

Women's studies journal

Distort

Demystify

Domesticate

**Vol. 3 No. 1
March 1987
WSA (NZ)**

WOMEN'S STUDIES JOURNAL is published by
WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND (inc).

This issue of the *Journal* was produced by an Auckland collective whose members were: Linda Cassells, Hilary Haines, Linda Hand, Mary O'Hagan, Pat Rosier, Margot Roth (editor.)

Designed by Jenny Rankine.

Printed by Sunprint, PO Box 645, Tauranga.

Advertising and Correspondence.

Advertising and advertising rates are by negotiation.

Enquiries, advertising, contributions and subscriptions should be addressed to: *Journal* PO Box 5067, Auckland, New Zealand.

Contributors and Contributions.

The *Journal* will be published twice yearly. The next issue will appear in August, 1987. The closing date for copy is May 18. Please send two copies of an article, double-spaced and with a maximum of 5000 words. Shorter articles are welcome, so too are graphics, cartoons and letters to the editor. In accordance with WSA policy, we accept articles from women only.

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Journal Subscriptions

New Zealand:

Individual: \$22 (Hardship: \$18)

Institutions: \$30

Single copy: \$14.50

(All NZ prices include GST)

Overseas:

Individual: \$35 (NZ)

Institutions: \$45 (NZ)

Single copy: \$17.50 (NZ)

Send cheques/bank drafts to: WSA (NZ) PO Box 5067, Auckland, New Zealand.

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D For Psychology: Distorts, Devalues, Damns Difference

Hilary Haines

Psychology has traditionally investigated women using male viewpoints, paradigms, assumptions, where it has bothered at all. In most of its contributions to the study of women psychology has reflected and reinforced the prevailing stereotypes. Stereotypes may have their basis in truth but often they do not. Where reflecting truths of the female condition, psychologists have often failed to see the extent to which these features of women's psychology have been brought about by male oppression.

Freud is a good case in point, as his understanding of women (as opposed to his theoretical structure of female development) was often superb, but he failed to see the influence of social factors and thought of women's nature as inevitable. In fact many of the features of women's psychology that I will be discussing are features of the psychology of other oppressed people, for example, slaves. In a word, traditional psychologies of women have been **DISTORTED**.

Women as DISAPPEARED: How have women featured in psycholog-

al research and theory? Before this question can be answered, it is first necessary to point out that the subject of women has not been of marked interest to academic psychologists. Although women are 51% of the human race, in psychological research, for the most part, they have conveniently **DISAPPEARED**. Psychological science has been largely the province of male researchers (and in this century, largely American males at that). For example, in 1946 the percentage of doctorates earned by women in psychology in the USA was 33%; this figure reached a low of 21% in the 1960s and a high in 1980 of 42%.

It is hardly surprising, then, given their numerical under-representation, that women have conducted fewer research studies than men. In 1963 the proportion of articles with female authors in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* was 21% and by 1983 it had increased to 49% (Lykes & Stewart, 1983). The research areas of personality and social psychology have a higher proportion of women researchers than many other fields of psychology; across the board, the figure would be considerably lower.

Once published, there is a further hurdle. Research produced by women receives less attention than men's research and even in 1975, as Over (1982, see Lykes & Stewart) found, only four women ranked among 102 American, British and Canadian psychologists who were cited most in the psychological literature.

Being a woman in psychology has been a handicap, but being a woman interested in studying women is even more so. As in so many fields, the more prestigious subject areas are the ones with fewer women in them: neuropsychology, sensation and perception, cognitive psychology and so on. The area demarcated 'psychology of women' (which has only recently emerged) is ghetto-ised. A woman who wants to get ahead in psychology may well choose to avoid it, because women working in this field may automatically be considered as second-rate.

The obvious outcome of these processes is that most psychological research has focused on men. In 1963 40% of the articles in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* included only male subjects; the situation had improved somewhat by 1983 when only 19% had only male subjects and a higher proportion had both males and females. (Lykes & Stewart, 1983). Similarly, the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* for 1958 showed 38% of studies used males only, 21% did not even report the sex of the subjects, and only 5% used females only. (Carlson & Carlson, 1960, cited in Johnson, 1978)

The **DISAPPEARANCE** of women from life as psychology views it can be illustrated by reference to various fields, as well as to psychology as a whole. For example, when the psychological processes involved in decision making came to be a popular topic of study, the types of decision studied were virtually entirely centred on the traditionally

male world, e.g. clinical decisions or political decisions. There was hardly anything on family decisions, which might have utilised different principles. This type of omission can lead to the common fallacy of making generalisations about, for example, *human* decision making when it is only male decisions that have been studied. If your point of view is that males make the decisions that matter, then you will probably not even care if women are left out (Johnson, 1978).

A better illustration, perhaps, comes from the study of achievement motivation, a topic of interest in psychology from the 1950s onwards. Virtually all the early studies looked at data from male subjects only. McClelland, a pioneer in this field of research (and a male, of course), did collect some data on women in the early stages of his research project but it did not fit consistently with male patterns so it was dropped, because it spoiled the simplicity of his theory. Presumably, too, it was not felt important to study women because they were not seen as being interested in achievement (and achievement, of course, was defined in traditionally male terms, i.e., career, scholarship, politics and so on) (Johnson, 1978). Many, many more such examples of this process of selective blindness could be given.

As I have mentioned, when only males are included in research there is a tendency to generalise the results to all human beings. But when studies have been carried out with solely female subjects the results are usually seen as only applicable to women (Lykes & Stewart, 1983). No doubt this tendency has been assisted by our sexist language with its ambiguous usage of 'man' meaning either 'men' or 'human beings'. A classic example of this confusion (the 'generic man' trap) has been drawn to our attention by Casey Miller and Kate Swift in their excellent analysis of sexist language, *Words and Women* (1979). They cite the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm discussing basic human needs by describing 'man's vital interests' as 'life, food, access to females, etc.' (p.43).

Psychology, then, has been and still is *androcentric*. In other words, it views the human species through male eyes. There has been a quest to discover 'the nature of man' and the basic laws underlying human behaviour. This quest for underlying principles, whether they are rooted in human biology (a nineteenth century tradition and now again popular as sociobiology and the neurosciences increasingly attract attention) or laws of learning (as reflected in the behaviourist school which has dominated twentieth century psychology) has tended to result in the equation of the universal with the male and to ignore differences between men and women. The psychoanalytical tradition, just as influential on popular thought but on the whole at odds with the science of psychology, has placed more emphasis on individuals but still rests on a grand theory of human nature, male at heart.

This bias, then, has led to an equation of maleness with human-

ness, to a view of the male as normative. Following on from this initial distortion, women have often been seen (when anyone has bothered to look) as basically men with flaws. Let us examine this view of woman in more detail.

Women as DEVIANT men: The internalisation of the idea of women as men with flaws, as deviant men, is nowhere as well demonstrated as in a study of mental health professionals' ideas about mental health. Inge Broverman (1970) and her colleagues gave a questionnaire to psychotherapists asking them to identify the personality characteristics of either mentally healthy males, mentally healthy females or mentally healthy adults. Those therapists who were asked to describe mentally healthy adults produced a similar set of results to the therapists who were asked to describe mentally healthy males. But what about the descriptions of mentally healthy females? Females, it was found, were expected to have characteristics that were thought of as *unhealthy* in adults (sex unspecified). They were different from adults, or males, 'by being more submissive, less independent, less adventurous, more easily influenced, less aggressive, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, having their feelings more easily hurt, being more emotional, more conceited about their appearance, less objective and disliking math and science' (pp.4-5). So male equals human and female is a deviation from this. The implication is that a female in striving to be a mentally healthy human being, in society's terms, forfeits the achievement of female mental health.

Women as DEFORMED men: At least one psychological investigator went so far as to think of women's psychology as resulting from their perceiving themselves as physically deformed men. Freud's theory, which had a profound influence on psychotherapy for women in the middle decades of this century, holds that the young girl's psychosexual development veers on a different course from the boy's when she realises, at the preschool stage, that she does not have a penis and then reasons that she must have been castrated. In Freudian theory, fears of castration in the growing male are held to lead to the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the boy's sexual desire for his mother being thwarted by fear of the potentially castrating father (he knows castration happens as he has seen the unfortunate outcome, i.e. penis-less little girls). Through the resolution of these fears the boy internalises social controls and moral rules, identifying with the father. Since girls cannot go through this stage of development (already having been castrated), their moral sense, according to Freud, remains underdeveloped. Healthy female development in-

volves the desire to have a baby boy so as to symbolically achieve the lost penis (Freud, 1925).

What is more, any undue liking for stimulation of the clitoris among women stems from an unfortunate fixation on this biologically inferior penis substitute. A healthy woman achieves orgasm through vaginal stimulation alone. Thus Freud, combining male prejudice with the ignorance of his day about the biology of sexuality, set up a ridiculous standard for female sexuality, which led to much unhappiness among women who were pressured into trying to achieve these standards.

Women as DEFECTIVE men: With the male seen as the norm, and the female as a deviation from the norm, the latter are sometimes seen as merely defective men, i.e., similar to men in many respects but impeded by aspects of their femaleness. Women's reproductive systems come in for special blame in causing defects.

From Greek times onwards and still persisting in modern attitudes there has been a firm belief that mental disorders in women often resulted from disturbances of the reproductive system. The Greek word for uterus is the root of the English word "hysteria", which the Greeks believed occurred when the womb travelled to different parts of the body (the 'wandering uterus'). Related organs were also suspect. One of my books on the history of psychiatry has an illustration of a vicious 19th century contraption called an 'ovary-compressor', which was designed to press on the uterus in order to cure hysteria (Altschule, 1965). It was certainly no improvement on the Greeks.

This historically persistent attitude was summed up by John Haslam, a 19th century English doctor, who said in 1817 that '...in females who become insane, the disease is often connected with the peculiarities of their sex' (quoted in Skultans, 1975; 223). 19th century medicine saw the natural female biological processes, such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation and menopause (climacteric), as illnesses that caused stress to the nervous system and therefore a predisposition to insanity. My own historical research on mental health in New Zealand has shown that in the 1870s, and 1880s around one-fifth of female admissions to lunatic asylums, as they were then called, were attributed to disorders of the reproductive system ('insanity of lactation', 'uterine affections', dysmenorrhea, etc. (Haines, 1982).

The history of ideas about the psychological effects of menstruation on women embodies this attitude. Women have long been thought of as particularly unreliable and emotional around the time of menstruation and this has been put forward time and time again as a reason for excluding women from a wide range of activities including

higher education and jobs such as that of airline pilot. There has been far more research on women's menstrual cycles than on any aspects of the male mind or body that might give rise to variations over periods of time. Research on premenstrual syndrome, a topic of interest at present, still gives rise to strong feelings among some feminist researchers because of the history of attempts to restrict women's activities because of their alleged defective functioning due to menstruation (Koeske, 1983).

All this is not to imply that the functioning of women's reproductive system has no effects on psychological processes. However, the mainstream ideas have merely been assumptions based on the idea of women as defective by virtue of bodily parts which are different from men's.

Women as DEFICIENT men: Women have sometimes been seen, not so much as deviant, deformed or defective men, but as merely deficient, that is, sharing the same qualities as men but having these qualities to a lesser degree. A prime exemplar of this common attitude is to be found in the history of debates about sex differences in mental functioning. Charles Darwin, who laid the foundations for modern biology with his theory of evolution, said in his 1871 work, *The Descent of Man*, that men were intellectually superior and that although women possessed some valuable characteristics in excess of men, e.g., intuition, tenderness and such-like, '... some, at least, of these faculties are characteristics of the lower races and, therefore, of a past and lower state of civilisation' (cited in Shields, 1978: 752). As well as less evolved, women were thought to be less variable with respect to intelligence, i.e., less likely to be mentally retarded and less likely to show genius (and variability was held to be a key process in evolution).

The reason for women's poor showing with respect to higher mental functioning was alleged to be her smaller brain size. George Romanes, a nineteenth century student of human and animal behaviour, said that even assuming that men might stop changing and improving, women would not catch up in a hurry because it would take 'many centuries for heredity to produce the missing five ounces of the female brain' (Shields, 1978: 753). Women who strove to make up for their deficiencies through education went against nature. Overtaxing of their brains, said Herbert Spencer, a British evolutionist and social thinker, could render them infertile because of the serious physical reaction. A rash of late 19th century studies purported to show that too much education caused menstrual irregularities, sterility and even insanity in women (Ehrenreich & English, 1979). These ideas were not particular to psychology, of course. They were widespread in medicine, biology and anthropolo-

gy. Sir Truby King, the founder of Plunket in New Zealand and a lunatic asylum superintendent, railed against female education here, too, for much the same reasons.

Shields tells how in mid 19th century the frontal lobes of the brain were regarded as the seat of intelligence and the parietal lobes the seat of lower mental processes. Women were said to have smaller frontal lobes and bigger parietal lobes. At the turn of the century there was a reversal in thinking with the parietal lobes now regarded as the seat of intelligence and the frontal lobes assigned a less noble role. Who could be surprised when *Popular Science Monthly* announced in 1895 that the 'frontal region is not, as has been supposed smaller in women, but rather larger relatively . . . but the parietal lobe is somewhat smaller' (Shields, 1978: 754).

The interest in judging intelligence by brain size waned. Elephants had bigger brains than humans, but that could be explained away by saying that intelligence depended on the proportion of brain to body size. However, the finding that Eskimos, as well as elephants, had bigger brains than European males was not popular, for late 19th and early 20th century psychology was certainly racist as well as sexist.

With the development of intelligence testing there came about more suitable methods of measuring mental performance. Lewis Terman put intelligence testing on the map in the USA, devising an American version of Alfred Binet's early test and standardising it on a huge population. Updated versions of his test, known as the Stanford-Binet, are still among the most popular of IQ tests. Boys and girls perform equally well on the Stanford-Binet, but this fact says as much about the testers as it does about the mental abilities of boys and girls. The test is a combination of different measures, such as language ability, memory, spatial thinking, arithmetic ability, reasoning, and so on and, embarrassingly, it was found in the early piloting stages that the girls did better than the boys. Girls' performance was better on language measures and boys on mathematical/spatial measures, so with a bit of judicious juggling a balance was found that promoted equality rather than male inferiority. If women aren't to be seen as DEFICIENT, then they're certainly not going to be seen as superior! Would any adjustment have been made if early results had been the other way around? I doubt it.

Interestingly, early women psychologists such as Helen Wooley, who discussed the findings of female superiority in verbal skills, were much more tentative in their claims and looked for other explanations, whereas male scientists seldom looked further when they found any differences favouring males (Johnson, 1978).

Women as DEVELOPMENTALLY DELAYED men: Another way of viewing woman was to see her as Developmentally Delayed, in other

words, following the same track as men but stopping short of fully grown up. We have already seen that Freud saw woman not achieving the moral maturity of men because their perception of their dreadful anatomical deformity impeded the progress of psychosexual development and left them stuck without the advantages of the fully resolved Oedipus complex. A more recent approach to moral development, Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory, arrives at the same conclusion through a different route. Kohlberg decided that the pinnacle of human moral thinking was the idea of justice. Justice is fair, abstract and egalitarian, treating each individual as the same before the ultimate moral law.

In his influential study of the development of moral thinking in 84 boys whom he followed over a period of 20 years, Kohlberg identified six stages of moral development, each one succeeding the last and increasing in sophistication (Brown & Bernstein, 1975). Very few people achieved the sixth stage, the highest stage of moral thinking, where there is an appreciation of universal moral laws based on justice (not even all moral philosophers reach these lofty peaks, sad to say). The bulk of adult men are concentrated at Stage Four, with a rule-bound, 'law and order' orientation.

Women, it was found in later studies that bothered to include them, were concentrated at Stage Three, an approval-seeking 'good girl' stage. Most women, being unable to abstract themselves from the petty details of the moral dilemmas which the researchers presented to them for comment, were unable even to apply the rudimentary principles of justice that the 'law and order' mentality could grapple with. They just couldn't seem to see the wood for the trees and did not always seem to realize that you should not bend the rules just because it will improve the situation for an individual.

Carol Gilligan, one of the most innovative and profound of women psychologists today, and a student of Kohlberg's, has exposed the sexist assumptions of Kohlberg's theory. She acknowledges differences between men and women in moral thinking, but does not judge these differences as being reflective of women's developmental delays. She sees traditional male ideas about morality, with justice the central concept, as arising from experiences in the public world and rooted in the concept of *rights*. In contrast, traditional female ideas arise from their more intimate experiences of making decisions in the domestic world, and are rooted in the concept of *responsibility* (Gilligan, 1982). Kohlberg's conception of the moral ideal is seen as impersonally masculine. Other writers have seen it as the moral ideal of bourgeois capitalism.

A further example of the idea of women as developmentally delayed comes from a widely influential personality theorist, Erik Erikson, whose more matter-of-fact and less threateningly sordid theories of personality development found a widespread acceptance

among educators who found Freud a bit hard to swallow. Erickson lays down the stages of personality development, and many of us who have ever been to Teachers' Training college or studied Education 1 will no doubt have been induced to learn these by rote: trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and so on. At the fifth stage, adolescence, the developmental task is to resolve the psychological conflict surrounding the emergence of an autonomous adult identity. But this resolution only occurs for the adolescent boy, for Erikson says that the adolescent girl will delay the process of identity formation because she does not become fully rounded until she marries and takes someone else's name and status and, therefore, derives her adult identity from them (Gilligan, 1982).

And so psychology portrays the male as the norm and woman, when noticed, is a deviation from the norm. Thus woman, in the image which psychology constructs for her, is:

DUMB: The early studies on intelligence have already been discussed.

DUTIFUL: Studies on conformity traditionally found that women were more conforming, more suggestible and more likely to give way to group pressures than men. This fitted in with the stereotype of women as dutiful and not very clever. But most of the experiments on conformity used judgements and decisions about stereotypically male areas, e.g. judgements about the size and shape of abstract objects and judgements about political and economic affairs. However, one clever study found that if the judgements concerned topics of typically female expertise and interest, males showed more conformity. (Sistrunk & McDavid, 1971, cited in Johnson, 1978). When tested over a wide range of situations including both stereotypically male, female and neutral topics, no sex differences in conformity were found. The obvious fact that this critical study underlined is that women in a male world will be more ill-at-ease and less sure of themselves than men. A man will be less sure of himself in a female world, too, but that is not a situation of interest to many psychologists. After all, the way of the world is that men make the rules in most spheres, especially public life, and women get to conform with these rules.

DECORATIVE: One of the major research areas in social psychology over the last couple of decades has been the study of interpersonal attraction. This field boils down to the study of the dating rituals of American college students. Not surprisingly, physical attractiveness is found to be a great asset for females and a brief whizz through this

literature is enough to make one wonder why this crass fact should be such an absorbing topic of interest that it deserves a chapter in most social psychology textbooks.

Far more helpful to the serious student of the concept of 'attractiveness' is the growing literature on anorexia, bulimia and body image, which shows that most women think they are too fat, most women think they should lose weight, most women overestimate their own body size and many women would consider having cosmetic surgery. A negative body image is the norm for women (Haines, 1986). Investigating the personal, social and commercial aspects of this area would seem to be a less superficial way of investigating the study of the psychological effects of human appearance than merely finding out what turns on the young Yuppie.

DEPENDENT: Women's dependency on men is, all too often, an economic and social fact, but it is also embodied in the mental health ideals for women found in the Broverman study, discussed earlier, although it is an antithesis of their mental health professionals' ideals for humans. Thus the status quo becomes legitimized and dependency becomes a personality characteristic, not a signal of oppression.

DOMINEERING: Before feminists forcibly drew attention to the area of domestic violence, this theme was infrequently discussed in psychology. Mental health professionals tended to blame the victim of violence by focusing on the supposed characteristics of the victim (domineering, nagging, etc.) that were said to induce violence.

DECEITFUL: Another 'female' characteristic which is relevant to the issue of violence against women. Freud had laid it down on tablets of stone that complaints of sexual abuse from little girls were to be regarded as the disordered workings of their fantasy life arising from their infantile desires to sleep with their fathers. How Freud reached this conclusion, reversing his earlier finding of a history of sexual abuse in the background of hysterics, has now been thoroughly investigated (Rush, 1980; Masson, 1984) and careful research has shown that false complaints are extremely rare. Children have not been taken seriously over this issue until recently and it is only in the last decade that the devastating psychological effects of sexual abuse in childhood have been documented.

This neglect by mental health professionals was brought home to me when with a psychologist friend I did some work on ideas about women as shown in Carrington Hospital records of the 1950s and 60s. We were shocked to read how frequently histories of sexual abuse were recorded in the files of women patients. At least the women seem to have been believed, but mental health professionals did not

speak out vigorously about it then, perhaps because of the climate of the day.

DOMESTIC: In the early part of the 20th century psychologists were particularly interested in maternal instinct, an idea which arose in the context of early psychology's biological, evolutionary theory emphasis. Instincts went by the board with the rise of behaviourism and the modern idea has been that mothering skills are learnt. Nevertheless, throughout psychology's history the woman who did not want to be domestic has been seen as abnormal. Freud saw the career woman as suffering from penis envy and even today the single woman and the lesbian woman are viewed as distinctly odd.

In the aftermath of World War Two, when women were being propagandized into giving up their new found freedoms and going back into the home to repopulate the nations and make jobs for the boys, psychologists helped to bolster the idea that women should be domestic even if they did not want to be. John Bowlby and others produced studies which seemed to show that children would be disadvantaged by non-domestic, working mothers and they had a profound impact on popular thinking about child-rearing (Ehrenreich and English, 1979).

DESTRUCTIVE: Men may like to see women as domestic, but they also like to see domestic women as destructive. The 'blame the mother' school of thought has been strong in psychology, producing tales of schizophrenogenic and other wicked mothers. In clinical case studies, in contrast to laboratory research, it is the mother who is most accessible for study and who is a priori regarded as the dominant influence.

DISTRESSED, DEMENTED, DISTURBED, DESPONDENT, DEPRESSED: There is certainly a trend in the mental health literature, to which psychology contributes, to see women as less mentally healthy than men. Early theorists, as we have seen, saw women's mental health problems as biological destiny due to the aberrances of the reproductive system. There are a number of approaches incorporating a feminist perspective that deal with women's mental health. Some feminist psychologists focus on biological factors, e.g. premenstrual tension, menopause, etc., but this is not a very common approach.

Phyllis Chesler, in *Women and Madness* (1972), claimed that women were not more likely to be disturbed than men, but that as an oppressed group they were more likely to be stigmatised and treated as deviant by the controlling institution of psychiatry.

However, epidemiological research on mental health indicates that women are not more likely than men to become institutionalised for

psychiatric disorder in New Zealand, at any rate. (Mental Health Data, 1983). In general, in Western countries where there are sex differences in admissions they are not marked. In fact men are more likely than women to enter a psychiatric hospital under compulsion through committal procedures, which rather goes against Chesler's argument. However, there are clear sex differences in diagnosis, with women being more likely than men to suffer from depression and other mood disorders and men being more likely to have a diagnosis of substance abuse.

As far as the 'common colds' of mental health go, such as depression, phobias and anxiety which are unlikely to lead to hospital admission, there are more women sufferers than men. Up to twice as many women as men suffer from depression, phobias and the types of physical symptoms that are often indicative of stress (headache, insomnia, feeling tired, etc.) (Robins et al, 1984). It seems that women and men express unhappiness differently, with men often being outwardly aggressive or aggressively self-destructive (and often in a way that gives rise to further distress for women as victims of violence). There are no easy answers in this field, but because women manifest distress in a more direct way, the historic tradition of women as more mentally unhealthy will probably persist.

Of course, particular sub-groups of women are more vulnerable to mental health problems. In discussing the mental health of mothers, for example, problems of interpretation loom large. The Mental Health Foundation has portrayed mothers of young children as an at-risk group in terms of mental health because the research literature shows them to have higher rates of depression than women at most other stages of the life cycle. The Foundation has referred to depression among mothers of young children as being of epidemic proportions (Dobson and Abbott, 1982; Haines, 1983). Professor John Werry and his research assistants at the Auckland Medical School, however, have produced much the same data in their research on mothers but have described mothers as mostly happy, with a number suffering from 'battle fatigue' and only very few seriously depressed (Werry and Carlielle, 1982). A Dunedin study reports very similar data to those of the Foundation and of Werry and Carlielle and decides that the two other groups are both overstating their case (Clarkson, Mullin and Sharples, 1986). Their summary is that the figures indicate that New Zealand mothers are at 'some risk' and 'give cause for concern'.

When the same or similar data give rise to differing policy implications it is clear that point of view is a crucial part of the picture. The Mental Health Foundation based its findings on comparisons with other occupational groups and life cycle stages; Werry and Carlielle felt the situation to be good because most mothers are apparently content with their lot; and Clarkson, Mullin and Sharples

hesitated to generalise or make firm policy recommendations from the existing data base.

Women's mental health, then, offers a minefield for the theorist.

With the feminist revolution of the late sixties has come a huge upswing of interest in the psychology of women (although we should not forget the pioneers, since there were always women interested in studying women who disagreed with the ideas prevalent in their own time — Karen Horney, Helen Wooley and Leta Stetter Hollingworth are examples from earlier this century). There has recently been a huge amount of research done and lots of useful information about women has been gathered, though the research has still largely been carried out in the context of male paradigms. Some of the most useful research has occurred where feminist interests have linked with empirical research interests in fields largely neglected by men, e.g. the explosion of information on violence against women.

So we are moving towards a new psychology of women (or to be more accurate, towards new psychologies for women, because there should not be just one psychology and it should be *for* not *of* women). What form will a feminist challenge to psychology take and, perhaps more importantly, how will the new psychologies portray women? Here are some of my personal views and hopes.

At its least radical the feminist challenge to psychology is to include more women scholars and practitioners, to do more research on women, not to base theories of human nature merely on men, to adopt pro-women, gynocentric perspectives when dealing with topics where women have traditionally been denigrated. This task is very important. New information on rape, incest and domestic violence, for example, have brought us part way through a revolution in the way society looks at these problems.

Another excellent example of a less radical challenge is in Maccoby & Jacklin's (1974) comprehensive review of the literature on sex differences in abilities and personality traits which concluded that there were only a very small number of clearly established differences between the sexes (aggression, verbal, mathematical and spatial abilities) and also that it had not been established whether there is a genetic component or an entirely cultural basis for these differences. This finding contrasts with the predominant idea that there are sex differences in most human traits. Even in those cases where sex differences have been established individual differences often strongly over-ride these. (It is important to emphasise that Maccoby and Jacklin were looking largely at the field of abilities and personality traits; there are established sex differences in many aspects of human behaviour, e.g. doing the dishes).

Challenges to psychology of this kind do not challenge the

fundamentals of the science. They ask for more participation, more information and fairness, but they do not challenge the rules of the game. They do have some radical potential because moving towards these goals causes all sorts of changes in the traditional relationships between the sexes, both within psychology and in society generally. However, there has been a tendency to focus largely on the areas of sex differences and sex role stereotyping and to accumulate large amounts of trivial knowledge (for evidence, inspect the psychology of women journals, *Sex Roles* and *Psychology of Women Quarterly*.) On the whole, there has been no decline in the tendency to use college students as subjects, even though the proportion of women subjects has increased (Lykes & Stewart, 1983) and this in itself indicates that the majority of work remains within the laboratory or questionnaire paradigm.

The feminist challenge to psychology, at its more radical, is part of the feminist challenge to knowledge (e.g., Spender, 1981; McCurdy, 1986) and rests alongside other contemporary challenges to ideas about the nature of psychology as a science (e.g., Sampson, 1978) and general challenges to science (e.g. Feyerabend, 1975). This challenge queries the sacred cow of the scientific method and refuses to worship at the shrine of objectivity. It values passionate science and sees knowledge as power.

One practical problem with this new approach is publication. Mainstream psychology journals will not publish material that is not presented in a rigidly standardised form and the more innovative material is often published in women's studies publications. Research has shown that material published in the mainstream psychology journals, unsurprisingly, has more influence on the discipline of psychology than psychological research published in interdisciplinary journals, e.g. women's studies journals (Lykes & Stewart, 1983). Lykes and Stewart claim that methodology is the 'gatekeeper' of mainstream psychological research, 'the point of most resistance and least change'. Thus information arrived at through traditionally male ways of finding out can be incorporated within psychology because it does not pose too much of a threat. Different and feminist ways of knowing are 'ghettoised' (at least, as far as academia is concerned) into the women's studies literature. 'Revolution or reform' is a very real question for women working from within (or bursting out of) the framework of psychology. And fortunately, work on psychology is not confined to academically trained psychologists (it is a very human interest, after all) and some of the freshest and most daring ideas about the psychology of women come from writers outside the field (e.g. French, 1985; Heilbrun, 1979; Daly, 1978; Raymond, 1986, to name just some of many).

In radical new psychologies for women, how will women be

portrayed? Some of their characteristics may be:

DISOBEDIENT AND DARING: We saw how the conformity research first painted women as conformist but when the balance was later redressed to include issues more pertinent to women, no differences were found. Perhaps the characteristics of Disobedient and Daring women (i.e. independent women) will be investigated more and a value placed on these characteristics for women. Instead of characterising women as afraid of success, as some early investigators did when they found that women often seemed alarmed at success, it can be realised that there are genuine reasons for fearing success in a man's world, both personal and moral, and that women may well have different ideals for success and with encouragement more could work towards these.

DOVE-LIKE DISARMERS AND DREAMERS: Some of the recent writers on the psychology of women and on women's issues generally (Carol Gilligan, Jean Baker Miller, Marilyn French and many others) have placed an emphasis on revaluing women's traditional qualities of non-aggressiveness. Their writings often emphasize the nuclear threat and suggest that while men's aggressiveness may have been an evolutionarily useful trait in older times, now it is threatening the whole human race. Sometimes these ideas run dangerously close to older stereotypes about women as staying home, keeping custody of moral values, while men run about in the dirty, dangerous and real world. Nevertheless, they have a compelling appeal.

DIFFERENT AND DISTINCTIVE: Distinctive is a more positive word for sex differences and the trend among the more radical seems to be to emphasise differences because an emphasis on sameness often leads to an embracing of male ideals. A tension here arises between research and theory because the trend in the research is to find few strong sex differences in abilities and personality traits and much overlap between the sexes. However, to some extent this may be an artefact of the topics and investigative methods chosen. Sex differences, I think, are weakest and most situation-dependent in tests and laboratory experiments and strongest in observational and real life studies (c.f., body language, mental health, violence). They are weakest in the realm of abilities and traits and strongest in the realm of actual behaviour. The implication from the research is that many sex differences are the products of the *situation*, rather than of genetic factors or learning history. So, given different current life environments, women could well behave in a similar fashion to men; but why should they choose to reformulate their own environments so as to make it possible for them to be more similar to men?

Differences can be emphasized as an ideal, in some cases, or a product of circumstances, in others, rather than always as a necessity arising from biology or life history.

New psychologies of women emphasizing difference and distinctiveness will be able to accomodate individual and racial differences as well as sex differences. Why should every woman of the future (and every man) be an androgyny-clone, a healthy balance of the 'best' characteristics of men and women, as put forward to us in Bem's popular theories (Bem, 1974, etc.)

Too much of an emphasis on mental health (the androgynous person, the fully-functioning person and so on) works against individuality and against cultural differences, too. Mason Durie, a Maori mental health practitioner, describes well how in the mental health field there are insensitivities to cultural differences (Durie, 1984). The Pakeha New Zealand, Californian imported ideals of self-sufficiency, self assertiveness and doing your own thing are the 'antithesis of mental health' in Maori terms, as are current ideals and institutions which promote certain sorts of parenting behaviour and the separation of mental and physical health. Most mental health practitioner training in New Zealand is culturally insensitive, but clinical psychologist training is the worst among these professions (Abbott, 1986).

DYKES: Psychology suffers from heterosexism and its literature on lesbians is riddled with notions of heterosexual superiority. Lesbians tend to have been invisible in psychological research, except for appearing in a little category of their own labelled under perversion, deviant sexual behaviour and so on, according to the fashion of the time. The main research questions have been: what caused it? do they have a mother/father fixation? (questions not usually asked about heterosexuality) how can it be changed? (a question which, historically, has been answered by 'treatments' such as lobotomy, ECT, hormone therapies, aversion therapies, etc.) Another feature of the literature has been prurient descriptions of lesbian sex based on heterosexual male assumptions and a lack of understanding of female sexuality.

Even in the more recent and more positive research on homosexuality lesbians tend to be invisible and nearly all the generalisations in the psychological literature about the nature of homosexuality are based on research on men, though this is often not stated. There is no reason to believe that lesbians are just a female version of male homosexuals. Fortunately lesbians themselves are initiating research on their own lives. However, some of the questions asked are still dictated by the ruling paradigms and by negative social policies. This is especially so, I believe, for the question of choice. 'Did you choose to become a lesbian or couldn't you help it?' If choice is the answer,

then the political implications can be conservative (then you can choose differently) or radical (heterosexual women can choose to be lesbian). Lesbians themselves have many arguments about this question and it is quite clear that some women think they have chosen, some women feel they always were lesbian and others, perhaps most, are uncertain. But why should this be a question of especial significance to lesbians? It seems to me that the radical stance is just a reaction to the conservative stance on choice (although one with very interesting consequences for lesbian feminist theory). This is not to argue that questions about choice may not be of great interest in psychology; it is merely to assert that they should not be directed to sexual orientation any more than to other aspects of life. So, just as women's psychology is partly determined by our dependent condition, so is lesbian psychology partly determined by stigmatisation.

A further question requiring exploration is that of the lesbian in every woman, in other words women's relating emotionally and sexually to other women. Freud said everyone is bisexual at the beginning of life and he asked questions about why heterosexuality was the course of development for the majority. His answers were anti-woman but his questions were good and half the art of finding out is asking innovative questions. For instance, how would women relate to each other in a society that does not condemn lesbian activities? (we have some answers in the work of Rich (1980), Faderman (1981) and Smith-Rosenberg (1975), although the latter two only pertain to societies where women's lives were very restrictive).

DELIGHTING: women have traditionally been regarded as kill-joys (wives) or as hidden away for the delight of individual men (mistresses, prostitutes). Marilyn French (1985) makes a strong case for women promoting *felicity* in the world, in contrast to the male values of competitive and destructive worldliness or ascetic other-worldliness. After all, it was a woman who said that she wasn't going to come to the revolution if there wasn't dancing.

Lastly, in my very personal list:

DISCOVERING: new psychologies for women could be, and portray women as, discovering, instead of as dutiful conformists lacking in creativity. Freud said that the only significant contribution women ever made to the development of civilisation was weaving, which they discovered through plaiting their pubic hair to make their genitalia less ugly. Not many psychologists have been quite so extraordinarily

misogynistic, but the same attitudes have been pervasive. Women's curiosity has been suppressed, scorned and invalidated. Let us explore new forms of research, new forms of knowing, new aspirations, new technologies, new methods of change. To cite Mary Daly, let us engage in dis-covering, risking, spinning, creative crystallising and ludic celebration ('the free play of intuition in our own space, giving rise to thinking that is vigorous, informed, multi-dimensional, independent, creative, tough.') Let us, as women, discover new psychologies for women.

*Hilary Haines is a psychologist whose book **Mental Health for Women** has just been published by Reed Methuen.*

Notes

This article was originally presented in June, 1986, as a lecture in the *Perspectives on Women Today* series arranged by the Department of Continuing Education, University of Auckland.

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The Apple Belonged To Eve: Rape, Incest and Re-Telling Myths

Heather McPherson

Myths are the inhabitants of the spaces between the seer and the horizon, between the horizon and the unseen. They are the giantess, the giant in the hills, they are guesses from the internal to the eternal, beginning not only in the child's perception of the vastness of the world and their own smallness in it but a perception of their own cast potential — the magical thinking that says: 'With enormous legs I could step across those hills, if I could fly I would catch that bird and go to the end of the earth. . . .'

The adult instinct to perpetuate myth is the social filling-in of the gaps. Myths capitalise the magical potential: Yes, there were beings who flew, who tell the plants when to grow, yes, mountains moved . . .; myths limit the gap between life and eternity or life and nothingness, they illuminate human behaviour and provide models for social roles and functions; myths can explain environmental phenomena and embody survival mechanisms, they provide a history and distillation of tribal wisdom. Part of their direct and directive influence is that they show powerholders and consequences.

Inherited myths for western culture up to the seventies when large numbers of women began re-claiming a selectively-lost mythological past confirm the belief that women are less than men, adjuncts to or more often recipients of men's initiating action. Myths have been an underpinning — or overhang — of, and a justification for, the patriarchal system. As part of the system's fabric they reinforce women's lower social and political status.

Renewed interest in historical myth, and the current interest in fantasy games using myth figures taken from a spectrum of cultures is one reaction to serious attempts to examine mythologic concepts. Another is the increasing rigidity of the adherents to religious myth, and their increasingly raised profiles in political establishments.

As religious myth is discarded as increasingly irrelevant or fundamentally limited, and more women opt out of established religion and into established power-structure positions, there is a polarising return to patriarchal stereotypes. As the realities of power politics remove life and death further from individual citizen control there seems to be an increasing hunger for myth powers. As the concept of tribal defence of territory by individual action becomes obsolete there is a greater need to assert individuality in powers that can equate with the force of nuclear explosion. But neither nations nor individual citizens can give up that old invasion/defence concept quickly or easily.

Invasion/defence is the central concept of inherited patriarchal myths. Among the 'natural' consequences of invasion is the overthrow and absorption of the victims' power and culture. Rape and incest are the analogues of tribal invasion. The original great goddess of creation lost her triple aspect, queen of sky, waters and earth. In some cultures she disappears altogether, in many she remains as the most passive aspect of the trinity, the earth mother. There are variations on the theme: Eskimo legend has it that Akycha the sun, raped by her brother the moon, is forever pursued by him across the sky; in African Dogon culture, mother earth is raped by her jackal son.

The myths our colonial culture has taught and retained in the cultural canon are Greek, Maori and Judeo-Christian. There are similarities with the Greek and Maori myths. Hades rapes and abducts Persephone who becomes an underworld death queen; Rangi the sky-god mates with his daughter Hine Titama who on learning of her birth relationship to him takes herself to the underworld and becomes death Goddess Hine nui te po. Both these transformations retain a certain power.

Persephone returns to the earth to signal its flowering, Hine nui te po — though she introduces mortality to humanity — also cares for spirits who would otherwise be prey of Whiro, the evil one.

Supposing myth figures as human models, the most striking part of these stories is the distribution of consequences. Humanity in general suffers lastingly, in Greece by losing its everlasting summer, in New Zealand or Aotearoa, by losing its immortality. Hephaestus/Hades suffers in the absence of his kidnapped 'wife' for half the year; Rangi is punished by Hine's withdrawal and his everlasting pursuit of her. His grief is at losing her physical presence, he mourns not his action but the result. In neither myth is there recognition of 'crime' — the male creator is beyond the necessity for apology or reparation, and his, and through him, humanity's loss, does not dislodge him from his supreme position. The daughter goddess suffers in the transference of her domain from middle to lower world.

Persephone and Hine nui te po as death goddesses embody mortality, humankind to be shown that in our birth is our death. The womb loses its procreative connotations to become primarily death-dealer — the necessary psychological element for the training of fighting men. The women-figure behind the womb is passive, She receives, does not induce or 'cause' death.

In the Judeo-Christian myth however, Mary, reduced completely to mortal rather than banished from active godhead, bears a demi-god mortal, who as the supreme god's aspect of himself returns to his creator's sky-mansion to be incorporated back into divinity. Mary's annunciation, like Danae's shower-of-gold Zeus-rape, is a ghostly rape effected without ostensible physical violence — she is the willing victim/recipient of detached sexuality, human-bearer of the divine boy child.

Rape and incest myths of patriarchal origin thus not only approve but glorify the sexual submission of the female. There is no question of exoneration since there is no 'crime' — the supreme/being creator takes his lord-of-the-manor right of sexual possession of his vassal-creations.

Rape and incest victims, like the mythological daughters, have felt themselves banished to the underworld. They may have felt if not articulated that they are banished from a community where their position is marginal anyway and dependent on 'good' conduct if it is to be retained. With authority and power-holders predominantly male — headmaster, boss, priest, doctor, policeman, prime minister — where fathers are possessors, allies of each other and potential dangers to her, men keep guard of the entrances to the middle worlds of earth and water, let alone the god-guarded upper world of sky and air.

Even where women are authority figures there is still the possibility, maybe even the probability that they will react as do the male figures. That is, they will not believe her, will not only not protect her, but increase her sense of self-blame with punishment or banishment. Only feminist analysis has unskewed the truth — that the girl-child is

not Jezebel the seducer, the implacable sexual force against which man is a helpless victim but the victim of an implacably possessing power, expressed in physical, emotional and sexual terms.

At best a girl-child will have seen herself as collaborator in an offence against social mores, at worst she has seen herself as spoilt goods. Simply by her existence she has been named instigator of her own shame. Her own guilt may well increase proportionately with the lack of acknowledgement and acceptance of responsibility by individual and collective male figures in her society. And in 'traditional' male-dominated families mothers too have been unlikely confidants, since they are perceived to be powerless, unreachable or punitive when patriarchally-conditioned; sometimes they are perceived as victims to be protected. The incest victim, as Hine, as Persephone, carries the consequences.

In the book *Father Daughter Rape*, Elizabeth Ward includes a long list of behaviour disturbances which sexually abused girls and women report. Despite its length the list is not exhaustive. Other sexually abused women report other symptoms.

Yet many women who have not been sexually abused, or cannot remember sexual abuse incidents report similar symptoms. These women may say they feel 'there must be something there' to account for fears, distaste for sexual relations, dependency, lack of confidence and self-esteem etc. They may have repressed incidents or have been too young to retain the memory; they may be reacting to the generalised sexual assault of this society against all women. Incest victims are the extreme end of the cultural rape by which the patriarchy conditions women to sexual submission:

How can I be confident/clean/good/self-respecting/have rights since I have been branded?

Even if an incest victim in court is not held culpable or collaborative in her own assault by 'encouragement', 'seduction', or previous 'sexual experience' — meaning sexual assault — Miriam Saphira confirms that the community, both adults and children, are likely to brand her as sexually promiscuous. Even without this predisposing factor she may well see herself as sexually promiscuous.

At the 1982 Mental Health conference some interesting, if predictable, factors emerged regarding sexual abuse in this society. Factors like: — the sense of powerlessness women social workers feel when faced with a child's admission of sexual assault by a community power-holder such as a headmaster or minister who categorically denies the assault (if, indeed, the social worker can confront them) and threatens action.

- the number of social workers who have been abused children
- the male social worker who told a group of women that his sexual assaulter had given him only good things and that his four year old daughter was encouraging him to sexual activity with her
- the promptness of male authority figures to act punitively to boy sexual abusers
- the frequency with which sexually abused boys are identified by behaviour problems compared with the difficulty of recognising sexually abused girls who tend to withdraw into goodness and niceness
- homophobic attitudes still in large part the result of identifying homosexual males as child molesters despite a research ratio of 97% of child sexual abusers being heterosexual males
- the telegram sent to the conference organisers with a message from a paedophiliac group to the effect that they would not be deterred.

With the last factor in mind, I note the promptness with which, following last year's highly publicised American-made film for community-education attitudes on incest, we have this year an American psychologist 'authority' travelling the country warning that child accusers of sexual molestation by adults are not to be automatically believed. If he had other information it was not reported.

A most common consequence of sexual abuse for women and girls is loss of self-respect and the ability to act independently or take initiative, and to act in self-destructive ways. There is often a living-out of the messages of lack of worth which society has done little to dispel and much to corroborate. There is often a fear-dependency or passive-hostile approach to relationships, particularly with males and authority figures generally. Such conditioned rather than innate personality traits add up to wasting of talents, satisfactions, relationships and woman-resources.

The rape/incest victim often personifies the death-in-life underworld dweller of the prostrate body of the goddess. But as reclamation of self-empowering and healing occur, now that there is recognition of the crime of the fathers and the rights of the daughters, and as there is movement to dig the goddess out of the underworld — what then?

Steps to healing for the incest survivor are: validation of experi-

ence; emotional release as in grief and anger; healing exercises in a supportive environment; independent action ditto and in the wider community.

There are parallels in goddess/myth figure reclamations: admission of goddess figure existence; appropriateness of their reactions in human (woman) experience; their nurturing qualities towards women; a full range of powers in the community. In the full range I include the destructive aspect, the propensity to destroy old forms, since truth-telling, confrontation, self-responsibility both signify and cause 'destruction', particularly to male-defined stereotypes of women.

If myths are to be reclaimed and taught in any canon, then the historic evolutionary aspect of patriarchal myths, their derivation from earlier matriarchal myths must be included. We are hampered by lack of knowledge but not as much as claimed. Archaeology is being reinterpreted with 'fertility figurines' being renamed 'goddess', with generic title and function according to culture; and statuary and wall-paintings being re-annotated.

But there are drawbacks to the historic approach. The myth of creatrix Gaea tells how she makes a son/lover out of the earth, mates with him, then gives her children the weapon to castrate him so that they can flourish. We don't wish to be stuck with castration themes which have had sufficient mileage under Freud for enormous magnification of the destructive and minimalisation of the positive elements of mother love to have been used as a stick to vilify women.

Besides, one forsee the historic approach in patriarchal hands . . . I think of a television programme purporting to be on the Bronte family in which a disproportionately large amount of time was taken up with the least attractive, least productive member of the family, Branwell. Or a New Zealand feature on writer Robin Hyde where glimpses of the main character were constantly interrupted by the introspections and posturings of the makers showing themselves making the film.

This kind of appropriation, its naive solipsism, is still not apparently visible to the male-makers. The feminist imaginative recreation of experience into myth is the most positive approach. But there are others. The extraction of goddess figures from their embalment in roles of Furies, Norns, Grey Sisters, earth mothers etc and the synthesising of their attributes into the many-named and characterised but fundamentally tripartite great goddess of the maiden/woman/crone or daughter/mother/elder concept is happening. There is the feminist re-telling of myths, in which forced actions are omitted or converted into protagonist-initiated actions. Persephone for instance decides of her own volition to leave her mother to care for the souls of the dead, choosing to rejoin her mother for half the year.

This is an attractive course, especially to present to girl-children. As

part of the healing for sexually abused women and children perhaps a verions where Hades is not only repulsed but some consequential visitation is worked on him, would be satisfying. Literary works by women support this: writers like Bertha Harris in the US and Renee in New Zealand have described this kind of action.

Biological logic aside, Gertrude Stein's 'too many fathers' aside, I see the re-presentation of a complex but essentially creative or creatrix myth-figure/goddess as part of the education of children and the re-education of women. Provided that its interpretation reflects woman-positive concepts. And provided that it is not institutionalised — women, as Adrienne Rich points out, are rightly suspicious of institutions that have largely worked against their interests, and towards which they have developed subversive instincts. It is noteworthy that although there are 'gay' churches I haven't seen, nor expect to see a seriously suggested feminist 'church' — feminists being aware that the religious impulse is inseparable from social and political action and largely private.

Estelle Lauder's descriptions of American women artists' work indicate there are wealths of concepts, symbols, wisdom — and myths — being made now. If the Judeo-Christian myth figures are to become outdated, the fantasy game stereotypes shifted, for Eve to be absolved of her primal crime — stealing patriarchal wisdom — then it needs to be known that the apple was Eve's to begin with, that it was first stolen from her so that she could be reduced to mortality, and the primal crime, today as then, is rape — the invasion of the sanctity of a person.

Our re-creations, our imaginative analogues-of-identity in the new myths which will unbind the sky-father's grip on the upper world will also release the girl-child, the one out of four sexual abuse victims, from the journey into the psychological underworld, or the inexorable progress of becoming mortal mother to a divine son. the new myths may have no tangible political effects but they will provide a nurturing imaginative environment for the new woman.

Heather McPherson has been involved with many aspects of feminism and the Women's Art Movement as a writer, participator and poet. She is currently living in Matata (with her son).

Women and Power: Law Economics, Politics And Decision Making

Margaret Wilson

The topic assigned to me is large and complex and obviously one that cannot be adequately covered in detail in this paper. What I therefore propose to do is attempt to define what is meant by power and how and by whom it is exercised in the areas of economics, law, politics and decision making. I shall also attempt to explain why the attainment and exercise of power is important to women in the struggle to obtain equality. This discussion will also include an identification of the areas in which women have obtained power or have been excluded from the attainment and exercise of power. And finally I shall attempt to identify the restrictions placed upon women from attaining power and what strategies are necessary for women to participate fully within the decision-making structure and institutions that are the subject of the paper, namely, economics, law and politics.

Before I attempt to define the concept of power, it is important to acknowledge that the whole question of the attainment and exercise of power is a difficult one for women. It is not difficult in terms of

identifying the means whereby we obtain power, but even more importantly it is difficult to reconcile the acquisition of power with feminist ideology. Power is seen as an integral part of that system of values we call patriarchy. Feminism stands in opposition to patriarchy. The question then for feminists is whether it is possible to effectively challenge patriarchy without using one of the tools of patriarchy, namely, power.

There is a genuine concern that use of power is not only a contradiction of the feminist method, but that the use of it will make it impossible to achieve the values of feminism. This concern is frequently expressed when women undertake the challenge of patriarchy by working within its institutions, particularly the political system, but equal concern may be expressed about the economic and legal systems.

Since this paper is focused upon a consideration of three patriarchal institutions I shall not pursue a discussion of the effectiveness of challenging patriarchy by working outside its institutions. I shall merely comment that I acknowledge the dilemma and the need for more discussion as to the feasibility of this approach under our present system. Here, I am more concerned with the question as to whether it is possible for feminists to work within patriarchal systems without being corrupted by them and thus being diverted from struggle to replace patriarchy with a system based upon feminist values. This is a real question for many women who struggle daily to achieve this objective.

In order to challenge patriarchy effectively we need to understand how it operates and the tools it relies upon to maintain its domination. One of those tools is power. We must then first understand what is meant by the concept of power, how it is exercised, and why it is exercised predominantly by men in the institutions under consideration, namely the economic, legal and political systems. Although much has been written about the concept of power, for the purposes of this paper I shall use the definition used by Stacey and Price in their book, *Women, Power and Politics* (1981). They wrote:

Power is clearly one element in all social relationships, and is difficult to separate from such related concepts as authority, control, influence and domination . . . The notion of power undoubtedly has to do with the ability of an individual or a group to influence the course of events in the direction they desire even against resistance by others.

Power then is about the ability to be able control or influence the

behaviour and status of others. It is also about having authority backed up by force to exercise dominion over others. This capacity to exercise force is achieved by a variety of methods. The two most obvious are the exertion of physical force either personally or through control of others who exercise it on their command. The second method of applying force is through the use of authority legitimised by the law, or an accepted system of values sometimes called ideology.

Power is exercised in a variety of ways. It is most obvious in times of conflict when a decision has to be made between two or more competing claims. The power to resolve conflict is legitimised through the legal system. This is the accepted form of conflict resolution over questions involving specific rights, obligations and responsibilities. Conflict over allocation of resources in the community are normally resolved in a democratic society by the elected group of representatives of the community, that is, our politicians in the forum of Parliament. The legal system and the political system then are two important institutions that have been given authority to exercise power over the citizens of a community.

Conflict resolution is the visible form of power in action. There is however a hidden face of power. It is exercised to prevent matters becoming the subject of acknowledged conflict. Bachrach and Baratz in their book *Poverty and Power* (1970) analyse this form of power. It is the ability to keep matters 'off the agenda' so that there is never any apparent need to exercise power. Stacey and Price apply this argument to what often happens to women and politics.

It is sometimes argued that the reason why women are under-represented in politics because of their apathy. Yet, as they argue, it is more likely that women's issues are not represented in politics because of the:

ability of men to prevent (consciously or unconsciously) women's issues entering politics.

The whole history of the struggle for women's rights can be seen as an effort to raise the consciousness of the decision-making institutions to address this question. The ability to control and influence others then can be exercised in either an overt or covert way.

If then power involves the ability to control and/or influence others, even against their will, and if it is exercised through physical force or through legitimised institutions such as the legal system and Parliament, the question that must be asked is how and where do women exercise power? The answer to this question depends to a large extent on where you find women. Are women to be found

predominantly in the boardrooms, leading trade unions, sitting on the bench or in the corridors of political power in Parliament? Do they chair meetings or move the motions, or make decisions that affect the lives of others? It is true you will find women in all these positions but it is also true you are more likely to find women in the home, at the supermarket, behind a typewriter, cleaning up someone else's mess, working in a factory or caring for others in a paid or voluntary capacity. Women are simply not found in large numbers in any of the institutions in which power is exercised, except the family.

It is assumed that the home is the centre of women's power and influence. Here she is meant to rule supreme in her appropriate place. There is no need for her to seek power or influence outside the home in the public world because this is properly the domain of the man. Some would even argue that this is the natural order and for women to seek power and influence outside the home is to upset the natural balance and chaos will result. This is sometimes expressed in terms of feminism destorying the family because it seeks to change this natural position of women.

It is important to try and assess whether women in fact do assert power and influence inside the home. It is possible that within personal relationships a woman exercises considerable power and influence over her partner and children. An analysis of personal relationships is outside the scope of this paper so I shall concentrate upon the family and home as a social, economic and legal entity.

No family exists in isolation from the society within which it exists. The economic system impacts directly upon the family. The availability of employment, the taxation system and the welfare system all contribute towards what financial resources are available for use by the family. None of these factors is within the control or influence of the woman or the man within the family unit. The law also intrudes into the family relationships particularly in times of conflict. It attributes a status to all members of a family and as such determines their rights and responsibilities to one another. Even the values observed by the family are the result of external influences. Values are passed on through the family but are reinforced or challenged by the dominant ideology of the society. Religion and the media are two examples of vehicles for the development of a value system.

If women have little or no control over the economic, legal, or political systems — all of which affect her family and her home — then it is difficult to see what real control she exercises within this sphere. At best she tries to assert some influence over how all these factors impact on her family life. If she wishes to obtain greater control and influence she must go outside her home and enter the public world because it is impossible to separate the private and public worlds. It is when women attempt to leave their private domains that they encounter the visible face of power. Her decision

to change her traditional roles has in the past, and is even today seen by some as a direct challenge to those who exercise power. Although women have traditionally been associated with home and family, they have always been subject to the decisions of those who control the economic, legal, and political systems. Women have also traditionally challenged the exercise of this power through their struggle to obtain equality. As Mitchell in her essay 'Women and Equality' (1976) observed.

Feminism arose in England in the seventeenth century as a conglomeration of precepts and a series of demands by women who saw themselves as a distinct sociological group and one that was completely excluded from the tenets and principles of the new society. The seventeenth-century feminists were mainly middle-class women who argued their case in explicit relation to the massive change in society that came about with the end of feudalism and the beginning of capitalism. As the new bourgeois man held the torch up against absolute tyranny and argued for freedom and equality, the new bourgeois woman wondered why she was being left out.

The development from feudalism to capitalism was accompanied by the concept of citizenship which involved the individual having recognised certain rights. These rights involved the right to personal liberty and freedom, the right to own and freely contract property, the right to justice before the courts, the right to participate in the political process and the right to economic and social security. All of these rights were based upon the notion of individualism. If women then were to obtain these rights they had to be acknowledged as individuals. This meant they had first to challenge the accepted notion that women were inferior because of the characteristics attributed to women. Their femininity was associated with weakness and inability to cope with the public world. Wollstonecraft in the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) argued against this notion when she wrote:

I wish to show that elegance is inferior to virtue, that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex. (1792:82.)

Although today few would not accept that women have the status of human beings, the characteristics attributed to women are still used as an excuse for her not being able to fully participate within the decision-making structures. We are all familiar with comments upon our biological weakness precluding us from certain activities.

Not only did a woman have to assert her humanness to be

recognised as an individual, she also had to establish her status as an individual independent from her marital status. The married woman had had a long struggle to establish her right to own property, control her own earnings, obtain custody of her children and divorce her husband. Upon marriage the man and the woman became one and that person was the man. The influential legal writer Blackstone wrote in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1753):

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law . . . Upon this principle . . . depends almost all the legal rights, duties and disabilities, that either of these acquire by the marriage.

Throughout the nineteenth century women struggled to obtain recognition as individuals by challenging this legal presumption. It is only relatively recently with legislation such as the Matrimonial Property Act, 1976, that married women have successfully challenged the last of the major legal disabilities of being a married woman.

For many women in the nineteenth century the struggle to be recognised as an individual with equal rights to citizenship became focused upon the formal right to participate in the political system through the right to vote. As Stacey and Price (1981) stated:

Women saw in the denial of the vote the withholding of the key which would release them from enforced domesticity, inferior education, and lack of professional opportunities.

Rowbotham in *Hidden from History* (1974) expressed the expectation of women when they obtained the vote as follows:

If women could vote they could change man-made laws.

Women then saw they could only obtain their objective of equality if they were acknowledged as individuals with all the same formal legal rights of men. This included the important right to vote and to hold public office. If we review the efforts of those early feminists and their successors, it can be seen that they and we have had considerable success in achieving formal legal equality. We can vote, hold public office, have a right not to be discriminated against because of sex or marital status, have a right to equal pay and opportunity in employment, have the right to marry without forsaking our individual legal rights, have the right to divorce and have our financial contribution to the marriage acknowledged in property; we also have the right to fully participate in the economic system through owning property, acquiring capital and using it as we please, and the right not to be excluded from employment just because of our sex. With all

these rights it seems a contradiction to state that women have little effective power in the community.

It is true that in order to achieve these legal rights, women have demonstrated that we can exercise considerable influence upon those who make the laws, namely, the politicians. We have done this through lobbying, forming organisations to fight specific battles, and by joining established political organisations such as political parties and trade unions. We have managed through a variety of means to coopt male politicians or men of influence in the community who have supported our cause. We have also importantly raised the level of awareness amongst women of the inequality of their position. In all our struggles we have relied upon the concepts of justice, fairness and equality to support our case. We have assumed these are still values upon which we wish to organise our society. We have also acknowledged that formal expression to these principles can come only through the intervention of the state through the enactment of legislation.

The question remains, however, how much control do women have over their lives? Are the concerns and interests of women a high priority on the agenda of decision makers whether they be in Parliament, the Courts or industry? It can certainly be argued that the position of women has changed. We are no longer found only within our homes. In 1981 over half a million were involved in some form of paid employment outside the home, that is, nearly 40% of all persons in New Zealand working for financial reward. Although we are joining the paid workforce in increasing numbers we are still found in occupational ghettos in low status positions. There are some signs of women moving into non-traditional occupations and perhaps that 40% of students at Universities in 1981 may indicate we are moving into higher status positions.

Perhaps a true indication of our position in the paid workforce is illustrated by the fact that women still do not receive equal pay. The law provides for it, but our occupational status means we earn less than men. This is why the current campaign to raise the question of equal pay for work of equal value is important. It highlights the fact that women's work is undervalued when compared with the type of work performed by men.

The position of women in employment is important because the ability to be financially independent is a prerequisite to obtaining a degree of control over the decisions that affect our lives. Financial dependence upon another, whether it be a man or the state places a limitation upon freedom and equality. If there is one area that currently impedes women's struggles towards equality, it is women's lack of power over the economy. This is demonstrated by the fact that

the concerns and interests of women are not a high priority on the economic agenda. A relevant example of this is illustrated in the current debate over the introduction of labour market flexibility. A necessary precondition of labour market flexibility is the abolition of the National Award system and a weakening of the organisational strength of the trade unions.

The result of these two changes, if they were to become policy, would be (amongst other things) a lowering of the wages of women. This would happen because women still work predominantly in the low paid industries that rely upon the award to maintain a reasonable living wage. If that were removed, combined with a removal of union coverage, then women would be left without any protection, except their own individual ability to negotiate with their employer. This point has been noted by many trade unions who are working in opposition to the introduction of labour market flexibility. There is clear recognition of the powerless position many women hold in the workforce by many trade unions, but not by the community at large. It must be asked why this fact has not received more prominence.

While women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers, they are still not reaching positions of authority. This is seen in the legal system where there are only three women District Court Judges, and one woman has now been appointed to the Equal Opportunities Tribunal. More women are entering the legal profession but it appears too few are ready to undertake the authority positions. There may be some truth in this, but the concern is whether they will ever be considered ready by those who make or influence these decisions. One of the difficulties is that women often have different priorities to men as to the commitment of their time and resources. These priorities are not necessarily those of those who control the patriarchy so it is relatively easy for them to disqualify women because they set the criteria for appointment to authority positions. This is one of those practical difficulties women face — must they become just like men to obtain power, and if they do then can we expect any real change to our decision making institutions?

As far as the legal system is concerned, women have managed to place their interests high on the agenda which is evidenced by the amount of law reform relating to women's rights over the past 15 years. The question now is whether this formal equality will be reflected in real equality for women. Laws alone are not sufficient but they are necessary to effect real change for women. What is now needed is the enforcement of those laws and a constant monitoring to ensure they are fulfilling their original purpose. In order to achieve this, resources will have to be allocated to law enforcement, and there must be a constant awareness by those who enact laws of the rights of women. This brings me to the position of women in the political system.

After the last election there was a dramatic increase in the number of women in Parliament. There are now 12 women in Parliament. This increase was a result of a concerted campaign on the part of the New Zealand Labour Party to select women for seats in Parliament they were likely to win. The selection of these women was possible only because of the programme in the Party to encourage women to enter politics and to assist them with preparing themselves for this task. This programme was achieved principally through the organisation of a separate women's section within the Party. This enables women to work together while remaining part of the wider Party. The ability of women to be able to organise politically and to be successful electorally has been ably demonstrated.

Apart from encouraging women to undertake electoral office, the women in the Labour Party also recognised the constant need to keep women's issues high upon the political agenda. This was achieved by providing for a specific women's policy that encompasses all areas of policy, and also through the appointment of a Minister of Women's Affairs and a Ministry of Women's Affairs. The purpose in providing for these two positions was to ensure women were specifically represented where decisions are made, that is, in Cabinet, and in the bureaucracy. It was an attempt to identify sources of power and to provide for women to have an influence on the decision making on these institutions.

There was some opposition to the establishment of the Ministry as was evidenced by the Women's Forums that were held prior to the establishment of the Ministry. These Forums were an attempt to involve as many women as possible in this decision-making exercise. This attempt at participatory democracy obviously threatened some sections of the community. Many of the arguments in opposition reminded me of the struggle of those seventeenth century feminists who were struggling to establish the independence of women as autonomous human beings, instead of being seen always in relationship to their spouses and families.

It can be seen then that progress has been made by women to achieve some tentative control or at least influence with the economic, legal and political systems. We have greater access to decision making but it is still tenuous. It is dependent upon our ability to be economically and socially independent. In order for us to build upon the progress that has been made, it is necessary to increase our political power. It is necessary both to protect the gains we have made and to provide for the environment and the resources to enable us to make further progress.

Women have always had considerable personal resources to work in hostile environments. The cost however is high and the progress slow. In the past we have had to work outside the power structures and institutions. We now have a tentative hold within some of those

institutions. The struggle ahead of us is to maintain and strengthen our influence so that we can turn our energies to the task of changing the structures that maintain the institutions.

The task is awesome but then it always has been and we must never forget to acknowledge those feminists who have struggled in the past against the patriarchy. It is they who struggled to keep alive the notion of a peaceful world based upon co-operation and not on war. The achievement of a nuclear-free New Zealand is a recognition of their efforts. They also prepared the way for much of the legislation that has been passed recently, giving women a greater measure of formal equality. Their questioning of the arbitrary use of power has reminded us that the acquisition of power and control over decision making is not an end in itself. It is to enable the creation of a society that is based upon equality and co-operation. Whether these objectives can be furthered is now the responsibility of feminists today.

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Notes

This article was originally presented as a lecture in the 1986 *Perspectives on Women Today* series arranged by the Department of Continuing Education, University of Auckland.

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Looking at Feminist Theories Looking at Women's Art Practices

Christine Cheyne

From the time of British colonisation New Zealand has produced a continuous stream of Pakeha women artists in the European tradition. The impact of Victorian concepts of femininity and domesticity were such that a new ideal was promoted for (middle-class) women. A certain degree of artistic skill became much valued as a feminine accomplishment. Dalziel (1977) has described the powerful ideology in 19th century New Zealand which upheld women as the moral guardians of society, whose purity, virtues and piety were to be used for the conversion of their rough, boorish male counterparts. Thus, women's pursuit of artistic skills was seen as entirely consistent with their socially ascribed identity as representatives of refinement and culture.

Certain kinds of art work were considered to be appropriate for middle-class women of accomplishment, and similar attitudes have survived to influence present-day views of women's work. The middle-class value of the 'lady-of-leisure' who was expected to enjoy such things as embroidery, drawing or, more recently, pottery, as a

hobby, became significant as an indicator of class position.

The effect of this was to reinforce the idea that women's involvement in art was a recreational activity, not a 'serious', or formal, professional role. Oliver (1980) acknowledges that although their interest in doing art frequently brought these women into conflict with both their families and society at large, nevertheless they did not consolidate a recognised place for women artists within the art establishment.

The art work of middle-class women was not considered to be serious by their peers and by more powerful members of the local art world. (Sometimes recognition came first of all from overseas). It was a suitably frivolous pastime, whereas for the male artist, art was legitimately and more frequently serious, his life work. The art work in which women engaged was properly of an amateur status, and for them to practise art fulltime in a professional capacity constituted a challenge to conventional notions of the appropriate work for women.

It was with the second wave of feminism in the 1960s that more consistently radical thought and practice characterised the work of women artists in this country. The new wave of feminism brought about the emergence of what is known as the 'women's art movement', especially in Australasia, North America and Britain. The term refers to those women artists who consciously sought to express a feminist political commitment in their work. The movement has drawn attention to the documentation (or, more correctly, the *lack* of documentation) of women artists by revealing the extent to which art history has ignored or devalued women. It has identified a hierarchy of the arts in which women are to be found predominantly in the art forms which are considered to be of inferior status, usually those activities secondary to 'great' art, the crafts. Indeed, the familiar phrase 'arts and crafts' embodies the distinction between the two activities and conveys the order of the two — with art ranking first.

Juliet Batten records that in 1975, International Women's Year, the first public exhibition of work by women influenced by feminist consciousness took place at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in Christchurch. She (1982:26) described it as 'a radical exhibition for its time.' A second major event in the history of the New Zealand women's art movement occurred two years later. A women's art environment at the Christchurch Society of Arts Gallery was set up to run in conjunction with the United Women's Convention being held in the city at the same time.

Another historical event for the women's art movement in New Zealand was the opening of the Women's Gallery in Wellington in January, 1980. This was significant because, in Juliet Batten's words

(1982:28): 'the women's art movement had come out from underground'. The stated aims of the Gallery were to promote and support women artists. This involved a concern to transform and extend the perceived function of an art gallery, to remove barriers between artists and non-artists, between 'art' and women's wider day-to-day realities.

The Gallery was constantly challenged from many quarters: by women who did not support the concept of a separatist institution; by separatist women who did not believe it should be open to men; and by men — especially those in the art world who reacted negatively to the Gallery's rejection of the art establishment's attempt to construct objective male artistic standards. Instead of such standards, the Women's Gallery encouraged serious recognition of women's art work, sharing of skills and information, and exploration of new ways of recording the significance of women's realities.

The work of many women artists constituted a significant challenge to the traditional definition and practice of art. It consciously sought to give artistic expression to women's experiences which had been neglected or silenced (for example, rape, pregnancy, menstruation), subjects which were often considered taboo or 'bad taste' in art and in other media. It embodied new themes (for example, the reality of domestic conflict in the face of the 'happy family' image, and the question of ideal beauty), new symbols (such as, shells and spirals), and challenged the undervaluing of women's art.

There has been a new emphasis on the personal and the autobiographical. The women's movement has promoted the intimate and the domestic aspects of daily life as worthy subjects of art — themes which were generally regarded as trivial or mundane by art critics, art historians, art dealers and art gallery curators. The women's art movement asks whether such categories as 'high' and 'low' art are relevant, and what makes a person an 'artist'. These are questions which suggest a radical redefinition of human creativity.

The very term 'woman artist' maintains women's inferior status. By it, 'women artists' are presented as deviations from the universal category of 'artists', which in fact only includes *male* artists. Stanley (cited by Spender, 1980:20) has described this exclusion of women with her theory of 'negative semantic space'.

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Even when women move to new roles beyond the narrow range of activities in which they have traditionally been concentrated, they do not receive the same positive status as the male incumbents of those roles. Women are still labelled as women and their femaleness stressed to reinforce their lack of maleness. In this way, the norm, the positive, still may not apply to women. The term 'woman artist' is indeed used dismissively. It means, in effect, 'someone-less-than-artist'.

The women's art movement has challenged the idea of a 'feminine sensibility'. Initially the notion of a feminine sensibility — by which certain themes, media, and styles were prescribed as the proper domain of women artists — provided a new means of recognising women's work. However, the prescription of a 'feminine sensibility' which women artists were supposed to embody in their work ultimately reinforced the devaluation of women's art, because of the very fact that women, who were considered to be generally inferior to men, produced the art. The idea of a 'feminine sensibility' further restricted women artists because work that did not conform to it would be discredited for not being genuine.

Quite clearly, any sensibility changes with its social matrix. Women's use of the medium of pastel or of floral subjects can be explained by the greater availability of the material as well as a tradition in such areas. Similarly, qualities like 'patience' and 'obsessive detail' arise not so much from innate female skill as from a longstanding, limited role prescription. Thus, a 19th century French critic could state:

Male genius has nothing to fear from female taste. Let men of genius conceive of great architectural projects, monumental sculpture, and elevated forms of painting. In a word, let men busy themselves with all that has to do with great art. Let women occupy themselves with those types of art which they have always preferred, such as pastels, portraits or miniatures . . . (or) . . . painstaking arts which correspond so well to the role of abnegation and devotion which the honest woman happily fills on earth and which is her religion (Parker and Pollock, 1981:13).

The claim that art has no gender has been used in a similar way to the idea of a feminine or female sensibility; that is, to exclude or diminish the significance of women's work. Making such a claim obscures the differential relationship of men and women to the sexual division in society and the historically varied consequence of this division for the

art produced by women and men.

I will now explore the nature of the women's art movement at a different level, and argue that in fact the present general direction of women's art is founded on radical feminist premises and as such does not constitute an adequate base for challenging the hegemonic processes of the art establishment. I shall then consider the opportunities for a more thorough critique afforded by a socialist feminist approach to cultural production.

The fullest extension of radical feminist theory argues that there are immutable psychological and biological differences between the sexes. This argument is:

— *biologically deterministic* because the biological characteristics of males and females are believed to determine the expression of gender differentiated behaviour;

— *reductionist* because the cause of women's oppression is reduced to the biological facts of female experience. Men and women are seen as possessing inherently different qualities.

Because men lack the capacity to bear children, they are also deprived of a whole matrix of attributes that women are supposed to embody as a result of innate psychological features linked to their potential to give birth. While it is true that women and men are born into a gender structured society and therefore experience reality differently, the construction of gender is not reducible to the biological, nor to some innate psychological quality of femaleness.

Many women artists and critics have responded to their own exclusion by developing strategies very like the biological essentialism and separatism of radical feminism. This kind of approach is shortsighted because it does not challenge the basic organisation of art in society, and it may simply produce a parallel art establishment. Since they emphasise the dichotomous nature of female and male experience, radical feminists — particularly cultural feminists — stress the uniqueness of women's artistic or literary production.

For radical feminists, the goal is an alternative practice that enables women to withdraw from the dominant culture. It becomes a permanent counterculture, a refuge from and contrast to the patriarchal one.

The strategy of those whose sole concern is to elevate the status of the *subjects* of women's art, so as to make female experience (such as pregnancy, motherhood, domesticity), and the *forms* of women's art (such as embroidery, quilting) as equally valid as the subjects and styles of men's art, is limited and, in fact, opposed to a socialist

feminist approach. The primary focus here is on the content of a particular artistic or literary product. The goal is the replacement of patriarchal messages, which reinforce women's subordination and male power, with feminist ones; that is, statements about the abilities and worth of women that are not defined by male interests. It becomes clear that while *women's* codes are employed by radical feminists to evaluate art, nevertheless these are not *feminist* codes. In reality, radical feminists are engaged in raising the value of codes that are fundamentally male-defined, since they are predicated upon the difference of women and men — women's 'otherness'. This type of 'cultural' feminism clearly shares some elements in common with conservative ideologies which argue for separate spheres for men and women.

More important, I believe, than defining a *feminist* text is to describe what is a feminist cultural intervention. As Kuhn says:

. . . if it is accepted that meaning does not reside purely in the text itself, that it is not something locked within the text waiting for a reader in order to be liberated, but is itself to some degree an independent product or outcome of reading, then it becomes impossible to consider feminism in terms of fixed textual attributes, whether they be of 'form' or of 'content', let alone in terms of whether or not producers intended to put them there. (Kuhn, 1982:16)

Thus, the encouragement of a feminist art criticism results in feminist 'readings' of texts to alert people to the patriarchal and bourgeois ideological mechanisms of texts. For various reasons, primarily its separatism and biological reductionism, radical feminism is prevented from developing any other political action than this counter-cultural strategy (Barrett, 1980:4)

Socialist feminists find radical feminist arguments untenable for the following reasons:

- they do not give sufficient attention to the diversity of women's experience of oppression through history and in contemporary societies;
- they do not offer an effective strategy for political change; women's reality becomes immutable, with hope being found only in a separate women's world;
- the concept of a women's culture, an essentially female form of

acting is without material foundation. It is not guaranteed by female physiology.

The defining characteristic of socialist feminism is its adherence to historical materialism as a method for understanding social reality. Socialist feminism has extended the concept of the material base to include:

... the set of social relations which structures the production and reproduction of the necessities of daily life, the production of people, including the production of sexuality, as well as the production of goods and services. (Jaggar, 1983:332).

In contrast to mainstream Marxist and neo-Marxist theories, for which gender relations are unproblematic, it requires the dual focus on class and gender as basis of oppression, but it constitutes more than the supplementing of Marxist categories with feminist categories. This has been the traditional Marxist position — to make 'the woman question' an addendum, an auxiliary to the central 'class question'. The problem with this 'additive' approach, as socialist feminists recognise, is that it implies that issues of gender and race merely multiply the degree of oppression that exists, whereas in fact they radically alter the *quality* of that oppression¹.

Socialist feminism attributes substantial importance to the role of non-economic factors in the maintenance of power both in social relations in general, and specifically in power relations between males and females. Women's oppression is political and ideological as well as economic; that is, the power of men is derived from their control of the means of production but also of the forms of signification in society. The study of cultural practice (including both art work and aesthetic theory) is significant because of the insights that can be gained into the maintenance of the dominant hegemony — how the dominant culture is able to produce and reproduce the existing social relations which reinforce the privilege of dominant groups.

Mainstream art criticism has been premised on male perceptions of the world and specifically of artistic creation. With this power of definition, men have been further able to reproduce the subordination of women, through both the images of women that were deemed acceptable, and the prescription of particular kinds of creativity that are appropriate to women — the feminine sensibility.

The basic premise in this paper is that the challenge to bourgeois and patriarchal authority is one that must be directed at the production and reproduction of the existing power relations through the practice of art and the products of artists. The creation of a

distinctive socialist feminist artistic practice is therefore as relevant to social transformation as, for example, efforts to overcome women's exploitation in wage labour.

A socialist feminist analysis of art seeks to examine art history in order to reveal the biases and inadequacies not only in regard to the position of women artists, but also in order to pose new questions about the discipline of art in all its aspects. The socialist feminist approach departs here from a more conventional history of women's art. It is not sufficient merely to resurrect or rediscover women artists who were denied recognition in their own time. Nor is it simply a matter of claiming that women's art is valid, that it approaches the same greatness as men's art, though its subject matter and style may be different.

Socialist feminist criticism of the arts demands a conjunctural analysis, one that encompasses the wider process of meaning production. Parker and Pollock acknowledge this need for looking at the social and historical conditions in which a work of art is produced:

Women's practice in art has never been absolutely forbidden, discouraged, or refused, but rather contained and limited to its function as the means by which masculinity gains and sustains its supremacy in the important sphere of cultural production. (Parker and Pollock, 1981:170)

There is an unfortunately dangerous tendency among many in the women's art movement to seek simply (overtly or unintentionally) a place for women in the existing male meritocracy of art. Frequently, exhibitions of women's art merely attempt to fit women's art into the mainstream, to showcase women's art. Batten (1982:27) has confirmed that:

... there is always a danger that women use the new art movement as a place for shelter rather than challenge, as a place to confirm the stereotypes rather than explode them.

Kuhn (1982:9) similarly acknowledges that the promotion of women artists, film-makers, writers, and so on, does not constitute a fully-developed feminist intervention in cultural production. Much of women's art which originally was counter-hegemonic in that it set out to question the accepted point of view, to challenge the traditional visual art form, and to displace the traditional bases of aesthetic pleasure, has become incorporated into the art establishment.

A socialist feminist approach is opposed to the exhibition of women's art simply to serve the interests of a governing critical ideology, or institutional requirements. With the emergence of the

women's art movement, the showing of work by women has become sometimes a concession made by the art establishment, and at other times, a new commodity of the establishment.

The strategy of those who are concerned merely with the ways in which women are denied equal literary or artistic opportunity (such as their lack of access to the artistic or literary canon, and their negatively disproportionate representation in influential institutions and in art criticism) suffers from the flaws of liberalism and its limited capacity for change. It does not challenge or begin to dismantle the ideological and political structures, of which discrimination against women artists is merely a symptom. (Bowen (1977:83) is severely critical of such reformist tendencies). Likewise, the radical feminist goal of raising the status of women's embroidery and quilting work, for example, does not necessarily challenge the hierarchy of the arts.

There are various consequences of the recent interest in women's craft work. At the same time as there is a welcome recognition of the skills of women who have made patchwork quilts or have done embroidery and other such craft work, there is the possibility that this recognition can be used to validate women's work in the home in such a way as to reinforce women's responsibility for, and confinement to, domestic labour. And, sometimes, in the process of admitting women's craft work to the art world, the fact that quilts and such things have been made by women, in the domestic sphere, for use, is obscured. They are made into *art*, and acknowledgement of their origins is downplayed in order to assert their 'artistic' quality, and associated commodity value — their non-utilitarian value and purpose.

The point I wish to make is that women's practice is not necessarily outside art history, but inside, according to a set of conditions shaped by male perceptions and interests. Thus, women have not been entirely excluded from art history, but they have been recognised to have a particular capacity for, and relationship to art that is nevertheless inferior to that of male artists.

The term 'feminist artist', for some artists and critics, requires the expression of explicit feminist statements in their work, and the manifestation of certain styles, within certain media — all of which amount to the prescription of a feminist sensibility.

The more fruitful line of enquiry according to socialist feminist scholars is to examine the reasons for women's particular practices, those factors which confined them to certain types of cultural intervention, rather than to enshrine a new female or feminist sensibility, which will be found to be constantly changing. It may be true that their location in the domestic sphere has generated

women's awareness of a 'mundane' reality and has become reflected in autobiographical work; or that had women not been constrained by domestic responsibilities their art would have been of a quite different nature.

In contrast to conventional approaches to art, a socialist feminist one does not try to establish an orthodoxy, but is, instead, guided by the principal feminist value of the significance of personal experience. Because of the diversity of experience of women, therefore, it is difficult to assert as 'feminist' art a particular, recognisable style.

Feminist art is not simply art by and about women, but it is a whole set of practices working politically against patriarchal and other forms of domination. 'Feminism' may be more or less consciously expressed in the *content* of feminist art. More importantly, however, feminist artistic practice must address the *organisation* of art. It challenges the *structural features* of the representations of dominant groups, as well as the *content* of dominant cultural representations.

The crucial project for a socialist feminist cultural practice is the creation of new *meanings* of art. Feminist art is a politics of art, not simply a female or feminist aesthetic. Indeed, as Elias (1985:5) says: 'The goal of feminism is to change the face of art.'

My central argument has been that the 'discourse' of the 'art establishment', which claims to be dealing purely with issues of aesthetics, is saturated with social and ideological assumptions, some of which are not adequately challenged by certain feminist approaches. A feminist approach to art criticism must seek to be as rigorous as the contemporary feminist critique within the sociology of knowledge which has challenged not just the content of knowledge, but its epistemological bases also.

Indeed, the socialist feminist examination of cultural products and practices may be seen as an important development in the sociology of art. This requires the questioning of what really constitutes the social meaning and value of art, rather than seeking to validate women's contribution within the existing art establishment by asserting the uniqueness of women's artistic work.

Although it has been a worthwhile project to assert the status of women's work, the task is not to apply to women's art the same criteria by which men's art has been elevated, but to challenge the fundamental assumptions about what constitutes art. This is to proceed beyond the 'women and . . .' syndrome that has been described by Stanley and Wise (1983:31). This corrective emphasis of filling the gap where women have been excluded — 'women and work', 'women and the arts' — enables the development of women's studies to be appropriated by existing male-dominated social science, to be incorporated into its subject matter without changing the established procedures of social science which originally silenced and omitted women.

The central intention of a socialist feminist criticism of art is to generate a new practice that legitimates and values the contribution of traditionally powerless members of society, and which recognises and undermines the hegemonic purposes to which art and art criticism have been directed by the powerful.

Women's domestic labour and other aspects of women's lives have traditionally been regarded as unworthy of representation. For this reason it is important to oppose the trivialisation and invalidation in art of these legitimate features of women's past and present reality. However, there must be caution exercised in emphasising and celebrating these so that they do not constitute a new prescription for women's art.

Feminism is, of course, precisely that which resists appropriation. As Kolodny (1981:30) acknowledges, those feminists who are involved in the arts need to take full responsibility for the 'truly radicalising premises that lie at the core of all that we have so far accomplished'. The challenge for socialist feminist theorists — especially those critics of cultural production and cultural producers — is to be alert to co-optive tendencies, so as not to compromise the value of a searching feminist and sociological critique of art with the romantic notion of an autonomous and independent artistic production.

Feminists who are involved in the arts must be constantly displacing themselves, that is, continually reassessing and refining their critique of art. They must shift away from any recognition or reward that does not stimulate more egalitarian forms of participation, both in the creation and enjoyment of art work, and must seek to analyse the artistic status of any work that reinforces negative perceptions of the role of women. Formerly subversive activities, indeed, may lose their oppositional impact. Likewise, the idea of art as retaining universal significance, across time and distance, is ideological. For socialist feminists, art is not something that necessarily has an inherent, timeless meaning; rather, quality and meaning are derived from the socio-historical conditions in particular conjunctures. The radical nature of socialist feminist theorising and working requires ongoing self-evaluation and redirection: lifelong vigilance.

The claim that women artists have been relegated to obscurity, that there is a significant body of women artists who have simply been overlooked by conventional art historians, should not be the goal of feminist artists and historians, but the point of departure.

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Notes

This is a shortened version of a paper, *Art and Feminist Politics*, given in Hamilton to a conference of the New Zealand Sociological Association, 2-4 December, 1985. (The second list of references that follows consists of those left out of the edited text.)

- 1 In describing the socialist feminist approach as one that emphasises both class and gender, this is not intended to trivialise the effects of race or other systems of oppression. On the contrary, socialist feminism rejects the separation of class, race and women's issues, and asserts the relevance of women in every issue, just as every issue has class and race implications. Socialist feminists are seeking to transform the gender blind categories of traditional Marxism 'so that the proletariat can be seen to be comprised of women as well as men, of people of other colours other than white, and of children as well as adults. It must also be seen to labour in many places other than the factory' (Jaggar, 1983:379). And, while asserting the comprehensiveness of a socialist feminist critique of art, I do not wish to dismiss the important contribution to the debunking of conventional Western bourgeois notions of art that is provided by commentators and practitioners from other cultural traditions and values, especially traditional Maori society, in which the whole basis for the production and consumption/receptivity of art is at variance with that of capitalist Pakeha society. There is a fundamental contradiction when the 'artistic practices' of the former have been appropriated by the latter, as Riley (1984:56) observes. Socialist feminism, as a theory, is of profound significance for political movements, for the feminist struggle, and for the sociology of knowledge. It is not limited to a single population, females, or to the oppression of women alone. On the contrary, it transforms every aspect of reality and every field of knowledge.

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She Was 'Only a Bloody Sheila' Who Battled For Workers' Rights

Kris Bennett

(Agnes Murphy was born in Glasgow in 1911 and died in Auckland of cancer at the age of 74. Shortly before Ms Murphy died Kris Bennett interviewed this indomitable trade unionist, who lived in New Zealand for over half a century battling for the people at the bottom of the economic ladder. She was first elected to the Auckland City Council on the Labour ticket in 1950, with the third lowest vote, but by the next election in 1953 she was the third highest out of 70 candidates.

One suggested reason for her failure to be re-elected in 1956 was because she had remarried and changed her name — the result was that the public did not identify the A. Johnston on the list of candidates with Councillor A. Dodd. Ms Murphy married three times, and all her husbands were seamen. She was an active supporter of the Seamen's Union and is reported to have arranged the details of

her own funeral at the Seamen's Mission when she knew she did not have long to live.

Unfortunately, some incomprehensible harm occurred to the tapes on which this interview was recorded, so it was impossible to transcribe all of it. There remains urgent work to be done to record in greater detail not only Agnes Murphy's activities, but also those of other undocumented women like her. — Editor)

My Dad raised me because my mother died when I was a wee girl. He was a staunch trade unionist so I was brought up in a trade union environment. The first thing I remember about trade unions was when there was a miners' strike that lasted for nine months. It was winter and I was home for the school holidays all wrapped up because I was so cold and miserable. I wanted something to do so I started cleaning the shelves. And I opened this old silver teapot and here it was full of money. *Full* of money. And I remember thinking to myself 'all that money and me sitting here *freezing*'. When my Dad came home that night from work I said:

You're the meanest cruellest father ever made because we've got no fire and you've got that teapot full of money, and you're that mean you wouldn't buy a bag of coal.

And he said:

every teapot and jug could be full of money in this house and there wouldn't be one bag of coal.

And then he sat there and explained to me.

So I came out here from a Dominican convent in Portobello Road, North Kensington. I thought I knew everything when I arrived and I got taken for a ride. Of course I had a box with letters of recommendation. I was supposed to go to the Monte Cecilia Convent in Mt Albert but I'd finished with convents, finished with nuns. So off the ship and up to the YWCA with a girl I met on the ship. I had £37 and in 1931 that was a lot of money. The next morning my girl friend's gone and so's all my money and there I was stranded. More by good luck than good management I got over it. The YWCA was fairly good. I got around looking for a job — at that stage if you didn't work you didn't eat — no handouts.

Then it was in 1934 I was going with Charlie Dodd. He was a seaman and there was the San Francisco seamen's strike and an American ship the *Mariposa* came into Auckland and it was all scab labour. And of course Charlie Dodd and myself and some others found all these scabs at a party at Anglesea Street and we followed them up. Each one

got a paling off the fence and we went in and we played merry hell.

After that I settled down to be a wife. There was no work for women then anyway much. In 1939 the war broke out, then in 1940 I got a job in the Post Office as a cleaner and that was my first real entry into trade unions. It was on the ground floor, the toughest in the building — more traffic there than anywhere. There was six of us.

At that time I was living in Collingwood Street and we had to walk to work and I used to get home by 8 o'clock in the morning, to get my little boy ready for school. Unfortunately I was married to an alcoholic. He was a good trade unionist but a dead loss as a husband and a father — but that's beside the point.

In 1942 we shifted to John Street, Ponsonby and then the first Yanks arrived in Auckland² and they were all billeted at Victoria Park and I had to walk from John Street to the main Post Office at half-past three in the morning. The first week it was all right but the second week I got to work and one of our women, she was only a little lady like me, had been attacked by a Yank. So I went to the women and I said:

This is *not* good enough. This is only the beginning. You women back me up and I'll go and apply for transport.

So I went to see the man in charge of the Post Office Workers' Association.³ and asked him to do something. He said:

We can do nothing.

What do you mean you can do nothing? We belong with you. You take money out of my wages every week so I must belong to your association. (It wasn't a union.)

Oh no. No, you don't belong to us.

We must do. You take our money.

You can come to our meetings but you're not allowed to speak.

Oh is that a fact. Well, If you touch a penny of my money in future, I'm going to pull every woman out of here.

At that time there were about 25 women working in the building getting about £2 a week, I think. I went back to the women and told them the Association would do nothing for us and asked them to back me up. But no way, no way at all. They'd rather take a chance of getting battered than make a protest. I left that job — well, I didn't leave it I got dumped because — you know — I kicked up a row.

Then I went to a cafeteria job and said to the fellow could I join the union.

We haven't got any union.

But you must have. What about the Hotel Workers' Union or any union that touches food?

Oh no, certainly nothing like that.

The next job I got was as a cleaner of a factory in Anzac Avenue. The owner's wife came to see me about doing it because they wanted someone they could trust and I took it because it suited me. The next thing I went to the Caretakers' and Cleaners' Union and asked which union took on women cleaners. 'Nobody', he said. In those days if you were a caretaker of a building you employed the staff and you paid them what you thought was right. No union. Anyway George Forsyth was the head of the Caretakers' and Cleaners' Union and I went to him and I sat down and said it was time the women were organised into a union:

Can't we join your union?
Oh no, we've never heard of women.
But you've got one now!
Well, we can't have you Agnes.

So I went to George Armstrong of the Hotel Workers' Union and told him:

My God you can get any job bloody easier than you can get into a union here. I don't believe it.

He said: 'Agnes, you organise them. You start your own cleaners' union'. And that I did — I walked miles. I was up stairs down stairs, in this, out this, up hills, down hills and I couldn't get 10 women to form a union. I couldn't get 10 women and they needed 10 to form a union. I said 'You're a gutless bloody lot — you make me sick'. So I went back to George Forsyth, put five shillings on the table and I told him:

You take my money. I want to belong to this union.

He did. And I was the only woman in that union among all those fellows. Well of course then that was an education. I never missed a meeting, got up and made myself heard and bitched about the other women — I couldn't do anything about it. So, they were looking for a delegate to the trades council, believe it or not, and they couldn't get one. So Billy Muggins got elected and took it on. And Billy Muggins used to scream her head off. And they'd say:

Sit down, you don't know what you're talking about. You're only a bloody sheila.

That's the way they used to talk but there's not much change now. After the first meeting George Forsythe came to me, and he gave me five shillings. I said:

What's that for?

That's for going to that Trades Council

What!

Oh yes, all our delegates get five shillings a meeting.

Do you mean to tell me you have to pay bloody men to go to your meeting for their benefit?

Yeah

Gor blimey no wonder the women haven't got a union. No wonder.

Well, I went through there and then came the fifty-one blue.⁴ At that time I was very active in the Labour Party and every meeting I went to I sat down and thought: 'they don't know what they're talking about. Not one of them does.' And I was nominated as a city councillor which I did, and I made it, the first woman in 10 years. The only other Labour woman in there was Mary Dreaver.

I got on the council — Sir John Allum was the mayor — and it was the first meeting and I thought 'this is going to be good.' I went along and dear old Sir Dove⁵ came in and sat down. We were having an argument or a debate or something and I got up and Sir John said: 'Sit down Mrs Dodd' and I said: 'No I won't sit down. I was on my feet before you.' And everybody was gaping at me. He said: 'I said sit down.' And I said: 'You're not going to bully me. I won't sit down.' And he said:

I forgive you this time, because you don't know. When I stand up I'm the mayor and I represent her majesty, and no matter what you are doing you must sit down.

I said, 'that's not fair' but I sat down.

Anyway, I got on with everybody and I always got up and had my say and I was a bloody nuisance to them because the Freemans Bay Residents' and Welfare Association had asked me to take up housing with the State Advances of that time. I felt for the people especially in Freemans Bay. They were going to redevelop all that and I had a lot of trouble and arguments with the council regarding this land some of it residential, some of it light industrial. So it came to the point where we had this meeting and I said:

If you're going to rezone and rebuild Freemans Bay I want a statement here that the people who have been pushed out of their homes have the right of first choice of returning. This is their area here, their homes. And I want it recorded.

Which it was. Anything I had to say was always recorded. I always made a point of that. Unfortunately it didn't build houses for the workers in Freemans Bay. They built them for the rich.

Now there was a chap at that time who was a bailiff. He used to come round, tip people out of their homes, put their stuff on the street and padlock it. And I and some others went around and kicked the bloody bolts off the place and let the people back in.

Now, funny things happened in life. It was three years later when I was on the Orakei housing committee. I had a file in front of me about a state house and I thought: 'That's funny I know that name' and you wouldn't believe it but this was the bloody bailiff that had put *hundreds* of people out of their homes and he was applying for a state house! So I went to the manager and I said:

You can't give this fella a house. He's the bloody bailiff!
The *bailiff*?

Yeah.

Unfortunately Agnes, unfortunately I have to because he's in his mother-in-law's home and she died and being a government servant he has the chance of a state house.

Kris Bennett was the first Co-ordinator of the Auckland Working Women's Resource Centre, which was established in 1984. She is currently Industrial Officer for the Northern Local Government Officers' Union.

Notes

1. Thanks to Bert Roth for background information. Also to Pat Rosier for repairs that made some of the second tape playable.
2. Members of the American armed forces, some of whom were sent to New Zealand after the USA had become involved in World War 2 in 1941.
3. The New Zealand Post and Telegraph Employees' Association. At that time state employees' associations did not perceive themselves as trade unions.
4. The 1951 waterfront dispute. Agnes Dodd was one of the speakers filmed at a meeting organised by the Combined Unions in Auckland's Carlaw Park on 15 June of that year (Roth and May, 1986).
5. Sir (at that time still Mr) Dove-Myer Robinson, who was also attending his first council meeting and subsequently served for 18 years as Mayor of Auckland.

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Scaling the Heights, They Called it 'An Easy Day for a Lady'

Pip Lynch

Very little has been written about the history of women mountaineers in nineteenth century New Zealand — a 'herstory' which extends from an ascent of Mt. Egmont in 1855 to more numerous ascents in the twenty years prior to the turn of the century. Even though they depended strongly on their male counterparts for guidance and support, some women's achievements were remarkable and well worth recording. In this era New Zealand attracted many natural scientists — geologists, botanists, zoologists — and there was a high level of scientific curiosity in the colony (Graham, 1981). Historical records of that time relate many expeditions into mountainous areas undertaken mostly by Government survey workers who were sometimes accompanied by female relatives and acquaintances.

From the time mountaineering first took root in New Zealand, much material has been published, with detailed recordings and analyses, about this country's mountaineering men, and the men who came here seeking new challenges. This preoccupation with the male

element in New Zealand mountaineering is in keeping with the more general and extensive domination of the white male over almost all social and recreational facets of life, and is particularly true for the time period dealt with here.

The alpine activities of women in New Zealand have never been as far-reaching as those of men for a variety of reasons, yet from the beginning women commonly accompanied men on exploratory high country excursions, on survey work, and on recreational ascents of peaks. Unfortunately the activities of these women are largely obscured in the literature by the exploits of their male counterparts but this paper deals with women who were active mountaineers in New Zealand during the Victorian era, 1837-1901. The dates were chosen to delimit the initial period of women's mountaineering in New Zealand. They coincide with the reign of Queen Victoria in England and Victorian society in New Zealand, and it is convenient to describe and analyse activities within the period as shaped by similar social forces.

To put the achievements of women mountaineers in context, it is important to look at the recreational pursuits open to women. In colonial New Zealand recreation and sport were potential avenues for women to achieve 'an emancipation of sorts' (Crawford, 1985). The frontier nature of the life of the time tended to avoid the rigid compartmentalisation of women's roles that dominated English middle class society in the nineteenth century. However, among the upper class sheep-station owners and their families, 'gentlewomen' were expected to perpetuate the attitudes and roles that applied to their sex in England.

The 'call' was the most important form of social contract in rural areas, and

the calling circle was so clearly defined that it was the main determinant of status (Eldred-Grigg, 1981).

Talk, music and gambling were standard amusements. There were also the longer 'visits' extending sometimes to several weeks, formal balls, garden parties and picnics. Horse riding had always been a popular and available activity for country women. Ladies rode side-saddle, and their riding habits were made of hard-wearing heavy materials, shaped to accommodate the protruding knee. Croquet was an acceptable outdoor game played by 'respectable' ladies wearing their usual bulky clothes (Ebbett, 1977).

These leisure pursuits were the preserve of the elite, not the majority of New Zealand's colonial population whose ideas about roles and activities for women were slowly changing. After 1880 a progressive spirit emerged among some women in the sphere of recreation but their involvement was only tolerated if it did not

impinge upon jealously guarded traditional male activities (Grimshaw, 1972). For many women in New Zealand recreation consisted of activities which were considered appropriate to assumed womanly instincts and abilities. In a society with such strongly defined roles, recreation for many females continued to be based around the needs of husbands and families. Handcrafts, drawing and sketching, reading, singing and playing musical instruments, cooking and decorating added variety to daily chores.

However there was a growing demand for the right of women and girls to unrestricted physical development and physical activity. This was marked by the beginnings of female participation in sporting and recreational institutions. Clothing was a major difficulty for the sporting woman, as were the behavioural constraints of a society 'where even an ankle could not be displayed in public.' Amelia Bloomer, the American women's rights advocate, began agitating for dress reform in 1849. She believed that a more practical style of dress would aid the struggle for emancipation and campaigned for loose trousers, the precursor of the 'bloomer'. New Zealand's own dress reform group, active in the 1890s, was centred in Christchurch and urged women to reject the corset, a garment which not only restricted movement but which caused conditions not conducive to physical activity — 'breathlessness, curvature of the spine and wandering spleens!' (Dunedin Collective, 1976). The alternative dress style was divided skirt and baggy knickers, which some daring young ladies adopted, particularly for bicycle riding, although most New Zealand women were too conservative for such a change. Skirts, blouses, and boater hats were more popular.

Despite the prejudice which lingered for a long time against women cyclists, this new activity was later considered to have added more freedom to women's everyday lives than the possession of political rights. It was a small group who were actively involved in breaking down the traditional restrictive social roles of women. Women mountaineers were amongst these adventurers.

On 25th March 1883 a Mrs. von Lendenfeld ascended Hochstetter Dome in the Southern Alps with her surveyor husband and porter Harry Dew. They set out from a bicoac beneath Mt. Malte Brun at 5 a.m. and returned 27 hours later. Mrs. von Lendenfeld had worn a long skirt of heavy woollen serge with a white blouse, and a wide brimmed hat with a 'mask' for sun protection. She was obviously a strong and active person. She twice accompanied her husband up 'the Linda ridge' towards Mt. Cook on survey work, but still filled the conventional role for women — that of caregiver, as is suggested in von Lendenfeld's account of the Hochstetter climb:

The summit was a knife-sharp divide, on which we let ourselves down astride. At once I set myself to record the panorama with hasty pencil strokes, while my wife from time to time conveyed to my mouth a bite or a mug of Cliquot (Scott, 1943).

Miss Marion Bealey Scott, herself an adventurous mountaineer in the 1920s and 1930s, enlarged on this theme when she wrote of Mrs. von Lendenfeld's era that a:

woman's place was in the camp, where she cooked large meals, mended large holes, and listened to large tales of daring and danger. Excursions suitable to their supposed powers would occasionally be made.

The *New Zealand Alpine Journal* (NZAJ) of 1892 notes that in 1880, John Acland, his wife Emily, daughter Agnes, Miss Fanny Tripp, and Miss Rosa Moorhouse spent a day on the Sir Colin Campbell (now the Frances) Glacier in the Rangitata headwaters. At least three of the glaciers in the area are named after the women in this party — another aspect of the contribution of women to the history of New Zealand's mountains. These women were from well-do-do families.¹

These preliminary outings may well have been the inspiration for future mountaineering for both men and women alike. Rosa Moorhouse, for instance, later made the first ascent of Mt. Rosa (7050 feet) on the Mt. Cook range, with Miss Mabel Studholme, in 1890.² However, some women appear to have climbed only once or twice and then were never heard of in the mountaineering world again.³

In the North Island, Mt. Ruapehu was first traversed in March 1881 by messrs. H.H. Russell, A.E. Russell, and a Mr. and Mrs. Birch of Erewhon Station, Upper Patea district (NZAJ, 1895); while as early as 1855 the first female ascent of Mt Egmont was made by Jane Maria Atkinson (formerly Richmond) another member of landowning families.⁴ Jane Marie has been described as:

... a young woman of great strength of character and resource ... warm-hearted and outspoken ... she was eminently practical and possess of an Amazonian spirit that skirted no dilemma and flinched at no prospect of physical danger. (Macgregor, 1975).

She and her husband were members of a party who climbed Mt Egmont after a laborious effort of several days' duration.⁵ According to Macgregor, Jane Maria's main contribution seems to have been the cooking of meals for the men:

After the first camp . . . the system adopted was for the males of the party to go forward cutting the line, and leaving the swags and Jane Maria at the camp in the weird recess of the forest to preside over the cuisine, returning towards evening.

The line-cutters, after dining plentifully, if not luxuriously, each picked up his load and all, including Mrs. Atkinson, journeyed on to the extremity of the line which had been cut, there camping for the night.

. . . everyone at that time [was] convinced that the route we took was the easiest to be found on Egmont and that it ought to be styled the ladies' ascent.

In February, 1859, James Crowe and Henry Robert Richmond, brothers of Jane Maria, 'succeeded in the enterprise of taking their wives to the top of Mount Egmont'.

Then in the South Island in the 1880s, Misses Maude and Elfie Williams (known as the 'Sunbonnet Brigade') with others reached a glacier on Mt Ernslaw, while 12 years later a Mrs Fairbanks with her husband and a Mr Adamson crossed Ball Pass, the first time a woman had done so⁶. They took 12 hours from the 'Government hut at the Ball Glacier' to the Hermitage, and the feat was commemorated by the naming of the stream on the west side of the pass after Mrs Fairbanks (NZAJ, 1983). Other recorded climbs by women were the Hochstetter come (NZAJ, 1894); two parties which both set out for Sealy Pass in the Godley district during 1892; while Mrs J. (later Lady) Westland was reported to have visited the headwaters of the Rakaia River in the following year.

In the Victorian era, lack of easy access to mountains, lack of equipment and the fact that mountaineering as a sport in New Zealand was still in its infancy were all difficulties encountered by male and female climbers alike. Problems of dress, accommodation and social attitudes were much greater for women. The overriding reason for the small number of women climbers at this time was the cost in time and money, so that only upper class women could afford to take up the sport, and working class women were largely ruled out. The 'pool' from which early female alpinists were drawn consisted of the wives, sisters and daughters of scientists and surveyors; of wealthy sheep-station owners; of individuals who had brought their financial success with them from Britain; of wealthy businessmen-adventurers — a minority group who had the time and money to spend on non-essential activities.

It required a certain financial outlay for hobnailed or clinkered boots, an ice-axe, a hemp rope and a backpack. For longer trips a tent, sleeping bag, lamp and other accoutrements were required — all relatively expensive articles which would not have been part of the usual household. Clothing was certainly an additional expense incurred by the woman mountaineer: if especially made for tough travel it was costly; if she wore ordinary clothes they were likely to be unfit for everyday use afterwards.

Yet another item to consider was accommodation at mountain hotels and huts erected in the 1880s and 1890s, together with the fees for a mountain guide. In 1890, for example, the latter amounted to 10 shillings a day (Pearce, 1972). When the New Zealand Alpine Club was established in 1891, membership cost £1 1s (i.e. one guinea) for full members and 10 shillings for subscribers (NZAJ, 1892). This membership fee was more than the average weekly wage of a female factory worker in 1898 (Sinclair and Harrex, 1978) while the corresponding fee in 1985 cost approximately 15% of a factory worker's weekly wage.

It is obvious, then, that the opportunity for nineteenth century New Zealand women to take up mountaineering was available to only a small number who had both the interest and the financial means.

Although many trips still involved exploration, by the 1890s mountain excursions were being made for recreation, without the qualification of scientific observation. Three North Island ascents illustrate this. In 1892 George Beetham, who claimed the first ascent of Mt. Ruapehu in 1879, returned to the volcanic plateau on a holiday trip with his wife, a niece, and two friends. They climbed Mts. Tongariro and Ngauruhoe, then the following day 'struggled up loose scoria to Mount Ruapehu's northern summit, Te Heu Heu Peak.' Mrs. Beetham and her niece were the first white women to ascend Mt. Ngauruhoe. Afterwards the party rode from Tokaanu to Taumarunui and canoed down the Wanganui River for four days (Pascoe, 1958).

Climbing mountains was not a particularly easy recreation, however. An ascent of Mt. Earnslaw (East Peak) in March 1894, as recorded by J. O'Leary⁷ highlights some of the difficulties. The party — Mrs. Price (an Englishwoman from Birmingham), Miss May Daniel, Mr. F. Daniel, and his son Gordon — travelled to the Rees River by 'buggie' where they met their guide, and then continued on horseback to Lynx Falls. Here they prepared swags 'while the ladies tied up their dresses and prepared for the rough bush climb'. Mrs. Price's 'beautiful black dress' was covered in 'Bidybids', had 'lost several pieces of braid' and had an occasional rip in it by the time they reached the bushline. Bed that night was in a tent on a bed of leaves

for the ladies, after having eaten a meal cooked over a log fire by the guide. The next day Leary Peak was traversed en route to what is now known as Wright Col, where Miss Daniel replaced her worn out boots with a pair of shoes, and where lunch was eaten in a cold wind. Despite having no gloves the ladies continued on with 'a word of cheer from Mr. Daniel occasionally and a little assistance . . . when required and at three o'clock in the afternoon became the first women to reach the summit. The descent was equally long and tiring with camp being reached at 11 pm. The following comment by O'Leary gives testimony to the inadequacies of clothing and footwear for mountain excursions at the time:

Their faces were dreadfully sun burnt (sic). Miss May was minis (sic) he skirt it having got torn on the rocks. Mrs. Price wore the sides out of her boots. Mr. Daniels the seat out of his pants.

Transport and access to mountains were to remain important limitations to alpine climbing for some time. Travel was complex and tiring for Mrs. Harper, who is thought to have been the first women to visit the Mt. Cook district when she and her husband Leonard camped at Governor's Bush in 1872. They went to the Terminal face of the Tasman Glacier and on to the Mueller ice. Riding borrowed horses and leading a packhorse, the Harpers rode 20 miles to Ashwick (near Fairlie), where they joined three others, then after a night's rest, rode another 20 miles to 'a small inn . . . on the borders of Lake Tekapo'. A punt was used to ferry the animals across Tekapo River, after which a 'thirty mile roughish ride . . . with a foot track illegible in places . . .' brought the party to Burnett's sheep station after dark. This part of the journey was not without incident. There were problems with the packhouse carrying tents and food, and later with finding the way to Burnett's homestead. Wandering horses again caused some delay the next day, however that evening Mrs. Burnett 'enjoyed a good gossip' with the only woman who had ever visited her in her isolated home. Next afternoon another ride over 'several miles of tedious shingle', and a crossing of the icy Tasman River led them to their campsite at the foot of the Mueller Glacier. Mrs. Harper's experience, unlike that of Frau von Lendenfeld, was, she wrote, one of being 'always spoilt' by the men in the party. Tea consisted of 'some bread and some biscuit, and we got mutton from Mr. Burnett, so we feasted on fried chops and bread and tea . . .' Bed had been arranged for her by the men in a small 6 ft. x 5 ft. tent which she shared with her husband:

They had even provided me with sheets and a pillow-case filled with jerseys and comforters, a candle was stuck upright between two stones at the end of the tent, a fire lighted not far from the

door (Harper, 1956).

This treatment of Mrs. Harper by the younger men in the party may have reflected the general contemporary attitude that women were frail, weak creatures who needed to be protected from over-exertion. Yet Mrs. Harper enjoyed the trip immensely and enthusiastically stated:

Now that we have found how easy a matter it is to go, I hope we shall do it again.

Her record of the climb is revealing of the conditions in which Victorian New Zealanders partook of their recreation. What was an easy matter in 1872 would severely tax the energy and patience of most glacier parties today.

Hawera resident Annie Lysaght also spent a few days exploring the Mueller, Hooker, and Tasman Glaciers in 1877. She later married the Hon. Thomas H. Wigley, and settled at Opuha Gorge Station in South Canterbury. She rode, with others, on horseback to the glaciers, and wrote to her father:—

I can't think why more people don't go up there as there is a good road the whole way for riding and you can take a vehicle the whole way up

However her grandson Harry Wigley, comments:

. . . I do not think that there was any formed road and in fact nothing more than a track made by the movements of stock and the horses and wagons of local stations. They were certainly no more than tracks winding in and out among hills and creeks . . . (Wigley, 1979)

Three days were spent exploring glacier tarns, ice caves and crevasses. The return journey was made in the same fashion as the approach. In her letter Miss Lysaght made no reference to crossing the Tasman River, an icy cold adventure at best, but necessary if one wanted to reach the Hooker and Mueller Glaciers from Burnett's Station.

Accommodation for early mountaineers consisted of tents and rock bivouacs until hotels and huts were built, so the lack of accommodation itself was a hindrance to many women wishing to spend more than a single day on a mountain trip. Mrs. Aubrey le Blond, first President of the Ladies Alpine Club (London) wrote of Britain (1932) that the chief reason women so seldom climbed in the late

nineteenth century was that unless they had the companionship of a father, brother, or sister, it was looked upon as most shocking for a female at a hut or bivouac. This attitude remained in New Zealand until after 1910 when Miss Freda du Faur made her entry to the annals of mountaineering.

The first established mountain tourist hotel was the Hermitage, built at Foliage Hill, Mt. Cook, in 1884. The first Hermitage was not elaborate nor impressive from outside but was considered very comfortable inside (Graham, 1965). It survived despite economic difficulties caused largely by inaccessibility until it was damaged by flood in 1913, and replaced. The Hermitage served as a guest house for non-climbing tourists to the area; a refuge for tired, weather-battered climbers; an activity centre for tourists and climbers alike when the weather prevented outdoor forays. A Miss Kinsey and friends stayed there during the summer of 1895-96, and spent a week visiting the Mueller, Hooker and Tasman Glaciers, and Ball Hut despite opened in 1891, has been described as 'a two-roomed ediface . . . simply a corrugated iron shell, with an earth floor, divided into men's and women's quarters by a canvas curtain, each section containing four canvas-bottomed bunks.' It had one door and no chimney, and was furnished with a table, mattresses, kapok pillows, grey blankets, enamel mugs and plates. All cooking was done outside in a converted nail drum (Wilson and Ashurst, 1978). Despite the segregated sleeping quarters it was deemed necessary for any woman to be accompanied by a chaperone — another woman or member of the family — when staying in a mountain hut.

The Malte Brun hut, built in 1898, was small (4m by 5m), and also had separate sleeping quarters. The Ladies' Room had wooden flooring, and the roof was lined all over with heavy felting. It seems rather ironical that a special room was built at Malte Brun at a time when very few women would have used it. Thirteen people, in total, visited the hut in 1899, with an average of 15 in 1900 and 1901, most of whom, one could safely assume, were men (Whitehouse, 1979). However in an age of strict moral codes, it was obviously considered necessary to supply separate facilities for men and women, despite such low usage rates.

Mt. Egmont also had two huts — the 'Old House' on the northern side of the mountain was opened on 28 January 1892, and Holly Hut which was built on Holly Flat in 1900. Mt. Egmont has always been a popular mountain for climbers. Miss Fanny Fantham was the first woman to reach the subsidiary peak which bears her name. She climbed it with a party of thirteen men and women in March 1887, when according to Fullarton (1976), she was 19 years of age. From this large party, five of the men climbed to the summit.

Perhaps the women were discouraged by the heat and the

unsuitability of their mountaineering garb — heavy street dress — but Fanny Fantham had helped herself by shortening her dress and wearing lace-up boots. (Scanlan).

Fanny Fantham never again set foot on Fantham's Peak, nor did she ever actually reach Mt. Egmont's summit. Mt. Egmont was first climbed from the south by women, a Miss Mitchell and a Miss Hastie, a few days after Fanny Fantham's climb. In 1889, on 17 March, Mrs. C.S. Curtis had climbed to the Shark's Tooth — the East Peak of Mt. Egmont — via the Pembroke Road track on the Stratford side.

Mt. Egmont had also been climbed in the late nineteenth century by Edith Staway Halcombe, one of a party which included Sir William Fox.⁸ By the end of the 1890s Mt. Egmont had been climbed from all sides except the west where activity had lagged behind. Settlement there had been delayed by the New Zealand Wars and poor roading. E. Maxwell had explored the Ikahu Gorge area in the 1880s, and, in 1990, planned and led a successful climb to the summit accompanied by his sister-in-law, Miss Berry, and a Miss Drummond.

Early women mountaineers had to contend with the extra weight and bulkiness of unsuitable clothing which was generally incompatible with the rugged conditions met in towns, let alone mountains. New Zealand settlers knew a country of ill-formed roads, dense bush, raging rivers, and mud everywhere. Dress was an expression of social status and the 'colonial revolution in female attire began at the lower end of the social scale' (Graham). In addition, women's dress changed more slowly than men's as it was dictated, especially amongst the upper classes, more by fashion and propriety. Most Victorian women alpinists climbed in dresses and skirts of the day, altered little to accommodate conditions of climbing. One exception was Jane Maria Atkinson, who held strong feminist views. She had made a pair of 'dungaree or canvas trousers' and flouted convention when she wore them on a climb of Mt. Egmont in 1855 (Ebbett). Fifty-five years later.

Freda du Faur was criticised . . . for climbing in the Southern Alps in a brief skirt and puttee-clad legs. (McAllister, 1976)

Well into the twentieth century dress remained a handicap. Miss Anne Stevenson, who climbed in West Coast and Mt. Cook areas in the 1930s, commented that when she had a suit tailor-made especially for mountaineering, she felt very self-conscious in her first breeches.⁹

It is interesting to note that in Europe where women had been ascending mountains since 1808 suitable climbing attire was used by those who dared to wear it. In 1838 the first woman actually to climb Mont Blanc, Mlle Henriette d'Angeville, then 44 years of age, wore: red flannel underwear, Scottish tweed knickerbockers lined with

flannel, a fur lined hat and a star bonnet, a veil, green tinted spectacles, a plaid anda carried 'the indispensable alpenstock.' She continued climbing for another 25 years, making her last climb at the age of 69 — wearing a crinoline! (Moore, 1984).

Jane Maria Atkinson's daring display of physical freedom was thirty years ahead of the New Woman of the 1890s. These pioneers of women's rights influenced the development of new social trends which in turn influenced fashion (Wood, 1974). Mrs. Harper, in 1872, had solved her problem of dressing for glacier walking by wearing her riding habit 'which, looped up, is a splendid costume for climbing'. By 1895 skirts were shortened to three or four inches above the ankle, and worn with small boots, jackets, blouses and wide brimmed hats. This style of dress was adopted by Mrs. Forrestina Ross and her companion in the late 1890s, while travelling on the Upper Tasman Glacier. Mrs. Ross had 'looked out some old clothes, took a considerable tuck in a serge skirt, and invested in a ferocious pair of boots.' Her relations looked upon her 'newly acquired taste for mountaineering as a phase of lunacy . . . and made sarcastic comments about her boots' (Ross, 1900). While a skirt was not the optimum in practical clothing for mountaineering, the shortened length would certainly have been a great improvement.

Domestically and internationally modern sports has developed as an activity for men. The Olympic Games, revived in Athens in 1896, were for men only. Baron de Coubertin believed that 'women have but one task, that of crowning the winner with garlands.' The first time women were admitted to the Games was in Paris, in 1900, when six out

not escape this male bias, though it was not usually as obvious in New Zealand as, for example, in Britain. The Alpine Club of London, established in 1857, did not admit women as members until 1974, so the women formed their own Ladies' Alpine Club (Clare, 1980). The New Zealand Alpine Club was modelled on its British counterpart, but did not exclude women — Mrs Forrestina Elizabeth Ross was the first woman to be elected as a full member in 1892. (NZAJ, 1892). Her application was accepted on the basis of participating in a Tasman Clacier expedition in 1890; a partial ascent of Mr Earnslaw (up to 8,800 ft.) and an ascent of Mt Boupland, both in 1892.¹⁰ In later years she accompanied her husband on an expedition to Mt Tutoko, visited the Tasman Glacier again and, with her husband and three other men, made an ascent of Mt Ruapehu after a storm had wreaked havoc at their camp site. The Forrest Ross Glacier (in the Tasman Valley, Mt Cook region) was named after her by her husband Malcolm¹¹ who was a founding member of the New Zealand Alpine Club¹². For a time in 1894 she acted as editor of NAZ¹³ and also had articles published in

the *Otago Witness* and the *Australasian*.

It is interesting to note that her son Noel was born in 1890 before several of his mother's major mountain excursions when family responsibilities would have confined most women to home and offspring. Undoubtedly, Forrestina Ross had the financial capacity to escape domestic restrictions as well as to afford mountain holidays and, together with her husband, to belong to the Alpine Club.

Women had been involved with the New Zealand Alpine Club since its inception, as subscribers. Although not established until 1925 the influential Canterbury Mountaineering Club did confine its membership to men for several years — with one exception. Miss H. Claxton joined the club in March 1927, but resigned in August of the same year just before the adoption of a second constitution excluding women from membership (Billing, 1974), and would appear to have been the only woman member until after membership rules were again changed in September 1977.

New Zealand mountaineering techniques in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lagged far behind those of British and European climbers. Equipment, skills and knowledge were generally imported from abroad and disseminated via overseas climbers mainly in the Mt. Cook region. Women were led or guided on climbs and there are few references to them before 1901 taking the initiative in decision-making or route-finding on a mountain. The most obvious explanation for this is that because society gave women very little opportunity or incentive to take leading roles, they were accustomed to follow.

Mountaineering trips often extended over one or two weeks as travel was slow, access often difficult, and equipment heavy. Clients in guided parties did not expect to have to carry a great deal on their backs, and in amateur parties, too, women in general did not carry their own provisions. Extra weight was thus placed on male members of a mixed party, whose loads were already heavy and bulky. If a party's equipment was too much for the male members, porters were required — an additional expense. It is possible that women were sometimes discouraged from joining men on climbing trips because of the logistical problems involved, or extra expenses incurred. In those early mountaineering days, before the advent of crampons, snow slopes and ridges were the only feasible ascent routes, particularly for women. It was these long, laborious, uncomfortable climbs that give women mountaineers immense pleasure — climbs which were often termed 'an easy day for a lady'.

The feminist movement in the late nineteenth century held the belief

that women should have social, economic, and political equality with men. Change was spearheaded by a middle-class group determined to break out of their circumscribed 'sphere'. Mountaineering can be seen as a reflection of these values — as an extension of women's activities into a predominantly male 'sphere'. Middle class women had reason to regard mountain climbing and its attendant values as a contribution to freedom from traditional roles, and as a step along the path to equality.

By the 1890s New Zealand women enjoyed a degree of freedom greater than their female forbears had known. They received equal educational opportunities with men, had entered many hitherto masculine occupations, and received equal voting rights in 1893. Many women who wished to recreate in the mountains in later decades could do so because of the income generated by their professions. One pioneer, Jane Maria Atkinson, had seen the need for improvements in girls' education in the 1860s as well as helping to pave the way for future women alpinists.

Late nineteenth century New Zealand feminists influenced changes in attitudes regarding sports and recreations, and clothing styles. There was a growing demand for the right of women and girls to unrestricted physical development, and toward more practical modes of dress. Women began to participate in a wide variety of sports. However, the dress changes required for fuller, more serious participation did not keep pace and it seemed that the 'courage needed for the assumption of men's clothing proved greater than that needed to enter men's sporting activities' (Grimshaw). In the nineteenth century women who wished to participate fully in mountaineering had to be daring, and determined not to let social attitudes become a distraction.

The same conclusion might hold today.

Pip Lynch, like the foremothers she has documented, is a climber herself with a degree in Physical Education.

Notes

This article is an edited version of a Special Study presented by Pip Lynch in 1985 as part of a Bachelor of Physical Education degree from the University of Otago.

1. Acland and Charles Tripp, both wealthy runholders, were resourceful, well-educated men with some political influence (Wheeler, 1982). Fanny Tripp was the daughter of Charles, and Rosa Moorhouse was the daughter of another Rangitata runholder, Dr Ben Moorhouse.
2. Personal papers of Miss L. Farnilton: 'Resume of Exploration and Climbing in Central

Portion of Southern Alps.' New Zealand Alpine Club Archives, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

3. A classic example is a climb in West Otago in 1895 by a Mrs Lille and a Mrs Groggs. They were both from Queensland, Australia, were guided by Messrs. Shaw and Brown, and were said to have been the first women to scale the highest point on the Remarkables.
4. The Richmond and Atkinson families emigrated from England to New Plymouth in 1852. They were adventurous, talented people eager for the colony to progress and grow. They were financially successful, with considerable social and political influence — Sir Harry Atkinson, five times New Zealand's Premier, was Jane Maria's brother-in-law. (Baassett, 1969; Millen, 1984; Scholefield, 1960).
5. The others were: Harry and Decimus Atkinson, H. R. Richmond, E. Paten, F.C. and C.W. Wilson.
6. Interview with Mrs J. Ashurst, Mt Cook Village, 12 September 1982.
7. Letter from J. O'Leary to W. Hodgkins, 17 March, 1894. J. O'Leary papers, New Zealand Alpine Club Archives, Hocken Library, Dunedin.
8. Papers of Edith S. Halcombe: 'The Mountain Trip with Sir W. Fox'. Taranaki Museum, New Plymouth.
9. Interview with Miss Anne Stevenson by Mrs Margot Ross at Mater Hospital, Dunedin, 19 March, 1985.
10. 'NZAC Qualifications of Members of Section' Book. New Zealand Alpine Club Archives, Hocken Library, Dunedin.
11. Hilgendorf, C. 1932. Unpublished thesis, New Zealand Alpine Club Archives, Hocken Library, Dunedin.
12. Personal papers of G. L. Nanson. New Zealand Alpine Club Archives, Hocken Library, Dunedin.
13. Entry dated 30 March, 1894, page 79, of secretary's letter book. New Zealand Alpine Club Archives, Hocken Library. Dunedin.

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Archives: The New Zealand Woman In Letters

Robin Hyde

(The following article by Robin Hyde comes from *The Working Woman* of April, 1936, a monthly magazine published in Wellington by the Communist Party of New Zealand between March, 1934 and November, 1936. Elsie Locke (then Elsie Freeman) was the editor, who later edited *Woman Today*, another Wellington-based monthly publication. Its first issue was in April, 1937 and it survived until September, 1939. *Woman Today* was run entirely by women, with an editorial board, a business committee, an art editor and an advisory board that included Iris Wilkinson — i.e. Robin Hyde).

Literary women in New Zealand seem to me roughly divisible into three classes. First, and in a huge majority, come those who make a hobby of writing. They produce, perhaps, a playette, an occasional and extremely conventional short story or article, or verses which are standard specimens of prettyish mediocrity. The first comment of a friend, introducing one of these ladies to a stranger, is invariably,

'She writes, you know.' (It would be so much truer, and more interesting, to say, 'She cooks,' or 'She drinks in secret,' or 'She always uses ochre powder, and can't stand Bing Crosby,' thereby bringing something really fundamental into the limelight, instead of a mere mannerism, as 'writing' is, if it isn't done for one of two reasons — either to earn an honest living, or to express some inward revelation of feeling so urgent that it counts for more than anything else in life.)

For some obscure reason — perhaps the sheer need of banding together in back-patting societies — this type of hobbyist writer is invariably gregarious and runs to the pastime of forming clubs. It is good for women to foregather, to get away from their domestic environments and talk over kindred interests, no matter how vague those interests may be. But at these clubs, pleasant and kindly though the atmosphere may be, actual production or appreciation of literature comes a very, very meek second to chatting over cups of tea. And, to be abominably frank, it seems to me that in New Zealand there is something rather sugary and pretentious in those organisations which do all the talking for the 'literary woman' — and which bear none of the heat and burden of the day. Literature also is a garden

And such gardens are not made
By singing 'Oh, how beautiful'
And sitting in the shade.

Having unbosomed myself of this belief let us pass to Class Two — the New Zealand woman journalist. Here there is immediate and abundant matter for good cheer. It can be said at once that there are only two things wrong with the women journalists in this country, taken as a whole. One is that in nine cases out of ten they are underpaid — anyone who does not believe that this is cramping to the style should try it — and the other is that they aren't given enough scope. There is still a horrible delusion that the social column is the only department women like to read, or are competent to write. As a matter of fact, I believe that men would be far better fitted to handle the social gossip field — if it really must be handled — than women. Men gossip more, have thicker hides, more powers of resistance, and (sorry, ladies!) more sense of humour. Read M. Paul Poirer's book of memoirs *My First Fifty Years* or Charles Sedley's novel, *The Faro Table* if you want to see gossip-writing as it really should be done, and isn't.

But among, and apart from, the social columns, fine heads, bright and thoughtful eyes, do manage to appear. To think of the New Zealand

woman journalist brings a score of names at once into the mind — the versatility and vitality of Mona Tracey, the true steel (unbared against injustice or untruth) of Jessie Mackay, whose touch of the Celt, taking the form of enthusiasm, not of shadowy twilight, has introduced into New Zealand newspapers some of their most telling contributions. There is Elsie K. Morton, to saddle up a horse and go riding into the back country when she wants fresh material. There are writers like Winifred Tennant, Esther Glen and Alison Grant, whose children's pages (the first two were attached to the old *Sun* newspapers, and Alison Grant was 'Fairiel' of the Wellington *Evening Post*) were the means of drawing thousands of kiddies, many of them lonely and ailing, into an excellent companionship¹. The children's page is a feature widely adopted throughout New Zealand newspapers today. With few exceptions, it is conducted by women writers, and is one of the most creditable features of journalism in this country.

Inevitably one turns from the work of the woman journalist, who by the nature of her occupation must write for the day, valuable and interesting though her contributions may be, to that which is written in book form, and with the hope of permanent survival. What have New Zealand writers done, and what have they left undone?

Take the negative pillule first. New Zealand has not yet produced a notable woman biographer. Apart from Jane Mander's *Story of a New Zealand River*, there is no outstanding New Zealand novel whose author was a woman. (I will refer to Mrs Jean Devanny in a moment, but can't feel that eminently readable, human and likeable novels, by writers like Nelle Scanlan, Mareen Stuart, Rosemary Rees, Isabel Maude Peacocke, and several others, are in the front rank of modern novel-writing. It would be unfair to New Zealand's own potentialities to spoil the vision of what its writers may still achieve, by exaggerating the claims of what has already been done.)

New Zealand hasn't achieved any woman whose writings have an exceptional political or sociological value. — except Katherine Mansfield, and nobody ever seems to notice that aspect of her genius. Mary Truby King is collecting material at present for a biography of her father, Sir Truby King; and this book² when produced, may perhaps be a very definite contribution to a field in which New Zealand's progress should interest all nations. But political lack is a disastrous one. The last issue of the *Working Woman* contained a mention of that quiet and spirited little lady, Mrs Muller, whose anonymous articles for *The Nelson Examiner* and other journals helped New Zealand women in their campaign for universal suffrage. I never read of Mrs Muller without wishing that her prototype, immune from clubs and cliques, would suddenly reappear on the modern scene: for politically, there is not a race of

modern women on the face of the earth more supine than the New Zealanders. One becomes sick and tired of hearing how we were first to get the vote — and last to make use of it. I suppose the Plunket movement will be indignantly advanced as an exemplification of what the New Zealand woman has done and can do, but to me, full-grown people are quite as interesting as their offspring, and I cannot see the point of a well-groomed infant population if its conditions are going to fall asunder the moment it reaches adolescence. This will probably be held vastly beside the point: but take it as a suggestion of what some New Zealand woman might write, provided her veins ran sufficient ink and ire.

On the positive side, we have much to be thankful for. New Zealand, in the first place, has produced the short story writer whose works are more discussed, and more beloved, than those of any other writer whose medium was the English language, and whose scene was the 20th century. People complain that Katherine Mansfield has been over-publicised by her husband, Middleton Murry. But a long time after Mr Murry's assiduous huntings in the scrap-basket are all over and done with, Katherine Mansfield's gems of stories will shine out clear, hard and vital. When the fashionable have done with her, she will reach down to the people: Katherine Mansfield's harassed, tortured Miss Brill, the schoolmistress of 'The Singing Lesson', Katherine Mansfield's marvellous contrasting social conditions, and drawing together of sympathies, in 'The Garden Party', Katherine Mansfield's poor children with their eyes shining as the little lamp in 'The Doll's House' lights up, Katherine Mansfield's patient old grandmother grieving over the solemn little sick boy whose lungs are choked with flour from a baker's shop — those surely are the truths for New Zealand to treasure always. It was the daughter of the rich who had for the poor that deep and compelling sympathy which made her work a picture of the structure of society; a short time ago, a man who was passing through Fontainebleau sent me a spray of flowers picked from Katherine Mansfield's overgrown grave. I thought, 'It is what she chose in life, and would have preferred in death.'

And then the others — diarists, from Lady Barker whose old records of early Canterbury you will find in the Parliamentary Library, to that delightful novelist of everyday life whom New Zealand lost to South Africa — Sheila MacDonald, author of *Sally in Rhodesia*. Ellen Roberts, living up at lonely Rawene, on the Hokianga, comes in from that blue and gold landscape to write the latest published New Zealand book of travel, *New Zealand, Land of My Choice*. While a spell of mingled sentimentality and secretiveness still lay heavy over the lands of youth, Edith Howes was writing *The Sun Babies*; *Fairy*

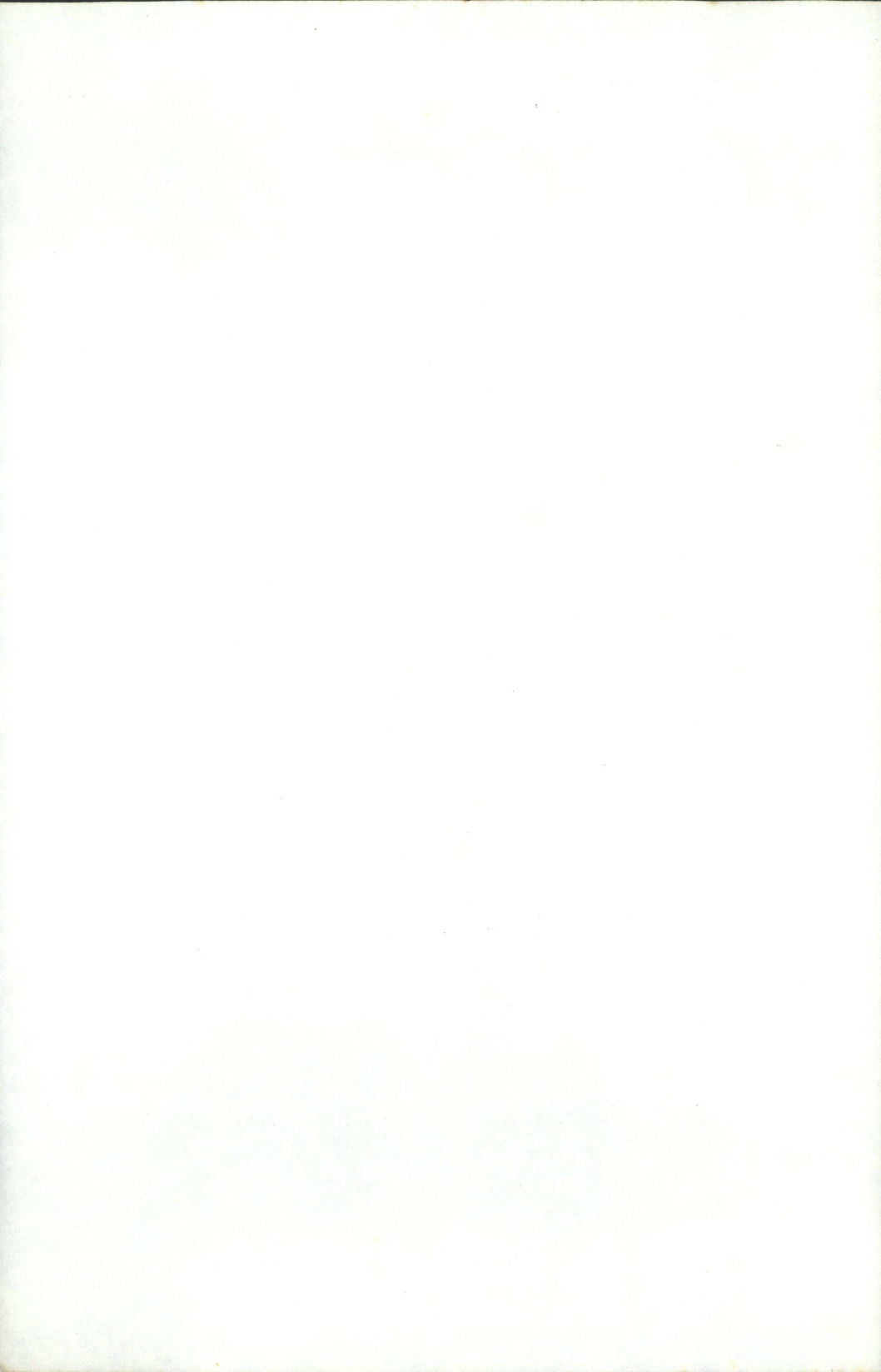
Rings; and *The Cradle Ship* — books which have been recognised abroad as children's classics. To appreciate Miss Howes' work, you must remember the type of literature then made available for children — the sham Sunday-school weepiness of the 'Elsie Dinsmore' series, the dreadful little prigs who died in white nightgowns, none too soon, on the last pages of every second book my own generation was expected, or commanded to read. Another New Zealand writer of children's books who is very far from having received her due meed of appreciation is Esther Glen, author of *Six Little New Zealanders*; *Robin in Maoriland* and several other tales. These have that human quality which distinguishes the Australian authoress, Ethel Turner. Esther Glen had the bad luck to be born a little later than Ethel Turner: she had cinemas and radios to rival her in the entertainment of young people. Otherwise, I am convinced that she would have equalled Ethel Turner's fame. And to those mothers whose infants still like firesides tales, I most earnestly commend Miss Glen's rousing young New Zealand warriors³.

So far as I can recollect, a woman, Mrs Jean Devanny, is the only author to have earned the distinction of having her book banned⁴. *The Butcher Shop*, written with great, if undisciplined power, is a work of crude ore. Jean Devanny, courageous and independent, liberated from most of the 'frills' which are apt to hamper women writers, deeply interested in political questions, has roamed far and wide since she wrote this book, which has been followed by other novels. If ever the time, the mood and the quiet place coincide, Mrs Devanny may give N.Z. the remarkable book which is well within her literary ability. As things stand, she ranks second only to Jane Mander — Jane, whose New Zealand river was a reflection of true experience, and whose deep voice and kindly heart became as well known in England as they are in Auckland where at present she abides.

Then there are the poets; but of them I can only think in the terms of Eileen Duggan's two lines:

We are but wanderers in the hinterlands
Too few for linking hands.

The poets would be a long story, all by themselves, and I doubt that this is permissible, in the age of crooners. There is Eileen Duggan, who has touched, perhaps, the deepest and sweetest spiritual note, and whose *New Zealand Bird Songs* contains some little masterpieces of descriptive phrase and sincere feeling. There is Evelyn Hayes. Her





Garden in the Antipodes is almost entirely unknown, though the book was published by an outstanding English firm⁵ and has some of the most charming garden pieces, solid and ribby garden, full of roots, rubble and trouble, that one could wish to meet. Eve Langley, who has been among us for the past few years (she hails from Australia), has a picturesque touch that one would like to see amassed in book form. Others, perhaps in single lyric, perhaps in a slender and scrupulously ignored booklet, have touched highwater mark. With the younger generation, there is Gloria Rawlinson and her book, *The Perfume Vendor*, a delightful collection of poetic fantasy.

'We are but wanderers.' And I have seen too much that was good in New Zealand perish by the wayside. If the working women of New Zealand can co-operate with the writers — in clearing some of the rubbish out of the way, in making clear what needs to be expressed, in showing a little appreciation where it is merited — they will have done their part. It is written that a nation gets the government it deserves. The same thing applies to literature.

Notes

1. The *Journal* Editor's first published work appeared in the children's page of the *Auckland Sun* in 1929.
2. The biography was published in 1948.
3. In 1945 the New Zealand Library Association established the Esther Glen Award for the most distinguished contribution to children's literature published in New Zealand.
4. For an account of good, keen — if secretive — Kiwi censorship regulations see Bill Pearson's addendum ('The Banning of *The Butcher Shop*') in the 1981 reprint of the book.
5. Sidgwick and Jackson. Evelyn Hayes was Ursula Bethell's pseudonym. (O'Sullivan, 1985).

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History as Pleasure, 'Powerhouse' for NZ Women's Studies

A review article by Beryl Hughes

Women in History. Edited by Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant and published by Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986.

A historian usually experiences a sense of relief in reading or reviewing a book on historical topics that is written by historians. It's not that non-historians can't write history; some do it well. But many do not, and women's history in particular has been poorly served by people who write what they think is history with very little sense of basic respect for the sources. It is a pleasure to read a book like this one. Most of the contributors are historians, while all of them write lucidly, intelligently and with a proper regard for their material. The book is well-produced, well-edited and each essay is rich in ideas and information, a powerhouse for Women's Studies course.

There are ten essays, arranged so that one theme glides into the next, each supplementing the other. Only the last one stands rather

apart, but its interesting subject must have compelled its inclusion. Moreover, for me, at any rate, this final essay pointed a moral.

The sub-title, *Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, could without too much distortion have been changed to *Essays on the Control of European Women in New Zealand*. (Or, if you like, *Essays on the Attempted Control . . .*). One of the over-riding themes is the persistent effort made by men in positions of power that cram women into male-approved moulds. The introduction says that

The relatively unstructured nature of colonial society allowed fluidity in social roles and some women took to gold-mining and bar-keeping to make a living

but we don't hear very much about women of this sort. We read mainly of wives and mothers, targets for politicians and doctors. Perhaps it was the increased opportunities for women here that led men to try hard to keep them down. Patriarchal propaganda seems to have been pushed at women in the early twentieth century more relentlessly and successfully in New Zealand than in some other countries. Undoubtedly this was a period when the ideal of a pure race produced by docile, fertile mothers was common through the western world; it would be easy to match Truby King's writings exalting motherhood and denigrating women's intellectual aspirations elsewhere. But in other countries the effect seems to have been less pervasive and emphatic. Why was this? I think it was partly that colonial social fluidity made the 'danger' of women taking more active roles seem acute. Moreover, the very small population suggested to some people that women ought to breed briskly to reduce the threat of invading hordes. Why did there seem to be a greater acceptance of pro-natalist views here than in, for example, Britain? I think one reason — there were others — was that New Zealand never had the social and economic conditions to produce the well-educated, well-to-do single women who in Britain provided an alternative model of womanhood and who had the time and the skill to put forward their own ideas about women.

Andree Levesque's essay, 'Prescribers and Rebels: Attitudes to European Women's Sexuality in New Zealand, 1860-1916', points out that

Women were primarily defined by their reproductive or by their sexual functions.

Feminists tended to accept that women belonged in the domestic sphere but fought legal discrimination and the idea that women were

interior intellectually. One of the most vicious of the attempts to restrain women was the Contagious Diseases Act, passed in 1869 and not repealed till 1910. Under this act (which in practice did not operate through the whole country) a woman believed to be a common prostitute was liable to periodic medical examination for one year and if found infected could be detained in a reformatory. Infected men were free to carry on infecting.

This essay, which provides a grim outline of male attitudes to women, is followed by Charlotte Macdonald's, 'The "Social Evil": Prostitution and the Passage of the Contagious Diseases Act, 1869', which fills out the political and social background to the act and discusses the extent to which the legislation was an attempt to suppress prostitution. (Levesque described it as a regulation of prostitution). It was men who campaigned for the legislation and who enacted it. Some women campaigned against it but we know relatively little about women's reactions since men controlled both the debate and the newspapers which recorded it.

There is fascinating material on prostitutes; some of them baffled the respectable by preferring this work to domestic service, which they considered tedious, hard and lonely.

These first two essays have mainly examined women who transgressed the sexual prescriptions of the day. Margaret Tennant in "'Brazen-faced Beggars of the Female Sex": Women and the Charitable Aid System, 1880-1920' is concerned with different types of women, those involved in charitable aid as providers or as consumers. As providers they sat on hospital boards and acted in various official capacities. They were not necessarily particularly compassionate to women less fortunate than themselves — 'brazen-faced beggars of the female sex' was Grace Neill's phrase. As deserted wives, whose lack of housewifely skills was said by another woman official to drive husbands away, and as widows, women were the chief consumers of the charitable aid. It was a system which firmly endorsed their domestic and maternal roles. One of the great merits of this essay is the link it makes between the importance placed on women's relationships with men and with children in the nineteenth century with the position of women as consumers of welfare today, when they are still viewed as dependants of men.

Raewyn Dalziel's essay 'The Colonial Helpmeet: Women's Role and the Vote in Nineteenth Century New Zealand' argues convincingly that the early gaining of the vote by New Zealand women was closely related to their achievements as wives and mothers. Since even feminists did not challenge the idea that a woman's most important role was a domestic one, votes for women were not seen by men as a threat to the sanctity of the home. But voting rights were not, as in

some countries, accompanied by the right to stand for parliament, since that lay outside a woman's sphere. Lady Stout, who had fought the good fight for the vote, claimed twenty years later that:

as a result of suffrage, New Zealand women have developed a much higher standard of womanhood and the duties and obligations of motherhood.

The franchise, she wrote, had developed in women a new sense of responsibility and made possible 'true comradeship' with men. Raewyn Dalziel describes this attitude as having a

strangling effect on the expansion of women's role in New Zealand society.

It is an effect that is still with us.

Judith Elphick Malone in 'What's Wrong with Emma? The Feminist Debate in Colonial Auckland' examines the position of women in Auckland in the 1870s. There was a high marriage rate, a high birth rate and New Zealand women

kept house in a society which enjoyed the highest per capita income in the world.

Domestic service was the main paid occupation for women. Colonial servants, says Elphick Malone, had

an independent and self-confident spirit — often referred to as 'servantgalism' — unthinkable in the British context.

In fact the word is English in origin, coined, I suspect by the Punch illustrator who in 1853 (volume XXIV) presented nine drawings over several weeks. The heading of each was 'Servantgalism; or what's to become of the Missusess?'. These 'jokes' showed uppity servants making demands: refusing to work in a house where no footman was employed, refusing to take a job unless the family went to a bracing place for the summer holidays, expecting a mistress to knock before entering the kitchen, and so on. British servants were no doubt harder-worked and more deferential than New Zealand ones but servantgalism is primarily a matter of perception and British servants in the middle of the century seemed independent and self-confident to their employers.

Elphick Malone points out that although women in Auckland

appeared in certain respects to be fortunate the legal position of married women was bad: they could not be the legal guardians of their children and they had limited rights over property.

Margaret Tennant's essay, 'Natural Directions: The New Zealand Movement for Sexual Differentiation in Education during the Twentieth Century' and Ruth Fry's "'Don't Let Down the Side": Physical Education in the Curriculum for New Zealand Schoolgirls 1900-1945' are both concerned with the ways in which the education of girls has created and maintained a separate sphere for women. The first essay, which is concerned with secondary education, shows that the early girls' high schools here established at first curricula very similar to those of boys' schools. But girls tended to be worse-housed than boys and to have poorer laboratories. Moreover by the beginning of the century, a declining birth-rate led to the promotion of parenthood, motherhood in particular, as a vocation. Truby King argued forcefully for a curriculum better suited to the domestic and maternal role which he believed the nation needed women to have. The endowment of a chair in Home Science in Otago in 1909 was intended to help this by giving status and recognition to housework. (And, I would add, in the hope that women who might otherwise have trained as doctors, would turn to the more 'feminine' career of Home Science). In 1917, Home Science became compulsory for virtually all secondary schoolgirls. What was sought was an 'education in womanly qualities', but this led to (in Tennant's words again)

an education in mathematical, scientific and technical ineptitude, and a lasting constraint on girls' choice of future lifestyles.

Ruth Fry's essay traces the development of separate spheres for boys and girls in physical education. There was no real counterpart for girls in the cadet corps which was formed for boys in 1900-1910, while girls had no sport which aroused public interest and official support as football did. As in the world outside, female interests in school had to give way to male. This was exemplified in the Auckland municipal baths (used by schoolgirls) which women could use only in the morning, before the water was properly heated. If one weren't inured to the contradictions which male requirements constantly impose on women, one would be surprised that delicate women, some of them perhaps *carrying future All Blacks*, should have to face the cold while manly bodies could wallow in the warmth. (Bad for sperm-production, if they had only known).

Girls at secondary schools often had better provision for general physical education than boys, since they were more likely to be taught by qualified people. Girls, however, were limited by current

ideas concerning their physical capacity. Although over the decades clothing became freer and more variety in sport and physical education was available for girls, physical education did not lead to equality between the sexes. Instead, girls' physical education advanced on separate lines.

Barbara Brookes in 'Reproductive Rights: The Debate over Abortion and Birth Control in the 1930s' shows the operation of women's 'special role' in the area of reproduction:

Women's centrality to the family made them peripheral in every other sphere.

Their entrance into other spheres was made difficult by laws and customs which prevented them from controlling their own bodies. Birth control clinics were strongly resisted, the practice condemned by many doctors and clergy as selfish and showing a lack of discipline. While contraception was made difficult by lack of information and of some appliances, abortion was relatively easy for women to try themselves, although the results were often tragic. A Committee of Inquiry was set up to investigate abortion, which was believed to be threatening the birth-rate and thus the safety of the nation. Women were blamed for the decline in family size, although social change had made large families a liability. Birth control and abortion challenged the special role of motherhood which a patriarchal society wanted to promote.

The next essay, that of Phillipa Mein Smith, 'Mortality and Childbirth in the 1920s and 1930s' continues the theme of motherhood and the state. Deaths in childbirth were a sensitive issue for the Health Department and the Obstetrical Society, although maternal sickness tended to be ignored. These two august bodies differed over the cause of puerperal sepsis, the chief hazard in childbirth. The Department believed that the infection came from outside the women, being unknowingly conveyed to them by their attendant doctors. The Obstetrical Society claimed that the infection arose spontaneously within the women's bodies. The error of the Society was made plain when the types of bacteria causing the infection were identified by Leonard and Dora Colebrook in 1935 in England. Yet this error, which must have caused the deaths of a number of women, did not appear to harm the Society's aim of getting greater control of childbirth for doctors. Childbirth in fact became more and more medicalised. This is another of the essays in this book which makes the reader reflect on the situation today.

Finally, Dorothy Page in 'Women and Nationality: Feminist Organisa-

tions in the Inter-War Period' deals with a topic totally different from all the rest, that of the struggle to achieve independent nationality for married women. This at first was not a matter of great concern to New Zealand women.

The issue appeared in Britain after a Naturalisation Act in 1870 removed British nationality from British women married to foreigners (and conferred it on foreign women married to British subjects). An act in 1914, the outcome of negotiations between Britain and the Dominions, applied throughout the Empire. After the outbreak of war, British-born women married to Germans or Austrians became enemy aliens in their country. There were very few women in New Zealand affected in this way, although Miriam Soljak was one.

A brilliant Scottish lawyer, Chrystal Macmillan was the leader of the fight in Britain. She discovered that the British parliament could not amend the 1914 act on its own: the Dominions had to agree. For this reason, New Zealand women were drawn into the agitation.

New Zealand women's organisations, in the doldrums after the winning of the vote in 1893, had already begun to revive. This issue was a stimulus to them: it united women's groups through the country and linked women here with women overseas. Independent nationality for married women was attained both in New Zealand and in Britain in 1948.

I found it heartening to read this essay. The picture emerging from so much of the material in the previous essays is a depressing one. This is not the fault of the authors, who write lucidly and convincingly of themes and episodes in the recent New Zealand past which are bound to hold the attention of anyone interested in women's history. But the manipulations of the heavy hand of patriarchy don't make for pleasant reading, particularly when the effects have been so long-lasting. In contrast this last essay presents a success story. It shows what women can do when they work determinedly together towards a common goal. I realise that these women had an easier task than women struggling in other areas where they had powerful vested interests against them. Nevertheless, I welcome this as a success for women and I salute Chrystal Macmillan and Elizabeth Taylor (chief campaigner here) as examples to us all of what women-power can do.

Beryl Hughes retired a year ago from lecturing in the History Department at Victoria University of Wellington. She is convenor of the Wellington Regional Working Party of the Dictionary and hopes to start some research into women's history in early 20th century New Zealand.

WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND (NC),
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:

- 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.

CONFERENCE PAPERS: The Association holds an annual conference where members present the latest research and discussion papers, 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 produces a Journal twice a year.

Full membership of the association is open to all women. Other individuals may become associate members. The membership year runs from August 1 to July 31 and the annual subscription is \$16.50 or \$5.50 hardship (both include GST). For more information write to P.O. Box 5067, Auckland.

ISSN 0112-4099