

# The Discriminations of Postcoloniality in Ireland and New-Zealand

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In Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) Stephen Dedalus's friend, Davin, is tempted sexually by a peasant woman.<sup>1</sup> He declines her offer, but is attracted by the strangeness of the encounter and the frankness of the invitation. Although an ardent nationalist and affectionately described by Stephen as a peasant, Davin has acquired the Dubliner's distance from rural Ireland. He finds the seductions of traditional Ireland exotic and resistable. To Stephen the life of the peasantry is inscrutable and more than faintly repugnant. He fears the 'red-rimmed horny eyes' of an ancient Irish-speaking peasant and feels he must struggle with him 'all through this night till day come'.<sup>2</sup> Yet images of peasant women he has seen from the college bus float through his mind. To Joyce in 1916 the Celtic Revivalist fascination with the peasantry had been important in a negative sense during his earlier strenuous efforts at self-definition. Yet the peasant woman possesses attributes so mixed that he employs the attractions and repulsions of sexuality to figure them.

In 1907 nineteen-year-old Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp went on a camping trip through the Urewera district of New Zealand and recorded in her diaries her impressions of Maoris, whose distance from colonial bourgeois civilisation she found deeply attractive. The wild Maoris of 'the utter backblocks' she found romantically fascinating; the Anglicised Maoris whom she encountered nearer civilisation she found somewhat distasteful.<sup>3</sup> The same year, back in Wellington with her family, she had an affair with a beautiful and rich young Maori woman named Maata Mahupuku. Later in London she both dressed as a Maori on occasions and reacted with cruel snobbery to a group of coloured intellectuals discussing literature in a night-club.<sup>4</sup>

The ambivalence displayed by both writers in the presence of 'traditional' peoples signals a complex responsiveness to cultural and class differences that cannot simply be explained as romantic projection or its resistance. The strongest feelings - involving awe, fear, excitement, desire - are evoked in both writers by situations where the viewed subjects *seem* to represent the most pure expressions of otherness - where they appear to be least assimilated by modernity, contaminated by the effects of colonisation, or modified by the romanticisms being constructed around them. In Mansfield's case, the most negative emotions are evoked where traditional peoples are seen behaving as Europeans, mimicking the coloniser.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, these situations are richly embroidered with political, cultural and literary associations. In their ambivalent responses to such figures as an Irish peasant woman at her door or a Maori woman whose face is 'passionate violent - crudely savage' but in whose eyes 'slumbers a tragic illimitable peace'<sup>6</sup> we may find signs of the contradictory forces within both writers and within the colonised societies they inhabited. It was by assimilating these forces that Mansfield and Joyce managed to negotiate paths towards the particular syntheses we describe in their work as modernism. Rather than abandoning the provincial constraints of their societies in favour of a cosmopolitan modernism, both writers carried beyond their native lands the interwoven elements of modernity, tradition, empire and nationalism that had confronted them as young adults. From all these elements they constructed their modernisms.

In this essay I consider firstly how two writers from colonial backgrounds derived specific kinds of modernism from their complex and divided reactions to the demands of nationalism, traditionalism and modernity present in their countries in the first decade of this century. The kinds of modernism they elaborated in the 'mature' writings they produced as exiles were symptomatic of their specific relations to nation, empire and modernity at either side of the turn of the century. In the remainder of the essay I examine the ways in which succeeding generations of writers in Ireland and New Zealand have elaborated 'postcolonial' responses to the places assigned to Joyce and Mansfield by their respective national cultures. I am interested here not only in their changing responses to the issues of language, tradition and nation confronted by Mansfield and Joyce but also in the way in which various postcolonial identities are formulated through the reconfiguring of

national literary icons. Mansfield and Joyce somehow became both the 'Shakespeares' - that is, the generating points - in the literatures of their native lands and exemplars of international modernism.

Postcolonialism, I shall argue, is not a state, a condition, or a moment. It is not rigidly demarcated from a prior and antithetical condition of being colonised. Rather, as Kiberd writes, it is a process that 'is initiated at the very moment when a native writer formulates a text committed to cultural resistance'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it continues as long as colonialism has a presence to be resisted in the consciousness of writers and citizens, even though it might have lost its force in the political forms of society. It exists within societies that are still colonised, not merely after they have proclaimed themselves decolonised. Postcoloniality exists within empire itself, without which it would not be possible. In literary terms postcolonialism involves not just 'resistance' but also the attempt to represent the ongoing process of negotiating the positive as well as the negative associations of the colonial condition and legacy; it is practised, moreover, not only by 'native' writers but also by those whose ancestors came as colonisers and, in many cases, by those who find both colonisers and colonised jumbled together in their ancestry.

#### Fly by those nets

In 1904 the 22-year-old James Joyce, having returned to Dublin from Paris, was compiling his epiphanies into what would become *Stephen Hero*. It was the year the essay, 'A Portrait of the Artist' and the first story in *Dubliners* were written; it was the year he met Nora Barnacle and eloped with her to Europe. June 16, the day he met Nora, was the day he later designated in *Ulysses* as Bloomsday.

In 1904 Kathleen Mansfield Beachamp, a sixteen-year-old colonial from Wellington, had been installed with her sisters in Queen's College in Harley Street, London, by her socially ambitious father. In the liberal atmosphere of Queen's she was assiduously reversing the effects of migration to the colonies, accumulating cultural rather than material capital and reinventing the "little savage from New Zealand" as an aesthete.<sup>8</sup> Around this time, under the influence of a charismatic and advanced schoolteacher, she encountered the writings of Oscar Wilde. Wildean epigrams would figure in her notebooks and diaries over the next few years, and the stylistic markers of *Dorian Gray* would figure prominently in the stories and vignettes she would write on her reluctant return to New Zealand in 1906.<sup>9</sup>

Joyce left Dublin for good in 1912. Mansfield finally left Wellington for London in 1908. (A year later Joyce's sister, Margaret, joined a great tradition of Irish internationalism by entering a religious order and emigrating - to New Zealand.) It is generally accepted that in his years in Dublin Joyce collected the storehouse of memories and impressions which were to sustain all his subsequent creative work. The nature and extent of the impress New Zealand left on Mansfield is more contentious. In New Zealand, not surprisingly, Mansfield's debt to her homeland has often been privileged, especially in popular biographies. One New Zealand critic has argued that, English critics having misinterpreted her work because of their unfamiliarity with her New Zealand background, 'Mansfield must be repatriated and set in her New Zealand surroundings'.<sup>10</sup> English and American critics, unmoved by nationalist sentiment, have tended to focus on her place in modernism or the feminist implications of her work. Recent postcolonial criticism has stressed her subversions and revisions of contemporary colonial writing.

Easily overlooked are the sources of the *modernism* of both Joyce and Mansfield in specific moments and contexts of high imperial culture. Both began writing when the British empire, having achieved its maximum extension, was confronted by the first wave of nationalisms that would become increasingly clamorous over the next half century and which signalled its eventual demise. Both began writing in societies where modernity was a contested condition, claimed on different terms and for different purposes by the colonised as well as the colonisers and by those ambiguously located between the terms. Their modernism inevitably draws its initial impulses and derives its subsequent developments from the fractured and fractious colonial societies in which they grew up.

Both Mansfield and Joyce determined to write about urban bourgeois life (Joyce lower, Mansfield upper) while still in their native lands at a time when the literature of local experience tended towards sentimentality and favoured romanticised versions of rural life. Joyce's aversion to the Celtic mythicising of the Irish Literary Revival which began around the time of his birth is a famous occasion of his determination not to be limited by the available forms of nationalism. A case could be made that Mansfield made the same kind of formative and self-defining break by refusing to follow the 'Maoriland' style prominent in New Zealand writing in the early 1900s. She set about making her own mode of writing by distancing herself from

an entrenched style in which local colour was provided by Maori myth and inspiring landscapes. Yet these 'breaks' were not as complete as they appear. Rebellious acts of self-definition invariably involve the internalisation of what one is negating. In both cases the official varieties of national writing that were rejected proved powerful enough to figure, albeit parodically, in the subsequent writing. Moreover, the notion of a break rests on binaries—modernity versus tradition, province versus centre, national versus cosmopolitan that obscure the complexity of late colonial cultures. In both Ireland and New Zealand between the 1880s and the First World War modernising tendencies did not merely struggle against nostalgic cultural constructions; the two were worked together in a period of cultural transformation. In leaving their native lands, neither Joyce nor Mansfield abandoned a simple, provincial and unformed society for a complex and fully modern one: all the conditions of modernity that would figure in their writing were present in the societies in which they grew up.

In Ireland, where anti-imperial sentiment was acute, the nationalism that took shape in the late nineteenth century was both nostalgic and modernising in its expressions. To state this is not simply to observe that in looking back to the Celtic past and heroising folk culture, the mainly bourgeois promoters of Irish independence from English rule demonstrated what had been lost as much as what was being preserved. The strong forces impelling Irish cultural and political activism were modernising in the sense they were part of a programme which aimed to bring into being a modern nation state, not a return to pre-imperial social forms<sup>11</sup> - this although, as Kiberd observes, Dublin in 1904 was 'a conurbation dominated by the values and mores of the surrounding countryside'<sup>12</sup> and many among the nationalists, including Michael Collins, fantasised about recreating traditional Ireland in political and social terms in a post-independence state. Yet in pursuing the independence of Ireland *as a nation* they placed themselves in the service of an idea that was inescapably modern. At the symbolic level it might be argued that, as in late nineteenth-century Japan, the versions of the tribal past that were promoted by the 'Revival' were directed at consolidating and extending an independent national identity under the sign of easily recognised cultural markers. The (partly mythicised) past provided a convenient imagery which allowed the modernising agendas of the present to be advanced.

If Ireland (and South Africa) were those parts of the empire where,

as the nineteenth century closed, nationalist rhetoric and agitation were most acute and active, New Zealand was that part where they were least in evidence. Among the bourgeoisie of late colonial 'Maoriland', imperial sentiment was vigorously and ubiquitously on display. The British colonists in New Zealand had rapidly achieved military, civil and political dominance over the indigenous people, so much so that by the 1890s the Maori were often represented as a dying race. Half a century after signing a compact with the Maori tribes at Waitangi in 1840, the settlers were in a far stronger position, numerically and in terms of their ability to realise their power, than were the Anglo-Irish three centuries after their first taking root as colonists. Unlike the Irish, the Maori could be romanticised from a position of seemingly unassailable superiority. Modernity was a condition entirely at ease with the situation of the colonials. The systematic extension of organised pastoralism, advances in the preservation and shipping of meat, various new technologies improved the material conditions of the settlers generally and brought rapidly increased wealth to Kathleen Beauchamp's father in particular.

Imperial commerce and advances in banking, trade and technology enriched Kathleen Beauchamp's family. However, the economic instability of the urban middle classes and the vagaries of political patronage in post-famine Ireland (aided by John Joyce's personal efforts) served progressively to undo the Joyce family. While Joyce's family declined throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Beauchamps accumulated property, money and status. The moves to different houses made by both families in this period illustrate these differing fortunes.

In 1887 the Joyces moved to Bray, twelve miles from Dublin. It was a large house in Martello Terrace and Joyce's first surviving epiphany recalls an incident there.<sup>13</sup> The family's finances, still stable enough for John Joyce to pay off several mortgages, were to worsen dramatically from 1891 when he was dismissed from his government post, just at the point when Harold Beauchamp began making money 'fast and in large quantities'.<sup>14</sup> James Joyce was then nine years old, four years older than Kathleen when the Beauchamps moved to Karori, a few miles outside Wellington in 1893. 'Chesney Wold', the Beauchamp home, was also a large home, unashamedly Anglophile as its name suggests, and it indicated the consolidation of that process of increase later recorded in Mansfield's New Zealand stories. These

divergent family fortunes reflect differences between the economic fortunes of the two colonies and, more generally, the multiple distinctions that existed within the colonial condition itself: from the declining Irish-Catholic bourgeoisie to the rising commercial upper class in Edwardian New Zealand, from Irish small farmers watching their holdings diminish with each generation to Maori living on communal land and coming under pressure from laws designed to individualise property ownership. They also reflect differences between the two families: Joyce's colonised and Mansfield's colonising.

The nearest New Zealand equivalent to the situation of Irish Catholics was that of the Maori, caught between modernity and tradition, without the distance from those forces of Anglo-Irish aristocrats like Lady Gregory. Romantic nostalgia was simply not an option for Maori, for whom modernity and colonisation were from the outset of settlement connected but not synonymous. Maori eagerly chose what they wanted of the former and fiercely resisted the latter once it became clear that land sales were compromising tribal sovereignties. From the earliest periods of contact Maori were quick to take advantage of the technologies of a more developed material culture. They were also eager to adopt both the English language and writing, as were nineteenth-century Irish Catholics. The Bible, often seen as an instrument of colonial cultural domination, was also an important means of adapting traditional values and beliefs to modernising agendas. Maori nationalist movements in the nineteenth century reworked Old Testament stories of the Chosen People and millenarian aspects of Christianity with traditional beliefs to make local adaptations capable of advancing political and cultural programmes of the day. A recent history of nineteenth-century New Zealand by James Belich sees the Maori as Kiberd sees the Irish: as deliberate and inventive modernisers rather than mere victims of colonisation, continually choosing what they wanted of the colonists' advantages.<sup>13</sup>

By the close of the century Maori nationalist movements had been decisively militarily defeated. The removal of the last Maori threat to orderly settlement and pastoralism was registered by a shift in the stereotypes in whose terms Maori were represented. The Land Wars of the 1860s had been accompanied by an emphasis on Maori savagery. Frederic Manning's *Old New Zealand* (1863), while affectionate in its portrayal of the unredeemed Maori (Manning termed himself a 'Pakeha-Maori', a binary-dissolving oxymoron employed a generation later in Ireland by the 'Protholicks'),<sup>14</sup> focused on

cannibalism and superstition, signalling thereby the threat posed by Maori to the settler project of modernisation. Such imagery also indicated the ultimate unfitness of Maori for assimilation. By the close of the century more romantic images prevailed. Maori were a dying race and the remnants of this noble but doomed people were prepared for assimilation. Amateur ethnologists strove to fit Maori into noble traditions aligned circuitously to the myths of origins of the settlers themselves. The 'Aryan Maori' was a suitable subject for assimilation with a British people and worthy of civilising influence.<sup>17</sup>

Both Mansfield and Joyce famously refused to allow the colonial cultures they came from to limit their work, conceiving the choice that faced them in terms of an opposition between provincialism and cosmopolitanism. Nevertheless, for all their efforts to distance themselves from the kinds of writing and the cultural assumptions that ruled their native lands, their rebellions were symptomatic of their colonial societies at that time and indicate not only the states of those societies - ambiguously balanced between nation and colony - but also the choices those societies have made subsequently. Joyce stopped off in London briefly en route to European destinations, but, unlike Wilde or Yeats, he made no effort to establish himself there. If Mansfield became a 'New Zealand European',<sup>18</sup> Joyce became an Irish European six decades before his native country entered Europe on similar terms. Thus Joyce, like Beckett after him, became 'post-colonial' long before the term had currency by refusing to enter into the established dialogue between imperial centre and colonised country or to adopt rhetorically the position of either. Mansfield went straight to London, as her fellow New Zealanders would continue to do once out of the country for most of the twentieth century. But she never managed to feel at home there; she was always the colonial. She became European not out of anti-British sentiment but because of illness and restlessness. Like her country, she entered belatedly and reluctantly into the condition of not being colonial.

Stephen Dedalus misquoted Marx - 'History ... is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' - and generations of readers have assumed that he spoke for his author.<sup>19</sup> The truth is that Joyce found Irish history - saturated as it was in the rhetoric and affects of colonisation - as inescapable as Catholicism, and he never made Stephen's mistake of assuming that one



could transcend either. Family, nation, religion are the webbing of the nets of history a young man might wish to 'fly by' (and Stephen himself says only 'I shall try to' do so, not that he will), but the desire comes too late - *after* they have been flung.<sup>20</sup> Mansfield found colonial reality as dull as she found her family, and expressed little interest in the brief history of her country. Yet in a poem addressed to the Polish patriot, Stanislaw Wyspianski, she indicates her sense of herself as a woman 'with the taint of the pioneers in [her] blood', that is, a colonial writer with all the guilty consciousness of history that implies.<sup>21</sup> In 1915, after the death of her brother in the British Army she wrote, in a phrase that recalls Stephen Dedalus's line about creating the uncreated conscience of his race, of her desire to bring her 'undiscovered country' to the world's notice.<sup>22</sup>

### **Nationalist but not patriotic**

Declan Kiberd has observed that, '[t]o write a deliberately new style, whether Hiberno-English or Whitmanian slang, was to seize power for new voices in literature: and the pretense of the national poet is that he or she is not constructed by previous literary modes'.<sup>23</sup> In settler countries the descendents of the colonists, at the point where they seek to announce their independence of the parent culture, feel driven to claim indigenous status for their productions. In the literatures of emergent nationalisms this is usually signalled by a preoccupation with language, a deliberate seeking after localised forms of the inherited language. Mark Twain and Henry Lawson anticipated Frank Sargeson by identifying the distinctive forms of national character with the least genteel, urbane and 'colonial' usage. A new literary style rooted in a rough and vigorous vernacular is a sign of an emerging cultural independence.

In New Zealand the moment when the new literature began selfconsciously to appear occurred in the 1930s half a century later than in Australia or Ireland. The strongest voice announcing the cultural-nationalist programme was that of Allen Curnow. Curnow, however, declined to submit as wholly to the vernacular as Twain, Lawson or his contemporary, Sargeson; he tempered his raids on the demotic with a predilection for a hieratic style. The word 'hieratic' is Yeatsian and points to the forceful example of Yeats in defining New Zealand's moment of national self-definition. Yeats spoke to Curnow because his nationalism was an ambivalent, at times reluctant, one. He indicated how local realities could be made the vehicle of a universal

poetic, lacking in provincialism. As well, Yeats's ambivalence suited the hesitation in Curnow's always reluctant nationalism, his disinclination to turn too steadfastly away from the English literary inheritance.

To strive to be 'nationalist but not patriotic' was Yeats's means of coping with his disappointment at the behaviour of the Irishry he was bent on redeeming.<sup>24</sup> Half a century later and half a world away Curnow chose to remain among an even more recalcitrantly philistine populace in the interest of nation-making. As Kiberd points out, Yeats followed Wilde and Shaw to London, then 'decided to return to Dublin and shift the centre of gravity of Irish culture back to the native capital'.<sup>25</sup> Curnow made the same determination without benefit of the initial obsequiousness to the imperial centre. Like Sargeson, who regarded Mansfield's expatriation as a form of literary betrayal, Curnow held that the writer could only write authentically out of a particular known place. Even if the place was as unpromising as New Zealand in the 1930s, location had to be accepted with same sense of regretful inevitability as the human body.

Curnow and Sargeson set about constructing a national literary culture that celebrated the local and eschewed colonial hankerings, yet at the same time excoriated the present forms of national life. Mansfield, who might have offered a welcome model, became a sign of irresponsible cosmopolitanism. By leaving, by going to Europe, she declined to begin the programme they were engaged in. She thereby found herself, according to Sargeson, in a state of 'suspension', a dangerous situation for a writer.<sup>26</sup>

Mansfield might have stood to New Zealand as Shakespeare to England, except that her exile meant that she could not physically be identified with the country. Heroes had to come from other national founders: Twain, Lawson, Yeats. Notably, the modernist-nationalists of Curnow's generation chose rooted, organic writers rather than internationalists as models. Joyce, another cosmopolitan, is one modernist little in evidence in New Zealand until Maurice Duggan, coming from a Catholic background, determined to break with the ruling colloquial plainstyle of the lapsed-Protestant mainstream. Joyce was also a problem for second-generation modernist Irish writers.

In Ireland by the 1930s the modernist generation provided a variety of models which could be built on, repudiated or slyly subverted. Flann

O'Brien demonstrates the way in which nationalist literary programmes beget detractors, who make their own sub-species of literature by refusing to observe the pieties expected of the genre, which in turn may beget further acts of subversion. O'Brien was deeply influenced by Joyce; he delights in Joycean stylistic pastiche and mockery of the pastoral pieties of the Revival. Nevertheless, he remained determined to maintain a distance from the writer to whom he was often compared. Unlike Joyce, he refused to budge from Dublin or Catholicism. He wrote an early work entirely in Irish. O'Brien declined to choose between being defined as a nationalist writer or a cosmopolitan writer. Without falling back into the attitude of Celtic pastoralism, his aim was to make the material of Ireland, legendary as well as historical, of interest as literature.

In *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) he parodies the discourses in which thenation has been constructed, especially the legendary ones favoured by the nationalists. Like Joyce, O'Brien uses Irish legendary material but not in the spirit of the Irish Revival, which he regarded as a fraud. He does not write as part of a nationalist effort of tradition-making. The reasons for this are partly aesthetic: he uses myth not to stir nationalist emotion or to signify local reality but for literary purposes. He regards the stories of the Irish past as pleasing amusing, fertile, but does not treat them with reverence.

In this respect O'Brien looks forward to an anti-traditionalist post-colonial writer like Salman Rushdie, but is opposed to the writing of the Maori Renaissance, in which authenticity and tradition are highly valued terms. In looking back to Joyce with a mixture of respect and resistance O'Brien illustrates the problems in grouping writers under the categories of nationalism or postcoloniality. Kiberd claims that the Irish experience anticipated that of 'the emerging nation states of the so-called "Third World"'.<sup>27</sup> It provided an example that serves to 'complicate, extend and in some cases expose the limits of the current models of postcoloniality'.<sup>28</sup> It is true that Yeats, for example, had an exemplary role for writers in new nationalisms from Tagore to Curnow. Yet what separates the new literatures in which he served as an example and model is greater than what connects them. The danger in eliding such differences is that post-coloniality becomes reduced to the response of one party to the old binary between coloniser and colonised. Postcoloniality applies to the Caribbean, Africa, Australasia the Americas. It includes Tiger economies, settler countries, Third and First

World societies. It encompasses a multitude of differences within each of those societies as well as among them, even where parallels are forcefully apparent.<sup>29</sup>

### **Modernity and Tino Rangitiratanga**

Almost a century after the Gaelic League led a revival of the Irish native language in the 1890s Maori people initiated a revival of their native language. Maori language pre-schools were established from the 1970s and Maori-language immersion programmes were progressively established in primary and secondary schools throughout the 1980s. The Government supported these efforts in the late 1980s and 1990s with funding and teacher training. In 1987 Maori was declared one of the two 'official' languages in New Zealand.

In both cases the language revivals were associated with more general anti-colonial responses to a legacy in which the indigenous people had lost much of their land and economic power as well as their knowledge of the native language. In both cases, sympathetic groups within the colonising elites supported the efforts of the colonised peoples to reclaim what had been lost. In both cases the attempts to revive native languages and cultures coincided with periods of nationalist enthusiasm that involved groups other than the colonised.

Both revivals occurred in times of economic crisis. The Famine had left the Catholic population of rural Ireland demoralised and impoverished. Throughout the late nineteenth century the small holdings of Catholic farmers became less and less viable. In the cities, as in the country, the situation of the Catholic poor was relieved only by emigration. The Catholic middle class remained insecure. In New Zealand a century later the steady improvement of material life (interrupted by periodic trade slumps) which colonisation and modernisation had brought, mainly, though not exclusively to the settlers, had begun to reverse. Ironically this was a result of post-imperial shifts in Europe which significantly benefited Ireland.

Ireland signed a Free Trade agreement with Britain in 1965 and, along with Britain, joined the European Economic Community in 1973. Thus New Zealand's access to its traditional, 'imperial' market was progressively curtailed while Ireland, having long produced the same kinds of products with a less modernised and capital-intensive agriculture, found its markets expanding. As Ireland, invigorated by new arrangements in Europe,

embarked belatedly on a programme of economic modernisation, New Zealand, unnerved by the loss of its colonial ties, drifted towards insolvency and cultural reaction.<sup>30</sup> Ireland from the 1960s became more outward-looking and socially liberal as New Zealand became more inward-looking, provincial and socially divided.

The changes in the New Zealand economy impacted most savagely on Maori people. In the 1950s and '60s Maori people in large numbers had migrated from rural areas to the cities where expanding local industries offered more remunerative work than the seasonal kinds traditionally available in rural areas, but the new jobs were mainly unskilled. From the early 1970s, as Europe progressively closed its markets to New Zealand primary products and the oil shocks increased inflation, the economy suffered a series of crises. When, in the late 1980s, the economy contracted sharply as protected industries were exposed to competition the demand for unskilled labour savagely declined.

Maori nationalism, which had first appeared as sporadic movements of resistance led by prophet figures in the late nineteenth century, appeared again in the 1970s, now frequently led by strong female figures. The protests of the 1970s focused not on jobs and economic issues but on land and language, the key markers of cultural identity. As with the Black consciousness movement in the United States in the 1960s - a source of influence among radicalised young Maori especially - Maori were engaged in constructing an identity around a set of values held to be different from those of the colonising Europeans (the Pakeha). The Pakeha, in this essentialising discourse, stood for the exploitation and despoliation of the land, lack of community and a failure to care for the old, unchecked individualism, the cash nexus as against emotional connection, materialism as against spirituality.

On one level a simple binary established by settler prejudice was being reversed so that all the positives were Maori, all the negatives Pakeha. Yet a more complex process of revaluation was also underway. When Maori writers claimed that the flowering of new Maori literature represented the true beginnings of a local tradition while Pakeha literature was exhausted, they were subverting a longstanding and debilitating pattern established not only by colonisation but also by Pakeha cultural nationalists like Curnow. The struggle for authenticity and independence in the 1980s was not waged between settler and empire, as in the '30s, but between Maori who defined

themselves as tangata whenua (the people of the land) and all those who had come as a consequence of colonisation, however they defined themselves. In this new struggle the downtrodden were cheekily claiming all the clever advantages, just as the Irish had in respect of the English in the 1890s. Suddenly, Polynesian values were seen as ideally suited to the imagination and providing the true basis of a decolonised literature, at once modern and rooted in authentic tradition. Pakeha literary postmodernists and cultural mandarins in the 1980s eagerly endorsed this view, supporting bicultural anthologies and art work as a means of signalling the nation's distance from its monocultural past.<sup>31</sup> As with the Irish case, the old negatives were being reversed so that not only the early British colonisers but also the mid-twentieth-century nationalists were now seen as provincial and outdated, while to be 'native' was to be particularly imaginative by virtue of one's special relationship to (post) modernity and to tradition.

From the outset, then, the Maori Renaissance was both nostalgic and modernising. The issue for Maori in the 1970s as in the 1870s was to find a means of assimilating modernity to their own purpose and on their own terms, fitting current discourses and technologies to their own patterns of life. The object was to be agents of modernity not its passive recipients. In the early period of contact modernity had been extended to Maori by the colonisers as a civilising benefit, even where this involved chiefly guns, garden implements and the Bible. By the post-World War II period a more concerted effort to modernise Maori life was underway. Not coincidentally, this effort went with the establishment of new import-substitution industries in the major cities, which required new sources of labour. The migration of Maori from rural communities to industrial suburbs went with the provision of state houses, electricity, health services and education. All these were offered in the guise of benevolent improvement, even where the offer concealed blatant Pakeha interests (as when the remnants of the tribe that had controlled the Auckland isthmus were shifted from their 'residentially desirable' site on the seashore to nearby state houses just before the Queen visited in 1953). Modernity in these terms was no longer acceptable.

At the heart of the the cultural contentions of the 1980s lay the complicated issue of Maori sovereignty. Clearly, Maori nationalism was limited in a way Irish nationalism had not been by the overwhelming presence of the colonisers in the country. Nevertheless, the Maori Renaissance

was a broadly based movement whose object, like that of the Irish Revivalists, was the achievement of national independence. Maori nationalism did not aim at the removal of the Pakeha presence, but at decolonising New Zealand so that it might become Aotearoa, a bicultural country involving true partnership between the two separate nations which signed the Treaty. Many Pakeha embraced this latter aim, just as many Anglo-Irish had embraced the nationalist cause.

According to Maori nationalists, Maori sovereignty had been guaranteed by the Treaty of Waitangi which offered to preserve tino rangatiratanga (chiefly authority) in return for Maori agreement to cede kawanatanga (governance). By tino rangatiratanga Maori understood that the integrity of their tribal lands would be respected and their mode of social organisation under their own chiefs would be respected on those lands. They argued that, had sovereignty been ceded, the appropriate word would have been mana (power) rather than kawanatanga, which represented in 1840 the rather loose powers of the governor to discipline Europeans.

In the 1970s Maori protested about land loss; in the 1980s the argument shifted around the issue of sovereignty. Donna Awatere argued for separateness in *Maori Sovereignty* (1984). Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* (1986) compares the Maori search for nationhood with that of the Italian people of the Risorgimento. In 1989 he rewrote a number of Mansfield's New Zealand stories from a Maori perspective in his centennial gift to the country's major literary figure; *Dear Miss Mansfield* thus celebrates Mansfield's writing and claims her for the bicultural politics of the period. By the late 1980s a tribunal had been established to investigate Treaty claims going back to 1840s as a result of which a number of major settlements were to take place over the next decade. A further shift occurred in the 1990s as arguments developed within Maoridom as to whether the Treaty settlements should be distributed only among tribally-based Maori or shared among Maori generally. The chief dissension involved the right of the many detribalised urban Maori to a share, a dispute that is currently being conducted with great bitterness in the courts.

While some Maori, particularly in the early period of the Maori Renaissance, chose to try to recreate the past by returning to their ancestral lands (or in literary terms by writing versions of pastoral), most remained concerned with how the post-colonial mood of New Zealand from the

mid-1980s might be used to improve the material basis of their lives. Disputes arose over how that might best be achieved, especially when Treaty payments were used to build a capital base by the tribes which settled rather than being distributed to Maori generally on the basis of need. The South Island tribe, Ngai Tahu, that has most fiercely defended traditional tribal affiliations as the proper basis of Treaty claims has also been the most determinedly capitalist in its use of the settlements. Among the many ironies of the period was the transformation of Donna Awatere, radical Maori nationalist in the 1980s, into a member of Parliament in the radically right wing Act Party by the 1990s. (By 'right wing' here I mean economically libertarian.) Maori farmers were also objecting to Producer Boards, a favourite theme of the economic right, and Maori fishermen were the right to fish unrestricted by fisheries legislation, enraging not only Government agencies but also tribal groups with traditional rights to fish particular areas.

**Pastoral masks a conflict<sup>32</sup>**

The Maori sovereignty movement in the 1980s aimed not only to reclaim economic power but also to encourage a new growth of Maori language users. Maori claimed the native language as one of the taonga (treasures) vaguely protected by the Treaty. As in Ireland, the native language had been suppressed by an English-language education system imposed on the subject populations in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century Maori language use in schools was punishable. Stories of the 'tally stick' used by teachers to count lapses into Irish which were followed by punishment and the punishments given to Maori children for speaking Maori at school were important in focusing discontent in both countries.<sup>33</sup> By the early 1970s Maori language users were a tiny percentage of the population, and the number of first-language speakers was rapidly declining. Hence, a revival meant that English-speaking Maori adults and children would need to relearn the language.

Colonial suppression, however, does not of itself explain the loss of native languages in either Ireland and New Zealand. The colonised peoples themselves participated in the loss of their language, believing that their children would have a better chance in life by learning English. The languages declined because their users declined to speak them, even during the 1930s and '40s in Ireland where the Government made Irish compulsory in schools and in the Civil Service. The attitude of Maori to their native



language fluctuated historically. English was the language of modernity, hence regarded ambivalently. It was viewed positively at times of material betterment, negatively at a time of disillusionment when economic opportunity was bleaker. During the latter periods, the prestige of the native languages rose as the lure of separateness became more powerful.

In Joyce's *Portrait* Davin's mind is 'armed against' all thought or feeling that came to him 'from England or by way of English culture'.<sup>34</sup> In New Zealand also in the 1980s there were radical decolonisers who sought to extirpate the legacy of English cultural values and habits of thoughts in the minds of colonised and colonisers alike. The desire for purity was also manifest in the effort among Maori language authorities to preserve the language in its pristine (that is, pre-European) state. The Maori Language Commission, established in 1987, did not tolerate the creation of Maori words for modern usage by the transliteration of English forms.<sup>35</sup> Yet at the same time Maori language activists, often young and working in schools rather than universities or government departments, were tolerating more hybridised usages. The Commission promoted an official, mandarin and traditional view of Maori language and culture while in the commercial media - radio, rap music, television - younger Maori were finding forms in which to express the dynamic and street-wise culture of the decaying cities.

The most powerful expression of the latter effort is to be found in Alan Duff's unrelievedly naturalistic novel of domestic and social violence, *Once Were Warriors* (1990). Duff's uncompromising novel is not treated, at least in New Zealand, as 'postcolonial'; unlike other Maori Renaissance writing it does not blame the colonisers for the situation of the colonised, nor does it valorise the organic, pre-colonial past. Instead, it unmask the conflicts in pastoralism, along with those within the author himself, whose ancestry uneasily combines coloniser and colonised, upper-middle-class Pakeha and poor Maori.

Duff sees the Maori Renaissance as limiting and simplifying the range of Maori attitudes to modernity. For Duff, the writers of the Maori Renaissance failed to engage with the reality of most contemporary Maori life. Maori people in the late twentieth century are predominantly an *urban* people who have allowed themselves to be captured by a false and irrelevant view of the past. They can neither return to the pre-contact world nor, so long as they continue to romanticise the warrior past, live successfully in the modern one.

