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FRAGMENTS OF FEMINISM : A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO NEW ZEALAND WOMEN WRITERS, 1882 AND 1926.

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Ruth Alice Lilian Hogg
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ABSTRACT

This critical examination of *Everything is Possible to Will* (1882) by Ellen E. Ellis and *The Butcher Shop* (1926) by Jean Devanny provides a comparative analysis of their representations of the feminist vision in New Zealand fiction. The comparison seeks to establish the thematic continuities and discrepancies between both texts and to determine whether Jean Devanny's feminist perspective is a developmental progression from that offered by Ellen Ellis.

Chapter One examines the apparent similarities between both texts; their mutual experience of censorship, their mutual concerns with similar themes, their mutual use of the romantic genre, and their mutual preoccupation with the truth or realism of their narratives.

Chapter Two examines the representation of paradise as a manifestation of romantic ideology within Ellis's text, noting the strategic connections Ellis creates to link the subjection of women with the subjection of Maori in New Zealand.

Chapter Three argues that Ellis's depiction of women and marriage within *Everything is Possible to Will* has a particular emphasis on the relationship of female autonomy to patriarchal power.

Chapter Four examines Ellis's representation of female sexuality within her novel, with particular attention given to her presentation of the archetypal Angel in the House.

Chapter Five begins the examination of Devanny's *The Butcher Shop* and notes her treatment of paradise and romanticism as individualistic constructs.

Chapter Six analyses Devanny's image of women and marriage, particularly her perspective on adultery and her attempt to sexualise the Angel in the House.

Chapter Seven argues that Devanny's representation of female sexuality is posited on eugenic ideology and the creation of a sexual hierarchy that privileges the white European female.

Chapter Eight concludes the argument by suggesting that the comparison of thematic concerns in both texts indicates a continuity with the image of woman as the Angel in the House which both authors modify with varying degrees of success. It further argues that both texts offer a fragmented vision of feminism, and a fragmented image of woman, which denies any progressive development of feminism and fiction.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Women Writers of Will.

Although forty four years separate the fiction of Ellen Ellis from the fiction of Jean Devanny a surprising relationship can be discerned between Ellis's *Everything is Possible to Will* (1882) and Devanny's *The Butcher Shop* (1926). Both authors were married women for whom writing fiction was not a career or full-time occupation, both have a married heroine, both are didactic in form, both include fictional portrayals of Maori, and both novels are concerned thematically with the position of women in New Zealand society. Further, the reception to the publication of both novels was marked by protest and censorship, with later critical appraisal describing both novels as feminist writings.

The other similarity both novels share is that they employ a romantic genre to explore their themes. The romantic genre is generally held to derive from the epic [1], and can be perceived broadly as possessing a division into an aristocratic form and a popular form. Both Ellis and Devanny's novels fall into this post-romantic popular form, which is effectively much closer to the ballad, and can be identified by its tendency to organise a single narrative around that of an individual hero or heroine's quest for an ideal. Commonly within the popular romance this ideal is explored through the psychology of the individual subject, as

it is within *Everything is Possible to Will* and *The Butcher Shop*. Both novels could be identified generically as a sub-division of the popular romantic form known as the feminine romances, narratives which trace "**the heroine's quest for domestic fulfilment, love and a sense of self-determination**" [2]. It is these criteria of popular romantic genre that are used throughout this thesis as a basis of analysis, and it is in this context I argue Ellis subverts the romantic genre by suggesting "**domestic fulfilment, love and self-determination**" are impossible ideals to achieve when her heroine is confronted with the reality of marriage in New Zealand of the 1880s. It is at this juncture of romance and reality within the novel that Ellis challenges romanticism as an appropriate ideology for female self-fulfilment. In doing so she also challenges the validity of the popular romance as a fictional form suggesting a novel of social realism is more valuable for both women and New Zealand.

The selection of *Everything is Possible to Will*, as against any other pre-1900 New Zealand novel by a woman writer, is because Ellis seems to be passionately concerned with a very wide range of issues which are now regarded as feminist, encompassing both the personal and social body of what is defined as female. I also believe the labelling of her novel as didactic fiction obscures its value as an early attempt to inscribe a feminist vision for New Zealand women [3]. The

selection of *The Butcher Shop* from Devanny's vast range of novels is because it encapsulates her obsession with the themes of marriage, adultery and violence more succinctly than where they arise in her other writings, and because of Heather Roberts' suggestion that Devanny was in some way adding to Ellis's feminist beliefs within New Zealand fiction, discussed below.

My argument is a subversive one because it undermines the established view of Devanny as a feminist writer, particularly as articulated by Carole Ferrier, Lynley Cvitanovich, Heather Roberts and Drusilla Modjeska [4]. I am not trying to re-interpret Devanny as a non-feminist, but I do consider she is an advocate of National Socialism, not feminist socialism, and her feminist thinking, where it does emerge in *The Butcher Shop,* is confined to constructing a female sexuality which is extremely limited in its perspective.

My argument is also a subversive one with respect to feminist writing generally, for I challenge the unquestioning application of the pathetic fallacy to Ellis and Devanny's novels. I do not deny the necessity of examining the biographical data of these authors because I believe these two novels in particular are contextually located. But I do challenge the brand of so-called feminist criticism which reads women's writing as reflecting women's lives, in this case Ellen Ellis and Jean Devanny. Furthermore

the biographical details used in support of such criticism are often erroneous.

It is the structural and thematic similarities between *Everything is Possible to Will* and *The Butcher Shop* which permit Heather Roberts to conclude that Ellis and Devanny occupy related positions on a continuum of development for feminist fiction in New Zealand. She writes:

> Some of them [serious novelists] like Ellen Ellis, Edith Searle Grossman, Constance Clyde and Louisa Baker, espoused feminist beliefs in their novels, advocating freedom of choice and opportunity for women ... Jean Devanny and Jane Mander in the 1920s shared the feminist beliefs of their female predecessors and added socialism to their feminism.[5]

Roberts sees an imaginary line of female novel writing, a narrative continuum on which the freedoms of women in New Zealand can be fictionally tracked and identified. Within this context, and because of their structural and thematic similarities, these two novels seem to offer mirrored fragments of female thinking and writing: one fragment from 1882 where the freedoms of women are restrained by the cultural demands of Victorian society, and one fragment from 1926 were women are liberated in the post-suffrage, and post-war, environment of New Zealand in the 1920s. As mirror fragments both novels should, when compared, reflect this developmental image of feminist fiction in New Zealand.

Both Ellis and Devanny were wives and mothers. As a result

their writing took second place to the demands of family and society. As far as is known, Ellen Ellis (1829-1895) only ever wrote one novel, *Everything is Possible to Will*, printed by E.W.Whittle [6]. In contrast, Jean Devanny (1894-1962) wrote a large number of novels, four of which were written and published when she was resident in New Zealand [7]. Her first novel, *The Butcher Shop*, was published by Duckworth, London, in 1926 and was reprinted in 1981 with an introduction by Heather Roberts [8]. Devanny stopped writing in New Zealand in 1929, when she and her husband went to Australia to seek better medical care for their son Karl's heart condition [9]. Once in Australia she went on to write thirteen more novels, numerous articles, speeches, plays, radio and film scripts, travel books, and theoretical works, including thirty six pages on "The Sex Life of the Maoris" [10].

Ellis had been mother to three children but they were either deceased or had left home by the time she began writing *Everything is Possible to Will*. Her eldest son, John William, known as William, was married and had established his own business in Hamilton. Ellis may have even been living alone whilst writing the novel, as her husband Oliver's death certificate in 1883 indicates that he was resident at a different address to Ellis [11]. Ellis herself identifies writing the latter parts of the novel in May 1880 for she

slides into the text the dates the "24th May 1880" (EPW,217) and "10 May 1880" (Appendix, EPW,243) written in the present tense, as opposed to the rest of the narrative which is in the past tense. However, since it is not known when Oliver changed address, it cannot be assumed Ellis was writing as a result of being freed from her domestic responsibilities as a wife even if she was freed from the responsibilities of motherhood. Whatever her domestic circumstances, according to Ellis she wrote her novel "at the express desire of the late Mr.O.S.Ellis" [12].

For Jean Devanny, domestic and personal responsibilities dominated from the very beginning of her writing career. She had two children, Patricia and Karl, and Devanny felt she had not prioritised her writing above the demands of her family and her political involvement, for as she wrote to Miles Franklin:

> 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.[13] [Devanny's emphasis].

Devanny expresses regret for her perceived failure to focus solely on her writing, to polish her writing abilities so that her novels would possess more "thought" and so create more accurate reflections. Certainly Devanny is concerned that the *The Butcher Shop* should be seen as an accurate reflection of reality, a narrative of "truth" that mirrors

her contemporary world. She said, in 1926, that her novel

> is a true story of New Zealand life. I know it is true for I have lived in this country and have seen for myself.[14]

Devanny unconsciously defends her novel by suggesting that its value lies in its ability to tell the truth. In doing so, Devanny not only agrees with the principles of "mimetic criticism" but is also in agreement with Ellis's view of the primary function of *Everything is Possible to Will* [15]. For Ellis writes:

> if a pioneer work be precious in proportion to the difficulties surmounted, this simple story, pioneer to the unvarnished truthfulness, must have its merits, for its labor has been prodigious. (EPW,70).

Ellis stresses that because of its "unvarnished truthfulness" her novel accurately mirrors the world of women around her. Her repetition of "pioneer" reflects Ellis's novice role as a New Zealand writer and emigrant, but also stresses her attempts to write her way out of the romantic genre of narrating the story of a marriage and into writing a narrative of social realism.

Ellis tries hard to subvert the romantic narrative of courtship and marriage for her heroine, Zela, commonly referred to in the novel as Zee. Ellis forcibly over-rides the romantic convention of the heroine meeting her man, marrying, and living happily ever after. Not only does she refuse to close the novel at the point of Zee and Wrax's

marriage she actively intervenes, stating:

> Having gone this far with Zee, does the reader demand that she shall continue to skip merrily down-hill, carolling bird-fashion, until her voice is lost in the far distance ? Such were the fitting termination to a novel; but such is not life. It is a pity to let the curtain fall on the girl, but there is a dark background to bring into view. Tulle-illusion may be a pretty web for a bride, but it does not wear.(EPW,58)

The sarcastic tone of this extract is conveyed by the image of the adult Zee, who, once married, regresses to childlike behaviour, to "skip" whilst "carolling", at the demand of a reader conditioned to expect romantic conformity. This tone betrays the anger and scepticism of the writer who sees a world of difference between the "novel" and real "life". In Ellis's eyes the romantic novel deceives, for it implies self-fulfilment for women through marriage but really only offers an unsubstantial frothy cloud of nothing: a "tulle-illusion". For Ellis, real marriage in nineteenth century "life" could not be further removed from the image of marriage offered by romantic fiction for it bequeaths nothing other than "domestic tyranny" (EPW,70) to women. And her driving concern is to ensure that her readers experience the "truth" of this reality within her novel.

This concern with realistic writing, embedded within a conventional novel form customarily driven by romantic sensibilities, and Ellis's feminist and political agenda to bring the female reality of living in New Zealand to light

so it may be changed, results in an unhappy technical marriage of style and structure. Somewhat clumsily on occasion, Ellis attempts to overcome this difficulty by calling upon the narrator to interpret the narrative for the reader. By these interruptions, the romantic, and fictional, "tulle-illusion" is swept aside to reveal the reality of Zee's, and every woman's, marital experiences in the 1880s.

Devanny's novel echoes this "tulle-illusion", this romantic view of love and marriage, despite her belief that the novel faithfully mirrors New Zealand of the 1920s, and that it is a work of social realism. Little substantive evidence within the novel can be found for such a view. Only the descriptions of farming activities on a sheep station hold as socially, and graphically, realistic. This is the male world of "Industry" (BS: 65,66,72) in which Margaret Messenger chooses to have no place, her female world being more consistent with an Arcadian Paradise than reality [16]. Margaret Messenger is trapped within the conventions of the romantic novel whilst Devanny ensures her captivity, and the novel's conformity to the romantic genre, by insisting that the denial of a woman's true love for a man can only lead to the novel's murderous conclusion. Margaret falls in love, and has ten years of happy marriage with Barry Messenger. She then falls in love with Glengarry, the station manager with whom she has an adulterous relationship. This is where the

novel departs from conventional form, for Margaret believes she should be able to maintain both her marriage and her love with Glengarry. When she cannot, Barry commits suicide and she murders Glengarry. Devanny's political agenda overlays Margaret's characterisation and that of other characters in the novel, for the narrator tells the reader that Margaret's position and her ultimate actions are the result of the sexual ownership of women by men. Superficially this appears to be a straightforward feminist statement, but this is less clearly the case as the novel is examined and it is markedly less clear than Ellis's openly avowed feminist agenda.

In the Preface to *Everything is Possible to Will*, Ellis states:

> **the book, if read wisely by women only, will, by awakening thought, probably mark an epoch in her history, since she will understand what is meant by strength of will.(EPW, Preface,vii)**

In this statement Ellis defines her crusading purpose for her novel. It is to provoke not just female thought, but female action; the novel will demonstrate how female will can be tapped to overcome the obstacles of the masculine society. It is this context Ellis sees herself as a "**pioneer**" , as a writer struggling not only with a new form within the novel, but with a new image and a new social plan for the freedom of women and the development of New Zealand. Hers is a more comprehensive act of feminism and fiction than that suggested

by Heather Roberts. Roberts defines Ellen Ellis's novel as feminist because Ellis's beliefs

> were what we now recognise as feminist: the belief that women are oppressed in a society that valued men's experience and understanding above that of women; the idea that women have a unique and important contribution to make to society; and the promotion of women as being entitled to equal rights and responsibilities with men.[17]

But Ellis goes further as a feminist writer than this description suggests because of the dualistic structure and focus of her novel. She attacks contemporary social structures and ideologies for their impact on women, and she attempts to inscribe a feminist vision of a New Zealand where women have autonomy and independence, not merely equality in the eyes of the law.

Defining Jean Devanny's novel as feminist within the context of Roberts' definition is more problematic, despite the fact that *The Butcher Shop* is generally regarded as an icon of feminist writing in New Zealand. For although this is the prevailing view [18], little evidence lies within the text to support either its attributed claims of feminism or socialism. Roberts sees Devanny as part of a continuum of feminism and fiction, although she sees her further along this imaginary line than Ellis, for Devanny **"shared the feminist beliefs of [her] female predecessors, and added socialism to [her] feminism."** [19]. Dale Spender moves closer to a more accurate appraisal of the novel, stating she is

> critical of *The Butcher Shop* ... which in its brave and bold assertion of women's right to sexuality, seems to give sex and satisfaction too much significance as a solution." [20]

Spender is careful not to endanger the feminist reputation of *The Butcher Shop* but she indicates the totally personalised, and individual, nature of Margaret's quest for "sex and satisfaction".

But this quest of Margaret's is far removed from any social or political context of feminism. What Devanny posits instead is a female sexuality defined in terms of eugenics and race, pointing much more directly towards National Socialism and Fascism than feminism and socialism [21]. *The Butcher Shop* is really a single, didactic message concerning the construction and enactment of female sexuality, whereas *Everything is Possible to Will* uses a didactic construction to illustrate the definition, construction and enactment of female self, female autonomy, and female will.

It is difficult to assess how these differing didactic messages were received, for both novels were subject to censorship. It has been stated that censorship of a private and family nature was used in an attempt to silence Ellis's voice for, according to Vera Colebrook, *Everything is Possible to Will* was almost totally destroyed by Ellis's outraged elder son, William. She writes:

> Whatever affection William may have had for his mother,

> it disappeared when he read words in print which undoubtedly could be taken as discrediting his father. Being a man of decision, he bought up every copy he could get hold of - probably almost the whole of the only edition to be printed - and burned them. It has proved impossible to find out what circulation the book had, if any. No review, nor mention of it - not even an advertisement - appears in the New Zealand papers of the day ... After much research one copy was found amongst some old books which had belonged to Ellis's sister, but even now this seems to have disappeared. [22]

Unfortunately, this account appears to be as much of a fabrication as the report that Ellis's husband, Oliver, died of a heart attack in the street [23]. A review and description of the novel and its publication, entitled "Everything is Possible to Will", did appear in a New Zealand newspaper of the day, and did explain something of the circulation of the novel [24]:

> This is the title of a neat volume which has been published in London, by Mrs. Ellis E. Ellis, of Auckland. The object of the story is set forth in the following communication from the author. This book ... has been presented to the Queen ... A copy of the work with a different note lithographed on each respective cover has indeed been presented to Sir George Grey and the late Samuel Edger,B.A., of New Zealand, and to Messrs. W.E. Gladstone, John Bright Ruskin, Professor Huxley, Sir F. Dillon Bell, Sir Wilfred Lawson, and several other ladies and gentlemen of England, including the Editor of the London Times. [25]

The remainder of the lengthy article goes on to include a copy of Ellis's letter to the Editor of *The Times* and lays out the feminist and political purposes of publication [26]. Regrettably, Vera Colebrook's biography of Ellis has proved to be an extremely unreliable source of information about either Ellis's life or her novel and in some of its

statements it is blatantly untrue [27]. The bulk of the biography has been taken directly from the text of *Everything is Possible to Will* and then grammatically altered and edited to the first person to transform the protagonist of the novel, Zee, into Ellis herself (See Appendix A). Part of Vera Colebrook's confusion over the subject of the novel may have resulted from her acceptance that the book is an autobiographical account of Ellis's life, that Zee is Ellis. But this is merely an assumption, one easily made in the light of the particular didactic structure of the novel. The reality, however, is that little confirmed evidence has been uncovered regarding Ellis's life, or how the novel came to be written [28].

Similarly, no firm evidence exists to prove that William "**bought up**" copies of Ellis's novel and "**burned them**", so it is problematic to argue *Everything is Possible to Will* was deliberately censored. It can be assumed from Ellis's statement that she intended the novel to be read by "**working women**" (EPW, Preface,iii) and it is therefore unlikely she would have confined a print run to just the "**white satin**" copies distributed to the English aristocracy and intelligentsia [29].

By comparison, the state and public censorship applied to Devanny's *The Butcher Shop* is well documented although still presents a certain amount of mystery as to why it was banned

in New Zealand, and a certain amount of error about the novel's banning in Germany [30]. The banning of *The Butcher Shop* in New Zealand occurred virtually without the book being read by officials. Whitcombe and Tombes booksellers had twenty five copies on order but their detention was ordered by Customs Comptroller George Craig on the instructions of the then Minister of Customs, William Downie Stewart [31]. He was acting on a cable received on the 1st March 1926 from " Bert" which warned that *The Butcher Shop* was "disgusting, indecent, communistic" [32]. The identity of "Bert" is still a source of mystery. David McGill states that "Bert" was Publicity Officer in London [33] whereas Bill Pearson says "Bert" was probably Berkeley Lionel Scudamore Dallard, Inspector of the Public Service Commissioner's Office [34].

William Downie Stewart did not receive a copy of the novel until 26th March 1926 when R.M. Hacket, Editor of the *New Zealand Herald,* sent the copy that had arrived for the newspaper to review, stating :

> you sometimes, through your Department, exercise censorship over books coming into New Zealand. The subject of pernicious literature has for some time been a subject in the correspondence of the `Herald'. This is a fair sample of what readers are complaining about. It is pretty rotten stuff. [35]

The language used to describe the novel: "pernicious", "indecent", "rotten", and "disgusting" is indicative of the moral outrage the novel provoked, even where it had not been read. H.C. South, Chairman of the Censorship Appeal Board,

the agency who ratified the ban which was to last a further twelve years, went further, saying the novel was "a bad book all round - sordid, unwholesome, and unclean. It makes evil good. We are of opinion it should be banned." [36]. The moral outrage at the novel was largely directed at its explicit sexuality; its "evil" lay in Devanny's support for her heroine's adultery, although the official explanation was believed to be "because its frank portrayal of farm conditions was considered detrimental to the Dominion's immigration policy" [37]. At least, this was the reason Jean Devanny cited when interviewed in Sydney [38]. The novel's ban in Australia did not happen until 2nd October 1929 but was an explicit attack on the sexual content of the book; the Invoice Examining Officer reported "I have perused it and found it is a `sex' novel" [39]. C.J.Brossois, a clerk for the Investigation Section, examined the novel and wrote:

> The philosophy expounded by the author is pernicious. It assails the fundamentals of present-day society and in advocating loose morals for married people constitutes a definite danger to impressionable youth. [40]

The consequence of his agreement with the moral stance taken by New Zealand was an Australian ban of the novel on the 2nd October 1929 as a "blasphemous, indecent or obscene article[s]". The ban remained in force until 1958 [41] . Despite its public censorship, *The Butcher Shop* enjoyed a wide circulation in England [42]. Readership in New Zealand

was limited by the Government's censorship even though a month between the arrival of the first copies of the book and the censor's decision permitted the distribution of large numbers of the novel [43]. Bill Pearson sees the ban as having been provoked by a "confusion of motives ... affronted national sensitivity as well as moral and political reasons." [44] but it does seem that the collective concern of the officials, both in New Zealand and Australia, was with the sexual content of the novel, particularly the antagonistic position Devanny presented towards sexual fidelity within marriage.

Devanny's focus on the nature and experience of marriage for Margaret Messenger is thematically very narrow, since marriage is only examined in relation to female sexuality. Even more specifically, Devanny's interest in this relationship lies only with attacking the monogamous ideology that accompanies marriage in New Zealand society. Devanny is not at all concerned with marriage as a socio-legal institution, nor is she concerned with the experiences of women generally as marital partners. *The Butcher Shop* is the antithesis of a socialist tract for it is governed by a solely individualistic philosophy; it is Margaret's personal achievement of her own vision, her own image of paradise. When Barry Messenger first sees Margaret (**BS**,39), she is reading George Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*

(1903). Heather Roberts expresses real surprise that Devanny would have Margaret reading such an author, for

> it is an odd choice of book for Devanny to give her heroine, as Ryecroft is opposed to any sort of change. Having once been a socialist he professes himself to be `in every fibre ... an individualist'. [45]

But this is only a surprise if *The Butcher Shop* is pre-judged as a socialist book. If not, Devanny's choice makes perfect sense for Margaret is totally individualistic in her pursuit of what she wants. What Margaret wants is to enact her vision of paradise, to be sexually free, to have autonomy of sexual desire, to be able to choose her sexual partners, regardless of, and without endangering, her marital state. This sexual paradise is very closely attached to, and justified by, a concept of transcendental love. What Margaret means, and what Devanny endorses, is the classic imagery of romantic love, the romantic love which transcends any and all reality [46]. Traditionally it is the great passion the romantic lover should be prepared to die for, the romantic fate assigned to males. *The Butcher Shop* faithfully follows this romantic pattern for it is the men who die for their great love of Margaret; her husband, Barry, commits suicide, and Margaret murders Glengarry, her lover, because both he and Barry insist on monogamy. Devanny struggles to link the motive for this murder with her attack on sexually monogamous ideology but what emerges in the novel is Margaret murdering because she cannot either maintain, or merge, her vision of

transcendental love, her personal paradise, with her social reality.

This vision of paradise is also revealed as dominated by eugenic ideology, where the superiority and purity of the white race must be maintained. Devanny appropriates and portrays Maori, particularly the character of Jimmy Tutaki, in order to demarcate the difference between Margaret's higher sensibilities, as a European woman with her transcendental experience of love, and the sensibilities of Tutaki, who, being Maori, is associated sexually with the base lusts of the lower social orders. Devanny develops a sexual and racial hierarchy, the pinnacle of which embodies Margaret and her insular vision of paradise. Her hierarchal paradise of white supremacy, female sexual autonomy, and female violence is not attached to the contemporary New Zealand of the 1920s but to a past New Zealand, the New Zealand of rural gentility: the Arcadian paradise envisaged by the early colonists.

As one of those early colonists Ellis might be expected to have adopted a similar vision of New Zealand, and initially *Everything is Possible to Will* maintains a consistency with the search for paradise so frequently attached to Romanticism. It is this ideological vision which offered a better lifestyle than that of the Old World of Britain.

Certainly Zee's hope on arrival in New Zealand is to recover the Utopia she thought she would gain through the act of marriage to Wrax.

Disillusioned by the failure of romantic love and marriage to fulfil its promise of a paradise on earth, Zee believes New Zealand may offer the paradise she seeks. But instead of fulfilment she finds, as a married woman, legal and social oppression, hardship, humiliation, and enforced dependence. Zee discovers the social reality of New Zealand, the "serge of this work-a-day world" (EPW,58) far removed from the "tulle-illusion" (EPW,58), the romantic picture, of either her marriage or her image of New Zealand. It is at this juncture that Ellis becomes a "pioneer" (EPW,70) writer for, instead of resorting to fictionalising a romantic solution, she elects to write a novel which portrays the social realities of the life of a married woman in New Zealand. Ellis demonstrates an awareness of how this is a "pioneer" step, both in terms of fiction and in terms of feminism. She says:

> If the book be " wild " to the English taste the fault will be in the taste of those who love wild flowers ! (EPW, Preface,vii)

Ellis consciously writes a book which she knows will not conform to the conventional, and British, ideas of romantic fiction. Ellis is not very skilled as a writer but she does try to "pioneer" a new type of writing, what came to be

termed social realism, and in doing so, she seeks to move out of the restraints of romantic fiction.

Ellis also tries to "pioneer", somewhat unsuccessfully, a new, and distinctly female, vision of paradise in New Zealand. Ellis envisages a new "woman" and a new type of marriage, based on a combination of individual and social change. Unlike Devanny, Ellis challenged the entire social system as it affects women; seeking to change marriage, education, contraception, medical practises, divorce legislation, and property law through the example of Zee's "simple story" (EPW,70). For Ellis, and Zee, the thematic exploration of marriage is not focused on just the legal issues of equality but includes the issue of personal autonomy within marriage. Ellis sees marriage as a union offering tremendous potential for genuine sharing, genuine partnership, a mini-democracy reflecting the wider democracy of State and Monarch. Her one major obstacle is determining quite where female sexuality fits into this new marriage, or indeed, her envisaged new world. Faced with the need to keep woman sufficiently sexualised to be a mother, but unwilling to acknowledge female sexual desire, Ellis leaves the matter of female sexuality in a vacuum. It is as if by trying to throw the romantic genre out of fiction Ellis unwittingly throws out female sexuality, and then is unable to find a way to locate female sexual desire within the new types of

relationships she envisages between men and women.

Notwithstanding her failure to accommodate female sexuality, Ellis's paradise and marriage is markedly feminist, a feminism inclusive of Maori. Uniquely, Ellis sees Maori and women as sharing a common oppression, as Heather Roberts notes: **"alone among the female novelists Ellis saw that Maori and women were subjugated in similar ways and for similar reasons"** [47]. But Ellis perceives the subjugation of Maori and women in New Zealand will not be altered by merely legalistic changes. She indicates that changes in attitudes are equally as important, and must accompany any structural change.

What Ellis and Zee want is a paradise which will be translated into a social reality that will become New Zealand. Ellis's novel is sited within the urban, domestic environment of colonial Auckland, although a greater part of the novel points towards England. As contemporary Victorians and as colonists, both Zee and Ellis see England as the primary source of change for New Zealand. Ellis is not concerned with the mythology of New Zealand's **"rural gentility"** [48]. Although her Appendix,"A Few Last Words About Auckland" (EPW,227-245), gives heavily romanticised descriptions of New Zealand's natural wonders, it is the absence of the country in *Everything is Possible to Will,*

rather than any successful attempt to describe the urban location, that is the device by which Ellis tries to detach the romanticised image of New Zealand within the novel. But as with the problem of female sexuality, Ellis does not then know quite what to do with the setting of the novel. Zee ends up very isolated within her family home, detached from the visionary society free of gender and racial constraints that both she, and Ellis, envisage.

Both *Everything is Possible to Will* and *The Butcher Shop* can be seen to pose the same major thematic concerns: the conceptualisation of paradise in New Zealand, the nature and experience of marriage for women, and the place and construction of female sexuality. This thesis explores comparatively each of these major themes in relation to each text. Chapter Two examines the representation of paradise as a manifestation of romantic ideology within *Everything is Possible to Will* noting the strategic connections that Ellis creates to link the subjection of women with the subjection of Maori in New Zealand. Chapter Three argues Ellis's depiction of women and marriage is anti-romantic and feminist as she seeks to subvert the romantic genre into a narrative of social realism. Chapter Four examines Ellis's representation of female sexuality within her novel, particularly in relation to her re-creation of the archetypal Angel in the House [49]. Chapters Five, Six and Seven

comprises a critical analysis of Devanny's *The Butcher Shop* using the same thematic focus of paradise, marriage and sexuality as used for Ellis's novel. Chapter Five notes Devanny's treatment of paradise as an individualistic construct that is closely identified with romanticism. Chapter Six examines Devanny's representation of marriage as a contract of sexual bondage for women, closely analysing her stance on adultery and its relationship to sexualising the archetypal Angel in the House. Chapter Seven argues that by drawing on Eugenic ideology Devanny, in her efforts to privilege female sexuality, creates a socio-sexual hierarchy which has more in common with National Socialism than feminist socialism [50]. Chapter Eight concludes this comparative exploration by stating that Ellis's vision for New Zealand is feminist, democratic and egalitarian but that she fails to master successfully the transition from romanticism to realism, and from the narrative of the romantic genre to the narrative of social realism. Further, although providing a universalised and comprehensive vision of autonomy for women, Ellis fails to reconcile female sexuality into the Utopia she imagines. Whereas Devanny, by focusing almost exclusively on female sexuality, not only validates romantic ideology but constructs a limited vision of woman that is firmly generated from the ideology of National Socialism, offering only a pathological violence as a means of resolving sexual difference. Additionally, Chapter

Eight concludes that Devanny was not adding socialism to the feminist ideas expressed by Ellen Ellis, and that instead of elaborating Ellis's comprehensive feminist vision Devanny restricts it into a narrow tunnel of just female sexuality. From these conclusions it cannot be inferred that feminism and fiction in New Zealand can be said to be developmentally progressing.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER ONE.

1. M.H.Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1941) 22.

2. Fiona Giles,"Romance: An Embarasssing Subject" *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1988) 223-237, p.227.

3. Lawrence Jones, "The Novel" *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* (Oxford & Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991) 107-199, p.114.

4. Carole Ferrier is regarded as the foremost critic on Jean Devanny's literary works having compiled a bibliography of Devanny's writing, edited Devanny's biography, *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1986) and provided many critical articles and essays on Devanny's Australian novels as listed in the bibliography to this thesis. Drusilla Modjeska is an Australian critic who has provided additional crtical analyses of Devanny's writing, the most well known is her book *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945* (North Ryde, New South Wales: Angus & Robertson, 1981).
   Lynley Cvitanovich completed a Master of Sociology thesis entitled "Breaking the Silence: Protest in the Feminist Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers" (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1985) which closely examined *The Butcher Shop*. Much of this thesis was published as a monograph entitled "*Breaking the Silence: An Analysis of the Selected Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers.*"(Palmerston North: Massey University, 1985).
   Heather Roberts is well known for her seminal work *Where Did She Come From?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1967* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989) in which she considers Jean Devanny and her novels as well as the writing of Ellen Ellis.

5. Heather Roberts, *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989) 4.

6. E.W. Whittle, Ellis's printer, was based at 170 St. Johns Street, Clerkenwell, London, England. Her novel was published from 63, Fleet Street, London, England in 1882. In all subsequent reference's to *Everything is Possible to Will* the abbreviation **EPW** is used.

No evidence has been found to confirm the terms and conditions of the novel's publication, except to deny the possibility the publication was sponsored by The Good Templars or paid for by her brother-in-law's legacy to her. Vera Colebrook, *Ellen: A Biography* (Dublin: Arlen House, 1980) 160-161. The only other published writing of Ellis's is the posthumously publication "A Letter by Ellen Ellis, 1859" *Auckland Waikato Historical Journal*. 59 (September 1991): 25-29.

The late Mrs.V.M.Lees, Ellis's great grand-daughter, kindly made available a number of Ellis's other letters to this author, all written between May and August 1860, the year after Ellis's arrival in Auckland.

7. The other New Zealand novels were *Lenore Divine* (London: Duckworth, 1926) and *Dawn Beloved* (London: Duckworth, 1928). *Old Savage and Other Stories* (London: Duckworth, 1927) is a collection of Deanny's short stories which was also published whilst she was resident in New Zealand.

8. The 1981 re-print of *The Butcher Shop* was by Auckland University Press from a 1928 imprint of the 1926 edition. The 1981 edition is used throughout this thesis and in all subsequent references to *The Butcher Shop* the abbreviation BS is used.

9. Carole Ferrier, *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St.Lucia, Queensland:University of Queensland Press, 1986) 100-105.

10. A comprehensive bibliography has been compiled by Carole Ferrier of these materials and of Devanny's correspondence, and was published as "Jean Devanny: A Bibliography" *Hecate*. 13.1 (1987): 138-171.

11. Oliver Sydney Ellis died at an address in Hopetown Street, Auckland. folio Number 552-1883, reference no.180794-114, Registrar General, Registry of Births and Deaths, Wellington. Ellis spent most of her years in Auckland at an address in Ponsonby Road. Her funeral, and the posthumous management of her small estate, was initiated from this same address.

12. "Everything is Possible to Will" *New Zealand Herald* 22 March 1883, 5. This new insight into why Ellis wrote the novel is reported as an inclusion in her letter to The Editor of *The Times* newspaper, London, when she sent a copy of her novel for *The Times* to review. She must have anticipated Oliver's death, for his death notice

does not appear until four days later. *New Zealand Herald* 26 March 1883, 4.

The Times did not comply with Ellis's request. Samuel Palmer, *Palmers Index to the London Times* (1882 and 1883).

13. Letter to Miles Franklin, Miles Franklin Papers, 14 August 1953, Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia, MS 364/32/163-5, cited in Dale Spender, *Writing a New World: Two Centuries of Australian Writers* (London: Pandora Press, Unwin Hyman Ltd, 1988, and Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988) 261.

14. "Banned New Zealand Novel" *The Sun* 5 June 1926, 5.

15. Mimetic criticism holds that literary works are an imitation, reflection or representation of the world and human life. The primary criterion for mimetic criticism is the "truth" of the novel's representation to the objects it represents or should represent. M. H.Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston,1981) 36.

16. The term "Arcadian Paradise" was coined by Patrick Evans in his article "Paradise or Slaughterhouse: Some Aspects of New Zealand Proleterian Fiction" *Islands* 28, 8.1 (1980): 71-85.

For a further discussion of this concept and its application to the text see Chapter Five "The Idealistic Wraith -Paradise in *The Butcher Shop*".

17. Heather Roberts, *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989) 10.

18. Modern literary critics like Heather Roberts, Dale Spender, Drusilla Modjeska, and Carole Ferrier have all defined *The Butcher Shop* as a feminist text. And research on *The Butcher Shop* is still being influenced by this dominant perspective as indicated in a recent newspaper article by Susan Wild entitled "Rediscovering a Fiery Orator of the Working Classes" *The Dominion* 12 December 1994, p.13.

19. Heather Roberts, *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1967.* Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989) 4.

20. Dale Spender, *Writing a New World: Two Centuries of Australian Women Writers* (London: Pandora Press, Unwin Hyman Ltd, 1988, and Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988) 260.

21. See especially Chapters Five and Seven for a discussion of the singularity of Margaret Messenger's vision and its dislocation from feminism, and discussion on the eugenic and fascist ideology underpinning Devanny's construction of Margaret's sexuality.

22. Vera Colebrook, *Ellen: A Biography* (Dublin:Arlen House, 1980) 159.
Efforts to trace Mrs. Colebrook, or the Irish publishing house of the biography have proved unsuccessful. Mrs. Colebrook's visit to New Zealand in 1972 to collect information about Ellis's life was reported in *The London Times*, "Information Quest Brings Woman to New Zealand" 29 April, 1972. *NZ Biographies*. Vol.II, 1972, The Turnbull Library, Wellington, p.38.
But much of what is reported about Ellis and her novel in this article is inaccurate. Vera Colebrook states a copy of Ellis's novel is held at the British Museum, but the Museum confirmed they do not hold a copy of the novel. It is also not accurate to suggest the records of the book's publishing and printing have disappeared. Research has indicated the company records may be held in The Public Records Office, London, England, but can only be accessed personally.

23. According to Oliver's death certificate, he died on 12th March 1883 at an address in Hopetown Street, Auckland, following a two month epileptic illness. He was buried on the 13th March 1883. folio number 552-1883, reference no. 180794-114, Registrar-General, Registry of Births and Deaths, Wellington.

24. In New Zealand, one copy of *Everything is Possible to Will* is held at The Turnbull Library, Wellington, and one copy in the New Zealand collection, Auckland Public Library, restricted access only. A photocopy of the novel, available on three day loan, is held at Victoria University Library, Victoria University, Wellington.

25. "Everything is Possible to Will" *New Zealand Herald* 22 March 1883, 5.

26. A full copy of the article is included as Appendix B.

27. This is particularly unfortunate when much of what has been published, or broadcast, concerning Ellis has been heavily dependent on Vera Colebrook's biography, and may be serving only to perpetuate myths about Ellis and the novel.

In her recently published book *Pioneer Families: The Settlers of Nineteenth Century New Zealand* (Auckland: Batemans, 1994) 123-134, Angela Caughey borrows heavily from Vera Colebrook's biography, incorrectly cited as "Colgrove, Vera" (p.209), and from Ellis's novel, to create her chapter on the Ellis family.

For the extent of textual agreement between the novel and the biography, See Appendix A where three extracts from the novel are compared to three extracts from the biography.

28. Vera Colebrook suggests the Reverend Samuel Edger provided Ellis with writing lessons which then enabled her to write the novel, a process in which he assisted. *Ellen: A Biography* (Dublin:Arlen House, 1980) 160.

Certainly Ellis may have had some association with the Rev.Edger. Both of them are placed at the same meeting of The Good Templars where Ellis provided "**readings**" to the audience. "Good Templarism" *New Zealand Herald* 3rd July 1877, 5. But research has been unable to confirm the exact nature of their relationship, or how much of a role the Rev. Edger had to play in enabling Ellis to write.

29. "Everything is Possible to Will." *New Zealand Herald* 22 March 1883, 5.

30. Devanny's novel, re-titled as *Die Herrin*, was believed to have been banned in Germany but recent research indicates this was never the case, "**Myth has it that *Die Herrin* was banned after the Nazi's rise to power in 1933. But in consulting the various blacklists and indices issued first from the *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, then from the Ministry for Information and Propaganda I have found no evidence to confirm this ... It fails to turn up even in the very last index list compiled in the Nazi era, the *Verzeichnis englischer und nord-amerikanischer Schriftsteller* (1942)**". Gustav Klaus, "Devanny in Germany" *Hecate* 14.2 (1988): 73-78, p.75.

Klaus provides some interesting detail about the German publication. The novel was translated by Paul Baudisch, a minor playwright novelist, and "published in Berlin by Theodor Knaur and issued in a series called `The World's Novels'. It was popularly priced at M 2.85. which was only about a third of the price of the first

London edition." He adds "The provocative question `Is Woman the Slave of Man ?'[was] on a red slip enclosed in the book". *Ibid*, p.73.
Klaus also states there was a "very neglible reception of the work in Germany ... None of the major dailies reviewed the novel. A sample of cultural journals reveal the same negative result ... Devanny remained virtually unknown in Germany". *Ibid*, p.75-76.

31. David McGill, *The Guardians at the Gate: The History of the New Zealand Customs Department* (Wellington:New Zealand Customs Department,1991) 135.

32. *Ibid*, p.135.

33. *Ibid*, p.135.

34. Bill Pearson, "A Further Note on the Banning of Jean Devanny's The Butcher Shop" *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 9.(1991):131-133, p.131.

35. David McGill,*Ibid*, p.135.

36. Bill Pearson,"The Banning of The Butcher Shop" *The Butcher Shop* (Auckland:Auckland University Press, 1981) 225-234, p.226.

37. Heather Roberts,"Introduction" *The Butcher Shop.* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1981) 7-23, p.11.

38. Pearson, Bill. "The Banning of The Butcher Shop". *The Butcher Shop* (Auckland; Auckland University Press, 1981) 225-234, p.229.

39. Bill Pearson,*Ibid*, 1981, p.231.

40. Bill Pearson,*Ibid*, 1981, p.231.

41. Bill Pearson,*Ibid*, 1981, p.231.

42. 15,000 copies were sold in England and the book ran to four editions. Bill Pearson,*Ibid*, p.229.

43. Bill Pearson has detailed the distribution of the novel and provides a history on it's censorship. "The Banning of The Butcher Shop" *The Butcher Shop* (Auckland:Auckland University Press, 1981) 225-234.

44. *Ibid*, p.226.

45. Notes to *The Butcher Shop* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1981) 236.

46. Margaret, and Devanny's, romantic philosophy of love was clearly expounded in the nineteenth century by such individuals as the American Dr. Elizabeth B. Blackwell, who said "**The fact in human nature which explains, guides and should elevate the sexual nature of women, and mark the benefice of Creative Force is [Love] this very mental element which distinguishes the human from brute sex ... Love between the sexes is the highest and mightiest form of human sexual passion.**" "Sexual Passion in Men and Women".*Roots of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women.* (New York: Northeastern University Press, 1986) 261-308, p.303.
What is surprising is to find this ideology emerging so clearly in a book so long regarded as feminist, and valorised by an author who is largely seen as socialist.

47. Heather Roberts, *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1967* (Wellington:Allen & Unwin, 1989) 13.

48. Evans, Patrick."Paradise or Slaughterhouse: Some Aspects of New Zealand Proletarian Fiction" *Islands*, 28. 8.1 (1980):71-85, p.84.

49. The phrase "Angel in the House" appears to have been first used in the title of a 1835 poem by Coventry Patmore, but did not begin to develop as an archetypal image until Michele Barrett's examination of Virginia Woolf's writings in "*Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing*" (London: The Women's Press, 1979) when she cited the following from Woolf: "**you may not know what I mean by the Angel in the House. I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was a chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it - in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or wish of her own, but preferred to sympathise always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all - I need not say it -she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty- her blushes, her great grace. In those days -the last of Queen Victoria - every house had its Angel. And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words. The shadow of her wings fell across my page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in my room.**" Michele Barrett, *Ibid*, 58-9.
Woolf's poetic image of the Angel in the House to

express the cultural construction of idealised Victorian womanhood was further developed as a archetypal image when it made the transition into the discourse of feminist literary critique with Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's publication of *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) where the image of the Angel in the House was offset against the image of The Madwoman in the Attic as a means of analysing representations of women within literary texts. By utilising these two critical images of women Gilbert and Gubar were able to establish an exploratory feminist critique whereby binary oppositions could be examined. since the publication of their text The Angel in the House has become an accepted tool of feminist literary criticism.

50. Eugenic ideology basically encapsulated two main bodies of thought. The first was the biological argument that "**acquired characteristics**" were passed on to future generations.
But this was not a straightforward scientific argument concerning hereditary mechanisms. For Eugenics held that these "**acquired characteristics**" included those of human interpersonal behaviours like alcohol consumption, sexual behaviour and social deviancy. In other words that social behaviours and social problems were products of hereditary processes.

The second main body of thought linked hereditary biology to a value system, for it was "**bound up with the necessity for securing the purity of the race as far as possible**". In turn these two main ideas were bolstered by drawing on the discourses of empire and nationalism as justifications.

Eugenic ideology then, had an established racist bias since it was utilised to justify white colonisation and superiority, and an obsessive concern with racial purity to the extent where non-perfect human beings could or should be eradicated, or at the very least subject to reproductive regulation and control so that their defective genes could not continue to "contaminate" the national gene pool. Phillip Fleming, "Eugenic Ideology in New Zealand 1900-1940" Unpublished M.A. History thesis (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1961) 15-16.

Eugenic ideology is discussed further in Chapter Seven "Respectable Promiscuity: Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*".

CHAPTER TWO

The Place of Paradise.

Everything is Possible to Will describes Zela's chronological journey from childhood to wife and mother, from England to New Zealand. Through the metaphor of Zela's journeys the novel reflects a thematic concern with the disparity between the idea of paradise and the experience of social reality. But the theme of paradise goes further than Zee's own personal experience or ideology. Ellis politicises paradise by imaginatively linking it to a New Zealand Utopia, a millennial vision of what New Zealand could be as a society, and of what it could be specifically for women.

Ellis's Utopia is a New Zealand where women have access to education, where they have autonomy and control over their bodies and their lives, they have freedom of choice and marriage laws which do not confer a loss of rights alongside the husband. Her Utopia was markedly different from that of Lady Barker who viewed New Zealand as a paradise where **"Not a sod had been turned there since the creation of the world"** [1]. Lady Barker's Utopia was not a world for women but a virgin world ripe for male cultivation and production.

Visions of New Zealand as a Utopia, a paradise on earth, have been a strong feature of New Zealand fiction, as noted by Cox [2]. But Cox fails to acknowledge this fictitious imagery of paradise as being closely linked to colonisation, feminism

or political agendas other than those of class distinctions. Ellis's imagery of paradise within *Everything is Possible to Will* is contextually located within these agendas. But also unique to Ellis's exploration of the paradise image is her incorporation of women and Maori together within a politicised paradise [3]. The instability of this image is metaphorically portrayed through Zee's constant experience of disillusionment with the idea of paradise, either in England or New Zealand. Through Zee's disillusionment Ellis highlights the dislocation of the idea of paradise from the political framework of English and New Zealand society.

By displaying social and personal failures throughout the novel Ellis attempts to write/right a New Zealand that anticipates Mannheim's **"realizable Utopia"** where a vision of paradise is integrally connected with established social order [4]. Zee's idea of paradise is never realised, never reconciled to the social realities of her life as a woman. Her childhood paradise is destroyed by time and the social expectations of her family; her romantic paradise is destroyed by the reality of marriage. Her idea of paradise is revived on emigration to New Zealand only to be met with more disillusionment.

The failure of Zee's paradise is not because it is so idealistic that it cannot be achieved. Ellis makes Zee's

idea of paradise quite specific throughout the text. It is politicised and gender-specific. Paradise, for a woman, is having the freedom to fulfil one's self: to achieve self-growth, self-expression, autonomy, to develop a will of one's own. Ellis suggests Zee's failure to achieve union between her idea of paradise and her experience of reality is a product of both individual and social forces. In arguing from such a position Ellis establishes herself not only as a feminist but also as a unique writer of the last decade within New Zealand fiction. Ellis argues that for women to gain equality and freedom there must be reform of the social structures, including those of law, marriage, education, motherhood and economics. But she also argues structural reforms are inadequate in themselves for promoting freedom of choice for women. Unless they are accompanied by a corresponding reform in the way individual women think, Zee, and all women, are doomed to a perpetual ontological split between the idea of paradise and the reality they live in.

This disparity, or split, between paradise and social reality is established by Ellis at the novel's opening and overtly woven into the very characterisation of Zela or **"Zee as she is commonly called"** (**EPW**,1). Zee has a **"dual nature"** (**EPW**,7). She lives a double, and split, existence from the beginning of the novel. Zee's social reality as a ten year old girl is an English world of family, friends and school

where she is a misfit. She is described as a "dunce" (EPW,10), "unattractive for a woman" (EPW,7), "plain looking" (EPW,18), and possessing "a dreamy clumsiness" (EPW,10). Ellis's physical descriptions of Zee and particularly of her nose (EPW,8) are consistent with the "heroine of irregular features ... who can act, make mistakes, learn from them, and grow" [5]. Ellis signals Zee's departure from the conventional heroine stereotype by subverting the Victorian passion for physiognomy. This deviation from convention partly explains why the novel "may be "wild" to the English taste" (EPW, Preface,vii) but it also marks Ellis as attempting to establish a new model of femininity incorporating both brains and character. Zee's deviant attributes create her social isolation and earn her punishment from her sisters (EPW,10). Yet in the world of nature Zee is described as a very different character. She can repeat her school lessons "exultingly" (EPW,3). She is energetic and vibrant, "almost as swift as her friend" the squirrel (EPW,1). She is as "shaggy without and within as a Shetland pony" (EPW,7), "frisky and tricky" (EPW,5), possessing a bold, free spirit with "defiance flashing in her eyes and attitude" (EPW,8). She abounds with "animal spirits" (EPW,14). Outside of the urban world, the social world, Zee is clearly established as a child of nature. Throughout the novel wherever Ellis links Zee to the natural landscape or where Zee's "animal spirits" are foregrounded the idea of

paradise as a place of female freedom is not far away. Zee's idea of paradise is introduced early in the novel, for she had:

> a genius for discovering fairy-bowers in the out-of-the way nooks in which her native place abounds. The spot in which her acquaintance is made is one of her "parlors" with "beautiful trees for walls"; the earth is carpeted with long grass; to her right is a sandy bank, dotted with primroses and violets, and at her feet ripples a shallow brook, in which she ever and anon dabbles. The air is fragrant and full of melody. (EPW,2)

In this setting Zee is able to be herself, the free child of nature. The language of this passage, with its "fairy-bower", echoes the classic description of the Bower of Bliss in Spenser's Faerie Queene [6]. Just as Acrasia's Bower of Bliss was an artificial creation, so Ellis creates an artificial bower for Zee, a Victorian urbanised one. For Zee's bower is a "parlor", with "walls" and "carpet" . Acrasia's Bower of Bliss is strongly associated with paradise on earth, "There the most dainty paradise on the ground" [7], but Ellis goes further, firmly placing paradise within a domestic site. In this imaginatively united paradise there is no ontological split. Zee is able to be natural, to wholly and freely act upon her will within a natural and domesticated environment.

By marrying paradise and domesticity Ellis incorporates two contemporary mythologies, the Victorian ethos of a woman's proper place being firmly sited within the domestic home and a fitting paradise under her sole control, and the romantic

ethos of a domestic paradise being located at the end of the romantic rainbow [8]. These are mythologies of female paradise which within the novel are proven erroneous, both to Zee and the reader. The allusion to Spenser appears to act as a sign for the reader, a note to heed the artificial nature of Zee's paradise on earth. For Zee is not allowed to remain either physically or psychologically within her "**fairy-bower**", her domesticated paradise; she has to conform to the demands of Victorian social reality. Ellis takes care to delineate the reality of Zee's social options. Being forced to leave partly because of her gender, her "**dunce**" status and because of the demands of a large family on her mother, Zee is enlisted to provide domestic help, which she takes to "**with right good will**" (EPW,12). But by the time she is in her late teens she has become of "**marketable age**" (EPW,18). By describing Zee as "**marketable**" the narrator suggests that Zee, as if she were like any other commodity on the open market, can now be traded or exchanged in return for marriage. When Zee meets her future husband, Wrax, the narrator interjects to inform the reader that Zee "**had unfortunately nothing but marriage to look forward to**" (EPW,19) and so she should be grateful for his good looks. Zee's gratitude is a measure of her plain appearance. Being less than a beauty Zee is unlikely to get anyone better, and she is ageing, so she should accept Wrax's attentions. The narrator appears to affirm the necessity of romantic ideology

for young women. There is a need to be grateful for the prince on a white horse, particularly if he is good-looking and the girl is not. But this is later denied by the novel's narrator:

> girls should aim at naturalness at all costs. Nature, even in its "fall" is better than art, because more God-like, and the grace which is born of inward beauty of character is divine. (EPW,25)

The narrator states the superficial beauty of a girl is an artificial construct which should not be the measure of a woman. But if the presence or absence of artificial beauty is a requirement for fulfilling the romantic expectations permeating male-female relationships and marriage, then the narrator is also arguing against a basic premise of romanticism. The tone of this passage suggests the narrator is interjecting to give a warning to both Zee and the reader. Neither the reader nor Zee are to heed the seductive call of romanticism because it is an ideology based on artificial, not natural, premises.

Within the narrative it seems Zee may have heard the narrator's warning. For Zee is quite relieved that Wrax favours her sister, Sadai, as much as he favours her. Zee possesses a passion capable of being stirred by a man for "novice as she was in the affairs of the heart, she was as keen-scented as those who had been through the wood" (EPW,22). Ellis's reticent and delicate inference towards

Zee's healthy sexuality is consistent with the conventions of romanticism and with the literary conventions of her day [9]. Narratively it is juxtapositioned against Zee's obvious lack of sexual attraction or love for Wrax , for "**she was conscious of no aching void within which he alone could fill**" (**EPW**,23). Despite the narrator's call to her to deny the seduction of romanticism Zee's belief that Wrax should fill an "**aching void**" demonstrates her utilising a romantic ideology as the defining test of love in assessing her relationship with Wrax. Ellis uses this dialectic between narrator and protagonist to deconstruct the romantic argument in front of the reader, and to reinforce Zee's "fall" into a marriage based on self-deceptive reasoning and the social pressures peculiar to young women.

Zee's inability to reconcile her personal feelings to the ideological expectations of romanticism is reflected in her temporary escape to Scotland. Whilst away, Zee is overwhelmed by letters from Wrax and she undergoes some personal transformation. The narrator states Zee "**had changed grievously; she had become conventional - traitor to the higher, truer life in seeking the good - will of her fellows**" (**EPW**,30). The narrator's disapproving attitude towards this change in Zee is conveyed by the moralistic diction of "**grievously**" and "**traitor**". By adopting such a position the narrator highlights for the reader the gravity of Zee's first

"fall" from grace, a fall which will lead Zee down a slippery path, for "**all too soon ... Zee had allowed herself to drift into an engagement with Wrax**" (EPW,32). The narrator, by remarking and interpreting on Zee's "fall", shapes a cautionary directive for the reader on the subject of romantic love and its relationship to marriage. But the narrator also appears to engage in some moral forecasting of Zee's fate. Harris argues this narrational forecasting is a standard feature of nineteenth century novels, adding at no point does

> **the narrator suggest other options may exist - that a fall, for instance, might lead to self-knowledge, and from there to mature adulthood. [10]**

Ellis departs from this didactic model as the Zee does gain a limited self-knowledge and a maturity of self. Although the narrator does not directly suggest that other options may exist for Zee, significant energy is spent in launching a critique against the social structures which keep Zee locked into the unhappy marriage created by her "fall". Even if Zee had more "**moral courage**" and had been able to say "**No**" to Wrax (**EPW**,32) the alternatives to marriage with Wrax are unappealing; as someone who lacks conventional beauty she is "**born to be an old maid if ever a girl was**" (**EPW**,17), and having been denied an education (because she is a female) her future is to remain a domestic dependent with her family. Either position leaves her without social status or approval.

Zee's experience of a paradise of self-will, however artificial a bower, cannot be accommodated within female reality. Disillusioned she turns to Wrax.

The narrator continues to interject, commenting on Zee's character and story events in order to "limit interpretive possibilities" for the reader, as Harris has noted [11]. The narrator's limitation of interpretive possibility is evident at this crucial juncture where Zee seems to opt for marriage with Wrax. As explained by the narrator, Zee cannot

> fall in love, as the stupid phrase is, with her eyes shut, nor be beguiled into taking thorns for roses, nor gall for honey. Mental blind-man's buff had no charms for her, and yet had she used her brains as well as she used her eyes she would have no history. (EPW,39)

The narrator may collapse into sarcasm with the comment on the romantic ethic of falling in love as being a "stupid phrase" but she confines the reader's interpretation of Zee. The narrator directs the reading female consciousness towards Zee's inability to make any decision other than a pragmatic one. If Zee had "used her brains", that is if she had subjected herself to some critical enquiry, she would be effectively signing her death warrant, she "would have no history". At worst marriage means survival for Zee, at best it may realise the

> surgings of her soul, hungering for leave to love, yet baulked in its every effort to grasp hold of its ideal, of anything indeed. (EPW,46)

Despite her pragmatism, Zee's ideal remains that of

romanticism and the paradise it promises (EPW,46). Even without a "romantic love" for Wrax, Zee believes she can recover the romantic ideal by strenuous efforts at wifely duty. The romantic paradise is transformed into a vision of a marital paradise created by the act of becoming a wife. The narrator's interruption on the eve of Zee's wedding is too late to save Zee from the vows she has just made but is early enough to challenge the reader's interpretation of Zee's position. The narrative *persona* argues against any belief Zee might hold about the marital relationship as being a paradise on earth:

> Too often the wife, in common with other treasures, loses value in possession, even though the oughts and crosses of married life make her incomparably more worthy of esteem than when, as a thoughtless young thing, the husband first won her. (EPW,47)

The message to the reader is to be sceptical of Zee's hope of a paradise forged from marriage, even though Zee's immediate reaction to marriage is to re-acquire a belief in the potential for a realisable paradise on earth.

As a married couple Wrax and Zee are transformed in Zee's mind to "**Adam and Eve in Paradise**" (EPW,53). Interestingly, this transformation of the unhappy engagement into a transcendental union comes after Zee's personal vow to love, honour, serve and obey Wrax (EPW,51). In the event of romantic love's failing to achieve paradise, Zee spiritualises her marriage relationship into one of Miltonic

heaven. With this imaginative creation of a paradise realised Zee regains the sense of freedom, self-expression and will she had experienced in her bower:

> she was brimful and running over with animal spirits, sparkling with diamond dew as, putting on her coronation robes, she surveyed her future from the hill-top reaching to heaven, converting her once waste howling wilderness into a bower of content. (EPW,54-55)

The metaphor of the queen is not merely purple prose run riot but Ellis's attempt to acknowledge textually the power which Zee experiences as paradise and reality temporarily conflate. The imagery of the Queenly Wife and Mother was to be later adopted by the Women's Christian Temperance Union in New Zealand in their description of marriage as the "Crown of Creation, the miracle of miracles".[12] It is a miraculous power conferred by the status of "married woman" which Zee believes will allow her a freedom of self not only legitimised by society but expected and upheld by society. Zee's "waste howling wilderness" was her social invisibility engendered firstly by her being female but exacerbated by her falling outside of a socially defined stereotype of womanhood. A "fall" is corrected by marriage for Zee now "fits" into the social fabric. Her paradise now seems assured as she and Wrax luxuriate in their "Second Eden" (EPW,56). From Zee's point of view

> threescore years and ten would find their Eden only the more refined. The triple powers of the world, flesh and devil would be powerless to quench the torch lit at and fed at the Zeeshrine. (EPW,56)

Ellis's deliberately distanced and elevated religious prose of "world, flesh and devil" and "Zeeshrine" is unintentionally comic but serves, within its biblical metaphor, to reinforce the reality of this discovered marital paradise whilst in tone suggesting an almost evangelical, ecstatic energy. Harris has noted a literary convention of didactic American fictions where "their language is carefully structured, tending towards the oratical in narrative passages [sic]" [13]. For the twentieth century reader writing as oratory is a difficult concept to accommodate [14] but Ellis would seem to be utilising elevated rhetoric to detach the narrator from sharing the same perspective on marriage as Zee [15].

This structural distancing from the protagonist's point of view is important for it is the narrator who attacks the Temperance view of marriage as a holy and rewarding institution throughout the novel. The narrator also challenges Temperance's evangelical belief in the transformation of the individual as being all that is required to achieve paradise on earth [16]. The narrator's forceful interruption, just at the point where Zee believes she is about to obtain a marital paradise, is a radical departure from novelistic and social conventions.

Ellis enacts textually what Rachel Blau DuPlessis calls

"writing beyond the ending" [17] by not only writing beyond the point of Zee's marriage but loudly drawing the attention of the reader to this break with narrative conventions. The narrator overrides Zee's story to ask:

> Having gone this far with Zee, does the reader demand that she shall continue to skip merrily downhill, carolling bird-fashion, until her voice is lost in the far distance ? Such were a fitting termination to a novel; but such is not life. (EPW,58)

Ellis violently breaks with the conventions of the nineteenth century novel in a pioneer attempt to write a new text of social realism. Simultaneously the narrator warns the reader the illusion of Zee's newly-found marital paradise is just that, an illusion and "not life" [18]. For Zee's paradise collapses under the definition of woman bound by the social structures of law, marriage and motherhood.

Disillusioned yet again Zee sees emigration to New Zealand as an opportunity to realise her paradise. For New Zealand is "The Glad New World" (EPW,108). As a new world it offers the vision of achieving the female "bower" of Zee's childhood paradise in England. But New Zealand is not a pre-existing "bower", it is a "wilderness" (EPW,111), a "bush home" to be converted into a "paradisiac bower" by the "bride-elect" (EPW,172).

Initially conversion does not seem necessary for New Zealand appears to affirm the paradise Zee seeks. She seems

to have, as a woman, for the first time:

> Freedom from the restraints and hateful conventionalities of the old-world life. (EPW,112)

She appears to experience an independence of self, a freedom of choice made possible by the apparent absence of class structures in New Zealand:

> To have her household dependent upon herself, raised Zee pleasantly in her own self esteem. She had no bell to ring, no good Emma at her beck henceforth ... A queen might have envied her active merry life. (EPW,110)

The re-emergence of the royal metaphor of Zee as "a Queen" confirms the conflating of paradise with reality. Even as a queen in this new land Zee does not have to conform to the social dictate and convention of being a "lady". She is able to enact rather than conduct her own domestic work. She is able to make decisions for herself, to act upon her will, at least within the domestic arena. She experiences an autonomy and independence parallelled to her domestic acting in her childhood bower. Freed from the tightly structured English social conventions governing even the simple act of going for a walk, Zee is "at liberty" (EPW,111) not only to go for a walk but to take her two sons with her.

Confirmed in her domestic world of paradise of independence and empowerment, the world Zee sees outside of the colonial settlement physically appears to confirm New Zealand as the paradise Zee believes it to be:

> There never was a bluer sea, a brighter sky; Nature

> tried her prentice-hand on all climes, and made this New Zealand North the praise of the whole earth. (EPW,112)

Domestically and physically New Zealand appears to affirm the female paradise Zee desires.

Yet in a series of narrative connections and statements the narrator foreshadows the collapse of Zee's vision of New Zealand as paradise; Zee's domestic paradise stops at her front door. Paradise does not extend into this colonial world. Ellis portrays the social reality of New Zealand through the metaphor of the Maori. Just as alcohol is used as the point of entry into the male world, so Maori are narratively and fictionally appropriated as the point of entry into the social constructs of New Zealand.

Zee's encounter with Maori is narratively located within her domestic domain; they are represented as forcibly entering her perceived paradise of independence and autonomy:

> The "noble savages", the early inhabitants of New Zealand, were a curiosity to Zee ... Zee was often startled to find a grim, hobgoblin face flattened against her window-pane, taking stock of all within ... Entering the house without any form of "by your leave" they raked an ember from the fire ... Then, but not till then, to business, bartering their wares for old clothing. (EPW,116)

By representing Maori as "noble savages", reduced in stature and dignity to "bartering" at the lowest end of the social and economic scale for survival, Ellis constructs a sympathetic relationship between Zee and Maori. But Maori

are also represented as threatening to Zee, having "**grim, hobgoblin**" faces. This aspect of Maori as threatening represents the reality of New Zealand society which is to threaten and invade Zee's perceived domestic paradise. It is the hobgoblin face of the patriarchal, capitalist system. Maori and Zee are mutually aligned together as both are victims of this oppressive system.

Maori, specifically, Maori women, and Zee, representing all English women, are reduced to being "**importunate beggars**" (EPW,117). The narrator tells the reader this is the position Maori occupy in New Zealand's social structure, adding that Maori sit "**down among the grounds of society**" (EPW,119), using a terminology for describing the very bottom of society. Maori are by definition, the "dregs" of society. Denied economic and personal independence or autonomy, Maori are forced to develop alternate strategies to access European controlled resources. Aside from the strategy of begging, Maori "**courted and were flattered by the notice of Europeans**" (EPW,117). Ellis uses "**courted**" to suggest an image of feminine subjection, to describe flirtation as a necessary economic strategy enabling Maori to "enter" European society. The narrator is condemning in tone towards Maori women and their "**style**", as demonstrated by the lapse into America's Deep South "white trash" diction describing a Maori bride's clothing as being "**the flashiest pure red and bright yallar**"

(EPW,117). But the narrator's condemnation is explicitly linked not to Maori women but to the society which drives women, Maori and European, into this type of behaviour:

> Wahine wears her sex's badge of disgrace - she is schooled, as is her fairer sister who ought to know better, in all the arts of coquetry, coaxing, ogling, wheedling, giggling. (EPW,117)

The "sex's badge of disgrace" is the contemporary euphemistic diction of prostitution. Ellis suggests Maori women are forced into this type of relationship to European society just as European women, "her fairer sister" have been, even though "eighteen centuries of Christianity should have produced other results in English women" (EPW,118). Despite the colonial arrogance of implying that Maori possess a lower moral sensitivity when compared to cultured English women the sins of the "old world" are already perpetuated on women in this "Glad New World". New Zealand society is no paradise of female independence and autonomy are circumscribed from the very "grounds" (EPW,119) of its structure by the economics of survival in a male society [19]. Maori are the lowest on the social ladder and economically dependent as beggars. Maori women are doubly alienated, both as Maori and as women, an alienation shared by Zee, who is:

> low enough on the social ladder to realise, that as a rule woman are treated as the merest drudge; a necessary evil. (EPW,122)

The language of prostitution re-surfaces in the description of women as a "necessary evil" [20]. But this remains the

language of the narrator. Zee's awareness of the social constraints on her independence and autonomy are not realised within her domestic encounters with Maori. Maori are "**Too much the broke**" (EPW,116), a position Zee tries to ameliorate, but it is Ellis who forges the connection between Maori and Zee of their shared oppression by the repetition of "**Too much the broke**" (EPW:116,123,193) as a descriptive of Maori, women and Zee.

The social "hell" for women, both Maori and English, outside of the perceived domestic paradise of Zee's is cruelly drawn by the narrator's impassioned rhetoric:

> **Bloody steps will mark woman's way to freedom ... think of the scenes our police and criminal courts present - think of the poor battered women - wives and mothers "too much the broke", pleading for their embruted husbands [sic]; "Forgive them they know not what they do." (EPW,123)**

Ellis extends the metaphor of "**too much the broke**" to include not just the economic dependency of women but also their social and legal powerlessness. They are forced into begging, like Maori, "**pleading**" with society's most visible authorities not for their own freedom, but for the release of the men that batter them, because men are needed for the little economic protection they offer, at whatever price. Under New Zealand legislation of the 1880's, particularly the marriage and divorce laws, women are trapped into a cycle of dependency and powerlessness [21].

The narrator's speech to an extent foreshadows Zee's fate. Zee may not be forced into prostitution but she is forced to acknowledge her economic dependency and powerlessness as her illusionary domestic paradise collapses. This fall from paradise is textually mirrored in Zee's "fall" (EPW,190) as she steals flowers for her garden because she has no money of her own. Wrax, who has been drinking very heavily, goes away for a while to escape creditors, having hastily prevented a foreclosure on the marital home (EPW,192). Zee is left without either food, fuel or money. Zee is forced to acknowledge this shameful situation to a cousin, and forced to admit to herself that her domestic paradise of independence was just an illusion. The reality of the social protection seemingly offered by marriage, to Zee or any other woman, is the absence of legal identity, the absence of legal rights or redress, the absence of any social power, and the absence of entitlement to either income or possessions. Zee confronts the reality of New Zealand to find not a paradise but the "old world" located in the "new". New Zealand may have dispensed with the class and conventions of the old world and appear to offer new freedoms for women, but this only serves to expose the structural oppression of women through marriage.

By using the important life stages of childhood, adolescent, courtship, marriage and adult life Ellis attacks the

traditional romantic mythologies of female paradise to expose romantic ideology as a deceitful, but convenient, narrative for supporting the main constructs of patriarchal power over women. Ellis acknowledges through her heroine Zee that women are insufficiently critical of romantic ideology and only too ready to persevere with even the most impossible marriages and situations in order to try achieve a paradise far removed from reality. But Ellis ranges far beyond an individual conceptualisation of paradise to suggest that social reform could build a real female paradise by creating opportunities for female autonomy, however that autonomy might be willed by any individual female even if married, and by creating a true social, economic, and legislative democracy which did not discriminate or oppress on grounds of gender or colour. In doing so she challenges the very essence of patriarchal power and it is through Zee's marriage that Ellis seeks to explore the nature of this power, not only in terms of the powerlessness early New Zealand marriage laws conferred on women but, more importantly in Ellis's eyes, how romantic ideology and the social structure of marriage powerfully combine to advance the imprisonment and annihilation of female self.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER TWO.

1. Mary Ann Stewart (Lady Barker), *Station Amusements in New Zealand* (London:William Hunt, 1873) 107.

2. Shelagh Frances Cox, "Images and Visions of Society in the Selected Fiction of Three New Zealand Writers". Master of Philosophy Thesis (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1981) 78-86.

3. Heather Roberts, *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989) 32.
   Ellis's early awareness of the connection between the oppression of Maori and the oppression of women in New Zealand has been acknowledged as a possible "first" and has recently achieved a world audience. Claire Buck, *The Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature.* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 1992) 518-9.

4. K.Mannheim,*Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to The Sociology of Knowledge* (London:K.Paul,Trench Trubner & Co.Ltd; New York: Harcourt,Brace & Co.,1936) 183.

5. Jeanne Fahnestock, "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description." *Victorian Studies* 24.3 (Spring 1981):325-362, p.331.
   As Fahnestock details, the Twentieth Century reader frequently misreads the importance of the textual cues in texts by Victorian writers. In England from 1860 onward the use of irregular physiognomy to inform the reader of departures from the conventional descriptive methodology takes on particular significance. Ellis's use of this literary technique indicates her familiarity with both a relatively "new" method of writing and her desire to create a different type of female to inhabit her imagined new world.

6. Edmund Spenser, *Books I & II The Faerie Queene - The Mutability Cantos.* Eds. Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele.(Indianapolis: Odyssey Press, 1965) 390-397.

7. *Ibid,* Book II, Canto 58.1, p.390.

8. Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: the Novel 1880-1920.* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1979) 26.
   As Stubbs notes the heroine of late Nineteenth Century fiction "was expected to articulate and demonstrate the belief that a woman can reach happiness through her

relationships, is fulfilled by her domestic role. She was to reassure." In other words, a woman's happiness was achieved by her relationship, by marriage to a man, and her fulfilment was a natural consequence of this expected outcome to romance. She literally got married and lived happily ever after. In Victorian literature it was conventionally expected that a novel would confirm these romantic outcomes for the (female) reader.

9. Gries argues that within New Zealand fiction of the late Nineteenth Century New Zealand women writers were victims of this sexual and emotional reticence because "pervading every action was the prudential morality to which women were committed more strongly than men". "An Outline of Prose Fiction in New Zealand" Unpublished Ph.d thesis in English (Auckland: Auckland University College, 1951) 16. Although this is to elevate women to a higher moral ground than men by bequeathing them an angelic quality of purity, it is also to ignore the use of reticence as a literary figurative technique of Victorian writing as recognised by W. E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) 356, and Eric Trudgill, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origin and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* (London: Heinemann, 1976) 236.

10. Susan K. Harris, *Nineteenth Century American Women's Novels: Interpretive Strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 47.

Harris suggests the narrators of didactic American fiction show "a reluctance to engage in skeptical enquiry. They also show the predominant values; obedience to legitimate external authority, female passivity, and self-denial" (p.59).

Harris's statements would seem to be borne out within *Everything is Possible to Will*. For Ellis's narrator shifts position within the text once Zee has confronted the Church and her husband, Wrax, and moves into such a sceptical enquiry of the legitimacy of external authority whilst questioning female passivity and self-denial. This new re-evaluation of the movement and function of the narrator, as initiated by Harris, would seem to have important implications not only for Ellis's novel but for late Nineteenth Century fiction in New Zealand. In particular the fiction by female writers which has been broadly labelled didactic, not solely because of a novel's purpose in teaching a doctrine or ideology but because of the tendency for male critics to label them in this way because they have unruly and invasive narrators. The consequence of such decision making is the dismissal of these texts as legitimate

fields of literary critical enquiry. Whereas Harris's theories suggest these unruly and invasive narrators serve a particularly important role in the subverting of the conventional romantic genre of the novel as well as fulfilling a significant role in conveying feminist ideas to their readers.

11. *Ibid*, p.47.
Harris suggests the role of the interjecting narrator is to present to the reader "**a dialogue that admits no interpretive ambiguity**".

12. Phillida Bunkle, "The Origins of the Women's Movement in New Zealand: The Womens Christian Temperance Union 1885-1895" *Women in New Zealand Society* (Auckland:Allen & Unwin, 1980) 52-76, p.73.

13. Susan K. Harris, *Nineteenth Century American Women's Novels: Interpretive Strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 41.

14. *Ibid*, p.41.

15. An argument could be made that Ellis was merely using an evangelical discourse familiar to her from her association with The Good Templars, a religious Temperance Movement. But these burst of elevated, distanced, evangelical oratory are used highly selectively within the text.

16. McKimmey traces the growth and development of the Temperance movement in New Zealand and in doing so highlights the central Temperance belief that reform of the individual is strongly linked to an internal, psychological, and spiritual transformation from evil and sin, based on the appetites of the flesh of which alcohol is one, to purity and good. The transformation of the individual would then result in social reforms which would eliminate evil and sin for the "**individual is saved within his social context rather than out of it**". "The Temperance Movement in New Zealand 1835-1895" Unpublished Master of Arts in History thesis (Auckland: Auckland University, 1968) 144-146, p.144.

17. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Writers.* (Bloomington:Indiana University Press, 1985) 18.
Ellis's breaking into the novel's plot in order to give the narrator an opportunity to subvert the reader's expectations seems to be an attempt not just to struggle with a novel of social realism but also to try and

writer her way out of the romantic ideology and idiom governing women's fiction. She denies the romantic convention of narrative life stopping at the point of marriage, and denies Zee, and by implication the reader, a "happy ever after". But Ellis also holds a romantic view of writing as a moral and educative tool. She says of her novel "it is written by the unlearned, especially for women and girls to raise them in their own estimation" (EPW,70).

As a consequence Ellis's writing is frequently invaded by romanticism and the novel unhappily suffers at times from being a romantic novel trying not to be romantic but realistic.

19. The political perception of prostitution in New Zealand from the 1860's to 1890's was particularly vehement.
Politicians firmly believed prostitution was an elective choice by women, rather than being linked to socio-economic considerations. The general view within government was plenty of legitimate work existed for young European women; especially as the government had embarked on massive assisted emigration programmes for young women in the 1860's to fill the growing need for domestic servants and colonial wives. However, the restrictive amount of work available to women, especially Maori women, is indicated by the Inspector under the Female Employment Act (1889), "there is so little employment that it is necessary to ask the workwomen to make short time". *New Zealand Herald* 26 October 1889, 3.

The perception of prostitution, the assisted emigration programmes for single women, and the limited work opportunities for women has been well documented by Charlotte Mcdonald, *A Woman of Good Character* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1990) and in her article "`The Social Evil' Prostitution and the Passage of the Contagious Diseases Act (1869)" *Women in History:Essays on European Women in New Zealand.* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1986) 13-33.

20. Andrée Lévesque notes in his discussion of the implementation of the Contagious Diseases Act (1869) in New Zealand, "few legislators or medical doctors objected to prostitution *per se*, since the oldest profession in the world was seen more as a *necessary evil*"[my emphasis]."Prescribers and Rebels: Attitudes to Women's Sexuality in New Zealand 1860-1916." *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand.* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1986) 1-12, p.11.

21. New Zealand marriage and divorce laws during the period when Ellis writes and publishes her novel is more fully explored within this Thesis under in Chapter Three "The Hobgoblin of Patriarchy: Marriage and the Containment of Women in New Zealand".

CHAPTER THREE.

The Hobgoblin of Patriarchy: Marriage and the Containment of Women in New Zealand.

Everything is Possible to Will is primarily concerned with the nature and meaning of marriage for women. Ellis identifies four major aspects of marriage which contain and constrain Zee and all married women: the discrepancy between the imaginative perception of marriage and its reality, the legalistic nature of marriage as a contract where the full implications for women are hidden, the economic imprisonment of women within marriage, and marriage as an instrument for the death of the female self. In doing so Ellis advances a feminist analysis of marriage long before formalised ideas about the place and role of women emerges [1].

By acknowledging concepts like those of the female as an exchange commodity within a patriarchal economy, Ellis provides a critical analysis of marriage which is openly feminist in its intent, but she is careful to maintain a distinction of voice between the narrator and Zee on the subject of marriage for a greater part of the novel. It is the narrator who leads and voices the feminist attack whilst Zee is textually bound to "act" within marriage. Zee only escapes from the text when her personal marital crisis forces her to acknowledge that the reality of her marriage is the reality of marriage expounded by the narrator [2].

Zee's decision to marry with Wrax is not a positive and clear act but a muddled and confused response, made in hope but resulting in immediate despair. She finds herself trapped between the reality of her feelings for Wrax and a vision of marriage predicated on romantic love:

> she herself found it impossible to determine whether she did or did not love him. In all her helplessness, strength all gone, Zee promised to become Wrax's wife; and therefore until the marriage was consummated knew no peace, casting a gloom for a season over the coming event by refusing to hear it mooted. (EPW,47)

Zee's despair and helplessness is as much driven by her inability to exercise any other options, like achieving her own economic and personal independence outside of her family, as it is by an inability to site herself as bride-to-be within an image of marriage as defined by romantic love [3]. Zee's grief at her "helplessness" provokes nothing other than the anger of her father:

> The father and Zee-who is bound to accord "the quiet half hour" he requests - are to be closeted again, and Zee is to be placed martyr-like on the rack ... the father urged: "Be your own merry self again, for no one can look forward to an event which should be joyous so long as it is tabooed as if the bridal were a burial, the wedding-dress a shroud." (EPW,47)

The descriptive language of the narrator is also interpretive for Zee is "bound" to obey her father. The narrator indicates Zee is chained to a patriarchal dictate and discourse which demands she must fulfil the conventional requirements and expectations of a bride-to-be. She is to be joyous, not for

her sake, but because her grief is spoiling the marital event for the rest of the family. The narrator links marriage for women with martyrdom as Zee is "placed martyr-like on the rack": a sacrificing of self for the sake of patriarchy. Zee herself rationalises her marriage decision and quiet her anxiety by assessing her husband-to-be against her father, "Her father ruled by love; Wrax would be as gentle and true as he"(EPW,52). Zee perceives herself as merely being exchanged between one male who "ruled" to another male who will do the same.

In the Twentieth Century such an idea has a familiar currency within feminist literary analysis and fiction, but in the New Zealand of 1882 no such concept of the female as a commodity of a patriarchal economy had ever been written. That this is reference to the nature of the patriarchal economy is confirmed by the narrator's description of Wrax's view of his impending marriage:

> But few men would envy the bridegroom of such a bride; yet Wrax knew all, his joy was boundless; he was content with such love as she had to offer; knowing full well her devotion to duty would be unswerving as if inspired by love. To secure her at any price was his object, believing that his happiness would secure her own.
> (EPW,48)

Wrax's desire to marry Zee is not driven by any romantic vision for either himself or Zee. For him, romantic love is only useful in so far as it propels and consolidates "devotion to duty" from his future wife. His perception of

the marriage, as mediated by the narrator, is as a type of deal where, in the language of economy, he "**secures**" Zee, the object, "**at any price**". His concern lies with his happiness and the assurance of female "**duty**" with its implicit attendants of obedience and submission. The narrator discloses Wrax's complete oblivion to any awareness of his wife as being an autonomous individual. He believes "**that his happiness would secure her own**". Even within his own imagination Zee has already been denied any will of her own.

By having the narrator highlight Wrax's economic assessment of marriage and the absence of female autonomy even before the actuality of becoming a wife, Ellis foreshadows both the operation of the doctrine of coverture within marriage and the economic dependence of the married woman [4]. The enactment of the doctrine of coverture ensured the legislative extinction of the wife as an independent person but it also annihilated the personal identity of woman herself. Ellis's narrator is quick to describe Zee's marriage as an "**untimely end**", "**the stage of the tragedy**" and as a binding contract from which "**There was no loophole for Zee to creep out of**" (**EPW**,49). The cynical but knowledgeable narrator is able to comment directly on the "**tragedy**" to be the death of Zee's self as a result of marriage, confirming for the reader the reality of the "**bridal as a burial, the wedding-dress as a shroud**" (**EPW**,47). The discrepancy between

the knowledge of the narrator and the naivety of Zee creates a dialectic between the romantic vision symbolically embodied in the wedding-dress and the reality of existential death symbolically embodied in the wedding-shroud. However, the narrator's voice becomes increasingly more politicised whilst gaining more and more dominance within the text from the moment of Zee's marriage to Wrax, with Ellis almost losing control of the narrator as the didactic attack on the nature of marriage intensifies. Ellis herself defined the intention of the novel as an attack on the nature of marriage, when she said:

> The book further-more should help men and women to see that unjust laws make unjust men - who hold themselves justified in believing that since the marriage law ignores the wife's existence, she is the last person entitled to consideration, though to her they may be indebted for well nigh all of their possessions. [5]

Ellis makes it quite clear that the novel is concerned with the issue of coverture within marriage, "since marriage law ignores the wife", and with the issue of the morality of marriage law, for the "unjust laws" of marriage do not just enforce but enshrine and uphold an unequal distribution of power based on gender [6]. But Ellis goes one step further to link these "unjust laws" to the creation of "unjust men". The empowering of the husband over the wife is actively enhanced by the law, suggesting that where a good, or moral, husband may have treated his wife fairly and decently,

marital legislation, by codifying this imbalance of power, actually and actively, corrupts the good husband into a bad [7]. These sentiments find a clearer, and more lyrical, expression in text as the narrator describes how marriage really could be if this legislative and social imbalance of power was removed:

> Bolstered up in the belief insensibly fostered by social, educational and political advantages, that marriage entitles a man to do as he likes, even though he likes to do wrong, *Self* is enthroned god forthwith, and the husband rules in everything but love. There ought to be but one code of morals between husband and wife. William and Mary must ascend the throne together; and she or he who knows how to rule will say very little about it- certainly never suffer the two wills to clash, nor be forever thrusting the sceptre into the other's face. What matter whose hand holds the sceptre, if the rule be right ? (EPW,52)

This forthright lecture on the immorality of marriage law textually occurs following Zee's marriage to Wrax to create an immediate linkage between the narrative marriage, the social structure and the nation. A national image is provided by the introduction of the Royal marriage of William and Mary and also echoing a resonance to the feminine royal metaphor employed by Zee immediately after her marriage when she is "putting on her coronation robes" (EPW,55) and recovering her vision of paradise.

The narrator's vision of marriage is freed from a gendered construction, incorporating real equality and mutual moral obligation as "one code of morals between husband and wife."

It dispenses with the empowerment of male ego and with the empowerment of "Self", by removing the structural inequalities of power. This new vision of marriage suggests a non-hierarchical and non-adverserial relationship as neither party is "thrusting the sceptre in the other's face" [8].

The narrator's utopian vision of marriage and Zee's vision of paradise are both to collide with the reality of marriage within their contemporary world. For the narrator moves away from the potential vision of marriage to relay how the power of the doctrine of coverture corrupts Wrax into indifference:

> Zee had become his property, his slave, by marriage. Wrax would have been a devoted husband - an immeasurably better man, and Zee by no means a worse woman, had she been free - free as Wrax was free. He would then have respected in her what he valued above all things himself, the subtle potency of recognised being - the all of dignity comprehended in the words personal *liberty*; but having become a wife, she was comparatively worthless. (EPW,63)

The narrator sadly foreshadows the collapse of Wrax and Zee's marital relationship placing the blame firmly on the interrelationship between *femme couverte*, the wife as a possession within a patriarchal economy as "property" and "slave" whose value diminishes following marriage, and becomes "comparatively worthless" [9].

Just as sympathetic are the narrator's observations that Zee has verbally bound herself into this disadvantaged position by her own hand. For she was blind to the implications and

hidden small print of the marital contract she entered into. She was participating in a marital bondage complicitly provoked by her very own words in making her marriage vows [10].

The difficulties of Zee's marriage vows are not only linked to her complicity in her own bondage but to her own moral corruption:

> She must steep her soul in sin to conceal the sins of her husband, and eat her words, lest she wound the vanity and self - love of the man whom she, in ignorance, promised to "love, honour and obey" ... yet found it impossible to do any. Oh false theology, to exact such a pledge ! It is said "All women are hypocrites" Are all men true ? (EPW,75)

The "sins of her husband" include his alcoholism, his verbal abuse and his inability to stay out of financial difficulties, but Zee's "sin" could be read as her hypocrisy in marrying Wrax when she did not love him, then turning to blame religion as a "false theology" although the narrative informs us that she made her marital vows in good faith. The apparent confusion of this argument is dispersed when the distinction is made between the narrator's voice and the voice of Zee. This attack on the hypocrisy of the marriage vow is the narrator's, Zee remains silent on whether these views are also hers. The narrator comments on and condemns the narrative in order to create a dialectical examination of the legal contracting of marriage between wife and husband [11].

The active political voice of the narrator continues the attack on the nature of marriage for women and Zee whilst narratively describing Zee's growing frustration with her experience of marriage to Wrax:

> the fact that Wrax was kind to everyone but his wife, and cruel to her just because she was his wife - the creature of his convenience was the one bitter drop in her cup. He was the last man to have treated a mistress or a servant as he treated Zee; they would not have been at his mercy; nor could they felt as did Zee, the gross injustice of placing the husband by virtue of his sex, at the top of the social ladder, thus stultifying his desire for improvement to his own degradation and his wife's humiliation, yet requiring the wife to be intelligently companionable to the husband while forbidding her to place her foot on the lowest rung of the ladder of learning proper. (EPW,87)

The shift from the descriptive narrative voice of the narrator to active political voice is marked by the textual movement from the specificity of "Zee" to the generality of "the wife" a shift constantly, and often clumsily, used by Ellis but disguised here by the length of sentence and run-on punctuation. This grammatic movement from the specific to the general allows Ellis to broaden this marital dialectic between the narrator and the protagonist into the wider public arena; to seek agreement from readers that the operation of a hierarchy of gender which places Wrax as man at the top of the social ladder, and Zee as woman at the "lowest rung" is morally wrong [12].

To some extent this marital dialectic risks giving way to a wider dialectic on the philosophy of social structures, a

movement Ellis checks by focusing directly to Zee's narrative and existential crisis within the text as she struggles with the cumulative effect on her life as *femme couverte* and married woman. The threatened death of Zee's social and personal identity may have been sustainable if she had been able to learn and grow, if she had been able to "**place her foot on the lowest rung of the ladder of learning**" but to be denied this opportunity as well results in Zee translating actual legal death and metaphoric existential death into literal death:

> **the public mind was shocked by the trial of Madeline Smith for poisoning her lover, and Zee became possessed of the desire to poison herself or Wrax. His death she meditated; she must get rid of him somehow, anyhow.** (EPW,87)

By reference to the trial of Madeline Smith Zee's reaction is tied by the narrator into the wider social arena of a fate for all women, married or not, within the existing social structure, a fate which transforms the moral woman into an immoral killer or forces her into the immorality of suicide [13].

The seriousness of Zee's murderous intent is narratively mirrored by the use of her direct voice for the first time within the text:

> **ah, If I could but kill him ! To be tied to such as he for life, and receive nothing but insult and injury at his hands, would be worse than death.** (EPW,88)

Zee's determination to kill is compounded by the death of her

child through an unidentified illness and Wrax's indifference to this family crisis (EPW,85-87) but it is also a desperate attempt to escape her own death because "it was so hard to have a soul that would not die , try as Wrax did to blot it out"(EPW,87). For once the narrator is silenced and Zee is allowed to escape the containment of the text giving a particular sense of weight to her depth of feeling. Being the rational and sensible person that she is however, Zee decides she is

> not prepared to die for Wrax twice over and the probable consequences to herself alone prevented the committal of the rash act. (EPW,88)

Compared to Zee's personal outcry of intense despair and anger the narrator's tone is of Zee's determination to remain alive, to transcend the captivity that men, marriage, and society have imposed upon her. The decision to challenge this captivity does not occur to Zee, although the narrator's active voice is quite explicit in demanding social change, and not just to marriage [14].

Zee's failure to challenge the social systems which keep her in captivity is avoided by her emigration to New Zealand. Neither challenge nor death will be necessary because she believes New Zealand to be a different reality for women. Initially Zee's experience of marriage in New Zealand confirms her beliefs, but she is soon forced into a position where she takes up the challenge of a personal

transformation, from obedient submission to defiance and assertion, both within her marriage and outside of it. Her personal change is matched by her direct challenge to the two major social institutions perceived as oppressing women, marriage and the Church.

It is Zee's economic imprisonment within marriage In New Zealand which is made the focus of the narrative and of narrational condemnation [15]. Zee is made economically dependent by her marital state. She is forced, just like Maori, (EPW,117) into "wheedling"

> money from a miserly husband and father, [which] resolves itself into a chronic bankruptcy so trying to the wife that she really ought to share in the money-getting. (EPW,38)

Zee is kept in an avoidable state of poverty, for if she were able to "share in the money-getting", to work, her enforced economic deprivation would not be such an issue, for it would ensure the retention of her personal dignity. It is this loss of dignity, this forced humiliation of begging, to be "Too much the broke" (EPW,193) just like the Maori in the New Zealand economy, which Zee, and the narrator, find so appalling. Zee is forced to accept charity from her relatives (EPW,138) and to borrow money from her minister (EPW,139), none of which she is able to pay back despite her attempts to earn an income by knitting and crochet (EPW,139). Death becomes a better alternative to this humiliation for Zee had "implored him on her knees to kill her at one blow rather

than subject her to the living death" she endures (EPW,208). Rather than meeting Zee with some understanding, Wrax's response is to

> continually outrage his wife's sense of right and justice, by pitting her legal bondage against his freedom, before the children, saying: "Umph ! Who are you ? You've got no voice; you are a nobody. I bought you; you are only part of my goods and chattels." (EPW,150)

The narrator's condemnation of not only Wrax's personal response but the legal sanction which underpins his outburst is indicated by the observation "Most disgraceful truth, humiliating because true" (EPW,150). The annihilation of Zee's legal and social identity, and her being affirmed as an object and "a nobody" within marriage provides sufficient fuel to produce a change in Zee's demeanour.

Zee's change in behaviour is first directed towards the Church (EPW,194). Although this challenge is not solely concerned with the issue of marriage, Zee attacks her local church for their money-grabbing hypocrisy and their gender bias in "enforcing unconditional submission to man's will on woman" (EPW,141).

Strengthened by her ability to survive this institutional confrontation, Zee refuses to give Wrax five pounds which she had been holding for him at his request in order to meet the needs of herself and the family. This is her first-ever act of defiance and assertion within her marriage, much to the

narrator's delight, but it is met with violent suppression:

> Wrax defied at last ! Defied by his wife too ! [But Wrax] shouted " I have given instructions to "----- naming an auctioneer-----" to sell every stick and stone belonging to me, and your clothing too, madam. Not a blessed thing will I leave you, beyond what you stand upright in. And if you don't mind what you're about I will sell the gown off your back and shoes off your feet." Oh infamous law that gives the husband such power. (EPW,205)

Wrax not only exerts his perceived authority as Zee's husband, he does so with the all the legal power he possesses as sanctioned by marital law. Zee's defiance proves powerless. Any attempt to free herself, to exercise an autonomous decision within marriage, is useless in the face of a social structure which treats her as non-existent, and denies her any rights to property or income. She is sentenced to live as John Stuart Mill describes

> under the very eye, and almost, in the hands, of one of the masters-in closer intimacy with him than any of her fellow subjects; with no means of combining against him, no power of even locally overmastering him, and, on the other hand, with the strongest motives for seeking his favour and avoiding giving him offence. [16]

Zee's awareness of the utter lack of power she has to make even the smallest of changes to her own situation from within marriage leads her to confront the institution of marriage itself. In New Zealand, at the time of writing the novel, the relationship of women to marriage, and the nature of marriage, itself was particularly significant [17]. Levesque has noted how women in New Zealand found themselves in a male

world boasting a disproportionate number of bachelors, perhaps providing a reason why marriage took on such a political and national focus [18]. Zee is determined to break out of her marital prison. She decides to propose

> a judicial separation between them ... to which end she consulted a lawyer, to find that, since Wrax opposed the separation, and Zee was unable to swear that her life was in danger from his violence, the law would allow her nothing - absolutely nothing. She must leave him in full possession of everything ... the law regards the wife as the property of the husband ... all she might, could, would, or should possess - moral rights into the bargain - are her husband's also. (EPW,219)

Again Zee meets the full power of the law which operates to uphold Wrax's rights and the marital relationship [19]. Zee has no choice except to return to her marriage and continue her challenge to it by merely maintaining her newly gained assertiveness. The narrator's voice subsides within the text during Zee's efforts to break free of her marriage, reflecting the tone of resigned despondency Zee experiences in meeting legal, social and personal resistance to patriarchally invested interests.

Ellis, by refusing to collude with the novelistic conventions of the happy marriage, and in refusing to provide a heroine whose personal happiness and fulfilment is achieved solely by the act of marriage, created a unique and radical departure from the New Zealand literature of her day. As Norma Clarke notes of feminist writers of the era:

> to question marriage was to threaten the foundations not only of society but also of the novel, for bourgeois marriage was the moment in human life on which the novel (the bourgeois speaking to the bourgeois) centred its regard. [20]

In this respect alone Ellis writes a novel "**wild to the English taste**" (**EPW**,Preface,vii), but she also subverts the New Zealand arcadian myth of "**rural gentility**" [21] exchanging it for a female experience of a colonial reality which embraces brutality, poverty, and oppression. In doing so, she refutes Joan Stevens' claim that novels written in New Zealand by women about women were not "**aggressive in their femininity**" until the 1920s [22].

Zee is left imprisoned in her marriage. It is left to the narrator to make the last impassioned call on Zee's behalf for equality and justice in marital law as a direct plea to Queen Victoria:

> the very weakness of the present appeal, strong only in its invincible truthfulness, may startle the nation to its depths and evoke an active sympathy which shall stir to its centre. Public opinion can, if it will, strike the chains of slavery from women's intellect and heart, and make women's emancipation the grandest trophy of Victoria's reign. Everything is possible to whole-souled men and women loyal to truth ... if Zee's small voice, as herein expressed, could reach thee, thou wouldst, perchance, love to take her hand and call her sister. (EPW,222-223)

"Zee's small voice" is the personification of New Zealand's women [23] embodied in a text which seriously questions the morality of existing marital law by demonstrating how the doctrine of *femme couverte*, economic oppression and the

nature of the legalistic marriage contract conspire to keep women in a position of utter containment, physically, emotionally and psychologically. Ellis, as author of the novel, attempts to capture and mobilise "**public opinion**" so New Zealand women can "**strike the chains of slavery from women's intellect and heart**". The call to Queen Victoria is as much a reflection of the contemporary legal structure of the day as it is an attempt to widen her public audience, since New Zealand seemed to follow the British legal system, almost word for word, in matters concerning the freedoms of women [24].

In seeking these freedoms Ellis was not attempting to dismantle the institution of marriage for she quite clearly saw marriage as the proper setting for male/female relationships. Indeed, Ellis largely upholds the Victorian conceptualisation of the Angel in the House she merely seeks the autonomy for the Angel to move outside of her domestic setting and to be able to exercise her own autonomy within marriage. Where Ellis does get into difficulties is in trying to establish quite where female sexuality fits into this newly created image of the Angel in the House. Even in her challenge to the institution of marriage Ellis has a transparent investment in the purity of the wife and the higher morality of women. Her difficulty is how to incorporate female sexuality without jeopardising this purity

and without offending her Victorian readership.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER THREE.

1. Ellis was thrown into an environment of intensive debate about marriage from the time of her arrival in Auckland in 1869. Mary Colcough (also known by her pseudynom of "Polly Plum") was raising the issue of the legal subjection of women by marriage law from 1871 by bombarding the *New Zealand Herald* with eloquent and impassioned letters, she writes, "I will ask any young man just entering on life, if he would like to contemplate this fate. That all he has, or can have, or can earn, shall be absolutely at the disposal of his wife, that it shall be in her power to take away from him those dear children ... that she shall be able to do all this, to force him to obedience, keep him poor if she please, while she has plenty." "What Women Want" 31 July 1871, 3.
Mary Colcough came out from behind Polly Plum to give her first public lecture on the 27th June 1871, including an attack on New Zealand marriage law, which "was an insult to women." *New Zealand Herald* 27th June 1871, p.3. Mary Colcough left Auckland in 1874 partly as a consequence of the intense, and vitriolic, public criticism. Colcough's lectures (of which there were at least three) were all chaired by the Reverend Samuel Edger who, as it has been established, did have contact with Ellen Ellis. (See Chapter One, endnote 24, p.27) and Ellis specifically mentions him in her novel (EPW,198). The Reverend Samuel Edger was a staunch advocate of women's rights and a devotee of John Stuart Mill's tract *The Subjection of Women* (1869). He was such a devotee that he purchased "all the available copies" of the essay within Auckland so "he could lend them out to interested readers."
Judith Elphick Malone, "What's Wrong With Emma ?: The Feminist Debate in Colonial Auckland" *Women in* History: *Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1986) 69-85, p.82.

2. It is this distinction of voice between the narrator and the protagonist which permits Ellis to state her novel is a simple tale, "Written especially for working women, by one of themselves, the narrative and its reflexions have been patiently elaborated with the "Line upon line, precept upon precept" simplicity needful to the untaught notwithstanding that conciseness of word and thought appeal more forcibly to the cultivated mind" (EPW,Preface,iii-iv). Zee's tale is simply one of getting married and surviving within that marriage. The narrator's tale is simply one of providing a commentary on Zee's experience of marriage.

3. Patricia Stubbs comments on this dilemma for women in the Victorian period,"**the overwhelming emphasis on the need to love and be loved finally submerges all other essentially feminist issues - the problem of women's employment, their economic dependence, [and] their restriction to a purely domestic range of activities and ambitions.**" *Women and Fiction: Feminism and The Novel 1880-1920* (Brighton:Harvester Press,1979) p.29.

Stubbs suggests dependence on the romantic vision is a key part of the ideology driving the mythology of the Victorian family. She states "**the seductive concept of romantic love**" arises as a replacement ideology following the challenge of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) to the effectiveness of Christianity as offering "**a firm moral basis for human actions.**" *Ibid*, p.7.

Certainly a part of Zee's grief is she has no moral basis on which to assess her decision to marry within a romantic paradigm, but equally she has no social options given her situation as a "marketable" single woman.

4. The doctrine of coverture or "spousal unity" was where under common law a married woman had no legal identity apart from her husband. Mary Lyndon Shanley, in an article entitled "One Must Ride Behind: Married Women's Rights and the Divorce Act of 1857" *Victorian Studies* 25.3 (1982):353-376, p.360, cites the source of this doctrine with William Blackstone's *Commentaries on The Laws of England* and quotes his rationale as:"**if husband and wife were "one body" before God, they were "one person" in law, and that person was represented by the husband**". She adds, "**This meant that a man assumes legal rights over the wife's property at marriage, and of any property that came to her during the marriage. While a husband could not alienate his wife's real property entirely, any rents or other income from it belonged to him. On the other hand, a woman's personal property, including money she might have saved before marriage or earned while married, passed entirely to her husband for him to use and dispose of as he saw fit.**" *Ibid*, pp.360-361.

Although Shanley is describing the impact of English common law there was no difference in New Zealand of the 1880's. New Zealand adopted English common law which remained largely unchanged in its approach to the doctrine of coverture and the legal identity of a married woman until the advent of the 1976 Matrimonial Property Act, *NZ Official Year Book 1990* (Wellington: Dept of Statistics, 1990) 176., when full legal status

was finally conceded to married women. In New Zealand the issue of married women's rights to property was subject to legislative intervention from 1860. The 1860 Married Women's Property Protection Act gave extremely limited rights, via application for a Court Order, to deserted wives for protection of money and property acquired by "lawful industry" *NZ Statutes* 1860, No.9, pp 400-401. In 1870 this Act was extended and property protection orders widened to include actions by the husband other than desertion, such as open adultery, cruelty with adultery, habitual drunkness, or failure to maintain his wife and children *NZ Statutes 1870* No.37, pp 113-4. Both these Acts were repealed and consolidated into the 1880 Married Women's Property Protection Act. But this legislation did not apply to women living with their husbands. It would not be until 1884, after the publication of Ellis's book, that a Married Women's Property Act sought to provide protective legislation for the property and income of a woman living with her husband. *NZ Statutes 1884* No.10, pp 17-24.

5. "Everything Is Possible To Will" *New Zealand Herald* 22 March 1883, p.5.
   Ellis provided this rationale as the motivation for the writing and publication of the novel in a letter to The Editor of *The Times*, London. This letter was cited by the *New Zealand Herald* in an article on the release of the novel.

6. Ellis's feminism remains consistent with what Barbara Caine describes as a Victorian feminism of moderation, **"Rather than continuing the critique of the Radicals and the Socialists, and questioning the concepts of monogamous marriage and the nuclear family, members of the women's movement accepted the view that such types of marriage and family were necessary and beneficial, demanding only some modification of their forms."** Barbara Caine,"Woman's `natural state: marriage and the 19th C feminists" *Hecate* 3.1 (February 1977):84-102, p.87. This conservative feminism is also noted by Phillipa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900* (London: Heinemann, 1987) 141.
   Both these authors discuss feminism in relation to marital law in England of the period but this has relevance for both Ellis and the narrative of the novel. Ellis came to New Zealand in 1869 following the most heated feminist debates in Britain concerning marital law and marital property for women. Zee has just got married in Britain, prior to her emigration to New Zealand. Even with Zee's narrative arrival in New

Zealand, or Ellis's actual arrival, the same marital law applies and had been opened to public debate in Auckland by figures like Mary Colcough. Yet Ellis goes further than the novelists Caine refers to, and further than any New Zealand female author in analysing the relationship between social structure and the individual as a gendered construction (See also note 16).

7. The attachment and exploration of the morality of marriage law in part seems to express Ellis's own beliefs on the elevating, moral duty of woman in the world as she argues, "It is woman's work to raise, refine, and redeem the human race from every form of moral, social and political degradation and she will do it too, when she is as free as man is free." *New Zealand Herald* 22 March 1883, p.5.

8. Mary Lydon Shanley states the feminists who argued for "married women's rights in the name of a new vision of a companionable and intimate marriage ... regarded female autonomy as a crucial prerequisite for realising true understanding between a husband and wife. Only by recognising women's rights could marriage cease to be hierarchial and become a true marriage of equals." "One Must Ride Behind: Married Women's Rights and the Divorce Act of 1857" *Victorian Studies* 25.3 (1982): 355-376, 371-2.

9. *Femme couverte* is the title given to the definition of a married woman as per William Blackstone's. Barbara Caine,"Woman's `natural' state: Marriage & the 19 C Feminists." *Hecate* 3.1 (1977):84-102,p.84. See note 4.

10. Caine also cites Frances Cobbe who noted "the extraordinary and blatant untruth in a marriage ceremony in which the groom promised to endow his bride with all his wordly goods - when in fact he was in the act of appropriating hers - and she had little claim on his." *Ibid*, p.87.

11. Barbara Caine notes the feminist attack on the issue of the marriage vow was seen as having very serious moral consequences for women. She summarises the eloquent Frances Cobbe on the subject stating,"The vow of obedience was seen as the start of the problem. Frances Cobbe insisted that though such a vow was very convenient to men, it was absolutely wrong morally ... women, she argued, as rational creatures could not give their conscience and their moral responsibility into the hands of their husbands. No vow and no religious sacrament could justify it." "Woman's `natural

state: Marriage & the 19 C Feminists." *Hecate* 3.1 (February 1977):84-102, p.89.

Ellis is consistent with this point of view but she can be seen to be utilising the argument to reinforce the desired female autonomy within marriage and counter the appropriation of the female by the male, not just physically but emotionally and psychologically.

12. Ellis is not an exceptionally skilled writer but neither is she completely lacking in talent. The diction used in this passage of the "**social ladder**" is the same metaphor used when she examined the place of Maori in New Zealand society, and was employed to link Maori and women together. What makes Ellis's use of this metaphor unique is its detachment from an analysis of class structure and its application to an analysis of the relationship between gender, race and society. This is a type of Social Darwinism found much later in New Zealand literature in the works of Jean Devanny but she uses the metaphor to confirm a hierarchy of gender and race. For an analysis of Devanny's "social ladder" See Chapter Seven "Respectable Promiscuity: Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*."

13. Madeline Hamilton Smith (1835-1928) was notorious as the defendent in a sensational murder trial in 1857, at the onset of the great marital debates in the House of Lords. She stood trial in Edinburgh for the alleged murder by arsenic poisoning of her former lover, Pierre Emile L'Angelier, a clerk and native of Jersey whom she had met in Glasgow in 1855. Her uninhibited love letters to him, published during the trial, stirred up considerable public resentment against her. but although she had sufficient motive for ridding herself of L'Angelier, after her engagement to a more wealthy suitor, William Kinnock, sufficient evidence was lacking of any meeting between them in the last days or nights prior to his last violent illness. As a result the verdict was " not proven. Magnus Magusson, "*Chambers Biographical Dictionary* (Edinburgh: W.& R.Chambers 1990) 1363-1364.

Ellis appears to incorporate this reference with Zee's desire in an effort to normalise the concept of the woman murderer as being not a shocking event but a predictable outcome of woman's place in society. In doing so she suggests an intertextual relationship with Devanny's *The Butcher Shop*. Devanny appears to make the same argument, that women become murderers because they are oppressed, but unfortunately her novel does little to support this argument and instead provides a heroine who seems to kill because she can't get her own way. See

Chapters Five and Seven for a further discussion of Margaret Messenger's motivation for murdering her lover, Glengarry.

14. Ellis gives the novel a considerable focus on the issues of female education (**EPW**:6,16,73,84-85), and on female sexuality (**EPW**:25,38-39,68,73,83-84,85,119,134-7) where the narrator carries the responsibility for providing the reader with oportunity for political and dialectic consideration. The novel's treatment of sexuality is discussed within this thesis in Chapter Four "The Keen-Scented Woman:The Representation of Female Sexuality in New Zealand of the 1880s."

15. This economic focus seems linked to the New Zealand government's involvement from 1880 to 1884 in bitter debates about the issue of the protection of married women's property. It is known Ellis was writing the novel as late as 1880 for she herself writes into the text the date "**this 24th May 1880**" in the present tense when the rest of the text on the page is constructed in past tense (**EPW**,217). She includes in the Appendix to the novel another date the "**10 May 1880**" also constructed in the present tense. The 1880 Married Women's Property Protection Act was only applicable to women who had seperated from their husbands. Even then, the procedures for obtaining a protection order were unsatisfactory and did little to free women from their restricted legal status. For example, "**the most alarming legal anomolies which existed was that a married woman's place of residence was deemed always to be the same as her husband.**" Comment taken from the *NZ Official Year Book* (Wellington:Dept of Statistics, 1990) 175.

Protracted debates occurred in the House over the introduction of a Married Women's Property Bill, with considerable resistance being exhibited by politicians. The main objections appeared to be the threat to the sanctity of *femme couverte*, but more importantly female sexuality would become uncontainable. As put by the Hon.Mr. Wilson the object of the Act was to "**make a husband and wife as nearly as possible perfect strangers ... if it passed there was nothing to prevent a married woman entering into a partnership with any other man than her own husband ... he could not imagine anything worse than a state of affairs where a woman went into partnership with a stranger.**" *NZPD* Vol 41, Ist June 1882, p.203. The preservation of sexual ownership for the husband within marriage was the main contention.

John Stuart Mill, *Three Essays: On Liberty, Representative Government, and The Subjection of Women* 1912.(Oxford:The World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1975) 439.

Ellis's novel is heavily influenced by this essay of Mill, particularly in respect of rejecting suffrage as a solution to the women's rights problem. Ellis echoes Mill's sentiments when she uses the protagonist and the narrator to reflect a wider social demand for both a change in social structure and a change in individual attitude in order to release women from the "woman slavery" of marriage. Similarly Ellis reflects within the novel Mill's beliefs in the elevated moral purpose and function of women to ensure the highest standards for both men and civilisation as a whole (See endnote 7).

Charlotte MacDonald has noted not only the dominance of the ethos of marriage in New Zealand, particularly in the government efforts to provide assisted passage for young women to emigrate to New Zealand and create a pool of available spouses, but also that the nature of marriage in New Zealand during the later colonial period was of quite a different character to that of England. She remarks that New Zealand marriage "**exemplifies the elasticity, and fragility of marriage in an embryonic and highly mobile colonial community**" *A Woman of Good Character* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1990) 153.

However, this elasticity and mobility was in reference to the man's ability to move around the country and in my view, demanded tighter legal controls over marriage than might be found in a more stable community. In turn this led to political fears about freeing up marital legislation for women, particularly in respect of sexual behaviour.

Andrée Lévesque, "Prescribers and Rebels: Attitudes to European Women's Sexuality in New Zealand 1860-1916." *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington:Allen & Unwin, 1986) 1-12, p.1.

New Zealand's first legislation concerning the dissolution of marriages came in 1867 with the passing of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act. This was a complete replica of legislation passed by British parliament some ten years earlier. As outlined by Shanley, (See endnote 4) the British legislation did not redress the issue of the sexual double standard, continuing to uphold a man's right to divorce his wife

if she had committed adultery but insisting a woman may only divorce her husband where he had committed adultery accompanied by provable other offenses such as incest, bigamy, rape or cruelty. Such was the position in New Zealand. A judicial separation could be applied for, such as Zee tried to obtain, but only on grounds of adultery, cruelty or desertion without cause for a period of two years. Nor did this grant a divorce; it merely meant a legal separation and the wife was unable to remarry. In contrast to the end result of this legislation, The New Zealand Parliament, in discussing the 1867 Divorce Act, which had previously shelved a similar Bill in 1865, voiced a particular sympathy towards initiating Divorce legislation to enable women to escape misery and despair in bad marriages, especially as voiced by Francis Dillon Bell, *NZPD* Vol.I, Part I, 1867, pp 256-7.

Ellis sent a copy of her novel to Francis Dillon Bell, no doubt because she was aware of his sympathies in this matter even though he was no longer in the House. "Everything is Possible to Will." *New Zealand Herald* 22 March 1883, 5.

20. Norma Clarke,"Feminism and the Popular Novel of the 1890's: A Brief Consideration of a Forgotten Feminist Novelist." *Feminist Review* 19-24,20(1985):91-104,p.94.

Although writing about Sarah Grand and some of her contemporaries, Clarke makes some useful contributions on the place of didatic fiction and its challenge to the predominant enshrinement of the novel form.

21. Patrick Evans, "Paradise or Slaughterhouse: Some aspects of New Zealand Fiction." *Islands* 8.I (1980):71-85,p.84.

23. Ellis's naming of her heroine as "Zee" may reflect the contemporary interest in the evolving iconography of the female figure Zealandia symbolising for New Zealand. Zealandia, a female figure holding a staff in her left hand, who appeared on a celebratory postage stamp issued on the Ist January 1901. Richard Wolfe, *Well Made in New Zealand: A Century of Trademarks* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1987) 42-47, p.44. But Ellis may also have drawn the name "Zee" from the contemporary language of the Temperance movement who also saw "Zee" as a symbolic name for New Zealand. In an article describing a farewell ceremony to Temperance member Brother John Jenkins and his family who were leaving New Zealand, was written, "As they leave the beautiful land of the *Zee* our prayers will follow that brighter days may shine upon them and every blessing attend them." [my italics]

Even though this is some six years after the publication of Ellis's novel the name "**Zee**" symbolising New Zealand may well have been of common usage within the Good Templars or the Temperance Movement. Further research would be required to establish whether this was the case or not."Temperance" *The Leader* 16 November 1888, p.467.

No biblical source has been located for the origins of this word "**Zee**" although Anne Salmond refers to the original Dutch naming of New Zealand as "**Zeelandia**" which may suggest the source word for both "**Zee**" and "**Zealandia**". *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Maori and European 1642-1772* (Auckland:Viking, Penguin, 1991) 24.

24. Ellis actually forwarded a copy of her novel on publication to Queen Victoria, a special copy with a "**white satin cover**". *New Zealand Herald* 22 March 1883, p.5.

CHAPTER FOUR.

The "Keen-Scented" Woman: The Representation of Female Sexuality in New Zealand of the 1880s.

Both the call for female autonomy within marriage and Zee's return to her marriage appear to evade tactfully the issue of female sexuality. Certainly Zee is represented as an asexual wife, with a passionlessness which distinguishes her as merely consistent with other heroines within Victorian novels [1]. However, Ellis is careful not to represent Zee as an asexual woman, for she clearly possesses her own female sexuality as a young woman prior to her marriage [2]. Once married, Zee's sexuality is textually *in abstentia*; she even has babies between chapters [3], whilst it is the narrator who gives voice to female sexuality within the public arena by challenging the operation of the Contagious Diseases Act, the social resistance to birth control and female sex education [4].

This separation between Zee's private world and the narrator's voice in the public world enables Ellis to exploit the full potential of the didactic form. The narrator is able to enter a public debate concerned with highly contentious issues of female sexuality and morality without jeopardising the moral integrity of Zee [5]. Zee is represented as the ideal asexual wife and mother and as a

representative of the moral superiority of women, especially in respect of the female responsibility to "teach man that he *can* and *must* control the animal passions" [Ellis's emphasis] (EPW,73).

Ellis can be seen to walk "a moral tightrope" [6]. She carefully negotiates images of the passionlessness and the sexualised woman as she seeks to liberate sexually the married woman from the "martyrdom of maternity" (EPW,135). But Ellis's vision of the new married woman is not of her acquiring control of her reproductivity in order to explore her own sexuality for her own aesthetic pleasure. Female sexuality remains bounded by "God-like" love, for

> Love execrates the mere animalism, which teaches that the gratification of the passions is happiness ... A nobler, more interested love - the love which can be reverence only the God-like in the beloved - must be cultivated before passion's supremacy shall be displaced. (EPW,25)

This "nobler, more interested love" places sexuality within romanticism, as passion is elevated to a transcendental site at the pinnacle of the Darwinian ladder, compared to the passions of the body which are identified low on the ladder as "animalism." [7]

While Ellis's concern with the "animalism" of the sexual passions reflects contemporary ideology and the idiom of temperance belief and language, it also has some resonance for the representation of Zee's puberty and development prior

to her entry into the defined world of the married woman. As a young and single woman Zee's sexuality is euphemistically determined in the language of nature and the fairy tale: "**Novice though she was in the affairs of the heart, she was as keen-scented as those who had been through the wood**" (EPW,22)

Zee is described as "**keen-scented**", as if she were an animal, like a deer during the mating season, and in this delicate manner Ellis establishes Zee as a woman with sexual (animal) passions. The use of the term "**wood**" is a fairy-tale archetype for foregrounding sexuality and sexual knowledge [8]. Unlike "**those who had been through the wood**", Zee is sexually inexperienced but at an age where she has sexual feelings. It is this "keen-scentedness" which defines Zee as a social risk. She occupies a social, or marginal, space where her sexuality is not sanctioned by marriage [9]. This marginal and sexualised space allows Zee some room to explore her sexuality. It is during this period that she is involved in what is described as a "**flirtation**" (EPW,37) with the Cockney lad she names "**my man Friday**" (EPW,34), and she has some experience of physical passions even though those experiences may have left her less than passionate:

> **Zee protested, irreverently, that "kisses had been given to her in such round dozens that she knew no difference between the first and the last, so the superlatively sweet kiss was yet in store for her. That. in fact, she preferred motto kisses to the essence of**

> two lips, the former being good to eat, the latter good for nothing".(EPW,40)

Zee may have had a number of admirers but the narrator is quick to establish the morality of her behaviour, for "she was no flirt; liberty she loved, license pleased her not" (EPW,28). The emerging image of Zee's sexuality prior to her marriage indicates a sexual passion which awaits "the superlatively sweet kiss", a kiss which perhaps could have arrived in Zee's relationship with her "man Friday". This relationship is described with a degree of warmth and affection, absent in the narrative descriptions of Wrax, but it is an affection held in check by Zee, for

> Whether or not he knew of her engagement, she did and that sufficed...and even admitting that Zee went to the end of her tether, she did not play football with Friday's heart, nor did he play with hers. (EPW,37)

Ellis's mixed metaphors of horses and football indicate the moral boundary Zee maintains, despite the "dance she led the dear fellow" (EPW,37), to safeguard her sexual chastity and honour her engagement to Wrax. Yet the risk exists. It is the knowledge of potential sexual awakening which Zee's father is determined to control:

> hearing of Zee's "flirtation", he quickly brought her to book ... the father wound up his lecture by saying that "Mr.--------- was not worthy to wipe the dust from Wrax's feet". The highest commendation he could offer. (EPW,37)

The narrator's sarcastic summation "The highest commendation he could offer" alludes to the commercial considerations of

Zee's proposed marriage. Wrax is "**worthy**" because of his social position and money, not for any intrinsic personal or emotional value.

For Zee "**the superlatively sweet kiss**" is never to arrive, her marriage is represented as annihilating her sexuality, rather than permitting, or encouraging, any flowering. Zee's sexuality slides into "**silent discourse**" [11] from the honeymoon onwards. Her honeymoon is curiously chaperoned, at Zee's insistence, for "**On the wedding night Zee takes "her favourite sister, Merlee, with them on the tour**" (EPW,50). Whether this is to provide emotional support or to avoid the sexual encounter is unclear, but the effect it has is to curtail the length of the honeymoon (EPW,52), leaving "**the more honey wherewith to consecrate their new dwelling**" (EPW,52). This is the last mention of sexuality within the narrative of the novel, suggesting that the location of female sexuality within the domestic dwelling is synonymous with its absence [12]. Instead female sexuality is subsumed into the asexual wife and mother [13].

Zee's transformation from sexualised woman to asexual wife is textually signified by her placing *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* as authority for her definition of self within her marriage [14]:

> **Having read "Coelebs in Search of a Wife", her ideal woman was very much after Miss Hannah More's mind,**

> considering herself more perfect the more Moreish she became. (EPW,53)

The slightly mocking tone of the narrator at Zee becoming "Moreish" is intensified by the nature, and language, of Zee's pregnancies and births. It as if Zee has become so virtuous as to be angelic, for her first pregnancy is described in distinctly religious terms:

> "Unto to us a son is given" has carried joy to a myriad of households since angels heralded the lowly birth of the Divine Man ... [Zee was] looking forward with absorbing interest to the advent of the little stranger, a softened radiance lit up the young mother's face, as giving fond welcome to her jewel from the spirit-land, Zee sunned herself in the newly opened sanctuary of pure bliss. (EPW,67)

Zee's pregnancy is linked to the celebratory hymn of Christ's birth and viewed as a "sanctuary of pure bliss" echoing, almost exactly, the sentiments of the feminine ideal [15]. Paradoxically reproduction becomes the transcendental, and confirming, experience of purity, totally detached from any aspect of sexuality or passion, detached from the female body, given the distance Ellis's text implies in "a little stranger who will arrive", and attached to an enactment of angelic purity.

This conceptualisation of pregnancy was quite consistent with the dominant ideology of the 1880s and to this extent Zee merely conforms to a common image of motherhood. Her second pregnancy, although still occurring miraculously outside of the text, is described in more practical language: "When

[Rex, the first child was] a sturdy little man of three summers, a tiny new brother was shown to him" (EPW,83). This movement in the text from idealised pregnancy to practical pregnancy reflects the collapse of the idealisation of motherhood into the reality of motherhood, a reality fully exposed by the narrator and textually mirrored in the death of this second child of Zee's. This unnamed, one year old child dies from an unnamed illness, "wasting, visibly, pining away" (EPW,85), a death Zee sees as being caused by her unhappiness [16], an unhappiness which causes her breast milk to dry up (EPW,83). The narrator places responsibility firmly on the absence of sexual education for women:

> So dense is a woman's ignorance of all physiological knowledge, the marvel is that an infant ever arrives at maturity. To taboo subjects as "unfeminine", "unbecoming", which may be worth more than life itself, while a new born babe is put into her hands to rear, is the maddest folly. (EPW,84)

The narrator decries the prudery which prevents a woman from understanding her own biological functioning and reproduction, particularly in a society where reproduction is regarded as her key function [17]. The attack on the absence of sufficient sexual information for Zee, or any woman, to meet her reproductive duties responsibly does not imply agreement with reproduction as being a woman's function in life. Both Zee and the narrator are adamant that reproduction results in the "martyrdom of maternity" (EPW,135) and that birth control is absolutely necessary.

The novel's exploration of birth control becomes particularly vehement after Zee's arrival in New Zealand. One of the very first observations Zee makes about her new country is that "**Large families are the rule in this land of the sun, and infants appear six weeks old at birth**" (EPW,119). Her observation reflects the social reality of colonial New Zealand [18]. But Zee is far from willing to conform to this endless maternity having experienced the personal cost of a large family to her mother:

> **Zee's mother loved her husband, and he deserved to be loved; but she never could forgive him the suffering her seventeen children had occassioned her: she felt instinctively that she had been cruelly wronged in being made to suffer so much for the selfish gratification of another. (EPW,135)**

The sexual drive of Zee's father is described as "**selfish gratification**", echoing the Temperance movement's belief that "**male sexual energy [posed] the greatest threat to women**", a threat actualised in Zee's mother [19]. However, Zee and Ellis depart from the Temperance Movement's glorification of motherhood and their advocating for "**sexual continence**" rather than birth control [20]. In the absence of birth control the only alternative to serial pregnancies was sexual abstinence.

It would seem that Zee decides sexual abstinence is her only course of action following the birth of her third child, Piri [21], for,

> On one subject Zee's strong will ruled to some purpose; Wrax failed to provide properly for the children he had; she therefore wisely determined there should be no more of their children to keep. (EPW,134)

Although it is not specified exactly how Zee determines "there should be no more children", given the intensity of social opprobrium regarding the discussion, let alone use, of birth control, it can only be assumed Zee has terminated sexual relations.

The mention of Zee's decision is a significant departure from the conventions of the Victorian novel, and even those of didactic fiction, because active sexual intercourse is associated directly with the heroine. This allusion to sexual activity on the part of the heroine challenges the Victorian presentation of the asexual wife and mother. Further, the control of the marital sexual relationship is placed in the hands of the heroine in an unprecedented feminist stance. It is also evident that it is Zee as well as the narrator who celebrates the use of birth control. The narrator's comment that "Zee now rejoices in the conviction that never again in the history of Christendom will any woman be known to endure the long martyrdom suffered by her mother" (EPW,135), following the watershed Bradlaugh-Besant trial [22], suggests that Zee's rejoicing might be because female sexuality within the marital relationship now has some opportunity for expression rather than resulting in serial pregnancies, and

an opportunity now exists for female identity to be broadened from its restrictive definition of reproduction.

By linking the narrative into the Bradlaugh-Besant trial the narrator passionately repudiates the female task of endless reproduction:

> The population question having once come up for discussion, it will never again be frowned upon,taboo it as you may; it were dangerous to attempt to silence it; intelligent women are not to be put down as silly women have been; they must be faithful to their convictions. And upon this subject their convictions are strong, so deeply rooted, that if large families are necessary to the prosperity of the State, you must uneducate woman, rob her of the little intelligence she possesses-make her, if you can, wholly animal; since except where the maternal instinct is above average, she will not bear in the future what she has born in the past. She will not! To talk to her of "taking what God sends" is a profanity.(EPW,134-5)

The narrator not only attacks the religious justification of large families but the social justification of large families as being somehow "necessary to the prosperity of the State". [23]. The narrator expresses the need to detach reproduction, and female sexuality, from social regulation by the State, by men, and place the right to make reproductive decisions back into the hands of the women themselves. For women whose "maternal instinct is above average " could continue to have as many children as they choose.

A similar attempt is made by the narrator to detach female sexuality from the regulation of the State by attacking the operation of the Contagious Diseases Acts in New Zealand.

The Contagious Diseases Act in New Zealand was initiated in 1869 and closely followed the British legislative model. The New Zealand Act gave the police the power to stop any women who may be believed to be a prostitute and to have them forcibly examined, gynaecologically, for evidence of venereal disease. If such evidence was found then the woman could be confined in a special hospital-prison (the Lock Hospital in Auckland) for up to six months until her infection had been treated. Once cleared of venereal infection she received a certificate stating she had been treated. She was then released back into the community. The Act was nicknamed "Mr.Rolleston's Nasty Act " since he was the instigating Member of Parliament [24]. Rolleston defended the double sexual standard inherent in the Act by saying "the one sex made a trade of the matter, and spread the disease, but it was quite a different thing with the other sex" [25]. Women were the offenders to be persecuted, men the innocent party. The legislation was never intended to apply nationally. The Act, once passed, provided for local authorities to gazette its enactment within their own areas. In fact, only two provincial areas ever enforced the legislation: Canterbury in 1872 and Auckland in 1882. The Act provoked widespread debate in the New Zealand newspapers, particularly concerning definition of female sexuality, both respectable and notorious [26].

In Auckland the decision to invoke the Contagious Diseases Act has been linked to the potential development of a naval base, "to make Auckland safe for the naval men" [27]. Whether this was the reason or not, it was extremely unpopular. A petition of some 1168 "married ladies" was presented to the Auckland City Council demanding the proposal to instigate the Act be withdrawn. Ellen Ellis was heavily involved in this appeal. She attended a meeting of women where the petition was compiled on the 2 October 1882 and it was she who presented the petition to Council [28]. The covering letter, written and signed by her, stated:

> it is monstrous to demand that the pure and true shall provide bad men with the gratification of unchaste desires, since all vigorous life clearly proves that health and morals go hand-in-hand - to sever them is to imperil both. [29]

Ellis's "pure and true" would seem to refer to the married women of Auckland, including herself, who otherwise saw themselves, and this Act, sanctioning men's "unchaste desires". This does suggest the expression of female sexuality was less of a concern for the author than the control of male sexuality. Ellis would seem to prefer relationships where "there is no passion to confess or conceal [then] much pleasant and profitable intercourse is possible." (EPW,38). Ellis's interesting antithesis of "confess" or "conceal" isolates her perspective on female sexuality; it is either a guilty thing to confess or a guilty thing to conceal, just like prostitution. This sentiment is

echoed as the narrator argues:

> It is too bad that women should suffer as they do in bringing children into the world, and that men should show such utter disregard of life as the liquor traffic and the Contagious Diseases Acts evidence. O glaring inconsistency ! - large families are a necessity and "prostitution is a necessity" - man is to be made wholly animal ! (EPW,136)

The repetition of "necessity" in relation to female reproduction and prostitution serves to make both the reputable and the disreputable woman victim to male sexuality, effectively blurring the moral distance between them.

Yet the narrator's claims do not establish female sexuality in its own right, either within marriage or outside of it. Zee cannot be seen to exercise an awareness of her own sexuality once married; it is as if female sexuality and marriage are antithetical. Instead Zee, in a limited way, and the narrator, in a public way, seek to re-define the sexuality of the married woman as something other than just reproduction. Celibacy may become a choice or, as alluded to, the potential for a marital sexual relationship without children may become a possibility; either way a real ambivalence exists within the novel concerning the place, and expression of female sexuality.

It is an ambivalence expressed in the narrator's observations on the relationship between fashion, female sexuality and

romanticism. The narrator looks forward to the development of the brassiere:

> it is to be hoped our lady doctors will confer on society a benefit as lasting as the human race by inventing or popularising some simple contrivance which shall support the bust from the shoulders without in the slightest degree compressing the waist. The praises of the "slender waist" in whose honour many silly women have squeezed themselves out of existence have been rung to nausea by unreflecting poets. (EPW,85)

This observation is made following the death of Zee's second child for whom Zee could not provide sufficient breast milk. The relationship between the narrative and this observation suggests the narrator holds contemporary fashion partly responsible for this physiological failure.

A distinction is also drawn between "**silly women**" who adopt such dress to conform to the romantic expectations of the "**unreflecting poets**" and the implied "sensible women" who don't. But the impact of the wasp waist would appear to have a wider ramification for "**women have squeezed themselves out of existence**" in order to conform to this fashion demand [30]. This expressed anxiety about women "**being squeezed out of existence**" appears rooted to the fear of being annihilated physically and sexually, in the same way as marriage laws effect annihilation of the female identity.

Ideally Ellis would seem to prefer a landscape where the whole issue of sexuality, male or female, is tidily

eliminated in favour of an environment where pure, asexual and morally uplifting relationships between the sexes are made possible. This Utopian vision is merely that, a vision of a world which cannot be realised, for Ellis demonstrates throughout *Everything is Possible to Will* the kind of female reality that marriage and children brings. She deconstructs the Victorian vision of sexual romanticism to expose the reality of motherhood as incorporating despair, grief, pain, death and very little glory. It is the fact that she includes these references to sexuality at all, either prior to marriage, or after marriage, which places her outside of the conventional school of "purity" literature. She is prepared to incorporate female sexuality as a political challenge as in the call for women to become sexually educated about childbirth and pregnancy, and to become knowledgeable about birth control, but beyond this female sexuality remains the unknown "empire of a woman" (EPW,25).[23]

Ellis cannot go so far as to demand a right for women to explore, develop and enjoy their own sexual feelings, for this is elicited from twentieth century expectations and perspectives. But her real ambivalence is that she does not know what kind of reality to posit for female sexuality. All she can call for is "an often self-conscious sexual `emancipation' which seems to enact a revolt, both `colonial' and `intellectual' against gentility and puritanism" to

establish woman as something other than mother, something other than sexual slave to man [31].

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER FOUR.

1. Passionlessness is defined by Nancy F.Cott as a term to **"convey the view that women lacked sexual aggressiveness, that their sexual appetites contributed a very minor part (if any at all) to their motivations, that lustfulness was simply uncharacteristic".**
She notes the ideology of female passionlessness was firmly developed within the British novel, prescriptive sources such as etiquette manuals, and expanded by the evangelical clergy to bolster the ideals of Victorian marriage."Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology 1790-1850." *Signs* 4.2(1978): 219-236, P.220.
This "passionlessness" in Victorian literature, or the absence of representations of female sexuality, has largely been attributed to the operation of a conventional form of authorial and novelistic modesty supported by belief in a model of Victorian sexuality which relies heavily on sexual repression as its guiding ethos, by critics such as: Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1979); Phillipa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900* (London: Heinemann, 1987); W.E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); Constance Rover, *Love, Morals and the Feminists* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); and Eric Trudgill, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes.* (London: Heinemann, 1976).
And in New Zealand, by critics such as: Heather Roberts, "Mother, Wife, and Mistress: Women Characters in the New Zealand Novel from 1920-1940." *Landfall* 29. 3 (1975):233-247; Stephen Robertson, "What Are You?: Gender in Five Novels by New Zealand Women." Unpublished B.A.(Hons) thesis in English (Otago:Otago University, 1990) and Joan C.Gries, "An Outline of Prose Fiction in New Zealand." Unpublished Ph.D.thesis in English, (Auckland: Auckland University College, 1951), all of whom have tended to validate the passionless representations of female sexuality.
Some exceptions are Ronald Pearsall,*The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality* (London:Random House, 1969) who recognises a wider representation of female sexuality, even though it is critical analysis from a very masculine viewpoint, and Micheal Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (London: London University Press, 1992), who challenges the validity of the model of sexual repression. In agreement with Mason I would argue the very adoption of the model of sexual repression combined with belief in the discourse of

modesty may well have contributed to distortions in critical analysis when examining the representation of female sexuality. See note 2 for an alternative model.

2. In a recent publication Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble provide an analysis of the representation of female sexuality which suggests the revision of the asexual feminine model is achieved by a novel's concentration on the figure of the young girl. The ideal wife-mother is textually displaced "**in favour of the adolescent girl or young woman, and the story of her progress *towards* matrimony and virtue**" (p.15). This technique enables authors to represent heroines as sexualised, by siting them within puberty, "**without compromising the heroine and so invalidating them as role models**" (p.13).
Victorian Heroines:Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth Century Literature and Art (Washington Square,N.Y: New York University Press, 1993) 10-37.
This critical perspective helps to explain why nearly half of *Everything is Possible to Will* is taken up with Zee's journey towards marriage to Wrax, and why the narrative starts with Zee at the onset of puberty, developmentally her most sexualised transition. This narrative strategy reinforces how Zee loses not just her autonomy and identity through marriage but is re-defined as an asexual female, as wife and mother.

3. Just as Zee has babies out of text, so does Margaret, the heroine of Devanny's *The Butcher Shop*. Yet Devanny is believed to be more "realistic" in her descriptive techniques and more "liberated" in her representation of female sexuality. This issue is further discussed within Chapter Seven on the representation of female sexuality in Devanny's novels and short stories.

4. The Contagious Diseases Act in New Zealand is discussed further in this Chapter. Both this legislation, and the absence of social permission for birth control and female sex education, are intrinsically concerned with definitions of female sexuality. As Lynda Nead argues, "**the discourses on prostitution became a crucial site for the production and re-working of ideas concerning femininity and sexuality.**" *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (London: Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) 103. Paradoxically, the prostitute became the defining archetype for respectable female sexuality particularly in respect of birth control, as Harrison notes:"**the acquisition of birth control techniques by women is summed up in the quotation `a second-hand knowledge which would place her**

[the respectable woman] on an equal footing with an experienced prostitute."
Fraser Harrison, *The Dark Angel: Aspects of Victorian Sexuality* (London:Sheldon Press, 1977) 188.

5. For any woman to enter the debates on the Contagious Diseases Act or those concerning birth control was highly provocative. Harrison remarks **"Contraception was, in other words, synonymous with promiscuity and prostitution"**. *The Dark Angel:Aspects of Victorian Sexuality* (London:Sheldon Press, 1977) 224, a view supported and expanded by Constance Rover,**"to be associated with the birth control movement was, in Victorian eyes, even worse than being connected with the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts"**.
She adds that female authors, particularly those who can now be seen as feminist, had great difficulty in adopting a position of sexual liberation for women. The contemporary feminist view was of women as victims of the double standard of morality which could be remedied if men were to exercise the same sexual self-restraint as women. The encouragement of birth control, which was argued by its opponents would foster "sexual indulgence" would have appeared to have run counter to the objectives feminists held as desirable. *Love, Morals and The Feminists* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) 101.
Yet Ellis's novel enters this discourse very stridently, certainly upholding the view that the eradication of the double standard rests on men exercising the same restraint as women whilst vigorously attacking the dominant ideology of woman as reproductive machine and attacking the idealised image of the glory of motherhood.

6. Kimberley Reynolds & Nicola Humble, *Victorian Heroines: Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth Century Literature and Art* (Washington Square,N.Y: New York University Press, 1993) 13.

7. Nancy Cott succinctly presents an explanation for Ellis's siting of female sexuality within romanticism, **"The pervasive ideology of romantic love, and also the evangelical conflation of the qualities of earthly and spiritual love, bridged the gap and refuted the ostensible contradiction between passionlessness and marriage."** "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology" *Signs* 4.2 (1978): pp 219-236, p.234.
In this way Ellis accommodates a conceptualisation of female sexuality within marriage, which, although not

directly articulated as a source of female pleasure, at least alludes to a potential exploration of female sexuality. For when this is examined alongside her call for female liberation from the perpetual reproductivity consequent upon marital relations the potential for the expression and enactment of female passion within marriage at least becomes a possibility. It must also be noted that Ellis's sites the sexual passions of the body low on her social ladder, close to the animal classes, in exactly the same manner as Devanny. Devanny places the sexually passionate Miette close to the bottom of the social hierarchy. See Chapter Seven for further discussion.

8. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Penguin, 1976) 94.
Bettleheim refers to the original image of the "wood" in Dante's *Divine Comedy* in order to expand his argument that the image is often symbolically connected to the unconscious, particularly those desires of the Id which include sexuality. For women, even in the Victorian period, the intuitive understanding of the sexual meaning implicit within this imagery is constituted from early childhood experience of the fairy-tale and novelistic conventions.

9. This marginal social space is classically described by Arnold Van Gennep in his analysis of rites of passage where the transition from child or unmarried person to adulthood and marriage threatens social stability, particularly in respect of uncontained and undefined sexuality, and therefore requires control or license. *The Rites of Passage* (London:Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960) 50-64. See note 10 regarding control of Zee.

10. Zee's father actively intervenes to stop the risk to Zee's actual, and social, chastity by ordering her terminate the relationship. For him the issue is embedded in class and money, "**man Friday**" is a low class Cockney, Wrax comes from an upper-class background. Female sexuality becomes an economic commodity subject to patriarchal control, first by the father and then through marriage.

11. Reynolds & Humble propose this term for describing how female sexuality is accommodated without compromising the heroine, "**where the plot is structured so as to effect an absence or removal.**" *Victorian Heroines: Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth Century Literature and Art* (Washington Square, N.Y:

Washington University Press, 1993) 18.

This critical perspective has its difficulties as it can mean all absences have presence, presumably meanings selected at the discretion of the critic. With Ellis's novel, where there has been a significant attempt to textualise the existence of Zee's pre-marital sexuality, the sudden absence of sexuality at the onset of marriage would suggest an attempt by the author to present a particular image of Zee as wife and mother, partly to advance her argument of the moral superiority of women over the "animalism" of men, and partly to conform to the contemporary Victorian ideology of extolling the domestic virtues of the woman in the home. Where Ellis departs from this model is to attack the inherent contradictions within the image of the asexual wife and mother, particularly in respect of a definition of female sexuality which rests entirely on the reproductive functions of women. A passionless wife would appear to be antithetical to an ideology of continuous reproduction. Further Ellis does not valorise motherhood, she does not view it as either glorious, vocation or reward but as a female suffering, as discussed further in this Chapter.

12. The absence of female sexuality within the Victorian domestic home was an ideology advanced by John Ruskin, whose much cited paragraph on the moral and spiritual virtues of home from his 1865 essay "Of Queens Gardens" (*Sesame and Lilies)* not only removes any hint of physical activity between man and woman but elevates the home to the asexual sanctuary of "**a sacred place, a vestal temple**" Barbara Ehrenreich & Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 years of the Expert's Advice to Women* (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1978) 21.

Ellis sent a copy of her novel to Ruskin on its publication. "Everything Is Possible To Will" *New Zealand Herald*. 22 March 1883, 5.

13. The asexual wife and mother is also ideology supported by John Stuart Mill, the writer who can be seen to have most significantly influenced Ellis's writing. Mill advocated a "**type of asexual marriage based on affection and trust.**"
Barbara Caine,"Woman's natural state: Marriage and the 19th C Feminists." *Hecate* 3.1 (1977):84-102, p.98.

14. Ina Ferris notes that a review of *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* defined the book as a "lecture to the fair sex on '**their being, end and aim**' a lecture aimed at demonstrating to women '**what they ought to pursue, in order to qualify themselves for wives; and to**

inculculate those religious and moral principles by which they ought to be governed'." Ferris adds "The text of a proper novelist like Hannah More ... encourages the upright reading that maintained the decorum of gender" arguing the novel entered social and ethical discourse rather than that of literary discourse, and itself enacted the virtues of restraint and deferment proper to civil society. "From Trope to Code: The Novel and the Rhetoric of Gender in Nineteenth Century Discourse" in *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History and the Politics of Gender* (London: Routledge, 1992) 18-30, p.18.

15. "the ideologies of the home and the feminine ideal reinforced each other; woman's moral and sexual purity guaranteed the home as a haven ... and in turn, feminine purity itself was ensured through the shelter and protection of the domestic sanctuary". Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford:Blackwell, 1988) 33.

16. Ellis departs from the conventions of the romance and the novel in describing the death of this child and the depth of Zee's grief. As Jenni Calder notes few novelists attempt "to convey a picture of their snugly married heroines undergoing the effects of repeated pregnancies, some of which would produce dead babies, or babies who would die within the first few years. It was a moral as well as physical reticence for so long as motherhood was to be glorified its realities could not be detailed." *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction* (London: Thames Hudson, 1976) 160.

    Ellis's heroine is clearly not described as "snugly married". The reality of Zee's marriage is of an unhappiness to the point of desiring death, and of motherhood as being a traumatic reality rather than transcendental glory. The attempt at socially realistic description within Ellis's novel generates her anxiety about the novel being "wild to the English taste" (EPW,Preface,vii).

17. Various critics have noted the Victorian definition of "respectable" female sexuality being solely confined to woman's reproductive function. Cynthia Eagle Russett provides an extensive analysis of how the Sciences were harnessed to "prove" the biological definition of woman, ensuring that "Not for one moment were Victorian women permitted to forget that their essence was reproductive. Nature had created in woman a being whose principal functions are evidently intended to be love, leading to generation, parturition , and nutrition." In other

words, maternity defined womanhood. *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge,Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989) 43.

Lynda Nead also comments how the medical sciences set about defining womanhood as reproductivity, for **"Motherhood was regarded as the most valuable and natural component of woman's mission; it was woman's main reason for being and her chief source of pleasure".** *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford:Blackwell, 1988) 26.

Ellis, through the narrator, challenges the right of the medical profession to establish this definition whilst withholding the physiological information required by woman in order to adequately fulfil their reproductive function, **"doctors, even, are jealous of women trenching on the realms of physiology -a study more important to woman than man, for man's sake."** (EPW,84).

"trenching" is an archaic word meaning to encroach. Marian Makins, *Collins English Dictionary* 1979. (London: Harper Collins, 1991) 1640.

18. Andrée Lévesque notes that in New Zealand of the period **"the prescribers of social rules concentrated their attention on women's most popular function, reproduction, and their unmentioned one, sexuality."** "Prescribers and Rebels: Attitudes to European Women's Sexuality in New Zealand 1860-1916" in *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1986) 1-12, p.2.

This social concentration on reproduction was advanced further by the State's focus on the Cult of Domesticity, **"a particular construction of femininity which emphasises almost exclusively women's alleged nurturant and maternal capacities".** Bev James & Kay Saville-Smith, *Gender, Culture and Power* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1989) 31.

This emphasis on actual reproduction in New Zealand is argued by the authors as being a specific strategy adopted by the State to contain and control male behaviour; to alter the New Zealand male into "The Family Man" by making women the instrument through which the State could impose domestic order on men and children. *Ibid*, pp.31-35. The authors further argue this strategy was in response to the social threat posed by wife desertion, the destitution of women and children in New Zealand, and to correct the demands for State welfare. The social costs of such a strategy may lie in the birth rates. Infant mortality in the 1890s was 80 infants out of every 1,000 live births, and it had been higher. The actual level of European births in New

Zealand of the 1880s was 6.5 live births per married woman, Sandra Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since They Won the Vote* (Auckland: Viking, 1993) 73., with illegitimate births in 1886 at 602 or ratio of 32 per 1000 births, Andrée Lévesque, "Prescribers and Rebels:Attitudes to European Women's Sexuality in New Zealand 1860-1916." *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1986) 1-12, p.4.

19. Phillida Bunkle,"The Origins of the Women's Movement in New Zealand: The Women's Christian Temperance Union 1885-1895." *Women in New Zealand Society: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Auckland: Allen & Unwin, 1980) 52-77, p.63.

20. *Ibid*, p.73.

21. Piri, Zee's third child, is born in New Zealand but is drowned after falling off a ship when she takes the children back to Britain for a visit (**EPW**,160-2).

22. Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh were brought to trial in England on the 18 June 1877 charged with publishing an obscene document entitled *The Fruits of Philosophy or the Private Companion of Young Married Couples.* This pamphlet was a reprint of an 1833 publication by the American James Watson. It strongly advocated the use of birth control, offering a number of detailed, descriptive methods to prevent pregnancy occurring, and providing descriptions of menstruation, the process of conception and the development of pregnancy. The trial action was brought partly because of the availability of the pamphlet for it was being sold at sixpence a copy thereby making it available to large numbers of the middle and lower classes in Britain. The trial received extensive coverage within the newspapers, including New Zealand, and for a while it looked as though Besant and Bradlaugh had lost their defence. The pamphlet was judged obscene and Bradlaugh and Besant were sentenced to imprisonment for six months and ordered to pay a fine of two hundred pounds each. However, Bradlaugh and Besant appealed the decision and in 1878 the indictment was quashed on a technicality. Annie Besant went on to write another birth control paper called *The Law of Population: Its Consequences and Its Bearing Upon Human Conduct and Morals* which went on to sell thousands of copies in Britain and overseas. Roger Manvell, *The Trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh* (London:Pemberton, 1976) 54-60, 155-157.

Charles Bradlaugh continued to receive often unwelcome

publicity, particularly in his fight to retain his seat as M.P. in the British House of Parliament. *New Zealand Herald* 17th February 1883, p.6.

23. An area which has only recently received critical attention as a result of discourse theory and post-colonial criticism has been the relationship between appropriation of the female within the discourse of Empire. One author, Lynda Nead, has begun to analyse this relationship in her examination of the representations of the Victorian prostitute. She discovered "**publications on prostitution appropriated the language of imperial decline ... it is surely significant that the language of moral and dynastic degeneration is the same: decline and fall; the terms plot both a moral and imperial narrative and a fall from virtue [for the individual woman into prostitution] can symbolise the end of an empire**". *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) 93.
In this context it is interesting to witness Ellis attempting to disentangle the State from female reproduction, and by definition, female sexuality. She goes further in adding a piece of poetry to indicate Zee's "spirit of perversity" which states "**Ah ! the empire of a woman is still in the unknown**" (EPW,25) as if to indicate woman as unchartered sea or unknown territory, appropriating the language of empire in order to establish not a known colonial world, but an unknown female world. See also note 18.

24. *NZPD* 11th July 1883, p.445.

25. *NZPD* 17th August 1869, p.500.

26. These debates were characteristic of attempts to define female sexuality, as Lynda Nead notes in *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian England* (Oxford:Blackwell, 1988) 97-103, where the definition of the prostitute became a negative means by which to define respectable female sexuality.

27. C.A.Mairs, "The Contagious Diseases Acts." Unpublished M.A.History thesis (Auckland: Auckland University, 1973) 37-38.

28. *New Zealand Herald* 3 October 1882, p.6.

29. *New Zealand Herald* 6th October 1882 p.6.

30. Casey Finch has analysed the relationship between Victorian underwear, particularly the corset responsible for the production of the wasp-waist, and the female body. Ellis foreshadows what Finch describes as "**images depicting corsets, crinolines and bustles inexplicably floating in a void. These images refer uncannily to the absent presence of the newly shaped body.**" "Hooked and Buttoned Together: Victorian Underwear and Representations of the Female Body." *Victorian Studies* 34.3 (1991):337-362, p. 347.
Finch suggests that in Victorian newspaper and magazine advertisements the elimination of the real woman in favour of the underwear itself, was a re-definition of female sexuality to suit the masculine imagination. Female sexuality as symbolised by the female body, already obliterated by the imposition of reproduction as a woman's sole sexual function, was completely annihilated, in Ellis's words "**squeezed out of existence**". Finch suggests the usefulness of this annihilation to men was in allowing the transfer of female sexuality into a wider discourse of erotics, into the fetish of clothing, appearance and image.

31. Peter Alcock,"Eros Marooned: Ambivalence in Eden." *The Family in New Zealand Literature* (Wellington: Hicks & Sons, 1970) 242-277, p.264.

CHAPTER FIVE.

The Idealistic Wraith: Paradise in *The Butcher Shop*.

Nan Bowman Albinski defines the term "**eutopia**" as "**the vision of the good place**", and as quite distinct from "**Utopia**" which defines a particular genre of writing generally describing a vision of "**an egalitarian society composed of both men and women free from discrimination in both public and private life**". The usefulness of this distinction is that it permits an exploration of the representation of paradise within *The Butcher Shop* without implying in language an automatic connection to a futuristic vision of external social order or structure. In this context, *Everything is Possible to Will* could be described as utopian for in its didacticism it textualises a distinctly female vision of a reformed, and egalitarian, future society [1].

Within *The Butcher Shop*, paradise or eutopia is totally dislocated from the external world and is firmly located inside the head of the heroine, Margaret Messenger. Her eutopia has no social reflection nor any relationship to the New Zealand world of farming life or work referred to as "**Industry**" throughout the text. Nor does Margaret's vague concept of eutopia call for reform of marital and educational structures to accommodate the needs of women. Margaret's, and Devanny's, eutopia [2] does not seek to establish a female

vision, nor even a New Zealand one, for even as a geographical location New Zealand has no place in Margaret's imagination, and her unshaped vision is "peopled only by idealistic wraiths" (BS,43).

For Margaret, paradise or eutopia is only attached to romance, to falling in love, for the eutopia Margaret imagines is embodied in her vision of being in love with an unidentified man, a vision which lies within the realm of the dream:

> On his countenance was expressed immeasurable love and reverence. Supreme benignity was theirs, and they walked through long drenched grasses which did not clog their footsteps towards a horizon which was a blaze of glory. All Virtue, all Hope, all Happiness was depicted there in some supernal way through the medium of colour. Lustrous pearls which were joy floated thickly on azure lakes which were laughter; wondrous were the colours paletted by Happiness, glowing, pulsating, breathing like sentient things vying with the shining, gleaming gold of Hope and shimmering liquid silvers of Virtue. In the great luminous arch the glory coruscated before them, and the dreamer knew that she and the man were crossing the fields in the early morn to live in its refulgence for ever. Thoughtless, careless, love-wrapped and pure, they were walking straight to Paradise.
> (BS,51-52)

Devanny's archaic language of "begnignity", "supernal", "coruscated", and "refulgence" emphasise a "Paradise" completely detached from the real world and its contemporary language. The overblown prose paints a heavenly landscape where "Virtue" and purity are repeatedly reinforced as integral and essential qualities of colour and form. Even after her marriage to Barry Messenger, this eutopian vision

is attached to her sexual affair with the station manager, Glengarry:

> They were conscious of the immensity of those moments. The life force seem to billow around them, impregnable, imperishable, the eyes, the ears, the brains of the world. Travail and happiness, sin and innocence, were disclosed to them as the husk enclosing the kernel of life which was the reproductive instinct. For a little wisp of time the man saw through the woman's eyes, for a wisp of time his spirit renounced its condition of Man as separate from Woman ... Glengarry's befogged mind gained nothing tangible from that momentary revelation of the infinite ... the passing moment of the vision left him no solace, no girded loins for the future. It might never have been. Woman disappeared from his ken, and the object of his love, another man's wife, stood beside him. (BS,131-2)

Glengarry is momentarily incorporated as the "man" in Margaret's eutopian vision. He participates in this "infinite" heaven by his sexual union with Margaret, their re-enactment of the "reproductive instinct". The real world of "travail and happiness", "sin and innocence", is described as merely an outer skin to a more essential, more meaningful reality as "the kernel of life" is made accessible through sexual union. The eutopian vision/dream becomes sexualised, moving from a dependence on virtue and purity, as it has up to now been attributed to Margaret's character, to its realisation within sexual intercourse.

Devanny validates this conceptualisation of paradise by reinforcing its dependence on sexual relations with men. Margaret's soul is described as hovering "close to the gates of paradise" (BS,173) at the very point in the narrative when

she is sexually involved with both Barry and Glengarry, recalling the "luminous arch" or gate figured in her original dream-vision of eutopia.

Similarly, when Margaret convinces Barry that their sexual consummation should occur prior to their actual wedding, Paradise is sexualised, and textually validated, as "divine" and "sublime" instruction from God:

> She began to think, foolishly, of the myth of Adam and Eve ... Then a divine inspiration came to her, a sublime thought born out of sheer naturalness. She raised her head and looked him full in the eyes, the glory of slumbering womanhood shining in her own. "It is God in us," she said."It is God in us. This is our wedding day, Barry. Make me your wife." (BS,59-60)

Margaret's recalling of "Adam and Eve" places Barry and herself in some new re-figuration of Eden, where they alone are given divine permission to explore their sexuality without reference to the real world of social convention or worldly law. Cvitanovich argues this psychological vision of eutopia, as the romantic but sexualised relationship between male and female, is merely an expression of Margaret's youth and immaturity, a predictable outcome of her reading romantic novels. She implies that as Margaret matures she outgrows the romantic idealism of her youth [3]. But this is to give a weight to Margaret's character not supported within the text, an attempt to politicise her relationship with Barry and Glengarry, when throughout the novel the "gloss of romantic illusion" still informs her eutopia [4].

Margaret's eutopian vision remains within the realm of the psychological, and is elevated into a psycho-sexual transcendental experience when, momentarily, she possesses both Glengarry and her husband Barry (BS,43). Nor does this personalised transcendental eutopia ever disappear within the novel even though it is temporarily threatened. For "**the cold but saving hand of science [falls] upon her love**" (BS,210) with Glengarry. The narrator describes the impact of this rationalism and realism as devastating, for by

> **plucking out the idealism ... The high-flown, spiritual aspect of her love could only have emanated from a transcendental psychology, and that transcendentalism had been destroyed.** (BS,210)

Yet even under this pressure, eutopia is isolated as merely an internal experience, firmly linked to Margaret's individual character as her "**transcendental psychology**", and closely identified within a romantic context as a "**high-flown spiritual aspect**" of love.

Unlike Ellis's "realisable" Utopia in *Everything is Possible to Will*, Devanny's eutopia remains an entirely psychological entity attached to, and an expression of, Margaret Messenger's individual character, particularly her "**naturalness**" and her "**purity**". Throughout the text Devanny manipulates the meanings of "**natural**" and "**purity**" restricting them to reflect the eugenic ideology that underpins the bulk of the novel. In *Everything is Possible to*

Will Ellis uses the word "**natural**" within its conventional semantic form to reflect all of Zee's characteristics which are not a product of the social world. She attaches "**natural**" to its traditional meaning acquired within romanticism, whereas Devanny confines "**natural**" to mean all that is beautiful. That which is not beautiful is not natural. In this way the "**natural**" is even detached from the conventionally romantic rural world, the world of nature. Similarly "**purity**" for Devanny is consistently linked to a state of being clean and wholesome in body and mind, of being untainted by malice, nasty motives or appetites. This has particular importance in rationalising Margaret's murder of Glengarry for Devanny has to find a way to make the murder free from moral taint and make Margaret and her actions both innocent and correct, to make her a moral murderer. This is why Margaret's character is repeatedly reinforced as "**natural**" (BS:44,101,108,112,118) and her "**purity**" is of "**mind and soul**" (BS:44,105,108,112). Further, these personal attributes are conflated into Margaret's exceptional physical, intellectual and moral beauty (BS:44,105,118), opinions not only offered by her husband, Barry, and her lover, Glengarry, but by Ian Longstairs (BS,159), a visitor to the Messenger's Maunganui sheep station. Nor is it enough that Margaret is a "**wonder woman**" (BS,118) for arising from her "**naturalness**", her "**purity**", her external and internal beauty, her intellect, her "**sense of righteous**" (BS,118) and

her "**charming dignity**" (BS,118), is an immediately visible "**transcendental quality**" (BS,101) provoking a religious and spiritual response in Glengarry, for "**He had a sense of sacrilege in regard to her**" (BS,105). Margaret becomes an angel visited upon the earth, she is "**Womanhood incarnate**" (BS,112),"**the most glorious woman in the world**" (BS,118), a literal incarnation of the Victorian Angel in the House.

Carole Ferrier suggests Devanny "**partially endorses**" the classic figuration of the Angel in the House in the presentation of Margaret's character [5]. Such endorsement is more than partial for Devanny maintains this characterisation of Margaret throughout the text. Even after her violent murder of Glengarry, the narrator describes Margaret, still holding the bloody, dripping razor blade with which she had cut Glengarry's throat, as "**again the radiant, glorious woman**" (BS,224). What is surprising is Devanny's advocacy of the Angel in the House as a desirable feminine ideal and as representative of a eutopian vision, however unformed, which is dependent upon violence for its maintenance [6]. An alternative critical perspective suggests that the characteristics attributed to Margaret are merely couched in a language consistent with that of romanticism. The talk of purity, transcendence, and beauty are only tropes conventionally employed when describing a classic romantic heroine, a view supported by Joanna Morris [7]. Further, it

is occasionally implied Devanny deliberately employs these romantic tropes in order to highlight the imprisoning position women are forced into by the conventions of romanticism. Echoes of this view are found in Cvitanovitch's analysis of *The Butcher Shop* [8] and more explicitly stated by Carole Ferrier as Devanny "**offering a critique of the romantic form**" [9]. But none of these alternative perspectives can adequately account for Margaret's highly individualised eutopian quest, her configuration as an idealised angelic female form, nor her remarkable consistency with traditional romantic form.

For if Margaret is the literal incarnation of the Angel in the House it is in an entirely ethereal, and decorative context. For Margaret is not involved in the running of the sheep station, neither domestically nor in the "**Industry**" (**BS**:65,66,72) which constitutes the daily work of sheep farming. Margaret's relationship to sheep farming is initially one of a spectator, for

> **sitting on a railing fence she saw only romance there. Not being one of the piece, she saw the work of the world through the eyes of the impractical visionary.**
> **(BS,65)**

However, Devanny does not limit Margaret's " **romantic** " perception of the work merely to that of farming. Margaret sees "**the work of the world**" as an outsider, an "**impratical visionary**" Devanny textualises Margaret's world view of work

as either being romantic or not related to her personally at all. Certainly Margaret herself expresses such sentiments when she informs Barry "Industry is not so wonderful after all" (BS,70) and later, this view consolidates into Margaret's opinion that "Industry was horrible" (BS,72).

But "Industry" within the novel is also the reality of New Zealand, particularly of its farming environment. It is a reality Devanny graphically describes, as when the sheep are being shorn:

> The blade slipped and ripped right down the animal's leg, tearing away a lump of flesh. Margaret shuddered violently and thrust her finger into her mouth to stifle a scream. The sheep plunged; the shearer yelled "Tar!" The tar-boy rushed up and smeared hot tar upon the wound. (BS,69)

Margaret's reaction to the unpleasant realities of farming work is one of horror and disgust [10], and from this point on she does not involve herself in the affairs of the sheep station except as a distant, though decorative, observer. But this is the position Margaret also manifests towards her wifely domestic duties, for she "had always left the household entirely to Mrs. Curdy, at first out of shyness and then out of good sense." (BS,158). Indeed, when Margaret was initially married to Barry, "she had found it the most natural thing in the world for her to play the lady" (BS,71), being quite content to make her social rounds of "calls" and survey her possessions. But throughout the text Margaret

continues to "play the lady", remaining reasonably distant from the real world whilst maintaining her pleasures:

> Margaret's life was very full, what with her children's lessons and the hundred and one interests, and her visitors and friends and calls and it became really annoying to have her routine disturbed. (BS,158)

This little vignette of Margaret's lifestyle is characteristic of the rural aristocrat, the lady of the manor, who is largely free to pursue her own "interests" and "calls". By detaching Margaret from the real world of "Industry", of the farm, of the real world, Devanny inscribes her into an "Arcadian Paradise", as an extension of her eutopían vision.

The Arcadian Paradise is a term used by Patrick Evans to describe "the garden paradise, which is nature both cultivated and domesticated by man" [11]. He argues, Devanny "tries to reverse aspects of arcadian mythology by drawing attention to the brutalising effects of life on a sheepfarm" [12]. Although Devanny may describe "brutalising effects", Margaret floats within this paradise founded on New Zealand's "Industry" of wool, remaining largely unaffected, except for temporary emotion, by the brutalising nature of sheep farming [13]. Instead she enacts brutality by murdering Glengarry.

It is almost as if Devanny casts Margaret back in time to an earlier New Zealand of Lady Barker. Even the descriptions of

the New Zealand landscape are couched in very British language. When Margaret imagines her paradise she sees "**woods**", "**buttercups**" and "**grasses**" (BS,51). Even the weather is British for there are "**real English dusks**" (BS,57). It is as if Margaret, and her eutopia, are dislocated from all temporal, physical and chronological reality, not just the immediate reality of the farm.

The real world may possess many unpleasant realities but Margaret is not touched by these events; she does not attempt reform, challenge or change to reduce or remove them. She merely turns her back on them, in the same way that she rejects all unpleasant realities. This is seen in her reaction to the deformed child she sees on her way to make a social visit:

> That ill-formed face, as though it had been arrested in its prenatal growth and come into the world half-formed. "He should have been killed at birth!" she declared vehemently. "It is a crime to let him live. He is a hideous blotch on the face of nature." (BS,72)

Margaret's response to a real social victim is extreme and violent. Her confrontation with this child disrupts her heavenly, eutopian vision, and is described by her as "a **glimpse of hell out of heaven**" (BS,73). Margaret's "**heaven**" is a rural and ethereal world she inhabits as a privileged woman. She is economically provided for, she does not have to "work" or concern herself with "**Industry**", and she chooses not to. She does not undertake housework, and she chooses not to, leaving her free to pursue her own inclinations,

interests and social life.

Margaret appears to have never possessed any great desire for work or education, for as an adolescent girl her original attitude to work is reluctant and rebellious. Her parents urge her into domestic service which she refuses "**hotly**" (BS,43), but she very rapidly responds to Mrs.Curdy's advertisement for a house-maid on Barry Messenger's station as "**the best of a bad choice**". Devanny spans Margaret's entire adolescence in just half a page, implying the reason for Margaret's limited opportunities for work are due to her lack of education, the "**semi-slavery**" of domestic service, and her parents' desire to keep her chastity intact (BS,43). Various critics have read these few paragraphs as Devanny forwarding a social critique and a feminist argument concerning the social situation of young girls in the 1920s, namely that Margaret has no options except to marry Barry Messenger [14].

Given Margaret's characterisation and her relationship to the text it is difficult to perceive Devanny forwarding a feminist case that Margaret is forced into marriage when the heroine herself demonstrates no resistance to the idea and expresses no particular inclination to do otherwise. Much of this feminist interpretation of Margaret stems from the narrator's occasional comment interrupting the narrative

as on page 56, when, after Margaret has very happily informed her parents of the material attributes attendant upon her marriage to Barry, the narrator says "**Position, his money, may have just dazzled the child. Youth is so easily mislead by its inevitable romanticism.**" The key to this comment lies in the use of the preposition "**its**" for the referent is not specifically Margaret but the more universalised "**Youth**". The narrator is also ambivalent, for there is no assertion that romanticism did in fact influence "**Youth**" only that it "**may**". Perhaps the confirmatory answer lies in the narrator's comments that if Margaret had not come to Maunganui "**a decade before she might still have been a working-girl or married to a working-man living in penury**" (BS,136) stating Margaret's decision to marry Barry was not only influenced by romanticism but was also the right choice, for it removed her from "**penury**" and work. The narrator would appear to be supporting an anti-feminist argument by applauding female economic dependence and affirming Margaret's choice and behaviour.

The narrator's apparent validation of Margaret's privileged lifestyle does not reflect the reality of New Zealand in the 1920s. Olssen remarks on a tendency to regard New Zealand's recent past as a golden age as a counter-reaction to a swiftly changing society "**characterised by towns and cities, bureaucracy, specialisation and organisation**" [15].

Barry and Margaret's world of the huge sheep station was dying as dairying and small-scale farming became viable as a result of land availability, refrigeration and mechanisation [16]. In a sense Barry and Margaret are the last of a dying breed of colonial pastoralists [17], particularly in view of Liberal land policy which from 1891 had systematically been employed to break up large land holdings of the early colonialists [18]. Work opportunities for women had greatly expanded after World War I, particularly as a consequence of the growth of the tertiary sector in New Zealand, for by "1921 women constituted some 24 per cent of the workforce" [19] although these were lower paid positions in factories and in domestic service. Nevertheless, it would seem these were not the only options open to young women, for many attended the newly established technical colleges [20] and more were training for "white-collar" occupations like teaching and nursing.

Cvitanovich has commented on the discrepancy between the expanding world of women's work in New Zealand of the 1920s and the limited options offered within *The Butcher Shop* to Margaret as being either "housewifery" or "domestic service" (BS,43). She interprets Margaret's limited choices as a result of Margaret's parents attempting to safeguard their daughter's sexual chastity [21]. But it is Margaret who makes the "best of a bad choice" (BS,43) by choosing domestic

service because it is the potential romance of being a housemaid on a remote sheep station:

> it was a plunge into the unknown. It would be sort of adventurous. She had never been farther into the country than the Hutt Valley, and the thought of station life was exhilarating. She had read about station life in dozens of cowboy books. (BS,43-44)

Margaret sees domestic service as an opportunity for adventure and romance rather than as a means of gaining any work or economic independence. And the hope of romance is realised when she meets Barry Messenger, for her "fanciful spirit, unclogged by even so much as a vestige of worldliness, soared heavenwards in search of Paradise" (BS,48).

Right from the outset this eutopia is Margaret's personal vision, and her pursuit of its fulfilment is achieved at great cost. Devanny is neither critical nor ironic in her treatment of her heroine, instead she affirms the morality of Margaret's personal vision, particularly endorsing and privileging certain aspects of its manifestation within the text especially its links to romanticism and sexuality. Although initially the language and concept of "paradise" appears to be a metaphor to describe romance, the consistency of the Margaret's private eutopia suggests romance as an actuality and of Devanny quite seriously describing a classical romance. Certainly it is difficult to reconcile Margaret's conceptualisation of eutopia with feminism or even

reconcile the narrator's apparent agreement with Margaret's behaviour as either feminist or socialist.

It is therefore not surprising to discover Devanny affirming Margaret's marriage to Barry Messenger as a romantic and fulfilling relationship. She generates no challenge to the institution of marriage except that marriage should not demand monogamy of women. Instead Devanny advocates a case for the moral justification of adultery in her efforts to incorporate female sexuality into the imagery of the Angel of the House while trying to retain the moral purity of her heroine. These largely unsuccessful arguments are made to make the ideology of monogamy responsible for the novel's tragic deaths and Margaret's actions.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER FIVE.

1. Nan Bowman Albinski, *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction* (London:Routledge, 1988) 10.

2. The recognition of this eutopia in the text is acknowledged and applauded by Dale Spender, as "the dream of the just world" and recommended to all "alert, intellectually active individuals". Admittedly, Spender concedes she is critical of *The Butcher Shop*, "which in its brave and bold assertion of women's rights to sexuality seems to give sex and satisfaction too much significance as a solution".
Writing a New World: Two Centuries of Australian Women Writers (London: Pandora Press, Unwin Hyman and Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988) 260.

3. Lynley Cvitanovich, *Breaking the Silence: An Analysis of the Selected Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers* (Monograph No.2, New Zealand Cultural Studies Working Group and the Department of Sociology, Massey University, 1985) 62-63.
Cvitanovich is not alone in trying to rescue Margaret from any suggestion she may be just a traditional romantic heroine, or worse, an immature and selfish woman who justifies her behaviour by transforming her sexual digression into a transcendental experience of eutopian proportion. Heather Roberts, in her introduction to *The Butcher Shop*, argues "If there is any fault, it lies not with Margaret but with the society in which she lives" yet it is the collapse of Margaret's eutopia that causes her husband's suicide and her murder of her lover. *The Butcher Shop* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986) 21.

4. Cvitanovich, *Ibid*, p.62.

5. Carole Ferrier,"Modes of Consumption and Reception: A Review of Jean Devanny, *The Butcher Shop*" *Hecate*, 4.1 & 2 (1983): 160-166, p.165.

6. This particular union of feminine violence and purity which finds its ultimate expression in sexuality is further discussed in this thesis in Chapter Seven "Respectable Promiscuity: The Representation of Female Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*".

7. Joanna Kirsten Morris,"From Jessie Weston to Robin Hyde: The Development of the Heroine in New Zealand Novels from 1890-1939." Unpublished M.A. in English thesis (Otago:Otago University, 1985) 58.

8. Lynley Cvitanovich, *Breaking the Silence: An Analysis of the Selected Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers* (Monograph No.2. Palmerston North: New Zealand Cultural Studies Working Group, Massey University, 1985) 62-64. See also note 3.

9. Carole Ferrier,"Modes of Consumption and Reception: A Review of *The Butcher Shop*." *Hecate* 4.1 & 2 (1983):160-166, p.165.

10. Horror and disgust were also some, but certainly not all, of the reactions to the publication of *The Butcher Shop*. Although not specifically condemned for its depiction of New Zealand farming practises, it is widely believed the novel was banned by the New Zealand government for its "**frank portrayal of farm conditions was considered detrimental to the Dominion's immigration policy**". Heather Roberts, Introduction to *The Butcher Shop* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986) 7-23, p.11. See also Chapter One pp 13-16.

David McGill has indicated the primary reason for the banning of the novel lay not with concerns about its realism or detailed portrayals of New Zealand farm life, but primarily with the novel's concern with sexuality and politics.*The Guardians at the Gate: A History of the Customs Department* (Wellington: Customs Department, 1991) 134-5. The original cable from London warning of the release of the novel described it as "**disgusting, indecent [and] communistic**". The Censorship Appeal Board demanded censorship because "**the Board considers this a bad book all round-sordid, unwholesome and unclean. It makes evil to be good**" and the *New Zealand Herald* refused to review it because "**It is pretty rotten stuff.**"
Devanny considered the novel was banned in New Zealand because "**of its brutality, but that cannot be helped for it is a true story of New Zealand country life. I know, I have lived in the country**". But she too seemed ambivalent for in the same interview she also suggested the banning may have been caused by the political content of the novel for the theme was about "**the subjection of women in all times.**" "Banned New Zealand Novel: My Story is True says Author of `*The Butcher Shop*'" *The Sun* 5th June 1926, p.6.

11. Patrick Evans,"Paradise or Slaughterhouse: Some Aspects of New Zealand Proletarian Fiction" *Islands* 8.1 (1980):71-85, p.72-77.

12. *Ibid*, p.78.

13. The word "Industry" in its context within *The Butcher Shop* has its reference in very early colonial writing in New Zealand of the 1870s, particularly writing concerned with the "Pastoral Paradise" or the establishment of an "Eden" in New Zealand as noted by Lawrence Jones,"Versions of the Dream: Literature and the Search for Identity." *Culture and Identity in New Zealand* (Wellington: GP Books, 1989) 187-211, p.188.

14. Cvitanovich states "with only the compulsory minimum of schooling and limited practical experience Margaret's job prospects are few. She is confined to a limited range of low status, poorly paid feminine occupations." *Breaking the Silence : An Analysis of the Selected Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers* (Monograph No.2. Palmerston North: New Zealand Cultural Studies Working Group, Massey University, 1985) 59.
Joanna Morris goes further and suggests Devanny urges "economic independence for women". "From Jessie Weston to Robin Hyde." Unpublished M.A. in English thesis (Otago: Otago University, 1985) 59, but nowhere in the text does Devanny have Margaret voice a desire for economic independence. It is Ian Longstairs who articulates a future society with "a race of emancipated women, free in body and mind, economically independent, choosing their own mates, marching onward to that goal" (BS,206). Margaret doesn't comment on her economic dependence directly nor is she opposed to marriage. When she envisages herself as wife to Barry Messenger it is in terms of economic and material wealth, of "her position in the house" (BS,58), of having "money to burn" (BS,56) and she exhibits extreme resistance to the idea of giving up the personal haven of her marriage.

15. Erik Olssen,"Towards a New Society" *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 250-278, p.250.

16. Tom Brooking, "Economic Transformation" *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Auckland:Oxford University Press, & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 226-249, p.229.

17. The observation that Barry and Margaret are members of the class of white, colonial pastoralists who are dying breed in New Zealand takes on a new meaning when *The Butcher Shop* privileges European motherhood. Refer to Chapters Six and Seven for further discussion.

18. David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power 1891-1912* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988) 56-58 and Chapter Eight pp 271-307. See also Tom Brooking,"`Busting Up' The Greatest Estate of All: Liberal Maori Land Policy 1891-1911" *The New Zealand Journal of History* 26.1 (April 1992): 78-98.

19. Erik Olssen, "Towards A New Society" *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 250-278, p.260.

20. Erik Olssen, *Ibid*, p.270.

21. Lynley Cvitanovich, *Breaking The Silence: An Analysis of the Selected Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers* (Monograph No.2. Palmerston North: New Zealand Cultural Studies Working Group, Massey University, 1985) 59-60.

CHAPTER SIX.

Murderous Monogamy: Marriage in The Butcher Shop.

Devanny's representation of marriage within *The Butcher Shop* is problematic, for she depicts Barry and Margaret's marriage as idyllic and as solely defined within economic and sexual terms. Issues of female autonomy within marriage are posited solely on the right of women to engage in adulterous behaviour without jeopardising either marriage or economic security. Devanny's attack on marriage is not an attack on the social institution of marriage, but an attack on the ideology of monogamy. By adopting this stance, particularly within the framework of romantic fiction , Devanny is unable to sustain a coherent logic to support either a feminist analysis of her writing or the feminist label so frequently attached to *The Butcher Shop*.

The Butcher Shop has been acknowledged for its "realistic" description of New Zealand life but Devanny's treatment of Barry and Margaret's marriage is far removed from the social realities of marriage in the 1920s [1]. For their marriage is a privileged one. They are European, wealthy and established landowners, economically independent, with considerable freedoms to indulge their rural lifestyle (BS,56). They are able to employ a housekeeper, maids and farm personnel

(BS:30,31,36), many of whom are Maori. Margaret is not obliged to undertake her own housework and instead is able to ride her "decent" horse (BS,57), embroider, read and occasionally romp with her children (BS,218).

This economic stability enhances Barry and Margaret's marital relationship. For despite their youth (Margaret is only seventeen when she marries Barry, BS,43) their marital relationship is described as one of happy union, for

> the privacies of married life together were theirs ... he knew of the secret hours when she lay close to his heart and whispered, and of the family life when, as tonight, her impressions and gleanings from without would be paraded before him for his inspection and criticism. And paraded in the loving, haphazard way of privilege. (BS,81)

Both within their "secret hours" and within their "family life" a harmonious marital relationship prevails. As Barry's wife, Margaret seems to be "quite satisfied with this role and finds marriage very pleasing" [2]. This privileged marriage is reminiscent of both earlier New Zealand fiction and the "familial arcadia" as suggested by Patrick Evans [3]. Yet it is depicted at at time when the social and economic climate of New Zealand had dramatically changed so as to seriously challenge the legitimacy, and even the existence, of this type of marriage and this type of lifestyle. New Zealand of the 1920s was predominantly urban, and few of the large sheep stations of the early colonial period remained [4].

Given the happy state of Margaret's marriage it is not surprising Devanny makes no didactic attack on marriage as either an institution or a primary social structure within *The Butcher Shop*. Devanny expresses no complaint against marital law or the legal marital contract. She has no concern about issues of physical property or income for women within marriage.

Even when Margaret is made aware of the economic dependence of her relationship with Barry (BS,147) she is not concerned with challenging its nature or seeking to alter its power in order to acquire her own independence, or even to change the status quo of her life on the station:

> Did it ever strike you, Barry, that I am your property just like your cattle and your pigs ?
> "No, no, Margaret. You are my wife. I ask nothing of you; demand nothing of you. Have I ever attempted to coerce you or tyrannise over you in any way ?"
> "No, but you are my owner just the same. Because I am your wife, I cannot have the man I love."(BS,215)

Margaret is not concerned about her economic dependence on Barry. She is only concerned with her lack of sexual freedom as a wife, for she cannot "have" Glengarry, her lover, as well as her husband.

Like Margaret, Devanny's only concern with the degree of autonomy women may exercise within marriage is entirely focused on the absence of freedom to have other sexual relationships. Devanny does not attack, or seek to change the

social nature of marriage. Instead she attacks the ideology of monogamy which conventionally underpins Western marriages [5]. In doing so, Devanny tends to advocate adultery throughout *The Butcher Shop* [6], and throughout many of her short stories [7].

When Margaret, as a potential bride, thinks about marriage it is only in terms of economic security and social status, "if she married him she would be mistress of that big house" (BS,53) and in terms of a sex, for

> Marriage meant more than kisses. She knew what marriage meant. She buried her face in the pillow, her maiden modesty shocked at the pictures her unmaidenly imagination conjured up. (BS,54)

Devanny sexualises the young Margaret by providing her with "unmaidenly imagination" and this sexuality is firmly linked to marriage. The same linking of marriage to sexual union is repeated by the narrator as Margaret's ambivalence towards marriage is expressed:

> Margaret did not want to get married particularly ... She had no desire for closer intimacy than existed. Still, she was not opposed to marriage, either. She saw her position in the house, and knew it must be marriage or separation for a time. The latter was unthinkable, so marriage it would be. She was prepared for all that marriage meant. She was not as eager for it as was the man, but she was not shy of it either. (BS,58)

The repetition of "she was prepared for all that marriage meant" echoes "she knew what marriage meant" (BS,54) and suggests marriage for Margaret, and Devanny, is focused predominantly on the sexual relationship.

Margaret's "**position in the house**" has changed because she has a "**closer intimacy**", has already started a sexual relationship, with her employer, Barry Messenger. Margaret freely admits she "**has no desire for closer intimacy than existed**", in other words she is content with her romantic and sexual relationship with Barry. But her physical relationship with Barry generates a change in the social legitimacy of her position as a house-servant, leaving her with the choice of "**separation**" from or "**marriage**" to Barry. Devanny would seem to stating that marriage for Margaret becomes "**the best of a bad choice**" (BS,43), a way to preserve her sexual relationship with Barry. In uncritically representing Margaret's ambivalence in this way Devanny can be seen to be remarking on the social pressures young women are subject to, particularly in respect of the freedom to express themselves sexually, but she also telescopes the nature of marriage into just a sexual contract.

The difficulty in privileging the sexual relationship and sexual intercourse leaves Devanny arguing there is no sexual freedom for women without marriage, and there is no sexual freedom for women unless they are married, for neither Margaret, nor Devanny, seek sexual freedom for women without marriage [8]. As a result Devanny gets into a paradoxical argument where there are no sexual freedoms for men or women unless they are married.

Miette is married to Ian Longstairs and yet pursues sexual relations with Tutaki (BS,162) and with Glengarry (BS,210-211). Even Glengarry is married, having a wife who had "**run off with a Chinaman**" (BS,102), and since there is no mention of his divorce it would appear he is technically married whilst conducting his affair with Margaret. For Barry Messenger the focus of marriage is solely that of sexual activity, particularly procreation:

> ***Marriage***. He trembled. All that ? Yes, just that - ***Marriage*** ... in exultation of his ... ***clean*** manhood. He pounded his hands upon his chest. This - this was why he had instinctively preserved himself. He thanked the gods for the parentage that had bequeathed to him a body free from vicious instincts, that had brought him through the perils of young manhood with the glory of his soul untarnished. His mating time had come. He knew it infallibly. He had preserved himself in order that he might breed a fine, clean race, he and - one other, that girl [Margaret] he had loved from the first time of meeting. [Devanny's emphasis] (BS,37)

Sexual intercourse and marriage become synonymous as Devanny suggests by her foregrounding of "***Marriage***" , in capitalisation and italics, so lending a very particular emphasis to the linking of marriage and sexual intercourse to "**breed a fine, clean race**" [9]. The Eugenic subtext of Barry's perspective on marriage is one that Devanny seems actively to applaud by her textual emphasis of the relationship between a "**clean manhood**" that "**is free from vicious instincts**", "***Marriage***" and "**mating time**". This could be seen as a feminist criticism of the predominant Eugenic

ideology of the day if Devanny confined her affirmation of Eugenic purity and principles to Barry. But she equally validates the Eugenic purity of Margaret by emphasising that she also comes from "**good, clean stock**" (BS,43) and "**clean, good stock**" (BS,44) as well as perpetually reinforcing Margaret's "**purity**". Having so clearly privileged sexual intercourse and marriage, clearly underpinned by Eugenic ideology, Devanny is lead into arguing a case for adultery to support her claim for sexual freedoms within marriage.

This emphasis on marriage as sexual intercourse is reinforced when Barry and Margaret picnic at Devil's Corner where, at Margaret's initiation, they engage in pre-marital intercourse. For Margaret, this is not just sexual intercourse but their "real" marriage:

> "It is God in us, she said. It is God in us. This is our wedding day, Barry. Make me your wife today." (BS,60)

Physical lust becomes invested with mystical and religious significance as an expression of "**God in us**" and the act of sexual intercourse becomes transformed into the wedding ceremony. This is confirmed later when, as the narrator describes, the more mature Margaret looks back over her marriage to Barry:

> **The past ten years vaguely fell away from her, and a momentary vision of her real marriage day, the mating beneath the trees, passed before her mind's eye.(BS,102)**

Margaret sees her "real marriage" as "the mating beneath the trees" although she is confused by the lack of "transcendental uplift" in her and Barry's sexual union (BS,60). It would seem even as a "marriage ceremony", sexual intercourse fails to provide the necessary transcendental element to fulfil Margaret's private vision of paradise [10].

Having expected marriage to provide transcendental sexual experience Margaret is disappointed on her actual wedding day:

> She tried to meet his mood. She tried to feel solemn and weighted with the importance of the day as he did. She was conscious all the time of a "littleness" of attitude towards this event which must surely be the greatest event in a woman's life-her marriage ... after all a wedding was a wedding, not a funeral. It seemed to her weddings should be gay and jolly, not solemn. (BS,64)

Devanny appears to parallel the disappointing, social ritual of Margaret's wedding against her true, or real, but equally disappointing, wedding of her sexual consummation with Barry. Margaret parallels her wedding with a funeral, not because she recognises a death of self as Ellis does of Zee's marriage but because her sexual encounter with Barry fell short of her transcendental expectations. This experience would appear to set the scene for an intimate but passionless marriage and provide a motive for Margaret's subsequent adultery. Devanny does not explicitly justify Margaret's adultery within this context but neither does she refute it.

In fact Devanny supplies no explanation for Margaret's adultery other than it is Margaret's "right" (BS,121) to have the romantic love she seeks. This is an essential difficulty of the text, because Devanny offers no critique, no condemnation and no commentary on the undesirability of romanticism for women. Neither Margaret nor Devanny reject romanticism as an inappropriate doctrine for women. In fact, Devanny consistently affirms the opposite, that romanticism is the only way for woman to achieve fulfilment and sexual freedom, the only difference between classical romanticism and Devanny's romanticism is that Devanny's is rooted in eugenic ideology.

It is the absence of this romantic, transcendental passion which marks the beginning of Margaret and Barry's marriage, as the narrator describes:

> The ardour of her love had not out-lasted the first few months of her wedded life, but Margaret had not considered this anything extraordinary ... She knew no disappointment through vanished ardour in bodily contacts. (BS,97-98)

The narrator inscribes Margaret's marriage as being unproblematically passionless, as presenting "no disappointment through vanished ardour" despite her obvious recovery of her passion for Glengarry (BS:106-7,131,200). Having given so much emphasis to Margaret's romanticism as a part of her character Devanny then seems to draw her marriage as neither romantic nor passionate. Yet it is the pursuit of

transcendental passion which leads Margaret to her adultery with Glengarry.

Certainly, Margaret has no intention of leaving her marriage in order to pursue her passion for Glengarry. For Margaret, and Devanny, adultery is not only more acceptable than divorce; it is a "right" of women:

> I don't see why you should mind Barry. He is my husband. (He [Glengarry] laughed grimly). You know my situation. You must make the best of it. You are not very reasonable .... I have a right to my happiness if I can get it without harming others. Every woman must have the right to consummate the greatest love of her life. (BS,121)

For Margaret "the greatest love of her life" is Glengarry and it is her "right" to pursue him, (he would appear to have no "right" to say "no") even though this implies the "right" to pursue an adulterous relationship [11]. She is not willing to give up her marriage for him, nor sees any reason why she should do so [12].

Instead, it is Glengarry who has the problem for he is not willing to share her with Barry. Devanny argues, as does Margaret, the unwillingness of both Barry and Glengarry to share her physical affections is a manifestation of the sexual property rights men perceive as their right over their women, a right upheld and maintained by society through social structures such as marriage [13].

The issues of sexual ownership rights and adultery was subject to public debate during the 1920s , both in the newspapers and within the Parliamentary House, as the Divorce and Matrimonial Clauses Bill was discussed. The particular focus of these debates was with the restoration of a clause into the 1920 Act concerning "the restitution of conjugal rights". The clause (number 2 in the final Act) was debated as an issue of adultery, and implicitly of sexual ownership within marriage. Restitution of conjugal rights had been a part of divorce legislation until 1907, and had been used as a means of applying for divorce on grounds of desertion. But following an "incautious remark" by Justice Denniston implying a court case for the application of restitution of conjugal rights was a "farce" the clause had been dropped from divorce legislation [13]. However, the government had become increasingly concerned at the "morality" of the public response to divorce legislation without this clause, for

> it had been contended since the repeal there is a danger that married persons, who are no longer cohabiting as man and wife, may be induced to accept misconduct as the only way out. [14]

The "misconduct" to which the Hon. Mr. MacGregor refers was collusive adultery, where the parties involved "staged" discovery of an adulterous liaison to speed a divorce. But the other concern about adulterous relationships as a result of the absence of the restitution of conjugal rights clause was that adultery was being maintained, if not actively

encouraged, by the existing legislation. Married individuals, not living with their spouses, and unable to pursue a divorce on grounds of desertion for four years, were engaging in defacto and technically adulterous relationships. Separations granted by the Magistrates were described as "premiums on adultery" [15] and resulted "in a vast amount of immorality and adultery, and in a large number of illegitimate children" [16].

It was believed the re-introduction of the restitution of conjugal rights clause, described by the Hon.Mr.Lee (Minister of Justice) as where a

> man refuses to live with his wife there is no law to compel him to live with her, but if an order is made by a Judge of the Supreme Court that he returns to cohabitation with his wife, and he disobeys that order, then the ground for divorce arises as if there had been desertion. [17]

This would permit married couples to acquire a quicker divorce (it was not subject to the four year minimum) and put an end to the growth of adulterous relationships. What is particularly interesting is how the Parliamentary debates on adultery and the operation of the clause in New Zealand were consistently in reference to men who left their wives, not to wives who engaged in adulterous relationships. It would seem that New Zealand was still much pre-occupied with the colonial issue of wife desertion and Parliament was willing to speed up divorce procedures to control masculine, not

feminine, sexuality, reinforcing but modifying Heather Roberts comments that divorce had begun to "approximate social reality". It is easily seen how this debate can be perceived as reinforcing the monogamous ideology underpinning marriage within New Zealand society, and how Devanny may well have been influenced to respond to this ideology in writing *The Butcher Shop*.

She had began drafting *The Butcher Shop* in 1915, at the recommendation of an visiting American lecturer called Jack MacDonald, but it was not completed or submitted to the publishers until probably 1923. At the request of Duckworths' Devanny had to rewrite the novel a second time whereupon it was published in 1926 (18).

As if mirroring these legislative concerns Barry is willing to go away and electively "desert" his marriage, leaving the children to live with Glengarry and Margaret in a defacto relationship, but Margaret is vehemently opposed to any such suggestion:

> "Oh, Barry, she said, almost irritably, " don't talk rot ! The idea of you leaving the children is unthinkable. They love you." (BS,214)

Faced with this response, Barry asks her if she would "take" Glengarry whilst living with him (BS,215). Margaret not only informs him she would do so and "glory in it" (BS,215) but victoriously informs him, "He has been in my bed and I in

his" (BS,222). This triumphant declaration of adultery prompts Barry to suicide by drowning. Margaret's confession is provoked by her outrage at Barry's **"sticking up for the man, clinging to his own sex against the woman" (BS,222)** and her murder of Glengarry is provoked by her outrage that he dares remind her of her married state. She declares:

> **You think my married state gives my husband and children the power of life and death over me. What am I, then? What am I in your eyes, eh? A machine, just the female of the species to be caged up, a breeding animal denied even the right to choose my own mate! Get away! You outrage my womanhood! (BS,120)**

But Margaret's argument is less than convincing when she did **"choose [her] own mate"** in Barry, even if it was **"the best of a bad choice" (BS,43)**, and Devanny's argument, as expressed by Margaret, that as a wife Margaret is entitled to adulterous relationships to escape being just a **"breeding animal"** is difficult to reconcile with Devanny's privileging of childbearing as a divine cause and of marriage as a sexual union [19].

Various critics have attempted to rescue *The Butcher Shop* and its author from this illogical argument and equally illogical representation of marriage, and most have avoided Devanny's affirmation of adultery as not only a viable basis for marriage (if only men would be reasonable), but as a desirable basis for marriage.

Lynley Cvitanovich argues that Margaret is forced into marriage because she is a victim of social forces in 1920s New Zealand, because she is naive, and because Devanny "retaliates against dominant social groups by putting forward her own opposing conception of decency" [20]. Gustav Klaus similarly states "on several occasions Devanny explicitly qualifies romantic notions of her heroine as figments of a yet immature mind" although he is sceptical of Margaret's naivety [21]. For Margaret makes an active choice (BS,43), and she is not particularly committed to the idea of work [22]. Her naivety is also questionable. Devanny has the narrator comment how Margaret's

> attitude towards men ... had unconsciously been that of a child towards grown-ups, but her meeting with Messenger had destroyed that attitude. (BS,47)

Margaret suddenly matures as a result of her encounter with Barry, but the narrator adds later, "Youth is so easily misled by its inevitable romanticism." (BS,56). The narrator implies that Margaret remains naive as a consequence of her "romanticism", and certainly her naivety remains a problematic throughout the novel. For it is not Margaret's naivety which rescues her, or Devanny, from the illogical position of privileging marriage as a sexual union and then advocating adultery as a means to achieve freedom from sexual ownership. It is Margaret's naivety which indicts her and drives the novel to its bloody and pathological ending. It is the naivety of a highly personalised vision of paradise as a

"transcendental union" (BS,63) between man and woman, the transcendental union which fails to materialise with Barry, for "she lost the divine quality of her love" (BS,209). Her transcendental union is achieved in her sexual union with Glengarry but is then threatened by Barry's refusal to accommodate her in having both marriage and her "transcendental union".

Other commentators have suggested that Devanny "uses the format of the romantic novel to explore the economic and sexual subjugation of women in marriage" or have suggested that Margaret's actions within her marriage are intended to point to some unspecified socialist solution for women [23]. But it is difficult to justify Margaret's position as one seeking socialist solutions in which "emancipated women, free in body and mind, economically independent, choosing their own mates" [24]. Margaret does not seek to choose her own mate, she wishes to have both her husband and her lover. She is not concerned with the application of solutions for women in marriage generally, but only a solution for her own marital dilemma. And least of all does Margaret seek economic independence. She vehemently resists any move to detach her from the economic haven of her marriage, to the extent where she will commit murder rather than be forced to challenge her own particular vision of a lover and a husband. Devanny had recognised a patriarchal phenomenon with the

issue of sexual ownership of women by men, but her valorising of adultery, to the extent of it justifying murder, as a solution to this observation is far from satisfactory. It offers only a pathological form of feminism predicated on violence.

Devanny's most significant contribution in her representation of marriage within *The Butcher Shop* is her attempt to sexualise The Angel in the House. She tries to maintain the characteristic features of motherhood, purity and morality attributed to the archetypal image whilst endeavouring to acknowledge the sexuality of The Angel in the House; as a sexualised woman, a woman who generates her own physical, emotional and mental desires which demand recognition but do not demand that she be judged as if she were The Fallen Woman. Devanny attempts, unsuccessfully, to alter the parameters of female sexuality within marriage. But she does so by offsetting Margaret's pure sexuality against the promiscuous sexuality of Miette Longstairs. To establish Margaret as a sexual Angel in The House Devanny resorts to a particularly vindictive description of the Fallen Woman. As a result Devanny is led into enormous difficulty in trying to maintain the position of Margaret's "respectable promiscuity" against Miette's "promiscuity", especially as the distinction appears to rest on Miette's transgression of racial and hierarchal boundaries.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER SIX.

1. Carole Ferrier has examine some Australian and overseas reviews of the 1926 edition of *The Butcher Shop* to discover most reviewers commented on Devanny's realism within the novel. She cites one of the most flattering reviews from the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* 15th June 1926, **"with one or two possible exceptions this book represents the largest stride yet made by an English writer of fiction towards that absolute liberty of thought and expression possessed and exercised by the novelists of France."** The comparison with French realists is mirrored in comment by a magazine entitled *Adam and Eve* (1st June 1926), also cited by Ferrier, who state **"the station life is told with a realism which is Zolaesque, and nauseating to both mind and stomach."** Ferrier observes the novel was widely reviewed in the United Kingdom, since Britain was its place of publication, with consistent comment made on the realistic "brutality" of colonial life."Modes of Consumption and Reception: A Review of Jean Devanny, *The Butcher Shop*." *Hecate* 9.1 & 2 (1983):160-166, p 161.
   Few New Zealand reviews of the 1926 edition are available because of the banning of the novel, but it would seem the response to the novel's alleged "realism" was far less favourable, for **"a good deal of the life is very incorrectly observed; and its psychology is so extremely crude in many instances that it is ludicrous."** *The Spike or Victoria University College Review* 49 (June 1926): 38-41,p.38.

2. Ann MacDonald, "Once Banned NZ Novel: Lambs to the Slaughter." *The Dominion* 31 July 1982, p.6.
   This book review was written on the re-publication of Devanny's novel by Auckland University Press in 1981.

3. Patrick Evans,"Paradise or Slaughterhouse: Some Aspects of New Zealand Proletarian Fiction."
Islands 8.1 (1980): 71-85, p.72.
Evans argues early New Zealand fiction like Mrs. Aylmer's *Distant Homes* (1862) failed to accommodate colonial reality, positing instead a colonial romantic dream of arcadia, of a paradise obtained, thereby fulfilling emigrant expectations. Devanny's representation of Barry and Margaret's marriage encapsulates the primary requirements of this arcadian imagery; economic wealth, social status and independence, opportunities for leisure, and peaceful and harmonious domestic relationships.

4. Erik Olssen,"Women, Work and Family: 1880- 1926." *Women in New Zealand Society* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1980) 159-187, p.159. Olssen argues that the period from 1880 to 1926 saw a "dramatic change" in New Zealand as it "became predominantly urban, the state bureaucracy grew rapidly and assumed a variety of tasks and large- scale organisation became dominant in the private sector ... Women began to enter new occupations and to assert their right to new freedoms and opportunities."
He elaborates further by stating "in 1874 only 11.1% of all women were actively engaged in the workforce; by 1921 the figure had climbed to 20.7%" (P.161) and "In the entire female work-force the married, widowed and divorced constituted only 16.7%" (p.165). Olssen's figures indicate the largest proportion of women in New Zealand were single (some 83.3% in 1921) and young (55.3% under thirty years old, p.165). Even though he qualifies these figures as reflecting short-term employment while girls waited for marriage, he reflects a very different social reality to that described by Devanny. It would seem rates of marriage had not decreased for women during the period preceding the writing of *The Butcher Shop*. Phillipa Lyn Mein Smith notes the Department of Health discovered a "record number of marriages had been performed in 1920, as expected after the war." "The State and Maternity in New Zealand 1920-1935." Unpublished M.A.History Thesis (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1982) 34, but these were not privileged marriages like that of Barry and Margaret. The 1921 depression seriously impacted on childbirth rates, suggesting marriages were under significant financial and social pressures.

5. Devanny's fictionalised attack on monogamy appears far removed from her own personal position. She states "it seemed to me, from puberty onwards, all sex instruction should be a guide to the attainment of an orderly, monogamic love-life and family circle; it should be linked up with spiritual factors and objectivity in social life. By my own experience, I saw that the full development of the physical relationship between man and woman, the true and complete sex union, could obtain only in a prolonged monogamic union, one based in harmony in spiritual and mental attributes." Jean Devanny,*Point of Departure: An Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St.Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1986) 74. This autobiography is a posthumous publication from Devanny's manuscripts of a planned autobiography. The reliability of this

autobiography has recently been called into question. Research by Gustav Klaus has revealed Devanny's daughter, Pat Hurd, made at least one insertion into the typescript of the autobiography as she was revising it for publication. "*The Butcher Shop* **had the honour to be one of the books publicly burned by Hitler's Cultural Department."**

According to Klaus the novel had not been subject to censorship by the Nazis following its publication in Germany in 1930. Gustav H.Klaus, "Devanny in Germany." *Hecate* 14.2 (1988):73-78, p.75.

6. For a discussion of Devanny's support of adultery in relation to her sexual ideology see Chapter Seven "Respectable Promiscuity: Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*"

7. In her 1927 collection of thirteen short stories entitled *Old Savage and Other Stories* no less than seven are concerned with adultery;"Mrs Salgast's Baby" (originally published in a London Magazine called *Sun* in 1919),"Till Hell Freezes Over","The Springs of Human Action","Maori Love","Roy Phipps and his Wife Feodora", "Her Big Idea", and "The Perfect Mother".
Many of these stories reflect female violence in relation to attempted sexual ownership by men. In her other New Zealand novels (those written before 1929 and her departure to Australia) the same theme of marriage as a predominantly sexual contract and adultery emerges, as in *Lenore Divine* (1926) and *Dawn Beloved* (1928).

Heather Roberts interprets Devanny's dominating interest in adultery as being "**because it is a symbol of the power that men have over women.**" *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1867-1987* (Wellington:Allen & Unwin, 1987) 45.

Certainly, Devanny challenges the sexual double standard in which social permission exists only for men to commit adultery, and she inscribes her heroines with their own sexuality (for further discussion of these issues see Chapter Seven "Respectable Promiscuity: Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*") but Devanny was the first to admit the foolishness of her focus on adultery as a legitimate means for the expression of female sexuality. She says of *The Butcher Shop* "**I had taken the stand that the right of a woman to control her own body was inviolable, irrespective of the marriage bond. (Yes, it was as naive as that.)**" Jean Devanny, *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St.Lucia, Queensland:Queensland University Press, 1986) 94.

8. Certainly the moral climate of New Zealand in the 1920s was far from supportive of sexual relationships for women without marriage, "**Sex before marriage was almost universally condemned**" despite the fact that one quarter of New Zealand women conceived a child outside of marriage. Sandra Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since They Won the Vote.* (Auckland:Viking, 1993) 178.

   Some draconian measures were taken to curtail dangerous sexuality in teenage girls. Te Oranga was established in 1900 and operated until 1918 as "**a female reformatory which confined young women until their early twenties [and] could allievate some of the worst aspects of youthful sexuality**" in response to "**disquiet about juvenile promiscuity**". It was assumed residents were sexually active on admission and the main task of the institution appears to have been a means of "**controlling their incipient sexuality, best saved until marriage. If left unchecked, a young woman's flirtations and relationships with dubious characters could turn to prostitution.**" Bronwyn Dalley, "From Demi-mondes to Slaveys: Aspects of the Management of the Te Oranga Reformatory for Delinquent Young Women, 1900-1918." *Women in History 2: Essays on Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1992) 148-167, p.156, p.159.

9. Margaret, too, seems to be under some compulsion to engage in sexual intercourse in order to "**breed**" for "**Her sex-life with Barry she would probably not have reckoned up at all. It loomed little in the scheme of things. Its biggest aspect was its relation to the begetting of children.**" (BS,96). But Devanny proves remarkably inconsistent within the novel for Margaret is actually detached from motherhood and breeding when Devanny realigns the semantic meaning of words like "propagation" from reproduction to describe Margaret's own eroticism, her desire for sexual intercourse. See Chapter Seven "Respectable Promiscuity: Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*" for further discussion of these observations.

10. See Chapter Five "Idealistic Wraiths: Paradise in *The Butcher Shop*" for a discussion of how Margaret's vision of paradise is entirely a personal one and how this vision is singularly focused on sexual relations.

11. It was this affirmation of adultery which provoked the banning of the novel in Australia. Devanny's philosophy was described as "**pernicious**" for "**It assails the**

fundamentals of present day society, and in advocating loose morals for married people constitutes a definite danger for youth" Ann MacDonald,"Once - Banned NZ Novel: Lambs to the Slaughter." *The Dominion* 31 July 1982, p.6.

The novel remained banned in Australia until 1948 although it appears this may have been an oversight of the Australian authorities rather than continuing concern with its moral position or philosophy. The length of the ban is perhaps more surprising given Australia's adoption of Jean Devanny as their own novelist.

12. Divorce for Barry and Margaret might not have been such an unreasonable proposition, for as Heather Roberts describes "the divorce law had changed sufficiently to make divorce an easier and more acceptable option for women in damaging relationships ... the rate of divorce rose significantly in the 1920s ... [and] the 1920 Divorce Act was beginning to approximate social reality more closely and meet social needs". (See also note 13).

Roberts goes on to argue that,"Devanny's belief in the failure of marriage lay not with the individuals involved but with a society which expected a woman to sell herself to the highest bidder, and a man to buy a woman in the same way as he bought livestock or other property." *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987* (Wellington:Allen & Unwin, 1989) 47-48.

It is difficult to justify this latter argument in the face of Devanny's very specific, and highly individualised, focus on marriage as it is perceived and enacted by Margaret. Nor is there any textual evidence for either Margaret, or Devanny, suggesting that the marriages of Barry and Margaret or Ian and Miette are failures. The only indictment both Devanny and Margaret make is the failure of marriage to accommodate adultery.

13. Hon.Mr.MacGregor. *NZPD* Vol.187, August-Sept 24, 1920, p.1160.

14. Hon.Mr.MacGregor. *NZPD* Vol 187, August 6 - Sept 24, 1920, p.1161.

15. Hon.Mr.Lee. *NZPD* Vol.189, Oct 25-Nov 11, 1920, p.758.

16. *NZPD* Vol.187, August 6-Sept 24, Sept 23, p.1162.

17. *NZPD* Vol.189, October 25-Nov 11, 1920, p.759.

18. Jean Devanny, *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St.Lucia, Queensland: Queensland University Press, 1986) 84, p.93.

19. For a discussion of Devanny's philosophy of "divine" breeding in *The Butcher Shop* see Chapter Seven "Respectable Promiscuity: Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*."

20. Lynley Cvitanovitch, "Breaking The Silence: Protest in the Feminist Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers." Unpublished M.A. Sociology Thesis (Palmerston North: Massey University 1985) 274.
The suggestion Devanny is attempting to establish her own philosophy of decency is hardly credible when Devanny espouses and valorises the dominant ideologies of eugenics, divine motherhood and imperialism. See Chapter Seven "Respectable Promiscuity: Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*".

21. Gustav H. Klaus, "Devanny in Germany." *Hecate* 14.2 (1988):73-78, p.74.
Klaus does recognise the logical difficulties of Devanny's arguments, and of the problems these present in terms of Margaret's character. However, he too attempts some degree of rescue for Devanny by suggesting the novel suffers from "**the discourse of romance**" rather than as a consequence of unthinking writing.

22. See Chapter Five "Idealistic Wraiths: Paradise in *The Butcher Shop*" for discussion of Devanny's fictional inscription of Margaret's attitude towards work as being particularly tailored to being the aristocratic lady of the manor and a position of chosen economic dependence.

23. *The Book of New Zealand Women - Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa.* Eds. Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold, & Bridget Williams (Wellington:Bridget Williams Books, 1991) 176-177, p.176.
Carole Ferrier also argues Devanny provides a socialist vision for the emancipation of women, affirming that the re-issue of the book in 1981 as a "scholarly" edition suggests the "**work is offered not as romance, but as a work of historical and sociological importance**". "Modes of Consumption and Reception: A Review of Jean Devanny,*The Butcher Shop.*" *Hecate* 9.1 & 2 (1983):160-166, p.163.

24. This quotation from the text of *The Butcher Shop* (p.206) is frequently cited as representative of the novel's message and of Margaret's characterisation and role. However, the quotation is sourced with Ian Longstairs in a specifically didactic portion of the text which would seem to express the view of Devanny's rather than any of the characters in the novel. This confusion is perhaps symptomatic of the novel's principal weakness since the didactic voice of the author, the voice of the narrator, and Margaret's voice are not as easily distinguished as in Ellis's novel.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

Respectable Promiscuity: Sexuality in *The Butcher Shop*.

Whilst Margaret Messenger embodies all the virtues of the Victorian Angel in the House she is particularly distinguished by her own sexuality. Margaret is not inscribed with passionlessness but with passion [1]. She has her own self-generated sexual desires on which she acts. Nor is this merely an adolescent sexual passion which disappears on her marriage to Barry Messenger [2]. Initially Margaret is sexually passionate within her marriage, but this passes, and her sexual passion is moved outside of her marriage and into her adulterous relationship with Glengarry. By sexualising the Angel in the House Devanny does attempt to inscribe a new type of fictional woman, one who is a wife, a mother, and is both pure and sexual. But by making Margaret a married and sexual woman Devanny risks the reader misinterpreting Margaret as a "Fallen Woman".

The "Fallen Woman" was a euphemistic term, frequently used in Victorian Literature, to describe variously women who had succumbed to sexual impulses. This did not automatically imply the woman had become a prostitute. The Victorians developed a typology establishing whether the "Fallen Woman" had fallen as a result of seduction (because she was therefore less guilty than if she had acted on her own

desires) or if she had previously been "respectable" before her sin (that is, if she had belonged to a "good family"). Both these categories of sexual judgement implied potential redemption, and so the women concerned were less disreputable. If a woman had "fallen" and was engaging in commercially based prostitution (for money), and if she came from the lower classes, she would slide into the category of the actual prostitute, and was considered quite beyond redemption [3]. Devanny's difficulty in inscribing Margaret with sexual feelings was that she had to ensure the reader did not see Margaret as a "Fallen Woman". But her efforts to avoid reader misinterpretation of Margaret's sexual behaviour do not result in a challenge to the Victorian sexual typology but a re-formulation of it. Devanny's representation of female sexuality within *The Butcher Shop* is firmly delineated as a sexual hierarchy constructed from a mixture of Eugenic and Darwinian ideologies. The characters in the novel, and their sexual behaviour, are a reflection of their position within this Eugenically determined hierarchy [4]:

> **There in that green paddock...were the varied mentalities and emotions running the whole gamut from the highest to the lowest; from Margaret and Messenger, the scale ran down through Glengarry and Tutaki, the better class worker there, down through Miette, the unfortunate embodiment of human animalism, to the half-crazed little hunchback `sheepo' that Messenger kept out of the goodness of his heart. (BS,181)**

The Eugenic ideology underpinning the structure of Devanny's sexual hierarchy can be seen in the movement from the

representative of the "perfect" white woman, Margaret, at the top of the scale to the "**half crazed little hunchback**" who, as mentally and physically defective, represents those sub-humans at the bottom of the scale. The positions of the characters within this telling hierarchy are determined by the combined effects of their sexual behaviour, intellect and racial identity. Margaret is at the top of the hierarchy because she is the most pure, the most clean and wholesome. She even precedes Messenger within the hierarchy because she is female and is privileged by her reproductive function.

But Devanny's privileging of the reproductive function in woman has little to do with reproduction as such. Throughout *The Butcher Shop* Devanny does not privilege the outcome of reproduction, namely children, or the associated consequence of reproductive activity, namely pregnancy. Some of the conceptual confusion over Devanny's representation of motherhood appears to rest on Devanny's use of the term "**The Will to Propagate**" (BS:132,174,175) where "**propagate**" is misread as synonymous with motherhood. But Devanny uses "**propagate**" as a euphemistic title for the female desire to engage in sexual intercourse, for female eroticism, and although she links this to the continuation of the human, and white, species, it is never within the context of motherhood. It is the potentiality of maternity that is given importance. Woman is figured only sexually, as

> a sex-fabric woven from the raw material called sex-delight; a builder of bodies, she is fashioned for that purpose only ... She brings forth the Woman-child, shows her the mating-couch, and says: "the race must go on." (BS,174)

It is within this context that Devanny can name Margaret's sexual desire as the "**will to propagate**" whilst she names Miette's sexual desire as unrestrained lust, as a murderous "**vice**" (BS,162). This is a fascinating irony when it is Margaret's "**will to propagate**" that results in Barry's suicide and Glengarry's murder. Not only is Margaret's sexual desire honoured in the text, it is deified. Devanny privileges Margaret's sexual desire historically by linking it back to the beginning of evolution (BS,132) and spiritually by sourcing her sexual desire as "**god-head**" (BS,174). Margaret's position at the top of the hierarchy, her refined and sensitive understanding of the "**niceties**" of culture and civilisation, transcends the normal interpretation of history and society. She is exempt from "**common**" (BS,108) racial and social stereotypes, she is exempt from "**common**" sexual behaviour, and she is exempt from the category of the "Fallen Woman". Her exemptions from common social criteria and categorisation are reinforced by the didactic rhetoric grafted into Margaret's voice, loudly confirming her attributes as well above those of normal women.

Next down from Margaret and Barry in Devanny's hierarchy is the chiefly Maori, Jimmy Tutaki, closest to the superior Europeans because he is an intellectual Maori. Tutaki shares the same level with Glengarry, the Scottish farm manager, not quite a pure European and of a lower social class than Margaret and Barry Messenger, and who, by virtue of his sexual behaviour, is closer to the "savage" Maori. Close to the bottom of the scale is the dreadful Miette, described as "an embodiment of human animalism". Miette, unlike Margaret, Messenger and Jimmy Tutaki, is not an intellectual. This alone would reduce her status on the scale, but because she is indiscriminate in her choice of sexual partners to the extent where she will sleep with non-Europeans (Jimmy Tutaki) she is close to the bottom of the hierarchy near to the mental and moral defectives. But Devanny is very careful not to reduce Miette's status too far, for she distinguishes Miette from the prostitute:

> Miette, again the typical libertine was only attracted by men of a certain decency. Her type must not for a moment be confounded with the woman of the street. She was saved from that lower level by a certain strain of respectability. (BS,159) [5]

Although Miette is no prostitute, she cannot aspire to the heady heights of purity and transcendent sexuality Margaret occupies in Devanny's own constructed sexual hierarchy.

The erotic plotting of the novel would also seem to reflect

this sexual hierarchy; Margaret marries Barry, her appropriate mate at the top of the bio-genetic scale, both of them having been described in terms of coming from "**good, clean stock**" (BS:37,44) and both are European (white) New Zealanders. Margaret's adulterous relationship is with Glengarry, who is slightly below her on the scale because he is inferior to her, as is made clear in the text (BS:121-22, 129-130,131,135), but he is still a white man and so entitled to a more privileged position. Jimmy Tutaki is a "**clean and civilised Maori [who] is a brown pakeha**" by virtue of his unusual habits of reading [6], but he transgresses the hierarchal order by having a sexual relationship with the animalistic Miette and is reduced back to the level of the savage. Margaret refers to Jimmy Tutaki as a "**black swine**" and a "**nigger**" (BS:167,169) following her discovery that he is having sexual intercourse with Miette. But her real fury seems directed at Jimmy Tutaki's impudence in being disrespectful towards Miette, in seeing her as a "**human cesspit**", for Jimmy Tutaki is

> **a man not of her race, a man whose sex traditions differed essentially from the pakeha's. Civilisation demanded from the white man of Jimmy's type at least a semblance of respect and consideration for the Miette's; but two generations had not taught Jimmy the finer points, the niceties of civilisation ... His essential savage honesty had not become obscured ... To the Maori she was a human cesspit.(BS,161)**

Devanny's representation of Maori is one of the masked savage [7]. A veneer of civilisation covers Jimmy Tutaki's

behaviour but there is a "a vein of imperishable savage simplicity, of child-like acceptance of people and things, in Jimmy's make-up" (BS,168). In other words, Jimmy remains a savage because he is genetically determined as a savage. His "make-up" determines not only his colour, but his race, his sexual behaviour, and his capacity for culture.

Yet Devanny describes Margaret as a woman who is quite excited by "savage" sexuality. After her second adulterous intercourse with Glengarry, Margaret reflects:

> But how dreadfully fascinating his savagery! She shivered in fearful delight. She thought about his criticism of her attitude, but arrived at no conclusions regarding it, beyond seeing definitely her utter inability to feel outraged, `insulted'. This last word coming to her mind shocked her, roused her indignation. as though she were a common creature that a man would dare insult! Her transcendent qualities of mind and soul took the first step towards conscious existence. The supreme egotism of the natural woman, recognising the unquestionable character of instinctive morality, laid its first imprint upon her. (BS,108)

The "attitude" Glengarry finds so provoking is Margaret's unproblematic acceptance of having a husband and a lover simultaneously. Yet Margaret's anger is directed at the "insult" from Glengarry in his suggesting she may be doing something immoral in having an adulterous relationship with him. The allegation of immorality, in Margaret's eyes, can only be true if Margaret were a "common creature". But Margaret is not an ordinary or "common" woman, she is a "natural woman", because her sexuality is founded on her "transcendent qualities of mind and soul" and her

"instinctive morality". These "transcendent qualities" create the distinction between Margaret, the Miettes of the world, and ordinary women, and form the core of the sexual philosophy Devanny uses to construct and distinguish Margaret's sexuality and her adultery as "respectable" and different from Miette's and Jimmy Tutaki's promiscuous adultery.

Devanny's sexual philosophy of women seems to mirror almost exactly that of Ettie Rout's, to the extent where *The Butcher Shop* seems to be a fictional enactment of the "new system of morality" Rout espouses. Jane Tolerton provides the best synopsis of Ettie Rout's "philosophy of sexuality", as expressed in Rout's 1922 publication *Safe Marriage* [8]. Rout wanted a world where there would be

> a new system of morality. Its object would be personal happiness and a healthy race. Its pivot would be ` the fastidiously selective passionate love of free womanhood. The fastidious sexual selection of woman of the finest men for the fathers of her `children' was `the greatest dynamic force on earth'; it could be released if contraception and prophylaxis were `rightly used and understood'. Legal marriage had abolished sexual selection and therefore had got in the way of evolution towards `higher types'. `Private property in women and children is the real object of legal monogamic marriage ', Ettie said ... As things stood, legality had been substituted for morality. Legal monogamic indissoluble marriage was depriving people of love-life whereas ` the claims of sex-love should be paramount'. Marriages of convenience, and all other forms of mercenary intercourse are wrong, indecent, unnatural, and anti-social. Romantic, passionate, highly selective mutual Love is the only justification and reason for Sexual Intercourse - and that is its natural limitation. [9]

Margaret frequently voices Rout's ideas as her rationale for her adulterous behaviour; her "**personal happiness**" is paramount, particularly where it is tied to the pursuit of her great "**Romantic, passionate, highly selective Love**" that justifies her sexual intercourse with Glengarry, for as Margaret tells him:

> **I wish I had not loved you ... I can see you are going to create difficulties where none exist ... I have a right to my happiness if I can get it without harming others. Every woman must have the right to consummate the greatest love of her life.(BS,121)**

Despite her marriage to Barry, Margaret is firmly committed to pursuing her sexual relationship with Glengarry, that is until Glengarry besmirches her purity of motive by suggesting it may be immoral. For like Ettie Rout, Margaret believes her "**legal monogamic indissoluble marriage was depriving [her] of love-life**", which she believed it should not do. In taking this position Margaret, and Devanny, are referring to a higher authority than the legal or social. Margaret's point of reference is her sexual desire as a "**god-head**" (BS,174) which, of itself, provides an "**instinctive morality**". Like Rout, Devanny also espouses the view that as far as marriage is concerned "**legality had been substituted for morality**". Margaret also believes, like Rout, that "**private property in women and children is the real object of legal monogamic marriage**" and her attacks on Glengarry are solely focused on this issue:

> I hate you when you talk like that. I feel - yes, insulted; you insult me, you treat me as though I were not a human being at all. How dare you tell me that my happiness, my life, is to be regulated according to any man's character; that I am not to have a mind, a will of my own ? I tell you it does not matter what Barry is! It is the *principle* of the thing. I am myself, and will not be the subject doll of any man.(BS,133)[Devanny's emphasis].

In the light of this sexual philosophy both Margaret and Devanny do not acknowledge "adultery" within Margaret's relationship with Glengarry, although it is promiscuous "adultery" that Margaret sees when she considers Miette's sexual behaviour. When Glengarry challenges Margaret's view as one which advocates promiscuity between men and women, "a society of paramours"(BS,134), Margaret's response is unequivocal:

> I would have a society of reasonable men and women unsoiled by filthy conventions; men and women equal in each other's eyes; a society in which the natural love of man and woman can have natural expression...(BS,134)

Margaret's "natural love" is sexual love, sexual desire, the passion she holds for Glengarry. But Devanny expands this justification even further, supporting Rout's argument that the "claims of sex-love are paramount" when Margaret proclaims:

> I would be just as good had I a dozen children each with a different father, Glen, so long as my mind remained clean and I chose my own mate. But let me have one forced on me, chain me with bonds of slavery, and I am bad, a menace to society.(BS,136)

Margaret states the case for mate selection, for free sexual choice, providing it is linked to a purity of motive and

intellect by retention of her "**clean**" mind. As long as these pre-conditions of free will and purity are met, Margaret can pursue as many sexual relationships outside of her marriage as she may choose, even having children by "**different fathers**" and she will still remain "**good**".

Margaret voices the very essence of the philosophy which leaves Devanny arguing the case for Margaret's "respectable" promiscuity against Miette's "**vice**" (BS,162) of promiscuity.

Within this distillation of Margaret's sexuality Devanny's philosophy of female sexuality can be seen as almost identical to that of Ettie Rout. Rout argues for the "**fastidiously selective passionate love of free womanhood**", and for the "**fastidious sexual selection of woman of the finest men for the fathers of her `children'**", in other words, for free mate selection based on sexual love.[10] The only distinction between Devanny and Rout is that Devanny argues this should be the case even if the woman is married, whereas Rout was suggesting this principle should become the basis for marriage rather than any other reason.

Throughout the novel, Devanny invites the reader to compare Margaret's sexual behaviour, which is governed by her higher moral sensibilities and her intrinsic purity, with that of Miette Longstairs, Barry's married cousin. But the reader's interpretation of both Margaret and Miette is heavily

controlled by the shifts in tone and metaphor that Devanny inscribes to indicate blatantly her approval of Margaret and her disgust at Miette. Miette is consistently portrayed as a woman who is sexually promiscuous and sexually indiscriminate, who lacks intelligence and is governed not by purity and love but by the sensual demands of her body: "she lacked the brain power to offset her sensuality", "she was a sensualist of a low type", "the psychology of her type pandered wholly to the fleshy lusts",(BS,152), "[her] sensuality was that of the male...she was much too passionate for Ian [her husband]" (BS,150), and "Miette talked about sex whenever possible, especially with men, and at such times her sensuality would manifest itself unmistakenly. She would look as though she wanted to grab the man nearest her"(BS,150). The tone of all these descriptions of Miette's unrestrained sensuality are quite condemning. Devanny does little to hide the disgust this "type" of woman evokes. Miette is described as "the harlot's house [of] the wanton spirit" (BS,163) and "as soft and pulpy as a slug" (BS,164). Margaret too, is equally condemning of Miette. She describes Miette as representing unrestrained, and deadly, lust:

> A personification of the vice that she most despised, a personification of the Thing that sprawled its leprous limbs upon Society to whiten mankind and loose its virtues until they dropped from it one by one. (BS,162)

Devanny's diction reflects lust as a disease, like leprosy, which will eat into society, destroying as it were the social

body. The realistic reflection of this disease, and this anxiety, in contemporary New Zealand was of the "Red Plague" of venereal disease [11]. As a deadly lust personified, Miette would be tolerable if she stayed within the lower social orders, but she doesn't. As the narrator observes, Miette "**never consorted with men of her own type, she selected respectable, fairly clean men**" (BS,59).

Interestingly, although Margaret is not thrilled when she discovers that Miette is having a sexual relationship with Jimmy Tutaki, she is horrified when she believes Miette is having a sexual relationship with her ex-lover, Glengarry, her own "**fairly respectable clean**" man. But she is not just horrified, she is jealous (BS,199), possessed by emotions so strong that they "**billowed around her like poisonous vapours vomited from the mouth of hell's choicest denizens**"(BS,198), causing her to seduce Glengarry back into a sexual relationship with her (BS,199-200). As a consequence of this behaviour Margaret condemns herself for falling from her elevated position:

> **She, Margaret Messenger, renowned throughout the country for her mental and moral pulchritude, had descended to the level of a drab. (BS,199)**

Devanny's diction of "**descended to the level**" clearly indicates the operation of her hierarchy as posited on sexual behaviour. The use of the term "**drab**", an archaic expression for a slatternly woman or a whore [12], seems particularly

selected to emphasise how Margaret has fallen lower than Miette, as

> **the pure and high-minded, of the intellectual, [she has been] compelled, despite herself, to drag her spiritual wings in the filth and coarseness of the debased [Miette].(BS,164)**

It is difficult to see why Margaret is compelled "**to drag her spiritual wings in the filth**", or by whom, particularly as it is only her own vision of her transcendent love with Glengarry that compels her. Most of Margaret's horror seems to be provoked by Miette's transgression of the hierarchic order, so Margaret's sexual behaviour may reflect her anxiety about sexual contamination of her "**good clean stock**" (BS,43) by the leprous Miette. According to Margaret, Miette should not move within the hierarchy at all for her bio-genetic position, like Jimmy Tutaki's, is pre-determined at birth:

> **Miette could not hide the type of woman she was. She was born it. She had not become it through circumstance or reason or will. She was it, and the type was stamped all over her.(BS,145)**

There is no mistaking the underlying Eugenic ideology which defines Miette as a sexually promiscuous `amateur' from birth, for "**she was born to it**". Her genetic construction totally pre-determines her intelligence, morality, and behaviour whereas Margaret, by virtue of her higher intelligence, her purity, her beauty, and her transcendent qualities, is able to exercise free-will in the selection of

her sexual mate. Superficially, Devanny's construction of Margaret's sexuality appears to validate the feminist attributes some critics have ascribed to it. Heather Roberts briefly mentions Devanny's pre-occupation with extramarital sex but chooses to see this as evidence of Devanny's feminist concern with extramarital sex as "**a symbol of the power that men have over women**" [13]. Roberts does admit that Devanny "**has some difficulty explaining her belief that sex should not be confined to marriage**" but she does not acknowledge the singularly individual construction of Margaret's characterisation, and her vision, which for Margaret, and Devanny, is not seen in feminist terms at all, but is merely assessed on the basis of personal pleasure and not political or social reform. Roberts also remarks that Margaret does not enjoy sexual intercourse, and that Devanny inscribes this in the text to "**point out the suffering of women in marriage signified by their lack of enjoyment of intercourse with the men to whom they are bound**" [14]. This would appear to be a feminist over-reading of the text. Margaret does enjoy sexual intercourse with her husband, both before marriage and after the initial bloom of passion has worn off, for

> **the intimacies of their life together, though not sweet to her as him, yet were not displeasing to her because the flavour of her love clung to them.(BS,96)**

She certainly seems to enjoy intercourse with Glengarry as well as seeing herself bound to him, admittedly of her own

free-will. Lynley Cvitanovich, when reflecting on Margaret's sexuality, advances a feminist argument that Margaret's adultery does not "**interfere with her being a good mother and reliable wife. Her family and domestic life are not threatened or destroyed by her sexuality. Rather, it is the men in Margaret's life who disturb this equilibrium with the claims they make on her**" [15]. But Margaret's domestic and family life is destroyed by her sexuality; her husband drowns himself and she murders her lover. Further, it is Margaret's invoking of her own "**ingrained jealous property instincts of the wife**" (BS,167) as aroused by Miette, and her determination to hang on to her transcendental love and her marriage, which provoke the bloody conclusion of the novel.

The feminist critical perspective adopts the position that the bloody ending to *The Butcher Shop* is a direct consequence of man's oppression of woman, a fitting outcome to Devanny's perceived radical interpretation of marriage as merely one of sexual ownership for the woman. But textual evidence suggests that it is Margaret's own ideas of sexual ownership, of having both husband and lover, which provoke her to murder. Further, the dominant thematic concern of the novel is with Margaret's erotic rather than reproductive sexuality, and with the satisfaction of Margaret's personal pleasure. Very little of the novel is devoted to motherhood, parenting, or children. Yet the critical commentary concerning the novel

consistently focuses on Devanny's representation of motherhood, as personified by Margaret, rather than that of Margaret's sexuality. Furthermore few critics examine Miette's characterisation or her relationship to the representation of female sexuality within the novel [16].

For Margaret, pregnancy occurs outside of the text, actually between chapters, or babies just appear. The birth of Margaret's first child reinforces Eugenic ideology rather than extolling the virtues of motherhood. Margaret attends a doctor whilst pregnant, as she is scared that her encounter with the physically deformed, and mentally retarded child (BS,72) would have affected her baby's development, for "noticing the boy so much might have affected the child" (BS,78). This first child, Harry, is born, but Harry is "preternaturally alert, fitful, startled to infant hysteria" (BS,79), and later discovered to be suffering from a life threatening heart condition (BS,94), as if to support the idea the "idiot" (BS,72) had somehow influenced the embryonic Harry. Margaret's view on the less-than-perfect is made clear in her response to the deformed boy:

> 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. (BS,73)

Margaret's statements are pure National Socialism particularly as her own son's imperfections are redeemed by

his intelligence and his beauty (BS,92) whilst Devanny, by her non-critical position voices agreement for both the extinction of the non-perfect human and the Eugenic ideology of contamination [17].

The Eugenic rationale, at its most extreme, argued for the extinction of mental and physical defectives, or at the very least severe restrictions on their abilities to reproduce because they would otherwise contaminate the national gene pool, and worse, would somehow magically infect "normal" members of New Zealand's population. Horrible though these views are, they had enormous currency, as demonstrated in Phillip Fleming's thesis [18]. He cites B.E. Baughton's report to the North Canterbury Hospital Board in 1923 advocating compulsory sterilisation of the mentally defective:

> not only the feeble-minded required operation[s], but also those who were over-sexed. From the evidence they needed de-sexualising rather than sterilising only, in order that character might be helped in the individual as well as the quality of the race. [19]

Here the argument extends beyond the mentally defective to members of the population who are "over-sexed" who evidently require treatments other than mere sterilisation.

Margaret's view of motherhood appears to be firmly founded on Eugenic ideology, that pregnancy and childbirth must conform to the production of "perfect" babies. Critics such as

Cvitanovich have attempted to site Margaret's eugenically driven motherhood as a contemporaneous reflection of the dominant ideology of the 1920s [20]. But Devanny's position is not neutral towards Eugenics since she actively valorises and affirms these Eugenic ideas of motherhood within Margaret's characterisation. And contrary to the dominant ideology of the day, particularly that of Truby King [21], Devanny does not perceive motherhood to be a divine or supreme female task. Margaret herself sees the act of giving birth as divine, not that of motherhood:

> The bringing forth of young she saw as awesome and wondrous, 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? - as the woman of her world invariably did. Unconsciously she [Margaret] assumed this proper attitude towards her parenthood. (BS,79)

Devanny quite clearly proclaims that motherhood is not the "supreme achievement for woman" nor should it be the dominant and absorbing interest of a woman's life [22]. Margaret has three further children after Harry, "small Margaret"(BS:82,113), "Heather"(BS,155) and "Jane"(BS,94) but their arrivals are so invisible within the text there is some confusion as to how many children Margaret has at all. This invisibility, these silent pregnancies and births, stand in stark contrast to the lengthy, and detailed, descriptions of Margaret's varying levels of sexual desire and passion. In fact Margaret, despite her apparent glorification of giving

birth, is found throughout the text declaring there will be no more babies within her marriage (BS:83,94,95,138). Birth control is never mentioned so it is difficult to determine how Margaret plans not to have more children, but her motivation for refusing pregnancy is made quite clear, for she states: **"Well, the family will have to stop growing, that's all, because I am determined to go round the world."** (BS,83)[23]. Although Margaret seems to be placing her personal pleasure before motherhood, the later arrivals of children suggests Margaret is not able to control her pregnancies to suit her needs. But the fairly frequent arrival of children is more clearly directed at indicating the existing level of sexual relationship that she and Barry share: **"she was thinking she would have to put her foot down. At which Barry blushed like a boy, ran his fingers through his hair and stammered: `Just as you say, dear, of course'"**(BS,95), rather than any didactic statement concerning birth control, pregnancy or motherhood.

Devanny does ensure that Margaret is seen to "mother" within the text; she **"suckled her baby each evening"** (BS:100,116), in front of Glengarry much to his anguish, she **"occasionally [threw] herself into the medley"** of Jimmy Tutaki and the children playing in the lounge (BS,100),and she walks with her children in the cherry orchard (BS,200). She is a mother who spends time with her children, although the narrator

appears less affirming about these parental vignettes, stating sarcastically "**Wonderful domestic scene**" (BS,100).

Far from representing motherhood as an elevated status and function of womanhood, Devanny attempts to challenge at least partially the dominant social construction of motherhood in the 1920s. Essentially Devanny can be seen to try and change the cult of true womanhood; motherhood is not the ultimate, totally absorbing and essential activity for woman but Margaret is however, pure, an excellent wife and nurturing mother. Where Devanny attempts to change this image is by making Margaret sexual and assertive within her own sexuality. Devanny succeeds in sexualising the Angel in the House but fails in making a successful case for the expression of that sexuality by her advocacy of adultery. Her case for Margaret maintaining a "respectable" promiscuity is extremely difficult to justify when placed alongside her descriptions of Miette's sexual behaviour. The narrator describes Miette as desiring "**promiscuity in a respectable manner**"(BS,150), but so does Margaret. The only textual distinctions between Margaret's adulterous behaviour and Miette's adulterous behaviour is that Miette transgresses Devanny's sexual hierarchy and has sex with a non-white, Jimmy Tutaki, whereas Margaret has a sexual relationship with a white man which is justified on the basis of her higher personal morality and intelligence, in other words, her

elevated position at the top of Devanny's scale. The construction of female sexuality within *The Butcher Shop* is heavily dependent on Eugenic ideology and racial stereotype, rather than feminism and socialism. Gustav Klaus neatly sums up the total effect of these ideologies, stating:

> **In a German cultural and political context the recurring remarks on race and blood ... situate the novel in a very sinister neighbourhood ... What also connects *The Butcher Shop* with the blood-and-soil literature made into a cult (though not invented) by National Socialism, is its combination of rural rootedness, reverence for powerful manhood, celebration of elemental instincts in human and animal life, and the almost zoological insistence on unadulterated breeding.[24]**

Devanny's construction of female sexuality moves uncomfortably closer to fascism than feminism; 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.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER SEVEN.

1. Refer to Chapter Four, endnote 1, for the definition of the Victorian concept of `passionlessness' as explained by Nancy F. Cott and its relationship to the fictional construct of female sexuality.

2. Refer to Chapter Four, endnote 2, p.98, for Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble's critical analysis of the representation of female adolescent sexuality.

3. For a comprehensive discussion of this Victorian sexual typology and categorisation see Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality* (London:Random House, 1993) particularly Chapter 6 of this book.

4. Although Eugenics ideology was a feature of the post-1900 environments overseas, and a dominant factor in the 1920s to which the German National Socialist Party is testimony, Eugenics appears to have had an early, extremely powerful, and persistent impact on New Zealand culture and psychology.
   The earliest appearance of Eugenics ideology in New Zealand according to Phillip J.Fleming was in 1876, when Duncan MacGregor, Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy and Political Economy at the University of Otago, outlined his view concerning "**hopeless drunkards, hopeless criminals, and hopeless paupers ... They must be made to work for their support, and deprived of liberty until they die, in order to prevent their..having children to inherit their curse**". Eugenics in New Zealand 1900-1940 ", Unpublished M.A.History thesis (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1981)10-11. Eugenics was further advanced in 1903 when W.A.Chapple wrote and published *The Fertility of the Unfit* here in New Zealand. His book, outlining Eugenic philosophy, purported to be a `scientific study' and recommended the "**compulsory sterilisation of the unfit**". P. J.Gibbons, "The Climate of Opinion" *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press 1981) 302-330, p.304.
   Phillip Fleming provides some explanation as to why Eugenics gained such a grip on New Zealand, as well as providing a wealth of detail concerning the evolution of the Eugenics Education Society. He suggests Eugenics ideology became deeply entrenched in New Zealand because of intense political support. Large numbers of politicians found Eugenic theory to be highly credible, and creditable. (Fleming:18,25,28) This political enthusiasm, combined with the appointment of Dr.Truby

King (a leading member of the Wellington Eugenics Education Society in 1911) as Director of Child Welfare in 1921, the revelation of the poor health of New Zealand's young men in 1914, and the national concern with maternal mortality and the rise in venereal diseases, led to a national adoption of Eugenics ideology which would appear to promise a future generation of strong, white, European New Zealanders.

5. Aptly summarised by Ronald Pearsall,"**The prostitute as a sub-species of Homo sapiens was thus pigeon-holed, and that was that...**" As cited by Pearsall, Henry Mayhew created a sociological masterpiece when he categorised the prostitute into six categories dependent upon their client's class position.
Devanny performs a similar typological exercise in her treatment of Margaret and Miette's sexual behaviours, an exercise far removed from socialist or feminist principles.*The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality* (London:Random House, 1993) 245 & 268.

6. Heather Roberts, *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987* (Wellington:Allen & Unwin, 1989) 58.

7. Terry Goldie provides a useful critical analysis of the image of the indigene (savage, native) within New Zealand literature by utilising the concept of "standard commodities" from Edward Said. Goldie argues "**Two such commodities which appear to be standard in Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand literatures are sex and violence**". *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (Kingston,Ontario: McGill-Queens University Press, 1989)15. Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors* (Auckland: Tandem Press, 1990) also represents Maori through the standard commodities of violence and sexuality.
Devanny's representation of Jimmy Tutaki as really a savage is negotiated through his represented sexuality. If he had stayed a non-sexually active brown man he would be worthy of continued respect from Margaret. But it is the enactment of his sexual desires which discloses him as just a savage. It is as if Devanny became aware in the act of writing the passage where Margaret resorts to racial insults of Jimmy Tutaki that she was demonstrating an unwelcome racism. She has Margaret soften her response, and attitude, for "**Jimmy must, like herself and everyone else, be allowed his quota of weaknesses, she had to believe. His manner to**

Miette left no doubt in Margaret's mind, now that she understood the adultery, of his attitude towards his weakness...And she had to concede, in the light of day and re-enthroned common-sense, that fairness to Jimmy excluded consideration of his race."(BS,167) Effectively Devanny, and Margaret, exempt Jimmy from sexual judgement by "**excluding**" him from "**his race**"; by turning him into a non-Maori.

8. Jane Tolerton, *Ettie, A Life of Ettie Rout: Guardian Angel or Wickedest Woman ?.* (Auckland:Penguin, 1992) 212.

9. *Ibid*, p.212.

10. Ettie Rout was much influenced in the development of her sexual philosophy by the Swedish Feminist, Ellen Key.
In turn Key was much influenced by Eugenics, an interest Ettie found absorbing. As described by Jane Tolerton, Key wanted "**women to develop for themselves their own morality, building on their own sexuality and guided by their own instincts, not by the church or society**". *Ettie, A Life of Ettie Rout: Guardian Angel or Wickedest Woman ?.* (Auckland:Penguin, 1992) 88.
Although no contemporary evidence exists that Ettie and Devanny met personally, certainly Ettie as founder of, and long term contributor to, the *Maoriland Worker* made these views known within her various articles in the newspaper, a newspaper to which Devanny had considerable exposure owing to her Labour Party and Communist connections. It was also a newspaper she actively contributed to,in or around 1913 to 1915. Jean Devanny, *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St.Lucia, Queensland: Queensland University Press,1986) 67.
It is also likely Devanny would have read *Safe Marriage* particularly given her interest in sex and contraception, and given her view that she saw herself as a sexual pioneer, for she agreed with a friend that "**she had the makings of another Annie Besant**". *Point of Departure*, 91. This observation of Devanny's is particularly interesting given Ellen Ellis's reference to Annie Besant. Ellis saw her advocacy for birth control in *Everything is Possible to Will* as being a continuation of Annie Besant's work, (See Chapter Four, pp 91-93) whereas birth control within *The Butcher Shop* is never dealt with explicitly or argued for because of the strong Eugenic thrust to the text.

11. The phrase `Red Plague' is borrowed from Phillip Fleming's article "Fighting the Red Plague: Observations on the Response to Venereal Disease in New Zealand 1910-1945" *New Zealand Journal of History* 22.1 (April 1988):56-64. As Fleming observes "**the fight against venereal disease ... was perceived as a eugenic endeavour**" (p.60) and it would seem Devanny had absorbed the eugenic ideology driving the fight against venereal disease when she came to contemplate the characterisation of Miette. Certainly promiscuity and venereal disease in New Zealand were dominant concerns from 1914 to 1935, and frequently accompanied by an often irrational level of national terror. The intensity of this terror reached fever pitch in 1921 prompting the call for a national enquiry into venereal diseases in New Zealand. The result was the Report of the Committee of the Board of Health on Venereal Disease in New Zealand, 20th June 1922. It is widely believed returning soldiers from World War I prompted the concern about the spread of venereal diseases, and to some extent the infected soldier population had some impact. But the Committee's larger area of enquiry was into the promiscuous behaviour of young New Zealanders. As the Report quaintly describes, the Committee "**gave lengthy consideration to what it saw as a major cause of venereal disease in New Zealand that of `Promiscuous Intercourse ' by `amateurs' not prostitutes**". [their capitalisation] *AJHR* Vol.II, 1922, H.31A, pp 1-27, p.11.

Devanny seems to draw the same distinction in Miette's sexual behaviour, she is an "amateur" and not a prostitute. The Committee on Venereal Disease in New Zealand was quite driven by eugenic ideology stating "**the looseness of conduct between the sexes such as shown to exist in New Zealand is destructive to the high ideals of family life ... and must lead to the decadence of the race**" (p.16) and particularly saw girls as responsible for this threat to national health and morality because "**girls stay less at home**" (p.11). In respect of mentally defective females the commentary was even more extreme, for these "**girls are a source of danger to themselves ... since they have little or no will-power or sense of restraint**". (p.20).

Devanny reflects these sentiments in constructing Miette's sexuality; Miette has no intelligence, she is close to the bottom of the hierarchy near the mental and moral defectives, she has no will-power and no self-restraint, for she "**panted to live with the brown man**" (BS:161,165), and when aroused "**wanted to grab the man nearest her**"(BS,150).

12. Marian Makins, Collins English Dictionary (Glasgow: Harper Collins,1991) 471.

13. Heather Roberts, *Where Did She Come From ?: New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989) 45.

14. Heather Roberts, "Mother, Wife and Mistress: Women Characters in the New Zealand Novel from 1920-1940" *Landfall* 29.3 (1975): 233-47, p.243.

15. Lynley Cvitanovich, "Breaking the Silence: Protest in the Feminist Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers" Unpublished M.A. Sociology thesis (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1985) 273.

16. Carole Ferrier briefly mentions Miette by commenting on her inscription as "The Fallen Woman". "Consumption and Reception: A Review of Jean Devanny, *The Butcher Shop*". *Hecate* 9.1 & 2 (1983):160-166, p.166.

17. A definition of National Socialism is provided from within a New Zealand context by Paul Spoonley, "**Each individual is an organic part of the whole social organisation - the Nation - with an assigned function to the best of his ability of the whole. Each social class has its place and function within the nation and should therefore by no means be in conflict with the others**".
Spoonley remarks that the sexual and racial elements are critical within this ideology because they govern behaviour. Paul Spoonley, *The Politics of Nostalgia: Racism and the Extreme Right in New Zealand* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1987) 163.

18. Phillip J. Fleming, "Eugenics in New Zealand 1900-1940" Unpublished M.A. History thesis (Palmerston North:Massey University) 1981.

19. *Ibid*, p.36.

20. Lynley Cvitanovich argues Devanny constructs "**motherhood as woman's greatest achievement and the facilitator of her maturity. It remains then both her primary responsibility and her greatest joy**". Breaking the Silence: Protest in the Feminist Fiction of Two New Zealand Woman Writers" Unpublished M.A. Sociology thesis (Palmerston North:Massey University, 1985) 291.
Certainly motherhood in the nineteen twenties was lauded as woman's greatest achievement, but Devanny does

not have Margaret perceive motherhood in this light.

21. The Plunket Society from its inception in 1907 , as initiated and controlled by Truby King, was a dominant social force in New Zealand. Erik Olssen notes that "**by 1930 some 65% of all non-Maori infants were under the control and care of the Society.**" "Truby King and the Plunket Society: An Analysis of a Prescriptive Ideology" *New Zealand Journal of History* 15-16 (1981-2): 3-23, p.11.

It is now well recognised by historians and critics alike that Truby King and the Plunket Society was a major social force in disseminating a eugenically based philosophy of maternal and childcare, and during the period 1910 to the late 1920s was a keen advocate of the ideologically driven "**cult of true womanhood, that cluster of values defining the perfect woman as pious, pure, submissive, supportive and nurturant, a most excellent wife and mother.**" Erik Olssen,*Ibid*, p.5.

Devanny would seem to be presenting a different case within the characterisation of Margaret, for Devanny would seem to be presenting a different case within the characterisation of Margaret for she does not valorise motherhood, although Margaret is described as an excellent mother, even a perfect one (**BS**, 177). For further debate on the Plunket Society and eugenic ideology; see Gordon Parry, *A Fence at the Top: the First Seventy Five Years of the Plunket Society* (Wellington: NZ Plunket Society,1982) and Phillipa Lyn Mein Smith, "The State and Maternity in New Zealand 1920-1935" Unpublished M.A.History thesis (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1982). Smith provides a comprehensive analysis of the political climate of the day, examining the Plunket Society, eugenics and the maternal mortality scare of 1920.

22. This view would seem to be supported personally by Devanny. She says "**I brooded on the question of parentage. The physical tie, I came to believe, was basically unimportant to both `mother' and child. I myself, I knew, could love any woman's child; and if I, why not other women? Given the circumstances of family care, all normal women, I felt sure, could feel maternal love and anxiety for any and every child and, this too by my own experience, I knew that before everything else the child needed the open expression and lavishment of love. It needed in short a *mother* - but the physical bond played no necessary part.**"[Her emphasis]. Jean Devanny, *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St.Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1986) 65.

Devanny not only denies motherhood as the greatest achievement of woman, she radically argues there is absolutely nothing special, unique or divine about motherhood for there is no magical bond between biological mother and child; mothering can be performed by any woman.

23. It is not very surprising Devanny does not mention birth control directly given the social climate of New Zealand in the 1920s. The prevailing view was that both the provision of birth control methods and protection from venereal disease were regarded as physical prophylactics and would encourage pre-marital and extramarital sex and therefore immorality. Devanny's authorial concern was to stress the purity of her heroine so birth control methods are only discreetly hinted at compared to the overt treatment Ellis gives the subject and despite Ellis's desire to keep her heroine equally pure. For an interesting exploration of 1920s attitudes to sexual morality and birth control see Jane Tolerton, *Ettie: A Life of Ettie Rout* (Auckland: Penguin, 1992) 120-7.

24. Gustav Klaus,"Devanny in Germany" *Hecate* 14.2 (1988): 73-78, p.73.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

Unhappy Endings: The Fragmentation of the Feminist Vision.

As it should by now be clear the initial similarities between *Everything is Possible to Will* and *The Butcher Shop* do not indicate a shared feminist vision, nor do they demonstrate a progressively developmental image of feminism and fiction within New Zealand literature. Devanny's novel does not advance the feminist stance presented by Ellis, although both novels share the same preoccupation with the image of woman as the Angel in the House and both attempt to modify this image, with varying degrees of success. Ellis attempts to move the Angel from the domestic confines of the House and into society without necessarily forcing her complete removal from her domestic empire; the Angel's will, her desire to grow and develop, is to be exercised in both social and domestic domains. Devanny leaves her Angel, Margaret, in the House but attempts to inscribe her with her own sexuality whilst maintaining her traditional values of purity and morality.

Although neither of these representations of the Angel in the House is entirely successful, Ellis failing because she cannot accommodate female sexuality outside of romantic ideology, and Devanny failing because she cannot accommodate

female sexuality without romantic ideology, both writers raise a thematic image of female violence as a consequence of female subjection. Nevertheless in *The Butcher Shop* the subjection that Margaret experiences is quite difficult to locate, since it is confined solely to the restraint of her sexual behaviour. Ellis sees existential annihilation as a direct consequence of the patriarchal oppression of women through interpersonal relationships and social institutions and structures, a threatened annihilation countered either by female suicide or homicide. But she does not valorise these murderous impulses; she refutes them, actively restraining her heroine, and her novel, from such murderous consequences by textualising democratic options. Women must find a voice, free themselves from the capture of artificial ideologies, and find the will to challenge and change the conditions which generate these annihilating impulses.

Devanny picks up this thematic concern with existential annihilation, but for her this threat to womanhood is confined solely to the patriarchal interference in female sexuality, particularly where the female will to desire is restrained or refused by patriarchal interests and investments. But Devanny valorises both suicide and murder; she applauds Margaret's pathological responses and homicidal actions as an appropriate resolution of her personal difficulties, and of her failure to achieve her own

individual vision of paradise.

Margaret is totally captured by the romantic vision. Her individual ideals are intricately enmeshed with the conceptualisation of a transcendental love, a transcendental passion, which if not achieved in marriage is still every woman's birthright, even if this demands the pursuit of adulterous relationships. If Devanny did not valorise this classic romanticism then her novel and Margaret's behaviour could begin to be regarded as feminist, but Devanny consistently affirms the morality of Margaret's romantic vision and her behaviour. Devanny's "feminist vision", as portrayed through her heroine, Margaret, is totally individualistic, totally romantic and most definitely a personal, transcendental experience firmly based in the sexual desire between a man and a woman who find themselves "in love."

Devanny writes a romantic novel not a tale of socialist feminism or feminist socialism. Margaret is not concerned with economic independence, nor with her containment within marriage, except where that containment infringes her sexuality, and Devanny privileges her position. It is not marriage as an institutional, contractual or legal body that Devanny attacks, it is the ideology of monogamy. As reflected in the novel marriage, in an arcadian rather than

contemporary form, remains a part of Devanny's female vision and Margaret's eutopia and is firmly tied to a romantic ideology which Devanny deifies.

Despite Ellis's often clumsy technical writing skills in *Everything is Possible to Will,* she succeeds in reflecting the female experience of a married middle-class woman in New Zealand of the 1880s, and inscribes a feminist vision that is much more comprehensive, and coherent, than that of Devanny's *The Butcher Shop,* more than forty years later. Ellis's technical incompetence is not a reflection of her use of the English language but is a result of her difficulties in trying to write a romantic novel which will not only reflect the social realities of marriage for women but will also subvert the very ideas and images of women and men that the romantic novel seeks to perpetuate. She relies heavily on the didactic form to subvert these romantic impulses within her text and relies on the narrator to subvert the romantic language of her narrative. It is perhaps surprising in the face of these restraints that Ellis manages to produce a unified vision of a New Zealand society so distinctly feminist in its ideals.

The feminist vision found mirrored in her novel identifies a paradise, a Utopia, which is firmly detached from the individual, Zee, and firmly disassociated from romanticism. Instead, Ellis's Utopia is politicised and generalised; it

challenges the effect that the contemporary social structures and institutions of her day have on female autonomy, and it incorporates women and Maori as mutual victims of patriarchal oppression and subjection. This strategic incorporation of Maori into the novel is a key feature of Ellis's mirroring her contemporary social and economic reality, but it is also a significant indicator of the freedoms she associates with a real democracy, within marriage and society, for women, men or Maori.

For although the main focus of Ellis's novel is on women and their lowly position on the social ladder within society, her primary concern is to advocate an equality free from categorisations of gender and race: categorisations that she argues maintain the unequal distribution of power at the price of personal autonomy, independence and integrity. The price Ellis suggests women pay for their continual, socially enforced, and socially sanctioned subjection is existential death, the death of self, if not actual death. If this spectre Ellis evokes is projected into her image of Maori as a subjected people within New Zealand, then the price Maori must pay is the same. It is this threat of annihilation which gives Zee the motivation to find a voice, to find a will of her own, to challenge the realities of her world, even if unsuccessfully, and it gives Ellis the impetus to try and challenge the spectre by writing/righting the female vision.

Ellis's challenge is refracted through the institutional, contractual and legalistic social body of marriage. But *Everything is Possible to Will* demands more than change to the social body of marriage or society, for Ellis demands, through Zee's story, that women recognise the failure of romanticism to fulfil female aspirations. Romantic ideology is psychologically destructive to women for it is an artificial pathway towards female self-fulfilment.

Romantic ideology appears to offer an image of fulfilment for women, an image of independence and autonomy, of social acceptance and freedoms; the rewards of falling in love and getting married. Ellis strips away this illusion to disclose embodied within the imagery of the wedding-dress and the wedding service the spectre of death, actual or existential, which will destroy and kill what little female autonomy any young bride believes she will possess. Ellis reveals the distorting capabilities of a romantic ideology that blinds women to the social realities of marriage. What she discloses is a gendered social contract of inequality and female subjection; a patriarchal economy where man exchanges with man the commodity of woman.

In *The Butcher Shop* it is not romantic ideology that threatens the maintenance of Margaret's vision, but a monogamous ideology attached to the conceptualisation of

marriage. Devanny's attack on monogamy is not an attack on capitalism nor even a coherent argument for the advent of socialism. The socialism advanced by Ian Longstairs is a minimal component within the novel. Much more emphasis is given to working out a categorisation of female sexual behaviour, particularly in distinguishing promiscuous sexuality from "respectable" promiscuity. Just like Margaret, Miette exercises free will in choosing her own lovers, but for Devanny Miette's choices are immoral and corrupt for she is indiscriminate in her sexuality, even to the extent of conducting sexual relations with a Maori. Miette is governed by her genetic predisposition to uncontrolled sexuality, whereas it is the ability to wilfully control and direct sexuality that distinguishes Margaret and Barry from the lower social orders. Devanny agrees with Margaret that Miette's adultery is immoral whilst simultaneously agreeing with Margaret that Margaret's adultery is moral. For Devanny Margaret's adultery is not only moral, but applauded and deified, primarily because she is a pure white European and is seen to possess higher sensibilities, greater purity of mind and body, and a higher morality developed from her greater intellect than that of Miette, Glengarry or Jimmy Tutaki. But the ultimate justification for Margaret's adultery with Glengarry is her transcendental love for him, and her God-given right to enjoy that love regardless of any marital obligations. Romantic

ideology justifies adultery and makes such behaviour moral, providing, like Margaret and unlike Miette, that the woman involved is pure. And it is here that Devanny enters into a dangerous sexual typology of white supremacy. Devanny's sexual hierarchy is not socialism, but National Socialism, the belief in a fixed social hierarchy categorised by race and gender and where white supremacy is based on an Eugenic ideology of purity and breeding. It is a white supremacy that Devanny consistently approves throughout her novel.

Devanny's representation of Maori within her novel is not based on the democratic impulses evidenced within Ellis's *Everything is Possible to Will.* For Devanny, Jimmy Tutaki is represented as the best and last of a dying race until his sexual transgression with Miette. He is depicted as a Maori who is really a brown pakeha but who will never achieve the status of the white European for he, and all Maori, will always be subject to their uncontrollable "savage" sexual appetites. No amount of civilised "veneer", acquired through reading or intellect, will alter the basically animalistic nature of a people who occupy the lower positions on Devanny's hierarchy. Just as Miette's sexual behaviour is determined by her genetic construction at birth so is Maori sexual behaviour determined by racial genetics. If Ellis's concern is how women and Maori might move up the "social ladder" from their subjected and oppressed positions,

then Devanny's concern is that women less divine than Margaret, as well as men and Maori, do not move from their fixed positions on the social ladder, or social hierarchy, at all.

It is difficult to justify Devanny's sexual hierarchy as feminist in its construction except that it places a woman at its pinnacle rather than a man. But Margaret's position at the top of the hierarchy is ideologically wobbly for her supremacy is based primarily on her sexuality; her "**will to propagate**". What Devanny describes in this odd terminology are Margaret's physical and emotional desires to participate in sexual intercourse, not for reasons of propagation, but for "**love**" and her own eroticism. Devanny uses the phrase "**will to propagate**" as a constant referent throughout the novel for Margaret's own sexual desire, her eroticism. It is a semantic abuse to define "propagate" as eroticism, but within this linguistic distortion Devanny attempts to legitimise Margaret's claim to eroticism through the language of Eugenics. If female sexuality can be attached to the contemporary Eugenic ideology of 1920s New Zealand and linked as a moral, pure, and divine imperative to ensure the continuation of the nation, then female desire acquires a social legitimacy, and female sexuality acquires, or is distorted into acquiring, a spiritual purpose and status.

But this is a female sexuality divorced from reproduction, for within *The Butcher Shop* Margaret is not interested in reproduction, or even motherhood, as the focus of her life or self. Her major preoccupation is with the physical, intellect and sensual experience of transcendental love. Certainly Devanny sees motherhood as a pleasant activity but not as the primary reason for female existence. Such an authorial statement can be seen as feminist when the contemporary culture in New Zealand was attempting to maintain motherhood as a dominant, and preferably exclusive, occupation for women. It can also be viewed as Devanny's attempt to alter the role of the Angel in the House to one where female desire, female eroticism, is valorised as a worthy feature of womanhood, capable of respectable expression by intelligent women as distinguished from the prostitute or common woman. In this way, she can maintain the purity of self attached to the Victorian archetype, for Devanny tries, somewhat desperately, to reconcile purity with sexuality. And in this too, she can be seen to be attempting a feminist interpretation of womanhood, for in this adaptation of the image Devanny can be acknowledged as trying to offer a feminist vision: a new definition of sexualised womanhood which defeats the binary, and patriarchally defined values, traditionally associated with the good, pure non-sexual woman and the bad, corrupt, sexual woman.

But all these attempts are doomed to failure when the line between Margaret and Miette's sexual behaviour is posited on adultery committed by each woman where one is pure because it is willed by a higher intellect, and the other is corrupt because it is willed by physical passions, and where the line between purity and corruption is precariously posited on Eugenic definitions.

Devanny's attempt to sexualise the Angel in the House fails on this account, but it must also fail as a feminist vision because it is dominated by a solely individualistic philosophy tightly linked to romantic ideology when feminism is inevitably collectivist in its ideology. It is this combination of individualism and romanticism which keeps Margaret within the domestic arena and locked into a patriarchal dependence. Effectively, Margaret seeks permission from Barry to exercise her sexual autonomy and nowhere in the novel does Margaret seek an independent, autonomous existence outside of her marriage. Paradoxically she fights very hard to stay within her marriage and maintain her "right" to her sexual relationship with Glengarry.

Devanny validates both Margaret's decisions and her right to maintain her marriage and a lover. And it is this blanket authorial approval for Margaret's choices, for Margaret's ultimately pathological behaviour, for romantic

transcendental love, for female dependency, for rural gentility, for white supremacy, for Eugenic perfection, for murder, and for adultery, which makes it difficult to see why *The Butcher Shop* has been adopted by liberal socialists as an icon of New Zealand feminist writing. What Devanny mirrors are fragments of feminism confined to female sexuality embodied within right-wing politics.

The ideology underpinning *Everything is Possible to Will* is much more closely aligned to liberal and democratic principles. Ellis is concerned also with the retention of purity in her construction of the Angel in the House, for her novel holds up a mirror to her contemporary image of marriage as the crowning glory of female achievement, of woman as the Angel in the House who from her elevated position of purity and motherhood reaches the pinnacle of her self-fulfilment and achievement. But Ellis finds this image as equally unsatisfying for women as the image offered by romanticism. Her novel deconstructs this glorified image of domestic harmony to reveal what she perceives as the "**woman slavery**" of the Angel in the House. She deconstructs motherhood to reveal not glory but the pain and distress of having to fulfil a social role without adequate knowledge and without choice. She sees reproduction as a "**martyrdom**" where the woman is sacrificed psychologically, emotionally and physically. She sees the domestic empire of the Angel in the

House as imprisoning, dependent, humiliating and degrading rather than as a place offering autonomy and independence. Her vision is to move the Angel in the House out into society, not to deprive her of a domestic realm but to offer her the choice of environment.

Certainly Ellis wants to move the positive attributes of the Angel in the House, her high morality, her high sensibilities, and her purity out into the world so they may become an influence on men, on "fallen" women, and on the social structures in society. To this extent within the novel Ellis succeeds in representing a unified feminist vision of an equality which will incorporate all members of society. Where her vision fails is in accommodating female sexuality. She is unable to establish how female sexuality might be socially expressed, and yet remain pure, once it is detached from the domestic realm and detached from reproduction or motherhood. The result is her settling for an asexual woman, a female whose sexuality is subsumed into the passionlessness associated with the Angel in the House. Ellis exhibits an awareness that sexuality and purity are incompatible concepts, and that without romanticism no legitimate site exists for female sexuality. Her solution is to fragment the female vision to accommodate social reality by eliminating female sexuality. To this extent Ellis can be said to have failed in providing an integrated female vision

but she does succeed in offering a significantly more unified, and more universal, feminist vision of a democratic, egalitarian society than Devanny does. In Ellis's novel gender is identified as the primary determinant in distributing social power but according to Ellis this does not have to be the case. Devanny argues the opposite in her novel for she constructs a social world tightly structured on gender and race in order to free the sexual behaviour of a limited type of woman rather than womankind.

The collapse of this universal, feminist vision into Devanny's insular, individual, romantic, Eugenic and pathological vision in *The Butcher Shop* easily demonstrates the failure of Devanny to advance Ellis's feminist vision or to take the feminist ideas of her predecessors and build on them. Similarly the collapse of the vision does not indicate any continuity, any progressively developing image of feminism and fiction between 1882 and 1926, but a fragmentation. The continuities identified between both novels concern the consistent image of the Angel in the House and both writers' fictional attempts to change her image. There is as well the thematic continuity of a focus on marriage and sexuality as problematic fields of identity for women, and a mutual concern with romantic ideology but from entirely different perspectives. Both writers are, to a greater or lesser extent, unable to reconcile female

sexuality outside of romanticism and it is only Ellis who manages to reconcile awkwardly and clumsily social realism with the novel form, and in this reconciliation construct a potentially viable image of woman within New Zealand society, as opposed to the world of female violence which Devanny sees as a triumphant solution to female emancipation. Yet for both writers the final image bequeathed by their novels is of woman fragmented, of visions incomplete.

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Appendix A details three textual comparisons between Ellen E. Ellis's *Everthing is Possible to Will*, published in 1882, and Vera Colebrook's *Ellen: A Biography*, published in 1980.

The random extracts of Appendix A, from pages 90, 99, 100 and 144 from the Colebrook biography, easily demonstrate the degree of syntactical and grammatical agreement with the extracts from Ellis's novel. Colebrook writes:

> the heroine of the story [Everything is Possible to Will] was an obvious self-portrait [of Ellen Ellis], therefore, the invented husband might well be supposed to be Ellen's own husband - and she had depicted him as a degraded alcoholic. It was no wonder that William [Ellen's son] had stopped the circulation [of the novel]... I, therefore, extracted from the novel whatever I knew to be relevant to Ellen as a character, together with her forcibly expressed views on the legalised slavery of wives and in turn I have created a biography of Ellen. This is a story based on the facts as I could confirm them. (Preface,*Ellen:A Biography*, 1980,3)

Mrs. Colebrook's language discloses her uncertainty over the so-called "facts" of the biography; the heroine is an "obvious self-portrait", the "heroine's husband" might well be supposed to be "Ellen's own husband,[Oliver]" and Mrs. Colebrook "extracted whatever she knew to be relevant" to "create" a biography of Ellen's life.

Mrs. Colebrook unequivacolly states, in reference to pages 90, 99 and 100, that these were statements or descriptions Ellen made when she "wrote home" to her family in England. But this cannot be true logically, for either Ellis kept copies of letters she sent home which she then transcribed directly into the novel, or she lifted pieces of the novel and trascribed them, all but word for word, into her letters home. Neither of these possibilities appear plausible.

The textual distortions in the Colebrook biography have serious consequences when the biography is being accepted as an authoritative source on Ellis's life and writing. For example, on page 144 (attached Appendix A) the 'silk umbrella" incident is turned by Mrs. colebrook into Ellis's reason to write the novel (*Ellen: A Biography, 145*) when quite clearly Zee's visit to the asylum had no bearing on the writing of the novel as Ellis herself defines in the article transcribed from the *New Zealand Herald* in Appendix B.

TEXTUAL COMPARISON OF EXTRACTS FROM VERA COLEBROOK'S *ELLEN: A BIOGRAPHY* (1980) AND ELLEN E. ELLIS'S *EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE TO WILL* (1882)

1882 ELLEN E. ELLIS : 116 - 117	1980 VERA COLEBROOK : 99 - 100
Her dark-skinned brother, he strode about with a blanket guiltless of tie or tag, lengthways round his brawny shoulders one chanced occasionally to see more than one wished, not withstanding that, on the whole, he managed his full-dress toggery very adroitly.	...Our dark-skinned brother strides about with a blanket guiltless of tie or tag, folded lengthwise round round his brawny shoulders, of which shoulders one chances to occasionally see more than one would wish; not withstanding that on the whole, he manages his full-dress toggery very adroitly.
And the natives being stealthy in their movements, Zee was often startled to find a grim, hobgoblin flattened against her window-pane taking stock of all within.	The natives, being stealthy in their movements, I am often startled to find a grim, hobgoblin face flattened against my window-pane, taking stock of all within.
Entering the house without any form of " by your leave " they raked an ember from the fire, and dropping it into their horrid pipes (both sexes smoke) puff away clouds of dirty tobacco smoke.	Entering the house without any form of by-your-leave they rake an ember from the fire, & dropping it into their horrid pipes (both sexes smoke them) puff away clouds of dirty tobacco smoke.
Then, but not till then, to business, bartering their wares for old clothing, may be, at which they they snapped eagerly, first looking a garment over & over; and if they spied a hole, they would thrust a finger through, with " Too much the broke, Too much the broke," and Zee had to run it up.	Then, but not till then, to business, bartering their wares for old clothing, at which they snap eagerly; first looking a garment over and over; & if they spy a hole, they will thrust a finger through with ` Too much the broke ! Too much the broke !' & I have to run it up.

TEXTUAL COMPARISON OF EXTRACTS FROM VERA COLEBROOK'S *ELLEN: A BIOGRAPHY* (1980) AND ELLEN E.ELLIS'S *EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE TO WILL*(1882)

1882 ELLEN E. ELLIS : 112	1980 VERA COLEBROOK : 90
Many of Zee's happiest and most profitable hours were spent over the wash-tub. How unladylike ! Yes, and the freedom from the restraints and hateful conventions of the old-world life was to her delightful. More musical than the peal of wedding-bells was the flapping of the linen of her own washing, as it bleached in the purer, may be, than Italian sky; and sweeter than the rose as she folded it. She had been charged four shillings per dozen (an imposition by the way) for clothes rough dried, therefore resolved to do the washing herself by degrees.	Many of my happiest & most profitable hours are spent over the washtub. How unladylike !!!! But the freedom from restraints & hateful conventualites of the Old World life are to me delightful. More musical than the peal of wedding-bells is the flapping of my own washing as it dries in the pure air, & sweeter than the rose as I fold it. When we first arrived, I paid four shillings a dozen for clothes rough dried, a wicked imposition.
1882 ELLEN E. ELLIS : 148	1980 VERA COLEBROOK : 144
Mrs. H.'s departure for San Francisco having been somewhat delayed, she borrowed a silk umbrella of Zee the day before she sailed, and left it at the lunatic asylum, of all places. The umbrella was too good to lose, and yet shattered and unstrung as were Zee's nerves, she shrank with instinctive horror from going to the asylum for it.	A friend's departure for San Francisco having been somewhat delayed, she borrowed a silk umbrella from me the day before she sailed, & left it at the lunatic asylum, of all places. The umbrella was too good to lose, yet I shrank with instinctive horror from going to the asylum for it.

COPY OF THE ARTICLE ENTITLED "EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE TO WILL."

NEW ZEALAND HERALD 22 MARCH 1883,5.

This is the title of a neat volume which has been published in London, by Mrs.Ellen E.Ellis, of Auckland. The object of the story is set forth in the following communication from the author:-"This book, `Everything is Possible to Will,' has been presented to the Queen, and is accepted by Her Majesty `with pleasure,' &c., and on the white satin cover of the book the following note was lithographed:- `To England's Queen. My loved and honoured Queen,- Because you have suffered, and can sympathise with the suffering of the humblest of your subjects; because innocence,truth,and duty,are dear to you - I may dare to ask that you will be pleased to accept this book, and to read its simple record of a sad life bravely endured for honour's sake - so bravely, indeed, as to plead the cause of suffering womanhood with such genuine heroism as ought never to fail of its high purpose - to redeem woman life [sic] from the thraldom of preventible misery. Long live Victoria in the hearts of her people.- The Author, Auckland, New Zealand, July 22nd, 1882.'

A copy of the work with a different note lithographed on each respective cover has indeed been presented to Sir George Grey and the late Samuel Edger, B.A.,of New Zealand,and to Messrs.W.E.Gladstone, John Bright Ruskin, Professor Huxley, Sir F.Dillon Bell, Sir Wilfred Lawson, and several other ladies and gentlemen of England, including the Editor of the London Times, who is thus addressed:-`Sir,- In the present instance it is only a woman who speaks, but her voice is an honest voice, caught from the wholesome habit of looking at thing as they are. You, Sir, wield perhaps the mightiest pen in the universe, and can do much to make or mar the lessons this book in all the weakness of ignorance would instil rather than teach - that needless suffering is waste of force; that character is better than gold; that the intelligently good can afford to join "hands all round" to protect the weak, the oppressed, the persecuted.- Yours respectfully, THE AUTHOR.' The above is written for your information of course, Mr. Editor, and I sincerely hope it is not

APPENDIX B (continued)

"Everything is Possible to Will"

out of place for me to add the following:-
The accompanying book, `Everthing,' etc., now submitted to your just criticism, is written with a purpose, and since to her deep regret the author's name has been given to the world, it is but right to state briefly that it was written at the express desire of the late Mr.O.S. Ellis, in the earnest hope that it would help even the most degraded to realise they are strong enough within themselves to live down every vicious inclination as to regain the, for the time being, forfeited respect and confidence of their fellow men. The book further-more should help men and women to see that unjust laws make unjust men - men who hold themselves justified in believing that since the marriage law ignores the wife's existence, she is the last person entitled to consideration, though to her they may be indebted for well nigh all their possessions. The good man is better than the law, and against its flagrant injustice to the wife his whole nature protests unceasingly; but other men, whose ruling principle of action is - take all you can and give nothing - nothing, at least, to the wife - are so much worse than the law that, unless the good wife's right to consideration is practically acknowledged, the one word, duty, will soon become the most unpopular word in the English language, and then the home life will have become a wreck indeed. It is woman's work to raise, refine, and redeem the human race from every form of moral, social, and political degradation, and she will do it, too, when she is free as man is free. Rightly understood, there is no self-glorification, no merit even in saying, I have faithfully discharged my duty to the best of my ability. It is simply disgraceful not to have done it."