Interrogating Speech in Colonial Encounters
Native Women and Voice

Donna C. Matahaere-Atariki, B.A. Otago

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Abstract

This dissertation is an examination of Maori women's relationship to feminism within the current postcolonial dilemma of New Zealand politics. It interrogates the voice of native women and the location of this articulation. I investigate the efficacy of 'speaking-out' under conditions of colonial renewal and advance stages of late-capitalism. I ask 'what role does mainstream feminist politics play in the reproduction of 'images' that express native women's subjectivity in the Pacific'? And subsequently, 'how have Maori women responded'? If the point is to have a voice, what does it mean for those of us who have been silenced to be 'given' a voice? The limits of feminism as the presumed destination of native women will be seen to reflect the double-bind proposed by Maori women unable to return 'home', to that space designated, 'indigenous theory'. The irony and contradictory inevitability of postcolonial politics produces a moment, event, that Native women have no option but to negotiate as part of the colonial encounter we all inhabit.
Acknowledgements

For Ruby and Rose Bain

This dissertation originated in part from a personal desire to make explicit the limits of feminism in constructing a 'space' of liberation that could 'speak' to the lives of Maori women. My life, and the lives of the many women in my family, could not be easily contained within the myriad of representations that spoke for us. The death of two of my aunts within a short time of each other last year made what I was trying to achieve in my writing appear utterly useless. This grief will remain with me always as a reminder of the deep offence done to us as women and native.

There are so many who have made an impression on me and the directions I have taken in this dissertation. Any faults, however, are certainly mine. I would especially like to acknowledge my supervisor Lynne Alice for steering me through to the end and never letting me lose faith. Thank you for believing in me. Thanks also to Maud for sharing with me the postcolonial irony of our predicament as women in a settled society.

Finally I would like to acknowledge all my family who, at the end of the day, I remain accountable to; Riki, Roderick, Susie, Elizabeth, Lee, Jane, Bonney, Maria, Rachel and Kiri-Dawn. I thank especially Winnie and Matt for reminding me that my feminism is extremely contradictory, and Toni for being so patient. Most of all, however, I want to acknowledge my mother and father who always knew the world was not as it appeared.
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