

Mysterious Degrees of Whiteness: Stereotypes about Croats in Colonial New Zealand

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This article explores the complexity of the processes of stigmatisation which occurred in relation to the concept of "whiteness" in colonial New Zealand at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It analyses the ways Croatian immigrants in New Zealand were stigmatised and stereotyped as "non-white" group.

Key words: ETHNIC/RACIAL IDENTITIES, COLONIALISM/SETTLER SOCIETY, STEREOTYPES, BELONGING, CROATS IN NEW ZEALAND

"White" is not always white; "black" is not always black, especially if the whiteness or blackness assumes human forms. "White people" and "black people" have not been simple descriptive terms for a long time. During the colonial time white/black or white/non-white was a code for a relationship of domination and subordination between the coloniser and the colonised. So, it is common, when we write about colonialism, and especially if we analyse the ways of stereotyping within the colonial discourse, to connect the binary opposition white/black to the question of power. Indeed in colonial discourse "whiteness" functioned as a pattern for organising human difference, it was embedded in all forms of social relations. Other forms of differentiation (ethnicity, class, gender, age and so on) were often articulated within the white/black binary. But this binary was never simple. In the British Empire at the end of the nineteenth century the idea of "whiteness" certainly embodied the idea of British superiority in relation to other people but contrary to positions which see the concept of "whiteness" as a transparent technology of suppression and oppression in this essay I show that processes of stigmatisation which occur in relation to the concept of "whiteness" cannot be analysed as a matrix of simple bipolarities of white/black, superior/inferior. Certain forms of stereotyping show that there were different degrees of whiteness, some more white than the others (for instance in many parts of the Empire, the Irish, even though they belonged to the dominant group in relation to the colonised people, were often seen as not white enough and consequently experienced segregation and discrimination). In this essay I analyse the ways Croatian gumdiggers, the largest non-British immigrant group in the gumfields of the Far North,¹ were stigmatised and stereotyped as "non-white" group in colonial New Zealand.

¹ Kauri gum is the fossilised resin of the massive kauri trees that once formed vast forests over the northern half of the North Island of New Zealand. By 1805 Europeans had realised the commercial possibilities of kauri gum. In 1815 traders started to ship kauri gum to Australia, Britain and America. The gum, which Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, called *kapia*, was traditionally used for chewing, tattooing, to light fires, as a torch and for torture. By the 1840s, it was known that kauri gum could be used for oil varnishes. In those early years gum was easily found on or near the surface. As the surface gum became worked out, gumdiggers began to dig for it. For approximately the first twenty years gumdigging was restricted almost solely to Maori. During the 1860s, the kauri gum market was well established in the American and British markets, and European immigrants joined the Maori people in collecting gum. Gumfields attracted individuals from all around the world. By 1924, more than 6,000 Dalmatians were registered as gumdiggers.

They were represented as a “horde of barbarians”, “the scum of earth” and most importantly they were seen as “black fellows”.

My intention here is not to trace the genealogy of false representation of Croatian gumdiggers on New Zealand gumfields, but to show how the concept of “whiteness” produced stereotypes which excluded Croats from the dominant group. I argue that the “whiteness” is not just a colonial concept, or a simple structure formed by the exercise of the power; it is not just an empty label but rather it is a kind of container, filled with what Slavoj Žižek calls, following Lacan, *jouissance*, “enjoyment”. In other words, the concept of whiteness is not just produced by particular discourses, as argued by many cultural critics (inspired by work of Michael Foucault and Edward Said), but discourses themselves are always contaminated by enjoyment. Even though enjoyment, as Žižek (1989) states, is always-already there prior to any particular discursive formation, this is not to suggest that the concept of “whiteness” is ahistorical, static and unchanging, on the contrary the concept of “whiteness” has variable historical origins, it always mirrors historically specific power structures, it is always overdetermined by articulation with other specific forms of differentiation (class, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity and so on).

European Others

“Whiteness” as a concept for differentiation is certainly a European invention, the concept that associates colonialism, conquest, exploitation and the subjugation of different non-European peoples, but “whiteness” has been an enigmatic, opaque and obscure concept in Europe itself. In 1994, when I moved from Croatia to New Zealand I had to fill in different administrative forms, and in accordance with the existing classification in New Zealand I was classified as “Other European”. Indeed, Europe has always had its “Other Europeans”, often outlined in dichotomies: the Northern Europe/Southern Europe, then Western Europe/the Eastern Europe, then Europe /the Balkans and finally with the united European identity we have got the fortress of Europe or Europe as a fortress. On the other hand, in New Zealand “Other European” means “no-British European”.

These categories to which “other Europeans” belong corroborate Etienne Balibar’s thesis about racism without races, “neo-racism” or differentialist racism. Balibar outlines this neo-racism as an attempt to essentialise and naturalise difference in culture rather than in biology and race. The new nodal point of multiculturalism quilts the inversion between nature and culture by naturalising culture, in the sense that culture functions like a previous colonial classification based on nature “as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin” (1991:22). Is then the rhetoric of “whiteness” in colonial discourse not “a predecessor” to this new type of racism, as Žižek would say multicultural “racism with a distance” (2000:216).

In any case to clarify someone’s degree of “whiteness” implies a certain knowledge of the Other. In colonial New Zealand this knowledge of the Other was based on a concept developed in the British Empire. As Thomas Richards argues in the nineteenth century “the British Empire was more productive of knowledge than any previous empire in history” (1993:6). The Empire’s scientists and administrators collected much information (they surveyed, mapped, took censuses, described different people, their customs, religions, languages, etc.) which they organised in a series of classifications. Collecting and classifying information about different cultures was not new idea, but what was new in the nineteenth century was that these information were set off against new national ideas for organising polity (Hardt and Negri, 2000). The new concept of national sovereignty was based on two fundamental kinds of operations that contributed to its construction: the inclusion of people in a nation, based on the idea of cultural homogeneity, of the internal strength of the nation, and the exclusion of all others who were seen as outside of it. In this context, “the mechanisms of new colonial racism emerged”. This does not mean that different forms of racism did not ex-

ist before the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, but, as Thomas (1994:66–85) argues, over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries “Others” were seen and described by Europeans as distinctive in terms of their *lack*, the absence of the European values, but not as a distinctive type. By the end of the eighteenth century the hierarchical scale of different varieties of human beings had been created and the key issue in all scientific debates in Europe was the question of interaction between them (Young, 1995:6). Different scientific theories on race emerged and one of them was the theory of amalgamation according to which some humans (“superior”) can interbreed productively, but some (those who were ranked as “low”, “inferior”), cannot. The belief in the superiority of some races was supported in particular ways by social applications of Darwin’s theory of evolution and his argument that species and variety were not fixed but developed according to rules of natural selection. For the first time in history the theory of race moved “to the theory of types, to questions of psychological, intellectual and moral differences” (Young, 1995:13). Human history came to be viewed as a single evolutionary development through a series of levels, which were often referred to as savagery, barbarism and civilisation. Different cultures were seen to be contemporaneously on different levels. Richards argues that the belief in the wholeness of the natural world and the natural classification of peoples and their cultures in the nineteenth century Britain became “almost a matter of faith, and thus ended as a central myth of imperial knowledge” (Richards, 1993:57). With the emergence of a new racism based on a hierarchy where the British race was put on the highest level, above all others, where domination of “inferior” by “superior” was considered a natural condition the British saw their Empire as united by information. So they started to build the “Imperial archive of knowledge”. But this archive “was not a building, nor even a collection of the texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledge of metropolis and empire” (Richards, 1993:11). This overwhelming classification of different knowledges enabled the multiplication of various stereotypes.

Stereotypes are, by definition, a production and multiplication of the same (as in the etymology of the word – a plate on which the printing of newspaper is done). It was the belief in comprehensive knowledge that fixed the meaning of different data, producing stereotypes. Different racial and ethnic groups were included in the archive through this kind of stereotyping, through comprehensive knowledge, a fantasy of knowledge. Here Richards shows the importance of fantasy in the construction of what is called reality. According to Žižek (1989) it is a fantasy that covers over the impossibility of any closed system. The idea of a closed system, of society as a whole is the “fundamental ideological fantasy”. The social does not exist as a given object, but is always a process, always incompleteness, a fissure. Fantasy emerges as a support exactly in the place where the incompleteness of reality becomes evident. It is through fantasy that we experience our world as “a wholly consistent and transparently meaningful order” (1990). Hence we can say that fantasy structures our social relations. Clearly, the British saw their Empire as a sort of unity but the truth was of course that it was much easier to unify knowledges on different peoples than to unify an empire made of territory (Richards, 1993:4). This powerful fantasy construction of the imperial archive filled the gap between the British desire to control its colonies and the impossibility of absolute control. The political significance of a fantasy construction of the knowledge of the Other as a totality, although not to the same degree or in the same way, was visible in all colonies not just in terms of racism, but also in all other areas of social relations.

New Zealand’s Others

In accordance to the epistemological master pattern developed in the imperial archive of knowledge, the Empire’s subjects were compared and ranked. From the beginning of colonisation Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, were ranked “higher than most other

‘savages’” on account of their agricultural and artistic skills (Sorrenson, 1975:97). It was argued that they had the capacity to be civilised through their contact with the “superior” British race. Some influential writers of the time believed that through amalgamation Maori and Europeans could become one people (Wakefield and Ward, 2000 (1837):29). But this argument changed in accordance with new theories of race and hybridity which were emerging in Europe, theories that sometimes appeared conflicting, but the underlying premise in all of them was that in terms of the classification of races the European race was at the top. In short it was believed that: a) a union between different people is always infertile; b) the mixing of people produces a new mixed race with new moral characteristics; c) mixed breeds die out quickly or revert to one or other of the permanent parent “types”; d) hybridity between allied races is fertile, that between distant races is infertile or tends to degeneration; e) hybridity produces a mongrel group that makes up “raceless chaos” threatening pure races (Young, 1995:18). In discussions on hybridity in New Zealand, we can find the echo of all of these arguments: first amalgamation was propagated but later it was dismissed. By the end of the nineteenth century, through the land sale system and confiscation, Maori lost almost all of their land and due to the ensuing low standard of living, diseases such as influenza, smallpox, whooping cough and measles their population sharply declined. This decline and the coming of more European immigrants resulted in a situation where “Europeans outnumbered Maori by fourteen to one” (Sorrenson, 1992:141). In that context a new social imaginary emerged, one in which new settlers saw themselves as distinctive from other British colonies, more importantly they saw themselves as “better British than British in the Britain”. The goal was to reproduce a British culture in a new form, a form which even though was based on the British values was seen as unique for New Zealand. Belich describes the period between 1840 and 1880 in New Zealand as one of progressive colonisation, “an unholy alliance between myths and economics, an extraordinary system of dream-led growth through growth” (Belich, 2001:17). But from 1880, he argues, the ideology of progress was replaced by the “emergent new ideology of recolonisation” under which a new sense of collective identity emerged, one in which New Zealand saw itself as a “better Britain” (2001:76–77). New settlers from the United Kingdom very often described themselves as Britons of the South in an attempt to dissolve differences between English, Welsh, Scots and Irish. This idea of an ideal New Zealander as better British than British in the Britain first operated on the level of “whiteness” and excluded indigenous people – the Maori, although it was proposed that Maori could become “brown Britons” (Belich, 2001:189). Whiteness here does not mean a physical property, it refers to the established structure of relations, a signifying chain that through a process of inclusions and exclusions constituted a pattern for organising difference (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000:4). Whiteness operated on different levels and at different intensities: there was “pure white” or “dirty white”. In this classification, English and Scots were seen as the best, Irish and Northern Europeans (Scandinavians, Danes, Germans) as “a good second best”, followed by the less desirable types of Southern and Eastern Europeans (Belich 2001). Asian immigrants, mostly Chinese and Indians, were least welcome.

There is a sentiment amongst the people at large which has almost become a watchword or motto: “New Zealand for New Zealanders.” Our ambition is assuredly not to colonise our country with Chinese, or Kanakas or Austrians [Croats]. Neither are we ambitious to have a mixed race – a hybrid or mongrel in reality a mixture of all. On the contrary we are all anxious to preserve the purity of our race (*New Zealand Observer*, 27 May 1893:2).

This new construction of social reality, the emergence of New Zealand nationalism, which Belich sees as a shift from progressive colonisation to recolonisation cements a new set of differences based on nationalism. Rather than Empire, the nation became more and more the criterion for exclusion (or inclusion) of the Other. However, this emerging nationalism

was shaped by the epistemological master pattern of whiteness developed in the imperial archive of knowledge. According to Žižek (1993), this pattern cannot be seen as purely symbolic or discursive, since it produces extra-discursive effects. There is something more in this pattern, something "which holds together a given community", something that can produce national identification but is rather difficult to describe – the national Thing and this national Thing is always at stake in ethnic tensions.

Influenced by Lacan's theory of the imaginary, symbolic and real, Žižek's starting point is the Lacanian conception of the subject as split, a void. This void is the irreducible gap between the symbolic and the real. The real is fullness which is lost forever with subject's entering into the symbolic, into the world of words. The signifier, the word, the symbolic, offers to the subject stable representation, but this representation is not capable of representing the "unity" of the subject. With entering into the symbolic the subject sacrifices something, it sacrifices an immediate access to the real, it becomes alienated and this "alienation constitutes the subject as such". This lack of the subject is productive since the subject continuously tries to fill it, to close it with different identifications, but there is no identification in the symbolic, in the social that can restore the real. The real is lost forever, sacrificed or castrated when the subject enters the symbolic but nevertheless it is exactly this loss of fullness that forces the subject to try to find it in the symbolic. In Lacan, this lack of the real is the lack of a pre-symbolic, real enjoyment, a lack of *jouissance*. The sacrifice of *jouissance*, of the primordial Thing, causes desire for it and in that context the primordial Thing becomes posited as an external object, the first outside, which remains desirable but still impossible. Žižek (1993) argues that the nation could be seen as a Thing, as an object-cause of desire. The nation as a Thing is a fantasy space but at the same time it stages that fantasy. The nation-Thing always appear to members of a given community as their "Thing", as something accessible only to members of that particular community, but nevertheless at risk of being "stolen" by others. Clearly, when the writer of the above letter panics because of the growing presence of aliens, Chinese and Croats, he believes that he possesses this Nation Thing which others somehow want to steal. But this newly established "New Zealandness" which he wants to defend "is not reducible to the so-called set of values [in this case British values] that offer support to national identity" (1993:201). According to Žižek (1993:201) there is "something more there", something that is "present" in these values, something that "appears through them", something that nationalists see as if it is in them, what defines their being, but when they are asked to describe the presence of this Nation Thing, they usually "enumerate disconnected fragments of the way [their] community organises its feasts, its rituals of mating, its initiation ceremonies, in short, all the details by which is made visible the unique way a community *organizes its enjoyment*". But paradoxically, even though the nation always appears to nationalists as "their Thing", as something accessible only to them, as something the others cannot grasp; nonetheless they believe that it is something constantly threatened by "others", they believe that the "others" want to "steal their enjoyment" (by ruining their way of life).

But this nation as the Thing, as we have seen, is interwoven through different discourses, different fantasies that cover the impossible nature of the traumatic kernel of the Thing. At the beginning of New Zealand nationalism, whiteness (Britishness) emerged as the Gordian knot of different fantasies, as the pattern which organised differences (ethnicity, class, sexuality, age...) and subsumed all of them under the issue of the Nation. During the 1880s, when the first Croats arrived in the gumfields in search of a job, the idea of cultural homogeneity based on "whiteness – Britishness" was very strong. Different ethnic groups were measured in accordance with a hierarchical scale of possibility of assimilation into New Zealand culture, a culture described as more British than in Britain itself. This newly valued "British-ness", arguably a developing sense of "national" identity generated anxiety about those who were seen as different. In a specific way Croats who were working on the gum-

fields of the Far North were seen as “different”, as a group which wanted to “steal enjoyment” from New Zealanders by taking their jobs, sending money out of New Zealand, stealing New Zealand’s women and therefore poisoning the blood of the young nation.

The gumdigging industry in general was not valued in New Zealand, it was considered to be on the margins of the colony and an obstacle to the nation building process. During the 1880s the Government’s ideal was to establish a proper settler society where the development of land was prized as the only possible progress of the colony. A high value was placed on a stable domestic life, strictly gendered work roles, abstinence from alcohol and so forth. The nature of the gumdigging industry implied that gumdiggers had to move from field to field in search of gum, and mostly gumdiggers were men. In that context gumfields were seen as the industry that could not produce long-term prosperity. Given the nomadic character of the job, everyone (English, Scot, Irish, Maori, Italian, Croat, Chinese ...) who worked as a gumdigger was under suspicion as “wild” and “problematic”. Ironically, the 1880s were the worst years of a long economic depression in New Zealand and many skilled workers from the cities and small farmers were forced to find seasonal work such as gumdigging. But even though gumdiggers in general were not respected by the Government, members of the urban elite or respectable settlers, the discourse of “whiteness-British-ness” occurred on the gumfields constructing the other as that which stands in the way of achieving the ideal of colonial New Zealand. As Croats were the biggest non-British group on the gumfields soon they were perceived as a threat:

The main inconveniences of camp life, independent of the weather, are of the insect species – the blow fly, the mason fly, and the mosquito... Other insect pests, notably a small beetle that gets into one’s ears in the night, causing positive agony if an attempt is made to eject him forcibly ... are numerous, but according to the majority of the diggers, the greatest pests of all are the Austrians (Croats) who are now flocking to the different fields... (*Supplement New Zealand Herald*, 25 March 1893:1).

In the nineteenth century, when more than 3000 of Croats were working on the New Zealand gumfields, Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and even though Croats were never treated by Vienna as Austrians, in many parts of the British Empire immigrants from Austria-Hungary were simply labelled as Austrians. On the gumfields, like many other gumdiggers they lived and worked in groups, moving from one gumfield to another in search for gum. Once they were “registered” as intruders their difference evoked a chain of associations, all of them referring to the “theft of enjoyment”:

Austrians come together in mobs, they herd like sheep on their arrival, and their methods of living are neither clean nor compatible with food sanitation (*New Zealand Observer*, 11 August 1900:2).

Again, the Austrians are travelling over the gumfields ... [S]ince the Austrians have passed over like locusts, it is impossible to earn a living (*New Zealand Herald*, 29 April 1898:3).

Like a “herd of ship”, the “greatest pest”, “passing “like locusts” – clearly the perception of Croats was mostly based on animal imagery. In addition, together with other unwanted foreigners they were categorised as “black”:

Everywhere we go we find black fellows – Syrians, Austrians, Chinamen, etc. (*New Zealand Herald* 100 years ago 1 September 1998).

[I] was digging gum on a new field at the North Cape, in March 1896, ... there were 35 whites and 20 Austrians (*New Zealand Herald* 100 years ago 25 August 1998).

As a “dirty whites” or “black fellows” they aroused anxiety about racial purity. These anxieties reflected the very core of colonial sexual politics. From the beginning of the colonisation of New Zealand, women migrants were very often connected to the processes of establishing a new life in the country, a stable life based on family values. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Croats were working on the gumfields, the Government believed that the fastest way to “civilise and settle down” the wandering male population on the gumfields and goldfields was “to marry them off” (Phillips 1987:50). So, women were seen as both a “stabilising and civilising factor” for the community, they were “the guardian[s] of moral and spiritual values” (Park 1991:29). Women were expected to have not just a moral influence over men, but also over children. Proper motherhood was seen as vital for the strength of the nation and its future. But at the same time New Zealand women were warned to stay away from unwanted foreigners. It was argued that by marriage with foreigners, the colony would lose its power, that the “commingling” of New Zealanders with the “scum of the earth – Chinamen, Syrians, Indians, Croatians, etc – would result in descendants being “a mere assemblage of half-fed, half-clad savages, reduced almost to barbarism, their physical and moral nature deteriorated and debased, our language lost, all the noble qualities of body and mind of British men and women wanting” (Petrie 1999: 191). So, even though the Government promoted an ideal of a stable domestic life and marriage, these marriages were arranged in relation to the degree of “whiteness”, to the fantasy of knowledge of the other, the other that sometimes, like as in the case of Croats, was seen underneath white skin as essentially black, hence the unassimilable. New Zealand women who married those who were classified as black fellows had to forfeit their New Zealand citizenship.²

Croats on the gumfields were also seen as threatening the prosperity of New Zealand, of “stealing” the wealth of the country. During the 1890s Croatian gumdiggers introduced a new technique known as face-digging and they also “invented sluices, gum-washing machines and new types of sieves” (Mitalfe, 1984:77). They systematically dug large areas, overturning the soil to a depth of several feet, and picking up even the small gum nuts and chips. “Facedigging” caused some fear that the “Austrians” overproduction” would seriously affect the wealth of British diggers.

The Government responded to these fears and in 1898 formed the Investigation Commission on Kauri Gum Industry to check the suitability of Croats for working on the gumfields. In a remarkable series of encounters, the Commissioners questioned British settlers and diggers about Croatian behaviour on the gumfields. The following statements were given by British diggers to the commissioners:

Thomas Somers: ...They, Austrians, come in large numbers ... Our greatest trouble is the alien invasion (AJHR 1898 H. – 12:17).

John Gray: There were two hundred Austrians on the field the winter before last; ...there are very few now. We do not want them, because of their competition ... I am of opinion that the only way to deal with this influx of the Austrians is, if possible, to pass a law by which they would be prevented from digging gum (AJHR 1898 H. – 12:37).

² For example, Miriam Bridelia Cummings, born of Northern Irish parents at Thames in 1879, married Peter Soljak, a Croat, in 1908. After that she was treated as a foreigner. She was turned away when she registered for a bed in a Tauranga nursing home preparatory to the birth of a child; her name was removed from the electoral roll; in 1919 she registered as an alien “but only when it was made clear that if she did not she would go to prison” (Coney 1993:131). In this context we can say that all of these concerns about purity of race and social hygiene were gendered; women who married foreigners had to forfeit their New Zealand citizenship, but this law was never applied to men.

Robert Morrow Houston: ...The Austrians on the fields are a great evil at the present time. ...[The] North will be destroyed by the Austrians... (AJHR 1898 H. – 12:48).

Croats were accused of constantly sending money to their homeland, thus impoverishing the young colony.

Joseph Evans: ...I find that the Austrians are hardworking industrious people, but they take a lot of money away... I believe they are impoverishing the country by sending money out of it (AJHR 1898 H. – 12:38).

Croats toiled day and night, living frugally and working in large groups in contrast to mostly individual British diggers. They were blamed for everything, and even the dropping of prices was seen as a result of cheating by Croats who offered a large quantity of gum on the market:

...the quantities of gum brought into the market by the Austrians serve to lower the market price (AJHR 1898 H. – 12:9).

Some gum merchants refused to deal with Croats. Robert Morrow Houston, said that he, as a storekeeper, used to give equipment on credit to gumdiggers. He explained: "...I have refused on all occasions to give an Austrian a start, ...but I have never refused a Britisher" (AJHR 1898 H. – 12).

The Investigation Commission in their Report to the Government wrote that the Austrians "speak Slavonic dialect, not German ... they appear to have strong family affections ... they work very long hours ... [their] ignorance of the English language prevents [them] understanding market quotations..." (AJHR 1898 H – 12:7-9). They stated that "Austrians – laborious, energetic, resourceful, well behaved – would make admirable settlers" (AJHR 1898 H. – 12:9).

Despite these and some other positive comments made by members of Parliament,³ the Kauri Industry Bill was passed to reduce the number of Croats in the gumfields. Premier R. J. Seddon, speaking in Parliament described them as "locust-like" (PD 1898 (105):547). Large areas of Crown land were reserved just for "the digger of British extraction" (*New Zealand Herald*, Special Supplement, 11 April, 1923:9). In 1908 and 1910 other restrictive laws against "aliens" on the gumfields were passed, protecting interests of the British gumdiggers (AJHR, 1914, C-12:8-9).

One of the most telling accusation against the Croats was that they worked too hard. As Zizek points out this characterisation is a double bind: to the nationalist the "other" is always either a workaholic stealing their jobs or an idler living on their labour (1993:203). This "double-bind" is the clearest evidence that the fear of the Other is based in fantasy, a fantasy in which "New Zealandness" "is not reducible to the so-called set of values that offer support to national identity" (1993:201), in other words, it is not reducible to any particular discursive formation since "the last support of the ideological effect ... is the non-sensical, pre-ideological kernel of enjoyment".

An 1893 letter to the Editor of the *New Zealand Observer*, written by one British gumdigger, sums up all fears from unwanted foreigners, Croats, in a flurry of invective:

It is unquestionably time that the people of New Zealand woke up to a recognition of the evil consequences that must follow this influx of Austrians. Did I say

³ Mr Buchanan, a representative from Wairarapa said "We have measures for excluding people... but in the case of these Austrians, against whom the Bill is aimed, the testimony again and again has been that they are sober and industrious – that they get up early in the morning and work in the manner we should like to see some of our own people doing" (NZPD 1898 (105):553)

Austrians? Well, I am wrong. They are not Austrians... They are Russian Slavs and consequently are very much more undesirable as colonists than Austrians would be... The Russian Slav, like the Chinamen is "peculiar" in many of his little ways. He has a frugal mind, for example, oh very frugal! Lives, like John, on the smell of an oiled-rag. And like John again, he is extraordinarily industrious. He gathers honey – I mean gum – all the day, and stores it up at night, and keeps it stored very often for many days and nights holding on for a rise! Oh yes he knows all about that and is fully equal to the task of telling how many beans make five! The Russian Slavs are gregarious creatures – amongst themselves. Birds of a feather, they flock together. They hunt not in couples – as do the ordinary gumdiggers – but in droves of six or eight or more... The Russian Slavs save more money than English... And he sends more than two thirds of his earnings out of the country ... to Dalmatia... If steps are not taken to drive these Russian Slav invaders away the result will be this: These foreigners will band together to lease our gumfields ... and they will boss the situation... (*New Zealand Observer*, 13 May, 1893:2).

Comparisons of "black fellows", like in this letter of Croats and Chinese, were common. There are certainly many representational parallels between the Croatian and Chinese migrations to New Zealand. At the beginning Chinese labourers in New Zealand working in the gold fields were considered "industrious, frugal, moral, healthy, and law-abiding" (Pearson 1990:96), but by the 1880s their productivity was seen as an "economic threat" to the colony. Like Croats, Chinese immigrants were overwhelmingly male and they worked and lived in separated communities. Members of both communities were also commonly referred to as animals or barbarians. Reading the characterisations of the Croats and Chinese together, it becomes apparent that a deep psychic fear of the Other was interwoven into the fabric of colonial New Zealand. Neither Chinese nor Croats met the stereotyped view of the "desirable coloniser".

Conclusion

Whiteness is not a physical property, but the signifying chain that can establish a pattern of difference (Seshadri-Crooks 2000). In New Zealand at the end of the nineteenth century the concept of whiteness, shaped by the fantasy of knowledge developed in the imperial archive of knowledge, was the basis of emerging New Zealand nationalism. In other words, we can say that the specific kind of knowledge of the Other was developed through this colonial discourse of whiteness. But this knowledge of the Other cannot be analysed just as a purely discursive operation, as for example Edward Said proposed in his famous work *Orientalism*. Said's critique of colonial discourse is based on the analysis of the power relation that produced its fiction – the Orient as a European invention. In other words Said's argument is that the colonial discourse itself produced in its unfolding its object. The imaginary cartography and divisions between "East" and "West" were painted with numerous stereotypes: the Oriental as "strange", "abnormal", "inferior", whereas everything that was Europe was seen as "familiar", "normal", "superior" and so on. By employing words like "alien", "strange", "exotic" or "inferior" in its descriptions of the Orient, the West identified itself as positive, worthwhile, in other words, the European Self was produced through the negation of the constructed Other. According to Said "...cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not *as they are* but as, for the benefit of the receiver, *they ought to be*" (Said 1978:67). But what is problematic in this argument is exactly this statement about the possibility of possessing the truth about culture "culture as it is". Following Žižek, however, the critique of colonial discourse would not be based on the distinction between *they are* and *ought to be*, since each culture is morally based on "ought to be", where this "ought to be" tries in different ways to conceal the funda-

mental lack, a void in the social. Therefore, each culture conceals its lack by generating different fantasies, filling out the empty space of a fundamental impossibility of any closed system. It is through fantasy that we experience our world as "a wholly consistent and transparently meaningful order". On the one side fantasy has a stabilising dimension, "the dream of the state without disturbances out of reach of human depravity" (Žižek 1996:24). On the other side, fantasy's destabilising dimension creates images that "irritate us". In other words, the obverse of the harmonious community always produces some disconnected piles of fragments, some stereotypes that try to conceal the lack in "reality" itself. Therefore, unlike Said's "Orientalism", the critique of colonial discourse would not indulge in revealing fiction produced by discourse but in exposing enjoyment (like the nation Thing) in this production of stereotypes. Žižek insists on a pre-discursive kernel of enjoyment in discourse itself, its particular surplus. It is this surplus which acted as the last support of colonial discourse, beyond the field of meaning but at the same time internal to it – something in the black that is more than black – and this surplus, blackness, could slide into whiteness because the colour was structured in fantasy (enjoyment).

Hence whiteness is not just purely discursive. At the first it could seem that when we analyse the concept of whiteness in colonial New Zealand and its relation to the beginning of the New Zealand's nationalism that it functions just as a discourse, a point which totalises the series of floating signifiers (nation, sex, justice...), transforming them into a unified field. But the last support of the way whiteness operated was the pre-ideological kernel of enjoyment. Stereotypes about Croats on the gumfields were the product of a fundamental ideological fantasy about the New Zealand nation as more British than Britain itself, New Zealand as a workers' paradise, a respectable society where everyone who wanted to work hard could earn enough to buy land and build a home (Bassett 1990:170). Croatian gumdiggers were seen as an external element, as an obstacle to the achievement of an ideal society. Stereotypes about them arose from the belief of British gumdiggers that they possessed the National Thing, and this National Thing was constantly threatened by others, others who, like Croats on the gumfields, tried to "steal" it. Hence the characterisations of Croats in the gumfields are a result of this identification of British immigrants in New Zealand with the National Thing, an empty signifier filled with anxiety and fear of the Other.

Even though everyone who lived and worked on the gumfields was seen as a person who had slipped to the bottom of the economic and social ladder, as an uncivilised element, as an element that is corruptive of the social body as the whole, the identification of British diggers with the National Thing allowed them to transfer the real antagonism of the social via fantasy to the foreigner other, non-British or non-white other. This leads us to the hypothesis that the "mysterious" degrees of whiteness developed in colonial time anticipated what later developed into multicultural racism or as Balibar would say, racism without races, postmodern racism, that in the era of globalisation and the "logic of Capital" unfolds in a way that posits whiteness as colourless in the privileged universal position. Those who are seen as being out of the global system, like the "brawny stuff" described by George Orwell, or the "ethnic trash" attributed to the "South Slavs" by Karl Marx, or those characterised as "enemies of the free world" by the American president George W. Bush, present something malleable, not susceptible to the progress. In other words, in the era of globalisation the mysterious ingredients of whiteness are protected by a universal law pretending to be colourless, that is through the Capital-Thing the mysterious ingredients of whiteness provide subjects with certain symbolic positions.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AJHR, *New Zealand Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*
- NZPD, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*
- Balibar, E. (1991) **Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities**. London: Verso.
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- (1893) Letters to the Editor, *New Zealand Observer*, 27 May, p. 2.
- (1893) Letters to the Editor, *New Zealand Observer*, 11 August, p. 2.
- (1893) Letters to the Editor, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 October, p. 7.
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STEREOTIPI O HRVATIMA U KOLONIJALNOM NOVOM ZELANDU

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Ovaj rad razmatra strukturirani politički prostor Britanskog Imperija, u koji su stizali prvi hrvatski doseljenici na Novi Zeland u 19. stoljeću, a koji se temeljio na pretpostavci britanske nadmoći i hijerarhiji u kojoj je "britanska rasa" bila na vrhu. Konstrukciju političkoga prostora utemeljenu na ideološkim fantazijama rad teorijski problematizira kroz principe lacanovske "Stvari" u odnosu na pojam nacije koju predlaže Slavoj Žižek. U britanskome imperijalnom arhivu, unutar "fantazije znanja", dominirala je logika ekvivalencije u vrijeme kada su se Hrvati doseljavali, koja je potiskivala svaki položaj različitosti. To je značilo pojednostavljenje novozelandskoga političkog prostora i širenje paradigmatičkoga pola značenja na različite slojeve stanovništva. Analizirajući razne povijesne izvore rad pokazuje kako je logika ekvivalencije, "nečega identičnoga idealnom tipu Novozelandana" isprva djelovala na razini "bjelokožnosti" i tako isključila maorske domoroce. Međutim, sama "bjelina" djelovala je na razinama različitog intenziteta pa prema toj klasifikaciji ni Slaveni nisu bili "dovoljno bijeli", dakle bili su podređena "rasa" i, dosljedno tome, nisu bili dobrodošli. Logika ekvivalencije je prethodila i poticala nove zakone i odredbe pomoću kojih je vladajuća skupina podupirala ideju o kulturnoj homogenosti utemeljenoj na britanskim vrijednostima i stvorila kulturnu stvarnost koja je isključivala ljude nebritanskog porijekla.

Ključne riječi: ETNICITET, RASA, KOLONIJALIZAM, STEREOTIPI, HRVATI U NOVOM ZELANDU