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Interrogating Speech in Colonial Encounters  
Native Women and Voice

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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.

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