1997, ch. 16.

¹¹⁹ Belich, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

by sea from Australia to one or other of their manifold destinations, before 1820.¹²⁰ What all this posits about networked convict knowledge of freedom chances on distant shores is obvious enough. Equally important, I suspect, was suffering common folk's utopian *dream* of a distant place without masters (by sea or land), magistrates, landed gentry, alienated labour, flogging, bondage, lawyers, courts and canting clergy serving worldly power. Linebaugh and Rediker have spoken of this in the Atlantic world.¹²¹ Escape to such a utopia, far outside the Australian colonies, was the hope of some convict absconders and bushrangers. It was also attempted by fifty convicts escaping by boat from Norfolk Island in September 1826, headed by John Goff, who was sent there for life after leading a bushranging outbreak at Port Macquarie.¹²²

The *Venus* pirates made their way to the Bay of Islands, North Island — then the main New Zealand port of call of whaling and trading ships and, of course, entirely under Maori sovereignty. Nevertheless, it was not a safe haven for convict pirates. They cannot have been unaware that the authorities in Sydney would, as they did, advertise their escape to shipping departing from Sydney and call on the services of the authorities in all British home and colonial ports, in East India Company ports, or any other ports the *Venus* might call at, to be on their guard. Merchant ship captains could be safely relied on to hate the *Venus* pirates. More daring captains might even be proactive if they came across them, especially if their ships carried some heavy armaments (unlike the *Venus*). Also, one prominent Bay of Islands Rangatira (leading chief), Te Pahi, had recently visited Sydney for some months and clearly valued the utility of good working relations with the British authorities there.¹²³

On 12 April, news of the *Venus* pirates was published in Sydney, brought by captains Birnie of the *Commerce* snow and Eber Bunker of the *Elizabeth* whaler, both recently arrived from the Bay of Islands. Birnie 'was given to understand' that the *Venus* 'is supposed to be wandering along the [North Island] coast', with no navigator aboard,

¹²⁰ Hainsworth, *Sydney Traders*, p. 12.

¹²¹ Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, esp. chs. 1, 5 and 9.

¹²² Carter, *Road to Botany Bay*, ch. 10; P. J. Byrne, *Criminal Law and Colonial Subject*, p. 139; I. Duffield, 'The Life and Death of "Black" John Goff: Aspects of the Black Convict Contribution to Resistance Patterns During the Convict Era in Eastern Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 33, No. 1 1987, pp. 30-44.

¹²³ Belich, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

having left Kelly behind at the Bay of Islands. Kelly was said 'taken by the master of the *Britannia* and sent home a prisoner'. Lancashire had also been left behind and in turn, taken off in the ship *Brothers*.¹²⁴ Clearly, as was always possible with pirate ships, the crew had deposed Kelly from command. The phrase 'sent home' seems to imply to Britain rather than the United States but I have found no London High Court of Admiralty trial of Kelly in 1807 or ensuing years. His ultimate fate therefore remains a puzzle. Nor have I yet traced Lancashire's later fate in early sources.

Bunker's report was partly from third parties too but fills out the story.¹²⁵ Two women and a child — they can only be Kitty Kelly, Charlotte Badger and Charlotte's baby — had been put ashore with Lancashire and Kelly. One of the women had died ashore and as the survivor had a child, clearly, Kitty was the fatality, while Charlotte begins to re-emerge, as in her earlier life, as a tough survivor. She now also ensured her child's survival, which cannot have been easy. Bunker said he had offered her a passage back to Sydney with the child but she had refused. Charlotte was not only physically tough but resolutely held on to her new freedom, rather than taking a deceptively easy option under difficult circumstances. Indeed, Belich recycles a story that she lived some years at the Bay of Islands with a Maori chief before sailing off with a New England whaling captain.¹²⁶ At the least, to survive and secure her child's survival for a length of time, she would of necessity have had to learn sufficient Maori language and custom to operate in Maori society, perhaps becoming the first woman Pakeha-Maori in a cultural sense.

As for command of the *Venus*, that, Bunker reported, had fallen to a black man, who must be Redmonds. 'Black Atlantic' men and women had a history of leading predominantly white (in a demographic sense) resistance activities.¹²⁷ As commander of the *Venus* however, he had a serious flaw. He lacked all knowledge of navigation so could not, so

¹²⁴ 'Ship News' SG, 12 April 1807, p. 1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Belich, *op. cit.*

¹²⁷ Duffield, "I Asked How the Vessel Could Go", pp. 140-3; Duffield, 'The Life and Death of "Black" John Goff'; P. Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black people in Britain*, London, 1984, pp. 214-20; Linebaugh, *The London Hanged*, pp. 336, 337, 348-9 and 351; Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, ch. 6; I. McCalman, *Revolutionary Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840*, Cambridge, 1987; 'Anti-Slavery and Ultra-Radicalism in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 7, 1986, pp. 99-117.

Bunker reported, follow his inclination and return to Sydney, or sail for any specific destination. As ordinary seamen did not normally possess navigation skills, the latter is very plausible. The former is possible, if Redmonds had shrewdly calculated that the chief odium could be heaped on Kelly, and the rest of the pirate crew could plead that they were merely deluded ignorant men rather than very wicked ones.

The *Venus* story now takes a nasty turn back to the 'bad ship' theme. In 1813, Reverend Samuel Marsden acted with Governor Macquarie in a move to publicise and stamp out atrocities and frauds committed by whites in Polynesia. Witnesses gave information to their 'New South Wales Society for Affording Protection to the Natives of the South Sea Islands'. Concerning New Zealand, they said that Maori were generally friendly to Europeans until 1806 and seldom hostile 'even after the atrocities of the *Venus* pirates'.¹²⁸ On himself going to New Zealand as its first Christian missionary in 1814, Marsden heard that the *Venus* had seized two Maori women (Bass Strait sealer-style) at the Bay of Islands, then sailed to the Thames River (perfectly possible by following the coast) and there captured Chief Houpa and one of his daughters. They escaped by jumping overboard. These deeds, possibly including other kidnappings of women, were as perilous as wicked, given Maori expertise at handling coastal war canoes and the customary *utu* inflicted for such deeds — violent death followed by ritual consumption of the evil-doers' corpses. And that, it seems, is what happened to every one of them.¹²⁹ So only Charlotte Badger and her child survived in freedom — a fabulous but apparently true outcome.

Where did they end up? The 'Mutiny on Venus' ballad hazards Fiji as where *all* the *Venus* pirates met their fate, perhaps its authors having heard Fiji was then was a nest of cannibals. Alan Richards has a nicer tale, that mother and child managed to escape from the Bay of Islands for Tonga, lived there for ten years (her Maori would have come in handy for getting the hang of Tongan speech) and only then departed aboard an American whaler.¹³⁰ And after that, what further voyages and landfalls to escape bondage and claim liberty?

¹²⁸ A.T. Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden: The Great Survivor*, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 148-9.

¹²⁹ Tipping, *op. cit.*, p. 134; Belich, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹³⁰ Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Eager and Ready, the crying lone flyer,
Whets for the whales-path the heart irresistibly,
O'er tracks of ocean; seeing that anyhow
My lord deems to me this dead life
On loan and on land ...¹³¹

¹³¹ Ezra Pound, 'The Seafarer', translated and adapted from the Old English, in *The Translations of Ezra Pound*, London, 1953. The phrase 'crying lone flyer' indicates a seabird but also a venturesome mariner's escape by sea from earthly woes; 'whale-path' is a common trope for the ocean in Old English. Black country dialect still retains features from Old English.