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Meatworkers
Mansfield
Motherhood

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WOMEN' STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND (INC), P.O. BOX 5067 AUCKLAND.

This Association is a feminist organisation formed to promote radical social change through the medium of women's studies.

Some of the objects of the Association are:

- to undertake, promote and disseminate research about women by women from a feminist perspective
- to inform and educate women about women
- to encourage the preservation of existing material about women
- to facilitate the establishment of women's studies courses with a feminist perspective
- to undertake and promote the publication and dissemination of material about women
- to organise and participate in activities, conferences, seminars and displays in furtherance of the objects of the Association

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CONFERENCE PAPERS: An annual conference is held where the latest research and discussion papers are presented, and workshops explore issues important to women. The Conference Papers are published annually and some back copies are available. Members receive a discount for the Conference and the Conference Papers.

NEWSLETTER: A quarterly newsletter containing local and overseas news, book reviews, conference reports etc. is sent to all members.

JOURNAL: The Association will produce a Journal twice a year.

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editorial

In this *Journal* of the Women's Studies Association — the first such publication with a totally made-in-New Zealand label — the central concern is with 'rowdy' women. In early Canterbury, so Jan Robinson tells us, the quiet ones with a 'respectable' image were more likely to avoid arrest and conviction for 'crimes' like vagrancy and prostitution than their less conforming sisters, who publicly disturbed the tight-lipped citizenry. For:

> These women did not live lives of quiet domesticity behind closed doors; they were not dependent on and subservient to one male head of household.

Consequently, some of them were quarantined with relatively heavy prison sentences, which they were seen to deserve because they showed themselves to be a 'moral health hazard.'

Other *Journal* contributors bring studies of rowdy women into the twentieth century. Helen Cook discusses the difficulties of combining the respectable image of motherhood with union negotiations for decent pay and conditions for childcare workers; while Jenny Phillips describes how she refused to accept that image by writing a book about the real life experiences that she and so many other mothers have painfully shared. And one way of coping with these stultifying experiences is related, under a pseudonym, by someone who managed to kick the alcohol habit.

Sue Middleton, though, gives us hope that educators may help to change stereotyped expectations of female and male behaviour as more of our own research is encouraged to provide information on how New Zealand women and men develop gender-based attitudes. She

gives a useful start to researchers with her criticism of the inadequacies of current theories of sex-role stereotyping.

In the employment field Joan Shields outlines the obstacles tripping up the rowdy women trying to storm the male barricades of meatworks throughout the country. An interesting aspect to this particular article is its connection with the one by Viv Porszolt, for together they illustrate the stop/go/under repair/detour route that women's occupational lives so often follow. Porszolt was one of those who pioneered the way for the acceptance of women into the skilled, better-paid jobs in freezing works. Now, with her trade union commitment as strong as ever, she writes as an academic, making a valuable theoretical addition to the neo-Marxist domestic labour debate.

The combination of the academic and the domestic is epitomised by British Ann Oakley, whose research into housework and childbirth has been widely published and sold, in the face of official (male) scepticism about the worth of such non-essential topics. Hilary Haines's review of her autobiography enables us to identify with Oakley's:

> . . . recurrent conflict between love and the family, between . . . dependency and autonomy, emotion and intellect, sacrifice and protest, depression and ecstasy.

As narrated by *Journal* contributors, this conflict seems to have a lot to do with women's existence in a male-directed world which gives most of them few rewards — financial, work-related and/or emotional. Often, a certain amount of attention-getting noise in one form or another is the only means of sidestepping total extinction.

However, as Anne Else demonstrates all too clearly in her piece on biographies of Katherine Mansfield, the ability to sustain proper recognition may be only temporary. Few women doers and thinkers survive as admired models either for their contemporaries or for future generations. If their names should remain associated down the years with some kind of status like, for instance, Helen of Troy or Cleopatra or Queen

Elizabeth I or Katherine Mansfield, they become translated into fatal beauty, a nose of the right length, an intact hymen or pre-menstrual tension. So Else's careful analysis of received wisdom from male culture bearers is a useful antidote to general assumptions. Too often, women achievers are found guilty by association with their physical attributes, positive or negative.

Altogether, this *Journal* may go some way towards providing an alternative to popular culture. Of course there are important areas of our lives as women living in New Zealand that have not reached these pages. However, this is just the first time round and there will be more opportunities to debate, enlarge upon and present more topics that concern women in this part of the Pacific.

The *Journal* has been a collective effort with goodwill and support coming from all over. One reciprocal gesture is our donation of space to *Broadsheet,* the feminist magazine published in Auckland which, like New Zealand's Women's Studies, has gone from strength to strength for over a decade.

Now, this historic development, the publication of our first Women's Studies *Journal,* is an important, ongoing contribution to the celebration and documentation of New Zealand's own rowdy women. Like so many elsewhere, they have fought, and continue to fight for their right to independence, to an equal share of resources (like jobs) and the right to break the rules they never made.

We are among them, cheering ourselves on publicly and loudly.

Margot Roth

Canterbury's Rowdy Women: Whores, Madonnas and Female Criminality

Jan Robinson

One of the most significant aspects relating to criminology's study of women offenders has been the discipline's almost total dearth of interest in them.

In marked contrast to the tomes of theorising and analysis devoted to offending males, the female offender has typically been ignored, relegated to the footnotes or subsumed into the accounts and explanations offered for men's crimes. (Rasche, 1974).

Such disregard for women's crimes surely reflects in part the general reluctance to see women and women's lives as 'fit' and proper topics for academic research. (Oakley, 1974). For if women have been largely invisible in social research, then nowhere more so than when their actions (or rather, society's response to such actions) have resulted in their ostracism behind huge walls and strong bars. This neglect has been costly in terms of the quality of theorising on women and crime:

> Our knowledge of the character and causes of female

> criminality is at the same stage of development that characterised our knowledge of male criminality some 30 or more years ago. (Ward et al, 1969: 847),

while 12 years later much 'theoretical stagnation' (Naffin, 1981) was still being criticised as we continued to rely on essentially 'second-rate theories for the second sex' (Campbell, 1981).

One prominent feature in the historical development of theorising on the female offender has been its reliance on a set of assumptions concerning the nature of womanhood, and its concomitant tendency to describe and analyse the woman offender within the framework of a series of narrowly defined typifications of female criminality. Offences committed by women have thus been subjected to analytical processes designed to make them 'fit' the conceptual baggage emanating from particular notions of the nature of feminity.

One dominant approach has been to polarise women into madonnas or whores. The 'natural' passivity and gentle nurturing role of women was idealised and extended so that any who violated it risked being epitomised as totally monstrous, dangerous and depraved. According to Lombroso and Ferrero's documentation of female offenders, women could only be viewed as 'either perfectly normal or excessively anomalous' (Lombroso and Ferrero, 1895: 288) because a woman's moral character was either pure or blemished — with no shades of grey in between.

The madonna/whore duality has a long historical existence. It is evident in the Biblical polarisation of the temptress Eve with the Virgin Mary, while in The Malleus Maleficarum (a 15th century guide to witch-hunting published in 1484) women were claimed to:

> know no moderation in goodness or vice; and when they exceed the bounds of their condition they reach the greatest heights and lowest depths of goodness and vice. (Kramer and Sprenger, 1971:43).

Historical accounts of the nineteenth century have documented the prevalence of such dualism in Victorian thought (e.g. Crow, 1971; Trudgill, 1976), while in recent times it has been identified and examined in terms of its proclivity in criminological literature (e.g. Klein, 1973; Simon, 1975; Wilson and Rigsby, 1975). The simplistic notion of duality usually equates the criminal woman with the 'bad woman' —

> Bad women are whores, driven by lust for money or for men, often essentially *'masculine'* in their orientation, and perhaps afflicted with a touch of penis envy. Good women are chaste, 'feminine', and usually not prone to criminal activity. But when they are, they commit crime in a most *ladylike* way such as poisoning. (Klein, 1973: 61-62)

What is interesting is to consider the social control functions associated with such dualism and the particular stereotypes essential to its efficacy as a behavioural regulating mechanism. This theme has recently been addressed by Anne Summers (1975) writing within the context of the colonisation of women in Australia. She describes the emergence of two distinct stereotypes within colonial Australia. The first, that of the 'dammed whore', came during the convict era when women were expected to serve primarily as sources of sexual gratification for the predominantly male population (Chapter 8): while the second arose in the mid-nineteenth century when there were moves to establish the bourgeois family and within it the role of women as the moral guardians or 'God's police' of society (Chaper 9). Held together, these two stereotypes were seen as having functioned both to control women in accordance with the principle of divide and rule, and to reproduce the basic authority relations within society as they affected men, women and children (p. 152). Women who accept the traditional social role accorded to them within a male-dominated capitalist society are taught to ostracise any woman labelled as a whore, whose 'crime' need only be that as a solo mother, feminist, prostitute, or lesbian she challenges existing social and sexual structures (pp. 154 ff). But the use of polarised stereotypes to divide women in this way is seen as ensuring the perpetuation of existing sexist authority structures as well as urging women to participate in maintaining their own oppression (p. 153).

In a sense, such dualism may also be seen to guarantee for men 'good' women to be their wives and the mothers of their children, and to ensure on the other hand a ready supply of 'bad' women to cope with the demand for prostitution services. Men are conceptualised as having a strong, irresistible, and uncontrollable sex urge which justifies their recourse to whores, while women are divided into two camps in order that dual male needs may be met. That men do not want the mothers of their children to be whores results in a dichotomising of the female sex drive, with 'respectable' women being portrayed as passionless (e.g. Action: 1857:101; Summers: 241-243) in contrast to the lasciviousness seen to characterise 'immoral' women (Summers: 221-222; Trudgill:9).

The basic criterion determining women's categorisation as either Damned Whores or God's Police thus revolved around the extent to

which they conformed to the socially prescribed role of 'acceptable' feminity. For a woman to end up behind bars was seen as 'proof' of her rejection of this role:

> Prisons exist to punish women for not conforming to their female roles and this punishment purpose far outweighs any effort to change the women. The effect of prison is to convince women that the road to respectability is closed to them forever. Women in prisons, like lesbians and prostitutes, are seen as damned, as totally beyond redemption. (Summers: 163).

During the convict period of Australia's early European settlement, Summers argues, whoredom was expected and demanded of all women entering the colony, with the 'all women as whores' stage giving way in the mid-nineteenth century only to a situation characterised by the 'some women as whores and some women as God's police' dichotomy.

While there is no doubt some truth in this, as it is consistent with what we have already seen regarding the double standards surrounding male and female sexuality, it is too sweeping a generalisation to do justice to the complexities of colonial social life. Other evidence suggests that by no means were all women in early Australia whores (e.g. Perrott, 1983), and, more importantly, it calls into question the contemporaneous use and abuse of that and associated terms. The high value placed on chastity and purity for women meant that any sexual aberration could result in the label 'prostitute' or 'whore' being applied, even to women whose only 'crime' was cohabitation outside marriage (Sturma, 1978:6). We must also remember that it was essentially middle class notions of chastity and purity which formed the basis of sexual ideology and that, often for financial reasons, cohabitation was an accepted part of working class life and not necessarily deemed immoral.

Summers' contention that whores were made an outcast group and ostracised by the rest of the society to the extent that even the worst convict males would refuse to marry them becomes problematic at this point. The low rate of marriage in Australia has been shown to reflect more the extent of 'official impediments to matrimony' than the personal reluctance of convict men to take wives (Sturma:9), while economically marriage was a risky prospect given both the low wages and high demand for mobile and seasonal workers. Additionally, it was only those of the middle and upper classes who ostracised whores, for cohabitation was accepted within working class culture along with prostitution (in the first half of the nineteenth century at least), with the prostitution role being one of several social identities which women could hold within working class communities (Walkowitz and Walkowitz, 1974).

In order to further assess the usefulness of Summers' dichotomy, it will now be applied in a consideration of nineteenth century Canterbury

criminal court material.

At first glance an examination of this data in the light of Summers' typifications does seem to provide a wealth of supportive evidence for her imagery. The language of the day seemed to make frequent reference to there being both decent women and prostitutes, respectable women and harlots, with the inhabitants found in a bawdy house in 1862 being described in court as 'diverse evil disposed persons, as well men and women and whores' (Supreme Court Record Book, 1862). Similarly, descriptions of women appearing in court tended to refer either to their being respectable and well-dressed or to portray them as 'bad women' with 'loose characters', 'abandoned women of the lowest class'. Public concern was often expressed over the way in which prostitutes and drunken women would congregate in particular areas of the city, such that the latter became too unsavoury for any respectable woman to walk through (LT, November 22, 1867). Complaints were often made about the area surrounding the Theatre in Gloucester Street, with one gentleman being prompted to write to the *Lyttelton Times* in 1882 protesting at the way in which 'our wives, daughters and sweethearts . . . the respectable people' were being elbowed by men and even worse by women 'who have the appearance of animated dram shops'[1](LT, April 18, 1882).

Such polarised sentiments were also expressed at times about younger girls. In 1896 a letter calling for the age of consent to be raised intimated that there were both good girls and bad girls who could be involved in sexual relationships, the good girls being those who had been seduced by men who should be hung for the evil they had done, while 'on the other hand, there are girls who ought to be be put in an Adamless Eden' (LT, April 22, 1896).

The debate over the employing of women as barmaids was characterised by anxiety as to whether such an occupation could lead to their being altogether 'lost to respectable society', since it would undoubtedly reduce them to being 'loose in manner (and) low, coarse and vulgar in speech . . . And if perchance they marry, what kind of wives do they make? And do not their progeny also carry with them through life the taint of the bar? (LT, March 3, 1883). Recognition of what was seen as a positive social function emerging from the yawning chasm which existed between good mothers and bar-maids and between madonnas and whores, was given in a letter to the paper in 1871 which requested of brothels in Christchurch that they be allowed to 'exist as a safeguard to the virtue of the respectable part of the female community' (LT, March 22, 1871).

However, there are dangers in trying to apply Summers' typifications too rigidly in the New Zealand situation.

Firstly, New Zealand's settlement occurred somewhat later than Australia's and for reasons other than the establishment of a convict colony. The Wakefield scheme of colonisation aimed to ensure a proper mixing of the classes. Great pains were taken to select the right combination of immigrants needed to transpose Britain's class hierarchy on to the new colony, and the coexistence of prostitutes alongside the Lady Barkers and Charlotte Godleys of the province means that, even more than was the case in Australia, any application of Summers to New Zealand would have to account for the simultaneous, rather than the successive arrival of both the whores and the God's Police, the prostitutes and the gentry, on our shores.

Secondly, historical evidence suggests that it is not possible to isolate one single category of whoredom. For Summers the category of whore, as we have seen, seems to include all prostitutes and criminal women as well as any other women whose lifestyle could be seen to threaten the existing social order (Summers: 154 ff; 248). In actuality, however, a more complex set of attitudes existed in nineteenth century Canterbury towards prostitutes and imprisoned women than is conveyed by the 'Damned Whores' label.

It seems, in fact, that by no means all criminal women were tarred with the same damned whore brush. Women deemed to be 'respectable' also appeared in court, and the fact of their conviction was obviously *not* seen as transforming them into instant whores, or otherwise such measures would not have been sought as those designed to ensure their protection in gaol from the contaminating influence of drunken prostitutes. Frequent calls were made during the later nineteenth century for ways of classifying and separately accommodating the different types of female prisoners. It was constantly urged that the 'comparatively innocent' should be kept apart from hardened whores (e.g. LT, February 11, 1868; March 11, 1871). Judges and magistrates often expressed grief at being forced to confine 'respectable' and 'abandoned' women together (LT, March 4, 1869; September 2 1869), or even at having to imprison 'respectable' women at all.[2] Thus in 1869 His Honour Mr Justice Gresson indicated that his being compelled to confine all criminal women together could result in substantial leniency being according 'respectable' women for, he stated:

> I cannot help look at it in this light — that the fact of a person who is not utterly abandoned being forced to consort with females who are, very much aggravates the punishment. (LT, September 3, 1869).

Even where a woman was a confirmed whore she would not always be

victimised in the courtroom for being such. Jane Glass was well known as a prostitute and had a long list of previous convictions produced as evidence against her when she appeared in the Magistrates Court in 1869 charged with robbery from the person. This offence arose when the male victim accompanied her home while intoxicated and was allegedly robbed later while in a satiated sleep. His Worship said he was sure Jane had committed the robbery but the evidence was not sufficiently conclusive to convict her and she was given the benefit of the doubt and dismissed (LT, February 13, 1869).

Other instances occurred where the courts would intervene to protect the rights of prostitutes against possible victimisation by the police. Sarah Hayward, a known prostitute, was arrested for behaving improperly but the case was dismissed against her when she pleaded that the man following her had done so 'without any invitation or inducement on her behalf' (LT, May 8, 1871). In 1893 a detective tried to get two old-timers — Bella and Mary McKegney — convicted of using indecent language in a public place, but the Bench declared the language was *not* indecent and their case also was dismissed. Similarly in 1883 police evidence was presented in court against Margaret Thompson to support a neighbour's complaint that her house in Victoria Street was a disorderly brothel. However, she was discharged with a caution for:

> The Bench considered that it was hardly competent to convict the accused of having no lawful means of support merely because she kept a brothel (LT, March 21, 1883).

The fact that a woman was a prostitute was not seen by the sentencing personnel at least, as any reason for her to be unduly harassed by male citizens either. In 1882 seven men went from brothel to brothel late at night forcing the women to provide them with alcohol, abusing them, and smashing windows in some of their houses. His Worship was adamant in court that the prostitute status of these women in no way excused the men's actions, and they were sentenced accordingly (LT, November 2, 1882).

It therefore seems simplistic to assume that all women offenders were seen as whores or that all whores were automatically victimised and discriminated against for being such. Not all prostitutes were regarded as totally abandoned whores — some were still regarded as redeemable. The Resident Magistrate Mr C.C. Bowen, expressed gratitude and relief at the meeting on the 'Social Evil' in 1867 that the Female Refuge existed for those for whom there was any chance of rescuing from their 'downward course' (LT, November 22, 1867).

What factors, then, mediated the application of the whore stereotype and the prescription of women as prostitutes in Canterbury? How a

woman conducted herself in the courtroom seems to have influenced the type of sentence she could expect to receive. Existing evidence suggests that, characteristically, a woman weeping before the judge or magistrate could expect to be treated with paternalistic leniency (LT, September 2, 1869; April 28, 1887) and, given the high status attached to 'respectability' in the Victorian era, it is conceivable that crying was taken to be a sign of contrition, thus indicating a certain degree of respectability of character in the defendant.

'Respectable' women were often treated with leniency, but it seems that respectability through association was also advantageous to females in the dock. When young Polly Smith (aged 12) obtained groceries under false pretences in 1870, the fact that she was of good character and came from respectable parents led to the case against her being dismissed (LT, September 13, 1870). Similarly, when Margaret Isabella Turnbull (aged 15) was convicted of larceny in 1887, Mr Beethan R.M. pointed out that she was liable to imprisonment for six months but since she was a young girl with a very respectable father he would simply release her into her father's care (LT, April 11, 1887).

Girls who appeared to be not-so-respectable could expect to meet with a different fate, however. In 1877, a 15 year old girl was taken to court by her brother-in-law for leading a dissolute life. The latter stated that 'He had no wish to punish her, but simply desired to prevent her from leading an improper life', at which point His Worship congratulated him for the action he had taken and sent the girl to Burnham Industrial School for a year (LT, August 4, 1877).

On other occasions women who were married to men seen as 'respectable' could be dismissed of an offence on the condition that their husbands took charge of them. Thus, for example, Fanny Alice Parkes was accused of being an habitual drunkard in 1883, but her husband was cited as 'a respectable man' who pleaded on her behalf and promised to take her away from Christchurch if the Bench allowed her to go, and accordingly she was released into his care (LT, October 15, 1883).

If to be of respectable appearance, behaviour, or background often reduced the harshness of the penalties women could expect to incur, and mitigated against their being labelled and ostracised too severely as deviant or 'bad' women, then the converse was almost true. Women who refused to act demurely were not portrayed very well in the court reports. When Eliza Lambert was remanded for Supreme Court trial on a stabbing case, the *Lyttelton Times* commented how she had 'slammed the door in a very violent and passionate manner' (LT, June 8, 1869). Mary Ann Robinson lay down in the street and swore at the police when they tried to arrest her, and was later reported to have been noisy and obstreperous in court. Although she was released on this particular

charge of drunkenness since it was her first for three years, the police were instructed 'to keep a close watch on her' (LT, January 14, 1870). Margaret Bowen's appearance in the Supreme Court in 1864 for keeping a disreputable house was so disruptive that she almost received an extension of her sentence, for:

> She was removed from the Court uttering the foulest and most abusive language against judge and jury, thus testifying to the justice of the verdict, and almost calling for an increase of punishment. (*Canterbury Standard,* December 1, 1864).

It seems, therefore, that demeanour, character presentation and so forth could influence court room interaction and sentencing outcomes favourably for women from 'respectable' backgrounds, of 'respectable' appearance, or with 'respectable' connections. Of course, very few 'respectable' women appeared in court anyway, for the nineteenth century justice system (just like that in the twentieth century) was directed much more against the socially and economically poor and vulnerable than against those with power and influence. The most vulnerable sector in nineteenth century New Zealand society contained those women persuaded by their marital or financial position to obtain paid employment. Given the small range of occupations open to them, and the harsh exploitation characterising both domestic service and factory employment, it was no wonder that some Canterbury women decided to consider another alternative — prostitution.

It is important to note initially that prostitution itself did not constitute a legal offence — it was only when it became offensive to others that it was deemed to be a violation of the law.[3] The key factor seems to have been the extent to which the behaviour caused, or was seen as likely to cause, an annoyed response from passers-by or neighbours. It has accordingly been suggested that

> Unless a prostitute was kicking up merry hell, she stood little more chance of being arrested than a respectable person. (Pearsall, 1969: p.267).

This attitude was also associated with how obvious and public prostitution was considered to be. Victorian attitudes to sexuality reflected the double standard of morality which tolerated sexual expression in men while condemning it in women. Thus, while those of prohibitionist persuasion might have condemned prostitution outright, in practice its policing seemed to reflect a certain ambivalence. The prostitution trade seems to have been generally accepted by those imposing sentences as a necessary service industry, tolerated as long as it was discreet; and where it was not, then policed only in regard to the

women concerned and not their clients. Men had more right to use the service, it seems, than the women had to provide it.

While prostitution was accepted as a necessary evil by many, it was also hoped that its sordidness would not be too blatantly manifest as a blot on the Canterbury landscape. Much of the motivation for the campaign to regulate prostitution through the Contagious Diseases Act stemmed more from a concern to check an evil which was running riot in public than to curb the spread of venereal disease. Comparisons drawn between Christchurch and Britain produced comments typified by the following:

> It is almost impossible for a decent woman to walk the streets of any of the English towns after dark, without running the risk of being insulted or utterly shamed and disgusted with what is passing around. And Christchurch is steadily progressing in the same direction. Scenes nightly take place in some of our principal streets, which are absolutely disgraceful, and which render them unfit to be trodden with comfort by any decent modest woman. (LT, November 18, 1867).

It was essentially the affront to the senses of respectable citizens, but especially women, which was intolerable, and which in its rendition echoed very clearly the madonna/whore polarisation. The worst aspect of prostitution was not the risk of disease, but the risk of contamination of the pure by the impure. The streets of the city were in fact probably one of the few social arenas likely to be accommodating both groups of women at once, and essentially, it was the prostitutes making their presence felt who were most likely to be arrested.[4]

That such concerns were dominant is reflected in the manner in which such women were spoken of in the court reports. Frequently they were described as 'nuisances', as when Margaret Webster (alias Crossley), Mary Haynes (alias Kelly, alias Smith) and Elizabeth Mary Cronin (alias McKenna) were all charged with vagrancy in 1895:

> The evidence showed that the accused wandered about the streets of the city late at night; they had no fixed place of abode, and associated with men and women of the criminal class. They were a perfect nuisance to the residents of Manchester Street, and were of bad character. (LT, January 14, 1895).

In June, 1869, Martha Jones was arrested for being drunk and disorderly near the Theatre one Saturday night —

> Inspector Pender said prisoner was a great nuisance — in fact, the worst of her class. Wherever she resides, she was at the head of all rows or disturbances, and in the streets she was a constant source of annoyance to the police. (LT, June 22, 1869).

Other women were also termed public nuisances or annoyances as they were removed behind bars (LT, February 11, 1869; May 9, May 29, August 4, 1877; July 30, 1883).

It was not only prostitutes annoying passers-by on the streets who were described in this manner, but also those whose brothels were seen as disruptive of the neighbourhoods in which they were located. In 1869 Eliza Edwards' house was presented in court as one which ostensibly appeared on the front to be a confectioner's shop, but Detective Feast testified that he had found there one evening

> a host of bad characters and girls of ill-fame, with a convicted thief playing the piano. Evidence was given by a neighbour as to the great annoyance caused by the people assembling in the house, and the frequent passing of men through the adjacent back premises to get at the back door. (LT, November 16, 1869).

Many other cases reflected similar concerns (LT, February 11, 1870; March 14, 1877; December 26, 1883) — but it was only when 'houses of ill-fame' became too bawdy and disorderly for the public and the police to ignore that their inhabitants became liable for arrest.

It was openly argued that if the brothels were *not* disorderly and a nuisance then they should be allowed to remain (LT, March 22, 1871), and the charge against one of the prostitutes arrested in a brothel raid in 1870 was dropped when evidence was produced showing her to be of quiet behaviour (LT, August 5, 1870). Similarly in 1894, three women charged with keeping disorderly houses were shown leniency to the stated extent of having their cases treated as if they were first offences, explicitly because the houses had *not* been prosecuted against specifically for being public nuisances (LT, November 20, 1894).

An interesting contrast is provided in the relative severity of the sentences imposed on Margaret Bowen, a woman of known 'ill-repute'. She received only one week's imprisonment for brothel keeping (LT, February 18, 1870), but when she was charged with indecent behaviour in a public thoroughfare, was put away for three months (LT, August 16, 1870). Thus it was not necessarily being a prostitute or keeping a brothel which drew the heaviest penalties. Rather, it was the affront to public

decency when those involved behaved in a manner seen as forcing respectable people to acknowledge the fact of their existence.

Information obtained from the 1892 and 1893 police registers of prostitutes reveals a strong connection between those prostitutes who were noisy and aggressive in public and those who were arrested and convicted. Approximately 80% of 'quiet' prostitutes conducting 'orderly' brothels had no recent convictions, in contrast to those women deemed to be 'rowdy' prostitutes who, without exception, had faced arrest, conviction and often imprisonment. Between these two extremes was a third category said to act 'indifferently', who attracted an ambivalent response from the sentencing authorities.

Essentially it was the small group of rowdy prostitutes whose lifestyles were characterised by excessive alcohol use, transient residency and so forth who met with the most fervent condemnation. The register's collective comment on eight women, all of whom had been active prostitutes but were now aging, sums up the sentiment:

> These women are old drunken hags, have no fixed residence but camp out at night and frequent low brothels.

As women offenders the 'rowdy' prostitutes stood out not only because they *were* women and automatically exceptional in their court appearances, but also because the nature of their offences brought their whole lives under scrutiny in a way that was virtually all-encompassing. Male recidivism rates arose from repeated criminal offences, but for women they derived from repeated prosecutions for their way of life

> Many of the habitual women criminals did not have any legitimate employment, a permanent abode or a stable relationship; all of which were considered necessary for a respectable existence. (Macdonald, 1977: 13-14).

What was really being condemned was the way in which their lives threatened conventional mores. These women did not live lives of quiet domesticity behind closed doors; they were not dependent on and subservient to one male head of the household; they were not pliable creatures submitting politely to situations and conditions repugnant to them. Instead they confronted through the day-to-day patterns of their lives all that was presented as the norm of idealised womanhood in Canterbury, and in so doing caused affront to those who modelled themselves as paragons of Victorian respectability. Brief consideration of the life of one such woman and the response she received may

provide a richer impression of the varied offences for which these prostitutes risked conviction.

Ellen Parkinson — alias Parkson, alias Danby — was born in Ireland in 1850 and came to Canterbury in one of the first four ships. She appears in the 1869 register of prostitutes as a Mrs Parkinson living alone in Durham Street, and from then on she made frequent appearances in court on drunkenness and vagrancy charges, only some of which we shall consider in detail. In 1883 she and Minnie Bench were charged with larceny, but this was dropped by the police in favour of pressing for a vagrancy charge. The arrest of these women occurred in Henry Birmingham's house on the South town belt, described as being ostensibly a vegetable shop but in reality operating as

> a sort of headquarters for thieves and vagabonds and a place to which drunken men were taken and robbed. (LT, June 13, 1883).

Both women said they were willing to go to the Female Refuge, but when their application for admission failed they asked for three days in which to leave town. Inspector Pender advised that:

> This was perhaps the best thing the women could do as they were too well known in Christchurch to do any good for themselves here. (LT. July 6, 1883).

Three weeks later Ellen was charged along with Elizabeth Leatherby with being drunk and fighting in a public place:

> From the evidence it appeared that Parkson had beaten the other woman most unmercifully and seriously bruised her, without provocation. Parkson was sent to gaol for three months as a vagrant, and Leatherby fined 10s for drunkenness. (LT, October 18, 1883).

Within little over a week of her release from gaol on this charge, Ellen was accused, along with James Kedge (alias Cockney Jim), Frank Le Mesurier and Annie Williams, with violent assault on John Grant in a Madras Street brothel. The complainant had been very intoxicated and could remember few details of the attack, although he did comment that he

> Had long whiskers when he went to the house, but had

short ones now, and supposed they had been pulled out. (LT, October 18, 1883).

Testimony from neighbours proved the savagery of the attack. Ellen and the two men were sentenced to two months' imprisonment with hard labour each and Annie Williams one month, with the reason for the disparity seeming to be that she was not as well known to the police as the others (ibid.). Ellen Parkinson was convicted and imprisoned on fighting, vagrancy and drunkenness sentences throughout the rest of the century, and with stealing an overcoat in 1897. The 1893 police register of prostitutes indicated her to be one of the 'rowdy' women in town, of no fixed abode, and it remarked of her life overall that she was 'a notorious thief and generally in gaol'.

Responses to women such as Ellen included the obvious ones of abuse and arrest, as well as repeated efforts to keep them isolated in prison and in effect quarantining them as a moral health hazard. Annie Swift arrived in Canterbury in the *Lancashire Witch* in 1867 and began appearing repeatedly in the courtrooms, very soon earning herself the reputation of being 'a bad importation' to the province (LT, October 15, 1867). After appearing on her sixth charge in four months

she was committed to prison for six months as a vagrant, in order that she might be kept off the street. (LT, December 19, 1867).

There was also a distinct readiness to use any opportunity to imprison these women for longer periods than those allowed by the provisions of the Vagrancy Act. Thus when Minnie Thompson was convicted of larceny of a purse in 1880, the judge stressed how she had had 25 previous convictions in the past ten years (for obscene language, brothel-keeping, and so on), and then gave her a sentence of four years' penal servitude (LT, January 6, 1880).

And the magistracy tended to try to purge the province of 'abandoned women' altogether. Instead of periodic bouts of detention in gaol to remove them temporarily from the streets of Christchurch, it was hoped to be able to induce them to leave town altogether by making informal contracts with them in the courtroom.

However, the women's promises to leave town in exchange for court leniency seldom eventuated (LT, April 7, April 24, 1877: August 14, December 6, 1897). Ellen Talbot made fervent avowals to 'clear out and amend her mode of life' (LT, February 11, 1870), but when she was arrested yet again for drunkenness, the court report carried the following indictment:

> Ellen Talbot, who on the previous day had produced a certificate to show that she had become a total abstainer, was charged with being so helplessly drunk in Gloucester Street that assistance had to be procured to carry her to the station. As chance after chance to go away had been given her, His Worship sentenced her to 12 months' imprisonment with hard labour. (LT May 13, 1877).

Probably the woman who most frustrated the magistracy with her promises to leave town, however, was Ellen Mitchell, who had 'purchased railway tickets to take her up country on ten occasions, and each time had been prevented from using them by her giving way to drunkenness' (LT, July 10, 1883).

In general very little help was offered to prostitutes by a society convinced of their depravity and debauchery. It was even difficult for them to keep their own money or their children — the protection of both was a right earned with respectability.

Thus when Martha Rhodes applied for an order to protect her earnings from her husband it was refused 'as applicant is living in a house of ill-fame' (LT, August 2, 1875), and women living as prostitutes, or even just 'promiscuously', often had their children taken away and placed in Burnham Industrial School (LT, March 29, 31, 1875; June 10, 1869, August 27, 1881; July 9, 1889; February 5, November 20, 1891; June 2, 1892). Indeed there were some in Canterbury who felt that the more penalties imposed on prostitutes the better — a letter to the *Press* in 1868 urged:

> If pimps, panders, and prostitutes were informed before landing on these shores that a severe horsewhipping at the cat's tail and a term of imprisonment with hard labour awaited them if discovered plying their abominable trade, they would give the colony a wide berth, and we should be rid of the social pest. (*Press,* February 21, 1868).

Rowdy prostitutes and old drunken hags were thus the women who aroused the most concern in nineteenth century Canterbury. Yet the response to these groups differed in the sense that while the older 'abandoned' and alcoholic women were seen as beyond redemption, hopes were often expressed of the possible 'saving' of younger girls from lives of vice and sin. Recalling Summers' typifications again, we could perhaps declare now that there *was* a damned whore category, but this

category did not comprise *all* criminal/immoral women — it was reserved for that small minority of women whose lives were characterised by vagrancy, prositution and drunkenness, lives which very perceptibly attracted a high degree of police surveillance and intervention.

From this basis we can construct an essentially three-fold scheme of the layers of badness perceived in nineteenth century Canterbury women. Those women perceived as 'abandoned wretches' would constitute the *Forsaken Floras.* They were the women focussed on in this chapter, who were often perceived as having sunk too deep into degradation to be reclaimed by the Salvation Army's 'hallelujah lassies'. The legal presumption which operated to protect respectable women from harsh sentences was not evident in the sentencing of these women. For example, several cases involving rowdy brothels resulted in both men and women being brought before the courts, but whereas it was often proved by the evidence that it was the *men* present who had created the disturbance, invariably it was the *women* who were punished the hardest.[5] Forsaken Floras could spend half their lives going in and out of gaol, and the more they became known to the police and magistrates, the longer and more frequent the sentences they could expect to receive for their 'crimes'.

A second group of women, whom we could term the *Hopeful Hettys,* comprised occasional offenders who hoped to be able to get away with the odd misdemeanour and were regarded with a certain degree of optimism by the sentencing and saving agencies. Usually, they would be convicted of petty theft or false pretences, or would appear on the occasional drunkenness, vagrancy, or prostitution charge, but not frequently enough to be deemed totally depraved or robbed of all respectability. Women in this category tended to receive more constant and predictable sentencing, being regarded as those who should be censured for their crimes but not lost forever because of them. Often theirs were the cases which placed judges and magistrates in a quandary as to how to imprison them so as to best avoid the risk of contamination by the Forsaken Floras.

The third group of offenders could be termed *Big Time Berthas,* women who had never been indicted on any other charge but whose first and usually only court appearance followed their having committed one of the more serious or even capital offences, such as concealment of birth, murder or manslaughter. Characteristically these women often seemed to be able to sway the judge to sympathy, and to receive sentences which were remarkably lenient compared with the nature of the offence committed. At times this was due in part to a perception of the crimes they committed as being too much out of (female) character to be

regarded as intentional, wilful acts. The frailty of the fair sex did not easily allow for them to be identified as the cold-blooded killers of the husbands and children to whom they were supposed to be so passionately and passively devoted — even if not insane, they could hardly be responsible, and hence punishable, for their action.

Katherine Kelly was charged that she 'feloniously did kill and slay one Thomas Kelly', her husband, in August 1886. Evidence was given by a neighbour's daughter that he had arrived home and banged on the door, whereupon Katherine had come out and thrown him along the verandah with sufficient force that he had fallen hard down the steep steps. Consistent with this, the inquest revealed Thomas Kelly to have died from a serious spinal injury, and the jury agreed as to Katherine's guilt but made a very strong recommendation for mercy. His Honour remarked that

> He has no doubt that the accused had had *no* intention of taking her husband's life, and that the painful result of her violence had been an accident. He would pass a sentence that would be virtually a discharge, viz — one day's imprisonment; and as this counted from the opening of the Court, she could now go. (LT, October 6, 1886).

At other times, the courts might find such offenders insane, or might choose to completely discharge them — even in the light of apparently damning evidence. In 1859 Christina Gregg was charged with the murder of her husband, and evidence given in court revealed her to have been on bad terms with him for a long time, to have often complained about his drunken squandering of money, to their frequent fighting, and to her now being pregnant to Edmund, the servant, and terrified of her husband's discovering the fact. The inquest revealed that James Gregg died from poisoning by arsenic, but there was obvious reluctance to condemn his wife. Doubt was thrown on much of the witnesses' evidence because they were

> mostly women, whose casual exchanges with the accused had now assumed momentous importance in the courtroom,

and it was also suggested that maybe James Gregg had taken the poison himself even though such a claim could not be supported by evidence. The female prisoner was declared not guilty and discharged (LT, December 7, 1859).

Thus it seems that the image held of the woman on trial was often far more influential in her treatment by the court than any consideration of

the nature of the offence she had committed. A prostitute was more likely to receive a longer sentence for drunkenness than at times another woman would for manslaughter, and the underlying ethos almost seems to have been to keep the utterly abandoned utterly confined, and utterly segregated from anybody they could contaminate, with the result being a rather inverse sentencing pattern!

Overall, therefore, it seems that there were levels of degradation through which women could sink. Summers' simple dichotomy, and her locating of all criminal women within the same whore category, must then be rejected in favour of an approach which allows for the complexities expressed in attitudes towards 'erring' women, and for the ambivalences manifest in responses to them. For it certainly cannot be argued of nineteenth century Canterbury either that *all* criminal women were seen as helpless victims deserving leniency, or that *all* female offenders were perceived and treated as damned whores.

Jan Robinson was in her late twenties before she discovered that women could be rowdy (in the sense of being vocal and vital upstream swimmers) and that indeed many have been in the past. Her M.A. Thesis (see Note 1, below) examines the various ways in which the Victorian ideology of womanhood was apparent in the treatment of women brought before the criminal courts in nineteenth century Canterbury.

Notes.

This article is based on material contained in an M.A. Thesis, completed this year in the University of Canterbury's Department of Sociology, and entitled *Of Diverse Persons, Men and Women and Whores: Women and Crime in Nineteenth Century Canterbury.*

1. i.e. rolling drunk — a dram-shop was a public house or bar.

2. For example, Sarah Steel was discharged without sentence in order to avoid: 'compelling her to mix amongst hardened criminals'. (LT, September 26, 1871.)

3. 'The class of prostitutes found in the streets, so long as they conduct themselves with decency and do not "solicit", do not come within the power of the police, however offensive their presence may be to the public.' (AJHR, 1898, Vol III, h-2: xxvi.).

4 In this sense the red light districts became understandable as areas which probably arose to segregate 'necessary' vice in a manner which allowed respectable community members to avoid them, as well as keeping the virtuous safe from contamination. In effect they may also have been advantageous for the prostitutes by rendering them relatively safe from arrest and imprisonment.

5 Thus, in 1870 two males fighting in a brothel were fined 10s and 40s respectively,while the women present in the house were each sentenced to a month's imprisonment with hard labour (LT, January 14, 1870).

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Childcare Workers: (Under)paid As Surrogate Mothers

Helen Cook

Feminist theorists (e.g. Chodorow, 1978; Rich, 1976) have drawn a distinction between motherhood as an institution that has been defined according to patriarchal values and needs, versus motherhood as an experience whereby women care for the children they have given birth to. Motherhood as an institution in NZ is a product of a society in which male work is defined as that of a breadwinner, whereas the role for women is to care for and rear the children. Any earnings through paid work by women, even if essential earnings, are classified as pin money, or as an additional bonus for the well-being of the family. These separate definitions are enshrined in such Government family policy that exists and is an essential cog of the welfare state machinery.

This definition of women in relation to motherhood is inclusive of all women and impinges upon us throughout our lifetime:

- Baby girls are given baby dolls as a preparation for this role.
- Teenage girls do babysitting.
- Single women are termed **un**married or child**less.** Their status is the negative of the norm.

- Older single women take on the role of maiden aunts and are expected to demonstrate their latent maternal instincts in this context.
- Older women become kindly grandmother figures.

For eight years I was a childcare worker; this was my paid employment. For three of these I was part-time, but for the rest I was employed full-time. During the same period I was also a mother of one, then two children, which meant that while I was caring for other people's children as a paid worker I was at the same time caring for my own children of the same age in my role as mother. This dual role with children was, in the main very convenient and it was regarded both by myself and others as an ideal and even acceptable occupation for when my children were young. There seemed to be a symbiosis in my mind and in the minds of others, of the mothering and childcare work.

At the same time the duality of my work did have its contradictions, although these were rarely revealed:

- For one job I was paid (although not very well), the other was an accepted and inherent part of my motherhood role.
- The paid job of being a childcare worker also meant that I was unable to be a full-time mother, meaning that I too at certain times had to find suitable childcare for my own children, etc.

When I began my paid job I saw it initially as a convenient extension of my mothering role; a job that perhaps my mothering intuition would provide natural skills for. How wrong I was.

I found that to work in childcare required skills and training that motherhood did not equip me with. As I continued to work in childcare and my status as a worker overlaid, and became more important to me than my motherhood status, I perceived more and more the undervalued status of my work, e.g. my occupation of childcare worker was classified at the lowest level of the Elley and Irving (1977) socio-economic scale for women's occupations. That motherhood was undervalued was something I personally did not accept the validity of, but as a pragmatist in an imperfect world sought to come to terms with by also being a paid worker. And, just as men view fatherhood, I did not see motherhood as a full-time job although it was a part of my life I valued.

The term childcare worker refers to all workers employed in childcare

centres. These are defined by the NZ Childcare Regulations (1960) as any early childlhood service caring for children in loco parentis, that is not a state kindergarten, an affiliated playcentre, a hospital or a registered children's home. Consequently childcare covers a diverse group of services and is run by a diverse range of organisations and individuals, i.e. full and part-day centres, industrial and tertiary institution creches, shoppers' creches, private kindergartens, kohanga reo's etc. However except for a few voluntary workers, all these services are staffed by women (or nearly all) whose occupational label is that of childcare worker.

There has always been a need for childcare services, but it has existed on the underside of early childhood education (ECE); as an uneasy contradiction to the ideal values concerning the role of men, women, the community, and the State towards the care of chlildren.

The childcare service, beyond its 'crisis care' function has been threatening as an alternative to the 'ideal model' of childrearing. The contradiction between the myth and reality of childrearing, has made childcare an issue in which there is exhaustive lobbying for and against its provision and funding.

On the other hand Smith (1981:3) claims that:

> The vast majority of childcare workers are unconcerned with politics. They enjoy working with children and do not want to be bothered with matters of public policy. Similarly parents, although they usually want their chlildren to be cared for well, are often preoccuied with other events of their daily lives.

Until one is conscious of childcare as existing in a wider network of relationships, it is usually perceived as non-political. As such, the oppressive relationships that have surrounded childcare workers exist within a microcosm that cannot be separated from the macrocosm of the wider politics of childcare: an arena that challenges patriarchal values embedded throughout the fabric of our society.

Guettal (1974: 61) points out the need:

> . . . to discover that problems hitherto believed to be personal are in fact social, and that to fight against them is political.

The occupational label of a childcare 'worker', is not one all women working in childcare feel comforable with: the 'worker' label seems a bit too tainted with images — 'the workers' movement', the 'Labour movement', 'union', 'workers' rights', etc. Such concerns are seen as

distasteful when linked with the well-being of children in our society.

In contrast to childcare workers, those who classify their place of work as a kindergarten have for many years adopted the name of 'teacher'. Beacause of this alignment with education they are consequently several rungs up the socio-economic scale. Those women working in playcentres, although unpaid, have termed themselves 'supervisors'. In England the concept of being a worker in relation to working with children doesn't arise; such people are neatly separated into 'nursery teachers' and 'nursery nurses' — one being paid at a higher rate for working with the child's intellect, and the other with its physical well-being!

In New Zealand we may have been more realistic, but the 'worker' component of the term childcare worker is often diffused, hidden or mythologised into something more feminine, ladylike and motherly. We seem more coy about admitting the hard fact that working with children IS work, and that:

- It should have the status of work.
- The wages received should reflect its value as important work.

Consequently childcare workers are addressed, or referred to by a conglomerate of terms which, I believe, undervalue their work — e.g. 'Nannies', 'Girls', 'Ladies', 'Aunties', etc. I see this mythologising process as one which society imposes — and also a process which childcare workers participate in, thus helping to make childcare acceptable to a society that needs its services but continues to believe that young children should be with their mothers for most of the time.

The job of being a childcare worker has become inextricably bound up in our conception of the role of mothers and wives, as well as notions of femininity; which may give acceptance to the usage of childcare by women but also devalues the work of childcare workers.

The nature of women's work as sometime wage labour, childrearing and housewifery is rather elusive, because it does not always fit into an occupation/income classification. It has been excluded from the history books and from economic analysis although, as Rowbotham (1973: 68) says: 'Every individual man . . . is dependent for his survival on her non-work'.

Or, in the words of Oakley (1981:247):

. . .men are people who put work first, women are those whose work

must be called by another name — making a home, loving children, performing wage labour for pin money.

Novarra (1980) names six tasks that have traditionally been and still are women's work, even though the form and mechanics of such work may have changed, and the division between the paid and unpaid spheres shifted. The tasks are: care of children, clothing people, feeding people, tending the weak, taking responsibility for the home and educating the young.

The bias towards servicing, caring and nurturing has never been associated with the same status as production work. Thus, occupational/income jobs in these particular spheres pay less, and are similarly shrouded in the selfless images surrounding the role of women as mothers and wives, despite the reality of the social importance of this work which is skilled and may be fulfilling.

A childcare worker is in such an occupation.

Although women are very different from one another in temperament, inclination, ability — and in their economic circumstances — there is a tightly constrained image in our culture of a 'good woman'. This is bound up with being a good mother, faithful wife, tidy housewife, willing community volunteer and, nowadays, the ability to earn some 'pin money' for family extras in an acceptable part-time job. This person, suggests Lazarre (1976: vii) is:

> . . . quietly strong, selflessly giving, undemanding, unambitious; she is receptive, and intelligent in only a moderate concrete way; she is of even temperament, almost always in control of her emotions. She loves children completely and unambivalently.

I find this ideal both patronising of our abilities, yet simultaneously impossible to attain. In the occupations to which it is transmitted — nursing, cleaning, teaching, cooking, waitressing, etc. — the unpleasant aspects of servicing human beings are ignored, such as the continual messes and the endless routines; it undervalues the depth of experience and skill needed in working with people rather than products; but it also sets up a model which suggests if we don't 'love it all the time' we can't be very good at it — the guilt syndrome.

Another perspective is provided by Abbott and Haines (1983: vii):

> Being a mother and housewife is an extraordinary occupation. There is no formal job description, but the unwritten one is for 24 hours a day, seven days a week of giving. There is no pay and there are no

> holidays or fringe benefits written into the job description. It is a job that has very low status in our community. It is so undervalued that many people don't even regard it as true work. It is also a very high stress occupation, especially during the years when there are preschool children at home.

Because of the established belief and custom that young children are best cared for by their mothers, the sphere of ECE became the prerogative of women. Unfortunately, even amidst a women dominated teaching profession, ECE has had a lower status. Because of the close alignment with 'mothering and caring' ECE has always been seen as fulfilling custodial, emotional and social needs as opposed to the presumed intellectual functions of the rest of the system (an arbitrary and inaccurate assumption). Similarly childcare has suffered in status in comparison to kindergartens. Half-day educational sessions are seen as an acceptable complement to a mother's childrearing role, the division being that the mother passes over the presumed 'intellectual' development to the trained kindergarten teacher, whilst retaining responsibility for physical and emotional well-being. In contrast the childcare worker assumes these responsibilities, which aligns her much closer to what is seen to be a mother's task.

Such distinctions between care and education we know to be arbitrary and unjustified, but the status hierarchy is based on a strange rationale where servicing the needs of the very young is at the bottom. That mothers have done the task quietly, unselfishly, and unpaid has made it difficult for those workers who do these same tasks for a 'living wage' (sic). For example, look at the attitude reflected in the venerable Benjamin Spock's guidance for a suitable person to care for the children of women who 'had to work' (Spock, 1966:571):

> Most likely it will be a woman. Towards the children she should be affectionate, understanding, comfortable, sensible, and self confident. She should love and enjoy them without smothering them with affection. She should be able to control them without nagging or severity — avoid a person who is crass, reproving, fussy, humourless or full of theories . . . Cleanliness and carefulness are more important than experience . . . some people focus on education . . ., but I think it's unimportant compared with the other qualities, especially for very young children.

The existence of ECE as a 'women's sphere' has proved to be both an advantage and a hindrance to women workers in ECE. On the credit

side it has offered employment opportunities, and raised the consciousness of women. It has also led to the only truly women's perspective of the theory and practice of education. The negative aspect though, is that although the energies of women workers maintain the services, in both a paid and a voluntary capacity, we are not the policy or decision makers and we do not hold the purse strings. As Noonan (1977) once said, there are:

> A disproportionate number of women at the bottom, and an equally disproportionate number of men at the top. The workers are almost exclusively female, the consumers are children and their families, and the decision makers are men.

It is an irony that women working in ECE are so lowly paid, and the work of mothers so undervalued despite the knowledge that the early experiences of children are considered to be the most vital. One could suggest a seemingly facetious analogy with another women dominated occupation: nursing. Like childcare, the supposed skills of nursing have traditionally been aligned to the servicing, caring roles assigned to women, and indeed performed so well by women. To pay nurses on a rate according to the age of the patient is not acceptable, yet for women who work in the care and education of the healthy it is. I am not suggesting that there is no difference working with 1 year, 3 year, 8 year, 10 year, 15 year, and 18 year olds either in nursing or education, but that age should not be equated to a monetary value.

Working with young children as paid employment has made negotiations over wages and conditions paradoxical and timid because of the existence, by comparison, of mothers who are on call for 24 hours a day — at no extra cost! Unlike other women dominated unions that have had a longer history of unionism, (e.g. clothing workers, shop employees, cleaners) women in ECE have been much slower to form collective bargaining structures. The reasons, I suggest are:

- The strong voluntary and/or charitable component of ECE. Resources from the beginning were scarce, and the workers who were paid saw their labour as a contribution to a service they believed in.
- Early childhood workers do not work together in large groups. Unlike factory workers, or even city office and shop workers who work within a similar physical space, early childhood workers are fragmented and isolated, like many mothers, throughout the

suburbs.

- Working with young children has been seen as a suitable lady-like occupation for young women, and one too, that gives 'excellent training for motherhood'. Alas, one has to say that shades of this belief still remain. Many women pass through ECE on their way to marriage and motherhood (or pass into it after the experiences of motherhood), but only a few make a commitment to a service that has little career structure and few material rewards.

But slowly a collective consciousness has emerged, beyond a belief in the value of the service provided to a consciousness of being workers in a system without quality pay and conditions.

The Kindergarten Teachers Association (KTA) was established in 1952 but

> . . . the idea of a political union had not emerged. The idealized image of the neighbourly kindergarten teacher was strong. (Clark, Cook and Pearson 1983:7)

However, during the mid-seventies the KTA became a more political force with low salary rates prompting the planning of strike action. In 1982 kindergarten teachers closed the rolls in protest at the Government's inaction over their staffing scheme. Such action was anathema to Education Minister Wellington, who accused them of using 'shop floor tactics', and that the KTA was tainted with the 'sulphurous smell of pseudo-unionism'.

The Early Childhood Workers' Union (ECWU) was formed more slowly still, and was not registered until 1982; and even then was prevented from negotiating awards by a wage freeze. And although childcare workers are the lowest paid workers in the country, with virtually non-existent legal protection over conditions of work, the move towards unionisation is not one that fits comfortably with the idealised childcare worker who 'just loves children'.

Childcare workers have had to negotiate not only with employers who feel financially threatened; because of the wage freeze regulations they have also had to negotiate publicly and loudly with the government. The result is a more radical union, more in the public eye than some of its members probably feel comfortable with.

On the other hand the union understands (to its amazement!) around 1000 letters were received by the Minister of Labour from childcare workers over the inability of the union to negotiate an award, and a

limited amendment was granted to enable initial negotiations. So, childcare workers may not march in the streets yet, or go on strike, but they are breaking out of a passive framework that assumes that they will understand, and won't mind if their conditions of work are poor.

Childcare workers are becoming conscious of the reality that through their underpaid labour they are the real providers of childcare, and are keeping the service operating because parents will not/cannot afford to pay what childcare really costs. Small Government subsidies introduced in the 1983 budget are still quite inadequate for this. Until recently, the politics of childcare has been dominated by the perspective of employers, administrators, supervisors (who can also be employees), and experts. The perspective of the childcare worker who did all the work was not apparent. This I believe is changing.

Childcare workers are going to need to 'educate' the parents of the children in care, because unless there is a lot of Government money in childcare, the parents' fee will determine the size of childcare workers' wage packets. The amount that parents will pay depends on two things:

- How much they can afford, and for all parents there is a genuine cut off point, and there is no wish to price childcare off the market.
- How much parents value the work childcare workers do.

Parents may admire the childcare worker and say that they 'could never do the job'; or 'you're doing a great job girls'; or 'you're marvellous ladies!'. But the hidden message is that they really have better things to do with their time and wouldn't want to do it. Caring for children is a job that they are not paid for when they do it, and they find it difficult to put a high value on it when someone else does it, even though it gives them freedom to pursue other activites.

The domestic imagery has to go, before the circle of poverty surrounding childcare can start to break up. Childcare centres should be homely, friendly, and caring places, but this 'feminine' image should not submerge the recognition of the hard physical work, the skills and training that childcare workers need, to be such super people.

Women workers in childcare don't wish to deny the particular expertise and perspectives — unique to the female sex — that they bring to our workplace. At the same time they need to break out of the constraining mould that patriarchal values have determined for women who work with young children.

Like the undervalued work of mothers, childcare work IS important.

Helen Cook was supervisor of the Victoria University creche, 1978-84, and president of the Early Childhood Workers' Union from 1982 until May of this year. Her M.A. thesis was: ***The Politics of Childcare: An Analysis of Growth and Constraint*** *and she is now working on a Ph.D looking at the impact of childrearing on the lives of women. She is at present living in Hamilton and doing her research at Waikato University.*

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The Post-Natal Check: *Mothers Matter Too*

Jenny Phillips

The first sign that the birth was imminent was a parcel in the mail — an advance copy. Red jacketed, glossy with Vanya Lowry's illustrations, it bore little resemblance to the pleading piles of paper which had littered the floor of the room I worked in.

I placed it on the mantel-piece. At first I didn't look at it. Later I shot surreptitious glances in its direction.

Sometimes I was swept with exhilaration, and would Russian dance my way around the room (a very private hobby). At other moments I would look at my private 'confessions', now publicly revealed, and feel a sinking feeling in my stomach.

I've *really* done it this time.'

I would probably be labelled 'the suburban neurotic' for the rest of my life! What if my figures (rechecked numerous times) were wrong?

However, I was able to be vindicated for my courage (yes it did take courage) in writing this book.

Meanwhile I mentally prepared myself for the (I thought) inevitable attacks. Yes, I was glad I had written it, whatever was said.

Determined to evangelistically 'get it to the people' I attended a Media Women course. These courses are run by women in the media, quite voluntarily, to give women the skills to get their point of view into the

media. In the way men do, every day. Said one:

> We *try* to get the point of view of women's groups.
> I'll ring someone and she'll say: 'Oh help, phone so-and-so, instead'. So I ring so-and-so and she says: 'Oh dear, I'll have to ask the committee. I'll get back to you in three weeks'. Meanwhile the story has come and gone and their point of view wasn't in there.

They are aware some of us would like, very much, to change the media, but believe we can't do this until we know how it operates and why.

I guess it's like visiting a foreign country when you don't know the language. You are not going to make a great deal of impact if you say, in English, that you don't like the way things are and that changes should be made.

First learn the language!

I attended this course to learn the language. I had been a newspaper journalist; but after 12 years I was pretty rusty on the daily operations of a newspaper. And I knew virtually nothing about radio and television.

Most people who have dealt with the media will know how it feels when that brilliant, insightful, in-depth statement, is amputated. Then the aside you made, or some other irrelevant issue is wrenched from its context and features as one minute on radio or one line in a newspaper.

The Media Women course helped by training us to create our own 'one-liners'. After two years of managing to say exactly how I felt mothers were oppressed in our society in 70,000 words, I was required to sum it all up in 60 seconds. Using a stopwatch!

Contacts are everything in the media (it's not what you know but whom). We were told (and I knew that bit already) to create a headline and an introduction on our press releases which would grab a reporter's attention. News is pouring off telex machines constantly in media offices. Press releases come in by the hundred. If yours doesn't grab 'em straight away, it is filed in the rubbish bin.

I wrote my 'grab 'em' headlines and introduction and found representatives from television documentaries and regional news were interested straight away. Yes there was a story there and I knew it very well. But the fact that it was placed on the table in front of people in the right department was important too.

The Media Women course is open to all women and is intended to balance the fact that men are manipulating the media every day. There are still those, such as a woman television journalist I spoke to, who feel

Media Women is an elitist and sexist organisation, and who refuse to join on those grounds.

A few weeks later I received a call from Carol de Colville, of the television documentary programme, *Close Up*. They would like to do a programme featuring *Mothers Matter Too*. My entire body turned to jelly. 'Just be natural,' she urged.

Cocooned in life at TV Centre Avalon, television people are probably not aware of how strange it is to enter that world for the first time. Numerous similar corridors, neon lights, hundreds of people all under 40, a lavish expenditure quite extraordinary to a person who never quite seemed to have enough money to buy a new pair of knickers, and vast numbers of people working on a two minute segment of a programme; all this left me with such a dose of culture shock I found myself quite unable to have a coherent conversation when on leaving I bumped into an old friend.

Having said that, I couldn't have had kinder caretakers. The programme's reporter and producer shared with me their plan for the programme and listened with interest to any comments I made. They were willing to film me in whatever environment I felt comfortable and relaxed. After filming me and recording voice-over at Avalon they filmed me in my own home, where I felt relaxed, natural and coherent at last.

An outdoors section, where we paced a pre-arranged line and spoke our lines for a third and fourth time, rather tested my sincerity, and I have felt rather unconvinced by such segments on television ever since.

The programme was fine and, appearing as it did, sandwiched next to a programme on rugby, may well have had a few male viewers as well.

By this time the book was out, having not been on the high seas as reported but having somehow slipped into some of the bookshops quietly and without fanfare.

The press release I so carefully sent out, via my publishers, had not arrived when radio's *Morning Report* rang to inverview me. Contacts again — this time the one I'm married to. A Press Gallery journalist, Oliver had been chatting with other Press Gallery journalists over lunch. A radio newsman had pricked up his ears, rung his news editor and voila! an interview.

Television's regional news *had* received a press release and rang to ask for an interview. Live television this time. They do this so viewers can get the full flavour of sweating, quaking interviewees.

First there is the long drive out to the studios. Second there is the makeup where the makeup artist assures you that wearing all this is the only way you can look natural on television (later friends phone and say 'My God! What did they do to you!'). Then one is positioned on a

platform under a spotlight and required to remain absolutely silent until the rest of the programme has passed. There seems to be no indication that you are 'on' until suddenly the reporter sitting next to you asks a question. This is why people suddenly look like startled rabbits at the beginning of the interview. And why I did.

A blitz of newspaper and radio interviews followed. I saw the female producers behind the macho disc jockeys and newspaper reporters skilled and unskilled. They all, almost without exception, wanted a blow by blow account of my depression.

The pens slowed when I talked about statistics, the causes of depression in mothers, and speeded up when I talked about myself: 'And then how did you feel?'

I know, I was a newspaper reporter once. Newspapers like human interest stories. They probably thought people would identify or not identify with my *story,* not my research. My problem was that the period I wrote about was already some four or five years before. Fresh when I began writing the book, the memory was now rather hazy. My voice grew mechanical and I trotted out the same old lines again and again.

Thank goodness for talk-back radio shows where, outside the plastic world of publicity, I could hear the voices of real women thanking me and appreciating what I had written, reminding me of the reality I had written about and was rapidly losing touch with.

I have been asked, with great cynicism and distrust how one finds a suitable publisher, who understands about sexism and exploitation. Perhaps it was sheer luck that led me in the first instance to Geoff Walker of Reeds. Or perhaps what I had heard about him over the years encouraged me to trust him. He looked at my few lines — nothing like a book or a chapter of a book — and saw the possibilities. He encouraged me. My editor, Jane Parkin, was a feminist sympathiser responsible for creating a women's list. Two of the editors at Reeds, possibly more, were members of a men's anti-sexism group.

And so it was that the advertising, letters to book reviewers and the like were conducted with the utmost sensitivity (unlike some I have seen in my years as a reviewer). The tone was neither patronising nor sexist.

I was sad to note that the first description of *Mothers Matter Too* as 'a self-help guide for Kiwi Mums' was in *Broadsheet,* New Zealand's *feminist* magazine.

As victims of the media put-down 'womens libbers' I would have thought they would be the first to understand what the word 'mums' does to women who are mothers. Otherwise supportive, they had a few unconscious stereotypes to get rid of too.

'A self-help guide for Kiwi Mums' has now become the standard description and I've had to learn to live with it. I raise consciousness on

what this use of the language actually *does* to people whenever I can.

By now the book was well established in the shops and the letters were steadily streaming in.

> It's the book I wish I had then. As I read I remembered my isolation, the chronic fatigue, the mess and my superb ability to put a brave face on things.
>
> I relate to parts in nearly every chapter — at *my* advanced age!
>
> Even up till now, I wasn't absolutely sure how many other women 'out there' felt as I did. Now I know for sure that I'm not *strange*.
>
> I picked it up casually, and within minutes of browsing I had an eerie sensation of reading my own story, written by someone I had never met, who understood me better than I did.
>
> That I was not alone with my 'problem' was a consoling enough revelation, but your book did more than that to getting me back on the road to being a more confident, self assured woman.

Then there are the groups. So many requests now that I am beginning to have to say no. Not only do I give out to the women I speak to, but I learn as they talk to me.

At one group I ask them what they would find most useful in my next book. I am gratified to discover they are listing what sounds like the table of contents I have already written!

Not one person of any size, shape or sex, has said they don't know what I am talking about, when I talk about the distress experienced by many women at home.

At one meeting a man listened to the women talking about their feeling then said: 'You realise this is all historically new. This wanting 'freedom' . The women heard the put-down and, I was pleased to note, continued talking about their feelings. The next morning I switched on the radio and heard a commercial radio disc jockey interviewing a famous child care 'expert'. 'Isn't all this, you know, people wanting to do their *own thing* QUITE NEW?'

There are those who like to believe that psychological distress amongst mothers is both new and the prerogative of middle class women who

have so many gadgets they have nothing better to do than complain. Wrong: Kate Shepherd was making comments similar to mine in the early 1900s; working class women are twice as likely to show signs of depression; recent research shows Maori women are more stressed than pakeha, and many — perhaps most — of my letters are from women who had children many years ago!

The reviews, with the exception of one by a woman where the reviewer only just stopped short of vomiting all over it, were uniformly favourable.

'A tonic'; 'gripping'; 'very readable' and 'honest' were typical comments. Almost every reviewer commented with amazement on its honesty. Obviously books which are honest about motherhood are strange and unusual.

I wrote to complain to one reviewer — a male. I felt his review, while favourable, had rather misrepresented my point of view. I did *not* say that all babies were vampires, or that mothers should demand and scream. I genuinely feel that we should try talking first. It can work. His injured reply explained that he was quite sure he had summed up the essence of my argument perfectly. (What would I know. I only wrote the book.)

Several reviews asked if the book would really get to those for whom it was intended. This was a good point. I always intended that the book would be cheap and accessible. However, as anyone in publishing could probably have told me, if you want it to be cheap, don't write 70,000 words!

The book retails at $14.95. And as we all know, mothers are a group of people who both have little access to money and little permission to spend on themselves. Fortunately many women have come up with creative solutions to this problem.

Not just town and city council libraries are featuring the book. The more informal libraries such as kindergartens, parent's centres, Plunket and Barnados, often tell me they have several copies all of which seem to be permanently out on loan. A number of women have told me *they* bought several copies of the book to lend out to friends and acquaintances with less access to money.

And despite this flourishing underground, the book's first printing sold out — 4000 copies which is very good, I'm told, unless you are an All Black or gardening expert in which case your expectations would be a great deal higher. It is now selling extremely well in reprint.

Further good news is that my publishers are looking favourably at the suggestion that I produce a smaller, easy-to-read, lavishly illustrated and *cheaper* version of *Mothers Matter Too.*

Questionnaires I have sent out so that for my second book I can get the viewpoints of the many different kinds of mother there are, have mined a

rich vein of information, particularly on that rapidly expanding breed of mother — the stepmother.

Meanwhile what *Mothers Matter Too* seems to have achieved is a permission-giving role. It gives mothers permission to talk honestly about their feelings, in the knowledge that they are not the only ones.

In the same way that members of my assertiveness groups used to cheer up no end when we discussed anger, and sink into a pit when we discussed compliments; so women are often cheered up by reading this tale of distress and depresson in our happy families. And it's for the same reason: 'You too?'

For many women who have small children, and are living through the haze of sleepless nights and whose vision has narrowed to simply surviving each day, the words 'oppression' and 'patriarchy' have little meaning. The days of the broad vision are in abeyance. So it was for me and so it continues to be for many, including the few who return early to paid work and those who share the load with a partner. The perspective is a narrow one.

Knowing I had to write before I forgot that perspective and got caught up in a world of academic books and reports, I wrote a book which began from my own experience and which starts the reader at the starting point of her own experience.

I hope I leave her with a real understanding of how hurtful the motherhood role in this society is to her. That it is not motherhood as such which is oppressing her, but the invention of MOTHERHOOD. I hope I leave her realising that it is not *she* who has failed. It is our society which has failed her.

That message has to fight its way through many myths:

—the myth that mothers of young children don't actually *do* anything all day — when they are coping with a job that is far too much for any one person. They cope, but the cost to their self esteem and confidence is often life long.

—the myth of the perfect, selfless, ever loving 'natural' mother.

—the myth that the motherhood role as it is seen today is 'traditional' and 'natural'.

—the myth that the family is an institution that benefits all its members.

—the myth that women instinctively know how to care for babies and young children, and above all,

—the myth that all the others are perfectly happy and satisfied with their situation (because they don't say they are not).

From my postnatal perspective of *Mothers Matter Too* I see that I was the first to give birth to this kind of non-fiction book in New Zealand. But I am not the first, nor will I be the last, to speak out on the damage done by the motherhood role. I have joined the queue. And the more the merrier!

Jenny Phillips is author of ***Mothers Matter Too,*** *a New Zealand book about the psychological distress experienced by many women at home. The book analyses the reasons for the prevalence of depression in mothers, offers suggestions to avoid it and includes a section on her own experience.*

Taking It Closer To Home: The Domestic Labour Debate

Viv Porszolt

Karl Marx's analysis of the capitalist system did not take into account the role of domestic labour in the maintenance of the working class. This was for the very good historical reason that under early capitalism, wage labour for the working class largely excluded the possibility of a private domestic sphere.

Prior to the industrial revolution, the home and productive social labour were united — the factory system enforced a split which in the early stages totally neglected personal needs. By the mid-nineteenth century, this left women doing privatised socially unproductive work in the home for personal consumption, while men were engaged in productive waged work for general social distribution. It is this privatised domestic work done by women which is the focus of what has come to be known as the *domestic labour debate*.

At the earlier stages of the debate, emphasis was placed on the analysis of domestic labour in terms of the abstract categories of *Capital* and *Theories of Surplus Value* (Marx, 1954, 1963). More recent contributions stress the need for an historical understanding of housework, and suggest there is a need for a more concrete analysis of its development in

different times and places.

Under late 20th century capitalism, the domestic sphere has both expanded its functions and lost them to other social agencies, and the position of women has reflected these changes.

My analysis will not deal with these changes, but with domestic labour on the basis of an abstraction of the working class family, the full-time housewife, the full-time wage earner and dependent children. This abstraction underlies various concrete historical forms of existence of the family under late capitalism. This paper is not an attempt to analyse sexism as such, but only the role of domestic labour in the oppression of working-class women.

First of all, let us examine labour and the labour process 'independently of the particular form it assumes under given social conditions' *(Capital I*:173), that is, the nature of labour, whether as wage labour, domestic labour or any other structurally defined category.

Marx sees labour as a specifically human phenomenon. It is distinguished from the labours of animals by its purposefulness and creativity: 'What distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.' (ibid: 174). The elements of choice, selection and control predominate over blind biological patterning.

The universal labour process consists of three factors — the human activity of labour, the subject or object of labour and the instruments of labour. Human brains, nerves and muscles have been applied to transform a preexisting state, whether given by Nature directly or previous human labour. This transformed state is a *product* of labour — this expenditure of brains, nerves and muscles is therefore *productive* though as Marx reminds us, 'This method of determining from the standpoint of the labour process alone, what is productive labour, is by no means directly applicable to the capitalist mode of production,' (*Capital:* 1:176. At the same time however, this productive labour, 'uses up its material factors, its subject and its instruments . . . and is therefore a process of *consumption,* (ibid:179). This is a productive consumption, however, resulting in a product.

Individual consumption, on the other hand, *uses up* products to form the living human being. 'The product of individual consumption is the consumer himself; the product of productive consumption is a product distinct from the consumer,' (ibid:179).

Production and consumption are therefore two dialectically opposed poles of a continuous exchange between living human beings and the products of their labour, a living activity. This living activity is absorbed

and comes to rest in products and these products in turn are absorbed and produce the movement, the living activity of the labourer.

This exchange between human beings and their products is a continuous unified one, involving production and consumption at each moment. However, the two poles, human beings and the products of their labour are radically opposed and the distinction between them must be clearly delineated.

When domestic labour is considered as a concrete labour process, its content — that is, the tasks and functions of the housewife — fall into two broad categories. On the one hand, there are services which are immediately consumed in the process of production. These produce and reproduce future and existing workers. This type of labour, because it directly produces and/or sustains living human beings, is subject to considerable mystification and often not recognised as labour at all.

On the other hand, there is the production of material objects, use-values, which exist apart from living human beings.

Both conform directly to the labour process as analysed by Marx. Raw material (food or fabric) is transformed with the aid of instruments of labour (stove, knives, sewing machine, etc.) to produce a new product. These also include material maintenance functions like house-cleaning, mending, laundry and shopping. Some labours do not produce a product or a service, but are necessary for such production. The whole business of maintaining a household — seeing the bills are paid on time, cupboards stocked, co-ordinating all the various tasks — is a significant labour over and above the constituent functions of housework.

'Where are my socks, Mum?' illustrates the kind of servicing performed by the housewife. Budgeting is another significant labour. In order to eke out the wage, the housewife must make continual choices between spending options. (These in turn may involve more added domestic labour to commodities purchased.)

Next comes the labours which directly produce and reproduce living labourers. The production of future workers begins with pregnancy and child-birth itself. The woman transforms a natural raw material, (the fertilised ovum) with her own blood and muscle into a product, the new-born infant. While this is an inevitable biological process in one sense, it is in fact socially governed and controlled, like any other form of human activity. It therefore is a productive labour process in the Marxist sense.

Once the infants are born, they require feeding, clothing, washing and watching till they are capable of doing these tasks for themselves. The labour of an adult is essential to the survival of immature human beings and the labour of child-care is hence a production of children.

But the physical nurturing of children is only one aspect of child-care. Emotional and social care are equally essential. This aspect of child-care has expanded considerably since the beginnings of capitalism and particularly in this century. It involves elaborate attention to the individual subjectivity of each child; skills of compassion, understanding and self-denial are required of the domestic worker. She must also teach her children socially acceptable behaviour and values.

This learning constitutes what Althusser calls 'the long forced march which makes mammiferous larvae into human beings', (Althusser, 1971:206). This is a productive activity also, since the psyche of a human being is as much a socially-constituted product as the body. It is the housewife who performs this labour for society.

The housewife may also produce this whole range of goods and services for the grown-up male wage worker. She also cares for his replacements on his behalf. And besides these material labours, she also performs for him emotional and social services similar to those she gives to her children, particularly if he is her sexual partner. She perceives his needs, emotional and physical, and administers to them, often before he has perceived them for himself. Intuition, understanding, sympathy, these are the tools of trade of the housewife.

The emotional servicing performed by the housewife includes sexual availability. Sexual intercourse is expected, regardless of her own inclinations, as is evidenced by the non-recognition of the crime of rape in marriage. While the man's needs are met, hers are not necessarily so. For him, it is an act of consumption, a satisfaction of his needs; for her, a service, a labour of production.

Now labour is not in itself exploitive or oppressive. Exploitation and oppression are two distinct elements which can characterise relations of production. Labour is exploited when all or part of the product is expropriated from the worker. It is oppressive when the worker has no control of the productive process. What is the situation of the housewife in regard to these two aspects?

From the point of view of exchange within the household, the raising of future workers is a joint responsibility of husband and wife. Quite apart from any particular mode of production, the propagation and care of the next generation is a universal requirement. All adult workers must labour not only for their own needs but also for their dependent replacement. They will always therefore produce more than they themselves consume.

Such 'surplus labour' is not exploitation; it becomes such only when the surplus is consumed by another able-bodied human being who produces less than s/he consumes. The question to be considered in

regard to exploitation is therefore the relative contribution in terms of labour which husband and wife make to the household, both in regard to use-values and to the direct care of human beings.

As regards the use-values produced by the housewife, she receives only those that cover her own needs. The rest of her product is consumed by the other members of the family. She receives also from the husband the exchange value to purchase raw materials which enter her products as well as commodities ready for use. These latter require no further added labour apart from the labour of purchasing them.

The wage packet as a family wage covers the subsistence needs in commodities of all members of the family, while the housewife's labour provides supplementary use values. There is no way of determining the relative contributions of these two forms of labour to the use values consumed by the family, since one is quantified in the wage while the other has no basis for quantification and therefore it is impossible to say whether the housewife receives more or less than the product or her labour in use values. And the lower the wage, or the more its purchasing power declines as prices rise, the greater the labour required from the housewife to substitute for commodities which the household cannot afford.

As regards the production and reproduction of current and future workers, this labour is, by its nature congealed (i.e. invisibly incorporated) in other human beings and cannot be possessed by the housewife. (Insofar as she does attempt to 'possess' them, she either destroys their independent human existence or suffers rejection.) The question is then what does she receive in return for this labour of producing human beings?

It will be easier to clarify the nature of the exchange between husband and wife if we compare what a husand might give to and receive from a housekeeper/prostitute, (supposing he had the resources) with that which he receives from a wife. In other words, we need to isolate the functions of a housewife which are commodifiable, the aspects of her role which can be sold from those which cannot. This is the distinction between the marriage contract and a mere labour contract.

A man could conceivably hire a housekeeper/prostitute who as well as performing the necessary physical tasks, could be relied on to be loyal, kind, understanding, skilled in child-care and sexually adept and available. But the very act of payment places all these services on a commodity basis. Some human needs cannot be met in this way and these form the basis of marriage: e.g. child-bearing, exclusive sexual service and emotional commitment.

The requirement for sexual fidelity has its roots in the need to put paternity beyond doubt and hence maintain possession of the woman by the man. Emotional commitment and fulfilment is the hallmark of modern marriage. Intense emotional relationships are the only escape from the all-embracing cash nexus of capitalism.

But the nature of this emotional exchange is quite different for the men and women who are its partners. The wife services the emotional needs of the husband and children in terms of understanding and compassion but does not receive the same services for herself. Instead, she receives security, the assurance of being wanted, but without the assurance that her desires and needs are important. She needs to be identified as desirable by a man. All the man has to provide as a 'loving' husband is the assurance that she is indeed wanted and needed by him.

This need for validation by a man has its roots directly in her economic dependence. If her husband ceased to want her, she would lose her livelihood. In order that he will continue to want her, she must minister to his needs and desires. Ths emotional exchange is thus inherently unequal, since the man's needs take priority through his control of the purse strings. Further, this exchange informs all the activities of the housewife. All the housewife's labour in the production of use values is expected to be inspired by this personal caring service. It is the intimate mingling of physical and emotional needs and their satisfaction which accounts for the mystification of domestic labour — the labour of love.

The very being of the housewife as a feminine, caring person is thus an instrument of labour, an object for the use of others.

This is the ultimate alienation.

The housewife's work is further obscured because her products, human beings, are not objects for human use, (though their labour power is.) Nor do they enter into social exchange. They therefore do not attract exchange value. Since social labour is the basis of exchange value, from the social point of view, a product which attracts no exchange value contains no labour. Isolation and denial of the reality of her production contribute to the powerlessness of the housewife.

However, the fact that the housewife's labour is unpaid does not mean that she is exploited by the husband in the sense that he alienates from her the product of her labour. He receives in his wage packet only sufficient to purchase necessary commodities for the whole family. The production of the housewife has absolutely no effect on the size of the wage. If the husband uses his possession of the wage packet to retain more than his fair share, this is not expropriation of the product of her labour — he deprives the children as much as he deprives her. The wage is, after all, the product of his *own* labour for the capitalist and only part of that product at that. He is, however, stealing from his dependents their

share of necessities which are their due by reason of the requirement to raise the next generation of workers. The housewife may have to make up this shortfall by more domestic labour, or by engaging in wage labour herself.

But if the husband is a 'good' husband, he does 'provide' in return for the domestic services of the wife.

Moving on to the question of oppression, is the housewife oppressed by the male wage earner? What control does she have over her labour process? First, she is wholly dependent on the wage labourer for her means of subsistence, since none of her labours are possible unless he has first produced the value of those means of subsistence. This includes her instruments of labour

Through his possession of her means of labour and subsistence, he has power to set the standards of her product. She must please him and meet his wishes, material and emotional, despite her apparent autonomy in choosing the method and timing of her labour. Her economic dependence means that her sexuality and child-bearing as labour process are not under her control. She has no right to refuse intercourse in marriage and she is denied it outside of marriage. Abortion and contraception are not always freely available, so she cannot necessarily choose whether or not to bear children.

She therefore suffers alienation and oppression in the production of human beings just as the wage earner suffers alienation under capitalist production.

Thus, while not exploitive in the economic sense, the exchange between husband and wife is oppressive in that the husband, through possession of the means of subsistence, wields considerable material and emotional power over the dependent housewife.

What, then, of the exchange between the housewife and capital? First, does she contribute to the surplus value expropriated by the capitalist from the wage labourer? The question of the contribution or otherwise which domestic labour makes to surplus value is part of the great debate among Marxists over productive and unproductive labour. Marx's whole theory of capital is a continuing debate with his forebears. They were trying to answer the question 'What is the source of new wealth in society? Which activities *produce* wealth and which *consume* it?' While labour was generally understood as the source of new wealth, some labour added to the social wealth, while other labour did not.

'A man grows rich by employing a multitude of manufacturers (craftworkers); he grows poor by maintaining a multitude of menial servants,' (Adam Smith quoted in *TSVI*:155). Such services while yielding

a concrete use value are immediately consumed by the purchaser and do not add to social wealth. Wealth in the concrete sense is accumulation of the products of labour.

But wealth under capitalism is not simply a quantity of use-values but an accumulation of exchange value. Marx's labour theory of value is an analysis of the basis of capital. We must now briefly summarise this theory, which is based on the crucial distinction between use-value and exchange value.

All commodities 'satisfy human wants', (*Capital I*:43) and therefore have use-value. This use-value is specific to the object in question and to the user. It is therefore a quality of the commodity and its user and cannot be quantified. Exchange value arises when goods are exchanged in society. They are implicitly valued against each other — they are related in a quantitative way. Since use-value is a *quality,* it cannot be the basis of this *quantitative* exchange value.

Marx makes it clear that it is not the concrete nature of the work or its product which defines it as productive but whether it creates value. He gives the examples of a cook in a hotel and a privately employed cook (*TSV I*:165). The cook labouring for the hotel proprietor creates value because the product is a commodity which replaces its own value when it is sold to the customer.

The product of the privately employed cook is produced as a use-value, and:

> The great difference, the conceptual difference however remains: the cook does not replace for me, the private person, the fund from which I pay her, because I buy her labour not as a value creating element but purely for the sake of its use-value, (ibid).

Thus we have the paradox that the production of consumer goods which are immediately used and do not add to the sum total of concrete use-values in society, nevertheless, if they are produced capitalistically, add to wealth in terms of value.

This paradox is part of the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value. In the concrete sense, the housewife produces use-values which are immediately consumed and do not add to wealth in society. Or her labour forms human being who are the actors in social exchange, not its object. Because this labour is privatised and not employed by capital it does not produce surplus value either. If she does not produce value, is her labour nevertheless necessary for the accumulation of capital?

Humphries (1977), argues cogently that the family with the unpaid full-time housewife was a result of struggle by the working class to meet the

needs of its dependent members. This does not mean, however, that this struggle was won on working class terms. As Marx says, 'the maintenance and reproduction of the working class is and must ever be, a necessary condition to the production of capital,' (*Capital* 1:537).

19th century capitalism was cutting its own throat by hyperexploiting the working class so that it could not adequately reproduce itself. State intervention to limit working hours was necessary to protect the long-term interests of capital as well as the immediate interests of the working-class.

> The fact that the labourer consumes his means of subsistence for his own purposes and not to please the capitalist, has no bearing on the matter, (ibid).

The capitalist can clearly extract more surplus value from the work-class household by employing as many members of the family as possible and paying them a wage sufficient only for their own individual needs rather than employing only one and paying for the needs of all the others. In the latter case, the needs of dependents and wage-earners alike must be met by domestic labour fitted in outside the hours of wage labour. The working day is correspondingly lengthened. This is manifestly so for housewives who are also wage labourers.

In this sense, Marx is right when he says, 'The capitalist may safely leave the maintenance and reproduction of the working class to the labourers' instincts of self-preservation and propagation,' (ibid).

Thus the family wage has been a victory for the working class and an indirect cost to capitalists through the loss of the potential surplus value which would have been produced by the housewife as a wage labourer. The working class benefits by this extra attention to personal needs.

From a class point of view, it is a form of leave without pay.

However, this 'leave' for domestic labour exists on an unpaid basis which exploits the working-class because it is a necessary function for capital. It also exists on a divisive basis because it is sexist.

So while the working-class has succeeded in expanding the portion of its life free from capitalist domination and exploitation, (shorter working day, week, year and life), this does not mean that domestic labour is not functional for or unexpoited by capital. Surplus value would be greatly reduced if capitalists had to pay wages or taxes sufficient to pay housewives or shorten the working day without loss of pay.

However, there are other reasons for unpaid domestic labour besides the maximisation of surplus value. As we have seen, this labour must be

unpaid, must be a labour of love, if it is to do its job of meeting the psychic needs of future and existing workers. These psychic needs are not biologically given but are historically constructed.

The highly individualised self is a historical result and requirement of capitalism, because the capitalist labour market requires mobile, individual workers who are not tied to any large group or region.

The woman's role as the primary source of nurture within the nuclear family is essential to the development of the intense personal emotions which produce the required individualist subjectivity. This individualist subjectivity sets up the illusion of the free self set apart from the social structures which produce it. Bourgeois democracy requires individuals who 'freely' consent to its rule.

The family, by producing the illusion of individuality while structuring the subjectivity of its members according to the requirements of capital, contributes to the ideological mystification of capitalist exploitation. Since capital:

> has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest and callous cash payment,' (*Communist Manifesto* in Tucker, 1972:337),

workers seek in the family an isolated arena of personal life free of this calculation. This is at the expense of class ties and consciousness. The family thus becomes a force which erodes class solidarity.

The political and ideological role of the family which has domestic labour as its basis, is evident in comparison with the families of black workers under apartheid. Their domestic life is non-existent; families are split and children starve. The extraction of surplus value takes priority since ideological incorporation is not required to maintain political order which is achieved with outright repression.

Thus, domestic labour produces labourers in a form which is ideologically and politically functional for capital. However, the labour process of the housewife is quite separate from capital. Indeed, it appears to be quite unconnected with it and is quite outside capital's control. To paraphrase Marx, the working-class in its domestic labour 'belongs to itself' while in its wage labour it belongs to the capitalist. But, within the working-class, the wage-labouring husband has control of the full-time housewife.

The housewife is therefore in a contradictory position. She provides privatised labour which maintains the working-class, including herself. Because it is bound for its survival to capital, the working class is driven to

serve capital in the very process of serving its own needs. The contradiction of the housewife's position is that her labour is the satisfaction of those needs, placing her in a position of service to those labourers as well as to the capitalist.

The male adult labourer who is in principle capable of performing such labour for himself, is thereby in a position of dominance over her. Thus in meeting the needs of the working class, the housewife reproduces her own sexist oppression.

This is analogous to the position of the wage labourer who is forced to sell his/her labour to the capitalist and thereby reproduces the relations of his/her own oppression and exploitation. Domestic labour is thus part of the unequal exchange which the working class makes with the capitalist class, but one which in turn subordinates the housewife.

Further, while domestic labour produces 'the power that creates wealth' (*Capital I*: 538) it does not produce wealth as such. This is the distinction between living human beings and the products of their labour. Only the latter constitute the wealth of society. Thus wage labour produces wealth and consumes labour-power, while domestic labour produces labourers, and therefore labour power, and consumes goods. The labour of the housewife is thus vital to society and to capital but produces no wealth in value or concrete terms.

Her labour is the polar antithesis of wage labour, while the two together are dialectically opposed to capital. It is the antithesis between wage labour and domestic labour which is the form of subordination of women under capitalism. This antithesis is, in the final analysis, the antithesis between production for use-value and production for exchange-value.

The domestic worker produces for human need, while the wage worker is compelled to work for human greed.

This contradiction between use-value and exchange-value lies at the heart of the contradictions of capitalism. Privatised domestic labour is just one expression of this contradiction.

Is the housewife's sexist subordination functional or necessary for capital? So long as this domestic labour is performed free of charge, it makes no difference to the capitalist whether it is performed by the woman, the man or shared between them. The sexist aspects of women's oppression whether as housewife or wage labourer cannot therefore be explained by the dynamics of capital. This only accounts for its form.

As I have shown, the cost of domestic labour is far too high to be paid for by capital either through wages or taxes. In any case, only some tasks of domestic labour can, in principle, be socialised. This is possible with housework and child care but not for the task of meeting the psychic needs of the members of the family. These needs will still exist under a

socialised economy, though in a less pressured, isolated form, and can only be met in personal relationships.

This will require shortening the part of the working day devoted to social labour to leave adequate time for parents to spend with their children or each other. There would need to be a commitment to sharing nurturing tasks. There is no reason, however, why the nurturing unit should be the couple. Parenting has historically been tied to sexual relationships and procreation because until very recently, one was the inevitable consequence of the other.

Capitalism does not require unlimited procreation — on the contrary, its tendency to replace human hands and brains with technological inventions results in the need to limit population. This has led to the development of contraception and attitudes favouring birth control and sexuality separated from procreation. This is a very recent development and parenting may well be unconnected with sexual ties and have quite different connotations in the future.

Both of these requirements for solving the problem of domestic labour, socialisation of household tasks and shortening of the working day, can only be met in an economy devoted to production for human needs. Even so, it would call on considerable resources, *and* social commitment to bring these changes about. The family structure is still a highly economical method of child-raising, even if supported by public child care, catering and laundry facilities. This accounts for the strong regulation and support for it seen in developing socialist countries.

My review of the domestic labour debate has exposed a number of conceptual confusions when value analysis is applied to women's work in the home. This contribution has sought to clarify the content of domestic labour and to define the limits of a value analysis approach to an understanding of the oppression of women. I concluded that domestic labour was not socially productive of wealth either as concrete products or as surplus value, but that this labour, while it served working-class personal needs, was essential to capital for ideological and economic reasons. The lack of payment is both ideologically necessary and economically advantageous to capital.

Working-class men are placed in a dominant position over working-class housewives by the wage form of payment for their labour but the interests of capital cannot explain why women have structural responsibility for domestic labour. Sexism must be separately accounted for.

The abolition of domestic labour as an oppressive form of labour requires the devotion of considerable resources to alternative structures. While a socialised economy is a necessary condition for this it is not sufficient. A firm commitment to fighting sexist ideology and structures is

required.

The domestic labour debate arose from feminist concern to analyse women's oppression from a Marxist point of view. It is ironic that while quite successful at focussing on specifically capitalist exploitation of women and the role of domestic labour in this exploitation, the analysis of the relations of production has thrown no light at all on sexist oppression as such.

The relations of production were analysed by Marx solely in regard to the production of goods and services. There remains to be constructed a historical materialist analysis of the production of living human beings as a significant dynamic within the overall mode of production.

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Notes.

This is part of a longer work which contains an overview of the domestic labour debate and a much more detailed explanation of Marx's theories of value. Massey University is publishing the complete paper. For further information write to the author, Sociology Department, Massey University, Palmerston North.

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Another Little Drink . . . Won't Do Us Any Harm?

Laura Shaw

'I'm going to be sick' I mumbled, and a polystyrene vomit cup was pushed into my hand. 'Keep still' admonished the doctor intent upon her task. Unable to move I lay on the operating table in utter misery, my eyes and nose running, retching helplessly unable to wipe my slimy face as the doctor continued to set the stitches.

It is so hard to begin because I have never before told anyone what it was really like.

My family only saw the outward signs — which were distressing enough — but had no idea of the apalling nature of the nightmare. Even I, after telling myself so many lies, can hardly credit the depths I have been rescued from.

So I'm going to write this for you — the you that was me ten years ago; you — a wife newly at home with a young family 'three under four' as they say, a new house — a hard-working husband you never seem to see — in a new 'executive' suburb a half hour's walk from the shops.

You can't afford to waste money, when you buy wine it is for the table, to share, and perhaps sherry for after dinner. Impossible to date that first

time the sherry is poured before dinner — to ease the frenetic tea-time fuss of recalcitrant children and exhausted parents. Life cannot be easy all the time, and when tension is building why not diffuse it with a little drink?

If you like I could stop here because that last sentence in a sense says it all.

When the children were young we had a few hardships, disappointments, disillusionments with each other. Once I discovered that alcohol could mist over the black cloud of depression, take away the urge to scream, I started to use it for just that reason. I prided myself on not giving way to nervous breakdown, not needing valium. After all it was not as if I was getting drunk, merely using sherry medicinally. Doesn't every advertisement, every television play encourage an attitude of 'spoil yourself . . . you deserve a drink'.

Like many an educated woman I had charge of the family finances, managing not only the housekeeping but paying all the bills. So it was not difficult, with liquor firms so keen to deliver free, to organise an adequate liquor supply; since we had proudly purchased a cocktail cabinet with lots of gleaming glasses what was more natural than to want to keep it well stocked.

I remember some of those orders — I usually managed to have them delivered while my husband was out so he would not know how much I was buying, or how much it cost. By now I was developing a wide and varied taste; although I much preferred sherry there are obvious advantages to having several bottles open at the one time, nobody will notice the levels in them. Am I getting ahead of myself? I don't think so — I was a greedy drinker once I discovered alcohol's magic properties. And I was very soon a secret drinker too.

There is so much mythology about alcoholism that it is easy to persuade yourself that you don't fit into its pattern. I wasn't a pub crawler, didn't fly into drunken rages, didn't let the house go to rack and ruin or lose my job. Not me — I lovingly raised my family to school age, kept them and my husband well-fed, clean and neat, and the house bright and shiny; and when my husband was made redundant I polished up my qualifications and went back to my old job, even got promotion. Now that's not in the alcoholism casebook!

Or is it?

You know, that's why I'm tormenting myself writing all this. For all I know my experience was unique, but it may well be that there are a great many women caught in the trap of domestic alcoholism, literally drowning their sorrows, or should I say submerging their tensions, in that routine comforting drink before dinner . . . and with dinner and after

dinner and while washing up . . . and for a nightcap. We are apt to pride ourselves on self-control — never keeping vodka in the desk drawer, brandy in the filing cabinet or whiskey in a hip-flask; that sort of behaviour is for hardened drinkers.

So there I was. Plenty of job satisfaction and a burgeoning self respect. No more 'free deliveries' with their horrendous cost, just a respectable visit to the local wine shop after the supermarket so we can always have a drink with dinner; there are those opened bottles in the cocktail cabinet and the flagon of sweet sherry from which we fill the decanter. So civilised. And no one to know . . . that on Monday I will smuggle the empty flagon out of the house in my basket, get it filled in my lunch hour and by judicious juggling make it appear that one flagon lasts for months . . . that on Friday I'll walk downtown and replace two or three of the opened bottles and adjust their levels to look as if they haven't been disturbed.

If I was lucky I wouldn't see the same shop assistant often enough to be known as a regular customer. I dreaded the day I might be asked, 'Back for more sherry, Mrs?'

My life was now settled into an apparently good routine. To my family and colleagues I passed for normal, though most of my time and attention was occupied in organising my liquor supplies, drinking (at home of course — I never went in for the 'liquid lunch' while I was working) and that other private nightmare — getting rid of the bottles. The devious stratagems I involved myself in, trying to hide the sheer quantity of booze I was swallowing would seem funny if it weren't so deadly serious. Flagons of course are refillable . . . so I only had about half-a-dozen empties (a week) to get rid of.

I became ambitious, discovering the 'joys' of pure spirits which though much more expensive went further when shared only with myself. I was earning the money and since I wasn't wasting it on nasty habits like smoking I could afford to treat myself — brandy being my favourite (gin I discovered in my dieting days, it has less calories than other drinks).

Dieting/slimming (being fat) perhaps deserves a paper to itself, particularly in regard to marriage and family relationships. The depression of being overweight, the drink to ease the depression, the resultant weight gain. I went through a dodgy spell, when being determined not to get any fatter coincided with particularly heavy drinking — and vomiting. I found out how long food stays in the stomach before being digested and since I was usually drinking at mealtimes it was not hard to throw up. I now know that there is a name — bulimia — for this syndrome but at the time I was quite sure that I was the only person

doing this sick thing.

Why am I telling you all this? Taking myself back to those hours spent kneeling in front of the lavatory with my fingers in my throat, taking myself back to the cold feel of the vinyl floor under my face as dizziness and nausea induced blackout.

Fortunately as my capacity for alcohol grew I gave up on the weight worry completely; as it happened I found myself too incapacitated to get rid of my dinner within the stipulated time. I knew I was fat, but then, so were lots of other people; I knew I wasn't alcoholic because I could go for days — sometimes as many as three — without a drink at all. What I could not do, though I doubt if I ever admitted it to myself, was to take only one drink when I had the opportunity to take another without anyone knowing.

Helpful magazine articles, chapters in health books, made it clear to me that I should stop drinking — or, of course, drink less. There you are, the painless solution — just drink less. Easy. Easy that is until you have taken the first drink and have to have another.

With the passing years the pattern changed a little. I was in control to the extent that I could rationalise what I was doing and accepted it as irreversible. I identified with the policeman hero in a novel:

> He was drinking too much — not for pleasure, just sipping it systematically, like low proof hemlock.

Name your poison, they say, and rightly. I read somewhere that alcoholics rarely kill themselves (by any other means that is) because they have subconsciously chosen that way to die. This fitted my assessment of the situation. I actually found a perverse satisfaction in punishing my family as well as myself — to the extent that if they made me unhappy well, they'd be sorry 'one day'. I was content to think that at least I'd kill myself slowly and painlessly.

Only in the event it wasn't painless at all.

Death is like giving birth in that some memories are sharp as broken glass and others confused and misty. Being in the ambulance was like being on a helter-skelter — in fact, the whole experience was one of being thrust forward through a tunnel at tremendous speed; only the light at the end was shining full in my face and voices were shouting my name, over and over. How many pills had I taken, what did I think I was doing? The strange quiet conversation with a social worker in the emergency room when I felt far away and perfectly composed 'and do you still think death is the only answer?'

It had certainly seemed so that night.

Starting like so many Saturdays I was drunk before dinner trying to

cook a really nice evening meal for my family. I think we had even been out shopping together earlier. My eldest had given me a solemn lecture on how unhappy my drinking was making everyone, but in my muddled mind I was sure that if no one bothered or worried me I wouldn't need so much drink anyway. So who was I punishing? When with what was my first, last and only cry for help I worked my way through a full packet of analgesics, washing them down with sherry — while trying to get dinner ready.

I thought I was taking my final drink and that's the way it has turned out to be. Between the pain of nausea, the stomach pump (one of my clearer memories) and the stitches I needed because at some stage I had fallen and cut myself badly, was contrived an aversion therapy more effective than anything a drying-out clinic could dream up. During the days I spent realising that I was going to have to go on living I gradually accepted that I couldn't face it all again; to drink at all was to drink to excess — and what had that just done to me. Never again.

It was some time later that I found out my husband had, while I was at the hospital, poured all my supplies down the sink. Oddly enough my only feeling was relief that I didn't have to get rid of the empties. Other odd things happened — when I went to the shops I could buy what I wanted, there was plenty of room in my basket now I didn't have a flagon to carry home — and I no longer worried in case the wine shop closed early.

The funny thing is that no one has ever said that being sober is more fun than being drunk; that the highs and pleasures of sheer physical and mental sensation are swamped by alcohol, and when they reappear it is like a new life beginning.

I had thought, as so many others seem to think, that every sober day had to be a struggle, an unsatisfied craving, a descent to the drug-addict's hell of withdrawal. Well it wasn't and it isn't — but why has no one ever said?

I would not like to give the impression that all was sweetness and light. My family as well as myself had adjustments to make — someone else's turn to do the cooking, and no raised voices in my hearing. There was considerable assistance in those first days from my own body — when you are barely able to keep down a little milk-and-water there is no question of wanting anything stronger. Soon I was in a position to say to myself, 'I haven't had a drink for almost a week' and that was a position of strength from which to face each day. By the time things got back to 'normal' I was looking after myself. I still am. Any situation that would formerly have had me reaching for a glass of sherry I simply walk away from. And it helps to have a mental image of that glass transformed into a

polystyrene vomit cup!

Someone may ask 'where in all of this was Alcoholics Anonymous?'. I'm afraid for me the answer is 'nowhere'. I did get one call, routed from the hospital; when I told them I had decided not to drink any more they explained that that was too difficult on my own and I ought to be going to their meetings.

Meetings: the thought of going to Weightwatchers was bad enough (I have never been), the idea of admitting to drunkenness by going to the AA was preposterous. I still feel like that, and the person I am writing for is the same, suffering in silence in her own home and bitterly ashamed.

A graphologist recently told me that my handwriting showed me to be assertive: well, I have had to be. I protected my newfound freedom from addiction like a precious houseplant — now I find it healthily flourishing out in the garden like a weed. I go to the occasional party and ask for fruit juice, proudly; I tell people that I don't drink (I don't tell them why though, and I haven't told you my real name). My GP, bless him, offered to give me 'something to help', but I thankfully didn't take it.

At the risk of being repetitious I must say again: I was surprised to find my life my own, surprised to find I could face routine crises sober. Why had no one told me? Now if I weep I know that it's emotion and not booze; if I drop a plate or burn the vegetables I know that that's carelessness and not booze; if I forget what I was going to say and words elude me — well that's because I'm like that; it's not booze.

I am myself, and while there are drawbacks to this, at least I'm not a guided missile under the control of some anonymous brewery. I make my own decisions and my own mistakes, not those of the parasite that used to rule me.

I no longer wake up to find that I was sick into the bedclothes the night before. I no longer make phone calls that I've no recollection of, or wonder how various burns or bruises happened. I no longer wonder whether I merely fell asleep during my favourite TV programme or actually passed out.

And there's no more smuggling full bottles in and empty bottles out.

It has been an effort to write about my experience but worth the effort if someone reading this can get help from it. Having written it has given me a sense of achievement — something I could never have gained while my brain was still in pawn.

Laura Shaw is a pseudonym.

Sex Role Stereotyping: A Critique

Sue Middleton

The issue of sex-role stereotying has been hotly debated in 'educational' circles for the last 10 years. During this time we have seen the production of a literature on the subject in educational and feminist journals; research within the Department of Education, feminist groups, the Teachers' Colleges and the Universities; a few innovations in curriculum materials; the establishment (and disestablishment) of NACWE[1] and the position of 'Education Officer, Women' within the Department of Education; and through all this, the growth of the Women's Studies movement inside and outside the 'system'. All these changes reflect the vast ideological changes in people's thinking about the position and status of women since World War Two.

Since the Second World War, the ideology of feminism has come out of hibernation. The generation who fought this war gained new perspectives on male and female roles and attributes. Women's work was seen as essential to the war effort. A New Zealand Army Current Affairs Bulletin of July 12, 1943, is devoted to the topic of 'Women and the War' (p.3):

> . . . today nations at war pit the whole of their peoples against their enemies. Total war demands the strength of enemy women. We are now, after four years of total war, beginning to

> understand the gravity and significance of this fact. The novelty of women in unexpected jobs has begun to wear off. The elements of drama and surprise are yielding to those of endurance and steady work. Every month has made it more apparent that this is a war in which women are necessary in the factories and in the Forces and that it cannot be won without their help.

At first this appears a very 'liberal' statement in its emphasis on the equal abilities of men and women; if women are capable of doing 'men's' jobs, as the bulletin suggests, shouldn't they receive equal pay and rights? However, a feminist analysis of the bulletin shows it to be based on unquestioned assumptions of male power over women. It is quite clear that the issue of whether or not women should enter the paid work force in 'male' jobs or remain in it after marriage was one that was seen as being decided by men, eg. (p.15):

> There are 4,900,000 women under forty-five, with no children under ten. If the real pinch comes, at least half of this group will have to be moved out of the kitchen and on to the assembly line.

It is clear also that it was assumed that after the war women's primary role in national development would be to increase the birthrate and care for their children (p.16):

> 'Many women with families are now working. Are children bound to suffer if they are deprived of maternal care? Or is the problem solved by the care that free kindergartens and schools provide? After the war, should married women be allowed to work if their husbands are working and if there is a demand for women's labour? If women leave their homes to work, will the birth-rate suffer? Is it possible for women to work and for the birth-rate to increase too? How could this be *ensured*?' (My emphasis).

Betty Friedan has argued in *The Feminine Mystique* that in the post war period women flocked back to the home to revel in the idyllic fantasy of domestic bliss. The results of this return to domesticity included the post war baby boom (the 'bulge' whose passing through the education system has shrunk our pupil population) and, ironically, helped to stimulate the rebirth of feminism in the late 1960s, as disillusioned in later life with the housewifely role, many of these middleclass American women

complained of what Friedan called the 'problem that has no name'. Doctors called it 'suburban neurosis'.

Meanwhile their young sons were burning their draft cards and refusing to go to war, growing their hair, and wearing caftans. Their daughters went on the pill and 'lived with' their boyfriends. People were urged to 'make love, not war' and John and Yoko went to bed in a department store window to spread the message.

But the 'sexual revolution' for many women did not mean liberation. Instead it meant being treated as a 'chick' or as a 'bird'. Angry women within the peace and civil rights movement in America demanded to 'make policy, not tea'.

The second wave of feminism hit New Zealand in the early 70s. Visiting feminist Germain Greer was arrested for saying 'bullshit' and found guilty of 'obscene language'. Tim Shadbolt wrote a book called *Bullshit and Jelly Beans*. Sharon Cederman and Sue Kedgely wrote a New Zealand book called *Sexist Society*. Auckland Women's Liberation, *Broadsheet* magazine, the United Women's Conventions, all spread feminist thinking widely throughout the country.

Now we are experiencing another time of national crisis in which increasing rates of unemployment and the economic recession are leading some to challenge women's hard-won rights to equality of opportunity in public life. Married women who remain in paid work are attacked as 'greedy', even as 'stealers' of men's jobs. Women's rights to work and choice of life style are seen as less than those of school leavers or married men. Young women hitting the job market are usually disadvantaged. Amongst the unemployed school leavers, girls are more likely to be unemployed than boys and, as a group, to have higher qualifications than the boys, albeit in 'arts' subjects or typing, where microchip technology is threatening office and other 'girls'' jobs.

Maori girls are the group with the highest rate of unemployment, its extent as yet unmeasured. We do not know if there are a large number of young women who are invisible in unemployment statistics because they are solo mothers, or stay at home to 'help in the house' in rural areas (or work on the farm). How many are working as housekeepers or child minders?

Sue Shipley's recent research in Palmerston North is the first major piece of research in this country to address the issue of women's unemployment. Married women frequently do not register as unemployed, sensing their chances of finding work as zero.

Many of us, as teachers, are going through the threat or the reality of unemployment. For many of us this is a traumatic and painful

experience. Growing up in a time of boom, we were steeped in the liberal belief in the value of education and hard work as a route to economic security and professional satisfaction. As teachers, we have all, whether straight from school or as 'mature students' experienced some degree of academic 'success'.

Although, as post war children, we were exposed to very conflicting messages about our sexuality as women and our careers, feminism has taught us that we should not have to choose between career and family; we should, like men, be able to have both, if we so choose.

However, at present the right to choose is being lost as increasing redundancies force women out of the paid work force. Greedy women, return to your homes, the media blare. There is a more 'deserving' labour force of young people and married men whose rights are seen as greater than ours; we are 'taking' something that is not ours by right. Could a school leaver do *your* job?

So, as academically 'successful', many of us have taken our careers seriously amidst the economic prosperity of the post war period, when teaching was regarded as a 'secure' occupation. Yet many of us had been brought up to believe that work was nothing more than 'something to fall back on' when your children were older, or your husband died. Work was something you did when you waited to get married, something you did if you were 'forced' to through economic necessity (such women were to be pitied), or one could earn a little 'pin money' to buy 'extras'. In later life a little job could get you 'out of the house'.

But only the 'exceptional' woman (e.g. women doctors) or (horror of horrors) those who'd been 'left on the shelf' (many men were killed in the war) were expected to have a 'career' in the male sense. For paid work, including teaching, was seen as something peripheral to the 'main business of being a woman', that is child bearing, child rearing and supporting husbands emotionally. Women supporting men financially was unheard of unless he was an invalid or if her support was advancing his career (e.g. putting him through university). Having career ambitions of her own was 'selfish'.

Rejecting this model as oppressive to women, feminists of the 70s demanded actual, not merely legal, equality. We have made some gains. As educationists, we sought to explain women's oppression in terms of the social sciences, which in the early 70s offered us stereotyping theory. Sex-role stereotyping theory argues:

—That there are fixed 'images' (or stereotypes) of what men and women should be.

—That these stereotypes are transmitted through the overt and

covert dimensions of school curricula (the latter including teacher expectations, role models and the inequitable distribution of the sexes in bureaucratic hierarchies).

—That children's self-concepts, academic performance, subject and vocational 'choice' is conditioned by stereotyped images and expectations.

Such an analysis, while providing some useful rough guidelines for the analysis of how schools and other social institutions (such as the family) reproduce and construct gender, is theoretically inadequate for three reasons.

Firstly, it implies a homogeneity of stereotypes and ignores the wide variety of 'ideal types' of perfect womanhood', in different cultures, in different periods of history and in different social class groups. The Victorian 'lady', the Maori 'kuia', the woman factory worker and the 50s movie queen are very different constructions of femininity. It ignores the 'contradictions when the same women are subjected simultaneously to incompatible ideologies, e.g. the conflict between models of academic 'success' and the home based wife and mother as ideals. Writing of the 'contradictions which can arise between different gender definitions;, Madeleine MacDonald gives examples (1980: 45):

> Take, for example, the contradictory sets of female ideals: the consumer housewife versus the dependent incapable wife; the insatiable temptress and the passive sex object; the all embracing earth mother versus the childlike doll.

Sex-role stereotyping theory, then, presents an oversimplified and distorted impression of the ways people experience and construct their gender identities.

A second criticism is that sex-role stereotyping theory ignores the origins of the stereotypes and is, therefore, a-historical. Stereotypes must be studied in the light of a knowledge of the cultures which produce them, e.g. urban middle class, rural working class, Maori, aristocracy etc.

There are several emerging theoretical analyses of these origins (Jagger and Struhl, 1978, Middleton, 1983). Marxists argue that the ownership and organisation of the means of production (i.e. the economy) ultimately determines female inequality; women are seen as a 'reserve army' of workers to be encouraged into the paid work force in times of boom or war and sent back to the kitchen when jobs are scarce. Radical feminists argue that male dominance is at the root of women's

oppression; the domain of 'public life' (paid work and the political system) is a male product and women's subordinate status has been brought about for the convenience of men. Socialist feminists point to a dual basis for women's oppression, as being ultimately determined by the interaction of economic forces and male dominance. Radical black and Maori women have seen 'sex role stereotypes' as an imposition of colonialism and white cultural imperialism.

What all these theories imply for the issue of sexism in schooling and education is that our analysis must consider cultural (ethnic and class) differences.

If models of the 'ideal typical' woman are cultural constructions, research into sexism in schools must be based on the study of the cultures of the school and its contributing community. This is the focus of contemporary research in the 'sociology of woman's education;' a new field of largely British origins which draws together feminist theory, sociology, curriculum theory, history and anthropology. Much of the previous research in the 'new' traditions in the sociology of education has been into the teenage subcultures of rebellious school boys, as in Paul Willis's (1978) study, where, as Mandy Llewellyn (1980:42) has noted: if girls are 'visible', it is through male eyes as 'birds', 'scrubbers' or 'hangers on'.

Mandy Llewellyn has studied groups of 'academically successful' and 'academically unsuccessful' secondary school girls, in an urban, British community. She argues that 'there are always distinct 'female' and 'male' experiences of any situation, as well as shared levels of meaning through being working class or successful within the classroom.' (p.45) To illustrate, think of the differences (conversely, think of the similarities) between an 'A' stream girl pupil and a girl streamed into a 'domestic science' and a 'commercial' stream? What is the status in the hierarchy of school knowledge of of 'home economics', secretarial courses, art (all women's fields) in your school? Rugby versus netball?

A third weakness in sex-role stereotyping theory lies in some of its assumptions about human beings, which are based on a behaviourist learning theory. Such an approach may be seen as implying that people are the passively conditioned products of the stereotyped expectations of their teachers, parents, etc.

However, anyone who has taught groups of disaffected teenage girls will know that they frequently actively rebel against teacher authority and the 'Protestant work ethic' of the school. Like the boys studied by Paul Willis (1978) they create their own teenage subcultures as a resistance against adult authority and middle class work values.

However, in rejecting the idea of academic or entrepreneurial success,

these girls opt for an extremely conservative ideal of what a woman should be. 'Sexuality' (sexual relationships, pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood) may dominate the rest of her life.

In accepting this pattern for herself and other women, she consents to her oppression a process which is defined by a number of feminists and social scientists (e.g. Sheila Rowbotham, 1973) as 'male hegemony'. It is this process of how children and teenagers construct their versions of what it means to be a woman, or a man, in their own peer cultures, that is the focus of research in the sociology of women's education.

In New Zealand we as yet lack research into the social construction of gender in teenage and adult subcultures. Alison Jones in Auckland, is currently writing a doctoral thesis on her participant observation in a 'low stream' fourth form at a girls; school, and her findings will give us much needed information.

In Britain, there has been research into the relationship between youth cultures and the mass media. There have been studies of rock music and sexuality (Frith and McRobbie, 1978) the gender ideology of 'love comics', (see MacDonald, 1980), analyses of school texts (MacDonald, 1980; Wolpe, 1978); we need such studies in New Zealand.

Studies of the power of radio over housewives, such as that by CCCS[2] are needed in New Zealand. Our Australasian 'soapies' such as *Close to Home'* and *'The Young Doctors'* should be analysed before they go off air; this must be done now, as unlike the printed word, we have as yet no easy form of access to video and radio materials once they have been broadcast.

How do the images of women as conveyed during the afternoon TV commercials and programmes differ from those at night? Late at night? (horror movies; women at night are 'asking for it'.)

In a British study of rock music of the late 70s, Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie (1978) describe two dominant ideologies of gender. The first (e.g. some of the Rolling Stones) is seen as a male definition of gender (male and female), masculinity being portrayed by the 'rampant destructive male traveller, smashing hotels and groupies alike' (in MacDonald, 1980). Women are seen as

> either sexually aggressive and therefore doomed and unhappy or else sexually repressed and therefore in need of male servicing. It's the woman, whether romanticised or not, who is seen as possessive, after a husband, anti-freedom, the ultimate restriction.''
>
> (Frith & McRobbie, 1978:7)

Such 'macho' flourished in the 'permissive era' of the so-called 'sexual

revolution', women, as 'birds' and 'chicks' were disposable, to be a source of pleasure, but being 'tied down' was to be avoided (the 'ball and chain syndrome').

The other gender stereotype in this analysis is described as 'teeny bop'. Played to a radio audience during the day of mainly women (both housewives and factory workers), this music presents a different model of sexuality:

> If cock rock plays on conventional concepts of male sexuality as rampant, animalistic, superficial, just-for-the-moment, teenybop plays on the notions of female sexuality, as being serious, diffuse and implying total emotional commitment . . . It is men who are soft, romantic, easily hurt, loyal and anxious to find a true love who fulfils their definition of what female sexuality should be about.' (MacDonald, 1980:44).

What of the rock music of New Zealand, 1983? What ideologies of female and male sexuality are constructed, for example, in the rival youth cultures centred around reggae and punk?

As teachers and parents, we need to understand how today's young men and women see themselves. We need to understand class and ethnic cultural differences. We need a strong sense of what kinds of people we wish to become and wish our children to become. Education, whether in schools or in the home, can be a means of bringing about social change. As feminists, we are committed to bringing about equality of educational and vocational opportunity for all people regardless of race, sex, culture or wealth. How best can we, as teachers work towards such change?

Henry Giroux (1982) speaks of two models for bringing about educational and broader social change which are possible for teachers. One is a 'content based' method, the other 'strategy based'. A 'content based' approach would involve teaching students about the status of women in different cultures and periods in history. This, in itself, is a process of consciousness raising. Graeme Bassett (1978) wrote of a 'curriculum for useful unemployment' in New Zealand, and I note that groups of unemployed people, through arts such as drama and folk music are now engaged in this process of teaching others about social injustice.

The second, 'strategy based' method is to structure learning experience so that students experience a sense of autonomy in designing their own curriculum. This is preparation for a life style in which one makes one's own 'work/leisure' distinction. As more and more, often

highly 'qualified' people, are forced out of the paid work force, new categories of work are emerging.

What is the status of the middle class, university graduate, T.E.P. worker? Can one see oneself as an 'artist' instead of as 'unemployed'? One young unemployed lad of my acquaintance describes the 'dole' as the 'young people's pension'. However, defining one's situation differently does not alter the fact of loss of income, and economic status and sheer poverty when one becomes unemployed.

'Student-centred' teaching can be a kind of 'laissez-faire' and the sexism, racism and other cultural biasses in the wider society manifest themselves 'as usual' in the classroom (e.g. see Sharp and Green, 1975; Sharp, 1982). If sexism is to be destroyed, it must first be made visible to the students. This may require direct intervention on the part of the teacher, e.g. using a sexist infant reader (What Girls Like and What Boys Like) to stimulate discussion of gender attributes; does your mother stay at home, Tommy? Bill's mother works in a factory. Whose mother works in a factory? Who lives in your house, Mary?

Children then become aware of cultural diversity. The taken-for-granted world of everyday life no longer seems inevitable. It can be changed.

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Notes

This is the text of an address given to Waikato Women in Education, at Hamilton, June 16, 1983.

1. National Advisory Council on Women's Education.
2. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (at the University of Birmingham).

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Women Meatworkers and the Gentleman's Agreement

Joan Shields

During 1983 a group of women meat workers from all over New Zealand compiled information on women in export freezing works as part of a research project on women working in non-traditional jobs. As well as collecting statistics, researchers asked about attitudes towards the employment of women.

They got replies from management spokespeople at the various plants, and from officials of the New Zealand Meat Workers' Union and the Auckland-Tomoana Freezing Workers' Union — and found more similarities than differences among the (mainly male) respondents.

Some of the figures are only approximate and the information is not complete. However, the people working on the project drew on a wide variety of sources, which included: the New Zealand Freezing Companies Association; personnel officers and industrial relations managers of individual plants; branch and shed union officials; other written material and the firsthand knowledge of the workers themselves. Thus the survey did provide enough facts and figures to give an overall picture of the situation of women in the meat industry, where for the most part they are still a very small percentage of the workforce, despite some gains in the past few years, as the following table shows. (It also

shows the wide regional differences in the employment of women meat workers).

National distribution Table[1]

Area	No. of meat workers (peak season)	No. of women in production areas	Women as %age of meat workers
Auckland	5930	279	4.7
Southern North Island	9382	740	7.9
Canterbury/ Marlborough/ Nelson	4715	41	0.9
Otago/ Southland	7060	292	4.1
TOTAL	27,087	1352	5.0

The respondents to the survey advanced a number of reasons to explain why so few women were employed and were restricted to a limited range of jobs. Some companies claimed that 'lack of facilities' prevented them from employing more women, or from employing women on the mutton slaughterboard. Some said that the meat union on the plant was the greatest barrier to the employment of more women.

The survey asked a number of questions about restrictions on women's access to certain traditionally 'male-only' jobs. Answers ranged from claims that the women themselves were not interested in doing these jobs, that the work was beyond their physical capabilities or that the men would not like it, to statements that women who had tried to gain access to some of these jobs had proved to be 'not suitable' or 'not prepared to participate in all aspects of the job'.

One example was given of a woman who gained enough seniority to become a mutton butcher. An attempt was made to get her to work in the sticking pen (the most isolated and bloodiest part of the chain). When

she refused, she was given another job further up the chain. The following season a further attempt was made to place her in the sticking pen, but when she refused this time, she was taken off the chain.

Quite a wide range of attitudes was expressed by personnel officers and industrial relations managers. Some, for example, said that they preferred to employ women rather than men because they were keener to get on with the job and were more reliable.

In some cases, too, the employment of women on the slaughterboard — including some who were butchers — came at the initiative of the company. This is particularly true in some of the newer works, although it should be remembered that these all opened in the wake of the Human Rights Commission's landmark ruling against the Ocean Beach works.[2]

The impact of the Ocean Beach case on the meat companies emerged clearly from the survey. Many personnel officers cited the Human Rights Commission Act in their replies, and claimed that there was equality of opportunity for women in their plants. 'We treat all workers the same here' was a favourite phrase.

It should be noted, however, that in the majority of cases there was little difference in the percentage of women in the workforce and the jobs they could do at these works compared with others which did not make such a claim.

Several personnel officers at works where women were not employed as mutton butchers stated that they would be happy to employ them in this job if they had the necessary ability and skill. In no case, however, did such a statement indicate that training programmes existed on their plants to enable women to learn these skills.

Perhaps the most extreme expression of hostility to women being employed in the meat industry came from one personnel officer who claimed that the women at his plant refused to do heavy jobs; wouldn't wear 'unladylike' smocks and gumboots despite 'coming to work looking like men in jeans, bush shirts and gumboots anyway'; wouldn't work on their own had to go everywhere in pairs — but were good at monotonous jobs. He also said that there was an attendance problem with women with young children, and that the women there insisted that only married women be hired so that their husbands (also working on the plant) wouldn't be stolen.

The attitudes expressed by union officials were equally varied.

In cases where women have succeeded in becoming mutton butchers, this has taken place with the agreement of the union. In at least two cases

we were told about — Longburn and Tomoana — union delegates played a key role in encouraging and supporting the first women to break into these previously male-only jobs. At Tomoana, the butchers voted to temporarily suspend a seniority requirement in order to enable women to go on the learner chain for the first time.

Before Oringi opened in 1981, the West Coast branch of the NZMWU also argued very strongly in favour of equality of opportunity for women. It is significant that Oringi has subsequently become the only shed in the country where women play an important leadership role in the union.

A union official at one of the newer works also explained that women were more generally accepted in his shed because the male workers, who were also quite new to the industry, had no prejudices about women in the meat works to get over. For them, women meat workers — including butchers — are 'the way it's always been.' An additional factor may be the generally younger composition of the workforce at these plants.

Despite these positive examples, however, it is true to say that a fairly backward attitude to the employment of women is more common among union officials. Many gave only token support for equality of opportunity on the job, while echoing many of the same prejudices expressed by personnel officers and other company officials. In some cases, union officials have played an active role in opposing the employment of women; either in general or in specific areas like the mutton slaughterboard (both as labourers and butchers).

One union official admitted that there was a 'gentleman's agreement' between the union and the companies to restrict the employment of women. Another said that although the union was not opposed to the employment of women, now was 'not the right time' to push this issue.

The most overtly hostile response came from one union official who said that women shouldn't work on the slaughterboard or the freezers, but were reasonably suitable for jobs like packing because they were 'nimbler', 'can stay longer on their feet' and 'don't mind the monotony so much.' He also claimed that women in the meat works were 'more dangerous than the atomic bomb' and that women meat workers 'earn more in their lunch hour than they do on the job.'

Despite the incomplete nature of the survey, some general trends are clear. Although there has been increased employment of women in export freezing works over the past 10-15 years, women are still a very small percentage of this industry, both nationally and in the majority of plants. In general, they are limited to only a few departments in the works, and to a certain range of jobs within these departments. They are

often excluded from the most skilled and highest-paid jobs.

As the national distribution table shows, there is a wide regional variation in employment opportunities for women. The southern half of the North Island (and Hawkes Bay in particular) is well above the rest of the country in the percentage of its workforce which is female. In some cases, there are wide variations among different works owned by the same company.

In general, the greatest employment opportunities for women, both in absolute numbers and in the range of jobs available, seem to exist in the newer works e.g. Oringi, Takapau.

In one part of the country (Canterbury) it was found that the number of women employed in meat works in the region was actually declining. This was attributed, in part, to the type of incentive system operating which 'doesn't seem to suit women.'

As things stand at present, it seems likely that job opportunities for women in meat works will not increase significantly over the next few years. A number of works have closed (Southdown, Gear, Patea) and new works opening over the same period have employed fewer workers. As well, many meat companies are trying to introduce lower manning levels in their plants. This is partly linked to a wide range of labour-saving technology now available, much of which is likely to be introduced into plants over the next few years.

Because women meat workers are generally confined to only a few departments and have gained access to some of the more skilled jobs only in the last few years, they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of lay-offs.

Another trend is also clear, however, and that is that women meat workers themselves have become more self-confident and more willing to fight for equality in the last few years. In the works where women are employed as mutton butchers, for example, this came about largely at the initiative of the women themselves.[3] This was particularly true in the period following the media coverage of the two women butchers working at Feilding, and the Human Rights Commission's 1979 ruling in favour of a complaint laid by three women meat workers against the Ocean Beach Freezing Company Ltd.

Auckland and Tomoana Freezing Workers Union

Total union membership: approximately 8000.

Moerewa (Auckland Farmers Freezing Co-operative Ltd — Affco)

This is a mutton and beef works, with a peak manning of 1100 meat workers (estimate). Women are 5.76 percent of the total peak workforce (including non-meat union members) — a total of 72 women. The first

woman started in 1962 (the works opened in 1922). They are employed in the offal department, the boning floor, and in non-production areas.

Northland R. & W. Hellaby Ltd)
This is a beef works with a peak manning of 160 meat workers. Women make up 20.42 percent of the total workforce (including non-meat union workers) and have been present ever since the works opened in 1972. They work in the trimming room, offal, and non-production areas.

Westfield (W. & R. Fletcher Ltd — A Vestey subsidiary)
A mutton and beef works, with a peak manning of 1900 meat workers (estimate).

There are 100-150 women, working in the boning room, offal, casings, and lamb cuts. There are no women on the slaughterboard, although women from the boning floor work there occasionally (particularly on the cooling floor) when it is shortstaffed.

Taumaranui (Hellaby)
This is a mutton and beef works, with a peak manning of 167 meat workers.

Women have been working there since the plant opened in 1979, and make up 10.1 percent of the workforce, including non-meat union workers. They work on the mutton slaughterboard, in the offal department, casings, and non-production areas. There are three women mutton butchers.

Tomoana (Nelsons [NZ] Ltd — a Vestey subsidiary)
This is a mutton and beef works, with a peak manning of 1350 meat workers. There are over 200 women meat workers (estimate) — over 14 percent of the workforce. Nearly half of these work on the mutton slaughterboard. Women also work in the beef boning room, in lamb cuts, calibrating, and in non-production areas.

Ten women work as mutton butchers, and a number of women slaughterboard labourers have also trained as butchers and are used as such when the chains are short-staffed.

No information was received on *Hellaby-Shortland, Horotiu* (Affco), *Aotearoa* (Dalgety Crown Ltd), or *Rangiuru* (Affco).

New Zealand Meat Workers Union
Total union membership: 24,671
East Coast branch

Branch membership: 3746

Kaiti 50% Vestey; 50% Advanced Meat)
This is a mutton and beef works, with a peak manning of 750 meat workers. There are no women working in production areas at Kaiti.

Whakatu (Hawkes Bay Farmers Meat Co.)
Mutton and beef, with a peak manning of 1655 meat workers. Of these, 181 are women — 10.9 percent of the workforce. Women work as labourers on the mutton slaugherboard, in the beef and mutton boning rooms, in devco (lamb cuts), and in casings. It is only in the last few years that women have gained access to the slaugherboard, and now 58 women work there. The first two women butchers began training in the 1983-84 season.

Pacific (Pacific Freezing [NZ] Ltd)
A beef works with a peak manning of 280 meat workers. About 50 of these are female (17.9 percent), and there have been women there since the works opened in 1974. Women work only in the boning room, and are limited to jobs as packers and table trimmers.

Takapau (Hawkes Bay Farmers Meat Company)
A mutton works opened in 1981. Last season it had a peak manning of 313 meat workers — a third chain was added for the 1983-84 season. Women are employed on the slaughterboard (as butchers and labourers), in the boning room and in fancy meats, and make up 30 percent of the workforce. There are no women working in the freezers or the stockyards, but there are facilities that women could use in the stockyards.

No information was received from *Wairoa* (Waitaki-New Zealand Refrigerating Company Ltd).

Wanganui branch

Branch membership: 742

Imlay (Waitaki-NZR)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning of 718 meat workers. Women first began working in production areas in 1981, although they had worked in the bag room much earlier than this. They are about five percent of the workforce (including clerical and laboratory workers), and work on the mutton slaughterboard, the boning room, beefhouse, and bag room.

West Coast branch

Branch membership: 5598

Waitara (Borthwick C.W.S. Ltd)
A mutton and beef works, with a peak manning of 820 meat workers. Women started work in the bag room in the 1930s, and in the calibrating department in 1961 (this department closed in the early 1970s). Women work on the boning floor, in fancy meats and frozen sundries, and in the bag room. They make up about four percent of the workforce.

Eltham (Huttons N.Z. Ltd — 70% owned by Brierley Investments Ltd)
A beef works with a peak manning of 150 workers. There are no women employed in production areas.

Oringi (Pacific Freezing)
A mutton works, with a peak manning of 426 meat workers. Women have worked there since it opened in November 1981. They work in all departments, except the freezers, and are about 21 percent of the workforce. There are 10 women butchers.

In the 1983-84 season, very few women were hired at Oringi. Instead, preference was given by the company to married men with financial commitments. The shed union is hoping to fight this trend by winning more control over hiring.

Feilding (Borthwick)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning (before the lay-offs at the end of the 1982-83 season) of 780 meat workers. Women are about six percent of the workforce, working as beef and mutton labourers, mutton butchers, and in beef cuts and variety meats.

Women first started work on the slaughterboard in 1975, and Feilding was the first works in the country to have women butchers.

Longburn (Borthwick)
A mutton works with a peak workforce of 780 meat workers. Women first started at the works in the early 1970s, and are about 11 percent of the workforce. They work in a number of departments, including the mutton slaughterboard. Six women have trained as butchers altogether, with three starting in the 1983-84 season.

No information was received from *Hawera* (majority interested owned by Dawn Meat NZ Ltd — a part-owner of Pacific Freezing) or *Waingawa* (Borthwick).

Canterbury, Marlborough, Nelson & Westland branch
Branch membership: 6248

Riverlands, Blenheim (Waitaki-NZR)
This is a new works, replacing Waitaki's Picton works (which employed no women). It was not yet operational at the time of the survey. Facilities exist for 50 women on the slaughterboard.

Stoke (Waitaki-NZR)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning level of 250 meat workers. There are 46 women employed in casings (18.4 percent of the workforce).

Kaiapoi (NCF Kaiapoi Ltd)
A mutton works with a peak manning of 420 meat workers. No women are employed.

Belfast (Canterbury Frozen Meat Co.)
Kills beef and pigs. Peak manning is 225 meat workers. No women are employed.

Canterbury (CFM)
A mutton works with a peak manning of 1000 meat workers. No women are employed.

Islington (Waitaki-NZR)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning of 740 workers. Nineteen women (2.6 percent) work in lamb cuts, the bag room, and preserving.

Fairton (CFM)
A mutton works with a peak manning of 470 meat workers. No women are employed.

Pareora (CFM)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning of 740. Ten women (1.3 percent) work in beef boning. They were first hired in the 1976-77 season, when this section opened.

Smithfield (Waitaki-NZR)
A mutton works with a peak manning of 570 meat workers. Since 1979-80, 25 women have been employed in the calibrating department (4.4 percent of the total workforce). Twenty of these women came from Tekau Knitwear, which Waitaki closed down three years ago — at the same time as the calibrating department opened.

Otago and Southland branch
Branch membership: 8291

Puakeuri (Waitaki-NZR)
A mutton and beef works, with a peak manning of 850 workers. Women are about six percent of the workforce, and are in the offal and casings departments, the mutton slaughterboard (as labourers), the tannery and potato factory. They were first employed in casings in November 1962, and on the slaughterboard in December 1975.

Burnside (Waitaki-NZR)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning of 770 workers. Women started working in the 1980-81 season, and are in the offal and casings departments, and on the mutton slaughterboard (as labourers). They are four percent of the workforce.

Finegand (Waitaki-NZR)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning of 900 meat workers. Women first started work here in 1974, and are now eight percent of the workforce. They work in most departments, including (since December 1977) the mutton slaughterboard. There are three women butchers.

Mataura (Southland Frozen Meat Ltd)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning of 940 meat workers. Women are about 4.4 percent of the workforce and are employed in the boning room.

Makarewa (SFM)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning of 1300 meat workers. Women were first employed in 1974. Today, 10 women work in casings (0.8 percent of the workforce).

Alliance (Alliance Freezing Co. [Southland] Ltd)
A mutton and beef works with a peak manning of 1350 meat workers. Women first started working there in the early 1960s (the plant first opened in 1960) and today there are 71 women working in production areas (5.2 percent of the workforce). They work in beef boning, lamb cuts, mutton boning, mutton offal, and processed foods.

Ocean Beach (Alliance Freezing Co.)
A mutton works with a peak manning of 950 meat workers. Women were first employed in 1973, and are nearly eight percent of the workforce.

They work in a number of departments, including the mutton slaughterboard.

Joan Shields worked as a mutton slaughterboard labourer at Tomoana Freezing Works in Hastings from 1978 to 1982.

Notes.

1. Overall workforce figures at the union/union branch/works level came from a survey of 38 expert freezing works by Wilson (1983). In some cases meat companies supplied overall figures for their particular works.

2. In 1979 three women working at Ocean Beach complained to the Human Rights Commission that their employers had refused to allow them to start work on the learner chain, where they could train as butchers, although they all had the necessary seniority. The Commission upheld the women's comlaint and when the company still refused to train them as butchers took the case to the Equal Opportunities Tribunal. In 1980 the Tribunal not only supported the women's right tolearn to be butchers, but also awarded them damages based on what they would have earned if they had begun in their more highly paid jobs when they first applied.

3. Eight of the works surveyed employ women as mutton butchers. Attempts by women to become either mutton butchers or beef boners had been made at another eight (and there may be other examples not recorded in the survey).

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Limitation, Selection and Assumption in Antony Alpers' *Life of Katherine Mansfield.*

Anne Else.

Introduction

Antony Alpers has written two biographies of Katherine Mansfield: *Katherine Mansfield, A Biography,* was published in 1954, and *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* in 1980.

For its time, the earlier *Biography* was remarkably free from stereotying and bias. Just the contrary is true of the *Life.* Surprisingly, Alpers seems to have moved, during the thirty years between these books, in the opposite direction to that in which the climate of attitudes to women and men has swung, however slightly.

Alpers is the only New Zealand writer, male or female, who has thought Katherine Mansfield's life of sufficient interest to devote a large portion of his own working life to recording it. His research has been both meticulous and exhaustive. It is now highly unlikely that any major new facts will emerge. Moreover, what Professor Ian Gordon said of Middleton Murry's work on Mansfield's writing, that Murry had 'invented

nothing,'[1] is also true of Alpers, as far as the facts are concerned.

However, biography involves more than getting the correct facts in the correct order. Above all, unless it is deliberately hostile, it involves empathy.

Empathy is not sympathy, nor is it white-washing. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines it as, 'the power of projecting one's personality into (and fully comprehending) the object of contemplation'.

Alpers himself recently recognised the importance of empathy when he wrote, in a scathing review of a biography of A.R.D. Fairburn (1983):

> Nowhere is the question raised: why was it thus with Fairburn? To just what suffering was all that lifelong jesting a desperate response? From this unthinking book, no answer comes.

Yet in dealing with various crucial aspects of Mansfield's life, he fails to follow his own prescription. We are told, exhaustively, how Mansfield behaved, with particular emphasis on her 'egotism', her 'falsities, her sexual encounters both lesbian and heterosexual, her restlessness, and her later 'rages' or 'hurricanes'. But why all this should be so is frequently not explored. When it is, the suggested reasons are strikingly inadequate. Some are simply trivial or patronising; others are blatantly stereotyped. The impression given, time and again, is that she did not know what she was doing, and was not behaving rationally.

In other words, Alpers fails to display the kind of thoughtful empathy with his subject which he himself appears to have stressed as one of the touchstones of good biography. In its place he relies disturbingly often on shallow theories about Mansfield's 'masculine/feminine' character, illness, or female biology. When he mentions *feminism*, however, his claims reveal that while he does not understand what it means, he is prepared to go to great lengths to prove it has no serious connection with Mansfield's life or work.

Most biography necessarily involves selection. Not only by what he selects from the admittedly enormous mass of material surrounding Katherine Mansfield's life, but also by whom he selects it from, and by the comments he sees fit to interpose, Alpers appears to be one of that group of biographers whose accounts, in Dale Spender's words, 'reveal more about the focus of the authors than the lives of the women they profess to portray.' (Spender, 1982: 395).

In many instances, the text quotes surprisingly little from Mansfield herself, particularly in relation to John Middleton Murry. Instead, consistently sympathetic and uncritical emphasis is given to Murry's actions, emotions and views; and in some cases Alpers explicitly reverses his own earlier opinions in favour of Murry's. The same bias appears in

his treatment of Harold Beauchamp, George Bowden, and to a lesser extent A.R. Orage.

By contrast, the part played in Mansfield's life by her grandmother, by Ida Baker, in fact by women in general, is shown as being of only minor importance. Baker's perceptions, in particular, are ignored or dismissed, and she is typecast from the beginning as a large, odd spinster.

In his 1980 *Life of Katherine Mansfield,* Alpers shows that he can be sensitive of the problems facing a biographer whose subject is of another time, mainly another place, and above all another sex; for example, after speculating about the reasons for Mansfield's first hasty marriage, he says (p.91):

> But these are all guesses, and only a man's guesses, and what follows by no means clears them up.

However, it is far more frequent to find not only a surprising absence of empathy with his central figure, but also an apparent lack of recognition that it is absent.

For Harold Beauchamp, though it is not unmixed with irony, there is empathy enough. For example, writing of the time just before Kathleen Beauchamp's birth (p.2):

> The house was full of women. It was time for a son . . . it was high time for a son.

And Alpers goes beyond empathy into sympathy for a Harold perceived as long-suffering of all those women (p.9), when he comments:

> Mrs Dyer was a woman of self-effacing tact and practical good sense . . . she made the household run smoothly for thirteen years or so . . . That such a menage survived so long while a succession of daughters arrived says something for Harold Beauchamp, if it says even more for the grandmother . . . On 21 February 1894 came the longed-for blessing of a son.

This may well be an accurate representation of Beauchamp's own view, but no evidence is cited for it. It is not present in the *Biography,* which simply states (p.41), 'In 1894 another child was born — a boy at last'.

Not surprisingly, after the son's birth, Kathleen 'felt herself less loved,

save by her granny', says Alpers, adding: 'and grew to be fat and moody and resentful'.

The emphasis on physical appearance is continued in quotes from two of her early teachers — 'plain', 'shabby and inky', 'dumpy and unattractive' — but eventually she goes off to school in England 'transformed . . . a comely, well-poised young woman, her face finer, her eyes softened, the glasses gone.'

There is no discussion of the effect on her life and work of Mr Beauchamp's alleged desire for a son, or of Kathleen's own early plainness and her mother's negative response to it (on returning from a trip to Europe, she greeted her daughter with 'Well, Kathleen, I see you're as fat as ever'). However, of Kathleen's adolescence, especially the period after her return from England, Alpers comments (p.46):

> All the evidence from the time suggests an unremitting self-absorption, of a most unpleasing sort. Some of her best-known stories were, it would seem, a form of atonement for the sins of her youth.

And on page 48 we see what some of these sins were, apart from the much-discussed lesbianism:

> . . . she was a darling, the dear old thing. She was deliberately rude to the ship's captains whom her father was always inviting to dinner, and to the up-country parsons . . . there is still not a glint of humour in her writing.

Alpers seems either never to have passed through adolescence himself, or to have forgotten all about it. More seriously, interesting disclosures are trivialised rather than explored, for example (p.40) this quote from the Journal:

> When I am with him (a shipboard romance) a preposterous desire seizes me, I want to be badly hurt by him, I should like to be strangled by his firms hands —

to which is added the comment: 'All perfectly normal and healthy, especially the strangling part'.

Certainly Alpers shows few signs of recognising how isolated Kathleen Beauchamp must have felt, and how stifled, by what she described as the

'Suitable Appropriate Existence' of a well-to-do middle-class colonial girl. He has also discarded the suggestion in the *Biography* (p.76), apparently based on actual letters, that her unpleasant behaviour was quite deliberate:

> She had decided, so her friends in England learned, that if she made herself sufficiently objectionable her parents would have to let her go . . . She saw her chances, and took them all.

There is another plausible suggestion too, expunged from the *Life:* after the mysterious 'incident' which so horrified her mother, accidentally reading her description of it, and after her last interview with her father:

> Kathleen finally left New Zealand . . . believing him (her father) capable of anything — even of having let her go at the last for fear that she was about to ruin the family's respectability.

By contrast, again taking Beauchamp's part strongly, the *Life* says this:

> As things were, in the little world which her father ruled, . . . freedom could only come as a gift from him, and that it did so in the end is something which needs to be placed quite squarely to his credit. Kathleen could hardly have recognised, nor could he have explained, how much she already owed to her father. He it was who had given her Karori and Day's Bay in her childhood . . . and all those benefits of the extended family which sustained her later work.

Both the grandmother's role in supplying those benefits, and the other possible motive behind that gift of freedom, have disappeared completely, as has the idea that her rudeness was planned.

The *Life* also contrasts Mansfield unfavourably with more agreeable young women, for example Edie Bendall, whom she had an affair with: 'a pretty girl with a sweet and simple nature and none of Kathleen's egotism' (p.47); or Margaret Wishart, who became her friend on her return to England (p.66):

> A violin student, of warmer and softer temperament than Kathleen, and a more straightforward person, Margaret was less driven by ambition and much more likely to make a contented marriage.

In such passages, Mansfield is denigrated for displaying the very qualities which, while certainly unfeminine, were essential to her survival as a writer and a woman alone in London.

After explaining the lack of outlets for her work (in the masculine prewar literary world), Alpers states (p.82):

> With all her egotism, and all her falsities, there is something courageous and admirable about this lonely and persistent quest of Kathleen's.

His praise is grudging, belated, and less than perceptive. In *The Obstacle Race,* Germaine Greer (1979: 327) suggests that:

> You cannot make great artists out of egos that have been damaged, with libidos that have been driven out of reach and energy diverted into neurotic channels.

Alpers has completely missed the excellent opportunity Mansfield's early life provides for an examination of why, how and to what extent she was able to avoid such damage and diversion, and thus ensure that her talents and ambition did produce great art. Instead, he implies that her refusal to conform to the feminine role was a defect.

The lack of empathy in the *Life* is seen again in the phrases used to describe Mansfield's subsequent life in London, 1908-11. Her second attempt to stay with her husband is followed by the phrase, 'The little monkey'. A period which included numerous love affairs and sexual encounters, the disastrous brief marriage, at least one miscarried pregnancy, considerable financial anxiety, the onset of tuberculosis (thought at the time to be pleurisy), and a serious operation (followed by the surgeon molesting her) is summed up by Alpers (p.144) as 'three years packed with mischief'. The tone is both obtrusive and trivialising.

Straight after the description of the operation, Alpers discusses the writing of three more 'Pension Sketches'. He goes on (p.116):

> Two of them, 'At Lehmann's' and 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' (which he has previously described as 'mischievous') have an undertone of revulsion from childbirth and male sexuality. Since Katherine herself was unaware of the actual nature of her recent illness (gonorrhea), their tone was probably the consequence of 'female' sessions with Beatrice Hastings, who had lately been raging in print on the horrors of childbirth. Along with two sarcastic letters to the editor, they can be taken to reflect the baneful influence of 'Biggy B.'

'Raging' apart, Alpers is ignoring, first, the relevance to these stories of Mansfield's acute perception of her mother's revulsion from child-bearing, and therefore from male sexuality too; and second, the historical context. That was after all the era when Marie Stopes could write (1918: 24):

> Women driven to despair, to madness, by the incessant horror of pregnancies they dread, will by hook or by crook, from the street corner or the gutter, find out how to strangle the life which should never have begun.[2]

Mansfield's own personal response to male sexuality was, to say the least, likely to have been ambiguous, given both her attraction to women, and her experience of men. By the time the offending stories were written, she had suffered her parents' appalled reaction to her own sexuality, and her own agonies of guilt, become pregnant, begged in vain for some response from the baby's father, miscarried, and coped alone in Bavaria. Thus it seems extraordinary for Alpers to state that the 'revulsion' was purely due to another woman's 'baneful' influence — and therefore irrelevant to her real feelings and views. Yet logically he must do so, if he is to support his repeated contention that she was no feminist.

Throughout that time, Ida Baker played an important role. When Baker was 83, she gave her own version of events, in *Katherine Mansfield: The Memories of L.M.* (1971). But very early on in the *Life* — on page 28 — Alpers disposes of her book as a reliable source of information:

> Its most noticeable characteristic is its loving and gentle tone, its angel of mercy sweetness. Most readers . . . would not notice . . . the needle hidden in the cotton wool ('I hate to say it, but men are such beasts' could be the title . . .) still less the lethal fluid in the needle. An expert user of symbol and the literary antimony known as innuendo, L.M. as author contrives minute assassinations of all the men in Katherine's life save three, all her relatives save one, and many of her women friends.

As for Baker during Mansfield's lifetime, their friendship is described as 'nitric', and from the outset she is presented as an oddity:

> Her personality was a sort of tabula rasa, which awaited imprinting . . . she would be a 'giver' all her days — but get her own back, too . . . The other girls felt 'sorry for her', not knowing upon what firm self-confidence

> their sympathy was spent. She had a mighty appetite for puddings, and in one so sturdily built her soft, exquisite voice was always a slight surprise . . . 'For hardily, she was nat undergrowe.' She had a gift, indeed, for self-effacement in certain circumstances, but she took size nine in brogues . . . Ida in fact had lifelong need of a certain kind of friendship — one that would let her share vicariously the ambitions and achievements of another . . . a form of imprinting had occurred.

The emphasis on Baker's size, especially her feet, together with the use of 'imprinting', usually found in connection with animal behaviour, combine to give just the impression of a 'type' (and a rather ridiculous, unattractive one at that) which Alpers took such care to dispel in the *Biography*.

Anyone persistent enough to read Baker's book, despite Alpers' derogatory footnote, is in for a surprise. It gives the impression of a complex, unusual woman who was certainly critical (openly, not by innuendo) of those who, as she saw it, had consistently failed Mansfield; but who was far more severe on what she felt to be her own failings, for example (p.127):

> I never gave her the buoyant, unfettered love that she needed, and was often a responsibility which, for a sick woman, must have been exasperating . . . if only I had been a little braver, a little wiser, more of an identity of my own.

Her book also reveals new and interesting aspects of Mansfield's character, for example her exacting tastes, her habit of giving advice about anything and everything, her fastidiousness.

The biassed treatment of Baker, her recollections and her views stands in sharp contrast to the respect and authority accorded Murry and his opinions. Such a partisan approach ill serves biography.

In the winter of 1919-20, Mansfield was living in Italy, at Ospedaletti. She was extremely ill and low in spirits, faced with 'wintry weather, fantastic prices . . . cheating Italians . . . loneliness and silence'. She attacked Ida Baker to her face and in letters to Murry, calling her a 'murderer', an 'albatross' and a 'deadly enemy'. Alpers goes on (p.312):

> Then Murry, as well, became a victim of this phthisical rage,[3] and at a time already difficult for him . . . It was Murry's bad luck, just as his critical gift was gaining stature . . . to have Katherine turn on him in a rage as cruel as any rage of Lawrence's. She had forgotten

how overworked he was, she had even forgotten her own sympathetic warnings on that score when, just as his article appeared in London, she sent him those bitter verses called 'The New Husband' . . .

Two other poems, not published in the Letters to J.M.M. but included in the Journal, were also enclosed. Taken together, the three indict Murry for different aspects of his reactions to Mansfield's illness. 'The New Husband' carries the most obvious accusations, and 'Et Apres' imagines how her death will 'inspire' him to 'Poems of Sacrifice'. The third describes, with deadly accuracy, Murry's response to her letters; written as if by him, it tells her:

Don't be sad, and don't be lonely.
Drive away those awful fears.
When they come, remember only
What I've suffered these two years.

Nothing in Alpers *Life* suggests that Mansfield's actions were justifiable or even rational. Instead, at this point he produces another reason for her behaviour. Again, it is biological, suggesting that Mansfield could not help herself and did not know what she was doing:

As it happens, there is a strong suggestion in the diary that this action — if not those that followed it — may have been connected with the hormonal disturbance of her menstrual period. Perhaps that was also the case when in 1918, at Looe, she had . . . casually sent him something that was bound, indeed could only have been meant, to hurt him as deeply as she knew.

PMT is therefore cited to account for an instance of 'unkindness' which, Alpers believes, even her illness cannot otherwise excuse, the hard-working, hard-done-by Murry having done nothing to deserve such an outburst. Yet previously Alpers has not seen fit to take seriously into account the important implications of Mansfield's being a woman writer trying to live and work in what was so obviously a patriarchal world. The political aspects of her sex are ignored virtually throughout the book. The biological aspects are conveniently made use of not so much to explain, as to explain away, her anger and distress, when her illness alone does not seem sufficient cause.

Alpers would really prefer not to examine the whole distasteful subject any further:

> The rest of this unkindly episode can be followed in the Letters, if it must . . . Murry was notoriously bad at defending himself when he had a good case to make — *cet animal n'etait pas mechant.* He muffed this occasion badly, using so many 'I's' in his letter that Katherine went through it underlining them all, with some of his other self-absorption words. Ignoring telegraphed commands, he set off to join her for Christmas, and she, on the day before he reached her, wrote the long piece in the Journal which asserts that the experience had caused her despair to disappear: 'I am (December 15, 1919) a dead woman, and *I don't care.'*

This long Journal entry, clearly written after her depression had abated, analyses her reaction to Murry's earlier letters:

> As I grew depressed, he grew depressed, but not for me. He began to write (1) about the suffering I caused him . . . (2) a constant cry about money. These letters, especially the letters about money, cut like a knife through something that had grown up between us.

The entry is a crucial one for a biographer, yet it gets scant attention. A feature of the *Life* is that it quotes much less from Mansfield herself than does the *Biography,* although the Stead selection from her Letters and Journals (the only one easily available) was explicitly chosen for its literary rather than its biographical interest.

Murry stayed in Italy for a fortnight; accounts of his visit are conflicting. Alpers says they 'made it up'; Ida Baker says 'he brought no happiness'; Mansfield's published Journal gives only fragments of evidence.

Once Murry had left, Mansfield was 'ill all day — exhausted. In the afternoon fell asleep over my work . . .' She was plunged into a black despair, and on 11 January wrote 'The Man Without a Temperament'.

In a footnote on this important story (p. 305) Alpers repudiates his own earlier opinion, apparently because he has come round to Murry's own:

> Not a few have supposed — the present author being among them once — that this acute portrayal of a man whose wife is hopelessly ill on the Riviera was a picture of Murry himself (whether consciously so or not), and a hostile one. That is not at all what he thought. After reading the author's previous biography in 1953 he said that its comment struck him as 'quite a fantastic misreading of the story', and he added: 'If ever a character was drawn with loving admiration, Salesby was. I

should be very well content to go down to posterity as his original.'

Cherry Hankin's impressive examination of this story (1983a:188) as of so many others, throws a completely different light on Salesby, revealing the layers of meaning beneath the deceptively innocuous surface, especially in the ending:[4]

> An even grimmer repetition of the death motif brings the story to a climax. Salesby gets out of bed to catch and kill the mosquito which is inside his wife's net; as if the act were symbolic of killing her, too, he now bends and kisses her, whispering the final monstrous word: 'Rot!'

As Murry's inadequate response to other stories confirms, he was prone to rest content with surface readings only.

Throughout this and later accounts of Mansfield's distressed behaviour towards Murry, Alpers uses terms such as 'storm', 'hurricane', and 'earthquake', which suggest that she was out of control, and that the root cause was physical. However, C.K. Stead writes (1977:138):

> The full texts of K.M.'s letters and journals of this period have persuaded some critics to see her as neurotic and self-indulgent. Both her husband and Ida Baker, on the other hand, have excused the violence of her outbursts on the grounds that they were simply a manifestation of her disease.
>
> No doubt her disease contributed; but to 'excuse' her seems unnecessary. To appreciate the extent of her suffering at this time it is necessary first to compare the free active life she had led up to the age of thirty — full of intellectual companionship, gaiety, hard work, emotional entanglements, physical pursuits — with the restricted life of the invalid who could now take only short slow walks with the aid of a stick, who was in a foreign country without any friends but one, on whom she was forced to depend absolutely but with whom she could not share more than a small part of her thoughts and feelings. She lacked books, literary talk, companionship; she felt insecure, uncertain whether her husband still really loved her, and above all, terrified of death.
>
> This serious deprivation of intellectual and emotional life led naturally enough to dreams, fantasies, depressions, to the enlargement of fears which were in any case valid, preventing her from concentrating on her writing. It was all this and not her

disease alone which produced her moments of hysteria; and it seems juster to admire the prodigious efforts she made to be positive than to deplore the times when she failed.

Nothing in Alpers' account of Mansfield's later years approaches the level of empathy and full consideration of the facts shown here by Stead. In place of empathy with Mansfield there is superficial stereotyping, together with sympathy for Murry.

Stereotyping is evident too in Alpers' comments about Mansfield's attitude to money. He writes (p.295):

> . . . a powerful drive to earn money is evident in the letters and the notebooks, reflecting her discovery that tuberculosis was a very expensive disease.
>
> Murry's 800 a year, plus her allowance (now 300) and her 100 a year from reviewing, had now put hardship behind them.

This was certainly not true for Mansfield. But it does explain why she went on reviewing work much inferior to her own, despite the toll it took (as letters make plain), instead of hoarding her strength for her own writng — she needed the money. They kept their money affairs entirely separate; Alpers asserts, however, that:

> . . . part of her hated that. When she heard by accident one day that Murry was still working for the War Office and was paid 250 a year for it, but hadn't told her, she was much annoyed, as the Journal shows.

There are two points to note here. First, in the circumstances, annoyance would have been a mild reaction. Keeping separate accounts is one thing; concealment of major income, when from his main work, Murry was already earning twice as much as she was, is quite another. Secondly, the Journal entry does not in fact record annoyance over Murry's not sharing the money at all, but distress at his inability to share his life with her: not telling her what was going in the *Athenaeum*, or bringing new books into the house without showing her, though 'he knows I can never get to a bookshop'.

Alpers goes on about the money:

> She was really very divided about it. Although one half of her longed to be an old-fashioned wife relying on a nice solid husband, the other half insisted on its independence . . .

It is far more likely that half of her longed not to have to cope with earning enough to live on, as well as fighting tuberculosis, struggling to write, and managing the household (as the Journal shows his *Why is lunch late?* as though I had but to wave my hand and the banquet descended. But doesn't that prove how happy he would have been with a real WIFE!)

Then there was the disastrous visit from Harold Beauchamp, during which, says a letter, Murry 'never once spoke to him, paid him not a moment's attention. It could not have been more fatal'. Beauchamp never again increased Mansfield's allowance, though her needs increased enormously, and clearly Murry was mainly to blame.

Alpers' account of the letters about money exchanged that winter again describes Mansfield's behaviour as 'angry', the 'hurricane', and 'rage', and again cites her illness and premenstrual tension, while presenting Murry's as sane, reasonable and placatory.

It is difficult to make an alternative case without quoting all the letters[5] in full, but they can be interpreted very differently.

She had first written (January 22, 23 and 26) giving details of her many expenses; and saying she would sell a book of stories outright for £20, as she wanted the money so badly. Murry replied to her 'gorgeous letters' with an account of tramping the Downs looking for a house, and asking 'how's money — let me know, please.' In her painfully explicit reply, her distress and hurt at his obtuseness are plain:

> 'I ask you to contribute £10 a month towards my expenses here. If you cannot do so, please wire me at once, for I must make immediate other arrangements. I cannot wait a day longer.
>
> It is so bitter to have to ask you this — terribly bitter. Nevertheless, I am determined to get well . . .

Alpers describes this letter as an 'angry ultimatum', and goes on (p.311):

> . . . The hurricane died down. He had sold a book of her stories to Constable for an advance of £40, he had bought her an overcoat to advance the stolen one . . .

But it was not quite so simple. He sent £20, but also a reply which upset her because he had taken her letter to be 'primarily concerned with money', and that was horrible hence her 'Damn the £20.' And he still did not understand.

> I know you are saving up for the house but you . . . don't put the house FIRST, do you, Bogey? Yet you find it necessary to

again write *money is tight.* I don't want — God forbid! — to know your private affairs, but if you can tell me a little it would be a great relief.

On 9 February he replied:

> The £20 is £10 for January and £10 for Feb. Not a loan, a gift. I should like, on the other hand, if you found it possible, for you to repay the £10 I have paid into yr. bank and the 9 guineas I paid for the overcoat — when you get your £40 . . . You want me to be frank about money. I will be.

Then comes an extraordinary itemised account of his January income (salary plus rent from his lodger) and his expenditure: besides unavoidable bills and housekeeping, it included insurance shares and life insurance, sheets, towels, mirror and pillow cases, boots and mackintosh bought at a sale, and 'all my weekend expenses. I might have kept them down, had it not been that the house seemed urgent.'

All this expense came to over £50.

> Please don't think I made-up being hard up in January — I was very. And the evil was done before I got your S.O.S. . . . please criticise my expenditure. It's your — our — money I spend.

Mansfield replied, sounding weary but loving, on 12 February:

> I'll repay you for the overcoat when Constable pays me. Thank you enormously for the figgers. They frighten me. You never mentioned your new suit (he had bought it in February). I don't know what colour it is or what shape or anything — or whether there is any fringe on the trousers. I always rejoice when you buy clothes . . .
>
> . . . You are a perfect darling to have bothered to say all this about the money. No. there's not much to play with indeed. We're both rather short of pocket money. If God would only give us a sheer 1d. a week dropped from Heaven every Saturday morning — just for us to go off and spend.

He was obviously trying hard to get it right — and thanks to her advance, she would manage.

Set side by side and read in sequence, the letters powerfully counteract Alpers' insistent claim that Mansfield's distress is irrational, excessive, and biologically based. A recent review of Murry's own letters neatly

outlines a radically different theory:

> Where the letters are useful is in demonstrating the pathetic inadequacy of his response to Katherine's emotional needs. His over-riding idea is that Katherine is unhappy only because she doesn't believe that he loves her. Whenever she complains, therefore, he again reiterates his undying devotion and at the same time reproaches her for hurting him with her doubts and accusations. While he seems to be the ultimate caring husband, he is effectively protecting himself from the need to understand. (Truss, 1983).

Conclusion

The *New Zealand Encyclopaedia*[6] sums up Mansfield in these words:

> . . . neurotic and bisexual, Katherine contracted tuberculosis . . . Mansfield was a physically attractive woman who could exert great charm, but she could also sometimes be a cruel companion. (MacLauchlan, 1984: 347).

For all Alpers' research and scholarship, his *Life* leaves the reader with a similarly slanted impression of the woman who was Katherine Mansfield.

Both in its approach to her life and in relating that life to her work, Alpers' second biography appears, to a much greater degree than his first, to exemplify the attitude which Spender has summed up as follows (p.396):

> The differences in power among men are serious and of a political nature, but the differences in power between women and men, as conceptualised by women are silly, and of a neurotic nature.

Alpers' work, particularly in its reliance on Murry's perceptions, also bears strong witness to the truth of two of Spender's key contentions (pp.394; 505)

> . . . for women, there is no relationship between their actions and male-controlled representations of them — unless it be

an inverse one, in which those who comprise the greatest threat receive the harshest treatment

. . .for women, *progress* is an absurd concept. In so many respects our situation remains the same, vis-a-vis men — what 'progresses' is their increasedly sophisticated rationale of our inferiority.[7]

Anne Else, MA (Hons), helped to found ***Broadsheet*** *and has been a frequent contributor. Editor of* ***National Education,*** *she is an active member of Wellington's Women's Studies Association, and is working on a book about New Zealand women and men in the 1950s.*

Notes

All page references to Alpers' *Life of Katherine Mansfield* (1980) are to the paperback edition (1982). All my quotations from Mansfield's letters to Murry come from the 1951 edition edited by him. Those from her Journal are from the 'definitive' 1954 edition he compiled from the mass of notebooks and fragments she left (now in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington). For a clear account of this material and Murry's handling of it, see the introduction in Stead (1977).

1. Quoted in Stead (p.13).

2. The biblio page in my 1925 reprint of this book, a sequel to Stopes' better known *Married Love,* reveals that by then 395,000 copies were in print and it had been translated into seven languages.

3. Alpers accepts without question that TB patients were prone to sudden rages. Modern medical opinion does not concur. Dr Basil James, Director of Mental Health (New Zealand Health Department) told me that anyone who is debilitated is likely to have lowered resistance and therefore become more responsive to their environment: the organism is a whole and anything which impairs its general capacity will affect it in many ways, but certainly in cases of 'rage' external events cannot be ignored. Dr M. Nicolson, who treated many TB cases before 1953, says that in his experience, although TB causes extremely varied problems, it does not make people go into 'rages'. Dr J.B. MacKay, also familiar with the disease, says that rage *per se* is not a feature, and adds that people often attribute features to a disease process in order to explain behaviour.

4. For an excellent discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Hankin's approach to Mansfield's work, see Hardy (1984).

5. Apparently Alpers had not seen Murry's letters: 'A special arrangement existing in 1973 denied me access to his own letters to KM' (Alpers, 1980: 427).

6. For a feminist critique of this astonishing book see Bunkle (1984).

7. See also, in particular, the Chapters 'Mocking Our Minds'; 'Harassment'; 'Nowhere to Go' and the last section 'Reinventing Rebellion.'

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Book Review

Taking it Like a Woman by Ann Oakley. Jonathan Cape, $21.50.

Ann Oakley is well known in women's studies circles for her work on the sociology of housework and motherhood. Her first publication, *Sex, Gender and Society,* (1972), was a popular book on the sociology of sex roles. This was followed by two books drawing on her doctoral thesis on housework, *The Sociology of Housework* (1974) and *Housewife* (1974). The latter book, *Housewife,* has long been available as a Penguin paperback, and has been very widely read. With its historical and sociological analysis of the development of the modern housewife role, and its revolutionary demands that this role be abolished, along with the family and sex roles generally, *Housewife* has had a powerful influence on many who have read it.

Oakley's next research project, on the transition to motherhood, resulted in two further books, *From Here to Maternity* (first published in 1979 and originally titled *Becoming a Mother*) and *Women Confined: Towards a Sociology of Childbirth* (1980). Both contain extensive interview material, and give a vivid picture of what it's like for the first-time mother, as she experiences a 'medicalized' pregnancy and childbirth, and then begins the lonely, exhausting struggle that comprises motherhood for many women. *Women Confined,* in particular, gives a scathing picture of the medical profession's indifference towards women's feelings, of its rigidly hierarchical, impersonal and inflexible structure. I can't resist quoting my favourite piece of 'expert doctor-ese' from this source: 'Doctor (reading case notes): "Ah, I see you've got a

boy and a girl." Patient: "No, two girls." Doctor: "Really, are you sure? I thought it said . . . (checks in case notes) oh no, you're right, two girls." (p.41)'

Oakley has also edited, with Juliet Mitchell, *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (1976), and has produced an excellent book on women's studies, *Subject Women*. In any discussion of Oakley's works her important contribution to feminist research methodology, 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms' should also be mentioned (in Roberts, 1981). It should be required reading for anyone proposing to carry out interview research with women.

And now Ann Oakley has produced an autobiography, *Taking it Like a Woman*. One might think that a woman of 40, with a conventional middle-class upbringing, who married and had children young, and who has spent her time since then childrearing, doing housework, carrying out research and writing books, is hardly likely to write a very interesting autobiography. I couldn't help thinking as I picked it up, surely her life can't have been much more interesting than my own or my friends' lives. But as I became engrossed, I realised that I was quite wrong to think that autobiographies should be the final reflections of someone who has led an exceptional life. Ann Oakley has written an imaginative, thoughtful book that speaks to all of us who have headed like lemmings into motherhood, especially those of us who did so in the sixties.

As a child, Oakley was especially close to her father, Richard Titmuss, the left wing social theorist. She was sensitive to the tensions inherent in the close, 'happy', one-child nuclear family where she grew up, publicly a 'good middle-class girl', privately, a 'mess'. Her breakdown in her late teens, which she now sees as the result of the dilemma of 'being born female in a man's world', was a short deflection on her path towards Oxford, CND, socialism, sociology and marriage. But these experiences were hardly preparation for the reality of motherhood. 'I saw myself as a Technicolour Madonna, lactating and serene.' In fact,

> . . . it took combinations of little blue and red pills . . . to make me into the mechanical housewife of my daily life . . . I felt that my life, despite its centredness on my beloved children, and a marriage that by anybody's standards was 'good' (few rows, no wife-beating, affection and mutual respect), was simply devoid of meaning.

The turning-point came when she read in an academic tome on work that she happened on in her husband's study — 'perhaps while dusting' —

> that a valuable aspect of women's low-status work is that

it allows men to feel less alienated because they can have better jobs, and that unpleasant work conditions don't make women workers feel unpleasant because 'successful work is not part of the traditional female role'.

Her outrage at this dismissal of all her efforts at housework and childrearing (surely work, and surely alienated labour, the theme of that book) led to her enrolment for a Ph.D. on housework, a topic which was thought laughable at the time. At the same time, (the early seventies) she became involved in the feminist movement, and experienced, as so many of us have done, a sense of liberation at finding that her own experiences had been ordinary, not pathological.

It is clear that Oakley's own domestic experiences have given her the empathic understanding that is apparent in her own work on housework and motherhood. Reading her autobiography adds a further dimension to her sociological writings, because she presents to us her (and our) recurrent conflict between love and the family, between (to use her antitheses) dependency and autonomy, emotion and intellect, sacrifice and protest, depression and ecstacy.

> . . .I don't like being a wife, I don't like being a housewife and I don't like being a mother. But I love Robin and I love our children . . .I am a member of this second nuclear family as I was a member of my first for powerful historical reasons.

The unusual arrangement of the book highlights these conflicts. There are five chapters of chronology, spread throughout, which follow the conventions of autobiographical narration. Interspersed with these are chapters dealing with significant parts of her life in more detail, e.g. the death of her father, her own 'intimations of mortality', stemming from cancer of the tongue. Some chapters directly address the 'war between love and the family', and reflect on her frustrations at the difficulties that beset anyone who tries to keep the structure and change the patterns within it.

Another theme throughout the book is the course of a love affair, described in fictional sequences interleaved throughout the book:

> What is she doing being made love to, being loved, by this man in this overweening manner? Was this affair of her own choosing? Did he ever ask her if she wanted to love him? . . .The answer to these questions is plainly no. So, is she simply being swept along, as most women are, by the tide of male events? She, who has struggled for so many years

to understand and control the malevolent forces in herself that lead her to enjoy dependence and compliance where a more politically appropriate active independence is what she would prefer? Something seems to have gone wrong.

He says he loves her for her contradictions. She does not love herself for them.

By choosing a fictional voice for describing love and sexual passion, Oakley no doubt manages to express feelings more freely. It is an innovative technique, and one which has impact at first. I found towards the end, though, that these sequences started to pall; one of the contradictions about passionate love is that it is interminably, obsessively interesting to those undergoing it, and tedious, slightly irritating and maddeningly predictable to those not. Reflecting on affairs and families, she concludes that families are not held together by love and other positive qualities, but rather by commitment and asceticism: 'Families are nothing other than the idolatry of duty'.

There is not as much as I had expected in this book about Ann Oakley's life as a researcher and writer, although there are a few lovely stories. One such is her description of her early experiences of market research interviewing: pursuing women with large breasts in supermarkets in order to fill her quota for a study of brassieres — a formative experience in the development of her ideas about interviewing.

But after all, that side of her life is already available through her other books. Her autobiography shows very strongly, though, that Oakley the sociologist is never very far away from the Oakley the autobiographer. She is not, however, the possessor of a 'sociological unimagination', to quote *Women Confined,* but a sociological thinker who can inform her own history and individuality with a powerful awareness of the 'sameness' of her experiences as a woman of her time and place.

Trying to understand herself, Oakley says, is not a self-interested pastime, but a necessity for women who want to protest against a society which causes 'the gap between who they are and who they want to be.' Quoting Adrienne Rich:

> 'Re-vision — the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction — is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves',

Oakley tells us this is what she is trying to do in retelling and re-visioning her life.

In this work she has succeeded brilliantly in conveying to us the life of a woman not so different from many of us. It is not a book with solutions; it is a book which leaves the reader enmeshed in the author's own conflicts, and is ultimately true and unsatisfying. The story does not end; the contradictions are not resolved; life goes on. But, as Oakley says of herself as a writer, what drives her is the wish to create a world in which she can live. Trying to make sense of one's own life is a creative action, and it is also a radical one.

Hilary Haines

Hilary Haines is a psychologist interested in Women's Studies in general and women's mental health in particular. She edits the annual ***Women's Studies Conference Papers,*** *lives in a feminist housing collective with her friends and her teenage son, goes to too many meetings and support groups, and in her spare time she is Research Officer for the Mental Health Foundation.*

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(The following list, with the exception of the first item, consists solely of Oakley's work, but does not claim to be a complete Oakley bibliography. Different editions of some of her books have been noted, partly to indicate their popularity and also to give interested readers an idea of their accessibility.)

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