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Mary Lapsley

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Women's Studies Association (NZ) (Inc.)

The Association is a feminist organisation formed to promote radical social change through the medium of women's studies. We believe that a feminist perspective necessarily acknowledges oppression on the grounds of race, sexuality and class as well as sex. We acknowledge the Maori people as the tangata whenua of Aotearoa. This means we have a particular responsibility to address their oppression among our work and activities.

Full membership of the Association is open to all women. Other individuals may become associate members.

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A Return To Auckland

The *Women's Studies Journal* begins its twelfth year with this first issue edited by the new editorial collective based in Auckland. I say 'new' editorial collective because, as you probably are already aware, the *Journal* commenced in Auckland in 1984 with Margot Roth and the Auckland Women's Studies collective. Two members of the original collective, Claire-Louise McCurdy and Aorewa McLeod, have also joined the current Auckland collective. Their experience is valued as much as their historical connections with the *Journal* are honoured.

The current Auckland editorial collective includes:

Sharon Bagnall, Caroline Daley, Raewyn Dalziel, Jan-Maree Fraser, Phyllis Herda, Linda Hill, Judith Huntsman, Alison Jones, Eileen Joy, Liz Kiata-Holland, Claire-Louise McCurdy, Aorewa McLeod, Deborah Montgomerie, Waerete Norman, Julie Park, Judith Pringle, Amanda Smith, Lane West-Newman and Susanne Wilson.

A *Journal* innovation with the move to Auckland is the establishment of a student essay competition for Stage III undergraduate and first-year graduate students. Judith van Trigt's contribution on the representation of Pacific Island women in five films was selected as the winner by a committee of the editorial collective from twenty entries received. The committee members were impressed with the enthusiastic response of students as well as the high quality of the entries. Judith van Trigt's excellent paper is published here. The collective hopes to include other entries in later issues and to make this an annual competition.

The *Journal* will continue to focus on scholarly debate concerning Women's Studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the wider Pacific region, covering a wide range of feminist positions and disciplinary backgrounds. In this issue Jan Cameron examines the discriminatory practice of gender verification or sex testing in female athletes – topics all the more relevant in this Olympic year. Deborah Dunsford's article chronicles the difficulties faced by women who wished to enter the nursing profession between 1913 and 1947 in the Auckland region. The creation of women's clubs before World War II by middle and upper class Pakeha women and whether this consti-

tuted 'female space' is discussed by Sue Upton in 'Women in the Club'. Maureen Molloy highlights the gendered construction of knowledge and evidence of the Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion in New Zealand (1975-1977). 'Wives and Mother First' by Jo Aitken queries the basis and effects of the imposition of the Teachers' Marriage Bar in the 1920s and '30s in Canterbury.

A further innovation with this issue of the Women's Studies Journal is its production and distribution by the University of Otago Press, who are now managing subscriptions, advertising and other non-editorial matters. We're enjoying their professional input.

After some discussion with the University of Otago Press, it was decided that the publication of two issues per year (Autumn and Spring) would remain and, if possible, one of these issues would be devoted to a special topic. The special topic for the Spring 1996, contributions willing, will be The Body with plans for an issue on Pacific Island Women in 1997 and New Zealand Feminist Literature for 1998. The collective welcomes your contributions on these and other feminist topics. In addition, we would like to hear from readers about what you would like to see in the *Journal*.

PHYLLIS HERDA
University of Auckland

For Women's Own Good ...

Gender Verification of Female Athletes

JAN CAMERON

*'I am an athlete and I am a woman. At least I think I'm a woman.'*¹

In May 1995, the New Zealand Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (NZOCGA) advised that there would be gender verification testing at the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996. In its newsletter the Association cited the IOC Medical Commission's latest report, which referred to 'gender fraud' as one form of cheating or exploitation in sport. Gender verification, commonly called 'sex-testing', has been practised for nearly fifty years. In the last twenty years it has met with objections from sportswomen and medical professionals alike, with a result that some sports have dropped conventional testing. The most important of those to drop the tests is probably the IAAF. The international body of athletics, comprising over 200 member countries, dropped *all* forms of gender testing in May 1992, announcing 'We [now] have no femininity list, the file is closed'.² The Commonwealth Games organizers have also abandoned testing by genetic means.³ But while individual sports are free to *not* test their athletes in their own competitions, they must still submit to testing at the Olympics.

The first sex tests were in fact carried out in ancient Olympia, where all athletes and their trainers had to appear naked in order to ensure no women were present.⁴ In modern times, a concern about gender eligibility was expressed by the British Women's Amateur Athletic Association in 1948, when they required women athletes to provide a letter from a doctor, verifying their sex. The first visual test was introduced at the European Athletics Championships in 1966; later in 1966 manual examinations were carried out at the Jamaica Commonwealth Games.⁵ As a consequence of objections from the women examined, the IOC introduced the chromosome test of buccal (cheek cell) smears in 1967, further refined as the chromatin test in 1968.⁶ In 1972 the chromatin test was done on hair roots instead of buccal smears.

Whether coincidental or not, the first modern tests followed doubt

about the 'true' gender of the Soviet sisters, Irina and Tamara Press. Proof of their 'femininity' or otherwise has never been forthcoming since they, along with several other Soviet sportswomen, disappeared from international competition when gender tests were introduced. The first woman to 'fail' a chromatin sex test, Polish sprinter Ewa Klobukowska in 1967, had reportedly failed a visual inspection three years earlier but had been permitted to continue competing.⁷ The issue of gender 'failure' had not been just discovered: before World War II records had been set, in the high jump (Dora [Herman] Ratjen from Germany) and the 800m (Zdena Koubkova from Czechoslovakia), by women who were later confirmed to be men. Other famous gender 'failures' have included sprinter Stella Walsh (found to have had 'ambiguous genitalia' after she was killed in an accident in 1980; it was decreed by the US Athletic Congress, however, that there was insufficient evidence to prove she was a man) and tennis player Renee Richards who had had sex-change surgery.⁸ But while there have been around a dozen women disqualified from Olympic competition because of gender 'failure',⁹ Ratjen is the only case cited as a deliberate act of falsification. In 1957 Ratjen claimed that the Nazis had forced him to enter the women's event in 1936.¹⁰

While numerous commentators probably agree with Romanos's conclusion 'Good idea – pity it didn't work', the issue is not one which will simply 'go away'.¹¹ In Australia, as recently as 1991, athlete Ricki Carne threw administrators and competitors alike into a quandary over whether she was, or was not, a woman. The transsexual was permitted to continue competing as a woman on the grounds that her performances were 'typically those of a woman', after Chairperson of the IAAF Medical Committee, Arne Ljungqvist had pronounced that there was 'no true definition of what is a woman'.¹² In New Zealand in 1994, netball administrators grappled with how to sex-test players who might be transvestites 'without breaching privacy and human rights laws'.¹³ So long as these concerns remain, the IOC (and other sports federations) will claim some justification in their argument that sex-testing must also remain.

This paper recounts the biological basis of gender testing and the background to objections made by the key actors involved: sportswomen and medical professionals. While it is recognised that the interchangeable use of the terms 'sex-testing' and 'gender verifica-

tion' in fact epitomises the crux of the problem of just *what* is being tested, the terms are used this way in the following paper, because that is how they are used in sport. It might be added that a third, even more erroneous term, is also used in sport, namely 'femininity testing'. The documentation involved is referred to as a 'femininity certificate' or 'fem card'.

The paper is written from the viewpoint of a sport administrator, qualified by some sociological insight, a consequence of attempting to find a way through conflicting debates to the benefit of athletes.¹⁴ There are, in fact, a variety of theoretical approaches which might be taken to analyse the sex-testing fiasco, including a feminist critique of patriarchal relations (the decisions regarding sex-testing have been made, almost without exception, by men), a critique of capitalism (almost all of the athletes cited as 'ineligible' have been from the old Soviet bloc), a critique based on the hegemonic relationships inherent in the role of the IOC *vis-à-vis* its member sports and their athletes, or an analysis based on relations of the body. This paper does not present any particular theoretical perspective but is, in fact, written as an introduction to the substantive issue, in the hope that such analyses might be sparked by the concerns it raises.

A BIOLOGICAL BASIS OF SEX

Superficially, the biological mechanisms of sex differentiation between women and men are quite simple. They are controlled by genetic material determined at conception, males being characterised by having XY sex chromosomes and females an XX pair. Various genetic abnormalities may occur, including those who have only a single X chromosome (XO – Turner's syndrome, sterile but obvious females) and those who have an X chromosome in addition to an XY pair (XXY – Klinefelter's syndrome, males with some greater or lesser degree of female physical characteristics). More common are individuals, known as mosaics, who have some XX cells and some XY cells in their bodies. Depending on the proportions, they might present as males or as females.

In addition to chromosome abnormalities, biology might also go awry during development, such that individuals of one genotype (genetic type) might suffer abnormal hormonal development. Of these, some genetically XY individuals develop as sterile but otherwise apparently normal females.

Sex distinctions – as recognised by the medical profession, for example – can be made in the following ways:

- 1) appearance of the external genitalia;
- 2) possession or absence of a Y (male) chromosome;
- 3) the amounts of different (male and female) hormones in the body;
- 4) the sex to which the individual is assigned at birth (gender);
- 5) the sex which the individual self-identifies with (gender).

In the majority of individuals, the sex identification by these different criteria coincide. However, the exceptions are the ones which cause problems for sports administrators wishing to make absolute distinctions between the sexes. Dyer claims that although less than one per cent of babies born are so ambiguous sexually that chromosome tests are necessary for identification, as many as 10 per cent of adults 'live on or across the social, sexual and psychological borderline between the sexes in one way or another'.¹⁵ The fear for sports administrators appears to be a deliberate exploitation of or by women who are slightly 'across the border', on criteria which give them a physical advantage over other 'straight' women.

CRITIQUE OF SEX VERIFICATION TESTING

The major critics of gender verification in recent years have been Finnish geneticist Albert de la Chappelle and British pathologist Malcolm Ferguson-Smith. Described as 'a thorn in the side of the IOC' for over twenty years, de la Chappelle has been fighting a war against sex-testing, trying to educate, persuade or shame them into changing their policy; a war which in 1992 he was quoted as saying he had 'dis-mally failed'.¹⁶ Ferguson-Smith, likewise, began his campaign in 1970 when he told the British Olympic Medical Committee that 'genetic tests of *any sort* were inappropriate for gender verification'.¹⁷

Buccal smear testing involves two stages. First, all tests are screened for X chromatin (and sometimes also for Y chromatin). If these are 'normal' (i.e., X chromatin from XX chromosomes present, Y absent), female gender is considered established and a 'femininity certificate' issued to the woman competitor. If the sex chromatin is considered abnormal, further tests, including clinical and gynaecological examinations, are carried out. The decision as to gender status is then made by the medical authorities of the sports organisation concerned.¹⁸

The major objection to sex chromatin tests – circumstances known about in the 1960s before testing began – is the potential for X and XY females and XX and XXY males to be wrongly labelled by sex chromatin. This information was given to the IOC at the time, and ignored.¹⁹ In a paper presented at the 1985 IAAF Medical Congress, de la Chappelle detailed the objections to the chromatin test as follows:

- 1) First, although sex chromatin tests would reveal males masquerading as females, some categories of males would pass the sex chromatin screening:
 - (a) Males with Klinefelter's syndrome (XXY), who have small testes but otherwise male physical characteristics. They would pass as females by the X chromatin test, but not by the Y chromatin test.
 - (b) Males with XX Male syndrome, who have similar characteristics to males with Klinefelter's syndrome. They would pass as females by both the X and Y chromatin tests.

In addition, some categories of females who might have masculine physique would not be revealed by sex chromatin screening:

- (c) Females who have taken male growth hormones. Sex chromatin screening will *not* reveal such people, and neither will drug testing if the doping took place some considerable time previously.
 - (d) Females with congenital adrenal hyperplasia, an hereditary disorder which gives females ambiguous genitalia and masculine body proportions. Such conditions may now be treated but excessive muscularity might give some such women a competitive advantage.
 - (e) Hermaphrodites, having a range of physical condition from almost male to almost female. Only about 20 per cent are revealed by present sex screening methods. The condition is, however, extremely rare.
- 2) Secondly, some people have 'abnormal' sex chromatin, and would be revealed as 'male' by sex chromatin screening, but should be allowed to compete in women's events:
 - (a) Females with Turner's syndrome (XO), who have short scanty

periods, or no periods, and for whom childbirth is rare, are nevertheless female in appearance and in psychosexual orientation.

- (b) Females with testicular feminisation (intra-abdominal atrophic testes in association with female body characteristics), or with gonadal dysgenesis (no gonads at all). Both appear as female but would be revealed as 'male' by sex chromatin tests.

In summary, the inadequacy of sex chromatin testing is manifest in two different ways: it reveals only a fraction of those people who should *not* be allowed to compete in women's events; it reveals as male women who *should* be allowed to take part in women's events. Ferguson-Smith and Ferris state that having reviewed a large number of test results they 'know of no case in which the sex chromatin test has exposed a man masquerading as a woman'.²⁰

De la Chappelle and Ferguson-Smith have not by any means been the only professionals to object to chromatin testing. Indeed, between 1985 and 1992 'over 15 scientific societies of the highest standing . . . passed resolutions explaining and condemning the use of sex chromatin and other laboratory procedures for Gender Verification'.²¹ The American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have all objected to it.²² In response to these criticisms some sports, for instance the IAAF, dropped all specific testing and have argued that physical genital anomalies would be identified during dope testing (dope testing requires that the athlete be observed while urinating). Yet despite repeated communication of these concerns to the IOC, laboratory testing remains the basis of its sex determination.

Current testing, as will be conducted at the Atlanta Olympics, involves polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing of DNA, a procedure which the IOC Medical Commission is confident 'will be able to pronounce on all cases, and also those where a masculine genotype or genotype mark exists':

But this test, by itself, does not claim to be able to diagnose all possible cases. It can, however, claim to reveal them. We cannot expect a single test combining the qualities of non-evasiveness, great respect for athletes, low cost and rapid execution to give, in addition, all the subtleties of clinical diagnosis. It will be up to the

Medical Commission to implement the complementary investigations it may need in order to pronounce on the few cases revealed by PCR. This approach means that finally there is no longer need for practices such as gynaecological examinations for all female athletes who often are very uncooperative at this prospect. *Today gender verification tests are still necessary.* As organised by the IOC they are very safe in the execution and achieve their fundamental ethical objective: to be a deterrent'.²³

Y-PCR testing detects the presence or absence of DNA sequences carried on the Y (male) chromosome.²⁴ It is a more sophisticated procedure than chromatin testing, but critics argue that PCR testing is no more reliable. In fact, its very sensitivity might well make it more dangerous: clinical arguments against PCR testing include the risk of contamination from 'background' material (such as male dandruff floating in the air). Grady states that PCR testing also has technical inadequacies.²⁵ Such was the disquiet among the scientific community that it was rumoured prior to the Barcelona Olympics that the IOC was having considerable difficulty finding personnel prepared to carry out PCR testing.²⁶ As Carlson says, 'PCR testing is simply another way of doing the same wrong thing'.²⁷ The position of most medical professionals would seem to be summed up aptly by endocrinologist Myron Genel, who asked rhetorically, 'Should it be left to a handful of people at the IOC, most of whom are men, to decide who is 'feminine enough' to compete?''²⁸

BIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The following discussion refers to chromatin testing. While this method of testing might now be out-dated, the arguments raised here remain relevant, since the cases detected represent the 'abnormalities' which laboratory-based sex-testing is supposed to identify and exclude from women's competition. The discussion also highlights the complexity of the whole issue of 'when is a woman not a woman?'

In 1975 Daniel Hartley (American representative on the IOC Medical Committee) noted that sex testing was 'an expensive over-reaction to a remote possibility'.²⁹ Blue suggests only one woman in 5,000 suffers adrenal hyperplasia.³⁰ However de la Chappelle claims that hormone doping is 'very common'.³¹ Neither condition would be picked up by chromatin testing. Dyer cites a Canadian survey in

which one in 4,000 individuals appearing male was genetically female.³² These people, who perhaps should be excluded from women's competition, would in fact pass the X chromatin test also.

On the other hand, Simpson cites 2-3 per cent of infants having genital and gonad defects, caused by a range of abnormalities, such that they would be phenotypically female but genetically male – a group who would have no competitive advantage and by laboratory tests would be inappropriately excluded from women's competition.³³ Blue claims a lower ratio of around six women in 1,000 who 'look like women, think they are women, and whose body composition, strength and muscle seem entirely female' but who suffer from chromosomal abnormalities which identify them as male.³⁴ In the Canadian survey cited, one in 2,000 individuals appearing female was genetically male (would fail the chromatin test but pass a physical test).

The incidence within *sport* of these abnormal conditions is unknown. On the face of the evidence presented here, the likely incidence of a male presenting as female in the absence of tests is around 5 in 10,000 or 1 in 2,000 (Carlson cites from 1 in 1,000 to 1 in 4,000 for sex chromosomal defects).³⁵ If there is any substance to arguments about some physical advantage being incurred by genetic anomalies then the incidence of 'ineligibles' among sportswomen might well be expected to exceed these proportions. In fact, Ferguson-Smith and Ferris cite 13 ineligible cases out of 6,561 women tested between 1972 and 1990, a ratio of 1:504. Whether one considers such an incidence as 'remote' or 'common', however, is debatable.³⁶

More importantly, de la Chappelle notes that the actual fraction of conditions revealed by chromatin tests which *should* exclude people from women's competition is 'at most' 10 per cent. That is, at least 90 per cent of *conditions* which should preclude the person from women's competition would not be detected by a sex chromatin test. He concluded, 'The sex chromatin screening of female athletes is a near-total failure and should be abandoned': on the one hand it reveals females who have certain types of chromosome abnormalities but whose body build and muscle type is female, and thus they should not be excluded; on the other hand, it does not reveal females whose body type is such that they should not be permitted to compete in women's events.³⁷ Ferguson-Smith and Ferris also stated, 'the sex chromatin test is more likely to exclude athletes unfairly than to de-

tect those who cheat'.³⁸

In addition to the genetic/physique/physiological problems mentioned above, it must also be stated that having tested 'male' in these tests does not automatically imply that the woman will have the advantages of a male body. Renee Richards, for example, claimed that she actually competed at a disadvantage (compared to other women) after her sex-change operation because she lost so much muscle mass, while still carrying a male frame, that she became particularly injury prone.³⁹ It is also stated that women with androgen sensitivity do not have the advantage of male strength either.⁴⁰

Gynaecologist Eduardo Hay, member of the IOC Medical Commission responsible for carrying out testing at the 1968 Olympics, has argued that the difference in male and female performances (a difference cited as ranging from 8 to 17 per cent) can be due only to anatomical factors.⁴¹ On the other hand it has been pointed out, first, that male and female lie only as points on a continuum of anatomical physique, that the range of difference within either one sex can be as great as that between men and women, and secondly, that athletic success is due to a complex of factors, only one of which is anatomical physique. Genel noted that the assumption of advantage based on anatomical measures is 'scientifically unsound' and that it is by no means unequivocal that typical male traits create an advantage.⁴²

In 1986 the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggested that eliminating screening would probably have little or no effect on who won championships, and 'it might restore a few personal dignities'. The editorial called for an end to testing.⁴³ IAAF Women's Committee members declared gender testing 'outrageous'. If absolutely necessary, athletes might be examined and certified by their own physicians, but on the whole that committee questioned just how common the incidence of deliberate masquerading was.⁴⁴ The call of many of those representing women's interests seems to be clear: eliminate sex testing entirely.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Documentation of legal challenges to sex determination are difficult to locate. However the possibility is real and is exemplified by the case of American tennis player, Renee Richards, who prior to surgical treatment had been Richard Rasskind (Richards was later

coach to Martina Navratilova). For two years Richards 'shunted between various US tennis tournaments which were sufficiently enlightened to accept her entries with the knowledge of her transsexuality'.⁴⁵ The International Tennis Federation invoked chromatin tests which the player could not satisfy. In 1977 Richards sued the US Tennis Association, the US Open Tennis Championship Committee and the Women's Tennis Association on the grounds that her sex reassignment surgery had changed her sex from male to female. She sued first to prevent reliance on a sex-chromatin test for determination of whether she was female and, secondly, to permit her participation in the Women's Division of the US Open Tournament. The legal case was built on a breach of the antidiscriminatory code of the New York Equal Opportunities legislation. The Court ruled that:

a requirement that the plaintiff pass the sex-chromatin test in order to be eligible to participate in the [Women's] tournament was grossly unfair, discriminatory and inequitable, and violated plaintiff's rights under the New York Human Rights Law.⁴⁶

The Court granted the injunctions. Grayson notes that a similar outcome would be expected had the case occurred in Britain, where the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 may have been invoked.⁴⁷ This experience is relevant to the case of Ricki Carne in Australia and of April Capwill in the US. In both cases it was athletes who protested that the transsexuals had an unfair advantage, while the national athletic federations decreed that the athletes could compete as women.⁴⁸

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Throughout discussion and debate over testing procedures, 'gender' and 'sex' are interchanged as equal. This use of terms as if synonymous is inaccurate: 'sex' refers to biology, 'gender' to psychosexual orientation and identification; there is an added dimension to 'sex', in that it refers to both genetic 'sex' and to physical 'sex' (as in physique, genitalia etc.). These differences are important and, I suggest, are part of the reason for confusion as to objectives. From de la Chappelle's evidence we can see that:

- 1) People of female gender but not female genetic sex are unfairly excluded from women's events (Turner's Syndrome; testicular feminisation; gonadal dysgenesis);
- 2) People of male gender but revealed as female genetic sex are

unfairly *not* excluded from women's events (Klinefelter's Syndrome; XX Male Syndrome);

- 3) People of female genetic sex but male physique are unfairly *not* excluded from women's events (hormone doping; congenital adrenal hyperplasia).⁴⁹

The male/female distinction is also political (that is, it is embedded in power relationships), in the first instance, because it is based on an assumption that women do not perform as well as men. This might not be the case in all sports. A first question, then, is whether sex tests are relevant for all sports (e.g. archery and equestrian events today; perhaps diving and ultra distance running tomorrow). The point is that this inequality is dynamic: no set of assumptions will be valid for all sports at all times. Furthermore, as Dyer points out, the sex differences themselves are not fixed: 'there are overlaps, ambiguities, uncertainties and changes of sexual identity. Changing medical and social practices will increase their frequency and raise their visibility rather than lower them and hide them. Any definition of sex is an arbitrary one subject to change as social pressures change.'⁵⁰ The foolishness of the tests was implied by British runner Liz McColgan who was called for 'gender verification' testing after she had given birth to her daughter.⁵¹

It is assumed that males would have some unfair advantage in competing against women. What this advantage is might vary – in such mixed-sex sports as archery and equestrianism no advantage would seem to be perceived, notwithstanding the physical demands on competitors. Indeed, New Zealand horsewoman Vicki Latta stated prior to the Barcelona Olympics that sex-testing her was 'farcical': 'They can't eliminate me. It doesn't matter if I prove to be a male, because it's an open competition.'⁵²

If the objective of the tests is to preclude from women's competition individuals who exhibit male physique, that is if body type is the issue, then body type is what should be the basis of tests of exclusion/inclusion. A major problem with this approach is the subjective nature of any assessment. By contrast, one of the attractions of the sex chromatin test was, presumably, its objective nature. However, male physique which is a consequence of genetic or physical abnormality is far from the main 'cause' of masculinised women. One might easily claim that *the* major form of 'cheating' in international competition for women

is in fact hormonal alteration, the taking of testosterone or steroids. Proof of deliberate hormonal alteration is difficult to establish and is certainly not established by conventional sex-testing.

However, the major objection to sex-testing is a political one. Tests for gender verification are objectionable because they place women in a subordinate position: unlike sportsmen, sportswomen must subject themselves to questions as to their 'true' gender. The impact of these tests has been documented by sportswomen and their biographers. The first sex tests, introduced in 1966, involved physical examination. Mary Peters has recounted the tension among 'women of thirty-five and schoolgirls of sixteen, waiting to be examined like the female black slaves of the Deep South more than a hundred years earlier'.⁵³ In describing the examination she characterised it as 'the most crude and degrading experience I have ever known in my life'.⁵⁴ At least one New Zealand athlete (Valerie Sloper Young) also found it not very pleasant. She explained:

All the girls had to do it. It was very embarrassing. Even the women who had children had to go through it. They put you on a chair, took your underwear off and examined you physically to make sure you were a female – quite degrading.⁵⁵

Although the physical examination was soon replaced by the less offensive buccal smear, the psychological stress on sportswomen did not disappear. Mary Peters described the chromosome tests as 'somewhat more sophisticated but. . . a little more sinister' – one might believe one was a woman but turn out not to be.⁵⁶ As noted in the Introduction, Polish sprinter Eva Klobukowska had passed the physical examination but failed the chromosome test, to be stripped of her Olympic medal and other titles. She was one of those chromosomally abnormal females who was revealed as male by the chromatin test. The stress she underwent is commonly recounted, along with her attempts to have her 'sex' surgically corrected so that she would regain her eligibility.⁵⁷

Another *cause célèbre* is that of Spanish athlete Maria Patino. Failing a sex chromatin test in 1985, 'she lost her right to participate in sports, her university scholarship, lodging and boyfriend'.⁵⁸ However she fought back, eventually to be reinstated by the IAAF. The IOC, according to de la Chappelle, 'has not reacted to Maria's case'.⁵⁹

The 'bad news' stories continue. Some concern has been ex-

pressed about the tests being carried out on younger and younger sportswomen. For instance, indication of the stress caused by the testing was provided by teenage American swimmer Debbie Meyer who had not yet begun menstruating and now worried that she had trained herself into being male. Worse, another US swimmer, Kirsten Wengler, was actually told she had a Y chromosome and might not be able to have children. Before she received test results to the contrary, a consequence of more sophisticated and expensive testing arranged by her parents, her life was turned upside-down.⁶⁰ Older – and probably more confident – sportswomen also have their moments of worry. As New Zealand tennis player Belinda Cordwell said, referring to buccal smear testing at Seoul:

It was a strange time. We were laughing and joking about having to do the tests. But at the back of your mind was the terrible thought, 'What if they say I'm not female?'"⁶¹

What these tests do is cause otherwise confident women to question the very essence of their being: their gender. It is one further barrier that women, but not men, have to negotiate before competing. Not a few coaches have wondered what this effect alone has on women's performance in elite competition.⁶² American sports psychologist Thomas Tutko pointed out that the sex test has an underlying message: 'It's a way of saying "If you're this good at sport, you can't be a real woman"'";⁶³ a point also made by some athletes.⁶⁴ Blue points out that women do not need to carry gender verification certificates in any other walk of life. To have to do so in sport suggests that there is something different, something worrying, perhaps 'unnatural' about women doing well in sport.⁶⁵

A different dimension to the politics of sex-testing is indicated both in the review summarised above and in discussion within sports organisations: the so-called 'sex tests' are presented as if to protect women. Representing the IOC's position, Hay has said that sex testing is simply to prevent unfair competition, a claim described as 'absurd' by Genel who says that in trying to guarantee such things as 'physical equality', 'unfair advantage' and 'fair competition' it is referring to concepts which cannot even be defined consistently in the first place.⁶⁶ In fact, Blue's review of cases which have 'failed' the sex-testing suggest that they are not primarily cases of unscrupulous males exploiting female competition: most have been somewhat

tragic cases of gender (or sex) abnormality, a situation that de la Chappelle refers to as having 'gruesome' consequences.⁶⁷ In contrast, it is of interest that history records more cases of women who disguised themselves as men in order to gain independence, leadership, to avoid rape and to be safe on the streets. It is plausible that some women might have done likewise in order to participate in sports otherwise denied them. As recently as 1967, Katherine Switzer reputedly entered the Boston Marathon as K. Switzer at a time when women were not 'permitted' to run marathons. Yet men do not have sex tests in order to preclude women.

De la Chappelle argues that sports organisations have not in fact been entirely clear as to the aims of gender verification (or 'femininity control'); it is only *assumed* that the aim is to preclude males, or females with male characteristics which might give them an unfair advantage over other females, from participating in women's sports. He also points out that sports themselves appear to have no published guidelines as to the criteria used in determining gender by the sports involved. The most common argument *for* sex-testing is that it protects '*bona fide*' women. De la Chappelle's overview indicates that this is not borne out: the most serious weakness of the *sex* chromatin testing is probably the potential for *unfair exclusion* of females whose *gender* is not in question.⁶⁸

One might conclude that at least part of the failure of the testing procedure is because the objectives of the testing have not been made explicit. There is another aspect connected with these arguments, which is to do with the very nature of sport. Sport is, by its nature, selective. Good basketballers are tall, rugby forwards tend to be large, jockeys are light, gymnasts have high strength to weight ratios, and so on. Sports, as Money pointed out, 'are not democratic; they're élitist'.⁶⁹ All successful sportspeople are likely to have some form of advantage over their less successful peers, whether conferred by genetics (for example extra height or capacity for oxygen uptake) or environment or social circumstance. Should such athletes who have particular forms of advantage also be excluded from sport? On what basis should gender/sex be singled out as grounds for discrimination? The point is that sports themselves take this differentiation for granted, yet in failing to define it they risk passing people who should fail and, worse, failing people who should pass, simply because the *purpose* of the exercise is unclear. The process is a shambles, techni-

cally, morally and politically. The IOC, as the last bastion of sport, should heed its betters and drop the tests.

CONCLUSION

In sport, men and women have the right to protest against unfair competition. Most sports competition separates male from female competition, although the grounds for this are not always clear. Furthermore, within sport the definitions of 'male' and 'female' are left to commonsense, such that when individuals 'fail' a sex test the logic of *why* that failure is pertinent to the competition is often overlooked, or even missing. Rather than defining the terms 'male' and 'female' as they pertain to sports competition it might be that sports administrators need to be asked to define on what grounds the two competitions within their sports are considered to be not equal. The changing participation of women, their competence and conditioning, mean that such definitions of 'unequal' competition are not likely to remain fixed through time.

The requirement for women, and not men, to carry certification of their gender (actually sex) is unacceptable. While the assumed objective of sex-testing is to identify individuals who are *not women*, the practice of issuing femininity certificates to women, rather than men, reaffirms that women are *not men*. That is, their status as sportspersons is measured as against men: men are the standard. People who are not eligible for a 'femininity certificate' are assumed to be men. Gender is a fundamental part of a person's identity; it is draconian for either women or men to have to carry proof of their sex as a routine.

This paper has reviewed a range of objections to conventional 'sex-testing' of female sportspersons. Yet the IOC persists in conducting tests and will do so at Atlanta in 1996. Their refusal to acknowledge the weight of medical and scientific opinion, along with the views of sportswomen themselves, only highlights the patriarchal role assumed by this (self-defined) most august of sporting bodies. It reflects not just the subordination of women by the elderly gentlemen who comprise the majority of IOC members; it also signifies the subordination of all other international sporting federations by the most powerful of them all.

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'Too Hard a Life for a Girl'

Becoming a Nurse at Auckland Hospital, 1913-1947

DEBORAH DUNSFORD

This paper examines the process of applying for and training to become a nurse in Auckland between 1913 and 1947. Data drawn from the Auckland Hospital application registers provide some indication of success and failure of candidates at various stages of application and training. This data combined with oral interviews provides a view of the actual nursing experience which can be weighed against popular sentimentality about nurses. The paper also explores some of the influences surrounding young women's choice of nursing as a profession.

BACKGROUND

Nursing can be regarded as one of the pillars of twentieth-century women's employment. So much so, that it seems likely that many people today might well find an ex-nurse among the older generation of their female relatives and, if not, questioning may reveal someone who wanted to become a nurse but was unable to do so. From the beginning of this century until the late 1940s, this exclusively female occupation took applicants for a brief interval before marriage or offered a long-term career to those who did not marry. Nursing's importance for women's employment stemmed largely from its status as an occupation especially and solely suited to women. Arising out of the Nightingale nurse training reforms in Britain of the 1860s, the system of female nursing was squarely based upon the 'womanly' qualities of caring and service for others, high personal moral standards and the further qualities of obedience, discipline and endurance. Importantly, however, nursing was one of a limited number of work options for women before the 1940s and one of even fewer which offered a sense of vocation and of worthwhile work.

The reform of nursing practice and the initiation of formal nurse training were responses to the inadequacies of the system of the day: that of untrained, unhygienic and often uncaring women and men whose nursing skills were few at best and, at worst, completely ab-

sent. The most famous of the reformers was Florence Nightingale whose name has become synonymous with nursing. Her response to her experience in the Crimea was the formation of a hospital school where women would be properly trained in the art of nursing. The Nightingale reforms were carried around the world by eager graduates and New Zealand undertook the reform of its nursing system applying the Nightingale model during the 1880s.

The Nightingale reforms were not simply a method of education however. They involved a prescription of the ideal nurse and her training which combined religious zeal, military discipline and traditional notions about a woman's role, and led to changes in the recruitment of nurses and in the organisation of the nursing corps and of the hospital itself.¹ A woman's 'natural sphere' was seen as her home, where she was responsible for nurturing and caring for her family and maintaining both household order and high moral standards. Nursing also demanded these duties from the trained nurse but extended some of them even further. To the nurse's formal training and high moral character was added a religious devotion to her work of caring, a sense of vocation that demanded that the patient's well-being was always considered over and above her own needs. In short, the nurse was to sacrifice her desires to the patient's, or the hospital's, needs. The qualities of cleanliness and the maintenance of order were emphasised within the developing military-style management of the nursing corps and hospitals. Efficiency, hard work and unquestioning discipline were demanded, and the public was quickly able to contrast 'modern' nurses with those of earlier days: the untrained male hospital nurse;² the married community nurse or midwife who was very experienced but also without formal training; and the dissolute, Charles Dickens stereotype, Sairey Gamp. Each of these earlier models now lacked one or several of the qualities deemed essential to modern nursing, for example, training, respectability and, for male nurses, the inherently 'womanly' ability to care. The trained nurse by comparison was educated, efficient, immaculate, self-sacrificing and devoted. She had no failings at all.

Public appreciation of the trained nurse was rapid and wholehearted, with Sairey Gamp, in particular, consigned to an often-recalled memory of the bad old days. In her place was the modern nurse and many people seemed excited by nursing's potential as an occupation for young women. This was rarely articulated as keenly

as by one New Zealand Legislative Councillor in the debates on the 1901 Nurses Registration Bill, when he said:

It is a source of congratulation to see the number of young women - many of them highly educated and belonging to respectable families - who devote themselves to nursing - in carrying out, I may say, practical Christianity. This, I believe, will be a highly commendable life for them....With such a career before them there is no necessity whatever for young women to separate themselves from the world... within the walls of a convent or a convent-school.³

Clearly, nursing was entering the ranks of the greatest of vocations. Modern nursing drew on the early conventual model of nursing, seen in the adoption of the veil in the uniform and the requirements of devotion, obedience and self-sacrifice. The Legislative Councillor above certainly identified nursing as a secular continuation of, as well as an alternative to, the 'sacrifice' of convent life. This emotive view of the young woman as a nurse was often placed before the public and was easily heightened with sentiment about her caring, her humanity and her own particular self-sacrifice. The highly publicised role of nurses in the Crimean, Boer and First World Wars contributed to public feeling about nurses, as did the ever-increasing numbers of patients leaving hospital full of florid tributes to these 'angels on earth'.⁴

Vocational appeal was certainly strong for many women, but the desire to serve was just one of the requirements for success. Like convent life, the modern system of nurse training was designed to ensure that only the moral, the disciplined, the enduring and strong would cross the hurdles along the road to being a registered nurse. However, it also seems that underneath the official and public admiration for 'the nurse' and her vocation, many parents were less enthusiastic about a daughter's wish to become one. Far from being impressed by the vocational fulfilment of the work, they instead recognised the disadvantages of the long hours, hard work, poor pay and constant involvement with a harsher side of human life.

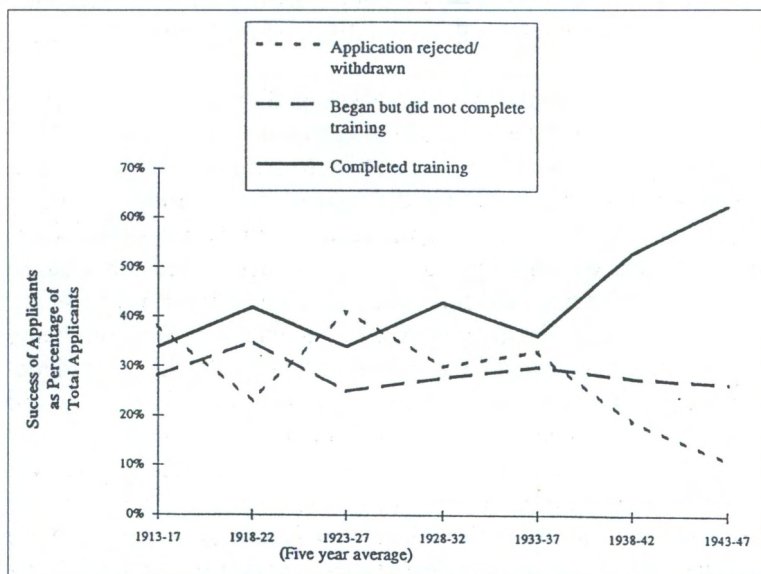
Monitoring the suitability of entrants and graduate nurses was vital to maintaining the newly-established respectability of nursing. However, the rigidity with which nursing leaders demanded these qualities meant that many women found it very difficult to reach the necessary standards. In New Zealand and elsewhere, recruitment and

graduation rates failed to meet the increasing demand for nurses in the changing and expanding hospital systems of the twentieth century.

APPLICATIONS TO THE AUCKLAND SCHOOL OF NURSING

Auckland Hospital's School of Nursing application registers provide a picture of candidates for nurse training and reveal changes and trends between 1913 and 1947. Information about the age and address of applicants gives a clearer idea of the women who were attracted to nursing as well as the opportunity to quantify just how many applicants successfully completed their training.⁵ How did they find the reality of this most 'womanly' of occupations?

In looking first at the age of applicants, there is a clear pattern of nursing initially attracting women from a cross-section of ages between 19 and 35 to being thoroughly dominated by the under 20 group by the late 1940s. During the 1910s, both the under-20 and 21-25 age groups averaged 30-45 per cent of total applications. There was also a steady 15-20 per cent of applicants in the 26-30 age group and regular, if small, numbers of applications from the 31-35 age group.



Graph 1: Success of nurse applicants to Auckland Hospital, 1913-1947

However, over the next 35 years, the pattern of ever-increasing numbers of applicants in the youngest age bracket established itself. Between 1921 and 1940, the under 20 group increased and then remained at about 60-70 per cent of total applications and, by 1947, the ratio of under-20 year olds had increased again to 79 per cent, with 21-25 year olds at just 20 per cent.⁶ Certainly, this picture of an increasingly younger student nurse ties in with the memories of two nurses, Grace Gordon and Leslie Turner. They both commenced training at Auckland in 1941 at the ages of 25 and 24 respectively and felt distinctly 'older' than most trainees, forming their special friendships from amongst the small group of 'older' women.⁷

The minimum age of nurses was a continuing subject for discussion. It was felt that girls did not have the emotional or physical maturity needed for the hospital environment before the age of 19 or so. However, the profession was also disturbed at the loss of 'suitable' girls who entered other occupations straight after school rather than wait until they could apply for nursing. The further decline in age at entry during the 1940s was a result of the legislative response to the nurse shortage. World War II saw many nurses enlist for military service and the trainee intake was doubled to cope. In addition, the 1940s saw the expansion of the hospital system which came out of the first Labour Government's social security measures. In short, the country was desperate for more nurses at a time when a much greater range of employment which offered better pay and working conditions was becoming available to young women. Unable to attract sufficient applicants, the age of registration was lowered from 22 to 21 in 1943, with entry for training at 18.⁸ For nursing authorities, the troublesome gap between school and nursing closed a little further.

The increasingly high educational standard required for nursing probably contributed to the decrease in numbers of applicants in the older age brackets. Those who had left school and worked for some time before applying were less likely to have had an extended high school career. The standard of general education required was not laid down in law but was set by each hospital and tended to increase as medicine became more specialised and complex. In 1927, one applicant was rejected because her education was insufficient – she had not passed the sixth standard.⁹ By 1936, however, each application was being noted with the level of education achieved, whether matriculation, higher leaving certificate or just the number of years

at secondary school.¹⁰ In 1940, Leslie Turner was interviewed by Miss Cussen, Auckland's Acting Lady Superintendent, who was not keen on accepting her because she had not had the required two years secondary education. Luckily for Turner, she was able to convince Cussen of her suitability and her vocation by revealing that she had already been studying anatomy on her own account.¹¹ No doubt the wartime shortage of nurses contributed to Cussen's eagerness to be persuaded.

Nursing seems to have appealed to a wide cross-section of women who joined the service on an equal basis. As one nurse who trained in the 1930s said:

Nursing is like belonging to a sports group or doing military training. When you get into hospital, it doesn't matter where you came from, whether you came from the town, whether your father was a school inspector or if he was a farmer...you all had to face up to the same things.¹²

The home address given by applicants gives some indication of the social and geographical breadth of the Auckland Hospital trainee intake. As would be expected, the majority of applications came from young women in the Auckland city and suburban area – over 50 per cent throughout the period. The occupation's appeal to women from rural areas and provincial towns is also evident. Out-of-town applications rose during World War I and remained between 30 and 45 per cent of total applications from the late 1920s onward.¹³ Hopeful country nurse trainees could quite easily have trained at a local hospital nearer to their homes. However, it was widely known that such hospitals gave a less varied and thorough training than the large city hospitals and Auckland also consciously promoted itself as the 'premier' training school in the Dominion. Fewer jobs in the provinces meant that many had to move away to have any sort of employment outside the home and nursing's attractions must have included the security of the nurses' home environment and the ability to train for a career which would be of use whether a woman married or remained single and wherever she lived. Coupled with the fact that Auckland, as the largest city in the country, must have had a degree of magnetism for young women seeking independence or simply wanting to get away from home, it is scarcely surprising that it attracted applicants from throughout the country.

Nursing's appeal as a vocation suitable for 'well educated' young

women from 'good' homes is reflected in the steady numbers drawn from Auckland's eastern suburbs – between 10 and 20 per cent throughout the entire period. Nurse leaders probably hoped to attract a higher proportion of applicants from the daughters of Auckland's well-to-do families but nursing's reputation as being a hard life may have meant that many affluent parents were unenthusiastic about their daughters becoming nurses. This could possibly have been a response to the heightened fears about the health of nurses – and in particular, during the 1930s, about their susceptibility to tuberculosis. There may also have been a middle-class reluctance to expose them to a rougher side of life from which they had been largely protected. Tui Radley, who began training in 1939 at the age of 19, remembers her father opposing her becoming a nurse and demanding to know what she would do if she met up with a dirty old man. Radley replied: 'We would sponge him and get him clean' but also commented that, of course, that was not what her father had meant.¹⁴

Because of the delay for most girls between leaving school and entering nurse training, a number went to work at private hospitals or maybe to the Auckland Infirmary (which used a high proportion of nurse aides for the less demanding work of nursing the invalid and convalescent). Other nurses began working as aides and, because they enjoyed the work, decided to train. A small group of applicants gave another hospital as their address. However, applications from hospital addresses decreased rapidly from 1940 as girls were able to enter training almost directly from school and there was a much greater choice of employment for girls generally.

In even making an application, quite a number of nurses had to overcome a substantial hurdle: that is, the opposition of some parents to their daughters taking up what they saw as 'too hard a life for a girl'.¹⁵ Reasons for parental and wider community opposition varied but revolved around fears that many young women were not strong enough for the work and their health might be at risk. It was held as common knowledge that nursing involved hard work, long hours and very little pay. Understandably, many parents preferred to guide their daughters into office work, where the hours were reasonable and the pay was better. Some parents sought to protect them for other reasons. Jessie Kirkness began training in 1931 after having worked for a number of years in a builder's office. She had always thought of

becoming a nurse but her father had apparently had a miserable experience in a hospital in Hamilton at the hands of a night sister and he had told Jessie's mother 'it was the last thing I was to do because nurses were very hard'.¹⁶ Middle-class parental fears, in particular, reflected concerns about the harshness of nursing and hospital life which was at odds with rigid notions of the day about the propriety of young women's experience.

It seems too that people who might have been expected to value the vocational aspect of nursing were not entirely blinded by it. Kirkness went to her vicar for one of the three references required by Auckland Hospital. He provided the reference but as she went out the gate, he came out after her and called out: 'Jessie, Jessie, come back. Isn't there something better you can do than spend your time emptying other people's slops?'¹⁷ Kirkness's experience suggests that for some the 'skivvyng' side of nursing work overwhelmed the caring aspects, a view no doubt influenced by class prescriptions about suitable work. It illustrates the degree to which some people were aware of the realities of nursing life as opposed to the admiration and sentiment with which they regarded the nursing profession as a whole. Nurses might have been brave and wonderful women but many people did not necessarily want their daughters or acquaintances to take on nursing's challenges.

The first formal hurdle for the potential nurse to cross was the hospital interview with the lady superintendent and the application registers allow some analysis of the success rate of applicants through the interview, and then the training process. Not surprisingly, considering nursing's strict views of who might and might not be suitable, between 22 per cent and 40 per cent of applicants were rejected or withdrew at the interview stage.¹⁸ A suitable trainee nurse was to be at least 19 years old (but not over 35), unmarried, physically strong and healthy, have a reasonable standard of education, be of good character and from a good family background. Quite apart from these guidelines, however, nursing leaders were able to and did refuse entry on a myriad of grounds, sometimes highly subjective and impressionistic. The registers provide some indication of how arbitrary the rejection of candidates may have been. While the attrition rate of those who began but did not complete training remained relatively stable, the ratio of successful graduates increased dramatically from

the mid 1930s, at the same time as the ratio of applicants rejected at interview fell away (see Graph 1).

Nurses were interviewed at Auckland by the lady superintendent and, if considered 'suitable', were then referred to the medical superintendent for a medical examination. Although the simple comments of 'withdrawn' or 'unsuitable' were most common, the more specific remarks which appear in the application registers are revealing of the discretion with which the lady superintendent and her deputy rejected or accepted applicants. An applicant's personal qualities and demeanour were very important to the outcome of the interview. In August 1933, one applicant was judged 'not suitable, dirty feet, etc'.¹⁹ In 1936, another made it to preliminary school but left after just one day. Her short career was summed up in the application register by the words 'dirty and unsuitable'.²⁰ A 1940 interviewee was described as a 'dreadful looking girl. Untidy - crying'.²¹ Some applications were deferred while the candidate had treatment for acne.²² Many of the nurses remember having their hands examined at the interview. Perhaps they were being checked for dexterity or strength,²³ but most probably it was for possible skin problems such as eczema or for evidence of careful hygiene.

The importance of showing proper respect and accepting one's place in both the nursing and greater hospital hierarchies was an intrinsic part of being a nurse. In connection with this, nursing leaders were always concerned to attract the 'right type of girl' from a 'good' home. How well an applicant would accept hospital discipline was no doubt one of the judgements the lady superintendent made at the interview. In 1930, Kathleen Falls was interviewed by the Deputy Lady Superintendent. In those early depression years, it was not easy to be accepted and Falls felt that being accompanied by her step-mother, whom she described as 'real quality', was to her advantage. They discussed etiquette at the interview, with Miss Cussen revealing the standards she expected in the comment that she herself 'still stood up when her mother came into the room'.²⁴

The highly personal world of nursing where matrons, Health Department staff and Nurses' Association leaders all knew one another personally through their membership of the Nurses' Association and attendance at Association and Matrons' conferences is evident. A 1928 Auckland Hospital applicant who had worked at St Helen's Hospital and the Auckland Infirmary, possibly as a nurse

aide, was refused with the comment 'Neither Miss Broadley nor Miss Rudd recommend'.²⁵ No further investigation would have been thought necessary, the judgement of fellow matrons being accepted without question. The other side of this coin was that an application accompanied by a reference from a respected senior nurse was viewed very favourably.

Once judged suitable for training by the matron or lady superintendent, applicants were sent for a medical examination. Until the 1930s, this meant an interview with the medical superintendent and obtaining a certificate of health from an applicant's own doctor. A relatively small per cent age were refused admission because they failed their medical examination. Certainly in most years, the percentage rejected for non-medical reasons was far higher. However, the 1930s saw growing concern about the health of nurses and a higher rate of refusals on medical grounds of between 7 and 16 per cent of all applications.²⁶

The higher refusal rate on medical grounds was in response to growing evidence worldwide of an abnormally high incidence of tuberculosis amongst nurses. There was public and parental concern about risks to the health of the respectable young women nursing wished to attract. In 1931, German research revealed the high incidence of tuberculosis amongst nurses compared to that of the general population and, by 1933, the New Zealand Nurses' Association, the Department of Health and the Otago Medical School were all discussing the local situation.²⁷ In 1935, the Division of Nursing advised that all candidates for nursing should be thoroughly examined by Hospital Board medical staff (rather than by their own doctor) and undergo both a chest x-ray and a tuberculin skin test before being accepted for training.²⁸ At Auckland, the medical superintendent quickly began to exercise more caution in accepting candidates at some risk of infection. Three 1933 candidates were rejected because they were 'unhealthy looking', 'too small' or had an 'unsatisfactory physique'.²⁹ The mid 1930s also saw many candidates refused admission until they had had a tonsilectomy. However, rejections for medical reasons fell away again quite rapidly to six per cent in the early 1940s. By the end of that decade, medical rejections at Auckland were down to two and one per cent as the availability of vaccination and more effective treatment began to combat the worst of the disease.³⁰

NURSE TRAINING

Up until the 1940s, between twenty and forty per cent of applicants were judged unsuitable even to commence training. However, the final hurdle for the aspiring nurse to clear was the training itself. It took three years of fulltime work and study to become a registered nurse and the application registers show that many young women found during this stage that nursing was not their vocation after all. Across 35 years, there is an attrition rate of around 30 per cent of those who actually entered the School of Nursing (see Graph 1).³¹

It is difficult to quantify the reasons for student nurses leaving the service, however impressionistic evidence does give some explanation. The numbers leaving for marriage were high enough for Emily Nutsey, Auckland's lady superintendent throughout the 1930s, to comment acidly on yet 'another nurse joining the ranks of matrimonial wastage'.³² A 1947 Department of Health survey showed that 27 per cent of those leaving during training did so to marry.³³ Trainee nurses had to be single. This was partly because of the requirement to live in the nurses' home but also because it was a tenet of nursing that the dedication to duty and service required of a nurse would be hindered by a marital relationship. Auckland Hospital did not begin to employ married trained nurses until during World War II. Then, the combination of the shortage of nursing staff and the large number of married women whose husbands were away on military service provided a forceful need and its solution.³⁴

The general pattern of women leaving work to marry can be seen throughout women's employment at that time. Paid employment was viewed as a temporary occupation during the transition from school to marriage. Nurses were no different to other young women and, for most, their 'vocation' for nursing was secondary to their primary and long-term 'vocation' of marriage and motherhood. Cicely Cole remembers having qualms about leaving nursing, which she loved, for marriage 'but I looked at some of the senior staff at the hospital and...thought which would I rather regret, giving up marriage or giving up nursing and I thought I'd rather give up nursing if that's what it meant'.³⁵

Implicit in Cole's judgment of the senior staff is the feeling of hardness and of emptiness in some part of their lives which she felt would not be the case for a married woman. Where nursing did differ from many other female occupations was in the potential career

path it could offer women who did not marry. Nutsey's observation about 'matrimonial wastage' certainly reflects her position as both a career nurse and an employer of nurses but it also provides a commentary on the temporary nature of most women's employment and the overwhelming expectation that marriage was a woman's ultimate destination.

Another indicator of the way in which women's employment was viewed as temporary and dispensable is shown in the number of student nurses who left their training in order to care for parents or family. The traditional role of single daughters returning home to provide fulltime care for old or ill parents was common at least until the 1930s and a single daughter with even a small amount of nursing training was an obvious candidate within any family. If a trainee nurse was proving satisfactory and had the recommendation of the lady superintendent, the Auckland Board would agree to consider her readmittance at a later date. However, this was not a right all pupil nurses could expect. The 1947 survey found that 15 per cent of trainee nurses left for 'family reasons'.³⁶

Illness, and on a few occasions death, prevented some trainee nurses achieving registration. Some nurses found that their strength or health was not up to the long hours of heavy work. Long hours they certainly were. While the eight-hour day was legally introduced for trainee (but not trained) nurses in 1910, all nurses still worked seven days per week. The legislation simply limited a trainee's week to 56 hours.³⁷ It was not until 1921 that Auckland Hospital introduced a regular weekly day off. Annie Blewett remembered her holidays at the end of the first year: 'I wasn't inclined for anything except for sleep. I went to my sister's and I think I just went out in the sun and just slept for a lot of the time'.³⁸ Blewett began training during World War I and missed out on the benefit of one day off per week. She had to do all her study in her own time and make up time on the wards that was missed through attending lectures. Even when one day off was given, it could easily disappear. Jessie Kirkness remembered that, when you reported to a new ward for a month's duty in the 1930s, 'Sister would [often] say, "What day do you have the most lectures, nurse?" And you'd say, "Thursday, Sister". "Oh, that'll be your day off."'³⁹ Hospital boards and senior nursing staff were easily able to utilize nurses' highly developed sense of vocation and obedience to ensure hospitals were run in the most cost effective way.

Some nurses must have found the petty discipline and rigid hierarchy impossible to take. Familiarity between the ranks was not encouraged. Marjorie Feist was a trained nurse in the early 1930s while her sister, Dorothy, was in training. However, both women knew that nursing imposed its own hierarchy over any outside relationship. Trainee nurses must never presume upon a sister and Marjorie remembered that Dorothy 'never admitted to knowing me when we passed in the corridor'.⁴⁰ One nurse successfully completed her training but was described in the register as being 'frivolous' and 'not respectful'. She was credited with being 'conscientious with patient care', however, the negative remarks carried more weight and ensured that she was not invited to remain on the permanent staff.⁴¹ Others like her must have chosen to leave during training to the relief of the nursing administration. There seems to have been very little room for the individualist and none for the rebel.

All the nurses interviewed commented on how hard they worked, especially as trainees. They went on duty early just to get the work done and stayed until the whole shift was excused by the ward sister.⁴² Patients remained in bed for ten days after surgery and nursing care meant doing everything for them. The work was heavy and tiring and, on top of that, a nurse had to study in her own time. It is perhaps no surprise that many decided that they were not suited to the hospital environment or chose marriage when it was offered.

The nursing profession created a high code of expectation to ensure that only the right kind of applicant would become a nurse. It was never intended that it should be easy to do so and the application registers show that, until the 1940s, a large proportion of applicants did not succeed. As the public image of nursing was sentimentalised into virtual sainthood, the profession also became synonymous with women and all that was womanly. Yet individual families and their daughters were not all taken in by that public myth. They knew the reality was that a nursing life would be hard for a girl, and for many it was too hard.

Between 1913 and 1947 a large although decreasing percentage of all applicants for nurse training at Auckland Hospital disappeared into the ranks of the 'unsuitable'. In a discussion largely concerned with those 'unsuitable' and unsuccessful, it is easy to overlook those who completed their training and graduated as nurses. For these women, the hospital experience might have been hard but was not a

burden. To complete her training, a nurse had to be able to cope with the long hours and heavy work, study and pass her exams, accept the rigorous discipline, fit into the hierarchy without offending it or being offended by it and settle for small financial rewards. But to the woman who could fit into the nursing hierarchy and did not regard the life as a hardship, nursing offered an ordered world of close female friendship and worthwhile work. Whether an interlude before marriage or a long and varied career, those women who were 'suitable' found nursing a deeply satisfying life.

Deborah Dunsford completed her MA (Hons) at the University of Auckland in February 1994. Her thesis examined the working conditions of general nurses in Auckland's public hospitals from 1908 to 1950. She has presented papers on her research at the 1994 New Zealand Historical Association Conference and the Australasian Medical History Society's 1994 International Conference on the History of Medicine and Health. Currently a freelance researcher and editor, she is also co-director of a software distribution company.

NOTES

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- ² In New Zealand and elsewhere, the last two decades of the nineteenth century saw the transition from male-and-female to an all-female nursing staff. The female system of nursing excluded males from its training process and effectively established a gender monopoly for nearly fifty years. As the public of the day were convinced by the 'special' qualities which so suited women to nursing, the hospital boards, as employers of nurses, also appreciated the lower costs of employing women over men. See Derek A. Dow, 'Springs of Charity?: The Development of the New Zealand Hospital System, 1876-1910', in Linda Bryder (ed), *A Healthy Country, Essays in the Social History of Medicine in New Zealand* (Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1991) pp. 56-8; Patricia Sargison, 'Gender, Class and Power: Ideologies and Conflict during the Transition to Trained Female Nurses at Dunedin and Christchurch Hospitals, 1889-1895', in Linda Bryder and Derek A. Dow (eds), *New Countries and Old Medicine, Proceedings of An International Conference on the History of Medicine and Health* (Pyramid Press, Auckland, 1995) pp. 271-278; Angela Cushing, 'Perspectives on Male and Female Care Giving in Victoria, 1850-1890', in Linda Bryder and Derek A. Dow (eds), pp. 263-270.
- ³ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 116, 9 July 1901, p.180.
- ⁴ National Archives (NA) (Auckland), A493/15, Letter from a patient at Auckland Hospital describing Sister Tilly, Minutes of a meeting of the Auckland Hospital Board, 15 May 1938, p. 551.
- ⁵ For base figures drawn from these registers, see Deborah A. Dunsford, 'The privilege to serve others', The working conditions of general nurses in Auckland's public hospitals, 1908-1950, MA thesis (Auckland), 1994, Appendices 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, pp. 184-190.
- ⁶ Dunsford, Appendix 1.1, pp. 184-5.
- ⁷ Interviews: H. Leslie Turner, 21 December 1992; M. E. Grace Gordon, 19 February 1993. Tapes in author's possession.
- ⁸ *The New Zealand Nursing Journal*, Vol. XXXVI, 15 August 1943, p. 171.
- ⁹ NA (Auckland), BAOE, 4509/1a, Nurses Application Register, 1913-1942, p. 117.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 214-224.
- ¹¹ Interview, Turner, 21 December 1992.
- ¹² Interview, Jessie M. Kirkness, 10 February 1993.
- ¹³ Dunsford, Appendix 1.2, pp. 186-8.
- ¹⁴ Interview, Tui Radley Garnett, 14 January 1993.
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Interview, Kirkness, 10 February 1993.
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Dunsford, Appendix 1.3, pp. 189-90.
- ¹⁹ NA (Auckland), BAOE, 4509/1a, p. 181.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 221.
- ²¹ *ibid.*, p. 264.

- ²² *ibid.*, p. 165.
- ²³ Interview, Kathleen Falls Tutill, 8 February 1993.
- ²⁴ *ibid.*
- ²⁵ NA (Auckland), BAOE, 4509/1a, p. 145.
- ²⁶ Dunsford, Appendix 1.3, pp. 189-90.
- ²⁷ F. S. Maclean, *Challenge for Health: A History of Public Health in New Zealand* (Government Printer, Wellington, 1964) p. 377; *The New Zealand Nursing Journal*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1, March 15, 1993, pp. 38-40.
- ²⁸ Maclean, *Challenge for Health*, p. 378.
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- ³⁰ Dunsford, Appendix 1.3, pp. 189-190.
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- ³² Interview, Cicely J. Cole Bibby, 20 December 1992.
- ³³ NA (Wellington), Department of Health Paper on Shortage of Nursing Staffs, H/1/1/8/3, 7/2/51, p. 2.
- ³⁴ NA (Auckland), A493/38, Minutes of a meeting of the Auckland Hospital Board, 18 March 1940, pp. 3052-3.
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- ³⁶ NA (Wellington), Department of Health Paper on Shortage of Nursing Staffs, H/1/1/8/3, 7/2/51, p.2.
- ³⁷ *New Zealand Statutes, 1909*, p. 101.
- ³⁸ Alexander Turnbull Library (AT), Nursing Education & Research Foundation (NERF) Oral Collection, LC0075.
- ³⁹ Interview, Kirkness, 10 February 1993.
- ⁴⁰ Interview, Marjorie Feist and Nora Kingsford, 9 February 1993.
- ⁴¹ NA (Auckland), BAOE, 4509/1a, p. 124.
- ⁴² AT, NERF Oral Collection, LC0034.

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Women in the Club

SUSAN UPTON

Women early this century had their own social clubs, clubs with their own buildings like men's clubs – like the Wellington Club. Often when I was researching the history of women's clubs I resorted to this male comparison to define 'club'. I was not happy but it worked every time. People are familiar with men's clubs, which still exist in New Zealand towns. Formerly bastions of male privilege, some are now even daring to admit women as members. This is a reversal in attitude from the nineteenth-century when gentlemen valued their club for being a place where they did not have to deal with women. The club is still seen as an essentially male institution while its female equivalent is largely forgotten. In this article, I want to explore the reasons why women belonged to clubs from the 1890s until the end of World War II and why that popularity diminished.

Women's clubs were the first formally constituted social organisations for women in New Zealand. They were institutions with a rule book stating the objects of the club and the procedures which were to govern it. Most were also incorporated societies.¹ From the beginning of European settlement in New Zealand women had valued the companionship of other women. Cut off from the family network they had been accustomed to in nineteenth-century Britain, and transplanted to a society in which they were outnumbered by men, Pakeha women delighted in opportunities to meet each other. The establishment of women's clubs was a formal attempt to provide 'a place for women to associate'.² Their aim was unashamedly social.

The first women's clubs were founded in New Zealand in the 1890s but it was during the interwar period that every town had at least one women's club to which their social élite belonged. It is hard to know the exact numbers of women involved in clubs because records are uneven. In 1925, when a federation of women's clubs was formed in New Zealand, they estimated that there were approximately 5,000 clubwomen in this country.³ The numbers increased during the latter part of the 1920s as new clubs were founded. This number was large when it is considered that clubs were deliberately

exclusive, restricting membership by a strict nomination and election procedure, and sometimes also limitations on space. This exclusivity meant that New Zealand women's clubs in the interwar years catered solely for middle-class Pakeha women.⁴

The Federation of Women's Clubs in New Zealand defined a club as an organisation which owned or leased premises in a New Zealand town, held a ballot for membership and had no political purpose.⁵ Women's clubs ranged in size and function. One thousand women took part in cultural and social activities at the the sophisticated Auckland Lyceum Club in 1934, whereas 49 country women used the modest restroom facilities of the Wharekoa Club in Hunterville in 1949.⁶ Clubs were popular throughout the interwar period, with only a slight fall in numbers during the economic depression. But by the end of the thirties numbers were dropping and committees began worrying about ways to attract younger women. This decline halted temporarily during World War II, as clubs became centres for war work, but membership fell again after the war. The sharp rise in property costs in the 1960s forced many clubs to close. Numbers have decreased gradually since and the women's clubs which continue today are mainly for older women. While city clubs have falling rolls, areas with a high proportion of retired people, like Tauranga and Taupo, report increasing interest in women's clubs.⁷

The significance of a social organisation is hard to measure. There are no changes in political or social policy on which to judge their importance. While the practical advantages of a club as a place to meet (what nowadays is often described as our own 'space') are obvious, the merits of bridge parties and grand receptions are harder to evaluate. Club leaders usually described their club's aim as being purely social, a place for rest and recreation. American historians have claimed that clubwomen deliberately masked their feminist intentions behind this social facade.⁸ Certainly, club leaders in this country had a wider agenda than the majority of the membership and the more feminist of them hoped clubs would teach women to work together.

Even if these women, who were the exception, are ignored the history of women's clubs in New Zealand is worth investigation because clubs were a distinctive form of leisure for 50 years, a form of leisure that the English in the 1890s saw as a sign that women's social life was becoming more independent.⁹ The history of leisure has

not been seen as being as important as the history of work, and the study of women and leisure has been even more neglected. When a study has concentrated on leisure in New Zealand it has focused on sport and recreational pursuits, as opposed to time spent entertaining and meeting friends.¹⁰ It has been assumed that New Zealand women's social life in the 1920s centred on the family, but this may be only partially true. Certainly it ignores these middle-aged clubwomen who, while they never questioned that home and family were their top priority, cheerfully spent some of their social life away from them.¹¹

Biographers often disregard a woman's club involvement presumably because it seems unimportant by today's standards.¹² The membership of women's clubs included many of the first women graduates and career women, women who were active in local body politics and a myriad of cultural and voluntary organisations. Busy women, they nevertheless took a leading role in club life, serving as presidents and committee members. It is hard now for us to see why women who had been involved with the serious concerns of suffrage or temperance considered it not only a pleasure but a duty to establish an institution which was basically self indulgent. Clubs did have snobbish and frivolous elements, but they are important in understanding the lives of middle-class Pakeha women in the interwar period. In addition, women's clubs gave their members the opportunity, rare at that time, to widen their circle of acquaintances and make contacts in other organisations.

Women's clubs differed from other early women's organisations, like the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Benevolent Societies, in having no religious stipulations to membership. Women's clubs can make good claim to be the first non-sectarian women's group in this country, although within the narrow boundaries of class. Class allegiance was stronger than religious loyalty and clubs never crossed economic barriers or pretended to be democratic. Clubwomen came mainly from the upper middle class, were reasonably wealthy, well educated and travelled. Clubs were unashamedly exclusive and only women who were acceptable to other members were admitted. This engendered an element of snobbery and an allegiance to class that was stronger than any feeling of sisterhood. Spending money on their own enjoyment was not a luxury available to the average New Zealand woman at this time. Nor was owning and leasing property an experience shared by other women's groups. Having their own

premises provided clubwomen with unique opportunities to help other groups by hosting functions and providing a venue for meetings. In this way clubwomen could enhance their position in other organisations and widen their network of contacts.

Kate Evelyn Isitt initiated the founding of the Pioneer Club in Wellington in 1909. She believed women needed a club for two reasons: 'first, the provision of comfortable rooms where members could read, write, or rest, and where refreshments could be provided, and secondly, the mental stimuli which could be afforded by interchange of opinion among women of varied interests.'¹³ Most New Zealand clubs were run on this premise. The earliest catered mainly for country women. The first, still functioning today, was the Ranfurly Club in Masterton. It was founded in 1899 and named after Lady Ranfurly, the wife of the current governor.¹⁴ Its charter 'to meet a want felt by a large number of ladies, of a place where they can lunch, have afternoon tea etc., meet their friends or interview servants' was adopted by several clubs.¹⁵ Country towns in New Zealand in the early 1900s had no facilities for women and children. Masterton did not even have tearooms and it was socially unacceptable for a respectable woman to go alone to a hotel. The Ranfurly Club gave Masterton women a place of their own in town. Until the 1920s, when motor cars made an overnight stay unnecessary many women's clubs were also residential.

The women who founded these first women's clubs were mainly the wives and daughters of landowners who wanted the same facilities as their husbands and fathers enjoyed at their clubs. Like the founders of the first English ladies' clubs, New Zealand women used a male model. In fact, Masterton clubmen may have inadvertently contributed to the founding of the Ranfurly Club by refusing, in 1895, to allow a 'meeting of ladies' in their committee room.¹⁶ In her introduction to Karen Blair's *The Clubwoman as Feminist*, Annette Baxter observes that the exclusion by men 'has frequently precipitated the coalescence of a woman's group' as it did with the founding of the New York women's club Sorosis which was a reaction from women journalists to their exclusion from a New York Press Club dinner for Charles Dickens.¹⁷ Unlike overseas clubs, there is no evidence that New Zealand women considered having mixed clubs.¹⁸ At the inaugural meeting of the Hunterville Ladies' Club in 1914, the Hunterville Men's Club offered to help, but were politely told the women 'would

prefer to be independent if possible'. The Hunterville women then wrote to the Ranfurly Club for advice on setting up a club.¹⁹

While the Wairarapa women followed the procedure and rules of the men's club, two of the Ranfurly Club founders had spent several years in London in the 1890s and they were aware of the ladies' clubs which were fashionable there.²⁰ The popularity of these London clubs was well publicised here. Clubs were seen to symbolise the freedom of the 'new woman' and the press highlighted the wearing of rational dress and the inclusion of smoking rooms. It may have been this sensationalism which alarmed Dr Edger Carr, who in 1902 warned the National Council of Women (NCW) conference in Napier that 'women's clubs meant neglected homes'. New Zealand women treated his remarks with scorn.²¹ In fact, women's clubs at this time ensured member's children were not neglected by allowing them to accompany their mother to the club. The Ranfurly Club also allowed a member to 'introduce a governess or lady help in her employ', presumably to look after the children if their mother wanted to leave them. It was pointed out that the club custodian was not a nursemaid.²² The New Zealand city women's clubs which were founded later were less accommodating and only admitted children, like gentlemen, to the strangers' room.

Clubs here were not formed in a vacuum and in some cases were established by women who had belonged to overseas clubs. The Women's Club in Sydney was the model for the Pioneer Club in Wellington and the Otago Women's Club, started in Dunedin in 1914.²³ Two of the Pioneer's founders, journalist Kate Evelyn Isitt and Dr Agnes Bennett, had belonged to this Sydney club and so had Miss Gether who proposed the establishment of the Otago Women's Club.²⁴ The Sydney club had itself been based on the London Pioneer Club.²⁵ The Wellington Pioneer as a result had visiting rights to the London Pioneer and the Women's Club in Sydney. By the 1920s even the smallest New Zealand club was affiliated to at least one English and Australian women's club and by the end of the decade they were also establishing links with American clubs. Affiliation gave women access to the facilities of the other club as well as providing a forum for overseas communication.

While affiliation was normally an individual arrangement between two clubs, the Lyceum Clubs had formed an International Association. The London Lyceum had been founded in 1904 for univer-

sity, scientific, artistic and literary women. To become a member women had to have had art exhibited or written work published.²⁶ The first Lyceum in New Zealand was established in 1922 when the Auckland Women's Club affiliated with the London Lyceum and changed its name to the Auckland Lyceum Club.²⁷ Other Lyceum clubs were started in the 1920s. All, with the exception of the Wellington Lyceum, were in the north of the North Island. Lyceums thought of themselves as part of an international organisation. In 1927 Maude Parkes, president of the Auckland Lyceum, described how she and her daughter had stayed at the Paris Lyceum and met many stimulating women in Europe through her Lyceum contacts.²⁸

Upper-class New Zealand women travelled 'home' to England frequently. This was not unusual amongst their section of society. In 1906 one sixth of the men belonging to the Wellington Club were on the supernumerary list, which meant they were out of the country for twelve months or more.²⁹ Comparable records for women are not available, but it seems likely that women spent even longer periods overseas. Some, like Anna Stout who belonged to the London Lyceum Club from 1909 to 1912, stayed in England while her children were at school there.³⁰ A strong reason for would-be travellers joining a club was the advantage of reciprocal visiting rights overseas. One woman infuriated the Wellington Women's Club by making a habit of joining the club on the eve of her departure overseas and then letting her membership lapse until her next trip.³¹

A strong motivation for belonging to a women's club was to emulate the lifestyle of English relatives. As the *Otago Witness* commented in 1907:

New Zealand women are keen observers of the rest of the world... among colonial women of all classes – but especially the wealthier and more leisured – there is an ever increasing desire to follow as much as possible the tone of society and the trend of activities in other countries. The bachelor woman and the club woman are types of the most up-to-date woman.³²

The most common qualification for membership of a London club was the eligibility to be presented at Court.³³ New Zealand club-women at the beginning of this century shared with other members of their class a deep fascination with the activities of the English aristocracy.³⁴ Most women's clubs had a suggestion book in which

magazines could be requested and *The Tatler* was always their favourite.³⁵ The loyalty this section of society felt for the monarchy was transferred to the governor. Several women's clubs were named after the wife of the current governor; she was the patron of most women's clubs, and her visit was the highlight of their year.³⁶

While New Zealand women's first loyalty was to Britain they were also aware of the larger American club movement. As early as 1891, Kate Sheppard quoted the motto of the New York women's club Sorosis: 'Tell them the world was made for Women too.'³⁷ In 1917 Elsie Griffin became general secretary of the YWCA in Auckland. She had seen the women's club system in America as a political force for women and wanted the same type of organisation here. She wanted girls to form clubs among themselves and learn to manage them on business lines.³⁸ Clubs at the YWCA were not entirely successful, but Griffin was only the first of many New Zealanders to admire the organisation of the American club movement and its collective achievements.

In the early 1920s club leaders, like other New Zealanders of their class, were appalled by the invasion of American popular culture, but as more women visited the United States links between clubs were established. By this time American clubs had moved from reform to bridge playing and the civic dimension once so strong in their clubs was not attempted here.³⁹ New Zealanders adopted the American concept of federation and in 1925 the Federation of Women's Clubs in New Zealand (FWCNZ) was founded 'to form a basis of introduction from one club to another so that clubwomen could find themselves at home in any clubs they visited'.⁴⁰

The federation encouraged interclub activity by holding biannual conferences. It was at these conferences in the 1920s and 1930s that the women's network could be seen at its most successful. The delegates belonged to the same core group who took the lead in other women's organisations. This was not an urban phenomenon, as rural women had their activists as well. Sybil Simpson was the Rangitikei Women's Club delegate to the FWCNZ conference in 1938.⁴¹ This was not her first involvement in a women's organisation, four years before she had represented the Women's Division of the Farmer's Union when the Manawatu Branch of the NCW was founded in Palmerston North.⁴²

The majority of clubwomen took no part in the FWCNZ and were only interested in their own club. One of the chief attractions of

most clubs was their cultural and recreational activities. The Canterbury Women's Club wanted 'a centre of culture and progress and a neutral ground where women of divergent views and varying interests may meet to learn a larger tolerance, acquire a larger outlook on the world'.⁴³ By organising cultural and educational activities, women began to move away from the male model. Men's clubs had recreational facilities: billiard and card rooms and sometimes, swimming pools, squash and tennis courts, but mental stimulation was presumably to be found at work.

Women's clubs were interested in women's intellectual standing as well as their social position. The Pioneer's founding committee originally sent circulars to women they knew were 'interested in philanthropic, professional, literary and artistic work' to gauge their level of support.⁴⁴ As the first women graduates and professional women did not come from the upper class, inviting them to join broadened, if only slightly, the social mix.⁴⁵ It gave many clubwomen a chance, often for the first time, of meeting as social equals women they would not invite to their homes.

Women's clubs attempted to provide mental stimulation in two ways. Firstly, and more publicly, they organised lectures to inform members on a variety of subjects. This often took the form of a monthly lunch or afternoon tea at which there was a guest speaker. Afterwards there was an opportunity for discussion and a chance to meet them. The more high-profile clubs had an impressive range of speakers, ranging from overseas celebrities to clubwomen themselves. Some clubs made a point of inviting women who worked in related areas to these functions. If clubwomen found the speaker's social standing acceptable, the non-political rule was overlooked; Anna Stout, for example, was allowed to speak against the proposed Hygiene Bill at the Auckland Women's Club in 1920.⁴⁶

Club leaders considered that, as women in a privileged position, it was their duty to entertain visitors to their town. The Women's Community Club was formed in Hastings because its founders were appalled to hear that no accommodation had been arranged for the Russian soprano Lydia Lipvoska when she performed there in 1924. It aimed to make sure visiting celebrities were treated more hospitably in future.⁴⁷ Functions to entertain visitors ranged from simple morning teas to grand balls such as the Otago Women's Club gave to welcome the Prince of Wales to Dunedin in 1920.⁴⁸

These functions were formal one-off events, but clubs also organised smaller special interest groups, called circles, to widen women's interests. In the club circles women met for drama, gardening, bridge, arts and crafts, singing, discussion, play reading, and, during the war years, knitting and sewing. After World War I large numbers of mainly middle-aged married women took part in cultural and recreational activities in these circles. With smaller families (the average was 2.4 in 1923), married women had more time for leisure.⁴⁹ Although more women were joining the workforce, employment was only seen as a temporary situation and it was against social convention for women to work after they were married. As their children grew up, women found they had time to spare. Clubs required little commitment from their members and activities were held at times that were convenient for women with family and domestic responsibilities.

The largest proportion of the membership in the interwar period were middle-aged and married women. Clubs were also popular with the well educated because they provided one of the few opportunities women had to continue their intellectual interests and use their artistic talents. Society in the 1920s had, according to Beryl Hughes, 'permitted women to enjoy higher education while making it difficult for them to use this education once they had children'.⁵⁰ Americans boasted that clubs were the 'older woman's university', but serious intellectual study was rare. Kate Edger (Evans), in her seventies, led a rigorous study circle at the Wellington Lyceum Club, but her popularity was rare and other members' efforts to organise French and Psychology circles were short lived.⁵¹ Gardening and drama circles were most popular and took women outside the club to compete in horticultural shows and drama festivals. Some clubs had debating or public speaking circles aimed at giving women the skills to speak in public.

Circles were a vital part of club life because of the companionship they provided. It was in these smaller groups that women got to know each other. Members of the Otago Women's Club were 'nervous of the stilted correctness maintained' in the main club, but found that friendships developed through common interest in the circles.⁵² Some more private clubs did not have circles but most had a bridge group. There was always a social component in club life with refreshments available so that women could arrange to meet at the club for lunch or tea.

Companionship was one of the main attractions of all clubs. Many early career women joined a club because it was a convenient and neutral place to entertain colleagues and meet friends. Professional women who were working in a predominantly male environment valued the support and companionship they gained from talking to other women in similar positions; university women's clubs served the same purpose. While the majority of club members were married, clubs also attracted unmarried women. New Zealand casualties in World War I were horrendous and although social conventions still prescribed marriage as a woman's vocation, the war had removed many men of marriageable age. Being secretary of their club committee or president of a circle gave unmarried women a socially acceptable role they were unlikely to find elsewhere. In 1921, approximately one quarter of the Pioneer Club roll were unmarried women, without accounting for widows, and their contribution to club life far surpassed that of the married women.⁵³

Women's experience during World War I provided a stimulus for women's clubs. Upper middle-class women had taken the lead in patriotic societies during this war and had enjoyed working together. One such group started the Auckland Women's Club in 1919 because they wanted somewhere to continue to meet. Some, like Lady Miria Pomare and Lady Jacobina Luke, had, because of their husbands' position, been expected to take part in public life during the war and had become formidable organisers.⁵⁴ Both used this expertise in women's clubs in the 1920s. Voluntary organisations provided one of the few places where women could use leadership skills and some found 'committee meetings less soul deadening than afternoon teas'.⁵⁵

While one of the general aims of club founders had been to teach women to work together the reality was that most clubs were hierarchical and run by a small group of women. Longevity was a characteristic, with Ruth Beetham, Amy Kane and Mary Ferguson being presidents of their respective clubs for 30 years and Ellen Melville an office-holder at the Auckland Lyceum for 26 years.⁵⁶ Melville used her club as a bolster for her more public activities, while Kane used her status as president to foster links with other organisations here and overseas. Personally ambitious and energetic, Kane welcomed opportunities to play an active role in public life. Typical of this was her involvement with the British Drama League, which began in 1931 when she was asked to chair their inaugural meeting at

the clubrooms. She was elected to the committee and was an active member for the rest of her life.⁵⁷

Ellen Melville believed World War I had given women 'a stronger sense of the value of common effort, had drawn them together more closely'.⁵⁸ The 1920s was a decade when, especially for rural women, important new organisations were being established. This growth also stimulated activity in clubs with larger numbers becoming country members or using visiting rights. City clubs offered hospitality to conference delegates from a variety of groups, but they were particularly welcoming to rural organisations. In 1930, when the Country Women's Institute held their first national conference in Wellington, the Lyceum offered them the use of their room and 70 delegates met there. The country women were later joined by the Lyceum president and entertained to supper.⁵⁹ A Gisborne delegate raved later about 'Lyceum coffee and their deep comfortable chairs'.⁶⁰

It was the clubrooms themselves which gave clubs an opportunity to help other women. Although most clubs interpreted being non-political to mean they should not support other organisations, it was acceptable to entertain approved groups to which individual members belonged. There is little evidence that clubs felt any responsibility to help women less fortunate than themselves. The organisation most often supported was the National Council of Women.⁶¹ Minutes of NCW conferences often ended with a vote of thanks to the local women's club for hospitality and an opportunity to explain current concerns to local women. In this way, women from other parts of the country had a chance to make social contact.

At an individual level clubrooms could also be used by a member on behalf of another organisation. For a small cost a woman could hire a room for her favourite charity or women's group. Agnes Bennett, for example, organised the university women to meet at the Pioneer Club for many years, and when she moved to the Wellington Women's Club the university women also changed their venue. Clubs were also a boon to the hostess wanting to entertain a private group. Holding a party at the club avoided worry about domestic staff or the correct etiquette required to entertain at home. Private rooms were used for bridge lunches, bon voyage parties and wedding receptions. Before World War I alcohol was prohibited in most women's clubs (a major departure from the men's club), but by the 1930s it was permitted at private functions and sherry was served at club lunches.⁶²

The satisfaction of club membership did not come solely from useful facilities, companionship or cultural activities, there was also the social prestige involved. This may be the reason a percentage of members continued to pay their subscription although they never used the club. Society in the interwar period was still stratified and clubs attracted women through their 'superior' membership which avoided 'undesirable elements'.⁶³ Although city clubs welcomed their rural sisters, country clubs were more insular. Members were related or had been to the same private schools: 'everyone knew each other or knew of them.'⁶⁴ They aimed to preserve, not extend, their social circle. Feilding and Hunterville clubs had rules confining their membership to women living outside the town boundary.⁶⁵ In Feilding antagonism towards 'townies' resulted in two women's clubs in the 1950s, although, in fact, some women belonged to both.⁶⁶

Belonging to a club whose members could be relied upon to conform to a set standard of behaviour was comforting to the more conservative. This conservative image was necessary if women's clubs were to be acceptable to most of these women and, significantly, to their husbands. By the 1920s belonging to a club was seen as compatible with women's role as wife companion. The columnist Dorothy Dix advised that 'the woman who cultivates a circle of worth-while people, who belongs to clubs, who makes herself interesting and agreeable is a help to her husband'.⁶⁷ Catherine Andersen wrote a sketch for *The Lyceum* in 1934 in which a wife, persuading her husband to let her join a club argues 'But John, dear you have a club. . . you know that you do spend three nights a week there.' John cannot cope with this logic and produces five pounds so she can not only pay her entrance fee but also buy a new hat.⁶⁸

Women's clubs were popular in the interwar period because they conformed to the social conventions of the Pakeha middle class. After World War II attitudes changed and, increasingly, middle-aged married women re-entered the workforce.⁶⁹ Combining domestic duties with paid employment left less time for leisure, and special interest clubs and adult education classes were more focused. Club rolls had begun to fall at the end of the 1930s, with more societies competing for women's leisure time. When club circles lost their appeal so the vitality of many women's clubs disappeared. Professional women who had been core members of women's clubs now had their own organisation, the Business and Professional Women's Clubs.⁷⁰

The decline in club rolls halted during World War II as clubs became centres for war work, but numbers fell rapidly during the 1950s. Women's clubs operated much as they had for 50 years. They did not change, but women's lives did. Behind their genteel facade clubs had given women opportunities to extend the boundaries of their social life. But attitudes had changed; it was not women's groups but women's auxiliaries appended to men's service organisations which had large memberships in the 1950s.⁷¹ The idea of women spending their social life together had become outdated.

Why, then, do men's clubs still survive? There have been individual histories but little serious research on men's clubs in New Zealand. Obviously men's clubs were always better endowed than women's clubs. It has been suggested that women do not spend the necessary amounts on food and, more significantly, drink that keep a men's club prosperous.⁷² If this is true how did women's clubs survive so long? Men's clubs will continue as long as their members believe they are influential and an integral part of the old boys' network. Women's clubs tried to operate in a similar way, to give women power by widening their social circle. This was only a limited success. A sizeable number of members rarely used their club and the majority of those who did were interested in its cultural and recreational activities. Women's clubs never entirely departed from their male model to become a women's space.⁷³

Susan Upton completed an MA on women's clubs in the Wellington region at the Department of History, Victoria University, Wellington. She now works at the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, in Wellington.

NOTES

- ¹ A new member was given her rulebook when she was notified of her successful election. It stated the rules of the club, its objects and election procedure. This usually meant that before she was elected a woman had to be proposed and seconded by women outside her family and a ballot was held. In some clubs the committee could veto a nomination. Wellington Women's Club Inc. aims when founded in 1924 were:
 - i) That the Club be of a social character designed for the convenience, comfort and relaxation of its members.
 - ii) No public activities were to be encouraged within its walls.
 - iii) Club be absolutely non-political, non-partisan and non-sectarian in every respect.
 - iv) Subscription to be 3 guineas within 50 miles of Wellington and 1 guinea outside. Entrance fee 2 guineas. (See Wellington Women's Club papers, Acc. 88-307, Box 3, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington).
- ² Mary Richmond, 'Preface', *Souvenir Pioneer Club Wellington, NZ 1909-1930* (The Club, Wellington, 1930) p. 6.
- ³ Federation of Women's Clubs in New Zealand (FWCNZ) Minutes, March 1925. The FWCNZ headquarters which holds the records rotates between constituent clubs every two years. In 1992-93 it was with the Ranfurly Club, Chapel St, Masterton.
- ⁴ Lady Miria Pomare is the only Maori woman to feature in women's club records in the Wellington region. She was the first president of the Wellington Women's Club in 1924.
- ⁵ FWCNZ Minutes, March 1925.
- ⁶ FWCNZ Minutes, March 1934; Wharekoa Club Minutes, June 1949, Wharekoa Club, Hunterville.
- ⁷ Information from Maureen Forbes, president of FWCNZ, 1991-1992; Tim Murphy, 'Golden Era Ends for Lyceum', *New Zealand Herald* (NZH), 26 May 1994, p. 20.
- ⁸ Karen Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined 1868-1914* (Holmes & Meier, New York, 1980); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady* (University of Chicago Press, 1970); Anne F. Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1984).
- ⁹ David Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s* (Harvester Press, Brighton, 1986) p. 222.
- ¹⁰ Bob Gidlow et al, 'Leisure', in Paul Spoonley, David Pearson and Ian Shirley (eds), *New Zealand Society: A Sociological Introduction*, (Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1990) p. 247.
- ¹¹ Martha Vicinus [*Independent Women: Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (Virago Press, London, 1985) p. 299] argues that English women were not 'clubbable' and preferred to create homes. While this may be relevant in

helping to explain the proportion of women in New Zealand who paid to belong to women's clubs but seldom used them, the development of clubs here was very different. English ladies' clubs were predominantly residential, providing meals and practical facilities. Few English clubs provided the cultural and recreational circles which in the 1920s encouraged New Zealand women to regularly attend their club. Circles, here, were planned to fit in with domestic and family responsibilities and were often an extension of home interests, like gardening or craft work. The majority of members by the interwar period were middle-aged women with grown-up families who saw their participation in women's clubs making them more informed and, therefore, more interesting companions to their husbands and a help to them socially.

- ¹² There are many biographies which do not mention their subject's involvement in women's clubs. Examples are Cecil and Celia Manson, *Doctor Agnes Bennett* (Michael Joseph, London, 1960); Beryl Hughes, 'Agnes Bennett 1872-1960' in Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold and Bridget Williams (eds), *Book of New Zealand Women (BNZW)* (Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1991) pp. 78-81; Heather Roberts, 'Jessie Mackay 1864-1938' in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography 1870-1900 (DNZB)* (Bridget Williams Books/ Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1993) 2:292-294; Carol Broadbent, 'Stella May Henderson 1871-1962' in *DNZB* 2:209.
- ¹³ *The Dominion*, 5 April 1909, p. 3. In 1909 Kate Evelyn Isitt was Women's Editor of *The Dominion*.
- ¹⁴ Letter from Government House to Ranfurly Club, 18 May 1899, displayed in Ranfurly Club, Chapel St, Masterton. For more about this club see Susan Upton, 'Ranfurly Club 1899-' in Anne Else (ed), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand/ Nga Ropu Wahine o te Motu* (Historical Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs/ Daphne Brasell Associates Press, Wellington 1993) pp. 420-422.
- ¹⁵ Ranfurly Club Rules, 1906, Ranfurly Club, Chapel St, Masterton. Rangitikei Women's Club Constitution, 9 Sep 1913, displayed in Historic Village, Marton; Hunterville Ladies' Club charter, 1914, Wharekoa Club, Hunterville.
- ¹⁶ *Masterton Club N.Z. 1877-1977* (The Club, 1977) p.70.
- ¹⁷ Blair, p. xiii.
- ¹⁸ The Sesame Club, founded in 1895, was one of several London clubs which admitted members of both sexes (Rubinstein, p. 225).
- ¹⁹ Hunterville Ladies' Club minutes, 12 May 1914, Wharekoa Club, Hunterville.
- ²⁰ The Ranfurly Club's custodian's agreement, 1906, follows the Masterton Club's agreement word-for-word. Alison Hosking and Marion Beard visited London in the 1890s (*Wairarapa Herald*, 27 Feb 1894, p. 2; 18 Mar 1896, p. 2; 27 May 1898, p. 2).
- ²¹ In the same breath he told women they had the right to claim equality. The reporter commented 'men really do love to conserve the privilege of whisky drinking and card playing to the shelter of the club ... when woman demands

- right to gamble and liquor up ... perhaps the lords of creation will see how lopsided their arguments are.' (*New Zealand Free Lance*, 17 May 1902, p. 3).
- ²² Ranfurly Club minutes, 1914, Ranfurly Club, Chapel St, Masterton.
- ²³ Brenda Harding, *Women in their Time: Seventy-five Years of the Otago Women's Club, 1914-1989* (The Club, Dunedin, 1989) p. 9.
- ²⁴ *Souvenir Pioneer Club Wellington, NZ 1909-1930* (The Club, Wellington, 1930) p.10; Harding, p. 9.
- ²⁵ Florence Earle Hooper, *The Story of The Women's Club: The First Fifty Years*, (Women's Club, Sydney, 1963) p. 7.
- ²⁶ Constance Smedley, *Crusaders: the Reminiscences of Constance Smedley*, (Duckworth, London, 1929) pp. 57-64.
- ²⁷ *Auckland Lyceum Club Diamond Jubilee, 1919-1979* (Auckland, 1979) p. 8.
- ²⁸ FWCNZ Minutes, March 1927.
- ²⁹ J.C. Morrison, *Wellington Club* (The Club, Wellington, 1960) p. 21.
- ³⁰ Roberta Nicholls, 'Anna Stout', in *BNZW*, p. 634.
- ³¹ Eugenie Whyte, personal communication, Braeburn Hospital, Upper Hutt, 28 September 1992.
- ³² *Otago Daily Times and Witness Christmas Annual*, December 1907, p. 44.
- ³³ Eva Anstruther, 'Ladies Clubs', *Nineteenth Century*, xlv (1899) p. 600.
- ³⁴ A visitor to New Zealand commented in 1904 that 'to come near the Court, to have seen the King, even to have made the acquaintance of his suite, is an honour which is told of for months afterwards, and which gives you in some ways a right to respect and consideration.' [Andre Siegfried, *Democracy in New Zealand* (Bell, London, 1914) p. 274]. Reading women's club records, I was struck by the truth of this comment. The intensity of these women's patriotism as well as their admiration for anything English, especially the aristocracy, permeates all club records.
- ³⁵ *The Tatler* features the activities of the English upper class. Minutes of the women's clubs in the Wellington region show one of the things which caused most interest amongst members was the magazines which were purchased for the club reading rooms. *The Tatler*, although considered expensive by some committees, was always the first preference.
- ³⁶ Both David Hamer, [David Hamer (ed), *The Webbs in New Zealand* (Price Millburn, Wellington, 1974) p. 43] and Nelle Scanlan, [Nelle Scanlan, *Pencarrow* (Jarrolds, London, c.1932) p. 84] refer to the governor as the leader of colonial society. The Ranfurly Clubs in Masterton and the Lady Jellicoe Club in Wanganui were both named after the wife of the governor.
- ³⁷ Judith Devalient, *A Biography: Kate Sheppard* (Penguin Books, Auckland, 1992) p. 65.
- ³⁸ Sandra Coney, *Every Girl: A Social History of Women and the YWCA in Auckland 1885-1985* (YWCA, Auckland, 1986) p. 75.
- ³⁹ Sheila Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present* (Basic Books, New York, 1978) p. 184.
- ⁴⁰ *Souvenir Pioneer Club*, p. 14.

- 41 FWCNZ minutes, March 1938.
- 42 Mary Davies, 'Without Prejudice': *A History of the Manawatu Branch of the National Council of Women 1934-1989* (Manawatu Branch of NZ Federation of University Women, Palmerston North, 1990) p. 1.
- 43 *The Press*, 20 October 1913, p. 2.
- 44 *The Dominion*, 5 April 1909, p. 3.
- 45 W.J. Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, (University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1979) p. 93.
- 46 *The Dominion*, 2 December 1920, p. 2.
- 47 Mary Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings* (Victoria University Press for Hastings City Council, Wellington, 1984) p. 233.
- 48 Harding, p. 16.
- 49 Erik Olssen, 'Towards a New Society,' in W.H. Oliver (ed), *Oxford History of New Zealand* (Oxford University Press, Wellington, 1981) p. 258.
- 50 Beryl Hughes & Sheila Ahern, *Redbrick and Bluestockings: Women at Victoria 1899-1993* (Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1993) p. 57.
- 51 Wellington Lyceum Club Annual Report, 1926-27, with Andersen papers held by Peter Gibbons, Department of History, Waikato University, Hamilton.
- 52 Harding, p. 14.
- 53 Pioneer Club Annual Report, 1921, with Andersen papers held by Peter Gibbons, Department of History, Waikato University, Hamilton.
- 54 Eru Pomare 'Miria Woodbine Pomare, 1876-1971', *BNZW*, p. 530. Miria Pomare was the first president of the Wellington Women's Club in 1924. Family papers held by Lady Jacobina Luke's grand-daughter, Jacobina Cody, Wellington. Jacobina Luke was mayoress of Wellington during World War I and organised the city's relief effort during the 1918 influenza epidemic. She was vice president of the Pioneer Club.
- 55 Florence Hooper to Agnes Bennett, 27 October 1905. Agnes Bennett papers, MS 1346, folder 202, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
- 56 Veronica Kuitert, 'Ellen Melville 1822-1946', MA research essay, University of Auckland, 1986, p. 123.
- 57 Pioneer Club Annual Report, 1931-32, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. For more about Amy Kane see Susan Upton, 'Amy Kane', in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (forthcoming), vol.3.
- 58 *NZH*, 25 June 1919, p. 8.
- 59 *Home and Country*, vol.3, no.11 (Nov 1930) p. 2.
- 60 *ibid*, p. 16.
- 61 Some clubs affiliated to the NCW in the 1930s and 1940s. Many clubwomen were involved on behalf of other organisations. In 1921, for example, 19 out of 28 delegates to the Wellington Branch of NCW were members of the Pioneer Club.
- 62 Many club founders supported temperance. Kate Evelyn Isitt had written a novel with a strong temperance message and Lily Atkinson (Kirk) was vice-president of the New Zealand Alliance at the same time that she was presi-

dent of the Pioneer Club, 1913-17. In 1926 the subject for the Pioneer Club Debating circle was 'that bars be introduced into women's clubs' but there is no indication of whether this was a current issue or just an academic exercise. In 1929 a member of the Wellington Women's Club was allowed to serve whisky at a mixed bridge party.

- 63 Etta M. Janisch to Agnes Bennett, 27 August 1921, Agnes Bennett papers, MS 1346, folder 293, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
- 64 Isabel Guscott, personal communication, Masterton, 31 March 1992.
- 65 Wharekoa Club Minutes, October 1914, Wharekoa Club, Hunterville; Rules and Regulations of Country Women's Club Inc., no.3, Feilding Country Women's Club, Darragh Bldg, Mitre 10, Feilding.
- 66 Papers re: New Club, 1 November 1955, Feilding Country Women's Club, Darragh Bldg, Mitre 10, Feilding.
- 67 Rothman, p. 184. Dorothy Dix was syndicated in New Zealand.
- 68 *The Lyceum*, no.4, 1934, p. 4.
- 69 Graeme Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', in W.H. Oliver (ed), *Oxford History of New Zealand* (Oxford University Press, Wellington, 1981) p. 427.
- 70 Beryl Hughes, 'New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs 1939-', in Anne Else (ed), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand/ Nga Ropu Wahine o te Motu* (Historical Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs/ Daphne Brasell Associates Press, Wellington, 1993) pp. 223-226.
- 71 Dorothy Page, 'Service Organisations', in Anne Else (ed), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand/ Nga Ropu Wahine o te Motu* (Historical Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs/ Daphne Brasell Associates Press, Wellington 1993) p. 296.
- 72 Barbara Rogers, *Men Only: An Investigation into Men's Organisations* (Pandora Press, London, 1988) p. 196.
- 73 Martha Vicinus (Martha Vicinus p. 299) suggests that women's clubs may have had limited success in England because they were 'a combination of a men's club and a charity'. New Zealand women's clubs had no wealthy benefactors and cannot be described as a charity. But Vicinus next point that English women themselves declared they were not 'clubbable' and preferred to create homes may be relevant.



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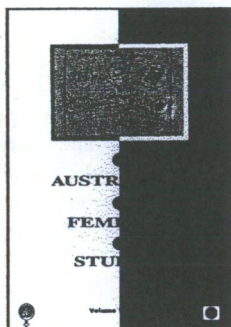
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Rights, Facts, Humans and Women: An Archaeology of the Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion in New Zealand¹

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On 5 March 1977, the Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion in New Zealand presented its findings to the government. The Commission, which had sat for almost two years and heard 10,000 pages of testimony, recommended a tightening of restrictions on abortion, exclusion of rape or socio-economic circumstances as grounds for abortion and the establishment of panels, comprising two medical doctors advised by a non-voting social worker, to decide whether any particular case warranted the granting of an abortion. Needless to say, there was a public outcry. Women's groups, forewarned of the results of the Commission, distributed posters nationwide protesting its recommendations. Demonstrations were held around the country and women set up a national 'underground railway' to assist those who wished to take advantage of Australia's more liberal abortion laws, assisting 3500 women in 1978 alone. Protests and demonstrations continued for a number of years, as abortion clinics tentatively established a way of working within the law.²

The Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion was warranted on 12 September 1975. Its terms of warrant mandated it to 'inquire into, investigate, and report on:

- 1) The legal, social, and moral issues that are raised by the law and practice relating to:
 - (a) Contraception in all commonly existing and likely forms; and
 - (b) Voluntary human sterilisation, whether of the male or female.
- 2) The state of the present law on abortion, its interpretation and its application in practice, and whether it meets the needs of society having regard to the social and moral issues relating to it, including the rights of pregnant woman and the status of the unborn child.
- 3) Any changes that should in your opinion be made in the public interest to the law or practice relating to contraception, voluntary human sterilisation, or abortion.

- 4) The likely effects upon the present health, hospital, and medical service of any changes to such law or practice.’³

The Commission was chaired by Justice Duncan Wallace McMullin, Supreme Court judge. Other Commissioners included Denise Henare, the first Maori woman lawyer, recently graduated from law school, Barbara Thompson, a social work student identified in the *Report* as ‘a married woman’, Dorothy Winstone, a wealthy Aucklanders with a history of involvement in voluntary and charitable works, also identified as ‘a married woman’, W. Matich, a family doctor⁴ and Maurice McGregor, a medical social worker. The Commission also had a staff of five, including two researchers.

The Royal Commission was established after five years of escalating agitation and conflict in New Zealand over abortion. This culminated in a police raid on the Auckland Medical Aid Trust, a private clinic providing abortions and the subsequent judicial and legislative circus which saw Dr. James Woolnough, its director, tried, granted a mistrial and then retried and acquitted for performing abortions.⁵ While legislators scrambled to circumvent abortions, the judiciary quashed a crucial search warrant and refused to accept the onus to decide the legality of abortion that badly and hastily drafted legislation had directed to the courts.⁶ In 1977, the year the *Report* was submitted, contraceptives were not free unless prescribed for health reasons. Three thousand women suffering from botched backstreet abortions were admitted annually to public hospitals and around four thousand New Zealand women were flying to Australia each year to obtain legal abortions.⁷

The Commission’s procedures resulted in an archive of papers which enable an ‘archaeology’ of the steps taken to reach this resolution. First, those wishing to appear before the Commission were asked to make written submissions which were circulated to the Commissioners before they were heard as oral evidence. Hearings were held in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. At these, witnesses were asked to read their written submissions and were then questioned on their contents. These hearings were conducted like a trial. Those appearing as private witnesses could only be questioned by the Commissioners, but those appearing as experts or as representatives of organisations could be questioned by members of the public present at the hearings. In practice, this meant questioning by

lawyers from Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) and the Abortion Law Reform Association of New Zealand (ALRANZ). These sessions were very like hostile cross-examination in court-room trials, and, even on paper twenty years after the event, the hostility is glaringly obvious. Early on, the Commission was asked to grant immunity from prosecution to witnesses who wished to give evidence which might lead to them being prosecuted for offences. The Commission was unable to give immunity but agreed to hear such evidence in private. The Attorney-General then announced that he would issue a stay of proceedings, which would in effect give immunity to such witnesses. While the Commission felt that these moves gave the public confidence to share their experience, the ultimate result was that the most personal and most compelling evidence was often heard only by the Commissioners. After the hearings had been completed and other research carried out, the Commissioners wrote discussion papers on thirty-nine topics relevant to their warrant. Finally, after discussion between the Commissioners, the final report *Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion in New Zealand: Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry* (hereafter referred to as the *Report*) was put together. The papers of the Royal Commission thus consist of the following layers:

1) letters and warrants about the establishment and procedures of the Commission; 2) written submissions; 3) written submissions with oral interjections and transcripts of questions and answers from the hearings; 4) discussion papers; 5) the final report.

The archaeology of these archives which is presented in this article outlines the procedures by which the Commissioners produced the knowledge which led to their decision to recommend the restriction of access to legal abortions in New Zealand. This was not a simple procedure. It involved a complex array of quasi-judicial hearings and consideration of scientific 'facts'. It was shaped by the wording of the warrant and by the vested interests of many of those, often powerful men and institutions, who presented evidence. It involved, as Foucault has led us to expect, the validation of certain kinds of knowledge and procedures for arriving at it and the discrediting or dismissing of others. But ultimately the knowledge was anchored, not by time-honoured scientific procedure or sifting of the relevant facts, but by a narrative structure which reduced women to passive receptacles or irrational and irresponsible beings and elevated the fetus to the status of an active, rights-bearing bourgeois (male) citizen.

RIGHTS

While the Commission was warranted to consider contraception, sterilisation and abortion, abortion was by far the most contentious issue, that which consumed the most time and produced the most paper.⁸ The debate on abortion was configured around the issue of fundamental rights – the right of the fetus to life, versus the right of the woman to choose whether or not to bear a child. In the submissions to the Commission, those who supported ‘a woman’s right to choose’ and those who opposed abortion worked with the same model of the individuated and property-owning body. Many of the pro-choice submissions were couched in terms of rights, property and liberty. For example:

I believe that the law should be changed to make it possible for a pregnant woman to terminate her pregnancy at any time. In my opinion there can be nothing more the personal property of a woman than her unborn child.⁹

Any woman seeking to be aborted views the foetus developing within her body as just such a personal threat to her future liberty to live as she wishes.¹⁰

N.O.W. therefore holds that it is a fundamental right of a woman to follow the dictates of her own conscience in making a decision regarding the termination of her own pregnancy.¹¹

The decision to terminate a pregnancy involves a moral decision. Where the rights of the state are not involved and where there can be no certainty as to what is right or wrong, we believe that individual liberty should prevail.¹²

Many (but not all) of the pro-choice individuals and groups took birth as the moment at which the fetus¹³ became human and advocated a woman’s right to terminate her pregnancy right up to the moment of birth. While this gave maximum rights to the woman, it raised in the Commissioners’ collective vision the prospect of women choosing to abort eight and nine-month viable fetuses.¹⁴ While this position was consistent with the view of the woman as an absolute rights-bearer, it was probably tactically very naive. Faced with very strong liberal support for a woman’s right to choose up until the moment of birth, and an equally strong and scientifically and professionally backed support for the position that the fetus

was a human being from conception/implantation, it may have been inevitable that the Commissioners would take the morally conservative position.

The warrant directed the Commission to consider the rights of the pregnant woman, rather than the rights of all women. The Commissioners did not choose to exceed this limit, despite the fact that the critical American *Roe versus Wade* decision (1973) was decided explicitly on the issue of rights, in that case the right to privacy. The chapter on 'The Rights of the Pregnant Woman' follows that on 'The Status of the Unborn Child'. Thus not only was the 'child' given priority over the woman in terms of the ordering of the argument, but 'woman' was only considered as a rights-bearing subject after she had already become pregnant. The woman is thus defined throughout the *Report* by her relation to the 'child'. By beginning its quest with the nature of the fetus, the Commission created a fragmentary model of woman: the non-pregnant woman whose rights are not at issue and the pregnant woman who is a problematic rights-bearer because of her compromised individuality. Thus 'woman' is doubly fragmented as not-pregnant/pregnant and as woman/fetus. In each instance the first part of the equation is subordinated to the second.

The *Report* identified not the rights of women, but the 'status' of the unborn child as the 'cornerstone of the abortion argument'.¹⁵ If the unborn child had no status, it argued, then 'no obstacle will lie in the path of the mother's [sic] rights other than consideration of her health'.¹⁶ For the Commissioners, the question of when human life begins was the fundamental question, but one which was answerable with recourse to science. This question of 'fact' then dictated the answer to the moral question of whether abortion was permissible and under what circumstances. If human life was found to begin at conception, then the fetus or conceptus was a rights-bearing citizen from conception or implantation, and, accordingly, had the right to support and protection from the state. The debate was framed by anti-abortion groups as a conflict between science and secular humanism. The Commissioners worked within this frame and undertook to adjudicate the dispute. By the end of the hearings, if not before, they believed, apparently, that they had found truth and that it carried with it certain (almost) absolute moral obligations.¹⁷

FACTS

In a chapter of the *Report* entitled 'The Status of the Unborn Child', the Commissioners reviewed the factors which they considered fundamental to resolving the issue of fetal rights. This chapter has a number of peculiar and contradictory features, many of which were criticised by contemporary responses to the *Report*.¹⁸ The Commissioners were aware of some of the controversies surrounding the language of their warrant and were careful in defining the 'unborn child' to assure their readers that they considered it a neutral term serving only to distinguish the fetus from the 'born child', and that this terminology did not in any way pre-empt the subsequent discussion of the status of the fetus as human, alive or individual.

They defined status as 'a *social* position, rank, relationship to others, or position as fixed by law, or legal standing'.¹⁹ Given this definition of status as being 'social' it was then a somewhat paradoxical move for the Commissioners to turn directly to science for a solution to the question of the unborn child's status. The balance of the chapter is divided into two parts: 'Biological Approach' and 'When Does Human Life Begin?' 'Origin of Life' is the first topic considered under 'Biological Approach', again pre-empting the subsequent discussion on when human life begins. This is followed by a detailed review of the current biological information on fetal development from conception to birth, entitled 'Stages in the Development of the Unborn Child'.

'When Does Human Life Begin?' considers three different positions on the origins of life: the genetic school, the developmental school, and the social consequences school, drawing on David Callahan's *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality*, a work much cited in submissions.²⁰ Callahan proposed, and the Commissioners agreed, that views on abortion fell broadly into these three groups. The commissioners clearly felt themselves to fall most happily into the genetic school. Those taking this position argued that human life began at conception and that the child, from conception, was a unique human individual, 'a man [sic] in miniature'. They offered no criticisms of their own of the genetic school, although they summarised Callahan's. The second school of thought Callahan called the developmental school. Persons adhering to this view contend that some developmental stage, such as viability, brain functioning or quickening, should be taken as the point at which human life began. The

Commissioners felt the developmental position was arbitrary, subjective and hazardous. They dismissed utterly the arguments of the third, social consequences, school which contended that 'biological facts do not directly dictate the definition of "human"'. The final recommendations of the *Report* are commensurate with the Commission's acceptance of the genetic position, which Commissioners found excluded 'the employment of arbitrary norms' and offered 'the possibility of a prudently safe moral policy'.²¹

There are three discussion papers which were critical in establishing the Commission's position on abortion: No. 12 'Indications for Abortion – Medical Psychiatric and Social' (no author given); No. 18 'The Status of the Unborn Child' (McMullin) and No. 33 'The Morality of Abortion' (Thompson). McMullin wrote that the 'first and the most important step, in considering the status of the unborn child, is to consider what is *in fact i.e. biologically*'.²² In accepting the genetic argument, McMullin reflected on the contrast between the New Zealand conclusions and that of the landmark American case of 'Roe versus Wade':

While the judgement of the majority [of the American Supreme Court Justices] reveals a depth of scholarship and wide reading, it proceeds on the basis that the question of when a life begins cannot be resolved. Indeed, Mr. Justice Blackman [sic]²³ who gave the principal decision said, 'we need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer.'

The Commission is not in that position. All the witnesses who gave evidence before the Commission were agreed that life begins at conception, or for practical purposes, at implantation.²⁴

This was somewhat of a gloss on the evidence, for scientists and physicians were not all in agreement about the status of the conceptus or fetus. A.M. Veale, Professor of Human Genetics and Community Health at the School of Medicine, Auckland, for instance, took the position that the fertilised ovum is 'a potential human being [which] becomes human when it is viable (in medical practice) or born (in law)'.²⁵ Numerous submissions cited the research of neurophysiologist Dominick Purpura, who argued that changes in brain functioning

between 28 and 32 weeks 'should be taken as the beginning of "brain life" as "brain death" is taken as death'.²⁶ Barbara Thompson's discussion paper on 'The Morality of Abortion' was more sympathetic to a developmental framework, but in the end concluded that '[h]uman life is a continuum but it is human life throughout'.²⁷ She wrote that:

[c]oncerning the biological facts of *human life* and its beginnings, scientists are in almost complete agreement. By the fertilisation of the egg with sperm a human embryo which is genetically unique and carries the complete genetic code of the new individual is formed. It implants, all being well [sic], on the wall of the mother's uterus, though a number of defective or mis-timed fertilised eggs are rejected, and others are lost after often defective implantation.²⁸

Given this commitment to the 'biological' as the 'real', the Commissioners were able to ignore or downplay the significance of other kinds of 'knowledge' and 'science'. Downgraded knowledges included research on public attitudes to abortion, psychological and psychiatric research, and the knowledge of women who presented evidence of lives marred by ill health, poverty and lost opportunity. Whereas there was no methodological criticism in the discussion papers and the *Report* of any of the scientific 'facts' used to determine the origin of human life, research on public and medical attitudes to abortion was given little weight and was repeatedly criticised or dismissed on the grounds of methodological unreliability or that the opinions expressed were not informed by all the relevant facts. The introduction to the chapter of the *Report* on 'Opinion Polls and Surveys' sounded the following cautionary note:

The responses made to surveys and polls have commonly been advanced as an indication either of the measure of public support for existing laws or for suggested reforms to those laws. In our opinion, however, their value has been limited in some cases by faults in methodology or in interpreting the responses made to the questions asked. It is to be remembered that even where the methodology is sound and the responses to the questions are correctly interpreted a survey or opinion poll cannot express in any exact way what public opinion is upon a particular matter. Results can be expressed only in terms of a probability ... It is difficult to know whether the opinions expressed on these issues are based on an adequate knowledge of the relevant facts or a full appreciation of the issues involved.²⁹

Polls and surveys showed consistent support for abortion on a wide range of grounds including socio-economic conditions, age of mother, and possibility of birth defects. They showed growing support for more liberal grounds for abortion, including a Heylen poll which demonstrated that support for abortion on demand had increased substantially over the years 1970-76.³⁰ True public opinion, it was repeatedly implied, could not be ascertained because survey research accounts are imperfect and because the opinions they measure were, at any rate, likely to be ill-informed.

Psychology, psychiatry and psychologists figure very ambivalently in the submissions and in the Commission's ultimate findings. The critical discussion paper on 'Indications for Abortion' identified defining the parameters of psychological stress which would constitute grounds for abortion as the greatest problem facing the Commission. It noted that 'it is *recognised* that there are very few medical indications for abortion' and '[i]t would *appear* that there are very few true psychiatric indications for abortion'.³¹ While admitting that there was a strong feeling that:

Severe, substantial, or significant psychological stress caused by unplanned or unwanted pregnancy should constitute grounds for abortion' it concluded that 'psychiatry . . . is not an exact science and therefore exact psychiatric grounds for termination of pregnancy can not really be formulated.'³²

'Topic No.19', which covers social issues pertaining to abortion, discusses the relationship between socio-economic conditions and mental illness under the rubric 'The Psychiatric Masquerade'.³³

There was a great deal of psychological research reported and numerous submissions from psychiatrists and psychologists. However, the author of 'Indications for Abortion' identified the submissions and evidence of Dr A.M. Rutherford (who appeared for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and who supported the submission for SPUC presented by Dr Drayton) and that of Mrs de Jong of Feminists for Life as being the most pertinent and cogent with regard to the psychology of pregnancy and abortion.³⁴ Rutherford argued that the further people were from doing abortions, the more liberal they were likely to be, 'right out to the psychiatrist'.³⁵ On the one hand, practising physicians with no psychological or psychiatric qualifications evidently had no problem diagnosing

their patients' psychological states as merely passing phases or normal reactions to pregnancy. On the other hand, psychologists' and medical researchers' reports on the impact of abortion and unwanted pregnancy on women's and children's long-term mental health, as well as women's own accounts of the impact, were downplayed or ignored. The 'truth' of psychology was determined by the status of the truth-sayer. In this instance, the truth was spoken by obstetricians and gynaecologists because of their 'experience' and based on their experiential accounts. Feminists for Life, we can only assume, gained their credibility because they repeated what these medical specialists were saying. They were praised for their documentation of their arguments, although a high level of documentation was not atypical.

While physicians' and obstetricians' experience and accounts carried great weight, the experiences and accounts of women whose lives had been blighted by unwanted pregnancies and backstreet abortions were disregarded. These submissions, extracts of which appear in some of the discussion papers, were taken to be 'instances' of unfortunate individual experience rather than a compendium of the accumulated effects and knowledges of those whose lives had been directly affected, often for the worst, by their inability to obtain safe, legal abortions. There is virtually no reference to these submissions in the body of the *Report*. Instead there is a very bland summary in Appendix 1. These accounts were most often heard *in camera*. While this protected witnesses recounting often painful and sometimes illegal experiences, it also reinforced the status of their accounts as 'personal' and 'private' experience, rather than as knowledge and thus publicly accessible. This is reinforced by their marginal location in the text.

In ascertaining the 'facts' about the fetus only particular kinds of knowledge were validated by the Commission. The status of the fact and the definition of what constituted fact were determined principally by social and professional status. The fundamental issue as defined by the Commissioners, the rights of the fetus, was defined in judicial terms by a Commission chaired by the Supreme Court Justice. The solution to the issue was presented as a question of fact, as defined by a group of anti-abortion scientists and physicians. This consortium of science, law and medicine produced a truth based ostensibly on a combination of science and professional experience. It was a classic case of power producing knowledge,

but it depended ultimately not on incontestable fact, but on a narrative and metaphoric movement which reduced women to the non-human and produced the fetus as a fully developed rights-bearing (male) citizen.

STORIES

In the final recommendations, the exclusion of women from full rights-bearing humanity was made overtly on the grounds of conflictual rights, but it was secured by two narrative and metaphorical movements which effectively de-humanised them. The first of these movements operated on the basis of stereotype – the classic association of women and irrationality. The second was effected through metaphor which implicitly undermined women's humanity. In order to understand how this argument developed over the course of the Commission, it is useful to look at the original submissions and at the use made of them in the discussion papers drawn together by the Commissioners in the course of preparing the final *Report*.

One of the outstanding paradoxes of the debate on abortion centred ambivalently on issues of rationality. There was a conflict between a representation of women as rational human beings choosing to control their lives (made by those favouring liberalisation of abortion law), and that of women as irrational, emotional and unable to make informed judgments. This latter view of women was repeatedly expressed by medical practitioners and was picked up by the Commissioners in collating their discussion documents. This irrationality was seen as intrinsic. Dr W.M. Platts, a venereologist, for example, is cited as arguing that 'there appears to be a biological blind spot in females when it comes to having babies, and for no explicable reason, apparently well-motivated women with full knowledge, will omit the pill or forget to take it or make no effort at all to use any method'.³⁶ This was an opinion expressed by lay as well as medical personnel and women as well as men. One submission cited declared '[s]elf-control becomes more difficult when older, ... and a significant number of ex-nuptial pregnancies are to older women'.³⁷ In considering the status of rape victims, Thompson reported a statement made by Feminists for Life that 'police estimate [two thirds] of rape reports are false, devised to cover passion, indiscretion and detection of the woman'.³⁸

If women were commonly represented as irrational, pregnant

women were doubly so. The evidence of Dr K.D. Drayton, an obstetrician appearing for SPUC whose written submission was endorsed by a number of physicians, was cited in support of this contention:

He considers that to take the word 'health' to mean an ideal state of physical and mental well being is mischievous when applied to a case where the pregnant mother is at a period of emotional instability which makes her vulnerable to suggestions that an abortion will solve her transitory and passing problem'.³⁹

Dr Matich concurred, 'It is very often stated in books which I have read, and from my personal observation that in the first three months, the woman may be irrational anyway, and cannot make a reasonable decision'.⁴⁰

For this reason, some of the Commissioners tended to give more weight to the opinion of 'medical men', both in weighing up the arguments and in considering who should have the power to decide whether an abortion was warranted. In the discussion paper on 'Indications for Abortion – Medical Psychiatric and Social' the author argued:

It is important I think to note this attitude on the part of Dr. Drayton and his fellow practitioners. They being practitioners who deal regularly with pregnant women and I think considerable weight must be placed on their opinion when it is compared with the opinion of others who may not be said to have dealt with any large number of women at this stage and at later stages of pregnancy.⁴¹

In a similar move the author endorsed the views of Dr R. Tennant who 'presented what I would consider a reasonable approach by a concerned family practitioner from a rural area – man [sic] of some years standing'. Dr Tennant's views were paraphrased thus:

with regard to the depression in early pregnancy, he thought that nearly 40% of women need reassurance, occasionally drug therapy, more commonly psycho therapy, the commonest treatment being explanation, which generally helps when they are told they will have the 'blues' early in pregnancy. Again, it becomes very common after pregnancy too. It is in my opinion an hormonal thing and in many cases the woman has difficulty in making value judgements on her pregnancy in the first month or two. He stated that depressive states in early pregnancy are not a relatively common thing [sic].⁴²

Of the many submissions from women, McMullin was most impressed by those of Feminists for Life. He characterised Mrs de Jong, who presented the submission for the Auckland Branch of Feminists for Life as 'a level headed woman presenting an unemotional submission'.⁴³ Mrs de Jong's level-headedness and lack of emotion clearly contrasted with the picture of irrational women having unprotected sex and emotionally unstable pregnant women who were seeking abortion.

Irrationality was not, however, available to women as a justification for abortion. The desire for abortion was taken by some who made submissions to be evidence itself of psychological disturbance. Discussion paper 'Topic 36B Characteristics of Women Seeking Abortion' begins by listing studies which argue that women seeking abortion 'show disturbances of feminine identity, tend to reject their maternal role, . . . use pregnancies as a way of acting out sadomasochistic impulses', may in the case of older women be 'denying the approaching menopause', become pregnant as 'the result of conflictual and disorganised sexual behaviour' and/or 'have a high frequency of sexual problems'.⁴⁴ These studies did not feature in the *Report*, which indeed states that:

very little investigation has been carried out into [the emotional and psychological characteristics of women seeking abortion] in New Zealand, and most of the overseas studies deal with the sequelae of abortion rather than noting any of the prior characteristics of the women concerned.⁴⁵

However, for the most part women's desire for abortion was seen as 'normal' irrationality, driven by biological processes, rather than pathological irrationality which indicated a need for termination of the pregnancy:

it is well known that the natural biological changes in a mother during early pregnancy may, whether the pregnancy is expected or not, cause her to become somewhat unstable emotionally... These reactions and responses are perfectly natural and normal ...The mother in fact derives fulfilment and comfort from carrying out an important and natural biological role.⁴⁶

In her discussion paper on 'The Rights of the Pregnant Woman', Thompson included 'The Right to be Considered Sane', presumably as an attempt to counter this representation of women. She drew on

private submissions which expressed women's outrage at their treatment at the hands of physicians and on submissions such as that by Dr Ann Hall who argued that being 'physically sick and miserable during early pregnancy' did not mean that a woman had 'lost her testamentary capacity'.⁴⁷ The right to be considered sane was not, however, included among those listed in the final *Report*. It recommended instead that women should be given 'as of right, a careful, attentive and sympathetic hearing by her doctor' . . . 'irrespective of the ultimate decision'.⁴⁸

While those in favour of abortion were arguing strongly for women's right to choose whether to bear children, the medical and genetic model being put forward by a number of leading physicians and scientists systematically presented the fetus as an active independent agent, while reducing women to passive receptacles, holding-pens for and under the control of the developing fetus. This model was emphasised by McMullin in his discussion paper on 'The Status of the Unborn Child'. He drew principally on the submissions of Sir William Liley, Professor of Perinatal Physiology in the Post-graduate School of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Auckland, Jerome Lejeune, Professor of Fundamental Genetics, University of Rene Descartes, Paris, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and the Guild of St. Luke, Ss. Cosmas & Damien, an association of Catholic physicians.⁴⁹ Many of the statements found in the evidence given by these persons and organisations were transferred almost verbatim into the *Report*.

Within this narrative the fetus is the active agent:

Professor Liley cites evidence to show the *command* a fetus has over a pregnancy . . . (9619-9620). This evidence is that it:

- 1) *Develops* placenta, membranes and forms the amniotic fluid and *regulates* its composition and volume.
- 2) Produces chorionic gonadotrophin to prolong the normally restricted lifespan of the corpus luteum, which in turn maintains the endometrium. Later it *takes over direct control* of the endometrium.
- 3) It *manufactures* hormones which *modify maternal* cardiovascular, respiratory and renal functions to cope with fetal requirements.⁵⁰

McMullin cites another example of this metaphor of control and command in a SPUC submission which:

drew attention to the command the fetus has over the whole process of pregnancy . . . The Society's view is that once conception has occurred, the matter is out of the control of the mother who is providing shelter and nurture to an independent life whether she likes it or not (p. 2556-7).⁵¹

The metaphor features in Lejeune's and the Guild's submissions as well. Liley's evidence was transmuted in the *Report*:

The unborn child *asserts a command* over the pregnancy. The conceptus *initiates* the process by which the corpus luteum maintains the uterine lining by suppressing menstruation. *It initiates* the development of the amniotic sac and the placenta for its survival; and it is from the pituitary gland of the fetus that the processes of labour are initiated.⁵²

The fetus is described not only as active, but in highly masculine terms as commanding, controlling, regulating, manufacturing – a miniature captain of industry! In the *Report* this masculinising is more explicit and the fetus is referred to at one point as 'a new human being, a separate individual, a man in miniature'.⁵³

The active, initiating fetus stands in stark contrast to the mother who is referred to as an 'appropriate environment' in oral evidence and again in the *Report* where the mother is virtually erased:⁵⁴

[v]iability depends on the appropriate environment and not on the subject in that environment. After the child reaches full term and is born, it lives in the environment which is most suited to its survival, but until birth it lives in the environment which is most suited to its survival at that stage'.⁵⁵

This echoed the evidence of Dr Drayton who is paraphrased as stating that:

there would be no distinction from extracting him [sic] from the uterus at a time when he cannot be expected to survive outside it, and extracting a premature child from his incubator at a time when he cannot be expected to survive outside it.⁵⁶

The fetus was depicted to be 'an independent person for the time being included in the body of the mother'.⁵⁷ Liley also dissociated the pregnancy from the mother: 'Women speak of their waters break-

ing and their membranes rupturing, but such expressions are so much nonsense – these structures belong to the baby'.⁵⁸ Rather contradictorily the *Report* suggests that the fact that the fetus is 'unlikely to survive if born before 24 weeks, does not make it any less an independent being'.⁵⁹ The irony of constituting the fetus as a fully independent human being from the moment of implantation, that is, the moment in which it becomes fully dependent on the mother, seems to have been lost.

Furthermore the fetus is not simply lodged in the environment of the mother's body but, as the quotation from SPUC above indicates, is specifically seen to be in command of the maternal body. Professor Lejeune, for example, is cited as describing 'the chemical signals by which the fetus initiates labour' as being a 'decision on the part of the unborn child (p. 265)'.⁶⁰ Similarly Liley argued that 'it is the fetus, not mother, who determines the duration of pregnancy, for unquestionably the onset of labour is normally a unilateral decision by the baby'.⁶¹ McMullin, again drawing on Liley and Lejeune refers to '[t]he control of the unborn child over the physiological processes of the mother'.⁶² Liley's own evidence was considerably more picturesque: 'His own welfare is too important to permit leaving anything to chance cooperation of others, and therefore he must organise his mother to make her body a suitable home'. This, he stated, 'is a splendid feat of power amplification'.⁶³

CONCLUSION

In the consideration of 'woman' in the context of the abortion issue there is a double movement that excludes adult women from full-rights-bearing humanity. First, women's status as fully rational beings capable of self-governance is undercut by the construing of them as emotional, unstable and unable either to control their sexual behaviour or to act rationally to limit its consequences. This becomes, as was pointed out in a number of submissions, a double-bind in which in order to obtain abortions women must present themselves as psychologically disturbed, while this presentation itself necessarily undercuts their decision to abort. Secondly, in the consideration of the relative humanity of the fetus versus the woman, the fetus becomes the fully-formed human being, while the woman is demeaned to the status of temporary accommodation or appropriate environment. The fetus is anthropomorphised while the woman is dehuman-

ised. The dehumanisation of woman is a necessary corollary to the humanisation of the fetus. Statements to the effect that the fetus is an independent human despite the fact that it could not survive 'extra-uterine life' are patently absurd. They depend on the erasure of the relation of absolute dependence between fetal development and individual embodied women.

In the context of this debate, the fetus clearly stands in a symbolic relation to the masculine middle-class. The masculinised fetus is made to take on all the attributes of the bourgeois citizen of enlightenment: thought, independence, self-governance and the ability to govern women.⁶⁴ The fetus is entrepreneurial, directorial and a user and modifier of nature. Furthermore, like the male individual of classic enlightenment theory, the fetus eschews any recognition of its dependence on women and, in fact, is presented in classic Lockean terms as one who governs its female kin.⁶⁵ Women stand in a double relation to the bourgeois fetal/man as nature to be modified and as female to be governed.

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NOTES

- ¹ I wish to thank Phyllis Herda for her comments and support which enabled me to finally finish this paper, and the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology and the University of Auckland Research Committee for funding in support of this research.
- ² Christine Dann, *Up from Under: Women and Liberation in New Zealand 1970-1985* (Allen & Unwin/ Port Nicholson Press, Wellington, 1985).
- ³ *Contraception Sterilisation and Abortion in New Zealand: Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry (CSANZ)* (E.C. Keating, Government Printer, Wellington, 1977), p. 11.
- ⁴ Matich replaced Geoffrey Leonard Brinkman who withdrew.
- ⁵ For accounts of these events see CSANZ, p. 42 and pp. 141-43; Dann, pp. 51-64.; Phillida Bunkle, *Second Opinion: The Politics of Women's Health in New Zealand* (Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1988) pp. 9-28.
- ⁶ Mr Justice Speight's ruling on the Hospitals Amendment Act: 'I have no doubt that the conclusions I have reached as to the meaning of these two sub-sections are far removed from the intentions of the author of this ill-drafted piece of legislation.'; cited in Hon. Justice McMullin 'Topic No. 11

- The Law as to Abortion'. Papers of the Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion, Com 26 Acc W1495. National Archives, Wellington (RCCSA Papers) Box 1, p.22.
- 7 'The Public Health: Report of the Department of Health for the year ended 31 March 1977'. *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* E.10, pp. 48-50.
- 8 Of the thirty-nine discussion papers twenty-nine were devoted to issues relating to abortion.
- 9 J.R. Burfitt, RCCSA Papers, Box 12, p. 801.
- 10 C. Johnson, RCCSA Papers, Box 12, p. 807.
- 11 National Organisation of Women, RCCSA Papers, Box 12, p. 892.
- 12 New Zealand Rationalist Association Inc., RCCSA Papers, Box 12, p. 872.
- 13 This spelling is used in the *Report*. I have adopted it for the sake of consistency.
- 14 See, for example, Dr Inglis, solicitor for SPUC, questioning J.I. Thompson, Halfway House Group, Inc., RCCSA Papers, Box 12, p. 1111.
- 15 CSANZ, p. 180.
- 16 *ibid*.
- 17 The Commissioners recommended that pregnancies involving serious fetal defect or those resulting from incest or 'an act of intercourse with a girl who is mentally handicapped' should not be protected. CSANZ, pp. 206-15.
- 18 See, for example, Maureen Milne (ed) *Critique of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion in New Zealand* (Abortion Law Reform Association of New Zealand, Wellington, 1977); Julie Thompson 'The Royal Commission like King Canute: "stemming the tide of permissiveness"', *Broadsheet*, July 1977 (No. 51) pp. 12-16.
- 19 CSANZ, p. 181; emphasis mine.
- 20 David Callahan, *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality* (Macmillan, New York, 1973).
- 21 CSANZ, p. 186.
- 22 Hon. Justice McMullin 'Topic No. 18 The Status of the Unborn Child', RCCSA Papers, Box 1, p. 1; emphasis mine.
- 23 The correct spelling is 'Blackmun'.
- 24 Hon. Justice McMullin 'Topic No. 39 Abortion Law in the United States', RCCSA Papers, Box 2, p. 5; also, CSANZ, pp. 363-4.
- 25 Professor Veale, RCCSA Papers, Box 17, pp. 4345-62 cited in Barbara Thompson, 'Topic No. 33 Morality of Abortion', RCCSA Papers, Box 2, p. 1.
- 26 Dr Purpura's argument was reported in 'When Life Begins', *Medical World News*, June 2, 1975.
- 27 Thompson, 'Topic No. 33', p. 4.
- 28 *ibid*. p. 1.
- 29 CSANZ, p.231.
- 30 CSANZ, p.234.

- 31 'Topic No. 12 Indications for Abortion – Medical Psychiatric and Social',
RCCSA Papers, Box 2, p. 2; emphasis mine.
- 32 *ibid.*
- 33 'Topic No. 19 Addenda', RCCSA Papers, Box 1, table of contents and pp.
2-4.
- 34 'Topic No. 12', pp. 24-5.
- 35 Dr A.M. Rutherford, RCCSA Papers, Box 23, p. 8052, cited in 'Topic No.
12', p. 22.
- 36 Dr W.M. Platts, RCCSA Papers, p. 9230 cited in Denese L. Henare 'Topic
No. 25 Ex-nuptial Pregnancies – Problems Arising', RCCSA Papers, Box
2, p. 8.
- 37 Mrs Butterworth, RCCSA Papers, Submission 335, cited in Barbara
Thompson, 'Topic No. 27 Special Grounds', p. 3.
- 38 Feminists for Life, RCCSA Papers, Box 15, p. 3285, p.3524 cited in
Thompson, 'Topic No. 27', Box 2, p. 23.
- 39 'Topic No. 12, p. 14.
- 40 Dr W. Matich, RCCSA Papers, Box 12, p. 815.
- 41 'Topic No. 12', p. 15.
- 42 *ibid.*, p. 12.
- 43 McMullin, Marginal notes, final page of Thompson, 'Topic No. 27'.
- 44 'Topic No. 36b Characteristics of Women Seeking Abortion', RCCSA Pa-
pers, Box 2, p. 1.
- 45 CSANZ, p. 178.
- 46 'Topic No. 12', p.14.
- 47 Dr Ann Hall, Box 23, p. 8300 cited in Thompson, 'Topic No. 33', p. 7.
- 48 CSANZ, p. 197.
- 49 McMullin, 'Topic No. 18', pp. 10-12.
- 50 *ibid.*, p. 6; emphasis mine; numbers in brackets refer to Evidence.
- 51 *ibid.*, p. 11. See also, New Zealand Society for the Protection of the Unborn
Child, RCCSA Papers, Box 14, pp. 2552-3.
- 52 CSANZ, p. 185; emphasis mine.
- 53 *ibid.* The Submission of the Guild of St. Luke and St. Cosmas and Damien
states 'the foetus is a new human, separate and individual, a man in mini-
ature', RCCSA Papers, Box 14, p. 2110.
- 54 Sir Wm. Liley, RCCSA Papers, Box 25, p. 9615.
- 55 CSANZ, p. 186.
- 56 'Topic No. 12', p. 14.
- 57 CSANZ, p. 185.
- 58 Liley, p. 9619.
- 59 CSANZ, p. 186.
- 60 Professor Jerome Lejeune, Box 12, p. 264 cited in McMullin, 'Topic No.
18', p. 11.
- 61 Liley, p. 9619.
- 62 McMullin, 'Topic No. 18', p. 10.

- ⁶³ Liley, p. 9619.
- ⁶⁴ Carole Pateman, 'The Patriarchal Welfare State' in Amy Gutmann (ed) *Democracy and the Welfare State* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1988).
- ⁶⁵ Seyla Benhabib, 'The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory', in Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (eds) *Feminism as Critique* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987).

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Wives and Mothers First: The New Zealand Teachers' Marriage Bar and the Ideology of Domesticity, 1920-1940

JO AITKEN

Between 1920 and 1940 the employment of a small group of women became the subject of intense debate in New Zealand. As unemployment among young teachers increased with the onset of the Great Depression, so too did the demands for married women teachers to be dismissed from their positions. In 1931 the New Zealand government answered these demands with legislation which gave education boards discretionary power to refuse to appoint married women to primary school teaching positions and to dismiss married women teachers already holding positions.¹ By international standards the New Zealand teachers' marriage bar was short-lived. It ceased to be actively enforced in 1936 and was formally repealed in 1938.² Nevertheless, despite its short reign, the marriage bar provides a valuable insight into women's history in the interwar period. In particular, the bar demonstrates that domesticity was widely regarded as the only acceptable role for married women during these years.

Melanie Nolan has recently argued that domesticity was fractured from the 1920s to the 1940s by debate over the employment and unemployment of women, culminating in a shift in public policy that gave single women the rights of wage earners.³ This change in official policy eroded the male breadwinner principle enshrined in family wage legislation and gave partial economic citizenship to one group of women. However, as Nolan acknowledges, the debate over women's economic citizenship was limited.⁴ While single women may have gained official recognition as paid workers, no such concessions were extended to married women during the interwar years. The advent of the teachers' marriage bar suggests that there was no general fracturing of domesticity in the interwar period and that for married women, especially during the Depression, the ideology of domesticity remained dominant.

I argue that although the bar was justified by education authorities as merely a pragmatic response to high teacher unemployment, the policy was primarily legitimised by the ideology of domesticity.

Based on a case study of the Canterbury Education Board's enforcement of the marriage bar, I will demonstrate that the marriage bar was doomed to failure as a solution to teacher unemployment by both the terms of the legislation and the circumstances of the married women teachers themselves. The bar, therefore, functioned more as a means for education officials to be seen to be addressing the issue than as a viable solution to teacher unemployment. However, by playing on a widespread belief in the primacy of married women's domestic role, the education boards were able to use married women teachers as scapegoats for a problem they could not solve.

During the interwar years the paid labour of married women outside the home tended to be viewed with great ambivalence, if not outright hostility. Women were regarded primarily as wives and mothers whose place was in the home. Rigid gender-role divisions were maintained and women were expected to marry and be supported by their husbands. In most occupations, including teaching, men were paid at a rate which assumed they were supporting a family, regardless of their actual marital status. Female wages on the other hand were paid at a much lower rate, which assumed that women were single with no dependents.⁵ The New Zealand Women Teachers' Association fought unsuccessfully at this time for women teachers with dependents to be granted the married assistant's allowance, which was available only to men.⁶ Women were expected to leave the paid work force upon marriage to devote themselves to domestic life and indeed most did so. During the 1920s and 30s only eight per cent of women in the New Zealand labour force were married, compared with forty per cent by the 1960s.⁷

In such a context married women undertaking paid labour outside the home represented a threat to the concept of the male breadwinner and to domestic harmony by taking women away from their 'natural' duties.⁸ One way of countering this perceived threat was to try to control married women's paid labour through direct intervention. Jane Lewis, commenting on state practices and married women's work in England prior to World War II, observes that: 'Policies directed specifically towards the married woman worker tended to revolve around the perceived need to limit the extent of married women's work.'⁹ According to Lewis, protective legislation and exclusionary national insurance criteria were used to control working class women's job opportunities, while middle class married

women were excluded from employment by the imposition of marriage bars.¹⁰ This latter option became an international phenomenon in the first half of this century, with marriage bars being imposed upon professional women not only in Britain, but also in Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.¹¹

The economic crisis of the 1930s appears to have intensified opposition to married women in the paid workforce. There is evidence that in the face of rising unemployment, some groups and individuals opposed *all* women working outside the home, married or single.¹² However, fuelled by the assumption that unlike single women they could and should be economically supported by their husbands, married women came under particularly intense pressure to leave the work force during the Depression. They were widely seen as undertaking paid work when they did not 'need' to and were accused of creating unemployment among single women as well as men. Editorial columns in the *Sydney Morning Herald* denounced paid work by married women as 'evil' and in Brisbane the Shop Assistants Union employed sandwich-board men to carry notices saying 'Hundreds of married women whose husbands are in good positions are employed in the city.'¹³ Even the Women Confectioners Union opposed the employment of married women and many other Australian Unions refused to admit them as members.¹⁴ The American Federation of Labor advocated discriminatory hiring practices for married women whose husbands had permanent positions and a 1936 Gallup Poll showed that 82 per cent of Americans agreed with this stance.¹⁵ Such a view was also shared by the Women's Federal Bureau. Although established to protect women workers the Bureau represented the employment of married women as a 'dangerous aberration'.¹⁶

In New Zealand the married woman worker also came under attack. The Christchurch Unemployment Committee passed a motion against offering work to married women¹⁷ and members of the public urged married women workers to leave their positions. 'Married Man' wrote to *The Press* in 1931 to declare that the paid employment of married women was wrong: 'Whilst single women and unemployed men are squeezed out of employment, other homes are in receipt of two salaries.'¹⁸ His solution, along with that of other correspondents such as 'A Worker', was that the government should legislate against the employment of all married women workers whose husbands were in employment.¹⁹ No Western government was ever persuaded to take

such drastic action against all married women workers. However, many governments did introduce marriage bars for women in the teaching profession and other civil services during the economic crisis of the thirties. Such bars tended to be explained as a pragmatic response to high unemployment, but as we shall see they also represented an outworking of the ideology of domesticity.

In New Zealand the teachers' marriage bar was introduced following extensive lobbying for the legislation by education boards and other interested groups such as school committees. The marriage bar was presented by education officials as an emergency measure necessitated by high teacher unemployment during the Depression.²⁰ In the rhetoric used by the boards, discrimination against married women teachers was justified by the spectre of large numbers of unemployed young teachers. The Auckland Education Board declared that it should have the right to refuse to employ married women teachers 'especially when there is so much unemployment in the teaching profession.'²¹ Wellington joined Canterbury, Otago and Auckland Boards in January 1931 by issuing a protest against the continued employment of married women teachers in view of the 'large numbers of teachers, particularly single women, who are out of employment.'²² In Parliament, Mr Carrington, a member of the Legislative Council, congratulated the Minister of Education on the marriage bar legislation because 'I know of several cases where both husband and wife are getting good salaries, while, as we know, there are in Auckland at the present time some seven hundred unemployed school-teachers.'²³ The unemployed teachers referred to were predominantly recent graduates of teachers' training college.²⁴ The employment of married women teachers was thus depicted as contributing to unemployment among young single teachers who, it was assumed, were more entitled to paid work. In this context a marriage bar could be presented by education boards as a just policy that would improve the employment situation among teachers.

High unemployment among trainee teachers was also used to justify some overseas marriage bars. In New South Wales the lack of employment for single ex-student teachers was the most widely used argument in favour of a marriage bar during the Depression. It won much support and marriage bar legislation was passed by the state parliament in 1932.²⁵ Many British local education authorities introduced marriage bars following the 1921 recession on the grounds

that married women were taking jobs that unemployed teachers' college graduates could have filled.²⁶ In 1923, a top official of the British Board of Education (central government) observed that 'It is common ground that the elimination of married women teachers whose husbands are able to support them is the most obvious and natural way of mitigating the extensive unemployment of young teachers which is almost inevitable this autumn.'²⁷

Recession and teacher unemployment undoubtedly played a part in the formation of marriage bars both here and overseas. Certainly in New Zealand, New South Wales and Great Britain, formal teachers' marriage bars were not introduced until times of harsh economic recession, accompanied by high unemployment in the profession.²⁸ High teacher unemployment appears to have been a necessary catalyst for public sanction of the dismissal of married women teachers in New Zealand. When some education boards sought a return of this power in 1939 and 1940,²⁹ they did not receive the substantial public or government support they had had in 1931 whilst in the grip of the Depression. In the 1930s the need for economic retrenchment also lent support to the marriage bar as the accepted solution to teacher unemployment. Unlike other options for reducing the numbers of unemployed teachers, such as lowering class teacher ratios or early retirement, the marriage bar did not directly or obviously incur extra costs. There may even have been an element of cost cutting in the boards' approach, since it was cheaper to employ teachers just out of training college than the more experienced married women teachers, although this factor was never mentioned in any of the boards' representations in favour of the bar.³⁰

However, while economic crisis and teacher unemployment may have been the immediate cause and the official justification of the marriage bars, they were not the primary reason behind their introduction. Studies of teachers' marriage bars in New South Wales and Britain have concluded that the bars were clearly an outworking of the ideology of female economic dependence and domesticity. Noeline Kyle and Judi MacKinolty both found that the New South Wales marriage bar did little to relieve teacher unemployment. They therefore contend that domestic ideology, which prescribed a social role for Australian women of home-maker rather than worker, was a more important factor in the introduction of the bar than the official justification of high unemployment among teachers.³¹ MacKinolty con-

cludes 'One is left with the feeling that ex-student unemployment merely provided an excuse for a policy that was seen as desirable in the long term'.³²

In her study of the British teachers' marriage bar Alison Oram declares that economic causes are not a sufficient explanation for the policy. Instead, she points to the prevailing ideology that married women should not work outside the home as the predominant force behind the adoption of a bar by local authorities.³³ Jane Lewis takes a similar stance, concluding that in Britain:

Although economic reasons for the marriage bar were strong (local authorities, for example, faced the problem of large numbers of unemployed newly-trained teachers), there is strong evidence to suggest that it was the ideology of domesticity which legitimised the policy.³⁴

I would argue that in a similar way the New Zealand bar, although introduced in a time of high teacher unemployment, was legitimised by an ideology of female domesticity and economic dependence rather than as a genuine solution to the problem of teacher unemployment.

The rhetoric of fairness in a time of high unemployment, used in support of the New Zealand bar, obscures the fact that the education boards' opposition to the employment of married women teachers spanned a greater time period than the Depression years. While the boards did not seek the power of dismissal over married women teachers until teacher unemployment had assumed serious proportions, they sought the power to pass over married women teachers in making appointments long before this time. As early as 1923, many years before the economic crisis of the Depression, a conference of education boards had proposed that the Education Act be amended: 'Making provision that Boards may pass over married women teachers and appoint others lower on the grading list – except in the case of married women under an obligation to serve as teachers.'³⁵ Teacher unemployment did not become a category in Canterbury Education Board minutes until 1927 and yet there is evidence that the Board enforced an informal marriage bar in appointments from at least 1925, and possibly from as early as 1923.³⁶ The official justification of the bar in terms of teacher unemployment is also undermined by the fact that education boards continued to demand discretionary power over

the employment of married women teachers after the Depression years and the teacher surplus had passed.³⁷

When teacher unemployment reached high levels both in New Zealand and overseas it was ideology and economics that determined that married women would bear the brunt of the so-called solution. The widely accepted ideology of the male breadwinner and female domesticity fuelled animosity towards married women workers which grew stronger with the onset of economic hardship and high unemployment. A married woman's expected role was that of wife and mother, not paid worker, and married women workers were therefore considered to be less entitled to their positions than other workers. In the light of this ideology, a marriage bar came to be seen here and overseas as the natural and acceptable solution to teacher unemployment.³⁸ The intended effect of the marriage bar was simply to replace one group of unemployed teachers with another. However, due to the prevailing ideals of a married woman being economically provided for by a male breadwinner, the unemployment of married women teachers was not an issue the boards felt compelled to consider.

The marriage bar was doomed to failure as a corrective for teacher unemployment in New Zealand. Not only did the ranks of unemployed teachers hugely out-number those of married women teachers³⁹ but, as we shall see in the case study of the Canterbury Education Board, most of the married women teachers were working out of economic necessity. Therefore they could not be dismissed by the terms of the legislation, with the result that the overall effect of the bar on teacher unemployment was probably negligible. If teacher unemployment had really been the guiding force behind the marriage bar, education authorities ought to have targeted for dismissal all teachers who had other sources of income, regardless of gender or marital status. Indeed, this was a point often made by women's groups which opposed the bar.⁴⁰ To my knowledge, no officials ever considered such an option. Instead, guided by the ideology of domesticity, they persisted in singling out married women teachers as legitimate targets for discrimination.

Married women comprised a very small part of the primary teaching service during the 1920s and 1930s. According to a special report by the Department of Education, there were 311 married women teachers employed nationally by the boards in 1929: a mere 4.8 per cent of primary teachers.⁴¹ Throughout the interwar years married

women never accounted for more than 8.3 per cent of the Canterbury Education Board's teaching force.⁴² Yet despite their low numbers, married women teachers appear to have become a particular focus of national scrutiny and opposition during the Depression. They were accused of selfishness by many and entreated to leave their jobs in favour of unemployed teachers. 'Disgusted Ex-Digger' in a letter to the editor of *National Education* compared the position of married women teachers in 1931 to that of conscripts in World War I and asserted 'that it is not only the duty but the privilege of the married woman teacher who has either private means or a husband to support her to give way to the younger teachers who are unemployed.'⁴³ An earlier letter from 'Inquirer' declared that 'any honest married woman teacher' would have decided long ago to forego her salary so that other teachers who had need of the money could be employed.⁴⁴

The Nelson Board of Education was so opposed to the continued employment of married women teachers that it gave notice to one such teacher in February 1931, before the legislation for any form of marriage bar was in place. The notice was rescinded because the Board recognised that the primary teachers' union, the New Zealand Educational Institute, would win an appeal on legal grounds, but the Board felt its action 'had accomplished something in drawing attention to the matter and bringing things a step nearer to the desired end'.⁴⁵ There were also cases of individual school committees complaining to their boards about the presence of married women teachers in their schools.⁴⁶ The Canterbury Board fielded protests from Linwood and Papanui School Committees about married women teachers at the schools. In both cases the Board declared itself to be in sympathy with the committees but unable to take action against the women because of legal difficulties.⁴⁷

Faced with open hostility from their employers and other teachers such as 'Ex-Digger' and 'Inquirer', resignation must have seemed an appealing or at least a publicly sanctioned option for many married women teachers. Yet despite such intense social pressure to leave teaching, married women stayed. In fact the number of married women teachers employed by the Canterbury Education Board *increased* rather than decreased prior to the introduction of the marriage bar. Interestingly, the increase in married women teachers occurred against a persistent decline in the percentage of women teachers employed by the Board throughout the interwar period.⁴⁸ Thus the proportion

of married women teachers in the Board's employ prior to the bar rose in relation to both the total number of teachers and the number of women teachers. Such a rise in the number of married women teachers could be taken as evidence of the weakening hold of domesticity over married women in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This may indeed have been the case if most married women teachers were found to have been teaching where their husbands were also adequately employed. However, a list of married women teachers and their circumstances compiled by the Canterbury Education Board in 1931 suggests that this was not the case. The majority of married women employed by the Board were not deliberately choosing to ignore the ideals of domesticity but were undertaking full-time paid work only where through death, disability or unemployment, they lacked a male provider.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, education authorities and others in favour of a marriage bar proceeded as though most married women teachers were deliberately transgressing the boundaries of domesticity and teaching when their husbands were able to support them. The boards consistently maintained that they were not against the employment of married women teachers who worked out of economic necessity, but they presented such women as comprising the exception rather than the rule among married women teachers even during the Depression years. The Auckland Education Board promised the government that the interests of married women teachers required to work 'through special circumstances' would not be prejudiced by the introduction of a marriage bar.⁵⁰ Following the passage of the first marriage bar legislation,⁵¹ the Nelson Board gave notice to all its married women teachers with provision for an appeal by any teacher who considered her circumstances 'to be of such a nature as to entitle her to special consideration'.⁵² Clearly the married woman teacher who undertook paid work out of necessity was considered to be a special minority among married women teachers. The majority of married women teachers were characterised by their opponents, not as breadwinners, but as secondary earners already adequately supported by their husbands. The marriage bar was presented as 'just a question [of] whether we are going to allow two salaries to go into one home'.⁵³ The dominant ideology of the time upheld the economic dependency of married women and denied them access to paid employment as a basic right. By presenting married women teachers as predominantly

economically sustained by their husbands, rather than as teaching out of economic necessity, education authorities were able to draw upon this domestic ideology in order to condemn married women teachers and support the imposition of a marriage bar.

Reality for married women teachers was in sharp contrast to the picture drawn by education authorities. Far from being secondary earners supported by their husbands, most of the Canterbury Education Board's married women teachers were the major breadwinners for themselves and their dependents. Nearly one third of the married women teachers in the 1931 list were without husbands at all, describing themselves as widows, separated or deserted. Among the remaining two thirds, only a handful had husbands with incomes sufficient to support a wife or family. Many of the married women teachers were in the position of supporting husbands who were suffering from the afflictions of war or recession. Typical entries in the 1931 list provide a record of the struggle these women faced: 'Husband Returned Serviceman – incapacitated'; 'Husband earning eight pounds per annum'; 'Husband invalid'; 'Husband unemployed'; 'Husband mental patient'; 'Husband bankrupt farmer and semi-invalid'; 'Husband Returned Serviceman – vacating farm'. Given the level of hardship indicated by these entries it is no wonder that the Canterbury Education Board's married women teachers did not voluntarily leave the labour force as the economic crisis deepened. Unfortunately, this hardship was never acknowledged by the campaigners for the bar, intent as they were on using married women teachers as scapegoats for the problem of teacher unemployment. Married women teachers were still urged to give up their jobs. When social pressure proved ineffective in persuading married women to leave teaching, education boards tried to force them to resign using the provisions of the marriage bar.

In this endeavour the Canterbury Education Board was partially successful at best. Ironically, the terms of the marriage bar legislation itself protected many of the Board's married women from dismissal. The 1931 Finance Act (No. 4) gave education boards the power to 'terminate the engagement of any married women employed as a teacher' but only where this would not cause 'undue hardship'.⁵⁴ When the Canterbury Education Board attempted to dismiss one third of its married women teachers, it came face-to-face with the reality of the hardship which made teaching a necessity for many of these women.

On appeal, the Board was forced to reverse its decisions and retain slightly under half of the married women teachers to whom it had initially given notice.⁵⁵ In addition to those married women teachers who won their appeal against dismissal, there were many other teachers to whom it was impossible for the Board to give notice of dismissal in the first place. Thirty of the seventy-three married women teachers in the Canterbury Education Board's 1931 list had no action at all taken against them under the marriage bar because they were widows or deserted or their husbands were unemployed, and loss of their jobs would clearly have resulted in 'undue hardship'.

Incomplete records make it difficult to tell exactly how many of the Canterbury Education Board's married women teachers were forced to leave their jobs as a result of the marriage bar.⁵⁶ Leaving aside those resignations that appear to have been normal retirements, as many as one third of the married women teachers in the 1931 list may have been directly or indirectly compelled to leave by the bar. Other women teachers not included in the 1931 list probably also fell victim to the bar, such as single women teachers forced to resign upon marriage who, in the absence of the bar, might have stayed on. What is certain is that following the introduction of the bar in its final form in November 1931, the numbers of married women teachers in the Board's employ declined. The proportion of married women teachers peaked in 1931 at 7.2 per cent of the Canterbury Education Board's teaching force. By 1934 married women comprised only 4.7 per cent: a smaller proportion than at any other time during the inter-war period. These figures could be taken as an indication of the success of the marriage bar. Obviously the bar did allow some married women teachers to be forced out of their teaching positions, thereby reducing the proportion of married women teachers in the Canterbury Education Board's teaching force. However, two thirds of the married women teachers employed by the Board in 1931 managed to retain their positions throughout the Depression despite the enforcement of the marriage bar. While in theory the bar enabled the dismissal of married women in order to relieve unemployment among young teachers, in practice it seems the Board was forced to retain most of its married women teachers. Therefore I consider that, at least in the case of the Canterbury Education Board, the marriage bar was a failure.

The single greatest factor in the failure of the marriage bar was the outward conformity of married women teachers to the ideology

of domesticity. The Board sought a marriage bar on the premise that married women teachers were predominantly working when there was no economic need for them to do so: that is, on the premise that married women teachers were rebelling against the precepts of the ideology of domesticity. In reality, most of Canterbury's married women teachers were not rejecting the security and social acceptability of a domestic role and male economic support in favour of teaching. Rather they were teaching out of economic necessity in the absence of a male provider, usually through death or disability. While it is true that by assuming the role of breadwinners married women teachers were acting outside the prescribed domestic role for married women, the ideology of domesticity did allow for such women to earn their own living when forced to through widowhood or a husband's disability. The majority of the Canterbury Education Board's married women teachers were therefore acting *within* rather than against the ideology of domesticity by undertaking full-time paid labour outside the home. Ironically, it was their conformity to the very ideology that underwrote the marriage bar that prevented the dismissal of most of the Board's married women teachers. They were protected by the terms of the marriage bar legislation itself, which in line with the ideology of domesticity allowed for the retention of those married women teaching out of economic necessity to whom the loss of a job would cause 'undue hardship'. Thus, in the final analysis, the marriage bar probably functioned more as proof that the government and education boards were concerned about teacher unemployment than as any form of solution to the situation. Assuming that the Canterbury Education Board's situation was repeated in other regions, the marriage bar could never have relieved teacher unemployment to any significant degree because most of the married women teachers were precisely those 'special cases' whom the boards had vowed to employ.

The history of the teachers' marriage bar provides a graphic illustration of the fact that domesticity continued to be regarded as the only acceptable occupation for married women in the interwar period. As the case study of the Canterbury Education Board shows, the majority of married women teachers themselves did not transgress the dictates of domesticity: only where they lacked a male provider did they remain in teaching after marriage. Although the boards denied the reality of this situation, they made ample use of the ideol-

ogy of domesticity for their own ends. It was principally by drawing upon a popular belief in the essential domesticity of married women that New Zealand education boards were able to implement the bar and thus be seen to be addressing one of the most pressing issues of the time – unemployment.

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NOTES

- ¹ *New Zealand Statutes*, 1931, Sessions IV and V, pp. 40, 502.
- ² *New Zealand Statutes*, 1938, Session III, p. 206. In February 1936 five year olds were re-admitted to schools causing a shortage of teachers. At the direction of the Department of Education the marriage bar was not actively enforced from this time and many married women were employed to ease the teacher shortage. *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR)* E-2, 1932, p. 2; *National Education*, 18:188 (March 1936) p. 53; *The Press*, 20 November 1936, p. 16; Canterbury Education Board (CEB) Minutes, Supplementary Report of Appointments Committee, February 1936.
- ³ Melanie Nolan, 'Politics Swept Under a Domestic Carpet? Fracturing Domesticity and the Male Breadwinner Wage: Women's Economic Citizenship 1920s-1940s', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 27:2 (October 1993) pp. 199-217.
- ⁴ *ibid.*, p. 216.
- ⁵ *ibid.*, p. 199; E.J. Simmonds, *N.Z.E.I. 100: An Account of the New Zealand Educational Institute 1883-1983* (N.Z.E.I., Wellington, 1983) pp. 66-67.
- ⁶ Emily A. Chaplin, *Our First Quarter Century 1901-26: A Retrospective of the Women Teacher's Associations of New Zealand* (Willis and Aitken, Christchurch, 1926) p. 36.
- ⁷ Gordon A. Carmichael, 'Post-War Trends in Female Labour Force Participation in New Zealand', *Pacific Viewpoint*, 16:1 (May 1975) p. 80.
- ⁸ Married women did, of course, undertake paid work from home in the form of taking in washing, sewing or producing cottage industry products, but these activities were likely to be seen as an extension of their domestic role and, therefore, not threatening.
- ⁹ Jane Lewis, *Women's Welfare, Women's Rights* (Croom Helm, London, 1983) p. 22.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

- 11 For examples of marriage bars in the teaching profession and the civil service see Roberta Nicholls, 'The PSC and the Equal Pay Campaign', in Alan Henderson, *The Quest for Efficiency: The Origins of the State Services Commission* (State Services Commission, Wellington, 1990) pp. 247-279; Judith Arbus, 'Grateful to be Working: Women Teachers During the Great Depression', in Frieda Forman, et al. (eds), *Feminism and Education: A Canadian Perspective* (Centre for Women's Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, 1990) pp. 169-190; Eddie Clark, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools: A History 1860-1983*, Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Queensland Education No. 3 (Policy and Information Services Branch, Department of Education, Brisbane, 1985); Judy MacKinolty, 'To Stay or To Go: Sacking Married Women Teachers' in Judy MacKinolty and Heather Radi (eds), *In Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law 1788-1979* (Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979) pp. 140-147; Alison M. Oram, 'Serving Two Masters? The Introduction of the Marriage Bar in Teaching in the 1920s', in *The Sexual Dynamics of History*, The London Feminist History Group (Pluto Press, London, 1983) pp. 134-148; Courtney Ann Vaughn-Robertson, 'Sometimes Independent But Never Equal - Women Teachers, 1900-1950: The Okalahoma Example', *Pacific Historical Review*, 53:1 (February 1984) pp. 39-58.
- 12 For example see Jennie Bremner, 'In the Cause of Equality: Muriel Heagney and the Position of Women in the Depression', in Margaret Bevege, et. al. (eds), *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, (Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1982) pp. 268-298; Jane Humphries, 'Women as Scapegoats and Safety Valves in the Great Depression', *Review of Radical Political Economy* 8 (1976) pp. 98-121.
- 13 Margaret Power, 'Women and Economic Crises: The Great Depression and the Present Crisis', in Elizabeth Windshuttle, (ed), *Women, Class and History* (Fontana, Melbourne, 1980) pp. 498-499.
- 14 Bremner, p. 292.
- 15 Ruth Milkman, 'Women's Work and Economic Crisis: Some Lessons of the Great Depression', *Review of Radical Political Economy* 8, (1976) p. 81.
- 16 Humphries, p. 105.
- 17 *The Press*, 25 August 1931, p. 15.
- 18 *The Press*, 28 January 1931, p. 13
- 19 *The Press*, 2 June 1931, p. 12.
- 20 High teacher unemployment was exacerbated in New Zealand by the raising of the school entry age from five to six years in 1931; *AJHR*, E-1, 1932-33, p. 3.
- 21 *AJHR*, E-2, 1929, p. 26; *AJHR*, E-2, 1932-33, p. 22.
- 22 *The Press*, 29 January 1931, p. 8.
- 23 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 230, (1931) p. 950.
- 24 *National Education*, 13:137 (July 1931) p. 293.
- 25 Noeline Kyle, "'Women's Natural Mission" But Man's "Real Domain": The

- Masculinisation of the State Elementary Teaching Service in New South Wales', in Sandra Taylor and Miriam Henry (eds), *Battlers and Bluestockings: Women's Place in Australian Education* (Australian College of Education, Canberra, 1989) p. 33; MacKinolty, pp. 140-141.
- 26 Oram, pp. 137-138; Geoffrey Partington, *Women Teachers in the 20th Century in England and Wales* (NFER, Windsor, 1983) p. 26.
- 27 Oram, p. 136.
- 28 Kyle, p. 33; MacKinolty, p. 140; Oram, p. 135; Noeline Williamson, 'The Feminization of Teaching in New South Wales: A Historical Perspective', *Australian Journal of Education* 27:1 (1983) p. 40.
- 29 *National Education*, 21:222 (April 1939) p. 82; 22:238 (September 1940) pp. 317-318; 22:239 (October 1940) p. 334; CEB Minutes, Board Meeting, March 1939; *The Press*, 9 February 1939, p. 8.
- 30 A marriage bar was in fact costly in the long term because of the greater relative expense of training women teachers for enforced shorter service in most cases; Oram, p. 139.
- 31 Kyle, p. 33, MacKinolty, pp. 141, 147.
- 32 MacKinolty, p. 147.
- 33 Oram, pp. 140-142.
- 34 Lewis, p. 24.
- 35 CEB Minutes, Conference of Education Boards, October 1923.
- 36 The 1920 Education Amendment Act allowed the teacher with the highest grading to be passed over if the board and the senior inspector agreed that another candidate was more suitable, and the Canterbury Education Board was able to use this provision to exclude married women teachers when making appointments. It is not possible to tell exactly when the informal marriage bar started being enforced, because the minutes of board meetings which recorded such resolutions were only preserved from mid 1925 and the bar's existence must therefore be inferred from the minutes of committee meetings; CEB Minutes, Report of Appointments Committee, June 1923; Supplementary Report of Appointments Committee, June 1925, May 1927.
- 37 *National Education*, 22:238 (September 1940) p. 317; CEB Minutes, Board Meeting, March 1939; *The Press*, 9 February 1939, p. 8.
- 38 Oram, p. 140; MacKinolty, p. 140.
- 39 I do not have any precise figures for teacher unemployment, but according to N.Z.E.I. records they numbered some 2000 by 1934, while married women teachers had numbered only 311 in 1929; Simmonds, p. 126; *The Press*, 9 October 1929, p. 2.
- 40 *National Education*, 12:125 (June 1930) p. 254; Felicity Ann Burton, 'The New Zealand Women Teachers' Association 1901-1964', M.A. Thesis (History), University of Auckland, 1986, p. 96.
- 41 *The Press*, 9 October 1929, p. 2; percentage calculated using figures given in *AJHR*, E-1, 1930.
- 42 Calculated from Canterbury Education Board salary registers and figures

- in *AJHR*, E-1, 1920-1940.
- ⁴³ *National Education*, 13:138 (August 1931) p. 355.
- ⁴⁴ *National Education*, 13:134 (April 1931) p. 161.
- ⁴⁵ *The Press*, 18 March 1931, p. 8.
- ⁴⁶ *The Press*, 16 January 1930, p. 2; 15 November 1930, p. 11.
- ⁴⁷ CEB Minutes, Supplementary Report of Appointments Committee, January 1930; Board Meeting, August 1930.
- ⁴⁸ Canterbury's figures reflect a nation-wide trend that saw a steady decline in the ratio of female to male teachers during the interwar years from 2:1 in 1920 to 1.4:1 by the late 1930s. This decline was at least in part the result of a conscious effort on the part of education authorities to attract greater numbers of men into the profession. The diminishing ratio of female to male teachers was therefore welcomed by officials as a measure of success in this endeavour.
- ⁴⁹ CEB Minutes, 1931. This list was printed in the Minutes in identical form in May and December of 1931. It is the only list of its kind in the Canterbury Education Board records and probably provides the only available insights into the circumstances of the Board's married women teachers.
- ⁵⁰ *AJHR*, E-2, 1930, p. 27.
- ⁵¹ The marriage bar legislation was passed in two separate acts. The 1931 Finance Act (No. 2) was passed in May and was intended to allow boards to dismiss their married women teachers. However, following a test case in Auckland, this legislation was deemed to give boards the right to pass over married women teachers in making appointments only. The power to dismiss married women teachers was not awarded to boards until November 1931 in the Finance Act (No. 4).
- ⁵² *The Press*, 20 April 1931, p. 8.
- ⁵³ *The Press*, 22 January 1931, p. 8.
- ⁵⁴ *New Zealand Statutes*, 1931, Sessions IV and V, p. 502.
- ⁵⁵ CEB Minutes, Board Meeting, February 1932; Supplementary Report of Appointments Committee, March 1932, September 1932; Teachers' Court of Appeal, August 1932.
- ⁵⁶ Resignations were not accurately recorded by the Board at this time. For example although 32 married women teachers from 1931 were no longer employed by 1935 according to the Canterbury Education Board salary registers, only 19 of these resignations appear in the Board's resignation records in the minutes. The reasons given for those resignations that do appear in the records do not help to determine how many women were forced to leave as a result of the marriage bar: only one resignation of a married woman teacher between 1931 and 1935 gave marriage as the reason for leaving, but other Board records make it clear that more than one woman was dismissed under the marriage bar.

Reflecting on the Pacific

Representations of the Pacific and Pacific Island Women in Five Dominant Cinematic Texts

JUDITH VAN TRIGT

This essay examines the representation of the Pacific and Pacific Island Women in five dominant cinematic texts. It explores the construction of the Pacific as 'Other' in Western discourse and cinematic practice. With reference to particular films, dominant cinema is seen to define the Pacific as 'remote', 'savage', 'a paradise under threat'. Pacific Island Women are seen to be represented as 'sexually available', 'silent', 'the signifiers of difference'. This essay questions the extent to which these representations reflect Western fantasies about the Pacific, rather than what the Pacific might 'really' be, and who Pacific Island Women 'really' are. It concludes that 'The Pacific' and 'Pacific Island Women' are constructions that reinforce a Western concept of Self: the screen images reflect and reproduce the dominant power relations at work in Western discourse on the Pacific.

The films I have looked at are: *Moana – A Romance of the Golden Age* (1926, silent), *South Pacific* (1958), *Hawaii* (1966), *The Bounty* (1984), and *Rapa Nui* (1994).

Moana (1926) is a slice-of-life account of Moana, a young Samoan man approaching adulthood. The narrative shows the preparations made for the ceremony to celebrate Moana's coming of age: the collection and preparation of food, the tattooing, the dance. There is a sub-plot of a developing romance between Moana and Fa'angase, 'the highest maiden of the village'.

South Pacific (1958) is a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, based on the play of the same name. It is set on a fictional French Pacific Island near the fighting in World War II. Nellie, an American Navy nurse, falls in love with Emile, a French plantation owner: a romance complicated by Emile's earlier marriage to a Polynesian woman. At the film's end Nellie and Emile are romantically resolved. A second romance, between Joe, a Navy lieutenant, and Liat, a Tonkinese native, is less happy: Joe is killed and Liat is married off, against her will, to a plantation owner.

Hawaii (1966) is based on James Michener's novel of the same name. It is a dramatisation of early missionary contact with Hawaiians in the 1820s and 1830s. It is a saga of conflict between 'Native' and 'Christian' values, depicted through the lives of American missionaries Abner and Jerusha Hale, the Hawaiian Ali'i Nui Malama and her family, and the sealers and traders.

The Bounty (1984) is the third Hollywood version of the April 1789 mutiny, led by Fletcher Christian against Lieutenant William Bligh, on board the *Bounty*. Unlike earlier productions, which tended to focus on Bligh's 'pathological cruelty' as the origin of the uprising, the 1984 version of the story centres on a psychological struggle between the two main characters, with Christian cast as the troubled hero who forsakes all for his Tahitian love, Mauatua.¹

Rapa Nui (1994) is set on Easter Island, 1660 – a few decades before European contact. It tells the story of Noro, grandson of the ruling ariki mau of the Long Ears tribe, who is chosen to compete against his childhood friend Make, of the Short Ears tribe, in the race for the first manutara egg of the season and the right to be the supreme chief of the island, the Birdman. Both Noro and Make are in love with Ramana, a Short Ear woman who is not considered fit to marry Noro. The race turns into a battle for the rights to Ramana as well as the status of Birdman.

THE PACIFIC / PACIFIC ISLAND WOMEN AS OTHER

Edward Said writes that Orientalism as a field of study is a European construction.² The Pacific can be likened to the Orient in this manner: it is a Western construct based on generalisations regarding language, race and types. European discourse about the Orient (and, I suggest, the Pacific) is based on establishing the difference between the West and the Rest, between the Self and the inferior Other.³ Difference from the Western Self is the most salient feature of the Other. The West defines its Self by defining the Other as different, simultaneously denying difference within the category of Other. The Other is conceived of as a homogeneous entity. Establishing difference between Self and Other is crucial: diversity within the category Other threatens the stability of Western Self-identity.⁴ Representations of the Other form a system of ascribed meanings, associations and images that become the accepted means of referring to the other in domi-

nant discourse.⁵ This system creates a 'reality' which is confused, but does not coincide, with lived experience.⁶

Historically, the West's preoccupation with studying and representing 'Other' cultures has involved clearly differentiating subject from object in ways which support the status quo in terms of power relations.⁷ Given the patriarchal nature of Western discourse, it is not surprising that racial and sexual Other-nesses have a tendency to collapse into one, resulting in the sexualisation of non-Western cultures in dominant discourse. The image of the Other is an image of a woman. How women are treated, how they behave and, most importantly, what they look like, signifies the 'truth' of the culture.⁸ The dusky maiden signs for the Pacific as a whole; penetration is a metaphor for colonisation: the *Bounty* drops anchor at Matavai Bay – underwater shot of the anchor digging into the sea bed, cut to swarms of bare-breasted Tahitian women swimming out to greet the sailors.

Cinematic practice sets up a particular subject/object relation. Dominant cinema locates the centre/subject position with the spectator, the margin/object position with those who are looked at. The gaze constructs the object/'Other' as separate and different from the subject/'Self', the originator of meaning. Dominant cinema is characterised by a type of address which '[evokes] certain kinds of looking, [advancing] masculine subjectivity as the only subjectivity available'.⁹ In viewing the Pacific, dominant cinema invites a kind of looking that is Eurocentric as well as masculine. The gaze defines the Other within the frame, colluding with Western patriarchal power to define the Other within discourse, to produce a visual image of the sexual/racial object that the spectator can recognise and consume.

In viewing the films the questions I considered were: What do these films say about the Pacific and Pacific Island Women and how do they go about saying it? What exchange is there between Western perceptions of the Pacific and Pacific Island Women and their representation in dominant cinema? In posing these questions, I recognise that I am perpetuating the construction of the Pacific and Pacific Island Women as definable, describable, homogeneous entities. The discussion of these texts assumes an arbitrary, generalising Othering of diverse places and peoples. Film-maker Pratibha Parmar writes:

Images play a crucial role in defining and controlling the political and social power to which both individuals and marginalized groups

have access. The deeply ideological nature of imagery determines not only how other people think about us, but how we think about ourselves.¹⁰

I do not presume to know how the images in these texts affect the ways in which women in Hawaii, Samoa, Tonkin, Tahiti and Easter Island think about themselves. However, by exposing the ideologies at work in Western representations of the Pacific and Pacific Island Women, even as I have relied upon them, I can perhaps explore the ways in which these ideologies and power relations are reproduced in the texts.

IMAGES OF THE PACIFIC:

Remote, Savage, a Paradise under Threat

The Pacific as remote only makes sense to a consciousness that resides in the West. Remoteness implies geographic and temporal distance from the point of reference. In cinema, the gaze locates that point of reference as the camera/viewer. In looking, the viewer gains access to the otherwise inaccessible. These films position the viewer as coming from the outside: we make our own journey of discovery in engaging with the text. The opening frames of *Hawaii* and *Rapa Nui* are almost identical: the camera speeds over the ocean towards a distant island. The voice-over tells us that our destination is 'that land remote from the rest of the world' (*Hawaii*), 'one of the most remote islands on the face of the earth' (*Rapa Nui*). *South Pacific* and *The Bounty* begin at closer range, with shots of beaches, palm trees, islanders fishing or working in the forest; but always at a distance, with the camera positioned slightly off-shore.

All the texts have a historical setting: *Moana* refers to 'the golden age', *South Pacific* is set during World War II, *Hawaii* is set in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, *The Bounty* is set in the late eighteenth century, and *Rapa Nui* in the mid-seventeenth century. The Pacific is depicted as historically apart from the rest of the world; not just behind time, but outside of time. In the introductory stills/voice-overs, a Polynesian history is frequently constructed with reference to the arrival of gods and ancestors. To the Western viewer, this may suggest a history based on fable and myth. The speaker tells us that thousands of years have passed without change until now, until Europeans (and us, as viewers) make, or are about to

make, contact (*Hawaii* and *Rapa Nui*). In *South Pacific*, the opening credits roll over a sequence of shots that begins with a sunrise, continues with glimpses of island life, and concludes with a sunset: this implies that, outside of Western influence, nothing much happens here. The Pacific is portrayed as timeless and changeless.

'Savagery' in a variety of forms is another marker of the Pacific. Blythe identifies five versions of the Savage in Western discourse: the Noble Savage, the Ignoble Savage, the Romantic Savage, the Comic Savage, and the Dying Savage.¹¹ In *Moana* we have the Noble Savage in the main character (athletic, handsome, staunch to the pain of tattooing), in *Hawaii* it is the Ali'i Nui Malama (powerful, intelligent, wise enough to see the value of Western ways), in *The Bounty* it is King Tynah (royal, intelligent). We see the Ignoble Savage in the Short Ears tribe (*Rapa Nui*), and the Tofuans/Tongans (*The Bounty*). The Romantic Savage is personified in Noro and Ramana (*Rapa Nui*), Liat (*South Pacific*), Keoki (*Hawaii*), and Moana (*Moana*). Crazy Mary in *South Pacific* is the Comic Savage. The Dying Savage is referred to in both *Hawaii* and *Rapa Nui*.

The texts often throw up a contrast between the Noble and the Ignoble Savage. In *Moana* we are told that 'among the islands of Polynesia there is one where the people still retain the spirit and nobility of their great race'. This implies that the people of Savaii are different from all other Polynesians who, presumably, have lost their 'spirit and nobility'. In *Rapa Nui* an identity crisis develops between Noble and Ignoble aspects of the Savage character. Following the destruction of the Long Ears tribe, Make is repelled by his fellow Short Ears who are eating the charred Long Ears remains, saying: 'You can't do this – it's not who we are'. The Noble Savage behaves differently and looks different from the Ignoble Savage. In *Rapa Nui*, the (noble) Long Ears live in an orderly, spacious village and the women wear clothing that covers their breasts. The Short Ears are dirty and disorganised. They live in a camp of ragged tents where babies cry and animals are on the loose, while the women dance bare-breasted around a fire. In *The Bounty* the (noble) light-skinned, fine-featured, long-haired Tahitians are contrasted with the (ignoble) darker-skinned, round-featured, frizzy-haired Tofuans/Tongans. Nobility is thus defined as coincident with European norms, behaviours and values. Difference within the Other is allowed only as it serves to reinforce the superiority of the Western Self.

Western representations of the Pacific as Savage have a pseudo-anthropological tone. These texts combine appropriately recognisable visual images of the Savage with historical references to suggest that the Pacific represents a history of the species, a childhood of mankind. The Pacific is presented, with a kind of nostalgia, as an example of the simple, natural life of which 'we' were all once a part. At the same time, the Savage clearly denotes difference from the Western, civilised subject, who, these references suggest, is the more highly evolved form of the species.

The third image of the Pacific in the texts is of a Paradise under Threat. Western representational and literary histories are full of visions of the Pacific as terrestrial paradise.¹² This is captured well on film: lush forests, waving palms, golden sands and sparkling seas compare favourably with images of the hardships encountered on board sea voyages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But there is always trouble in Paradise. In *Moana* there is the tyranny of tradition – the tattoo – 'a pattern of the flesh, to you perhaps no more than a cruel, useless ornament [through which] the Samoan wins the dignity, the character and fibre which keeps his race alive'. In *South Pacific* there is the threat of war. In *Hawaii*, traditional and Christian values clash, and Western diseases and economic exploitation threaten the well-being of the Islanders. In *The Bounty* we see the conflict between Christian and Bligh that leads to the mutiny. In *Rapa Nui*, there is class warfare and destruction of the natural environment.

No paradise is complete without a maiden, and in these texts this is, perhaps, where the greatest threat lies. Classic Hollywood narrative poses 'woman as problem', with closure resulting in recuperation of the woman into a proper male/female bond.¹³ Romance, typically troubled, is what drives the plot in these movies. In *Moana* there is the burgeoning relationship between Moana and Fa'angase. In *South Pacific* there are two romances: one between Nellie and Emile, the other between Joe and Liat. In *Hawaii* there is the socially sanctioned but passionless marriage between missionaries Abner and Jerusha Hale, a repressed romance between Jerusha and ship's captain Rafer Hoxworth, the abiding but incestuous love between Malama and Kololo, and the traditional, again incestuous, alliance between Malama's son and daughter, Keoki and Noelani. In *The Bounty*, Fletcher Christian's love relationship with Mauatua is seen to be a

principal cause of the mutiny. In *Rapa Nui*, the ultimate prize Noro and Make compete for is Ramana, the woman they both love.

IMAGES OF PACIFIC ISLAND WOMEN:

Sexual Availability, Silence, Difference

Pacific Island Women in these texts are primarily characterised in terms of their sexual availability. The motif that codes for this is the bare-breasted woman. For the West bare breasts signify female sexuality on display. Bare breasts, fragmented from the rest of the body, are a soft-porn staple.¹⁴ However, not all breasts are relevant: only young, pert, full breasts. Malama (*Hawaii*), and Crazy Mary (*South Pacific*), are always well covered. Cast in what bell hooks calls the 'mammy' role, they are not sexually desirable or available and so they get to keep their tops on.¹⁵ The West's expectation that bare-breastedness is a Pacific cultural norm legitimises the display of women for the pleasure of the masculine spectator. In reality, the celluloid image is not sexually available to the spectator: access is gained by positioning the gaze with the male protagonist to whom the women are available. In *Rapa Nui*, our first glimpse of Ramana, Noro's love interest, is in the village of the Short Ears. It is night, the soundtrack features singing and beating drums as Noro approaches the village.¹⁶

MCS to CU: Ramana dancing, she looks OS

ELS: Noro comes out from where he is hiding behind a moai

CU: Ramana looks OS towards him, then looks away, then looks back

ELS: Noro runs away

CU: Ramana walks OS

MCS: Fellow villagers watch Ramana leave

LS: Ramana walks away from the village, to moai that we can see Noro hiding behind – Noro grabs Ramana – they embrace and kiss – camera zooms in – Noro and Ramana run OS.

Having introduced Ramana from her lover's point of view, the gaze establishes her as directly accessible for the enjoyment of the spectator. Noro and Ramana run off to be alone. This involves a close up of Noro lying on top of Ramana; both are naked from the waist up. As the camera pans from left to right to concentrate on either

Noro or Ramana, Ramana's erect nipples glide from screen left to screen right, always maintaining a prominent position.

In *The Bounty* Mauatua, Fletcher's romantic partner, is also introduced in the context of a village dance. In this example it is a ceremonial dance performed at the planting out of the breadfruit. The dance, we are told, simulates the coupling of men and women, encouraging the gods to do the same so that the harvest will be plentiful. A context of sexual abandon has been created, and it is here that we first see Mauatua, among the crowd that has gathered to watch the dancers.

- LS: a woman dancing straddles a man
- MCS: Christian watches dancer, then looks OS, as if he feels himself being watched
- MCS: Mauatua looks OS, toward Christian, swaying her body from side to side in time to the drum beat
- CU: Christian looks OS toward Mauatua, then in the other direction, as if to verify that she is looking at him
- CU: Mauatua smiles
- CU: Christian smiles, then glances sideways quickly toward
- CU: Bligh, looks from Christian (OS), to Mauatua (OS)
- CU: Mauatua smiles and looks away

These scenes present Ramana and Mauatua primarily in terms of their sexual availability to men, allowing the spectator-voyeur to establish a private relation to them. The 'come-on' look (as in the MCS of Mauatua, above), suggests that the woman is deliberately displaying her body for the spectator, soliciting the gaze.¹⁷ This absolves the spectator from any guilt he may feel in consuming her as a sexual object. The pleasure of the spectator-voyeur is enhanced by the transgressive nature of the sexuality ostensibly on offer (suggested above by the sideways glance toward Bligh, who represents authority and the establishment). Cinema has a history of defining Black (Other) women's sexuality in terms of transgressiveness and promiscuity.¹⁸ Caroline Ralston identifies the preponderance of sexual images in European depictions of Hawaiian women.¹⁹ Ralston states that 'eroticism and appreciation of sexuality [were] basic motifs of Hawaiian civilization', and therefore Western moralism renders 'prostitution' an inaccurate characterisation of sexual relations between Hawaiian women and European men in the early post-contact period.²⁰ *Hawaii*

exploits this collision of values by presenting Hawaiian women as simultaneously active in soliciting sexual advances, and passive, both in their reception of the (unseen) spectator's gaze, and in terms of narrative action as a whole.

Western discourse on the Pacific silences Pacific Island Women, making them peripheral to history.²¹ In cinema 'women do not tell their own stories or control their own images. . . the voice of woman . . . is systematically absent or repressed'.²² In *Moana*, Fa'angase symbolises Moana's coming of age; in *The Bounty*, Mauatua represents Christian's resistance to the established order; in *South Pacific*, Liat stands for Joe's longing for 'action' in the Pacific; and in *Rapa Nui*, Ramana is the trophy Noro wins for his achievements. The female characters are relevant only as symbols of the development of the male characters. In some cases the women are literally silenced: Ramana is shut in a cave for half the movie, Mauatua and Liat cannot speak English, and therefore have no lines. An ironic outcome of this situation is revealed in *South Pacific*, when Joe and Liat's relationship is sanctioned by Liat's mother, Crazy Mary. Crazy Mary sings 'Happy Talking Talking': Liat waves her hands, bats her eyelashes and tilts her head, but cannot actually give voice to 'talk about the things [she'd] like to do'.

Non-'mammy', non-sex-object Pacific Island Women are silenced by their absence. There are no sisters, no aunties: the female characters are isolated from any relationships that could link them as individuals to a context other than their definition as symbols in the masculine order.

Pacific Island Women are the signifiers of Difference, the embodiment of the Other in these texts. Their sexual availability and silence emphasise the way in which they are different to the European characters on screen. In depicting Pacific Women primarily in terms of their sexual relationships with men, sexual difference is privileged above other differences, for example, class. In *Hawaii*, Noelani, the daughter of the ali'i nui, is identified as a member of the chiefly class only by her sexual unavailability to the sailors: this differentiates her from the (commoner) 'cooperative ones'.

Pacific Island Women also connote difference in relation to European women in these texts. This relation is characterised by a tension between sisterhood and opposition. In *Hawaii*, Malama embraces

Jerusha as her 'adorable little haole sister'. Their friendship is portrayed as warm and affectionate, in contrast with the stormy relations between American and Hawaiian men as they struggle for power. This is an example of dominant cinema's tendency to treat women as a natural grouping, with female characters differing only as to where they fit on the virgin-mother/mammy-temptress-whore continuum of role range. This Eurocentric notion of sexual difference is then applied cross-culturally.²³ Patriarchal relations of domination are universalised: in the example above, this completely ignores the relative status of Jerusha and Malama in terms of their own cultures.

On the other hand, Jerusha is constructed as the opposite of Hawaiian women. Physically, Jerusha and Malama are complete opposites: Jerusha is white and petite, Malama is brown and large. Jerusha is servile and industrious: Malama is authoritarian, and in control of an entourage of helpers to meet her every need. Jerusha is the virtuous Christian wife who works tirelessly in the interests of her family and church, in contrast to the Hawaiian women who show no inclination towards housework and the moral life.

Finally, Pacific Island Woman as the signifier of Difference is worked over in these texts in the context of the problematic interracial romance. In *South Pacific*, a series of romances – between American Nellie and French Emile (who has had a previous romance with a Polynesian woman), between American Joe and Tonkinese Liat, as well as Joe's relationship with his 'girl' back in Philadelphia – establishes a racial hierarchy that problematises these (d)alliances. When Nellie discovers Emile's former marriage to a Polynesian woman with whom he had children – she has just assumed that the 'native' children playing outside belong to the Polynesian gardener – she has doubts about continuing their relationship.

Nellie gets sympathy from Joe, who is having his own troubles with Liat. They join to sing 'People Like Us', involving the audience in their affirmation of racial segregation, before Joe recants, pointing out that 'You've got to be Taught to Hate'. Eventually Nellie's situation is resolved and she moves in to play Mother to Emile's children. Unfortunately Joe dies, and Liat is married off to a plantation owner. Underscoring the emotional difficulties for the individuals involved in these romances is the threat they pose to the status quo. In *The Bounty* and *Hawaii* we see examples of European men trans-

gressing the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' by 'going native'. It is Fletcher Christian's relationship with Mauatua, and one missionary's marriage to a Hawaiian woman, that symbolises their break with the established order.

REALISM AND AUTHENTICITY

The last issue I want to consider is the extent to which the representation of the Pacific and Pacific Island Women in these texts is 'realistic'. My findings here are in no way authoritative: they are based on my relatively limited research on this point, and the texts I consulted are almost exclusively written by Europeans (and some of these sources are quite old). The five films I looked at involve (at least) five different islands and (at least) six different cultures. This highlights the arbitrary nature of my grouping the films as examples of dominant cinema's treatment of the Pacific. In considering issues of authenticity in these texts, I am not making a final judgement on the accuracy of the representations: rather, I am questioning how spectators come to see a particular representation as 'realistic'.

Film draws on the recording potential of photography, creating the illusion that it captures the world as it really is. Dominant cinema, of which these five films are all examples, is characterised by production processes (for example, continuity editing and the identification of character with narrative development) that are rendered invisible in the final product, giving the illusion that film equals reality.²⁴ Each of these five texts has real-time, real-place and, in some cases, real-person referents.

Moana opens with a description of the circumstances in which it was made. Robert and Frances Flaherty state that they lived on the island of Savaii for two years, enlisting the help of Fialelei, the chief's granddaughter, as an interpreter between the villagers and themselves. I cannot say how true to life this drama is, and I do not know if *Moana* and *Fa'angase* were 'real' people. The version I saw did not include a number of images that I had heard were quite inappropriate in terms of the time and place in which the film was made.²⁵

South Pacific has a real-time referent in being set during World War II. The filming, for the most part, took place on Kaua'i.²⁶ The narrative is located on an island 'somewhere' in the Pacific. Reference is made to Polynesian 'natives', but a large number of the characters on the island of 'Bali Hai' are said to be Tonkinese.²⁷

A.R. Tippet condemns James Michener's novel *Hawaii*, which he says left him 'shocked as an ethnohistorian, appalled as a human being, and completely disturbed that a novel could be so believed at the point of its departure from historicity'.²⁸ Tippet is most critical of the novel's use (which the film replicates) of real places, times and characters: Laha'ina in the 1820s and 1830s, the New England missionary representatives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

The Bounty is based on a real-life event. The narrative reveals a number of inaccuracies. In the movie the mutineers return directly to Tahiti: in reality they spent several months at Tubuai before returning to Tahiti twice to collect women and provisions.²⁹ In terms of the narrative, this would have weakened the contention that Christian is so strongly motivated by his love for Mauatua. In the film, the women leave Tahiti willingly (again, motivated by their feelings for the mutineers): Hough states that a number of Tahitian men and women were duped into staying on board and became aware of their predicament only once the *Bounty* was out to sea.³⁰ The film also suggests uncertainty around Fletcher Christian's ultimate fate: Hough states that Christian was killed by men he had brought with him from Tahiti and Tubuai, on 20 September 1797.³¹ Around the time of its release, much was made of *The Bounty*'s 'authenticity' – a ship had been specially built that was an exact replica of the original *Bounty*. In this instance, authenticity became an issue of prop rather than narrative: 'What actually happened was subordinated to what it would have looked like if it had happened'.³²

Rapa Nui is clearly a fictional narrative, but it relies on references to history and culture to sustain the drama. The literature confirms the Islanders' belief in the settling of Easter Island by Hotu Matua, the existence of a Birdman cult and the race to Motunui for the first manutara egg of the season, the construction and transport of the Moai, and the destruction of the Long Ears by the Short Ears in inter-tribal warfare.³³ The character Ramana's seclusion in the Cave of the White Virgins has historical precedent, according to Heyerdahl, in the sequestering of specially chosen virgins (neru) in a deep cave in order to become as pale as possible for their role in religious festivals.³⁴ Wolff claims that young men and women were routinely secluded prior to puberty, when girls would be examined by a priest

(maori) to certify their virginity (as happens to Ramana in the movie).³⁵ Heyerdahl states that the responsibility of feeding and caring for youngsters in seclusion fell to women specifically appointed to the task, whereas in *Rapa Nui* Ramana is visited and fed by her competing love interests, Noro and Make.³⁶

These texts are, however, dramatic productions and make no stronger claims to historicity than being 'based' on real events. We should not, perhaps, expect that these dramatisations replicate historical events and details. Yet the real-life-like allusions made in historically-based narratives, in conjunction with the realism implied by dominant cinema, create an appetite for authenticity in the audience. Tippet states that many young Americans believe that *Hawaii* (the novel) is 'basically true'.³⁷ Denning points out that some critics declared the 1962 and 1984 versions of *The Bounty* to be 'unhistorical', for omitting many of the details invented in the 1935 production.³⁸

History is produced in culture: culture is not outside history. 'The Pacific' and 'Pacific Island Women' as they are represented by these texts are historically and culturally specific constructions, as are all histories, cultures and representations. Tippet attributes the acceptability of the representation of missionary activity in the novel *Hawaii* to the 'mood of American anti-puritanism and permissiveness that . . . characterized the fiction of the country in the sixties'.³⁹ One critic identified a nineties 'greenie' message of protecting the environment in *Rapa Nui*.⁴⁰ While the earlier movies considered here [*Moana* (1926), and *South Pacific* (1958)] show no bare-breasted women, the later films feature increasing amounts of nudity.

These texts, then, reflect the norms and expectations of the culture and period in which they are produced. This returns us to the discursive drive, discussed above, to create images of the Other (and consequently the Self) that the audience recognises. Self-representation in the Pacific, and by Pacific Island Women, would probably look very different (but would be no less historically and culturally specific). What is at issue here are the relations of power through which dominant discourses name and appropriate the Other for their own consumption. These texts are produced within, and reproduce, these discourses and power relations.

This essay has examined the representation of the Pacific and

Pacific Island Women in five dominant cinematic texts. The Pacific has been seen to be represented as remote, savage, a paradise under threat. Pacific Women have been seen to be represented as sexually available, silent, the signifiers of difference. These representations can in no way be said to reflect the 'real' Pacific, or 'real' Pacific Island Women: these categories are themselves arbitrary. Rather, these images reflect a Western construction of the Pacific and Pacific Women as Other, a construction that rests on establishing Difference between Other and Self. In representing the Other, these texts reflect the Self, while emphasising Difference.

The extent to which these representations are accepted as authentic by the predominantly Western audience for which they were created is a condition of the processes of dominant cinematic production, and the historically and culturally specific context in which they were produced.

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NOTES

- ¹ Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992) p. 352.
- ² Edward Said, 'from Orientalism', in Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (eds), *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992) p. 63.
- ³ *ibid.*, pp. 60-62.
- ⁴ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* (Indiana University Press Bloomington, 1989) p. 98.
- ⁵ Said, p. 60.
- ⁶ Trinh, p. 94.
- ⁷ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (South End Press, Boston, 1992).
- ⁸ Joanna de Groot, "'Sex" and "Race": The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century', in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (eds), *Sexuality and Subordination* (Routledge, London and New York, 1989) pp. 100-105.
- ⁹ Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1982) p. 63.
- ¹⁰ Pratibha Parmar, cited in hooks, p. 5.
- ¹¹ Martin Blythe, *Naming The Other: Images of the Maori in New Zealand*

- Film and Television* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N. J. and London, 1994) p. 24.
- ¹² Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768 - 1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (Oxford University Press, London, 1960) p. 249.
- ¹³ Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, pp. 34-35.
- ¹⁴ Annette Kuhn, *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1985) p. 36.
- ¹⁵ hooks, p. 74.
- ¹⁶ The following abbreviations are used: CU=close up, MCS=medium close shot, LS=long shot, ELS=extreme long shot, OS=off screen.
- ¹⁷ Kuhn, *The Power of the Image*, p. 43.
- ¹⁸ Felly Nkweto Simmonds, 'She's Gotta Have It: the representation of black female sexuality on film', in Frances Bonner, Lizbeth Goodman, Richard Allen, Linda Janes and Catherine King (eds), *Imagining Women: Cultural Representations and Gender* (Polity Press, Cambridge and Oxford, 1992) p. 220.
- ¹⁹ Caroline Ralston, 'Changes in the Lives of Ordinary Women in Early Post-Contact Hawaii', in Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989) p. 54.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 57.
- ²¹ Sharon Tiffany, in Denise O'Brien and Sharon Tiffany (eds), *Rethinking Women's Roles: Perspectives From the Pacific* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984) p. 3.
- ²² Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, p. 88.
- ²³ Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse', *Feminist Review*, 30 (1988) p. 64.
- ²⁴ Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, p. 38.
- ²⁵ I have been told that one version of *Moana* ends with a shot of Moana and Fa'angase kissing and retiring together to a building on the foreshore, suggesting a romantic resolution. In reality, that building was an outhouse. These shots did not appear in the print I saw.
- ²⁶ Robert C. Schmitt, *Hawaii in the Movies 1898-1959* (Hawaiian Historical Society, Honolulu, 1988) p. 73.
- ²⁷ This 'lumping' together of diverse peoples and places illustrates the erasure of difference within Other. Ethnic, cultural and geographic specificities are rendered null as Other is constructed as homogeneously different only in relation to Western Self.
- ²⁸ A. R. Tippet, *Aspects of Pacific Ethnohistory* (William Carey Library, California, 1973) p. 172.
- ²⁹ Richard Hough, *Captain Bligh and Mr Christian: The Men and The Mutiny* (Readers Union, 1973) p. 194.
- ³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 204.

³¹ *ibid.*, pp. 256, 307.

³² Denning, p. 194.

³³ Thor Heyerdahl, *Aku-Aku: The Secret of Easter Island* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1958) p. 43, 124, 145-151; Alfred Mettraux, *Easter Island: A Stone Age Civilization of the Pacific* (Audre Deutsch Limited, London, 1957) p. 34; Werner Wolff, *Island of Death: A New Key to Easter Island's Culture through an Ethno-Psychological Study* (J. J. Augustin, New York, 1948) pp. 14-15.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 74.

³⁵ Wolff, p. 24.

³⁶ Heyerdahl, p. 74.

³⁷ Tippet, p. 171.

³⁸ Denning, p. 348.

³⁹ Tippet, p. 172.

⁴⁰ J. Chilwell, 'Rapa Nui', *Listener*, May 21 1994, p. 50.

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Book Reviews

SUFFRAGE AND BEYOND: INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (eds.)

Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1994. \$39.95

This collection brings together sixteen papers by leading women's historians, which were presented at the conference held to mark the centenary of women's suffrage in New Zealand in 1993. Broad in its geographical, chronological and ideological perspectives, it includes important new research, revisionary work, historiographical reassessment and comparative studies.

In one of several papers which stress the internationalism of the women's suffrage movement, Ellen Carol DuBois suggests that '[w]oman suffrage can be usefully conceptualised as an international protest movement, or perhaps more accurately several such movements'. Many of the papers in this collection highlight the parallels and similarities between the movements across time and place. But they also illuminate how the timing and nature of each movement, and the degree and kind of opposition to it, were shaped by factors specific to the particular historical background from which the struggle emerged and against which it defined itself.

Appropriately, the collection opens with Patricia Grimshaw's paper, 'Women's Suffrage in New Zealand Revisited: Writing from the Margins'. Grimshaw gives a useful overview of some of the historiography of the suffrage movement over the past three decades, and points to ways in which recent work is helpful for 'a reinterpretation of women's suffrage on the margins'. By assessing the common elements in those locations where women's suffrage was achieved relatively early, she considers why women campaigned for the vote in those places, and why they gained sufficient support to achieve their goal. One crucial factor, she suggests, was the desire on the part of these colonial societies to distinguish themselves from the cultures from which they had separated. These were societies intensely conscious of their new world identity, attempting to ameliorate the evils and inequalities of the old world through state interventionist, bold social experiments.

It was, however, Raewyn Dalziel points out, the colonial status of New Zealand and the experimental nature of the women's suffrage legislation which lessened its impact as a precedent to be followed by older nations. In the years immediately following their enfranchisement, New Zealand women were subject to intense scrutiny, with suffragists and their opponents around the world looking to the New Zealand example to provide evidence and ammunition for their respective causes. Dalziel discusses the ways in which New Zealand women's suffrage and its aftermath was presented abroad, particularly in Britain, noting how British suffragists used the New Zealand case to counter the arguments of their opponents by pointing out that the New Zealand experiment had not led to revolution in either gender relations or political life.

Despite such reassuring messages, opposition to women's enfranchisement in Britain and other parts of the world remained firmly entrenched. Carol Pateman's paper focuses on the reasons underlying the opposition of both men and women. Drawing on the work of Susan Kingsley Kent, she suggests that at the heart of male opposition to the women's suffrage movement was the threat that it appeared to pose to the state, and to male power and privilege. Some women were particularly concerned that greater autonomy of women would lead to loss of male protection within the family and force women into economic competition with men. Pateman points to similarities between these concerns and those arguments which have so far prevented the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States. Given the longevity and deep-seated nature of the arguments against women's enfranchisement, why, asks Pateman, did women eventually achieve their goal? Part of the answer, she believes, lies not in any significant shift in the conception of women and the family, but in changes of views concerning the vote. While party politics might be seen as defusing the potential radicalism of women's suffrage, Pateman suggests the need for wider analysis, namely a consideration of 'the relationship between womanhood suffrage, party politics and patriarchal power'.

The hopes of the suffragists, and the fears of their opponents, were to a large extent based on the belief that there was an essential nature of women. That neither the hopes nor the fears were realised, exposed the fallacy of this belief. Women did not vote as a group and the unity of the women's movement was, from the outset, fractured

by ideological divisions and party politics. Some suffragists were well aware of the limitations of the political system. Susan Magarey, in a paper which uses South Australian suffragists Catherine Spence and Mary Lee as case studies, suggests that their belief that the interests of women would be best served by working through other, non-parliamentary forms of organisation and activism, led to their refusal to be nominated for seats on the legislature.

This collection well and truly puts to rest the belief that the women's vote was a gift graciously bestowed, rather than something which had to be tenaciously fought for against considerable and vehement opposition. It also shows the extent to which women's suffrage was inextricably linked with, and secondary to, other issues and considerations. The threat or promise of wider democracy was one issue against which the women's suffrage debate took place. Another was competing views of national or imperial interest. In this context, invariably women were defined first and foremost by their biology, particularly their maternal function, and debates centred on the extent to which that function would be enhanced or endangered by their political participation.

Karen Offen, who charts the long campaign waged by French suffragists, suggests that an analysis of the gendered nature of authority is an important direction for future scholarship. It was against the background of 'institutionalised patriarchy', in regions dominated by the dual cultures of machismo and marianismo, that the women's suffrage movements in Uruguay, Chile, Argentina and Colombia developed. Factors which, Asunción Lavrin contends, led to the strong emphasis of the movement in these countries on women's difference.

Throughout their campaigns in various countries suffragists drew on historical precedent and the notion of progress to add weight to their claims. Illustrious women of the past were recalled (and in some cases demonised by anti-suffragists), and it was asserted that the condition of women in a society was an indicator of the progress towards civilisation of that society. Jane Rendall's finely nuanced analysis of the languages of British suffragists between 1866 and 1874 considers how a growing sense of the social, and the new concept of altruism, were as formative in the development of liberal thought as the more usually emphasised notion of individual rights. Liberalism also embodied the inherently racist consciousness of progress which,

Rendall points out, was a unifying theme in the discourse of the early suffragists. Marilyn Lake, who like Grimshaw considers the role of European women in the colonising process, points out that the inevitable and upwards march of progress and civilisation was an essential part of the world-view of Australian suffragists. But, she asserts, this view underwent radical change as some feminists, disillusioned in the decades following their enfranchisement, came to see in the treatment and plight of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia a metaphor for the continued exploitation of women.

Several of the papers in this collection look beyond the issue of suffrage to consider questions of continuing inequality. Penelope Schoeffel Meleisea argues that for the women of the Pacific Islands, the central political issue now is the 'the reconciliation of old political traditions with new forms of democracy'. The assertion of custom and tradition has been, and continues to be, important to the restoration of pride and identity in the aftermath of colonisation, but it can also be a tool which old élites and/or males, like the colonialists before them, selectively construct and manipulate to ensure their dominance.

The value of this collection lies in the questions raised by the authors, their indications of directions for future scholarship, and the way in which a consideration of suffrage and its implications brings wider issues to the fore. In many places, in the aftermath of the achievement of suffrage, the high hopes of the suffragists rapidly gave way to disillusionment as the promise of universal democracy was not fulfilled. This disillusionment can partly be related to the gendered and eurocentric nature of the concept of citizenship upon which democracy rests. But as disillusionment has become the profound sense of powerlessness and alienation besetting so many enfranchised people around the world, the idealisation of democracy as a system of government needs to be reconsidered. Democracy must be seen, not only as something which has been fought for by many, but also, in some cases, as an alien form of government which has been imposed upon countries in the dubious and never disinterested name of progress. If the hopes of the suffragists were not realised, neither were the fears of their opponents. Universal suffrage has not been the threat to the established order it was feared it would be. It may well be that the illusion of power contained within democracy is its most disempowering aspect.

This review has only touched on some of the points raised by a selection of the papers in this collection, which, in turn, contains only a few of the fifty-four papers presented at the conference. The editors do not indicate why these particular papers were selected for inclusion, although the presence of so many familiar 'names' suggests that the stated theme of 'the margins questioning the centre' was secondary to considerations of commercial viability. But as a sample of the variety of approaches taken by scholars around the world to the issues surrounding and arising from suffrage, this collection is a worthwhile addition to the work produced to mark the centenary of women's suffrage in New Zealand.

BRIDGET WALDRON, *History, University of Otago*

DISSONANCE: FEMINISM AND THE ARTS, 1970-90

Catriona Moore (ed.)

Allen & Unwin/Artspace, Sydney, 1994. \$34.95

The idea behind this collection is an intriguing one. Catriona Moore has compiled a collection of texts published in Australia between 1973 and 1990, and combined them with commissioned essays from a variety of academics, critics, curators and practitioners. The opportunity that this provides for re-examining the issues that have concerned feminists working in this field over the last twenty years and the directions that writers and practitioners are currently exploring seems a timely one. It is one that is not really taken up in either the introduction or in the accompanying essays.

Dissonance: Feminism and the Arts 1970-90 was originally compiled to accompany a 1991 series of exhibitions and symposia entitled *Frames of Reference: Aspects of Feminism and Art* organised by the Sydney gallery, Artspace. It is unfortunate that the publication of the book was stalled until 1994 as the collection, while wide-ranging, would probably have benefited from being more closely aligned to a particular event. The contents are diverse, not simply in subject

matter but also in style – ranging from the personal intimacy of early 1970s feminist writings to the occasionally intimidatingly postmodern criticism of the late 1980s. As such, it is reflective of the variety of art writings over the last two decades.

According to the Director of Artspace, Sally Couacaud, the anthology is the first collection of Australian 'writing on feminist art and theory' (p. vi). Certainly it is probably the first chronological collection of texts from feminist writers drawing on the last twenty years, as opposed to collections of feminist art historical and critical essays. One of the most recent of these is the collection of essays edited by Jeanette Hoorn, *Strange Women: Essays in Art and Gender* (1994). Perhaps the absence of art historical writings in *Dissonance* is representative of the different approaches to feminist research in Melbourne and Sydney art scenes. The editor has drawn upon predominantly Sydney-based writers and examples, ignoring the strong feminist groups in other states such as South Australia or Queensland.

The anthology is envisaged as both a resource and as a comprehensive introduction for students, and consequently a selective bibliography and a chronology of events are included. Both Couacaud and Moore noted that 'the anthology is select and partisan'. It was hoped that it would provoke discussion and debate. Artspace had a policy to provide 'a site for the active production, display and discussion of contemporary art discourse and its relation to socio-political contexts' (pp. vi-vii).

The documents found in the first section are wide-ranging, including extracts from exhibition catalogues to discussions of individual artists. They also refer to a variety of different practices in the visual arts such as painting, photography, performance and craft. Two exhibitions recorded here, *The D'Oyley Show: An Exhibition of Women's Domestic Fancywork* (1979) and *Mothers' Memories, Others' Memories* (1980), organised and recounted by Vivienne Binns, are typical of more community-based projects which reappraised and acclaimed the lives of ordinary women. Binns describes in her account the processes, difficulties and rewards of such community-based and collectively constructed exhibitions.

Found in this collection are many of the issues and themes that have concerned feminists involved in the visual arts since the 1970s in places like the United States, Britain and New Zealand and the texts reveal an awareness of international debates. For example, Toni

Robertson's early essay, 'Towards a Feminist Art' from 1973, draws upon the writings of John Berger, Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Linda Nochlin and the emerging feminist histories of women's art. The topics covered in this collection include such pragmatic concerns as the representation of women in major contemporary exhibitions and their absence from mainstream art historical accounts. There is an equally strong concern to validate and celebrate women's experiences and the expression of these experiences through methods not necessarily validated by the art establishment. Included for example is Ann Stephen's brief account of the motivations behind the establishment of the Women's Art Register in Melbourne (1975). Emerging from such groups as this came discussion on the inherent sexism found in art schools and the moves to overcome it through organisations like the Art Register and within the secondary school system, as can be seen in the brief but optimistic essay by Bonita Ely from 1977. The anthology also includes essays on feminist art practice such as Janine Burke's 'Sense and Sensibility: Women's Art and Feminist Criticism', originally published in the important feminist art journal, *Lip* (1978-79) and Lyndal Jones' 'Performance, Feminism and Women at Work', also published in *Lip* in the early 1980s. Meaghan Morris has two essays in the collection: the essay from 1975 is a discussion of both popular and art house film-making in which she writes about the need to step beyond 'righteous anger' and the potential for film theory effectively to analyse and critique contemporary film-making.

Another interesting aspect of this collection is the way the reader can trace the emergence and gradual dominance of postmodern discourses, and the attendant alienation from more experientially-based feminist activism. For example, Jude Adams and Ailsa Maxwell discuss the forum 'A Decade of Feminist Art in Review' held at the Fourth Biennale of Sydney in 1982. The panel members were a formidable collection of British, US and Australian artists and writers, including Jude Adams, Julie Ewington, Mary Kelly, Miriam Schapiro and Lisa Tickner. Here the clash was between older US radical feminists such as Schapiro, with the more 'academic' postmodern artists such as Mary Kelly and the British academic, Lisa Tickner. To the frustration of the reviewers here, the audience's sympathy clearly was with Schapiro's 'anti-theoretical' stance. Julie Ewington, in an article dedicated to Elizabeth Eastmond of Auckland University, writes

on the potential of French feminist writing: it is in part a retraction of an earlier attack on postmodern theories affecting art. Ewington visited Auckland for the 1985 ANZART, where another version of this paper, 'Past the Post: Postmodernism and Postfeminism', was highly influential. It was printed in the New Zealand art journal *Antic*, in 1986.

Although Moore does not provide any detailed discussion of the texts in the introduction, accompanying each is a brief reflection by the original author either contextualising it or reconsidering how their position has changed. This is quite an interesting idea that works well.

Although mentioned prominently in the introductory paragraphs, Aboriginal women and their issues are absent from much of the material contained within the first part of the collection. The only references are found in the brief discussion of Tracy Moffatt's *Night Cries* in the article by Ingrid Periz, 'Distance, Communicability and Reference,' which dates from 1990. While Periz does point out the allusions to the paintings of Albert Namatjira and the 1953 film *Jedda*, directed by Charles Chauvel, in Moffatt's film, the writer focuses more upon the textures in the film and the mother-daughter relationship. Curiously, it is in the discussion of *Jedda*, made by a white man, that the most extended exploration of aboriginality is found.

This silence is, in part, resolved in the second section, by the interviews with Banduk Marika and Fiona Foley. The former looks at the lack of serious recognition given to Aboriginal art in Australia before the late 1980s and the marginalising of Aboriginal women's art. In one of the most fascinating articles in the collection, Banduk Marika draws upon her own history to describe the tensions between Europeanisation, Christianity, traditional ways and the gendering of art in Yirrkala, in Northeastern Arnhem Land. She also talks about the difficulties and tensions faced by a traditional woman trained in urban art practice in Sydney. Fiona Foley was one of the curators of the exhibition *Tyerabarrbowaryaou (I Shall Never Become a White Man)* in Sydney (1992). In her interview she talks about the challenging of colonial history by the Koori, aboriginality, appropriation and cross-cultural exchange. Importantly, too, she discusses (too briefly) the tensions between feminism and Aboriginal politics.

On the whole, in the second half there is less attention paid to art practice and more to theory. Julie Ewington combines both effectively in her intelligent and articulate article 'In the Wild: Nature, Culture, Gender in Installation Art'. One of the weaknesses in several of these

essays is the presumption that the audience is familiar with the artists and the issues and genres in which they work. For example, Sue Rowley in 'Going Public: Getting Personal' refers to the work of three women to support her arguments, neither providing the reader with examples of their work nor, indeed, describing them. This presumption of knowledge about contemporary art makes some of these essays of limited use outside a particular informed readership.

This second half seems unfocused. There are for example two articles on English and US women (the film theorist Claire Johnston and the artist Mary Kelly) the relevance of which to the collection as a whole is unclear. It is possible that they were included to represent the range of interest of critics writing in Australia, or that the influence of these figures on work there was seen as self-evident. Certainly, in the case of Mary Kelly, her work was well known, having featured in the Sydney Biennale in 1982, and writing on it had appeared in *Lip*. This point needed to be drawn out more or, at least, some allusion to her significance made. Elizabeth Grosz's article on 'Feminist Theory and the Politics of Art', which looks at the pervasive significance of the French feminists certainly makes more sense in this collection. It would be interesting to explore how such ideas became so influential in places like Australia and New Zealand, and what impact they have had on art production.

It is probable that this collection was never intended to be coherently unified. The decision to combine two very different projects is at the heart of this. Catriona Moore's introduction does not help guide the reader on this matter. In it, she rejects linear models of history and the creation of a 'simple telos' progressing from a rough and ready 'seventies' theory to more 'nuanced work inflected by psycho-analytic, semiotic and deconstructivist models' or an 'uncritical, intellectual history approach'. Consequently, her introductory essay 'Once upon a time...' discusses postmodern concepts of time and the need to avoid historicist pitfalls. The essay acts as a shuttle along a series of historical and theoretical faultlines in feminist writing. It stresses dissonant chords in feminist work as it charts a thematic course towards present practices. Indeed, the complex nature of women's history itself suggests that straightforward stories about aesthetic progress and theoretical development don't quite fit the bill.

Indeed Moore skids through a variety of issues and themes without explaining the purpose or the point of the particular texts chosen

nor why the various contributors were approached. It is unclear why particular texts were considered significant, although the reflective introductions by the original authors go some way towards mapping feminist approaches to art.

I personally, however, felt the lack of a coherent account of the significance of these texts for the study of feminist thought in Australia, let alone the creation of a history on this theme – although, to be fair, this was an agenda that seems to have interested none of the writers represented. This combination of an historical anthology with critical essays is ultimately unsatisfying, as the mix does not coalesce. Certainly, however, the disjointedness and the lack of connections does indeed create a space for the reader to create her own. The collection is very definitely ‘partisan’ and should create more discussion.

JUDITH COLLARD, *Art History and Theory*, University of Otago

**THE BODIES OF WOMEN:
ETHICS, EMBODIMENT AND SEXUAL DIFFERENCE**
Rosalyn Diprose

Routledge, 1994. \$36.95

Mainstream bioethical thought continues to be dominated by traditional western thinking. Informed by the disciplines of medicine, philosophy and theology, medical bioethics has framed the issues in traditional ways, and used traditional language. However, the inadequacies of these dominant approaches have become increasingly obvious, even within the discourse of bioethics. There are both theoretical and practical difficulties. Justifying the theoretical approaches in purely rational and logical terms has become more difficult, with the social, cultural and philosophical tradition of the writer or practitioner finally being recognised as significant, and the illusion of objectivity being shaken. Also, the usefulness of theoretical approaches which seek to apply principles is frequently questioned by practitioners who wonder at a theoretical approach which does not arise out of practice.

These changes have been moved along by the contribution of feminists, who have successfully pointed out the inadequacy of approaches which do not take account of the particulars of women's lives, the effect of context and the importance of political and cultural considerations. Also, building on such writers as Gilligan and Noddings there has been a wave of work claiming the distinctiveness of women's ways of thinking, and valuing the moral work done by women in care and nurture.

The contribution of postmodern feminism however has been limited. In part this could be because the language of postmodernism is so remote from that in which most health science people are trained. There is a density in postmodern writing that challenges the uninitiated reader. 'Otherness', 'identity', 'inscription', 'gift' all carry meaning and significance that eludes the newcomer, and the continental philosophers on which they draw have had little impact on bioethical thought.

Diprose's book makes an important contribution to bridging this divide between biomedical ethics, feminism and postmodernism. She brings these areas together in a way which enables them to be in conversation with one another, and a large area of contemporary thought made (slightly) more accessible to health professionals. Her general aim is to develop an approach to ethics which can take sexual difference into account. She rejects an understanding of ethics as a search for universal principles and proposes ethics as the study and practice of what constitutes our place in the world. Such an approach, with a strong recognition of difference, challenges the foundation of most bioethical thought, and is long overdue.

The book is framed by chapters which discuss feminism and the ethics of reproduction; ethics, embodiment and sexual difference; and, at the end, biomedical ethics and lived, sexed bodies. The three central chapters offer postmodern re-readings of Hegel and Nietzsche. Diprose explores the importance of sexed identity and difference, and an understanding of social relationship based on gift. She uses the case of surrogacy to ground her discussions in a particular ethical issue where the significance of the sexed body is central to considerations.

Diprose argues against the assumption that identity is prior to relationship (as assumed in the contract model which holds such sway in much mainstream bioethics) and presents a strong case for understanding identity as something constituted in relation to other, something embodied, inseparable from one's existence in the body – and

of course sexed. Her discussion makes visible the body, and the meaning and significance given it by the social relationships which produce/generate the values of the body and the sense of self.

Diprose's discussion of the role of medical science in the production of identity and difference is thought-provoking and necessary. While she has focused on the identity of the sexed body, her emphasis on embodied difference has ramifications elsewhere. The exploding field of genetics (including gene mapping, screening and therapy) is constructing a new field of social practices centred on the body. Certain bodies are being inscribed with negative value, regarded as undesirable or unfortunate, and placed outside the range of 'normal'. Women's understanding of their bodies and of reproduction are being questioned as they can be seen as carrying 'dangerous', 'abnormal' and 'different' genes. New meaning is being given to the diseased body, the different body, and the disabled body as genetics develops new options. Women are already exposed to pressure to selectively abort fetuses on the basis of sex. The pressure is growing to do the same on the basis of other 'undesirable' variation. Diprose's call to interrogate 'scientific representations of embodied identity and difference which in claiming objectivity appear to be devoid of a moral and political agenda and free of material defects' continues to be an urgent one.

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GENDER, CULTURE & POWER**Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith*****Oxford University Press (second edition), Auckland,
New Zealand, 1994. \$24.95***

Although the biological determination of sex is not straightforward, it is generally accepted that along the vast continuum of sex differences, there are at least two kinds of bodies: 'male' and 'female'. Within feminist sociological literature there rests the long-held assumption that: "sex" refers to the biological division into female and male; "gender" to the parallel and socially unequal division into femininity and masculinity'.¹ Thus, this tradition views the relation of gender to sex as an arbitrary one. Men and women are born male or female, but *become* masculine and feminine.

In their analysis of the gendered culture of New Zealand society, and for avowedly political reasons (p. 78), Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith explicitly endorse this distinction. According to James and Saville-Smith, 'all societies engage in the social construction of gender' (p. 11), which determines the:

qualities, traits, and activities collectively deemed to be masculine or feminine in any particular society. Although 'things feminine' are associated with females, and 'things masculine' are associated with males, sex and gender are quite distinct... Gender is a categorisation based not on physiological but on social attributes. Sex, that is the categories 'female' and 'male', is purely physiological. (p. 10)

Without attempting to attribute causality to gender as the primary form of oppression, James and Saville-Smith develop the concept of gendered culture in the New Zealand context. By showing how social structure is articulated through the gendered motifs of masculinity and femininity, they attempt to capture the specific inequalities and power dynamics which derive from the 'particular exigencies of British colonialism in Aotearoa' (p. 47). Within gendered New Zealand culture, James and Saville-Smith assert that there exist rigidly bounded and highly ritualised male and female cultures and that the cultures they portray are structured largely by precepts established in the mid to late 1800s and are constituted through the 'Cult of Domesticity', notions of the 'Dependent Woman', the 'Moral

Redemptress', the 'Man Alone' and the 'Family Man' (pp. 15, 55).

Acquiring particular expertise in 'home-making' and mothercraft, the lives of New Zealand women become feminised through domestic practices purportedly accentuating women's 'allegedly nurturant and maternal capacities' (p. 32). Notwithstanding local and global effects of feminist politics from the late 1960s onwards, technological innovation and the increased availability of oral contraception, James and Saville-Smith argue that contemporary women's culture remains structured around residues from these masculine and feminine archetypes (p. 15). Women are constituted as self-sacrificing 'Others' (p. 59), meeting the overriding needs and prerogatives of their children and the demands of the men to whom they are economically dependent (pp. 54-61). Concurring with Novitz, James and Saville-Smith argue that the effects of this all-pervasive government of domesticity and the scientization of housework which helped to put it in place, have increasingly permeated the public sphere, feminising occupations such as teaching, secretarial work, nursing and other 'caring' professions (p. 34).

In James and Saville-Smith's account, the dominant masculine motifs for New Zealand men also derive from state endorsed practices beginning in the 1860s. Promoting agricultural settlements based on the family farm, the burgeoning masculinity of the time situated men as actors in the public sphere by interweaving the pioneering subculture of rootless, single 'Man Alone' with the new virtues of 'Family Man'. The fusion of 'Family Man' with 'Man Alone' subsequently created a new, and yet often contradictory identity for the New Zealand male (pp. 15, 36). On the playing fields, in the pubs and in the sports and service clubs, contemporary masculinity and mateship were forged, celebrated and reaffirmed in ritualised forms of male behaviour. Central to and valued by this new masculine subject were traits asserting sexual and physical prowess, self-control and control over others, notably women-folk (pp. 36-42, 48-52).

Despite the interpretive possibilities *Gender, Culture & Power* opens up for its readers (e.g. contextualising male violence within the wider gamut of masculine culture), I have two pronounced reservations. These pivot around the very tightly circumscribed and almost monolithic ways in which femininity and masculinity are said to be inscribed within dominant post-contact culture. Although the description we are given for early colonial masculinities and femininities is

interestingly and provocatively addressed, contemporary subjectivities are arguably far more heterogeneous and indeed, fragmented, than James and Saville-Smith's account would lead us to suspect.²

Related to and coincident with James and Saville-Smith's homogeneous accounts of femininity and masculinity is their 'degendering proposal' toward social change.³ Arguing against biologically determinist accounts of women's oppression as 'inevitably reactionary' (p. 3), the social constructionist perspective James and Saville-Smith deploys is itself fraught with a number of onto-epistemological problems. Not least of which is a refiguring of the old binaries between mind and body, self and society that in themselves go on further to emancipate women from the strictures and constraints of their so-called gendered roles than does the ostensible 'biological determinism' against which they write. If socially constructed gender is as disembodied as the sex/gender distinction would seem to suggest, then why is it that frankly positive and negative valuations of masculinity and femininity attach themselves to, and are located in, particular sorts of sexed bodies? The implications of this run deeper than the issue of 're-socialization' and zones of authentic identity free from power (pp. 94, 97). It is therefore curious in a text calling for 'the creation of new forms of masculinity and femininity' (p. 109), that there should be an insistence upon utilising an analytical distinction which functions to undermine rather than enhance its basic strategic impulse.

RHONDA SHAW, *Sociology, University of Auckland*

NOTES

- ¹ Anne Oakley, *Subject Women* (Fontana, London, 1986) p. 41; cf. M. Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (Verso, London, 1986) p. 13.
- ² Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman (eds), *Feminism and The Politics of Difference* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993); R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1995); Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1995).
- ³ Moira Gatens, 'A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction' in Sneja Gunew (ed), *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge* (Routledge, New York, 1991).

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