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**The Construction of Maori, Melanesian and
Aboriginal Peoples in the writings of Jean Devanny**

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Abstract

Historical constructions of racial otherness have legacies which endure to the present. The analysis of the discursive practices of the past helps to understand the present tenacious investment in notions of racial difference. This thesis examines the construction of Maori, Melanesian and Aboriginal peoples in the writings of Jean Devanny.

Western texts which are informed by the [impossible] need to become indigenous, attempt to incorporate the indigenous character as an “other-within”. Where no conflict regarding indigenisation exists, such tension is minimised and the indigene remains a more distant other.

In Devanny’s New Zealand novels, the attempt to incorporate Maori as “one of us” is subverted by essentialist constructions which assign to them a fixed, irreducible otherness. In the Australian text, racial difference is acknowledged and deployed to challenge the prejudice which such difference generates. Additionally, this text offers an exploration of the colonial processes which assign a group identity on the basis of racial difference.

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Introduction

My whole life-work and outlook, my ingrained acceptance as a New Zealander of the coloured man as equal with white, my studies in anthropology, my cultivation of coloured persons as personal friends, my writings – all together, these establish that a tolerant attitude towards injustice perpetrated on coloured peoples is not to be numbered among my many faults.

Point of Departure, 302.

Jean Devanny's passionate identification with the struggle against oppression of and discrimination against women, indigenous people and migrant workers pervades her autobiography *Point of Departure*. Fiercely committed to championing the causes of various marginal groups, Devanny herself occupied a number of marginalised positions both within the dominant bourgeois hegemony and as a woman and writer in the Communist Party. However, while a shared experience of oppression offers the occasion for affinity between marginalised groups, theories of oppression which equate the marginalisation of women with that of colonised indigenous people cannot be easily assumed. Various critics have pointed out that while white colonial women occupied a problematic position, placed both inside and outside the dominant hegemony, their collusion with and sometimes active participation in the colonial enterprise cannot be ignored.¹ Colonial ideologies of race and gender continue to inform life in the late twentieth century. As Margaret Jolly points out in her essay "Colonising women: The maternal body and empire": "Colonising women concern me because they are a contemporary presence, not an ancient absence" (104). An analysis of their articulations of and challenges to the dominant ideologies may assist in developing an understanding of the pervasive role they continue to play in sustaining the racial and gender divisions of our contemporary society.

My examination of Devanny's work will trace the development of her construction of the "racial other" from two early New Zealand novels through to a later work written in Australia in an attempt to establish the extent to which her work conforms to the discursive

frameworks of colonialism and identify what counter-hegemonic features inform her writing. The thesis examines the novels The Butcher Shop (1926), and Lenore Divine (1929), and the Australian work Cindie, published twenty years later in 1949. The short story “Maori Love”, from the collection Old Savage and Other Stories 1927, is considered alongside these works. Devanny contributed a number of articles on Aboriginal peoples to various publications and extracts from these and her autobiography Point Of Departure, are referred to where these illuminate the texts examined. Devanny’s unpublished study “The Sex Life of the Maori”, has also provided some valuable insights to her works. While my thesis does not include a detailed analysis of this study, I have included a transcription of the manuscript as an appendix to the thesis since no copy of it is available in New Zealand.

Edward Said’s seminal text Orientalism, has been a principal influence on post-colonial critical theory. His critique of a dominant Western discourse of Orientalism has however, been contested by various critics who argue that a unified theory of the power of an essentially homogeneous male discourse may fail to take into account marginal and counter-hegemonic voices and ignore the gaps and contradictions which these produce. In her analysis of women’s travel writing, Discourses of Difference, Sara Mills comments on Said’s lack of address to gender and identifies his view of Orientalism as a peculiarly male preserve which ignores women’s role as agents in the imperial and colonial enterprise (57-59). Similarly, Reina Lewis argues that while Said’s subsequent works suggest a more complex dialectic, Orientalism pays no attention to the part women played in imperial cultural and textual productions (15-22). Both critics insist that while women must be considered as agents in Orientalism, a theoretical framework which considers the complex and shifting position of women within the dominant hegemony is essential.

The colonial enterprise necessarily produced ideologies of gender, class and race, which were complex and contingent on shifting relational modes of power. How comfortably do women, constructed as the inferior other within patriarchal discourse, occupy the dominant position afforded them by a colonial hierarchy of race? Given their restricted access to colonial power, how do women writers participate in colonialism’s assumed power to translate its colonised others? Do the contradictions inherent in their

positioning result in representations of colonised inhabitants which contest or comply (or both contest *and* comply) with dominant colonial discourse? These are some of the questions I wish to address in my examination of Jean Devanny's writings.

Devanny's texts occupy an interesting cusp between colonial and post-colonial writing. In her book Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Elleke Boehmer defines post-colonial writing as interrogating colonial discourse and attempting to resist its perspectives (3). To what extent do Devanny's texts participate in the prevailing discursive practices and to what extent are these challenged in her narratives? Does the writing display any sense of self-division which might arise from Devanny's marginalisation as a woman and the textual authority bestowed on her as a white woman within the dominant hegemony? Boehmer also argues for the importance of considering the historical and political context in post-colonial criticism. As I attempt to trace the development of Devanny's construction of indigenous people over a period of some 23 years, the influence of geographical location or place is also relevant. The early novels and short stories were written in New Zealand, the later work Cindie in Australia. As Winston Rhodes observes in his essay "Australian and New Zealand Literature", an awareness of Maori as part of a general New Zealand identity has had a profound impact on New Zealand literature. Australian writers, on the other hand, have shown fewer tendencies to identify Aboriginal culture as contributing to a national Australian character. Devanny's ideological relationship with the countries in which she was writing and the awareness of the audience she was writing for must also be considered as a discursive pressure on her work. Terry Goldie's theory of indigenisation as expounded in his analysis of Australian, Canadian and New Zealand writing, Fear and Temptation, is also relevant when comparing the New Zealand novels and the Australian writing. While a process of indigenisation may be at work in the New Zealand texts I suggest that this tension is minimised in Devanny's writing on Australia.

Devanny's ethnographic study reflects the obsessive interest of the late nineteenth century in the history of family organisations and sexual relations, identified by Rosalind Coward in Patriarchal Precedents (9-10). One of the results of this concern was the investigation of so-called primitive societies in an attempt to make sense of contemporary sexual and familial organisation (9-10). This process demonstrates Terry Goldie's theory

that the indigene is of interest only to the extent that he or she comments on the white Western self, and this “commodification” of indigenous people will be explored during the course of the thesis (11).

However, what is also interesting about this work, obviously intended for publication, is the authoritative tone of the writing. Sara Mills has identified an anxiety experienced by many women as they presumed to enter a realm of public literary expression traditionally dominated by men (40-42). However, in “The Sex Life of the Maoris”, Devanny undertakes to challenge the “leading authorities” on Maori peoples in an effort to “set the record straight”. While her own forthright and combative personality must have been a contributory factor, one can assume that her active engagement in the “public” world of socialist politics provided additional confidence in her own authority to intervene in this traditionally exclusively male province.ⁱⁱ Her study also reveals her ready participation in colonialism’s assumed authority to translate its colonised others. However, the ambiguities and contradictions which mark her writings reflect the ambivalent nature of her participation in colonial discourse.

ⁱ For a wide range of critical analysis of colonial women’s participation in imperialism and colonialism see Margaret Jolly, “Colonising women: The maternal body and empire”; Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism*, Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire and Western Women and Imperialism*. (eds) N. Chauduri and M. Strobel.

ⁱⁱ In *Exiles at Home*, Drusilla Modjeska describes the mixed reactions of Devanny’s literary friends to her at times, combative and confrontational manner. Modjeska quotes a letter from Nettie Palmer who wrote of Devanny:

I respect her courage, admire her generosity and friendliness, but resent her general cocksureness, her way of charging into a thoughtful questioner at a meeting, simply riding him down like a policeman into a harmless, interested crowd (127).

Chapter One

Superior Savages

The teaching of pride in, and respect for, our native people the Maoris was part of the school curriculum.

Point of Departure, 105.

Besides, we were discussing Maoris, not black men. The Maoris are brown... They are a wonderful race.

The Butcher Shop, 46.

In her autobiography Point of Departure, Jean Devanny records the feeling of “foreignness” which she and her family experienced on arrival in Sydney. Her first observation on this sense of difference relates to the White Australia Policy, the social implications of which, as a New Zealander, she finds shocking: “All enlightened New Zealanders of my generation detested the White Australia Policy.” In New Zealand, she maintains, “Discrimination against coloured people was regarded by all self-respecting folk as the badge and distinction of an inferior type of white” (105). Devanny’s narrative specifically locates racism outside New Zealand’s boundaries and absolves all “enlightened” New Zealanders from complicity in racial discrimination.¹ The superiority of New Zealand’s uniquely harmonious race relations has been an ideal widely celebrated since the early twentieth century. In his analysis of the New Zealand search for national identity, A Destiny Apart, historian Keith Sinclair cites a quote from The New Zealand Herald in 1906: “Here, for the first time, the savage man was treated as one who had some of the natural rights of property, which our race has always claimed for its own people” (200).

With a main focus on Jean Devanny’s first novel, The Butcher Shop, this chapter explores Devanny’s participation in a discourse that constructs New Zealand race relations as harmonious and characterised by equality and inclusiveness. I suggest that while her

narrative appears to reject human difference on the basis of race, it nevertheless reveals what post-colonial critic Homi K. Bhabha identifies as an ambivalent and contradictory mode of representation where the colonised other's difference is simultaneously asserted and disavowed.ⁱⁱ This ambivalence is evident in the text's repeated reference to colour, the most visible marker of difference, in spite of the assertions that in New Zealand no distinctions are made on the basis of colour. Difference becomes less visible where the colonised other begins to take on attributes of the coloniser. I suggest that in Devanny's text the portrayal of the "primitive" in western dress takes on suggestions of a "bad imitation" to deflect this threat to clear and visible difference. Devanny's own ambivalence concerning the superiority of Western civilisation unsettles the traditional opposition of the colonist as civilised and the colonised, the barbaric other.

This is undercut however, by the notion of essentialism where primitive indigenous people are constructed as having essential characteristics which assign them to a fixed, irreducible otherness. In Devanny's text these constructions of essentialism intersect with eugenic theories of "type". The chapter concludes with an exploration of the implications of these articulations of "natural" difference.

The origins of a pride in New Zealand race relations, particularly when compared to other settler countries such as Australia and South Africa, have been attributed to the early perceptions of Maori as a "superior" type of savage.ⁱⁱⁱ In these early constructions Maori were ranked higher than most other primitive peoples and were characterised as possessing a greater capacity (with proper assistance) of attaining a high level of civilisation. In his reminiscences With Anthony Trollope in New Zealand, Anthony Trollope observes:

They are certainly more highly gifted than other savage nations I have seen. They are as superior in intelligence and courage to the Australian Aboriginal as they are in outward appearance. They are more pliable and nearer akin in their manners to civilised mankind than are the American Indians. They are more manly, more courteous, as more sagacious than the African negro (133).

As James Belich observes in his essay “Myth, Race and Identity in New Zealand”, this notion of “better blacks” also complemented the evolving idea of New Zealanders as descended from “select” British stock: “From the outset, European New Zealanders consisted partly in having the ‘best blacks’ and in treating them the best” (12).

Nevertheless, New Zealand settler-Maori relations *were* superior to those of other settler colonies and Keith Sinclair attributes this to the prevailing humanitarian ideology which informed British colonial policy: “The humanitarian imperial ideology at the time New Zealand was annexed seems the only factor distinguishing it from other settler colonies” (127). The humanitarian ideal of the basic equality of all races was one to which Jean Devanny was deeply committed. Both her writings and her championing of the rights of various marginalised minority groups attest to this. Her journalist writings on behalf of Aborigines reveal a clear recognition of and a genuine concern for their plight at the hands of “white invaders”. However, despite her understanding of the sources of oppression, and her acknowledgement of dispossession in the process of colonial expansion, her vision of Maori is shaped by the internalised ideology of racial equality: “between Hawaiki’s brown sons and the white there was no room for line of demarcation” (BS, 33). In her study of New Zealand women novelists, Where Did She Come From, critic Heather Roberts comments on the scant attention paid to Maori by women writing in the 1920s. Like Devanny, these women, though concerned with women’s oppression, failed to link women’s oppression to that of other marginalised groups (57).^{iv} Devanny’s own preoccupation with the oppression of women under contemporary patriarchal institutions may have been another reason for not extending her insights on the processes of oppression to Maori.

Early in The Butcher Shop, there is a discussion about race relations in New Zealand. Margaret Errol, newly arrived to take up a position as a housemaid on the Maunganui sheep station, has been informed by the Scottish housekeeper Mrs. Curdy that there are “any quantity” of Maori working on the station. Mrs. Curdy obviously has her own views regarding the employment of Maori when the country is full of unemployed whites:

“You are a funny people you New Zealanders. You treat your natives

as if they were white.”

“Where is the difference?” asked the girl quietly, but with a suspicion of heat.

“The difference lies in the colour. A white man is a white man, and a black man is a black man.”

“Yes of course. That’s no argument. Besides, we were discussing Maoris, not black men. The Maoris are brown.” She waxed enthusiastic, for she was not far from her school days and the lessons on the grandeur of the Maori race, and she had read all the written works on them. “They are a wonderful race. Why, Elsdon Best and Edward Tregear and Johannes Andersen cannot do too much honour to the Maoris.” (46).

While Margaret’s rather naive embrace of the narrative of a “superior” race does suggest some authorial distancing from this discourse, the passage nevertheless reflects the ideology of superior race-relations. Mrs. Curdy’s observation reflects the popular belief in an exemplary non-discriminatory attitude that is uniquely “New Zealand”. The other non-New Zealand characters share Mrs. Curdy’s prejudice in varying degrees. Glengarry writhes in the face of Jimmy Tutaki’s contempt: “To be despised by ‘a bloody nigger’!” (118). His mother is surprised at the fuss made over the birthday of “an ordinary shepherd, and a Maori at that” (101). Ian Longstairs is not overly concerned about Jimmy’s apparent lack of respect for his wife Miette since “he was a Maori and doubtless did not know any better” (161). Apparently, all of these newcomers have, like Miette, “a lot to learn about New Zealanders and Maoris. She had to learn that the Maori, grand in the traditions of his race, stood equal with the average white man... in New Zealand racial distinction between Hawaiki’s sons and the whites is non-existent” (141). These characters, apart from Miette, are shown to be capable of growth and learning. Mrs. Curdy is amazed to discover “the cultured table manners and undeniable mental superiority of the Maori” (33). Longstairs quickly detects and marvels at Jimmy’s intelligence and Glengarry discovers that he is “a superior sort of chap” (99). However, it is only the New Zealanders Margaret and Barry who have a true sense of Jimmy’s worth: “she [Margaret] learned to know Tutaki and to respect and like him as well as Barry himself did” (71).

The ideological perspective encoded in this construction functions to obscure the impact of European colonisation on Maori society. As prominent Maori scholar Sydney Moko Mead points out in his lecture “Maori-Pakeha Relationships: an obstacle race”, the reputation for harmonious race relations “is really myth that has been carefully contrived and nurtured by the dominant section of our society”(39). This myth successfully masks the very uneven power relations that have historically informed the colonial encounter. As observed earlier, its pervasiveness is evident in the way it has been employed by the dominant group until very recently, to define New Zealand’s national identity. In his essay “Immigrants and Indigenes”, Mark Williams remarks on its efficacy in the construction of an acceptable national self-image, “in a world where colonialism and racism are bad for business” (638). Jean Devanny’s participation in this discourse, despite her sincere condemnation of racial oppression, points to the pervasiveness of women's take-up of colonial ideology and the various positions available to them within the discourse.

Margaret’s explanation that Maoris are brown not black is also noteworthy. In his comparative study of the race relations of New Zealand and Australia, historian Kerry Howe describes the positive early European settler reaction to Maori in comparison with Australian Aborigines. Amongst the various favourable characteristics attributed to Maori was their robust physique and relatively light complexion: “The colour of the natives, taken as a mean, resembles that of a European gypsy; but there is considerable difference in the shades, varying between a dark chestnut and a light agreeable tinge of an English brunette” (qtd. in Howe: 17). This representation is considerably more favourable than contemporary portrayals of the Australian “blackfellow” who was repeatedly described as more akin to the ape than to humankind (11-20). James Belich describes this construction of Maori as the “White Savage” stereotype, a product of imperial ideology which ranked indigenous peoples according to their perceived similarities to Europeans (11). In their conversation Margaret tells Mrs. Curdy that Elsdon Best, Edward Tregear and Johannes Anderson “cannot do too much honour to the Maoris”. Both Best and Tregear were New Zealand ethnologists who advocated the theory of Caucasian or Aryan origins for Maori. (Devanny’s own unpublished ethnographic study, “The Sex Life of the Maoris”, was based largely on the works of Elsdon Best.) This idea survived well into the twentieth century and

may have contributed to the more positive attitude towards Maori in comparison with other indigenous people. As Belich points out, the notion of long-lost cousins legitimated the European presence in New Zealand as family re-union (17).^v

Both Maire, the Maori housemaid, and Jimmy Tutaki are described as having “golden” skin. The text takes pains to emphasise the equal attractiveness of Messenger and Tutaki’s colouring: “Messenger’s own skin was white almost as the snow outside, but not more beautiful than the luscious gold of his friend’s body” (32). This portrayal would appear to resist colonial discourse, which enshrines whiteness as a dominant value. However, historically, the labelling of skin-colour has not been an objective designation of difference. Sander L Gilman observes that “the very concept of color is a quality of Otherness” (30). Despite Devanny’s insistence on New Zealanders’ “inferential refusal to recognize a colour line” (POD, 105), and the textual valorization of Jimmy Tutaki, her repeated reference to Tutaki as “the brown man” foregrounds rather than elides colour difference.

While the colour of Messenger and Tutaki’s skin is equally attractive the comparison between Margaret and Rona, Jimmy’s stepmother, is more ambiguous. Earlier in the narrative Chief Tutaki’s wife is described as “most agreeably good-looking” (109). However, when she is placed alongside Margaret the effect is different: “In the brilliant sunshine she [Margaret] stood among the dirty pens like a tall white lily. Rona’s dusky skin, her ungraceful, incongruously clothed big body and bare primitive feet set off Margaret’s daintiness, her exquisite toilette, the glorious beauty of her dark fairness” (111). In this passage it becomes more difficult to untangle Rona’s “dusky skin” and Margaret’s lily whiteness from a value-laden system of binary opposites. Traditional imperial ideology, which equates dark with the primitive and white with civilisation, surfaces in the inscription of these images. The narrative proceeds to spell it out: “Glengarry... appreciated the distinction of the picture they made: the dressed-up primitive against the finished product of civilisation” (111).

The “dressed-up primitive” reappears in Devanny’s second New Zealand work, Lenore Divine. In this novel it is the wife of a Maori member of Parliament who, like Rhona, hasn’t quite got it right:

Toki [her husband] was correctly dressed in the fashion of the white man; but his wife, though wearing a truly beautiful costume, had bare feet and a red handkerchief tied round her hair. Her baby was held securely upon her back by a blanket draped around her body (159).

In The Savage in Literature, Brian Street discusses the implications of the portrayal of primitive man in European dress. Street maintains that since clothing is a major symbol of cultural difference, when the native character is portrayed in Western dress it is frequently to prove how badly it fits: “when the clothes come off, so will the culture” (116). Devanny’s “dressed-up primitives” do appear to signal the difficulty the primitive indigene has in acquiring the characteristics of Western culture. The bare feet and the red handkerchief tied around the head are signals that they have not quite mastered the complexities of western civilization.^{vi}

In one of Devanny’s unpublished stories, “Maori and Pakeha Friendship”, a Pakeha woman, Mrs. Grimsby, becomes friendly with her Maori neighbour, Mrs. Tipani. As the friendship deepens, “Mrs. Tipani developed a passion for doing things the ‘white’ way and Mrs. Grimsby subtly apprehended that it was not because she wanted to so much as that she desired to compliment her friend” (4). Mrs. Grimsby is “profoundly moved at her neighbour’s fealty” (6), and on Mrs. Tipani’s request, makes her an impressive black dress just like her own. Also at her friend’s request, Mrs. Grimsby takes her to her own church where Mrs. Tipani “not to be done out of her full measure of publicity” insists on standing next to Mrs. Grimsby in the choir pew. Mrs. Grimsby is a little taken aback but not fazed by her friend’s action. There is plenty of room in the choir pew anyway. On the walk home, Mrs. Tipani, unaccustomed to her formal attire, becomes progressively more dishevelled. She removes her shoes and her hair comes loose. Once again however, Mrs. Grimsby takes it all in her stride: “Mrs. Grimsby smiled to herself. She minded not at all the gaping few who rode or drove past and laughed aloud” (8). On their arrival home, Mr. Grimsby, when

confronted by the unusual sight, not only apprehends “the spirit of his wife and condoned it, but found himself thrilling with an unaccountable pride” (9). In this story of Maori and Pakeha friendship, as in the extract from The Butcher Shop quoted above, there is friendship and respect between the Maori and Pakeha women in spite of their cultural differences. However, in both representations, the idealised qualities of the white women are defined against the incongruous figure of the Maori women in European dress.

As various feminist critics have observed, this construction of white femininity is based on a taken-for granted distinction between white civilised and black primitive womanhood. In her analysis of white woman, racism and history, Beyond the Pale, Vron Ware argues that the explorations of, and challenges to the concept of womanhood in the late nineteenth century must be examined as part of the ideological cluster of imperialism (148). Devanny’s attempt to challenge the contemporary image of womanhood reveals what Marilyn Lake, in her critique of western feminism’s complicit relationship with imperial ideology, describes as its “conceptual dependence on and contribution to imperial relations, even as it sought to challenge them” (82).^{vii}

The construction of Margaret as a “finished product of civilisation” is of course also challenged later in the novel when her “primitive passion”, awakened by Glengarry, results finally in an act of unrivalled savagery. Civilisation is exposed as a flimsy veneer, inadequate in the face of “elemental instincts” (104), to which we are all apparently subject, regardless of race or culture. Commenting on Jimmy’s response to Miette’s repeated sexual advances, the narrator remarks ironically: “two generations had not taught Jimmy the finer points, the niceties of civilisation” (161). In her introduction to The Butcher Shop, Heather Roberts remarks on Jean Devanny’s ambivalent attitude towards civilisation, on the one hand attracted by its cultural dimensions, on the other repelled by its hypocrisies (20). In general, however, Devanny appears to subscribe to the contemporary view of social Darwinism, which saw a slow but steady march of human progress, the worst elements of society being gradually eliminated. Margaret is “profoundly moved” by “The History of the race! How wonderful it was... that great trek through history, beginning with the drop to the earth of the ape and reaching so far as to herself, a twentieth-century woman lost in the

mazes of a wondrous civilisation” (205). The race is of course white and the civilisation Western.

Devanny herself, however, does not ascribe the superiority of Western civilisation to any inherent qualities of “whiteness”. In “The Sex Life of the Maoris” she asserts that: “the fact that the Anglo-Saxon culture is as superior to the Polynesian as the latter’s barbarian morality was superior to the present day Anglo-Saxon, is a matter for no conceit on either side as both culture and morals are traceable to economic necessity” (109-110). Earlier in the same paragraph she insists that, “Mentally the Maoris are equals”.

In *The Butcher Shop*, Jimmy Tutaki’s “undeniable mental superiority” (33) is emphasised. This is partly as a result of his “superior cultured upbringing” (35) and privileged education. It is also, however, attributed to an inherent ability: “He was the type that assimilates quickly, that remembers, that learns without effort” (31). This representation runs contrary to typical colonial discourse in which the “native” is portrayed as illiterate, irrational and backward but it coincides with the New Zealand trope of “superior natives”. However, within this convention the traditional construction is of Maori possessing the potential for civilisation with appropriate assistance from the more enlightened Pakeha. The text subverts this convention by allowing the Pakeha character to be instructed by a Maori: “He [Jimmy] did her the world of good from the viewpoint of real development. Uncovering his own versatility he showed her the meagerness of her own attainments” (80). Barry Messenger recognises that “a wealth of beauty lay in the virgin soil of her [Margaret], waiting to be revealed... and that Tutaki was supplying an actual need” (80).

However, since Tutaki is “exceedingly well-read” (99), it is presumably instruction in Western thought and philosophy that Jimmy provides, rather than any insight into his Maori culture. As Heather Roberts observes, Tutaki appears to be valorised mainly as a “brown Pakeha” (58), his cultural superiority acquired from his Western education. This construction of Maori as possessing the potential to become “one-of us” implicitly defuses the threat of the “Other” and demonstrates the process Gayatri Spivak describes as the

“domestication” of the other: “The project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolute Other into a domesticated Other that consolidated the imperialist self” (273).^{viii}

Nevertheless, despite the overt intention to portray Jimmy as the mental and cultural equal of the Messengers, he remains, it appears, subject to the “call of the pah”. The representation of even the most “civilised” Maori as always at risk of reverting to savagery is another trope common in New Zealand colonial fiction. The narrator observes that: “Margaret knew that Barry was not awake, as she was to the vein of imperishable savage simplicity, of child-like acceptance of people and things in Jimmy’s make-up” (168). The construction of the indigene as childlike is a standard representation within colonial discourse, as is the corresponding image of the “knowing” European. However, of greater significance is the “vein of imperishable savagery” which Margaret recognises in Jimmy. The immediate association of the vein metaphor is with blood, historically a potent signifier of innate and irreconcilable difference; “in the blood” also suggests a genetic determination of characteristics over which the individual has no control. The adjective “imperishable” reinforces this sense of fixity. The construction not only marks Jimmy as absolute other, but also assigns permanence to that otherness.

It is apparent that Jimmy’s accelerated advance up the evolutionary scale of civilisation has not yet been quite completed: “Civilisation demanded from the white man of Jimmy’s type at least a semblance of respect and consideration for the Miettes; but two generations had not taught Jimmy the finer points, the niceties of civilisation. His essential savage honesty had not been obscured” (161). As observed earlier, the “niceties of civilisation” are, by the end of the novel, revealed to be but a veneer for even those at the top of the evolutionary scale. The ironic tone of the passage appears to give a positive value to Jimmy’s “essential savage honesty”. Jimmy’s lack of artifice is due to the fact that he has not yet acquired one of the more negative aspects of civilisation. From this perspective, Jimmy is still more the same than other, albeit a little less sophisticated.

However, in the sentence immediately preceding this passage an essential difference in racial sexual patterns has been registered. Unlike the men of Miette's previous experience, Jimmy "was a man not of her race, a man whose sex traditions differed essentially from the pakeha's" (161). Later, on the same page, the narrator announces that Jimmy's "essential difference from white men of his kind left Miette at sea" (161). In her analysis of sex, race and nation in Australian colonial women's writing, Along the Faultlines, Susan Sheridan makes the observation that their writing manifests "the classic ambivalence of colonial discourse, the simultaneous affirmation and disavowal of likeness, the construction of racial difference as absolute" (125). In spite of Devanny's disclaimers of racial distinction in both Points of Departure and The Butcher Shop, the text of her novel reveals a distinct disavowal of likeness.

Theories of essential racial differences were part of the complex international debate on evolution during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The concept of human "types", in which genetic construction predetermines character, morality and behaviour formed part of this debate. This discourse surfaces in the text in the repeated references to "types" and the accompanying notions of fixed and congenital identities. Margaret, for example, has never before encountered anyone of Miette's "low type": "She was too innocent and inexperienced to recognise the other woman's type or even to know it existed" (157). Ian Longstairs, on the other hand, knew well that his wife "was a sensualist of low type. He knew the general laws appertaining to low types" (152). Furthermore, "Miette could not hide the type of woman she was. She was born to it. She had not become it through circumstances or reason or will. She was it, and the type was stamped all over her" (145). This construction of Miette's identity suggests a fixed pattern of behaviour, which cannot be changed.

Margaret, whose high level of intelligence, purity of being and motive is repeatedly emphasised, is obviously an example of the highest "type": "She was a rarity in womankind" (44). The text explicitly invokes a naturally ordained hierarchy:

... the varied mentalities and emotions of humanity running the whole gamut of the scale from highest to lowest; from Margaret

and Messenger the scale ran down through Glengarry and Tutaki, the better class workers there, down through Miette, the unfortunate embodiment of human animalism, to the half-crazed little “sheepo” that Messenger kept out of goodness of heart. (181).

Inherent in the theory of a hierarchically arranged universe is, of course, a pattern of human inequality from which there is no escape. However, the biological determinism of this theory does appear to exclude racial difference. Jimmy occupies the same level as Glengarry. In the novel Lenore Divine, the Maori characters Kowhatu and Ngaire both occupy an elevated status alongside the approved whites.

Accompanying the concept of a hierarchy of types there appears to be a somewhat contradictory Nietzschean notions of “Übermensch”, where particular individuals are liberated from the traditional values of the “masses” by virtue of their individualism, moral strength and independence. Margaret, whose high level of intelligence and purity of being are repeatedly emphasised in the text, has “a transcendental quality setting her apart and above the common woman for whom the conventions and formalities are necessary” (101). She is “beyond and above the conventions”(154). This construction of Margaret as implicitly one of the “chosen” may also be significant when linked to references to the “good clean stock” (43) she springs from. Barry’s “clean racial sentiment” and “unsullied blood” (30), is also remarked on. “He had preserved himself in order that he might breed a fine clean, race” (37). These phrases reflect a discourse of Eugenics and its theories of race improvement through selective breeding. In her study of the impact of scientific theories on attitudes to women in the period 1870–1920, “Evolution, Eugenics and Women”, Carol Bacchi points out that many contemporary feminists sincerely endorsed these theories (139).

In her thesis “Fragments of Feminism”, Ruth Hogg accuses Devanny of “valorising the purity and moral desirability of white reproduction above that of other races, and emphasising the Eugenic purpose of a European drive to reproduce which is historically and spiritually validated” (179). However, while statements such as “she did not know that the coloured man made appeal only to her type of white woman” (182), are problematic

(and will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 3), there appears to be little textual evidence to support this argument. In the novel Lenore Divine, published in the same year as The Butcher Shop, the white heroine and her Maori lover, Kowhatu, will together produce “a strong race”. Kowhatu argues that the “strong only has the right to survive. Holly is weak; through no fault of his own, I grant you, but weak just the same. His breed must be weak like himself. I will breed a strong race, Lenore – you and I together” (168). The real concern, as Bacchi points out, was that the best “stock” was being outbred by the unfit (136). When Margaret encounters the “idiot” boy on the Roderick farm her reaction is one of disgust: “This man will have the instinct to breed like you and me. Far worse than you and I, as the lower the mentality the stronger and more ungovernable will be the animal instincts. He is better dead. He is an animal” (73).

In an article written in 1930 for Stead’s Review, “Eugenic Reform and the Unfit”, Devanny offers a less extreme solution to that proposed by Margaret. She argues that the “inborn mental qualities” of the “superior types” has encouraged the use of birth control methods thereby reducing their numbers. To offset this “we must look for a reduction in the numbers of inferior types”. To achieve this she advocates “enforced birth control among the uncontrolled, the bestial, the simple” (22). There is however no reference to the dangers of racial inter-breeding. Racial purity implies freedom from “the plasmic taint” of “defective germ-plasm stock” (21). In a newspaper article written much later in 1959, Devanny argues that in New Zealand, “intermarriage between Maori and white results in a type genetically superior to both races” (JD/PP/169).

In his essay “Musings in Maoriland”, J.O.C. Phillips observes that by the 1870s the issue of Maori had been more or less resolved in the minds of white settlers. Perceived as a race whose survival was possible only through assimilation, they no longer presented a threat, neither physically nor within the discursive self-fashioning of belonging and indigeneity. Rather, identification with Maori could contribute towards the construction of a distinctive New Zealand identity (527-528). I have suggested that Jean Devanny’s construction of Maori in The Butcher Shop, in general coincides with a New Zealand

colonial discourse in which the idealisation of Maori contributes towards the fashioning of a national ethos of egalitarianism and harmonious race relations. Within this ideology a proprietorial pride exists in an indigenous people whose superior characteristics, when assimilated, will enhance the “national” stock. However, a tension is created between the desire to incorporate Maori as “one of us” and constructions of Maoris’ essential difference.

ⁱ Stephanie Pride makes this observation in her Ph.D. thesis “A Home in this World”. In Robin Hyde’s *Wednesday’s Children*, racial oppression and discrimination is located in the operations of Italian fascism while in *Nor the Years Condemn*, Australia is constructed as racist. This process of displacement absolves New Zealand from complicity in racial discrimination.

ⁱⁱ In his essay “The Other Question”, Bhabha argues that colonial discourse produces the colonised object as simultaneously other yet entirely knowable and visible:

The fetish or [colonial] stereotype gives access to an “identity” which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it (27).

ⁱⁱⁱ See for instance Howe: 17-23, and Sinclair: 199-200.

^{iv} Later feminists did make these connections however they were in turn challenged by feminists “of colour” who challenged assertions of shared marginality, which erase distinctions of race. Homogeneous assumptions of the universality and commonality of women’s shared oppression were also criticised for failing to address the multiple and varied situations and concerns of women from non-Western cultures.

^v Edward Tregear maintained that the ancestors of the Polynesians were Aryans who had migrated eastward. There was therefore no need for the Europeans “to blush at his own brotherhood with the beauties of Hawaii or the heroes of Orakau... We of Europe have set out on the same quest. Encircling Africa, the two vast horns of the Great Migration have touched again... the Aryan of the West greets the Aryan of the Eastern Seas” (qtd. in Sorrenson, 29–30).

^{vi} In his essay “Signs Taken For Wonders”, post-colonial critic Homi Bhabha argues that the effects of this process of the colonised “becoming English” creates an uncertainty which destabilises colonial authority since the image that is returned is at once strange and familiar (155).

^{vii} Marilyn Lake, “Between Old World ‘Barbarism’ and Stone Age ‘Primitivism’: The Double Difference of the White Australian Feminist: 82.

^{viii} “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism.”

Chapter Two

But Nevertheless a Dying Race

But contact with Europeans does not improve them. At the touch of the higher race they are poisoned and melt away. There is room for poetry in their past history. There is room for philanthropy as to their present condition. But in regard to their future - there is hardly a place for hope.

With Anthony Trollope in New Zealand (133-134)

And his heart turned to water, and his eyes spilled over their tears with anguish for the death of his race...

The Butcher Shop (143)

The identification of a childlike simplicity in Jimmy Tutaki, despite his apparent sophistication, has significant implications for the future of his race. Representations which locate the indigenous condition in a state of infancy are a common trope within imperial discourse. These portrayals either overtly or implicitly assign a parental role to the white western coloniser, whose civilising mission it is to “wean” the savage from his primitive state. The metaphor of the childlike or immature indigene may imply the potential for change – the child eventually grows up with appropriate parental aid. However, to attribute a simple, natural “childlike” nature to indigenous peoples also has the effect of fixing their identity in a primitive culture of the past, a culture which cannot survive the complexities of modern civilisation. This is a construction which underpins the “fatal impact” theories which have been so pervasive within colonial ideology.

In this chapter I explore essentialist constructions of Maori which assign a permanent childlike essence to Maori identity in both The Butcher Shop, and Lenore Divine. In The Butcher Shop, this primitivist ideology can also be identified in the construction of an inherently uncivilized or primitive female essence. However, for Maori, the implications of an unchanging primitive essence have a fatal consequence. This

“passing of a people” is poignantly lamented in both The Butcher Shop and Lenore Divine, by a member of the dying race and I explore the implications of this somewhat melodramatic technique. Attention is also paid to the attempt in Lenore Divine, to incorporate the indigenous other within the narrative, as a speaking subject with an alternative point of view. I suggest that this attempt is undercut by a white character’s explication of the colonial process which serves to legitimise rather than interrogate it. Primitivist ideology fixes authentic indigenous identity in the primitive culture of the past and the portrayal of the attempt by Maori to enter the present in Lenore Divine is also examined.

The vein of imperishable savage simplicity that throbs beneath Jimmy’s veneer of sophistication surfaces again at the end of the novel. On this occasion it is imaged as a naïve fear of the supernatural. Confronted with Margaret’s unnaturally calm reaction to the news of Barry’s death, Jimmy is seized by a wild and irrational panic:

The superstitious kernel of the man came up through the pakeha’s training and stayed his steps at the top of the stairs. “Run away! Run away!” it told him. “A fearsome monster walks with the woman”. He struggled with his childish terror, with his great black eyes almost bolting from his head (223).

The seed metaphor, like that of the blood imagery, attributes this sensibility to something existing at the very core of his being.

Other references to a childlike simplicity, which is somehow “in the blood”, reoccur throughout the novel. When Margaret, enraged by Jimmy’s insult to a “woman of [her] race” (170), retorts with racial epithets, he responds with childlike emotionality, collapsing at her feet and beginning to “weep like a little child” (170). In an earlier passage which describes Jimmy’s reaction to Miette’s unwanted attentions, the text informs us that: “The simple ideas of his race in regard to women had persisted in Jimmy” (154). In the same way that his “essential savage honesty” appears to be valued over the “niceties of civilisation”, the text here appears to valorise the natural, uncontaminated sexual values which persist in Jimmy regardless of his “pakeha training”.

In *The Butcher Shop*, the “vener of civilisation” is equally thin for both Maori and Pakeha. This is, however, complicated by a specific link in the text between female identity and primitivist ideology. The text’s construction of “woman” suggests a primitive essence which will never be erased despite centuries of civilization. In a single “blinding flash of understanding”, Glengarry sees:

Man, the forager, loosing the stranglehold of primal instincts,
 evolving above instinctive condition through the nature of his activities...
 whilst Woman, the passive, the vessel which bore
 the principle of life during all its seasons of growth from seed
 to fruition, continued to live close to the beginnings of the world,
 close to nature and natural conditions (132).

Margaret is portrayed as “natural woman” whose “primitive passion” is awakened by Glengarry’s “fascinating ... savagery” (108). Yet her sexuality is endowed with an “instinctive morality” (108), similar to that ascribed to primitive peoples: “Chastity was the standard of the savage” (154). In Margaret’s (and Devanny’s) analysis it is patriarchal institutions which prohibit the natural expression of female sexuality, the frustration of which culminates in Margaret’s act of savagery. The solution appears to lie in a society sufficiently evolved to accommodate “natural” woman’s essentially untameable sexuality. Ian Longstairs foresees “a race of emancipated women, free in body and mind, economically independent, choosing their own mates” (206).ⁱ

However, while the narrative anticipates an eventual change in society to accommodate “natural” woman, this solution does not appear to extend to the “natural” indigene. To survive in the present modern world the primitive indigene must change. Yet the emphasis on an innate “imperishable” simplicity seems to suggest that he or she is unable to do so, or at least not in the short space of a couple of decades. The implications of this construction are that when confronted with the demands and complexities of modern civilisation, primitive races face inevitable extinction.

This is most evident in the passage in which Jimmy, “true son of his race”, laments the passing of that race:

He knew the history of the white migration and settlement; in his breast, as in every true Maori's, there burned the never-dying resentment for unavenged wrongs done to his race in those early days. The stolen lands, upon which greedy whites, descendants of the thieves, now lived in splendid opulence, ordering chieftains and chieftains' sons to do their bidding.

It was the march of Progress, Jimmy knew. Progress, which was carried in the hands of the "pakeha". Progress which made sport of racial extinction. The fittest to survive!

Jimmy, true son of his race, sitting on the stringer of the white man's wharf, sitting under the shadow of the product of the pakeha's brain and hand, the leviathan of the deep, knew that the law of club and fang was the law of Progress, and yet that Progress was good.

And his heart turned to water, and his eyes spilled over their tears with anguish for the death of his race, for the death of his race which was slowly sinking, sinking, with thinned blood and loosened muscle and sagging belly back into the earth which was the dust from which it had sprung (143).

In this passage there is frank acknowledgement of European invasion, illegal seizure of land and racial oppression. This is a perspective that challenges the ideal of racial harmony and equality expressed thus far in the text. From this perspective, Margaret and Barry may be viewed as "greedy whites, descendants of the thieves", living in "splendid opulence" on "stolen lands" and ordering the likes of Jimmy and his father, "chieftains and chieftains' sons to do their bidding". This perspective acknowledges that under the gay disposition and the "continual smile and merry ways" (30) of Jimmy Tutaki, "there burned the never-dying resentment for the unavenged wrongs done to his race". The passage also appears to be an attempt to present what might be the colonised other's point of view.

However, this alternative perspective is undercut by the narrative's relapse into the discourse of evolutionism and Social Darwinism: "The fittest to survive", "the law of Progress". These theories both naturalise and legitimise the colonial enterprise and portray

the destruction of indigenous society as regrettable but inevitable. Furthermore, while the contemporary problematisation of textual appropriation of indigenous subjectivity was not available during the period of writing, there remains a disturbing element of manipulation in the portrayal of the indigene lamenting the death of his race while at the same time acknowledging its inevitability. Such representations were a common feature of colonial literature, as Lawrence Jones observes in his analysis of the New Zealand novel in The Oxford History of New Zealand History: “The chorus of doomsayers mourning the necessary extinction of the Maori swells in the first twenty years of the period, as the “resistless” stream of history is seen as sweeping over Maoridom. From...1890... to 1929, Maori characters are made to articulate and mourn the coming doom of their race” (139).

Fatal impact theories were underpinned by theories in which indigenous cultures were viewed as static and fixed and therefore unable to accommodate change. The inevitable result of contact between these societies and a more progressive, western civilisation was that the former should disintegrate and collapse. Accompanying these theories were notions of a “natural” simplicity and naivete inherent in the indigenous condition, which made it vulnerable to contamination. When exposed to the influences of Western civilisation, the inevitable result was physical and moral corruption. Such theories, however, were not necessarily accompanied by a valorization of Western society over the supposedly inferior social organization of “primitive” peoples. For many writers, the idea of a society organised around simple basic needs presented an attractive alternative to what was perceived to be a highly artificial, tightly restrictive western way of life.ⁱⁱ As observed in the previous chapter, in her unpublished manuscript “The Sex-Life of the Maori”, Jean Devanny firmly rejected any cause for self-congratulation by either party, attributing any achievements to economic necessity. Nevertheless, whether the primitive culture is given positive or negative attributes, it is generally still perceived to be destined for destruction.

The death of Jimmy’s race is imaged in metaphors of an aging body approaching death. The return to “the dust from which it had sprung” carries with it both the sense of the indigene as “the land” and the organic cycles of nature, over which the human individual has no control. The phrase “the law of club and fang” further mystifies the process as one

“ordained” by natural laws. In direct contrast to the “loosened muscle and sagging belly” of the Maori race is the “product of the pakeha’s brain and hand”, the “leviathan of the deep” before which Jimmy feels “very humble” (143).

In the novel Lenore Divine, it is once again a Maori character who is made to mourn the imminent death of the race. Ngaire, Lenore Divine’s close friend, admits to Lenore that “my race is dying out – dying out and degenerate. The young men of my race are now fat as the old women. They are lazy” (68). In this novel however, while the prognosis is the same, there appears to be a greater effort to diagnose the processes and consequences of colonialism. Furthermore, access to the internal view of the Maori character takes the form of dialogue rather than the impossible attempt to present the interiority of the other. As observed in the introduction, Elleke Boehmer defines post-colonial literature as writing which critically scrutinises the colonial relationship and attempts to resist colonial perspectives. The text’s attempt to explore the colonised’s experience of colonialism suggests we should locate it within a post-colonial genre of writing.

Ngaire relates her family’s history and the consequences to that history of the arrival of the “whites” in New Zealand. The implications of her “chieftain’s blood” and “great ancestry” (65) will be addressed in the following chapter. What is significant here is that she is given a personal history and permitted to articulate it herself. She thus becomes more than the blurred figure or the stereotyped image of the indigene presented in much of the literature of the period. In Edward Said’s critique of Orientalist discourse, he argues that the dehumanising omission of personal statements denies a subject position to the other, “denuding the humanity of another culture” (108). For a short period in the text, Ngaire becomes a speaking subject providing an alternative point of view.

Lenore’s response is to admit to the “injustice and cruelty” of the colonial project, however this is once again portrayed as an inevitable consequence of progress: “But it is always so, the advance of civilisation” (LD, 65). She goes on to identify mutual misunderstanding as a contributory factor:

A lot of the trouble in the case of your race was caused by the fact that the whites had no conception of the customs of your race and vice-versa. The Maori, living under communism as he did could not understand our notions of private property. Following the ancient customs, brown men would heap their choicest possessions before the white visitor just as before the visiting brown men, and the whites, naturally, not understanding the spirit behind the action, took these gifts, merely intended as emblematic of the most generous welcome and hospitality, away with them, baffling the native mind. Why should any man claim for himself that which belonged to all? The low whites would offer a bottle of whisky in exchange for Maori land. The communist, knowing the land belonged to all and that every man had a right to its use, assented to the exchange. One can imagine the dismay and wrath excited in the Maori mind on finding that the lands he had given the use of in exchange for the Pakeha gifts was fenced in and he denied access to it (65-66).

Lenore's argument of mutual estrangement emphasises the misunderstanding and confusion on both sides. Each party acted in apparent good faith (apart from the low whites), and in accordance with their own cultural values. Each misinterpreted the other's gestures, "naturally not understanding the spirit of the action". In other words, no one is really to blame because everybody got it wrong. The emphasis on human error, however, effectively obscures the colonial project of expansion and appropriation. In a similar way, Lenore's personal interpretation of Maori customs from within her own ideological framework of communism not only distorts indigenous meanings, but legitimates the colonial presence. Her claim that Maori, as communists, knew "that the land belonged to all and that every man had a right to its use" invalidates indigenous land rights and claims to traditional authority over the land. After Lenore's analysis, both girls fall musingly silent for a long time and Ngaire provides no counter-narrative to challenge Lenore's interpretation. Commenting on colonial women writers' attempts to address indigenous

beliefs and values, Susan Sheridan remarks that “they had no means of understanding the vital importance of the land to Aboriginal people’s identity and hence the extent of colonial dispossession” (135). However, while Ngaire’s silence may suggest the author’s awareness of the limitations of her own understanding of indigenous culture, Lenore’s uncontested interpretation of that culture may amount to what Gareth Griffiths in his essay “The Myth of Authenticity” describes as “an inscription of ourselves displaced upon the ... Aboriginal” (238). Although the text’s overt sympathies lie with the colonised indigenous peoples, the representation becomes in effect another form of colonisation. Another effect of Lenore’s translation is to defuse the threat of the other as they are drawn into the ideology of “sameness” discussed on the previous chapter.

Ngaire’s eventual response to Lenore is to articulate a defiant resentment: “hatred of the Pakeha is bad in me sometimes” (66). This sentiment echoes the “never-dying resentment” experienced by Jimmy Tutaki, which burns in “the breast of every true Maori” (BS, 143). Ngaire attempts to explain her feelings of resentment by describing the heroism of her ancestors. However, while Lenore expresses an understanding of Ngaire’s sentiments, that understanding is limited by her own assumptions of cultural superiority. She reminds Ngaire of the less admirable aspects of her noble past: the atrocity of some of the tribal customs, the “superstitions – and the cannibalism” (67). She points to the benefits of Western civilisation: “...peace and quiet over all this Sunday morning; and you so pretty in your clothes which the white man brought you. Think of the comfort which surrounds your daily life” (68). In his essay “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The function of Racial Difference in colonialist Literature”, Abdul JanMohamed argues that, “Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions and ideology of his culture” (84). Lenore’s response indicates that, although sympathetic to Ngaire’s predicament, she is clearly unable to “bracket” her own ethnocentric assumptions.

Ngaire’s history is interrupted by Lenore’s reshaping of its meanings in terms of her own cultural values. Ironically, her interruption in a way re-enacts the historical colonial suppression of the histories of colonised indigenous peoples. Lenore’s response ignores the

different cultural perspective Ngaire is attempting to articulate, dismissing the stories of heroism as merely “Kings and Queens, playing battledore and shuttlecock with the lives of men and women and little children” (67–68). Her interpretation reflects traditional colonial portrayals of the irrational violence of pre-contact Maori society and, once again, is not challenged by Ngaire. The absence of a response contesting her translations makes it difficult to interpret the textual stance. The apparent attempt to explore the subjectivity of the colonised other in any event collapses into a conventional “fatal impact” discourse. Ngaire’s only response to Lenore’s argument is to lament the degeneration and death of her race.

Her articulation of resentment and hatred of the colonising pakeha is also undercut later in the text when Lenore discusses Ngaire’s “racial sentiment” with Lafe Osgood. Lenore quite specifically acknowledges white violation of land treaties and admits, “Everyone knows it” (80). However she goes on to observe that: “The common Maori’s simplicity does not hold much rancour, but it stands to reason that an intelligent, educated girl like Ngaire, who has studied the history of her race and of white aggression, will feel the bitterness” (80). Once again this opinion, expressed by the heroine who is valorised for her perceptive intuition (she even has the occasional ability to read the minds of others), is never modified or contradicted in the narrative.

When Ngaire’s brother Kowhatu arrives in Wellington, it is immediately apparent that he is no “common Maori”. His aristocratic qualities amaze the residents of Lenore Divine’s boarding house: “High purpose was stamped upon him; strength of mind and of body evulgated from him, and the softness and poetry of his race was there, which doubtless found expression through the medium of his violin and vocalizing” (127).

The text goes on to explain the company’s astonishment:

He amazed these people because he was so unlike the Maori as they knew him. The city-dweller of New Zealand knows little of the native race, and what little he knows does not tend to elevate the status of the brown man. The savage cannibal, withal possessed of a chivalry, a high morality,

such as his white conqueror has only aspired to, usually cannot in two generations assimilate the ideology of a complex civilisation. If he assimilates it, as in rare cases, he does not find in his physical make-up the wherewithal to meet its demands upon him. The call of the pah is strong; the craving for the old-time, strong foods gnaws at the stomach. Some few, of the Ngatoro type and approaching it, are strong enough to be both Maori and European; to take pride in the blood of their race and unfailingly reverence its customs and to live, gracefully, the life of the European (127).

A number of discourses appear to be at work in this passage. The early reference to savage cannibalism, a standard colonial stereotype, foregrounds an absolute otherness. Food is another traditional signifier of cultural difference. The craving for “old-time, strong foods” might refer only to “fern-roots, fish – often times rotten” (67), but has inevitable associations with the practice of cannibalism, abandoned as recently as “two generations” back.

The reference to the “Ngatoro type” suggests the hierarchy of types discussed in the previous chapter. Within this framework, the idealised Kowhatu may be seen to represent a superior “type” who is able to retain his authentic “Maoriness”, while “living gracefully, the life of the European”. He is, however, one of a very few who are able to do this. The common Maori cannot aspire to such heights since two generations has not allowed sufficient time to equip him to deal with the complexities of civilisation. This construction reflects a discourse of social evolutionism and its preoccupation with stages leading up to civilisation. On the rare occasions where Maori are able to jump the evolutionary ladder, they remain, like Jimmy Tutaki, subject to the “call of the pah”. This vulnerability is genetically determined, part of their “physical make-up”, and is imaged as a biological process, a “hunger” which gnaws at the stomach.

With the odds stacked so high against him it is perhaps inevitable that the common Maori should grow fat and lazy. However, another unfortunate consequence is that there are no Maoris left fit to mate with Ngaire, “daughter of the Ariki” (68). None, that is, but Kowhatu and he is her brother. Ngaire’s predicament has significant implications for the future of her race. As sole survivors of a Maori aristocracy, she and Kowhatu are in danger of becoming “extinct”. The only alternative is to “marry a white” (68), to mingle their noble blood with that of a worthy member of the conquering race. Since the only white man she would consider is destined for another, and, possibly since she “will never be europeanised” (79), Ngaire is denied this alternative. The privilege of breeding a new strong race is reserved for the heroine Lenore and Ngaire’s noble brother, Kowhatu.

This solution, however, does not address the plight of the common Maori unable to assimilate the ideology of a complex civilisation and therefore threatened with degeneration and decay. While in Wellington, Kowhatu visits a Maori friend, Noho Toki, who is a member of Parliament, “one of the representatives of the Northern Maoris” (158). Maori participation in Western systems of government might suggest a race negotiating a new identity in response to changing social and political environments. Noho Toki is a wealthy man, “owning great lands in the north” (159). He also, however, has white blood. Hete Cuni, on the other hand, is a full-blooded Maori who Toki informs Kowhatu, has failed in his attempt to start a business of his own: “Couldn’t make a success of it. None of us ever do” (162). Hete Cuni is also a “bad Maori”, a traitor to his race, who is “ashamed of his blood” and has tried to become a “pakeha” (162).

In Fear and Temptation Goldie discusses the colonial text’s conflict when the indigene attempts to become “coeval”. Primitivist discourse fixes an authentic indigenous identity in the primitive culture of the past. The indigene who attempts to enter the present necessarily becomes “inauthentic” (165). In Lenore Divine, the “city-dweller of New Zealand knows little of the native race”, because he or she has only contact with urban Maori who do little to “elevate the status of the brown man” (127). As Goldie observes, indigenous people living far from major population centres are considered by the white culture to have maintained their traditional way of life (165). Because urban Maori do not

conform to this white construct of Maori identity, they are portrayed as either false or as failing in their attempts to negotiate identities within modern contexts.

It is significant that neither Ngaire nor Lenore are able to persuade Kowhatu to live in Wellington. After her father's death Ngaire too remains on the station despite Lafe Osgood's predictions that she will return to the city. Kowhatu is evidently out of his natural element in the city. He tells Lenore that its pavements "worry" him (151). It appears that the innate noble qualities of the superior "type" of Maori, which enable them to live gracefully as Europeans, flourish best in a natural context. Kowhatu's destiny is to remain on the land and breed a fine strong race. Ultimate political influence and power is reserved for the white character Osgood who is "at home" in Wellington, "the capital, the core of the country, in which the seeds of progress lie" (87).

ⁱ For Devanny this seems to imply a return to a society organised on similar lines to that of primitive Maori society which for her exemplifies sexual and familial interdependency and harmony. In "the Sex Life of the Maoris" she maintains that in primitive Maori society:

economic life was not built upon greed, and therefore the social and sex customs resultant on their economic position were as free from degradation and debasement as the economic system itself... what a spectacle to cast one's eyes forward to that time in the future when the same economic PRINCIPLE will obtain by functioning through the marvellous technical development of the era of electricity and steel (22-23).

ⁱⁱ New Zealand writer Roderick Finlayson describes a conscious intention in his Maori stories to "warn the Pakeha, to show him, through Maori eyes, the danger of sacrificing completely the warm, vivid life of the simple and the naive to a system grown coldly and exclusively rational and greedy" (Beginnings, 68).

Chapter Three

Miscegenation

What does the future hold for the Maoris?... They will survive but how? There is but one answer. They will become assimilated and absorbed in the general population of the Dominion, and so help to form a fresh type of colonial. Claimed to be an offshoot of the Caucasian race, they share a common stock with Europeans. No such gap exists between the brown and white man as between the black and white. It needs only a few generations of intermarriage to obliterate distinctive Maori characteristics. ... In that happy way will be solved the native question in New Zealand.

William Slade, "The Maori of New Zealand" 1914.ⁱ

You see the white man has never allowed his woman to hold the sentiment 'black but comely', on which he has so freely acted himself. Libertinism apart, white men constantly express an open preference for the society of black women. But it is a sacred convention that white women never feel passion of any sort, high or low, for a black man.

Ida Wells 1894ⁱⁱ

The "native question" identified by William Slade, Secretary of Foreign Missions, is in fact a double articulation of the dilemma encountered within both the imperial, and the colonial enterprise. Within imperial discourse it signals the contradictions inherent in the overt "civilizing mission" and the covert project of exploitation and appropriation. It has further and particular relevance for white settler societies where the implications are both material and psychological. Various post-colonial critics have identified the "need to become native" as an imperative in white settler writing. In these narratives, the process of white indigenisation is complicated by the presence of the "original" indigene. One solution to the native question is for the original natives to become "extinct". When they refuse to comply with this imperative another alternative is assimilation with the new arrivant to create a new race of "native" inhabitants.

This chapter examines the complex issue of cross-racial desire as it is portrayed in Devanny's New Zealand works. While the embrace of the indigene may be seen to offer a potential source of indigenisation I argue that this does not appear to be a major imperative in the novel Lenore Divine. I suggest rather that the text seems mainly concerned to explore female desire for a racial other, whose exotic difference offers a liberation of female passion repressed by the restrictive codes of Western patriarchal society. The white woman - black man pairing represents an inversion of the dominant social code and the tensions that this representation may bring to the text are explored. I suggest that while this relationship represents a potential source of liberation for repressed female desire it is not presented as a viable alternative to the dominant order since, ultimately, neither one of the pair has the political power embodied in the white male character, Lafe Osgood. Furthermore, I suggest that this ultimately "Utopian" fantasy effectively marginalises the colonized indigenous female denying her her own self-constituted subjectivity. I also consider Devanny's more light-hearted portrayal of female desire liberated by an exotic racial other in her short story "Maori Love". I return to Devanny's first novel, The Butcher Shop, to discuss the implications of that novel's portrayal of the "dreadful fascination" which the racial other presents for a certain "type" of woman. Finally, I argue that in all three narratives the portrayal of Maori characters is predicated on textual requirements. Their racial "otherness" is appropriated for the exploration of female sexuality.

In the novel Lenore Divine, one of the consequences of colonisation is that there is no remaining member of Ngaire's race suitable for her to mate with. In this instance the native question becomes the native's question: "Who is left for me to marry?" The solution, Lenore suggests, is to marry into the white race: "You will mate with a white man, Ngaire... I know tons of white men who are crazy about you" (68). Interestingly, however, having proposed the solution, the text proceeds to deny Ngaire this outcome. The only white man she would consider, Lafe Osgood, is destined for another. Since she has rejected all Maori suitors, Ngaire's future role, it appears, will be that of sister to the characters who do achieve an inter-racial union.

Ultimately, the representation of Ngaire is problematic. To some extent, as discussed in the previous chapter, she is freed from an object position to speak for herself. She articulates her own, and her family's experience of colonisation and expresses an ongoing resentment for the white colonisers. However, this representation of the colonised indigene's point of view is undercut by Lenore's counter-arguments which Ngaire never challenges and therefore implicitly accepts. She thus provides the opportunity for an exposition on the process of colonialism and its consequences. She also serves to provide the link between the white female character Lenore and Kowhatu, her brother, whose cross-racial relationship is to be explored. Ngaire herself expresses desire for a particular white man, however her desire remains unfulfilled since the plot requires Lafe Osgood to redeem the "fallen" white woman Alle Wishart. The representation of Ngaire seems in the main to be predicated on textual needs. There is an attempt to liberate her as a subjective presence but ultimately she remains a commodity manipulated in aid of the white female subject Lenore. It would appear that in the exploration of white female individuation, and to a lesser degree indigenisation, there is no place for the indigenous female.ⁱⁱⁱ

A process of indigenisation *can* be identified within the narrative. Lenore, the approved white character, and Kowhatu, the approved Maori, will together breed a "fine strong race", legitimate inheritors of a native New Zealand identity. However, within the novel's exploration of racial mixing in terms of procreation, there seems to be another tension at work. Initially, Lenore's desire for an intimate relationship with her "brown man" does not include the bearing of his children. When Kowhatu, attempting to persuade her to leave Holly, brings up the issue of his own children, Lenore's response is one of surprise:

Lenore shrank back, staring at him. "Your children!
But – but – I did not intend to have your children."
(155-156).

It is the indigenous male Kowhatu, rather than the white female, who articulates the desire for children. As he attempts to persuade Lenore to leave Holly, he tells her, "I see you all

the time with my child in your arms” (156). Later he insists that, “Marriage to me means children, Lenore. Wife means nothing to me unless linked with the word Mother” (168). Lenore’s response challenges the dominant ideology of the period which prescribed motherhood as the ultimate fulfilment for women: “It’s a lot of rot, all this talk about women wanting children. It’s the men who want the children” (156). In her approach to motherhood Lenore appears to share with Margaret Messenger what the narrator in The Butcher Shop, defines as “the proper attitude towards her parenthood” (79). While Margaret is a dedicated and loving mother, she refuses to allow her role as mother to dominate her life:

She did not become immersed in a sea of domesticity because of the babe... The bringing forth of young she saw as awesome, right enough: but since Nature in this made man its puppet, at one with the lowly worm, why regard it as the supreme achievement and worship at its shrine to the exclusion of all other interests? (79-80).

In addition to challenging the received ideas about women’s ultimate fulfilment in motherhood, Lenore does not appear to harbour any romantic ideas about becoming the mother of a new race of indigenous New Zealanders. In the light of her expounder to Ngaire on the inevitable consequences of the advance of Western civilisation, discussed in the previous chapter, she does not appear to entertain any uncertainty or anxiety regarding the legitimacy of the Pakeha presence in New Zealand. Indeed, Lenore constructs herself as equally native as Ngaire in the sense of belonging to the country. Early in the narrative she tells Ngaire, “I am proud to belong to the country that produced a girl like you” (63).

By the end of the novel, however, Lenore has come to share Kowhatu’s desire for children. Yet, while their offspring may be seen as representing a new breed of New Zealanders who can legitimately claim indigeneity, this does not appear to be a major imperative within the text. Rather, the emphasis seems to lie in the fact that, as two healthy, superior specimens, they will “breed a strong race” (168). This construction reflects the eugenicist ideology of selective breeding.^{iv} As ethnologist Anne Stoler points out in her essay “Making Empire Respectable: The politics of race and sexual morality in twentieth

century colonial cultures”, colonial translations of Eugenic principles were directly related to the vulnerability of white rule and the concern to safeguard European superiority (644). However, as observed in Chapter 1, Jean Devanny did not subscribe to theories which saw miscegenation resulting in racial degeneration, believing rather that inter-racial marriage could be genetically strengthening.

In male-authored colonial narratives the sexually available indigenous female frequently functions as a potential source of indigenisation. As a metaphor for the land she becomes the figure to be conquered and penetrated. Within this construction the white male coloniser’s sexual possession of the indigenous female becomes a trope to depict a wider set of power relations. Colonial women, occupying an ambiguous position both inside and outside the dominant hegemony, had a different relation to colonial power and their writing does not demonstrate the same imperatives of conquest and domination. Furthermore, as Stoler points out, colonial women, burdened with the responsibility of reproducing the race and maintaining high moral standards within the colonies, had their own sexuality regarding indigenous males carefully regulated (642-645).

Intermarriage between Maori women and white men had occurred in New Zealand from the earliest days of contact, however marriages between white women and Maori men were less common. In colonial literature generally a white woman – black man relationship represents an inversion of the traditional colonial portrayal of cross-racial liaisons, where these have been the preserve of the white male colonizer. As Bill Pearson observes in his essay “The Maori in Literature”, Jean Devanny appears to have been one of the first New Zealand writers to explore such pairings in any detail (107). However, while the focus on sexual attraction between Maori men and white women may appear to challenge the dominant social code, neither of the involved parties has the political power of the white male. As observed in the previous chapter, in the novel Lenore Divine, it is the valorised white male, Lafe Osgood, who is granted access to the public world of politics and who remains at the “core of the country, in which the seeds of progress lie” (87). Lenore and Kowhatu remove themselves to the country where she will continue to write and Kowhatu will presumably continue to tend his “flocks and herds” (189), while breeding a fine strong

race. As Goldie observes: “The new indigenous incubus, like the old succubus, has the power to confer indigenisation. But the incubus is no better able than the succubus to use this power as “demolisher” – or even controller – of the white tribe” (81).

Historically, the “primitive” has long been associated with uninhibited sexuality. In colonial discourse, indigenous sexuality is often valorised as spontaneous and natural, free from the restraints of a civilised Western code of behavior. Within this semiosis, the embrace of the indigene may offer a form of sexual liberation. In her exploration of alternative codes of morality and sexual conduct, Jean Devanny looked to pre-contact Maori society, whose communistic way of life exemplified sexual and familial interdependency and harmony. In the unpublished manuscript “The Sex Life of the Maoris” Devanny maintains that the “splendour” of the original Maori character was a result of the period of civilisation in which they lived:

Their economic life was not built upon greed, and therefore the social and sex customs resultant on their economic position were as free from degradation and debasement as the economic system itself (115).

In Devanny’s “materialist” analysis, regulation of women’s sexuality is the result of contemporary economic processes which reduce their status to that of mere commodity. In spite of the benefits of Western culture, civilised women’s position is inferior to that of savage women: “The savage and barbarian woman occupied a relatively higher position in the social life of her day” (20). As observed in the previous chapter, Kowhatu appears to in some ways represent the last of “that noblest of races, the sons of Hawaiki” (JD/MSS 67,1). Viewed in this light he may represent a potential source of female liberation from an oppressive Western system which restricts the natural expression of female desire.

By the end of the novel, the fulfilment of Lenore’s desires, both creative and sexual, has been achieved through Kowhatu. He teaches her how to love and provides a setting in which she can achieve the dream of her writing becoming “a real fighting force for the good of the race” (115). At this stage it becomes evident why Lafe Osgood, in spite of all his admirable qualities, is not the man with whom Lenore falls in love. Throughout the

narrative there has been a suggestion that Lafe and Lenore would have made an ideal couple. On two separate occasions Lenore and Lafe make explicit observations to this effect. When Holly, jealous of the attention Lenore gives to Lafe, accuses her of “making it rather hot with Lafe” she admits that: “It is the greatest pity in the world that Lafe and I did not fall in love with each other” (18). When Lafe learns that Lenore intends to marry Holly he remarks: “You ought to be marrying me, not that chump.” Lenore’s response is: “Yes, that is so. Unfortunately we did not fall in love Lafe” (42).

Lafe Osgood fits the traditional model of ideal colonial masculinity. He is aggressive, domineering and rational. In an early argument with Lenore he tells her impatiently that, though her theory is a “pretty one”, it is “not practicable – not practicable. It’s a Utopian idea” (12). He has great integrity as demonstrated in his contempt for his “tinsel-souled” wife’s bourgeois sentiments (122). He has a high code of moral conduct and commands great public respect. He is also hugely insensitive and fails to notice Lenore’s anxious all-night vigil when he paces the city after learning of Alle’s pregnancy. He is brutal and ruthless in his treatment of Alle once she has fallen from grace. There is also a suggestion that he might be rather repressed sexually. Because he loves to “fight”, Lenore remarks to Alle that “he must be a lamentable failure as a lover” (14). Although he is qualified to advise Lenore and Holly on their sexual relationship (evidently equipped with the right scientific ideas), he explains to Lenore that passionate love can never be enduring: “It would shrivel us up if it were. Passionate love is a fire, a flame that burns the body up. If it endured for long we should become physical wrecks” (100). In the light of her subsequent passionate love for Kowhatu, this may not be what Lenore wants to hear. Holly, the narrative explicitly informs us, “denied... his right scientific instruction in matters of sex...” by “foul lack and convention in society” (58), is a failure in the marital bed: “Lenore knew that she had been cheated, through ignorance on the man’s part, of the raptures and transports which marriage should bring to lovers” (58).

Clearly, the men of her own race are unable to awaken any passionate response in Lenore Divine. In Kowhatu’s embrace on the other hand, “the tropic exuberance of his

love-storm overpower[s] her almost to the point of insensibility” (137). Holly’s casual suggestion that Kowhatu should get married arouses similar passionate feelings:

Lenore was frightened at herself. She sat there
trembling, trying to calm her thoughts, her senses,
trying to still the throbbing in her throat. She had
not dreamed of such passion, such desire, within
herself. It had leapt out at the man fiercely, with
elemental savagery (146).

In response to Kowhatu’s verbal love-play Lenore encourages him: “ ‘Tell me some more’ she whispered. ‘White men do not say such things Kowhatu’”(141). However, in spite of the central role he plays in fulfilling Lenore’s desires, as a character, Kowhatu is never as fully realised as Lafe Osgood. His own personality is so little externalised that it appears to act as a mirror for Devanny’s own projections. His representation seems almost entirely predicated on her heroine’s needs and desires.

In the short story “Maori Love”, published in 1927 in the collection Old Savage and Other Stories, a Pakeha woman, “doomed to the celibate’s bed” (197) by her husband’s sickly condition, is aroused to similar ecstasies by a Maori man’s passionate embrace. Mrs. Ballinger and her husband have been “transplanted from the southern snows and mists to the dulcet glories of the Marlborough Sounds” (210). Pehi Matanga, a “full-blood Maori” from the nearby Maori settlement, comes regularly to chop wood for Mrs. Ballinger. His presence excites her with his unspoken desires: “Mrs. Ballinger knew that Pehi wanted her though she was incapable of understanding his passion” (195). When he finally kisses her “his passion sent her crazy” (197). Willie, her husband, has obviously, like Holly Virtue, been cheated by society’s conventions of the proper scientific instruction in sex: “Willie would have been shocked at passion in a woman, would probably have considered himself defrauded of the proper amount of virtue in his wife” (206). Moreover, Mrs. Ballinger recognises that were she to have had a relationship with “a white man of her world again, the affair would probably have been a repetition of the first” (206).

“Maori Love” cannot be considered to be one of Jean Devanny’s better short stories. It is written in what appears to be intended as a lighthearted, humorous, style however the abundant use of racial stereotypes results in what is essentially a crude and demeaning representation of Maori. The piece makes use of most of the “standard commodities” which Said identifies in Western Orientalist discourse. Pehi Matanga is portrayed as variously simple, natural, child-like, emotional, sensual and violent. He is also representative: “Like all his race he was a glorious liar” (199), and “He was Lazy, lived easily like all of his race” (203). As Said points out, generalising comments such as these, “wipe out any trace of individual people with narratable life histories” (229). Pehi is, however, not too other: “His features and skin showed no trace of the dark Melanesian skin so interwoven in his race. He was pure Polynesian, sturdily built, golden brown of skin, almost Caucasian of feature” (191).^v

Yet, in spite of these stereotypical representations, it is interesting to consider the piece alongside the novels The Butcher Shop, and Lenore Divine. In all three texts a romantic model is used to explore female sexuality and desire. In Lenore Divine and “Maori Love”, Pakeha men are unsuitable “love-mates”, and prove incapable of gratifying female desire, “which is woman’s primal need and right” (LD, 181). In both of these texts it is Maori, the racial other, who provide sexual liberation and fulfilment. It appears that, as Lafe Osgood observes to Holly, “Some women are so constituted that they can’t love a man of their own race at all. Their make-up seems to demand a strange strain” (LD, 267).

Historically, “blackness” has served as a marker for uninhibited, as well as illicit sexuality. In his analysis of stereotypes of sexuality, Sander Gilman discusses nineteenth century fantasies in which blackness signals an attractive but dangerous sexuality: “The attraction of the Other as sexual being in nineteenth century fiction was enhanced by the Other being of either another race or another class” (197). In his introduction to his book Colonial Desire, Robert Young observes that, “we may go so far as to claim it as the ‘dominant motif’ in much of English fiction” (3). Nevertheless, in the case of female authorship, the projection of white fantasies onto a racial other has historically been shaped by discursive restraints on what could be said or written by women. In the colonial context,

the regulation of European women's sexuality assumed even greater significance in regard to colonised indigenous males. Thus in colonial women's writing indigenous figures are even less likely to be marked as overt objects of desire. Generally aggressive in her frank portrayal of female sexuality, Jean Devanny's explicit exploration of female desire for a racial other challenges this silence and places her in the vanguard of this particular genre.

In *Lenore Divine*, Kowhatu's "strange strain" is foregrounded: "It was the soul of the man she craved – the strange bizarre note about him, his racial characteristics (181). The text draws on a discourse of the "tropics" to evoke an exotic difference. The "tropic exuberance" of Kowhatu's "love-storm" overpowers Lenore "almost to the point of insensibility" (137). She tells him that his beauty speaks to her "of tropic seas and coral isles" (152). In "Maori Love", Mrs. Ballinger feels a physical response to the "opulence" of her tropic surroundings: "new life in her veins" and "a plain heat with which she had been so familiar in the stockyards" (201–202). Pehi Matanga, himself, is "pure Polynesian". While Polynesian and other Pacific islands have traditionally been constructed as the West's "exotic Other", it is usually the image of a beautiful, passively sensual female who evokes an idyllic Polynesian fantasy. In Devanny's texts, it is an erotic male beauty who personifies the "tropics" and functions as an object of desire. The detailed description of Kowhatu's male beauty also subverts the traditional construction of the female body as object of desire:

He stood well over six feet high; slim, lithe, and upright as a dart. His hand was small and beautifully shaped, yet its grasp when he shook hands was as steel... When he removed his hat his hair brushed straight back from his brow, showed wavy and of the reddish tint of the Urukehu. His skin was dark, very dark for a Maori. The pure golden brown of his race was sun-darkened almost to mahogany hue (127).

Furthermore, challenging the traditional construction of male spectator – female spectacle, the text portrays an active female gaze. On Kowhatu's appearance both Alle Osgood and

Mrs. Doom, (one of Lenore's tenants), "gazed on him wide-eyed. 'Whew!' exclaimed Alle softly. 'What a beauty!' 'Beauty's right' murmured Mrs. Doom" (126). Lenore's response is similar: "Lenore, gazing on him...[felt]...vaguely the first remote stirrings of an urge towards him" (127).

However, it is Kowhatu's male body coded as racial other that appears to attract Lenore's desire. When she realises that Kowhatu is in love with her, her first response is: "My brown man! My Maori" (137). Later, recovering from her "breakdown", she sleeps with his cloth cap close to her heart: "Just a common grey cloth cap, but to her a wondrous thing that ravished her senses with its Maori smell, the strange smell of the brown man which emanated from his clothing" (181). When she receives his letter, "She imagined she could smell the Maori body odour upon it, the acrid pungent smell of the brown man" (260). When she arrives at the station she enters Kowhatu's bedroom and "over all there clung that pungent, clinging body odour of the clean Maori" (291). Sander Gilman makes the observation that body odour has traditionally been used to label the other as different, and in late nineteenth century discourse both difference and odour are associated with sexuality (114).

In *Lenore Divine*, there is a cursory acknowledgement that female desire for a racial other is considered transgressive by some sections of New Zealand society. Holly expresses some reservations: "After all, he is a – Maori" (267), but Holly has from the outset been exposed as a weak, impressionable character, prone to "half-baked twaddle" (52) and "half-assimilated, incoherent talk" (50). On the Ngatoro station the unpleasant Mrs. Leatham attempts to rescue the family from financial ruin by marrying her daughter Rose off to Kowhatu. Rose discusses the idea with Lenore:

I put it to you, Mrs. Virtue, is it a fair thing to ask a girl to marry a Maori?...It's not the thing is it now? I'm not foolish enough to think my race is superior or any rubbish like that. We've had to come to these people for help anyhow. But – he's a Maori and I'm white. There it is (290).

Mrs. Leatham reveals her racism when her plans are thwarted and Rose is a relatively insignificant and naive character who is quickly smitten with and married off to Holly Virtue. Ultimately, Lenore's desire is sanctioned by Lafe Osgood, the valorised white male who represents the new political force in New Zealand society. Lafe, "well balanced and strong as his ideas were scientifically sound" (51), tells Holly: "It's all a lot of rot – about East and West not meeting. There is no reason in the world why the different races shouldn't live happily together, all other things being equal" (267).

In "Maori Love", however, this desire for a racial other *is* identified as illicit: "What broke down the barrier was the 'wickedness' of it. Having decided to eschew decency to relinquish virtue and espouse the ways of the abandoned, she [Mrs. Ballinger] thought she might as well do it thoroughly" (207). The ironic tone of this passage satirises conventional social attitudes but also portrays female desire as deliberately resisting the norms and conventions of the social order. Yet, while this portrayal challenges prevailing puritanical definitions of sexual respectability and female virtue, it is significant that Mrs. Ballinger is a slightly comic figure: large and jovial, "her big body was ungraceful; her breasts, big and full, hung jerkily unsupported by corsets" (192). She is at the mercy of her passions which are "as strong as her body" and she is "childishly inexperienced emotionally" (194). A "simple woman of the back-blocks whose way of life had developed no artifice" (194), she is very different to the idealised heroines of The Butcher Shop and Lenore Divine. This difference suggests ambivalence in Jean Devanny's portrayal of female desire for a racial other. While Mrs. Ballinger is a playful figure, a simple soul who can afford the risk of being labelled wanton and promiscuous, no such chances can be taken with the "serious" heroines.

In The Butcher Shop, the social repression of women's sexuality is revealed to have horrifying consequences and the text may be read as a plea (or demand) for the lifting of restrictions on women's sexual choice. Nevertheless, as has been pointed out by a number of critics, the narrative goes to great lengths to distinguish between indiscriminate lust and the legitimate desire of a morally chaste woman. As Linda Hardy observes in her review of The Butcher Shop, "Two Books, One Cover", in the attempt to preserve Margaret's

reputation as an instinctively moral women, the carnal aspects of female passion are projected onto her narrative double, Miette (28). However, more problematic is the inscription of female desire for a racial other onto a figure whose “bestial” nature governs her sensual physical demands. When Glengarry observes, “But what beats me is the way these low-class women take to the niggers” (165) his comment can be taken to reflect both his own racial prejudice and a popular myth in racist ideology. However, where this construction appears in other places in the text it becomes more difficult to interpret. During the “lambing season” there is a lull in the action of the plot and the narrator takes the opportunity to meditate on “Margaret, the Woman, once her sex-nature had been aroused” (174). After a fairly lengthy exposition on the Woman’s “divinity, the godhead within her being, which is her sex-desire” (175), the narrative considers Miette:

Miette? What was the same season for poor Miette?

The dreadful fascination of the coloured man held her fast. Her desire for Tutaki was an obsession. All the force of her bestial nature, untutored by even her her modicum of intelligence, clamoured for the Maori.

She could not rid herself for an instant of her desires (175).

The detailed description of the “dreadful fascination which the coloured man exercises over the white woman of [Miette’s] certain type” (161) has a definite suggestion of the projection of repressed desires and fantasies onto a bad other. When Miette realises that Margaret and Glengarry are “carrying on”, she is astonished:

Miette was amazed. It had been easy enough for her to see Margaret infatuated with Tutaki because of the passions for him which gnawed at her own vitals (she did not know that the coloured man made appeal only to her type of white woman), but Glengarry...

Glengarry and Margaret! She was amazed (182).

Both of the above extracts suggest an intrusive narrator and, by extension, an authoritative construction. Furthermore, at no stage in the narrative is this resisted or contested in any way. In the light of Lenore Divine’s socially sanctioned miscegenation, this construction is surprising and difficult to understand.^{vi}

In her study of women's roles in imperial culture and discourse, Reina Lewis argues that the analysis of women's cultural production requires an exploration of social forces outside the text: "Disentangling the possible meanings of a text requires attention to the way gender determines the social spaces in which the text can signify" (30). Considered in this light, the apparent contradictions in the representation of female desire for a racial other may reflect the social pressures experienced by Devanny as she attempted to insert a new ideal into the dominant discourse of female sexuality.

In "The Sex-Life of the Maori", Devanny announces her intention to alert women to their degraded position as "chattel" within the prevailing economic system:

It is MY business to awaken civilised woman to her degradation, which understanding must carry with it knowledge of the cause, to inspire her to rebel against her condition and to direct her rebellion along the only channels in which it can be efficacious (20).

In The Butcher Shop, the "degradation" of women within the patriarchal capitalist system is articulated in Margaret's dilemma. In Lenore Divine Devanny appears to move on to explore "other" ways of releasing women's sexuality. Both texts, however, reflect the process of "double colonisation" of indigenous people identified by post-colonial critics, in which they are reduced to signs in the texts of the West. As Goldie observes, each text shapes the image according to its own needs but the other remains of interest only to the extent that it comments on the white self (192).

It seems evident then that Jean Devanny quite readily participated in the hegemonic western textualisation of indigenous peoples. However, as observed in the introduction, within the dominant colonial discourse there were a variety of different positions which could be taken up. Devanny's texts appear to confirm Reina Lewis's contention that women's "gender different" access to colonial discourse meant that they worked both within and against dominant meanings, frequently reshaping them to fit their own textual needs and agendas (4).

ⁱ Slade, 148-149.

ⁱⁱ Quoted in Ware: 169.

ⁱⁱⁱ The ambivalence of the white female author towards the figure of the black female has been commented on by various female critics. See G. Spivak's "Three Women's Texts", Marilyn Lake's "Double Difference" and Cahill et al "Aotearoa/New Zealand and their others".

^{iv} Eugenist theory maintained that selected breeding of the best "stock" was the principal way to improve the race and advocated legislation to prevent the "unfit" from multiplying. As discussed in Chapter 1, Jean Devanny appeared to subscribe to some Eugenist notions. However, the Lamarckian school of heredity emphasised rather the effect of environment and advocated improving the health and fitness of mothers and bettering the home environment. Devanny's participation in this debate is reflected in the concern Lenore expresses for Alle Osgood's child "conceived in drunkenness – by brutes. What can one expect?" (228). Lenore maintains, however, that she believes in "pre-natal influence" and advises Alle to take care of her health, both physical and mental. Later, attempting to persuade Lefe to return to Alle, she reminds him "What it will become will depend on its bringing up" (317). For a discussion of early feminists' participation in the Eugenics debate see Carl Bacchi's essay "Evolution, Eugenics and Women".

^v In Lenore Divine Kowhatu too has Caucasian features: "His features were curiously unlike his sister's. In place of her breadth of nostril he had the thin, hooked nose of some tribes, and his mouth, though large was almost thin lipped" (LD, 127). By contrast, Jimmy Tutaki, who is desired by a woman of "low type", is quite ugly: "among a people noted for the beauty of its men as is the Maori race he counted as ugly" (BS, 30); and has very definite Maori facial characteristics: "The broad nose, thick lips and shining black eyes of Jim Tutaki were heartily welcomed everywhere when jollity reigned among the common people" (31).

^{vi} We should bear in mind that Devanny herself described The Butcher Shop as a "terribly confused and foolish book; its meagre merit sincerity, frankness and a certain power of phrasing" (POD, 94).

Chapter Four

White Australia

Funny business altogether, this White Australia business.
 he thought. Funny how its advocates ignored the presence
 in the country of tens of thousands of original black inhabitants.

Cindie, (193).

Devanny wrote a further five novels in New Zealand, however while she continued to explore the conditions of women's lives in New Zealand society, there is little mention of Maori in her subsequent works. In 1929 Devanny and her family left New Zealand for Australia in the hope that the sub-tropical climate of Sydney would improve her son Karl's rheumatic condition. However, in spite of the significance she affords the White Australia policy in her autobiography, Point of Departure, few Aboriginal or other "non-white" characters feature in her works until the novel Cindie, published in 1949. Devanny spent much of this period working for the Communist Party of Australia which she and her husband had joined in 1930. Her Party commitments left little time for writing, a predicament shared by other writers within the Communist Party. Devanny was frequently at odds with the Party line on both writing and female sexual morality. She criticized the leadership for its dismissive attitude towards the needs of writers who, she argued, could make a valuable contribution if given sufficient time and support. Her outspoken views on female sexual autonomy also caused friction. She accused the leadership of applying double standards in their treatment of female C.P.A members. Devanny's autobiography records the ongoing tensions and conflicts which marked her relationships with the Party leadership and various individual members. In 1941 she was temporarily expelled from the Party, one of the grounds being alleged sexual misconduct.¹ It is possible that Devanny's own experiences of marginalisation, both as a member of the Communist Party and as a female within the Party during this period, may have been a factor in turning her attention to groups marginalised by the White Australia Party.

Her novel Cindie is set in the period 1896 to 1909 in the Queensland cane-fields and traces the transition from the cane-farmers' use of indentured Melanesian workers to their repatriation under the White Australia policy. Through the figure of the heroine Cindie, the text explores the issues surrounding the introduction of this policy; the debates, the conflicts of interests of various involved parties and the implications for both the white settlers and the indentured Melanesian workers, the "Kanakas".ⁱⁱ The narrative also focuses on the original Australians, the Aboriginal people dispossessed by colonialism and now further marginalised by a policy whose very title denied them an Australian identity. The explicit linking of the Aboriginal presence and the White Australia Policy articulated in the epigraph to this chapter is unusual for the period and is in itself a political statement. In her examination of Australian women's writing during the period 1880 to 1930, Along the Faultlines, Susan Sheridan observes that the White Australia policy "does not seem to have been articulated with reference to the Aborigines. They were simply not perceived as actors on the contemporary scene" (123).ⁱⁱⁱ Historically, Aborigines had received little attention in white Australian literature. In his book After the Dreaming, W.E.H Stanner observes:

Inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absentmindedness. It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned into habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale (213-214).

However, by the 1930s an increasingly critical public attitude towards government policies and injustices perpetrated on the Aboriginal people became evident. In her essay "The Aborigine in Australian Fiction: Stereotype to Archetype", Helen Daniel points out that this shift in attitude is reflected in the textual construction of Aboriginal people where increasing attention is paid to the social problems accompanying the disintegration of traditional Aboriginal society (50). Katherine Prichard's novel Coonardoo, published in 1929, was one of the first to break the literary tradition of neglect and disparagement. From 1938 through to 1948 Devanny herself wrote a number of journal and newspaper articles protesting against the use of Aboriginal "slave labour", the harsh restrictions on their

movements, the laws regarding half-caste marriage and the generally destitute conditions under which Aboriginal people were forced to live.^{iv}

However, as Kerry Howe points out, in spite of increased public attention to Aboriginal affairs the vast majority of white Australians still subscribed to deeply entrenched beliefs regarding Aboriginal inferiority and hopelessness (54). As observed earlier, Jean Devanny held strong views on racial prejudice and discrimination and one of her projects in the novel Cindie is to address and challenge the racial ideologies and stereotypes which she saw existing in the Australian national psyche. In her essay “Jean Devanny, Katharine Susannah Prichard, and the ‘Really Proletarian Novel’”, Carole Ferrier suggests that, as an outsider, Devanny was perhaps more able to recognise how deeply racism was interwoven into the Australian working-class consciousness (110). Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter One, coming from New Zealand with its dominant ideology of racial equality, Devanny was all the more shocked by the racist implications of the White Australia Policy.

In this chapter I examine Devanny’s participation in the contemporary debate over the “half-caste” problem and the advocated policy of absorption, the ultimate aim of which was the eventual disappearance of the Aboriginal race through miscegenation with the white population of Australia.^v I suggest that Devanny uses her historical novel Cindie to explore the conditions of pioneer life in Queensland, attempting to analyse the processes which contributed towards the creation and maintenance of racial divisions. Focusing on the presence of the indentured Kanaka workers in Northern Queensland, her narrative attempts to divest colour of its pejorative connotations, and transform it into a positive marker of difference. Devanny’s text rewrites the dominant ideology of colour difference rejecting blanket categorisations of both “blackness” and “whiteness”. I suggest that in the attempt to provide a counter-discourse which subverts traditional colonial representations of colour, the text also takes measures to counteract a predominantly white perspective. In the endeavour to imagine the experience of colonized racial others, the narrative also demonstrates an awareness of its own limitations in portraying “other” subjectivities. Finally I look at the textual representation of Aboriginal people in comparison to

constructions of Kanaka. To an extent the Aborigine in the text remains a blurred and shadowy figure while Kanaka are presented as more fully realised and vital characters.

The novel opens with Randolph Biddow, prospective cane-farmer, greeting his family and Cindie Comstock as they disembark on the banks of the Masterman River in Queensland. Their arrival coincides with that of Biddow's indentured Kanakas so that from the outset their "coloured" presence is foregrounded. The pioneer environment in which Cindie finds herself provides the opportunity for her to discard her domestic role for the traditionally masculine occupation of clearing the land for settlement. Her move alters the traditional hierarchy of relationships as she becomes Biddow's "man" rather than Blanche's maid. Biddow increasingly comes to depend on her practical ability, competence and foresight and particularly on her skill in dealing with the Kanaka, and later the Aboriginal workers. By the end of the novel she has achieved a position of authority, economic independence and is respected and admired throughout the community.

Historical novels offer a way of understanding the present through a textual exploration of the past. In her attempt to challenge and change the structural role of racism in the construction of Australian national identity, Devanny's text explores the social conditions and the relationships which informed pioneer Australian society. Traditionally the pioneering environment provided a narrative space for the realisation of manhood. The qualities required for conquering the untamed colonial landscape such as reason, authority and practicality were characteristically defined as male virtues. Jean Devanny subverts this genre by endowing her female hero with these qualities and making her personal growth possible through engaging with the pioneering situation. Devanny's inscription of female agency into the traditionally male-dominated myth suggests her awareness of the partial nature of the historical record and her attempt to address that imbalance. (This awareness anticipates later feminist problematisation of male-authored history.) However, Devanny is not content merely to challenge the gender hierarchy of colonial society. Cindie's servant status aligns her with the Kanaka workers so that, as Kay Ferres points out in her essay "Written on the Body: Jean Devanny, Sexuality and Censorship", her entry into the domain of agricultural labour dissolves gender, class *and* racial distinctions (128).

One of the narratives within the novel charts Cindie's growing awareness of the racial other as fully human. Initially, Cindie displays the typical colonial dismissal of colonised others as somehow less than human. For example, when Blanche Biddow objects to the impropriety of Cindie working in the cane-fields alongside the Kanakas Cindie replies: "I think it *is* proper up here. Mr. Biddow would be there. And as for the Kanakas – they're not *men*" (35). In another similar incident Cindie is surprised at Biddow's reluctance to hurt the feelings of the Chinese field cook by not eating the breakfast prepared for him. "Does that matter?" she asks in surprise. However, as the narrative progresses, Cindie is shown to change. When she hears the Kanakas singing she experiences a moment of epiphany and is "chastened by a sense of shame in her own hitherto natural and simple assumption of innate superiority to these black-skinned folk... For the first time Cindie thought of the Kanakas as human beings like herself" (53). The recognition of a shared humanity decreases the psychological distance between herself and what is no longer an utterly alien other.

The weeks that follow continue to reduce that distance and Cindie's close physical proximity to the Kanakas further frees her from the social codes of colonial society: "Within a week of Cindie's participation in the work, the social relations between Biddow, the Kanakas and herself had drastically altered. She no longer kept herself separate from the black men" (68). The implications of Cindie's movement from the domestic sphere to the public arena of masculine work will be explored in the following chapter. At this point it is her retreat from the homogeneity of the white settler society which is significant, since this frees her from the collective classificatory system of that society. Rather than a homogeneous "they" whose collective difference ensures distance from "us", the Kanakas assume individual identities: "As she came to know the Kanakas individually, Cindie recognised among them the same inequality of temperament and character as obtained among whites" (93).

Cindie's encounter with the racial otherness of the Kanakas enables her to reject her culture's racial and cultural preconceptions and prepares her for her encounter with the Aboriginal people. Historically, Australian Aborigines had been perceived as occupying the lowest rung of the evolutionary ladder, by virtue of their primitive make-up, completely unable to cope with the demands of Western civilisation. The entrenched view of the impossibility of "civilising" the Aborigines is evident in the pioneer community Cindie inhabits. Even the less racially prejudiced members of the community share this opinion. Jeff Grey, a neighbouring cane-grower, cautions Cindie: "They are wild men, Cindie. They're just like animals. Belong in the bush" (125). Cindie's experience with the Kanakas, however, has taught her to disregard such racial preconceptions. She has also learnt how misleading first impressions can be. Her initial response to the wild-looking second intake of Kanakas was one of apprehension. However, after several weeks of acquaintance she finds she can "laugh now, at her fears of the new batch of Kanakas. The fiercest-looking among them... turned out if anything to be the most docile" (93). Nevertheless, on her first visit to the Aboriginal camp Cindie is initially dismayed by the primitive conditions of both the camp and its inhabitants. The nakedness of the young girls affronts her sense of propriety and the scrutiny and laughter of the Aborigines further disrupt her equanimity. However, though intimidated she stands her ground and "looks around". This representation allows neither gaze an undue power. On closer inspection she discovers evidence of organisation and order that challenge the colonial construction of an "animal-like" existence of the Aborigines. "These people *do* work," she tells Grey triumphantly, "And these people are good-looking in their way Jeff" (127). Later, she discovers that they are also highly intelligent and are capable of learning. Her success at recruiting Aboriginal labour for her coffee plantation and logging project, demonstrate, to the amazement of the community, that they are also capable of *consistent* work habits. The uproar Cindie's employment of Aborigines causes in the community leads Jeff Grey to speculate on the White Australia Policy:

Funny business altogether, this White Australia business, he thought. Funny how its advocates ignored the presence in the country of tens of thousands of original black inhabitants. It was tacitly accepted that the Aborigines did

not count. Sub-humans, they were accounted. No longer shot on sight and tortured with approbation, it was true, but... darned if he could make head or tail of what the future held for them (193).

Jean Devanny was, of course, writing in that future, a period which saw increasingly vigorous debate concerning the destiny of the Aboriginal peoples who could no longer be conveniently dismissed as a dying race. However, while concern was expressed about the generally depressed situation of Aborigines the main concern appeared to be the threat to “white Australia” of an ever-increasing population of “half- caste” coloured people. The “official” solution appeared to lie in the absorption of “half-castes” into the white population of Australia, and legislation aimed at preventing “half-castes” from marrying “full-bloods” was advocated.^{vi} However, as Jacobs observes in her essay “Science and Veiled Assumptions: Miscegenation in Western Australia 1930-1937”, traditional racial myths associating black races with evil, barbarism and savagery still functioned strongly in the early twentieth century Australian consciousness and such proposals were not without opposition from the general public (17). Colour, Jacobs observes, was obviously a symbol of deep unease and the rhetoric of “threat” and menace” which surrounded the debate on “breeding out colour” suggests a genuine anxiety concerning the “half-caste” problem (18-21).

Devanny’s novel *Cindie* speaks into and out of this debate addressing the complex issue of categorisation by colour and the way it serves to secure group identity. Her narrative challenges the colonial mentality which enshrines whiteness as a dominant value unsettling the traditional Manichean binarism of colonial discourse in which white represents all that is good and desirable and black signifies all that is repulsive and evil. As she achieves self-actualisation through labouring with the Kanaka on the cane-fields, Cindie becomes progressively more brown: “By November the natural gold of her skin had deepened to a rich brown” (80). Her name, with its resonance of cinders, suggests that she is “not white”. However, her “white” status within the colonial situation is what affords her the opportunity for personal growth and self-actualisation. Moreover, the qualities of

action, independence and authority which she displays in rising to the occasion are traditionally qualities of “whiteness”. Thus Cindie, who is “not white”, nevertheless possesses qualities of “whiteness”. Tirwana, who is “jet black”, displays similar characteristics which the white male Randolph lacks. Blanche, whose name means white, takes on a sexual taint traditionally ascribed to black women. This “unsettling” of the construction of “whiteness” will be more fully explored in the following chapter.

In Devanny’s analysis, the removal of coloured peoples from Australia leaves the country “colourless” rather than white. Throughout the novel there is an emphasis on the colour and vitality which the Kanaka bring to life on the plantation. When their deportation is made inevitable by White Australia legislation Cindie observes to Randy:

But replacing the Kanakas by whites means taking the most colourful thing out of cane farming for me. The black bodies of the Kanakas amongst the golden cane; there’s a picture for you Randy! Black skin is so velvety and shining. And their singing! Randy, what shall I do without the singing of the Kanakas? Our whites are so – so dry! There seems to be no joy or romance in them. The blacks have educated me, Randy. Our own Aborigines and the Kanakas. Their talk of the earth, the sea, the sky, of bird and animal life, their spirit world. I can’t bother with the white workers somehow.

Randy’s response is that:

Yes, I know. I realise that Cindie. But when the whites were savages they must have been like the blacks are now. I reckon that cuts both ways Cindie. The blacks have something the whites haven’t got and vice versa. There’s something twisted in what’s happened in between. It’s as though the primitive appreciation of nature and beauty has been wrung out of the whites by civilization, like wringing out

a rag (269-270).

Randy's observations are informed by the evolutionist ideology discussed in Chapter Two, in which primitive people inhabit a position on a hierarchical ladder of progress once occupied by white Western society. The ideal of progress is unsettled, however, by the implications of loss which occur in the move upward. The idealisation of the "primitive" in tune with nature which the passage reflects has long been a tradition in literary representations of indigenous peoples and Devanny uses it here to emphasise the loss which occurs when society attempts to "purify" itself of elements of difference. However, her text does not merely romanticise the Kanakas in this way. In the portrayal of Tirwana, "native of the powerful and warlike race of the Tanna" (8), who becomes Biddow's foreman and friend to both Cindie and Biddow, the text challenges the Manichean allegory which constructs the racial other as backward, irrational and lacking in restraint. From the outset, Tirwana's blackness is foregrounded. He is "jet black", his "black skin shining like satin" (11). However he is also endowed with intelligence, rationality and authority, all of which are traditional qualities of white manhood. Tirwana has both foresight and the ability to put ideas into practice, a quality particularly lacking in Biddow. However, as with Cindie, whose gender status limits her ability to act, his potential is circumscribed by his racial identity since Kanakas were officially restricted to unskilled agricultural labour. Both Cindie and Tirwana are able to provide the qualities which Biddow lacks: "Between Cindie and Tirwana a link was being forged through their mutual understanding of Biddow, and their own joint desire and self-acknowledged ability to complement his talents" (81).^{vii}

The high regard in which the white characters hold Tirwana further enhance his valorised status, however that recognition also serves to highlight their own enlightened humanitarian qualities. By contrast, Blanche's contemptuous and arrogant dismissal of Tirwana as a "black savage" serves to throw his superior qualities into greater relief. The text evokes and explores a variety of white attitudes to racial difference. The debate amongst the cane-growers concerning the deportation of the Kanakas affords the opportunity to present a cameo of prevailing attitudes to race. However, throughout the narrative, various constructions of the white colonial "self" are brought into sharper relief,

with particular attention being paid to their attitudes to colour difference. At one end of the scale is Willie Frazer, “Kanaka beater and starver”, and Chris Martin, “long notorious for his aberrant hatred of ‘colour’” (100). Jeff Grey, a small-time cane-grower who works his own holding without Kanaka labour, displays an ambivalent respect for both the Kanaka and the Aborigines. The Callaghans, neighbouring cane-growers, represent a type of benevolent paternalism. When they attend the Sunday morning service held by Tommy for the Kanaka workers they watch the proceedings with “interested expressions, the expressions of parents indulging their children” (54). Nevertheless they treat their Kanaka workers well and display an ambivalent respect for cultural differences. When Blanche insists that Barney intervene in the domestic problems of the Kanaka couple Mary and Tommy, Barney reproves her sharply: “These people have got their own ideas about marriage. They’ve got a high moral sense about these things. A damn sight higher than some whites I could name. Mary is honest. We should leave them to their own customs” (57). The liberal humanists Cindie Comstock and Randolph Biddow represent the most “enlightened” settlers, however their participation in the exploitative processes of colonialism is not glossed over. Biddow’s unease with Cindie’s methods of reimbursing her Aboriginal workers for their labour signals the author’s awareness that she is fully implicated in the capitalist and colonialist venture. When Cindie empties the storerooms in preparation for the “corroboree” at Folkhaven she observes to Biddow:

“This is the test of our attitude towards these people, Mr. Biddow. If it cleans us out of foodstuffs they must be fed. They are our own people, Mr. Biddow. They are Australians. They can’t be deported. We can’t expect to have them to fall back on if we lose the Kanakas unless we treat them right, now”.

Her words made Biddow uneasy. “Maybe you are right, Cindie,” he told her, carefully. “But there’s something I don’t like about it. It’s even cheaper labour that the Kanakas. I feel we are exploiting these people unjustifiably. There’s something wrong about it” (190).

Cindie's generosity and her recognition of Aborigines as fellow Australians is somewhat tainted by the self-interest that appears to motivate her actions.

Devanny's text thus explores the role of colonialism in creating and sustaining both race and class divisions. The narrative also demonstrates an awareness of the complexity of racial difference and the problems endemic in the struggle against racial discrimination. As the narrative progresses it becomes evident that colour prejudice and assumptions of racial superiority are not necessarily confined to the white community. Early in the novel the antagonism between the Callaghan's Chinese and Japanese cooks is commented on. Takeo, the Japanese field-cook at Folkhaven, despises the Kanakas and Cindie dislikes him for his "assumption of superiority to the black man" (105). When she insists that he change his attitude he expresses surprise that she likes the Kanaka:

"He black," he [Takeo] said simply.
 "And you're brown" said Cindie promptly.
 A broad grin from Takeo. "You brown too.
 Ha, ha, ha... you brown, too, Boss..." He
 cackled and shook.
 "Yes, I'm brown, too," laughed Cindie (106).

Similarly, the Kanakas consider themselves superior to the Aborigines:

From the Aborigines the Kanakas held aloof, in the
 main contemptuous of a people whose physiognomy
 they derided and whose technique they regarded as
 appallingly primitive. The word "myall" was spat out
 by some of them in disgust, weighted with a significance
 quite foreign to its simple "bush native" meaning (191).

Cindie heatedly challenges these assumptions of superiority insisting that "the myall Aborigine is as good as you any day" (310). Randolph Biddow's more measured opinion is that the Kanakas have learnt their contempt for Aborigines from the white Australians. Tirwana tells his fellow Kanakas that, "The white man, he all the time on top, if Kanaka he thinks he better than other black men" (311). In his analysis:

The white man who works is a fool when he does not see that beneath the white skin and the black skin and the yellow skin is one heart, one blood, one blood that is red, one will to live good! The white man who works and does not take the hand of the black and yellow man as brother is *one damn bloody fool* (321).^{viii}

In his essay “Emancipating the Equal Aborigine: J.B. O’Reilly and A.J. Vogan”, Terry Goldie discusses the white writer’s attempt to incorporate Aboriginal people into his or her text. Goldie suggests that the extent to which the aboriginal character’s subjectivity is explored may provide a possible continuum on which narratives about aboriginal people may be placed. On this continuum the indigene in the text “comes closer to a subjective presence to the degree that his dialogue is presented” (51). In Cindie the cross-racial encounters are for the most part related through Cindie’s consciousness, however there seems to be an effort to counteract this “white” perspective by the frequent portrayal of Cindie in dialogue with various Kanaka and Aboriginal characters. Tirwana’s voice in particular is allocated a considerable amount of space. As observed in Chapter Two, in the novel Lenore Divine, Devanny had already moved away from attempting a representation of indigenous consciousness. However, in that novel, the portrayal of Ngaire as speaking subject is to some extent undercut by Lenore’s translation of Ngaire’s experience. Lenore’s assumptions of cultural superiority prevent any extensive exploration of Ngaire’s “otherness”. The absence of an indigenous “answer” to Lenore’s explications lays the text open to Abdul R. JanMohamed’s criticism of colonialist literature, who argues that, while the surface of these texts purports to represent specific encounters with the colonized other, the subtext in effect merely affirms the superiority of Western culture (84).

In the novel Cindie, however, Cindie’s “white” perspective is on several occasions successfully challenged by Tirwana’s articulation of an alternative point of view so that, following JanMohamed, the encounter with the “native” offers a bridge towards “syncretic possibility” (84). In her interactions with the Kanaka and Aboriginal characters, and

particularly with Tirwana, Cindie (and the reader) is led to question the validity of her Western values and codes of behaviour. For example, when Cindie expresses concern for the Aboriginal character Verbena's illegitimate child, Tirwana observes ironically: "The black people, they will look after the baby. Black people are not sensible like whites, Miss Cindie. They won't let the little baby starve because the father not known. They only savage" (123). Tirwana's observation inverts the opposition in traditional colonial representation of the indigene as savage and the colonist as civilised and challenges the Western assumption of moral superiority. On another occasion Tirwana offers his own translation of the rhetoric of Christianity's civilising mission. Explaining to Cindie why he never returned to his island home, he remarks: "Me too young, at first, to know I could return. The boss, he never tell me. Missis, she always tell me to stay with her, be Christian and go to heaven...Heaven look very good to young Island boy lost to his people" (69). Earlier in the narrative Cindie has already experienced unease with the rhetoric of Tommy's fervent sermonizing:

Further, as Tommy with mounting fervour sung the praises of the Lord, and added extempore injunctions to his fellows to be "thankful for da riches de good Lord has piled on to your sinful backs", and failed not to scarify laziness and sloth and foreshadow the after-death torments awaiting trouble-makers and the ungrateful, as this sort of thing went on, Cindie began to feel a vague disquiet ... There was something she did not like about this precious religion of Tommy's... But she could not pin that something down, exactly (54).

Cindie's discomfort lies in the implicit benefits to the colonial project of the Christian regime of work and worship for reward in the hereafter. Tirwana's later observation explicitly makes these connections.^{ix}

In a similar manner, another one of Biddow's Kanaka workers, Sow, draws attention to the violent exploitation obscured by the overt "civilising" project of colonialism and the accompanying necessity of maintaining law and order amongst the

“natives”. After the New Year’s Day incident, Sow complains to Cindie about the fines levied on the Kanakas involved: “Not right, Missie Cindie, to hit us with sticks and chains and take our money too. One fight, one punish. The bloody white, he want everything” (308). On the night of this incident Cindie spends the evening listening to the Kanaka grievances, “...encouraging the more volatile among them to spill out of their systems through passionate talk the urgency of their will to vengeance, their fury of frustration arising from their ignominious subjection” (311). During this interchange, Sow again calls into question the supposedly superior white moral codes of behaviour: “I see white Australian like animal too... I see white Australian crawl on knees with drink. I see him lie on road in own spew...” (311). Cindie and Randolph’s openness towards the Kanaka point of view provides the opportunity to better comprehend and understand “other” experience: “Possibly Cindie and Biddow learned as much as they taught that night” (311).

The endeavour to give a narrative “voice” to silenced and marginalised others has been extensively debated and becomes even more problematic where the white text attempts to represent a racial other. However, while whites can never speak *for* people “of colour”, the attempt to challenge and offer alternatives to the discourses of the dominant group is as much the responsibility of those within that group as those who have been silenced and marginalised. As Margery Fee points out in her essay “Who can write as Other”: “Rewriting the dominant ideology is not easy since the difference between Pakeha and Maori has been written into existence by the dominant discourse, and thus the process of rewriting this ideology is the work of the whole New Zealand community, rather than of any one writer” (245). In her article “Jean Devanny’s New Zealand Novels”, Carole Ferrier draws attention to Devanny’s concern for the coming into speech of previously silenced groups (40). This concern is reflected in the scene on the jetty where the Kanaka gather to await deportation. A “grave-looking youth”, a stranger to Cindie, addresses the group, expressing his dilemma. Forcibly removed from his community at an early age by the practices of “black-birding”, he has grown accustomed to a Western way of life and fears that he will return a stranger to his people and their customs.^x Neither does he wish to remain in Australia:

For here I have lived like a white man and yet I am treated

like a horse. Because my skin is black! So what is there for me in this world? I do not want to stay here and I do not want to go back to my people. I have no people. I am alone (320).

Tirwana responds to this speech with emotion:

Tirwana stretched out an arm and pointed a finger at the youth. “No!” he cried deeply. “You are not alone! There are a great multitude of men like you and some of them have white skins. You, boy, are lucky. You can say out loud what these other fellas here can only think... These people here, they laugh and joke and buy nonsense because they can’t talk out loud what is in their hearts. Like you. But your problems are theirs too.

“You, boy, people like you who can talk out loud what is in your hearts, you are lucky people. You are *big* people. You are *leading* people...

I have seen that the white man, too, often thinks he is alone in facing up to problems. But it is only because, like you, he does not look around him and see the – the *waiting* in the hearts of the people who can’t talk, how they wait on him who can talk, who can read their hearts and talk about it to the world (320).

Devanny’s attempt to read the heart of black experience of prejudice and discrimination reflects her readiness to take up the challenge of producing new discourses to counteract those of the dominant hegemony.

In her autobiography Point of Departure, Devanny defends the “truth” of her representations of Kanaka, pointing to the oral accounts of conditions experienced which are embedded in her narrative. She particularly refers to an “aged Kanaka” from whom she “gleaned some valuable information” (P.O.D, 301). However, as Sneja Gunew points out in her essay “Framing Marginality”, invoking the authority of so-called personal testimony,

which is traditionally privileged as the place where “truth” speaks, may also be problematic (148). Spivak argues that, given the complex mediations of power, the authentic voice of the “subaltern” will always be misrepresented.^{xi} Nevertheless, as observed earlier, the attempt to tell the stories of marginalised peoples may offer a way of challenging the “claims to truth” of the dominant discourse. It should also be borne in mind that our contemporary problematisation of speaking on behalf of the other was not available to Devanny in the period in which she was writing.

There are, however, indications that, by the time she was writing *Cindie*, Devanny was aware of the limits of a “white” narrative’s ability to represent the subjectivity of the racial other. As observed above, no attempt is made to enter the consciousness of any of the Kanaka or Aboriginal characters. There is also no attempt to represent dialogue between Aboriginal or Kanaka characters independent of Cindie’s white centre of consciousness. The Kanaka and Aborigines are understood only within the confines of the white characters’ interactions with them. Furthermore, in the passage referred to above, Tirwana’s simple broken English and his struggle to articulate his point of view, suggest an awareness that the text is attempting to express the subjectivity of the other in a symbolic order foreign to that subjectivity: “Struggling for clarity, conscious that he was hashing up a good case he only partly understood, Tirwana was now prancing about, in wild-eyed excitement”.^{xii} At the end of his speech he “collapsed in a frenzy and sank down on the ground. Drops of sweat rolled down his face. His eyes rolled. He drew great panting breaths” (321). Tirwana’s difficulty in expressing his thoughts signals his unfamiliarity with the conventions of an[other] language. It may also be interpreted as hinting at other ways of making meaning and other subjectivities which cannot successfully be encoded within the text’s symbolic order.

An awareness of the limits of the white narrative’s ability to render the subjectivity of characters excluded from the dominant symbolic order may also account for the fact that no attempt seems to be made to incorporate the Aboriginal characters as subjects within the text. Cindy insists to Randolph Biddow that, “These people must know all sorts of things that we don’t know” (170). In her dealings with the Aborigines, the narrative informs us

that Cindie maintains, “A deliberate policy of give and take in respect of things to be learned” (171). In the passage quoted earlier she tells Randy that the “blacks” have educated her with their “talk of the earth, the sea, the sky, of bird and animal life, their spirit world” (270). However, apart from statements such as these there is no attempt to portray what Aboriginal culture might have to offer Western society. This silence suggests the magnitude of the Aborigine’s distance as other and is difficult to interpret. Devanny’s numerous articles protesting at the degraded conditions Aborigines were forced to live in would suggest a greater familiarity and a more intimate knowledge of Aboriginal people than of the Kanakas, the majority of whom had left Australia long before she took up her pen to write *Cindie*. Yet none of the Aboriginal characters are brought alive in the way the Kanaka characters are. By the end of the novel the Aboriginal presence has all but completely disappeared. However, Cindie’s sense of “irreparable loss” (321) is for the Kanakas, whose colourful presence on the plantation has brought her so much pleasure.

In his essay “Emancipating the Equal Aborigine”, Goldie suggests that the textual representation of the indigene is shaped by the author’s own ideological contact with the country inhabited by the indigenous people portrayed. Where a need for indigenisation informs the narrative, a tension exists since the other, perceived as alien and different, must nevertheless become the “other-within” (62-64). In this analysis, Devanny’s text may reflect her own ideological contact with Australia. Although she spent the greater part of her life in Australia, Devanny continued to identify herself as a New Zealander in both her autobiography and other journal writings. This self-construction suggests that the conflict concerning indigenisation would be minimised in her narrative and Aboriginal people are more likely to remain a distant other rather than the domesticated other or the “other-within”, which Maori had to be in her New Zealand novels.

At one stage in the text Cindie demonstrates a pride in “our Aborigines” similar to the proprietorial pride of colonial New Zealanders in their “superior savages”, discussed in Chapter One. Cindie is “splendidly, exuberantly confident” in the Aborigines’ capacity to learn and work:

“If the Kanakas can cut timber, our Aborigines can.

Mr. Biddow, haven't you noticed that our blacks are more powerful than the Kanakas? Most of the Islanders are soft and flabby in comparison to our blacks. They will be better axemen. You'll see."

And Biddow himself felt a little exalted to realise that she was proud of the Aborigines. Proud that they were Australians, like herself. She *wanted* them to be superior (169-170).

However, Cindie's aspirations for "her" Aborigines are slowly sabotaged by both the hostility of other planters and the destruction of Aboriginal "feeding" grounds by the ever-increasing encroachment of white settlement. The ultimate failure of Cindie's attempt to assist the Aborigines' entry into civilised society is spelled out in the unpublished sequel to Cindie, "One Can't Have Everything".^{xiii} In this manuscript a much older Cindie reminisces about "Cindie Comstock's boongs":

Her dreams and plans of those old times seemed in retrospect to be fantastic. Dreams of schools for the shy little brown wood-pigeons, dreams of the original Australians marching side by side with the white invaders to a land of happiness and plenty. They had not endured for long those dreams. Soon they had dissolved into the miasmatic mists given off, like the stench of a rotting corpse, by the "inspired" doctrines of WHITE AUSTRALIA. They had vanished like the Aborigines themselves who had perforce to flee before the threat of hunger from the destruction of their coastal feeding grounds, and the refusal of the whites to regard them as human beings. Later, the insignificant remnants of once flourishing splendid tribes had been more or less forcibly segregated in a motley collection of "missions" (JD MSS/26/1, 384).

Another way to interpret the comparative lack of aboriginal presence and

characterization might be to read it as a sign of Devanny's own awareness of the complexity of racist attitudes in Australia and of the problems endemic in changing them. In this interpretation Devanny may be seen as using the history of the Kanakas' recruitment and deportation to demonstrate the loss which occurs when attempts are made to "bleach" out colour from a society rather than directly addressing the Aboriginal "problem". This more "subtle" approach suggests the distance Jean Devanny had travelled since her early attempts to attack all forms of injustice head on. It would also challenge the impression Drusilla Modjeska gives in her study Exiles At Home, which implies that this remained an unchanging pattern throughout her life:

This was a pattern in her life. She had strongly held views and thought that it was enough to state and restate them for their obvious justice to be recognised: yet she had little understanding of the complexities of social and sexual relationships and the difficulties of change. (128).

I suggest instead that Devanny's analysis in Cindie reflects a sensitive awareness of the complex difficulties which attend the attempt to challenge dominant constructions of racial and sexual difference.

ⁱ Information cited in Ferrier (1985), Modjeska:125-131, 147-153, and Devanny's autobiography Point of Departure.

ⁱⁱ In the introduction Carole Ferrier points out that while the term "Kanaka", taken from the Sandwich Island dialect, originally signaled the general concept of "man", in Queensland it acquired derogatory connotations (ix).

ⁱⁱⁱ In his essay "Keeping Australia Clean White", Raymond Evans suggests that though some historians of Australian race relations argue that the racial contact situations involving Aborigines were essentially different and separate to the racist responses to Melanesian and Chinese migrant workers, both situations reflect structural similarities: "...the essence of both situations was a battle for vital economic assets over which whites sought an absolute monopoly" (172). The silence surrounding the presence of the Aboriginal people suggests that as the original inhabitants of the country, they posed the maximum threat to the discourse of legitimisation.

^{iv} These are listed in the bibliography. Copies are held at James Cook University, Townsville.

^v Patricia Jacob's essay "Science and Veiled Assumptions: Miscegenation in W.A. 1930-1937" examines both the legislation and the controversy surrounding this debate in detail.

^{vi} Jacobs points out that the “veiled assumption” was that “half-caste” women would marry into the lowest economic stratum of white Australian society while the possibility of “half-caste” men marrying white women was tacitly ignored (18).

^{vii} This partnership reflects Devanny’s communist ideal of men and women working together in unity and equity.

^{viii} Devanny is directly addressing working-class racism here. In Point of Departure she complains about the “backwardness” of the North Queensland communists:

The term nigger was freely used among them in reference to coloured persons. I was shocked and angered to find that a leading comrade of Innisfail, in love with a Chinese girl, would not be seen with her in public... I never let up on pressing home the reactionary attitude of the comrades on this basic principle of communist practice. (190-191).

^{ix} In her study “Pacific Islander women in Queensland 1863-1907” Kay Saunders remarks on the susceptibility to Christian rhetoric of Pacific Islanders alienated from their traditional culture. She points out the usefulness of Christianity in providing an earnest, obedient workforce and quotes a Bundaberg police magistrate’s observation: “The planters universally admit the advantages that have arisen from religious training and the police are in accord with the planters on this point” (30).

^x Devanny’s text portrays “blackbirding”, the process by which Melanesian people were recruited to work in the Queensland cane-fields, as a cruel and abominable process. In Point of Departure she maintains that the cruelty to Kanakas lay chiefly in the recruitment methods (300-302). However, in his essay “Used and Abused: The Melanesian Labour Trade”, Clive Moore observes that historians maintain that the majority of Melanesians came to Queensland of their own will (158). For their own story as related to the children of the Kanakas see The Forgotten People, a transcription of the first-hand accounts recorded by the ABC.

^{xi} “Questions Of Multiculturalism: Sneja Gunew and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak”: 140.

^{xii} On the other hand, in Black Skin, White Masks, Frantz Fanon argues that the portrayal of the “native” speaking pidgin English “decivilises” him and suggests that he has no culture and cannot express himself properly: “To make him talk pidgin is to fasten him to an effigy of him, to snare him, to imprison him, the eternal victim of an essence, of an *appearance* for which he is not responsible: (35).

^{xiii} Devanny had originally planned a trilogy of life in the cane-fields. The sequel to Cindie, “One Can’t Have Everything” was never published, partly as a result of the hostile reaction to Cindie from the Communist Party (Cindie, xii).

Chapter Five

Colonising Women

Colonising women concern me because they are a contemporary presence and not an ancient absence. Colonialism may have ended as a formal historical relation but it persists in political/ discursive practices.

Margaret Jolly, (104).

In the foregoing chapter it was suggested that Devanny's novel Cindie expresses an awareness of the complexity of the issues surrounding racism and the difficulties attending the endeavour to change racist ideologies generated by colour prejudice. Thus one of her projects within the narrative appears to be an attempt to unsettle the notion of colour as a marker of essential difference. In the same way that her text resists fixed definitions of colonised racial others it also resists the historical definitions assigned to femininity by colonial ideology. Devanny's corpus reveals an intense interest in the ways in which women respond to the social and psychological pressures of the various environments in which they find themselves, and Cindie presents a detailed exploration of the life prescribed for colonial women on the Queensland frontier. As Carol Ferrier points out in the introduction to the 1986 edition of Cindie, in the characters of both Cindie and Blanche, the different historical constructions of the pioneer woman are explored in their full complexity (x).

Post-colonial criticism has pointed to the way in which colonial discourse produces an apparently stable, unmarked white "self" in contrast to a marked racial and cultural other.¹ In this chapter I examine the ways in which Devanny's narrative destabilises this "white self" and, through the figures of Blanche and Cindie, holds up for scrutiny traditional constructions of "female whiteness". Cindie draws attention to "white" as a signifier of dominance and Devanny appears particularly interested in the ways in which white women respond to the power available to them to dominate colonised others in the colonial situation. Her narrative also explores the ways in which colonial women

experience and respond to their own sexuality and that of both the male and female colonised other. Here as well the text seems concerned to unsettle conventional constructions of black and white sexuality.

Both Cindie and Blanche are finely drawn characters and reveal a significant evolution in Devanny's exploration of the different and conflicting meanings of femininity. In the period between writing The Butcher Shop and Cindie, Jean Devanny has moved beyond the tendency to portray her characters in a series of simple binary oppositions. In The Butcher Shop, Margaret Messenger's sexual desire was idealised as pure and instinctively moral and all intolerable passion and inclinations were displaced onto her bad other Miette. In Cindie, the sexuality of both main female characters is problematised. As Kay Ferres points out, Blanche's failure to regulate her sexual desire leads to promiscuity while Cindie's puritanical repression of her desire turns her into a withered old maid (129). Similarly, while the figure of Blanche offers a critique of the sterility and self-indulgence of a particular section of the colonial ruling class, Cindie's role in the colonial venture is not unproblematic. Both of their names are significant. Blanche's name signals both whiteness and the removal of colour. In the context of the novel's portrayal of the loss to the community which results from the deportation of the Kanakas, her whiteness has implications of lack. Cindie's name has associations with both cinders, with the accompanying notions of being burnt (colour being burned onto her skin by the sun), and Cinderella, the fairy-tale heroine who rises from obscurity to fame and riches. Blanche's idleness and self-indulgence is thrown into sharp relief by Cindie's work-filled existence alongside the Kanaka workers and her commitment to the success to the cane-growing enterprise. Blanche's blatant racism and automatic assumption of superiority is in stark contrast to Cindie's determination to treat the Kanaka and Aborigines as humans deserving of consideration and respect. Blanche is of course the epitome of white female narcissism and her excessive self-regard and self-indulgence results in a sterile and parasitical existence.ⁱⁱ Cindie expresses her exasperation at the wasted potential she sees in Blanche to Jeff Grey: "Jeff, how can a woman be content to neglect a good brain? Tell me that! She's got more brains in her little finger than I've got in my head." To Jeff's suggestion that

Blanche's beauty might have "side-tracked" her, Cindie replies "Stuff and nonsense! Most of the really big women in history have been good-lookers" (205).

While the narrative focuses on the experience of colonising white females there is also some attempt to imagine the experiences of colonised black women. Traditionally, colonial discourse on race and women separate the chaste, monogamous white colonial women from a wanton, polygamous racial other. In her essay for The Penguin New Literary History of Australia, "Women Writers", Susan Sheridan observes that even white women's fictions of the period generally deny their white female characters an active desire, displacing it instead onto the Aboriginal women (329-330). However, in Cindie, the textual constructions of black and white women unsettle these binary oppositions. While the Kanaka and Aboriginal women Charity and Verbena are portrayed as freely desiring agents it is the white woman Blanche who is unable to regulate her sexual desire. Whiteness as a signifier for purity and chastity is contested in Blanche's eroticism. When Blanche insists to Barney Callaghan that the Kanaka woman Mary's sexuality be policed and white codes of conduct enforced, Cindie intuitively recognises that, "She's jealous. She doesn't know it but she's jealous, for some reason of the black woman's rights" (58).ⁱⁱⁱ Blanche's hypocrisy is soon made evident as she repeatedly transgresses the prescribed moral code for white women. The exploration of female desire in Cindie, offers a far more sophisticated analysis than that of The Butcher Shop. In that novel Devanny's attempts to challenge the negative meanings attached to women's sexuality are undercut by her concern to keep her narrative within a framework that was at least minimally acceptable in the puritan climate in which it was published. Devanny's own anxiety is evident in the way she is unable to reject completely the historical categorisation of women as either virtuous or "fallen". While Blanche does experience a fall from grace she is not Miette's equivalent. Her eroticism is not constructed as Miette's sheer animal lust. Nevertheless, her failure to regulate her own erotic desire leads to sexual relationships with the unsavoury male characters whose exploitative natures are evident in their treatment of Aborigines and Kanakas. Willis Fraser treats his Kanaka workers like animals and Florenz Bardia is a "slimy black-bird whose name, even among the hardened ranks of his colleagues, had stunk to the degree that his licence for recruiting Kanakas had been revoked" (208).

Blanche's frustrated eroticism finally culminates in the sexual encounter with Melatonka, the portrayal of which challenges the colonial construction of white women as vulnerable and in need of protection from black male lust and violence, as well as the gender ideology which portrays white women as moral guardians of home and race.

Early in the narrative the issue of black sexuality is brought into focus. Mary Callaghan warns Cindie soon after her arrival in Queensland never to forget that the Kanakas are men with the same physical impulses as white men:

“They are men Cindie,” she said gently. “In some ways exactly like all other men, irrespective of colour. And you must not forget that Cindie. Our women, Cindie, never forget that the Kanakas are men. Do you understand?” (35).

Mary's cautionary words highlight the colonial ideology in which the presence of white women on colonial frontiers demanded that relations between white women and indigenous males be strictly regulated. However, her construction of the threat of potential sexual violence insists on a commonality of male “nature”; all men “regardless of colour” are subject to the same sexual urges. Her construction thus challenges the stereotype of black hyper-sexuality.^{iv} The spectre of the primitive black male lusting after white female flesh is further demystified when Cindie realises that any threat that may exist can be attributed to the fact that the Kanaka men are deprived of normal domestic relations. As she observes to Randolph Biddow: “Why should they like it Mr. Biddow? Work all day. Sleep all night. No wives, no homes, no children, no fun” (70). Tirwana also remarks on the alienated lifestyle the indentured Kanakas are forced to adopt: “New country here. No women” (84). His suggestion that the white women carry guns because the new men may yet be “savage” is undercut by his ironic observation, “maybe more savage for being stolen from their people” (84).

However, while the text challenges the discourse that projects all illicit sexuality onto racial others, phenotypically marking them as inherently different, Cindie nevertheless retains a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the “primitive” sexuality of the Kanakas.

While she is able to laugh at her initial fear of the new batch of wild-looking men, all the same she keeps in mind Tirwana's warning "not to underestimate the powerful impulse of primitive souls frustrated and possessed of entirely different moral standards to her own" (93). At this stage in the narrative it has become evident that Cindie's moral standards are characterised by both naiveté and somewhat puritanical repression. She refuses to acknowledge her attraction to Randolph Biddow. When she recognises the sexual jealousy that exists between herself and Blanche her reaction is one of confusion and denial. Arguing with Blanche about the advisability of carrying guns as a protective measure Cindie informs Blanche that, in spite of her privileged status, to the Kanaka she is just another female:

"To them Mrs. Biddow, you are only a woman.
Just a woman like – like me." She caught her breath perceptibly on that last phrase, and the shock of some sudden aberrant emotion that gripped her turned her brown skin to a putty-like hue. Her eyes opened wide upon Blanche. The muscles of her mouth tightened and straightened her lips (84).

Interestingly, it is the discussion of black male sexual desire that sparks an awareness of Cindie's own sexuality. This sudden awareness prompts Cindie to attempt to conceal the fact that Biddow had asked her to raise the subject of guns with Blanche:

Then, realizing that for some reason obscure to herself she had told her mistress a half-lie Cindie's face was stained with a rush of blood. Her thoughts whirled. What was happening? Why was Mrs. Biddow looking at her like that? (85).

Her first reaction as she tries to make sense of what has occurred is to weep:

... to her surprise [she] found tears gushing from her eyes. A dreadful wounded feeling replaced the daze. To be spoken to like that! No woman had the right! And why? Why? What was it all about! What had she done! Suddenly

she felt terribly tired, a condition that roused her to a sense of loafing in the midst of demanding interminable tasks. She got to her feet and looked around her at the fruit trees. Here, right here was one job she would have to give attention to without one hour's delaying (85).

The retreat into physical labour allows the release of the physical sensations aroused by the encounter:

Cindie let go that thread [of thought] and lost herself in nebulous day-dreaming. Her fingers continued by pressure to estimate the degree of ripeness of the fruits, but beneath this overtone of functional activity she drifted in a sea of sensuous rainbow-hued dreams. The steaming heat widened the pores of her skin till her clothing stuck to her body and limbs, outlining the slimness of her torso and the sturdiness of her thighs...

She was dimly conscious of an instinctive reluctance to delve deeply into the subtleties of her encounter with Blanche.

Nothing had happened. Nothing really (87).

Cindie's refusal to acknowledge her sexuality turns her into "a muscular and stringy old crow" (205). Finally, however, her sexual awakening is achieved through her relationship with Randy Biddow, son of Blanche and Randolph. After their lovemaking Cindie is re-invested with a physical energy that turns her days into a whirlwind of activity: "She looked youthful beyond those early years. The almost fierce glow that animated her features erased the tiny lines of drudgery and monotonous unloved virginity. Even the heavy waving masses of her honey-coloured hair seemed to take on new shine and vitality" (316). Cindie's sexual fulfilment is achieved through a cross-generational union which reverses the traditionally sanctioned norm of older men marrying young virgins. This marks an interesting development in Devanny's exploration of women's sexuality and its fulfilment in unorthodox relationships. Devanny's insistence on women's "right to choose" is first articulated in The Butcher Shop where Margaret's relationship with Glengarry

crosses divisions of class. In Lenore Divine it is a cross-racial relationship which brings her heroine sexual fulfilment. The cross-generation relationship portrayed in Cindie is all the more interesting given the period in which Devanny was writing. As observed in the previous chapter, this period saw increasing public debate over the future of those who were the products of cross-racial sexual unions. The absence in the novel of any serious sexual relationship between black and white suggests a new caution in Devanny's approach. One could speculate whether her own experiences of marginalisation contributed towards this caution. However, this silence may also be attributed to her awareness of the difficulty of challenging too many prejudices at one time. As Mary Anne Jebb and Anna Haebich observe in their analysis of gender relations on Australian frontiers, "Across the Great Divide", while white men's access to black women's sexual services had been a persistent feature of frontier life since the early days of contact, the idea of marriage between white women and Aboriginal men was considered so unconscionable as to be absurd. These prejudices persisted well into the Twentieth century and it was not until the 1970's that attention began to be focused on the contradictory attitudes and actions of white Australians regarding inter-racial sexual liaisons (29-34)

While the text refuses to offer any fertile and rewarding sexual relationship across racial lines, the narrative does portray a growing friendship between Cindie and Tirwana, a platonic relationship based on mutual respect and understanding. As observed earlier, both Cindie and Tirwana occupy marginalised positions dictated by their gender and race respectively. Their friendship may thus reflect what Ros Ballaster, in her essay "New hystericism: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: the body, the text and the feminist critic", identifies as a "mini-allegory of strategical political alliance" where the black man represents "race" and the white woman "gender" (288).

However, while no serious inter-racial relationship is contemplated in the narrative there are passages where a certain "frisson" seems to inform white women's awareness of black male sexuality. Early in the text Blanche becomes aware of how good-looking the Kanaka men are and in particular Tirwana, "That ebony giant... was quite fine-looking" (54). Blanche's irresponsibly flirtatious behaviour with Tommy disgusts Cindie, however

her own reaction to the Solomon Islander, Melatonka, reflects an ambivalent awareness of his sexual attraction. Although she professes to “detest” this character, the description of his physique filtered through Cindie’s consciousness suggests that he is an object of both fascination and repulsion:

With the exception of Tirwana he was the finest looking native she had seen. His torso was magnificent, he had the same reddish tinge in his skin as Tommy the preacher. His features were blunt and as Aryan as Cindie’s own. His frizzy hair, of which he took meticulous care, was combed high and wide to form a halo for his face and was more red than black. And he had a very good idea of the extent to which the slop-made white man’s clothes detracted from his beauty and grace. On Sundays he discarded them and wrapped around his loins a sulu of multiple hue that set off his natural colour scheme to perfection.

It was not the fact that Melatonka became sex-conscious whenever she approached him that aroused Cindie’s ire and dislike. It was his “slimy grin” and downcast eyes, his wheedling too-soft “Yes Missie”, his pretence of not understanding her directions; for the purpose she very well knew, of prolonging her contact with him. She detested him for his sharp detection of her own feeling about him and his knowing, perverted delight in it. She linked him in her mind with Willie Fraser, Kanaka-beater and –starver, whom she had recently told to quit bothering her or she would put a shot about his heels (93-94).

Cindie’s response to Melatonka’s overt displays of sexuality also, however, reflects the contradictory position occupied by colonial women who are constructed as vulnerable to the threat of black male lust, but who at the same time are placed in a position of dominance over colonised black males within the colonial hierarchy of race relations. The

fundamentally destructive irresponsibility of Blanche's sexual encounter with Melatonka more explicitly highlights the power to dominate racial others which accrues to white colonial women within this hierarchy. Melatonka's demonstration of fear both before and after the encounter is in strong contrast with Blanche's contemptuous order for him to carry her to her room. Cindie's own distaste for Melatonka is at least temporarily forgotten in the sympathy she feels for his plight. She uses her own power more benevolently to assist him to avoid the severe consequences he would face if the encounter were made public.

The relations between colonial women and colonised black women are in this sense less contradictory. While Cindie's impulse to control Blanche's sexuality is constrained by her subordinate class positioning, a position of authority in relation to indigenous females is made available to her by the hierarchical racial structure which informs colonial society. An uneasy friendship does appear to develop between Cindie and Verbena and Charity, however the relationship remains unequal and Cindie's superior position allows her to define its boundaries. Her relationship with the Kanaka and Aboriginal women suggests a tension between her egalitarian impulse and the power available to her as a white woman. Unlike Blanche, who makes Verbena and Charity wear shapeless and unrevealing frocks to conceal their pregnancy, Cindie appears relatively unruffled by their condition and by the fact that in both cases Melatonka is responsible. In fact she remarks to Tirwana that "if Melatonka keeps on at this rate he'll have a whole tribe of his own about the place" (153). It would appear that Cindie has taken on board Barney Callaghan's advice not to judge the Kanakas by white moral standards. Tirwana's response when Cindie raises the issue of Verbena's illegitimate child also serves to make Cindie realise "it is none of my business" (123). However, on several other occasions she seems to feel compelled to enforce a Western code of appropriate female behaviour. At the New Years sports event in Masterman she is dismayed to note that Charity, "in company with several other Kanaka women had abandoned decorum and was shouting and laughing hilariously" (304). A more serious abandon of decorum occurs on the plantation on Boxing Day night when Charity, responding to the general atmosphere of festive abandon, joins the Kanaka men's wild and "licentious" dancing:

Charity, restrained till now by her sense of the white

women watching, threw out a shrill laugh, pranced forward into the firelight and, pulling up her long frock – her “best” – till the major part of her legs was exposed, began to participate in the orgy (141).

When Biddow, Jeff Grey and Tirwana move to put an end to the exhibition, Charity responds with inappropriate “cheek” and Cindie is enraged:

Down the stairs she flew and over to the gathering.
Without a moment’s hesitation she grabbed Charity
by the hair as she whirled, jerked her to a standstill
and slapped her face with all her weight behind it (141).

Cindie, with all the “best” motives, nevertheless takes it on herself to reform indigenous female behaviour, to bring it into line with her own culture’s prescribed codes of appropriate female decorum.

Various post-colonial feminist critics have identified what Barbara N. Ramusack, in her essay “Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945”, describes as benevolent maternalism in the attitude of early British feminists who took it on themselves to rescue “native” women from their own degradation (309). In her article “Colonising Women: The maternal body and empire”, Margaret Jolly argues that these apparently humane intentions nevertheless served British imperialism and legitimated the overall project of colonial expansion (109-110). She also, however, points to the ambivalence with which many white women entered this complex relationship of both identification with, and distance from, indigenous women:

The symbolic constitution of the relationship between colonising women and colonised women in the familial mode as that between mother and daughter was a poignant but strategic expression of the tension between superordination and identification, between detachment and agonised intimacy, between other and self (115).

Cindie’s relationship with the Kanaka woman Charity and the Aboriginal woman Verbena displays some of these tensions. Her reaction to the incident on “Boxing Day night” is

revealing: “After Boxing Day night Cindie’s manner was that of a woman withdrawn into herself and a little fearful. It was the manner of one recovering from an emotional shock” (142).

Cindie’s self-realisation takes place through a contradictory hierarchy of race, class and gender. Her bid for power involves a complex negotiation of the various positions available to her in the colonial situation. Devanny’s exploration of the ambiguous role of white female colonisers suggests an awareness of the complex position of white women within the colonial situation as they both resist and collude with colonial ideologies and practices. Initially at least, Cindie shares the same servant status as Charity and Verbena. The first Aboriginal woman Cindie encounters makes this link explicit when she observes to Cindie “You the Toby, the Alice eh?” (24), (Toby and Alice being the Callaghans Aboriginal maids). However, her white skin places her above them within the colonial hierarchy and the text appears concerned to explore her reactions when faced with this power to dominate colonised others. The ease with which Cindie assumes a position of authority appears to be linked with the different spheres of labour. Initially Cindie’s own uncertain position within the Biddow household causes friction between herself, Blanche and Verbena. Once this has been resolved by Biddow, Cindie calls herself the “little boss” and within the domestic sphere her relationship with Charity and Verbena is characterised by a benevolent control tempered with maternal indulgence.

When Cindie and Charity build the fernery for Blanche, it is as Kay Ferres observes, a feminine undertaking (130). The project, however, takes place outside the domestic sphere and thus affords an escape from the more negative aspects of domestic power, as embodied in Blanche Biddow. The egalitarian nature of the work suggests an element of “sisterhood”. This ideal is complicated, however, by the incident where Cindie rescues Charity from the menace of the deadly poisonous snake. Cindie’s rescue of Charity may suggest their shared vulnerability to male threat signalled by the snake. It also, however, contains elements of the “mission of maternalism” identified by feminist critics, in which white women rescued indigenous women from the degraded position they were perceived as occupying within their own culture. Cindie’s attempts to house Charity in the Biddow

home on Boxing Day night, to protect her from potential violation by “aroused” Kanaka males, suggests a similar protectionism. On the other hand, both incidents may be interpreted as Cindie’s challenge to colonial practice which denied black women, stereotyped as wanton and promiscuous, the protection afforded white women.

However, the narrative does cast a critical eye over both Cindie’s benevolent control of the Kanakas and her project of social reform for the Aborigines. The reader is informed that it was Cindie’s practice:

to marshal the Folkhaven Kanakas into church in a body and then seat herself in a position from which she could direct a stern eye upon each worshipper in turn at the approach of the plate. Despite their promises to be “sensible” beforetimes, she knew that the religious fervour engendered by the singing and the enchantment of their own responses to Melody’s passionate praying would without her supervision induce the Kanakas to bestow their meagre all (218).

Cindie is surprised and embarrassed, however, when the parson reverses this surveillance and sternly chides the whites for their “lack of grace” (208). Later in the narrative she is taught a salutary lesson regarding her confident assumption of control and authority over the Kanakas. When events turn ugly, at the New Year’s sports day, Cindie, “overconfident of her ability to handle any situation involving the prestige of coloured people” (303), undertakes to mediate between the whites and the Kanakas. However her attempts to pacify the angry Kanakas are met with scepticism and, in some cases, defiant resistance:

Cindie was chagrined to find that handling a group of men united and standing firm on what they considered a justified grievance, was something quite different to management under conditions of routine plantation life (304).

Similarly, her attempts to inculcate, missionary style, the values of white society into her Aboriginal workers are held up for scrutiny. When Cindie enthusiastically outlines her aspirations to “teach them to live like whites, stick to a job and send their children to school”, Biddow himself draws attention to the missionary ideology implicit in her vision:

“I reckon you ought to have been a Missionary, Cindie.”

Biddow smiled and sighed. “Very well. I certainly have nothing better to offer them, at this stage” (191).

In the light of the textual stance on the Christian rhetoric of conversion and industry discussed in Chapter Four, one suspects that the author shares Biddow’s reservations about Cindie’s missionary project.

A tension thus exists in the narrative between Cindie’s desire to contest colonial racist policies and her complicity in colonial ideologies and practices. The colonial environment provides a space to explore the way Cindie variously experiences herself as “white”, “woman”, “boss” and “lover”, and the implications involved in the way she takes up these various positions. This exploration marks a move from Devanny’s earlier portrayal of fixed “types” to a position that resists such definitions. Her chronicle of Cindie’s life in the cane-fields becomes the means to undermine the pervasive racial and gender assumptions of colonial discourse and offer alternatives to the meanings inscribed in the dominant ideology.

ⁱ Whiteness as an “absent centre” is discussed by Claire Pajaczowska and Lola Young in their essay “Racism, representation, psychoanalysis” (202).

ⁱⁱ The portrait of Blanche as a vain, idle, self-indulgent woman coincides to some extent with that of the representation of bourgeois women in Communist iconography. See Joy Damousi’s essay “Representation of the Body and Sexuality in Communist Iconography, 1920-1955” (68).

ⁱⁱⁱ This passage reflects Devanny’s interest in the history of sexual organisation and the gender relations of “primitive” peoples, and her belief that Maori women occupied a superior position in primitive society to that of civilised women of her time. In her study “The Sex Life of the Maoris” she declares:

It is MY business to expose the FACT that civilised woman is really comparatively inferior to savage and barbarian woman despite her culture, which avails her not at all in the real things in life. The savage and barbarian woman occupied a relatively higher position in the social life of her day (111).

For Devanny’s analysis of the marriage customs of Maori see chapter three of her study.

^{iv} In a newspaper article titled “Frenzied Proposals. Lynch Law for Australia. Need for Clear Thinking”, Devanny writes:

Is it likely that the squatters and other wealthy citizens who reap profits from the unpaid labour of Aborigines are going to allow the present widespread move for amelioration of their [Aborigine] conditions to develop without opposition? Colour prejudice will be exploited. “Assaults” upon white women will be “featured”. This present isolated case of an aborigine attacking white women has been duplicated a thousand times by white men upon white women and children and thousands and thousands of times by white men upon aborigine women (JD/PP/22).

Conclusion

In any case, the tensions and problems embodied in the material are not in any real sense resolvable on paper. They will only begin to be resolved when the society in which they operate has been changed.

Carole Ferrierⁱ

Jean Devanny's active commitment towards creating a society based on equality and social justice for all members of society is evident in all of the texts examined in this thesis. Her attempts to use her writing as "a real fighting force for the good of the race", has, however, led to it being variously dismissed as crude, flawed, irregular, lacking in literary polish and guilty of excesses of romanticism.ⁱⁱ As Chris Price remarks in her essay on Robin Hyde: "Contemporary criticism tends to look down on fiction demonstrating any overt passion for social issues...writing which is clearly in the service of issues is widely considered unsophisticated."ⁱⁱⁱ

As observed earlier in the thesis, the pressures of continually being drawn into different fields of activity made it difficult for Devanny to concentrate on developing her evident talent for writing. Devanny's own frustration with her work is reflected in a letter to Miles Franklin:

Oh Miles, how I have wasted my life. I'm done for now and yet I feel I had it in me to do good work. You at least have the compensation of knowing that you have done good literature that will stand as a monument to this era... I realise now that I have not exploited the small measure of ability of writing I possess one whit. I have never really got down to it and *thought*.
Thought was reserved for politics^{iv}

However, her enthusiastic commitment to communism and energetic engagement in political activity was not without benefit. In Women Come Rally, Joy Damousi discusses the educational and social benefits experienced by women in the Communist Party and the sense of empowerment which the vision of a new society engendered (114-116). The

intellectual stimulation afforded by participation in study and discussion groups and the accompanying exposure to new theories of civilisation and its discontents is evident in Devanny's autobiography. For Devanny, possibly the greatest benefit came from the discovery of her own power to "speak", both on the platform and at her writer's desk.^v Her first novel, The Butcher Shop, reflects her early enthusiastic attempts to use this newly discovered power to inscribe a variety of newly discovered theories in her fiction.

The contentious issue of "literary value" is not addressed in this thesis. My interest has been in the ways in which Devanny's writing constructed racial difference and used these constructions to challenge prejudice and discrimination. Overall, it seems that her resistance to certain discourses of difference was accompanied by conformity to others. The New Zealand texts reflect her immersion in her own society's myths and ideologies and suggest the writer's difficulty in attempting to extract herself from the internalised values and assumptions of her culture.^{vi} Contemporary discourses of New Zealand national identity incorporated Maori in the notion of "select stock", and The Butcher Shop, in particular, reflects Devanny's participation in this discourse. However, in both of Devanny's New Zealand texts, the construction of Maori as the "other within" was unsettled by a primitivist discourse of fixed and essential difference. These writings reflect the "classic" ambivalence of colonial discourse, where difference is repeatedly both affirmed and denied.

In Cindie, the text appears more at ease with racial difference. Devanny's different ideological relationship to Australian constructions of national identity meant that the tensions that informed her New Zealand narratives were minimised in her writings about Australia. Her attempts to engage imaginatively with that country's indigenous peoples were less constrained by an indigenising imperative and the need to produce a "domesticated" other which consolidates the colonial self. Additionally, Devanny had, by that time, moved away from representations in which "primitive" racial others were constructed as having essential, irreducible differences. In Cindie, constructions of racial otherness serve to challenge ideologies of differences where these reinforce and sustain racial prejudice and discrimination. The novel also demonstrates an awareness that, along

with the production of a marked colonised other, colonial discourse produces an apparently stable and unmarked self. The narrative attempts to destabilise this colonial self and diagnose the processes of colonialism which construct *all* individuals as racialised identities, whether white or black.

Devanny's attempts to find new ways to construct race and gender are uneven and at times contradictory. However, they *do* destabilise dominant ideologies and as such may be regarded as a contribution to the development of an alternative discourse which challenges (and perhaps transforms) the uneven power-relations operating in hegemonic discourse.

ⁱ Carole Ferrier. "Constructing and Deconstructing Jean Devanny": 146.

ⁱⁱ For examples see Patrick Evans: 69, Lawrence Jones: 148 and Alcock: 248.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chris Price. "The Childish Empire and the Empire of Children: Colonial and Alternative Dominions in Robin Hyde's Check to Your King and Wednesday's Children":65.

^{iv} Quoted in Modjeska: 131.

^v The phrase is taken from Modjeska's chapter entitled "The Platform and the Writer's Desk":117.

^{vi} Abdul JanMohamed points out that the effort to negate the ideologies of one's culture to some extent involves negating one's very being since one's culture is what framed that being (84).

Appendix

Description

The manuscript consists of loose typewritten pages with various pencilled alterations. These are sometimes difficult to decipher and in places are illegible. There are also several hand and typewritten insertions on small scraps of paper. Punctuation is irregular and it is not always clear whether Devanny is quoting from a source or not. The original punctuation and grammar has been retained.

In this transcription, additions are shown in italics and deletions in square brackets. My own comments are in small print.

THE SEX LIFE OF THE MAORIS

Consider putting the (illegible) dry stuff relating to tools etc. in humorous vein of Maning.

Handwritten pencil note in top corner of first page.

As the writer of this book [is a] *I am* a native of New Zealand, a country inhabited by a primitive people, the Maoris, it is but meet that space be usurped for separate and special study of the sexlife of the Maoris. For one thing, [the writer] *I seek[s]* to endow [her] *my* work with a peculiarly New Zealand touch, which desire but expresses a little of the deep love [she] *I feel[s]* for [her] *my* native land. For another, [she] *I believe[s]* that the world can only be enriched with whatever aspect is presented to it of that noblest of races: the sons of Hawaiki. And most important of all, having read [all] *as much as I can procure* of the data collected by the authorities on the Maoris, and having been compelled to realize that much of the data has lain fallow and many of the conclusions drawn *from it by the authorities* are wrong, resultant on the application of wrong methods, [she] *I consider[s]* that if [she] *I* can throw any further light on the subject of the Maoris, it is [her] *my* duty in the interests of science to do so.

“For the Polynesian race, though not so important as far as numbers are concerned, is one that deeply interests anthropologists.” (Best).

But it is not for anthropologists that this little book is written: [more] *its* for the man and woman in the street, therefore the rule of avoiding uncommon and scientific terms shall be followed in regard to the Maoris as in the foregoing. And no better introduction to the subject can be given than a direct quotation from *Elsdon Best, the foremost authority on the Maoris*: --- “The Maori of New Zealand is a member of the far-spread Polynesian race speaking a dialect of the common tongue than is spoken from the Chatham Islands to the Sandwich or Hawaiian Group, and from Easter Island to the Eastern bounds of Melanesia and beyond...”

“The first Polynesian settlement probably occurred about thirty generations ago. A considerable number of voyages to and fro between Polynesia and these islands were made during the next ten generations... but from that time onwards voyages rapidly decreased. The last of a few isolated voyages took place ten generations ago...” A rather superfluous

note may be added to the effect that the Maoris found New Zealand occupied by aboriginals of a low type with whom they intermarried but soon exterminated as a race.

In the foregoing chapters a simple abstract has been presented of mankind's evolving sexlife in general; more than a spice of interest should accrue to that abstract when the methods embodied in it are applied to the data gathered in relation to primitive living people whose noble characteristics and mental calibre have caused them to be adopted by the Anglo-Saxons as equals in actual fact.

The abstract has linked a certain kind of sexlife with a definite stage of economic development and shown the connection between the two. [It was written for the purpose of giving the average reader clarity regarding the sexlife of contemporaneous peoples.] Now, a study of the sexlife of the white races of today leaves no bewilderment in the mind of the average reader. We have a certain type of sexlife; we have a definite family form, and there is not term applicable to family relationships that is not clearly understood by everyone. [But if the] When the term "brother" is used, for instance, what that term implies is perfectly plain to everyone. But if the average reader of today embarked on a study of the Maori's sexlife, he would find himself, when it came to a question of family relationship terms, in bewilderment.

He would find that when the Maori used the term "brother", he might be alluding to a degree of relationship that to us is expressed by the word "cousin". His system of names for degrees of blood relationship would be found peculiar and distracting. [Even] Mr. Best, [foremost authority] tells us, regarding a study of the Maori system of kinship, that "that way distraction lies."

Macmillan Brown, M.A. L.L.D., speaks of "the piquant antithesis in the emotional phases of Polynesian Life". He tells us that: "the whole treatment of women is full of contradictions." But if the materialist philosophy, as outlined in the previous chapters, is applied to Maori customs and institutions, instead of "distraction", instead of "piquant antithesis", interesting yet baulking the student and obscuring his vision, there is clearly shown a primitive people evolving through a most interesting and important phase of social progress. The contradictions and anomalies resolve themselves into mere relics and overlappings of past family forms.

The social organisation of Maoris consisted of the following divisions: - Tribe, sub-tribe or clan, and family group. Mr. Best tells us: "When a canoe arrived on these shores with a party of immigrants a suitable place would be found for settlement. Such a company of people would band together as a social unit until, as time went on, the population of the district increased to such proportions that it became formed into different tribes. A tribe would commence its existence as a family group. Some man of influence would propose that a certain family group... composed of, say, three generations, should adopt a collective name and be recognised as a distinct social unit... and dwell together. This family group would develop into a clan or sub-tribe and later into a tribe. It is thus seen that all members of a Maori tribe were descendants of a common ancestor. No outsider could become a real member of the tribe, though he might marry into it and live out his life with his wife at her own home. His children would be members of the tribe by virtue of their mother's blood"

Each family group was self-contained, self-controlling, except in regard to affairs which concerned the clan or tribe. The family unit (Best tells us there is no precise term in Maori to describe the true family) was swallowed up in the group, the group in the clan, the clan in the tribe.

Now, these divisions in the social organisation of the Maori did not develop haphazardly. When the Maoris arrived in NZ they did not invent a new method of social organisation, they brought with them their ideas and customs of social organisation from their Polynesian home, as Mc. M. Brown testifies in his "Maori and Polynesian", and at once proceeded to build the structure of their new life on the lines of those ideas and customs, though doubtless this would be modified somewhat to suit the new conditions.

However, it is seen that the basis of social order among the Maoris was the family, the same family grouping the evolution of which has been outlined in the foregoing chapters, and out of which, as Engels shows, grew the institutions of the "gens", which is the foundation of the social order of most, if not all, barbarian nations and in Greece and Rome we step immediately from it into civilisation".

The Maoris had no family life as we know it, "The social organisation, the communistic habit of the people, were much against such family life. The sleeping house contained several families" (Best). And Mr. Best goes on to describe a system of kinship, of family relationships, that is a contradiction of the Maoris' actual existing family

conditions. There is no need to go into this complicated system here as it is available in Best's work; to us the interesting and significant thing to note is that this condition, this system of kinship, is exactly the condition Morgan found among all the American Indians and that a historical explanation of it was found in the Sandwich Island (Hawaii). For in Hawaii there existed up till the first half of the nineteenth century the family form which Morgan named the Pumatuan family form, producing such degrees of relationship as indicated by the American and Maori system.

What other conclusion can possibly be drawn from such a discovery than that this Hawaiian family form supplying the degrees of relationship indicated in New Zealand and America must have existed in New Zealand *or among the ancestors as well as the New Zealanders* and America, as a preceding family form.

(It might be added that this system is also in use with hardly any modification among the original inhabitants of India, the Dravidian tribes of the Dakan and the Gaura tribes of Hindostan. And is frequently found in modified form all over Africa and Australia).

And as remarkable and significant was the discovery that in Hawaii again the system of kinship in vogue did not agree with the actual family form there, but instead presupposed a still more primitive form of the family, which earlier form Morgan designated the Consanguine family form.

(Mc. M. Brown makes allusion to the "singular matrilineal relic" existing today in the most monarchic of the groups, Hawaii and Tahiti).

What can we conclude from this? For one thing, the truth of Engel's statements: - While the family keeps on growing the system of kinship becomes ossified...with this same certainty may we conclude from a system of kinship transmitted by history that the extinct form of the family corresponding to this system was once in existence".

And it becomes easy for us to place the exact development of the Maori's sexlife and of his evolutionary progress in general.

The Consanguine family form, indicated by the system of kinship in vogue in Hawaii, represented very early efforts on the part of mankind to prevent incestuous generation. It prohibited sexual intercourse between parents and children, ancestors and descendants [and was a low form of group marriage, though not so low as the Australian

form, one imagines, in which the prohibition of sexual intercourse between parents and children is apparently only aimed at.]

The Punataun family form, indicated the system of kinship in vogue among the Maoris, American Indians and other and actually in force in Hawaii in the early part of the last century, represented still further efforts to prevent incestuous generation by the prohibition of sexual intercourse between brothers and sisters and near blood relations. It was the highest form of group marriage.

But the real family form among the Maoris [and Indians] was one-man one-woman marriage giving an appearance of monogamy but which was really, as we shall see, the family formed named by Morgan the Pairing Family form.

A brief examination of the Maoris economic structure, their social and marriage customs shall now be conducted to prove my contention that they were in this Pairing Family stage and that they could never have progressed beyond this stage without outside influence.

Chapter 2

Economic Structure

The Maoris were a neo-communistic people.

Mentally they equalled Anglo-Saxons, yet their methods of procuring their food, clothing and shelter were the crudest possible.

Elsdon Best states that Morgan erred in placing the Polynesians in the lowest stage of human culture, linking them with the Australian aboriginals.

[So] Morgan did *err in this*, but knowledge of the extreme primitiveness of Polynesian industrial methods, and especially those of the Maoris, clearly shows how easily Morgan drew his erroneous conclusion, at that time when little was known of these brown peoples and lacking personal contact as he did. For Morgan's knowledge of other nations than the Indians was based on information collected for him by the Federal government by the help of a series of blanks and charts drawn by himself; the filling in of which by ordinary investigators would probably mean the recording of only the most obvious

features such as industrial and agricultural methods and weapons, *but more especially the systems of kinship in vogue*. Morgan, knowing nothing of their superior mentality, probably little, if anything of the information detailed by Mc. M. Brown's work published in 1907, could hardly have done otherwise than draw the conclusion he did. The one fact that the Polynesians had no pottery, from the acquisition of which Morgan dates barbarism, would doubtless have led him to err in his generalisation. The authorities today, after many years of painstaking research and study, are intrigued with the antithesis of Polynesian culture. Brown states: "The Fuegians and Australians are the only other peoples so primitive as to have no pottery and the Polynesians are lower even than these in their fire-making".

And this authority attributes the low conditions of Polynesian culture to the early neo-lithic immigrants into Polynesia arriving without their women, who alone practiced advance house-hold arts, and inter-marrying with the low Negroid type. For only the men's arts, house-building, canoe-building, netmaking and such, show advance.

It is rather peculiar that the Maoris confined the exercise of their superior mentality to mythological and spiritual concepts.

They worked timber with stone tools. The adze was the common hewing tool. Some were hafted like axes. Stone chisels, gouges, and rasps were used. The stones used were mostly greywacks and quartzite, but most valuable were of greenstone, the beautiful stone which is New Zealand's pride in its best form.

They made fire by rubbing wood together. The Maori viewed the act of fire-making as having a relation to sex, therefore both sexes were required to participate in the act. He termed the act of fire-making "hika ahi" and also used the word "hika" to denote the begetting of children. The woman held a piece of wood stationary with her foot while a man worked another piece upon it to generate the fire.

They had no form of recording events whatever.

They had an elementary knowledge of navigation and astronomy, necessitated by their sea-faring habits. Fishing was the chief occupation of the littoral dwellers, they had well made fish nets.

They were an extremely war-like people. [They fashioned] *They bashed each other's brains out with weapons that were fashioned from wood, bone and stone*. They had spears of various kinds, daggers, clubs, and axes...beautifully carved greenstone weapons

of various shapes. They did not use the bow and arrow, from the introduction of which Morgan dates the highest state of savagery. They fought almost naked and in their fighting showed the same ferocity and treachery that marks the warfare of all savage and barbarous peoples and which is only surpassed by the ferocious and diabolic methods of war used by civilisation today.

(It is a little sad to find that Mr. Best, when dealing with this fighting aspect of the Maoris, allows his admirable work to be tarnished by an exhibition of a spirit of bias and prejudice which will diminish the value of his work to posterity. Personal rancour has no place in a scientific work and but serves to raise doubts regarding the strictly scientific attitude of the author's mind. Mr. Best's vindictive and outrageously false statement that Sinn Feiners and Germans alone could be guilty of the same ferocity, savagery and treachery as was practiced in Maori warfare, could be better relegated to the limbo of discarded absurdities, and one hopes that if future editions of the work are issued Mr. Best will save his face with posterity and the intelligentsia of today by removing this stain from a work which otherwise ranks high in the peculiarly New Zealand literature of today.

"However, despite his ferocity, the Maori at times practiced a high chivalry and magnanimity towards his enemies".

Mr. Best makes this statement immediately following his accusation against Sinn Feiners and Germans. One wonders mildly why he did not consistently push his parallel further and state that the Germans and Sinn Feiners alone resembled the Maoris in at times practicing a high chivalry and magnanimity towards their enemies. The one statement would be no more absurd than the other *and there is as much evidence for the one as for the other.*

Interpolation here

(This section is handwritten and very difficult to read as the paper is soiled and torn.)

However, if Mr. Best is really desirous of finding a parallel for Maori savagery I am willing to help him to one. I can point him to the allied intervention in Russia during the early part of the Bolshevik regime. Or, rather, I should say, to the Allied and German intervention in Russia at that time. For as everybody knows, while the French and British and German were fighting each other on the fields of France, German and French and British were fighting side by side as comrades on Russian soil. I can point Mr. Best to the destruction by

these Allied troops and German's of Russia's rolling stock, her machinery, her bridges, her railways, her harbors, her crops; to the blockade of her ports, (the latter conducted mainly by Britain under L. George) which blocked out Russia's throat and caused the death by starvation of millions - millions, Mr. Best, of Russian people. Not for generations will she recover from the terror forced upon her by that unimaginably atrocious crime; by that appalling savagery of our Christian nations in their pursuit of Russia's vast stores of wealth. (The Maori! and his cruelty. He may have broken the bones of his victim [illegible] alive in running water for days as I have seen it recorded of him but in face of modern warfare, in face of that hideous monstrous crime – we – we, Mr. Best, you and I and our kinsmen, committed against Russia's teeming millions, in face of those pictures of her starving children that we had (rest?) us and remembering our culture – our bloody Christian culture, dare we accuse the barbarians? Oh no!

(In these days of angry and jealous recrimination – when the warlords are busy writing their memoirs to expose each other's "mistakes"; when the disgruntled politicians who have been deposed from their (illegible) leadership by horrified and disgusted people, are (illegible) the muck of wartime chicanery promiscuously around – in these days we cannot ever ascribe the blame for Allied crimes in Russia to the baleful manipulations of the horrid Bolsheviks. No, we cannot even do this Mr. Best, unless we are fools or knaves or worse. (*Go onto p. 3 Magnanimity etc.* (Here several lines of illegible notes)

Magnanimity in modern warfare! Chivalry, ferocity, savagery! Here we have every civilised nation in the world making science the handmaiden of the organised destruction of millions of the world's best youth on the one hand, and on the other the utmost care taken to preserve the lives of the incurably insane and yet a gentleman of Mr. Best's high standing deliberately taints a historical work with the stupidity that Sinn Feiners and Germans are the only living exponentsof wartime ferocity and savagery equaling that of the Maoris".

The only explanation offering for this sort of thing is that specialists often are as little children regarding subjects outside their own study. They are shut up in a small world of their own and the impact of great happenings without only reaches them obscurely. A specialist in one field means a fool in another. The march of progress will be greatly

facilitated when folk all learn to turn a deaf ear and a smiling face to the specialist when he is off his own ground but to listen hard when he is on it.

The agricultural implements of the Maori were crude in the extreme. When they brought their tropical foods to the colder climate of New Zealand they found that more care and labor were needed to make them grow. In some parts of the country no crops would grow at all, which meant of course a small population in that part. They had a primitive spade made from hardwood; they did not turn the soil over; merely loosened it and broke the clod with a club. Their agriculture, therefore, was on a small scale. A very few digging tools were fashioned in bone and stone. They had a primitive grubber and hoe. The land was drained in places. Kumara and sweet potatoes by far the most important of the cultivated foodstuffs; yams and taro were grown to some extent and the gourd, the hard rind of which was used for bowls and vessels. Other foodstuffs were fern roots, parts of trees, birds, eggs, rats and dogs. The gigantic moa was used for food until it was exterminated.

They lived a settled village life. A fortified village was called a pa, an open village a kainga. They built defensive earthworks with no parallels in all Polynesia. They had carved houses and palisades.

Both sexes clothed themselves in cape and kilt.

The cooking was done, perfectly in steam ovens and steaming pits. There was no specialised labour as we know it. Idlers were almost unknown; all engaged in industrial pursuits. Being communistic, there was no form of internal competition, only inter-tribal competition.

The leaders or chiefs were a type of primitive organisers and their voices carried great weight in all important functioning, but they held their place by merit alone. Authority was a thing to be very cannily exercised among the proud Maoris. A leader, not daring to command, usually issued instructions by way of suggestions. Presents of food were often made to the chiefs by their grateful followers.

The social classes of the Maoris were of three grades: - aristocrats, commoners and "slaves" (the latter were prisoners of war). The aristocrats or rangatira class were "all persons of good family, including the ariki" the latter being the first-born, male or female, of the line of eldest sons and holding the positions of highest chieftainships...so long as they merited it. If the merit were lacking the ariki though holding his chieftainship by right

they merited it. If the merit were lacking the ariki though holding his chieftainship by right of birth, would be displaced by a younger son in the interests of the tribe, or by whoever else best filled the bill.

The commoners were the offspring of the younger children of the family. All members of the tribe were, then, of the one blood. "We might claim that a Maori tribe is composed of one class only, the rangatira class, the well-born ones." "The Maori had an intense respect for primogeniture and recognised no higher rank than that of a male ariki who traced descent through a line of first born sons of a high-class family" (Best).

Woman ariki, however, often obtained high positions in the tribe by order of merit. Not infrequently woman were great and revered chieftainesses.

Chapter 3 Marriage Customs

The Maoris were endogamous, as a rule regarding the tribe and often in regard to the sub-tribe, but members of family groups could not marry within the group unless three generations from a common ancestor divided the two.

One is here reminded of Engels: "There is no antithesis between exogamy and endogamy; no exogamic tribes have been found up till the present time. But at the time when communal marriage still existed everywhere, a tribe was divided into a number of groups (gens) consanguineous on the mothers side, within which intermingling was strictly forbidden. The men of a certain gens or group could choose their wives within the tribe and did so as a rule, but had to choose them outside the gens. And while thus the group or gens was strictly exogamous, the tribe comprising an aggregate of groups was equally endogamous".

How far was the Maori advanced beyond this condition of group marriage? Let us see.

The members of their family groups could not marry within the group unless three generations divided them.

The Maori marriage was a loose union, easily dissolved by either party to it. There was a custom by which a temporary wife was provided for a visitor, plainly a lap-over from

group marriage in [its lowest] a low form as practiced by the Australians: "where group marriage is represented by class marriage; that is, mass marriage of a whole class of men frequently scattered over the whole breadth of the continent to an equally wide-spread class of women". (For details of this marriage see Engels). Slipshod mating was looked down upon but not forbidden. There were bush marriages without any ceremonial. Desertion by husband or wife carried no lack of prestige. Adultery was more common in woman than in man, plainly showing former choice by woman, who had not yet renounced the old freedom of group marriage. It was punished severely. Sometimes the husband slew his adulterous wife, sometimes he slew her lover. [This severe punishment of adultery is characteristic of the pairing family form.]

The custom obtained of group relatives trying to reconcile quarreling couples before allowing them to separate. [The American Indians also had this custom.]

Ritualistic marriage was observed only by the most aristocratic families, the rangatira class. The common people had ceremonial marriages but little, if any ritual.

Best thinks that this ritualistic marriage of the Maori patricians showed the advancement of the people and the gradual elevation of womanhood and marriage.

He is right as to the advancement, it certainly meant an advance towards the private property social form which has always preceded civilisation, but wrong as to the elevation of womanhood and marriage. Just the contrary was the case. For the ritualistic marriage made for closer restriction of woman's sexual freedom; it made for her degradation to the position of man's tool. It meant restriction for the woman only. Her husband was free to and still did practice polygamy.

Best goes on to say that the Maori had arrived at the highest form of conjugal union, marked by the ritualistic ceremony, although it was practiced only by the aristocratic families.

The Maori had certainly reached the highest form of conjugal union---when he reached the pairing family stage, the one-man one-woman union based on natural selection, without ritualistic ceremony but this was the condition obtaining among the common people, whose men and women were practically free to choose their own mates. The aristocratic women was married for political reasons [which custom has persisted down to our own day because the same economic necessity demands it] and she did not practice

polyandry. She was compelled to be monogamic, while her husband's choice of wives was restricted only by his ability to provide for more. Beside chief wives, those of high birth married for political reasons or otherwise, he took so-called "slave" wives for enjoyment, who performed the heavier labour and menial tasks, leaving the light work for him and his chief wives.

We see again that among ancient peoples it was the aristocratic woman who suffered most by social advancement. The common woman, being propertyless was therefore less restricted. It took considerable time for the dominant class to impose its cultures on the common people. The aristocratic ritualistic marriage of the Maori tended towards a low form of conjugal union because it was artificial and degraded woman.

Immediately following the above statement we find Mr. Best declaring that "among the Maoris the woman was looked upon as the property of the husband." To my mind an erroneous conclusion, one which does not conform in any way to the social condition of the Maori woman as outlined so skillfully by himself, nor with my own observations of the Maori race.

A property right in a wife implies a great deal of power over her; it implies a choice of treatment regarding her; it means the ownership of her person and of her goods. In short, a property right in a wife implies the relationship existing between the white man and his wife in New Zealand. A white husband in New Zealand can insult his wife freely and still be respected by public opinion. He can restrict her, use her as a beast of burden, work her to death, take her children from her after forcing her to bear them; he can rape her whenever he likes. And she has no remedy except through a pitiable [public] exhibition of her most intimate actions and wrongs in a PUBLIC divorce court. And even this is conditioned on the production of a large sum of money, which of course is practically impossible to the working-class woman.

But the Maori woman, according to Mr. Best himself, suffered no indignities from her husband. Did he inflict them on her, her clan wiped *out* the insult in blood. A Maori man dared not insult his wife; he had to pay her the respect custom demanded. Otherwise tribal fighting would often result. The Maori did not purchase wives. (In which respect he differed from the American Indians among which tribes women were bought and sold; a more "advanced" condition than the Maoris could boast, as it more nearly reached the

private property form of monogamic marriage which put the property stamp on woman; but still not flavoured with more than a SEEMING DISREPECT for her.

The single Maori woman had great freedom. All authorities stress the fact that there was no value attached to purity during maidenhood, either in practice or in theory, though the bonds of marriage (always remembering that marriage was a loose union easily dissolvable) were supposed to be respected. "The latter was doubtless due to the inheritance of tribal and family rights to the lands, which any ambiguity in the descent would mar." (Mc. M. Brown).

Adultery in the man was *sometimes* punished as severely as in the woman.

In view of the foregoing, how could the Maori woman be regarded as the property of her husband? The aristocratic woman disposed of willy-nilly for political reasons can be considered the property of the tribe, but as regards her husband's property right in her... it was simply non-existent.

Mistakes of this kind are probably the result primarily of the ignorance of true social development (as disclosed by the materialist conception of history) in the minds of the investigators, and then the difficulties of interpretation of Maori terms. The Maori man might say: "my wife is my property", but to his communistic mind that statement carried an entirely different meaning to the one it conveyed to the Anglo-Saxon investigator ignorant of economic and family history. Even the Maori investigator, and we have one very eminent Maori seeker after the truth regarding his race, would be baulked when handicapped [and I have every reason to believe he is] by ignorance of the true premise to start out from. The Maori is a great genealogist, but Evolution, working out through hundreds of thousands of years of paleolithic man, and the tens of thousands of years of neolithic man, carries on so slowly as to permit no consciousness of its flow to arise in the mind of man.

I am prepared to accept Mr. Best's reiterated statement that Maori woman was considered inferior to man but she certainly occupied a much superior position comparatively in the life of the people than our white woman today does.

I am unable to discover whether the head man of the family group had sexual rights over the women of his group as he had in the patriarchal period of some other nations. But I might say that I myself know an old chief, living with his wife who acts as though this were

so. This old gentleman, over eighty years of age, contracts for the wool-cut of a certain station owner. At shearing time he gathers up the labour for the sheds *from his own tribe* and each year never fails to have sexual intercourse with the young Maori women whom he hires as “picker-ups”. His young wife does not like it but she does not actively rebel and the young women appear to regard it as rather an honour.

[These shearers and picker-ups always sleep in the one room. I asked a young man once if any promiscuity prevailed through this condition? Or were the married couples faithful to each other? He, a married man himself, offhandedly replied: “Oh, we usually get in beside the one we like best”]

The real position among these people was this: - The Maoris had generally passed out of the group marriage stage, in which woman was supreme, into the pairing family form. Group marriage overlapped in the form of polygamy of the chiefs, the organisers, because these men were able to support more than one wife, and in many other customs such as the almost common ownership of the children. For the parents did not enjoy sole authority over their children. In polygamous marriages the mothers treated all the children alike; the marriages [are] *were* arranged more by the uncles and aunts than by the parents; the children have several “Fathers” and “mothers”, calling their uncles and aunts father and mother.

It must be remembered that the men were the chief food procurers; generally the women only prepared and cooked and did the unproductive labor. Women assisted in clearing the ground but the men dug and planted. The women had their hands full, too, as Best testifies. The chief worked but he also receives presents of food which resulted in his polygamy. The chief's wives did the finer work, the better class weaving.

The commoner, if his wife was childless, occasionally took another wife to beget children. The inferior position of woman is traceable to [the] *her* inevitable loss of prestige [by her] once group marriage was abolished and maternal descent disappeared through the pairing family placing a well-authenticated father beside the mother. When descent could be traced to both parents woman came off her pedestal and man assumed an importance in the tribe.

For the importance of being food procurer, owner of tools, builder, etc., which importance increased in proportion with the improvements in the methods of production,

was now added the prestige of an authenticated parentage. The FATHER, able to point positively to the fruit begotten of his loins, turned now on the poor homebird whose household possessions had dwindled to relative insignificance, and, after the manner of the cock which crows when the hen lays and egg, shook the law of ECONOMIC NECESSITY in her face and dared her to claim a share in creation.

Chapter 4

SOCIAL CUSTOMS OF THE MAORIS

The personal property of the Maoris consisted of weapons, hut, tools, clothing and other as purely personal items.

The land was held on a system of family tenure. Individuals had customary rights to working certain lands. Family groups could hunt only on group lands.

“In all Polynesia there is a democratic electiveness about leadership and honours, on a basis of merit and feats, both in war and private life.”

Woman was considered inferior to man.

There was division of labour between the sexes. The women practiced the household arts while rearing large families; the men were the food procurers.

Mc. M. Brown, in allusion to this sex division of labour, usual throughout Polynesia, says: “this represents an earlier stage when the wives were also the slaves, when the women of the conquered tribes were taken into the households to raise children and do servile duties. The result is that the men retain their handsome form till far on in life while the women assume early a hag-like appearance. This contrast between the sexes belongs to a primitive stage in which polygamy prevails and the chief occupations of the male are war and hunting”.

The easiest and clearest way to our objective, that of assigning the Maori his true evolutionary significance, is to take just such quotations from the *highest* authorities on that race and criticize them from the Materialist standpoint. Let us analyze the above quotation, then.

Firstly, then, this sex division of labor was necessitated by woman's primal function, by nature herself. Woman bore the children, tended the home and prepared the food and clothing while the man foraged. During the period when this division of labor materialized the crudity of the tools compelled man to spend all his time in war and hunting. We saw in our previous analysis that this stage of social life grew out of a more primitive one, the lowest stage of savagery, in which each person fended for himself, the food being nuts berries and roots, the tree the habitation. We have seen that improved methods of production, the invention of the paleolithic implements, made for a higher social life and an ideological advance, out of which grew the effort to build strong tribes, a natural selection process, by preventing incestuous generation. That this latter necessity evolved, first the consanguine family form (we can make this the lowest form for purposes of classification) then the Punatuan form, in which stage this sex division of labour would probably be organised. We have seen that in this group marriage period descent had been naturally traced through the mother and because of this fact maternal law prevailed. Women mated naturally, owned the children and reigned pre-eminent in the tribe. This was the earlier stage when Mr. Brown says: "wives were also the slaves, and the women of conquered tribes were taken into the household to raise the children and do menial tasks".

This stage was communistic. There was no specialised division of labour allowing a surplus for idlers to live on. Therefore any women taken into the household would be economically in exactly the same position as all the other women in the tribe. There were no luxurious products of industry for her to be deprived of; only the barest necessities of life were produced and not always then. Women needed to raise children, to produce strong fighting forces for the tribe, would not be maltreated in any way. While they bore the children the men of the tribe would be there to support them. As a matter of fact they would simply be adopted into the tribe.

Really, when one considers the economic position of our Anglo-Saxon women today, one has to smile at such high and mighty classifications of these ancient folk.

"The result (of this sex division of labour) is that the men retain their handsome form until late in life while the women early assume a hag-like appearance". This is nothing to be concerned about. Nature imposed this handicap on the primitive women, not any condition of "slavery". Child-bearing has an amorphous effect on the body of women,

civilised and primitive, only the latter had the appurtenance of the toilet at her disposal and the discoveries of science to modify the effects of childbirth. The exercise of the chase, the athletics and outdoor life of the men had perforce to build splendid bodies, just as continual child-bearing and the sedentary pursuits of the household arts had perforce to develop amorphous women. Among the Maoris we find that civilisation, by depriving the man of his primitive pursuits and substituting sedentary occupations, has developed in him the same tendency to bodily ugliness as was and is noticeable in the older Maori women who clings to her primitive mode of life.

But why worry over these physical conditions in primitive folk? Just notice instead, and ponder on, the protruding stomach, bent shoulders, wearisome gait, and hopeless hag-like appearance of the civilised woman who has mothered several children; with her body broken on the wheel of industrial development, old at thirty and worn out of all semblance to decent womanhood by the continual jar and fret of poverty, insecurity and baulked desire.

Let me quote Engels: "Nations whose women have to work much harder than it is proper for them in our opinion often respect women more highly than Europeans do. The lady of civilised countries, surrounded by sham homage, and a stranger to all real work, stands on a far lower social level than a hard-working barbarian woman, regarded as a real lady and having THE CHARACTER OF SUCH".

Take Mc. M. Brown's last statement..."This contrast between the sexes belongs to a more primitive stage in which polygamy prevails..."

Group marriage, "the *more* primitive stage" was not polygamy. Neither was it polyandry. Group marriage meant absolute sexual equality between man and woman. Polygamy must have arisen among the Polynesians after the group marriage stage. According to all authorities it is existing side by side with the pairing family, which form is mistaken by [the] *many* authorities for a true monogamic marriage form.

It is easy to see how polygamy arose. It was simply the extension of group marriage, its continuation by the men, and could only exist among the leaders who alone could afford more than one wife.

Catlin, in describing polygamy among the Indians, [attributes] *gives as one of the reasons for* the condition [to] the opposite of its cause. He tells that the practice is generally

confined to the medicine men and chiefs but gives as a reason the following... The women do all the labour and therefore the more wives a chief has the greater can become his wealth. He keeps his wives at hard labour during most of the year, dressing furs for the fur companies' market, and with the avails of their labour he procures luxuries. The shallowest of reasoning! If a plurality of wives means more wealth why were they confined to the chiefs and medicine men? Could ordinary tribesmen have kept women dressing skins the best part of the year? Had not those women to be fed by the food-procurer while they laboured? At the time of their discovery the Indians living East of the Mississippi carried on cultivation on a small scale only. The tribes of the northwest had no cultivation of plants whatever. Practically all the time of the men must have been taken up procuring meat and yet Catlin ascribes their polygamy in part to a man's desire to increase his wealth. The polygamist had to have it in the first place. The chiefs and medicine men were enabled to fill their lodges with wives because of contributions from grateful followers.

The economic basis must not be lost sight of for one moment if the truth is to be arrived at. First the stomach – to live it had to be filled and in this condition lies the universal cause regarding polygamy, Engels says:...“Between the pairing family and monogamy, in the highest stage of barbarism, the rule of man over female slaves and polygamy is inserted”. This statement [may] *does* not, of course fit in with individual instances of polygamy, but if the whole of Engels testimony in regard to polygamy is studied as given by him in his invaluable work: “The Origin of the Family”, it will be seen to be generally quite in order.

Among the Polynesians polygamy could have arisen through an extra wife being taken for political reasons; the practice of taking lesser, so-called slave wives just a lustful manifestation by the chiefs, but in either case, it was an overlapping of group marriage.

And Mc. M. Brown himself, proves my case when he describes various aspects of female life which, he admits “are a direct contradiction to this low polygamic stage”. (But which are no contradiction to the group marriage stage I contend was the real preceding family form.)

The fact that a certain amount of sexual license was allowed the unmarried, yet illegitimacy carried a strong reproach, a seeming contradiction, is a sure proof of former sexual equality [to my mind]. The evolution of tribal and family rights necessitated that

there be no ambiguity of descent, yet the license accorded the unmarried showed the persistence of the old equal sexual freedom. I gather that the illegitimate occupied much the same position in the tribe as the "slaves", a natural result of ambiguity of descent.

All the evidence is therefore supplied by Mc. M. Brown, Elsdon Best and the lesser authorities to prove that Maori were in the pairing form of sexlife when discovered. Examination of their economic form revealed a communistic people, therefore there could be no personal private property in the form of lands and herds to necessitate a close, tight monogamic family form to beget heirs.

The aristocratic marriages undertaken for political reasons were in the interests of the group or clan or tribe. There could be no marriages undertaken for the purpose of conserving personal property rights.

There can be seen in the Maori then, as in the American Indians, a ripe maturity of the pairing family form; an eager readiness to step forward into the monogamic form and yet the impossibility of such a step being taken without outside influences.

In what factor does this impossibility lie? I hope the reader has gathered sufficient of the gist of my work by this time to make an answer from me unnecessary. The factor that prevented the Maoris along with their Polynesian kin from stepping forward into monogamy was natural conditions. Here is the position of some of the Indians all over again. Here the lack of animals fit for domestication, the absence of cultivated grains. The pairing family form persisted until it ossified, practically among these primitive peoples, because they could acquire no herds, no abundant, lasting food supply to lead them out of communistic barbarism into the private property social form. In the tropic isles of Polynesia proper the food dropped from the fruit tree into the mouth of the native. Why struggle, then. Everything in the garden was lovely.

It can easily be seen that in time the Maoris would have exterminated themselves fighting had the Anglo-Saxons not fallen on them like wolves on the fold, and set to achieve the same end by a different method.

It is difficult to assign them a definite place in the evolution of society because of the fact that their social organisation encompassed all three stages of barbarism and the highest stage of savagery. They had no pottery from the introduction of which Morgan dates barbarism, yet they had beautifully carved wooden vessels. They had no domesticated

animals, no brick and stone buildings which mark the middle stage of barbarism, but they lived in fortified settlements and carried on cultivation on a well organised plan. They practiced cannibalism abominably, sometimes eating slightly decomposed flesh, but cannibalism persisted into the second stage of barbarism. And their sexlife was the pairing family form, which is the characteristic sex form for barbarism, arising on the boundary line between savagery and barbarism and persisting until the private property social form necessitated monogamy in the advanced second stage of barbarism.

It is pretty safe then, to let the Maori take his place in evolutionary development [beside the American Indian] in the [lowest] [second] *lowest* stage of barbarism.

Chapter 4

SLAVERY AMONG THE MAORIS

Having shed the light of materialist philosophy on the data gathered on the economic development of the Maori, his social organisation, marriage and social customs, we are enabled to see the sex life of this primitive people not "as through a glass darkly", embedded in a distracting and contradictory system of kinship, but clearly and positively, mirroring a distinct stage of social development, that ourselves passed through before the institution of private property necessitated the close monogamic form.

But there is an aspect of Maori life [as] depicted by all the authorities, and which I have alluded to in the foregoing, which, for the sake of completeness must be dealt with before leaving the subject of Maoris. And that aspect is the slavery which all the authorities agree existed among these primitive people.

When slavery is mentioned in connection with an ancient people the anthropologist pricks up his ears, and for the one capable of applying scientific methods to the analysis of the customs, arts and institutions of people this mention carries double significance. For it straightway establishes a base of operations. Slavery! At once is envisaged a community wherein one class of people labours to support another class of people in idleness. In no way can the scientist imagine a condition of slavery in which the slave's condition is

economically equal with his master's; wherein he produces no surplus value for his master to live in idleness upon. In short, in no way can the scientist envisage slavery and COMMUNISM co-existing in the one community.

Yet every authority on the Maori assumes that the institution of slavery existed among the Maoris, a communistic people.

Even before I had studied the Materialist philosophy I regarded doubtfully this assumption, which did not seem to fit in with any conception of slavery I had met with. Then I was roused to slight interest and speculation in the matter on being informed by a Maori friend that I was wrong in supposing that the Maoris had slaves, as we understand the term. Later I discovered an interest in reading up the Maori race and applying the materialist philosophy to the data. Immediately the truth of my friend's contention was manifested.

I conclude that probably the authorities, having no clear idea of what constitutes slavery had been able to light on no better word than the term to denote the position of a certain group of people within the social organisation of the Maori. But to my mind they could have found few terms less applicable. For let us consider the position of these Maori "slaves" as outlined so admirably by these authorities.

The slaves were prisoners of war almost exclusively, those left over from the cooking pots. Occasionally a raiding party would carry off individuals and enslave them. There was little slavery by birth. Slaves sometimes married slaves and so perpetuated slave off-spring, but as a general rule they would become by marriage incorporated into the tribe. Children of these were free tribesmen.

Slaves might attain positions of importance in the tribe. They were generally so well-treated that in many cases they preferred to remain in slavery rather than return to their own people. So to be "enslaved" meant no physical hardship, unless the captive was of high rank, in which case it would mean the replacement of light work by menial toil.

Strong bonds of friendship and most humane relations often existed between captors and captives. One instance given by Best serves to show the general feeling in regard to slaves. "It is related of Paoa, a great chief, that he made love to a beautiful slave girl, and, making her his slave wife, deserted his highborn wife and children for her sake. A male slave of Paoa resented this conduct and returned to the service of his mistress,

continuing to live with her as her slave. He and his mistress worked the kumara fields together; Paoa and his slave wife worked theirs together. (There is much talk of sex love in Maori lore but my own observations of the race have convinced me that the emotion was merely the eroticism of the ancients all over again, and bore no relation to our sex love. Their marriages are best described as cemented by affection with sensual interludes.)

The offspring of the slave wives and husbands inherited family rights in land and property.

The chiefs and their families took their places beside the women and the slaves in the fields. The slaves did the menial work, the cooking and carrying etc., leaving the lighter industry to be performed by their captors.

They supplied the victims for sacrifices.

The slaves, then, were economically equal with their masters, who worked beside them in the fields. They produced no surplus product to be taken by their masters and regarded as personal property. The product of their labour was communal property in which they had an equal share. The only difference between them and their masters was that the stigma of being captured lay upon them. They had been deserted by their gods; were fit only for menial toil, which menial toil the people of rank were debarred from by sacred tapu. *They fought furiously for their "masters" as for their own people and did it wholeheartedly.*

What possible ground is there for applying the term slave to them. They were nothing more or less than captive menials, of the same blood as their masters and inferior only in the sense that they had been conquered. [Whole tribes were "enslaved". That is, were subjugated and their slavery was of a tributary nature, they sent their conquerors presents of food – until they grew strong enough to refuse.]

The term slave implies something more than a moral inferiority; something more than what really amounted to a crude division of labor corresponding to that which nature had necessitated between the sexes. *Here we see again the readiness to step forward into private property institutions; we see the dim beginnings of the placing of the lowest grade of labourer side by side with the women; partners in oppression, bowing together beneath the yoke of a dominant class.*

The term slave denotes an economic inequality when used in the classification of peoples, it ought not to be loosely or idly applied in a scientific work. Slavery, in its many aspects and in different forms and names, has been the most significant factor in the progress of mankind in historic times, and in every one of those aspects it has presented the principles of exploitation; it has meant a property mark on man, the buying and selling of man's labour-power as a commodity. It has meant PRIVATE PROPERTY in the means of production.

Slavery and communism cannot exist together. The Maori slave, toiling in the kumara fields, might do the heavy work; he might dig and hoe while his master merely planted the tuber, but at the end of the day's toil the master did not say to the "slave": "All the product of my labour and a part of yours belongs to me". Oh no! The product of the labour of master and slave went into the village storehouse and each took his equal share in common with all others.

[What was missing here in my authorities was an understanding of the phenomenon which has been the core of all the organisational functions of mankind... the phenomenon of SURPLUS VALUE.]

Put in bit on real slavery here

I find Mc. M. Brown, in his "Polynesian and Maori", saying: "The abolition of slavery is not so distant and historical event among the Anglo-Saxon races as to make them feel superior to Polynesian culture." A statement of this kind well demonstrates the utter darkness of the writer's mind regarding the nature of mankind's development, of the basis of his progress, of the origin of his ethical concepts.

The Anglo-Saxon races are just as superior in culture to the Polynesian as their technical development in industry is superior to the primitive economic methods of the Maoris despite the fact that slavery among the Maoris is confined to an elementary stage and the Anglo-Saxons have practiced it in all its aspects of chattel slavery, serfdom and wage-slavery, and are still practicing it in this last and most diabolical form.

Mentally the Maoris are equals. From the point of view of a real morality, that is, a morality based on results to the race from the health aspect, they are (or rather were, for the Maori readily developed the views of the white), our superiors. But the fact that the Anglo-Saxon culture is as superior to the Polynesian as the latter's barbarian morality was superior

to the present day Anglo-Saxon, is a matter for no conceit on either side as both culture and morals are traceable to economic necessity.

The trouble with Mc. M. Brown, a great man on his own ground, is that with all the goodwill in the world brought to bear on his subject, he cannot conceive of the economic necessity which renders foolish "moral" criticism of human institutions of the past and of the present. The superior culture of the Anglo-Sano races was evolved THROUGH slavery. When chattel slavery was in vogue among us it was right and moral because economic necessity made it right and moral. When serfdom was the form slavery assumed among us, it also was right and moral and only ceased to be so when the changing economic order, the coming of capitalistic society, demanded the substitution for it of wage-slavery. Today wage-slavery is considered right and moral, even by Mr. Brown, even or especially by me, because it is right and moral. It is necessitated by the economic structure of the period and it shall cease to be right and moral only when the present economic system has passed away in the birth pangs of a more advanced order which will in its turn necessitate a redistribution of labour.

The Maoris ate their vanquished enemies if food were needed. But if labourers and mothers were needed more than food they adopted them into the tribe and made them perform the unpleasant and menial tasks. *So much for their "slaves"!*

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The reader can supplement the foregoing brief sketch and fill in the needed details by a perusal of Best's, Tregear's and Mc. M. Millan's works on the subject. No unpleasant task as all three gentlemen have a most pleasant and readable style of writing. Fairly full information regarding the connections and affinities between Maoris and Polynesians in general and other primitive peoples is supplied by Mc. M. Brown in his "Maori and Polynesians".

I made it my task to endeavour to give the Maori his true evolutionary significance, in as brief and easy manner as possible, and I can but hope that I have to some extent

succeeded. [My reason for trying to throw light on the subject of the sex life of peoples is to add yet another prop to the Materialist philosophy which alone can import reason and through that attribute enlightenment, to the ravelled skein of present-day social condition.]

Scientists like Elsdon Best and Mc. M. Brown do great work gathering the data enabling the materialist to draw his conclusions but their work is infinitely more valuable if they were able, while conducting their investigations, to themselves apply the philosophy which is needed to arrive at the whole truth.

For instance, a knowledge of these family forms, discovered by Morgan, and clearly sketched beyond all shadow of doubt in his epoch-making "Ancient Society", throws a different light altogether upon accounts one often see of the lubricity and unrestricted sexual intercourse which was said to obtain among certain native race, especially some of the Pacific tribes. Brown, in his "Riddle of the Pacific", published in 1924, gives lurid accounts of the promiscuity recorded by early white voyagers to some of these islands. One wonders if the same conclusions would have been arrived at if those white voyagers had possessed a knowledge of society's evolving family forms, instead of being impelled to view the condition through the "brothel spectacles" supplied them by the ideology of our "chaste" and "pure" civilisation.

My authorities have drawn wrong conclusions from starting out from wrong premises, thus minimising the value of their work.

One of their wrong premises is that civilisation must make for the elevation of woman. (Of course, being men, they can only be expected to (unconsciously) adopt the philistine attitude towards a condition which has been essential to their own supremacy.) Running through my authorities' works is the idea that civilisation carries in its concept and treatment of women something intrinsically and idealistically superior to savage and barbarian ideas and treatment of women. Monogamy is vaunted as a virtuous and elevated condition for woman.

It is MY business to expose the FACT that civilised woman is really *comparatively* inferior to savage and barbarian woman, despite her culture, which avails her not at all in the real things of life. The savage and barbarian woman occupied a relatively higher position in the social life of her day. It is MY business to awaken civilised woman to her degradation, which understanding must carry with it knowledge of the cause, to inspire her

to rebel against her conditions and to direct her rebellion along the only channels in which it can be efficacious.

One difficulty with conventional, formally educated students is to get outside the mental "clay carcasses" of bias and prejudice surrounding their envisagement of established institutions and ideological concepts. To arrive at truth there is only one infallible method of inquiry: to remember that whatever the form, whatever the process under study, there must be a cause, and, seeing that the whole organic functioning rests on the stomach urge, that cause must lie in the field that fills the stomach, the field of economics.

The whole of scientific deductions in the field of economic history establishes that ever since the introduction of private property in the means of production, society has advanced through the principles of oppression, through the existence of a dominant class and an oppressed class, and woman has occupied a lower position in society even than the oppressed class (the working class). For from the time the dominant class imposed its culture on the oppressed class she has been the slave even of the men slaves.

There is no use railing against this fact. The scientific attitude is to understand it, accept it and DEAL WITH IT.

Progress could have worked itself out otherwise; or if it could have done so, it has not, so why worry over the might-have-beens of the past? It is for us to deal with the present, for we are fitted to deal with the present. The primitive organiser cannot be blamed for the possessive instinct which first led him to accept his follower's gifts, to accumulate wealth in the form of herds and lands for he was benighted. He had no science to set him searching for the logical conclusions.

But the scientist of today can be under a delusion regarding the economic processes of his period. No one can be unaware of the appalling conditions in industry and only the chicanery of dishonest motives can lead to professions of ignorance regarding the cause of these conditions, or to the misrepresentation of facts which appear to be the chief output of the "scientific" manufactories of today.

Take the subject of the sexlife of peoples. Listed at the back of my authorities books are the works of other authorities which have been consulted, in the long list I find the tawdriest and shoddiest of names; authors with no claim to distinction whatever, whose work in the light of present day revelations count as nil; but nowhere a mention of

MORGAN, the master, who grappled with his subject for more than 40 years on classical grounds with the help of the Federal Government, and who “found in the sex organisations of the North American Indians the key that opens all (hitherto) unfathomable riddles of most ancient Greek, Roman and German history. (*Elsdon Best, in his opening page makes a sole allusion to Morgan’s error regarding the Polynesians. Morgan’s name is omitted from his list of authorities consulted*).

To be sure it was the fashion among the English students to ignore Morgan, yet at the same time” their” school is not at all backward in appropriating to its own use the results of Morgan’s study. This was, Engels thinks, because Morgan was an American. There certainly was a lively dislike of everything American in the English scientific schools of the time, and Morgan’s work fully established the falseness of the English views on the history of the family. But the chief reason why Morgan’s work was belittled by his contemporaries, methinks, was because he criticized the existing system of production and enunciated theories for the reorganization of society. Not that Morgan was a “Socialist”. [Not at all!] [*Bless him No!*] His environment prevented him from seeing the socialist position. He actually considered that privileged classes did not exist in America. Rather a funny conclusion one must admit. But now that it is the fashion to be American; now that an attempt is being made to link up with the English speaking nations of the earth and the condition of being “socialistic” is a highly respectable one (as witness the introduction of prominent socialists to court circles) surely the practice of ignoring Morgan can be dropped.

Not that he was perfect. No one claims him for infallibility. For instance, Engels explains how he went too far with his group marriage hypothesis, in view of the latter-day discoveries; and in one or two other instances he has been shaken or discorded. But in no instance has the new material led to a weakening of his leading propositions.

I think I have sufficiently demonstrated that the contradictions and anomalies of Maori sex life can be explained only through the application of his materialist philosophy, which was independently re-discovered by him after being enunciated by Marx [forty] many years before.

It is impossible for persons having no understanding of the family forms herein traced to properly estimate the position of woman in barbarous and savage peoples. We find Catlin descanting on the degraded and enslaved condition of women in American Indian country, then immediately contradicting himself in outlining "reciprocal feelings and attachments in their domestic relations". Telling us: "Their women are beautiful and modest... Virtue is as highly cherished and as unapproachable as in any society whatsoever". He is nonplussed to find: "Yet at the same time the chief may marry a dozen wives if he pleases" and so on. The "Most beautiful and modest girl in the tribe has a value equal, perhaps to two horses".

Catlin speaks of "The woman's occupations as being almost continual and they seem to go industriously at them, as if from choice or inclination, without a murmur".

The foregoing digest sufficiently explains this condition, which Catlin who lived with the Indian for many years, erroneously ascribes to a degraded and enslaved condition of woman. Catlin saw the conditions around him but was unable to apply reason to them. Once connection was established with civilisation it is easy to imagine that the man's pursuits would become less rigorous. Hunting would wane as civilisation's foods took its place. The contrast between the easy life of the men and the busy habits of the women would appear striking. But when one thinks of the degradation and slavery of Anglo-Saxon working-women as seen and actually experienced by the writer, one wonders whether these authorities would not be better delving among the savagery of civilisation.

The contradictions in Maori economic life have been very well dealt with by Mc. M. Brown in his "Maori and Polynesians". I have briefly applied the explanations of the contradictions in the emotional and sex aspects of Maori life, which he and other authorities were unable to do. If Best's two volumes on the Maori, published in 1924 and Mc. M. Brown's are read through with the materialist philosophy as outlined briefly in this book continually borne in mind, it will be found that they take on a greatly enhanced interest as well as a double significance.

In conclusion let me say a word regarding the splendour of personality possessed by the *original* Maoris. No white has ever come into contact with these unspoiled, primitive people but is filled with admiration of their personal character; but stresses their dignity, courage and strength, their gracious manners. The same was recorded of the American

Indians of pre-European times, and of other native peoples living under primitive conditions. Well, the reason is not hard to find. It can best be summed up in saying that their splendour of character is typical of the period of evolution in which they lived; they were "not affected with the advantages and the drawbacks of civilisation". Their economic life was not built upon greed, and therefore the social and sex customs resultant on their economic position were as free from degradation and debasement as the economic system itself.

They had no PRIVATE PROPERTY IN THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION.

They lived under primitive communism. What a spectacle to cast one's eyes forward to that time in the future when the same economic PRINCIPLE will obtain but functioning through the marvelous technical development of the era of electricity and steel.

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