Women's Studies Journal

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they invited
her in only to
stare her down

Autumn 1998

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Women's Studies Journal

Contents

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.

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Antagonism, Imaging and the Expectation of the Feminine

PHYLLIS HERDA, May 1998

This issue of the *Women's Studies Journal* features articles of concern to Women's Studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the wider Pacific region. As always, the wide range of the contributions to the *Journal* is noteworthy and this issue is no exception. Common to all of the articles is an analysis of society's expectation of the feminine and the commitment of each author to feminist scholarship as a way of understanding and appreciating women's lives and experiences.

Jane Vanderpyl's thoughtful article on the herstory of a Rape Crisis collective asks difficult but significant questions about the nature of feminist collectives. In particular, Vanderpyl considers their patterns and models for identifying and dealing with conflict. The female breast as a site of new mothers' struggles with breastfeeding and social expectations surrounding maternity is examined in **Annette Beasley's** ethnographic article, 'Breastfeeding and the Body Politic'.

Margaret Tennant reflects on autobiography, religion and the nature of 'special friendships' early this century through the diaries of Sister Mabel, a Presbyterian deaconess and nurse. Tennant addresses the specificity of the author's as well as the historian's gaze on this genre of writing and explores how the self is refracted as well as created in the process. **Judith Collard** critically assesses the journal *Art in New Zealand* between 1928 and 1940 in terms of its treatment of female artists. Collard discusses the amount and character of the coverage the women received as well as the politics of the gendered language used to assess their work. Feminine aesthetics and issues of identity are also considered by **Amanda Doyle** in her ethnographic study of a woman's quilting group in Auckland. Doyle argues that quilting is a means for women to sanction empowering and, at times, subversive behaviour in a traditionally feminine designated sphere.

Sacha Wallach's essay, 'A Defence for the Battered Woman? Assessing the Adequacy of Legal Defences Available to Battered Women Who Kill' was selected by a committee of the editorial collective as the overall winner of the 1998 Student Essay competition.

Wallach is a student at Victoria University in Wellington pursuing a BA (criminology and psychology) and law degree. Wallach's thought-provoking paper on justice and Battered Women's Syndrome is published here. As in previous years, the competition attracted interesting and accomplished pieces of writing by Stage III undergraduate and first-year graduate students enrolled at New Zealand universities and polytechnics.

The editorial collective would like to acknowledge the work of Alison Jones in co-editing the previous issue on indigenous women in the Pacific. Unfortunately, her name was omitted from the frontis-piece of the first printing of the issue. Our apologies, Alison – your work was certainly appreciated.

With volume 14 of the *Journal* the Auckland editorial collective begins the final year of its three-year commitment. We look forward to hearing from groups of women who may be interested in taking over the job. Ideally, the new collective will be endorsed at the Women's Studies Association conference in Palmerston North in June. Although at times demanding, editing the *Women's Studies Journal* has proved a worthwhile and very satisfying endeavour.

An Unstable Achievement:
Conflicts in Feminist Collective Organising[1]

JANE VANDERPYL

Rape Crisis collectives emerged out of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s and 1980s. This paper focuses on one Rape Crisis collective established in the early 1980s. Like many other Rape Crisis groups established both in New Zealand and overseas, this group developed a radical feminist collective structure, ideology and politics. As Carmen Sirianni suggests in her study of pluralism in feminist organisations, two ideologies merged in the practice of feminist collective organising, 'what later came to be called a distinctively, though not exclusively, female "ethic of care" in feminist theory was grafted onto a radically egalitarian version of participatory democracy and community'.[2] Small groups of feminists establishing alternative services for women dominated the Women's Liberation Movement at this time. These groups identified as radical alternatives to traditional institutionalised services. They emphasised the establishment of services run by women for women. For many of the women involved in establishing feminist collectives, developing collective organisational structures and practices was a political act, a way of challenging patriarchal forms of oppression.

Between 1982 and 1991, the most significant social change in the Rape Crisis collective that is the focus of this study was the shift from constructing the collective as a radical alternative to emphasising the development of a professional counselling service.[3] Central to this change was a process of formalisation of policies and procedures within the organisation that involved the adoption of numerous bureaucratic practices. Particular focus is on the tensions, conflicts and ambiguities that occurred throughout this process of change. This shift has challenged the maintenance of feminist collective values and practices.

As many writers have suggested, in order to survive feminist collectives have usually had to undergo a process of change from their initial status as a counter-institution or radical alternative to conventional service provider.[4] Unintentionally, these groups have come to

embody many of the values and practices associated with the bu-
reaucracies that they were set up to challenge.[5] In effect, these groups
have undergone what has been referred to as a process of
mainstreaming. The herstory of the Rape Crisis collective in many
respects highlights this movement from radical alternative to a main-
stream social service. The herstory of the collective reflects the ways
in which:

> Alternatives that survive beyond their initial founding phase will con-
> tinuously struggle with the tension between maintaining a collective
> structure, converting into a conventional bureacratic organisation or dis-
> banding.[6]

As will be shown, the changes were uneven and ambiguous in
their effects. The organisation did not simply develop
unproblematically from one stage to the next in a linear progression
to mainstream institution. In part, what challenged the seemingly in-
evitable progression was the collective's ideological commitment to
equality, unity and diversity between women, so central to 1980s femi-
nist collective organising. Yet these commitments remained prob-
lematic. It was not so much the processes of formalisation and
mainstreaming that made these commitments problematic in prac-
tice, but the ways in which they were constituted in terms of a di-
chotomy that emphasised commonality between women whilst de-
nying the importance of differences between them. Contrary to the
collective commitment to diversity and equality, the attempts to cre-
ate unity between women continued to encourage homogeneity and,
at times, an oppressive politics of sameness. The collective experi-
enced great difficulty in managing commonality and difference within
the organisation. Part one of this paper examines change and con-
flicts in the organisation. Part two discusses the ways in which these
conflicts challenged the collective commitment to equality, unity and
diversity among women.

Part One: From Radical Alternative to Mainstream Institution

Some of the key changes in the development of the Rape Crisis
organisation will now be explored. Stephanie Riger developed a model
that identified stages of growth and issues associated with each stage
that many egalitarian feminist organisations go through as the or-

ganisation develops. She identified three stages of growth relevant to the development of this Rape Crisis centre: creation, collectivity and formalisation.[7] This three-stage model is quite useful for examining many of the changes, tensions and conflicts that occurred within the Rape Crisis centre from 1982 through to 1991. The collective was established during 1982. Feminist collective ideals and practices were dominant in the 1982 to 1984 period, but by 1985 the collective had collapsed resulting in the virtual closure of the centre. In 1986, the Rape Crisis collective re-emerged, from which time the centre developed into a professional counselling service. Although the organisation's development can be fitted within this model, its herstory indicates a much more fluid, complex and ambiguous development between maintaining feminist collectivity and bureaucracy.

1982: Establishing a radical feminist alternative

This period was one of great excitement, hard work and a focus on the feminist philosophy and the purpose of the organisation. Riger suggests the *Creation Stage* represents the birth of the organisation, marked by innovation, creativity and a lot of hard work. A key focus is acquiring resources, obtaining legitimacy and a clientele for the services being developed.[8] As Riger reported:

> [A] critical choice facing members of a newly formed feminist organisation is how far to deviate from mainstream principles and practices. If an organisation is too different, it may not be able to obtain enough resources to survive. . . . On the other hand, if the organisation is not sufficiently different, participants who are motivated by a commitment to feminism may drop out. Feminist organisations need to maintain a delicate balance between these opposing forces in order to survive.[9]

A key tension is between the 'oppositional stance of the feminist organisation and its survival needs.'[10] In effect, the Rape Crisis collective emphasised developing feminist collective practices and a feminist analysis of rape in this early stage. Gaining external funding became much more critical during 1983 to 1984.

During the setting-up period of Rape Crisis, the emphasis was on developing a radical alternative and on its counter-hegemonic status. It appeared to be taken for granted that the group would operate as a collective. Feminist collective organising aimed to develop

liberatory forms of organising for women. Central to this project were the ideals of participatory democracy and the establishment of egalitarian participatory communities for women.[11] As Bronwyn Hayward suggests, 'Participatory democracy has had an intuitive appeal for these groups because its non-hierarchical, decentralised and inclusive approach appears to offer previously marginalised groups a direct voice in decision-making.'[12] This tended to involve a commitment to radical egalitarianism, self-actualisation, group decision-making, and a ban on leadership, structure and the individual exercise of power. Collective structures were identified primarily in terms of their opposition to what were perceived as traditional masculine structures and values, such as bureaucracies, hierarchies, competition and individualism.[13]

The feminist collective had to reflect a relationship of equality between members. Hierarchies of authority were to be replaced by consensus decision-making. Consensus decision-making was a crucial strategy, for it expressed resistance to the development of individual leadership, hierarchies and expressions of individual power. Consensus involves each collective member being able to participate equally in decision-making. The process usually involves going round and round the group until everybody has reached agreement. Ideally, no decision was finalised until every member has agreed with the outcome. In this way, '[C]ollectivism [was] an attempt to supplant old structures of society with new and better structures. And what [made it] superior [was] that the basis of authority [was] radically different'.[14] As Joyce Rothschild-Whitt went on to say, 'Authority [resided] not in the individual, whether on the basis of incumbency in office or expertise, but in the collectivity as a whole.'[15] Yet these principles were rarely explicitly discussed; instead there was a tendency to refer to feminist collective practices and ideals as women's ways of doing things.

The place of feminism and what it meant for the focus of this Rape Crisis collective was subject to challenge, especially in terms of the tension between providing a support service for women who had been raped on the one hand, and political activism and feminist consciousness raising on the other. As a consequence, the collective spent a lot of time in 1982 identifying why it was there. The 1982 response indicates an expectation that the collective would provide a very broad range of support for women:

1 Service – support women who have been raped.
2 Feel very supported in the group by other women. A lot of energy
   to give to women survivors.
3 Public education – inform people about rape.
4 Social change – help self and other women to get a feeling of
   their own power. Like feeling of women's group, working
   through radical politics.
5 Sharing skills and knowledge.
6 Race issues, class, language and group dynamics
7 New group, learning new ways of working. See Rape Crisis
   as being able to do that.
8 Personal learning, experience about issue of rape . . .
10 Work with a feminist philosophy, public and own education and so-
   cial change.[16]

These responses indicate some of the ways in which the collec-
tive constituted itself as a radical alternative organisation through a
commitment to equality, unity and diversity between women. They
show a focus on support for women and education about rape. They
also indicate how the Rape Crisis collective was set up as a challenge
to traditional social services. There was an emphasis on the need to
feel supported by the group. Some of the statements highlight the
importance of social change and working in a women-only group, as
well as sharing skills and knowledge. Many of the responses assume
the importance of sisterhood, togetherness, and sharing within the
collective. The accent was on interrelationships within the group.
The notion of empowering self and other women was perceived to be
a crucial part of working within a collective. Differences among
women as a result of race and class were acknowledged, as was a
perception of collective processes as challenging patriarchal ways of
working.

In this early period the group was marginalised and stereotyped
by various other groups in the community. The establishment of a
women-only group with a feminist analysis of rape was seen by many
as threatening. Their first funding application to the city council was
passed from desk to desk and initially turned down.[17] The 'Credo
Society' condemned Rape Crisis as anti-God, anti-marriage and anti-
men, and accused the group of being radical Marxist feminists who
wanted to destroy the family.[18] As Susan, who worked in the agency
during 1983 and 1984, stated: 'People were dying to label Rape Cri-

sis as radical feminist extremists. Rape Crisis was trying to break families up.'[19] Many of the women interviewed recalled how the collective was often accused of being a lesbian man-hating group. This is a theme reiterated by Sarah Oerton, who argues:

> [W]hen women workers organise in ways which challenge male dominated hierarchy, their marginalisation necessarily takes a sexualised form because organisations, whether hierarchical or less/non-hierarchical, are not only gendered but are also sexualised . . . [S]exuality can attach at the level of the organisation, and not simply at the level of individual bodies or life-styles . . . [Women only collectives] in the voluntary sector . . . are routinely lesbianised and hence marginalised, both discursively and materially.[20]

Accusations that the collective was a lesbian man-hating group continued to be common into the late 1980s.

Central to the work of the centre was challenging myths and misconceptions about rape utilising a radical feminist analysis of male violence, drawing on the work of American feminists like Susan Brownmiller.[21] This analysis was central to the collective development of unity between women by maintaining a focus on connection through the common oppression of women as a result of male violence, as well as politicising what had been constituted as a private issue. Creating a relationship of equality between the Rape Crisis worker and the women seeking support was seen as fundamental to this process of providing services. Equality was an important aspect of developing a peer counselling service:

> [T]he strongest thing that seems to be in a feminist counselling perspective is the identification with the client. . . . [T]rying to produce a neutral equalised relationship between client and counsellor which may include you actually identifying with the client in certain areas as appropriate and maybe introducing your own experiences. So it's more equalised.[22]

Linked with this focus on equality and connection between women was a stress on being a survivor-based organisation. As Leonie suggests, 'The women who started Rape Crisis were all university women. They came from a political point of view, but they were all sexual abuse survivors.'[23] Emphasising commonality between women on the basis of common experiences was an important part of collective unity.

There was a high degree of homogeneity in terms of class, sexuality and ethnicity among the women who joined the collective throughout its herstory. Many of the women who became involved in Rape Crisis, especially in the early 1980s, were involved in tertiary education, training as counsellors or working for various other social service organisations. Most collective members identified as middle-class and Pakeha. There was a mix of lesbians and heterosexual women in the collective, with either lesbians or heterosexuals tending to dominate the collective at different times. This pattern of collective membership was common to many collectives. As Raewyn Dalziel has noted, 'many of the New Zealand feminist collective organisations have been made up of students, former students, young professional women and women at home – but few working class or Maori women'.[24] Yet while most women in the collective identified as middle-class, one suggested there was a lot of confusion about class as an identity category. She commented: 'If you had a bit of education then you called yourself middle-class, even if you didn't have any money'.[25]

1982 – 1984: Maintaining a radical alternative

During this period the organisation experienced a huge increase in demand for counselling, crisis-line services and community education. Acquiring resources was crucial for expanding the service. Addressing the organisation's survival needs through gaining external funding was a critical issue, and a significant amount of effort went into this. By 1983, the group was attracting funds from a variety of sources: Department of Labour employment schemes, various charities, garage sales and pub crawls. The collective was very active in the local community, undertaking many public speaking engagements and providing some school education programmes. In 1983, a two-week Rape Awareness Week campaign involved a non-stop 36-hour phone-in about rape and sexual abuse, a show, films and self-defence course. All these activities supported the centre's expansion in education, face-to-face counselling and crisis-line services.

As Riger outlines, the *Collectivity Stage* is reflected by a high level of cohesion and commitment from organisational members. It is typified by 'a relatively informal structure in which jobs and authority are often shared among group members'.[26] Riger has argued that an equal distribution of skills and knowledge in the collective,

internal funding from members, an emphasis on participation in the collective above efficiency, close friendships in the collective and a 'dispersion of sources of power (e.g. friendship networks and expertise)' were crucial for the maintenance of collective processes.[27] These features were a key part of the experiences reported by women who were involved in this early period.[28]

For much of this period the collective had an open membership policy, which meant that any woman could join and participate in both the activities of the centre and collective decision-making processes. Many women joined through friends who were on the collective. Initially, it appeared that everyone had a voice and influence. Also central was the focus on women working together without men. A radical feminist separatism was an important part of the collective's ideology. Many members had a sense of living an alternative in every aspect of their life, not just through occasional participation in the organisation. As some of them reported, the collective was like a family.[29] In many ways there was an attempt to recreate the values of nurturing associated with the private sphere within a public work space. Lisa remembers:

> At the point that I went to work for Rape Crisis, I was living in a household of other women [who were also involved in Rape Crisis]. We were very angry separatists. . . . There was just an incredible tight circle of women who were living together, working together, taking political action together.[30]

However, another key feature was ongoing conflicts in the collective. These were associated with childcare, having men at the centre, and debates over defining collective membership. None of these issues were resolved and many kept reappearing in the collective minutes. Policies, structures and processes were increasingly sources of debate at meetings. Factions formed and power struggles occurred over the direction of the centre. The collective attempted unsuccessfully to resolve each conflict by trying to recreate a sense of collective unity.

One of the earliest responses to the 1982 conflicts identified the need for all collective members to have a common feminist analysis. It was argued that the training programme for new members was not providing an adequate feminist framework for addressing issues of heterosexism, classism and racism.[31] Conflicts about these issues were alleged to be causing confusion and resulting in women leaving the

collective. In an attempt to resolve some of the tensions, the group decided to have a 'bonding' weekend away together to explore group dynamics with an outside facilitator early in 1983. The women interviewed reported that the weekend did little to resolve the issues or to bond the group.[32] The key issues related to questions of power, leadership and influence within the collective. As part of the increasing tension between practising collectivity and pressures to formalise policies and procedures, conflicts often centred on who had the power within the collective, and thus who would chart the direction of the organisation.[33] Accusations of women of engaging in patriarchal practices of power and domination were reported to be common. One collective member who attended this 'bonding' weekend remembered being accused of taking too much power:

> The only thing I can remember [about the bonding weekend] was that Wendy accused me of being a power tripper and that I kept trying to run the whole show. I asked her, what do you mean? How? Why do you say that? And she couldn't really explain. She did say that I kept information from people, that was rubbish because everything was in the filing cabinet at the centre. I was quite devastated by that accusation. Exactly everything you are working against and you are being accused of it . . . [A]s far as I was concerned we were just all equals and all just putting in whatever energy we could.[34]

Often within these groups, negative constructions of power structured collective dynamics. Thus empowerment and equality were translated into a belief that no one should have more power or influence than anyone else and that there should be no leaders within the collective. This kind of understanding created an opposition between 'empowerment' and 'power'. Power was linked exclusively to a negative, oppressive practice of power, as held by men over women or by patriarchal power-hungry women.[35] The empowerment of women within the collective process often attempted to remove all differences in level of influence between women. There was a profound ambivalence around leadership. Accusations of elitism were common, of women being on a male trip or of 'having a man in her head'. 'Ambivalence about leadership was so deep, and egalitarian impulses so strong, that many groups could not sustain a rational debate about what democratic leaders should be like or how the movement might produce them'.[36]

Increasingly, the Rape Crisis collective split into two clearly divided factions. The argument was about whether the centre would be a women-only space or not. The conflict ended in mid 1983 when one faction, consisting of six collective members, resigned in protest over having men in the Rape Crisis building.[37] The conflicts point to the development of divisive subcultures within the collective, with a particular focus on issues related to implementing feminist collective ideals. The development of factions has been a common issue within Rape Crisis and other collective organisations, especially in relation to ideological purity.[38] A key division appears to be between those who emphasised a more pragmatic approach to the relationship between feminist philosophy and practices and those who stressed ideological purity.

Amy Fried has explored how certain structural features are influential in the development of factions. Some of the features that were particularly pertinent in this Rape Crisis collective were 'internal democracy . . . permeability, autonomy, and [a] mixture of inclusiveness and doctrinal-purity'.[39] In relation to internal democracy, vocalisation of dissent was possible, and the relatively open power structure enabled disagreements to emerge. However, once voiced, these dissents were not easily resolved, especially where there was a tendency toward doctrinal purity.[40] Conflict undermined notions of feminist community, which was frequently part of the motivation for many women to join feminist collectives.

This period was characterised by improvements in funding, an increase in the numbers of paid workers and a subsequent expansion in the work of the organisation. However, conflicts tended to occupy centre stage. Underlying many of the issues was a tension between maintaining a commitment to collective features of informality, friendship, the dispersion of power and the demands for increased formalisation of policies and processes within the organisation as a consequence of expansion. As Riger has noted, collectives that did not maintain these features tended to either close down or move more toward a hierarchical form of organising.[41] This was a key tension, and the collective was unable to resolve it during 1984 and 1986.

1984-1986: Conflict and decline of the collective[42]

After this period of expansion, the centre went into decline during 1985 and 1986. There was a rapid turnover of members with a

consequent loss of skills, knowledge and continuity of practices. Internal and external conflicts were rife throughout 1985 and the centre almost closed down completely. Central to this near closure was a failure to negotiate the tension between maintaining informal collective practices and pressures to become more bureaucratic associated with the rapid development of services. Riger's study has indicated how the rapid development collective services has been implicated in the collapse of many feminist collectives. The history of this collective supports this point.

There were times during 1984 and 1985 when the Rape Crisis centre had up to eight or nine workers on Labour Department employment schemes. The collective did not have the procedures and policies in place to monitor and negotiate the interrelationships between paid workers and the collective. This resulted in increasing pressures towards formalisation of policies and procedures; however, at the same time, there was significant resistance to such attempts by some members. Issues about accountability, poor financial practices and credibility in the community were often raised in the minutes during 1984 and 1985.[43] There appeared to be problems with lack of clarity and agreement about decisions, and many collective decisions were never implemented, notably in 1985.

Internal conflicts appeared to be rife. A few women were singled out as troublemakers. As one collective member stated, they were 'wreaking havoc and destruction in the collective'.[44] These conflicts were not resolved. Whilst the organisation appeared to be thriving with up to nine paid workers involved in the centre in 1985, by early 1986 it was barely operating. As one member recollected:

> The paid workers had an incredible amount of power and information wasn't passed on. . . . I don't know what happened. Rape Crisis just sort of disappeared then, the office was run from Refuge. The collective was in a mess. It seemed to be just [Judith] running Rape Crisis. It seemed to be very strange. . . . I don't know what happened. But Rape Crisis folded. It kind of disappeared. . . . Collective processes weren't working at all during this time. I challenged a woman about who she was accountable to and she told me to stop oppressing her. It was really loose, people didn't know what they were supposed to do. Meetings at the time were chaotic.[45]

In effect, the collective appeared to be dominated by what Jo

Freeman has referred to in 1972 as a 'tyranny of structurelessness'.[46] As Riger has discussed:

> When the organisational decision-making structure is ambiguous, an informal hierarchy of influence develops in the absence of a formal one. Because this informal hierarchy is not a part of the formal organisation structure, there may be no way to hold it accountable.[47]

The 1985 collective was also in conflict with the Maori Women's collective. In 1983, some Maori women decided to establish a collective to support Maori women survivors of sexual violence. They established a centre at the same house where the Rape Crisis group was located. One of the key issues in having the two groups share the premises was a difference in philosophy over men visiting the centre. This was sorted out by having an agreement that only allowed men in the front rooms of the building, and having in place a system of communication to warn groups when men were coming onto the premises.

However, with the resignations of many of the Rape Crisis collective members who had been involved in making the agreements between two collectives during 1983, the relationship that had been established between the two groups was lost, resulting in a lack of rapport between them. In 1984 the Rape Crisis collective reported that the loss of the collective which had originally made this arrangement meant that the original agreement was in question. New women on the Rape Crisis collective could not agree about the issue of men visiting the centre. The Rape Crisis collective remained in conflict over this issue both internally and with the Maori women's group.[48]

Similar conflicts between dominant and minority ethnic groups have been common in feminist collective organising and reported on frequently.[49] Differences, especially ethnic differences, became incredibly problematic to the predominantly Pakeha Rape Crisis collective. Many feminist collectives, like this one, had stated that respecting and acknowledging diversity was a part of their commitment to anti-racist practices. Yet, as Jan Tikka Wilson has argued, what remains problematic is the failure to recognise that 'woman' and 'white woman' are not the same through appeals to sisterhood and common feminist values.[50] In this particular conflict, the issue was resolved through the Rape Crisis group moving out of the shared house. It was a few years before communication was again established between the two groups.

The conflicts were a significant factor in the decline of the centre during late 1985 and early 1986. The collective was unable to negotiate the tensions created by attempting to maintain a feminist collective organisation, and attempts to work with differences between women within a feminist collectivist framework failed. The collective could not deal with the tensions between collectivity and pressures to formalise. Consequently, it seemed that the organisation would not survive. Yet in mid 1986, after a few women called ex-Rape Crisis members together, the centre was ultimately rescued.

1986-1991: Establishing a professional social service

During this period the centre clearly emerged as a professional counselling service, whilst still attempting to operate within a feminist collectivist framework. A significant aspect of this development was the increasing formalisation of processes and procedures. The collective gradually built up credibility within the local community. The focus was on developing a professional counselling service.

Riger refers to the *Formalisation Stage* as the process of institutionalising the organisation's policies and procedures.[51] She has outlined how:

> [S]uccess during the 'collectivity' stage sets in motion multiple forces that press toward institutionalisation of the organisation's policies and practices and the development of a hierarchy of authority. Among those forces are an increase in the size of the staff, turnover in staff, and the need to obtain funding from sources outside the organisation. Each of these conditions generates pressures that move the organisation toward the development of positions with specialised functions, a hierarchy of titles, and more formal and impersonal communication procedures.[52]

In effect, these practices move the organisation towards increasing bureaucratisation of its procedures and practices. Bureaucratisation involves a specification of job functions, an attempt to create uniformity, routinisation, efficiency and predictability in the performance of work.[53] It occurs at the cost of fragmentation of work roles and a loss of self-determination, spontaneity and expression of individual skills and needs. It has been argued that this process leads to increasing conflicts in attempting to maintain a feminist collectivist structure.[54]

Conflicts in the collective during this period were less common

and not so disruptive as the pre-1986 conflicts. There were no block resignations or long periods where the unresolved conflicts brought the collective to a virtual standstill. Collective attention remained focused on developing the services. A number of strong women were leaders for significant periods of time. Dissent appears to have been minimal and contained within the restructurings that occurred in 1987, 1988 and again in 1990, and were usually connected with changes in leadership. Throughout this period, leadership was never defined in terms of women holding particular positions in the organisation or having specific skills characteristic of traditional bureaucracies, but remained informally constituted in the organisation.

Of interest here are the aspects of the Rape Crisis group that indicated an increasing formalisation of policies and practices. This was most evident in two ways: one, the shift to developing a professional counselling service; and two, the increasing formalisation of paid workers contracts, job description and accountability practices. Many of these practices were connected to the increased reliance on external funding and the requirements of accountability to external funders. This in turn meant an increased emphasis on maintaining statistics, record keeping and formalising policies. As a consequence the organisation focused on gaining credibility through fostering an increasingly conservative image.

From peer support to professional counselling service provision

One of the most central changes in the Rape Crisis organisation was the shift from peer counselling to a professional counselling service. This was a key development from 1987/88 onwards and resulted from a number of factors. Perhaps most influential was the focus on upskilling the centre's counsellors. Requirements for counselling moved from being survivor based and on training through participation in the internal Rape Crisis training programme, to an external training requirement to enable women to become skilled in various counselling and therapy models. An important external influence was the Accident Rehabilitation & Compensation Insurance Corporation (ACC) registration of counsellors. Counsellors approved by ACC received funding from the ACC for counselling rape and sexual abuse survivors. ACC registration depended on increased training in models of counselling and therapy. All of these processes enhanced the credibility of the organisation and resulted in an increase

in funding. Emphasising the 'professionalisation' of the service was perceived to be a desirable goal by the collectives during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Paid workers and the collective

Throughout the herstory of this collective, paid workers remained collective members. However, the ambivalence of their positions in relation to unpaid members and workers increased over time. Initially, most paid positions were financed through the Department of Labour employment schemes. A small honorarium was also paid to one of the counsellors. Unintentionally, these schemes supported the collective ethos of equality. This changed with the loss of access to most of the Labour Department employment schemes between 1985 and 1986.[55]

Increasingly, funding was sought for salaries through organisations like Social Welfare, ACC and the Lottery Grants Board. This resulted in a demand from funders for increased record keeping, reporting of service provision and increasingly, evidence of employment contracts and job descriptions. Perhaps, a key influence in this process of formalisation is the need to gain outside funding. This point was reiterated by Riger. She has argued that:

> To get these funds . . . [the collective] must adopt conventional bureaucratic practices in order to convince outsiders that it is both successful at its mission and fiscally responsible. Traditional forms demonstrate the legitimacy of an organisation to external institutions.[56]

Two paid workers were employed in 1986. From 1986 through to 1988, there was a sense that the two paid workers were the leaders within the collective, because of their full-time involvement and the knowledge they had of the centre's work. In fact, one of the paid workers clearly referred to their control of the collective in the interview. She spoke of how their knowledge and extensive participation in the organisation meant they made most of the decisions.[57] They both resigned at the end of 1988. During 1989, a few long-term vocal unpaid collective members were very influential within the collective. They usually determined decision-making. Later, as these women left the collective and new women joined, some of the paid workers became increasingly influential. By 1991, leadership, power and influence were increasingly in the domain of paid workers. Perhaps

this was an inevitable consequence of their extensive involvement in the everyday work of the centre and the continual turnover of unpaid collective members, as well as the tendency for any long-term members to become paid workers.

Linked in with this process was also an increasing specialisation of positions within the centre as a result of the upskilling of counselling services. More and more, different positions received different rates of pay according to skills and value of the work associated with those positions. Increasingly, the collective had to take responsibility as employers of the paid workers. This resulted in increasing division between paid workers and the collective. Also, the collective became much less involved in the day-to-day running of the centre. Discussions about collective relationships during this period supports the argument that increasing formalisation of policies and procedures do result in the development of a hierarchies within these organisations.[58] However, the collective's experience suggests that it remained a largely informal and unstable hierarchy.

Credibility and conservatism in the collective

Evident throughout this shift was a focus on increasing the credibility of the organisation. The centre worked to attain widespread acceptability within the community, moving from an image of a 'radical, lesbian feminist man-hating group' to a professional counselling service. Commonly associated with this increasing formalisation of policies and procedures are various arguments about the increasingly conservative ideology of the collective through a shift away from an emphasis on social and political change to a focus on helping individuals, without challenging inequalities of power in the dominant social order or the politics of marginalisation.

The visibility of lesbians in Rape Crisis did become more muted over time. From 1986 to 1987, the collective had been almost entirely lesbian. One of the collective members suggested that joining the Rape Crisis collective 'was part of belonging to the lesbian community . . . at the time'.[59] Teresa and Mary argued that as Rape Crisis shifted away from a political focus to a focus on becoming a professional counselling agency, lesbian visibility became less marked. They stated that:

When [Mary] became a collective member [in 1987] Rape Crisis was

growing, it was becoming more professional and more aware of how the public perceived us. We weren't there for our political means, but for our clients. Our lesbianism, while important to us, took a back step.[60]

Joan commented that:

Feminism was a very big part of building up the service, most women involved had extremely evolved feminist beliefs and practices. [It was an] integral part of women in Rape Crisis. The times were more openly feminist, the women were much more involved in political causes . . . This changed after I left, because people had changed, people became involved in Rape Crisis for differing reasons . . . The biggest changes were more straight women coming onto the collective, the dynamic political feel was declining. Rape Crisis took on a different focus, became more counselling based.[61]

Alice talked about the changes in terms of public image and the types of volunteers coming into work in the agency:

[With this change in image,] women who weren't radical feminists could see themselves becoming involved. Whereas in the past only radical lesbian feminists would become involved in Rape Crisis, because to become involved in Rape Crisis was to be seen as a lesbian. To be accused of being a lesbian was a terrible thing. That is not as common as it was . . . Women volunteers are more conservative now. Therefore the agency becomes more conservative.[62]

The increasing conservatism within the centre was highlighted by various women who had been collective members during this period. The women interviewed often connected this to three aspects: fewer lesbians involved, less focus on feminism and a decrease in political activism.

Linked with the processes of developing a professional counselling service and the associated formalisation of policies and procedures is a shift to emphasising a more conservative image. What seems to come through is the way in which this shift involved asserting hegemonic constructions of heterosexuality as a part of gaining credibility and acceptance out in the community. In effect, the focus on developing a professional counselling service over this period had consequences in terms of shift to a much more individual-oriented service and an emphasis on credibility and acceptance by funders and institutions such as the police and local city council.

1991: A modified collective structure

The processes of formalisation outlined above indicates the multiple ways in which feminist collective ideals and practices within the organisation were undermined and challenged. However, the process of formalisation and consequent depoliticisation was not as complete as the above discussion might suggest. It will now be argued that the processes of change in the organisation were much more complex and uneven.

In 1991 the collective made a list identifying the gains they experienced as a result of belonging to the collective. It demonstrates a similarity in themes found in the 1982 list of 'why are we here?' discussed earlier in this paper. It indicates how notions of unity and commonality between women, along with attention to difference/diversity, remain a part of the ethos of the collective. The gains and frustrations experienced in being a part of the Rape Crisis collective were extensive (See Table One opposite).

The key changes reflected in 1991 were the increased complexity contained in the suggested gains. The list draws attention to an attempt to bring together the values associated with feminist collectivity and a focus on developing a professional counselling service. For example, the focus on professionalism, stability, increased credibility and operating like a business were listed as gains, while the balance sheet also emphasises friendship, love, change, being pro-women and respecting diversity. It is in the list of frustrations that attention is drawn to the tensions generated by the gains. The list of frustrations highlights the marginality of the group and the pressures on the collective to become more like a traditional bureaucracy. What the collective continued to reiterate in these lists was a desire to bring feminist collectivity and a professional social service focus together. Not mentioned in this list is a commitment to equality between all collective members, paid and unpaid. This was a central part of the constitution and was attempted through practices like consensus decision-making and the participation of all paid and unpaid members.

It cannot be denied that the increasing formalisation of policies and procedures in the collective resulted in a more conservative, modified collective structure and practice than that envisaged by its founders. Yet it also maintained a commitment to equality, unity and diversity, that was at once problematic and radical. As will be explored in Part Two, each of these commitments is potentially both

Table One: Lists of Gains and Frustrations in Rape Crisis, 1991.[63]

Gains		Frustrations
Friendship/love	Legitimate	National structure
Personal growth	Professionalism	Wages and conditions
Empowerment	Maturity	Bureaucracy versus philosophy
Support	Operating like a business	Resources/lack of funding
Respect for all women	Stability of the centre	Enormity of sexual abuse issue
Positive affirmation of women	Supportive and structured environment	Women's organisation in a man's world
Pro-women	Increased credibility	Being invisible over the issue of abuse
Sense of belonging	Scope to grow	Feeling powerless
Common philosophy	Monitoring and nurturing	Living within the system
All women	We make a difference	Lack of energy and time
Diverse	Networking	ACC system
Sense of humour/fun	Awareness of lesbian women	Cutbacks in order to service clients and centre
Pro-active base	Honest	Lack of validation
We survive, we thrive		

liberatory and oppressive. These tensions are central to the ambivalences and confusion that abounds around feminist collective practices.

Part Two: Conflicts in Feminist Collective Organising – An Unstable Achievement

It would seem that key developments in the provision of professional counselling services by the centre involved an almost inevitable progression from counter-institution to mainstream institution. Yet the herstory of this collective suggests a much more complex

shifting interrelationship between bureaucratisation and collectivity. The group worked to develop a professional counselling service while still retaining some of the key feminist collective values. It was the commitment to equality, unity and diversity between women that was central.

The organisation retained this commitment throughout its herstory. It also maintained a commitment to working as a collective. This involved an attempt at maintaining participatory democratic practices within the organisation through the participation of all members of the organisation in consensus decision-making. It remained a woman-only organisation. The focus was on women empowering women and reiterated a form of identity politics which emphasised a commonality and understanding based on women's common oppression. Training of new members retained a critique of racism, colonisation, homophobia and heterosexism. The training involved a process of consciousness raising about not only women's oppression, but also an awareness of inequalities and discrimination in relation to sexuality, class and ethnicity. Class was discussed much less than ethnicity and sexuality. The collective also maintained a commitment to acknowledging, respecting and attending to differences primarily in relation to sexuality and ethnicity, with a particular focus on establishing a bicultural relationship between Maori and Pakeha women. These ideals and practices remained important aspects of the organisation. They were perceived to embody the organisation's commitments to equality, unity and diversity between women.

Kathy Ferguson has drawn attention to the way in which the feminist philosophy central in the development of the feminist collective was a subject-centred discourse that privileged the female speaking subject in opposition to the male speaking subject dominant within patriarchy.[64] These remained central in collective members' discussions about the vision of the organisation. Trina, who was involved from 1987 to 1993, emphasised the importance of:

> believing in women, putting energy into women, politicising. One thing I think is realising that what women say is really important. Women have their own experiences and they actually need to be given understanding and sensitivity. They need support.[65]

Alice, who was involved in the late 1980s and early 1990s, emphasised that the organisation was about: 'women working for women,

women working for equality . . . coming from a grass roots level, there is a need for a sense of empathy'.[66] Within discussions about feminist collective organising in the collective, a key theme involved acknowledging and attending to identity differences between women. It was common in the interviews to also reiterate the need to recognise differences when talking about feminism in the organisation. Trina and Wendy both highlighted this:

> I think the other thing too is that Rape Crisis as an organisation recognises the importance of oppression that women have in our society and that's class and race.[67] There are differences amongst women. It is about recognising differences among women.[68]

A commitment to unity and difference/diversity remained a central part of constituting the organisation's philosophy and radical potential. Yet, in spite of this, the herstory of the collective suggests that these ideals were rarely translated into effective practice. Unity between women appears to be no more than what Iris Young has identified as an oppressive fiction.[69] Conflict was rife in the first five years of the organisation. Inequalities in influence remained an ongoing issue. The collective's attempts to develop a bicultural relationship with a Maori women's group resulted in a reassertion of Pakeha feminist collective values. The place of lesbians became more muted. Hierarchies became more prominent. Collective commitments to creating unity and equality between women, challenging inequality and attending to diversity between women have been very problematic.

Conflicts in the collective have usually been perceived by its members to be the result of one or more of the following: poor processes; lack of faith in collective practices; inadequacy of the women involved; inadequate understandings of collective philosophies; personality conflicts, and having women on the collective who were either too needy or power/control freaks. Such issues focus attention on the individual as the problem. Often, when there was conflict in the collective, deficiencies in individual's motives, abilities and commitments were blamed. Certainly, these were issues within the collective, but as Riger has highlighted in her discussion on collective conflicts, 'Individual differences are highly visible, whereas the shaping power of organisational arrangements is less transparent.'[70]

Central to these collective organisational arrangements is an un-

critical adoption of an oppositional binary framework through which commitments to equality, unity and diversity have been constituted and practised. They come to be constructed within a framework that creates issues for maintaining a radical and plural democratic practice within the collective. It is this binary framework which remains a part of the organisation's ideology, irrespective of the shifts towards formalisation of policies and procedures and the adoption of bureaucratic practices.

What often occurs in feminist collectives is a tendency to construct these commitments in terms of a dichotomy between collectivity and bureaucracy.[71] Bureaucracies are constructed as masculine and dominating, based on hierarchy, individualism and alienation; while collectives are constructed as feminine and humanising, based on equality, co-operation and unity:

Feminist collectives were based on	*Bureaucracies were based on*
• Hierarchical structures	• Non-hierarchical structures
• Unequal relations	• Egalitarian relations
• Nurturing communities	• Individualism
• Consensus decision-making	• Decision-making imposed by a few
• Co-operative	• Competition
• Women-centred values	• Male domination
• Radical views	• Mainstream values
Characterised as feminine and empowering for women	*Characterised as masculine/ Patriarchal and oppressive/ disempowering for women*[72]

As Joan Cassell has explored, the values promoted by women's liberation are always contrasted with their opposites, or the ways men do things:

> [T]he belief that men represent hierarchy while women represent a 'community or even communion of equal individuals' is central to women's liberation. I believe that this concept of communion, which has been called *communitas*, underlies and organises women's liberation values'.[73]

'*Communitas*' refers to one side of a set of paired opposites, that of 'egalitarianism as opposed to hierarchy . . . social marginality as opposed to a system of statuses'.[74] Cassell argued further that in many feminist groups, 'Women represent communitas, while men repre-

sent power and hierarchy.' What is central is the way in which many of the 'characteristics traditionally ascribed to women in our society resemble the attributes of communitas'.[75]

The groups attempted to challenge the masculine/feminine dualism contained within this dichotomy. Feminist collectives were attempting to do this by reversing the dualism and positively valuing those characteristics of caring, co-operation and equality within the organisation. In this process they attempt to challenge the public and private dualism, by drawing what has been characterised as the personal or the private into the public arena of the collective. As Cassell has suggested:

> The concept of 'the women's way' offers an emblem of the nature of women, the way they behave (or should behave), and a dream of a new joyful and liberated society where everyone will be like this. The symbolic attributes provide a group identity, a boundary differentiating 'us' from 'them,' women from men, feminists from nonfeminists.[76]

The collective did attempt to think through issues of difference between women. But these differences were constructed in terms of binary oppositions: men–women; Pakeha–Maori; and heterosexual–lesbian. Rarely were other kinds of differences articulated. Although references to respecting differences is evident in the collective's reflections on what being a part of a feminist collective is all about, rarely was this respect successfully demonstrated by practices in the long term. Developing an inclusive politics that emphasised unity while also acknowledging identity differences between women was often in tension with an emphasis on commonality and sisterhood among women. This commonality tended to be based on a focus of women's common oppression and experience of violence from men. Perhaps the central difference that is reiterated as fundamental within the Rape Crisis collective is women's difference as a group from men's difference as a group. It is this focus that seems to underlie many of the conflicts and is central to constructions of unity between women within the collective.

Often both groups were constructed as stable coherent categories in opposition to one another.[77] This is reflected in a 1982 paper on men's responsibility for rape written together by the local men's group and the Rape Crisis collective. In it the focus is on understanding the ways in which all men as a category benefit from rape, while

all women as a category suffer. '*Rape* is the ultimate symptom of patriarchy (men controlling women) and also a tool of patriarchy, which helps keep men in control of women through fear.'[78] It is in this process that differences between women become sacrificed. What tended to occur was that women's differences were acknowledged, but then the focus shifted to that which can be perceived to be common across those differences. As Ferguson has highlighted:

> [T]he significance of particular locations is necessarily elided through [this] interpretative gesture, which assumes a common 'woman space' that can serve as a foundational space for rendering lucid the experiences of those who inhabit it.[79]

It was through this discursive strategy that the mostly Pakeha middle-class feminist collective came to reassert a unity based on sisterhood between women. Central to this process was the way in which the collective emphasised the creation of a woman-only space and organisation in which women could be empowered without being dominated by men. There was an emphasis on friendship, nurturing and understanding between women as a source of connection in the collective. In effect, the feminist collective attempted to:

> [C]onstruct a political economy of gender, one that builds from women's experiences of eros, community, and power. . . . It combines a valorisation of the distinct practices in women's lives under patriarchy with a critique of partriarchy's modes of domination.[80]

This ideal of women's community in the feminist collective was set in opposition to the individualism associated with patriarchal bureaucratic society.

Yet, as Young argued, it is this dichotomy which creates problems for feminist collective organising.[81] Merely reversing the valuations contained within the dichotomy does not constitute a genuine alternative to capitalistic, patriarchal and bureaucratic society. Unity between women within this reversal generates a hierarchical opposition based on exclusion which results in a politics of sameness. Young contended that this was because the distinction between community and individualism creates a dialectic in which each is the condition of the other. Community and individualism have a common logic underlying their opposition to each other. Each entails a denial of difference and desire to bring multiplicity and heterogene-

ity into unity, but in opposing ways.[82] Both deny difference. The individualism of liberalism denies difference by 'positing the self as a solid self sufficient unity, not defined by or in need of anything or anyone other than itself, its formalistic ethic of rights denies difference by leveling all such separated individuals under a common measure of rights'.[83] In contrast, the ideal of community denies difference by focusing on fusion of subjects rather than separation as the social ideal. In effect:

> [Conceiving] the social subject as a relation of unity composed by identification and symmetry among individuals within a totality . . . This represents an urge to see persons in unity with each other in a shared whole.[84]

As Young has delineated in her discussion about feminist community, this formulation has involved the unification of particular persons through a sharing of subjectivities.[85] This is because it assumes a transparency of subjects to one another. It expresses a desire for mutual understanding and reciprocity. It also assumes that one can understand oneself and express that knowledge accurately and unambiguously to others. It assumes the existence of the stable, unambiguous, unitary self. It denies difference in the sense of the basic asymmetry of subjects. This has had implications for feminist groups' attempts to work with differences among women. As Young has stated:

> Many feminist groups, for example have sought to foster relations of equality and reciprocity of understanding in such a way that disagreement, difference and deviation have been interpreted as a breech of sisterhood, the destruction of personal relatedness and community. There has often been strong pressure within women's groups for members to share the same understanding of the world, the same lifestyle, in addition to . . . rotating leadership. Such pressure has often led to group and movement homogeneity.[86]

Differences were a problem for the collective. Its herstory indicates how attempts to construct unity created problems for the expression of differences between women. This was particularly evident in two ways: the voicing of dissent within the collective, and working with cultural diversity. Both forms of difference were sources of tension and conflict, that challenged the collective's commitment to equality and diversity. Central to both was a problematic construc-

tion of unity constituted through the dichotomy discussed earlier. Unity in this process came to reiterate homogeneity and an oppressive politics of sameness between women.

As one volunteer collective member who was involved from 1987 to 1989 suggested, dissent and difference were unrepresentable within the collective process. About her participation in the collective, Glenda remembered:

> Frustration, not feeling like I was being effective or that I had learnt a lot. It was really hard learning. I didn't ever feel very confident. It was an odd thing because it felt like something that was empowering for the women who were involved, that was the whole focus of it. But I felt like it was the opposite most of the time . . . Overall, the organisation and the way it was run was not very empowering for the collective members involved. The structure of the organisation was a problem, because it assumed that we were all going to think pretty much alike and nobody can.[87]

This collective member found being an active participant within the collective very difficult. She found the process disempowering, and reported that it was especially difficult to challenge those who held informal power within the collective. This collective member went on to suggest that it was difficult to voice dissent especially if you were not part of the informal elite within the collective:

> I remember sitting in a collective meeting and just shaking, I was so nervous, just wanting to say how I was feeling about something and not having the confidence or feeling that I would be heard or that it would be accepted. At the time I was naive. I thought this was a new way of doing things and I thought, of course it is hard, of course it is difficult, because I am not used to this way of doing things. We are not working in a traditional masculine structure. I was struggling with it because I was not used to . . . [working a feminist collective way]. But of course, in the end I knew that that wasn't the reason at all. The reason has been a part of our culture for a long time, when you challenge the power, that's when you are out.[88]

What is interesting to note here is the way in which the opposition between masculine patriarchal ways of working and feminist collectivism breaks down when questions of power arise. This collective member's experience challenged constructions of equality between women in the collective. As Sirianni has written:

Lack of formal structure made some feel even more inadequate and disempowered, because it appeared that all could speak and be listened to equally . . . In many cases, egalitarian styles bred conformity and stifled dissent by branding it 'unsisterly' to challenge another woman's ideas.[89]

Glenda's understanding of collective relationships connected the issues to the development of informal power within the collective and the way in which collective relationships remain embedded in the dominant social order. The relationship between paid workers and volunteers on the collective could be very ambiguous and tense. The discussion indicates the ways in which internal democratic practices emphasising equality of influence and participation between women on the collective could be problematic and oppressive of differences.

Another area of difference that was problematic was the attempt to respect identity differences within the feminist collective arena. As already mentioned, there was a focus on ensuring that all collective members had a knowledge of racism, sexism, heterosexism and homophobia through the internal Rape Crisis training. An important aspect of this was a commitment to challenging oppressive practices out in the community. Like many other feminist collectives in the 1980s in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the group attempted to attend to inequalities between women in relation to sexuality, ethnicity and class.[90] As Wendy Larner has identified, most feminist strategies in the 1980s that attempted to address inequalities between women involved a focus on Maori and Pakeha differences.[91] Most groups attempted, often inadequately or problematically, to address racism and inequalities between Maori and Pakeha women primarily through the development of separate or parallel groups.

The Rape Crisis collective's experience suggests some of the ways in which Pakeha feminist constructions of unity between women become a source of tension within feminist collective processes. However, the collective was able to acknowledge both the racism and the way in which collective was racialised through practices that worked to maintain the collective as a 'white' space structured by Pakeha values and norms. But they were unable to maintain a working relationship between the two groups in the same building. The Maori women's focus on involving whanau threatened this group's construc-

tion of unity between women based on the exclusion of men. This difference was perceived by many women on the Rape Crisis collective to be an irreconcilable difference. In this way, the feminist goal of unity between women reasserted a feminist politics of sameness that resulted in the exclusion of Maori women.

What remains central throughout all of these phases of collective development and the various conflicts is that the commitment to unity posed significant issues for the collective's simultaneous commitment to equality and diversity. The emphasis on unity between women was nearly always disrupted by a return to conflicts about differences between women and issues of power. As the above description of the key developments and changes in the Rape Crisis group indicate, feminist ideals of the early 1980s in the Rape Crisis movement remain important throughout the herstory of the organisation. Like many other collectives set up in this period, they began with a desire for unity among women and a preference for a form of collectivism which linked feminist ideals of egalitarian organising, a feminist ethic of care, personal development and an emphasis on radical social change. But their commitment to equality, unity and diversity was often undermined through conflicts.

These commitments tend to disrupt what is seen to be an often inevitable progression to developing a mainstream bureaucratic service because they draw attention to equality, empowerment and difference, as well as highlighting issues of marginalisation and inequality of women within the dominant social order. This creates potential spaces for dialogue and for challenging inequality and marginalisation. But this potential was often unrealised, in part due to the tensions that exist within feminist collective organising.

In the attempt to establish a prefigurative community based on feminist collective principles, the collective perhaps inevitably experienced conflicts, tensions and ambiguities as the organisation developed. What the conflicts highlight is the way in which feminist collectivity centred around ideals of community, togetherness and sharing between women. Differences and conflicts between collective members threatened group unity in the attempts to construct a collective 'we'. The collective 'we' could not deal with too much disparity.[92] Consequently, ideological differences and differences in relation to influence on the collective emerged as sources of conflict.

The attempt to develop an ideal feminist collective organisation

was continually confronted by the paradoxes within its practices:

> A feminist theory of participation is confronted with its own set of perhaps irreducible paradoxes and permanent tensions. Illusions of the singular ideal of fully egalitarian, diffuse, nuturant, and transparent relations are unable to sustain themselves, even as they often prove educative and provide resources for further democratisation. Managing commonality and difference is an unstable achievement open to pragmatic solutions that themselves generate new conflicts and problems.[93]

Like Sirianni's exploration of participatory feminist organising, this examination of one Rape Crisis collective demonstrates how these organisations remain an important place to explore feminist attempts to develop participatory democratic communities. As the discussion has shown, even as the organisation became much more mainstream, the commitment to equality, unity and diversity within feminist collective practice remained central. Yet equally important were the ways in which these attempts were continually challenged and undermined by the problematic assumptions contained within those commitments. Conflict remained a central aspect of feminist collective organising. The herstory of this collective clearly demonstrates the ways in which feminist collective organising remains an unstable but valuable site of feminist organising for social change.

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NOTES

[1]   I would like to thank the collective and all the ex-collective members interviewed for this study for their support for this project. Special thanks go to Wendy Marsters and Inge Wilhelm, who contributed much to this herstory project, and to Phyllis Herda, Judith Pringle and the anonymous reader for their support in developing this paper.

[2]   Carmen Sirianni, 'Learning Pluralism: Democracy and Diversity in

Feminist Organisations', in J.W. Chapman and I. Shapiro (eds), *Democratic Community Nomos XXXV* (New York University Press, New York, 1993) p. 284.

3   This paper draws on reports, letters and collective meeting minutes kept by the collective during the 1980s and early 1990s. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were undertaken with sixteen women who were involved in the collective during this period in order to further explore and expand on the reports, letters and minutes. Names of the women interviewed have been changed and pseudonyms were given to ensure confidentiality. Some of the dates have been changed and explicit references in reports and newspaper clippings to the collective have also been deleted in order to maintain the collective's anonymity.

4   For example, Las Ahrens, 'Battered Women's Refuges', in K.Winston and M.J. Bane (eds), *Gender and Public Policy* (Westview Press, Boulder, 1993); Linda Briskin, 'Feminist Practice: A New Approach to Evaluating Feminist Strategy', in J.D. Wine and J.L. Ristock (eds), *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada* (James Lorimer and Company, Toronto, 1991) pp. 24-40; Shulamit Reinharz, 'Alternative Settings and Social Change', in K. Heller (et al.) (eds), *Psychology and Community Change: Challenges of the Future (2nd Edition)* (Homewood, Illinois, 1984); Stephanie Riger, 'Challenges of Success: Stages of Growth in Feminist Organisations', *Feminist Studies* 20:2 (1994) pp. 275-300; Noelie Maria Rodriguez, 'Transcending Bureaucracy: Feminist Politics at a Shelter for Battered Women', *Gender and Society* 2: 2 (1988) pp. 214-227 and Wharton, Carol S, 'Establishing Shelters for Battered Women: Local Manifestations of a Social Movement', *Qualitative Sociology* 10:2 (1987) pp. 146-163.

5   Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organising for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1988); Kathy Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1984).

6   Reinharz, p. 312.

7   Riger also discussed a fourth stage called the Elaboration Stage. However, this stage has not been a part of the internal development of the local Rape Crisis group. Riger suggests that few feminist collective organisations reach this stage. However, some of the

coalitions of feminist collective groups like the national collectives of Rape Crisis and Refuge have some characteristics of these elaborated structures. These coalitions are often involved in distributing funds to local collectives. The coalition often takes on the political activity for member collectives, enabling a more influential powerful voice in state politics in relation to law change and funding of Centres (Riger, pp. 290-291).

8   ibid., p. 279.
9   ibid., p. 280.
10   ibid., p. 280.
11   Bronwyn Hayward, 'Participatory Democracy: Questions Raised by Feminist Involvement with Practice and Theory', *Political Science,* 45:1 (1993) pp. 27-39; Jane Mansbridge, 'Feminism and Democratic Community', in J.W. Chapman and I. Shapiro (eds), *Democratic Community Nomos XXXV* (New York University Press, New York, 1993); Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991); Anne Phillips, *Democracy and Difference* (Polity Press, Cambridge 1993); Sirianni, 1993.
12   Hayward, p. 29.
13   Joan Cassell, *A Group Called Women: Sisterhood and Symbolism in the Feminist Movement* (Prospect Waveland Press, Heights, Illinois, 1977).
14   Joyce Rothschild-Whitt, 'The Collectivist Organisation: An Alternative to Rational Bureaucratic Models, *American Sociological Review,* 44 (August 1979) p. 511.
15   Rothschild-Whitt, p. 511.
16   Collective Report, 1982 (no month or week given).
17   Interview, Lisa, November 1996.
18   Reported in local newspaper; citation omitted to ensure anonymity.
19   Interview, Susan, April 1996.
20   Sarah Oerton, 'Sexualising the Organisation, Lesbianising the Women: Gender, Sexuality and "Flat" Organisations', *Gender, Work and Organisation,* 3:1 (1996) p. 26.
21   Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1975).
22   Unpublished interview transcript, Wendy and Stephanie, 1988, found in collective's records; interviewer unknown.
23   Interview, Leonie, February 1995.

24   Raewyn Dalziel, 'Political Organisations', in Anne Else (ed), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations In New Zealand, Nga Ropu Wahine o te Motu* (Daphne Brasell Associates Press, Wellington, 1993) p. 64.

25   Personal communication, Lesley, July 1997.

26   Riger, p. 281.

27   ibid.

28   Interviews: Leonie, February 1995; Lisa, November 1996; and Sally, November 1996.

29   Interviews: Janice, November 1994; Leonie, February 1995; and Lisa, November 1996.

30   Interview, Lisa, November 1996.

31   Minute Book, 13 December 1982.

32   Interviews: Janice, November 1994; Leonie, February 1995; Lisa, November 1996; and Sally, November 1996.

33   Reinharz, p. 310.

34   Interview, Sally, November 1996.

35   Janice Ristock, 'Feminist Collectives: The Struggles and Contradictions in our Quest for a Uniquely Feminist Structure', in J.D. Wine and J.L. Ristock (eds), *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada* (James Lorimer and Company, Toronto, 1991) p. 46.

36   Sirianni, p. 292.

37   Collective Records: Letter of Resignation, 9 June 1983.

38   Amy Fried, 'It's Hard to Change What We Want to Change: Rape Crisis Centres as Organizations', *Gender and Society* 8:4 (1994) p. 562-583; Christine O'Sullivan, 'Consciousness, Status and Power', in *Women and Social Change: A Reader* (Deakin University, Victoria, 1985) pp. 146-149; Clare Reinelt, 'Moving onto the Terrain of the State: The Battered Women's Movement and the Politics of Engagement', in M.M. Ferree and P.Y. Martin (eds), *Feminist Organisations, Harvest of the New Women's Movement* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1995) pp. 84-104.

39   Fried, p. 577.

40   ibid., p. 579.

41   Riger, 1994, p. 281.

42   There were real difficulties finding out about the collective from 1985 to mid 1986, as there appear to have been no minutes recorded from May 1985 to July 1986, and it was difficult to find women involved in the collective during this period. One of the women

involved during this time did not want to talk about the collective and could only suggest that it had been a terrible time. Three women interviewed had short periods of involvement on the crisis lines during 1985.

43   Certain references in the Minute Book point to this issue (30 April 1985 and 7 May 1985). Liz also (interview, February 1995) discussed these issues.

44   Interview, Janice, November 1994. Also, there are some rather oblique references to these sorts of conflicts in the Minute Book (5 February 1985; 5 March 1985; 23 April 1985), also a letter about a collective member's resignation suggests this (dated 7 October 1985).

45   Interview, Janice, November 1994.

46   Jo Freeman, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 17 (1972) pp. 151-166.

47   Riger, p. 281.

48   Collective Records: Report minuting a meeting between the two collectives (dated 27 August 1985).

49   Nancy A. Matthews, 'Surmounting a Legacy: The Expansion of Racial Diversity in a Local Anti-Rape Movement', *Gender and Society* 3:4 (1989) pp. 518-532; Jan Tikka Wilson, 'Feminism and Institutionalised Racism: Inclusion and Exclusion at an Australian Feminist Refuge', *Feminist Review,* 52 (Spring 1996) p. 1-26.

50   Wilson, pp. 1-26.

51   This process of formalisation is not unique to feminist collective organisations.

52   Riger, p. 283.

53   See Rothschild-Whitt for a comparison of collectives versus bureaucracies.

54   Rienharz.

55   After 1985, only two employees were employed through the Department of Labour employment schemes.

56   Riger, p. 286-287.

57   Interview, Stephanie, November 1995.

58   Ahrens, 1993; Helen Brown, *Women Organising* (Routledge, London, 1992); Kathleen P. Ianello, *Decisions Without Hierarchy: Feminist Interventions in Organisation Theory and Practice* (Routledge, London, 1992).

59   Interview, Trina, February 1995.

60   Interview, Teresa and Mary, 1996.

61   Interview, Joan, March 1996.

62   Interview, Alice, 1996.
63   Minute Book, 1991.
64   Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993) p. 69.
65   Interview, Trina, February 1995.
66   Interview, Alice, June 1995.
67   Interview, Trina, February 1995.
68   Interview, Stephanie, November 1995.
69   Iris Young, 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference', in Penny A. Weiss & Marilyn Friedman (eds), *Feminism and Community* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1995) p. 237.
70   Riger, p. 295.
71   ibid., p. 288.
72   Cassell, 1977 and Ferguson, 1984.
73   Cassell, p. 151; author's emphasis.
74   ibid., p. 152.
75   ibid., p. 157.
76   ibid., p. 168.
77   Ferguson, pp. 76, 84.
78   Rape Crisis Centre/Men's Group, 1982, their emphasis.
79   Ferguson, p. 77.
80   ibid., p. 78, drawing on the work of Hartstock.
81   Young, 1995.
82   ibid., p. 235.
83   ibid., p. 239.
84   ibid., p. 239.
85   ibid., p. 240-242.
86   ibid., p. 245.
87   Interview, Glenda, February 1995.
88   Interview, Glenda, February 1995.
89   Sirianni, p. 290.
90   See Deborah Mann, 'Diversity and Similarity of Feminist Organisations: Implications for Gendering Organisational Theory', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1993.
91   Wendy Larner, 'Theorising "Difference" in Aotearoa/New Zealand', *Gender, Place and Culture* 2:2 (1995) pp. 177-190.
92   Mary Holmes, Feminist Collectives 1970 - 1993; unpublished paper, 1994.
93   Sirianni, p. 308-309.

Sister Mabel's Private Diary 1907–1910
Sisterhood, Love and Religious Doubt[1]

MARGARET TENNANT

'I am going to begin a private diary, which I mean to write up faithfully every day, if God spares me & enables me to do so'. Writing in December 1907, 24-year-old Mabel Cartwright continued: 'Many times I have proposed keeping a diary, but now that I have come to another chapter of my life I must really <u>do</u> so'.[2]

The sense of making a new start has been the spur to keeping many a personal diary. Mabel Cartwright had finished a two–year training course at the Presbyterian Church's Women's Training Institute, and was shortly to begin work as deaconess to the South Dunedin Church, in a largely labouring area of Dunedin. But the sense of wanting to confide in a diary was also prompted by her strength of attachment to trainee deaconess Effie (Margaret) Simpson, 'a true upright & noble girl who despises anything which savours of hypocrisy deceit or any other dark quality'.[3] The diary was, in this sense, a celebration of a love relationship. The frequency of entries, every two or three days at first, two or three months and more by its end, parallels the intensity of the relationship and contact between Effie and Mabel. And, as the diary unfolded, it charted Mabel's spiritual struggle, a struggle which was played out against the backdrop of parish gossip and politics, and the challenge of social work amongst a less than responsive clientele.

As Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald point out in their New Zealand anthology of nineteenth-century women's writing, for Christian women faith often involved scrutiny of the soul, and a journal or diary became a place to measure adherence to belief.[4] It was also a place where a woman could explore her identity and actions without fear of outside censorship and recrimination, though in Mabel's case self-recrimination was all too apparent. Mabel, who felt herself so inarticulate in the company of others, gained a voice in her diary. Katie Holmes has suggested that nearly all diaries contain a sense of their readership: 'They are written to someone, even if that person is unknown. The imagined audience could be a friend, child, lover or a later version of the self. The diarist creates her persona for

her imagined audience, shaping, accentuating, defining as she goes'[5]. Mabel's diary may have been a substitute for confidences previously shared on a daily basis with Effie. In Effie's absence, the different elements of Mabel's self were able to engage and seek resolution of the doubts which so often assailed her. The diary contains a good deal of yearning for God's endorsement and comfort, but no direct appeal – God and Jesus are referred to in the third person. It was a private space where Mabel could record her more negative reactions to those for whom she, a servant of the church, was supposed to feel Christian love.

Jane Mabel Cartwright was born at Papakaio in Central Otago in 1883, the daughter of a farming family. Little is known about her early life, but her diary tells of a conversion experience inspired by the sermons of a Middlemarch Presbyterian minister and encouraged by the local school teacher, Evelyn McAdam. McAdam was herself a 'convert' and in 1902 she also became a deaconess and, later, a mentor to younger deaconesses like Mabel.[6] Mabel entered the Presbyterian Women's Training Institute, probably in 1906, finished her training in December 1907, and began work with the South Dunedin Church on the 13th of that month. She remained there until mid 1909, when she was persuaded to move to Wellington to work for St John's Congregation. Obviously unhappy in Wellington, she returned south in 1912, becoming deaconess to Dunedin's First Church. She resigned in 1917 and then trained as a nurse at Wanganui Hospital, gaining state registration in July 1921. By 1923 Mabel was working as a Health Department district nurse in Rawene, a district in the Hokianga with a large Maori population. A midwifery qualification from St Helens Hospital in Auckland followed in 1924. She was later based in Hastings. In 1930, when Mabel was forty-six, she married Walter Greensill, a farmer. They lived near Havelock in the Marlborough Sounds for some years, later moving to Blenheim. Mabel had no children. Widowed in 1956, she returned to Dunedin where she was cared for by a sister until her death in August 1964.[7]

Deaconess, nurse, farmer's wife, widow: this is the barest outline of a life, at least until it came into contact with the historian as predator, anxiously awaiting the diary's deposit in an archive. Mabel Cartwright's diary has survived into the 1990s, initially safeguarded by a niece close enough to Mabel to be protective of her privacy. In 1996 the diary was placed in the Presbyterian Church Archives by

family distantly related through marriage and more personally distanced from Mabel by the passage of time. Publicly available, it is no longer a private diary: instead it is a text around which a life is analysed and reconstructed in the light of 1990s concerns and preconceptions, and for scholarly ends. Some diaries are written for eventual public consumption but this does not seem to be the case here. Historians usually leap upon such private sources with great enthusiasm, hoping to find the unguarded revelation, the personal insight, evidence of feelings and personal interaction. Their intrusion into once-private territory is justified by the knowledge that the diary's creator is long dead, and that he or she did not, after all, destroy this intimate repository of their thoughts and reflections. How else might an otherwise obscure life be made visible? Predator, illuminator or something inbetween: the tensions in the historian's role are sometimes inescapable, always complex. Mabel Cartwright's diary, from one very small part of her eighty-one years, will henceforth define her life to later generations and, like most historical records, it will be reinterpreted by strangers according to the fashions of the day. In directing historical analysis to women's subjectivities and daily lives, the flourishing of women's history in the late twentieth century has given the diary a significance it would not have had at the time its writer died. A Christian historian of religion may read it quite differently from the way that I, a feminist historian and lapsed Methodist, have done, with greater sensitivity to the theological and metaphysical meanings of Mabel's frequently expressed uncertainties. Here the concern is with the notion of 'sisterhood' in a religious context, with the intersection of love and religious devotion in women's lives, and with the social mobilisation of this devotion in the form of church social work during the early twentieth century. Ninety years after Sister Mabel resolved to record her personal diary, its inward contemplation provides a window onto broader social themes.

Sisters in Religion

As a deaconess, Mabel Cartwright was emblematic of a new generation of churchwomen, combining training with womanly caring. She worked for the church on a full-time professional basis, employed by a Presbyterian congregation. Deaconess orders had first been revived in Germany in the 1830s and had subsequently spread within Protestant churches in Europe, North America and, by the 1880s,

Australasia. Protestant churchmen who recognised the dedicated (and economical) resource provided by women religious within the Roman Catholic church, encouraged the appointment of deaconesses to work among the 'unchurched masses' of the industrialising cities.[8] The term 'deaconess' had different meanings according to denomination, but within the evangelical Protestant churches it involved single women or widows who formally dedicated their lives to active service within the church, ideally after a period of practical and theological training. Such women did not typically take lifetime vows of celibacy or live in a community setting after their training. Although in Europe some Lutheran deaconesses retained an attachment to a mother house, within the Presbyterian church in New Zealand deaconesses were responsible to the courts of the church itself. They tended to work in their ones and twos within parishes, Maori and overseas missions, orphanages and other social service settings.

As Patricia Grimshaw has noted, the deaconess movement circumvented female claims for ordination to the ministry by incorporating talented women into the churches in a way that assisted, but did not challenge, male authority.[9] The deaconess performed some parochial functions, but hers was not the full ministry of sacrament and word – she did not administer communion and, except in very restricted circumstances, did not preach, marry or baptise. The motto of the Presbyterian deaconess order translated as 'By Love Serve' and practical service was the essence of the deaconess role, an ideal reinforced by the two years' of intensive training and prayer. In emphasising service, deaconesses claimed direct descent from the diaconate of the early Christian church, particularly such women as Phoebe and Tabitha who are mentioned in the gospels as exercising an active ministry of compassion and service. The deaconesses saw themselves not only as part of an international evangelical sisterhood in their own age, but as being links in a chain of sisterhood that stretched back nearly 2000 years.

At the same time, Mabel was one of the church's modern 'trained woman workers', supposedly equipped to spread the Christian word in an increasingly secular age. At the time she finished her training the Dunedin-based Presbyterian Women's Training Institute was four years old and had seven students in residence. Lectures covered the English Bible, theology, scriptures, missionary work, English literature and elocution. Medical lectures were given by a number of local

doctors, including Emily Siedeberg, while the founder of the Presbyterian Social Service Association, the Reverend Edward Axelsen, arranged for practical experience in home visiting under the direction of existing city deaconesses.[10] There was already some debate about the balance between theory and practice in the course, but Mabel's own assessment of her training was that its most outstanding benefit came from an opportunity to study 'in class & in private, the Word of God'. Each day, she noted, there was half an hour of 'family prayer' morning and evening, supplemented by private prayer and meditation, which she often shared with her room-mate, Effie.[11] Given Mabel's subsequent doubts about her ability to communicate with parishioners and the poor, her practical training may well have been deficient, but there is no doubt that she continued to find immense consolation in prayer and religious discussion with her friend Effie, who was in the year behind her at the institute.

The institute had something of a boarding school atmosphere, bounded by rules and routine. It was governed by Mrs Jeanetta Blackie, whose main qualification for the task was that she was the widow of a Presbyterian minister with two young daughters to support, and that she had as well an intense interest in missionary work. Mabel noted that Mrs Blackie had been very kind to her, though she was less generous in her judgement of Mrs Blackie: 'I have often been vexed at her want of judgement, & moral courage . . . Some of the girls have not cared for her at all, & many have wondered if she were quite suitable for the position.'[12] She also hinted at other tensions within the institute, wishing that she herself had been 'kinder & more loving' to the other girls there.[13] A later trainee was to describe the intense comradeship of her institute years, concluding: 'We were part of a sisterhood and supported one another.'[14] But given the fact that the institute attracted women from a variety of social backgrounds and educational attainment, with only a religious calling in common, it seems that sisterly feelings were occasionally strained. The institute nonetheless gave young women such as Mabel experience of living with others beyond their families, and of living by new and sometimes different rules.

On graduation the deaconesses had a strong sense of corporate identity, of becoming part of a formal sisterhood, and this was signified by the support of other deaconesses during their ordination into service. Mabel had Sister Evelyn McAdam and Sister Mary McQueen,

two of the more established Dunedin deaconesses, with her during the service, as well as Effie Simpson, Mrs Blackie, and a number of children from the local Presbyterian orphanage.[15] When she was later inducted into her work in the South Dunedin church, the other sisters also accompanied her and supported her, effectively introducing her to members of the congregation among whom she would work. The sisters subsequently socialised together on many occasions. The backing given by experienced sisters to those entering into new ventures was a feature of the deaconess orders throughout their history, and when Mabel moved to a new position in Wellington in 1909, Sisters Evelyn and Mary travelled with her to give support at another induction service and see her settled in.[16] Mabel felt acutely lonely when working on her own in Wellington without close contact and prayer with other deaconesses, even though she had often expressed a sense of inferiority to the more experienced sisters in Dunedin. 'Hard to work in Wellington,' she wrote: 'Need to be constantly in prayer for myself in case I grow careless about the real work of the Lord Jesus. Lack of the prayer atmosphere.'[17] As a single woman Mabel normally boarded with a family in her church community, though she made little comment on this in her diary. The lack of a conventual or community life made it difficult for more isolated deaconesses to sustain the sense of sisterhood, despite the later formation of deaconess associations and annual conferences.

Work and Service

Mabel Cartwright's diary gives the texture of a single woman's daily work within a church community. Most deaconess narratives are of the laudatory 'Day in the Life of a Deaconess' variety, intended to elicit financial aid for the sisters' work, or are the published autobiographies of long-serving and apparently successful deaconesses – some of them clearly indomitable characters, less prone than Mabel to introspection. Mabel's diary gives much more a flavour of struggle, self-doubt and, more than occasionally, dislike for the people she worked among. Social dissonance and a sense of personal inadequacy permeate her account.

As a parish deaconess in a working class area, Mabel engaged in parochial visiting and social work, especially among those on the peripheries of the Presbyterian church. She was involved in such fund-raising activities as the city's 'Hospital Saturday' collection, conducted

Sunday School and a young women's bible class, distributed second-hand clothing, helped organise bazaar workers, collected the old-age pension for some parishioners and accompanied orphanage children on outings. Mabel was not the first deaconess to have worked in South Dunedin, but the position was still a relatively new one and the status of deaconesses was to remain very ambiguous within the Presbyterian church. She had to prove herself and prove the value of the position in a context where women's work had more generally been voluntary and unofficial. To begin with, Mabel went on home visits with an elder of the congregation – even the 'trained woman worker' needed to be inducted into the work by a layman. He set a cracking pace, for she records visiting sixteen workmen's homes on her first afternoon and twenty-six the following day.[18] Similar numbers were chalked up in later visits. It was not an inspiring start – Mabel noted that the working class people whose homes she visited 'looked rather sceptically at me', while she, for her part, found them 'rather monotonous', and the 'front rooms' of their little homes so oppressively stuffy that she could hardly breathe.[19] Boredom and monotony provided a constant refrain throughout her narrative – there is little indication that Mabel's sense of sisterhood extended to her working-class parishioners.

It soon became clear to Mabel that the church community was a hive of gossip, division and rivalries, and that she lacked the social skills to negotiate its complexities. The different elders tried to warn her against the others: 'In the evening I visited Mr M., who told me a lot about the different members of the church & classes', she wrote in her third week. 'There appears to be hard work ahead of me in the way of healing divisions and differences. And I am so helpless in this work . . . . I do wish I could converse better, & know just what to say to help those in difficulties'.[20] Another elder warned her, however, that Mr M. was 'all talk' and that a third elder '[required] more grace not to be so narrow-minded'. Mabel described Mr M. 'uncouth & blunt as ever' on a later occasion.[21] The women church members were similarly difficult, and attempted to draw the deaconess into their likes and dislikes. One 'did not like Sister Mildred [Mabel's predecessor]' and 'does not like rich folk'. Another was an 'old haughty wealthy & cross person', who did not ask Mabel in because she thought she was collecting money. Yet another, also identified as rich, was 'very supercilious too but not so to me, esp when she thought

I did not want money'. In this case Mabel felt too intimidated to engage the woman in discussion of spiritual matters, but consoled herself that she would 'pray specially for her'.[22] Within a few weeks the gossip within the congregation was beginning to get Mabel down, and she started to wonder if she would not have done better to join an overseas mission:

> Sometimes I feel as if I cannot really be a Christian. Sometimes I wonder if my worry keeps me back. I think at times I might have made a mistake coming here, yet I did want only God's will. . . . when I think of gossipers here I wish I had gone right away to China, esp[ecially] as I seem to do so little for the good of home people (my people) & it is only for their sakes that I considered myself guided to stay at home. I do not rest in God & cast my cases upon Him as I sh[ou]d.[23]

The reference to 'my people' is significant, for Mabel initially situated herself against a foreign 'other', rejecting the Presbyterian mission in China or Maori mission work to work with the unchurched of her own race. However, this evangelical Christian soon found that 'otherness' was closer at hand. Among poorer church members, or those only marginally attached to the church, she found scepticism and over-familiarity. 'Most of the folk are so self-confident here, & have a familiar way wh[ich] annoys me at times, & shows me how much of the "old man" is within', she complained after one series of visits.[24] She feared imposition from those seeking help from the congregation's poor fund, thinking, probably rightly, that they were more interested in financial aid than spiritual guidance, and that they were manipulating her. They, for their part, may have seen her as something of a snoop, sitting in judgement on their homes and morality. As a March 1908 entry notes:

> Went to Mrs P. & found her in. Says she would like coal next month & would like some blouses. Appeared to have had beer. Told her I could smell it but she said it was stewed rabbit I c[oul]d smell. Did not contradict her but knew she had been drinking. She talks glibly of religious matters. Has taken an old man into her two roomed house, [which] practically means they are living together.[25]

Towards the end of the diary an entry made when Mabel was deaconess at St John's in Wellington suggests that she felt depressed and personally contaminated by much of the social work she engaged

in: 'One has to listen to so much evil, & to know so much evil; & yet God means us to be so perfectly pure in thought & imagination even in the midst of it all. . . . One longs to be more like Jesus in his disposition & love; but oh one is constantly reminded of one's earthy connection & proneness to evil'[26]. It is a reminder of the ambivalences surrounding social work, past and present, especially where material aid was seen as an adjunct of moral and spiritual reform.[27]

At this time (November 1909) Mabel had a strong sense of being alone without the support of her other deaconess allies, and of failing to live up to the expectations of the congregation employing her. An undated entry in the diary, probably from around June 1909, notes that she had received an invitation from prominent Presbyterian minister Dr James Gibb to work as a deaconess at St John's. There were attractions in such a move, as Mabel had earlier expressed a wish to work in an area where deaconesses were 'quite new' so that she would not be constantly compared with more experienced and, she feared, more impressive deaconesses.[28] But the invitation put her into a torment of indecision and doubt, feeling that she did not want to go, but that maybe it was God's will for her to transfer to a more self-sacrificing situation. She hoped that the South Dunedin elders would ask her to remain, but when two said she was free to go she resigned. The congregation then belatedly asked Mabel to reconsider, but she had already accepted Wellington and reconciled herself to what she saw as God's will: 'This coming earlier in the proceed[ing] would have kept me in [South Dunedin] but it didn't and I knew they c[oul]d have known had God meant them to stop me'.[29] God's will or not, Mabel soon had the sense of having made a major mistake, for on 14 July 1909, after her move to Wellington, appears one of the more poignant entries in her diary:

> Way down in the dark valley of loneliness, doubt & wounded feelings. No one in whom to confide. Disappointed about work. Shut out from homes except poor. Put to work under Dorcas Society which I hate. Hate having to speak to those women of people requiring assistance. Have been used in S. Dunedin to being trusted & allowed to help quietly. Doubt whether I did right to come. Certainly prefer work in S. Dunedin. Got into homes & more opportunity for real work . . . . Dr G[ibb]. Hurts my feelings when I go there & then I come away & mope. Feel just so far away fr[om] the Lord Jesus & so unworthy.[30]

A sense of unworthiness was not unusual among committed Christians, but in Mabel's case it was reinforced in both Wellington and South Dunedin by feelings of social insecurity. On the one hand she clearly felt herself superior to working-class South Dunedinites, found it hard to converse with them, resented their familiarity and expressed a yearning to work in a congregation where the people would be 'generally more refined'.[31] On the other hand, she was herself the daughter of a small farmer, and, unlike some of the deaconess trainees, she had had to take a church bursary to cover her expenses at the Women's Training Institute. She seems to have felt acutely her lack of schooling, especially in the presence of better-educated Presbyterians. 'I think of my lowly position my lack of education and culture, & how very little worldly wisdom or grace of character that I bring to this work' she wrote in her early deaconess days.[32] This, coupled, it seems, with a natural shyness, led to endless expressions of inadequacy as Mabel strove for greater charity, patience and zeal. It must be remembered that Mabel saw herself as a worker for Christ. The text read at her ordination ceremony was 'Go ye therefore and make disciples', followed by an exhortation for Mabel to be sympathetic in her work and to strive to *be* Christ each day to another.[33] Her self-diagnosed failure of communication was potentially a failure to bring other souls to Christ; her want of empathy a negation of the Christ-like love that she was supposed to embody. There was a real despair behind the admission that 'my heart is very barren'.[34]

Love and Religious Devotion

Counterbalancing Mabel's narrative of doubt and unworthiness was another of love and uplift. The value of the diary lies not only in its description of a professional church woman's social and parish work, but in its representation of a love relationship between two young women, bonded together by shared religious devotion. Effie Simpson was a trainee deaconess when Mabel began her diary, and later (as 'Sister Margaret'), deaconess to Dunedin's Knox Church from 1908 to 1911. Described in the diary's first entry as 'Dark with true intelligent grey blue eyes & wears spectacles', Effie was twenty-four at this time. Mabel went on:

> I have learned to love her very dearly & she cares for me. We have a bond of sympathy between us, & can enter into the secret places of one

another's natures. She is strong & true, loving & sympathetic, & I can rest & trust in her as I have been able to with no other girl. She is first in her studies and a favourite with the girls, by whom she is much loved & respected. All through the year we lived happily together. We were room mates & had only one dark time wh[ich] was all my fault, but God was good enough to bring joy & gladness out of the darkness .[35]

The attachment between Mabel and Effie fits into a well-established pattern of 'romantic friendships' documented by Lilian Faderman and others. Expressed in a language no different from heterosexual love, such intimate, even passionate, relationships were condoned into the early twentieth century and were partly a consequence of women's and men's separate emotional worlds.[36] Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald note that women sisters and friends were the best lovers in the eyes of many of their writers.[37] However, in an age less sexually self-conscious than our own, such relationships were not overtly sexual, for all their intensity. Nor were they seen as incompatible with heterosexual courtship and marriage. It was largely after the First World War that female same-sex love was problematised through medical discourses and the label 'lesbian' attached to it. As Liz Stanley has pointed out, fully understanding these relationships in the terms they were understood by their protagonists is an impossibility, and there is the danger of a 'temporal chauvinism' which assumes that women's relationships and behaviours have a meaning that has remained constant over time.[38] An element least accessible to late-twentieth century consciousness is the intersection of love and religious devotion in the lives of women past. To Christian evangelicals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the term 'love' had a plurality of meaning which may escape a more secular (and sexualised) age.[39] A common Christian motif is the notion of a love which elevates spiritually and transcends all else. Steven Seidman has suggested that this spiritual conception of love legitimised female same-sex love and made the gender identity of lovers less pertinent than it has since become.[40] Mabel and Effie slept together and prayed together and reinforced each other's religious faith. For all that they shared, in Mabel's words, 'strange & lonely childhoods', they were equally drawn together by the desire to 'realise more intensely the best & truest that is in us through the power of God's Holy Spirit having control of our minds & wills & affections'.[41]

Feminist historiography has been neglectful of earlier generations' immersion in religious frameworks, and of the sustaining, as well as the constraining, force of Christian faith among women.[42]

Mabel's diary begins at a stage when her relationship with Effie was entering a new phase and it ends with their gradual separation. At the diary's beginning the two training institute room-mates were to live apart, seeing each other perhaps only once a week. As Mabel began congregational activities in South Dunedin, Effie was doing practical work at the newly founded Presbyterian orphanage. Mabel's meetings with Effie were highlights in her existence, sustaining her through the disappointments and uncertainties of deaconess work. The perceived monotony of her daily work was heightened by the anticipated satisfactions of leisure spent with Effie. Mabel deferred to Effie, exalted her, and felt unworthy of her love: she was, Mabel wrote, 'such a transcendent character. She is always "high up", spiritually and morally'.[43] Their meetings embodied the heightened sensibilities of lovers. An entry of January 1908 describes how the two women walked, talked and prayed together:

> It was a most beautiful evening, and Nature every where spoke to us of God. Spoke to us also of His love, for every prospect indeed smiled. The sea, the hills the sky, the animals outlines on the hills against the horizon looked all so peaceful & calm . . . .It was so beautiful having dear Effie to talk with, and we enjoyed the scene so much more because we had each other. We spoke of the time when we were not so keen to enjoy the beauties & blessings of Nature, because our eyes & hearts were not then open to the love & holiness of God. . . . We came back & played a few hymns and then went home.[44]

The following month Effie went away for a while, and on her return came to see Mabel: 'She slept with me that night & it was so very good to have her again. She told me to put away thoughts of the Holy Spirit & believe God would give it. Christian fellowship is very good when enjoyed with a dear congenial friend. She went away in the morning after we had prayed together'.[45] Other entries refer to Effie and Mabel 'sleeping together', a term used unselfconsciously and without the sexual connotations it has more recently acquired.

When the two were not meeting they wrote to each other in an apparently effusive vein. In January 1908 Mabel recorded: 'Today I had a letter from dear dear Effie, such a love letter that I feel inclined

to blush'.[46] On other occasions she wrote: 'Effie coming out today & we shall have a happy time together. Her letter was quite a master-piece of wit & love'; 'Received a letter from darling Effie today wh[ich] made me very glad, and made me aspire to truer & nobler living'.[47] Part of the self-sacrifice involved in Mabel's move to Wellington in mid-1909 was undoubtedly the separation from Effie, whose letters continued to sustain Mabel, but whose physical presence was deeply missed: 'Have felt so lonely tonight no Effie to go to. And no one here yet really to love'. And a fortnight later, after receiving a photo from her beloved friend: 'There is a great big void in my heart Bec[ause] she is away'.[48] Effie stayed with Mabel in Wellington in January 1910, when they visited welfare institutions and hospitals and talked a great deal about themselves and their work. Mabel confided: 'She was an inspiration for the year, and it was sweet just to have communication with her & behold her face & form & hear her voice . . . I wish I could always have her but God has set our ways apart'.[49]

This last statement was not simply an indication that the two women now worked apart in different cities. The previous month Mabel had written that Effie's last letter had 'made me feel that I have to lose her undivided love in the interests of some-one else; & then of course I feel lonely'.[50] In the diary's last entry dated 17 May 1910, Mabel was still rejoicing in Effie's love and sympathy. But were other loves and friendships being forged? And why did the diary end at that time? *Did* it end, or did Mabel continue to record her doubts and longings in volumes which have not survived? It seems more likely that the diary went the way of most. Entries became shorter and more intermittent from mid-1908 with gaps of three to four months over 1909. As contact with Effie diminished, so did Mabel Cartwright's diary.

The Presbyterian Church's history of its deaconess order shows that after three years as deaconess of Knox Church in Dunedin, Sister Margaret Simpson resigned in 1911. She apparently married, becoming 'Mrs. Sneddon', but when is unclear.[51] Mabel, for all her early doubts about her own fitness for the work, served until 1917 as a deaconess. She too eventually married, but not before entering the nursing profession, a 'sisterhood' of another kind.

Conclusion

Few historians would these days deny that history is triply mediated: through original written or oral textualisations, which are themselves attempts to reconstruct 'the real'; through the fragmentary survival of these texts; and through the ordering and interpretation of the historian herself.[52] Mabel Cartwright's diary provides a window into the life of a deaconess, but from the perspective of one of the order's less confident members. The diary was a means of self-inscription, containing a particularised depiction of self, and silences as well as a record of daily life. This diary has survived more than eighty years, and has then been made more widely available through the goodwill of its donors – not an inevitable fate for such an intimate and sometimes unflattering document. Its content has here been subject to the selection, categorising and reordering that historians inevitably impose upon texts. In the process, I came to feel protective of Mabel, sympathetic to the stresses placed on a woman required in her public life to personify selfless service and Christian love. As a postgraduate researcher in the 1970s I had written somewhat scathingly about Christian reformers, stressing social control and punitive morality. Now I am in my forties the lives of females past seem more complex; the Christian frameworks within which many operated both enabling and restrictive.

Of the multiple identities that Mabel, like all of us, carried through life, I have here highlighted two: her role as trained woman worker in the service of her church, and her role as lover of another Christian woman, an example of the same-sex 'romantic friendship' that has been more fully explored in the United States context than in New Zealand historiography. Mabel was a daughter and sister as well but her family features little in her diary, except in a reference to her visiting them and coming away troubled, and another to Mabel's distress at a sister's illness and death after her move to Wellington. Mabel was also a nurse, wife, and later, a widowed and incapacitated older woman, but these life changes are beyond the boundaries of her diary, and so beyond our gaze.

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NOTES

1   I would like to thank Charlotte Macdonald and Peter Lineham for comments upon a previous draft of this article.

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3   ibid.

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[42] Grimshaw, p. 333.
[43] Cartwright Diary, 26 January 1908.
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Breastfeeding and the Body Politic

ANNETTE N. BEASLEY

Since the early 1970s the rate of breastfeeding within the Western world has increased. Accompanying this development has been a wealth of biomedically orientated research into various aspects of human lactation and the process of breastfeeding. Characteristic of a biomedical understanding of the process of breastfeeding is the assumption of universality of bodily functioning and experience, and exclusion of the subjective and non-tangible as irrelevant.[1] The result is failure to recognise breastfeeding as a complex and multifaceted process which interacts with numerous aspects of the maternal environment.[2] Within New Zealand an increase in the rate of breastfeeding has been marked by a quantitative focus on breastfeeding patterns and trends. Relatively little is known of the myriad of social and cultural forces that affect a New Zealand mother's perception of infant feeding or her decision to initiate and continue breastfeeding. Indeed, despite recent identification of breastfeeding as one factor associated with a diminished risk of cot death among young infants, those known to be at highest risk have the lowest rates of breastfeeding.[3] Clearly medical promotion of 'breast is best' is ineffective, a conclusion also reached further afield, as the comments of American practitioner Edward Newton indicate:

> As a practising obstetrician who actively promotes breastfeeding, I have experienced the frustration of challenging cultural norms. Contrary to the prevailing, egocentric belief of the medical profession, physician advice has little direct effect on whether a woman will breastfeed or not . . . a woman's decision to breastfeed is determined by her personality, education, experience, family, friends and the larger political/advertising community.[4]

Identifying and understanding the influence of factors which underlie a woman's decision to initiate and continue breastfeeding requires moving beyond the traditional boundaries of positivist, biomedical investigation. That is, breastfeeding needs to be recognised as an event involving the physical process of lactation in addition to social and cultural expectations.[5] As a learned activity, the establishment and maintenance of breastfeeding is influenced by social be-

liefs and practices which may enhance or interfere with the physical process of milk production. Viewed in this way, a woman's perceptions of the demands and expectations made of a breastfeeding mother and infant offer an alternative model of understanding.

The focus of this paper is on the significance of the body politic for a woman's experience of breastfeeding. Central to this concept is the argument that understanding breastfeeding requires recognition of the body as the site where physical facts meet social values, and conflicting and analogous discourses converge. In other words, a major factor in the breastfeeding experience of many mothers involves the conversion of the body into a site of conflict and tension generated through a struggle between physical processes and social forces. The body politic and other relevant concepts are defined in the first section of this paper. Case studies of physical difficulties and the issues of infant routine and weight gain are then presented to illustrate facets of the breastfeeding experience. The paper concludes with an interpretation and discussion of the case studies in terms of the impact of the body politic.

The material for this paper has been drawn from a larger, more detailed qualitative study of four first-time mothers during the first three months of their babies' lives.[6] The decision to limit the study to first-time mothers for the first three months of breastfeeding was made, first, in light of the higher rate of breastfeeding failure among first-time mothers and the marked drop-off in breastfeeding rates among New Zealand mothers after three months,[7] and, second, in recognition of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding as (in critical ways) new experiences for first-time mothers.

The four women who participated in the study were contacted through personal channels. All the women were identifiable as middle-class European New Zealanders through income or family connections, three (Kathy, Rachael and Anna) being married and in their mid-twenties or early thirties while the fourth (Maria) was a young single mother residing with her parents. The interview period extended over three months commencing shortly after the baby's birth and continuing until the baby reached thirteen weeks of age. Data were collected through a process of weekly visits of between one and several hours duration when I observed each mother breastfeeding and interacting with her baby, and discussed significant and/or meaningful events of the previous week.

Practice, Power and the Body Politic

Lock and Scheper-Hughes argue that cultural construction of the body involves three integrated realms identifiable as the individual, the social, and the body politic.[8] While the individual body focuses on a person's intuitive sense of embodied self as separate from others and the social body recognises the transformation of the body as a natural symbol into an entity of social and cultural significance, it is the body politic that is of central importance in this discussion.[9] The body politic involves the domain of power, control and regulation over individual bodies and social groups, and the potential of such forces to convert the body into a site of conflict and struggle. Thus, the body politic has the ability to regulate, constrain and shape physical appearance and individual experience of the body, and may even distort the human anatomy if the physical body is deemed incompatible with dominant values and practices. Evidence of the latter is to be found in practices such as foot-binding, circumcision, tattooing and those targeting body shape such as muscularity and slimness, all of which provide examples of the forces of power and control encapsulated in the body politic.

As the determining capacity of the social and cultural, power is an integral aspect of any culture and its history and can be classified as agentative and nonagentative in nature.[10] Manifest through the body politic, nonagentative power is immersed 'in the forms of everyday life . . . [which] direct human perceptions and practices along conventional pathways'.[11] Thus, nonagentative power permeates such realms as aesthetics, ethics, bodily representation and medical knowledge, and is revealed negatively as cultural constraints and positively as cultural values. Once values and beliefs become internalised and unconsciously accepted as 'what is right', 'natural' or common sense within a particular field, nonagentative power has been transformed into hegemony.

The relevance of hegemony to this discussion lies within its role in constraining individual perceptions and defining the body and appropriate individual practice. Hegemony manifests itself within the human frame where it is apparent in a variety of tangible, historically locatable, manipulations of body physique and individual action. As a significant force in constraining individual perception, and defining the body and appropriate individual practice, hegemony presents itself in the socially correct body (and accompanying practice and

action) through conformity to and expression of the dominant values and beliefs of a particular group or culture.

As a dominant influence in Western society, biomedicine consciously and unconsciously affects the way we view our bodies, health and disease and so constitutes a hegemonic influence. Integral to the hegemonic influence of biomedicine is the notion of 'medicalisation'. Originally defined by Illich as involving a process of control over resources, the term medicalisation has been broadened to accommodate recognition of the cultural nature of biomedicine.[12] As with all medical systems, biomedicine presents a sense of the world that reflects and buttresses the existing social order, making it necessary to understand the process of medicalisation as involving both hegemonic influence and control of access to resources.

Redefinition of physical functioning, health and illness through medicalisation transforms many everyday activities such as breastfeeding into processes dependent on medical expertise and intervention. As a result, processes previously recognised as falling within a range of 'normal' are redefined as pathological, and knowledge of the body and its functions is transferred from individuals and groups to health professionals. Associated with the latter is the devaluation of lay knowledge and skills and the emergence of a specialised vocabulary which (as it becomes incorporated into the vernacular) reconstructs and mystifies popular conceptions of particular events.[13]

Physical Difficulties

Although a process involving specific physical functioning of the body, breastfeeding is perceived and experienced by women in diverse ways. The body, as the reference point from which a mother's experience of breastfeeding becomes knowable, is also the site where the physical process of producing milk for an infant confronts socially defined beliefs, traditions and values. The process of producing milk and suckling a baby has, therefore, the potential to convert the mother's body into a site of tension and struggle if the mother's desires and practices, and the requirements of the baby, conflict with socially defined norms.

Physical problems are common to breastfeeding mothers and well documented in both medical literature and manuals detailing the techniques of breastfeeding.[14] Each of the mothers in the current study

commented on some degree of discomfort and physical inconvenience associated with the process of producing milk and feeding their baby. The impact and importance of these experiences, however, ranged from a perception of pain and discomfort as mild and generally non-problematic through to these features being a central aspect of the breastfeeding experience for one of the four mothers.

Kathy

Throughout the three-month interview period, Kathy struggled with bouts of breast discomfort and pain that proved difficult to alleviate and control. Although she had periods when the problem abated, the severity and duration of the pain and discomfort (particularly in her right breast) was significant. During my first visit, Kathy alerted me to the problem, remarking:

> Well, it [the right breast] seems to be aching all the time, when I am full
> . . . it's like toothache, especially after I've fed him from this breast and
> then go on to the left breast. It just aches and aches . . . and I rub it and
> sometimes it settles down.

Compounding Kathy's problem with her right breast was a more general discomfort associated with overfull breasts. As with many new mothers, this sensation was particularly pronounced during the first few weeks, settling down as her milk supply gradually adjusted to her baby's needs. For Kathy the discomfort from her overfull breasts was unanticipated:

> I wasn't expecting my breasts to be so uncomfortable for so long. It's
> just something that people don't talk about! . . . but it makes me quite
> miserable sometimes, they [my breasts] just ache . . . you know they are
> so full. They hurt when they are filling up, they hurt when they are
> emptying. I am very conscious of them, these great bricks.

Kathy's problem with breast discomfort continued over the next few weeks with minimal improvement, her sore right breast was accompanied by a tender and sometimes slightly cracked nipple. She admitted these problems made feeding difficult and uncomfortable. Although she attempted to overcome breast and nipple discomfort by paying attention to such things as positioning, sucking duration of the baby, and the use of heat and pharmaceutical preparations, such measures offered only limited relief and left Kathy puzzled as to why

improvement was so slow. When her baby was seven weeks old, Kathy commented:

> I wasn't expecting my breasts to be so uncomfortable for so long. I was so looking forward to sleeping on my tummy again . . . but I still can't because my breasts are too sore. I thought, 'Oh, nobody told you it's just going [to go] on and on'.

Kathy's surprise at her breast and nipple discomfort can be better understood through consideration of her professional experience as a practice nurse, which involved advising and educating breastfeeding mothers. As a nurse, Kathy's biomedical knowledge emphasised the physiological aspects of breastfeeding and assumed a relatively uniform physical experience. Kathy expected to encounter some of the problems observed in her patients, and during the pre-birth interview specifically mentioned nipple problems, which she primarily perceived as resulting from a lack of knowledge and support, and therefore easily remedied via management techniques and/or biomedical intervention. Kathy's physical problems nevertheless persisted despite receiving correct management.

As a woman and breastfeeding mother, Kathy had been repositioned within the biomedical discourse, her new experiences necessitating personal redefinition of processes that she previously perceived as clear-cut and clinically 'knowable'. The fact that biomedical discourse offers no alternative explanation or course of action, and even denies the existence of a problem if tangible evidence is absent, compounded Kathy's distress. In other words, Kathy was confronted by a conflict between her own lay experience as a breastfeeding mother, and her professional (biomedical) knowledge and expertise as a practice nurse. As a result the meaningful elements of Kathy's experience of aching breasts and a sore nipple became the prolonged duration of this experience, her inability to alleviate the discomfort, and most significantly, the fact that no one had ever alerted her to this possibility.

Infant Routine

Like the majority of new mothers, each of the four women was exposed to varying opinions and advice regarding breastfeeding, and infant care and behaviour. Dominant among the latter were common sense notions of 'normal' infant sleeping/feeding patterns and the

need for a regular routine. It was not surprising, therefore, that three of the mothers indicated a belief in the importance of establishing the baby in a routine as soon as possible, and that all anticipated their baby would sleep through the night by the age of three months. It should be noted, however, that all four mothers did expect breastfeeding to be time-consuming, and to involve frequent episodes day and night with little or no set routine for the first few weeks.

The issue of routine emerged as a source of stress and conflict for two of the mothers. In each case the baby's feeding and sleeping patterns consistently fell outside common expectations of 'normal' infant behaviour. Although both mothers anticipated a new baby would require considerable lifestyle adjustment and be demanding and un-predictable during the early weeks, both had expected to quickly resume (in modified form at least) former interests and activities.[15]

Kathy

Kathy felt herself fortunate because from the beginning her baby, Ben, generally slept continuously for six to seven hours at night and was very rarely affected by wind or colic. On the other hand, a prime source of conflict for Kathy lay with the amount of time she spent feeding Ben who, right from birth, required very frequent and pro-longed daytime nursing. For example, on the occasion of my first visit, Kathy remarked on the divergence between manuals and her own experience:

> In books and things like that, it says feed for five minutes on one side and then switch over to the other side for five minutes and the baby is to be fed for twenty minutes and then you get them down. Yesterday, quite often – I think more often than not – he was awake and at the breast for two hours. He just keeps drinking!

At this stage Kathy's main concern centred on her perception that sitting and feeding Ben for considerable periods amounted to doing nothing. She admitted feeling uncomfortable about the fre-quent feeding and guilty about not doing things around the home. Despite her husband's reassurance that she was 'the baby's life sup-port', the perception of breastfeeding as time spent 'doing nothing' continued to plague Kathy. In fact, Ben required frequent, prolonged daytime feeding throughout most of my period of contact with Kathy, who continuously struggled with this routine, finding it trying and

difficult at times. Moreover, her reaction was compounded by the physical problems of tender breasts and nipples, which were frequently aggravated by long periods of sucking.

Kathy's experience of 'doing nothing but sitting [and] breast-feeding' can be understood as a conflict between her role expectations as a housekeeper and household manager, and the physical demands on her as a breastfeeding mother. As the books she had read indicated that a 'normal' feed involved a time span of about twenty minutes' duration, Kathy anticipated that she would be able to allocate a portion of her time to other household activities. Reality, however, provided a marked contrast with this expectation, as her comments such as the following show:

> The thing that I most regret about breastfeeding is that I'm sitting in a big comfortable chair, looking awfully comfortable and I say, 'Oh Robert, could you please do . . . Oh Robert, the washing machine is finished, could you please put [the washing] out. I'm going to be sitting here for another hour.'

Kathy's unease about the time spent breastfeeding was intensified by remarks made by some of her friends who had babies slightly older than Ben. She experienced considerable pressure from friends who, as fervent adherents to a four-hourly routine, were eager for her to establish Ben into such a schedule. The pressure was compounded by Kathy's awareness that not only did her friends' babies appear to settle into a predictable routine from 'day one' but their feeding episodes rarely spanned more than twenty minutes. The disquiet and conflict experienced by Kathy over the issue of routine was evident in a number of her remarks. For example, when Ben was three weeks old she said:

> On Saturday [a friend] called in. I felt uncomfortable because I felt I was doing nothing but breastfeeding. And [the visiting friend] said at one stage, 'Oh he is not still feeding is he?' Ben had only been on the breast for ten minutes at that stage.

Kathy admitted she had always been affected by what others thought, and felt even more vulnerable to outside opinion as a first-time mother. She acknowledged being unsettled by the comments and opinions of her friends and voiced concern about the way she was breastfeeding, worrying that she was doing something wrong:

One [friend] . . . has got a seven-week-old and she said, 'Well I get my babies in a routine as soon as I go home.' Her babies are fed for four minutes on the breast and that's that, because that's all the baby wants. I couldn't tell her that I can feed for hours!

There was a certain irony in Kathy's situation given that as a former practice nurse she had constantly advised new mothers to disregard the opinions of others but felt unable to take such advice herself. For Kathy the root of the problem appeared to be a lack of confidence when she observed her own practices and Ben's routine as different from those considered 'normal' by her friends and in the books she had read.

Anna

Anna's difficulty with routine concerned baby Lauren's frequent feeding and intermittent difficulties with wind. For the first few weeks at home, Lauren fed regularly three hourly, day and night. At this stage Anna did not regard Lauren's schedule as particularly problematic, although she did comment that disrupted nights were a little tiring. The three-hourly pattern continued until Lauren reached four weeks of age when she went through an unsettled period of two hourly feeds accompanied by prolonged bouts of wind-related distress.

Anna was puzzled by, and at a loss to account for, the change in her baby's behaviour. She was certain that hunger was not the cause of the problem as she had an obviously abundant milk supply and Lauren refused to remain on the breast once a feed was completed. Lacking explanations and alternative strategies, Anna decided the best solution was to 'go with it' in the hope that the problem would resolve itself.

During a routine Plunket visit at this time, Anna sought the nurse's advice on strategies for coping with Lauren's changed behaviour. The nurse, who appeared to be primarily concerned by the feeding routine, concluded hunger was the problem and recommended a formula complement. Anna reacted to the nurse's advice with considerable dissatisfaction. She felt, given her observations about her abundant milk supply and attempts to offer Lauren extra feeding time, that such a recommendation was not only inappropriate but reflected a basic misunderstanding of the situation.

Over the next two weeks, Anna struggled to accommodate

Lauren's unsettled behaviour and frequent feeding. By now, however, she was finding the situation frustrating:

> I feel that there are things I want to get on with and that I have put off to look after her. And I feel as though perhaps it is never going to end, this feeling of [being] on call. I feel now that I have got a good grasp of the basics of looking after her . . . perhaps I should be able to get back into a more normal routine.

Although Anna acknowledged she found 'just going with it' a much less stressful option, it was also clear that she perceived the attainment of a regular routine as indicative of a level of maternal competence. Having thus far failed to achieve a regular routine, her confidence as a breastfeeding mother was seriously challenged. Her perception was endorsed by the nurse's comment in the Plunket book at the time of the six-week visit which read 'still not in a routine'.

Further evidence of the significance that Anna attached to a regular infant routine was apparent in her reaction to the more settled change that occurred in Lauren's feeding/sleeping patterns over the following weeks. For example, on arrival for my weekly visit when Lauren was eight weeks old, Anna greeted me with obvious pride and excitement, remarking: 'This week, has been an exciting week. Three nights in a row she has slept for six hours! . . . I was so thrilled I couldn't believe it!' When Lauren was ten weeks old and sleeping for 10 – 12 hours at night, Anna remarked that she now realised that Lauren had crossed the line from being a new-born to a 'settled' baby. Indeed, I detected that Anna felt that she had now become a 'successful' mother and asked her if this was the case. Her response was an unequivocal 'yes'. Her self-perception was sanctioned through the Plunket nurse's commendation of Lauren's regular routine and her comment that Anna could now 'cope' as a mother.

Weight Gain

Traditional monitoring of infant care and feeding through the Plunket Society has generated among many New Zealanders an acceptance that such matters require professional guidance and expertise. It was not surprising, therefore, that all four mothers' expectations of a normal, thriving baby were primarily informed by Plunket guidelines, particularly in the area of weight gain.

Maria

Of the four mothers, Maria's experience of breastfeeding was the most positive and unproblematic. As the youngest of the four, she was the most relaxed about her new role and happy to be guided by her baby in the timing of feeds and other activities. She was also fortunate in that right from birth her baby, Rose, conformed to the Plunket criteria of a 'healthy, thriving' infant. Indeed, the first 'official' endorsement of Rose's progress were the nurse's comments 'Lovely babe, progressing well' in the Plunket record book at the first visit. As a new mother, secure in the knowledge of official approval of her baby's progress, Maria thrived on her experience of breastfeeding and looked forward to Plunket visits as a time of affirmation of her success.

Rachael

Rachael's baby, Toni, made consistent weight gains until she was twelve weeks old. A Plunket weight check at this stage indicated Toni's weight had plateaued with only a minimal gain over the previous four weeks. Rachael, confident of her baby's 'progress', was taken aback at the result and accepted the nurse's offer of a second weighing in a week's time. Again a similar result was recorded. Although the nurse appeared unconcerned, her attempts to reassure Rachael that her baby was doing well did little to dispel her anxiety. Desperate for answers, Rachael queried the accuracy of the reading and recording: 'Sometimes I could have just finished feeding her. They say you can put on anywhere up to almost 200 grammes [after a feed].'

Rachael's concern was shared by her husband who indicated dissatisfaction with both weighing procedures and the expectation of infant conformity to an 'average' weight gain graph: 'It's not that I don't like the Plunket book . . . [it's just that] it leaves you all worried when you first see the decline on it. You know, it actually creates a doubt!' The nurse's scheduling of the next visit for a date four weeks ahead helped ease some of Rachael's concern. By the time of the next visit Toni's progress was once more within the Plunket guidelines.

Kathy

The Plunket nurse seemed reasonably satisfied with Ben's weight gain until he reached eight weeks of age. I was present at this visit

and observed the nurse's positive comments on Ben's healthy and bonny appearance. Once Ben had been weighed, however, the nurse's attitude changed as she voiced concern over the weight gain, which she felt was on 'the low side'.

After the nurse left, Kathy stated she was not unduly worried as Ben was a happy, generally settled and growing baby. Despite such comments it was apparent that the nurse's remarks had sown doubt in Kathy's mind, causing her to feel anxious and angry. Indeed, for Kathy, the Plunket visit signalled the beginning of a period of upheaval and self-doubt initiated through a focus on weight gain as the most significant indicator of a baby's progress. The following week, Kathy described the return Plunket visit:

> She came and weighed him and I was so confident . . . and I said, 'How much?' . . . she said, 'Well he hasn't really put on any significant amount.' . . . He had put on 25 grammes, which is just under two ounces! I said, 'Oh! How much is he meant to put on? Eight ounces?'

Kathy described her reaction to the nurse's finding on this occasion as 'shattering' and stressed she had been so confident that Ben was 'doing well': 'I just couldn't believe that he hadn't put on much weight. And she seemed to think it was quite serious!' More significantly, the nurse advised a strategy of expressed breast milk complements as a supplement to normal feeds. Why breast milk had to be expressed and provided as a complement instead of being made available in the usual way was never explained. The price of compliance to the new strategy was an exhausted, confused and stressed Kathy who struggled to express sufficient supplementary milk between Ben's numerous and prolonged breastfeeds.

After ten days of the new regime, the situation reached a crisis when Kathy accidentally knocked over the milk she had so laboriously expressed. Kathy described the incident as follows:

> I burst into tears . . . it was [literally] like crying over spilt milk . . . Ben was crying because he wanted a feed and I was busy up there expressing it to give him! I kept thinking I must be doing something wrong!

Kathy admitted that by this stage she was so overwrought she could no longer think straight and had lost confidence in her own judgement. She decided to contact a midwife friend who strongly advised her to ignore the Plunket nurse's advice and return to her

normal strategy of feeding Ben on demand directly from the breast. Although Kathy recognised her friend's recommendation as sound, especially as she acknowledged that she would have carried on as usual had the Plunket nurse not called and offered advice, she nevertheless decided to continue the complements of expressed milk until the next Plunket visit. Kathy admitted her decision reflected a reluctance to ignore the nurse's advice out of fear of the consequences for her baby.

Discussion

The physical difficulties of breastfeeding and the issues of infant routine and weight gain exemplify the impact of the body politic on the breastfeeding experience of the four mothers. In each case the body politic served to perpetuate and endorse common sense views on the maternal role, infant behaviour and progress. Underlying the perceived behaviour and progress of infants is the hegemonic influence of biomedicine, which itself reflects and buttresses dominant social values.

All four mothers had specific expectations regarding the feeding schedules and sleeping routines of their babies. Of the four mothers, only Maria's experiences during the early weeks of her baby's life conformed closely to her actual expectations, but even she commented that she could no longer 'get things done'. She undoubtedly perceived that more than just caring for her baby was expected of her. For Kathy and Anna, conflict arose between the time consumed through breastfeeding and caring for their baby, and the need to attend to household chores. Both mothers indicated an expectation that they should engage in numerous domestic tasks in addition to attending to their infants.

The emphasis placed by the mothers on the importance of attending to other household duties can be understood as a desire to appear 'productive', efficient and in control, characteristics forcefully implied by some of Kathy's friends. Such values are associated with traditional, common sense perceptions of a model housewife and more recently with 'superwoman'. Implicit in the importance attached to housework is the notion that breastfeeding a baby is not 'real' work. In other words, because breastfeeding generally involves sitting in a comfortable chair, 'cuddling' a baby, it is equated with laziness and 'doing nothing'. Such a view reflects predominant West-

ern notions about productivity and the efficient use of time. It projects a cultural construction of the role of housewife and of motherhood that conflicts with the body's ability to produce adequate milk, which requires frequent suckling – a classic example of conflict between physical processes and social forces. Kathy was the one who found the demands of frequent feeding the most difficult to adjust to, and her associated guilt and stress exacerbated her experience of breast discomfort. However, similar perceptions of guilt and frustration were also clear in the comments of the other mothers.

Maternal conflict generated through confrontations with Plunket ideology on the issues of routine and weight gain was experienced by three of the mothers. In contrast, the fourth mother (Maria), whose baby conformed to Plunket ideals, found that Plunket affirmed her success as a breastfeeding mother. Seen in this way, the Plunket organisation clearly emerges as an authoritative instrument of biomedical hegemony and so constitutes a significant arm of the body politic.

As a manifestation of the body politic, Plunket notions (or common sense perceptions) of infant routine and standardised weight gain encapsulate diverse past and present social attitudes and values. Even a brief exploration of the aims and origins of the Plunket move-ment reveals the role of medical knowledge as an agent of social control through its ability to 'normalise' culturally specific infant rearing practices. As a younger colony of the British Empire, European settlement in New Zealand was founded on imperialist notions of patriotism, progress and cultural superiority. Accompanying colonial development was a period of advance in scientific thought and practice and the emergence of mutual 'truths' in the domains of medicine and imperialism. As a result, links were forged between contrasting notions of health, social order and civilisation, and pestilence, physical degradation and 'primitive' societies.[16]

Sir Truby King, a staunch advocate of imperialist attitudes and values who was motivated by a concern for the state of infant and maternal health, founded the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society Inc. in 1905. King was firmly convinced that the decline of major civilisations was linked with increasing selfishness and lack of indi-vidual discipline, factors he attributed to poor infant health associ-ated with the 'spoiling' of babies.[17] King's views on the need for a regulated, scientific approach to infant rearing were endorsed by re-

search into the development of safe infant formula that occurred late last century.[18] The result was a convergence of scientific and common sense ideas, and the assumption of the benefit of a four-hourly feeding schedule regardless of feeding method. In this way the scientific approach to motherhood became firmly established.

For the next fifty years Plunket ideals dominated the discourse on infant care in New Zealand with mothers being urged to 'adopt routine, regular, all round treatment' and to turn to the clock as the governor of the rhythms of scientific regularity. Plunket routine advocated that babies should be fed four hourly during the day and ignored at night. Fundamental to ignoring babies at night was the notion of obedience as the basis of infant well-being, and a fear of 'spoiled' children developing into self-indulgent, unproductive adults devoid of moral self-control.[19] As a result of its unrivalled influence, Plunket's notions of infant feeding, spoiling and routine became accepted as the natural, correct and common sense view of infant care in New Zealand. Although now recognised as extreme and a potential impediment to the establishment and maintenance of an adequate milk supply, traditional Plunket ideology continues to inform common sense perceptions of 'normal' infant behaviour and development. [20]

In view of the dominance of Plunket ideology in New Zealand, it is not surprising that new mothers such as Kathy and Anna were advised and pressured to establish their babies in a regular routine. Although both mothers had intended to demand feed, the pressure to establish a routine was such that feelings of self-doubt and maternal inadequacy surfaced as the timing of their babies' feeds continued to remain unpredictable.[21] As a result, each mother experienced stress and tension generated by her inability to reconcile her baby's requirement with common sense views. For Anna the situation did resolve itself, the tension dissipated and her sense of self-confidence as a proficient mother soared. In contrast, Kathy's situation did not change. Ben continued for most of his first year of life to be a baby who required more frequent feeding than the commonly accepted norm and so Kathy found herself 'caught' between the physical requirement of producing sufficient milk for her baby and social pressure demanding regulation of the timing and duration of Ben's feeds. Thus for Kathy a major aspect of her breastfeeding experience centred around feelings of anxiety, tension and maternal inadequacy gener-

ated through conflict between physical processes and social forces. Indeed, when coupled with her inability to alleviate a prolonged period of breast pain and discomfort, it can be seen that Kathy's experience was intensified through the convergence of competing discourses which converted her body into a site of conflict and struggle.

The significance of weight gain as an indicator of satisfactory infant progress was very evident in the experience of Maria, Rachael and Kathy. In contrast with the other mothers, Maria's contact with the Plunket nurse, like that of many New Zealand mothers, was a positive and affirming experience. Ironically, it was Maria, the only mother among the four to experience trouble-free breastfeeding, who found her Plunket contact most beneficial. A similar trend has been noted among Australian mothers where a clinic sister monitors infant progress:

> Many women found it utterly intimidating to subject themselves to the scrutiny of the clinic sister when things were not going well with the baby. If the baby was cheerful and thriving, her authority gave the mother an official stamp of approval, bolstering her confidence. If the baby, was not thriving, her questions usually implied that the fault was the mother's.[22]

The point here is that the Plunket nurse, like her Australian counterpart, was regarded by each mother as the custodian of specialised knowledge and an 'expert' on infant care and health. Such recognition confers on the nurse the ability to enhance or undermine maternal confidence and to overrule lay perceptions of satisfactory infant progress. Kathy's trauma over Ben's weight gain attests to the standing of the Plunket nurse as an authority figure for new mothers. As a former practice nurse herself, Kathy recognised the Plunket nurse as a fellow professional possessing a similar knowledge and role within biomedical discourse. On the other hand, as a mother, Kathy felt effectively 'dispossessed' of expert knowledge and so opted to implement and continue the nurse's strategies despite serious misgivings. Significant in Kathy's reflection on the weight gain incident was her observation that had Ben not been weighed she would have carried on as before, being convinced he was progressing well.[23] Kathy's remarks highlight the discrepancy between her own and the nurse's criteria of assessment of infant progress. Kathy's dilemma involved, therefore, an issue of credibility for lay as opposed to professional

knowledge – a dilemma no doubt intensified by her own background as a health professional.

Similarly, Rachael, prior to Toni being weighed, had been confident of her baby's progress. Again both Rachael and her husband's reaction to the levelling off of Toni's weight was one of concern and doubt. Moreover, the nurse's voiced lack of concern was insufficient to completely allay the anxiety displayed by this couple. The problem is that the focus on a statistical norm, as the most tangible indication of 'expert' evaluation of infant progress, ignores a range of other (albeit more subjective) indicators frequently perceived by mothers as equally significant signs of infant well-being. Not only does the emphasis on infant weight gain heighten the potential for unnecessary maternal anxiety and stress, but when accompanied by maternally taxing remedial strategies it risks pushing the mother to a point where she decides to abandon breastfeeding.[24] This was an option Kathy came perilously close to exercising.

While a mother may question a focus on weight gain as the ultimate indicator of her baby's progress, to ignore an assessment goes against an ingrained acceptance of the validity and authority of biomedical wisdom. Indeed, failure to conform to the authoritative advice of the Plunket nurse was regarded with considerable caution by each mother, as such an action was perceived as likely to place her infant at risk of a number of biomedically identified outcomes (for example, cot death). Moreover, disregard of an 'official' opinion or advice confers upon a mother sole responsibility for any undesirable consequence, and may ultimately put her at risk of being accused of infant neglect or even abuse. Thus medical scrutiny of infant progress via the mechanism of the Plunket organisation constitutes an effective arm of the body politic.

To sum up, breastfeeding is a complex, multifaceted process, involving both the physical process of lactation and socio-cultural expectations. Understanding a woman's experience of breastfeeding requires, therefore, recognition of the body as the site where physical facts meet social values, and where both conflicting and analogous discourses converge. In other words, the body politic is a central aspect of the experience of breastfeeding through its ability to convert the body into a site of conflict and struggle.

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NOTES

[1] Peter Manning and Horace Fabrega, 'The Experience of Self and Body: Health and Illness in the Chiapas Highlands' in George Psathas (ed), *Phenomenological Sociology* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1973) pp. 251-301.

[2] Penny van Esterik, *Beyond the Breast-Bottle Controversy* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1989).

[3] See, for example, John Msuya, Winsome Harding, Marion Robinson and Joan McKenzie-Parnell, 'The Extent of Breast Feeding in Dunedin 1972-83', *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 103 (1990) pp. 68-70; Charles Essex, Paul Smale and David Geddis, 'Breastfeeding Rates in New Zealand in the First 6 Months and the Reasons for Stopping', *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 108 (1995) pp. 355-357.

[4] Edward Newton, 'Forward', in Patricia Stuart-Macadam and Katherine Dettwyler (eds), *Breastfeeding: Biocultural Perspectives* (New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 1996) p. ix.

[5] The terms 'lactation' and 'breastfeeding' are quite distinct. Lactation is the biomedical term which refers to the physiological process of producing milk and its 'removal' by the infant for nourishment. Frequency and duration of the latter are significant aspects in the production and maintenance of a mother's milk supply. Breastfeeding, on the other hand, is a much more holistic term as it embraces not only the process of producing milk and suckling a baby, but also the complexity of social, cultural and experiential factors associated with this activity.

[6] A.N. Beasley, 'Breastfeeding for the First Time: A Critical-Interpretative Perspective on Experience and the Body Politic' MA Thesis, Massey University, 1993.

[7] Paul Perry and Andrew Trlin, 'Socio-demographic Factors in Relation to Breast Feeding Duration Among Manawatu Women', *New Zealand Population Review*, 11:2 (1985) pp. 84-110; Essex,

Smale and Geddis; Rodney Ford, Philip Schluter and Christine Wild, 'Breastfeeding in Canterbury Over Three Decades', *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 109 (1996) pp. 343-345.

8   Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 'A Critical-Interpretative Approach in Medical Anthropology', in Thomas Johnson and Carolyn Sargent (eds), *Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method* (New York, Praeger, 1990) pp. 47-72.

9   See Marcel Mauss, 'A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of the Person, The Notion of Self' in Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins and Steven Lukes (eds), *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 1-45.

10   John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992) pp. 28-29.

11   ibid., p. 28.

12   Ivan Illich, *Limits to Medicine, Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (London, Marion Boyars, 1976); Margaret Lock, 'New Japanese Mythologies: Faltering Discipline and the Ailing Housewife', *American Ethnologist*, 15:1 (1989) pp. 42-61.

13   van Esterik, p. 192.

14   See, for example, Ruth Lawrence, *Breastfeeding: A Guide for the Medical Profession* (St. Louis, The C.V. Mosby Company, 1985); Mary Renfrew, Chloe Fisher and Suzanne Arms, *Breastfeeding: Getting Breastfeeding Right for You* (Berkeley, Celestial Arts, 1990).

15   The mothers' interests were primarily social as neither was on maternity leave or intending to resume a career in the immediate future.

16   Jean Comaroff, 'The Diseased Heart of Africa: Medicine, Colonialism and the Black Body' in Shirley Lindenbaum and Margaret Lock (eds), *Knowledge, Power and Practice: The Anthropology of Medicine and Everyday Life* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993) pp. 305-329.

17   Erik Olssen, 'Truby King and the Plunket Society: An Analysis of a Prescriptive Ideology' *New Zealand Journal of History*, 15:1 (1981) p. 14.

18   Gabrielle Palmer [*The Politics of Breastfeeding*, London, Pandora Press (1988) pp. 22-23] points out that William Cadogan was influential for his 'Essay upon nursing and the management of children from their birth to three years of age'. Cadogen's ideas were

based on a belief that overfeeding caused diarrhoea in infants. As an eighteenth-century medical practitioner he would have been unaware of the problem of hygiene surrounding the common practice of supplementing infants with 'pap', gruel etc. His solution was to advocate four regularly spaced feeds in 24 hours and to forbid night feeding, although he did not suggest limiting the duration of any feed.

[19] Olssen, pp. 14-15.

[20] Duncan Mackenzie, lactation physiologist, Massey University, Palmerston North, (personal communication, 1994) advises that it is now well understood that production of an adequate milk supply is dependent on frequent feeding of an infant. That is, successful breastfeeding is dependent on a situation of supply and demand. From a biological perspective, control of the milk supply has been identified as a function of endocrine and autocrine factors. In the early weeks of breastfeeding the hormone prolactin is of paramount importance in the maintenance of an adequate milk supply. The release of prolactin is stimuli-dependent through the suckling of the baby at the breast. Accordingly, any reduction in nursing episodes risks reduction in milk supply as it will be accompanied by a lowered concentration of blood prolactin. Overriding endocrine control is the autocrine or local control of milk supply which allows regulation of supply on the basis of 'demand' through the action of protein inhibitors. Thus, the less frequently the baby is fed, the less milk that will be produced, conversely frequent suckling stimulates milk production and ensures an adequate supply.
It is notable that former Prime Minister, James Bolger, during the 1993 election campaign proudly announced that all nine of his children had been 'Plunket babies'.
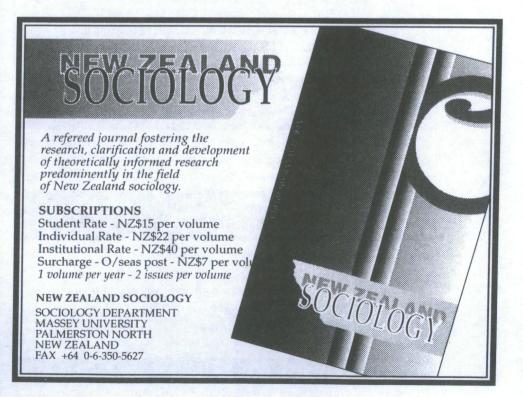
[21] 'Demand feeding' refers to a feeding pattern indicated by the needs of the baby rather than one scheduled to a predetermined timetable.

[22] Maureen Minchin, *Breastfeeding Matters: What We Need to Know About Infant Feeding* (Sydney, Alma Publications and George Allen and Unwin, 1985) p. 214.

[23] It should be pointed out that Kathy's experience with her Plunket nurse was an exceptional situation and not, therefore, necessarily representative of the experience of the many mothers who take advantage of the services of their local Plunket nurse.

[24] There are a range of factors that influence the termination of breastfeeding including the perception of insufficient milk, influence

of others, and infant behaviour. See Anne Marie Berg 'Obstacles to and Motivation for Successful Breastfeeding', *Curationis*, 16:2 (1993) pp. 24-29; Tania Gunn 'The Incidence of Breastfeeding and Reasons for Weaning', *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 97:755 (1984) pp. 360-363; Pamela Hill and Sharron Humenick, 'Insufficient Milk Supply', *Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 21:3 (1989) pp. 145-148.

Painted with a Smile:
Women, Art and Representation in
Art in New Zealand 1928–1940[1]

JUDITH COLLARD

In 1935 the painter Dorothy Kate Richmond died. In her obituary in *Art in New Zealand,* she was described as:

> the New Zealand painter of flowers who always had a nice thing to say, who said it well and with a smile. Her work will surely live, and will continue to have an influence for good on the art of this country.[1]

The essay was typical of many written in the 1930s in that journal in the way that it both acknowledged the importance of women in the arts in New Zealand while simultaneously diminishing their contribution by designating their work as feminine. The author, A.D. Carbery, a frequent contributor to the journal, outlined briefly the significance of watercolour painters for the history of art in New Zealand, 'when, in time . . . [it] comes to be written'.[2] He sets out three discernible generations: the 'Old Masters', including J.C. Richmond, John Gully, W.M. Hodgkins and the Barrauds, a second generation of aquarellists who were influenced both by these men and foreign teachers such as Van der Velden and, finally, a group of contemporary artists whose training was influenced by European art schools and whose technique was very different from the fathers of painting in New Zealand: the last group were all women. Its outstanding members were Miss D.K. Richmond, Miss Frances Hodgkins and Miss M.O. Stoddart. He praised their work for its skill and its individual outlook. The significance of these women to the contemporary art scene and to the development of watercolour techniques was acknowledged, but the praise was restrained and ambivalent. The deliberately gender-neutral language of the introduction underlines the perceived unusualness of their leading role, as does the hesitancy contained in its concluding sentence:

> There is no doubt that the art of this country has received its inspiration from these women painters, and it may be that they, rather than the earlier masters, will be the founders of a water-colour school in New Zealand.[3]

Although (in the obituary) Carbery went on to characterise Richmond's work as 'feminine', there was no further discussion of the notable prominence of these women.

The attitudes contained in Carbery's essay reflect those found within *Art in New Zealand* as a whole. The journal had an inclusive policy, recording the range of activities women were involved in, as well as their roles as producers and patrons of art. There were, indeed, a formidable range of talented and interesting artists included, such as Rita Angus, Olivia Spencer Bower, Louise Henderson, Frances Hodgkins, Evelyn Page, M.O. Stoddart, as well as D.K. Richmond. Whether they received similar attention to their male colleagues is less obvious. While these artists are highly regarded today, it is the sheer number of women involved in the arts and the quality of what they produced that is most striking in the content of the journal. Women were involved at every level of the art world, in the most conservative as well as the more radical groups, and included some of the most successful artists of the period. Indeed, the artists who received the most attention in the 1930s were not necessarily those whose work has been rediscovered and celebrated today. Much of the work of these women has been overlooked because the picture of this time has been distorted by the requirements of later generations who found the avant-garde, as represented by such artists as Colin McCahon, Toss Woollaston and others more exciting, radical and significant. *Art in New Zealand*, in the decade before the Second World War, provides us with a comprehensive overview of an art scene that was to change dramatically, through the influence of more radical, modernist ideas in the 1940s and 1950s.

One of the reasons *Art in New Zealand* is such a useful tool for research is that it occupies a position in time immediately before any sustained attempt to construct a history of New Zealand art or to create a canon of 'great' artists. While the editors and contributors were interested in the history of their art, this was limited to the occasional biographical sketch which preserved the memory of influential or colourful teachers and artists, rather than the development of an overarching history. Such a history would examine how New Zealand art was shaped, drawing out particular themes and priorities such as the search for national identity or stylistic developments. The first real attempt to produce such a history of New Zealand art, focused primarily on painting, was in 1940 when E.H. McCormick wrote

Letters and Art in New Zealand.[4] The primary focus of *Art in New Zealand*, however, was on the contemporary art scene. As such it provides fascinating insights into the range of contemporary attitudes to issues that interest us today, such as which artists were prominent at the time, what place did the search for national identity occupy within local debates and what roles women played in the arts. *Art in New Zealand*, with its catholic editorial policy, provides researchers with a richly varied, sometimes surprising, collection of materials. For example, the artists favoured in the 1920s and 1930s are sometimes unfamiliar today or have been relegated to less significant places within discussions of New Zealand art history.

During recent years, however, the history of New Zealand art has been undergoing a reappraisal. Artists who had been previously been dismissed or given only a minor position in the canon have been receiving greater critical attention. Artists who have recently had major retrospective exhibitions include A. Lois White, Doris Lusk and Evelyn Page.[5] This reflects a broadening of the range of styles and periods considered of interest to art historians and the public, and a new appreciation of art that was once dismissed as retrograde and dull. The reincorporation of so-called minor figures into the history of New Zealand art in turn allows for a greater appreciation of the range of art produced in this country. It is important, however, not simply to single out individual figures, but also to recognise the depth of involvement of women, both amateur and professional, in the art scene of the time.[6] It is how these women were represented, what is recorded about them and where it was recorded, that is the focus of this article.

In the introduction to her book *New Zealand Women Artists: A Survey of 150 Years*, Anne Kirker referred to the ways in which women artists' achievements had been played down in the writing of New Zealand art history.[7] She cited as an example W.H. Oliver's essay 'The Awakening Imagination' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand* where the writer, after extolling Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston whose works 'indicated that the Modernist revolution in New Zealand had at last begun', continued:

> Women were eminent among the more modest participants of the 1940s – Rita Angus, Doris Lusk, Evelyn Page, Olivia Spencer Bower, May Smith, and Louise Henderson. They were cautious painters, attaining

an authentic personal vision within a narrow compass, seldom depart-
ing far from 'subject'. They were all . . . beneficiaries of that colonial-
genteel tradition that made it acceptable, even estimable, for middle-
class girls to occupy themselves with paint, preferably watercolour. All
transcended these limitations and sometimes incurred the wrath of family
and society in doing so. But the ability to transcend fell short of the
capacity to break new ground.[8]

That the support middle-class girls interested in art received from
their families was seen as a limitation only makes sense if you take
seriously the idea of the artist as hero – the lonely genius. Clearly
Oliver did so. He described McCahon, Gordon Walters and Woollaston
as: 'home-grown and largely self-taught; they were neither over-
whelmed by overseas example nor inhibited by local precept'.[9]

This conception of the male artist as genius has been effectively
deconstructed and analysed by a number of British and American
feminist scholars beginning with Linda Nochlin, Griselda Pollock
and Roszika Parker.[10] It is also a deceptive representation of the ca-
reer of these New Zealand artists, ignoring both the time artists like
McCahon spent in art schools and the community of artists who en-
couraged and supported their work. The impact of European ideas,
as mediated through the notebooks and conversation of Flora Scales,
on both Woollaston and McCahon, is well attested. Woollaston did
not take formal classes from Scales but copied her notes from the
Hans Hofman School of Fine Arts in Munich, which he later lent to
Colin McCahon.[11]

Feminist art historians have also begun re-examining the work of
the female amateur and semi-professional artists whose work pro-
vided a significant proportion of the exhibits hung in art societies
both in New Zealand and abroad. This work has led to a greater ap-
preciation of their skills and the subtleties of their 'personal visions',
however narrow these may have been in their choice of subject mat-
ter or painting medium.[12]

Art in New Zealand is probably the primary source of informa-
tion on the Pakeha arts in the period between the two world wars.
This is not necessarily because of the quality of its art criticism but
because of its inclusive policies. This inclusiveness was deliberate.
In the first number, in 1928, the editors, Harry Tombs and C.A. Marris
(the literary editor), set out their goals for the journal. They saw its

principal role as being to generate and invigorate the discussion of
art in the Dominion:

> At last our artists and writers have a journal they can justly call their
> own. In especial, the artists. Heretofore they have had to content them-
> selves for reward with what publicity exhibition time afforded them . . .
> Then there were the newspapers. In this country, newspaper art notices
> are for the most part more kindly than constructively critical.

Whatever the reason for the kindliness of their tone, such notices
impart no stimulus to an art that needs stimulating. On the contrary,
they may merely have deluded the artist into a belief that he had
'arrived' or at least was 'arriving'.[13]

The journal's coverage was to be Dominion-wide, avoiding sec-
tarianism or parochialism.[14] This coverage was to aid in the setting of
new and higher standards for all practitioners both artistic and liter-
ary.[15] *Art in New Zealand* published short stories and poems in addi-
tion to pieces on the fine arts.

The first issue focused particularly on painters in Wellington
and the second on those in Christchurch. In the editorial of the sec-
ond issue it was noted that:

> It has not been found possible to do justice in one issue to the work of
> the Southern practitioners. For example, no women artists from that
> city are represented in the colour reproductions. However, that defi-
> ciency will be remedied in a future number.[16]

While women may not have been included amongst the artists
singled out for colour illustration in the first two issues, they were
represented elsewhere, including in the monochrome pictures.
Moreover, the editors kept their promise, for in the first issue of
volume 2, all the colour illustrations depicted work by Christchurch
women. The first plate was Evelyn Polson (later Page)'s *December
Noon*.[17]

The contents of the journal consisted of short articles about indi-
vidual artists, discussions about art, literature, drama and architec-
ture, poems and short stories, critiques of the big exhibitions held by
the provincial art societies and Art Notes, which were published at
the end of each issue. It was in these last two areas that women were
most fully represented. Women were also active as contributors to
the literary side of the journal, but this is not the focus of this essay.

The art scene, as represented here, was divided principally among the four main provincial centres: Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington, with Christchurch probably the most dynamic. Each of these cities had an art society, Dunedin's being called the Otago Art Society, while in Wellington there was the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, which held its fiftieth annual exhibition in 1938. These annual exhibitions played a major role in the creation of reputations and the selling of art works, at a time when private dealer galleries were scarce.[18] Consequently, the exhibitions, particularly those in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, received considerable attention. The exhibitors in these shows were not restricted to local members, and artists from around New Zealand sent works to them.

It was, therefore, possible for an artist to send the same work to each provincial exhibition. For example, Evelyn Page's oil painting, *Pohutukawa Rina*, was used to accompany d'Auvergne Boxall's 'Observations on the Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition'.[19] It also received a positive review from A.J.C. Fisher's account of the Auckland Society of Arts exhibition:

> I am pleased to see anyone tackling the difficult problem of the nude in the open air. This artist, with further arduous study of the nude, should produce some very attractive work.[20]

Similarly, the work was praised by the anonymous reviewer of the Otago Art Society's exhibition for its skill in depicting 'the play of sunlight on the bodies through the leafy boughs overhead'.[21] The work was also shown in Wellington at the New Zealand Academy's Annual Exhibition where it provided the Englishman Christopher Perkins with one more opportunity to sound off about the inadequacies of local art. In his condescending analysis, he described how:

> two naked girls ... are receiving dappled sunlight on their bodies, which are well and firmly described. But the two figures do not form a rhythmic whole with each other, the tree and the rest of the space-content. If we study the repertoire of pictures by Giorgione or Poussin or Ingres – we perceive that the obvious symmetry of the women's bodies is only a part of a complete hidden symmetry embracing every inch of the canvas where, in consequence, all seems inevitable and sublime. Turning back to Miss Polson's canvas, we realise that it is not a complete composition, but rather a very fine study, which will doubtless be very use-

ful when she decides to construct a picture with this material.[22]

Evelyn Page's painting, one of several nude studies of women she produced at this time, did receive considerable negative criticism. Perkins, a muted modernist, attacked its formal qualities, while others were more offended by its subject matter.[23]

Perkins' review was probably one of the more astute, if also mean-spirited, of those published in the journal, which rarely published outspokenly critical reviews. It also sparked one of the few obvious controversies in the journal, with responses being published in the next issue.[24] He did, however, in the same article, write more positively of other women artists praising, for example, Elizabeth Lissaman's pottery. 'Elizabeth Lissaman is an artist, and the title is meant as one of homage.'[25] He also wrote more kindly of Helen Blair, Elizabeth Kelly, Betty Rhind and D.K. Richmond.[26]

The inclusion of Elizabeth Lissaman highlights one interesting aspect of both the society exhibitions and *Art in New Zealand*. While a distinction may have been made between the applied and fine arts, potters, textile artists, metalworkers and other designers were represented. There are innumerable examples of this, such as Mary Brown who exhibited enamel and metalwork at the 1935 NZ Academy of Fine Arts Annual Exhibition.[27]

It would be misleading to interpret this inclusion as an example of a more enlightened attitude towards the place of craft design within the fine arts hierarchy. Rather it reflected the nature of art education in the country, particularly for women. This education was based on the South Kensington examination system, where the emphasis was upon the practical and decorative arts, the domestic nature of which was considered more appropriate for 'young ladies'. As Ann Calhoun has shown, New Zealand art and technical schools provided students with a broad education in both the applied and fine arts, producing weavers, jewellers, embroiderers and illustrators, and providing women with potential careers.[28] Women moved between the applied and the fine arts more frequently, and more easily, during their careers than did men. This can be seen in the careers of women who went through the South Kensington system of education and later became prominent in art circles including Mabel Hill and Mary E. Richardson (later Tripe); in 1894, the latter became the first student from the colonies to gain her Art Master's Certificate.[29]

That this type of training continued into the 1930s is indicated by the journal's recording of student work and exhibitions. For example, Nancy Bridgewater's silver coffee pot was included in the Canterbury College of Art Jubilee Exhibition of student work in 1933, as was a lamp by Ngarita Partridge.[30] Women also contributed articles on the applied arts, for example Jessica Andreae on 'Weaving in the Home',[31] while Louise Henderson contributed an article on 'Embroidery, a Living Art'.[32] Elizabeth Lissaman wrote a short piece on New Zealand pottery.[33] This inclusion of applied arts in art magazines became increasingly uncommon after the Second World War. It was not until the appearance of the Women's Art Movement and the questioning of modernist art and its ideology, that the distinctions between the fine arts and the applied became blurred, and what were once considered 'craft' forms reappeared more regularly in art magazines.

It is in the Art Notes rather than the exhibition reviews, however, that researchers can get a clearer picture of the range of activities women were involved with at this time. The column Art Notes, which changed its name to News from the Centres in volume 15 (1942), while operating on some levels as a 'gossip' column, is a particularly useful source for researching women artists. For example, weddings are occasionally mentioned such as that of Mary Grenville, daughter of Mrs L.C. Hogg, to Stephen Bet of Taunton, England, in Cairo in 1933: 'Mrs. Bet is well known in Christchurch as Miss Mary Hogg.' She had travelled together with Olivia Spencer Bower to Europe and exhibited interesting and fresh watercolours with the Canterbury Society of Art.[34] As has been frequently pointed out by feminist researchers, with the change of surname that so frequently accompanied marriage, a woman's career could become lost, and keeping track of changing surnames can be difficult.[35] A woman's identity could be subsumed in that of her husband. A telling example of this within *Art in New Zealand* is that provided by the important art entrepreneur Mary Murray Fuller, who is known exclusively as Mrs Murray Fuller, after her husband. This was, of course, common practice at the time.[36]

The range of women's activities covered in Art Notes in any particular issue can be indicated by examining the contents of volume 3, issue 4, from 1931. Organised by province, the Notes briefly outline local events. In Auckland, for example, Miss I.M. Copeland, who had just returned from overseas, was the inaugural speaker at the

Sketch Club of the Auckland Society of Arts. She spoke on the trends 'which modern art was taking in the Old Country, where a feature of the work was the extreme virility that depicted itself in much of the present day painting'.[37] Copeland also acted as a helpful critic to those who had brought along their own sketches to the meeting. A list of the officers of the club was also recorded, including the male chairman and the committee which was made up of three women and three men.[38] The Canterbury section included reference to the death of Mrs Leslie Greener (Rhona Haszard) in Alexandria and the travels of Mrs Maud Sherwood (better known in Wellington as Miss Kimball). Sherwood had spent ten weeks on a painting tour of Italy and had visited Mr and Mrs Sydney Thompson in Concarneau.[39] From Wellington there is a short review of a show by Miss D.K. Richmond, Miss Jean McKay and Mr Esmond Atkinson at Miss Richmond's studio in Hill Street. This exhibition was visited by Their Excellencies (the Governor-General and his wife), who purchased works by Miss Richmond and Miss MacKay.[40] The final entry was from Sydney which recorded the death of Nellie Melba, the Australian opera singer, making reference to her bequest of £8000 to the Albert St Conservatorium in Melbourne and to her collection of Australian pictures, believed to be one of the largest in Australia.[41]

As can be seen, this type of information is invaluable in providing answers to a variety of questions. The movement of artists around the world and the discussion of overseas art is crucial for an understanding of how ideas were spread, what access New Zealanders had to international stylistic developments and how artists were able to overcome the perceived disadvantages of the country's geographical isolation from the art centres of Europe. Of interest also is the structure of the art communities in the different regions and how artists exhibited their work. Dorothy Kate Richmond's use of her studio reflects one particular solution, the use of private studio space for public exhibition. Women appear to have been particularly innovative in finding alternative spaces for exhibition, making use of private homes, studios and shops. Male artists often shared these spaces, but seem rarely to have organised such events. Others used more public spaces. For example, Gwyneth Richardson successfully exhibited seventy watercolours in Messrs Kirkcaldie and Stain's Lounge in Wellington,[42] while Ivy Copeland exhibited work in the Auckland Society of Arts Club Rooms in December 1932.[43] The arrival of for-

eign artists in New Zealand was also recorded, such as the visit of two Australian artists: Winifred Caddy in 1932[44] and Margaret Preston in 1930. The latter had come to New Zealand to study Maori art.[45] Local artists, both female and male, were encouraged by the editors to follow her example in mining indigenous artforms to provide inspiration for their own works.

Women's successes in competitions were also recorded. Ida G. Eise and Rata Lovell Smith were both early winners of the Bledisloe Landscape Medal. This competition had been set up to encourage New Zealand-based artists, and was only to be awarded if the work submitted was of sufficient merit.[46] Eise was, indeed, the first to receive the award and her oil painting of Mangaotaki River was the colour frontispiece of the first issue of volume 9 of *Art in New Zealand*.[47] It was acquired by the Auckland Public Library and Art Gallery.[48] Jean Farquahar won the first Carnegie Travelling Scholarship in 1938.[49] Women were less frequently amongst those who made up the committees of art societies and galleries. Ivy Copeland and Ida Eise were the only women amongst the twelve members of the purchasing committee set up by the council of the Auckland Society of Arts to consider Mackelvie Collection purchases.[50] Neither was an office bearer. This was typical of most committees, although some women did become secretaries. Ivy Copeland was the first secretary of the Auckland Sketch Club.[51] Mrs Claude Sawtell (E. Rosa Button) was the honorary secretary of the Society of Imperial Culture.[52] Quite often the membership of committees was entirely male, for example the 1931 committee of the Association of New Zealand Art Societies.[53]

The information provided by Art Notes and the society exhibition reviews is very useful for the identification of who was active on the art scene and where. It can help recreate the artistic careers of a sizeable number of women. In the case of Rhona Haszard, it also aids in the understanding of the artist's posthumous career. After her death in Egypt in 1931, her husband, Leslie Greener, toured a collection of some forty of her works around New Zealand, advertising their arrival months in advance through the Art Notes.[54] He used *Art in New Zealand* to promote her work, writing a eulogy to her vital style and her success overseas, citing the French critic Henry Bergasse, who reportedly exclaimed on meeting her: 'But I have been thinking Rhona Haszard was a man. You do not paint like a woman.'[55] When the work

finally reached New Zealand, it was held up as a striking example of the benefit derived from contact with contemporary art influences abroad: 'it is quite clear that without the wider opportunities afforded her she must have remained an immature artist'.[56] She was promoted as one of the leading contemporary artists both in Great Britain and abroad.[57] This is clearly a much exaggerated claim, and it is uncertain how successful she actually was. This 'international reputation', however, made the art she did produce, and which was then sold in New Zealand, more appealing locally. While Haszard had practised in New Zealand before she travelled overseas, foreign recognition played a significant role for gaining attention in New Zealand. This was so for most of the women artists who were taken seriously in the journal.

In addition to reviews and Art Notes, the third principal source of information about women artists is found in articles focusing on individuals and groups. It is in these articles in particular that the social disparity between male and female artists is most obviously manifested. Generally, men had articles written about their work early in, or at the height of, their careers, while women were usually discussed after their death. Amongst younger artists, this is most noticeable. Toss Woollaston, for example, was featured within three years of his first appearance with the journal, while Rhona Haszard was written about only in the year following her death.[58]

Two well-established older artists who did not receive featured pieces until after their deaths were Dorothy Kate Richmond (1861–1935) and Margaret Stoddart (1865–1934). Both had received prominent coverage throughout their careers in reviews and Art Notes, and deservedly eulogistic obituaries were written about them. Their achievements were quickly played down, however, by later commentators. E.H. McCormick, in his *Letters and Art in New Zealand*, published in 1940, which was one of the first overviews of this country's art history, for example used words like 'purely technical competence' to describe their art:

> [T]hey were less catholic than their immediate predecessors, selected less ambitious subjects, and concentrated on solving technical problems raised within the chosen bounds.[59]

The language used at the time of their deaths to differentiate between the two women is fascinating. Margaret Stoddart's work was

given the highest of accolades: it was considered 'virile'. It is diffi-
cult to imagine quite what was meant by this, although in her obitu-
ary she was praised as being a pioneer whose painting was character-
ised by a robust technique, strong values and a fine colour sense,
'even her flower pieces were made of sterner stuff . . . there was
nothing fragile about Miss Stoddart, but rather a tender violence'.[60]
This gender-coded language was used unself-consciously through-
out the criticism published in the journal. 'Virility' was high praise
in the 1930s. The editors of *Art in New Zealand* recorded with pride
the description of their journal in the British publication *The Artist* as
a 'virile magazine'.[61] Similarly, a touring Loan Collection of Con-
temporary Canadian Painting at the Auckland Art Gallery was de-
scribed as a very 'virile' exhibition.[62] Roland Hipkins, in his review
of the 1935 New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Annual Exhibition,
wrote: 'In general, the exhibition demonstrates that New Zealand
artists continue to be conservatively progressive, yet with a virility
which precludes anything in the nature of eccentricity'.[63]

Gendered language was also used to distinguish Stoddart's work
from that of Dorothy Kate Richmond, whose work, when compared
to Stoddart's, was designated as 'feminine' and 'sensitive'.[64]

> Very notable is the strong antithesis in the work of each artist, an anto-
> nym of maleness and feminine character – Miss Stoddart virile in her
> realism, Miss Richmond sensitive in her emotionalism.[65]

Reading through both posthumous accounts, it would appear that
'virile' qualities (at least here) consisted of 'deliberate composition
and firm technique' which also reflected the moral character of the
artist. Stoddart's work was seen as fresh, lively and engaged.[66] Rich-
mond, in contrast, was described as a romantic, 'her work owes some-
thing to her French training'.[67] Words like 'graciousness', 'simplic-
ity' and 'craftsmanship' are used, her watercolours had a spontane-
ous transparency and her oils a more sober dignity.[68] 'Dorothy Kate
Richmond had a warm heart and a facility for conveying her aes-
thetic emotion in paint without sentimentality, or over-emphasis'.[69]
It would be interesting to know whether these stylistic analyses re-
flected the artist's perceived character as much as the work she pro-
duced.

The use of gendered language in *Art in New Zealand* the 1930s is
worthy of a more detailed analysis than is undertaken here. The artist

throughout the journal is generally perceived to be male, despite the obvious large percentage of women involved. This, in turn, was reflected in which figures the editors treated seriously. On the few occasions where gender-inclusive language was used, the artist discussed was a woman. At the same time, however, the term 'feminine' was not perceived then as a dismissive one when applied to a female artist. Our contemporary reading would challenge whether this was the case. While this was rarely articulated, there was a sense that it was considered an appropriate quality in women's art. On one of the few occasions when women's art practice was specifically discussed, it was by a foreign critic in London, writing about Frances Hodgkins:

> There are, I think, two reasons for her individuality, her aesthetic loneliness, one might almost say her uniqueness. She is a woman and she is a New Zealander. European painting has been almost exclusively a masculine art and has therefore naturally developed a set of symbols and attitudes adapted to men; such women as have painted have either adopted the masculine attitude, or they have produced paintings corresponding to the male stereotype for women - pretty and tasteful and superficial. Frances Hodgkins is a serious woman painter, as Emily Bronte or Jane Austen or Edith Sitwell are serious women writers. Like these women she has a contribution to make to the experience of the world which no man could provide.[70]

The notices that Frances Hodgkins received in the English press were regularly recorded in *Art in New Zealand*, although in the early issues, at least, what she produced was rarely discussed. Her success was, however, celebrated.[71]

Unlike Frances Hodgkins, however, the women given prominence in these articles are not necessarily names familiar today. Two of the most successful were Mrs M.E.R. Tripe (1867–1939) and Mrs A. Elizabeth Kelly (1877–1946). Tripe was another artist about whom the term 'virile' was used.[72] Like Kelly, she was born in Christchurch, but her father's position as a member of Parliament led to her moving to Wellington. The article about Tripe, written as an obituary, was one of the more detailed outlines of a woman artist's career presented in the journal. It records her education and her professional career, noting that she earned the Diploma of Art Master, but not that she was the first colonial to receive it. The essay also listed some of her teachers such as James Nairn, Van der Velden and Nerli, her travels,

her teaching, where she exhibited and which collections held her work.[73] It also recorded that she had served on the committee of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts and on one for the establishment of the National Gallery.[74] Curiously, it did not mention that she was a frequent contributor to the journal, writing articles and entries in Art Notes.[75]

Both Tripe and Kelly were fashionable portraitists. While Kelly was still alive, her work featured in an article by J.H.E. Schroder, which also discussed the work of her husband, Cecil F. Kelly.[76] The structure of this article is revealing. Elizabeth Kelly was probably one of the most successful artists of her generation, at least by the terms in which success was then measured, yet within the article itself her husband's successes were mentioned first. In 1934 his painting 'Lyttelton Harbour' was hung in the Royal Academy and in 1935 and 1936 he had paintings in the Paris Salon, the Exhibition of Empire Artists in Birmingham, and in the Royal Society of British Artists and the Royal Cambrian Academy.[77] While her husband did receive acknowledgement abroad, his successes paled in comparison with those of his wife. She won her first medal in 1899 and in 1938 was awarded the CBE.[78] Given the academic nature of the art scene in New Zealand, and its British leanings, her successes in Europe were notable. She exhibited at the Royal Academy shows in London in 1931–36, and two of her works in 1935 were hung 'on the line'.[79] To be hung 'on the line' meant that your work was placed at eye level, which in shows where paintings were stacked up the walls, was an extremely advantageous position *and* a much-prized honour. These successes were duly noted in each year's Art Notes.[80] In addition, however, she also received a Mention Honorable in 1932 and in 1934 a silver medal at the Paris Salon, the highest award the Salon had given a New Zealand artist.[81] Given these triumphs, the surprise is not that she was featured, but that it took so long to write this account of her career.

Amongst other living artists who received the honour of such a feature was Jenny Campbell, who was married to Roland Hipkins.[82] Campbell was a fine artist in her own right, and this was acknowledged in the article. Her presence here, however, was due to her husband's prominence. He was an art lecturer at the Wellington Technical College, having originally been brought out from Britain to teach at Napier under the La Trobe Scheme.[83] Other women artists featured

included Kathleen Salmond and Margaret Butler.[84] The latter, a sculptor, had just returned to New Zealand and had a well-established European reputation, while Salmond was a senior figure in Otago art circles. Both artists were thus well established when they appeared in the journal.

While younger women artists were rarely given this attention, they usually made up a sizeable proportion of the membership of breakaway groups that were featured in the journal.[85] For example, in 1927 a small group of artists, most of them members of the Canterbury Society of Arts, held two exhibitions independent of the main society.[86] The Group originally consisted of Viola Macmillan Brown, Edith Wall, Evelyn Page (then Polson), Margaret Anderson, Ngaio Marsh, W.H. Montgomery and W.S. Baverstock. Later members included Rita Cook (later Angus), James Cook, R.N. Field, Edith Collier and Louise Henderson. Guest exhibitors included Christopher Perkins, Roland Hipkins, Jenny Campbell and Toss Woollaston. When asked by the *Art in New Zealand* correspondent to explain their goals, W.S. Baverstock wrote:

> We are a group flying no standard, we have no plank or platform, nor do we make one of having none. The work of each member is distinct; we are not afraid of the unusual and the new, nor do we attempt to reduce anything to a formula.[87]

Gender was never mentioned in discussions of the Group. Nor was it raised when the less well known Rutland Group from Auckland appeared. The membership was made up of ex-Elam students and founded at the instigation of their secretary, Jack Crippen. It was more catholic in the make up of media represented, including applied as well as fine art works. Amongst the group were Bessie Christie, May Gilbert, Vida Steinert, Joan Edwards, Joan Harrison-Smith, the weavers Phyllis Crowly and Joan Lillicrap, Winifred Bodle and Briar Gardner, a potter.[88] Their first exhibition was held at the Auckland Arts Club rooms.

Given the conservative nature of much of the art promoted in the art societies, it is perhaps surprising how readily accepted was the work of younger artists. Admittedly, with the exception of Lois White, whose works were decorative and occasionally allegorical, these younger artists continued to work within the traditional genres of landscape, still-life and portraits. It was in their use of colour, their

technique and the more geometrical nature of their style, reflecting the influence of post-Impressionists like Cezanne, rather than in their subject matter, that they differed from older artists.[89] The contemporary art that New Zealand looked to was that produced at Home, from Britain – rather than the more experimental kind from Europe.

It is important to remember that while artist and critics today focus on the more 'avant-garde' works produced in Europe and the USA, let alone New Zealand and Australia, the artistic culture accepted and experienced by those interested in the arts in the 1930s was very different from that now elevated to the centre stage. The modernist art known to New Zealanders was, in turn, mediated through the watered down versions produced in England. New Zealand writers, at least in *Art in New Zealand*, prided themselves of the 'moderation' of such modernists as Rita Angus or Rhona Haszard, who avoided the extremes of such figures as Matisse or the Surrealists, producing 'modernism in a saner form'.[90] Indeed, New Zealand's isolation and the slowness with which ideas reached the country was sometimes seen as an asset because it 'has been spared those excesses which stultify true progress in the arts'.[91] It was only as the journal moved into the 1940s that a more informed interest in modernism began to occur.[92]

The picture gained of the New Zealand art scene when the pages of *Art in New Zealand* is consulted is markedly different from that obtained in more recent art history texts. The contents of *Art in New Zealand* do not give a complete picture of events, nor of attitudes in the 1930s. It was described by one left-wing critic as the 'watery quarterly'.[93] The journal's inclusiveness, however, its avoidance of serious controversy and the editors' desire to report the activities of local groups, meant that it was reasonably representative of the range of art produced in these decades. This breadth of representation means that *Art in New Zealand* provides us with a more complete record of women's involvement in the arts than any other publication produced in New Zealand this century. Artists who are much admired today, such as Rita Angus or Louise Henderson, were certainly included, but the women who were most prominent at the time were much older with well-established careers. Elizabeth Kelly and Mary Tripe were highly competent, but their fashionable works now look polite, staid and dated.

Anne Kirker has described the 1920s and thirties as being a time 'when there was something approaching a real balance, in terms of public acceptance between male and female artists'.[94] It is only when you look at who was on the committees, who theorised about art, what artists received individual attention, that you notice that generally male careers were given more weight, receiving more sustained attention at the height of their careers, while women were more generally discussed after their deaths or when their real successes forced attention upon their work. Women were erased from the record and less likely to be included in major collections in their own time and their work was dismissed as modest, narrow and competent by later writers who were often more interested in artists who conformed to an expectation of male genius. *Art in New Zealand* was a journal which, while it represented women, did them few favours.

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NOTES

1   A.D. Carbery, 'D.K. Richmond: An Appreciation', *Art in New Zealand*, 8 (1935-36) p. 20.
2   ibid., p. 9.
3   ibid.
4   E.H. McCormick, *Letters and Art in New Zealand* (Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1940). It was not until the late 1960s that the next history of New Zealand painting was written, when Gordon H. Brown and Hamish Keith produced *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting* (Collins, Auckland, 1969) and Gil Docking's larger work came out two years later [Gil Docking, *Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting* (A.H. and A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1971)].

5   Nicola J. Green, *By the Waters of Babylon: The Art of A. Lois White* (Auckland City Art Gallery, David Bateman, Auckland, 1993); Janet Paul and Neil Roberts, *Evelyn Page: Seven Decades* (Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch; Allen & Unwin, Wellington, 1986) and Lisa Beaven and Grant Banbury, *Landmarks: the Landscape Paintings of Doris Lusk* (Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Hazard Press, Christchurch, 1996).

6   For a comprehensive list of the women mentioned in *Art in New Zealand* and where they are included within the journal, see Judith Collard and Jill Davidson, 'Visual Women: An Index of Women Artists and Patrons in *Art in New Zealand*', *Bulletin of New Zealand Art History*, 19 (1998 forthcoming).

7   Anne Kirker, *New Zealand Women Artists: A Survey of 150 Years* (Craftsman House, Tortola, 2nd edition, 1993) p. 10.

8   W.H. Oliver, 'The Awakening Imagination, 1940-1980', Geoffrey W. Rice(ed), *The Oxford History of New Zealand,* (2nd edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992) pp. 549-50. Kirker only quotes the first two sentences, but the entire passage is very enlightening.

9   ibid., p. 549. It is clear that all three had some form of art education; McCahon attended, intermittently, the Dunedin School of Art, while Toss Woollaston spent brief periods at the Canterbury College School of Art and the Dunedin School of Art and Gordon Walters attended the Wellington Technical College Art School between 1936 and 1944 [Gordon H. Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940- 1960: Conformity and Dissension* (Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Exhibition, Wellington, 1981) pp. 95, 99, 103].

10 Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists', *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1989) pp. 145–178; Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses, Women, Art and Ideology* (Pandora Press, 1981).

11 Kirker, p. 70.

12 The reappraisal of the amateur/professional distinction and the 'narrow, personal vision' frequently ascribed in women's art has predominantly focused on nineteenth-century art works; see, for example, Anne Higonnet, 'Secluded Vision: Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Radical History Review* 38 (1987) pp. 16-36; Caroline Davidson, *Women's Worlds: The Art and Life of Mary Ellen Best, 1809-1891* (Chatto and Windus, New York, 1985) and more general surveys such as Deborah Cherry,

Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists (Routledge, London, 1993) and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists* (The Women's Press, London, 1987).

[13] *Art in New Zealand*, 1 (1928-29) p. 5.

[14] ibid.

[15] ibid., p. 6.

[16] *Art in New Zealand*, 1 (1928-29) p. 74.

[17] *Art in New Zealand*, 2 (1929-30) pl. I.

[18] Edwin Murray Fuller established one of the first dealer galleries in New Zealand in Wellington in 1920 [Brown, p. 29; Ann Calhoun, 'Two Wellington Entrepreneurs of the Thirties: The Murray Fullers. 1. Edwin Murray Fuller', *Art New Zealand*, 23 (1982) p. 20].

[19] *Art in New Zealand*, 3 (1930-31) pl. VII and p. 261.

[20] *Art in New Zealand*, 4 (1931-32) p. 66.

[21] ibid., p.154.

[22] Christopher Perkins, 'NZ Academy Annual Exhibition', *Art in New Zealand*, 4 (1931-32) p. 108.

[23] This later controversy is discussed more fully in Brown (pp. 44-46) and Neil Roberts, 'Towards Independence', in Paul and Roberts (pp. 64-65). It is clear that the place of the nude and, indeed, the human figure, in the art of this period would be a future area for research.

[24] *Art in New Zealand*, 4 (1931-32) pp. 225-226.

[25] Perkins., p. 105.

[26] ibid., pp. 106, 107, 110.

[27] One enamellist, Elsa Morrah, had a distinguished career in France; her enamel boxes and jewellery were represented at the International Exhibition at Liège in 1930 and her work was collected by the Musée des Beaux-Arts. The silversmith Marjorie Watson and the textile designer Phyllis Crowley both exhibited with the Rutland Art Group in Auckland [*Art in New Zealand*, 8 (1935-36) p. 76; 3 (1930-31) p. 95; 9 (1936-37) p. 109; 14 (1941-42) p. 72].

[28] Ann Calhoun, 'A Trade for their Daughters: Women in the Fine and Applied Arts in New Zealand from 1870 to 1900', *Bulletin of New Zealand Art History*, 14 (1993) pp. 15-28; Ann Calhoun, 'New Zealand Women Artists Before and After 1893', *Women's Studies Journal*, 4 (1988) pp. 54-67.

[29] Calhoun, 'A Trade for their Daughters', p. 20.

[30] *Art in New Zealand*, 5 (1932-33) p. 58. Silverware by May C. Wilson was illustrated amongst work by Wellington Teachers' College students [*Art in New Zealand*, 7 (1934-35) p. 43].

31   *Art in New Zealand*, 2 (1929-30) pp. 265-269.
32   *Art in New Zealand*, 14 (1941-42) pp. 37-38.
33   *Art in New Zealand*, 1 (1928-29) pp. 139-40.
34   *Art in New Zealand*, 5 (1933-34) p. 190.
35   See, for example, the discussion in Pamela Gerrish Nunn's *Victorian Women Artists*, pp. 32-33.
36   So complete was the exclusion of her first name, let alone her single name, that in the recent index of the journal *A Journal of their Own* she is listed as Mrs E. Murray Fuller. An indication of Mary Fuller's importance to New Zealand art is revealed by a brief outline of her career. As Mary Hamilton, she had been an artist before her marriage. Mary Murray Fuller organised three exhibitions of contemporary British art in 1935, 1936 and 1940, and was a powerful force within the New Zealand art scene. She was also the London representative of the National Art Gallery (Wellington) until she resigned in 1947 [Richard Dingwall, Rosemary Entwistle and Lois Robertson (eds) *A Journal of their Own: An Index to 'Art in New Zealand' 1928-1946* (Bulletin of New Zealand Art History Special Series No. 2 1997) p. 56; Ann Calhoun, 'Two Wellington Entrepreneurs of the Thirties: The Murray Fullers. II. Mary Murray Fuller', *Art New Zealand*, 24 (1982) pp. 22-25; Calhoun, 'I. Edwin Murray Fuller', pp. 20-23].
37   *Art in New Zealand*, 3 (1930-31) p. 299. The choice of gendered adjectives is notable throughout the journal, as I will discuss below.
38   ibid.
39   ibid., pp. 299-300.
40   ibid., p. 301.
41   ibid., p. 302.
42   *Art in New Zealand*, 5 (1932-33) p. 131.
43   *Art in New Zealand*, 5 (1932-33) p.189.
44   *Art in New Zealand*, 5 (1932-33) p.189.
45   *Art in New Zealand*, 3 (1930-31) p. 70.
46   *Art in New Zealand*, 5 (1932-33) p. 6.
47   *Art in New Zealand*, 9 (1936-37) frontispiece.
48   ibid., p. 53.
49   *Art in New Zealand*, 11 (1938-39) p. 94.
50   *Art in New Zealand*, 4 (1931-32) p. 25.
51   *Art in New Zealand*, 5 (1932-33) p. 249.
52   *Art in New Zealand*, 6 (1933-34) p. 110.
53   *Art in New Zealand*, 4 (1931-32) p. 161.

54   The movement of the work from its arrival in New Zealand and its display in centres such as Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch can be readily traced within the journal [*Art in New Zealand*, 4 (1931-32) p. 72, p. 291; 5 (1932-33) pp. 191; 250; 6 (1933-34) pp. 53-56].

55   Leslie Greener, 'Rhona Haszard', *Art in New Zealand*, 5 (1932-33) p. 20.

56   E.B. Gunson, 'Exhibitors of Contemporary Art', *Art in New Zealand*, 6 (1933-34) p. 40.

57   ibid., p. 41; Greener, pp. 17-20.

58   'Mr. Tosswill Woollaston: A Little Known Artist Interviews Our Reporter', *Art in New Zealand*, 10 (1937-38) pp. 7-13; for Haszard see previous note.

59   E.H. McCormick, p. 159.

60   Sydney L. Thompson and J. Shelley, 'Miss M.O. Stoddart', *Art in New Zealand*, 8 (1935-36) p. 100.

61   *Art in New Zealand*, 6 (1933-34) p. 120.

62   *Art in New Zealand*, 11 (1938-39) p. 46.

63   *Art in New Zealand*, 8 (1935-36) p. 75.

64   Carbery, p. 10.

65   ibid.

66   Thompson and Shelley, p. 100.

67   Carbery, p.10

68   ibid., p.20.

69   ibid., p.19

70   Geoffrey Gorer, reprinted from the English *Listener*, 'The Art of Frances Hodgkins', *Art in New Zealand*, 10 (1937-38) p. 160.

71   For example, the editors wrote of her: 'New Zealand is entitled to be extremely proud of her. It would be all to the good of art in this country if she could be persuaded to return for a space and tell us with that frankness of hers what is needed to put New Zealand art on a higher plane.'[*Art in New Zealand*, 11 (1938-39) p. 106].

72   'M.E.R. Tripe – Painter', *Art in New Zealand*, 12 (1939-40) p. 133.

73   ibid., pp. 133-4.

74   ibid., p. 135.

75   Kirker, p.106.

76   'J.H.E. Schroder, Cecil F. and A. Elizabeth Kelly, A.D. Carbery', *Art in New Zealand*, 9 (1936-37) pp. 123-32.

77   Schroder, p. 123.

78   Kirker, p. 106.

79   Schroder, p. 123.

[80] *Art in New Zealand*, (1931-32) pp. 29, 72; 6 (1933-34) p. 54; 7 (1934-35) p.48; 8 (1935-36) pp. 117-18.

[81] Kelly also had works shown at the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, the Empire Exhibition, the London Portrait Society and the Royal Cambrian Society. She was also invited to hold 'one-man' shows at the Lincoln Art Gallery and at the Walker Art Gallery, New Bond Street, London (Schroder, p. 124.).

[82] W.S. Wauchop, 'Roland Hipkins and Jenny Campbell', *Art in New Zealand*, 9 (1936-37) pp. 177-187.

[83] Brown, p. 18.

[84] R.T. Little, 'The Art of Kathleen Salmond: an Appreciation', *Art in New Zealand*, 12 (1939-40) pp. 199-207; 'Margaret Butler Returns', *Art in New Zealand*, (1933-34) pp. 160-163.

[85] The one exception being Olivia Spencer Bower [C.A. Marris, 'Olivia Spencer Bower and Her Art', *Art in New Zealand*, 10 (1937-38) pp. 125-135].

[86] W.S. Baverstock, 'The 1929 Group', *Art in New Zealand*, 2 (1929-30) p. 63.

[87] ibid.

[88] *Art in New Zealand*, 9 (1936-37) p. 109.

[89] McCormick described Rita Angus as a follower of Cezanne, acknowledging the influence of coloured prints that were now entering the country (McCormick, p.193).

[90] *Art in New Zealand*, 6 (1933-34) p. 53. See also *Art in New Zealand*, 6 (1933-34) pp. 68-9; 180. The critique of modernism offered within the pages of such colonial journals as *Art in New Zealand* is a potentially fruitful area for further research.

[91] 'New Zealand Art Opening of the National Centennial Exhibition in Dunedin', *Art in New Zealand*, 12 (1939-40) p. 164.

[92] For example, an account of the work of Klee, Kokoschka and Grosz was published in 1938. Edward C. Simpson, 'Art in Modern Germany', *Art in New Zealand*, 11 (1938-39) pp. 67-73.

[93] In 1938, Curnow contemptuously referred to it as 'the watery quarterly' in a review of A.R.D. Fairburn's *Dominion* (Brown, p. 72).

[94] Kirker, p. 63.

The Fabric of Their Lives:
Quilters Negotiating Time and Space[1]

AMANDA DOYLE

*How much piecin' a quilt is like livin' a life! Many a time I've set and
listened to Parson Page preachin' about predestination and free will,
and I've said to myself, "If I could jest git up there in the pulpit with one
of my quilts, I could make life a heap plainer than parson's makin' it
with his big words." You see, to make a quilt you start out with jest so
much caliker; you don't go to the store and pick it out and buy it, but the
neighbors give you a piece here and there and you'll find you have a
piece left over every time you've cut out a dress, and you jest take what-
ever happens to come. That's predestination. But when it comes to cuttin'
out the quilt, why, you're free to choose your own pattern. You give the
same kind of pieces to two persons and one'll make a 'Nine-Patch' and
the other one'll make a 'Wild-goose-chase' and so there'll be two quilts
made of the same kind of pieces but jest as different as can be. That's the
way of livin'. The Lord sends us the pieces we can cut 'em out and put
'em together pretty much to suit ourselves. There's a heap more in the
cuttin' out and the sewin' than there is in the caliker.[2]*

New Zealand is a strongly gendered society. Historical
constructions of masculinity and femininity arise from the particular
set of circumstances of our colonial history and continue to shape
contemporary society.[3] A key aspect of the construction of femininity
is a woman's primary and supposedly natural role as the selfless
nurturer of family and community. The values that characterise New
Zealand femininity are shared by the quilting community. This paper
considers the way gendered expectations shape the temporal and
spatial zones in which a quilter moves, and argues that through her
involvement in quilting activities, a quilter is empowered to fashion
a contemporary identity drawing on the 'traditional' ideal but cutting
it up and rearranging it to suit the changing circumstances of her
life.[4] It is based on ethnographic research I conducted throughout
1997 as a temporary member of Highway 16, a quilt group based in
Kumeu, north of Auckland.[5]

Great efforts have been made to record quilting history in North
America where pioneer families are known to have made quilts out

of necessity.[6] In settler communities, the production of a quilt served not only practical ends but also a social function as women came together at a quilting bee and exchanged news and views.[7] Over time, the necessity – or at least the cost effectiveness – of home produced goods has decreased and, as a result, the quilt's utility has become secondary to its aesthetic appeal.

The history of quilting in New Zealand is less well known.[8] New Zealand women are the inheritors of a strong tradition of home production; however, unlike in North America, this did not include a strong tradition of patchwork and quilting.[9] Quilting in the United States has enjoyed a revival since the 1970s and has become an extraordinarily popular activity. By 1984 'fourteen million Americans had made, bought, sold, or had something to do with a quilt'.[10] This upsurge in interest has had a knock-on effect in New Zealand which now boasts in excess of sixty quilting groups, a national association, a national magazine, a biennial symposium and numerous exhibitions.

In New Zealand, quilting plays a significant role in a quilter's social and family life, providing a means of self-identification and a way to claim a level of autonomy within and beyond the confines of the family.[11] Though the primacy of a quilter's socialised nurturing role remains central as evidenced by the way quilters position themselves in a web of familial, friendship and community relationships through the sentiments expressed in their quilts, it is also evident, to greater and lesser degrees, that this role sits in tension with the desire to pursue individual interests which require the luxury of personal time and space.

Negotiating time

The main concern of the quilters I spoke to was the negotiation of time in order to pursue their quilting interests.[12] This was particularly so for the younger women who still had children at home, as any quilting activity they undertook, whether at home or outside the home, was done against the backdrop of their familial obligations. In order to participate as a quilter, they were required to make administrative arrangements for family members. The older members of the group, who because of decreased family commitments were more at liberty to follow their own time clocks than were the younger women, did not speak so much about time constraints. Interestingly this was not so for all the women whose children had left home, as some of

their time was still controlled by the rhythms of family life in the satisfaction of their husband's continued demands.

Quilting retreats are one of the opportunities available to quilters who want to take time away from the home. Highway 16 runs weekend retreats twice a year.[13] They are held at a Girl Guide camp which can accommodate forty women, who stay on the premises from late Friday afternoon until Sunday afternoon during which time classes, food and entertainment are provided and cooking and cleaning is done on a roster basis. Retreats are characterised by an abundance of quilting. In addition, they provide the opportunity to buy more fabric, to 'show and tell', learn new techniques, to talk, laugh, drink, eat, have fun and to experience uninterrupted time and space.[14]

> For the many women whose bodily and social energies are constantly at the service of children, husbands, and/or employers, and hence fragmented, the experience of working in a concentrated manner on anything is something they crave.[15]

At the two quilting retreats that I attended there was a lot of conversation about what husbands and/or children were doing over the weekend and about the organisation that went into securing a weekend away. Some women had left prepared meals for their husbands so that they only needed to put a plate in the microwave, whilst others had simply ensured that there was an adequate supply of food in the cupboard. Women with children still at home had managed to orchestrate the husbands to stay at home for the weekend – one with their five children. This woman had to make a concerted effort to leave promptly so as to return home before the expiration of her husband's patience as he was having to juggle family and work responsibilities at the same time. A number of these women realised they were facing likely chaos upon their return in the form of general mess, dirty dishes and full washing baskets but this was obviously not too high a price to pay for a weekend retreat advertised as the 'Great Escape'. Attempts to attend retreats were not always successful. Rose had told me that she was hoping to go to the next winter retreat: 'I have to work on the [family] calendar. I'd like to [go] . . . I write my things on the calendar, I say "get your game of golf in because I'm out of here".' I noticed that Rose did not make it there; however, she had managed to make it to the last two symposiums through clever administration of family support.[16]

The last one worked out really well because it was the Christmas holidays which was super because [my husband] was home which was great. I didn't have to make arrangements . . . The one before that I sent them down to their grandfather in Christchurch which was rather a costly symposium!

It was clear the younger quilters felt a need to have time to themselves and realised that being a mother does not have to be an all-consuming role. Diana, a young married mother, told me: 'When I started [quilting] [my daughter] was little and I needed something to get out of the house from being a mother.' Rose related a similar need: 'When I had tiny little babies I didn't feel the need to do something for myself. It's more now, now that they're verbally demanding on you, I think "I want time for me".' Taking time-out challenges the behavioural expectations of the roles of wife and mother, and a number of quilters did not find this easy. In fact, Diana felt that her need for time to herself was seen as so out of the ordinary that her husband probably viewed it as a sign of an early mid-life crisis:

> I'm finding I've brought my family up, done my bit in the home, it's time for me now and I'm finding that quite a lot at the moment that things are hard to deal with and also like my job has changed so much. My life isn't what it was a few years ago and trying to make the family understand that has been very hard . . . so if I spoke to my husband, he'd say 'yes, she is going through a mid-life crisis' and yet I am only in my mid thirties but it's a time, a stage I'm going through, and I'm having to, like find myself again. But if I didn't have my patchwork I think I would have a lot of problems, because [my behaviour] has put pressure on our relationship.

Diana works in full-time paid employment, as does her husband, but is still responsible for running the household.

Influenced by the achievements of the Women's Movement, combined with the rise in the emphasis on the individual in political rhetoric, women such as Diana and Rose have expectations of fulfilling some of their own needs in addition to those of the family. However these expectations are tempered by the implicit model of woman as nurturer, which many women 'actively create and maintain' and upon which the current political ethos is dependent; therefore, it is not surprising that 'sympathy for mothers who do not follow the

strict – though often unspoken – rules that govern conventional behaviour is in short supply'.[17]

Many of the quilters I spoke to said that quilting enabled them to use their time effectively and have something to show for it. Jane, for example, told me that:

> For me it's more achieving something, having something to show for the time you've been at home, the spare time you had. 'I have achieved something today. I have made this'. Whereas you can't see the time you've put into the kids during the day.

Eleanor thought this compulsion to be busy could be attributed to the fact that 'Girls are programmed from such an early age – you have to be good, you have to be busy, the devil makes work for idle hands. You can't do this, you can't do that, you have to sit and do.' Andrea said that she liked quilting because it was good to get recognition for something that you have done, whereas she felt that the time and effort she put into housework just disappeared. It has been argued that women are both socialised into a feminine gender role and trained to do housework and that these are separate processes that have become conflated as one and the same, resulting in the tendency for a woman's self-esteem to derive, in part, from the way in which she keeps the house.[18] This would suggest, then, that as the efforts put into housework are barely visible and certainly do not last, a house-wife may feel similarly insignificant and transient. Therefore, a project like quilting provides an opportunity to transcend these limitations.

The tendency in Western society to make invisible and undervalue women's labour in the home is the result of the way economic dependence is equated with emotional dependence.[19] The converse – economic independence equated with emotional independence – leads to a woman who works in the home being viewed as not fully autonomous. In this way she is secondary to the dominant public world of paid work. In New Zealand's colonial history, a husband and wife are considered to have had an equitable exchange relationship of economic support for domestic production.[20] As time has 'progressed' and consumption overrides production in the home, the relationship has become less equitable. The value of the domestic tasks a woman performs has decreased as domestic production has moved to the manufacturing sector and caregiving tasks such as nursing have moved to the service sector, resulting in the private sphere

becoming dependent upon the public sphere.[21] Women's participation in the public sphere is constrained by their commitments in the private sphere, such as child care, and as a result they become dependent upon their male partner who works in the public sphere.[22] Economic dependence, in this sense, is the more common experience of the women in Highway 16. In the households that still had dependent children, the wife's main focus continued to be the family's needs, despite paid employment obligations.[23]

> We have a [family] business and I do office administration so I please myself. If I want a day off I have a day off. I normally do only three days a week but mostly I do four and sometimes I even do five but then, you know, I can whip out to do what I want to do and leave early to do the shopping otherwise I couldn't work because I don't like not being here when they come home from school. I have to do the gym transport several times a week and so that's as soon as we get home from school and I'm out again. The only way to do it is work in a family-type business.

Though Chrissie begins by saying that she pleases herself when it comes to the time she spends at work, the overriding impression is that pleasing herself means pleasing the other members of the family. Her experience is demonstrative of the two dominant time frameworks that govern a family woman's life.[24] The first and most dominant is linear clock time, which has become synonymous with wage labour time. The other temporal frame is process or relational time, which is a key characteristic of a family woman's time. Process time, rarely contiguous with linear time, is the time taken to perform a task, the length of which is often determined by the need of the 'other' that is being satisfied.[25] Anna Prussing, a New Zealand quilter interviewed on National Radio, believes it is the very fact of the interrupted nature of women's time due to family obligations that makes patchwork particularly attractive to women:

> We wait – a lot of women do. We wait by hospital beds, we wait in waiting rooms and often these days you will see a woman take out her packet and stitch on aeroplanes on all sorts of places so hand stitching is great – you can have a little packet and you can sit there and stitch when you have five minutes because our lives are so interrupted . . . I mean you think of the frustration of sitting in a gymnasium while your daughter goes through the motions and if she is very good you are there

constantly and sometimes at six in the morning – well at least you are doing something. Women hate wasted time so this is a way of using the time and producing something wonderful as well.[26]

The need for a quilter to have something to show for her time not only provides material evidence of her existence and efforts but is also strongly associated with her relational identity as a woman. It is quite common for quilters to give their work as gifts to friends and family, and adages such as 'Happy Hands Make Happy Hearts' are prolific in the quilting world. Jane told me:

> I'm not one for sitting doing nothing. I think a lot of the girls are the same. They will always have handwork or whatever when they are watching TV. I think it's the end result that is really interesting. You sit down and spend a few hours but eventually you get something that is useful to somebody so that is quite nice.

Even when the women I spoke to make something for 'themselves', in reality it is usually to decorate the family home, thus strengthening their self-esteem which is linked to the way in which they keep the house.

Occupying Space: Making a Quilt

Just as society's ideas about gender constructs a particular set of values and behaviours for women to follow, it also projects these ideas onto the material world, significantly affecting women's spatial relations. The stereotypical family home, for example, provides a separate space for the husband – in the form of a study, garage or shed – whereas the home in general is the woman's domain, especially the kitchen and laundry. However, the home is also the woman's place of work in which, generally, she has no private space. This gendered spatial organisation is being challenged by some quilters, particularly as they become more consumed by quilting.

> Quilt addicts describe how their first quilt project generally began on a small scale, confined to a table in a seldom-used domestic space. But in a relatively brief span of time, the number of quilt projects undertaken multiplied, the projects became larger in size, and soon no room was without a piece of a quilt-in-progress or at least traces of some quilt in the form of loose threads clinging to clothes, furniture upholstery, and rugs.[27]

The homes of the members of Highway 16 were for the most part of a standard layout that caters for nuclear family living. In the more established homes, women often had a sewing room as a result of a family member leaving home. In the case of Sharon, who is now living on her own, her entire home has become her workshop. In some of the newer homes, provisions have been made for a sewing room or space, sometimes specifically as such but at other times through the appropriation of a space designed for an office. Julia has placed a wall hanging that states *I Love Sewing* on her sewing room door, intended to be a territorial statement as her husband had been considering using the room as an office for the family business. Maureen, a relatively new quilter, set up her sewing room in the home office but now needs more space so is having the wall between the office and the garage knocked down so that she can expand her activities.

Many quilters said that they really enjoy spending time in their sewing rooms, which often provide necessary solitude. However, having this 'private' space does not guarantee sanctuary. A number of the women said that their husbands wanted them to be with them in the evenings watching TV rather than alone in the sewing room. These women complied, and found doing hand quilting at the same time a reasonable compromise. Carmen said that although she would like to be in her sewing room, through her own initiative she makes the effort to spend time with her husband in the evenings, otherwise she feels that they would never see each other. Consequently, she joins him to watch TV, and continues to hand quilt at the same time. Diana's husband, on the other hand, has started to make the effort to move into her sewing space in the evenings, but she is still aware of the need to be there for him:

> Yeah – he doesn't like it if I am off sewing [in my sewing room]. I think he thinks that I am ignoring him, so I have to try and find a sewing time when he is busy doing something else and quilting time at night, but I've got a big frame that's downstairs and he'll come downstairs. We've got a telly downstairs, and he'll come downstairs with me when I'm down there but he prefers that I am still around. Like we might not talk through the evening, but I think if he did want to I am there. But otherwise I think he does think that I am ignoring him, and I think all I want to do is sew!

For two quilters; even their physical presence was not enough to satisfy their husbands because they were not paying attention to what they were saying or to what was on the TV. Bronwyn's husband, for example, has made it very clear that he would be happier if she were to put as much time into thinking about the family business as she did about her sewing. Jane Przybysz has argued that it is the ability to claim mental space, a form of refuge in itself, that is part of the appeal of quilting to the modern quilter – a way of 'creating literal and psychic space for their selves to dream their way out of culturally constructed and constricting feminine roles'.[28] Przybysz also argues that the frustration experienced by men in the presence of a woman doing needlework is by no means a recent phenomena. Freud and Breuer believed needlework posed a threat to the health of women and their families as it presented them with the opportunity to experience 'their "selves" creating and enacting narratives in a private theatre to which men had no access'.[29] It is not surprising, therefore, that a quilter's husband might like to control her mind, as it is the ability to be able to envisage change that is the first step towards its occurrence.[30]

Gifting a Quilt

The occupation of space is not only an issue in the process of making a quilt but also in its completion, for it is either displayed and/or used in the maker's home or given to somebody in whose home it will occupy space. It is, however, not a simple matter of the occupation of space, as the quilt is expressive of the maker's feelings. Quilters give quilts to acknowledge events such as birthdays, weddings and other significant events, to friends, family and the community. Young mothers such as Diana make quilts for their parents and also their young children. Among the quilts that Diana has made are cot quilts for her sisters, nieces and nephews and a wedding ring quilt, one of her first quilts, for her mum – 'She has that on her bed with pride.'

Members of the group produced a lot of work for adult children living away from home and also for grandchildren. Trish has made several quilts for her daughter who 'loves hanging them over her chairs and everywhere'. She has also produced many items for her son and daughter in law: 'I did covers for the couch and chairs, a big bedspread for their last wedding anniversary; what else – a couple of

wall hangings' and she has decided to make her grandchildren 'one each for their thirteenth birthdays'. Fran has made a number of quilts for her sons and has recently completed yet another one for her son and daughter-in-law who have just redecorated so that they have a quilt that matches their new bedroom decor.

The reinforcing of familial bonds is a significant function of giving quilts, particularly as women are encouraged to form their identity through their interrelatedness with others. In her (1989) study of the significance of cloth in Trobriand and Samoan society, Annette Weiner argues that cloth is an object of exchange that is never neutral. It is a 'defining agent of life' which is used to demonstrate vitality but at the same time can highlight the vulnerability of the actor 'reveal[ing] the constraints and limitations within which individuals must negotiate their relations with each other'.[31]

In giving quilts to a significant other, quilters are regenerating their familial position, reinforcing their identity in relation to that person. At the same time, this can be seen as an exhibition of their vulnerability – of their need to keep the link alive and to work at its reinforcement. Jennifer's comments highlight the vulnerability of both the maker and the receiver of a quilt:

> Several years ago my father was very severely burnt and it was a tricky situation because I wasn't brought up with this father and the relationship is a bit – it's hard. And he was very badly burnt and flown to the Waikato burns unit and the family was called. He died six times. I got down to see him initially. But I couldn't get . . . to and from to see him. It was a serious time to see him and it made all of us realise how important this was. So I knew I had to make a quilt.

> I came home and I made a quilt and I made the whole quilt within a week, and it was a quilt of blood, sweat and tears. I cried through a lot of the quilt because I was making it for him. My fingers were raw with the blood because I was quilting so much to get it done so fast for him. I knew he had to have this quilt, which was silly because he was so severely burnt from face to knees that he couldn't have anything on him anyway – he was skinned – he couldn't have any weight. I knew literally it could just go on a seat, but I also knew how important the quilt was and I couriered it down and the nurse rang me and said the whole ward knew the quilt had arrived.

> It did so much for him . . . that was the day he turned around and started

fighting back. I mean when you are horrifically burnt you do want to give up and it was horrific burns but [the nurse] said the day he – he knew the love that came with the quilt . . . he turned around and fought, and from then on he got better, and I mean that was the most amazing thing.

It was all I could do for him. I couldn't get to see him. I knew I had to do the quilt and he knew through the quilt what it was. Quilts are – they are important – they are the most amazing things . . . He knew what was in that quilt for me – from me. It said it for me without me being there – it said what was important.

Jennifer found that making a quilt for her estranged and sick father helped her work through very intense and complicated feelings in relation to him. Drawing on the construct of woman the nurturer, she was able to make an item of comfort for her father that stood as a symbol of her self.[32] Jennifer's father, obviously vulnerable, responded to this positively; thus Jennifer's sense of worth in relation to her father was reinforced.

This type of sentiment is also felt by quilters when they reinforce their relationship to the community by giving charity quilts. The expectation that quilters will nurture people in their geographical community is reinforced in New Zealand by a tradition of benevolence stemming from the last century.[33] This tradition still has a strong appeal for many quilters. Diana, one of the younger members of the group, was attracted to Highway 16 because of the charity work they do: 'I went along there and thought they're doing a lot of charity work and, I don't know, it just inspired me.' The production of charity quilts is an aspect of Highway 16's profile which is commonly believed to be highly valued. Gillian explained:

We like to, at least every year, give back to our community by way of community quilts. This year we're making a quilt for the new public library. We try to build up and store quilts for emergency type things like sick children in the area, sick people that have been injured in the area, because quilts are the most amazing comforting things. A couple of years ago we heard of family in the area who had a very sick little boy who was dying of aplastic anaemia. I can't remember how old he was, something like three. So we made him a very special quilt and then he had a brother and sister so we made them a little quilt each but not with the same amount of work he got. He loved the quilt and had it

probably a month before he died and his parents buried him with the quilt. Though it was sad to hear the quilt was buried at the same time it was the best thing that could have happened to it. It was just so nice . . . Sometimes someone is sick we make them a big quilt. It's up to them whether they keep it or raffle it if they need funds like for cystic fibrosis, anything like this. So yeah, we try to put back into our area as much as we can. And often about three quilts a year would go to this sort of thing.

In the same way that the quilt was a symbol of Jennifer's identity and a metaphor of solidarity with her father, the charity quilt is a metaphor of solidarity with the community, an acknowledgement of the quilters' responsibility to the wellbeing of the community.[34] What is not so apparent from this metaphor of solidarity is the 'complicated and paradoxical' relationship that women have with their community.[35] Traditionally women have experienced a mutually beneficial relationship with the community in which they have opportunities for 'creativity and solidarity with other women' in return for their nurturing input.[36] Often, however, these efforts are only valued as 'an extension of domestic obligations and traditional moral values' and are consequently 'undervalued and marginalised', continuing to block women's participation in the public sphere.[37]

In New Zealand society, many women have less time and money available to give to charity as they experience increased family concerns regarding education, employment, health and retirement in a changing social, political and economic climate. Volunteer community groups are suffering under a market ethos that seeks to make their services competitive.[38] There was evidence in Highway 16 of tension between a commitment to charity and the practicality or willingness to fulfil this:

> We have sort of tried at times to put people in groups to do community good works. Like putting all the ladies from Waimauku together and making a quilt to go to somebody worthy in our area. For some reason it's never really got off the ground. If something comes up, [like] a child knocked down by a car . . . everyone makes a block and I think that's a better way of doing it [rather than needing] to churn out good works then to find a home for the good works.

At one monthly meeting it was suggested that too much of the money raised by the group was being used for the group members

and not enough was being given to charity.[39] It was apparent that all members liked the idea of supporting charities but not all were in a position to give large amounts of time to do this. It was decided that, as an interim measure, a cash donation would be made to a fundraising drive that one of the members was closely associated with and that a concerted effort would be put into the charity quilts the following year. However, in the end it was decided that the next group work day would, after all, be assigned as a community quilt work day. The tension over this issue demonstrates the different views people hold in regard to charity; or at the least, it reflects the constraints that affect women's ability or willingness to be charitable.

Friendship: the binding factor

Contemporary quilters generally join quilting groups from which they derive a number of benefits. Alongside inspiration, the most frequently mentioned positive aspect was friendship. Rose, for example, told me: 'There are people that like the high profile [of the group] and people that don't. The profile means nothing to me. I couldn't care less as long as it meets my needs. *Which are?* Lately – friends.' The existence of women's friendships in traditional communities is considered to have been a key element of their survival. Although the importance of the traditional quilting bee to the overall functioning of the community has diminished, the coming together of quilters continues to play a considerable role in a quilter's life. Quilt groups are thought to be particularly fertile contexts for friendships to develop because women talk *through* their quilts as they work on them, taking the intensity out of a face to face conversation.

> If you are sitting there stitching you are probably looking at your work saying things about what is happening inside you that you mightn't say if you were sitting over a coffee looking directly at the person. But there you are all stitching away, and women chat and talk about what is happening in their lives and build their relationships as they go. Some of those quilting groups are twenty years old.

This aspect is reflected in Jane's comment: 'With a similar hobby it's easier to get to know your friends. I'm not an extrovert . . . but with quilting, it's easier and you make lasting friends. It's easier to relate'.

Quilters from Minnesota in the United States have said that they

found the quilting community a supportive environment in which they can share experiences and knowledge about quilting or about resolving family problems. They felt this enhanced their self-esteem as it enabled them to cope with both quilting and life.[40] Quilters in Highway 16 provide each other with this kind of support, helping members with problems and overcoming the isolation felt by some mothers who work at home. Rose benefitted from this support when she first joined the group:

> The first meeting I was going to go to [my husband] ended up away so I had to ring Trish and tell her I couldn't make it after all. 'Oh, you must come, you must come', and she bought [her daughter around] to babysit and picked me up and took me there which was really nice. You know, at the time I couldn't have got out. That was nice and supportive.

Jessica said she found it particularly useful to meet other women to exchange news and views, including advice on local doctors and schools. Diana likes it because she feels: 'You just need a girlfriend and you can go out and have a good talk if you've got a listener [who is] not in the family or something'. Tracey finds value in being able to leave her troubles at the door of group meetings, spending time free of them before picking them up again on the way out.

A small number of women commented that the supportive aspects of group membership were diminishing compared with the past:

> You know, there's more members and they're further out than we originally thought they should come from. I think it was more supportive when we were smaller, and I think when our children were smaller a lot of us were around the same age. We've all got so much busier. You don't get the same support when you're so busy.

This could be attributed to the increasingly rapid pace of life characterised by social mobility and the focus on the individual, both of which pose impediments to female friendships.[41] As we have seen with charity quilts, the busier schedules of some of the group members have impacted on group projects. This is also true for the production of friendship quilts. When the group was smaller, everybody had a turn at receiving friendship blocks from each member of the group to make a friendship quilt.[42] Each month one member would get to say which block she would like, distribute the instructions, sometimes the background fabric, and a guide to the colours she would

like to be used. The following month the participants returned with their friendship blocks to be made into a quilt by the instigator. With an increase in obligations and the size of the group, this practice came under pressure to change as not all members wished to participate. Members now indicate their desire to do so and a list is drawn up. The fewer participants and the increased regulation has, however, reduced the pleasure of the experience for some of the members.

Highway 16 members have traditionally responded to each others' crises and celebrations – such as deaths, burglaries, births and significant birthdays – by making a quilt in secret and presenting it to the intended recipient at the appropriate time. These are also called friendship quilts and they continue to be made. When I presented my thesis to the group they gave me a quilt top to which they had all contributed. It was complete surprise and very moving. It is an item I shall always treasure; a tangible reminder of the times that I spent with the group and a reinforcement of the friendships that were forged:

> To receive a quilt is to receive a token of love and friendship. It is an intensely moving experience, one that I shall never forget for it expressed the warmth and pleasure of the makers and their desire to communicate in fabric and stitches. It is also a life-long gift, one that will out-last me. Often I lie in bed and examine each block and admire the colour, harmony, appreciate the quilting. I allow my imagination to wander and envisage the conversation around the quilting frame, the happy chatter about the latest fabrics, their favourite books, and the next exhibition. [43]

A Driving Passion

Quilters use their interest in quilting to negotiate personal time and space, and to build a support network of friends. However, it is the interest in quilting that comes first, and the negotiations and sociability that follow. Quilters quilt in the first instance because they become passionate about this form of creative expression. This is exemplified in comments by Jennifer and Jane:

> I believe that quiltmaking to me is a gift and it's what I am meant to be doing and I am so pleased that the passion is there with it because that is the exciting part . . . I wish I could apply other areas of my life to that drive I have for quilting. I'd be a wonder woman if I could do that. But I really can't help myself . . . it really is a drive, it's there and I just go for it.

> Quilting to me is part of my life . . . Going to the meetings and social

things help me carry on. You get inspired after every meeting. I find it hard to go to sleep. My mind is racing so fast. I tell myself I have to sit down, maybe read a book or look at some more quilting books, get a sketch pad out and have a cup of tea, just calm down and then go to sleep.

Prussing has suggested that one of the reasons women feel so passionate about quilting is because:

It's incredibly creative and it is yours. So no matter what else is going on, however much you are being pushed around by what's happening in the world, you've got something that you're doing that nobody else is controlling but you.

The feeling of being in control of something is an aspect of quilting that more than one quilter identified as desirable. It could stem from a general lack of control women feel in various areas of their life. As a result of the 'Moral Redemptress' element of New Zealand feminine culture, women have a 'social influence that far exceeds their economic power'; however, this has largely symbolic results.[44]

It is interesting to note that although the ability to control something is an attraction, being out of control is another. Women speak of being 'hooked', 'mad', 'addicted', 'obsessive', 'excessive' and/or 'passionate', not to mention 'lusty' and 'needy', about both fabric and quilting. Some quilters refer to themselves as 'quiltaholics' and 'fabricholics' and consider themselves to be compulsive buyers of fabric. One quilter confessed to me that her fabric collection had at one time become 'an issue in itself'; a collection from which she could not take, always having to buy new fabric for new projects. Considerable purchases are made at quilting events where merchants often sell fabric that quilters do not always have access to. Kathy Furlong, an internationally active quilter, makes use of her trips overseas for purchasing fabric:

I met my husband in San Francisco. I was repacking the suitcase on one occasion and he said 'How many pieces of fabric have you got there?' So he began counting. He stopped at over 100. Reports of 150 pieces of fabric arriving home with one quilter were not unusual. I wasn't the only one.[45]

This is quite an extreme example, judging by the average experience of the group members, though the following excerpt from my

field trip to 'Tote and Gloat', a one day quilt festival in Palmerston North, demonstrates that purchasing fabric is an important part of attending quilt events:

> We took our [fabric] purchases back to the motel, looked at them, arranged the colour sequences, speculated what we might do with them, and added up how much we had spent . . . We justified the purchases to ourselves and each other. Then, in the hope of finding more bargains, we headed off to the local quilt shop, Needlecraft, which was going to be open until the last customer had left!

Although the women often speak about their passion as an addiction, it is interesting to note there is no talk of trying to overcome it. On the contrary, they talk about how to get time to themselves away from family responsibilities so that they can quilt. It was obvious that the quilters enjoyed and played with the idea of being 'addicted', but doing this allows the significance of quilting to be undermined. As these women are supporters of a feminine culture which requires self-sacrifice when it comes to the family's needs, it is possible that they feel uncomfortable with the fact that quilting diverts their attention and time away from the family. As a consequence, they explain the need to buy fabric as the compulsive action of an hopeless addict, thus making it into something beyond their control, rather than acknowledging that quilting is a serious 'hobby' which they choose to pursue despite family expectations.

Almost without exception the quilters I spoke to justified their quilting expenditures, particularly in regard to fabric. Some pointed out the amount their husband spent on his hobbies, and one, Emma, argued that she does not spend money on cigarettes or alcohol. There was also a certain amount of dread that a husband might tally up the dollar amount fabric collections represent. I heard more than one story about women hiding new purchases – in one example, behind books on a book shelf – from observant husbands. In addition to fabric, a quilter's collection of equipment, books and magazines can represent a considerable financial sum. It is possible that quilters do not feel confident about the money they spend on quilting, as many are in a financially dependent position within the home and, as a result of spending limited time in the paid workforce, they are less likely to be accustomed to accumulating personal wealth.[46]

Quilters who are making a career, or at least earning an income,

from teaching quilting or selling quilts have a different attitude. Sharon, whose family has left home, now works full-time at her job and spends her free time quilting and teaching, and appreciates the importance of the financial outlay required:

> [Fabric's] part of quilting. I think you have to be a fabric collector to be a fairly serious quilter. I think it is all part of it. My mother counts up the dollars of all the quilts I've made and I am not selling them and not giving them away. 'What do you do with them all?' She can't understand it . . . I did all that [quilting]. It's like my kids – no way would I sell them – it's something I have created. Why should I get rid of it? But she says, 'You've spent so much money on fabric.' So what? [I say] 'What have you got, what do you do?' and she doesn't, she hasn't got anything. My father was a mad photographer and I say, 'Look how long, how many times we had to go to the rubbish dump with a trailer with dad's collection'. . . But that was the paraphernalia that he collected for his hobby that happened to be his career as well. Fabric's part of the collection part of the paraphernalia that goes with it.

Sharon finds her mother's attitude particularly frustrating. Not only is she disappointed that her mother has nothing of her own after years of supporting her husband's 'hobby', she is also upset that her mother does not support her 'hobby' or see that if Sharon does not follow her passion, she, like her mother, will end up with nothing to call her own.

Conclusion

The feminine culture in New Zealand places prime importance on the nurturing role of women. Resultant ideas about gender place certain constraints on a woman's desire to quilt as she organises the temporal and spatial zones within which her family moves in a way often more suited to the male head of household. This situation is reinforced as the domestic sphere has become dependent upon the public sphere. However, quilting can provide a woman with the means to stake time and space within this male-centred sphere for herself. Often feeling invisible as the efforts they put into the family and home 'disappear', quilters produce material evidence of their existence, resisting being overlooked. They challenge the spatial relations in the domestic sphere, appropriating a room and covering surfaces in the house with their quilted endeavours. In addition, they gift many

of their quilts to family members, friends and people in the commu-
nity, making new and reinforcing old bonds, making their desire and
need to remain in relationship with these people manifest and last-
ing. As quilting becomes an integral part of a woman's life, her time
and thoughts are distracted from the family. A quilter feels supported
to overcome any resistance of family members to her increased ab-
sence from the home through her network of quilting friends. How-
ever, there is evidence to suggest that quilters themselves experience
a level of discomfort with the attention, time and money quilting
demands. Many quilters disavow any control over their desire to quilt
by talking of it as though it is an addiction, thus not taking responsi-
bility for their choice to follow their own interests rather than those
of the family. Through quilting this discomfort can be resolved, for
the quilting community also valorises the central role a woman plays
in her family's wellbeing. As a consequence, as a quilter, a woman is
able to remain committed to her family, but is also able to rearrange
the fabric of her life so as to achieve a level of autonomy within and
beyond the confines of the family.

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pology at the University of Auckland and later this year will begin a
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NOTES

[1] I wish to thank Carolyn Morris for her suggestions as well as the
    reviewers, particularly the anonymous historian, for their instructive
    comments. Thanks also to all the quilters interviewed.
[2] From *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*, by Eliza Calvert Hall, in Marguerite
    Ickis, *The Standard Book of Quiltmaking and Collecting* (New York,
    Dover Publishers, 1949) p. v.
[3] Bev James and Kay Saville Smith, *Gender, Culture and Power*
    (Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1994).
[4] For discussion of this argument in the contemporary New Zealand
    context, see Amanda Doyle, 'Creativity and Constraint in a New
    Zealand Quilting Community', MA thesis, The University of
    Auckland, 1996; in the contemporary American context, see
    Catherine Cerney, 'A Quilt Guild: Its Role in the Elaboration of
    Female Identity', *Uncoverings 1991*, 12 (1991) pp. 32-49 and K.

Langellier, 'Contemporary Quilt Making in Maine: Re-fashioning Femininity', *Uncoverings 1990*, 11 (1991), pp. 29-55. For a historical discussion see R. Parker and G. Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London, Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, 1981).

5   Highway 16 has 29 members who are primarily but not exclusively middle-class Pakeha women. Their ages range from 36 through to 66. In addition to conducting interviews with 18 members, I participated in an extensive range of quilting activities. During the year I became a quilter by choice which blurred the boundary between myself the researcher and myself the quilter. My time, space and social relations went through a period of adjustment in the manner I observed occurring in the lives of the women I was interviewing. The group consented to their name being used but the names of individual members have been changed. I would like to thank the group for allowing me to join them and individual members who agreed to be interviewed.

6   See for example: Pat Ferrero, Elaine Hedges, and Julie Silber, *Hearts and Hands: The Influence of Women and Quilts on American Society* (San Francisco, Quilt Digest Press, 1987); Roland Freeman, *A Communion of the Spirits: African American Quilters, Preservers, and Their Stories* (Rutledge Hill Press, Nashville, 1996); Dennis Duke and Deborah Harding, *America's Glorious Quilts* (Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc, USA, 1987); and Roderick Kiracofe, *Cloth and Comfort: Pieces of Women's Lives from their Quilts and Diaries* (New York, Clarkson Potter, 1994). See also *Uncoverings*, a journal published annually by the 'American Quilt Study Group' which was founded for the express purpose of promoting and supporting quilt scholarship.

7   Pat Crothers 'Gender Misapprehensions: The "Separate Spheres" Ideology, Quilters and Role Adaptation, 1850 -1890', *Uncoverings 1993*, 14 (1993) p. 43 contends that this is a romanticised image and in actual fact communal quilting was not so common as quilters were separated by 'distance, weather and workload' and as a consequence 'isolated, solitary quilting' was the norm. Crothers does, however, acknowledge that when they did occur, quilting bees and the resultant quilts, could transcend distance, the quilts standing as a tangible reminder and link between these women.

8   A quilt is a bed covering that is constituted by three layers: a top and a bottom with a layer of filling in between. Quilting is the art of stitching together these three layers. There are many traditions of

quilting, two of which are evident in New Zealand. These are the North American tradition characterised by patchwork, the piecing together of fabric to make the quilt top, which can also include appliqué and the Cook Island *tivaevae*, characterised by a pieced or appliquéd top with no central layer. This paper focuses on the women who follow the former tradition.

9   The majority of quilters I interviewed said their mothers sewed clothes for the family but only two women said their mothers did any form of patchwork and quilting.

10   Elaine Showalter, *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991) p. 166.

11   Each member of Highway 16 has been married at some point in their lives and have children which has led me to write as though this is the common experience though it is not the case for all quilters.

12   In addition to the time it takes to participate in the many quilt-related activities on offer such as group and guild meetings, retreats, classes and exhibition the making of a quilt can demand an extraordinary amount of time. The average time it takes to cut, machine piece and hand quilt an uncomplicated double size quilt would be approximately 120 hours.

13   The name 'Highway 16' was chosen as it is the name of the main road in the local area. They are often referred to as the *Highway 16 Gang* and consequently play upon this image. A member of the group told me that: '[Our] first emblem was the road sign of the H16 stamped on and stitched and, because we are called the H16 so often we got tongue and cheek and decided we needed a new emblem. So the bulk of the group went down to Nelson [for the symposium] so we had our gang patches made. Larger patches for the back of our sweatshirts with the new emblem. It's an old lady blatting on a motor scooter breaking through our first original H16 sign – like a metamorphosis – we are now growing. We were asked at the Symposium whether we were the motorbike molls!' (Doyle, pp. 63-64).

14   At every quilt meeting quilters are encouraged to stand up and show their work, imparting information such as who the quilt is for, why a particular design was chosen, difficulties experienced making it and any anecdotal stories relating to it.

15   Jane Przybysz, 'Quilts and Women's Bodies: Dis-eased and Desiring', in Katharine Young (ed), *Bodylore* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1993) p.172.

16   A quilting symposium is an event that runs for a one-week period.

In New Zealand there is a biennial national symposium. Workshops held by national and international tutors are the main feature of symposium. A seminar series and an exhibition are held in conjunction with the workshops.

17   James and Saville Smith, p. 55. Judith Grunebaum and Janna Smith, 'Women in Context(s): The Social Subtext of Group Psychotherapy', in Betty DeChant (ed) *Women in Group Psychotherapy Theory and Practice* (New York, Guilford Press, 1996) p. 71.

18   Ann Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework* (London, Martin Robertson, 1974).

19   Grunebaum and Smith, p. 71.

20   James and Saville Smith, p. 54.

21 . ibid., pp. 55-56.

22   ibid., pp. 55-56.

23   The following is a breakdown of the employment situation of the 18 quilters I interviewed. Four were full-time 'housewives'. Four worked full-time in paid employment; three worked part-time outside the home, whilst two others worked part-time for the family business. A further four were retired, and one ran her own business.

24   Karen Davies, *Women Time and the Weaving of the Strands of Everyday Life* (Aldershot, Avebury, 1990) and Karen Davies, 'Capturing Women's Lives: A Discussion of Time and Methodological Issues', *Women's Studies International Forum,* 19:6 (1996) pp. 12-13.

25   Davies, *Women Time and the Weaving of the Strands of Everyday Life*, p. 36-37.

26   Interview, National Radio, 15 September 1996.

27   Przybysz, p. 171.

28   Przybysz, p. 180.

29   ibid.

30   Oakley, p. 197.

31   Annette Weiner, 'Why Cloth? Wealth, Gender and Power in Oceania', in Annette Weiner and Jane Schneider (eds) *Cloth and Human Experience* (Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989) p. 52.

32   Joyce Hammond 'Polynesian Women and *Tifaifai*: Fabrications of Identity' *Journal of American Folklore*, 99:393 (1986), pp. 259-279 recorded the significance of the giving of a quilt as a representative of its maker in her research of Cook Island quilters. She related the story of a woman sending a *tifaifai* in her place to her son's funeral that she was unable to attend. In this way, Hammond argued, the

quilt came to stand for the quilter 'thus creating a powerful statement using a *tifaifai* as a symbol of her identity'.

33 Margaret Tennant, 'Welfare Organisations', in Anne Else (ed), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand Ngaa Roopuu Waahine o te Motu* (Wellington, Daphne Brasell Associates Press and Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993) pp. 109-120.

34 Cerney, pp. 44-45.

35 Grunebaum and Smith, p. 79.

36 ibid.

37 ibid.

38 Anne Else, *False Economy: New Zealanders Face the Conflict Between Paid and Unpaid Work* (Auckland, Tandem Press, 1996) pp. 89-90.

39 Funds raised by the group through, primarily, the raffling of quilts, are used for charity projects, to support educational opportunities for members, and to assist with travel expenses to events such as the symposium.

40 Cerney, pp. 37-38.

41 Grunebaum and Smith, p. 63.

42 The patchwork block is the unit formed by the patchwork or appliqué design. These blocks are then assembled to form a greater design which becomes the quilt top.

43 Diane Dolan, 'Group Quilts', *New Zealand Quilter*, 7 (1994) p. 9.

44 James and Saville Smith, p. 61.

45 Przybysz, p. 179.

46 James and Saville Smith, p. 57.

VOLUME 24 1998

NUMBER 1
Includes a cluster of articles, written by various organizers of the Committee of 100, examining the need to bring together feminist scholarship and political activism in the fight against the repeal of welfare. Other articles include an interpretation of 20th-century U.S. social policy from the perspective of 19th-century racial politics; the impact of economic restructuring on the gender dynamics of families; the complex relationship among women, the nation, and international bodies such as the World Health Organization; as well as commentaries on the impact of the European Union on women, and women in democratic South Africa; a review essay examining feminist attacks on feminists; and creative work by Bell Chevigny and Becky Gould Gibson.

NUMBER 2: A special issue on the Ph.D in Women's Studies
With articles examining the pros and cons of an interdisciplinary Ph.D; questioning the potential contribution of a women's studies Ph.D to undergraduate and graduate education and to feminist politics beyond academia; challenging us to prioritize the issues of difference in doctoral programs; and assessing the various institutional models of already existing doctoral programs. Other articles interrogate the representation of "French feminism" in the U.S. academy and the representation of feminism in introductory women's studies texts; as well as a reading of Charlotte Perkins Gilman outside the sex/gender distinction; plus fiction by Virginia Moran and poetry by Chitra Divakarvni.

NUMBER 3
Includes a cluster of essays and reviews that examine the construction of various masculinities, including hunting as heterosexual erotic predation, black men's and hegemonic masculinities, and female masculinity in 1920's fashion. Two articles examine issues of privacy—its history and the paradox of changing legal doctrine. Other articles include feminist disruptions of presuppositions in western epistemology; the life narrative of a Papuan migrant woman; and an autobiographical and theoretical work exploring a mother's death; as well as commentaries looking at the faculty strike at York University and the domestic workers' strike at the University of North Carolina; an art essay on Jana Sterbak; and fiction and poetry.

A Defence for the Battered Woman?
Assessing the Adequacy of Legal Defences Available to Battered Women Who Kill

SACHA WALLACH

Domestic violence is a disturbing social reality that is increasingly demanding public attention.[1] The most obtrusive reminder of the intensity of this problem is when the abuse has fatal consequences. In recent years, almost 50 percent of homicides in New Zealand have been identifiable as domestic related; a majority of these cases represent situations where women are killed by their intimate male partners.[2] In a minority of instances, however, it is the woman who kills. This is often following a history of abuse suffered by her at the hands of the deceased.[3]

When a battered woman kills her abuser it seems the law offers her little leniency. By contrast, legal concession is commonly afforded to men who respond to various challenges to their masculinity with deadly force. The defences of self-defence and provocation, being framed with men in mind, fail to consider the context in which a woman comes to take the life of her tormentor.[4] Recognition of battered woman syndrome has meant steps have been taken to stretch the traditional constructs of existing defences.[5] There are, however, considerable problems in using this syndrome to advance a definitive view of women's experiences of abuse and their responses to it.[6]

The purpose of this paper is to assess the adequacy, or otherwise, of the legal defences currently available to battered women who kill their abusers. If the legal position of battered women is to be progressed, we must consider whether this should be done within existing frameworks; whether a new and separate defence should be created; or whether it is time to reassess the bases on which society wishes to define certain acts of killing as legally defensible. Firstly, the question of why we have defences to murder will be considered, looking specifically at the defences of self-defence and provocation. The principles underlying these defences, and the applicability of them to the circumstances in which battered women kill will then be discussed. Secondly, in assessing the legal position of battered women who kill, the use of battered woman syndrome in redefining existing

defences will be considered. Criticisms which flow from using a syn-
drome to explain the experiences of battered women will also be
explored. Finally, it will be asked where the law should go from here,
in addressing the plight of battered women who kill, and whether the
time has come for defence law in New Zealand to undergo change.

Justifiable killing: legal defences to murder in New Zealand

To intentionally take the life of another individual is to breach
one of the fundamental moral boundaries of society. This is reflected
in the level of social condemnation and revulsion elicited by such an
action, and through the weight of legal repercussions facing the
perpetrator of such an offence. In certain circumstances, however,
society recognises that the act of killing another may be justified,
although not endorsed, or that the perpetrator themselves may be
excused for their conduct because of some defined defect evidenced
in them.[7] This recognition is manifested in the provision of legal
defences. Two primary grounds of defence to murder are self-defence
and provocation. For a battered woman who eventually kills her
batterer, however, the defences of self-defence and provocation are
commonly found to be inappropriate and unavailable, the
circumstances in which she takes the life of her abuser and the form
of her action usually failing to fit within the traditional constructs of
these defences.[8]

Self-defence

The defence of self-defence reflects the view that sometimes the
use of force may be justified to repel force.[9] The availability of this
defence is determined by fulfilling a subjective and an objective com-
ponent.[10] First the jury must assess the situation from the perspective
of the accused.[11] The second limb to be satisfied is that, having re-
gard to the accused's honest belief as to the circumstances, the force
used by them in those circumstances is deemed reasonable. In deter-
mining the reasonableness of the actions of the accused the Court
has grafted two further requirements onto the defence. The threat
posed must be imminent and there must be proportionate use of force
in response to it. This raises a number of issues for battered women
who kill their abusers.

Killing in self-defence is only justified when there is a real or
perceived imminent threat of danger. It cannot be expected that indi-

viduals should wait until the attack is in progress before attempting to defend themselves, and so the defence does not preclude the possibility of a pre-emptive strike.[12] Because of society's interest in protecting the sanctity of human life, it is not enough, however, that the accused merely considers that they may be subject to some future risk of harm.[13] In the absence of imminent life-threatening violence, the actions of the accused would likely be interpreted as being premeditated and motivated by revenge, rather than as the response of someone acting in self-defence.

This requirement is one of the stumbling blocks for battered women attempting to claim they were acting in self-defence by killing their batterer. For a woman trying to fight back, it is often necessary for her to wait until her batterer is in a vulnerable position. He may have his back turned, be inebriated, asleep, unconscious or unaware before she dares to take action.[14] In these situations the batterer is said to pose no threat at all, let alone an imminent one.[15]

In the New Zealand case of *R v Wang*, a woman tied up and killed her intoxicated husband while he was sleeping.[16] She had been subject to threats, coercion and intense physical abuse over a number of years. This extended to blackmail of her family in Hong Kong. Some of the instances of violence suffered by Wang included being chased by her husband as he threatened to kill her with a meat cleaver; being beaten until her eardrum burst; and having sex forced upon her following a gall bladder operation, which caused her to be rehospitalised the next day. A psychologist described the abuse to which Wang was subjected as 'not unlike torture'.[17] Wang testified that just prior to her husband falling asleep, he had attempted to extort further money from her family and had made threats to kill her and her sister. The trial judge declined to let the question of self-defence go to the jury, stating that to make self-defence available in such a situation, would 'be close to a return to the law of the jungle'.[18] He viewed, and the court of Appeal concurred, that there was no imminent threat, such as would render her act of killing a justified course of action.

Linked into assessing the imminence of the attack is contemplation of whether the accused had any alternative courses of action available. This consideration was also seen as fatal to Wang's claim of self-defence. If there was an opportunity to escape or avoid the danger by means other than by force, the actions of the accused are less likely to be viewed as reasonable.[19] In cases where there is a

lapse of time between the attack of the abuser and the killing by the battered woman, this issue becomes pertinent. A question which is frequently asked is 'Why didn't she leave?'. It is assumed that each woman in such a situation could have chosen to get out of the abusive relationship, go to a shelter, or to the police, rather than to kill.[20]

Self-defence also requires that the amount of force used by the accused be no more than what was *reasonable* to repel the attack.[21] In order to determine whether justifiable force was used, a balancing of harms must occur.[22] This stems from the traditional conception of self-defence occurring in a 'bar-room brawl' context, where two men of roughly equal size and strength are in confrontation.[23] On average, women are of smaller physical stature than men. In order for a woman to defend herself against the threat of violence from her abuser, it is often necessary for her to use a weapon so that she can ensure her safety.[24] Her use of a knife, gun, poison, or some other means, to effect deadly force against her batterer may be the only way she feels able to defend herself from the perpetual threat he poses to her life. Although the use of a weapon against an unarmed assailant is not indicative of disproportionate force, it will frequently be held to be unreasonable by those who hold to traditional conceptions of self-defence. It is said that 'the *reasonable man* does not use a weapon unless one is being used against him'.[25] For the reasonable woman, her historical baggage denotes her as somewhat less reasonable than a man of balanced composure, especially in response to the threat of physical harm. It seems society has deemed it more reasonable for her to be the helpless damsel than for her to retaliate.

Provocation

Provocation is a partial defence which may reduce a charge of murder to manslaughter. It acts as a 'concession to human frailty', recognising that in certain circumstances things done or said may cause an individual to lose self-control and to act in the heat of passion. The underlying assumption is that humans have a breaking point; that if pushed too far, even the individual of normal sensibilities may snap.

Under the defence of self-defence, the battered woman's case is confronted by issues relating to the requirements of imminence of the threat and proportionality of the response to it. Similarly, the defence of provocation provides difficulties for the legal plight of the battered woman who kills. Like self-defence, provocation appears

gendered in its application, failing to take into account the context in which the abused woman comes to kill her batterer.[26] The framing and interpretation of the defence means that '[p]rovocation is a defence that is more useful to and more used by men'.[27] In order to satisfy the defence the accused must firstly have actually lost self-control. Also, the provocation must have been enough to deprive someone with the power of self-control of the ordinary person, of their self-control. This ordinary person takes on the characteristics of the accused except insofar as they effect the power of self-control.[28] The legal standard of the ordinary or reasonable person, however, is consistently held to be that of the ordinary or reasonable man.[29]

The loss of self-control is further qualified by the need for it to be sudden and temporary, immediately following a provocative incident. This requirement fails to contemplate the experiences of women who exist within a relationship of ongoing violence. Research shows that battered women tend not to react instantaneously to taunts or threats as men tend to.[30] More typically, the response is a 'slow-burning' of mixed emotions. This builds and, then, erupts in the killing of her batterer at a time when he poses no objective threat.[31] When the battered woman comes before the court, any evidence of a history of abuse are used by the prosecution to provide grounds for establishing revenge; the slow-burn response and fear of the battered women become premeditation, and relief at escaping the violence is interpreted as a lack of remorse.[32]

The inconsistency of the situations in which provocation is made available bears witness to the gender-bias inherent in the formulation and interpretation of this defence. Men have, time after time, been afforded legal leniency after killing their partners in reaction to behaviour by the deceased that can scarcely be described as provocative. Successful claims of provocation have arisen when men have faced nagging wives, the inability to cope with their partner in a drunken stupor, and disorderly placement of mustard on a dinner plate.[33] A violent loss of self-control has also been historically justified when a woman challenges the sexuality of her husband or partner.[34] Adultery, suspected or real; questioning a man's sexual competence; leaving him for another; or attempting to end a relationship, have all been found to constitute provocation.[35]

Women, by contrast, are consistently denied the defence of provocation because of its inherent unsuitability to take account of the

context of ongoing abuse that leads them to kill.[36] The delay in responding, often displayed by women who have experienced a history of abuse, is read as evidence of having plotted and planned the retaliation rather than it occurring as an outworking of a loss of self-control. The following case also brings out the attitude faced by some battered women – an expectation that women should put up with a bit of heavy handling within a relationship, the judge in this situation refusing to see such actions as potentially provocative. In 1983, an English woman, Mabel Patterson, was given a life sentence for stabbing her violent husband to death. The judge stated that: 'There are so many occasions when wives are subjected to the kind of rough treatment to which you were subjected. The difficulty is that I cannot establish a precedent to give licence to wives who take the law into their own hands.'[37]

Battered Woman Syndrome

In attempting to explain the plight of women in relationships marked by domestic violence, recognition has been given to the existence of Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS). The admissibility of expert evidence about BWS is now widely accepted in court.[38] The Battered Woman Syndrome is not a defence in itself; however, recognition of its symptoms in women who kill their abusers may be used to successfully bring claims of self-defence or provocation.[39]

Much of the development in understanding of this syndrome has come through the work of Dr Lenore Walker.[40] Walker's explanation of the syndrome is founded on a cycle theory of violence. This consists of three distinct phases and results in the psychological condition of 'learned helplessness'. The first stage is marked by a building of tension within the relationship. There may be abusive behaviour but at this point it is relatively minor incidences of physical and verbal abuse. The woman may attempt to calm her abuser using previously successful tactics, or she may have reached a point of trying to avoid him. She tends to·minimise what is occurring and to explain away incidents through situational factors, or her own behaviour. Secondly, is the acute battering incident. This is distinguished by the uncontrolled and severe nature of the outburst. This brings home to the battered woman the futility of attempting to escape. Thirdly, is the honeymoon phase, where the abuser displays contrite, loving behaviour, apologising for his actions and claiming he will never treat her in

such a way again. His sincere conduct acts as reinforcement for the woman to remain in the relationship.

This cycle is an ongoing one, however; as the relationship progresses, the frequency and severity of the battering tends to escalate and the period of calm may be marked less by loving contrition and more by a fleeting lull between violent incidents.[41] The resultant effect of this cycle of violence is said to be a condition of 'learned helplessness'.[42] Within this framework any attempts by the woman to alter her behaviour are usually unsuccessful in thwarting the abuse she suffers. She feels an absence of control over the situation, lacks self-esteem, and resigns herself to the unavoidable nature of her beatings. This 'psychological paralysis' is useful in understanding why she does not leave her abusive partner.[43]

Using BWS in bringing claims of self-defence and provocation

Evidence of battered woman syndrome may be used to describe how the defendant's behaviour and perceptions were affected at the time of the killing, and to show how her actions can be seen to fall within the traditional bounds of self-defence and provocation.[44] The cyclical nature of the abuse means the battered woman perceives the onset of violence as imminent; she sees her only option as to kill, or to be killed.[45] Expert testimony is provided to convince the jury that even though the killing occurred when there was a lull in the violence, the battered woman saw this as her only opportunity to defend herself from imminent harm. Her experience of previous beatings may mean she has a heightened sensitivity to the actions of her abuser, being able to pick up on subtle signs which indicate an impending battering incident.[46] These indicators may also allow her to predict the extent of the violence and so she responds with proportionate force to protect herself from the threat to her life.[47] Evidence of BWS attempts to cast light on the fact that 'it makes little sense for the law to excuse the wife's killing if it occurs while she is being beaten, but to find her guilty of murder if she kills during a temporary respite between beatings'.[48] Proof that she suffers from the syndrome lends support to the claim that the battered woman who kills acted reasonably in defending herself in the circumstances as she perceived them.

In recent courtroom decisions, attempts have been made to highlight the experiences of the battered woman, so as to provide a different perspective from which to view the defences of self-defence and

provocation. In the English case of *R v Ahluwalia* consideration of BWS saw a liberalisation in the law of provocation that may lend some hope to battered women who kill.[49] BWS was recognised as a characteristic that can be taken into account in assessing the reasonableness of the action of the accused. The objective test then becomes whether the provoking incident would have caused the 'reasonable woman suffering from BWS' to lose self-control.[50] Evidence as to the condition and symptoms of BWS provide a context in which to understand how the battered woman came to kill. The history of abuse presents a background of cumulative provocation which triggers the eventual killing. In *R v Ahluwalia* it was found that a 'slow burn' response does not preclude the application of the defence; however, the longer the delay in reacting, the less likely the accused's claim of provocation will succeed.

The allowance of expert evidence of BWS in courts has undeniably had positive implications for some battered women trying to claim a legal justification for killing their abuser.[51] Despite these apparent steps forward, the use of BWS to combat gender inequalities in the law can be severely criticised.[52] BWS is put forward as typical for all battered women and yet research has not sufficiently shown that 'repeated abuse causes a single distinctive behaviour pattern'.[53] A rigid construction of how battered women are believed to behave acts to discredit the testimony of abused women who fail to fit this established mould.[54] It has been seen that not all women go through all aspects of the cycle of violence, especially the 'loving, contrite phase' of the batterer's behaviour.[55] Many women also do not display the condition of 'learned helplessness' and may actively fight back or try to escape the relationship.[56] For Gay Oakes, a New Zealand woman who killed the man who physically and emotionally battered her for years, the fact that she had complained to the police, obtained non-molestation and non-violence orders, and had gone to the women's refuge on several occasions, acted to negate evidence of the syndrome.[57] Her attempts to advance the defences of self-defence and provocation failed and her crime was viewed as 'deliberate and calculated'.[58]

Relying on evidence of BWS to define the experiences of abused women also acts to medicalise women. Reliance is placed on personal incapacity and evidence of mental abnormality to explain why she kills. This perpetuates notions of the violent woman as truly defective.

Possible economic and structural restraints which may keep her prisoner to the relationship, are ignored. While men who successfully plead self-defence or provocation are seen as having been understandably provoked to retaliate, the actions of women who succeed on the basis of BWS are excused only because she is deemed to be mentally ill. By tagging the battered woman with a 'syndrome', focus is placed on what is wrong with her, rather than drawing attention to the actions of her abuser and addressing society's complicity.[59]

The assumptions underlying the syndrome tend also to reinforce existing gender stereotypes.[60] The battered woman is portrayed as a passive victim, incapable of rational thought, trapped, and helpless. Unless she retaliates in the manner of an impulsive, aggressive man, her only hope is to meet the law's image of femininity, displaying all the characteristics of a 'good victim'.[61] Reliance on the characteristic 'helplessness' to assist battered women who kill may mean that some women escape the condemnation of the law; however, it does little to effect social change and to advance the position of battered women as a group.[62]

Where to from here?

The issue of whether to afford leniency to the battered woman arises out of feelings that she has suffered at the hands of her abuser and should not be further punished for bringing the abuse to an end.[63] To classify certain behaviour as legally defensible is not to express approval of the accused's actions, but rather to declare that it is not conduct deserving of condemnation and punishment.[64] In assessing the adequacy of legal defences available, it can be seen that the defences of self-defence and provocation largely fail to take account of the experiences of battered women who kill. Both being based on a masculine model of aggression, self-defence upholds the idea of a threat eliciting immediate retaliation, and provocation appears to support impulsive, violent responses when the male ego is challenged.

Even with evidence of battered woman syndrome, it is often still difficult for abused women who kill to satisfy the requirements of these defences. Society is reluctant to grant concessions to an individual who kills another, at a time when that other cannot reasonably be perceived to pose an imminent threat. Equally, it can be an arduous task for a woman who delays action until her abuser is in a vulnerable position, to show that she has in actual fact lost self-control.

Evidence of a loss of self-control in men is identified by an almost instinctive response to something. The very fact of the impulsive re-action provides support to the claim that what occurred was suffi-ciently provocative. Women, however, rarely fit this male model.

The creation of a new and separate defence for battered women would perpetuate the notion that the experiences and responses of battered women are uniform, and that the conduct of the abused woman lies outside existing bounds of what is categorised as legally defensible. Such assumptions have obvious flaws, some of which were outlined when considering the problems with using battered woman syndrome to advance claims of self-defence and provoca-tion. The defence of diminished responsibility, which is available in England, is a defence which was introduced with women in mind. Although it allows some women to receive compassionate sentences from the courts, this defence again acts to pathologise explanations of women's behaviour as it works on the basis that the individual is labouring under some mental abnormality.[65] Another option is to let evidence of the abusive relationship come in as a mitigating factor at the sentencing stage. This would be done on the basis that the history of violence does not negate the battered woman's intention to kill, but may provide evidence of her motive for doing so. This approach could be combined with the elimination of a minimum sentence for murder, giving the courts scope to show leniency as is seen fit. Un-der this banner, however, the battered woman would be subject to the stigma of being labelled a murderer and there is also the issue of just how easy it is to determine motive without having to pay close regard to the actions of the accused.

In attempting to progress the legal position of battered women before the law, we must be sure of our bases for determining when an act of killing should be justified or excused. It is not sufficient to use existing gender inequalities in the law to assert the manufacture of a level playing field. Instead, it may be necessary to look to the foun-dations of what is already established and to recognise that there may be a need for a more comprehensive reconstruction of our defence law in New Zealand.

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BOOK REVIEWS

TO LABOUR WITH THE STATE: THE FIJI PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION
Jacqueline Leckie
University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1997. $29.95

This study, by New Zealand labour historian Jacqueline Leckie, records the history and analyses the role of the Fiji Public Service Association (FPSA) over its fifty years of existence. In a region where trade unions still struggle for recognition and the right to protect and advance the interests of workers, and where the history and role of the labour movement have been barely documented, much less analysed, the book is a very welcome arrival. It is the first full length book to be written on the life and times of an existing trade union in Fiji, where trade unionism in the Pacific region has perhaps its earliest origins. Atu Emberson-Bain's study of the mining industry, *Labour and Gold in Fiji*, (Cambridge, 1994), while unambiguously a labour history written by a sympathetic academic, is not centrally focused on the mineworker's union.

The FPSA's selection for detailed study by Leckie owes much to the association's emergence as a powerful force in the 1980s, when Leckie, a history lecturer at the University of the South Pacific, first began her research. The FPSA earned its laurels as the leading champion for labour amongst unions in Fiji through its close involvement in political events in the last twelve years, beginning with the formation of the Fiji Labour Party in 1986. Its president at the time, the late Dr Timoci Bavadra and general secretary, Mahendra Chaudhry, became Prime Minister and Minister of Finance respectively in the short-lived Labour/NFP coalition government which won the 1987 elections and was overthrown in a military coup a month later. The FPSA was also centrally involved in the sustained challenge to the post-coup regime and its economic, labour and racial policies, led after Bavadra's death by Chaudhry in his multiple roles of leader of the FLP, general secretary of Fiji's Trade Unions Congress, and secretary of both the FPSA and the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Leckie's choice of FPSA is very deliberate for another reason. With this study, Leckie breaks with, and essentially challenges, the

tendencies of labour historians to be preoccupied with, and to ascribe labour militancy exclusively to, blue collar unionism, with resulting academic indifference to white collar unions. Studies of the trade union movement in Fiji, Leckie says, have typically focused on blue collar militancy and ignored white collar unions and their significance in labour's struggles with employers and the state. Moreover, despite a relatively long history of public sector unions in the Pacific, there have been few studies or published accounts of labour relations in the public sector in the region as a whole. Indeed, Leckie says, academic interest in public sector unions has usually been episodic, triggered mainly by controversial strikes in the sector, as in Samoa in 1981 and Kiribati in 1980. Leckie's study of a public sector union in a small island state with 'a complex political and economic history' seeks to fill a yawning gap in labour studies literature. Unlike her earlier writings, Leckie also attempts in this work a broader analytical framework, approaching her study of FPSA by focusing on the dynamics of labour-state relations and the complexities of race, class and gender in the colonial, post-colonial and post-coup contexts of multi-ethnic Fiji.

The FPSA's early history, as Leckie documents it, provides interesting reading. The FPSA was formed in 1943 by disgruntled lower level European civil servants and junior division officers from other ethnic categories. The numbers of European members later dwindled, especially as issues of direct interest to European civil servants (such as inducement and expatriate pay) became issues to be defended or renegotiated. In the decade before independence, a number of men who would later assume senior political or administrative posts within independent Fiji served as FPSA officials, among them Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and Ratu Sir George Cakobau, independent Fiji's first Prime Minister and Governor General respectively, and Timoci Tuivaga, later Chief Justice. The appointment of prominent and 'responsible' (read moderate) Fijian officials as FPSA representatives was evidently facilitated by the association's use of the district administration network for recruitment, and their involvement in the association put the colonial government at ease, although their commitment to unionism was often half hearted. Not surprisingly, in much of its early history FPSA did not identify itself as a union, and did not see itself in conflict with its employer, the

government. It took seriously the identity of its members as 'civil servants' and espoused loyalty to the government of the day.

Leckie discusses and analyses the association's post-colonial character and role, its growing numerical and financial strength and expanded workload, its success in achieving industrial victories for its members, and, from the early 1980s, its increasing politicisation. Speeches and statements by both Chaudhry and Bavadra that are quoted by Leckie reveal the union's growing focus on issues such as national economic policy, leadership, and the socio-economic status of not just the association's members, but of the population at large in this period. A number of industrial disputes in this period, she says, were represented as political challenges to the state. Certainly the FPSA's allegations of government mismanagement brought workplace friction into the political arena, paving the way to its central involvement in the formation of the FLP in 1986. In the post-coup period, and particularly in the context of the labour and economic 'reforms' which began to be implemented in the early 1990s, the association increasingly played the role of public critic and watchdog on state economic policies, while at the same time leading its workers in fierce resistance to the implementation of these 'reforms' within different sectors of the public service.

Much of this may be well known to those familiar with contemporary history. What perhaps is less well known, and would probably have remained unrecorded but for this book, is the struggle waged over the years on the shopfloor, so to speak, by the FPSA leadership, its industrial officers and shopfront representatives. Indeed, from the mid-1980s, when the FPSA took on a broader political role in Fiji, its industrial role has tended to be overlooked, overshadowed by its more public political engagements. Yet it is its successful industrial work which is essentially the secret to FPSA's strength, success and sustainability as a union.

Leckie richly illustrates the various forms of worker control exercised in the civil service, the pettiness of senior officers and the powerlessness, but for the association, of subordinates. One peculiarity of the public service is its geographical spread, which makes it possible for a special form of victimisation of workers, and especially union representatives – the threat of, or actual, transfer to another centre or to a remote place, without regard to personal and

family circumstances. Another form of victimisation which appears to be regularly practised in the service is the denial of promotion or of an acting position. Threats of dismissal are also regular dispensed, suggesting that job security in the service is not as assured as we may have tended to assume. Leckie not only encourages respect for the word of the FPSA, but demonstrates unequivocally the importance of trade unions to workers.

Leckie also examines how other identities that workers have (ethnic, provincial, gender) affect relations in the workplace and can undermine worker solidarity, particularly in the politically and ethnically polarised context of post-coup Fiji. She addresses the continuing influence on workers of traditional political cultures which emphasise respect and deference towards those in positions of authority, discouraging action to support their interests as workers. In a chapter on ethnicity and other union factions, she discusses the practice of appealing to ethnic and tribal loyalties indulged in by both the colonial and post colonial state, examines the ethnic composition of the civil services pre-and post-coup, highlighting Indo-Fijian under-representation at senior levels and the apparent indigenisation of the civil service that was taking place prior to the coup.

In her concluding chapter on unionisation under the gun, Leckie analyses and records the targeting of unions by the post-coup regime and the forms of direct coercion employed in two years of military rule. She documents the introduction of draconian decrees, the military occupation of union offices and workplaces, the harassment, detention and victimisation of union officials, and the militarisation of sectors of the civil service that occurred during the early years of military rule. The facilitation that military rule provided for the implementation of economic restructuring policies directed by international financial institutions, and the sustained and strong resistance from unions to these measures are highlighted in this final chapter.

In sections discussing FPSA's women's committees and gender and the workplace, Leckie offers her only real criticisms of the FPSA, including its under-representation of women in its national and branch executive bodies, and its formation of women's committees which appeared to function more as organising units for sporting and social events than as change agents within the FPSA. In her introduction to the book, Leckie admits to the limitations of her study in exploring

the gender dimensions of labour state relations through this histori-
cal analysis of the FPSA, and explains this shortcoming as a result of
her reliance on institutional records and structures, in which women
are poorly represented. In an attempt to include the 'covert voices' of
women in her text, Leckie includes an extended discussion of gender
issues in the service. These include the ghettoisation of women within
specific sectors (81.3 per cent in the Ministries of Health and Educa-
tion), and, Leckie could well have added, their confinement mostly
to middle management and lower levels of the service. She points
out that, despite the existence of General Orders which might sug-
gest greater chance of gender equality in the public service than in
other workplaces, gender discrimination in the service is widespread,
and remains barely addressed in the 1990s. What's more, since the
coups, it has combined with racial discrimination to doubly disad-
vantage Indo-Fijian women in particular.

While Leckie's discussion in this section is an interesting addi-
tion to the book, it is largely disconnected from the FPSA, the book's
major subject. Yet Leckie makes the points that 'union brothers' in
the leadership of public sector unions were sometimes themselves
purveyors of sexist thinking and values, and responsible for perpetu-
ating inequitable or discriminatory employment conditions. What
Leckie describes as 'gender blindness' on the part of a union official
who in 1977 asserted that married women should not be entitled to
government quarters as it was 'the responsibility of the husband [sic]
to fend for the family', represents, in fact, strong male cultural val-
ues and views about gender roles. The existence of maternity leave
anomalies in the service which oddly privileged unmarried mothers
(who were given full pay while on maternity leave) while penalising
married civil servants by paying them only 25 per cent of their pay
while on maternity leave, likewise appears to reflect similar notions
about male responsibilities as husbands, rather than any special con-
sideration for the greater economic need of unmarried mothers. The
FPSA Council's endorsement in 1947 of the colonial administration's
policy of not employing married women illustrated the shared 'fam-
ily values' of the state and the union.

What would have been really interesting is information on the
dynamics of FPSA/women's committee interactions in more recent
decades. Certainly there has been some tension between male and
female unionists within the Fiji trade union movement in the last

decade, although in the face of the larger struggle against racism, authoritarianism and anti-unionism, often gender differences have been put aside or shelved. This will hopefully be a focus of future work by Leckie.

I have only two criticisms to make of the book: firstly, while it is not a conventional history chronicling the union's activities and issues over the decades since it began, but rather an analysis of the union and the role it has played in various historical and social/political contexts (colonial, post-colonial and post-coup) with thematic chapters and sections, Leckie's forward and backward references to cases in earlier and later time periods are sometimes confusing for the reader; secondly, in some places, Leckie's exclusive and narrow focus on what FPSA did in its particular relations with the state, as a union of state employees, without reference to the general industrial relations climate and context, makes for an incomplete account and erroneously enlarges the role and image of FPSA. These criticisms aside, the book is a valuable contribution to Fijian historiography, and should be of special interest to labour historians, not least because it purposefully seeks to enlarge their field of enquiry.

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SOCIAL POLICY IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Christine Cheyne, Mike O'Brien, Michael Belgrave

Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1997. $39.95

This study seeks to uncover the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of different social policy perspectives in order to promote informed debate about future policy directions in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The book was written by academics from Massey University primarily for students of social policy but the authors also hope that it will be accessible to a wider audience, including those who wish to participate in policy development. Theoretical frameworks are defined as the 'vision of the kind of society and the nature of social relationships that are pursued by politicians and policy makers' (p.

vi). The discussion includes liberalism, neo-liberalism, neo-Marxism, feminism, and anti-racism. The authors emphasise in particular 'the need to make transparent the criteria (values) guiding social policy' (p. 243).

The various theoretical frameworks are clearly set out and explained. The volume starts with an historical introduction, though its strength lies in the post-1984 period. Significantly, feminist and Maori perspectives are explored. It also incorporates three case studies – income support, child welfare (the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989), and health care. Each section concludes with the textbook technique of summarising 'key' points.

While claiming to introduce theoretical frameworks of respective social policies, the authors do not simply explain those perspectives and leave it to readers to decide. Without actually spelling out their own underlying values, they leave no doubt where their sympathies lie. Like the works of other academics such as Jane Kelsey and Jonathan Boston, this book is a critique of the neo-liberal social policies pursued from 1984 to 1993, during the fourth Labour government and the first term of the Bolger government. It is argued that the policy changes in that decade caused greater poverty and widened inequalities to the point of creating a 'three-tiered' society, which in the authors' view spells failure as far as social policy is concerned since 'At the heart of individual and collective well-being [the goal of social policy] is elimination of poverty'. Attacking neo-liberal dependency arguments, they claim that far from reducing dependency the so-called 'modest safety net' embeds dependency even more into the structure of welfare. They explain, 'Low levels of entitlement, poverty traps which make the transition to work difficult, low wages and high levels of state surveillance, all present the danger of sustaining a culture of poverty which separates the recipients of income support and state-funded social services from the rest of society.' (p. 249).

The study is then more than an introduction to various perspectives, and the adjective 'critical' in the title is the operative word. As a critical and reflective assessment of recent social policy changes it provides a welcome counterbalance to the pronouncements of some politicians and journalists in support of current policies. Its strength lies in the way in which it shows that 'facts' are social constructions and policy directives are informed by underlying ideologies. The femi-

nist and Maori perspectives, often overlooked or marginalised, provide a particularly useful corrective to many current assessments of welfare. It is hoped that social policy makers and their researchers will consult this useful introductory text.

LINDA BRYDER, *History, University of Auckland*

CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN FEMINISM 2
Edited by Kate Prichard Hughes
Longman, South Melbourne, 1997

It is disappointing to open a collection of essays labelled both 'contemporary' and 'Australian' and find little of either. This is a harsh judgement, but this volume does not deliver what it promises. Firstly, this is not a second collection of writings in a series entitled *Contemporary Australian Feminism,* but a revised edition of the 1994 book of the same title. Longman have included what they call 'six original essays' and 'seven new essays' which 'offer an introduction' to various subjects, by which they mean that half of the essays appeared in the original edition of this book and the other half are new. This information is conveyed on the back cover of the book which brings me to the first of my problems with this collection. While the volume is edited by Kate Prichard Hughes, her opening article is not an introduction to the volume. The lack of an introduction means that the book lacks coherence. Prichard Hughes' essay is a broad discussion of types of feminism, ways of defining feminism, and most interestingly, a discussion of what she calls the third-wave of feminism. While not referring to it as such, Prichard Hughes tackles the 'generation debate' which has erupted amongst Australian feminists in the wake of Helen Garner's *the first stone* (1995). While this is an Australian collection, Prichard Hughes then takes as her reference point the proliferation of books from the USA written by young white women attacking 1970s feminism as puritanical. It is this strong reliance on overseas material which is the other disappointment of this collection for me.

Most of the essays are introductions to the feminist literature and while this is useful, particularly for those new to feminist theory or to students of women's studies, I found the lack of Australian material in some essays disturbing. The essays about body image and about sexuality are startling in their lack of Australian theorists and 'The Body Politic' does not use theoretical material more recent than 1990. There are some essays which tackle topics more peculiarly Australian, such as Sevgi Kilic's essay 'Who is an Australian Woman?' This is an excellent overview of the issues surrounding definitions of femininity within Australian culture for indigenous women and women of non-English speaking backgrounds. Similarly, Barbara Brook's essay on the gendering of women, while not as well crafted as Kilic's article, is much more focused on the specificities of Australian-ness. Lyn Richards draws heavily on her extensive research into women and the family in suburbia in writing her essay, 'The Ideology of the Family'.

There are two essays which stand out for me. The first is Michael Gilding's analysis of the ways gender issues surrounding housework in families with working wives/mothers appeared in the women's press of the 1950s and the 1990s. Gilding draws fascinating parallels between the writings of the two decades. The second is Carmel Shute's 'Telegram, Telephone, Tell a Woman' which has some delightful material about women as telephonists and telegraph operators in the early twentieth century, contrasting telephones and telegraphy with later developments in office technology and the impact of the 'net' on women. Other essays in the collection include a thorough introduction to the literature on eco-feminism by Lesley Instone; Belinda Probert on women's working lives; essays on health care, poverty and the law.

One function this collection does serve is to highlight the enduring nature of some of the finer writings by Australian feminists. Jill Matthews' *Good and Mad Women* is used by several of the authors in this collection, as are several books by Jocelynne Scutt. Elizabeth Grosz's extensive writings are also sprinkled throughout the chapters. However many Australian feminist authors not mentioned at all.

The blurb on the back cover of *Contemporary Australian Feminism 2* quotes a review of the first edition of this book which states that 'this volume will prove to be really useful, even indispensable to

teachers and students of Women's Studies'. This second edition will be useful, particularly for students, but for those more familiar with feminist writings it holds little new.

KATE HUNTER, *History, Victoria University of Wellington*

WITHOUT ISSUE: NEW ZEALANDERS WHO CHOOSE NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN

Jan Cameron

University of Canterbury Press, Christchurch, 1997. $29.95

Children are central to conventional notions of marriage, family and adult identity. To become a parent is considered both normal and natural. People who do not choose to have children are viewed as abnormal; somehow less than adult, immature and selfish. Conversely, parenthood is assumed to be a fundamental component to adult identity and normal adult behaviour; parent and adult become synonymous. In opposition to that synonymy is the designation of childless. Accordingly, the categories of parent and childless do more than differentiate between those who do and those who do not have children. Alongside these descriptions of reproductive status are assumptions which seek not only to differentiate but to characterise individuals.

Cameron's book attempts to explore the parent/nonparent dichotomy. Originally 'conceived as a companion' (p. 9) to Cameron's earlier work on parenthood, *Why Have Children?* (1990), *Without Issue* initially aimed to extend understanding of 'parenthood as norm' through an investigation of people who intentionally chose not to have children. However, Cameron asserts that her exploration of the lives of nonparents also led to an examination of the assumptions (including her own) about nonparenthood rather than parenthood. The discussion which follows probes the notions of both 'parenthood as norm' and 'nonparenthood as deviance'. It is clear that ideas and assumptions about nonparents which arose from her earlier work have influenced her investigation and her discussion of people with-

out children. Hence, this book is as much about parents as it is about nonparents.

The introduction provides a useful overview of the ways in which the images of people without children are produced, reproduced and reinforced by three sources: popular media, society and research. Most importantly, Cameron's examination of previous research about childlessness, particularly socio-demographic and social psychological investigations, points to the trend in the past to comparatively evaluate nonparents against parents. Cameron stresses the need to conduct research which examines nonparents themselves; a goal which she has interestingly set out for this book despite the prominence of material about parents in the book.

Broad in its investigation of issues, the remaining chapters attempt to focus on four central themes: challenging assumptions and myths about nonparenthood, which Cameron suggests are more often than not perpetuated by parents; how the meanings of adulthood, marriage, parenthood and family differ for parents and nonparents and how this impacts their social interactions with each other; what are the various paths to the choice to not have children; and how do adults construct their identity without children in a world which equates adulthood with parenthood. Intertwined and pivotal to this discussion is the excavation of ideas behind the construction of 'parenthood as norm' and 'nonparenthood as deviance'. Cameron attempts this through an examination of the historical, social and political significance of children to ideas about family, marriage, adult identity and society. More descriptive than analytical, she uses interview material gathered from her earlier work on parents and the present research to reinforce how these ideas have been used to naturalise and normalise parenthood, and to construct a parent/nonparent dichotomy; a dichotomy where nonparents are clearly negatively valued. Moreover, she has attempted to cover a lot of ground which makes it difficult to ascertain what is precisely being argued. Yet within the maze of ideas, assumptions and concepts what is most evident is the notion that parents view nonparents as different. Even more importantly, this notion of difference informs Cameron's discussion on identity.

Cameron argues that identity is constructed in two ways; that which is imposed by others and that which is constructed by oneself.

For example, the imposed identity of 'nonparent' is constructed in opposition to the identity of 'parent' and vice versa. At the same time, self-identification as 'parent' or 'nonparent' is also constructed in opposition to each other (especially when being compared). However, what is really under investigation is how nonparents construct an identity of adult when being a parent is considered fundamental to that identity. What Cameron suggests is that nonparents construct their adult identities differently from parents. These identities may be more flexible and subject to change as people without children negotiate their status as nonparents. What is ultimately asserted is that the identities of nonparents are constructed through difference – difference from a parental norm.

Cameron's book is important in the New Zealand context where little research exists on the experiences of people who intentionally choose not to have children. The interview material included in this book sheds some light on the experiences and lives of nonparents, the pressure they are under to have children and how they respond to that pressure, and how the path to nonparenthood is as varied as nonparents themselves. This book provides a resource for further, much-needed research and critique in this area.

KIMBERLY ABSHOFF, *Sociology, University of Auckland*

THREE MASQUERADES: ESSAYS ON EQUALITY, WORK AND HU(MAN) RIGHTS

Marilyn Waring

Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, Auckland, 1996

Masquerade is variously defined as acting or living under false pretences; to pass off under a false character; disguise; a travesty. Waring's trio is about all of the above. Essay number one deals with women in politics and what they have experienced and said about their experiences; painful and dangerous adventures in a boys' own world where the fact that the conkers are fragmentation bombs and the paper darts laser-guided is carefully concealed. Waring's theme

is the need for representativeness and the impossibilities thereof. There is indeed an awful representativeness in parliamentary and political party behaviours; from sandpit squabbles, through playground brawls and prefects' privileges through to turf wars in the urban jungle, we have seen it all (if only on television) except that political and diplomatic behaviour are dignified with different names.

Masquerade number two is not so much about naming than about counting – and naming what gets counted. Tom Stoppard said it neatly in *Jumpers*: 'It's not the voting that's democracy, it's the counting'. Some votes have always been more equal than others, a fact that no amount of ingenuity in electoral system design seems to alter. A predecessor of Waring's along this trail, Barbara Rogers, tells the story of a massive volume by two French geographers on the history of farming. Therein the learned pair pointed out that it was women in Africa who invented agriculture; thereafter through a zillion paragraphs there was no further reference to women. Or consider a more recent example of international communication where the power of names and the powerlessness of the nameless can be counted in millions of dollars. Two men, steering their floating billboards in far southern latitudes (what did the sponsors want to say to the penguins and the polar bears?) are rescued at vast expense. Meanwhile, and not for the first or last time, eighty, maybe a hundred or more (but who is to count) are pitched from a pirate immigrant boat and drown somewhere off the coast of Greece.

Greece's (nameless) problems are 'illegals'. Illegals are also known (framed/named) as 'economic migrants' to distinguish them from refugees about whose treatment there is the occasional international agreement or law. Refugees come from states your government disapproves of and does not have significant trade relations with. Economic migrants are also refugees – from impoverishment and destitution – and must be hastily bundled back from whence they came lest they become an embarrassment to rich people everywhere.

Women, economic migrants and indigenous minorities are all deeply embarrassing to the world's power holders. One way and another they all come within the scope of the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights and a plethora of international instruments, conventions, protocols which are the soft underbelly of international law. Which is the third masquerade, in which Waring provides an

account of such emergent law as it might apply to women supposing sufficient political will could be mustered. In 1993 Marilyn Waring joined with Georgina Kirby and Jocelyn Fish to co-sponsor a petition to the New Zealand Parliament on the subject of equal representation for women in the House. Later she organised a submission on wider matters to the NZ Human Rights Commission.

Women and men in other countries are engaged in similar actions the impetus and articulation for which has issued from the UN Decade for Women. Different domestic jurisdictions, different modes of female 'entryism' – there are many ways to skin a cat, point the finger, unmask the substantive inequality of male gendered political, social and economic institutions.

Waring refuses to apologise for writing with passion; nor should she have to. I am less certain about her refusal to be pessimistic. Yes, one has to begin somewhere and anyone at all would be best advised to begin in their own backyard; particularly as the soft underbelly can only be got at when domestic remedies have been exhausted. Yes, states party to the various conventions must be consistently prodded to promote equal numbers of women and men within the international as well as the national systems. Yet the UN system, the apparatus of law and declaratory judgement, seems increasingly to occupy a parallel universe to that of power and wealth. Waring writes without this context. That the US ceased to pay its dues to the UN; that the US and the UK mounted consistent attacks on internationalism. These were not accidents but aspects of the grand project of global capital, the accretion of power to the transnational corporation and its bankers.

RUTH BUTTERWORTH, *Political Studies, University of Auckland*

VACCINATION AGAINST PREGNANCY: MIRACLE OR MENACE?
Judith Richter
Spinifex Press, Melbourne, 1996

Breaking the link between fertility and sexuality has been one of the more significant developments of the twentieth century, especially for women, but it has come at a cost. Though population control ideology made contraceptive research more acceptable, and helped many women to choose if and when they would have children, the philosophical underpinnings of the research left much to be desired. The history of contraceptive research since World War II has been characterised, not by an ideology of individual choice, but by a conceptual framework which maintains that there are too many people in the world, and women – particularly poor, brown women – must be 'persuaded' to use particular forms of contraception.

Judith Richter, a 'health researcher and activist by professional choice', wrote *Vaccination Against Pregnancy* as a contribution to informed public debate about 'anti-pregnancy' vaccines. 'Immunological contraceptives' are, according to Richter, a completely new class of contraceptive which 'induce a disorder of the immune system, namely immunological infertility'. In other words, by triggering the immune system to treat certain aspects of fertility as foreign or harmful, immuno-contraceptives make the body reject pregnancy just as a disease would be rejected. Richter's work comes down firmly on the 'menace' rather than the 'miracle' side of the debate, and this well-informed, accessible book questions the viability of a contraceptive method which has unprecedented potential for abuse, the possibility of serious side effects, and which seems to be designed primarily for population control rather than self-determination and well-being.

Richter's book begins with a brief discussion of the historical dynamics of contraceptive research, remarking that issues of women's safety and self-determination have traditionally taken second place to other priorities. Most researchers have concentrated on efficacy, lengthening the time periods in which the particular contraceptive remains effective, and lowering 'user failure' rates. Richter's following discussion of immuno-contraceptives does little to quell fears that

nothing has changed. *Vaccination Against Pregnancy* analyses the different types of immuno-contraceptives currently being researched, describes the fundamental problems with making them 'effective, reversible, and safe', speculates on their possible side effects and their potential for abuse, dissects the ideology behind the research, questions the ethics of the research practice, and finally traces the history of the campaign against the continued research and development of immuno-contraceptives. Her appendices, which include a petition entitled 'Call for a stop of research on antifertility "vaccines"' and a list of 'Some useful organizations' to contact to become part of the movement against immuno-contraceptives, make her activism clear and unequivocal.

What, then, makes immuno-contraceptives more potentially harmful than other contraceptives? According to Richter even if the vaccinations could be made effective, which is doubtful, there are possibilities that they could induce auto-immune disorders, exacerbate infectious diseases, and expose foetuses to ongoing immune reactions. She also remarks that as yet there is no guarantee that they can be reversed, and they could possibly cause permanent infertility. Given the complex differences between individual immune systems and their notorious unreliability under assault from stress and disease, immuno-contraceptives cannot be guaranteed safe and effective under all circumstances. Nor, since they require vigilant monitoring, do they present significant advantages over other methods, especially at a time when health care systems in many countries are being 'restructured'.

Vaccination Against Pregnancy also explains in detail the method's potential for abuse. Complaints about hormonal contraceptive injections have often centred on the irreversible nature of the method; until the hormones wear off, women are denied choices about their own fertility. As yet, immuno-contraceptives are not immediately reversible, and some researchers seem to have difficulty in stating exactly how long the vaccinations will last. The widespread acceptability of anti-disease vaccines, according to both Richter and other researchers, will allow immuno-contraceptives to be used more easily. However, Richter sees this as a disadvantage, especially since immuno-contraceptives may be administered without people's knowledge or consent.

Paranoia? Perhaps. Though Richter maintains that not all research-

ers and population control activists have such a scenario in mind, and some even pay 'lip-service' to self-determination, the impression given by *Vaccination Against Pregnancy* is of a future of Dr Frankenstein-like male scientists experimenting on women without their knowledge or consent. Whether or not the 'bad male scientist' figures have the agenda Richter proposes, her arguments against immuno-contraceptives are convincing enough.

Richter has read and researched extensively, and even for those unfamiliar with scientific research processes, the workings of the immune system, and experimental ethics, *Vaccination Against Pregnancy* is perfectly intelligible. The irony is, of course, that the people who most need to be given Richter's information – women in developing countries who will probably be affected adversely by the introduction of immuno-contraceptives – are the least likely to be supplied with this knowledge, or the opportunity to use it.

DANIELLE MOREAU, *History, University of Auckland*

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