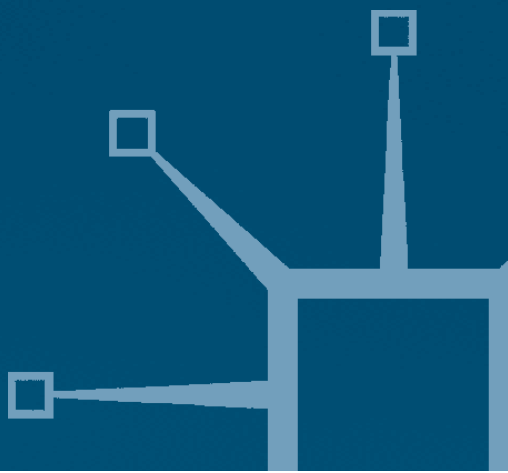


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Women's Rights and Human Rights

International Historical Perspectives

Edited by
Patricia Grimshaw, Katie Holmes
and Marilyn Lake



Women's Rights and Human Rights

Also by Patricia Grimshaw

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN: Feminist Perspectives (*co-editor*)

CREATING A NATION (*co-author with Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly*)

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Also by Katie Holmes

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GETTING EQUAL: The History of Australian Feminism

THE LIMITS OF HOPE: Soldier Settlement in Victoria, 1915–38

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(1996), *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea La E Pono Ai?* (1992) which was nominated in 1993 for a Po'okela Award in the category of Excellence in Hawaiian Culture; *An Act of War: the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation*, an award winning historical documentary written in conjunction with Haunani-Kay Trask and Na Maka o ka 'Aina Video Company for ITVS (Independent Television and Video Service) a subsidiary of PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) May 1993.

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Introduction

Women's Rights and Human Rights, the title of this collection, signals dilemmas central to women's struggles over the last two centuries. As they fought for legal, civil and political rights women have faced the challenge of discovering ways to claim equal rights with men while also defining women's specific rights, and to join with men in their (anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist) struggles for human rights, while not forfeiting their interests and power as women. Furthermore, how could women secure acknowledgment of their individuality as human beings without jeopardising recognition of the importance of relationships and community to women's and men's lives? This collection brings together very different perspectives on these questions from historians across the world. In doing so it highlights the significance of national and cultural difference, as well as sexual difference, for women's lives and to their political mobilizations and the very definition of what constitutes rights, freedom and social justice.

One of the key emphases of this collection of historical work, then, is the importance of locating political struggles and subjectivities in context, of making connections between political history and social and cultural history. The ways in which women have formulated their claims to rights and recognition have been crucially shaped by the particularity of their situations and the discursive and material resources available to them at any given time. The historical contexts of women's lives and political activism during the last two centuries have included the legacies of imperialism, the processes of nation building and the international networks formalised in the twentieth century through the establishment of the League of Nations and the United Nations.

Feminist scholars have long argued that the very concept of human rights derives from a European liberal tradition which privileges the masculine autonomous individual, but women activists around the world have adopted and adapted such conceptual language in support of radically different sorts of claims. Women have claimed rights as child-bearers and organized as mothers, and whereas European-based formulations of rights inscribed the individual's right to 'property', indigenous women and men have struggled to achieve recognition of their collective 'land rights'.

We have divided the book into three parts. Part I, 'Legacies of Imperialism', provides a number of different perspectives on the impact of imperialism on the development of feminism as a western discourse and the subsequent emergence of indigenous and nationalist political movements in which women have also played a definitive role. Clare Midgley explores the link between British feminism and imperialism between 1790 and 1850. She traces the development of feminism as a discourse of western civilization and progress and concomitantly as a politics that positioned 'degraded' African and Asian women as persons in need of salvation. Feminist campaigns thus contributed importantly to the circulation of a set of negative images of non-western societies as despotic, sensuous and corrupt, but also to the idea that all women had rights as human beings.

In another study of the importance of Christianity to feminism's sense of confidence in its proselytizing mission, Noriyo Hayakawa documents the imperialist assumptions of the Japanese women reformers, especially those associated with the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union, examining their role in colonizing activities in Korea and China. Their 'sense of superiority', she suggests, 'seemed to have been reinforced by Christianity, which was considered as a symbol of civilization'. As helpmeets to the state, they helped assimilate colonized people to Japanese society. On the other hand the work of such feminist reformers was crucial in challenging the legitimacy of licensed prostitution and in promoting women's suffrage in Japan and the occupied territories. Patricia Grimshaw also notes the missionary zeal that informed feminist campaigns for women's suffrage in three new settler societies, the British colonies of South Australia and New Zealand and Colorado in the American West. Again, WCTU reformers played a key role in suffrage agitation, but her focus is the feminist silence around the particular oppressions suffered by indigenous women in these societies, a silence that began to be broken by the 1920s.

In a detailed and complex analysis of the tensions surrounding women's political status and activism in postcolonial Papua New Guinea, Anne Dickson-Waiko argues that the processes of Australian colonial rule and nation-state formation privileged men as citizens and maintained women in their clan and tribal identities. The new status afforded to male citizens in the public domain, therefore, exacerbated the existing subordination of women in Melanesian society. But women's recent attempts to assert rights as individuals, by refusing for example to agree to a customary marriage as part of a compensation

payment, even when successful remain problematic because they run deeply counter to the Melanesian emphasis on community and the primacy accorded to maintaining social relationships.

The alleged customs of exotic others, usually construed negatively, have long influenced western feminist ideas about the proper direction for women's 'advancement'. In her essay on Margaret Mead as American anthropologist, Dolores Janiewski explores the ways in which Samoan practices of 'free love', as appropriated and represented by Mead in her iconic text, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, shaped a twentieth-century feminist agenda that added sexual rights to the feminist programme.

To the dispossessed indigenous communities in Hawai'i and Australia, 'land rights' were central to claims for rights and recognition. Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa writes about the long tradition of female power in Hawaiian society that sustains current women activists in their struggle for Hawaiian independence and sovereignty. In Hawaiian culture 'women were powerful because they gave birth'. Similarly, Aboriginal women in Australia draw inspiration from the example of their mothers. In their jointly written contribution to the collection, Indigenous women Jackie Huggins and Isabel Tarrago join with their non-Indigenous countrywoman Kay Saunders in an exploration of their mothers' lives. They present 'the journeys our mothers took in their separate ways to bring us together', as an affirmation of the current reconciliation process in Australia.

As a meditation on the conflict and convergence inherent to Australian nation building, this contribution also looks to the themes of the second part of the book. Part II, 'Negotiating National Citizenship', brings together a number of studies of women's engagements as national citizens, or would-be citizens. In Part I a number of authors showed the ways in which feminism has been historically complicit with imperialism in advancing the claims of white women. It is also important to recognize that feminists at other moments have identified with and been influenced by the struggles of enslaved, colonized and other subordinated peoples. In her revisiting of the significance of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention for United States feminists, Nancy Hewitt makes a case for a 'synchronic analysis' which would locate that American event in its own world. Such an approach would show American suffragists influenced by the contemporary campaigns of other oppressed groups, including 'slaves, free blacks, landless laborers, industrial workers, Native Americans and Mexicans'. Such struggles influenced many 'feminist foremothers' to espouse a vision of citizenship based on 'communitarian values' rather than the liberal conceptions of self-ownership, individual rights and

suffrage which came to define the American tradition of feminist citizenship.

Why did French women take so long to win political citizenship? Taking this time-honoured question as her departure point for an analysis of the gendered dimensions of citizenship, Leora Auslander offers a novel answer, which emphasizes the necessity of distinguishing between nation and state in such analysis. In a comparative discussion of France and Germany, she considers the implications for feminist national belonging of those two countries' very different conceptions of citizenship. In France, where citizenship was an abstract idea dependent on loyalty to and love of the nation, women were needed to teach and inculcate such emotions in their young. It was men's work to foster attachment to the political entity of the state, and to represent it. To grant women suffrage, therefore, would be to risk their role of reproducing the nation and the emotion and meaning of being French. By contrast in Germany, where citizenship was considered inherited and thus passed on only through the blood of parents, whether they lived inside or outside Germany, children did not need to be educated in love of nation. Thus women's political citizenship would not pose a threat to the nation nor disrupt the political system.

The importance of national political culture in shaping women's experience of citizenship (or lack of it) is also emphasized by Linda Edmondson's chapter on Tsarist Russia, even though she questions prevailing historiographical assumptions about 'Russian difference'. The combination of factors that characterized Tsarist political culture – autocracy, the lack of any tradition of constitutional government, serfdom and its late abolition, the peasant commune, the late and partial development of capitalism – all seemed inimical to women's (and men's) acquisition of the status of citizens. Even following their enfranchisement and after the Bolshevik revolution, however, women continued to be marginal to the 'body politic', confirming a gender hierarchy that still exists, as Edmondson suggests, 'in virtually all known societies'.

The subordination of women in nation-states necessarily takes different forms, however. In Charlotte Macdonald's account of women's marginalization as citizens in New Zealand in the 1930s and 1940s, the conceptual distinction between nation and state invoked by Auslander in her comparison of France and Germany is also significant. In 'Emily's Dream', Macdonald tells the story of one New Zealand activist's attempt to have women's historical achievements inscribed in the national memory. The first women to be granted the right to vote in national elections, and recognized as citizens by the New Zealand

state, New Zealand women were yet omitted from national mythology and history. In the years leading up to the 1940 celebration of the centenary of New Zealand's foundation as a British colony, Dr Emily Siedeberg, founder of the New Zealand Women's Medical Association, put enormous effort into an attempt to gain official support for a memorial Women's Building in Dunedin. She proposed this as an appropriate means to commemorate the 'pioneer [woman] citizen' as earlier war memorials had acknowledged the deeds of male citizens, but she and her committee were rebuffed and forced to raise the money privately. The defeat of the women's bid to 'challenge the gender identity of the nation', as Macdonald puts it, to 'build public memory around women', exposed the limits to women's citizenship in a nation-state in which they had enjoyed the franchise for over 40 years. Yet their ultimate success in having a (more modest) building opened in 1942 was also testament to their civic power and their sense of themselves as historical subjects.

In so far as citizenship privileged the relationship of the individual with the state, it also posed a threat to the primacy of people's familial or community identities, as Anne Dickson-Waiko argued in Part I. Thus did the dependent status of wife come to appear an anomaly in a modern democratic polity, a recognition that led to one of the most important and long-lasting campaigns waged by the new feminist citizens of the twentieth century, the demand for married women's nationality rights. Ida Blom examines this campaign in the Norwegian context, drawing attention to the conflict between the idea of 'individual rights' and what she calls 'family rights', a campaign that also occupied international activists at the League of Nations, as discussed in Part III.

But individual rights only took women so far, as Eileen Boris and Sonya Michel argue in their detailed analysis of American women workers' struggles after the Second World War for social services, such as child care, which would give substance to the civil right to work. A conception of 'social rights', they suggest, was essential for women carrying traditional domestic responsibilities if they were to exercise their equal 'civil rights'. While a privatized welfare state has worked reasonably well for middle-class white men, it has not equally benefited African Americans, the working class or women, for 'most of the rights that make up social citizenship for American women remain primarily the prerogative of middle- and upper-income families'.

If marriage undermined women's rights as citizens in the west, as Ida Blom shows with reference to Norway, the condition of widowhood in present day Bangladesh, according to Shirin Akhtar, can spell civil

death and extreme impoverishment. In her assessment of the status of widows in Bangladesh, where, as in other parts of the sub-continent, every citizen is governed by two sets of laws (secular and religious), Shirin Akhtar points to women's dramatic loss of identity and economic and social support on the death of their husbands. Muslims tend to fare better than Hindus, she suggests, in part because they are more easily able to remarry. She concludes with a call for the discriminatory laws of inheritance to be replaced with legislation more in tune with 'the present day demand for human rights'.

The emergence of global mobilizations in support of women's human rights in the twentieth century, with their successes and setbacks, is the focus of Part III of this collection, 'Women Working Internationally'. Here, five scholars provide essays on women joining forces internationally to promote women's rights, human rights and social justice. In her chapter, 'Nationalism and Feminism in the Black Atlantic', Deborah Gray White draws on Paul Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic to explore the experiences of women in Britain, the United States, South Africa and Brazil, to highlight the 'differences between black feminism and white feminism, western versus non-western feminism and the tension between feminism and nationalism'. She looks also to the emergence of a new communal race- and class-based feminism that is paradoxically both transnational and nationalistic. White identifies as a centrifugal force the belief that women's liberation cannot be separated from nationalist struggles against racism, imperialism and classism, a force that can serve as the basis for an alliance between black women from countries as different as Britain, the United States, Canada, Brazil and South Africa.

From the early decades of the twentieth century women from both West and the East, drawn from the ranks of colonizers and colonized, came together in international gatherings, inspired by the idea that all women had interests and aspirations in common. Such forums included the Women's Pan-Pacific Conference, the British Commonwealth League, the International Women's Suffrage Alliance and women's initiatives at the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations. These delegates agreed that women should be free and independent citizens and that they should have equality of status with men, but their priorities and strategies were always a matter of debate. Karen Offen shows that during the 1920s and 1930s activists in several of these international women's organizations responded differently to the rise of fascism, the advent of the Great Depression and the growing threat of war. They divided increasingly over whether a reinvigorated 'humanism' was not

a more pertinent politics for the times than a 'separatist' feminism. At the same time, the meaning of feminism itself was also in dispute.

In her study of feminist activism at the League of Nations and the United Nations, Marilyn Lake analyses the implications for feminist strategy of the conceptual shift in the discourse on human rights from self-determination to non-discrimination, a shift in which feminists played a decisive role. Whereas the idea of self-determination allowed feminists to address sexual difference and the implications of women's sexed embodiment, their policies seemed simply to reinstate women as the protected sex. Advocates of equality and non-discrimination on the other hand became caught up in a disavowal of sexual difference, a repression which worked to consolidate men's experiences and perspectives on the world as the 'universal' basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It proved impossible in such a framework to recognize mothers as rights-bearing political subjects.

Jane Kani Edward's study of the experiences of south Sudanese refugee women over the past two decades in Egypt and Uganda reveals the impact of women's international networks in a contemporary setting. The refugee women, accustomed to the constraints of a strongly patriarchal social system, quickly perceived differences in the situations of many women in their host countries as they themselves entered waged work and education for the first time. In Egypt and Uganda numbers of leading women have been active in international forums, publicizing human rights abuses in ways that resonate with the south Sudanese women's own concerns. They have formed their own women's groups to confront such issues as polygamy in an age of HIV/AIDS, and have had a significant presence at such forums as those in Cairo in 1994, and Dakar (Senegal) and Beijing, both in 1995.

A wide ranging analysis of such current political mobilization of women is the focus of Temma Kaplan's concluding chapter, 'Women's Rights as Human Rights: Grassroots Women Redefine Citizenship in a Global Context'. Kaplan considers the changing definition of human rights – the greater attention to daily material and physical need – which has emerged from recent United Nations sponsored world conferences of women, including at the most recent in Beijing in 1995. Kaplan examines the local and international manifestations of a new orientation and the ways in which activists have used the concept of 'women's rights as human rights' to redefine citizenship in terms of material reality and social justice.

Together this collection looks at the different histories of women's rights campaigns and political mobilizations through international

networking, and nationally in specific sites as diverse as Papua New Guinea, Russia, the United Kingdom, Japan, Hawai'i, France, Australia, Bangladesh, the United States, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, the Sudan, Egypt and Uganda. The historians whose work is represented here are notable for their breadth of interest in comparative perspectives on the experiences of women, whether they deal with precise and specific arenas or whether their subject is inherently cross-national or cross-cultural. They document important achievements, but also note the ambiguities and limits of those achievements. They note the multiplicity of oppressions and the elusiveness of equality, within nations and between them. They suggest the importance but also the difficulty of having women's rights recognized as human rights.

The historical perspectives examined in this collection represent the vitality and freshness of feminist research across the world. The chapters are drawn from a selection of papers presented to the 1998 International Federation for Research in Women's History conference entitled 'Women and Human Rights, Social Justice and Citizenship: International Historical Perspectives'. Over 400 delegates from 35 countries gathered in Melbourne, Australia, to hear an impressive number of speakers discuss their work on the historical and contemporary condition of women in their countries. The conference was notable for the number of indigenous women, including Australian Aboriginal women, who presented papers, and for the number of participants from the Asia-Pacific region who helped make it a truly international discussion. It is our hope that this collection provides a small taste of the intellectual rigour and sophistication of feminist historical research evident in Melbourne in 1998.

We thank the contributors warmly for their willing and prompt cooperation with the editing of this volume, and their willingness to donate proceeds to assist the work of the International Federation for Research in Women's History, an association of women's history associations from a large and increasing number of countries. We thank, also, Elizabeth Nelson and Vera Mackie for their valuable editorial assistance and Sarah Squire for the index.

MARILYN LAKE, KATIE HOLMES AND PATRICIA GRIMSHAW

Part I

Legacies of Imperialism

1

British Women, Women's Rights and Empire, 1790–1850

Clare Midgley

Introduction: British feminism and imperialism

Most research on the history of the relationship between British feminism and imperialism has focused on the period between the 1860s and the First World War.¹ This is understandable: this was both the period of 'first wave feminism' – of the first organized women's movement – and the period of high or 'new' imperialism, when imperial concerns came to the fore in British politics. In the late Victorian and Edwardian period empire also arguably had its greatest impact on the everyday lives of ordinary people in Britain: as John MacKenzie has concluded, 'the values and beliefs of the imperial world view settled like a sediment in the consciousness of the British people'.² But what, then, of the period which Jane Rendall and others have identified as seeing the origins of modern feminism in Britain, the 1790s to 1850s?³ This was, after all, a time of immense expansion in British dominion overseas. Around 150 million people came under British control between 1790 and 1820 alone, in territories as widely dispersed as southern Africa, India and Australia. In addition, Christopher Bayly's persuasive argument that 'the Regency empire was in an important sense an extension of domestic social change overseas' alerts us to the importance of exploring the relationship between domestic and imperial developments at this period.⁴ What, then, can be said about the relationship between Britain's imperial concerns and British women's feminist preoccupations during the early nineteenth century?

My work on this topic forms part of a broader research project which seeks to trace the significance of the fact that British feminism developed over a period when Britain was a leading imperial power. The key questions I am addressing in this research are: to what extent, and in

what ways, did imperialism impact on feminism, and feminism impact on imperialism? My interest in this issue stems from the debates which have been taking place over the difficulties of developing globally relevant feminisms given the immense diversity of women's experiences worldwide, the inequalities between 'first' and 'third' world women resulting from western imperialism, and the associated problems of racism and Eurocentrism in white western feminist thought and practice. The importance in exploring the historical roots of this 'imperial feminism' was stressed by Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar in an article 'Challenging Imperial Feminism' which appeared in *Feminist Review* in 1984.⁵ A number of feminist historians are now, to quote Vron Ware, investigating the 'colonial skeletons in the family cupboard' of western feminists, and I see my own work as part of this wider project.⁶

My aim in this chapter is to highlight and explore the significance of what I identify as the two key aspects of the link between feminism and imperialism in the 1790–1850 period: the development of feminist discourse as a discourse of western civilization and progress; and British women's 'proto-feminist' campaigning on behalf of African and Asian women under the aegis of empire.

Feminist tracts: the emancipation of women as the culmination of western progress

While historians have rightly pointed to the way in which early feminist tracts were preoccupied with the position of women within British society, they have only recently begun to recognize the ways in which their critique of British women's subordination was placed within an international framework, with particular reference to non-western societies encountered in the process of British expansion overseas.⁷ The limited recent discussions of this global and imperial dimension of the tracts contrast with the far greater attention paid by literary scholars to questions of empire and race in British women's travel writings and novels of the Victorian period, most notably in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), often identified as the first British feminist novel.⁸ What I want to highlight here is that early feminist tracts were imbued with analogies between the position of British women and subjugated non-Europeans, and that feminist arguments were structured around the presentation of female emancipation as the culmination of western civilization.

Early feminist tracts were composed by a diverse group of writers. Amongst the most significant were historian Catherine Macaulay,

author of *Letters on Education* (1790), a somewhat neglected founding feminist text; political radical Mary Wollstonecraft, author of the famous *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792); the Irish Utopian socialist couple William Thompson and Anna Wheeler, who co-operated in formulation of the arguments of *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race* (1825); Scottish anti-slavery campaigner Marion Reid, a somewhat shadowy figure influenced by the Utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, who wrote *A Plea for Woman* (1843); and radical Unitarian Harriet Taylor, who penned an essay on 'The Enfranchisement of Women' which appeared in the *Westminster Review* of 1851, developing arguments which later influenced her husband John Stuart Mill, the leading liberal thinker and parliamentary advocate of women's suffrage.

In these texts we see the authors engaging with the radical intellectual and political currents of the period, and attempting to bring questions of women's subordination and emancipation from their margins to centre stage. The writers both drew on, and critiqued the exclusions of, Enlightenment thought, calls for the 'rights of man', Utilitarianism and liberalism. Each of these strands of political thought had a particular relationship to British imperialism. Enlightenment thinkers were concerned to gain new perspectives on western societies by comparing them with societies newly discovered in the process of European expansion overseas.⁹ Supporters of the 'rights of man' called for the freeing of colonial slaves, while the 'black Jacobins' in the French Caribbean colony of San Dominique succeeded in overthrowing both slavery and French rule.¹⁰ Utilitarians strongly influenced the shaping of imperial policy towards India in terms of the introduction of English educational and legal systems in the 1830s.¹¹ Liberal political theorists were, as Uday Singh Mehta has shown, 'deeply involved with the empire in their writings and often in its administration'.¹² Given this intellectual and political background, it is perhaps not surprising to find that early feminist tracts highlighted British women's subordination by situating it within a broad geographical and chronological framework informed by an understanding of the world developed in the context of European expansion overseas.

In their writings, early feminists highlighted the severity of British women's subordination by repeatedly equating their position to that of people in non-western societies, creating what I have termed a 'triple discourse' of anti-slavery.¹³ The first element of this was a likening of the oppression of British women to black chattel slavery in Britain's West Indian colonies. The analogy of colonial slaves was most pronounced in

William Thompson's work, written soon after the launch of the anti-slavery campaign: Thompson likened the marriage contract to slave-codes and condemned the 'law-supported, literally existing slavery of wives'.¹⁴ The second element was an analogy between British marriages and the sexual slavery of women in the harem, an analogy which applied to gender relations Enlightenment thinkers' use of the harem as a 'metaphor for injustice ... and arbitrary government'.¹⁵ British women with their 'immoderate fondness for dress, for pleasure and for sway' were, Wollstonecraft asserted, like eastern women 'immured in seraglios and watched with a jealous eye' and 'educated only to excite emotions in men', while Taylor claimed that 'what is called affection in married life' in Britain was often no more than the feelings that 'often exist between a sultan and his favourites'.¹⁶ The third element of the discourse was an analogy with the slavish position of women in polygamous 'savage' societies. Wollstonecraft drew an analogy with African societies in which polygamy 'blasts every domestic virtue' and is associated with the belief that 'woman must be inferior to man, and made for him' while Taylor made comparisons with Australian aboriginal and American Indian cultures in which, she claimed, 'women were and are the slaves of men for purposes of toil'.¹⁷

By making these three related analogies between British women and slaves feminist writers were thus able to build up a picture of British women enslaved to men sexually, emotionally, physically and legally. Such comparisons conjured up a series of vivid, disturbing images based on other texts with which the educated reader was assumed to be familiar: anti-slavery tracts, travellers' accounts of Africa and the stories of the *Arabian Nights*. In the process feminists combined a critique of colonial slavery with the circulation of a set of negative images of non-Western societies: eastern countries were presented as despotic, sensuous and corrupt, while the indigenous societies of Africa, America and Australia were seen as living relics of the age of savagery.

In a related move, the tracts presented women's emancipation as the culmination of Europe's social progress from savagery to civilization. Drawing on Enlightenment thinkers' use of women's position as a marker of the level of civilization, Taylor described female emancipation as part of 'human improvement in the widest sense', while Reid argued that woman 'advances refinement and civilization, and is, in turn, advanced by them'.¹⁸ Both the enslavement of blacks by whites and the enslavement of women by men were represented as anomalous and anachronistic in Western societies, which were defined as progressive and free in nature. Once achieved in 1834–38, black emancipation

became, for feminists as for other liberal reformers, the marker of Britain's status as the most progressive Western nation.¹⁹ Female emancipation was presented as the final step along the road to the creation of a fully enlightened society: attempts to obstruct it, Thompson argued, called into question Britain's claim to be 'the most enlightened' and civilized country in the world.²⁰ In contrast, the subordination of women was represented as characteristic of the unchanging despotic nature of Eastern societies, and as a mark of the backward and benighted state of savage societies in Africa and elsewhere. Macaulay, for example, described the inferior state of female education in Europe as resulting from 'a prejudice, which ought ever to have been confined to the regions of the east, because it accords with the state of slavery to which female nature in that part of the world had been ever subjected'.²¹

Early feminist writers thus critiqued British women's subordination within a global framework informed by British imperial expansion. One element of this was a linking of the bad treatment of British women with the excesses of colonialism, and a call for emancipation for both women and slaves. A second was a questioning of Britain's present claims to be a civilized country when it treated women so oppressively, but an optimism about the possibility of change on the basis of its progress in other areas, especially following the abolition of slavery. A third was the circulation of a set of negative images of non-western societies which combined a stress on their ill-treatment of women with a pessimistic view of their unchanging nature. In the process was enacted western women's simultaneous identification with, and distancing from, non-western women and men. The process of identification drew out similarities between the treatment of women in western and non-western societies, and between white women and black slaves, while the process of distancing set up a contrast between western societies' civilization and ability to progress and non-western societies' savagery and inability to change. The resultant discourse enabled feminists to dramatically highlight the oppression of British women while also soliciting broad support for female emancipation as an unproblematic part of the onward march of western social progress under British leadership.²²

Female campaigns: emancipating the 'other' woman as a feminine imperial mission

Despite the production of a number of key feminist tracts over the 1790–1850 period, the organized campaigns conducted by middle-class

British women at this period tended not to be around their own social position but rather to focus on 'other' women, whether these were working-class women at home²³ or women living in non-western countries under British imperial control. The most important of the imperially-focused campaigns were for the abolition of colonial slavery and for the eradication of *sati*, or widow burning, in India. The former highlighted the oppression of women under a system introduced and perpetuated by the British in the West Indies, whereas the latter concerned the oppression of women by indigenous culture. Despite these differences, the two campaigns had strong links to each other and to the newly formed Christian missionary societies. Both involved an extension of the evangelical philanthropic concept of 'women's mission to women' from the domestic to the imperial arena. Both propelled women out of the purely familial sphere as they moved from a background supportive role into increasingly publicly-visible, self-directed and eventually overtly political engagements.²⁴

In the case of the campaign against *sati*, women began by organizing fund-raising and distributing propaganda through local ladies' associations which they set up from 1813 onwards as auxiliaries to the missionary societies which had just been given official permission to become active in India. They then moved into financial support for an initiative to send the first single woman teacher to India to promote the Christian education of girls and women. In the case of anti-slavery, women formed a national network of ladies' anti-slavery societies from 1825 onwards. These raised funds, produced and disseminated propaganda door-to-door, promoted a boycott of slave-grown sugar, and acted increasingly independently of the male leadership of the movement.²⁵ Both campaigns culminated in the first concerted petitioning of Parliament by women, which took place some 30 years before the commencement of petitioning for British women's own rights. The female anti-*sati* petitions initiated this female entry into petitioning: between February 1829 and March 1830 a total of 14 separate groups of women from around England sent petitions to Parliament calling on it to abolish 'the practice in India of burning widows on the funeral piles of their husbands'. This was followed by a total of 113 female anti-slavery petitions from all over the United Kingdom, presented between 1830 and 1833, and including a national female petition with 187 157 signatures, described by a campaigner of the period as a 'huge featherbed of a petition' which was 'hailed into the House by four members amidst shouts of applause and laughter'.²⁶

Both sets of campaigners could be described as 'proto-feminists'. In contrast to the female-led women's movement of the 1860-1914

period, these earlier campaigners formed the female sections of broader male-led movements. Despite this limit on their autonomy, they nevertheless widened the acceptable bounds of female philanthropic behaviour, developed their own distinctive feminine perspectives and contributions to the movements, and took initiatives which had an impact on the direction and policy of the movements as a whole. In the process they gained organizational and campaigning skills which they and their daughters were later to bring into the women's movement of the 1850s and 1860s.²⁷

Further evidence of their 'proto-feminism' lies in the female campaigners' objectives and motivation. Their aim was to promote female emancipation: they wished to free black women from colonial slavery, and to rescue Indian widows from enforced burning on the funeral pyres of their husbands. They emphasized that they were propelled into action by their concern for the sufferings of women, and they expressed their motivation in gender-specific terms. They described *sati* as 'disgusting to the moral feelings of every *British* female' while slavery, they stated, impelled them to step out of the domestic sphere because of 'a painful and indignant sense of the injuries offered to their own sex'.²⁸ They expressed identification with their own sex across the lines of perceived racial and cultural difference, not only along the lines of common humanity – stressed by male campaigners – but also by expressing common femininity. The anti-slavery slogan 'Am I not a man and a brother' was adapted by women into the slogan 'Am I not a woman and a sister' and women emphasized the natural maternal instincts common to all women. Thus the anti-slavery poem 'The Negro Mother's Appeal' urged the 'white lady, happy, proud, and free' to 'Dispel the Negro Mother's fears – /By thy pure, maternal joy, /Bid him spare my helpless boy' from slavery.²⁹ Similarly, an anti-*sati* address of the Southwark Ladies' Association (an auxiliary of the Church Missionary Society) stated: 'Let the anxiously fond mother...endeavour to realize the poignant anguish which must rend the breast of that other, who in the decease of her children's best support, hears the summons for her to forsake them...and to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pile'.³⁰

This proto-feminism was, however, set firmly within an imperial framework. Both sets of campaigners advocated stronger intervention in colonial government by Parliament in the metropolis. They promoted projects of imperial social reform, attempting to bring about legislative changes which would promote female emancipation. Both were strong believers in the benevolent and humanitarian potential of imperialism – in the value of a western civilizing and christianizing

mission. British imperialism was seen as having the potential to emancipate women. Anti-*sati* campaigners, having been urged to imagine the horrors of what William Wilberforce described as the 'family, fire-side evils' of 'Hindostan',³¹ were encouraged to imagine the following scene as the result of their support for missionary campaigns under the aegis of the Empire:

enter the dwelling where your messenger had proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation. Behold a father, a mother, a family, forming an assembly of humble, grateful worshippers, who while they adore the Fountain of their mercies, are fervently craving Heaven's richest blessings on the British Isles, the medium through which those blessings flowed.³²

Similarly, Baptist missionary William Ward claimed that British imperial rule had come about so that 'one of the smallest portions of the civilized world' would have the opportunity to 'accomplish some very important moral change' in the 'long-degraded state' of India – and urged women to fulfil their duty to their less fortunate Indian sisters under the mantle of Empire.³³

This imperial framework, with its in-built imbalance of power, imbued the relationship between white British women campaigners and the black and Indian women for whom they campaigned. Campaigners felt that they had both a right and a duty to speak on behalf of colonized women, whom they represented as passive victims of patriarchal oppression – whether as the 'weakest and most succourless of the human race' who were the 'helpless victims' of abusive white colonial planters in the West Indies and who had 'none with the authority and rights of husbands to protect them from insult', or as 'the ignorant, the abject, and deluded Hindoo female' oppressed by indigenous men and Hindu 'superstition' in India.³⁴ British women, encouraged to see themselves as the 'natural guardians' of less privileged women, were also confident that they knew how to improve other women's lives. What was suppressed was any recognition of oppressed women's own resistance to their lot, and attempts to assert agency in shaping their own lives. White women's activism was thus premised on, and justified by, black and brown women's passivity.³⁵

Stress on female victimhood was accompanied by an emphasis on female degradation. Petitions against *sati* described it as a practice 'degrading to the female character', while female anti-slavery campaigners similarly emphasized the 'cruelly degrading and demoralizing

effects of slavery on the female character'.³⁶ The victim was seen as stained by the sins of the abuser and in need of elevation by more respectable and 'pure' women and by contact with Christianity.

In terms of their analysis of female subordination, early nineteenth-century campaigners against slavery and *sati* raised many of the same issues as the writers of early feminist tracts. These included the sexual exploitation of women, male violence against women, the forced separation of mothers and children, the unsatisfactory legal status of married women, and women's lack of access to education. When it came to visions of freedom and strategies for emancipating women from such oppression, however, their approach was very different. Anti-slavery and anti-*sati* campaigners did not advocate women's rights, but rather the alleviation of women's suffering. This was to be achieved through the abolition of 'barbaric' practices, whether these were practised by 'despotic' Hindu men or 'degenerate' colonial planters, and the transformation of society through the transmission of humanitarian Christian values. Women campaigners' attack was not on patriarchy in general but rather on abuses of male power which denied to black and Asian women the privileges and protection which they claimed themselves to enjoy as British wives, mothers and daughters. It was this form of benevolent paternalism which British women campaigners felt they had a maternal mission to spread to their 'fellow-subjects' in the Empire. As the anti-slavery petition of the female members of New Road Chapel in Oxford stated, they:

felt truly grateful for the just and honourable level in society which they maintain, and for the distinguished privileges which in the several characters of daughter, wife, mother, Christian, they enjoy under the benign influence of the principles of Christianity, and by the administration of the enlightened and paternal Government of this happy land.³⁷

Similarly, an early appeal to British women to support missions in India, entitled 'On the burning of women in India', which was published in the *Missionary Register* in 1813, stated:

Let every Christian woman, who reads the following statement, pity the wretched thousands of her sex who are sacrificed every year in India to a cruel superstition, and thank God for her own light and privileges, and pray and labour earnestly for the salvation of these her miserable fellow subjects.³⁸

The spreading of British women's privileges was to be achieved through the creation of pious families and domesticated women in an ideal evangelical mould through the provision of Christian missionary education. Mary Anne Cooke, the first single British woman missionary teacher in India, expressed the hope that her schools would raise Indian girls from ignorance so they would gain the respect and affection of their husbands, 'properly discharge the important duties of their sex' and exercise good influence from a familial base.³⁹ Such was the limited vision of female emancipation within an evangelical and imperial framework.

Conclusion

In the 1790–1850 period middle-class white British women were thus engaged in two parallel and largely distinct projects broadly concerned with female emancipation. First, they created a 'western feminist discourse' concerned with vindicating their own rights within Britain itself through presenting the subordination of women as out-of-place and out-of-time in such a progressive and enlightened western society. Secondly, they were active in 'proto-feminist' campaigning on behalf of black and brown women under the aegis of Empire. While both groups of campaigners were strongly influenced by the context of British imperial expansion, affirmations of British women's privileges by the latter sat uneasily alongside protests about British women's oppression by the former. It was only with the emergence of an organized women's movement in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century that women were able to weld together these two different sources of British feminism. Then, as Antoinette Burton has shown, British women's suffrage campaigners drew attention to their role as social reformers of the lives of Indian women to justify their call for a place in the imperial Parliament. They also argued that their full emancipation would enable them to complete the western civilizing mission by emancipating women worldwide.⁴⁰ With this interlinking of 'women's rights' and imperial social reform, 'imperial feminism' had come of age.

Notes

1. The key work about this period is A. Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

2. J. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) p. 258.
3. J. Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780–1860* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985).
4. C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780–1830* (London: Longman, 1989) p. 251.
5. V. Amos and P. Parmar, 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', *Feminist Review*, 17 (1984) 3–19. See also C. T. Mohanty, A. Russo and L. Torres (eds), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).
6. V. Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992) pp. 228–9.
7. Moira Ferguson highlights the 'usage of colonial slavery as a reference point for female subjugation' from Wollstonecraft onwards: Moira Ferguson, *Colonialism and Gender Relations from Mary Wollstonecraft to Jamaica Kincaid* (1993), Chapter 2: 'Mary Wollstonecraft and the Problematic of Slavery', pp. 8–33; Joyce Zonana sees Wollstonecraft as introducing a 'feminist orientalist strategy' which 'came to pervade nineteenth-century feminist discourse': Joyce Zonana, 'The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of Jane Eyre', *Signs*, 18, 3 (1993) pp. 592–617; Kathryn Gleadle discusses the comparison between women and slaves in the feminist writings of Unitarians from Lucy Aikin's *Epistles on Women* (1810) through to the radicals of the 1830s and 1840s: K. Gleadle, *The Early Feminists. Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831–51* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) pp. 62–70.
8. For a useful review of the scholarship on Jane Eyre and empire see Antoinette Burton, 'Recapturing Jane Eyre: Reflections on Historicizing the Colonial Encounter in Victorian Britain', *Radical History Review*, 64 (1996) 58–72.
9. G. S. Rousseau and R. Porter, *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).
10. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York, 1963).
11. E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1959).
12. U. S. Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) p. 6.
13. C. Midgley, 'Anti-slavery and the Roots of "Imperial Feminism"' in C. Midgley (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) pp. 161–79.
14. W. Thompson, *An Appeal on Behalf of One Half of the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain Them in Civil and Domestic Slavery* (London, 1825) pp. 55–63; 43.
15. B. Melman, *Women's Orients. English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) p. 60.
16. M. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, reprint of 2nd edn of 1792 (New York: Norton, 1975) pp. 188, 117; H. Taylor Mill, 'The Enfranchisement of Women', *Westminster Review* (July 1851), as reprinted in J. S. Mill and H. Taylor Mill, *Essays on Sex Equality*, (ed.) A. S. Rossi (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970) p. 115.

17. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, p. 70; Taylor Mill, 'The Enfranchisement of Women', pp. 108–9.
18. Taylor Mill, *ibid.*, p. 120; M. Reid, *A Plea for Woman*, reprint of original edn of 1843 (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1988) p. 92.
19. D. B. Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
20. Thompson, *An Appeal on Behalf of One Half of the Human Race*, p. 195.
21. C. Macaulay Graham, *Letters on Education* (London, C. Dilly, 1790) pp. 48–9.
22. My analysis here has parallels with that of Joyce Zonana, who argues that 'by figuring objectionable aspects of life in the West as "Eastern" these Western feminist writers rhetorically define their project as the removal of Eastern elements from Western life', and in so doing sought to make feminism acceptable (Zonana, 'The Sultan and the Slave', p. 594).
23. F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
24. C. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery. The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London: Routledge, 1992); C. Midgley, 'Female Emancipation in an Imperial Frame: English Women and the Campaign against Sati (Widow-Burning) in India, 1813–1830', *Women's History Review*, 9, 1 (2000) pp. 95–122.
25. C. Midgley, 'Slave Sugar Boycotts, Female Activism and the Domestic Base of British Anti-Slavery Culture', *Slavery and Abolition*, 17, 3 (1996) pp. 137–62.
26. G. Stephen, *Anti-Slavery Recollections: In a Series of Letters Addressed to Mrs Beecher Stowe* (London: Thomas Hatchard, 1854) pp. 196–7.
27. C. Midgley, 'Anti-slavery and Feminism in Britain', *Gender and History*, 5, 3 (1993) pp. 343–62.
28. Petition of the female inhabitants of Alchester, 18th February 1830, *Appendix to the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons* (London: House of Commons, 1830) p. 52; national female petition against slavery, *Twentieth Report from the Select Committee of Public Petitions* (London: House of Commons, 1833), Appendix no. 701.
29. 'The Negro Mother's Appeal', *Anti-Slavery Scrap Book* (London: Bagster & Thoms, 1829).
30. *Missionary Register* (April 1814) pp. 136–40.
31. William Wilberforce, 'Substance of the Speech of William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Clause of the East India Bill for Promoting the Religious Instruction and Moral Improvement of the Natives of the British Dominions in India, on the 22nd of June, and the 1st and 12th of July, 1813' in *The Pamphleteer* (London) 3, 5 (March 1814) p. 70.
32. *Missionary Register* (April 1814) pp. 136–40.
33. W. Ward, *A View of the History, Literature and Religion of the Hindoos*, 3rd edn (London: Baptist Missionary Society, 1817) Vol. 1, preface p. xvii.
34. Minute Book of the Ladies' Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves, entry for 8 April 1828 (ms. in Birmingham Central Library); *Second Report of the Ladies' Association for Calne...in Aid of the Cause of Negro Emancipation* (Calne: W. Baily, 1827) p. 4; 'An Appeal from British Ladies to the West India Planters', handwritten draft in Lucy Townsend 'Scrap Book on Negro Slaves', pp. 127–34 (mss Brit. Emp. S. 4 in Rhodes House Library, Oxford);

- T. S. Grimshawe, *An Earnest Appeal to British Humanity in Behalf of Hindoo Widows* (London: J. Hatchard and L. B. Seeley, 1825) pp. 42–3.
35. The extent to which 'subaltern' women were able to resist and exercise agency is a contested one. Gayatri Spivak's pessimistic view of the silencing of Indian women has been contested by other scholars (G. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988) pp. 271–313; A. Loomba, 'Dead Women Tell No Tales: Issues of Female Subjectivity, Subaltern Agency and Tradition in Colonial and Post-colonial Writings on Widow Immolation in India', *History Workshop Journal*, 36 (1993) pp. 209–27). Recent writings on enslaved women in the Caribbean stress that, despite their lack of leading roles in slave revolts, they exercised myriad forms of resistance in their everyday lives (for a useful recent assessment see H. McD. Beckles, 'Taking Liberties: Enslaved Women and Anti-slavery in the Caribbean' in Midgley (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism*, pp. 137–57).
 36. Petition of the female inhabitants of Loughborough, 19th June 1829, *Appendix to the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons* (London: House of Commons, 1829) p. 1515; *A Picture of Colonial Slavery, in the Year 1828, Especially Addressed to the Ladies of Great Britain* (London: Anti-Slavery Society, 1828) pp. 5–6.
 37. *Appendix to the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons, Session 1830–1* (London: House of Commons, 1831) p. 78.
 38. *Missionary Register* (1813) p. 215.
 39. *Missionary Register* (1825) p. 246.
 40. Burton, *Burdens of History*.

2

Nationalism, Colonialism and Women: the Case of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Japan

Noriyo Hayakawa

Prior to beginning the main subject, I will refer briefly to what at first glance appear to be complicated but are in fact fundamentally simple issues of colonialism in modern Japan. In this chapter I will be discussing studies related to the issues of colonialism and nationalism published after the 1970s. Although many historical factors are often noted when we talk about Japanese people's consciousness of imperialism, the following two facts brought meaningful influences to people. The defeat of Japan in the Asian-Pacific War on 15 August 1945 automatically resulted in the independence of colonized countries such as Taiwan and Korea and the collapse of the puppet state, Manchuria. Secondly, some of the 'A' ranked war criminals returned to the political stage, a good example of whom is Kishi Nobusuke who served as prime minister in the late 1950s.¹ The suddenness of the defeat in the war left little time for Japanese to reflect on their own consciousness of imperialism as well as their war responsibility.² Moreover, the postwar rise of Japan as an economic power led to the reproduction of groups which desired to revive the empire of Japan. This led to a distortion of historical facts, and a recent movement of historical revisionism in the 1990s.

It was in the early 1970s that historians including Hora Tomio and journalists such as Honda Katsuichi and Senda Kakō published books specifically on atrocities committed by the Japanese army such as the Nanjing Massacre and the enforced prostitution of so-called 'comfort women' in order to let people know these facts. Some people refused to accept the Nanjing Massacre and some denied the facts.³ However, others began to consider their relationship with the colonized peoples and a few women became interested in the problem of the 'comfort women',

although in the 1970s feminists and historians of women's history did not recognize the 'comfort women' as sexual slaves, or develop ideas about how the practice infringed on human rights.

In the early 1980s governments of Asian countries including China protested to the Japanese government, particularly against the use of the word 'advance' in place of 'invade' in textbook descriptions of the Second World War. Some journalists continued to deny the Nanjing Massacre. However, increasing numbers of people started to set up groups to investigate the history of Korean and Chinese forced labour in Japanese mines. Two different forces concerning memories of the war stood in clear opposition. Historians, including women historians, began to do research on popular war collaboration.⁴ Some people thus faced up to their own consciousness of imperialism and colonialism, although of course, the majority have not changed.⁵

In 1991 Korean women filed a suit with other Korean war victims demanding that the Japanese government apologize to and compensate individual victims. They were supported by a large number of small women's groups and individual women in Japan, including the historian, Suzuki Yuko, and other historians such as Yoshimi Yoshiaki, who established the Institute for Research on War Responsibility. These Japanese women collaborated with Korean feminists as well as other supporters. The Japanese government continued to refuse to pay compensation for individual victims, arguing that issues of reparation had been resolved with the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952 and the treaty normalizing relations with South Korea in 1965. In spite of the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights which were issued three times and of the Beijing Platform, conservative groups like the Society for Research on Liberalism and the Society for Publication of New Text Books were established and organized the young generation who had no war experiences. These groups insist that to acknowledge atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre and the 'comfort women' is to damage the beautiful history of Imperial Japan and its role in the world, and that people should not reconsider colonialism, but should be proud of their history and Japan's rise as an economic power. They argue for a new nationalism. One of their members, a cartoonist, Kobayashi Yoshinori, whose book entitled *On War* (*Sensōron*) has sold over a million copies, alleges that one's grandfathers' rapes were inevitable during war and calls on the young to be willing to die for a public purpose.⁶ Their nationalism is clearly based on disdain for female sexuality.

The controversial discussions which developed concerning new historical trends cover five main issues. The first issue is that of sexual violence

during wars and the punishment for criminals. Women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), headed by Matsui Yayori, have decided to hold an international court in December 2000 for Japanese war criminals who organized sexual slavery. Furthermore, the Association for Research on the Impact of War and Military Bases on Women's Human Rights was established in 1997. The second issue concerns the debate on nationalism of the nation state including the cultivation of nationalism among the common people. Third, there is the issue of the views of Koreans living in Japan, especially Koreans of the third generation who criticize Japanese nationalism as well as colonialism while searching for their own identities. Korean feminists in Japan criticize the androcentric ideas of male nationalists. Fourth, debates have taken place about how the generations with no war experiences understand and acknowledge war responsibility. Finally, historians have made efforts to restore historical facts as correctly as possible.

On the other hand, until the 1970s, research on colonialism focused mainly on economic history, on investment of either the state or big business.⁷ There are also a few studies on the history of independence movements. In the 1980s research appeared which focused on conditions of the colonized countries and people.⁸ Various perspectives have appeared in the 1990s. For instance, we can take up research to analyse contrasting aspects such as development and despotism in one country, research on cultural controls through education in the Japanese language,⁹ and the imperialist ideology of Japanese living in the colonized countries.¹⁰ Subjects of research have moved from the colonizing country to the colonized countries and people.

Research on women's role in colonialism began only around 1980 when women's war collaboration and women as contributors to the oppression of colonized people as well as victims of war were discussed. These studies have focused on such issues as the mobilization of young women for emigration to Manchuria,¹¹ the policy of encouraging marriages between Japanese and Koreans,¹² licensed prostitution in the colonized countries,¹³ women's education,¹⁴ and sexual violence by the US army during the UN occupation after the end of the war.¹⁵ In addition, an International Conference on Asian Women's History held in 1996 in Japan presented comparative research on concerns such as colonialism, nationalism and patriarchy.

Most of the above-mentioned research focuses on imperialist ideology among Japanese women and the policies based on female sexuality of both Japan and the colonized countries in order to ensure Japanese male blood. Suzuki Yuko stressed the links between policies

for brides for Japanese emigrants to Manchuria, mixed marriage between Japanese and Koreans, and the 'comfort women'.¹⁶ After the end of the war the sexual violence of the US army overlapped with patterns of sexuality in Japan. Many studies also point out that consciousness of imperialism has survived even in the present in the way that women who were emigrant brides in Manchuria (*tairiku hanayome*) do not remember the oppressed lives of Chinese, but remember their own good lives in Manchuria.

In this chapter I focus on the relationship between nationalism, colonialism and women in modern Japan in the years 1868–1945. First, I will roughly define nationalism. In general three aspects are involved. These are the stress on the power of the state, the stress on people's rights and the stress on the right to independence of the nation. Added to these three elements in Japan is the stress on the sovereignty of the imperial institution, newly reconstructed in the process of establishing the main laws of the state from the 1870s to the 1890s. This developed into ultra-nationalism, which appeared with fascism – especially during the war period, 1931–45.

The stress on the power of the state in Japan has the following two characteristics. First, this stress was most strong not only among government bureaucrats, but among the general population, who wanted to get rid of the threat of being semi-colonized by western powers as China had been. They were thus eager to be on an equal footing with western powers by revising unequal treaties as an independent state. On the other hand, the government sent military forces to Taiwan to threaten China in 1874 and two years later used military pressure to force Korea to open to international relations with Japan. The government promoted industrialization as well as military power from above. A strong consciousness of the independent, industrialized state with military power was shared by activists of the widespread movement to establish the Constitution, the Diet and people's rights from the 1870s to the 1880s, which the government suppressed. Some women activists in their teens also shared this view of the state in the 1880s. There were, of course, exceptions among both sexes. Nationalism in Japan was therefore intertwined with the intention to establish colonies in East and Southeast Asia.

A further characteristic of nationalism in Japan was that people, including women, felt the coming of a new period in the Charter Oath issued in the name of the Emperor in 1868, the age of the Meiji Restoration, the first article of which declared that public meetings should be set up and that public opinion should be respected. Oligarchs such as Itô Hirobumi and Inoue Kowashi reconstructed the control of the emperors

and defined the sovereignty of the emperor as the fundamental character of the state. The sovereignty is derived from a mythical unbroken male line of the emperors. This formulation, which was newly constructed but presented as the original character of the Japanese state, disregarded the tradition of reigns by female emperors in pre-modern Japan.¹⁷ Japanese people were made conscious of the existence of the emperor through education. The Emperor and the Empress appeared together as a couple for the first time in front of the people at the ceremony at which the new Constitution was promulgated in 1889. The imperial couple became a model of the sexual division of labour for the ruling class with the Empress playing her role in charitable work, while the Emperor had five concubines as objects for his sexual pleasure. In addition, the Emperor was presented as a symbol of civilization during the Meiji period.

Japanese nationalism took this form with its overly strong consciousness of the power of the state and the sovereignty of the emperor mixed with a tendency to invade weaker neighbours, because Japan began to be modernized just at the period when western imperial powers were at their most aggressive in moving into Asian markets. Japan colonized Taiwan in 1896 through the Sino-Japanese War, the southern part of Liaodong Peninsula in China in 1905 as a result of the Russo-Japanese War, and Korea in 1910. Japan thus joined the western powers in claiming the right to develop mines in China. The Japanese government set up a puppet state, the state of Manchuria in the northeast area of China in 1932. In addition, Japan was mandated control over Micronesia after the First World War and occupied Southeast Asian countries during the Pacific War as well as some parts of China after 1937. Japan also directly colonized some neighbouring Asian countries. In particular, Taiwanese and Koreans were forced to be identified as Japanese under the sovereignty of the emperor from the late 1930s. The Japanese government had no policies to set up representative institutions or to maintain traditional culture in the colonized countries. The Japanese who first moved to these countries were soldiers and prostitutes. Prostitutes at this period were not the so-called 'comfort women' for the army but rather the so-called *karayuki-san*, who worked for private entrepreneurs. These are features of Japanese colonialism.

Now I would like to shift my focus to women. Although some societies such as the Patriotic Women's Association (1901) and the National Women's Defence Organization (1932) were established for the purpose of war collaboration and an inspiration of nationalism during the prewar period, I will take up the case of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU) in Japan. I have chosen to

highlight this organization for the following reasons. First, for its long history of activities in Japan. In connection with the headquarters in the USA, the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Tokyo was established in 1886 as the first voluntary women's organization in Japan. The first representative was Yajima Kajiko. Members of the WWCTU were Christians who worked under the influence of western Christian women's activities.¹⁸ It is very interesting to see how members worked among the Japanese people who were influenced by strong, aggressive nationalism and had a favourable attitude toward the Emperor described above.

Let us look at some of their activities. The WWCTU paid respect to Japan's imperial family, holding prayer meetings for the Empress beginning in 1887, introducing a custom from overseas branches of the Union. It published pamphlets which stressed two different themes. What seemed to be a formal prospectus written by Yajima in 1887 appealed for the abolition of old customs disdaining women in response to the idea that both the Emperor and the Empress had granted the people equality and freedom. On the other hand an earlier prospectus written by Sasaki Toyoku, one of the executives of the WWCTU, urged that it was most important not only to eliminate patriarchal customs and the system of legalized prostitution, but also to build monogamy.¹⁹ For Yajima, two kinds of authority, the Christian God and the Emperor defined as God, who had concubines, ironically harmonized well.

The WWCTU initially promoted three main goals: the abolition of licensed prostitution, the enforcement of the prohibition of alcohol and a prohibition on smoking. The first goal defined its main activities, which came to be associated with the Japanese WWCTU. Another important activity was to realize monogamy in Japanese society, which was described as a universal practice in the civilized world. The WWCTU considered that licensed prostitution, polygamy and concubinage damaged Japanese society. In 1888 it submitted a memorial to the senior statesmen (*Genrōin*) that the penalty law should punish adultery by a husband as well as by a wife and that the proposed Civil Code should provide for monogamy. After the Parliament was set up in 1890, the WWCTU submitted this petition every year. At the same time it petitioned that Japanese prostitutes around the world should be controlled by the government. In their view, society could not develop or be well-ruled without homes where couples respected and helped each other.²⁰ Some people, including bureaucrats such as Mori Arinori, had the same idea at that time. The WWCTU also considered that

prostitutes were victimized persons, most of whom had been sold into prostitution by parents, although prostitution was regarded as a despicable job.²¹ Afterwards, the WWCTU built a workhouse for them and devoted its activities to abolishing licensed prostitution either by helping prostitutes leave their jobs in spite of their employers' obstruction, or by objecting to the construction of new prostitution quarters.

It is noteworthy that the WWCTU submitted these petitions in order to strengthen state power as well as to realize the revision of the unequal treaties with western powers.²² Furthermore, it petitioned Parliament in 1890 to give women the right to observe Parliament, even though the government banned women from all political activity for fear that women would be as politically active as in the movement for people's rights in the early 1880s. The idea of the sexual division of roles was utilized for the first time to justify the ban. The WWCTU also grappled with the problem of the environment, helping people suffering from mining pollution in the Ashio district. Sasaki Toyoju insisted on freedom of speech and the press. The journal of the WWCTU was once ordered to stop publication for criticizing the government.²³

Through these activities the WWCTU contributed much to feminism in modern Japan, even though it also accepted the power of the state as well as the power of the Emperor. It clearly shows the contradictory nature of the progressive society of women in the developing country, Japan. The above-mentioned characteristics and activities of the WWCTU are the reasons I took up the study of this group as a means of illustrating the relationship between nationalism, colonialism and feminism.

During the Sino-Japanese War in which Japan and China struggled for supremacy over Korea between 1894 and 1895, the WWCTU considered that it was patriotic to contribute money to help defray war expenditure and that women should devote themselves as nurses or teachers, because Japan made war to help Korea retain independence from China.²⁴ One executive, Tsuda Umeko, who studied for over ten years in the USA and opened a college for women, said, 'Patriotism is part of our religion'.²⁵ They also thought they could inspire abolition of prostitution as well as concubinage and develop a similar movement in Korea.²⁶ Furthermore they considered that Japanese women should move to Korea and help Korean women who were oppressed under feudalism, and that this activity would eventually provide opportunities for the employment of Japanese women.²⁷ Around the period of the WWCTU's establishment, they made the following statement: 'We,

Oriental women, are all dependent on men'.²⁸ After the war they saw Korean women as more backward than Japanese women. The WWCTU also changed their idea about prostitutes abroad, from victims to shameful persons, for the newly born first-class nation of Japan.²⁹ The Union viewed Taiwanese, colonized after the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War, as uncivilized people to be educated, but they felt they should also reform Japanese men who bought Taiwanese women, who were more proficient than Japanese in such skills as sewing.³⁰ The latter was pointed out also to Japanese men in Korea. It is undeniable that the WWCTU shared the sense of superiority over Korean and Taiwanese people held by most Japanese people. Their sense of superiority seemed to have been reinforced by their Christianity, which was considered a symbol of civilization.

During the Russo-Japanese War ten years later, in which Russia and Japan struggled for supremacy over northeast China, military aid activities became very popular among women, especially among the upper-class women such as the royal family. The Empress often led such activities. Women's organizations for military aid such as the Patriotic Women's Association (Aikoku Fujinkai), which was established by Okumura Ioko in 1901, became prominent. She was motivated when she saw exhausted soldiers cleaning their bowls in the river during the armed intervention in China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion. The WWCTU was also active. For instance, a branch in Kure, where the first military port was located, set up a section for sending packages to soldiers. The headquarters urged other branches to set up similar sections, which proved to be useful in the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union both in the US and the UK. Similar sections were started at 24 Japanese branches, a little over a half of all the branches.³¹ The WWCTU sent 60 000 packages containing the Bible and temperance leaflets to the fields.

According to their idea, war was one step toward the improvement of women and women as well as men should do their best to realize peace in the Orient.³² Yajima Kajiko claimed that the Japanese victory was derived from the civilized spirit of Christianity.³³ One member, however, indirectly criticized war policies from the perspective of protecting the home.³⁴ A section of the Christian Youth also worked for military assistance. While there were many organizations which supported the war effort, there were some women who were against the war. This group included poets such as Yosano Akiko and Isonokami Tsuyuko and novelists such as Otsuka Kusuko and other socialist women.

Japan colonized the southern part of the Liaodong Peninsula (Kantōshu in Japanese) and through deprivation of diplomatic sovereignty Korea was also colonized following the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–5, eventually being annexed in 1910. Following the establishment of the colonies many more Japanese emigrated to these areas. The WWCTU considered that emigration was an inevitable policy for overpopulated Japan and that women could play a great role in the home-making on which the success of colonization depended. It was stated that Japanese women in the colonized area should have both religion and wisdom.³⁵ In the 1910s, branches of the WWCTU were set up in many cities in Taiwan, the Liaodang Peninsula and Korea, members of which were Japanese. Executives of the WWCTU had a strong interest in these areas and frequently travelled to visit them as observers. It seems strange, considering their anti-prostitution activities in Japan, that they travelled there only once to observe prostitutes. With regard to Koreans moving to Japan, one executive, Hayashi Utako, said the following: ‘We have been able to make them happy by giving them jobs and it is our new mission to not only enlighten, but to assimilate them’.³⁶ When a Korean woman, Kim, criticized Japanese Christians who remained silent concerning the anti-Korean purges in Tokyo during the great Kanto earthquake in 1923, Kubushiro Ochimi, a chief secretary of the WWCTU after 1916, said, ‘We have no friends in Korea, China and India. I don’t have knowledge of or interest in my neighbouring nations.’³⁷ The same deep gaps appeared between Japanese women and other colonized women from around the 1920s.

During the 1920s, the WWCTU focused its activities on the abolition of licensed prostitution, the enforcement of the prohibition law, peace and women’s suffrage. The peace movement was a new goal. Disarmament was demanded by the WWCTU in connection with the two International Conferences on Disarmament in Washington and London, to which the Union sent observers as well as a petition with 170 000 signatures calling for disarmament. The peace movement nonetheless seemed only propaganda. In their view the world was like one family, consisting of various kinds of nations and it was women’s mission to make them happy and peaceful; mothers needed intelligence, responsibility and rights to do their duty.³⁸ In the 1910s and 1920s Yosano Akiko, who at the time of the Russo–Japanese War wrote a poem praying that her younger brother would not be killed in action while wondering whether women should do their best for the sake of the state, tried to find a way to realize world peace.

In the early 1930s feminism was at its highest point for the period of prewar Japanese history, while two large nationwide women's organizations to assist the government were built up (the Japanese Women's League and National Women's Defence Organization). The members of branches of the WWCTU also became very active and powerful. For example, they called on people in the streets to agree to the petition to abolish licensed prostitution, handed out leaflets and acted in the local parliaments. They also recommended candidates in favour of their movement and gave a speech for candidates at the general election. They strongly demanded women's suffrage as an important step to realize their goals. One of the executives, Senbongi Michiko, said: 'We firmly require women's suffrage as individuals living in the economic world'.³⁹ In 1934 the Home Office at last announced plans for the early abolition of licensed prostitution. The movement for women's suffrage also became a dominant theme in public opinion as well. Various kinds of women's voluntary organizations held different attitudes toward Japan's invasion of northeast China in the wake of the Manchurian Incident of 1931. The third conference on women's suffrage in 1932, in which the WWCTU joined as an affiliated group, stated that they were against fascism and the war. The WWCTU itself, however, still supported the government. When the Peace Movement Organization in London and the Women's League in Shanghai in China sent a note of protest to the WWCTU about the invasion, the WWCTU replied, quoting government statements, that as the Manchurian Incident was not war, but an incidence of armed collusion, Japan was not violating the Anti-War Pact ratified in 1928. Also, they were trying to forge a friendship with the Chinese women because they were both leaders in realizing peace in the Orient.⁴⁰ Kubushiro argued that Japan had rights to places where it had invested 1.5 billion yen.⁴¹ The Chinese Women's League did not agree. Among Christians Kora Tomi and the Friendship Association (*Yûwakai*) were against Japan's aggression. The government suppressed them.

After the Manchurian Incident the WWCTU insisted that they would combine the best points of Japanese with those of Korean and Chinese women and that Japanese women living in the colonized countries should create sound families. They also frequently sent members to Manchuria not only to observe the activities of branches, but also to take care of patients, and give help to establish the League of All Women's Organizations in Manchuria in 1931. Its branches worked hard in order to provide support and comfort to soldiers and their families and to build women's schools for Chinese, although they criticized Japan.⁴²

Their colonial attitude seemed to grow stronger after the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The WWCTU continued to insist that the five nations in the Orient should cooperate with each other as brothers.⁴³

The domestic activities of the WWCTU were not as strong as they had been earlier, while other women's voluntary organizations were entirely mobilized in war effort of the government from 1938 onward. It seemed that the government disliked involving Christians in the war effort, although members of the WWCTU were named as local welfare commissioners earlier than other women's voluntary organizations in the 1920s. The WWCTU's will to join forces with war seemed to be suspended. After the Pacific War the WWCTU tried to maintain a good relationship with the USA and the UK. Its main interest was in building a mutually prosperous region in East Asia, incorporating family-type relationships as elder brothers and sisters as well as mothers.⁴⁴ This formulation still seems to reflect the view that Japanese were superior to other Asian peoples. Additionally, the description of the mind of the mothers resembles the government's statement at the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in which Chinese were to be punished.

I have briefly discussed the relationship between nationalism, colonialism and feminism in the case of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union in modern Japan. A most progressive women's organization from the standpoint of women's liberation, it became enmeshed in nationalism and colonialism when Japan colonized Asian countries. The WWCTU thus had a dual character. As Christians, they shared common views on the idea of civilization with western Christians, especially, with members of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union in the US. The Japanese branch also maintained constant and strong interests in colonized areas, particularly in north-east China. The idea of civilization of Christians to reform an uncivilized society was reinforced by the policy of the state which assimilated colonized people to Japanese ways.

The WWCTU in Japan had a twofold policy for the colonized areas. One was to set up branches composed only of Japanese. The branches actually seemed not to propagate powerfully. The other was to create friendship with women in these areas by establishing schools for women which were designed to enlighten uncivilized people. It was called Christian service for the realization of Oriental Peace during the Asian Pacific War. The spirit of service was unfortunately in accordance with the government propaganda of building an area where the five nations (the Chinese, Manchu, Mongolians, Koreans and Japanese, who were all living in Manchuria) could collaborate in peace with each other.

In general, there was close cultural exchange between Japan and colonized countries. For example, feminists in Japan such as Yosano Akiko, Yamakawa Kikue and Hiratsuka Raicho had followers both in China and Korea as well as among Chinese and Korean students studying in Japan.

However, it was almost impossible for Japanese women as well as Japanese men to understand the sovereignty of colonized Asian countries. It may have been in part the result of the way the sovereignty of the Emperor was defined. The journal of the WWCTU often carried articles on the royal family just like other magazines for women. During the Russo-Japanese War a poem by the Emperor encouraging soldiers was published in the journal. Members living in Korea prayed for the Emperor. Two authorities, God and the Emperor, seemed to be harmonized in their religion. This applied to most Japanese Christians. Their service for two authorities ironically came to justify their nationalism and colonialism. In addition, the more areas the government colonized, the more fields for their activity were opened. The idea of Christian service to enlighten people whom they saw as uncivilized and to create a sound family was much prompted by their respect for the Emperor whom they considered to be a symbol of civilization. Nationalism, colonialism and demands for women's rights, thus became linked to the nation state.

Here, I will briefly compare the activities of the WWCTU with the activities of the YWCA in Japan. The YWCA was established in 1905, under the control of the American headquarters, 20 years after the foundation of the WWCTU. The activities of the YWCA were different from those of the WWCTU in the following ways. First, the YWCA did not show any interest in the Emperor at all as far as I can tell from the journal of the YWCA. Secondly, they did not work socially for women's liberation until the 1930s. Third, they devoted themselves to studying Christian doctrine and, fourth, leaders of the physical education section were unfortunately mobilized for war efforts of the state. What the two groups had in common was that neither understood the demands for independence by the colonized peoples, but tried to make friendship with them for peace.

The World Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Japan has constantly worked for the abolition of various types of prostitution during the postwar period. It is pointed out in the historical account issued on the one hundredth anniversary of the foundation, that the WWCTU should also, however, be held responsible for its wartime collaboration.

Notes

1. All Japanese names are given in the order of family name followed by given name.
2. Arai Shinichi, *Sensôsekinin-ron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995).
3. Suzuki Akira, *Nankin daigyakusatsu no Maboroshi* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjû sha, 1973).
4. Kano Mikiyo et al., 'Notes on the History of the Homefront' in Kano Mikiko et al. (eds), *Journal of the Jugoshi noto, 1977–1983* (Tokyo: Impaction); Kawano Kimi, *Onna mo senso wo ninatta* (Tokyo: Tojusha, 1982).
5. Yoshida Yutaka, *Nihonjin no Sensôkan* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997).
6. Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Sensôron* (Tokyo: Gentosha, 1998).
7. Asada Kyoji, *Nihon Teikokushugi to Kyûshokuminchi Jimushisei* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobô, 1968) etc.
8. See Miyata Setsuko, *Chôsen Minshû to Kôminka Seisaku* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1985); Kurasawa Aiko, *Nihon Senryôka no Jawanosen no Henka* (Tokyo: Soshisha, 1992); Linda Grove and Sugiyama Nobuya (eds), *Kindai Ajia no Ryûtsû Nettowâku* (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1999).
9. Komagome Takeshi, *Shokuminchi Teikoku no Bunka Tôgô* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996).
10. Kimura Kenji, *Zaichô Nihonjin no Shakaishi* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1989).
11. Jinno Morimasa, *Manshû ni Okurareta Onnatachi: Tairiku no Hanayome* (Tokyo: Nashinokisha, 1992); Kano Mikiyo, 'Manshû to Onnatachi' in Oe et al. (eds), *Kôza, Kindainihon to Shokuminchi*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993) pp. 199–222; Sugiyama Haru, *Manshû Jojuku* (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1996); Aiba Kazuhiko et al. (eds), *Manshû Tairiku no Hanayome wa dô Tsukurareta ka* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1996); Kawasaki Kenko, 'Manshûkoku ni Watatta Onnatachi' in Kawano et al. (eds), *Onna to Otoko no Jiku*, vol. 5 (Kyoto: Fujiwara Shoten, 1995) pp. 78–119; Hirose Reiko, 'Josei ni totte Jûgonen Sensô wa Nandattanoka: Manshu Ninshiki o Tegakarini' in Hayakawa Noriyo et al. (eds), *Ajia Joseishi: Hikakushi no Kokoromi* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1997) pp. 189–204.
12. Suzuki Yuko, *Jugun ianfu to Naisen kekkon* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1992).
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3

Reading the Silences: Suffrage Activists and Race in Nineteenth-Century Settler Societies

Patricia Grimshaw

In December 1894 a majority of men in both houses of the legislature of the colony of South Australia passed an Act granting women 21 years and over the right to vote and stand for Parliament. This was without doubt progressive liberal legislation, through which South Australian women became among the first women in the world to enjoy full political rights. Since the 1894 Act had no race bar, Aboriginal women received the vote along with white women, just as Aboriginal men had in effect been enfranchised in 1858 when South Australia brought in universal male suffrage. The vote had done nothing to improve Aboriginal men's situations, nor the life chances of their families. Aborigines' problems were multiple; they were by far the most disadvantaged people in the colony though a small group of Chinese, Indian and other non-white immigrants also suffered from white settler racism. The Aborigines, the survivors and children of survivors of the early tragic acts of colonial dispossession, had become increasingly marginalized and impoverished as white settlement flourished.

Aboriginal women's lives could scarcely have been more difficult. They urgently needed strong allies. Yet in the discussions which white activists for women's suffrage promoted over the five or so years of their brief but energetic campaign in the late 1880s and the early 1890s, they maintained a solid wall of silence about the implications of the vote for Aboriginal women. What political rights would mean for Aboriginal women, or how their particular oppressions might be addressed, figured not at all on the white agenda. Nor did it figure in white activists' responses to the Constitution of 1901 or the 1902 Commonwealth Franchise Act. Once again, in point of law, the 1902 Act did not debar South Australian Aboriginal women or men from the federal vote. It did, however, contain a chilling clause explicitly

excluding most other Aborigines in the country from political rights. In effect therefore the Act also problematized Aboriginal civil rights in the state of South Australia, yet nothing was said. How do we account for this omission from the sympathies of a group of women otherwise attuned to issues of civil rights for their sex?¹

South Australia was not the only site of early female suffrage success where protagonists for women's emancipation maintained silence on the political rights of indigenous women and immigrant women of colour. In September 1893, 15 months earlier than South Australia, the legislature of New Zealand, the sister British colony across the Tasman, similarly enfranchised women. In the state of Colorado in the American West, just two months after New Zealand, a referendum of male voters likewise voted in support of the women's vote. New Zealand suffrage activists had scarcely alluded to Maori women in their campaign, nor to the small number of Asian women in the country. White Colorado activists spoke on women's rights without specific reference to the Native American minority of Ute women, or the African American and other migrant women of colour in the state. As in South Australia, indigenous and non-European migrant men in New Zealand and Colorado had earlier received the right to vote and stand for political office; the same acts that enfranchised white women enfranchised women of colour.² But these women had overwhelmingly pressing needs for human and civil rights that the white activists simply ignored.

This chapter seeks to consider the meaning of activists' compelling silences about non-white women in the suffrage campaign of South Australia in the context of the ideas and strategies of activists in these other sites of early suffrage. It looks first at the grounding of these silences in the white western and colonial discourses within which arguments for women's emancipation took shape and upon which activists drew. The chapter then examines the differences between South Australia on the one hand and Colorado and New Zealand on the other in terms of another significant silence, in this case a silence about the already existing voting rights of non-white men. In all three places there were moments in the colonizing process when specific historical conjunctions enabled white activists to practise a politics that was racially more inclusive. At these times the commitment of activists to equity and justice could, in a faltering way, turn towards the specific concerns of non-white women, and break through barriers of ignorance against the grain of their contemporaries' racist thinking. The 1890s, I conclude, was not yet such a moment for the suffrage activists

of South Australia; it would be another two or three decades before such a revolution in perception became possible.

White women's suffrage activism

South Australia, Colorado and New Zealand in the later decades of the nineteenth century had factors in common despite their many differences. All three were sites of new white settlement, dependent for their initial existence on the use of force to dispossess indigenous peoples of their lands, livelihoods and social autonomy, and anxious about maintaining the dominance of a recently entrenched white population. In the 1880s and 1890s when women's suffrage emerged as a realistic political issue, debates on the 'woman question' thus co-existed with public discussion surrounding the nature of accommodation with surviving indigenous peoples on the one hand, and the desirability of restricting the in-migration of non-white settlers on the other. Colonial narratives of history swiftly established a version of the acquisition of their stolen territories that erased indigenous peoples' original ownership. Instead colonists came to herald their society as brave new worlds where white men by right maintained economic dominance and political hegemony. The women and men who became protagonists for women's suffrage made their case for equity and justice for the female sex in societies immersed in negative constructions of indigenous peoples of both sexes.

The basic arguments about women's emancipation in the new white settlements were, of course, marked by racialized understandings derived from a lineage in western discourses dating from the Enlightenment and the writings of nineteenth-century political and social theorists. In South Australia, Colorado and New Zealand those who first advocated the vote drew initially on established arguments and concepts developed in Britain and the east of the United States, places from which they or their parents had migrated, and from which much of the suffrage literature and news of current politics continued to arrive. Individuals had raised the question of the women's vote almost as soon as widening the suffrage for men was mooted. From its publication in 1869 John Stuart Mill's essay *The Subjection of Women* prompted numbers of liberals in the colonies and the American West to publicize his arguments for women's emancipation. Liberal argument was grounded in a concept of the archetypal man as western man. This educated, rational civilization builder was matched in their rhetoric by a complementary image of the representative woman. The democracy

that was fitting for man, protagonists argued, was by extension fitting for woman. No one said that in each case the 'man' and 'woman' under review were white and western; such raced assumptions were unself-consciously present.³

Embedded in arguments for women's emancipation, therefore, were raced notions of the authentic attributes of the human person that advocates of suffrage rarely interrogated. When western thinkers had thought of themselves culturally or racially, it was to view white humanity at the top of a pyramid of achievement. Non-western peoples, on the contrary, fell below western standards of humanity, existing on a scale of civilization where the lowliest societies were marked by disordered families, oppressive gender relations and the oppression of women. Such influences had been critical for rationalizing the behaviour of western colonizers who ruthlessly invaded indigenous peoples' territories. British humanitarians and evangelicals of the nineteenth century might recognize the abuses of colonization but declare the process justified because it brought with it the benefits of Christianity, western education and 'civilized' living, with indigenous women the chief beneficiaries.

By the mid-1880s the women's campaigns that led up to the passage of the vote in the years 1893 and 1894 took on greater definition and more coherent organizational shape through the activities of an association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which had a precise agenda on race. Colorado was the one place where a suffrage organization had existed briefly prior to the birth of the WCTU. A few suffrage supporters had joined together to raise the issue of women voting at the time the Territory of Colorado entered the Union as a new state in 1876. Unsuccessful in this objective, the group continued its efforts to gain the vote through a referendum which was also lost the following year. It was the WCTU, however, that was the organization instrumental in revitalizing the suffrage campaign in Colorado in the 1880s. In South Australia and New Zealand, leadership of the suffrage organizations also included WCTU temperance reformers who constituted most of the grass-roots suffrage activists.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which had commenced in the American West in the late 1870s, was led by able and articulate middle-class women. Under one such woman, the utopian socialist Frances Willard, it quickly moved to combine an agenda about abusive male drinking patterns, violence against women and the need of women for full participation in all society's concerns. A vital weapon Willard perceived for this campaign was political representation. By the

last decades of the nineteenth century the WCTU had emerged as a key player in the American suffrage movement. In the mid-eighties Frances Willard looked abroad and forged a crucial alliance with Lady Isabella Somerset of the British Women's Temperance League to inaugurate the World's WCTU. This enlarged association swiftly put 'missionaries' into the field to take the message of drug-free living, sexual purity and women's rights world-wide. The influence of the WCTU spread to the Australian and New Zealand British colonies where the WCTU missionaries found a ready response among certain Protestant women who found their local congregations restrictive in relation to women's leadership.

The world-wide WCTU, extraordinarily influential as Ian Tyrrell's recent study demonstrates, gave the debate on women's rights in the places where it flourished its own particular raced emphasis.⁴ The WCTU had a strong agenda on the conjunction of colonization, women and race centred on the white men's exploitation of colonized peoples through an insidious promotion of vices: alcohol, opium and the sexual exploitation of colonized women. As the World's WCTU envoy Jessie Ackermann posed it, WCTU missionaries were forging a new world for women everywhere. She told an Australian intercolonial WCTU convention in 1894: 'Our banner floats in forty-seven lands, and in forty-seven languages can we read the motto "For God and Home and Every Land"'. The World's WCTU now was acting on a global stage, she continued, citing the needs of women in the East: 'distant China has heard the cry, and her women, down-trodden and degraded, struggle to free themselves and loved ones from the slavery of Strong drink and Opium', she said. In India the doors that shut in 40 millions of women could not secure them against this foe of every race but 'a few of the bravest daughters have gently pushed open the doors, released themselves from the bondage of caste, and come to the Christian world, with one of the most pathetic pleas that ever fell from human lips'.⁵

When the South Australian WCTU held its first annual general meeting in 1889 women's suffrage was central to the agenda. And their plans for Aboriginal women? The gathered members briefly considered commencing 'A Department for Work Among Aborigines', but then as quickly rejected the idea: the Salvation Army, someone said, was already interesting themselves in Aborigines.⁶

This was symptomatic of the WCTU in other settler societies. Suffrage activists in South Australia, New Zealand and Colorado had a particular means of engaging with the World's WCTU mission. It was

not hard to feel for the plight of their sisters in distant foreign lands, and many were the talks they sponsored and their expressions of solidarity. The difficulties faced by indigenous women or migrant women of colour at home – those less exotic sisters in whose situations they as colonizers were implicated – constituted a less uplifting affair. If and when activists attended to the lives of non-Anglo women in their midst, they constructed such women as objects of charity, in need of firm grounding in the Christian way or of humanitarian assistance. Active recognition of such women's needs for the protection of full citizenship rights required a different political consciousness.

The vote and men of colour

But in some respects suffrage activists maintained other silences about race that had a different significance. These were the silences they maintained about the existing political rights of non-white men. The political and strategic context of these silences differentiated the activists of Colorado and New Zealand in the 1890s from those of South Australia. Unlike the situation in South Australia, in Colorado and New Zealand non-Anglo men were a very real force politically. They not only had the vote, but they could and did make use of it. They had minor representation in the houses of the elected legislatures. White women had none of these. By their silences the suffrage activists of both places acknowledged the political importance of these men of colour by avoiding obvious temptations to elicit white male support for white women's emancipation by making racist comparisons.

The meaning of these silences about enfranchised men of colour is most clearly illustrated in the suffrage campaign in Colorado, where the sub-text on race was a strong force. There, the Native American Ute people were marginalized on reservations, the men's political rights protected in certain circumstances. The local tensions about race did not, however, end there: the in-migration of sizeable minorities of men of colour, and the character of the national debate on civil rights federally, produced a distinctive racialized context for the suffrage debate.

The origins of the Colorado stance on the male non-white vote lay in the post Civil War settlement when the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of 1866 and 1869 extended political rights to male freed slaves. Those Abolitionists who had simultaneously fought for women's rights, extremely disappointed that women were excluded from the Amendment's provisions, gathered to pass this motion: "That while we heartily approve of the Fifteenth Constitutional Amendment

extending suffrage to men, without distinction of race, we nevertheless feel profound regret that Congress has not submitted a parallel amendment for the enfranchisement of women'.⁷ As Andrea Kerr has recently demonstrated, numbers of suffragists felt more disturbed than this motion suggested, angered that white male legislators would perceive the political rights of freedmen superceding their own.⁸ The national leaders, former Abolitionists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, were among this number. Their vociferous protests denigrating the suitability of citizenship for freedmen became blatantly racist, as their target readily shifted also towards non-Anglo migrant men. Despite the suffragists' long struggle to free slaves, Stanton raged, some African American men were now opposing women's rights. 'It is sufficiently humiliating to a proud woman to be reminded ever and anon in the polite world that she's a political nonentity,' she continued; '...but to hear the rights of woman scorned in foreign tongue and native gibberish by everything in manhood's form, is enough to fire the soul of those who think and feel, and rouse the most lethargic into action.'⁹

In the course of the 1877 Colorado referendum suffrage activists had become swiftly aware of the problematic nature of such racist attitudes for their campaign. Their ultimate victory, after all, depended on the votes in a referendum of all registered men, men of colour included, and it was hard to see the benefit of insulting these groups to assuage white women's frustration at their lack of progress towards enfranchisement. The matter came to the fore when several Eastern suffragists travelled across the continent to assist their Western sisters' campaign. Just before the referendum went to the vote, the Bostonian Lucy Stone wrote a report for the *Woman's Journal* saying: 'If we lose the vote here it will be through the votes of men who cannot read the English language, added to the votes of those who cannot speak it'. One man at the coal mines had assured her in broken English that "'if the women in this country got the right to vote he should leave the country"''. He had gained the right to vote by coming to the United States, she noted sarcastically, and so much did he feel the added dignity that 'he looked with high and mighty disdain upon the native born, disfranchised American woman who aspired to the same dignity'. This man could leave the country, she declared, and 'no one, save perhaps himself, will suffer loss'.¹⁰

When the referendum was declared lost by over two votes to one Eastern visitors pointed the finger at scapegoats. Susan B. Anthony, who had herself turned up for a speaking tour, announced that she

knew who was responsible for the defeat: the fault lay with the Mexicans in the southern counties. There she had found herself speaking to this 'densely ignorant class of foreigners'. It was to such men, she complained, that she, 'an American woman, her grandfather a soldier in the Revolution, appealed for the right of women to representation in this government'.¹¹ (Many of these 'Mexicans' were, of course, American citizens, and their numbers were sufficiently few that the defeat could not with any validity have been laid at their door.)

Fellow Easterner Margaret Campbell embellished Anthony's accusations. The enemies of the vote, she agreed, were certainly the 'ignorant, degraded and superstitious Mexican' of the southern counties, together with Germans, Catholics and 'the uneducated and uncultivated negroes of the north'. In the women's column in the *Rocky Mountain News* she duly gave her opinion on supposed African American opposition: 'the negroes were said to be against us. Naturally, those who themselves most keenly feel, or most recently have felt, the galling yoke of arbitrary rule, are most disposed to derive a certain enjoyment from the daily contemplation of a noble class still in bondage.'¹²

A swift local denial ensued. A member of the Colorado Equal Suffrage Association put pen to paper to deny the charges that were circulating. 'Some of our warmest friends are among the intelligent Germans who have been citizens for years', she declared, 'as a matter of history not a few prominent Catholics voted to approve suffrage last Tuesday, and with respect to the colored men, they have many of them declared... that they ought to forbear opposition to the emancipation of women from their political disabilities.'¹³ This was clearly a conciliatory and corrective gesture directed specifically at Colorado's minority men. The Colorado suffrage activists, by and large, did not want to be aligned with these outsiders' denunciations. Insulting such men in racist terms was scarcely likely to persuade them to a pro-suffrage position.

When suffrage activists, many of them by now seasoned troupers, regrouped in the late 1880s to campaign for the second and ultimately successful referendum, they clearly recalled this lesson. The Colorado Equal Suffrage Association was a coalition of women and men already strongly engaged in various social movements and political lobby groups. Women from the Colorado WCTU spearheaded the campaign, and they along with other activists were themselves members also of such organizations as the Grangers, the Populists, the Knights of Labor and the Women's Club movement. These organizations included people of birth outside of America, and some were women and men of

colour; the Treasurer of the Suffrage Association itself was a Caribbean-born school teacher married to an African American man.¹⁴

On the occasion of this second referendum there was no enthusiasm whatsoever for offers of Eastern leaders to assist as lecturers and organizers although they could not actually be debarred. The Eastern suffragists had not given up their refrain about non-white male culprits in the interim. Writing in 1889 of her disappointment at several lost referenda in some Western states, Lucy Stone pursued the old theme in the *Woman's Journal*. In a column headed 'The New States – Making History' she wrote: 'If the women of the new States were negro men, fresh from the South, with all the disqualification which comes from generations of slavery, there would be no question about having their right to vote secured in the constitution'. It would be the same if the women of the new states were 'foreign-born men – Portuguese, Belgians, Spaniards, Poles, Hungarians – who could not speak or read a word of our language, and who know nothing of our institutions, some way would have been found to secure their right to vote in the new constitution. In the case of the free-born, intelligent, native women, surely there should have been no question about securing their right to vote.'¹⁵

When Susan B. Anthony was informed of the renewed campaign for a referendum in Colorado, her response was reported as: 'Are all those Mexicans dead?' (Later accounts had it that she asked, more moderately, 'Have you converted all those Mexicans, then?').¹⁶ In correspondence during the campaign with the Colorado suffragist Meredith Ellis, Anthony counselled avoidance of antagonizing either Democrats or Republicans. Perversely she obviously had no sense of the importance of avoiding antagonizing men of colour. Carrie Lane Chapman (later Catt) came to participate in the campaign as envoy of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Her message was the same as before: 'In the West people do not care much about pedigree... But I will give you the pedigree of the Sioux, and we will see how much these once savages are entitled to exercise a privilege denied to the women of the country...', she declared, selecting the most vulnerable minority group of all as her target.¹⁷

The coalition of local Rocky Mountain activists who led the campaign of the Colorado Equal Suffrage Association minimized divisive allusions to distinctions between white women's citizenship status and that of Native American, African American and foreign-born men. The silence was not total. Some suffrage literature noted the franchise situation discreetly amongst a dozen or so arguments to be considered on

the women's vote. A leaflet put out by the Colorado Equal Suffrage Association, for example, presented some 15 questions for the prospective voter to consider. 'Shall men and women, who obey the laws, have a right to make them? No, only men ... May not married women have a voice in making the laws that determine what share of the property acquired by labor of both wife and husband during marriage they shall have? They may not ... When a husband brutally assaults his wife, who shall make the laws to punish him? Men only ... Who shall pay taxes? Men and women. Who shall say what shall be done with the money? Men.' Thus these suffragists located liberal arguments over laws and taxes enmeshed in the gender-specific arguments of the late nineteenth-century women's movement. Just one item alluded to men born outside America, and none to African Americans or Native Americans. A fair way down the list we find: 'May foreign men who have lived in Colorado six months vote, whether they can read and speak English or not? They may. May American women, born in this country, vote in Colorado? No.'¹⁸

For the most part, however, the activists who came together in the association played down the racist codes that could have been at their command and were being applied so frequently elsewhere. This is not to say that other suffrage advocates in the legislature and the press did not air these views. Said a clergyman at a public meeting in Denver in early November 1893: 'No one pretends to say that woman is not equally interested with us men in the affairs of today ... Immigration laws concern her ... She does not want the Chinaman any more than we do ... Let her have a vote on this Chinese question at the polls.'¹⁹ But the Colorado women leaders refused the temptation to harness their cause to the racist chauvinism so readily available to them. One might assume that their restraint, and in the case of some individuals genuinely racially-inclusive attitudes, assisted them to victory.

New Zealand Maori enfranchisement

These elements in the Colorado campaign were also apparent in the New Zealand situation, though events were played out on a far smaller stage. In Colorado men of many minorities constituted the political force that suffrage activists had to reckon with. In New Zealand Maori political presence confronted suffrage activists with a challenge in their handling of the race issue. There, the inclusion of women in mainstream politics would be decided by a majority vote in the two houses of Parliament, not by a referendum as in Colorado, and the Parliament

included Maori. After the wars between British troops and Maori in the 1860s Maori men had been given the vote and parliamentary representation through four designated Maori seats – an unfair distribution in population terms but not of negligible importance. Maori parliamentary presence in the crucial years of the early 1890s amounted to six members, four in the House of Representatives and two in the Legislative Council. While organized political parties were in a nascent stage even small numbers might prove crucial when a division in Parliament was close.

Through the length of the suffrage campaign from 1885 to 1893, activists maintained a notable silence on Maori men's political rights contrasted with white women's exclusion. The issue scarcely surfaced in activists' repertoires even though there were moments where racist comparisons might have been exploited. When the suffrage was debated in the legislature, for example, some Maori representatives raised doubts about enfranchising women. The Honourable Major Wahawaha in the Legislative Council in 1892, for example, expressed his surprise that the European men would propose such radical change and voiced scepticism about its value. The 'Natives in Olden Times' had upheld men's dominant position in rituals and religious rites: when war-canoes were made, when men were going to war, when ornamental buildings were erected, when blessing land to be fruitful. 'The women were not allowed to join in or interfere in these ceremonies', he said; 'if any women were present, they were not allowed to interfere, and it was taken as a bad omen if they did so.' Women's tasks were all useful, but none sacred: 'This was the state of things when you arrived in these Islands', he told the white men, 'and when you came you introduced Christianity, and even then we saw that this same rule applied. No women were allowed to preach. There were no women ministers, neither did you allow them to appear in your assemblies.' It was only in the past few years that 'the voices of fanatical women' had been heard in the streets of the cities and towns. As far as Major Wahawaha could tell, just about every law passed in Parliament seemed to have some sting in it: perhaps this measure would prove burdensome for Maori women in ways they could not yet contemplate.²⁰

The suffrage bill that year passed in the lower house but failed by two votes in the upper house; both Maori Legislative Councillors voted against it. Here was the obvious occasion when suffrage activists might have manipulated a situation to Maori detriment, but while the action was quietly noted, nothing was said in public. When one white parliamentarian followed up with a question that had not been specifically

addressed, whether Maori women were included in the bill, the official reporter noted that the voices of the friends of Maori women rose in a roar.²¹ That settled the matter and Maori women were included in equal terms.

The granting of the vote to Maori women along with settler women in 1893 stimulated white activists to a new realization that Maori women were now potential allies in a common reform agenda. The WCTU, so neglectful of Maori women before, now unashamedly set out to help them register to vote and to mobilize them into the WCTU. By July 1894 the WCTU had a Maori organizer (a bi-lingual woman, formerly a mission wife) appointed to visit Maori settlements, taking with her literature both on the WCTU and parliamentary electoral procedures. Maori women were to take a pledge that ran as follows: 'I agree by this pledge, not to smoke, not to drink any beverages that are intoxicating, and also not to take the ta moko [chin tattoo]. May God help me.'²²

There were Maori women eager to join the WCTU, and numerous branches soon commenced operations. Some Maori women, like some Maori men, saw opportunities for their own groups' interests in white reformers' associations and causes. They clearly already knew of the WCTU's activities. The white WCTU had not known, however, about Maori women's political activities. In 1892 some Maori groups had formed a Maori Parliament or 'Kotahitanga' in which women's participation was confined to attending and speaking. As Tania Rei has shown, in 1893 Maori women associated with the Maori Parliament raised the issue of their right to vote and stand for election. In May 1893 a motion was put before the Maori Parliament by Meri Mangakahia of Te Rarawa, on behalf of the women, seeking the right to vote and to stand as members. She gave as a reason for seeking these rights that there were many Maori women, widows or with disabled male relatives, who owned or managed land. Secondly she pointed out that Maori men's efforts to petition the Queen about land had elicited no response – perhaps the women would be more successful. Maori women in many settlements, Rei shows, had already constituted themselves into committees to establish guidelines for acceptable behaviour, including controls on drinking. Many of these committees merged into WCTU branches.²³

Thus white suffrage activists now recognized Maori women as sisters. But the Maori women they applauded were those who moved readily within white reform circles. There was little or no understanding of the needs of Maori communities where leading women's agendas differed from white preoccupations, where they sustained different visions of

what Maori women, men and children needed. In white WCTU circles, above all, divisive matters concerning the continuing alienation of Maori land went largely unaddressed.

It took the disastrous loss of life in the First World War in the wake of Gallipoli to elicit warmer expressions of shared interests from the white women. 'Though the discouragement and difficulties of this work this year have been great, we must remember that we have all – Maori and European alike – had to enter into the valley of the shadow together', ran an editorial in the WCTU's *White Ribbon* in 1916; 'and we believe that the bonds which have been formed there with our Maori sisters, who are suffering and grieving at the loss of their dear ones, and also rejoicing at their deeds of heroism, have been so firmly welded together that out of the suffering will come with our purification a truer sympathy and understanding of each other's needs.'²⁴

Excluding South Australian Aboriginal women

More so than in Colorado, far more so than in New Zealand, the colonization process in South Australia had tragically disrupted the lives of the indigenous inhabitants. From the mid-1830s there had been a tragic toll of life, not least from introduced diseases. This was followed for many survivors by enforced living on missions and reserves where meagre state assistance was matched by intrusive state surveillance. Understanding Aborigines' enormous disadvantage helps explain the far lower participation of Aboriginal men in colonial political processes than in the two other white settlements, despite their apparent access to such rights in law.

What Aborigines' actual rights to vote had been in the colonies, or where they stood in the aftermath of the Federal Constitution and the subsequent Franchise Act, was confusing for most white citizens, even those who were genuinely interested to discover the details. When the British government first established constitutions for each colony as they handed over most administrative functions to the settlers, they set in place gender and property qualifications for voting and holding office, but not a colour bar. The new settler governments of the south-eastern colonies, now with the power to change the electorate, moved swiftly to widen voting rights to all men. Similarly, these settler governments did not at first erect a colour bar, and a very few Aboriginal men, especially in the vicinity of mission stations, registered and cast their votes over the next decades. The South Australian Act that gave women the vote in 1894 also enfranchised Aboriginal women, even

if this went unremarked. By contrast, however, Queensland's and Western Australia's settler governments, presiding over the colonies where most surviving Aborigines lived, did move explicitly to exclude Aborigines from the franchise. By the time women received the vote in Western Australia, Aboriginal men had been debarred from voting (unless by remote chance property holders) and hence Aboriginal women were similarly excluded from the vote. These states' interests would affect the rest in the federation settlement.

The clause in the 1901 Constitution of the new Commonwealth of Australia that excluded Aborigines from enumeration in the census appeared to deal a blow to their citizenship, but one clause held out some possibilities for the Aborigines of the south-east. Section 41 declared that if a person already were an elector in a state, then that person automatically had the right to vote in Commonwealth elections. Section 41 owed its existence to the insistence of South Australian representatives present at intercolonial meetings to draft the Constitution, that South Australian women should retain the vote federally. South Australian women voted therefore in the first federal election. Aboriginal men in the south-eastern states, and Aboriginal women in South Australia, ostensibly should have also become Commonwealth electors by virtue of the same provision, but this right would swiftly be ignored or eroded.

The silence in WCTU circles on Aboriginal civil rights throughout the 1890s and in the decade following the 1902 Franchise Act was total. There was no protest, nor even speculation on the implications of the 1901 Constitution and the 1902 electoral arrangements for indigenous Australians. During the 1890s South Australian suffrage activists did not, as did a few liberal suffragists in New South Wales and Victoria, score cheap points about Aboriginal men's eligibility to vote in the south-east while 'superior' white women had no such right. An examination of suffrage activism reveals a complete neglect of Aborigines' rights in South Australia as elsewhere in the colonies. In 1897 the South Australian leader Elizabeth Nicholls, referring to the title 'Nation Builders' bestowed on the men of the Federal Convention, thought that the WCTU, 'the representatives of the organised motherhood and sisterhood of these large territories... are equally entitled to the name of "Nation Builders"... And unless Australia is federated in the interests of women as well as men, our national life will be one-sided, inharmonious and dwarfed.' But the great power and influence she believed the Union could exert she did not relate to the civil rights of Aborigines, men or women.²⁵

In Colorado the silence of suffrage activists about men of colour represented an acknowledgment and affirmation of the reality of their voting power. The silence was a pragmatic tactic, but it was also a positive factor in a racist social context. In New Zealand the silence of suffrage activists on Maori men's access to political rights was similarly a recognition of their potential impact on white women's emancipation. The activists swiftly broke their silence on Maori women's civil rights issues when Maori women stood in a position to become useful political collaborators in agitation for reform. In Australia the suffragists' silence had more tragic implications: the relegation of Aborigines to mission concerns, and their marginalization from political processes and historical memory. But when the WCTU activists came later in the interwar years to understand their part in this process, their response was anguished and forceful.

Recently Fiona Paisley and Marilyn Lake have outlined the changing international context of the women's movement in the interwar period when women in feminist organizations began to develop a new voice on the concerns of indigenous peoples.²⁶ There were multiple influences. The League of Nations established guidelines for the administration of colonized peoples in mandated territories, publicized through the League of Nations associations that sprang up in many countries across the world, including Australia. This heightened consciousness flowed on to reassessments of the current experiences of minority colonized peoples in first world countries. As more western women received the vote after the First World War, including women in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, international gatherings of suffragists turned into forums where women citizens now attended to other civil rights issues, including the rights of non-European minorities. The British Commonwealth League took up this campaign with energy, challenging its Dominion members to assess government policies on indigenous peoples within their home borders.

In the 1920s and 1930s the WCTU in South Australia was at the centre of attempts to galvanize the country into a revision of its attitudes and policies towards Aborigines. In part this came about through a friendship between the Adelaide activist Constance Cooke and the Western Australian mission teacher and social reformer Mary Bennett, whose book *The Aboriginal as a Human Being* had great influence on feminist activists. An indication of the direction which Constance Cooke was promoting was seen at the 1933 national convention of the WCTU at a session on 'Christian Nations and Native Races'. Speaking

on 'Australia's Obligation to the Aboriginal Race', Constance Cooke declared that historically, the first great wrong that white settlers inflicted on the 'long-suffering' Aborigines was depriving them of their land; the second was white men's sexual abuse of Aboriginal women. And, as far as she could tell, in the year 1933 not much had changed. If Australians knew what was happening at that very time on the outskirts of civilization in their own country, surely they would rise up in protest. The country would do well to look to the principles that guided the administration of mandated territory of New Guinea: a 'primitive' people should be considered 'a sacred trusteeship' for the stronger race. Constance Cooke's preoccupation was with Aborigines' forced loss of land by theft. She concluded with this suggestion concerning Aboriginal land rights: 'Australia cost us nothing. It would not be a great matter to ask us to share it with its original owners.'²⁷

In a very public way and with memorable force, then, white WCTU leaders came to the position where they could acknowledge themselves as colonizers. The same convention agreed to include urgent attention to the needs of Aborigines in the seven-point plan of action that was to guide WCTU strategies for the remainder of the decade. The meeting passed a resolution calling on the Commonwealth Government 'to define the national status and legal privileges and responsibilities of the Aborigine as a British subject'.²⁸

By 1937 the WCTU portrayed its members as grasping the opportunity to uphold 'the cause of our native races, maintaining their rights to equal citizenship in this fair land of Australia, which is theirs by birth and love and tradition'.²⁹ The WCTU, no stranger to the championship of unpopular causes, including citizenship for white women, would now pursue Aboriginal rights as they acknowledged, in contribution, their negligence over the past 50 years. A moment of understanding of their racist past had at last come to the heirs of the suffrage agitation of the 1890s and early twentieth century. It would be many decades even so, before such changed consciousness bore fruit.

Notes

1. See J. Chesterman and B. Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997); T. Clarke and B. Galligan, "'Aboriginal Native" and the Institutional Construction of the Australian Citizen 1901-48', *Australian Historical Studies*, 26, 105 (October 1995) pp. 523-43; P. Grimshaw, 'A White Woman's Suffrage' in H. Irving (ed.),

- A Woman's Constitution? Gender and History in the Australian Commonwealth* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1996) pp. 77–97.
2. For fuller development of comparative and detailed suffrage see P. Grimshaw, 'Women's Suffrage in New Zealand Revisited: Writing from the Margins' in C. Daley and M. Nolan (eds), *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994) pp. 25–41. See also P. Grimshaw, 'Gender, Citizenship and Race in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia, 1890 to the 1930s'; *Australian Feminist Studies* (October 1998) pp. 199–214; P. Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, revised edition (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987); P. Grimshaw, 'Suffragists Representing Race and Gender in the American West: The Case of Colorado' in P. Grimshaw and D. Kirkby (eds), *Dealing With Difference: Essays in Gender Culture and History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Monographs, 1997) pp. 67–91.
 3. See P. Hulme and L. Jordanova (eds), *The Enlightenment and Its Shadows* (London: Routledge, 1990); P. Grimshaw, *Colonialism, Gender and Representations of Race* (Melbourne: Melbourne University History Occasional Papers, 1994).
 4. I. Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).
 5. WCTU of Australasia, *Minutes of the Second Triennial Convention* (Sydney, 1894) p. 36.
 6. WCTU of South Australia, *Minutes of the First Annual Convention* (Adelaide, 1889) [n.p.].
 7. *Revolution* (May 1869) p. 329.
 8. A. Kerr, 'White Women's Rights, Black Men's Wrongs, Free Love, Blackmail and the Formation of the American Woman Suffrage Association' in M. Wheeler (ed.), *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale: New Sage Press, 1995) pp. 61–79.
 9. *Revolution* (June 1869) p. 344.
 10. *Woman's Journal* (20 October 1877) p. 332.
 11. I. H. Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony. Volume 1* (New York: Arno, 1969) p. 490.
 12. *Rocky Mountain News* (10 October 1877).
 13. *Ibid.* (7 October 1877).
 14. For the Colorado campaign see: B. Beeton, *Women Vote in the West: The Woman Suffrage Movement, 1869–1896* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986); S. Marilley, *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); P. Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). See also G. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
 15. *Woman's Journal* (August 1889) p. 244.
 16. E. Stanton et al., *History of Woman's Suffrage Volume 3* (Rochester, 1886) p. 514.
 17. *Denver Republican* (29 October 1893).

18. Colorado Equal Suffrage Association, *A Few Leading Questions*, Colorado Equal Suffrage Pamphlets, Denver Public Library. See C. Stefanco, 'Networking on the Frontier: The Colorado Woman's Suffrage Movement, 1876–1893' in S. Armitage and E. Jameson (eds), *The Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987) pp. 265–76.
19. *Denver Republican* (3 November 1893).
20. *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Council (1893).
21. *Auckland Star* (9 August 1893) p. 2.
22. Anne Else (ed.), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand* (Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993) p. 4. See also *White Ribbon* (May 1895).
23. T. Rei, *Maori Women and the Vote* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 1993).
24. *White Ribbon* (1916) p. 1.
25. WCTU of Australasia, *Minutes of the Third Triennial Convention* (Brisbane, 1897) p. 34. For the suffrage movement in South Australia see: A. Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle?* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
26. F. Paisley, 'Feminist Challenges to White Australia' in D. Kirkby (ed.), *Sex, Power and Justice* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995) pp. 252–69; Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999).
27. *White Ribbon Signal* (1 May 1933) p. 89.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *White Ribbon Signal* (2 March 1936) p. 46.

4

Women, Individual Human Rights, Community Rights: Tensions within the Papua New Guinea State

Anne Dickson-Waiko

The fiftieth anniversary in 1998 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights went almost without notice in Papua New Guinea. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993 has strengthened the 1948 Human Rights provisions, especially its recognition of the right to development, a crucial factor for women in Papua New Guinea. However, the notion that women do have human rights has only begun to gain currency in the last decade. Titles of books, conferences and papers refer to the problem as women and human rights or, posed as a question, do women have human rights, as if to say women were somehow not human.¹ The concepts of human rights, social justice and citizenship were introduced to Papua New Guinea with the imposition of the nation state 25 years ago. In 1972 the House of Assembly passed a Human Rights Ordinance which declared every person entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, whatever his or her race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed or sex.²

The concepts of human rights became enshrined in the Papua New Guinea constitution at independence in 1975 when the nation inherited a state which has liberal democratic structures 'but lacks the cultural and social base to support these structures'.³ The pre-colonial societies consisted of 'stateless social systems' where there was no centralized political authority nor administrative organization intrinsic to the state. The interaction of these two contrasting political systems continued to pose challenges and create stresses which have often resulted in a struggle to establish the legitimacy of new state institutions and conventions. This has been demonstrated in recent years,

tragically so in the case of Bougainville when the ancient concept of communal land ownership came into conflict with the modern practice of private ownership of land.⁴ Peter Larmour has described the weak PNG state as being 'incompletely stateful'.⁵ This weakness has limited the state's ability to regulate the wider Papua New Guinea society.⁶ In rural areas villagers continue to use custom to solve many disputes including taking the imposed law into their own hands, otherwise known as payback killings. Custom continues to be the underlying factor in the maintenance of social relationships within communities in the country.

In 1998 a number of newspaper reports appeared in Papua New Guinea concerning custom and women's human rights, raising a number of issues which have received little attention. Melanesians are constantly faced with tensions and conflicts in upholding women's natural rights as enshrined in the national constitution. This chapter raises a number of conceptual issues which lie beneath these tensions as a way of exposing some of the constraints faced by the women who are relatively silent on the issue of their human rights. It examines these tensions under the following headings: first, the traditional gender constructs. This has to do with the way in which the ancient traditions and practices of the societies persist from the past even to this day; second, the introduction of colonial or western gender constructs which have in fact reinforced and institutionalized traditional gender constructs in a more systematic manner; third, in this section both Western and Melanesian gender constructs are juxtaposed in order to explain the similarities and differences inherent in the two systems. Fourth, a closer analysis reveals the underlying reasons for the partial incorporation of contemporary women into the modern state since 1884. There are tensions and contradictions that overlie the evolving complex process to do with human rights in Papua New Guinea.

Traditional gender constructs

Melanesian societies in pre-contact Papua New Guinea were extremely diverse and so there was no one traditional gender construct. Time and space prevent me from exploring these diversities which add to the complexity of the traditional gender question. Nevertheless, anthropologists have described these societies as relatively egalitarian in world terms, but their egalitarianism stopped short of relations between the sexes.⁷ Sexual inequality is striking throughout the country even in matrilineal societies. Male dominance is said to occur as a consequence

of men's competition with women for control of what women produce.⁸ Differences occur in the distribution of rewards and prestige to men and women, their participation in public ceremonies and effectiveness as managers of events. And where inequalities are structured between men, it is usually through their relations with or via women.⁹ 'Relations between men and women appeared to have been both chief cause and chief result of inequality.'¹⁰ Varying degrees of sexual asymmetry had existed in traditional pre-contact societies in Papua New Guinea. Colonialism did little to disturb this. In fact, it has reinforced and institutionalized sexual inequalities in a more systematic manner. Traditional gender constructs were untouched until the 1960s, and remain strong, because colonial rule was uneven and brief, existing in enclaves.

In the Papua New Guinea context an individual's membership in a community, family or group is dependent on their social relations. In the traditional non-state communities individual identities did/do not matter; rather it is the group and community or clan and tribal identities which were/are paramount. 'Community existence is central to Melanesian or Papua New Guinean existence to the point that life itself is not conceivable outside one's community.'¹¹ A community consists not simply of a particular aggregate of individuals, but individuals in a number of specified relationships¹² – what Strathern has called 'partible persons'.¹³ A Papua New Guinean understands the community in terms of these relationships and, according to this understanding, these connections are seen to carry more importance than the persons who are so related. Because the community is thought to be made up of these relationships, the community and thus life itself may be disrupted or threatened if these relations are ruptured. A Papua New Guinean community can sustain the loss of certain persons but if the appropriate relationships are not maintained the community itself may be destroyed and with it the individual members.¹⁴ The ethical implications of this thinking impose severe restrictions on the idea of autonomous and self-interested behaviour.¹⁵

The present-day *wantok* system or *wantokism* has thus evolved from the pre-contact Melanesian cosmology. *Wantok* system refers to the mutual duties and responsibilities which exist between those who share the same language. But in the modern context this has been extended to those who come from the same province. Melanesian cosmology understands a person as having a web of relationships. These relationships, however, are not confined to persons within the community, but are also connected with ancestors, and other communities including the entire environment.

Colonial gender constructs

The imposition of a Eurocentric public/private dichotomy during the colonial era was to bring about a new gender construct. This dualistic gender model of social life was further reinforced through missionization.

The Eurocentric model separated 'domestic' from the 'public' sphere, redefining cultural valuations to categories of woman and man. The tasks and functions performed by women including the reproductive functions of raising and caring for the family were now part of the domestic/private domain of social life. By contrast productive work, political and wealth-producing functions were now to be considered part of the public domain of life. Dualism and to a certain extent binary oppositions were imposed on Melanesian societies which themselves recognized no such systems.¹⁶ What is of major importance and a source of concern for modern Papua New Guinean women is how these two domains are evolving into a hierarchical relationship to each other as it is in the West. The re-ordering of society is not restricted to cultural and anthropological debate, but has implications for modern women as it affects their access and rights to political and economic areas of life within the state. It raises the fundamental issue of women's human rights, indeed their very existence as citizens in the post-colonial state.

The identification of 'rights' constructed a specific understanding of what women and men ought to be, both within the home and outside it. Given that sexual inequality existed in pre-contact Melanesian societies, according individual rights and placing greater value and importance on individuals in the public/political/productive domain of society only served to reintegrate pre-existing sexual inequalities in Papua New Guinea. The enormous influence wielded by the patriarchal church through intensive missionization could only result in a severely weakened position for women in the modern state.

The new gender construct introduced during the colonial period had other implications for women in Papua New Guinea. According different rights to the gendered individuals within these separate spheres affects the very core of Melanesian societies. Pre-contact societies were gendered but no recognition was given to individuals as such. Marilyn Strathern's work on Hagen women informs us that not only are constructions of 'man' and 'woman' culturally determined, but the conceptions of 'individual' and 'person' are also culturally determined.¹⁷ It appears that not only was there an absence of separate spheres, but the analytical concept of the individual did not exist. Therefore according

rights, identifying individuals and imposing a dualistic ordering of society were novel ideas which were bound to create conflict and tension.

Furthermore the new colonial gender construct separated Melanesian women's reproductive and productive functions. Women's labour in traditional society was considered important for the survival of the clans, tribes and communities. Melanesian societies placed equal value on the production of the means of subsistence to satisfy human needs and sustain life, and the production of new life, or procreation, to ensure the continuation of society/clans from one generation to the next. Neither was considered to be of greater value, nor were the processes separated analytically from each other. During the process of colonial rule reproduction and production became transformed, redefined and increasingly separated from each other. Reproduction now refers to biological reproduction and the caring and nurturing of labour, feeding, housing and therefore restoring the worker's energies consumed in the labour process – the reproduction of the labour force. The term production is now reserved for the production of services, and the distribution of goods and services, and given a monetary value. The production of the means of subsistence becomes the dominant type of production. Women's functions in pre-contact societies were different but were considered important and not viewed as of lesser social value. This explains why Papua New Guinean women writing about their own societies have referred to women's standing in society to be not equal but complementary to that of men.¹⁸

As in other colonized areas of the world, the colonial enterprise was gendered. The majority of colonial officials serving both colonies of German New Guinea and British New Guinea from 1884 to at least the 1920s were male. It was thus expected that the policies they instigated would be biased against female colonized subjects. Peter Sack's rather apt description of the beginnings of colonial settlement is of German New Guinea, but it could very well have been of British New Guinea.

In 1889, German New Guinea was far from an ordinary polity. It consisted of a few small weak colonial enclaves, surrounded by potential enemies, who still had to be 'subjugated', and not yet part of 'the public' whose safety the Colonial Government protected. Its subjects consisted, in fact, exclusively of the inhabitants of the colonial enclaves primarily the non-natives, but also the natives employed by them.¹⁹

The few Papua New Guinean people who lived within the colonial enclaves in both colonies were male, often unmarried, domestic servants. As the colonial enclaves grew, through pacification and integration by means of 'organizing' neighbouring areas, this had the effect of making their inhabitants part of 'the public' whose safety the Colonial Government had to protect, and of incorporating these areas into a domain within which public order had to be maintained. With conditions thus becoming 'normal', Sack refers to those existing outside the colonial enclaves as living in a 'primordial state of war' or what can be considered as outside the confines of a civil society. Those natives who came to inhabit the colonial enclaves and became subjugated were those who were employed in the few menial jobs that were offered to Papua New Guineans. The colonial officials adhered to the usual practice of maintaining an all-male populace within the enclaves.

Though the sex composition of the population within the colonial enclaves began to change in both colonies by about the 1920s when increasing numbers of colonial officials and missionaries were accompanied by their wives to the colonial frontier, this gesture was not extended to local women until at least the late 1950s and 1960s. This meant that native women remained outside of mainstream colonial life, during the process of state formation. Until the 1960s when the Australian colonial administration created opportunities for greater numbers of Papua New Guineans to gain an education,²⁰ local women remained outside the confines of the modern state. Hence their identities and rights also remained embedded within the traditional customary clan groupings. Between 1884 and 1960 it was men who came forward or who were sought after to take up the few opportunities that were made available by the colonial administration. Opportunities for education offered by the missions generally attracted the male colonial subjects. Similarly the limited openings through the native policy on plantations owned or leased by colonists for employment as miners, crew 'bois', police, clerks and domestic servants were available only to the male population. Women remained outside the colonial state because of a gendered colonial policy administered by Governors MacGregor (1888–98), Murray (1908–40) and Hahl (1901–14) restricting women to the villages where traditional customs continued to subordinate women.

Because women had been excluded from mainstream colonial society, their rights and identities remained intact with their traditional clan groupings during the period of state formation. Women were and are still seen by both women and men as representing collective clan and tribal identities, while their male compatriots have moved on to

acquire individual human rights, attaining citizenship within the modern state. This is offered as part of an explanation for the fact that Papua New Guinean women have so far found it almost impossible to be elected into parliament. Still today women are seen by the male dominated societies as somehow existing outside the state. Though women may be part of the nation, men seem to assume that the according of individual rights does not apply to them. The overwhelming male view of the Papua New Guinean woman today is that she should exercise a role which is determined by custom and tradition. Her traditional role was that of reproducer, gardener, to feed her husband's lineage and raise pigs to make feasts. Her childbearing and gardening capacities were exchanged for wealth.

While these notions of womanhood began to change in the late 1960s as more and more women gained access to higher education, and moved to reside in the urban areas, independent, career-minded women are still very much a minority. There exists an embryonic women's movement, but the notable absence of the use of terms such as patriarchy and feminism in the language and writings of the Papua New Guinean female educated/bureaucratic elite further attests to women's acceptance of their traditional feminine role even in a modified form. Maev O'Collins observed that 'the value of a formal political role for women had not as yet been fully accepted, and is reflected in the lack of any significant support by women themselves for female candidates'.²¹ Perhaps leaving out political activity in the seventh point of Pangu Pati's Eight Point Development Plan was not an unconscious omission after all, as suggested by Margaret Loko, but a conscious decision based on Melanesian communal values, cultural attitudes and ethical considerations.²² Thus the seventh point of the Eight Point Plan reads in part '... equal participation of women in all forms of economic and social activity'.²³

The competing claims of universal human rights and cultural relativism were highlighted by Lady Kidu's press statements. Lady Kidu is one of only two female members in the current parliament. Lady Kidu was reacting to a publicized exchange of young girls in 1998 as part of compensation payments as an 'abuse of custom'. She clearly viewed the exchange of young girls as being unacceptable in modern Papua New Guinea. In her view 'Papua New Guinean ways are not acceptable if they do not respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.²⁴ This raises the question of whether an idea, concept or theory if accepted universally should therefore be applied in PNG despite its obvious contradictions for Papua New Guinean societies and people.

Many of the problems of nation building stem from these very contradictions and tensions between primordial customs and modern state conventions. Papua New Guinea is a nation in transition, where customary practices are constantly in tension and often contradict the natural rights enshrined in the modern body of law or the constitution.

Women's invisibility in public life is determined by a different understanding of human rights, citizenship and social justice which until recently were Western concepts. Why have women largely been excluded from political participation? While it is true that women in other societies, both in the West and the Third World, have also until recently been largely excluded from public life, the reasons for women's invisibility in the public arena differ from society to society. And so regardless of when women acquired the right to vote – whether it was in 1919, 1928 or 1975 – women's participation in national and local politics ranges from very good in the Nordic countries to the United States where women have found it extremely difficult to increase their political participation.²⁵ Thus there are different contributing factors for women's invisibility in public life in all societies. I have argued elsewhere how Papuan women have been left out of the process of state formation, excluded women from the mainstream of colonial life, and so they remained until the 1960s.²⁶

Papua New Guinean societies were said to be holistic societies with interlocking relations between production and reproduction, each reinforcing the other. For instance in some Melanesian societies such as the one discussed below, women are handed over as part of compensation payments, usually in exchange for the death of kinsmen who had been killed in tribal conflicts. It is women who are handed over, not men, because a woman is valued for her childbearing capacity, meaning she will be able to add to their numbers by marrying one of them and bearing children. In almost every exchange, be it marriage, trade or compensation, the clan bigman or chief always tries to outdo his opponent because his generosity enhances his prestige and status amongst his own kin.

Feminism and the basis of liberal political theory

The basic idea of feminism is that a woman is a free being, a person whose value or worth is the same as that of a man. The treatment of men and women in society must therefore be in fundamental respects the same, and an individual's worth lies in the individual as such, independent of his/her relationships to others in the community. Women

are first and foremost human beings possessing individual human rights just like men; women should not be regarded as sex objects.

The basis of social and political order lies in the idea that individuals have rights that are independent of their social relations. And therefore those with individual human rights have the freedom as individuals to do what they wish without being interfered with by others. It is these individual rights which are said to be protected by the modern state. The philosophy of liberalism emphasized individual liberties, notably those associated with private property. Individual human rights and citizenship are values and attitudes which come with a modern state with a liberal democratic tradition. Individualism, individual choice and individual rights are at the core of the liberal tradition as articulated by prominent liberal philosophers beginning with John Locke.

Feminist scholarship has been engaged in the re-reading and reinterpreting of major political theories, seeking out the implications of major works by familiar Western political theorists such as Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Plato and Aristotle on women.²⁷ Pateman and Shandley re-emphasize the premise of Hobbes's theory stating that women, like men, are born free and are men's equals. Why then, they ask, did Locke endorse the dominion of men over women in civil society? And how does he make the theoretical move from sexual equality in the state of nature to patriarchal rule in civil society?²⁸ Pateman's reading of Hobbes suggests that all women in the state of nature were said to have been conquered by men and became incorporated as servants into 'families'.²⁹ Thus having lost their status as free and equal 'individuals', women lacked the standing to participate in the original contract. In this way, Pateman argues, men made the contract which created patriarchal marriage and the private sphere and this legitimized men's jurisdiction over women in civil society.

Gender constructs juxtaposed: Western and Melanesian

There is therefore a strong contrast between Melanesian attitudes and values and the Western cultural attitudes and values which are concomitant with modern market economy, technology, and the liberal political system inherited from the colonial past. Liberal political theorists perceived rights as deriving from individuals whereas the Melanesian view of rights is derived from the community, clan and the family. This is nowhere better exemplified than in the rights towards the ownership of customary land. The nature of the Melanesian ancient customs oblige collective ownership of a piece of land. This is because 'a kin network

binds people together in a web of mutual obligations that constrain a person's freedom to pursue his own advantage'.³⁰ This is why an individual person of the land group has no rights to buy and sell the land belonging to a clan. Land is like the heart of a person that pumps blood and keeps the person alive as the following quotation testifies:

Land is life, Land is our physical life, food and existence. Land is our social life; it is marriage, it is status; it is security; it is politics, in fact it is our only world. When you [foreigners] take our land, you cut away the very heart of our existence. We have little or no experience of social survival detached from the land. For us to be completely landless is a nightmare which no dollar in the pocket or dollar in the bank will allay; we are a threatened people.³¹

As John Waiko says the above quotation brings out a fundamental distinction between the village people and the modern state in Papua New Guinea concerning the rights over land and the monetary benefits from the resource development.

Conflicts between the two parties arise because traditional and modern societies have different concepts of land ownership and a different concept of what is appropriate investment in resources. Whereas the members of the land groups accept that land and the resources of the land are owned by the clans, the modern state refuses to recognize collective ownership...but seeks to impose individual [title to] ownership.³²

This contrast continues to pose tensions within the modern state. In so far as the rights of women are concerned the colonial and post-colonial state have both been constructed to exclude women. As women in Western countries had been excluded through masculinist constructions of politics and citizenship, colonial states have also transplanted the same masculinist constructions to the colonies of Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Papua New Guinean women were given the right to vote with men at the time of independence in 1975. The first national elections for the House of Assembly were held in 1964 though some local government council elections began in 1951. Thus, the women can be said to be effectively within the state, though in actual political practice remain outside the state. Citizenship is understood as the individual's relationship with the state, and by virtue of having the right to vote should therefore mean they remain as equals in PNG's political

community. Because PNG women had been excluded from mainstream colonial life, limiting their access to employment and educational opportunities, ultimately it was men who were trained to man the state apparatus at independence.³³ The process of systematic patriarchal domination was put in place during the colonial era through the separation of PNG women's economic roles by separating production from reproduction and by 'protecting' them within the villages when genuine fears about depopulation of tribal peoples were being expressed by the British Colonial Office towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the early 1900s. Systematic patriarchal domination was further reinforced by missionization.³⁴ A systematic patriarchal domination was not simply a new means of domination, but added a new dimension to domination.

The crucial question for women in polities such as Papua New Guinea, where liberal democratic systems of government have been imposed during colonial rule, is when and how did women become incorporated into civil society? The major distinguishing feature of modern Western societies which most people take for granted is that societies are divided into two spheres, but only one, the public sphere, is seen to be of political relevance. The separation of the world of women and the household from the masculine realm of politics and citizenship evolved over several centuries in Western Europe. In most cases within the Third World it was this patriarchal system which was imposed on societies like Papua New Guinea. How did men in these societies acquire the social contract? When did they move from the 'state of nature' to civil society, or was a civil society imposed? As civil society in Western countries is masculine, similarly in societies such as those found in Papua New Guinea, civil society was imposed on the male gender leaving the female populace in the remnants of a 'state of nature', or as in German New Guinea 'a primordial state of war',³⁵ outside civil society until quite recent times. I argue elsewhere how this took place in Papua New Guinea.³⁶

I now return to Pateman's argument that women were free and independent in the state of nature but were said to lose their freedom in the first contract through marriage. The problem with this argument for Papua New Guinea societies is that two types of marriage 'contracts' exist in the country: customary marriage and civil marriage. It is often the case that a couple would go through two ceremonies. In a civil marriage women do sign away their freedom but at the same time they are engaged in forging relationships with each other's family/clan/tribe, especially in cases where bridal exchanges take place following

traditions from customary marriage. In cases where couples opt for a civil or church ceremony, however, tribal/clan and family obligations continue regardless. The ceremony may have been changed in a cosmetic or superficial fashion, but a Melanesian understanding of obligations incurred through marriage either civil or customary remains unchanged.

Except for pockets of matrilineality in some Papua New Guinea societies, the overwhelming number of societies are patrilineal where women's work and roles had been valued by society, but it is men who exercise power and influence in the political arena.³⁷ Whether women were in between,³⁸ or had their own social space in which they controlled the exchange of valuable items,³⁹ or have in the past influenced public decision making in different ways,⁴⁰ in the modern state women have found it extremely difficult to break out of this clan/tribal based relations within the gendered (male) nation state. Women are seen not as individuals, having an individual relationship with the modern state, but as part of a clan, village, tribe, community or family. This is compounded further by the fact that PNG politics is still very much a clan-based affair where political parties only exist during election time.⁴¹ There have been many undocumented reports of fights occurring over the years between a husband and wife when a husband discovers that his wife had indeed exercised her democratic right in casting a vote for a candidate of her choice instead of following her husband, *haus* line (clan) or tribe who have collectively decided which candidate was to receive their votes. The so-called secret ballot is not so secret in PNG, because in many cases families, clans or tribes collectively decide how to cast their vote. Voting is the most individual of all rights in a liberal democracy but that is still being collectively determined in PNG. In the 1997 elections in the electorate of Sohe, a woman had her eyebrows burnt by her husband because she had cast her vote for a different candidate to that of her husband. The woman belonged to a different tribe from her husband. It was the husband's view that she should vote for a candidate from her adopted tribe, whereas she had opted to vote for a candidate from her own tribe.

Contemporary tensions and contradictions

Feminist writers reading Bernard Narakobi's *The Melanesian Way* have been quick to pronounce him as an anti-feminist and a male chauvinist.⁴² However, another way of understanding women's individual human rights and the tensions arising from a Melanesian collective communal

social relationship may throw some light on the misunderstanding of his work. Bernard Narakobi is the chief protagonist of the 'Melanesian Way', and now the Honourable Member for Wewak and Speaker of the National Assembly. Laura Zimmer-Tamakoshi is adamant that Mr Narakobi is firmly on the side of male dominance.⁴³ And yet Narakobi is one of the few Papua New Guinean parliamentarians most supportive of women's rights. Let us take the passage that Zimmer-Tamakoshi cited from Narakobi to show his support of male dominance.

Women are not inferior to men but different... Within the family, the woman's authority is as important as the man's... However, at the clan and village level, the woman cannot be head.⁴⁴

The above statement clearly states the Papua New Guinean or Melanesian view of women and reaffirms the claim that Papua New Guinean women may have influence and even possess social power but they do not exercise political authority as head of the clan, village or lineage, even in matrilineal societies. There is also of course the possibility that what the West defines as political power differs markedly from the Melanesian notion of power, both social and economic power. These are more important in gift economies where influence is seen as more significant than power and influence residing with a person (an individual).

To reaffirm the survival and wellbeing of the group, family, clan, which is paramount to the individual's right, Narakobi explains that:

marriage brings families and tribes together ... Marriage in Melanesia still is a collective communal relationship of a public nature, not a one to one private affair.⁴⁵

Incidentally, Narakobi does agree that 'forced marriages, are a scandal' adding, however, that 'there are sociological reasons too, for arranged marriages and for payment of bride and groom wealth'.⁴⁶ This means ongoing and new relationships have to be forged and/or strengthened through marriage transactions, thus strengthening the clan and tribe or families ahead of the two individuals involved. So even in the 1990s, women and men from the bureaucratic elite continue to contribute to marriage, funeral and group/family/clan obligations. Those who falter on their obligations are shamed through gossip or brought to the fold through other psychological means, including supernatural means such as dreams.

The landmark case of Miriam Willingal in 1996 further illustrates this continuing tension between collective and individual rights, in which Miriam's human rights as argued by the Judge appeared to be violated when her clan insisted she marry into another tribe, settling a tribal debt. On 3 May 1996, the Papua New Guinea *Post Courier* published a report that Miriam Willingal was given against her will to a Konumbuka tribe as part of a compensation payment. The compensation package included pigs and money in settlement of a dispute arising out of the death of a Konumbuka tribesman. As part of the compensation settlement package, Miriam Willingal would have been forced into customary marriage with a Konumbuka tribesman against her will.⁴⁷ On 9 May 1996, the *Post Courier* reported that Miriam was not willing to marry into the Konumbuka tribe at this time because she wished to continue her education and to find a job. 'I am not prepared to marry, my interest is to complete my course and get a job.'⁴⁸ This case contradicts a woman's individual rights enshrined in the Papua New Guinea National Constitution. Section 32(2)(c) states that a woman cannot be forced into a customary marriage against her will:

- (i) A woman who is exchanged with another customary group as part of a compensation payment, and or is forced into a customary marriage against her will is subjected to treatment that is inhuman, or is inconsistent with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person contract to section 36(1) of the Constitution.
- (ii) A woman who is forced to stay in a particular location, village or place, against her will, as part of a customary compensation arrangement, including deprivation of her opportunity to educate herself or to seek employment has been deprived of her right to Liberty of the person, contrary to section 42(1) of the Constitution.
- (iii) A woman who is deprived totally or in part of her ability to make a free choice in respect of the person she is to marry, is deprived of her right to reasonable privacy contrary to section 49 of the Constitution.
- (iv) A woman who is forced to stay in a particular location, village or place, against her will, as part of a customary compensation arrangement, is deprived of her right to freedom of movement, contrary to section 52(1) of the Constitution.
- (v) A woman who is exchanged with another customary group as part of a compensation payment, and / or is forced into a customary marriage against her will, is deprived of her right to the Equality of Citizens contrary to section 55 of the Constitution.

Thus sections 32, 36, 42(1), 49, 52 and 55 were being contravened by this action. ICRAF (Individual and Community Rights Advocacy Forum, a Non-Government Organization which specializes in human and legal rights) took up this case before the Mt Hagen National Court. This form of compensation was known as 'head pay', a custom of the people in Minj area.⁴⁹ 'Head pay' compensation usually takes the form of payments in money, pigs and other valuable personal items. 'Head pay' in the past had included payment in the form of young single women. These kinds of settlements are taking place all the time within the nation state. This was a landmark case because traditional custom came face to face with the modern state constitution. The Judge ruled that the introduced Western law based on individual rights took precedence. That was the first case of its kind.

In handing down the decision, the Judge noted that even though the 'head pay' compensation was the custom of the Konumbuka and Tangilka tribesmen of the Minj, they are now part of modern Papua New Guinea and thus are now governed by national law. If their customs conflict with the National Laws of PNG, they must give way to the national law: that is, the National Constitution reigns supreme. The Judge stated:

In my view, the custom of requesting women as part of 'head pay' and giving of women as part of 'head pay' in the Minj area, in particular, in Miriam's case, is repugnant to the general principles of humanity – that living men or women should not be allowed to be dealt with as part of compensation payment under any circumstances.⁵⁰

Miriam's right to freedom and her right to choose a partner in marriage had been infringed. The finding was that the custom of 'head pay' was an infringement of a woman's rights under section 32 – the Right to Freedom.⁵¹ Thus this case was a victory for individual human rights.

How the Konumbuka clan proceeded to solve this problem by placing their community above the individual is the way many Papua New Guinea societies continue under the nation state because of their different, conflicting understanding of rights. Western thinking is dominated by 'liberal philosophy which holds that the function of the community and civil society is to afford maximum expression of the individual freedom and autonomy'.⁵² Miriam should not be seen as a commodity, which is how most Western-trained observers including anthropologists and feminists would have us believe. Rather, this action should be seen as Miriam's rights coming second to the welfare

and harmony between tribes. The welfare of the tribe, its group solidarity, was placed above Miriam's subjective wishes. In most patrilineal societies in Papua New Guinea where compensations are part of dispute settlement, the practice is to give young women rather than young men away. This is because custom dictates that it is women who marry and leave their tribal land, while men remain within the clan. Papua New Guinea societies were holistic societies where the ultimate value was society itself. This case illustrates the co-existence of two contrasting systems bringing into question the legitimacy of the state as it endeavours to impose its jurisdiction.

The final example involves a public discussion through the letters to the editor in the *Post Courier* in the late 1970s and early 1980s illustrating further the depth of the problem. These letters have been discussed by E. Hogan, although her discussion overlooks the reason behind the anger between male and female readers of the *Post Courier* at the time.⁵³ I suggest there is another possible analysis. Tensions 'bubbled over' in those letters and remain the only public articulation of the undercurrents which continue to determine gender relations in the 1990s.

Having moved away from their village communities, these women were free to exercise their freedom by dressing the way that other urban women dressed who happened to be white. These modern Papua New Guinean women were not inhibited by the cultural restrictions and taboos as their mothers had been before them. As educated Papua New Guinean women they wanted to establish their individual identities by wearing makeup and mini skirts (which were fashionable at the time), jeans or pants, shaving their eyebrows and making major decisions about their lives such as entering the workforce and limiting the number of children they wanted to have. Women learned through experiences of education and urbanization that men had in fact acquired individual rights and identities. In the 1970s and 1980s more and more women had become educated and aware of their individual rights and freedoms.

Others have argued that this debate was centred 'on the assertion of Melanesian cultural values, nostalgia, and nationalism' and racism.⁵⁴ This is especially so with arguments such as 'those women who dress like white women are only good for white men'. But what is it that lies beyond this notion of Melanesian cultural values which drew out such an angry reaction? What was it about Melanesian cultural values which focused debate in national, provincial and local government assemblies, subjecting women to public harassment; women being brought before judges and magistrates in national, district and village courts;

education institutions of all levels providing forums for discussion by parents, teachers and students, even drawing the attention of priests and ministers in their sermons; mass meetings and protest marches throughout the decade.⁵⁵

The reaction of men such as the three Tolai men as analysed by Hogan was not one of controlling women's bodies but maintaining the community.⁵⁶ Thus the men speak of women bringing 'shame' on their community and province by exercising their individuality. Hogan describes the Tolai concept of *Iou to Pulapa* as referring to:

taro skin after cooking that has to be discarded. Tolai women who acted and dressed like white women, could not find Tolai husbands, but fit for white men and could be discarded like the taro skin. Before cooking, the taro produces a skin or crust which has to be peeled or lifted off. *Iou to Pulapa* used metaphorically meant that girls or women were an integral part of Tolai society but with Westernization which was like the cooking process, made them a category apart from Tolai society, i.e. taro skin after cooking has no nutritional value and had to be discarded.⁵⁷

These men were in fact arguing that Tolai women who exercised individual freedom were no longer placing their community before themselves and should therefore be discarded by the community.

The strong language and tone of the letters to the editor in the *Post Courier* between 1971 and 1981 were notable. I remember reading these letters as I was myself between 1974 and 1976 one of a small number of Papua New Guinean women residing in Port Moresby, a working mother, wife, and an undergraduate, reacting with anger and bemusement. The men were angry but so were the women. The issue attracted so many letters that the editor was forced to publish a 'toksave' (editor's note) that no more letters on the subject would be published. This outpouring of feeling expressed in the letters was the only outlet for this pent-up anger and frustration. I suggest that this may be the reason why the incidences of violence against women have increased since the 1980s.⁵⁸ Not only were men feeling angry and betrayed, which unfortunately for numerous women was often manifested in 'domestic' violence and rape, but modern Papua New Guinean women were also caught up in this tension of divided loyalties, their tribal/clan or customary/traditional obligations and exercising their individual human rights and modernity. Women's groups, NGOs and their respective donors would do well to tread cautiously as they advocate

for women's human rights in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere in Melanesia.⁵⁹

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to analyse conceptual problems arising from a complex phenomenon of women's rights in contemporary Papua New Guinea society. I have suggested that issues of human rights in general and women's rights in particular may well be embedded in traditional gender constructs. The modern state has superimposed its colonial gendered instrumentalities that do not promote the rights of women. The notion of rights are also compounded by different perceptions of rights accorded to an individual person and the collective social groups. Given the complexity of the nature of gender constructs in the country, I have raised more questions than provided answers.

The tensions and contradictions within the Papua New Guinea nation state can be linked to a different understanding of human rights and citizenship. The gendered colonial policies meant that only men were allowed to leave their village communities, in most cases male dominated communities, to take on responsibilities and identities which came with a male dominated nation state which now continue to monopolize political power. Papua New Guinean women remained restricted to villages until the 1960s and were thus considered to have neither individual nor political rights. Women were not incorporated into the state until very recently, and not until male political power had become entrenched. Man's reluctance to share power can be partially attributed to man's inability to separate women's individual identities from Melanesian communal values, but made more complex through the use of custom to subordinate women's human rights. The internalization of custom and the associated communal obligations by both woman and man illustrate the continuing traditional gender constructs in the contemporary scene. This may provide some explanation of the difficulties women face today in advocating their concerns to be recognized as citizens with equal rights within the modern state.

Women NGOs are growing in strength and have become increasingly vocal in the last five years in their campaigns for various issues including serving as advocates for women's human rights. ICRAF in particular has spearheaded the campaign in basic legal rights education and awareness raising amongst both the male and female population. ICRAF's success in bringing to court and winning the case of Miriam Willingal is a landmark for Papua New Guinea.

I have also argued that because women were restricted to villages in the first 75 years of contact with the West, their identities remained within their tribes, clans and village communities. Their prime responsibility was to maintain the existence of their communities and villages, and group solidarity came before the individual's wellbeing. Within the modern nation state, however, men had been allowed to acquire individual identities and rights in the male dominated state, and continued to monopolize political power under the new state institutions. Papua New Guinean men responded to outspoken modern women dressed in 'mini skirts' as bringing 'shame' to the province.⁶⁰ Women evaded control by wearing whatever dress they fancied, presenting a modern 'sexy Western image'. Women were perceived as bringing 'shame' to the community because they have always been seen as part of a network and web of relationships within a community and not as individuals. The psychological ramifications of shame in Melanesian societies are so great that death (homicide or suicide) was often the only way out. While Hogan showed women wanting to exercise the freedom to do as they wished in modern Papua New Guinea, men found it difficult to envisage a world where women could do as they personally wished.

Notes

1. See K. Tomasevski, *Women and Human Rights*, UN-NGO Group on Women and World Development Series (London: Zed Press, 1993).
2. J. D. Waiko, *A Short History of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 172.
3. A. Dickson-Waiko, 'Gender and State Formation in Colonial Papua', paper presented at the American Historical Association Meeting in New York City, 3-5 January 1997.
4. The tensions and problems arising from two distinct conceptions of land tenure have been discussed by a number of writers, but see J. D. Waiko, *Land Customary Ownership vs State Control in Papua New Guinea and Australia*, Pacific Studies Monograph, no. 18 (Sydney: Centre for South Pacific Studies, University of New South Wales, 1995) and D. Lea, *Melanesian Land Tenure in a Contemporary and Philosophical Context* (New York: University Press of America, 1997).
5. P. Larmour, 'State and Society', *Pacific Economics Bulletin*, 10, 1 (1995) pp. 40-47.
6. P. Larmour, 'Migdal in Melanesia' in P. Dauvergne (ed.), *Weak and Strong States in Asia-Pacific Societies* (Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1998) pp. 77-92.
7. M. Strathern (ed.), *Dealing with Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) p. 2.

8. E. Burke Leacock, cited in *ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Lea, *Melanesian Land Tenure*, p. 3.
12. *Ibid.*; E. Mantovani, 'Traditional Values and Ethics' in Susan Stratigos and Philip J. Hughes (eds), *The Ethics of Development. Volume 1: The Pacific in the 21st Century* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1987) pp. 188–201, 194.
13. M. Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
14. Lea, *Melanesian Land Tenure*.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Marilyn Strathern's work in Hagen showed that nature and culture do not exist in Hagen as categories of order: M. Strathern, 'No Nature, No Culture: The Hagen Case' in C. MacCormack and M. Strathern (eds), *Nature, Culture and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) pp. 174–222. A collection of essays by P. Sanday and R. Goodenough show other complexities of gender practice, gender meanings and gender representations in and beyond the Melanesian cultural contexts: P. Sanday and R. Goodenough (eds), *Beyond the Second Sex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).
17. Strathern, 'No Nature, No Culture'.
18. See Margaret Jolly 'The Politics of Difference: Feminism, Colonialism and Decolonialism in Vanuatu' in G. Bottomley, M. de Lepervanche and J. Martin (eds), *Intersexions: Gender, Class, Culture, Ethnicity* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991) pp. 52–74.
19. P. Sack, 'Colonial Government, "Justice" and the "Rule of Law": The Case of German New Guinea' in H. J. Hiery and J. M. Mackenzie (eds), *European Impact and Pacific Influence* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997) pp. 189–213, 194.
20. The opportunities offered were mainly taken up by Papua New Guinean men. Many parents kept their daughters away from public schools.
21. M. O'Collins, 'Women and Politics in Papua New Guinea: External Influences and Internal Constraints' in M. O'Collins et al. (eds), *Women in Politics in Papua New Guinea*, Working Paper No. 6 (Canberra: Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1985) pp. 1–5.
22. M. Loko, cited in *ibid.*, p. 1.
23. P. King, W. Lee and V. Warakai (eds), *From Rhetoric to Reality: Papua New Guinea's Eight Point Plan and National Goals after a Decade* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1985) Appendix A, p. 453.
24. *The National*, 20 August 1998, p. 23.
25. See Igor Kopytoff for an analytical approach to understanding why it is so difficult for women in countries such as the US to attain political power whereas in many changing 'traditional' countries like India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines women have assumed political power with relative ease: I. Kopytoff, 'Women's Roles and Existential Identities' in Sanday and Goodenough (eds), *Beyond the Second Sex*, pp. 77–98.
26. Dickson-Waiko, *Gender and State Formation*.

27. M. L. Shanley and C. Pateman (eds), *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988).
28. Shanley and Pateman, *Feminist Interpretations*, p. 5.
29. *Ibid.*
30. R. Cooter, 'Kin Groups and the Common Law Process' in P. Larmour (ed.), *Customary Land Tenure: Registration and Decentralisation in Papua New Guinea*, Monograph No. 29 (Port Moresby: National Research Institute, 1991) pp. 33–50, 41.
31. Mel Togolo quoted in Waiko, 'Land Customary Ownership', p. 13.
32. *Ibid.*
33. See Dickson-Waiko, *Gender and State Formation*.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Sack, 'Colonial Government', p. 194.
36. Dickson-Waiko, *Gender and State Formation*.
37. L. Josephides, 'Bulldozers and Kings; or Talk, Name, Group and Land, A Kewa Political Palindrome' in O'Collins *et al.* (eds), *Women and Politics in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 6–18.
38. M. Strathern, *Women In Between: Female Roles in a Male World*, Mount Hagen, New Guinea (London: Seminar Press, 1972).
39. A. B. Weiner, 'Stability in Banana Leaves: Colonization and Women in Kiriwina, Trobriand Islands' in M. Etienne and E. Leacock (eds), *Women and Colonization* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980) pp. 270–93.
40. See Josephides, 'Bulldozers and Kings'; M. Macintyre, 'Women and Local Politics on Tubetube, Milne Bay Province' in O'Collins *et al.* (eds), *Women and Politics in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 19–25.
41. For instance, voting behaviour in the 1997 national elections showed that candidates scored votes in their tribal areas. But more importantly, where both male and female candidates came from the same tribal area, it was the male candidate who scored a higher number of votes. Those candidates who emerged as eventual winners were those who did not have to compete with other tribesmen splitting the tribal vote, or those candidates who made inroads into other tribal areas. This has been the case in every national election since 1964 when the first was held.
42. E. Hogan, 'Controlling the Bodies of Women: Reading Gender Ideologies in Papua New Guinea' in O'Collins *et al.* (eds), *Women and Politics in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 54–71; A. Mandie, 'Institutional and Ideological Control of Gender in a Transitional Society' in King, Lee and Warakai (eds), *From Rhetoric to Reality*, pp. 166–171, 170; L. Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 'Nationalism and Sexuality in Papua New Guinea', *Pacific Studies*, 16, 4 (1993) pp. 61–97.
43. Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 'Nationalism and Sexuality', p. 86.
44. Cited in *ibid.*
45. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 86.
46. B. Narakobi, *The Melanesian Way* (Boroko: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and the Institute of Pacific Studies, 1983).
47. *Post Courier*, 3 May 1996, p. 1.
48. *Post Courier*, 9 May 1996, pp. 1–2.
49. The term 'head pay' is taken from an article which appeared in a newspaper in Port Moresby. The journalist wrongly used this term to refer to this form

of compensation practised in the Minj area of the Wahgi Valley. Head pay actually refers to a customary practice from the Wahgi of 'baim head long pikinini' or buying the head of a child. Some form of payment is usually given to a mother soon after the birth of each child. Children are highly valued among the Wahgi and so a payment is given in appreciation for a woman's contribution to the tribe/clan/family. However, Miriam Willingal in this case was handed over as part of a compensation settlement; she was not being paid for having a baby.

50. ICRAF, Papua New Guinea M. P. No. 289 of 1996 in the 'Matter of an Application Under Section 57 of the Constitution, Application by Individual Rights Advocacy Forum Inc, (ICRAF) in Re Miriam Willingal', p. 47.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Lea, *Melanesian Land Tenure*, p. 4.
53. Hogan, 'Controlling the Bodies of Women'.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 54; Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 'Nationalism and Sexuality'.
55. Hogan, 'Controlling the Bodies of Women', pp. 54–5.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–8.
57. *Ibid.*
58. S. Toft (ed.), *Domestic Violence in Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby: Papua New Guinea Law Reform Commission, 1985).
59. See M. Jolly, 'Woman Ikat Raet Long Human Raet O No? Women's Rights, Human Rights and Domestic Violence in Vanuatu', *Feminist Review*, 25 (Spring, 1996) pp. 169–90; B. Douglas, 'Traditional Individuals? Gendered Negotiations of Identity, Christianity and Citizenship in Vanuatu', State Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper No. 6, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1998.
60. Hogan, 'Controlling the Bodies of Women', p. 58.

5

Na~Wa~Hine Kapu: Divine Hawaiian Women

Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa

Na~ Akua Wahine Kapu

*O ke au i ka huli wela ka honua
O ke au i ka huli lole ka lani
O ke au i kuika'iaka ka la
E ho'oma'alamalama i ka ma'alama
O ke au o Makali'i ka po
O ka walewale ho'okumu honua ia
O ke kumu o ka lipo, i lipo ai
O ke kumu o ka Po, i po ai
O ka lipolipo, o ka lipolipo
O ka lipo o ka la
O ka lipo o ka po
Po wale ho'i, haunau ka po
Haunau Kumulipo i ka po, he kame
Haunau Po'ele i ka po, he wahine
Haunau ka 'Ukuko'ako'a*

Sacred Female Gods

At the time of changing, the earth was hot
At the time of changing, the heavens unfolded
At the time when the sun appeared in shadows
Causing the moon to shine
At the time when the Pleiades were seen in the night
When the slime established the earth
At the beginning of the deep darkness
At the beginning of the night, only night
In the unfathomable dark blue darkness
In the darkness of the sun

In the endless night

It was entirely night, the night gave birth

Born to the night was Kumulipo (foundation of darkness), a male

Born to the night was Poʻuʻele (the dark night), a female

Born from these two was the Coral Polyp¹

Thus begins the ancient Hawaiian world wherein Poʻu, the unfathomable and mysterious female night, gives birth by herself, and without any male impregnating element, to a son and daughter, Kumulipo and Poʻuʻele, who by their incestuous mating create the world. The Hawaiian conception of the universe is a cosmogonic genealogy that spans 16 *wau*, or time periods, wherein the 40000 *Akua*, or Gods, are born.²

By this cosmogonic genealogy, known as the *Kumulipo*, Poʻu, the female night, is ancestor of all *Akua*; she is the source of life, of divinity, and of ancestral wisdom. *Akua* communicate with humans by dreams in the night. One says, '*Mai ka poʻu mai*' (from the night, or the beginning of time) to connote wisdom and customs that come from antiquity. It is the female *Akua* that empower Hawaiian women. They are our ancestors, they are our inspiration, they live in us. They are all we know of what it means to be female; they define our femininity, our sexuality and our great capabilities. *Ua haʻunau ka poʻu*: the night gives birth. It is woman who creates the universe.

In the Hawaiian world, incest creates divinity,³ and by this reasoning, the first child of Kumulipo (male night) and his sister Poʻuʻele (female night) is the coral polyp. She is an *Akua*: her name is Hina. The coral reefs are the body of Hina; coral heads (*puʻukoʻa*) are the genitalia of Hina.⁴ From them Hina gives birth to sea urchins, seaweeds, reef creatures, and their cousins of the land, fresh water shrimp, mosses, and small ferns.

In many parts of Polynesia, Hina is known as Hine, as in Hine-nui-te-poʻu, the Maori Goddess of death, and Hinetitama, the Maori Goddess of the dawn.⁵ Hine is the shortened form of *Wahine* (Woman), a powerful source of new life, and a life giving source of mana, or spiritual power. Hence the term *mana wahine* (power of woman) is in Hawai'i and throughout Polynesia a force that men must never ignore, for in a world where genealogical ranking meant everything, the first ancestor was the most powerful. And, Polynesians know, if a man offends his mother or grandmother, he has bad luck for life.

So it was that women prayed to Hina as the *Akua* of reef fishing, for that was women's work. Men prayed to Kuʻu, Hina's lover and her male

counterpart as the *Akua* of deep sea fishing.⁶ The Hawaiian world was thereafter divided into female and male domains of work, and was considered *pono*, correct and righteous, when there was a balance between the two. When there is balance in the world, the ancestral *Akua* are pleased, and when there is perfect harmony in the universe, people are protected from all harm.⁷

Hina was prayed to by women for permission to pick medicinal herbs in the forest; it was Hina who beat *kapa* (bark cloth) in the moon, and to whom women prayed for their delicate art as they tapped out the cloth that clothed the nation. Hina was the mother of many useful *Akua*, such as the Pig-God Kamapua'a, who teaches men how to plant *Kalo* (Taro), the divine ancestor of the Hawaiian people.⁸ Hina is the mother of a son Maui, whom she empowers to slow the sun in its race through the heavens, so that Hina may dry her *kapa* cloth properly, who fishes up land from the bottom of the ocean for new generations to live upon, who pushes up the sky so that people might walk upright, and who obtains the secret of fire from his mother's sisters, the Alae birds.⁹

It is Hina (Woman) who gives birth to new life; it is woman who controls the moon, the tides and the reefs, it is woman who has the secret of fire. It is *mana wahine*. The first born of the human-like gods is a woman, La'ila'i, whose name means peace; the kind of peace that a woman gives to a man after sexual union. It is the female *Akua* Kaha'ula who gives sexual dream adventures to men, and to women, who pray to her earnestly enough. It is the female *Akua* Laka who inspires the skill of dancers and chanters, female and male, that they may enchant and seduce one another.¹⁰

Indeed, sexual power and political power are very close in the Hawaiian mind; the word '*ai*' means to make love and the word '*ai*' means to rule the land. Thus we have the female *Akua* Haumea, most famous on the island of O'ahu, who is a Goddess of childbirth, war and politics. She teaches women the medical knowledge required to have safe childbirth, and she defeats the ruling chief Kumuhonua, an enemy of her *kaupne* (male lover) Wakea, saving him from sacrifice at the temple, and giving him the authority to rule the island after she wins the war.¹¹ Women are powerful because they give birth, and men must have something to do – let them govern the land!

The body of Haumea takes possession of certain trees, from which are carved great war Gods, to whom men pray for success in politics. These carved *Akua* are the male Kūke'olo'ewa, principal war *Akua* of Maui island, the female Kūho'one'enu'u, principal war *Akua* of O'ahu

island, and the female Kameha'ikana, prayed to for political power throughout all the islands. Another part of Haumea's body is carved into the female *Akua* Makalei who is used to attract fish from the deep sea close to shore. It is the female *Akua* to whom fish are attracted, and who are worshipped by men who build the hundred acres of fish ponds where fish are raised. These female *Akua* are the *Mo'o*, the lizard or dragon Gods, and Haumea is a *Mo'o*.

Mo'o were greatly feared and revered throughout Polynesia; in Hawai'i they are almost always female. *Mo'o* could take the body form of a small lizard common to most Pacific islands, or in their divine form could have a lizard body 30 feet long. Since the latter form has no physical or animal representation in Polynesia, the image of the Chinese dragon, or the Papua New Guinea ocean-going alligator, is recalled. *Mo'o* are always associated with water – from waterfalls, to fresh water streams and ponds, to brackish water fish ponds, and even to the ocean. Hence they are *Akua* of fish ponds, because fish, the male element, like to nestle in the ponds, which are the female element.¹²

In their human form, *Mo'o* are beautiful women, usually seen combing their long black hair and basking in the sun next to a waterfall. *Mo'o* women are dangerous to men because they have an undeniable power of seduction, and after they have seduced their human lovers, they often drown them rather than share them with another *wahine*. Such sexual possession was rare in Hawai'i, where marriage did not exist, where men and women did not 'own' one another because they were lovers, and where sexual jealousy, at least among humans, was considered extremely bad form.

In the old days (and what seems to continue as a trend today) it was all '*moe aku, moe mai*' (sleeping here and there). Multiple sexual relationships (*punalua*) were affectionately regarded, and the children from such liaisons claimed higher rank as a result of having two or more fathers (*po'olua*). Hence, the possessiveness of *Mo'o* women was powerful because it was so different, and so severe in a society where bisexuality was most common.¹³

So it was that *Mo'o* women were worshipped by female chiefs at the female temple known as the *Hale o Papa*, named for Papahānaumoku, Papa the woman who gives birth to islands, Papa the earth mother, another descendant of the lineage of Haumea. In the cycle of yearly ceremonies known as '*Aha* and *Makahiki* where the male *Akua* were worshipped by the male chiefs at the male temple – known as the *luakini* – the ceremony could not be complete without the agreement and blessings of the female chiefesses of the *Hale o Papa*. Men's work

and men's worship must have the blessings of the female *Akua* or their work would not prosper.

Moreover, the *Hale o Papa*, or the women's temple, was also known as a *Hale Pe'a*, or temporary house, that functioned as 'a sanctuary for women during their monthly periods, at which time their religion required them to avoid men's company'.¹⁴ Women who had their monthly courses at the same time gathered together to rest and to avoid the normal duties of the world. Thus they could spend a few days with other women who felt the same emotions and inconveniences, without the irritation of men who had no knowledge or understanding of such things as menstrual cramps.

More importantly, women used this time, called '*ke kulu waimaka lehua*' (the flowing of the red *lehua* blossom tears), as a time for communion with the ancestral female *Akua* in the *Hale o Papa*, proving that the old idea of women being 'defiling' during the time of their menstruation only applied with reference to the male *Akua*. Red being the colour of sanctity, as well as the colour of menstrual blood, this may have been the time when women were most *kapu*, or sacred; certainly it is the time when we are most sensitive to the suggestions of the ancestors.

Each of the four major male *Akua* – *Ku*, God of war, *Lono*, God of fertility and agriculture, *Kamane*, God of sunlight and male essence, and *Kanaloa*, God of the ocean – had a female counterpart. There was *Kuho'one'enu'u*, war Goddess of O'ahu island, *Lonowahine*, Goddess of the Makahiki festivals, *Kameneikawaiola*, Goddess of fresh running water, and *Namakaokaha'i*, Goddess of the ocean.

Those *Mo'owahine* who were worshipped at the *Hale o Papa* included *Haumea*, *Mo'oinanea*, *Walinu'u*, *Walimamanoanoa*, *Kalamainu'u*, *Kamnekua'ana*, *Papahamnaumoku*, *Ho'ohomukukalani*, and the dangerous daughters of *Haumea*. *Haumea* was the mother of *Namakaokaha'i*, Goddess of the oceans, of *Pele*, Goddess of the volcano, of the *Hi'iaka* sisters who ruled the billowing lava flows and medicinal herbs that first grew from new lava, and of *Kapo'ulakina'u*, Goddess of '*anapu'anapu* – the prayers to cause death and to bring the dead back to life.

It was *Kapo'ulakina'u* who had the flying *ma'i* or vagina. It detached from her body and flew through the air with little wings attached on either side. When not in use she kept it wrapped in beautiful scented *kapa*. It was *Kapo'ulakina'u* who taught Hawaiian women that they need not be ruled by their sexual desires.¹⁵ They could leave their *ma'i* in the corner of the house if they so chose. They could send their *ma'i* flying through the air to tempt or seduce a lover. They could 'put on'

their *ma'i* when they chose and enjoy their sexuality for as long as they wanted. And, they could pray a man to death if he did not suit. They could pray him back to life if he did suit. Many women, and many men, worshipped Kapo'ulāukina'u, and her sister *Akua* Kalaipāmuhoā, Goddesses of life and of death.

All the female *Akua* come from the lineage of Haumea. Haumea of the wondrous births can give birth from any part of her body: from the top of her head, from her eyes, from her mouth, from her shoulders, from her bosom. She is also reborn in each succeeding generation of her female descendants; she lives in every Hawaiian woman. I am Haumea too, and all that Haumea has done, I too can do.

Our last Goddess is Papahānaumoku, ancient ancestor. Papahānaumoku, Papa the woman who gives birth to islands, Papa the earth mother who mates with her brother Wākea, the sky father, and to whom are born the Hawaiian islands, the sacred *kalo* plant, and the Hawaiian people. It is Papahānaumoku who agrees to Wākea's suggestion of the new religion called '*Aikapu*, and to the separation of male and female in labour, in cooking, in food and in sacrifice.

The '*Aikapu* religion is an ancient law, and began with the birth of the Hawaiian islands. '*Aikapu*, or sacred eating, makes the eating of food a religious experience, a communion with the Gods, surrounded by ceremony and constraint, much like sexual relations are in the west. '*Aikapu* is the foundation of all *kapu* or law. So men work in areas governed by male Gods, and women work in those governed by female *Akua*. Men and women worship at different temples, and they eat in different houses.¹⁶

And, while the earth is female, most foods that grow out of the earth are male; therefore men must cook. In the ancient custom of the Hawaiian people, it was men that had to do all of the cooking. They had to make one oven for men's food, and another oven for women's food. They had to build one house for the men's eating, and another for the women's eating.

And since only the male *Akua* demanded human sacrifice, only men could be sacrificed. Men were *la'a* and women were *haumia*. Today those words are often translated as sacred and defiling. But the old meanings are different. Men were *la'a* which used to mean reserved for sacrifice, rather than sacred. Women were *haumia*, or *Haumea*, after the Goddess Haumea, and were reserved for female Goddesses and female work. We have no historical examples of women being sacrificed for any reason, but we do know that their presence and their sacrifice was abhorred by the male Gods. Perhaps male *Akua* were afraid of *Haumea*?

Under the 'Aikapu religion, women relinquished the eating of four foods, coconut, banana, pig, and red fish. These represented the sexual power of four important Gods who governed the areas reserved for men's work. The coconut represents the testicles of Ku, God of war. The banana is the phallus of Kanaloa, God of ocean voyaging. The pig's snout is the genital of Lono, God of agriculture. The red fish represent the private parts of Ku'ulakai, God of deep sea fishing. When women agreed not to eat these four foods, they gave the hardest work of their world over to the men, and made them feel better by naming such work sacred.

Tradition tells us that when Wāukea came to tell Papahānaumoku of the new 'Aikapu religion proclaimed by the priest, Papahānaumoku questioned him about the details to make sure she had heard it right. We can imagine she said, 'You mean to tell me that if women give up eating these four foods, that now and forever more men will do all of the cooking?' Wāukea answered, 'Yes, that's right'. She asked again, 'And if women give up eating these four foods, that only men will be sacrificed?' Again Wāukea answered, 'Yes'. Then Papahānaumoku said the equivalent of, 'I'll take it!'

For it was only when the female agreed to the male proposal of 'Aikapu that the new religion could proceed. Female sanction was important in every major ceremony, in the 'Aha and the Makahiki, so that a women's temple, the *Hale o Papa*, was attached to every important male *heiau*. Later, we shall see that the 'Aikapu religion ends only when the women decide that it should.

Mo~i~wahine and famous ali'i nui wahine

Given the power of female *Akua*, especially on the island of O'ahu, it is not surprising that women first became most powerful on O'ahu.¹⁷ High lineage and genealogical rank were thought to bestow the most *mana* or spiritual power, and those of the highest chiefly ranks were considered Gods that walked the face of the earth. Around AD 1375, the high chiefess Kuμkaniloko became the first *Moμ'iwahine*, or supreme female ruler, of O'ahu. She was named for the birthing *heiau*, or temple, Kuμkaniloko, situated on the plains of Wahiawā where the island's most violent thunderstorms brought the *mana* of the heavens down to chiefly children being born below.¹⁸ Once a child was born at Kuμkaniloko, the highest chiefs would come to do it honour by beating the huge sacred drums of Haμwea and 'Opuku, which could be heard for miles around. It was said that any child born at Kuμkaniloko was by that circumstance recognized as a high chief.

Kuꞎkaniloko was the first born daughter of her father Piliwale, the *Moꞎ'iꞎ* of O'ahu before her. He had no sons of high rank, and rather than let the position fall to a male of a junior lineage he chose his daughter to rule after him. The O'ahu council of chiefs agreed, and so it was that Kuꞎkaniloko became famous for her long and peaceful reign as an *Akua* who walked the earth and brought prosperity to her people.

Her daughter Kalanimanu'ia (c. AD 1400) followed her as *Moꞎ'iꞎwahine*, and was renowned for the building of hundreds of acres of fish ponds in the Pearl Harbor region. *Mo'owahine* such as *Kaꞎneku'a'ana* were worshipped at the edges of these fish ponds as they were responsible for attracting fish to live there, and indeed all the fish of O'ahu used to come to Pearl Harbor estuary to spawn. Also residing in Pearl Harbor was *Ka'ahupamaꞎhau*, the queen of the sharks, whose law protected the people of O'ahu from shark attacks. Kalanimanu'ia's daughter Kekela was a warrior chiefess who ruled the northern half of O'ahu and fought her elder brothers for control of the island. Kekela's daughter Kaea-a-kalona brought peace to the warring lineage by accepting her cousin Kakuhihewa as her mate.¹⁹

Not long after the innovation of *Moꞎ'iꞎwahine* began on O'ahu, it was accepted by the ruling chiefs on the island of Hawai'i as well. *Kaikilani-ali'inuiwahine-opuna* (c. 1475), was the first-born child of a *niꞎ'aupi'o* (incestuous) mating, her parents being brother and sister and both from the senior lineage of ruling chiefs. When her junior lineage male cousins, also her lovers and the fathers of her children, tried to wrest the position away from her, she used one lover and his warriors to fight against the other and maintained her power.²⁰

While *Kaikilani's* first born was a son *Keaꞎkealanikaꞎne*, her grand-daughter *Keaꞎkealaniwahine* and her great granddaughter *Keakamahana* followed her son as *Moꞎ'iꞎwahine*. *Keakamahana's* daughter *Kalanikauleleiaiwi* was chosen as *Moꞎ'iꞎwahine* and co-ruler with her brother *Keawe*, because her rank was higher than that of her brother, and because she was more closely aligned with O'ahu island chiefs. Thus high female chiefs effectively ruled the island of Hawai'i from c. 1550–1720, and bestowed the right to offer ritual human sacrifice to the male God *Kuꞎ* at the temple upon their male descendants.

The celebrated *Maꞎui* chiefess *Ka'ahumanu* (c. 1768–1832), a great granddaughter of *Kalanikauleleiaiwi* via her mating with the *Maꞎui Moꞎ'iꞎ* *Ka'ulahe'a II*, was the favourite *wahine* (woman) of Hawai'i island chief *Kamehameha the Great* (c. 1758–1819), who united the archipelago into the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1805. She was also his *kuhina nui*, or chief political advisor, a position inherited from her father *Ke'eaumoku*,

who had been instrumental in bringing Kamehameha to power. Under Ka'ahumanu, the office of *kuhina nui* was strengthened so that it had equal rights with the *Mou'iū* to make decisions over matters of land disposition and politics.

Renowned for her intelligence and shrewd political acumen, Ka'ahumanu became the de facto ruler of the kingdom when Kamehameha died in 1819, declaring to his son Liholiho (Kamehameha II) that his father had commanded that 'they two should rule'. While she was the only chief to have heard that particular declaration from Kamehameha as he lay on his deathbed, Liholiho was not about to challenge such a powerful woman, because she also led a formidable array of her junior lineage Ma'ui chiefs and their armies.²¹

Ka'ahumanu is famous for supporting her cousin and Liholiho's mother Keo'umu'olani, the most sacred and high ranking of Kamehameha's *wahine*, in her breaking of the '*Aikapu*. Not long after Kamehameha died, the female chiefs decided that they would no longer follow the separate eating laws of their ancestors. The male chiefs were delighted at no longer having to cook, and Ka'ahumanu led in the burning of the old Gods and the destruction of the temples. This extraordinary action must be viewed in light of the inability of the old Gods to stay the massive onslaught of foreign disease – primarily VD and tuberculosis – brought to Hawai'i in 1778 by Captain James Cook and his two ship-loads of British sailors. From an estimated population of 1 000 000 Hawaiians in 1778, foreign disease reduced that number to about 200 000 in 1823; by 1893 when the American military invaded the Hawaiian Kingdom, there were only 40 000 Hawaiians. It was the responsibility of the female chiefs to search for a religious solution to this problem.²²

After Kamehameha died in 1819, Ka'ahumanu declared that 'we want to live like the foreigners'. Foreigners residing in Hawai'i at that time did not seem to worship any Gods; they had left their own homelands fleeing their various religions and priestly sanctions to enjoy the sexual freedom of Hawai'i. Foreigners in Hawai'i did not die from the waves of epidemics that came with each new western ship, but Hawaiians did.

Ka'ahumanu and the female chiefs wanted their people to live, and observed that foreigners seemed to have a secret protection from early death by disease. So just as their divine female ancestors, Haumea and Papahānaumoku, had first sanctioned the '*Aikapu* or Sacred Eating religion, it became the responsibility of Ka'ahumanu and the female chiefs to abolish that practice once it no longer served the people's best

interests. And, when American Calvinist missionaries arrived shortly thereafter with the message that only Jehovah could save the Hawaiian people from death by foreign disease, it was Ka'ahumanu who led the nation in conversion to that new God in 1824.

Although Ka'ahumanu had no children of her own, she gave power to her relatives, especially to her female relatives. While she ensured the appointment of her brothers Kuakini and Kahekili Ke'eaumoku as governors of Hawai'i and Maui islands respectively, she made her sister Pi'ia Nāmama'hana (1794–1825) governor of O'ahu island because its harbour port of Honolulu, highly favoured by visiting western ships, had become the most important in the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Ka'ahumanu trained her niece, Kīmana'u (1802–1839), to inherit all of her lands as well as her position as *kuhina nui*. Taking the name Ka'ahumanu II upon Ka'ahumanu's death in 1832, Kīmana'u ruled in the position of *kuhina nui* to her brother Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III) who ruled from 1824 to 1854. As Kauikeaouli's children died in infancy, Kīmana'u's children inherited their uncle's throne and reigned as Kamehameha IV and Kamehameha V.

When Kīmana'u died in the 1839 mumps epidemic, her sister Kekaupuluohi (1798–1844), another niece of Ka'ahumanu, inherited her lands and position as *kuhina nui* to Kamehameha III. While the king was away on Maui, it was Kekaupuluohi who averted the French takeover of O'ahu by negotiating with American merchants in Honolulu to raise the \$40 000 demanded as an indemnity by the French government and its visiting warship.

Another powerful Ali'i Nui woman and contemporary of Kekaupuluohi was Keka'u'ono (1805–1851) who ruled as governor of the northern islands of Kaua'i and Ni'ihau from 1842 to her death in 1851.²³ A granddaughter of Kamehameha I, she served on the Council of Chiefs²⁴ as an advisor to her uncle Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III). She was heir of her uncle Kalanimoku, who served and supported his first cousin Ka'ahumanu during her reign, and controlled vast tracks of land as a result.²⁵

One of the more famous of Ali'i Nui women was Queen Emma Kaleleonālani (1836–1885) who rose to position of Queen upon her marriage to Alexander Liholiho (Kamehameha IV) in 1856. Raised by her aunt Grace Kama'iku'i, and the latter's British husband Dr T. C. B. Rooke, Emma was devoted to the idea of medical care for her people, as well as being decidedly pro-British in her politics. She and her husband King Alexander Liholiho personally led the fundraising campaign to build Queen's Hospital, the first medical facility in Hawai'i, which was

subsequently named in her honour. It provided free medical care to Hawaiians, although it was much opposed by American Calvinist missionaries who thought that diseased Hawaiians deserved to die for their sins.²⁶

Queen Emma worked for years to support the establishment of the Church of England in Hawai'i, and was a friend to Queen Victoria who served as godmother to Emma and Liholiho's son, whom they named Albert Kahakuohawai'i. Later in her life, Emma led the Hawaiian people in their opposition to the cession of Pearl Harbor lagoon to the American military for use as a coal station, in exchange for a favourable sugar treaty with the US, and she stood against Kalākaua for election to the Hawaiian throne in 1874. She only lost because American businessmen, who were opposed to her pro-British stance, controlled the legislative vote that chose her rival. Nonetheless, common Hawaiians rioted when they heard she had lost the vote for political leadership.

A contemporary of Emma was Kapi'olani (1834–1899), who became Queen of Hawai'i when her husband Kalākaua was elected king by the Hawaiian legislature in 1874.²⁷ A granddaughter of Kaumuali'i, the last king of Kaua'i and Ni'ihau, she used her position to establish the Kapi'olani Maternity Home, known today as the Kapi'olani Hospital. The purpose of the home was to provide free medical care for pregnant Hawaiian women, and supported her husband's motto '*Ho'oulu La'uhui*' ('Increase the Race') at a time when the Hawaiian population was declining at a precipitous rate. Kapi'olani's own motto was '*Ku'ulia i ka Nu'u*' ('Strive for the Greatest Heights'), and she was a notable song writer, most famous for the composition of '*Ka Ipo Lei Manu*', a love song in honour of her husband.

Lili'uokalani (1839–1917) was the younger sister of King Kalākaua and followed him as Queen of Hawai'i after his death in 1891. Her reign was cut short in 1893 by a *coup d'état* made by American missionary descendants cum sugar planters, aided by the US Consul John Stevens, and the invasion of the American military. Nonetheless, she spent many years in Washington DC fighting for the return of Hawaiian sovereignty.

Queen Lili'uokalani's insistence that the Hawaiian people offer no armed resistance to the American military has guaranteed that under International Law the American invasion continues to be illegal, because a war was never fought, and America did not 'win' Hawai'i by conquest. Her wisdom has allowed Hawaiians to successfully petition the United Nations for redress. Upon her death in 1917, she bequeathed

all of her lands to The Queen Lili'uokalani's Children Center, a trust that cares for indigent Hawaiian orphans.

However, Hawaiian women of the time took up the struggle in political support of Queen Lili'uokalani and Princess Ka'iulani, joining and organizing the *Hui Aloha 'A'ina* (Hawaiian Patriotic League) and the *Hui Kapulai'auina* (Hawaiian Political League), collecting thousands of signatures on petitions to the American Congress in opposition to American annexation of Hawai'i. They called for the return of Queen Lili'uokalani to the throne to lead an independent Hawaiian nation.²⁸

Modern Hawaiian women

From the ranks of women of the *Hui Aloha 'A'ina* and the *Hui Kapulai'auina* came Kamokila Campbell (1884–1971), a niece of Queen Kapi'olani as well as a daughter of James Campbell, an extremely successful sugar capitalist who left a vast estate to which Kamokila was an heir. Kamokila Campbell became famous for her opposition to the proposal of American statehood, and often drove Campbell Estate trustees to distraction when she refused to sign required US tax declarations, declaring that America was occupying her country illegally.

Other Hawaiian women showed their opposition to American colonialism in different ways. Edith Kekuhikuhipu'uone Kanaka'ole (1913–1979), and 'Iolani Luahine (1915–1979) were famous masters of *hula kahiko*, teachers of the ancient style of dance, that had been outlawed by Calvinist missionaries in 1820, and again denounced as lascivious by their descendants in 1893. The art of *hula kahiko* is closely tied to the worship of female *Akua*, such as Laka and Pele, banned by Calvinists in 1820, and to the understanding of all the elegant nuances of the Hawaiian language, banned by Americans in 1896.

These two hula masters not only continued to speak Hawaiian in defiance of that law, but they continued to teach the ancient dance, even though the American community referred to them as *kahuna*, or 'witch doctors', until the Hawaiian cultural renaissance in the 1970s. Although a devout Mormon, Edith Kanaka'ole frequently taught that Hawaiians should respect the Gods of their ancestors, because their ancestors respected them. On the other hand, 'Iolani Luahine never gave up praying to those ancient Hawaiian Gods, especially to the fire Goddess Pele, who inspired the *hula* of both of these women.

Gladys Kamakakuokalani 'Ainoa Brandt (born in 1906) was a contemporary of Kanaka'ole and Luahine, but worked at the forefront in the field of education. A descendant of Hawai'i island Ali'i Nui

Μομ'ιμwahine Kalanikauleleiaiwi, she was the first woman school principal on the island of Kaua'i. She also became the first Hawaiian principal of the Kamehameha Schools, and later served two terms as chair of the Board of Regents at the University of Hawai'i.

Always a champion of educational opportunities for Hawaiians, she was instrumental in the establishment of the School for Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies (SHAPS) at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, as well as crucial to the construction of the Hawaiian Studies Complex, built as a home for all Hawaiians on campus, and named Kamakakuokalani ('the upright eyes of heaven') in her honour. The Kamakakuokalani Building is the first educational complex ever built for the benefit of Hawaiian students and Hawaiian studies on any of the University of Hawai'i's many campuses throughout the State of Hawai'i. Today at the age of 92, Gladys Brandt has been appointed to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and serves as a strong female leader and role model for us all.

Following in the footsteps of Gladys Brandt is Haunani-Kay Trask (born in 1949), a political scientist by training and a Hawaiian studies professor.²⁹ A brilliant political strategist, who challenged the power of America in her famous 1993 sovereignty speech declaring, 'I am not an American, I am not an American, I will never be an American, I am a Hawaiian and I will die as a Hawaiian', Dr Trask also led the fight for academic freedom for Hawaiians when she challenged a *haole* (white American) to learn the facts of Hawaiian history and invited him to leave Hawai'i if he chose not to do so. In the ensuing battle, Haunani-Kay Trask was investigated by three different University committees and, once exonerated by them all, opened the path for all other Hawaiians to speak the opposition to America so long hidden in their hearts.

Mililani Trask (born in 1952) is the younger sister of Haunani-Kay Trask; both descend from Ali'i Nui lineages of Maui and Kaua'i, and come from a family of Hawaiian politicians. Unlike her sister who works in academia, Mililani Trask trained in law in order to fight for the rights of the Hawaiian people in the American courts. Upon returning from law school, Mililani pressed a class action suit against the State of Hawai'i over their abuses of Hawaiian Trust Lands. In that suit she discovered that Hawaiians were legally defined as wards of the State of Hawai'i, like orphaned children and mentally incompetent adults, and had no standing to sue on this issue.

Unable to access lands or receive legal redress in an American court, in 1987 Mililani Trask sat with 250 Hawaiians to write a constitution establishing a new Hawaiian nation, known as Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, with

herself elected as *Kia'āpūinarary*, or Governor of the nation. This government in exile has had three constitutional elections, two State-wide democratic elections, has enrolled 21 000 citizens, and its main aim is to gain control over the Trust Lands.

Besides forming a new Hawaiian nation, Mililani Trask has shown her brilliant legal tenacity in the international arena, leading a team of Hawaiians to Geneva to demand that the United Nations reconsider the American takeover of Hawai'i. On 11 August, 1998, the United Nations Special Rapporteur issued the findings of a five year investigation stating that the American annexation of Hawai'i was illegal, as the Native Hawaiian people were not allowed to vote on that annexation.³⁰ The United Nations report recommends that Hawai'i be reinstated on the UN list of decolonizing nations. This important step towards the re-establishment of Hawaiian sovereignty would not have occurred if not for the work of Mililani Trask.

Over the years the work of these important female leaders has been supported by many thousands of Hawaiians, and in January of 1993, *Ka La'āhui Hawai'i* led a march of 15 000 Hawaiians upon 'Iolani Palace, former seat of the Hawaiian monarchs, demanding sovereignty for Hawaiians. At the forefront of the march were Mililani Trask, her sister Huanani-Kay Trask, as well as myself, Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa (born in 1953). I am an Hawaiian historian, and the current director of the Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i, as well as a political activist.

We three women are frequently asked why Hawaiian women are at the forefront of the Hawaiian movement. Why indeed? Whence the strength of Hawaiian women? The strength most certainly comes from the female *Akua*, and from our female ancestors.

In my case it comes from my grandmother, Nadine Haleakalā MacKenzie (1902–1953), for whom I am partially named. My grandmother refused to give up her language, and after one hundred years of sexist American colonization, she insisted upon speaking the Hawaiian language even though it was banned in public, and children were beaten for speaking it in schools. She refused to forget that she was an Hawaiian and passed her pride in things Hawaiian down to her children whom she struggled to raise, even while living in conditions of abject poverty caused by the American taking of Hawaiian lands. Her motto was, 'Where there is a will there is a way'.

My grandmother's perseverance was certainly inherited by my mother, Kathyryne Leilani Labonte (born in 1920). Determined to rise from the poverty caused by landlessness, Mama left school in the

eighth grade and went to work at the age of 13 as a live-in maid for American military families stationed in Hawai'i. While at first all of her earnings went to buy food for her younger siblings and to help pay the rent, eventually Mama became an Hawaiian business woman. She made money in farming, in running a second hand furniture store, and in the hairdressing business, defying American banking policies in the 1950s that insisted only the male of the family should have the right to borrow money. At age 78, she is still working and making money continues to be her favourite pastime.

From my grandmother I inherited a love for Hawaiian language and a fascination for things Hawaiian. From my mother I inherited a thirst for education. The first of my mother's children to graduate from high school, I took a doctorate in history because I was intensely curious about how it was that Hawaiians lost our land and our country; we were never taught about such subjects in school. My career was remarkable in that I was the first historian of Hawai'i in over 100 years who was fluent in Hawaiian and could present the Hawaiian point of view about Hawaiian history.³¹

My job at the Center for Hawaiian Studies has been to create a new curriculum, writing a dozen new courses on things Hawaiian ranging from Hawaiian mythology, to ancient Hawaiian history, to the political evolution of Hawaiian chiefly leadership during the kingdom period, to the researching of land awards, to traditional navigation, to the growing of taro. Now hundreds of Hawaiian students at the university, learning their language, their identity and their political rights, will be the new leaders of the Hawaiian nation. Walking in the footsteps of our ancestors allows indigenization to accompany decolonization.

It is to the next generation of Hawaiians, and of Hawaiian women, that we look to with great hope. Of course, besides being political leaders and teachers, we are also mothers. Like Hina we give birth to great male children, who like Maui will change the world. My son Napu'apu'alehu Kilohana Anthony (born in 1975) is such a son, who with his exceptional analytical mind not only wants to navigate by the stars the Pacific Ocean in the double hulled canoes of our ancestors, but also navigates by the web and is ingenious with computer and electronic systems. Secure in his Hawaiian identity, he is also fascinated by the possibilities of the capitalist world, and will be among those who serve the Hawaiian nation as a bridge between traditional farmers and fishermen, and the entrepreneurs of the West.

We look to the young ones like my daughter, Punihei Kaiwipuni Anthony (born in 1983), who is a champion *hula* dancer and a fluent

speaker of the Hawaiian language. She is also extremely political, and with her superlative verbal and written argumentative skills could no doubt succeed one day as a great lawyer. Indeed, we remember the ancient phrase, 'Ua haʻunau ka Poʻu', 'the Night gave birth', and from that original divine female ancestor was born Haumea, the great Goddess of childbirth, politics and war, who is reborn in each generation of her descendants, and reborn in each Hawaiian woman. We are Haumea, we are *wahine mana*, we are *naʻu waʻuhine kapu*.

Notes

1. Liliuokalani's version of the Kumulipo chant, with my translations as quoted in L. K. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires; Pehea la e Pono ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992) p. 1.
2. See also the discussion in M. Beckwith, *The Kumulipo, A Hawaiian Creation Chant* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1972).
3. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land*, pp. 40–4.
4. M. Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1970) pp. 217–19.
5. R. Kahukiwa, and P. Grace, *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth* (Auckland: Viking Pacific, 1991) pp. 32–5, 58–61.
6. Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology*, pp. 11–13.
7. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land*, p. 25.
8. L. K. Kame'eleihiwa, *A Legendary Tradition of the Hawaiian Pig-God, Kamaʻupuaʻa* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1996).
9. Beckwith, *The Kumulipo*, pp. 229–30.
10. *Ibid.* pp. 276–7, 185–6.
11. *Ibid.* pp. 281–5.
12. *Ibid.* pp. 494–5.
13. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land*, pp. 40–4.
14. Throughout his survey of Hawai'i island temples, J. Stokes makes repeated references to Hale o Papa being referred to as Hale Pe'a: J. F. G. Stokes, *Heiau of the Island of Hawai'i: A Historic Survey of Native Hawaiian Temple Sites* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1991) p. 107.
15. Kame'eleihiwa, *A Legendary Tradition*, pp. 143–51.
16. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land*, pp. 23–5.
17. A. Fornander, *An Account of the Polynesian Race*, volumes 1–3 (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle, 1969, first published 1878–1885)
18. E. Sterling and C. C. Summers, *Sites of O'ahu* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1978).
19. Fornander, *Polynesian Race*, volume 2, pp. 272–4.
20. *Ibid.* pp. 117–27.
21. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land*, pp. 71–4.
22. *Ibid.* pp. 79–82.

23. Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i* (Honolulu: The Kamehameha Schools, 1992) p. 397.
24. *Ibid.* pp. 299–300.
25. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land*, pp. 218, 228–9.
26. *Ibid.* p. 312.
27. *Ibid.* pp. 313–15.
28. N. Minton and N. Silva, *Ku'ēmu: The Hui Aloha 'A-ina Anti-Annexation Petitions 1897–1898* (self-published, 1998) pp. 1–48.
29. Her books include H. K. Trask, *Eros and Power: The Promise of Feminist Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Mana Publishing, 1990), and *A Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis: Calyx Books, 1994).
30. 'UN report: Annexation could be declared invalid', *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (11 August, 1998) A-1.
31. My books include L. K. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea la e Pono ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992), and *A Legendary Tradition of the Hawaiian Pig-God, Kamapua'a* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1996).

6

Reconciling Our Mothers' Lives: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Women Coming Together

Jackie Huggins, Kay Saunders and Isabel Tarrago

This chapter was a paper presented at the 'Women and Human Rights, Social Justice and Citizenship: International Historical Perspectives' Conference held at the University of Melbourne on 30 June 1998. The three speakers stood on stage together, to confirm their commitment to Reconciliation. The discussion has as its central theme the spaces where Indigenous and settler Australians share and do not share their life histories both as individuals and as communities. The paper was presented as a performance where slides accompanied the speeches and sometimes the wall was blank where the evidence had been deliberately destroyed or not recorded. Both the speakers and the audience were profoundly moved by the emotion contained in the material.

The wider historical context needs some elaboration in order to understand the particular forms of repression alluded to by the speakers. Queensland, as various authors such as Raymond Evans, Noel Loos and Henry Reynolds have demonstrated, had a particularly virulent and combative frontier in the nineteenth century.¹ The first free white settlers arrived in 1842 following the termination of the secondary detention centre for convict recidivists that had begun in 1824. This particular frontier followed the landmark Myall Creek massacre case of 1838 when seven white stock-keepers were executed for the murder of Indigenous people. Attitudes hardened towards the Aborigines and colonists swore that none henceforth would be convicted of dispossessing and murdering the local peoples. The use of poison was widespread. The Queensland government, which was initially formed in 1859 when the northern regions were separated from New South Wales, set up the Native Mounted Police. This was an autonomous section of the police which consisted of white officers and Indigenous survivors of other frontiers. It was allowed to submit verbal rather than

written reports of its activities which were largely to 'disperse' (or kill) Aborigines. The Native Mounted Police existed until 1905. In the early years of this century the force was deployed in the Cape York Peninsula.

Tens of thousands of Aborigines were killed by colonists and more died through malnutrition and disease. By the time our story begins, in 1901, few tribal people existed outside the Cape York areas. Even in remote areas in the Gulf Country like Cammoweal and Kiridila the frontier had been relentless since the 1880s. The survivors of the frontier such as Topsy Daly of our story were forced to work for the new owners of their lands as stock-keepers and domestic servants. The story to come of Rita Holt exemplifies the other pattern of oppression. In 1897 the Queensland Parliament passed the Aboriginal Protection and the Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act. This legislation established the reserve system by which Aboriginal people were forcibly removed from their country and segregated onto government reserves. This system, though modified and liberalized after the Second World War, remained in force until 1983. Reserves operated as labour agencies, dispatching young male inmates out on to the sheep, cattle and peanut farms and young female inmates out as domestic servants. Workers were vulnerable to physical abuse and, in the case of women, severe sexual abuse.

While Indigenous peoples existed in the period of our discussion (1901–50) as virtual wards of the state, as non-citizens without civil rights or liberties, white women had increasingly achieved nominal political and legal rights, beginning with the liberalizing of divorce law in the mid 1870s, and the Married Women's Property Act and the Infant Custody Act, two decades later. Adult white women were granted the vote federally in 1902 and in the state elections three years later. But with high fertility rates, early marriage and few lucrative employment opportunities their political rights were dulled by their reproductive responsibilities. Women like Catherine and Elizabeth Duff of this story before the First World War and Elizabeth Walsh in the interwar years were unable to secure a living wage and were dependent on husbands and male relatives for their economic survival. Not until the late 1960s were women able to earn a decent living as a rule rather than as an exception.

Not surprisingly under these circumstances, political moves for greater Indigenous autonomy were slower to develop in Queensland than in New South Wales. As Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus in their study, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights* (1999) note, however, organizations like the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) and the One People for Australia League (OPAL) formed in the 1950s with white and black members to improve Indigenous rights.² Rita Holt undertook her political education in OPAL. While these organizations might now seem a little paternalistic they gave Indigenous women the forum to express themselves politically and achieve leadership roles. In the Torres Strait Islands where no reserves were established the role of the church, particularly the Anglican Church, gave women a voice and training in leadership. Women like Topsy Daley rose through advancement in work. Topsy ended her working life as the housekeeper of Sir James Foot of Mount Isa Mines Ltd. She was also active in community political organizations in Mount Isa negotiating with both the Labour and National Parties for improvements for Indigenous peoples. But these achievements lie outside of our discussion and will form the basis of our next instalment in the lives of three Queensland rural women.

We write in the year 2000 at a time of greater recognition of the cruel injustices visited upon Aboriginal people over 200 years of white occupation of this island continent. Many Indigenous and white Australians speak now of the urgent need for reconciliation to begin the process of bridging previously unspeakable divisions. Reconciliation is a political and social movement which seeks to harmonize relations between the Indigenous and settler peoples of Australia. At its most formal level it is represented by the Federal Government initiated Council for Reconciliation which is currently drafting a treaty between the immigrant peoples and the original inhabitants; at its most informal level it is a dialogue of understanding between different Australians.

Introduction: Jackie Huggins

This chapter was born out of a special tree planting ceremony conducted at Kay Saunders' home in Highgate Hill in Brisbane in 1997. In attendance were Kay Saunders, her daughter Erin and her future son-in-law, Jaysen, Isabel Tarrago and her daughter Avelina, myself (Jackie Huggins), my son John Henry and sister Ngaire. I had told Kay that on the first anniversary of my adored mother's (Rita's) commencement back to the Dreamtime, Ngaire's and my families would be planting trees and flowers to commemorate the wonderful life and, in a sense, experience the 'letting go' of the intense grief built up over a year of not having our beloved mother at our side. Some close friends at their respective homes also joined the commemoration at around 9 o'clock in the morning on 27 August 1997.³

We gathered for another ceremony at the back of Kay's house where there is a lovely running pond and a proud lion statue glares across the beautifully sculptured lawn that Jaysen had made. He knew that the way to a woman's heart is through her mother's garden. Kay and I share the same birthday of 19 August and the proud lion symbolized us on that day as proud Leos. I might also add that Rita, my mother, my brother and my son are Leos. So you can imagine what it is like when we are all under the same roof and the positioning that took place to rule the roost! John and I unfortunately, or should I say fortunately, have exactly the same relationship Rita and I shared – and he is only reaching his teenage years next month!

Rita and Elizabeth, Kay's mother, were remembered on that special occasion with the closest people around them. Even though Jaysen never met either, he was paying homage to two special grandmothers. Elizabeth loved her granddaughter Erin dearly and Rita would have loved Jaysen too. As we moved back inside the house, Jaysen began to talk about his own paternal grandmother, Catherine, who came from the same country as my father. He knew little about her and believed she was Aboriginal. When he and Erin went up north in search of her, he found some resistance, although he did find photographs of her. These clearly show her origins.

As we all sat in the magnificent lounge in Kay's bourgeois old Queenslander, sipping tea and real coffee from fine china and nibbling on lemon biscuits, the power of storytelling began. Now blackfellas sometimes think that they are the only ones who can spin a good yarn; but what happened that day in many ways changed my view on that topic and confirmed the intersections between us as mothers, daughters and friends. We had always wondered why we three women had bonded when at face value we are as alike as chalk and cheese. But what we were to find was our shared histories, our shared repressed memories and the journeys our mothers took in their separate ways to bring us together.⁴

Section 1: mapping the lines (Kay Saunders)

At first glance, this whole project might seem to be easy and clear-cut: a narrative would consist of tracing the three women's lives and largely discussing their differences and departures: between two Indigenous women both under the Act, but with differing degrees of surveillance, coercion and institutionalization; both intersecting with the European–Australian community largely as ambiguously defined offspring and

servants. The white woman's life might seem only to have a similarity of region of birth and later having a husband who had also served in the second Australian Imperial Force overseas. The connection might superficially appear to be through the daughters and those changes that occurred after 1967 and more specifically in the mid 1980s when some Indigenous people were encouraged to undertake tertiary studies. But the history that the mothers and daughters share is not only their interest in Aboriginal culture and history; but complex historical webs of lines that cross, cut and diverge sharply only again to touch, swerve and collide. What we are discovering, and this will be a long and difficult process, is that though our class and racial identities seem to be so different, we share unexpected commonalties: our own lives and those of our families share elements of equivalence. Our historical landscape has caught us all in its intricate mazes; at some points we meet across the plains and gorges. Our convergence might be fleeting and unknown; at times it is deep and profound and at other times we are thrown apart seemingly with no possibility of encounter let alone dialogue. Such is the story of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians: we inhabit the landscape on different terms, under different cultural premises and for different purposes. Our collective lives mark out the stories of invasion, attempted conquest, conflict, curiosity, convergence, disdain, co-operation and abiding friendship across this ancient terrain.

Topsy Daley, Isabel's mother, and Elizabeth Walsh, my mother, were born in adjacent country, in the beautiful and harsh land of the Gulf of Carpentaria Country basin: Topsy in the open plains and Elizabeth in the tiny mining town of Kuradila. Their families' lives, though never connected, both came together in Duchess, the transport, recreational and provisioning centre for the district. In the first decades of the twentieth century before copper was discovered at Mt Isa, Duchess, or the Duchess as it is always known, was the hub of the pastoral and mining frontiers that swayed around the Gulf Country. Topsy was the daughter of an Aranta woman named Puppa (or Maggie as she was commonly known in her intersections with the white population) and Arthur Daley, a Scottish water engineer. Elizabeth was the daughter of Elizabeth and Peter Walsh of Scottish and Irish origins who were seeking their fortunes on the goldfields. They inhabited the same country but in different and separate worlds. Rita Holt, Jackie's mother, a Bidjarra woman, was born in 1921 in the Carnarvon Gorge inland from Rockhampton. Like Topsy she has a white father and an Indigenous mother. Her life was torn apart when she and her parents and siblings were taken into custody by the police and sent away to Cherbourg Reserve outside of

Kingaroy in 1928. Her maternal grandmother, sent to Woorabinda Reserve, was never seen again.

When we came to think about how we could research and write up this complex project one of the things that struck us most strongly was how well we could document the lives of two Indigenous women, Topsy and Rita. The former worked on cattle properties such as Glenormiston owned by the politician Malcolm Fraser's family, and later for Bob Katter senior, the noted pastoralist and politician, finishing her career as the housekeeper for Sir James Foot, the managing director of Mount Isa Mines. Rita's life was well documented; for as an inmate of an Aboriginal reserve, her life was monitored, directed and controlled by bureaucrats. Like a pioneer of war who was captured by an enemy Rita's life was no longer her own. As well as these documentary records both women had extensive oral histories constructed. Jackie wrote her mother's biography and this volume has been highly acclaimed as an innovative breakthrough in undertaking the biography of an Indigenous person.⁵

On the other hand, Elizabeth, who married into one of Queensland's leading conservative political families, did everything she could to hide and destroy her life story. There is no cache of photographs, letters and diaries. She destroyed most of the records of her life. The more she became a member of the seemingly secure middle class, the more she hid her origins of being born in a tent by lamplight in a wild mining town in a remote part of a vast state. She allowed no oral history and merely dropped the occasional hint about her early life. She refused to be an informant for my oral history of the 1940s homefront of Queensland, even though by this time she was living in an upper middle-class household with two servants. I interviewed Rita for this project and she was one of the most fascinating and perceptive informants, who could both talk about her own life as well as place it into a wider historical framework. If conventional wisdom in our profession declares that the lives of the dispossessed, the poor and the disinherited are difficult to chart with any degree of accuracy, this whole project defies that certainty. Those white women, who become privileged, at least in conventional terms through marriage, may in fact disguise themselves and hide from our scrutiny, fearing rejection, ridicule, and disrespect.

Section 2: hidden lines (Isabel Tarrago)

My grandfather, Arthur Daley, was a Scottish water engineer who worked on many cattle properties and settled at Glenormiston Station

with Puppa, my grandmother, until her death. He moved around the districts of my grandmother's homeland in the late nineteenth century. At this time the Aboriginal Protection and the Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act was passed in Queensland. This set up the system that placed Indigenous people on to the reserves, which operated as an internal prison system within the wider society. It also stopped Queensland Aboriginal people from moving across their country, centralizing their residence in fringe settlements so as to provide a ready labour force for the cattle industry. My grandfather was in an entirely different position as the only man with the skills to maintain the water supply for the animal stock. This gave him paramount authority over the management of the station. Rather than living in the whites' quarters he chose to live in the camps with my grandmother; he provided the group with food and shelter. Over the time my grandfather and grandmother became very close and his life became segmented between these two worlds. My grandmother and grandfather never legally married but it was understood that they were a couple. The local police did not make any moves to enforce the Aboriginal Protection Act, which forbade black-white sexual relationships.

My mother was born under a coolabah tree on old Glenormiston station. My grandmother died giving birth. As my grandfather was out on the road doing his work, the old women took my mother and cared for her. From this point my grandfather got very sick and the members of my grandmother's family cared for him. He was treated with bush medicine and was taken into the widows' camp for men. He remained a widower and never made another relationship. By this process it is evident that Arthur had become culturally an Aboriginal man who spoke the language and understood the traditional law and so was accepted as one. Yet he still worked as an engineer throughout the early years of this century staying on at Glenormiston. At this time a liberal employer, the aunt of the former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, owned the property.

By the 1920s the Aboriginal Protection Act had been well established in the far northwest and Aboriginal camps had been allocated on the fringe of townships like the Duchess and Dajarra. It was my family members that Elizabeth talked about; the camps were across the river at Dajarra and Duchess. These were also the centres for the cattle industry exports as well as gold mining. At this juncture in the Gulf Country the lives of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples frequently intersected both at work and recreation. The station manager, the stockmen and women, railway workers, miners, publicans and

barmaids, Chinese market gardeners, Afghan camel drivers and retail owners all came together at the bush races. Despite the strictures of the official White Australia Policy these remote communities were multi-racial and remarkably tolerant.

Kay Saunders

Elizabeth's mother, Elizabeth Duff, was born in Charters Towers in 1896, the daughter of Hugh Duff and Catherine Duff née Noonan. Hugh's family were Scottish Catholics or Jacobins and the descendants of a small distinguished clan. Elizabeth Duff worked as a barmaid before her marriage in 1916 to Peter Walsh, the son of John Walsh and Rosanna Walsh née McGlynn, both of whom had been born in rural Ireland. A few months after their marriage their eldest son Peter arrived, followed later by Elizabeth. Nine more children were to follow, two girls and seven boys. The family followed a particularly Irish mode with several of the boys never marrying and staying with their parents until the latter's deaths. My unmarried uncles Desmond and Bernard always remained boys in family speech; the only time they ventured from their parents' control was when they joined the Australian Military Forces to fight in Papua New Guinea during the Second World War.

Though spending most of his working life with the Queensland Railways, employed mostly as a navvy and later a ganger (or supervisor of a small work group), at the time of my mother Elizabeth's birth at the end of the First World War, Peter Walsh was prospecting for gold on the outskirts of the Duchess goldfields. He and his family stayed there several years before moving to Mackay where the sons later worked in the sugar mills and owned a modest cane farm. My mother rarely spoke of her early days in the tents on the goldfields. What she remembered was the harsh life for the women trying to raise families in makeshift dwellings that would be washed away when the wet season hit with fury over summer. With no stoves or refrigerators the keeping and cooking of food was always fraught with danger. Men drank away their earnings leaving children starving. Fighting in the streets, pub brawls and casual prostitution was rife, following the patterns of earlier goldmining settlements where women were few. For those who followed husbands as well as for those who set up as independent women, such as my grandmother and my great aunt Catherine Duff who both worked as barmaids, life was incalculably harsh, with predatory men and a harsh unfamiliar landscape. Elizabeth Walsh senior, like her

namesake daughter, suffered severe migraine headaches, brought on with some frequency by too many children, hard and brutal living conditions and a husband who drank heavily.

Though she left the goldfields as a small child, Elizabeth junior remembered an elderly Aboriginal couple renamed Old Tom and Mary who wore tattered European clothes and lived by a creek. Their living conditions were no different from the whites around them except that they lived in a wattle and dab hut instead of a tent. Watching them she often wondered who they were and to whom they were related. The frontier in this part of Queensland occurred in the previous generation. As an adult my mother often speculated on these elders, and though she rarely talked of her own life she thought aloud about the fate that had brought them to this intersection with the rapacious miners on the Duchess. Endlessly she pondered various scenarios, all terrible and tragic. In fact until I went to the University of Queensland in 1966 I had never heard anyone but my mother worry about the fate of the Indigenous peoples. She quite frequently would say, 'We did a terrible thing. We stole their land and we took everything away from them. And for what? For our own greed.'

At the age of seven Elizabeth's life was to change irrevocably. Accompanied by her grandmother Catherine Duff she was sent down to her Aunt Catherine's home in Brisbane. Unlike her sister, burdened with children and rural poverty, Catherine married 'well' to an enterprising young businessman named Oswald Englander, whose mother was Irish and whose father was German. He had established a paper manufacturing business named Paper Box, which operated in the inner city area of Spring Hill. He had come from secure middle-class origins, his father being a cultured man of wide learning in music and literature and his mother a music student who had met her future husband whilst studying in Germany in the late 1880s. Aunt Catherine, who later tried to assume the persona of a great lady as her husband became more affluent, also tried to hide those years on the Duchess. At the end of her life my mother let it slip that Catherine had tricked Oswald into marriage by claiming a pregnancy. Tragically she was never to have any children and Elizabeth became her surrogate daughter.

Later in the 1950s when Oswald went bankrupt and the spectre of poverty and disgrace dominated their lives, both Catherine and my mother Elizabeth suffered bouts of intense madness and violence, largely directed towards me. My mother would say, when she spoke, an event that only occurred once or twice over several months, that she belonged to no one; that she had been 'given away' or 'sent away' or

that she had been traded by the poor sister to the wealthy sister; that she was an object traded, fought over and never relinquished by her birth family. She saw herself as standing between two worlds, a stranger and outsider in both. Awkward in a house filled with antiques and paintings, with no one to play with or talk to except her grandmother, who was equally uncomfortable amidst this sudden elevation to material splendour and comfort, Elizabeth felt displaced. Holidays spent in a rough shack in Mackay, taunted by her envious siblings, she moved across the class divide ill at ease. Why had she been chosen? Surely the oldest girl in a large family was destined to be her mother's mainstay? And why not Edna the beauty with her fine nose, her dainty figure and her green eyes? Later on Elizabeth would often refer to herself as Charlotte Vale, the plain dumpy spinster played by Bette Davis in that classic film, *Now Voyager*. Like the fictional character, she was to be the unmarried spinster comfort of demanding relatives in their old age. I always worried when my mother called herself 'Charlotte' when I was a small child – I knew I was in for a bumpy ride!

Jackie Huggins

The Tindale genealogies list my great-grandfather as Albert Holt, a prosperous white station owner from the Wulurdargle Station south of Springsure, Central Queensland. Norman Tindale was an anthropologist who conducted research on Queensland reserves in the 1930s and 1940s. Although some of the information is inaccurate it is the only recorded written information on the births and family histories of the inmates at the time. Albert had a relationship with a 'full blood' woman called Maggie, producing my grandfather Albert Holt, who then had 14 children, the middle of whom was Rita. She had a brother Albert. We Murries are sure big on producing sons with the same Anglo names.

Now it has been rumoured in my family that the Holts came from a well connected political family from the United Kingdom before taking up pastoral leases in Queensland. People have asked me why I haven't wanted to track them down yet – I'm an historian after all – so it should be easy for me. But it's akin to having to find your adopted parents and I haven't felt the time is right or that I even want to know about them. There is something still inside of me grieving and until that is resolved I'll continue not to know about my white history. By the year 2001 I thought I'd make myself a promise to find out. Why 2001, well a little about that later.

Section 3: the work of class and race (Isabel Tarrago)

At the age of eight Topsy Daley was taken from the camp to take up duties in the kitchen at Barkley Downs station, cooking and cleaning pots and pans for the station hands as well as the manager and family. She stood on old crates of wood to reach the bench to prepare meals and wash up the dishes. Her day started very early in the morning before dawn and finished late. Topsy always wanted to return to the camp to sleep but the manager and his wife were afraid she would run away and not return. The Aboriginal Act was also enforced in the Northern Territory and groups were controlled by managers of cattle stations to work for them in return for food, tobacco, and shelter. When Topsy did escape to the camps, she was recaptured and forced back to the station homestead where she was locked in the pantry of the kitchen at night; the manager's wife whipped her with a thorny branch. My mother showed me the scars on her body. However, this did not stop her from running away.

Around the age of 16 she was taken to Kalara station to care for the manager and his wife and children. By this time Topsy had now established her competency with household management. Though she was always illiterate she watched the manager's wife cook from a recipe book and copied what she did. She could also speak five languages including English. With all these various skills she was in high demand as a worker in the pastoral industry and between Roxborough Downs and Glenormiston stations. She finally settled in the camp at the Glenormiston to become the head cook for both station homestead and camp work. She was noted as one of the best cooks in the Gulf Country and high demand was placed on her services. Despite her varied skills she did not earn any money.

Kay Saunders

Both Topsy and Rita, by being under the Act, had their whole life, including their work, controlled by the state. Elizabeth had no such restrictions. Yet, again it was she who lacked the self-autonomy and dignity that both Topsy and Rita came to enjoy as their skills and broad competencies increased. Having become a white equivalent of a 'stolen child' at least in its psychological features, with all that sense of dislocation, alienation, anxiety and fear, Elizabeth entered her adolescence even more fractured than in her childhood. So as not to identify her as a Roman Catholic she attended Windsor State Primary School,

leaving at 14. Rather than go to high school she simply continued her music and elocution lessons. With a maid and a cook in the house she never had to engage in any sort of household duties. Her aunt had determined that, as befitting her status as a genteelly brought up young girl, she should aspire to be a lady. As such she would never go out to work for a living, or learn any useful accomplishment that might provide her with workplace skills. By this time, such an attitude would have been considered old-fashioned, for other young women of similar class might be permitted to become a teacher or a private secretary, at least until marriage.

With much persistence, Elizabeth wore her aunt down on this vital point and was allowed to undertake professional dressmaking classes at the age of 18. But since she did not have the autonomy or training to run her own business or be allowed to work as a seamstress for someone else it was a hollow victory. She had a nervous breakdown when her hopes of freedom through work were shattered. The only time in her life she engaged in paid employment was in 1942 when she volunteered to go to work in a clothing factory making army uniforms. She was so shocked by the conversation of the other women who she told me admitted they had 'been intimate' with American servicemen that she left after two weeks. Her aunt was vindicated. Was not the world of work coarse and brutalizing? Were not working women unladylike and vulgar? Better the sheltered life amongst the Japanese, Indian and Chinese antiques her uncle collected, playing Listz and Chopin and doing embroidery. To be totally useless, though not decorative given her plainness of manner and features.

Jackie Huggins

From the end of the nineteenth century through to the 1930s, the effects of economic depression and drought resulted in the decline of the Queensland rural economy, and in its wake, increased competition for employment. Relocating Aborigines onto reserves effectively removed them from opportunities to participate in an already depressed labour market. Instead, superintendents and police who, without any consultation with Aboriginal peoples, arranged positions for them on the stations closely managed their labour. In the late 1930s and 1940s control of their work was made law under the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Preservation and Protection Acts, 1939–46. This act empowered the minister, acting through a system of superintendents and local police, to arrange poorly paid forced labour, to hold any funds they

might earn and to supervise spending. The Acts essentially legislated a system of enslaved labour.

Aboriginal women were sent to work as domestic servants and nursemaids on station homesteads and in some cases, as stockworkers. This began at 13 and 14 years of age and in some cases younger. Domestic service was a cruel time for my mother, as for so many women of her generation. The working relationship was of the master–slave order. The white men were addressed as ‘boss’, the women as ‘mistress’. Many women endured appalling treatment, including beatings, being locked up in cells, as well as being subjected to sexual abuse. It was an experience that stood in gruesome contrast to the loving companionship they had known among their own people.

Mother was very reluctant to talk about the regular beatings she received from one white mistress. I stumbled on this fact accidentally when my Auntie told of my grandparents’ attempts to get Rita out of the way of this mistress before she killed Rita. Of course, there were the rare exceptions when the white employers treated their workers with respect. Despite what my mother had to endure, she still had time to speak generously of those families who were kind to her: a graciousness and lack of bitterness I could never understand growing up as a young Murrie woman. I see her forgiveness of those actions now as a pillar of strength not weakness. They broke the mould when they made our grandmothers and mothers.

After Rita received her exemption from the Act in 1946, she was able to roam the country and that she did when, in 1951, she married my father Jack Huggins whom I am named after. Mother simply adored my father, and continued to speak about him every day, although he died in 1958 from injuries sustained as a prisoner of war on the Burma–Thailand Railway. There was no one good enough, so it seemed, and she never remarried. Jack was a ‘free’ man who enjoyed life to the fullest in his hometown of Ayr, north Queensland. His life was a direct contrast to my mother’s. He was never put onto a reserve and basked in his freedom which showed in his confidence and seeming equality with non-Aboriginal people. He was a famous footballer and lifesaver, and, as Mum put it: ‘As with all good-looking Black men, Jack attracted white women to him in droves. He had a string of white lady friends chasing him, but it was this little black duck who eventually won his heart ...’⁶

The story goes that Rita and Jack had three children of their own of whom I am the middle one. We moved to Brisbane when my father died so that Rita could be around her extended family networks. She

was never one to be a loner; for she loved people regardless of colour, creed, race or status. She could mix in with the best of them. I know she has made her mark on my life.

Conclusion: Isabel Tarrago

As Topsy's daughter, I have gained and maintained the strength of knowledge from her personal life. She was a woman who expected and demanded achievements from people. Her working relationships were concerned with housekeeping and caring for children initially. Then she was given more autonomy and respect. She showed how competent Aboriginal women workers were across a range of responsibilities. Later she worked with all political parties to ensure that they had the understanding of Aboriginal people's lives. In particular that they are usually hard working people who have an intimate knowledge of the bush. She was a proud traditional woman who had deep concerns for her people whose lives had been disrupted by colonialism. Her heritage and culture were central to her life and she would often say, 'Out there are the bones of my people'. This is where her ashes lie – in the homeland she loved and cherished.

Kay Saunders

Like my mother and my namesake, my great aunt Catherine, I too have spent a lot of life hiding whole parts of my personal history and myself. It is very difficult to admit that the women in your close family were both violent and mad. Being born into the Church of England, safely in the middle-class, I was schooled by my father to be proud of his distinguished family – his links through his father's mother, Louise Bass, to the explorer Surgeon George Bass; his grandmothers' valiant struggles in the Women's Christian Temperance Union in their home town of Cambridge; their fights alongside other determined women in the Women's Social and Political Union; his father's days at Cambridge University, his mother's brother's distinguished career as a conservative Cabinet member and wealthy businessman. But what of the shame of my mother's origins? A Roman Catholic, whose father was a hard-drinking Irish miner and railway navvy who never fought for King and Empire and whose brothers had to be conscripted to fight in the Pacific campaigns, with a German uncle who collected heathen idols and who never sang Gilbert and Sullivan but always in German and Italian, the languages of our recent enemies?

On the other hand, when I met Aunty Rita in 1985, I simply adored her with all the fervour of a former abused and needy child. She called me and my daughter Erin Evans her 'little lambs'. And indeed we were the little lost lambs without a good shepherd to guide and sustain us; two lambs without a large loving family. Before my mother died she became extremely violent and was made a ward of the state. On the morning she died in 1990 I rang Aunty Rita and Jackie and went over to their place. Aunty Rita wanted me to stay until after the funeral; but this deep and abiding guilt consumed me and I could not. For clearly I loved Aunty Rita; she was the mother I always wanted. Though I never at that time ever spoke of my childhood, Aunty Rita understood far better than I did then the traumas of madness, alienation and deep loss. Only because of her and Jackie and Isabel could I ever utter the words I now say; could ever try to understand the forces that drove my namesakes Kay and Elizabeth to madness. For both, the terror of discovery meant they lived lives of shame and deceit. I have been able to reclaim their sorrows, their fears and their deceptions and weave them into historical landscapes. Their lives, once twisted with pain and concealment, can endure now the scrutiny of exposure. Alongside the stories of Topsy and Rita they can live in death as they could never live in life. What we have shown is that despite our apparent differences, we own a large part of our lives together; that the destinies of the invaders and the Indigenous peoples are interwoven into complex patterns; that, whatever our pasts, we share our future together. My daughter and son-in-law went to Thailand for their honeymoon and went to the Burma Railway. They cried for John Henry Huggins, who suffered alongside his white compatriots. For he too shared both the best and the worst of our enjoined histories.

Jackie Huggins

What you have heard is a truncated history of Queensland this century, defining its regional, racial, ethnic, gender and class structures; the politics, industries, the role of the state, the involvements in the two world wars, education, racism and the social mores told in a very personal way by three women we thought at the beginning of the exercise could not be further apart. If anything Isabel and I are bonded by race, gender and class but then in creeps 'invader' Kay who shares the most intimate part of her life she seldom acknowledges. Where is all this heading? Is it all a part of the healing that needs to be confronted by so many of us in this country? Are we being honest and open, to

expose ourselves when it's really not what white middle-class girls do, when Aboriginal women are constantly asked to justify and explain their positions? Are we at a point that we can share our stories and respect one another's point of view?

One of the five key steps to reconciliation is understanding and accepting the history of our shared experiences as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. We have here attempted to share just a little part of ourselves with you so that we can personally reflect the commonalities and intersections that we might have with one another. In Australia this requires not only the wider community redefining itself in order to deal with the oldest living culture in the world; but also to identify what more can be done to make changes that can enhance the human rights of Indigenous peoples in all countries.

As for me, I am working on the Documents of Reconciliation with my co-convenor, Sir Gus Nossal, and our magnificent committee. This agreement must deal with the legacies of our history. It must recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples as citizens of Australia and their distinctive place as the First Australians. It will be achieved when there is a significant change in the behaviour between all Australians, a goal that we must advance to the year 2001 which is the date of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation termination. We are very optimistic despite the hard road ahead. More than that I fear a country without reconciliation. Right now we have thousands of people standing up to be counted alongside Indigenous Australians. While there have been rare dissident voices found in colonial times, today the growing people's movement flourishing around Australia gives us hope, the oxygen of life.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you and to acknowledge that my mother is a sign of strength for all of us.

Notes

1. See R. Evans, *Fighting Words: Writing About Race* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999); N. Loos, *Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal-European Relations on the North Queensland Frontier 1861-1897* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982); H. Reynolds (ed.), *Race Relations in North Queensland* (Townsville: Department of History and Politics, James Cook University, 1993).
2. B. Attwood and A. Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999).

3. For an account of Rita Huggins' life see: R. Huggins and J. Huggins, *Auntie Rita* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994). See also J. Huggins and K. Saunders, 'Defying the Ethnographic Ventriloquists: Race, Gender and the Legacy of Colonialism', *Lilith*, 8 (1993) pp. 60–70; J. Huggins, *Sister Girl: The Writings of an Aboriginal Activist and Historian* (St Lucia: The University of Queensland Press, 1998); A. McGrath, K. Saunders and J. Huggins, *Aboriginal Workers*, special issue of *Labour History*, 59 (1995); K. Saunders, 'All the Women were White? Some Thoughts on Analysing Race, Class and Gender in Australian History', *Hecate*, 17, 1 (1991) pp. 157–60.
4. We could find no source on the methodology we employed and we offer our paper as a beginning to further discussion on the dialogue between black and white Australians. We suggest the following sources as useful guides to some of the broad questions involved in reconciling white and Indigenous histories: Jimmy Barker, as told to Janet Matthews, *The Two Worlds of Jimmy Barker: The Life of an Australian Aboriginal* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977); D. Barwick et al. (eds), *Fighters and Singers: The Lives of Some Aboriginal Women* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985); J. Beckett, 'George Dutton's Country: Portrait of an Aboriginal Drover', *Aboriginal History*, 2, 1 (1978) pp. 2–31; D. Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming* (St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1993); D. Bell, *Gendered Fields: Women, Men and Ethnography* (New York: Routledge, 1993); D. Bell, *Generations: Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters* (Fitzroy: McPhee Gribble, 1987); D. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwari: A World That Is, Was and Will Be* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1998); D. Bell and S. Schreiner, *This is My Story: Perspectives and the Use of Oral Sources* (Geelong: Centre for Australian Studies, Deakin University, 1990); B. Cohen, *To My Delight: The Autobiography of Bill Cohen, the Grandson of the Gumbangarr* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1987); P. Cohen and M. Sommerville, *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990); N. Gallagher, *A Story to Tell: The Working Lives of Ten Aboriginal Australians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); R. Langford, *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1988); J. Pettman, *Living in the Margins: Racism, Sexism and Feminism in Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992); D. Bird Rose, 'Remembrance: Aboriginal Oral History', *Aboriginal History*, 13, 1–2 (1989) pp. 135–48; D. Bird Rose, 'Dark Times and Excluded Bodies in the Colonisation of Australia', *Monash Publications in History*, 24 (1997) pp. 97–116; L. Ryan, 'Aboriginal Women and Agency in the Process of Conquest: A Review of some Recent Work', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 2 (1986) pp. 35–43; L. Ryan, 'Reading Aboriginal Histories', *Meanjin*, 45, 1 (1986) pp. 49–57; J. Sabbioni, K. Schaffer and S. Smith (eds), *Indigenous Australian Voices: A Reader* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); R. Sykes, *Murawina: Australian Women of High Achievement* (Sydney: Doubleday, 1993); H. Wharton, *Cattle Camp: Murrie Drivers and their Stories* (St Lucia: The University of Queensland Press, 1994).
5. Huggins, *Auntie Rita*.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–2.

7

Margaret Mead and the Ambiguities of Sexual Citizenship for Women

Dolores Janiewski

From the time of the publication of *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*, Margaret Mead has been popularly associated with the issue of women's sexual citizenship, that is, women's right to act 'free morally and sexually', as they could exercise intellectual, political, economic and legal freedoms. She gained a reputation for her insights into the 'domain of erotics'. As a critic of sexual repression, she appeared to belong to the group of flapper-age feminists who extended feminism beyond suffrage. As an exponent of the sexually enfranchised woman, whose 'opinionizing' was a 'sort of public sexual behavior', Mead became popularly associated with the 'sexualization of modern society'. Credited and blamed for fostering the so-called 'sexual revolution', Mead would become one of the major intellectual influences on second wave feminism.¹

Mead's connections to feminism and sexual emancipation were, however, far more contradictory than her popular image suggests. Mead endorsed the need to inculcate the 'habit of adjusting' to cultural imperatives, as she demonstrated by her own adaptation to the ideological environment as it altered over the 50 years of her public career. Two decades after using a utopian vision of Samoa to criticize sexual repression in the United States, Mead denounced the Kinsey Report, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, for having shattered a 'previously guaranteed reticence' which had encouraged young people to conform to sexual mores by keeping them ignorant 'of the extent of nonconformity'. A woman sometimes credited with creating the sexual revolution had impugned the report that 'stimulated a nationwide examination of America's sexual habits and values', leading to the so-called 'sexual revolution'. Mead's 1949 book, *Male and Female: The Sexes in a Changing World*, argued that motherhood constituted sexual fulfilment for

women. Mead, like other Cold War intellectuals, appeared to believe that reproduction and sexual difference were essential to maintaining the 'uneasy peace' that followed the Second World War. For this retreat from her earlier advocacy of woman's emancipation, Mead became the subject of a critical chapter in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Stung by accusations that she had betrayed feminism, Mead responded to the cultural radicalism of the 1960s by providing some support for women's liberation and liberal feminist initiatives. Shortly before her death, Mead urged the readers of her *Redbook* column to widen their 'awareness and acceptance of human capacities for sexual love'.² Mead's career as an inconsistent advocate of sexual citizenship points to the strength of the forces opposing women's sexual emancipation, as well as the difficulties inherent in Mead's efforts to sustain her career as a public intellectual and professional.

Allowing herself to be presented as 'liberated from convention' in the jacket copy for her autobiography, *Blackberry Winter*, in 1972, Mead chose to depict herself after 1939 primarily as a mother and a grandmother, rather than as a sexually active woman. Like *Male and Female*, *Blackberry Winter* appeared to endorse the suggestion that women's fulfilment lay in motherhood. Claiming that she would be completely frank, Mead concealed the 'double pattern' of her erotic life. Mead's decision to keep her sexual history within the 'enabling privacy of the closet' revealed that she did not always believe that 'increasing knowledge of the sexual' constituted progress insofar as it involved her own sexuality. As a woman enabled to construct a 'unique individual sexual' self, and yet an erstwhile proponent of the 'absolute primacy' of women's 'innately fecund, private domesticity', Mead displayed an ambivalence towards women's sexual freedom that does not easily accord with her popular image. Ideological inconsistency was apparently the price she was willing to pay to retain public favour.³

Whether identified as a 'sacred whore' or a 'holy woman', Mead's association with sexual radicalism during the most celebrated parts of her career rendered her a suitable target for conservatives in the backlash against feminism in the 1980s. Subject to posthumous criticisms by Derek Freeman and other proponents of a biologically determined sexuality, Mead would also be criticized by those who saw her as ideologically opportunist rather than consistently feminist. Her use of 'primitive' societies as counterpoints to a repressive or progressive United States rendered her just as vulnerable to denunciation by the members of Pacific nations and scholars critical of anthropology's complicity with colonialism. Her concealment of her intimate relationships

with women was yet another aspect of her behaviour seen as questionable by those who believed in the need for sexual openness and honesty. Although she would be defended by those sympathetic to her endeavour to deal with 'matters that are ambiguous, contradictory, and that can generate ambivalence' such as the 'need both to fulfil and to constrain sexual drives', Mead's complex relationship with public discussions of sexuality made her a controversial public figure even after her death.⁴

The child of a suffragist mother, Mead grew up within a family where the 'enjoyment of the intellect as mediated by words in books' coexisted with a concern about social issues. Entering Barnard in 1920 in the same year that the nineteenth amendment gave American women the right to vote, she felt herself singularly blessed to belong to a 'generation of young women who felt extraordinarily free'. Mead, who believed 'that women should keep their own identity and not be submersed', felt herself liberated from the restraints that had forced earlier generations of women 'to bargain and hedge' for economic security. Hiding her own unconventional sexual experimentation in her account of her life as a Barnard student, Mead wrote that her younger self knew only that 'repression was a bad thing'. A chance decision to take Franz Boas' course on anthropology and a growing intimacy with Ruth Benedict convinced her that the field was 'an opportunity to do work that matters'. Identifying herself as an emancipated woman, Mead became involved in intimate partnerships, while insisting that any expectation of fidelity was an infringement on her autonomy, but her claiming of sexual freedom for herself went unacknowledged in her autobiography.⁵

Agreeing that it would be 'disastrous to stop her', the two mentors sent their prize pupil on her way to her first scholarly expedition to Samoa in 1925, an adventure that would produce the book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Directing Mead to research the question of how young girls reacted to 'the restraints of custom', Boas asked her to investigate whether the 'rebellious spirit' found 'among ourselves' could also occur in 'primitive society'. Perhaps, as he suggested, the 'desire for independence may be simply due to our modern conditions and to a more strongly developed individualism'.⁶ Sent to discover whether adolescence was always a time of rebellion, Mead began her first field trip as a young, married woman, who would pose as a virgin among her Samoan informants.

Studying 'only fifty girls in three small neighbouring villages', Mead alchemized a short field trip into a scientific enterprise that she could

use as a scholarly platform to criticize the repressive nature of civilized society and to provide advice on improving child-rearing practices in the US. Mead's audacity was far greater than her anthropological skills. Within two months, she claimed to have completed a 'fairly comprehensive survey' of the life of the Samoan girls. Another three weeks on a more remote island led her to conclude that Samoan girls were singularly free of the 'requirements of modesty, dignity, and chastity' despite admitting that 'discussion of sex' would have to 'wait upon my obtaining greater linguistic practice'. Their lives were in 'most striking contrast to the lives of our adolescents' she discovered. After four months in the field, Mead was convinced that Samoans were free from neuroses including frigidity, impotence, and perversion due to the absence of concern about 'monogamy, exclusiveness, jealousy, and undeviating fidelity'. Referring to the 'restraints put upon us by our civilization', Mead contrasted 'free experimentation' in Samoa to a repressive 'civilization recognising only one narrow form of sex activity'. Mead had created a book that played a 'mythic role in public discourse' as a 'text of liberation, a myth of enlarged human possibilities' in which she asserted that 'experience and perfection of sexual knowledge in Samoa makes for happiness'.⁷

Returning from Samoa, Mead encountered Reo Fortune, a New Zealander, who appeared to be more suitable for 'a professional partnership of field work' than her first husband, Luther Cressman. Mead found herself at the centre of a complicated emotional situation as she considered whether to continue her marriage, focus on the relationship with Benedict, or embark on a new partnership with Fortune. Ultimately Mead decided to choose a companion with linguistic skills to accompany her into the field; Benedict's deafness disqualified her from this role. Perhaps the very intensity of the emotional tangle made it tempting for Mead to create an image of a utopian culture where children grew up without 'crippling attitudes', sexual jealousies, or strong emotional ties. Mead wrote *Coming of Age in Samoa* as she made the decision to turn Fortune into an anthropologist and make him her second husband.⁸

Launched into national celebrity in a post-suffrage decade when 'the sexual landscape decisively altered and new patterns clearly emerged', Mead appeared to be entirely in tune with social change that turned sexuality into a topic of fervent discussion. Mead's depiction of a sexual utopia attracted an uncritical response from those seeking a tangible example of the 'essential healthfulness of sexual expression' including the leading sexologist, Havelock Ellis. *Coming of Age in Samoa*

became a key text in the emerging discourse of sexual liberalism, which would later produce Kinsey's report which gave scientific support to utopian fantasies about a sexual paradise. As Benedict declared in one review, Mead's depiction of a society whose lack of repression developed 'no neuroses in its members' was a study for which 'we have been waiting'. In *The Nation*, Freda Kirchwey described Mead's portrayal of 'sex in the South Seas' as appealing to 'our more obscure desires and our impulses of escape' to a 'palm-fringed South Sea island'. Entranced with the notion of an island paradise where sex was 'a pastime par excellence' and a 'fine art' devoid of guilt or shame, readers gave an enthusiastic reception to Mead's vision of 'moonlight', the 'soft perfume of the frangipanni blossoms', and 'low-voiced protestations of love and flowery invocations of the stars and moon'. Presenting Samoa in utopian terms and yet referring to it as a 'simpler' civilization, Mead had begun her ascent to her destination as a veritable 'goddess of anthropology', whose comments on sexuality would contribute to 'the new visibility of the erotic in popular culture'.⁹

Mead's better researched later works never achieved the same popular acclaim as her 'mythic text' that she had written as she tried to untangle her own complicated emotional and sexual life. Accompanying her new husband to Manus near New Guinea, she discovered a sexual dystopia that resembled the sexually repressive aspects of her own society which she had recommended should be changed. Rather than lovers engaged in passionate encounters under palm trees, she described young people being confined to their homes, while their parents quarrelled on the verandahs or held seances 'to search out sin'. Discovering that a 'puritan society' could also exist in the South Seas, Mead described the people of Manus as 'subduing [their] sex life to meet supernaturally enforced demands'. Once again, she appeared to endorse the 'relatively carefree sexuality' of Samoa that offered a 'vision of sexual emancipation' to young women as well as men in the US.¹⁰

When Mead returned with Fortune to New Guinea in the early 1930s, each discovered elements of themselves in the peoples they observed. Their encounter with another anthropologist, Gregory Bateson, created another 'triangular situation', an intense mixture of intellectual, sexual and personal stimulation, to which Mead's second marriage would fall victim. Although Mead described the three anthropologists as translating 'the intensity of our feelings into better and more perceptive field-work', Fortune interpreted the situation in different terms. Accusing Mead of being overcome by a messianic impulse, Fortune described her theories of sex, temperament, and culture as a 'dishonest way of

treating your private affairs'. The explosive combination of intellectual and sexual passions shortened the field trip, but did not prevent Mead from announcing a new revelation about the 'high cost of stereotyping sex roles', which reaffirmed her belief in 'human plasticity and perfectibility' and the 'desirability of increased sexual freedom', commitments that would earn her a feminist following.¹¹

While writing *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, Mead simultaneously kept a distant Fortune 'sane and working' to prevent him from attacking her arguments 'disastrously' before she got them into print. Published in 1935, *Sex and Temperament* allowed Mead to deliver what Fortune would describe as her 'messianic message'. It revealed a talent for prophecy as she drew upon other cultures for parables to illustrate her sermon about cultural plasticity. Disavowing feminist inclinations and proclaiming her previous lack of 'any suspicion' that temperaments were culturally imposed, Mead described her study as providing insight into the 'conditioning of the social personalities of the two sexes'. Mead discovered one society in which 'both men and women are naturally maternal, gentle, responsive, and unaggressive', a society she described as 'utopian'. In stark contrast another culture was based upon a 'theory of a natural hostility that exists between all members of the same sex'. Its people displayed a 'ruthless individualism', and an 'aggressive' sexuality which produced men and women 'expected to be proud, harsh, and violent'. Having discovered two peoples in which 'both men and women were moulded to the same temperamental pattern', although that pattern differed dramatically between the two societies, Mead studied a third culture in which the women had 'the real position of power' in their society. Treating the men with 'kindly tolerance and appreciation', these women displayed 'aggressive sexual desire' in a society which reinforced the 'solidarity of women' and the 'inessentialism' of men. Notwithstanding her disclaimer about her feminist intentions, her study lent support to those who argued that sex-difference was culturally constructed.¹²

Mead offered a vision of sexual expression that was as open to women, depending upon their culture, as to men. A sermon on the virtues of tolerance and cultural diversity became a key feminist text as she turned her attention to issues of gender. Mead urged her readers to avoid choosing between either 'the standardization of sex-differences' or the imposition of a single temperament on both men and women. Instead she offered a vision of a 'richer culture, rich in contrasting values', in which 'each diverse human gift would find a fitting place'. Offering her readers the promise of salvation in a 'less arbitrary social

fabric', Mead urged her readers to oppose conformity, coercion, and 'rigidity in the classification of the sexes'. According to her, American society could 'take the course that has become especially associated with the plans of most radical groups', that is, to train girls 'exactly as boys are trained, taught the same code, the same forms of expression, the same occupations'. Implicitly calling for the abandonment of 'artificial standardizations of sex-differences' Mead helped to inspire a new form of feminism that would include women's sexual emancipation among its goals.¹³

Even as Mead was writing *Sex and Temperament*, her immersion in a Freudian-influenced circle of social scientists and psychologists including Karen Horney, Eric Erikson and Erich Fromm persuaded her to adopt a new paradigm about the interaction between sexuality, biology, and culture, which emphasized the importance of early childhood, including toilet training, nursing and weaning. Mead's book on Bali would contain psychoanalytic 'concepts and nuances' and the assumption that culture was personality writ large. The coincidence of her intellectual engagement with Freudianism and the birth of her only child, Mary Catherine Bateson, provided a personal motive for her increasing emphasis on maternity and childrearing as crucial to feminine self-realization. Her daughter entered the world attended by an obstetrician, several nurses, a psychologist, a photographer, the paediatrician, Dr Benjamin Spock, and an observant mother who recorded the details of her development in film and notebooks. The nurses had already been instructed in traditional practices of childbirth through viewing the Bateson-Mead film, 'First Days in the Life of a New Guinea Baby'.¹⁴

As Mead exulted in motherhood and 'the perfect intellectual and professional partnership' with a 'temperamental soulmate', she advised her intimate associate, Ruth Benedict, to avoid taking any risks that her lesbianism would be revealed. Fearful that Benedict might endanger her academic career, Mead upbraided her friend for chancing a public scandal. Now apparently enclosed within normative heterosexuality despite her unconventional domestic arrangements, Mead stressed the need to appear respectable to her friends and to her daughter. Even after her marriage dissolved in the late 1940s, she concealed from Mary Catherine and her public her own sexual deviations from monogamy and heterosexuality to the extent that she did not even reveal her first marriage until the publication of *Blackberry Winter* in 1972. Although she claimed to believe that it was 'good to have the image of the sacred whore', she clearly remained uncomfortable about 'overt lesbianism'.

Seeming to believe that public exposure of her sexuality would profane her deliberately cultivated image as a sage and wise woman, Mead refrained from any actions that would feed the gossip and speculation about her sexuality.¹⁵

Mead spent the war years in service to the US government and increasingly absorbed in the effort to subject large populations to the same methods that had attracted criticism when applied to Samoa, Manus, and New Guinea. Mead and her associates, including Ruth Benedict, created studies of national character including the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and Japan. Interpreting the causes of the war as arising from the psychological traits of the Japanese and the Germans, Mead and Benedict convinced themselves that dysfunctional cultures, conceived of as neurotic personalities, needed to be carefully analysed and restored to health. They believed that appropriate attention to issues of repression, defensive mechanisms, and socialization practices would reduce the frustration, anger and hatred that produced aggressive and authoritarian personalities. Thoroughly immersed in the war effort, Mead's previous criticisms of a repressive, conformist American culture metamorphosed into admiration of the nation whose citizens were saving the world from totalitarian and ideological dangers.¹⁶

In the postwar world, Mead continued to provide reassurance and approval for Americans and American culture. Sympathizing with the plight of United States and its people forced to 'deal with every calamity in the world', she pronounced conformity to American values as 'a form of liberation'. Published in 1949, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* emphasized 'the basic difference' between men and women, a difference expressed in sexuality, personality and different attitudes towards fulfilment. Two years after the bestselling psychoanalytic critique of *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* by Ferdinand Lundberg and Marnya Farnham, Mead emphasized women's maternal instinct as far more powerful than their drive for sexual pleasure. Described by a *New York Times* critic as seeking to resolve peacefully 'the cold war between the sexes', *Male and Female* was indisputably a product of the ideological environment of the late 1940s with its mixture of Freudianism, biological and cultural determinism, and its explicit rejection of feminism as an organized movement. Having accepted the 'discipline of the war years' and the imperatives of 'the cold war that followed', Mead no longer resembled the advocate of sexual freedom for women that she had appeared to be in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁷

Accused by some critics of having contradicted her earlier arguments, Mead proclaimed the right to 'not only have it both ways, but many more than both ways' in her introduction to a British edition of *Sex and Temperament*, which was published only a year after the appearance of *Male and Female*. Although her 1949 book contrasted male 'unperiodic, insistent desire' and the 'more fitful moods' of female sexual receptivity as a cultural universal rooted in essential biological difference between the sexes, Mead did not choose to repudiate her earlier books. Espousing a neo-Freudianism inspired by Karen Horney that rejected 'penis envy' in favour of 'womb envy', Mead's reliance upon a mixture of biological and cultural determinism insisted that women must conform to their feminine natures.¹⁸ Perhaps her apparent shift from an advocacy of sexual emancipation to one of feminine sexual passivity was her way to hide her own deviations from her own culture at a time when sex roles were particularly polarized between manly men and feminine women.

Mead's retreat from sexual liberationism frustrated the expectations of some readers, particularly feminists. Mead described a 'society that appears to throw its doors wide open to woman, but translates her every step towards success as having been damaging to her own chances of marriage and to the men whom she passes on the road', but opposed any effort to change women's situation by political or social action. Taking issue with *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* as one of a 'spate of books that claim women are being masculinized', Mead nevertheless agreed with Lundberg and Farnham that childbearing confirmed women's femininity. Like Lundberg and Farnham, she attacked the idea of 'crusades based on the rights of women'. Insisting that competition with men was 'dangerous', Mead warned against seeking any changes in sex roles if they frightened men or threatened essential sex differences. By warning that excessively rigid sexual segregation could 'push a large part of society towards celibacy or homosexuality', Mead reinforced a normative heterosexuality even as she sought to encourage greater cooperation and interaction between the two distinct sexes.¹⁹ Dealing with the collapse of her third marriage, Mead used her own motherhood to prove her successful achievement of femininity, even as she continued to pursue her career.

The Cold War version of Mead refused to satisfy readers' desires for 'balanced and charming' cultures as a counterpoint to modern American society. Sexual utopias were no longer needed in a world where the American model of 'production and plenty' could satisfy people's desires. Mead returned to Manus to study the 'strange emergence of a

group of erstwhile savages' upon the 'world stage'. Describing the culture she had observed in 1928 as a people 'without history', Mead admired the actions of US troops who transformed Manus by tearing up miles of bush with their 'marvellous engines'. Although Mead's associate on the expedition to Manus in 1953 mourned the loss of 'drums, the dancing, the ceremonial', Mead found it 'curious and wonderful' to observe the changes, although she admitted that depression and suicide had become common on the island.²⁰

Despite having rapidly abandoned 'the ideas and values of the world in which they were reared', the men of Manus had adapted with ease to 'a new set of social forms', while wasting no regrets for their vanished culture. They valued the 'freedom' they had achieved. Mead's admission that 'the crucial position of sex has not changed very much' did not detract from her positive portrayal of change. She understood why disappointed husbands beat their wives. 'It is easy to see', wrote Mead, 'how husbands who once would have beaten them as opponents in an unresolved contest, now beat them to get any response out of them at all.' Despite describing a culture which 'in repudiating sex also repudiates women', Mead applauded the 'active choice' to enter 'into our way of life'.²¹ More subtly anti-feminist than *Male and Female* had been, Mead's *New Lives for Old* turned the men of Manus into modernizing heroes who had to drag their reluctant wives behind them on their march towards progress.

Despite her efforts to adapt to the 'functional freeze' of the Cold War, Mead's postwar texts did not attain the mythic status attained by *Coming of Age in Samoa* or the intellectual influence of *Sex and Temperament*. New editions of her prewar books continued to cater to the popular demand as readers refused to allow Mead to abandon her textual advocacy of sexual emancipation. An ambiguous figure, whom Betty Friedan would label a 'cornerstone of the feminine mystique', Mead would also be called a pioneering feminist, an advocate of sexual liberation, and an adherent of a 'stern' if 'eccentric' morality as the 1960s provided a new audience for sexual utopias.²²

Seizing the opportunity, Mead proclaimed that she had been working for the sexual revolution for 'forty years' in a series of columns in *Redbook* in 1974 and 1975. Favouring the acceptance of bisexuality and paying tribute to Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation, Mead reclaimed her public image as champion of sexual autonomy and the right to sexual pleasure. Still reticent, however, she did not admit that she was defending her own sexual preference in her columns. While prizing honesty, openness, and individuality, Mead kept her sexuality

hidden to keep her valued access to a public which might reject the commentary from an apparently self-interested sexual rebel.²³

Despite her efforts at concealment, Mead acquired the reputation of the woman whose sexual knowledge came at the cost of innocence. Combating that image, she wrote about maternity as the core experience of womanhood in an artful appropriation of another sacred image. Acquiring the grey hair and stick of a village elder, she turned herself into a 'holy woman'. Carefully posed photographs as a 'smiling mother or grandmother' elicited an appropriate response from the object of her affections. Mead fashioned for herself a public image simultaneously lewd, shrewd, proper, and powerful. As a result, she contributed to a discourse of sexual liberation and the emergence of a notion of sexual citizenship for American women, while attempting to shield herself in a protective cloak of respectability. A masterful maker of mythic portrayals of other people, Mead also mythologized herself into a public icon. The posthumous desecration of the self-made 'holy woman' testified to her success, but also the suspicion that her carefully crafted image concealed her own sexual sins.²⁴

Two books, appearing within five years of Mead's death, unmasked at least some aspects of her sexuality and her scholarship. Derek Freeman's *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* accused her of theoretical and ethnographic fraud. Part of his evidence involved testimony about Mead's 'unseemly behavior' in Samoa although he decided against publishing these allegations. The biography published by her daughter, Mary Catherine Bateson, *With a Daughter's Eye*, defended her mother's reputation as a serious scholar, but wrote about Mead's sexual relationships with Benedict and other women as well as an affair with a man, possibly married to one of her friends. Bateson revealed her own anger at her mother's deceptions.²⁵ Her biography suggested that Mead had carefully maintained a conventional image in a way that could be described as politically astute or as hypocritical by observers less charitable than her daughter.

Bateson justified her revelations by pointing to a more tolerant climate of opinion in the 1980s, but other commentators ascribed the ferocity of the attack precipitated by Freeman's book to the resurgence of conservatism in that same decade. Bateson's book may have given aid to her mother's accusers. Although Mead had not 'come out' of her own volition, she could now be included among the 'queer', 'perverted', and 'sinful' by those advocating a return to traditional sexual mores. Mead's image as an emancipated career woman, sexual liberal, and feminist made her an inviting target for the fear, anger and blame

of those trying to restore America to traditional values. The virulence of the attack was a 'mirror image of the hagiography' directed towards a woman who had been alternately 'lampooned and lambasted, lionized and mythologized'. From saint to heretic was a relatively short distance to travel. Having used the peoples of the Pacific as her foils to support her critique of American society, Mead received the same treatment from those trying to restore a repressive sexual and social order.²⁶

A book, published almost half a century before, thus became a *causa belli* in the 'culture wars' of the 1980s, when the book's author could no longer ride the ideological waves. After characterizing Mead as responsible for the sexual excesses of the repudiated 1960s, conservatives and their journalistic allies turned Freeman's exposé of Mead's allegedly fraudulent depiction of a sexual utopia into a media sensation.²⁷ Although Mead would also find champions, the contradictions in her own commitments to sexual emancipation and feminism would mean that even feminists would find it hard to support her uncritically.

In Mead's writings one element was curiously slighted in her discussion of sexuality and sexual freedom – power. Mead did not offer a sustained critique of sexual or cultural repression even as her reticence about her own sexuality betrayed her own knowledge of the limits society placed on women's sexual choice. Her life thus illustrates both the search for and the difficulties in women's attaining the right to enjoy sexual freedoms on the same terms as men. Despite having sometimes repudiated her own advocacy of sexual freedom and women's emancipation, Mead could still be castigated for a book written in the 1920s. Like other women, Mead's discretion would not spare her from receiving a scholarly version of the sexual slur hurled at those who challenge sexual orthodoxies. Death did not shield her from being attacked as a promiscuous woman, a modern-day variant of that conventional symbol of 'physical and moral pollution', the whore, who must be punished for her transgressions.²⁸ Without relinquishing the right to criticize her complicity with colonialism and the 'feminine mystique', feminists should also acknowledge their debt to this proponent of women's sexual citizenship, whose life so dramatically revealed the contradictions between the personal and the political.

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Part II

Negotiating National Citizenship

8

Re-Rooting American Women's Activism: Global Perspectives on 1848¹

Nancy A. Hewitt

For many American women's historians trained in the 1960s and 1970s, interest in the field was inspired by their engagement with women's liberation. They were compelled by their politics to recover the roots of modern feminism. Many radical feminists initially found foremothers in the likes of Louise Michel, Emma Goldman, Crystal Eastman, and other turn-of-the-century socialist and anarchist women. Though women's historians of this generation were driven by competing visions of feminism and thus embraced different foremothers, many sought to understand the present through a genealogical excavation of the past. This was particularly true for those studying women's political activism, who moved from contemporary debates about sex equity back through suffrage (socialism too quickly fell by the wayside in the US) and then Seneca Falls. This chapter explores the implications of reaching Seneca Falls through this reverse chronological trajectory, and then suggests how we might rethink the history of women's activism by re-embedding Seneca Falls in the world of 1848.

What a world it was – revolutions erupted across Europe; Irish peasants and later defeated German revolutionaries migrated to the United States *en masse*; the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican–American War, adding new territories and peoples to the United States; the *Communist Manifesto* was published; the Seneca Nation embraced a written constitution for the first time; John Humphrey Noyes established a utopian community at Oneida, New York; New York State granted property rights to married women; slavery was abolished in the French West Indies; US slaves fled North to find freedom; the first Chinese immigrants to North America arrived in San Francisco; the Gold Rush began; the Free Soil Party and spiritualism were founded and both attracted thousands of devotees. This remarkable array of

events shaped the meaning of Seneca Falls and the trajectories of women's activism in the mid-nineteenth century US.

Yet rarely is the 1848 women's rights convention conceived as part of these revolutionary developments. Instead, it is most often defined as foremother to the federal suffrage amendment passed in the US in 1920. Disentangling Seneca Falls from suffrage is no easy task. These two events were identified as the touchstones of American women's history long before the field was created. Until quite recently, Betsy Ross stitching the American flag and the Salem Witch Trials were the only other widely-known 'women's' events in American history. In 1959, Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle* reinvigorated the narrative that carried women's activism from Seneca Falls to suffrage, but the original story line was crafted by pioneer feminists themselves. In their six-volume *History of Woman's Suffrage*, published between 1881 and 1922, editors Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage claimed Seneca Falls as the birthplace of the women's movement and the Nineteenth Amendment mandating women's suffrage as that movement's greatest achievement.²

In recent years, scholars studying African American, immigrant and working-class women have challenged certain aspects of the story.³ Focusing on the post-Civil War suffrage campaign rather than its antebellum antecedents, historians have detailed the racist, nativist and elitist tendencies of many white women activists and highlighted the exclusion of poor, black and immigrant women from the political organizations and agendas of more well-to-do white suffragists. These challenges have tarnished the image of several pioneer figures and added a few women of colour and working women to the pantheon of feminist foremothers, but the dominant story of women's political activism as the struggle for enfranchisement has been left largely intact.⁴

By focusing the analysis synchronically – that is, on events occurring concurrently with the emergence of women's rights in 1848 – we leave aside the question of how women moved from Seneca Falls to suffrage. We can then ask, instead, how women of various racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds and of diverse religious, regional and ideological perspectives defined women's rights in the 1840s? How were these views shaped by the Mexican–American War, mass immigration, European revolutions, debates over slavery, race and Native American rights? And to what extent did the agenda crafted at Seneca Falls and later women's rights conventions speak to the concerns expressed by female radicals in Europe and by other communities of women in the US? The answers offered here are speculative, the intention being

merely to open up the landscape of 1848, to relocate Seneca Falls within a more panoramic frame, and to suggest how this might help us write new histories of American women's activism by reclaiming alternative narratives of women's rights.

First, the legend of the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention – a legend well-entrenched in historical texts and popular memory – must be challenged. The classic version of the story was penned by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in her 1898 autobiography.⁵ In 1840, Stanton found herself, 26 years old and newly married, 'seated behind a curtain at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London in company with the forty-two year old Lucretia Mott (a well-known Quaker abolitionist). The unwillingness of the convention to seat women delegates led the two to an animated discussion about the discrimination they were experiencing' and to the decision to call a women's rights convention on their return to the States.

'Eight years and several children later, Stanton, restless and yearning for intellectual stimulation in the isolated town of Seneca Falls, New York, met Mott again.' Joined by three friends of Mott, they drew up a Declaration of Sentiments, modelled on the Declaration of Independence, listing women's grievances. They then sent out a call inviting 'interested men and women to discuss the subject of women's rights' at the local Wesleyan Chapel. Much to the organizers' surprise, some three hundred women and men showed up. The result of the Seneca Falls convention 'was a surge of interest in the "woman question" and the launching of a vigorous debate that was destined to increase in scope and volume through the next seventy-two years', culminating in the achievement of women suffrage.

Most current accounts of this event accept Stanton's narrative and focus on her leadership and the demand for political equality. The history is thus written as one woman's struggle to craft a public role for herself and to inspire a political movement in support of suffrage. The main actors are nearly all native-born white women, assisted by a few good men – such as Lucretia Mott's husband James, who chaired the Seneca Falls convention, and abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass, the lone African American participant, who argued vigorously for women's right to vote.

Many other versions of this story could be told, however, highlighting other organizers, other participants and other agendas. Judith Wellman, for instance, has traced three distinct political networks – Free Soilers, legal reformers, and Quaker abolitionists – who converged at the 1848 convention. Nancy Isenberg has just completed a book

that places Seneca Falls in the context of contemporary struggles over church politics, property rights, and moral reform. More than a decade ago, I too tried to recast the history of woman's rights, by placing radical Quakers at centre stage.⁶ Led by Lucretia Mott, these feminist Friends dominated the Seneca Falls organizing committee (Stanton was the sole non-Quaker) and provided somewhere between a quarter and a third of the 100 individuals who signed the convention's Declaration of Sentiments. A more complete challenge must also examine the links between women activists in the US and their counterparts in Europe as well as between the agendas of Anglo-American women's rights advocates and the concerns of African American, Native American, Mexican American, immigrant and working-class women.

A new history of women's rights might begin by replacing Elizabeth Cady Stanton with Lucretia Mott as the central figure at the Seneca Falls Convention. Mott was, after all, the magnet that attracted such a large Quaker contingent to the meeting. Unfortunately for feminist scholars, she did not produce her own histories and autobiographies; and in Stanton's various memoirs, Mott appears only as an inspiring guide, not as an active co-worker. At the time, however, Mott's leadership was widely recognized.⁷ The preface to the published report of the 1852 National Woman's Rights Convention, held at Syracuse, New York, argued for the significance of the Declaration of Sentiments, signed by participants at the Seneca Falls and Rochester conventions of 1848: 'at the head of the list,' it noted, 'stood the name of Lucretia Mott'.⁸ Mott had spoken at abolitionist meetings in Rochester in late June 1848, and Amy Post, that city's leading antislavery and women's rights advocate, highlighted the Quaker spokeswoman in her account of the Seneca Falls and Rochester conventions. In correspondence with relatives on Long Island, she referred to Mott as 'my model of a perfect woman', while she mentioned Stanton only in passing.⁹

The path that Mott and Post took to Seneca Falls was traversed by many women who shared the faith and politics of these radical Quakers; it is a path that links women's rights to decidedly different historical connections and contexts than those claimed by Stanton. Unlike Stanton, Mott had not spent the years from 1840 to 1848 in domestic isolation. An avid abolitionist, she was active since the mid-1830s in one of the country's most dynamic interracial organizations, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. Like her Quaker co-workers, she was immersed in efforts to end slavery, advance the rights of free blacks and Indians, protest the US war with Mexico, and secure property reform. Mott travelled to western New York in the summer of 1848 to attend the

Genesee Yearly Meeting of Hicksite Friends, assist Quaker abolitionists in the area, and visit Seneca Indian leaders on the Cattaragus reservation near Buffalo.¹⁰ At the same time, Amy Post and her Quaker co-workers in the area organized a half-dozen antislavery fairs and conventions, broke with the Society of Friends over their stance on women and abolition, founded a new interracial and sex-integrated religious/reform organization called the Friends of Human Progress, formed a Working Women's Protective Union, and followed the efforts of their radical counterparts in France, Germany and Hungary.

Events in Europe were widely covered that summer in the antislavery as well as the mainstream press.¹¹ Several American women who later embraced women's rights had forged bonds with their abolitionist sisters in England during the 1830s and 1840s. Now they reached out to like-minded women in France, Germany and other parts of Europe, creating a set of international alliances among pioneer feminists.¹² Evidence of these connections appears in the reports of the early women's rights conventions. In the Syracuse proceedings noted above, a letter appeared from French revolutionaries Pauline Roland and Jeanne Deroin, sent to the 'Convention of American Women' from their Parisian prison cell in June 1851. In it, they applauded the courage of the American women and reminded them that the chains of the throne and the scaffold, the church and the patriarch, the slave, the worker and the woman must all be broken simultaneously if 'the kingdom of Equality and Justice shall be realized on Earth'.¹³

Deroin was a seamstress, a committed Saint Simonian socialist, and a revolutionary. In June 1848, she demanded that her male counterparts recognize women's political and social rights. She claimed the right to vote, ran for the legislative assembly, organized workers, and wrote for *La Voix des Femmes*, an early French feminist newspaper.¹⁴ The events that enveloped Deroin were closely followed by abolitionists and women's rights advocates in the US. The abolition of slavery in the French West Indies, for instance, was applauded by Lucretia Mott, who urged her American compatriots to 'take courage' from such advances abroad. 'We cannot separate our own freedom from that of the slave'; they are 'inseparably connected ... in France', she noted, and are 'beginning to be so in other countries'.¹⁵ In Rochester, emancipation in the French West Indies was marked by a citywide celebration on 1 August, just one day before women's rights advocates gathered at the city's Unitarian church to complete the deliberations begun at Seneca Falls.¹⁶

After a July visit to the Seneca (Indian) Nation, Mott claimed that Native Americans, too, were learning 'from the political agitations

abroad... imitating the movements of France and all Europe and seeking a larger liberty...'.¹⁷ This concept of a 'larger liberty' was central to important segments of revolutionary movements in France and Germany and of radical abolition and women's rights movements in England and the US. These segments comprised largely women and men who emerged from utopian socialist societies and radical separatist congregations – followers of Charles Fourier, French Saint Simonians, German religious dissidents, and Quakers who rejected the Society of Friends' restrictions on worldly activity and complete sexual and racial equality.¹⁸ These were revolutionaries who believed that to truly transform society meant rooting out oppression in all its forms – in the family, the church, the community, the economy, the polity – simultaneously. To them, emancipation of any group – slaves, for instance – was inextricably intertwined with emancipation for all groups – workers, women, prisoners and other subjugated peoples. Ultimately, a cooperative commonwealth based on shared labour and shared resources must replace older forms of rule – monarchies, autocracies, even bourgeois democracies. These radical activists advocated individual rights, but only in so far as they complemented rather than competed with communitarian ideals.

Thus revolutionaries like Deroin and women's rights advocates like Mott and Post supported voting rights for those currently excluded from the body politic, viewing suffrage as a necessary but not a sufficient means for achieving change. The question was complicated in the US by Quaker women's and men's refusal to participate in a government that tolerated violence against slaves and employed military might in the conquest of Mexico. Members of the Friends of Human Progress, a radical Quaker association founded in summer 1848, argued that women should have the same right to refuse to vote as men, but suffrage was not high on their political agenda. Instead, for them, the women's rights movement provided one more building block in a multifaceted campaign to achieve racial, economic and gender justice in America.¹⁹

Radical Quaker analyses of European revolutionaries turned on the inclusiveness of their vision. They applauded Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland in this regard, but their enthusiasm for Hungarian freedom fighter Louis Kossuth waned during his visit to the US in the early 1850s, when he failed to speak out against slavery.²⁰ For Mott, Post and like-minded co-workers, rights for women remained tied to rights for slaves, free blacks, landless labourers, industrial workers, Native Americans and Mexicans. When radical Quakers organized the second

US women's rights convention in Rochester two weeks after the Seneca Falls meeting, a woman presided, two local seamstresses were invited to discuss women's economic oppression, and two black abolitionist leaders fresh from the Emancipation Day celebration – Frederick Douglass and William C. Nell – were listed as featured speakers. The convention participants called for equal property rights, pay, access to education and occupations, authority in the church and home, and voting rights, for all women regardless of 'complexion', that is race. A month later, a gathering of the Friends of Human Progress added to this list land reform, Native American rights, and the abolition of capital punishment.²¹

Two weeks after the Rochester convention, Frederick Douglass carried the women's rights message into a new arena – the National Convention of Colored Freemen, held in Cleveland, Ohio. He introduced a resolution providing for the full and equal participation of women and men.²² William Nell, who three years earlier had successfully advocated women's rights in the militant New England Freedom Association (a group that aided fugitive slaves), spoke on behalf of the resolution. By the mid-1850s, nearly every major free black organization in the North granted voting rights to women and a few included women among their officers.

Though the record among predominantly white antislavery organizations was more uneven, those societies that counted a large number of Quakers and some number of free blacks in their membership – such as the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society – were in the vanguard. They consistently sought and recognized the support of their African American colleagues; and, as a result, a small circle of black women and men regularly joined women's rights conventions as speakers, delegates and officers. These activists also joined forces to abolish segregated schooling. Frederick Douglass and Amy Post took the initiative in Rochester, New York; Betsy Mix Cowles, a radical Quaker women's rights advocate, led the fight in Ohio; the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society made the stand in Pennsylvania; and other Quaker co-workers made the case in Massachusetts.²³

Free blacks recognized the potential power of these interracial alliances for achieving their primary goals – access to education and jobs, abolition and aid to fugitive slaves. During 1848, free black women in several cities also demonstrated their own brand of women's rights, one inextricably entwined with racial justice. Charlotte Forten, a member of an affluent free black family of Philadelphia, pursued her

work for education, fugitive slaves, abolition and women's rights quietly and with the support of Lucretia Mott and the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. Her counterparts across the North – many from less wealthy backgrounds – organized fundraising fairs, challenged school segregation, and refused to consume slave-produced goods. Some embraced more dramatic strategies. In Cincinnati, for instance, in the summer of 1848, freedwomen used washboards and shovels to fend off slavecatchers harassing blacks in the city.²⁴ Other free women armed themselves with even more deadly weapons to protect fugitive slaves.

In the South, more drastic measures were required if black women were going to participate in these larger freedom struggles. One particularly daring escape was planned in fall 1848 by Ellen Craft, a slave woman from Macon, Georgia. Married to William Craft, a free black cabinetmaker, the light-skinned Ellen dressed herself as a young gentleman, swathed her jaw in bandages to make it appear she was ill, and boarded a train and then a steamer to Philadelphia, with William posing as her/his manservant. They arrived safely in port on Christmas morning, and became noted abolitionist speakers in the US and England.²⁵ Ellen literally embodied the meaning of women's rights for slaves – the right to control over one's person and one's family. These were property rights, but of a different sort than those envisioned by most white women.

Like many fugitive slaves and many abolitionists, the Crafts found in England a safe haven and a receptive audience. But they missed immersion in African American society. Though we are just beginning to understand women's roles in the internal workings of antebellum free black communities, fragmentary evidence suggests that here, too, individual rights were lauded only as long as they advanced communal interests. Elsa Barkley Brown, studying Richmond, Virginia, has demonstrated that in the immediate post-Civil War period voting was viewed as a community event, whoever cast the ballot.²⁶ It seems likely that similar views prevailed in northern black communities before the Civil War.

We do know that free black women and men founded churches and mutual aid societies, established political organizations, ran successful businesses, and demanded access to education, jobs, and voting. As a consequence, they were often castigated for asserting citizenship rights that most whites – North and South – still sought to deny them. Women's rights advocates were likewise defamed, chastized, even arrested for claiming equal status with white men. In Cincinnati, Ohio,

in 1853, a woman who wanted to cast a ballot in a local election dressed herself in male attire. When her true sex was discovered, she was arrested and sentenced to 20 days in jail for impersonating a man and thereby a citizen.²⁷

As early as 1848, the rejection of feminine fashion and the embrace of more liberated, and more masculine, dress had become one sign of revolutionary commitment for women radicals in Europe and the US. Believing that clothes made the man while corsets confined the woman, a number of radical women sought to free themselves and their sisters from restrictive clothing. Replacing bone stays, cinch waists, and long skirts with turkish trousers, loose blouses and knee-length jackets, dress reformers assumed that ease of movement would aid in women's public as well as private labours. In her bid for freedom, Ellen Craft readily exchanged women's skirts for men's pants. In the case of slaves, however, and others who regularly performed extensive manual labour – Native American farmers, Mexican artisans, and Irish factory workers – women already wore less restrictive clothing than their white middle-class counterparts. Yet the freer clothing donned by these women was not usually linked to emancipation. Rather, the failure of poor and working women or any woman from another culture to wear middle-class white American fashions was viewed by those with wealth and power as a reflection of loose morals and a cry for patriarchal control.

Between 1846 and 1848, the issues of women's dress and men's control intersected with the path of western conquest as the Mexican–American War brought vast new territories under US authority. The cause of widespread protest by abolitionist women and men, the war opened vast new lands in northern Mexico/the southwestern US to Anglo–American planters, traders and settlers. Led by radical abolitionists who abhorred war and the spread of slavery, massive demonstrations protesting 'manifest destiny' and war with Mexico were staged in cities across the Northeast. Though some antiwar meetings were invaded by angry mobs and threats of 'brute force,' radical women abolitionists, supported by their counterparts in England, continued to speak out. Lucretia Mott addressed one such meeting in June 1846, presided over by her Quaker co-worker Sarah Pugh. Petitions and protests from women abolitionists and women's rights advocates circulated in Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania throughout the war. Some drew parallels with the outrages perpetrated by masters against female slaves and noted the dangers that military men posed to Mexican women.²⁸

Of course, not all Anglo–American women had developed such clear political perspectives on the war or the women who were its victims. In

1846, for instance, Mrs Susan Magoffin, the first US-born white woman to travel in the 'New' Mexico territory, carried eastern ideals of true womanhood with her. She noted with shock that Mexican women wore loose blouses, flowing skirts and no corsets. She appreciated the personal warmth and hospitality provided to her, but was astonished by her hostesses' freedom of movement and what she interpreted as their loose sexual mores. Yet she also noted the extensive legal rights accorded Mexican women.²⁹

Under Spanish law and, after 1821, Mexican law, women retained rights to property after marriage; they could inherit, loan, convey or pawn property whether single or married; they shared custody of children; and they could sue in court without a male relative's approval.³⁰ These rights were almost uniformly denied under Anglo-American law. In the areas that came under US control, women's rights had been expanded further during the 1830s and 1840s by residents' distance from the district courts of Mexico. They may also have been influenced by their proximity to Pueblo villages, in which women had traditionally held rights to property and a public voice though such rights had been severely curtailed after the Spanish conquest. In Mexican communities, extended kin groups, communal farming patterns, and collective decision-making as well as more egalitarian legal codes defined notions of women's rights and responsibilities.

Northern Mexico was no feminist utopia, however, as the number and range of court cases against abusive husbands, adultery, assault, property disputes and debts make clear. Nonetheless, conditions worsened with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As the region came under US control, government officials, Protestant missionaries, and white settlers used portrayals of local women as sexually promiscuous and culturally inferior to justify the imposition of Anglo-American authority. At the very same time, then, as participants at the Seneca Falls Convention were demanding rights to property, inheritance, and custody, 'New' Mexican women were losing precisely those rights as they came under US jurisdiction. Mexican women were losing not only rights, but also claims to respectability by virtue of their dark skin and now 'foreign' ways. All but the most affluent were compared, as were their Native American counterparts in the Southwest and California, to southern slaves. Indeed, any group of women in the US considered non-white might be defined as morally and socially inferior.

In the northeastern US non-white women had long been affected by the influx of Euro-Americans. Prior to and for more than a century after contact with Europeans, the Seneca – like other Iroquois groups

and like the Pueblo – passed names and property through the mother's line, husbands moved into their wives' households upon marriage, and women controlled agricultural production. Seneca women also held positions of religious and political authority, though chiefs and *sachems* were almost always men. Over the course of two centuries of trade, warfare, disease, missionary efforts and governmental pressure, however, the Seneca had lost most of their tribal lands, moved to reservations, and converted to patrilineal descent and men's control of agriculture. In July 1848, they also adopted a new 'republican' form of government and a written constitution. Women, who once held veto power over a range of decisions – from the appointment of chiefs to the signing of treaties – were divested of some of their authority, but retained the right to vote. And though Seneca men and women would now elect judges and legislators by majority vote, 3/4 of all voters and 3/4 of all *mothers* had to ratify legislative decisions.³¹

Several Quaker women's rights advocates were in correspondence with Seneca residents on the Cattaraugus reservation, and Quaker missionary women described in detail the specific voting privileges accorded women, and mothers, there.³² Lucretia Mott visited the reservation just before travelling to Seneca Falls; and just after the Declaration of Sentiments was published, the Seneca women produced a remarkably similar document. For the next 70 years, white suffragists would point, with some ambivalence, to the Iroquois as emblems of politically empowered women, recognizing the ways that communal ownership of property, matrilineal descent, and shared political and religious authority established foundations for female equality.³³ Yet Iroquois women themselves, like their Mexican and Pueblo counterparts, would slowly lose both rights and respectability as they were forced to embrace Anglo-American laws and customs. And in the post-Civil War period, most women's rights advocates, having accepted the individual right of suffrage as their primary goal, no longer embraced the communitarian vision of equality and justice that allowed their antebellum foremothers to see the Seneca as a model rather than a problem.

There are other threads to follow as we contextualize women's rights and women's activism in the 1840s: exiled revolutionaries (whose radical politics led to the support of women's and workers' rights in the German-language press); Irish immigrants (812 of whom arrived in New York harbour while the Seneca Falls convention was in session); the Gold Rush and western migration (which pulled apart but also extended the radical Quaker network with new circles of activity forming in

Michigan, Indiana, and California). Yet the examples above are sufficient to suggest the potential richness of a synchronic analysis.

In rethinking Seneca Falls, it is important to remember that the movement Elizabeth Cady Stanton championed – a movement based on liberal conceptions of self-ownership, individual rights and suffrage – was born there. But it was not alone, nor was it yet triumphant. Rather, the vision held by the largest and most active contingent of feminist foremothers was rooted in communitarian values and organic conceptions of both oppression and liberation. Linked to agendas promoted by utopian socialists and religious radicals in Europe's revolutionary circles, the ideas advanced by feminist Friends also echoed – if sometimes unintentionally – the experiences of women in those African American, Mexican and Native American communities founded on extended kinship networks, communal labour and collective rights. Self-consciously engaged in campaigns against slavery, war and western conquest, and for religious freedom, economic justice and political equality, radical Quakers connected the women's rights agenda to a broader programme of social transformation and more diverse networks of activists. Even with all the limitations and shortcomings of such utopian endeavours and knowing that a more liberal, rights-based vision would ultimately dominate, the legacy of women's rights radicals is worth reclaiming. For it provides an alternative foundation for modern feminism, one that incorporates race and class issues, critiques of colonialism, socialist foremothers, and an internationalist perspective.

Notes

1. The author wishes to thank Claire Moses, Beverly Palmer, Vivien Rose, Bonnie Anderson, Nancy Isenberg, and Gabriella Hauch for their insights and encouragement and the faculty and graduate students at Rutgers University (December 1997), the participants at the American Historical Association session on 1848 in Seattle, Washington (January 1998), and the participants at the International Federation for Research in Women's History session on 1848 in Melbourne, Australia (June 1998) for their challenging questions and comments.
2. E. Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1959); E. C. Stanton, S. B. Anthony, and M. J. Gage (eds), *History of Women Suffrage*, 6 volumes. The original two-volume history covered 1848–1880 and was published in New York by Fowler & Wells in 1881. Succeeding volumes were published between then

and 1922, the last volume being completed by Gage alone following the deaths of Stanton and Anthony.

3. Some of those most important works in this area are R. Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850–1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) and R. Terborg-Penn, 'Discrimination Against Afro-American Women in the Woman's Movement, 1830–1920' in R. Terborg-Penn and S. Harley (eds), *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1978) pp. 17–27; P. Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984); Y. Azize, 'Puerto Rican Women and the Vote', reprinted in E. DuBois and V. Ruiz (eds), *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural History of Women in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1994) pp. 260–7; J. Jensen, "'Disfranchisement is a Disgrace": Women and Politics in New Mexico, 1900–1940' in J. M. Jensen and D. Miller (eds), *New Mexico Women: Intercultural Perspectives* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990) pp. 301–31; E. C. DuBois, 'Working Women, Class Relations, and Suffrage Militance: Harriet Stanton Blatch and the New York Woman Suffrage Movement, 1894–1909', *Journal of American History*, 74 (June 1987) pp. 34–58.
4. See, for instance, the treatment of woman's rights and suffrage in S. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), which is widely used as a text in American women's history courses across the country, and which is particularly sensitive to race and class differences among women.
5. E. C. Stanton, *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences, 1815–1897* (New York: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898). The version sketched below, based on Stanton's autobiography, comes from A. F. Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Association in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 54–5. This version parallels that found in most women's history and American history texts. For two articles that suggest a more complex origin for the Seneca Falls Convention, and women's rights more generally, see J. Wellman, 'The Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention: A Study of Social Networks', *Journal of Women's History*, 3 (Spring 1991) pp. 9–37; and Nancy A. Hewitt, 'Feminist Friends: Agrarian Quakers and the Emergence of Woman's Rights in America', *Feminist Studies*, 12 (Spring 1986) pp. 27–49.
6. Wellman, 'The Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention'; N. Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (New York: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and Hewitt, 'Feminist Friends'.
7. Beverly Palmer of Pomona College in California is currently working on a collection of Mott letters, sermons and speeches. For biographical information on Mott, see A. B. Hallowell (ed.), *Life and Letters of James and Lucretia Mott* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1884); and M. Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).
8. *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, held at Syracuse, New York, September 8, 9, and 10, 1852* (Syracuse: J.E. Masters, 1952) p. 1.
9. See Mary Robbins Post to Isaac and Amy Post, Sept. 12, 1848, in which she cites an earlier letter from Amy Post, Isaac and Amy Post Family Papers, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.

10. On Mott's travels in western New York, see Lucretia Mott to Edmund Quincy, published in *The Liberator*, 6 October 1848.
11. See especially Frederick Douglass' *North Star*, which had just begun publication in early 1848 and covered events in Europe extensively during that spring and summer.
12. See B. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) for a pathbreaking analysis of these early international connections.
13. *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention*, quote p. 35; letter pp. 32–5.
14. On the life of Jeanne Deroin, see C. Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); and Moses and L. Wahl Rabine (eds), *The Word and the Act: French Feminism in the Age of Romanticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
15. Lucretia Mott, 'Law of Progress,' in D. Greene (ed.), *Lucretia Mott: Her Complete Speeches and Sermons* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1980) p. 75. Thanks to Bonnie Anderson for bringing this speech to my attention.
16. The *North Star* provided lengthy coverage of the upcoming Emancipation Day celebration in its July 14, 1848 issue, the same issue in which the announcement of the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention appeared.
17. Mott to Quincy, *The Liberator*, 6 October 1848.
18. See Moses, *French Feminism*; C. M. Prelinger, 'Religious Dissent, Women's Rights, and the Hamburger Hochschule fuer das Weibliche Geschlecht in Mid-Nineteenth-century Germany', *Church History*, 45 (1976) pp. 42–55; and Hewitt, 'Feminist Friends'.
19. On the political vision of the Friends of Human Progress (also known as the Congregational Friends and the Progressive Friends), see Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends, Held at Waterloo, NY, from the Fourth to the Sixth of the Sixth Month, Inclusive, with an Appendix, 1849 (Auburn, NY: Oliphant's Press, 1849); and Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends, *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention* (Auburn, NY: Henry Oliphant, 1850).
20. See, for instance, Mary Robbins Post to Dear All [Isaac and Amy Post], 5 May, 185[1], Post Family Papers.
21. On Rochester Convention, see Report, 'Rochester Woman's Rights Convention,' 2 August 1848, Phoebe Post Willis Papers, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York; and Hewitt, 'Feminist Friends'.
22. Material in this paragraph is taken from Terborg-Penn, 'Afro-Americans in the Struggle for Woman's Suffrage', Chapter 1; and Benjamin Quarles, 'Frederick Douglass and the Woman's Rights Movement', History 2000 Occasional Papers Series, No. 1-1993 (Baltimore, Md: Morgan State University Foundation, 1993).
23. These campaigns to end segregated schooling in the North have not been widely covered in the secondary literature. Information on them can be found in the *North Star*; the *History of Woman Suffrage*, volume 1; and *The Liberator*.
24. On black women's antislavery activity, see D. Sterling (ed.), *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: WW Norton, 1984) Part II; and J. Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998) Chapter 4.
25. Described in Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters*, pp. 62–4.

26. E. Barkley Brown, 'Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom', *Public Culture* (Summer 1994) pp. 107–46.
27. V. Harding, *There is a River: the Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981) p. 152.
28. Isenberg discusses these protests in *Sex and Citizenship*, pp. 69, 139–40. Her analysis should encourage additional work on the scope and language of these protests.
29. Magoffin quoted in J. Lecompte, 'The Independent Women of Hispanic New Mexico', *Western Historical Quarterly*, 22, 1 (1981) pp. 17–35.
30. Ibid.
31. For an overview of Seneca women's status, see J. M. Jensen, 'Native American Women and Agriculture' in K. K. Sklar and T. Dublin (eds), *Women and Power in American History*, volume 1 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1991) pp. 8–23. See also, S. R. Wagner, *The Untold Story of the Iroquois Influence on Early Feminists* (Aberdeen, South Dakota: Sky Carrier Press, 1996); and H. S. C. Caswell, *Our Life Among the Iroquois Indians* (Boston and Chicago: Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1892) and Mott to Quincy, *The Liberator*, 6 October 1848.
32. For a detailed account by a Quaker missionary of Seneca Indian life, see Caswell, *Our Life Among the Iroquois Indians* especially pp. 79–80 on the new 1848 constitution.
33. For a discussion of this interest and ambivalence about Indian women in the women's movement, see D. Janiewski, 'Giving Women a Future: Alice Fletcher, the "Woman Question" and "Indian Reform"' in N. A. Hewitt and S. Lebsack (eds), *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) pp. 325–44.

9

Women's Suffrage, Citizenship Law and National Identity: Gendering the Nation-State in France and Germany, 1871–1918

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This chapter was inspired by a desire to think again about the classic question of why French women won the vote 26 years after women in Germany (and much of the rest of Europe, the United States and Australia). Given that France had a very long history of both feminism and republicanism, and that there was massive popular support for women's suffrage on the eve of the First World War, one would have thought that France would have been among the first, not the last, of democratic nation-states to grant women the vote.¹ While France's enfranchisement of women is strikingly late generally in relation to its peers, the comparison with Germany is particularly surprising. Germany was unified only in 1871, and republicanism was new with the Weimar Republic in 1918. Germany, by 1918, had a strong feminist presence, but it dated only from the mid-nineteenth century, and women were barred from formal political participation in most German states until 1908.²

The most usual explanation for Germany having joined the wave of enfranchisement following the First World War is largely conjectural; the particular dynamics around the end of the war in Germany made the new republic grant women the vote despite a tradition that made such a move unlikely. The (much more abundant) literature on women's suffrage in France can be roughly grouped into three categories. One thread in the intellectual history and theory of French republicanism argues that women's suffrage was inevitable; its tardiness can be understood in terms of the particular dynamics of the Third Republic.³ The secularizing republic was threatened by an alliance of monarchists and observant Catholics; Republican politicians argued that if women

were granted suffrage they would 'follow their priests' and vote the Republic out of existence. Another thread has emphasized the exclusionary nature of French republicanism (and republicanism generally) and implies that women's ultimate full inclusion in the polity was the result of the political conjuncture at the end of the Second World War.⁴ Histories focusing on suffrage movements and discourses have emphasized feminist rhetorical and political strategies and logics of both support and resistance among male politicians operating within the always changing framework of French republicanism from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century.⁵ These works are all, clearly, vitally important to grasping the dynamics of women's suffrage. I would, however, like to suggest that a different approach, one that widens the analytical focus to include greater emphasis on how contemporaries constructed another boundary between insider and outsider (citizenship law), how they envisaged the relation between the individual and the state, and how they tackled the problem of forging national loyalty, may help elucidate the stakes in the exclusion from (and subsequent inclusion of women in) the polity; in sum, the gendered implications of seemingly ungendered differences in the law of national appurtenance.⁶

Thinking about the question of women's suffrage in relation to the logic of citizenship may help clarify both the issue of women's vote and the implications of citizenship based largely on *jus sanguinis* and regional identification as was the case in Germany or on a combination of *jus soli*, *jus sanguinis*, and voluntary ascription to the national body as was the case in France. France has traditionally emphasized birth within the boundaries of the French state and the expressed desire to belong to that state when deciding who could be a citizen. Germany has traditionally emphasized genealogy; one is German if one's parents were German regardless of where one lives, and access to citizenship by those whose lineage is not German is relatively difficult.⁷ Reinforcing these different legal and cultural traditions were very different patterns of nation-state formation and relations between the local and the national. The French Revolution consolidated a highly centralized state and the principle of an unmediated relation between individual and the nation. The German nation-state born in 1871 was based on federalism and would remain marked by very strong regional affiliations.

I would like to suggest that the two logics of citizenship, of nation-state formation, and relation of local and national, may have involved differing boundaries between nation and state and differing genderings

of the division of labour between the two. All modern nation-states, because of their dependency upon mass, popular, armies for their defence, mass-taxation for their economic survival, and on mass suffrage for their legitimacy, need to instill a sense of belonging, a powerful loyalty, a sense of patriotism if you will, in their citizens.⁸ They depend on their inhabitants' emotions as much as on their intellects. There is nothing natural about people's affection for a polity as large and as abstract as the modern nation-state. People have to learn to identify with people whom they have never and will never meet, they have to be willing to pay for them and die for them. They have to trust that others will pay, and die, for them in turn. They have to be willing to, at times, do things that are not in their own, or their family's, or their town's, or their region's, best interest. Teaching people that kind of self-abnegation is a complicated task, always involving pedagogy of the emotions. It is possible that there are different investments in the pedagogical roles attributed to women and men in nation-states – like Germany – in which citizens are understood to be born rather than made and in which town and region are seen as mediating between the immediacy of emotional attachments to kin, neighbours and friends, children and the abstraction of the national state than in nation-states – like France – in which citizens are understood to be as much made as born and in which town and region are understood to compete perniciously with the affection and loyalty properly given to the national state. The explanation for France's late enfranchisement of women may therefore lie as much in the longer term history of the French nation-state as in conjunctural politics or in the limits of republicanism *per se*. Likewise Germany's place in the first wave of enfranchisement may have had as much to do with its federalist structure and *jus sanguinis* as with conjunctural politics. These suggestions, with all of their very complex ramifications, can only be sketched here. Full development, and demonstration of the argument, would require a much longer piece. It is my hope that this proposition can serve as a useful 'think-piece' for those preoccupied by questions of gender and citizenship in Europe and elsewhere.

The division between nation and state in republican France

Both the arguments made by suffragists for why women should be granted the vote and resistance to those demands during the Third Republic were shaped by the political legacies and conjectures of the

period. The Third Republic inherited a nearly century-long tradition of republicanism and feminism, a state apparatus that had been highly centralized for far longer than that, a fraught relation between Church and State, and a strong challenge from monarchist forces. It would quickly also face a sense of demographic threat. The new regime was also heir to a juridical conception of citizenship that blended territorial, genetic and voluntarist principles. The combination of these factors made granting women the vote particularly difficult.

The territorial and voluntarist elements of French citizenship – elements reinforced by the Third Republic in 1889 – in combination with contemporary understandings of gender roles gave women a critical place in consolidating the nation. The 1889 law made all children born on French soil, regardless of where their parents had been born, or their citizenship, citizens of France. It also included the provision that children of foreign parentage were free to renounce French citizenship when they became adults. Offering the possibility of a refusal of citizenship implied a desire that French citizens, at least those born of foreign parents, consciously *chose* to be French. This law replaced an 1851 law which gave French citizenship at birth to all those born in France of one foreign-born and one French-born parent, as well as to all those born in the territory both of whose parents had been born in France. The reasons for this expansion of *jus soli* have been much debated among historians, but it is clear that it was partially a reaction to a perceived population crisis. France's birth rate in the nineteenth century was significantly lower than that of other European countries and there was enormous anxiety in France following the Franco-Prussian war concerning the resulting relatively slow population growth. Part of the worry concerned economic development: how was France to keep up with England, Germany and the United States, if labour was scarce? Equally, if not more, pressing, however, was the perceived need for more citizens to defend the Republic militarily, spiritually and intellectually. Thus, given citizenship law that made the transformation of foreigners into citizens possible and the perception of demographic crisis, the French state, in cooperation with industry, encouraged in-migration from Poland, Italy and Belgium. In-migration in the half-century bracketing the turn of the century was massive (and controversial). As many as 50 bills to limit immigration were introduced in the Chamber of Deputies between 1883 and 1914, although all failed in the face of employer pressure.⁹ The opposition to liberal immigration policy and the expansion of *jus soli* came from those who took the *jus sanguinis* aspect of French citizenship custom

more seriously than *jus soli*, arguing that those whose ancestors were not French would always lack loyalty to the nation and never completely assimilate.

Defenders of a voluntarist and cultural conception of citizenship responded to these critics by arguing that newcomers could indeed be *made* French. In fact, by 1889, the Third Republic had already been pre-occupied for more than 15 years with the problem of producing a more homogeneous French culture. Debates on the problem of turning foreigners into French men and women coincided in time with an explicit campaign by the Third Republic to break regional loyalties and ties. Children were punished for speaking the regional languages of Basque, Provençal and Breton in school. Teachers (who were civil servants of the national state) were sent to parts of France distant from their hometowns so as to homogenize French accents. Nationally funded museums and libraries were established to facilitate access to French knowledge and taste. Both those born in France of French parents but understood because of the distinctness of their local culture to be not fully French and those newly arrived on the territory were understood to need transformation (and to be capable of being transformed). But these formal institutions were understood to be insufficient to the task of instilling a sense of national belonging.¹⁰ When people went to school, museums, libraries and universal exhibitions, they *knew* they were the object of the state's attention. It was understood that a more subtle, less obtrusive, seemingly more natural form of education was also needed. It was understood that the ideal site for this additional pedagogy of the emotions was the domestic world, where French men and women could learn Frenchness from infancy.

The domestic sphere was, thus, seen as essential to the making of citizens, not only through education as it is usually understood, but through the objects by which the child was surrounded, the food the child ate, and the language the child spoke. Given dominant contemporary understandings of women's domestic role, this emphasis on the domestic necessarily gave women a crucial role in the making of the nation. As the social theorist Charles Fonsegrive put it in 1901, 'even women, who in our constitution do not enjoy the right to vote should nonetheless be given an education in civics, because they are the presumed mothers of the citizens of the future, educators born of citizens, they should have the souls of citizens'.¹¹ The reason it was so important that women have the souls of citizens was that a republic, unlike a monarchy, needed to instill its values in the very hearts of its

citizens. For

a monarchy can be satisfied, if necessary, with material obedience, with the exterior discipline of the movements of the body, for the national organism has one soul, that of the king, and that soul, if necessary, can suffice. But a republic cannot live without a spiritual discipline, a voluntary acceptance, an acquiescence of the spirit that supports the domination of law... the spirit of a republican nation must be diffused throughout the social body. There is a republican spirit and it matters to the greatest degree that all the citizens possess it.¹²

Fonsegrive understood that it was in the home, through the small gestures and objects by which the child was surrounded, that this 'spiritual discipline and voluntary acceptance' could best be instilled.

This sentiment was not entirely new in the late nineteenth century; rather it represented the maturing of earlier republican themes. Its earliest manifestation had been during the Revolution and First Republic, and it reappeared in republican discourse shortly before the Revolution of 1848, and then again during the Second Republic. For example, the celebrated historian Jules Michelet in his 1846 text *Le Peuple*, constructed patriotism as it was to be taught to a child in a dialogue first with his mother, then with his father. The mother says, 'You love me, you only know me... well, listen, I'm not all. You have another mother... we have a common mother, we all... have a gentle mother, a mother who nourishes us always, invisible and present. Let us love her, dear child, embrace her from the heart.' This other, mystical, transcendent mother, whom the child must be taught to recognize and love, is France. Later, when the boy is older, Michelet has his father take him to a city, presumably Paris, on a day of public festival. First they visit the monuments, then they watch a parade.

See, my child, see: there is France, there is the *patrie*! There are many of them, but they are as one. Same soul, same heart. All would die for one, and each must also live and die for all... those that pass there, who are armed, who leave, they go to fight for us. They leave here their father, their old mother, who need them. ... You will do as much, you will never forget that your mother is France.¹³

Thus, Michelet argued that children needed to learn that loyalty to the nation came before loyalty to their region, their class, and even

their own families. Fifty years later, Alfred Fouillée, the semi-official philosopher of the Third Republic, in one of many texts echoing those sentiments, argued that being French meant sharing certain common attributes, certain styles, certain modes of dress – it was through ‘appearances common to everyone that each recognizes themselves in others’.¹⁴

Contemporaries believed that women’s closer link to nature would facilitate the naturalizing of the nation; children would naturally learn to love France, be tied to France, at their mother’s breast.¹⁵ Later, they would learn from their fathers respect for the state and learn to rationally choose republicanism, but that conscious, rational, mature, choice would rest upon the powerful foundation of a natural, unthinking, emotional attachment.¹⁶ The state came to be understood as a constructed object (man-made, quite literally), while the nation was assimilated to the natural, feminized, domestic world. Men were to be members of the state – ‘citizens’ representing themselves, their families, and other men politically.¹⁷ Women were to be members of the nation – ‘nationals’ representing their families socially and instilling patriotism in their children. This division of political labour, as can be seen by the efforts of contemporaries to naturalize it, and of women to both use and contest it, was far from unproblematic or unchallenged at the time. Feminist demands for political participation started with the Revolution, and feminist voices were never again completely silenced.¹⁸ Suffrage claims were, however, very slow to be met; women, until 1944, could neither vote nor run for national office. I would suggest that part of the reason for that exclusion was that the republican state of the Third Republic was constituted of men, but depended upon women. It needed women – as nationals and not as full citizens – to produce the *naturalized* nation, one whose essential qualities could be taught and yet appear innate, transhistorical, and inevitable. Frenchness was to appear to grow organically on French soil, even as it was being taught by women. Women became responsible for the cultural as well as biological reproduction of the nation. It was at home that children first learned to be French. Through the creation of French homes, decorated with a French aesthetic, in which French food was eaten with French table manners, and in which good French was spoken, French women created and reproduced the nation – thereby equipping their sons to be good citizens and their daughters to be good nationals.¹⁹ The exclusion of women from the political sphere and their interpellation as naturally domestic creatures was thus critically important to making the French nation-state, while masking

much of the process of its construction. Indeed, the nation itself was symbolized by the figure of a woman – Marianne – mute and most often portrayed with at least one bare breast.²⁰ The mapping of the binary oppositions of the natural and the political, the emotional and the rational onto the female and male in French thought, in combination with the particular construction of the French nation-state, made women's vote particularly problematic in France.

This 'division of labour' was all the more necessary because of both the very abstract nature of French citizenship and because of the related conception of an unmediated relation between citizen and state. Unlike in Germany (or the United States or England) both the idea that citizens necessarily had divided loyalties – that they had ties to their towns, cities or regions – that would be expressed politically and the idea that such divided loyalties could actually facilitate national solidarity were unacceptable in the framing of republicanism inherited from the Revolution. French citizens were to identify directly with the state as a whole, as an abstraction. Such an abstract citizenship had been understood since the French Revolution to be psychologically and emotionally difficult to instill and to maintain. This aspect of French citizenship reinforced the need for women's emotional pedagogy created by the juridical concepts of *jus soli* and assimilationism.

By the late nineteenth century, republicans were especially and newly worried about local and regional loyalties because they were being mobilized by opponents of the Republic. It was feared that if women had the vote, if they were included in the political nation, mothers would abandon their role as teachers of the emotions, leaving the terrain to monarchists and Catholics. The power and attraction of the Church was fought through a radical secularization effort that involved replacing the Church with Republican nationalism. Republicanism was to be taught by the state, love of nation in the home. This problem common to all modern nation-states, of how to make people feel their attachment to their polity, was addressed rather differently in Germany, where citizenship was understood to flow inevitably through German blood and where regional and national ties were understood to be mutually reinforcing.

Nation and state in imperial Germany

The creation of Kaiserreich in 1871 brought together 22 monarchies and three republics into a new Empire. This new Germany was governed by a common constitution but one that left considerable autonomy to the

member states. In stark contrast to France, '[e]ducation, policing, law and order, health and social welfare, taxation, commercial and economic policy [...] and a host of other matters were left largely to the discretion of the federated states...'.²¹ These federated states were also marked by religious difference, with the dominant Prussian state forming part of the Protestant majority against a significant Catholic minority. Perhaps in part in defensive response to this reality of local difference and autonomy, inhabitants of the new nation were initially held by the Reich to be culturally alike, sharing a common German culture.²² This vision of a common Germanness was, however, endangered by the claim of both Protestants and Catholics to be the embodiment of the only German culture.²³

The 'Kulturkampf' carried out by the Prussian state in the early days of the Reich was an effort to impose a homogenous *Protestant* culture on the whole of the territory, provoking dramatic resistance at the local level and ultimately failing in its ambitions. Efforts at secularization in France and protestantization in Germany were in many ways parallel, failing in Germany because of the relative strength of the regions, and succeeding in France because the regions were relatively weak. Two especially salient corollary differences for the purposes of the argument here, in the struggle over the relation of religion and the state, are the relation between the regional and the national in France and Germany and the gendering of religion. While in France the struggle was framed as that of a masculine secular Republic against a feminine (and feminized) Catholic church, in Germany the struggle was ungendered, articulated rather in geographic terms as an opposition between the Prussian state and the Catholic regions. While women, in their maternal role, were considered important building blocks of the nation both before and after the Kulturkampf, the resolution of the Kulturkampf did not set the conditions for as powerfully a gendered division of labour between nation and state as in France. The local and the regional, along with the home, men and women, fathers and mothers, and to a relatively minimal degree the national state, all were to participate in the emotional labour of tying Germans to their state.

The compromises that brought the 'Kulturkampf' to an end in fact reinforced both regional power and underscored the role of the local states as mediators between the individual and the national. The degree of acceptance of the idea of Germanness as the sum of regional difference can be seen in the domain of law by the fact that, until 1934, 'citizenship of the Länder which made up the German Reich had priority. One became a citizen of a Land (Hessen, Hamburg, etc) ... and

only on this basis, a member of the German Reich'.²⁴ The states even nominated the members of the upper house of parliament, the political body which initiated legislation.

The difference between French and German conceptions of the relation between the local and the national may be summed up in the word *Heimat*. While both French and German have words for nation (*la nation* and *die Nation*), both have words for state (*l'état* and *der Staat*), and both have words for native-country (*la patrie* and *das Vaterland*), there is no French equivalent of *Heimat*. As historian Celia Applegate put it,

Those who created and promoted *Heimat*, consciously or not, were suggesting a basic affinity between the new, abstract political units and one's home, thus endowing an entity like Germany with the emotional accessibility of a world known to one's own five senses. ... *Heimat* was both the beloved local places and the beloved nation; it was a comfortably flexible and inclusive homeland, embracing all localities alike.²⁵

Loyalty to the new German nation did not require withdrawal from one's affective ties with the local but rather built on those ties. This acceptance of the importance of local affect was enabled by Germany's citizenship law.

Following unification in 1871, the new German state endorsed the principle of pure *jus sanguinis*, that is that those born of German parents were German regardless of where they were born, and those born of non-German parents were not German regardless of how long they had lived on German territory. And, just as the French state further endorsed its principles of *jus soli* when it revised its nationality code in 1889, so the German state endorsed *jus sanguinis* when it revised its code in 1913. Discussion of the origins of this conception of national belonging lies beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is crucial to bear in mind both the extensive out-migration from Germany of those deemed ethno-nationally alike (and desirable) and the fear of immigration of those deemed undesirable and unlike – Slavs and Jews from the East – in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. By 1894, the pan-German league was attempting to make it easier for ethnic Germans abroad to retain citizenship and even more difficult for those who immigrated to get it. The reform of 1913 in fact enabled those living abroad (and their children) to remain German indefinitely. An assumption behind the idea that all those born of German blood, even

if raised in a different culture, and the exclusion from Germanness of those raised in a German culture if of foreign blood, was that Germanness was genetically transmitted. While it is easy to underemphasize the persistent importance of *jus sanguinis* in France, the differences in the citizenship laws of the two countries are indeed significant. The emphasis on blood-ties between individuals and the nation in Germany meant that there was little emotional pedagogy needed or possible. Those born of non-German parents would remain foreign (as would their children) and those born of German parents would always be German regardless of education.

I do not want to imply that genetic definitions of citizenship, regional diversity, low immigration, and the loss of its colonies produced silence on the definition of German culture.²⁶ There was lively discussion on the topic, and that from early in the nineteenth century, well before the existence of the nation-state. That early discussion in many ways paralleled that in France – it was a discourse constructed by the *Bilderbürgertum*, those bourgeois elites of various political orientations, who saw engagement in the reconciliation of class strife as their duty to the nation. They were very active at the municipal and local state level, creating museums, writing in decorating magazines, fostering trade schools. They debated the virtues of different historicist styles and the question of if there should be a modern, German style. Thus, on the surface, the situation in Germany and France looks rather similar. French and German elites were vociferous on the subject of national culture and national identity. But the contexts in which the debates were happening were very different.

A consequence of all of these differences – in the conceptual foundations of citizenship, high rates of emigration and low rates of immigration, and the relation between the local, the regional, and the national – is that far less was invested in Germany than in France in women's role in inculcating national sentiment into the inhabitants of the German lands. Citizenship law based on the concept of genetic citizenship made the transformation of foreigners into Germans legally difficult and conceptually implausible. There were – with the exception of Poles on the Eastern frontier – not coincidentally, few foreigners in need of integration. Native-born Germans of German parentage were assumed, in a way very unlike the French, to already always have known how to be German. They did not need to be taught. Furthermore, there was little sense of a split between rational adherence to the state and emotional attachment to the nation. The concept of *Heimat* provided a bridge between the two. And *Heimat* was not gendered. Both men and

women participated in the construction of *Heimat*. *Heimat* was made at home, in the village square, and while restoring the local church. Germanness was inherently particular and general, but never universal. Women's obligations to the state included having many children, raising them well, providing nourishing food, and enabling them to live up to their full potential as members of the German nation. Mothers did not need to teach their children to love and identify with Germany; it was assumed that they would naturally do so. Fathers did not need to teach their sons to learn republican principles and to commit with their minds to the German state. It was assumed that, even if a person of German parentage had never set foot on German soil, nor spoken a word of German, nor eaten a German meal, they would nonetheless be German, morally, intellectually and emotionally.

In this context, women's vote may have meant something very different than it did in France. Given the absence of a sharp divide between state and nation, between the attachment of intellect and the attachment of affect, given the androgyny of *Heimat*, both men and women could be voting citizens. Giving women the vote would not have meant sacrificing the nation to the state, it would not have meant abandoning the affective task of binding citizens to their nation. Because all Germans were German by blood, because none who was not German by blood was German, women could have the vote in Germany without disrupting either the political or the social system. This is obviously not to say that Germany was a society in which gender did not matter, nor that men and women occupied positions of more equal status in the two nation-states. That is clearly not the case. It is also not to say that women's primary service to the nation state was not understood to be as mothers, as nurturers, and as those responsible for bringing the next generation into the world. That, too, was clearly the case. It was not thought, however, that bringing women into the state would disrupt the rationality of the state or void the nation of affect.

Notes

1. For the popularity of women's suffrage in 1914 see R. Huard, *Le Suffrage Universelle en France, 1848-1946* (Paris: Aubier, 1991) p. 207.
2. This discussion is based on the following analyses of the German feminist and suffrage movements: R. Bridenthal, A. Grossmann and M. Kaplan (eds), *When Biology Became Destiny* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984);

- K. Hausen, *Frauen Suchen ihre Geschichte: Historische Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 1983); U. Gerhard, *Gleichheit ohne Angleichung. Frauen im Recht* (München: Beck, 1990); U. Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der Deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg: Reinbek, 1990); B. Greven-Aschoff, *Die Bürgerliche Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1894–1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1981).
3. This is the implication of P. Rosanvallon's argument in his *Le Sacre du Citoyen: Histoire du Suffrage Universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).
 4. C. Fauré, *La Démocratie sans les Femmes: Essai sur le Libéralisme en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985); Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la Raison. La Démocratie Exclusive et Différence des Sexes* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1989; Paris: Gallimard, 1995); G. Fraisse, *La Raison des Femmes* (Paris: Plon, 1992); J. B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
 5. C. Bard, *Les Filles de Marianne: Histoire des Féminismes Français 1914–1940* (Paris: Fayard, 1995); P. K. Bidelman, *Pariahs Stand Up! The Founding of the Liberal Feminist Movement in France 1858–1889* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982); S. C. Hause and A. Kenney, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). L. Klejman and F. Rochefort, *L'égalité en Marche: Le Féminisme sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation des Sciences Politiques, 1989); M. Riot-Sarcey, *La Démocratie à l'Épreuve des Femmes: Trois Figures Critiques du Pouvoir, 1830–1848* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994); J. W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); P. Smith, *Feminism and the Third Republic: Women's Political and Civil Rights in France 1918–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
 6. The otherwise nuanced and important works on national identity and citizenship that do not consider gender are legion. Among those I have found most useful are: Z. Bauman, 'Soil, Blood and Identity', *The Sociological Review*, 40, 4 (1992) pp. 675–701; R. Brubaker, 'Rethinking Nationhood: Nation as Institutionalized Form, Practical Category, Contingent Event', *Contention*, 4, 1 (Fall 1994) pp. 3–14; O. Löfgren, 'The Nationalization of Culture', *Ethnologia Europea*, 19, 1 (1989) pp. 5–24; K. Verdery, 'Whither "Nation" and "Nationalism"', *Daedalus*, 122, 3 (1993) pp. 37–46. E. Hobsbawm's immensely influential, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: CUP, 1992 [1990]) also ignores these issues. Even T. Miller in *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture and the Postmodern Subject* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993) which has a section on the 'sexed subject' treats the issue only in passing.
 7. This rather schematic rendition is most clearly elaborated in R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). For the complexities and nuances of French positions on citizenship and immigration see: W. H. Schneider, *Quantity and Quality. The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For a more nuanced interpretation of the German dynamic see: D. Gosewinkel, 'Die Staatsangehörigkeit als Institution des Nationalstaats: Zur Entstehung des Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetzes von 1913' in *Offene Staatlichkeit: Festschrift für*

- Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde zum 65. Geburtstag, herausgeben von R. Grawert, B. Schlink, R. Wahl, J. Wieland (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1995) pp. 359–78.
8. One of the best texts on this question of emotional connection to the nation is L. Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).
 9. D. Dignan, 'Europe's Melting Pot: A Century of Large-scale Immigration into France', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 4, 2 (April, 1981) pp. 137–52; 143.
 10. Different parts of this story may be found in W. Walton, *France at the Crystal Palace Exhibition: Bourgeois Taste and Artisan Manufacture in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); P. Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987); P. Mainardi, *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); D. L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); and L. Auslander, *Taste, and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
 11. Charles Fonsegrive, *La Crise Sociale* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1901) pp. 440–1.
 12. *Ibid.*
 13. Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple* (Paris: Librairie Michel Didier, 1946 [1846]) pp. 263–4.
 14. Alfred Fouillée, *Esquisse Psychologique des Peuples Européens*, 3rd edn (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1903) pp. 470–1.
 15. This story is of course complicated by the fact that women were considered simultaneously closer to and further from nature than men.
 16. A great deal of work has been done in the last 20 years on nationalism. I have found the following theoretical discussions grounded in other parts of the world especially helpful: for a very concise and elegant discussion of the concept of the 'national symbolic' see Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy*, pp. 20–2; B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); E. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). On France, E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976) remains very useful. The three volumes of P. Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986) contain some fascinating articles, although there are equally telling omissions. On the later period see S. Elwitt, *The Making of the Third Republic: Class and Politics in France, 1868–1884* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975).
 17. Joan Scott has argued that French liberal theory was beset by a paradox, the individual (and the citizen) was simultaneously ungendered, abstract, all-inclusive and at the same time constituted by its Other and through the gaze of the other. J. W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).
 18. Feminism in France was not, of course limited to, or even dominated by, demands for suffrage. Political emancipation was, however, a consistent plank in the platform.

19. For one of the earliest (and most important) analyses of the complex ways in which this emotional work was attributed to women by European colonizing powers and how that division was later carried on by nationalists see P. Chatterjee, 'Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India', *American Ethnologist*, 16, 4 (1989) pp. 622–33. An example of domesticity in the construction of colonial power may be seen in: N. R. Hunt, 'Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura's *Foyer Social*, 1946–1960', *Signs*, 15 (Spring 1990) pp. 447–74 and S. Pedersen, 'National Bodies, Unspeakable Acts: The Sexual Politics of Colonial Policy-making', *The Journal of Modern History*, 63 (December 1991) pp. 647–80.
20. M. Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (New York: Atheneum, 1985); M. Agulhon, *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbols in France*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy*, Ch. 1.
21. R. Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years, 1830–1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) p. 2.
22. S. von Dirke, 'Multikulti: The German Debate on Multiculturalism', *German Studies Review*, 17, 3 (October 1994) pp. 513–36, particularly p. 513.
23. A. J. Hoover, 'German Nationalism and Religion', *History of European Ideas*, 20, 4–6 (1995) pp. 765–71. H. W. Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
24. N. Räthzel, 'Germany: One Race, One Nation?', *Race and Class*, 32, 3 (1990) pp. 31–48; 42.
25. C. Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) pp. 10–11; 11.
26. For a classic example of an effort (although a private one) to reform German culture in this period see: J. Campbell, *Werkbund: The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

10

Women's Rights, Gender and Citizenship in Tsarist Russia, 1860–1920: the Question of Difference

Linda Edmondson

The question of cultural distinctiveness and historical specificity forms the subtext – and sometimes the principal theme – in much recent writing about Russia. To some degree this reflects current preoccupations in the study of the histories and cultures of nations and communities all over the world, a study in which ‘meta-narratives’ and all-inclusive theories have been subjected – with good reason – to severe critical scrutiny. To a considerable extent, too, it is a natural response to the breakdown of the Soviet Union and a reaction, retrospectively, against the imposition of an ideology that subordinated not only the individual personality, but also community and nation to the principles of internationalism and socialism, and in practice placed the demands of a supra-national state dominated by Russia over the claims of its constituent nations and ethnic groups.

However, a preoccupation with ‘Russianness’ has a long history dating back to well before the Soviet era.¹ It was intrinsic to the formation of a Russian national identity in the nineteenth century, partly arising spontaneously and partly deliberately fostered by the autocracy. In many respects this concern for self-definition was little different from the quest for nationhood and the growth of nationalism taking place all over Europe at the time. What may be considered distinctive (though it was certainly not unique in the formation of national identities in Europe) is the fact that the process of defining Russianness often necessitated a dissociation of Russia from Europe, in conscious resistance to the already extensive cultural influence of the West.

Although a ‘westernizing’ element in Russian cultural, philosophical and political discourses was always strong, the ‘slavophile’ resistance

became a powerful force in conceptualizing Russia in the nineteenth century. As important as the schism between westernizers and slavophiles itself is the part that an imagined 'West' or 'Europe' played in defining Russia: whether positively or negatively, both factions measured Russia's development and its contribution to 'civilization' against this norm.²

The sense of Russia's difference from 'the West' and the resistance to all that was not Russian can be seen not only in conservative and overtly nationalist discourses during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also as an element in Soviet hostility to the West, in the guise of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist internationalism, despite the fact that in principle the Soviet Union embraced many different nationalities besides the Russian. In the wake of the collapse of this multinational empire, a purely Russian nationalism has re-emerged as a dominant discourse and political rallying point. It coexists with an ostensibly broader slavophilism that claims Russian leadership for the Slav nationalities of Europe, although here religion is as much a source of discord (Orthodox against Catholic) as of unity.

This sense of distinctiveness – with an emphasis on the polarity of Russia and the West – is an underlying (but not always conscious) assumption in many studies of gender relations and the movement for women's rights in Russia, from the mid-nineteenth century to the Soviet era, and is marked in recent writing on gender issues in post-socialist Russia.³ There are many convincing arguments for accepting the view that Russia's particular historical development was profoundly influential in shaping gender politics right up to the present day, but there are also pitfalls, which I shall discuss later in this chapter.

The most obvious (and most discussed) difference between the Russian women's movement and those in many western societies, particularly North America, Scandinavia, Britain and the white colonies of the British Empire, is that it arose in a society lacking any tradition of constitutional government or guarantees of personal freedom and rights of citizenship. Russia was an autocracy, unrestricted by any formal limitations on the tsar's authority over the governing of the state and its growing non-Russian empire. Before 1861 hereditary landowners had extensive powers over their enserfed peasants, but the landowners themselves remained, at least in theory, the feudal servitors of the tsar. Until the mid-1860s there was no independent judiciary and no local representative government. In addition, urban development was late and uneven; the hectic urbanization and industrialization that took off in the 1880s still left Russia on the eve of the

First World War with a relatively tiny urban middle class in an overwhelmingly rural and agricultural society.

The society in which the movement for women's emancipation materialized in Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century thus possessed quite distinct features, which influenced its future development. Many of the ideas that inspired the movement were derived from the West: Enlightenment philosophy; the rhetoric of the French Revolution ('the rights of man'); the feminism of Wollstonecraft and Condorcet; and the utopian socialism of the first half of the nineteenth century. But these ideas acquired public resonance among radicals and liberals in Russia only from the mid-1850s, after a humiliating defeat in the Crimean War, when society was thrown into a state of enthusiasm for 'social renewal' by the promises of a new tsar, Alexander II, to abolish serfdom and introduce a wide-ranging set of legal and administrative reforms.⁴

In many ways the history of the women's movement in Russia presents itself as a case history of opposition politics after 1855, its fortunes ineluctably bound up in the twists and turns of Russia's political life: a few years of intense hopes for a new era of freedom and self-realization; rapid disillusion provoked by the government's determination to maintain autocracy even at the expense of the very reforms it had set in motion; a polarization of political opinion, with the opposition to autocracy splintering into liberal and radical factions; the virtual silencing of legal opposition after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881; a slow recovery of public initiative in the 1890s; the beginnings of an organized labour movement and heightened political activity after 1900 (populist, Marxist, liberal constitutional and also extreme right-wing nationalist), culminating in the revolutionary upheaval of 1905; the government's restoration of its authority in 1906, though with the belated and reluctant introduction of a representative (male) legislature in the form of the State Duma; a revival of social protest in the years immediately preceding the First World War; a disastrous war precipitating the overthrow of tsarism, and a final contest for authority in 1917 between liberals, moderate socialists and bolsheviks.

In this unsettled and often turbulent political and social environment, the issue of women's emancipation – the 'woman question' (*zhenskii vopros*) – acquired great symbolic weight. Not only was the immediate issue of women's rights highly politicized, but the solutions offered to the 'question' invoked fundamental beliefs about the nature and the desired future of Russia. Historians of the Russian women's movement have understandably emphasized its most conspicuous feature, the schism between reformist feminists (working within equal rights theory

and a faith in constitutional government) and revolutionary socialists. The latter were at first populist, later mainly Marxist, who denied the validity of a separate struggle for women's rights, lambasted the feminists for seeking change within the existing social system and claimed that sexual equality would follow naturally on social revolution and the overthrow of autocracy and capitalism.⁵

The split between reformers and radicals may have been overstated, however. While the split was a real one, it was not the single defining characteristic of the politics of women's liberation in the closing years of tsarism, and it was not uniquely Russian. Such a polarization was also evident in other European countries, above all in Germany, where both liberal and social-democratic women's organizations were mutually antagonistic to an equal degree, but where each was far stronger than in Russia. More significantly, historians' emphasis on the political polarization between left and centre may mask a rift of at least comparable significance, between what could be seen as a 'westernizing' and a 'slavophile' approach to the politics of women's liberation.⁶

To date no historian has considered the 'woman question' from this perspective, but certain lines of enquiry suggest themselves. One is the fact that feminism was always considered to be of western inspiration, with good reason, as the literature of the reformist feminist movement throughout the period from the 1860s to 1917 mainly comprised translations of western authors. The rejection of feminism (even in the present day) has often focused on its 'un-Russian-ness', its lack of roots in Russian culture. On the other hand, Russian radicals in the 1860s, enthusiasts for women's emancipation – but bitterly opposed to the feminists – were happy to translate western writers, among them John Stuart Mill, icon of liberal feminism. Hostility to feminism in later decades was often strongly tinged with a slavophile outlook; radical populists of the 1870s, for example, rejected the 'western' path of economic and social development and sought inspiration in the traditional peasant commune. Even Marxism, of western origin but adapted to Russian conditions by the bolsheviks, can be seen to have a strong anti-western character.

One possible approach would be to re-examine the relationship between the Russian women's movement and the autocratic state. In most accounts the state has been represented as an inert and obstructive entity, hostile in principle and practice to the emancipation of women from their legal and accustomed subordination. Historians have generally taken the standpoint of feminist and radical women, and of the liberal and radical men who spoke for them (and sometimes listened to them). Individual ministers, especially in the era of the

'Great Reforms' of Alexander II, have been identified as taking a benevolent approach to certain issues, especially secondary and higher education and the reform of family law, and a number of historians have investigated the links between liberal advocates of women's rights and reformers within the government. But overall the state is seen, reasonably enough, as a repressive and negative force.

The Russian state in the last half-century before the 1917 revolution was caught between two mutually contradictory processes. On the one hand its rulers were attempting to modernize it, that is, make its institutions more efficient, its economy more productive, its armed forces more reliable and its administrative structure strong enough to rule a territory which had been growing in size and imperial ambitions over the preceding century and a half. On the other hand, Russia's rulers were committed to the preservation and, indeed, strengthening of autocracy. Even Alexander II, who had opened the way to the reforms of the 1860s and 1870s and who seemed and still seems the most western in orientation, nevertheless saw himself as an autocrat, if an enlightened one. The pillars of the state, as enunciated by his father and reaffirmed by his successors, were Autocracy, Orthodoxy (that is, the established Orthodox Church) and Nationality, which meant in practice Russian hegemony over an increasingly non-Russian empire.⁷

In accepting the need for reform, Alexander II intended to strengthen the autocratic state by making it more efficient. Conservatives resisted the changes because they foresaw, or feared, that reform would only undermine autocracy and arouse expectations in the tsar's subjects that could not (and should not) be met. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861, followed by the judicial reforms of 1864, the introduction of local government in town and country, and several other major reforms, not only had important measurable consequences for the economic and social life of the empire, but also introduced concepts into public discourse that had previously been banned and were quite incompatible with the maintenance of autocracy: concepts such as freedom, emancipation, equality, citizenship, justice, autonomy, independence, accountability, openness (*glasnost*). These were quite explosive words in a society that had only just been released from the rule of an authoritarian tsar, Nicholas I, who had made extensive use of censorship and the secret police and driven many dissident thinkers into exile.

The idea of emancipation immediately acquired a significance for the destiny of the nation way beyond the government's intention to introduce a rationally drafted set of reforms. If the serfs were emancipated, then why not women, or children from tyrannical parents, or

subject nations from the hegemony of Russia, or social institutions from the control of the state? In attempting to maintain its authority over its increasingly discontented subjects during the succeeding decades, the state had to contend with the power of words overloaded with significance and expectation. In the years of the worst repression, not only were political groups and particular individuals banned, but also the use of certain terms – ‘constitution’, for example, a word with as much subversive power as ‘revolution’.

But the state also played a positive, though largely unintended, role in fostering independence of thought and raising expectations, notably in its education policies. In the history of education over the last half-century of tsarism we can see all the conflicting interests of the state played out. On the one hand there was the perceived need for well-disciplined, literate, trained workers and military and naval recruits. There was also the need for specialists and the international prestige acquired by the opening of new universities and technical high schools, and by the patronage of the arts and sciences, and the need for teachers, doctors and other professionals to serve a rapidly expanding population, and so on. And on the other hand, all this had to be achieved without encouraging these newly-educated subjects to think for themselves. The government's education policy for the entire period oscillated between these two conflicting interests, becoming more expansive when liberal influence was stronger, and more prohibitive when conservatives held sway.⁸

Women's ordained roles in this state attempting to modernize itself were first and foremost to produce children and rear them in accordance with the precepts of autocracy and Orthodoxy. Influenced by fashionable pedagogical theories from the West (when liberals had the ear of the Tsar), the education ministry introduced a system of gymnasium schools for girls (on the German model), intending no more than to raise the educational standards of middle-class and gentry families and provide young women needing employment with a basic teaching qualification. It was an entirely patriarchal concept of the purpose of education: to educate women to be ‘better’ mothers and to train their sons and daughters for their appropriate roles in society. The reform was never intended to foster a desire for self-fulfilment in girls or to act as a stepping stone to higher education, but this was precisely its effect. The campaign to open the universities to women or, when this failed, to establish separate higher courses equivalent to universities (though without the degrees and privileges that graduation from university gave men), turned out to be the major preoccupation of the

reformist women's movement before 1900 and its only significant achievement up to that date.⁹

This achievement – from the right, grudgingly conceded in 1869, to organize public lecture courses open to men and women, to the inauguration of the higher courses in 1878 and the establishment of a medical institute for women in 1897, could not possibly have been created without state approval. In fact, a major shift of perception occurred in official thinking about women's education in the course of three decades. Where once higher education seemed to threaten the established order, upsetting the natural hierarchy on which autocracy depended, now the admission of women seemed to offer the guarantee of a stabilizing element in an unpredictable and unruly student population. From having been condemned in the 1860s and 1870s as being sexually promiscuous and politically subversive, women students by 1900 were often portrayed as models of student behaviour that men should emulate: hard-working, loyal, modest and chaste.¹⁰ Moreover, the tentative opening up of certain professions to women (a daring experiment in the 1860s) had proved to be of demonstrable benefit to society, providing it with much-needed teachers, doctors, dentists, pharmacists. All such occupations could be seen as 'natural' extensions of women's traditional caring roles in the family. Significantly, one profession that remained largely closed until 1906 was law and even though women were then admitted to legal studies, they were not allowed to practise as barristers right up to 1917.

Although higher education had been opened up to women by the end of the nineteenth century, the old bogey of the female nihilist continued to haunt the conservative imagination. While the majority of female students eschewed politics and were careful to remain within the law, significant numbers were very visible participants in radical student politics throughout the period up to 1917.¹¹ The women's higher courses were always in danger of being shut down permanently whenever the political temperature of society rose. Universities were suspended on several occasions of political upheaval (the longest being during the 1905 revolution), but they were established institutions of the state and their closure would have been more threatening to the state's stability than merely to have suspended them for a while.

The women's higher courses, however, had no established tradition or institutional incorporation, and conservatives were often tempted to close them down permanently, more as an example to the others than because they genuinely believed that women students were the cause of all the trouble. The fact that the courses were not abolished suggests

not only that the pressure exerted on the women students to 'behave themselves' was effective, but also that the provision of higher education for women was now considered desirable. The courses survived the last years of the tsarist regime and the upheavals of war and revolution, to be incorporated into the university system that was inherited and adapted by the new Soviet rulers of Russia.

Could the state have coopted the movement for women's political rights in a similar way? Almost certainly, if women's rights had not become so inextricably linked to opposition politics. There were already indications of the way in which reformist feminist politics might have developed: for example, the expressed willingness of some feminists, after the failure of the 1905 revolution, to drop the demand for unconditional universal suffrage in return for a limited franchise, based on property or education,¹² or a proposal to introduce a limited franchise for women in local elections, or possibly some recognition of women's contribution to the war effort (if the First World War had not itself swept autocracy away). To the government, to conservatives and even to many male liberals, women's suffrage seemed an extreme and unnecessary demand in the uproar of 1905, but there is no reason to believe that it might not have become acceptable over time, even to a regime so wedded to patriarchal values.

Just as women's education began as a dangerously radical idea which was tamed by experience and familiarity, so did women's citizenship. Admittedly, there is no way of knowing how the newly-enfranchised women of a constitutional Russia might have used their new rights. The vote was won in May 1917, under the provisional government, which was swept away by the bolsheviks only months later. Citizenship in Soviet Russia was founded on quite different principles. In the Soviet system, suffrage and civil rights were not universal, but withheld from 'bourgeois' elements, including many feminists of the old regime. Equally, under a one-party system, the right to vote had little political substance.

However, the experience of female enfranchisement universally has not lived up to the expectations of the campaigners who fought for it. It has not brought the benefits to society, or to women specifically, that suffragists predicted, but has been incorporated into a political culture still dominated by men, even in countries where women lead political parties or form a sizeable percentage of all elected representatives. An awareness that the expectations of many 'first wave' suffragists were utopian has fuelled the recent feminist critique of liberal individualism and egalitarian theories of citizenship. While the principal target of this

critique is western constitutionalism, its effect is to question the value of all 'progressive' political discourses – including both Russian liberalism and revolutionary populism and Marxism – as agents of women's empowerment. This is particularly useful in the context of Russian politics, for a reassessment of the long-standing association of women's emancipation with the struggle of liberal and socialist opposition movements before 1917, and the triumph of a Russianized Marxism after 1917.

Theorists of gender relations have punctured the apparent neutrality of both the liberal and socialist concepts of equal citizenship and argued that the claims of both to universality have masked an overall indifference towards the achievement of gender equality (in many cases, a refusal even to recognize its absence as a problem) and an assumption that power is a masculine preserve. Rather than argue, as the suffragists did, that the fundamental problem was to convince men of women's natural claim to citizenship, present-day feminist critiques have tried (in diverse and often opposed ways) to demonstrate an underlying resistance to gender equality within the theory and practice of politics.

In Carole Pateman's reinterpretation of the comfortable myth of the social contract, for example, she sees not simply indifference to equality, but a complete negation of it: the 'original political right' is a man's access to his wife's body, out of which right developed the modern 'fraternal social contract', a contract between men for the control of women.¹³ Other analyses locate the exclusion of women from power less immediately in men's legal and physical coercion over them, than in the power of essential gender difference. According to this outlook, women perceive the world quite differently from men, their experiences are not the same, nor their ways of interpreting them. The entire system of power is a masculine and masculinist one. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sara Ruddick, for example, argue that women derive authority in the family from their experience of mothering; this is their particular gift, their natural calling and their training; in a gender-balanced society this would inform their contribution to the public sphere too.¹⁴

The theory has many articulate feminist critics, for example, Susan Moller Okin, Mary Dietz and Anne Phillips, who resist the concept of gendered citizenship and argue, instead, for an androgynous citizenship which integrates public and private, 'masculine' and 'feminine'.¹⁵ Dorothy Dinnerstein and R. W. Connell have taken up the 'mothering' argument, but rejected the essentialism, proposing, on the contrary, that women are not innately 'good mothers', and that most physical

and emotional 'mothering' could and should be shared by both parents, for the psychological health of the child, the parents themselves and society.¹⁶

One of the most thought-provoking aspects of these debates concerns the concepts of public and private, how each should be defined, where the boundaries between them lie, how they relate to gender, to family and personal life, to the state, to citizenship.¹⁷ The problem of the 'public/private dichotomy' in gender relations is highly relevant to Russia, where the association of women with household, family, intimacy, emotion and the 'natural' has been as powerful as in the West. However, it is in precisely this area of debate that western theorizing most clearly reveals its limitations. Although it is equally relevant to Russia in the way it tries to explain the exclusion of women from the public sphere, most feminist political theory has had little to say about a society where the 'public sphere' has been poorly developed, conceptually and in reality, or where the state has possessed extensive formal and informal controls over both public and private.

The late and partial emergence of a 'civil society' in tsarist Russia (and the long survival of the peasant extended household and communal organization) inhibited the development of individualist political philosophies and left the state with greater control over privacy and individual autonomy than, for example, was the case in Britain or the United States in that period. After 1917 the bolsheviks were explicit in their ambition to overcome the individualistic culture of capitalism and to found a society on a collective 'mentality' (though specifically not the collectivism of the 'backward' peasantry). It has also been argued that under Stalin (and, some have claimed, Lenin too) the intention was to destroy privacy altogether. Whether this was a conscious intention or not, privacy in the Stalinist period was constantly invaded, by the collective organization of living space and work, police surveillance, the encouragement of denunciation, and other mechanisms of terror.¹⁸

The western feminist critique is directed against myths (the social contract), aspirations (citizenship) and institutions (constitutional government) that have had no enduring life in the political experience of Russia. This is not to argue that concepts of individual rights, representative government, constraints on state power, and the protection of privacy are not relevant to Russia – quite the opposite. But in Russia, in contrast to the West, constitutionalism is not the dominant discourse. The issue has been, and still is, heavily contested, and the alternatives of dictatorship, oligarchy, or some vaguely defined assembly deriving

from a slavophile reworking of Russia's past (all of which were advocated before 1917 and have been resurrected in post-Soviet Russia) are not those envisaged by any western feminist as desirable replacements for a masculinist liberal democracy.

By far the most challenging question in need of answering is what genuinely distinguishes the political history of gender relations in Russia from the histories of other cultures. This is particularly difficult when the supposed distinctiveness has become received wisdom. Examples here could be the commonly repeated assertion (used by feminists themselves as a debating point at the time) that before the inauguration of the State Duma in 1906 men and women were 'equal in their lack of rights', a statement of more rhetorical use than actuality. Another might be the long tradition of married women's legal control over their property, though this was limited in value when a woman (either as wife or daughter) had little control over her place of residence and divorce was highly restricted. In this connection, the use made of the issue itself by liberal Russian jurists in their struggles to establish the 'rule of law' and their own position within it was every bit as revealing of Russia's specificity compared with other countries as were women's actual property and marital rights.¹⁹

I am not suggesting that difference does not exist. Looking to the distinctive qualities of Russian political and cultural history, it is not difficult to pinpoint factors, in addition to those listed above, that may have influenced or determined the development of gender relations over centuries. These include Russia's late conversion to Christianity,²⁰ Orthodox rituals and customs,²¹ the Mongol invasions of Russia in the thirteenth century,²² centuries of autocratic rule, imperial expansion, serfdom and its late abolition, the long survival of feudal 'estates' (*sosloviia*), the continuing legal separation of the peasant estate after emancipation, the peasant commune, the late and partial development of capitalism and a commercial middle class, the existence of an articulate and disaffected intelligentsia, and many other factors.

Taken together these factors help to explain the particular limitations on their personal rights and status experienced by women before 1917, and the ways in which rights of citizenship were defined after the revolution. However, they may not be sufficient in themselves to account for the continuing exclusion and marginalization of women in the 'body politic' and for the perpetuation of hierarchical gender relations over many centuries, especially if we bear in mind that this hierarchy exists (to a greater or lesser degree) in virtually all other known societies. It may therefore be necessary to conclude that although

there are substantial differences between the political cultures of Russia and other societies there is no satisfactorily 'Russian' explanation of the gender hierarchy at all.

In general there are two fundamental problems with the search for Russia's specificity that may not be sufficiently recognized. Firstly, the tendency to counterpose Russia and 'the West' (or 'Europe') endows Russia with a homogeneity it does not possess. Even if we leave aside ethnic and regional difference in the Russian Empire or Soviet Union, there are enormous cultural differences related to class, geographical location (town, city, countryside, economic development, even climatic zone), religion and so on. Secondly, Russia's particular historical experience and culture, or cultures, may on close examination be no more remarkably different from 'Europe' or 'the West' than the differences between those cultures that make up these apparent entities. In other words, we have to ask whether Russian culture is fundamentally *more* different from German than German from Spanish or Greek from English. And what of the differences within each of these cultures? At the risk of stating the obvious, it needs to be recognized that while Russian specificity exists, every culture has its own specificity. There has long been an ideological interest in maintaining and reinforcing the distance between Russia and the West, but at the risk of obscuring what has been experienced similarly.

Looking at the nineteenth- and twentieth-century movements for gender equality overall, what is as remarkable as the differences is the extent of the similarities and parallel developments, as well as the mutual influences and interactions.²³ These need to be explored further, if we hope to arrive at a deeper understanding of the problem of equality and difference. Altogether, we are left with more questions than answers when we try to understand the complexities of gender and citizenship, whether in a particular society or in general. The recent feminist critique of liberal individualism and egalitarian feminism points out the flaws in previous theorizing, but takes insufficient account of the specific problems of citizenship and gender relations in societies with no established tradition of constitutionalism. In deconstructing social contract theory and exposing the apparently insuperable gender bias inherent in existing constitutional systems, the critics also tend to assume that these systems are rock solid, underestimating the profound vulnerability of representative institutions and personal rights, not only in a country like Russia, but perhaps in western societies too.

For their part, historians of women in Russia who emphasize cultural distinctiveness are often reluctant to explore the histories of women in

other countries and thereby fail to see parallels between Russia and the world outside. To outsiders Russia remains a rather mysterious, unexplored and even exotic land, a perception that does not encourage comparative research. The issue of citizenship and gender, however, needs to be studied across national boundaries, and across differing political systems. It is only then that we may be able to comprehend the full complexity of the relationship between gender and power in human society, as well as arriving at a clearer understanding of the true distinctiveness of any particular culture.

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Notes

1. See, for instance, *Russianness: Studies on a Nation's Identity. In Honor of Rufus Mathewson* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, 1990); E. Hellberg-Hirn, *Soil and Soul: The Symbolic Expression of Russianness* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), especially the chapter, 'Mother Russia, Soil and Soul', pp. 111–35.
2. There is an extensive literature on this schism. The classic work is A. Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).
3. Inevitably and necessarily, any historian studying a social phenomenon in a particular country or region will isolate what is distinctive. There is a danger, however, that this scholarly preoccupation will reinforce existing stereotypes about national difference. In Soviet accounts (usually brief) of the 'solution of the woman question', there was an ideological imperative to emphasize Russia's separate development, in opposition to the 'bourgeois' West. In post-Soviet Russia, a women's movement has re-emerged and contacts with western feminists have been extensive, but there has also been suspicion of 'feminism' because it is 'western' and not suited to Russia. See, for example, O. Lipovskaya, 'Women's Groups in Russia' in M. Buckley, *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) pp. 186–99; I. Korovushkina, 'Paradoxes of Gender: Writing History in Post-Communist Russia 1987–1998', *Gender and History*, 11, 3 (1999) pp. 569–82; 569.
4. Proposals for serf emancipation and egalitarian ideas about social relationships, including relations between the sexes, were already being discussed in educated circles. But the Russian political environment in the 1830s and 1840s was so hostile to free expression that there was no possibility of initiating any major social change until after the death of Nicholas I in 1855.
5. See R. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); B. A. Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); L. H. Edmondson, *Feminism*

- in Russia, 1900–1917* (London and Stanford: Heinemann and Stanford University Press, 1984). The influence on western historians of Soviet historiography, which emphasized this split to the exclusion of almost everything else, was much stronger than was generally recognized, at least until after the fall of the USSR.
6. Mary Zirin, for example, has noted the westernizer/slavophile controversy in the response of certain established male authors to the work of two women writers in the 1860s. M. F. Zirin, 'Women's Prose Fiction in the Age of Realism' in T. B. Clyman and D. Greene, *Women Writers in Russian Literature* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994) pp. 77–94; 83–5.
 7. There is a good summary of the various meanings of *narodnost'* (which can mean 'nationality', but also 'peopleness': *narod* = 'the people') in M. Perrie, 'Narodnost': Notions of National Identity', in C. Kelly and D. Shepherd, *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1880–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 28–36.
 8. See P. L. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); J. C. McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics. Education, Culture and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979).
 9. For this campaign, see C. Whittaker, 'The Women's Movement During the Reign of Alexander II: A Case Study in Russian Liberalism', *Journal of Modern History*, 48, 2 (June 1976) on demand supplement, pp. 35–69; R. A. Dudgeon, *Women and Higher Education in Russia, 1855–1905*, PhD thesis, George Washington University, 1975; R. A. Dudgeon, 'The Forgotten Minority: Women Students in Imperial Russia, 1872–1917', *Russian History*, 9, 1 (1982) pp. 1–26; C. Johanson, *Women's Struggle for Higher Education in Russia, 1855–1900* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).
 10. Linking radicalism with promiscuity was a standard weapon of conservatives, fuelled by the so-called nihilists' experiments in 'free love' and emancipation during the 1860s. Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, p. 97. By no means all radical women (or men) either preached or practised sexual freedom, though marriage was often denounced as an instrument of patriarchal oppression.
 11. There are several studies of female students who became involved in radical politics. Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, is by far the best. One historian points out that most female students avoided politics: Johanson, *Women's Struggle for Higher Education*, p. 67.
 12. This proposal caused a furore in the main women's rights organization, the Union of Equal Rights for Women, immediately after the defeat of the 1905 revolution, but became more acceptable to the union's successor, the League of Equal Rights for Women. In the event, when women did achieve political rights in May 1917, it was on the basis of universal rights for both sexes. See Edmondson, *Feminism in Russia*, pp. 86, 135–8, 167.
 13. C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press and Basil Blackwell, 1988), and 'The Fraternal Social Contract' in her *The Disorder of Women* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press and Basil Blackwell, 1989) pp. 33–57.
 14. J. B. Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman. Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); S. Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking. Towards a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

15. S. M. Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); M. G. Dietz, 'Citizenship with a Feminist Face: the Problem with Maternal Thinking' in J. B. Landes, *Feminism: The Public and the Private* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 45–64; A. Phillips, *Engendering Democracy* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania State Press, 1991).
16. D. Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press and Basil Blackwell, 1987).
17. For an excellent collection of articles on these issues, see Landes, *Feminism: The Public and the Private*.
18. For communal living and its effects on family life, see S. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), especially Chapter 4, 'Living Space and the Stranger's Gaze', pp. 158–97.
19. For this see W. G. Wagner, *Marriage, Property and Law in Late Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
20. It is suggested that pagan myths attributing power to women survived in Russia partly because of Christianity's late arrival, and that elements of pagan deities were incorporated into the new religion. J. Hubbs, *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988).
21. Orthodoxy venerates the Mother of God (*Theotokos* in Greek, *Bogoroditsa* in Russian) rather than emphasizing the virginity of Mary. It has been widely argued that Orthodoxy endows motherhood with a centrality in Russian culture lacking in other cultures. See, for example, Hubbs, *Mother Russia*. The cult of the Mother of God continues to be very important in Russian culture. Korovushkina, 'Paradoxes of Gender', pp. 575–6.
22. The invasions caused 'a shock that has never been quite erased from the collective consciousness of the Russian people'. R. Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1977) p. 55. It has been suggested that female seclusion, practised in the upper ranks of Russian society until the reign of Peter the Great, was either derived from Mongol practice, or imposed by Muscovite society to protect its women from the Mongols. See, for example, D. Atkinson, 'Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past' in D. Atkinson, A. Dallin and G. W. Lapidus, *Women in Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977) pp. 3–38; 13–14. This has been unceremoniously refuted by C. J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985) p. 116.
23. Personal and institutional links between feminists across national borders (the International Council of Women and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, for example) and among socialist women's organizations (affiliated to the Second International before 1914) are the clearest evidence of this. Both reformist and Marxist feminists in Russia made as much use as they could of these organizations, as well as developing personal links with women activists abroad. See Edmondson, *Feminism in Russia*, Chapter 5, and Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, *passim*.

11

Emily's Dream: a Women's Memorial Building and a History Without Walls: Citizenship and the Politics of Public Remembrance in 1930s–40s New Zealand

Charlotte Macdonald

Emily Siedeberg was 20 years old in 1893 when New Zealand women won the right to vote.¹ Three years later she became the first of her countrywomen to graduate in medicine. Over the next 40 years Emily's professional success and civic leadership appeared to fulfil the highest aspirations of nineteenth-century campaigners for women's education, economic independence and professional employment. She had run a successful practice in Dunedin, the most southern of New Zealand's main cities (and home of the country's one medical school), founded the New Zealand Women's Medical Association, taken a leading part in a host of organizations and represented her country internationally.² In 1938, now a woman in her 60s with considerable social stature, Dr Emily Siedeberg McKinnon, as she was now known, suffered the most serious setback of her public life. Only a dream revealed to her what she should do.

Emily's trouble arose from becoming interested in history. Anticipating the hundredth anniversary of New Zealand's foundation as a British colony in 1940, the Labour Government, in power from 1935, chose to make the occasion part of its broad ranging programme of post-Depression years reconstruction.³ The anniversary was to be marked by major national centennial celebrations and local centennial events. In a characteristically energetic and public-spirited fashion, Emily responded swiftly to invitations issued in 1936 for proposed centennial projects for the city of Dunedin and the surrounding province of Otago. While visiting Vancouver, British Columbia in 1928, she had visited the Women's Building on Thurlow Street. The Vancouver Women's Building was a

substantial edifice which had been supported and patronized by Canadian women for over two decades. It provided the space and an organizational hub from which a wide range of groups and services operated.⁴ Dunedin, Emily thought, could, and indeed should, have its own Women's Building. City women, as well as those from the rural surrounds, needed a place of their own for meetings and social activities, rather than relying on halls and rooms owned and controlled by others. The province's numerous women's organizations could have their headquarters in such a place, hold regular meetings, socialize and store their records, trophies and assorted possessions in a permanent and secure location. In coming together in this way they would not only solve the perennial problem of finding and paying for convenient and modern premises, but would strengthen their connections and thereby their influence. Emily was in a position to know. She was involved in a host of organizations herself, generally as office holder, commonly as president.⁵ The model she had seen in Vancouver was exemplary. The women who held positions of political and social influence in the city were directors of the Women's Building; it provided a platform from which they ran an effective lobby in the causes of women's education, suffrage, and legal rights. At the time of her visit in August 1928 (following the Pan-Pacific conference in Hawaii in which she was a member of the New Zealand delegation⁶), the Vancouver Women's Building had recently occupied purpose-built premises in the centre of the city and was at the height of its prestige.⁷

When suggestions were called for what civic projects Dunedin might consider to mark the centennial, Emily saw an opportunity to pursue her plan. An experienced organizer, she worked carefully to advance her proposal. Representatives of more than 40 women's organizations were invited to a meeting to discuss the local centennial celebrations. Following preliminary addresses by the mayor, Dr Siedeberg McKinnon was given the chair and from there outlined her proposal for the city's centennial memorial to take the form of a Women's Building. Emphasizing the significance of participation in the event, she provided a rationale on which a Women's Building could make women both the subject of public remembrance and the beneficiaries of a contemporary amenity. The argument set out positioned the Women's Building as a memorial appropriate for the city and province.

Adapting the discourse of public remembrance which had been prominent through the 1920s in the building of First World War memorials, Emily advanced the culture of commemoration into the 1930s and gave it new meaning.⁸ Just nine years earlier, in March 1927, the Duke of

York had unveiled the city's war memorial, bringing to an end a lengthy and, at times, acrimonious debate on its form and site. The result was an eight-sided marble column, 27.4 metres high, in the middle of Queen's Gardens, which soared into the air, 'in a proud assertion of manhood and triumph'.⁹ Less than a decade later public memory was to be stirred, and pockets appealed to, for an historical occasion marked by celebration and progress. Dunedin, of all New Zealand's centres, was the one most inclined to be receptive to such a message. Beginning to struggle to retain its population and commercial position, the sense that its glory lay in the past rather than the future was an undercurrent in civic life.¹⁰

Addressing the large gathering of representatives of local women's organizations, Dr Siedeberg McKinnon began by establishing the subject for public remembrance: 'To the pioneer settlers we owe a great deal, and therefore to us as their descendants, falls the responsibility of acknowledging that indebtedness in some concrete form which will be visible to future generations'.¹¹ The previous generations of settlers were given familiar shape as subjects of memorializing when their virtues – honour and good conduct, courage and endurance – were identified as those demonstrated by soldiers and nurses who had served with such distinction in the Great War. Those qualities were part of the legacy they had inherited from their 'pioneering' predecessors.

The proposal was presented explicitly in terms of citizenship which had been proven through history. 'There is no doubt', she reasoned, 'that during this last century a sense of citizenship has developed in women, they are being educated and trained to think along broader lines than those encompassed by husband and children alone. The grit and spirit of independence which was developed in our own pioneers in their fight to make a living out of rough country against great odds has gone on increasing in our female population, and woman's entry into all kinds of activities and different kinds of business has developed in her the same sense of responsibility concerning the welfare of her town and country, as it has in men.' A women's building which would practically support such development would serve as 'an acknowledgment of that sense of responsibility and citizenship which has been developed in women during this first century of New Zealand's history, started in many cases by the pioneers and now to be carried forward, under we hope, easier conditions'.¹² Whereas the war memorials built during the 1920s had invoked 'the soldier citizen', Emily was creating, in the language of her proposal, another figure to add to the popular pantheon of national remembrance: the 'pioneer citizen', specifically, the worthy woman forbear.

After further remarks connecting the origins and activities of the women's organizations and the successful growth of the province, Emily set out her proposal that the meeting form an organization to press forward the women's centennial goals and her idea for 'a fine centenary women's building, such a one as the women of Vancouver have built'.¹³ She was emphatic that it would be available to all, regardless of class or denomination, and that it would operate not as a club with exclusive membership, but an association.

Significantly, the model of citizenship Emily outlined as the basis for her claim on civic space and recognition of women as rightful subjects of public remembrance made little reference to women as mothers. Elsewhere in discussions surrounding centennial memorials and more broadly in the 1920s and 1930s discourse on women's citizenship, the claims made by women were predicated on women's status as mothers and the centrality of maternity to the nation.¹⁴ Emily's model of citizenship, in contrast, rested on evolution through history.

The model of citizenship she advanced was one which assumed a European or Pakeha (literally non-Maori) identity, thereby excluding the indigenous Maori. For Maori residents of Aotearoa/New Zealand, 'history' as the basis for citizenship did not have its origins in the mid-nineteenth century. Even more at variance with the celebratory nature of the centennial anniversary was the Maori perspective on the hundred years from 1840 to 1940. Rather than achievement and progress, this had been a time of struggle, resistance and survival in the face of dispossession of land, population decimation, and systematic erosion of the base on which to support a distinct culture. The centennial could hardly be regarded as an occasion of celebration, though it might be welcomed as a time of historical reflection, particularly on the agreements made between representatives of the British crown and Maori in the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840.¹⁵ Some Maori centennial events were organized as part of the 1940 anniversary. In Otago the major undertaking was the commencement of the rebuilding of the Otakou church on the peninsula.¹⁶ It is an indication of the distance between the Maori and non-Maori communities at this time, as well as where power to define the meaning of historical events rests, that the European, celebratory character of the anniversary remained so dominant. In the organization of events there was very little contact between Maori and non-Maori. This is especially evident in Dunedin where the Maori population was relatively small. In Auckland, at much closer proximity to the main concentration of the Maori population in the 1930s, a proposal to build a memorial to pioneer mothers did not reach far in

practical steps but faced greater problems of definition and scope. Even the earliest and most general announcements indicated that debates around 'pioneer' had taken place. A temporal definition had been given making any person living in the province prior to 1890 eligible, and it was noted that 'Maori mothers will be included'.¹⁷ While 'history' allowed 'the pioneer citizen' to claim a space for women in the national narrative of commemoration, it generally excluded Maori men and women. In the national narrative the space afforded to Maori was as harmonious and noble co-residents in a successful society. Other perspectives were given no admittance.

Dr Siedeberg McKinnon's proposal for a Women's Building was supported overwhelmingly at a second meeting of the women's organizations' representatives held on 15 September 1936. Although other suggestions were put forward (a memorial arch, a fund for slum clearance, an additional room for the art gallery) they languished. The idea for the Women's Building was not only the most developed proposal but also the one which best captured the prevailing mood. It offered something which was not only functional, a preference which had emerged clearly from the Depression years in which practical means of sustenance were invested with new respect, but also an opportunity for a modernist expression of civic prestige through stature rather than the outdated decorative monumentalism of the 1920s. The women's organizations showed their resolve by forming themselves into a Women's Centennial Council. The official provincial body convened to take overall responsibility for centennial events, the Otago Provincial Centennial Committee, was nowhere near as fast moving.¹⁸ The Committee was a sprawling entity designed to placate regional and sectarian interests rather than one suited for acting effectively or with much creativity. While it was not intended to be synonymous with local government, the correspondence was, in reality, very close. Only in February 1938 did it get around to formally endorsing two projects as centennial memorials for Otago.

The formal adoption, at the beginning of 1938, of the Women's Building, and a separate proposal for a new cancer block at Dunedin hospital as the local memorial projects, marked a stage of relative activity for the Provincial Committee. With the Centennial year itself beginning to loom, local committees were being urged into action by the national centennial organization.¹⁹ While Emily continued to work on the design and fund raising plan for the Women's Building – in

co-operation with the Provincial Committee – other moves were afoot through 1938. Following the municipal elections in mid-year, the whole structure of the Otago Centennial management was overhauled. A two-tier structure replaced the sprawling single committee with a small executive being assigned responsibility over a series of sub-committees established for each of the main centennial activities, including centennial memorials.

At a meeting of the memorials sub-committee soon after the municipal election, Emily and her colleagues discovered a motion had been tabled advising the executive to rescind both existing memorial projects. To say they were stunned is to underestimate the sense of complete shock and surprise. Without official status as a provincial centennial project the Women's Building was not eligible for the 3:1 government funding subsidy, or other forms of public assistance. Its financial viability as well as public profile would be lost. Despite protests and loud public outcry, the motion was passed, and later adopted by the Executive.

The ostensible reasons given were that central government favoured tree-planting projects and that there had been a lukewarm response in the community to the Building proposal. Little evidence was cited to support these claims. Central government worked studiously to avoid becoming involved in local discussions over appropriate centennial memorials and events. The reasons were much more to do with where power rested.

Reeling from the setback, Emily was forced to consider what to do. She had brought together the majority of women's organizations in the city and the region, had built considerable momentum and an organizational structure behind a project, and was now left in a very exposed position of leadership rebuked by the city authorities. An appeal to the Minister of Internal Affairs, in charge of the Centennial celebrations, in the form of a personal visit, was of little use.²⁰ She also made an attempt to revive the Building project at the very end of the year, approaching the Provincial Centennial Committee with a request that it simply recognize the Building project as a Centennial project but carry no further planning or financial responsibility for it. She received a second refusal. 'Is it any wonder', she asked, 'that we feel that there have been some influences at work – whether political or owing to class bias – among some, at least, of the leading men on the executive with which the decision now rests? There would appear to be a few at least who are definitely obstructing our scheme. One could understand that if the men had some outstanding scheme of their own on which they wished to concentrate, but they have nothing.'²¹

In her whole career Emily Siedeberg McKinnon had hardly faced such a public reversal. Baulked in advancing her project and challenged in her leadership of the women's constituency, she was non-plussed. A curt letter from the Provincial Committee's secretary soon after the critical decision was taken advising that the women's centennial organization was in breach of the law in using the name Centennial Council only deepened the wound. The name, they were told, could only be used by an officially designated body and they were not one.²²

Long serving in her efforts to advance the interests of women, Emily had relied on reason, proving by example and making a case through persuasion. Now in her 60s, in the mid-1930s, her life was one of an assured and prominent respectability. Yet she was not afraid of being original. In her own life she had taken bold steps. In 1928, at the age of 55, she had married for the first time. Her husband was a widower, James McKinnon. The match was not popular with members of either family. Although Jim McKinnon was a local man, a retired bank manager from Mosgiel, their decision to marry in Los Angeles on the same trip in which Emily visited Vancouver indicates the difficulty the marriage posed for their family and friends.

In facing the displeasure and opposition of her family at the time of her marriage, and the adjustments of married life,²³ Emily had faced one set of limits upon women, while discovering other possibilities. Following her marriage Emily had wound up her practice in order to give greater attention to her other professional responsibilities, especially as medical superintendent at St Helens Hospital,²⁴ and her public involvements, as well as to enjoy a more regular home life. The opposition she met over the Centennial Memorial in mid-1938 and its surrounding public furore exposed the feebleness of women's representation and the fragility of her own leadership dramatically. The easy defeat of her proposal and what it signified of the powerlessness of women's groups defied easy explanation. If there had been a more palatable explanation for the reversal, the dream Emily had at this time of what she described as 'mental strain'²⁵ may not have come to assume such importance.

Later, she was to describe it in the following way:

Without any preliminaries of getting there I found myself in a vague enclosure surrounded by indistinct high walls. I began to wonder how I was to get out and there was no door or opening. Presently vague shapes came near me, and one said 'there's a ladder here';

they put it against the wall and I was about to ascend when the wall alongside opened out, and I was able to walk out, but only to find myself surrounded by moisture in the way of great flat expanses of murkiness and slime which I knew I could not walk on. While I was attempting it, here and there appeared little firm footholds which bore my weight, and then two or three boys appeared from nowhere and pointed out the footholds. Thus I neared the shore which was far distant and indistinct, and I set foot on it and looked up, there was a large two storey unfinished building with scaffolding still round it. By this time the boys were gone and there was a vague shape on the shore which said 'the Building'. I awoke; it was a vivid dream though the shapes were indistinct, but I knew when I awoke that it was a message. My mind was made up. I carried on.²⁶

If it had been more obvious why the committee had rejected their proposal, and dropped them so unceremoniously, perhaps Emily would not have had recourse to her subconscious. But the reasons were not obvious. There was no rival proposal in the wings. Quite the opposite in fact. The committee flailed around in an unseemly and embarrassing manner for the next 18 months, seizing on one idea only to drop it in favour of another. In the end a lookout was started at Opoho.

Despite having won the vote at a relatively early stage, and having access to universities which, from their foundation, allowed women to study and take degrees, New Zealand and Australian women did not seem to have made the progress which might have been expected in building on those gains. Compared with their sisters in North America and Britain in the 1920s and 30s, very few women had been elected to office, or occupied positions of professional prominence in either country. New Zealand's first woman member of parliament was elected only in 1933 and the numbers remained a tiny trickle until well into the 1960s.²⁷ The pattern of women's activism and politics had, instead, largely been directed into a burst of organizational formation in the years following the end of the First World War. Choosing to create a domain of separate endeavour, and to exercise influence through delegations of representatives of national and local organizations with huge memberships, had become the predominant forum in which women exercised their political power.²⁸

The commemorative exercises in which New Zealand and Australia were engaged through the 1920s and 1930s, first in building war memorials and then in marking historical anniversaries, carried wider significance in establishing narratives of nationhood and creating 'national

histories'.²⁹ Emily Siedeberg's proposal to add the woman as pioneer citizen to the existing public memory of the soldier citizen challenged the gender identity of nation which had been invoked through the discourses of First World War memory. In creating 'the pioneer woman' as a memorial subject and making a claim to contemporary women's citizenship based on the achievements of European settlement, however, Maori women and men were offered no place in the modern New Zealand nation. In expanding the gendered boundaries of the nation the discourse of pioneer citizen narrowed its racial dimensions. Elsewhere around the country the centennial events prompted other accounts of 'the nation's story' which drew on histories which *did* encompass Maori and Pakeha. Generally these accounts of nation building emphasized the successful co-existence of two races who had managed to live in harmony and achieved a degree of equal citizenship exemplified by Maori representation in Parliament, the defence forces, the professions and equal exercise of the franchise (Maori women had obtained the vote in 1893 at the same time as Pakeha women following the earlier enfranchisement of Maori men). In these versions Maori inclusion was stressed. But it was inclusion in 'the nation' on narrow terms which allowed for the previous hundred years only to be viewed as successful achievement rather than a struggle for power and survival. The historical events behind the substantial gulf in material living conditions and social position which existed between Maori and Pakeha in the mid-twentieth century were not probed.

The organizations which Emily Siedeberg McKinnon drew into the Women's Building project in Dunedin were overwhelmingly organizations of Pakeha women. The number of Maori women living in Otago was, to begin with, very small relative to some other parts of the country. Some of Otago's Maori claimed dual lines of descent and may have chosen to align themselves with their European forbears on this occasion; for others the principal loyalty and affiliation was to the local *marae* and tribal group rather than a constituted society. While there was an active group working on the Otakou church as a centennial activity in Otago there is no evidence of contact between it and Emily's campaign. The Women's Building committee was explicitly formed and operated as an organization of women claiming to constitute that community descended from settler forbears.

In advancing what was an ambitious but nonetheless hardly radical idea, Emily had encountered the limits to women's citizenship in an era well beyond the initial phase of women's enfranchisement and first exercise of political power. Her dream represented this graphically.

In using it to rekindle support for the project several months later she chose to see its meaning in political rather than personal terms. Her leadership, bruised by the Provincial Committee's decision, could be restored by using the dream in a modestly prophetic manner. In not being able to exercise authority or influence within a small, and not terribly significant, local committee, Emily was confronted by the ease with which women's aspirations could be set aside. The need for the Women's Building as a place where women's civic responsibility could be fostered was evidenced by the treatment the proposal had received from the committee.

Contemplating her options over the southern summer of 1938–39, and reflecting on her dream, Emily vowed not to give up. At a meeting of women's groups in March 1939 she presented the current impasse, the history of the project to date and described the dream she had had. The representatives were asked finally whether there was still support for the proposal to continue. Of the original groups involved, the great majority reaffirmed their support and, from that gathering, the Otago Pioneer Women's Memorial Association was formed with the resolve of seeing the project through. The determination and the vigour of Emily's leadership is apparent in the subsequent history of the project. Despite the outbreak of war later in the year and the deepening calls on 'manpower', money, and materials, the Women's Building pushed ahead. Members of the Association sent out circulars to 35 000 households in the city, took out large newspaper advertisements and actively promoted the project and raised funds throughout the province. The Dunedin Savings Bank donated £1000. The Building, at 362 Moray Place, was finally opened on 23 February 1942, at the darkest point in the war (and just before women's industrial conscription was introduced). Although slightly more modest than initially proposed, the Moray Place building was only a few years old, centrally located, two-storied and offered a range of meeting and social rooms. The mortgage was manageable and able to be discharged by 1949. (Ironically, it was the outbreak of war which spelled the end for the Vancouver Women's Building. With many organizations suspending activities for the duration, and the illness of the founding director Helen McGill, the Building had to be sold. The new owners, the Salvation Army, turned it first into a soldiers' hostel.)

Once the initial effort of opening was over and when the war concluded, Emily set about completing the initial vision. She had not mounted her campaign in the context of the historical anniversary of the Centennial simply as a strategic convenience. The 'pioneer citizen'

she had first invoked in 1936 was brought into existence with the greatest of care. From their resumption in 1939 the committee adopted the name: the Otago Pioneer Women's Memorial Association. The final shape given to the Building demonstrated some of the relationships between this notion of women's citizenship and history. At its centre was the strongly symbolic and sacramental Shrine of Remembrance with its Pioneer Women's Memorial Windows, finally completed and dedicated in 1946. The Shrine of Remembrance was a three panelled set of decorative glass windows set in a wooden frame above a plaque and accompanying Memorial Record Book kept in locked glass upon an oak table. The three windows, in gothic points, depicted 'Departure', a wife, husband and child waving farewell leaving their home on the other side of the world, above a small lower panel featuring the rose, shamrock and the thistle; the central and tallest panel featured a large Christ figure watching over a group huddled in a small boat upon the sea, while the final panel showed 'Arrival' with a ship at anchor, woman and child with tin trunk of possessions in a background comprising New Zealand plants and a Maori carving above a lower panel of New Zealand fern leaves. In the final stages of the Shrine's design Emily Siedeberg had urged the designer to whiten the crests of the waves on the central panel (they had been left green) and change the colour of the Christ figure's robe from white to a 'rich red' in order to leave no ambiguity about the danger and discomfort of the sea voyage and the sacramental weight of the subject.³⁰ Redemption could be read in the voyage from the old world to the new. The plaque beneath read as follows:

This window commemorates the safe arrival in Otago of all those Pioneer Women who braved the dangers of a long sea voyage to assist in the settlement of the Province of Otago and is a tribute to their sterling qualities of character, their foresight, their self sacrifice and their powers of endurance through many hardships. A recognition by those who have reaped the benefit spiritual or material.³¹

The tropes of pioneering – courage, sacrifice, stoicism, denial, hardship endured and overcome – were all highly developed in the display. The past was being defined in terms of women, and the 'pioneer' past was one which had qualities resembling those depicted in memorials to men who had fallen in war. These meanings were much stronger than the prevailing tropes in the far more secular centennial histories which tended to emphasize success, adaptation, achievement – a more upbeat

scenario. In these histories the land and its people were impressed by the European settlers' application of skill and effort. History was not so much a matter of sacrifice than of heroic romance. Depicting the personal courage and sacrifice necessary for the community's foundation, the Shrine graphically depicted a particular historical narrative of settler citizenship. The Maori presence is acknowledged in the carved house but there is no human figure to suggest or illustrate the nature of interaction which took place in the 'new' land.

The achievement was a triumph for Emily. The Building became the focus of much of her life thereafter. For the next 20 years or so it fulfilled the hopes of its founders, its booking diary filled with a huge variety of meetings and occasions.³²

As New Zealanders watched with dismay but not surprise as war broke out again in September 1939 the 'pioneer ethic' found new traction in a society once more at war. The pioneer virtues of facing adversity, showing courage, fortitude and a degree of stoic resignation fitted the circumstances of the Second World War better than the rampant 'for king and country' patriotism of the First World War. More particularly, after the disappointing response to calls for volunteers towards the end of 1939 and then the fractious conscription debate over summer of 1939–40, something new was needed to revive patriotic feeling. Calls for military service drew on pride in the pioneering legacy which had been highlighted in the Centennial events, themselves overshadowed by the prospect of war.³³

While the fate of the Dunedin Women's Building is a small vignette in the national and international span of women's citizenship and human rights in the interwar period, it provides an illustration in microcosm of the limits and dimensions of women's citizenship in the post-suffrage era. Not only is the local illustrative, it also reveals the obstacles which were those most typically faced by women in organizational politics. Redefining citizenship in terms of history, specifically the achievements of 'pioneer settler women', meant a narrowing of the racial boundaries of the nation. As Emily Siedeberg McKinnon and others discovered, culture and history contained power. In endeavouring to build public memory around women, Emily encountered resistance stronger than the formal obstacles her career as a doctor or leader of women's organizations had previously encountered. What was contested was women's claim to recognition as cultural subjects, to civic space and to a place in national remembrance and narrative. A place at the centre, which the Women's Building project sought, was denied. But the dream was fulfilled through the path of separate endeavour.

Women's position in public memory was alongside but not in the centre of the civic memory. She eventually succeeded in building her dream but only by leading the women of Dunedin along the path of independent agitation. Emily was not able to occupy the centre, even for the centennial moment.

Notes

I am grateful to the Internal Grants Committee, Victoria University of Wellington, for research assistance in the preparation of the original conference paper.

1. P. Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, rev. edn (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987).
2. 'Emily Siedeberg, 1873–1968', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume 3 1901–1920* (Auckland: Auckland University Press with the Department of Internal Affairs, 1996) pp. 472–3; P. Sargison, *Notable Women in New Zealand Health – Te Hauora ki Aotearoa* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1993) pp. 12–16.
3. G. W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edn. (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 334–43.
4. Founded in 1910, the Vancouver Women's Building was run as a limited liability company. There were similar women's buildings in Roumania, Denmark and Norway, the latter two of which Dr Marion Whyte, a colleague of Emily Siedeberg McKinnon, had visited. Address to St Clair Women's Club, MS 665, folder 32, Dr Emily Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, ca 1841–1964, MS 665, Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin (hereafter Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, Hocken).
5. She was a foundation member of the Otago University Women's Association, the New Zealand Federation of University Women, the Townswomen's Guild, the founder and first president of the New Zealand Medical Women's Association, president of the Dunedin branch of the Plunket Society from 1933–48, instrumental in establishing the Dunedin branch of the National Council of Women in 1916, and deeply involved with the Society for the Protection of Women and Children from its foundation in 1899 until she was made honorary life president in 1949 (through much of this time attending weekly meetings with the paid secretary).
6. Diary, 1928, Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, Hocken; D. Page, *The National Council of Women. A Centennial History* (Auckland: Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, 1996) p. 72.
7. *Yearbook, 1922*, Vancouver Women's Building, 1923, pamphlet, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia; E. Gregory MacGill, *My Mother the Judge. A Biography of Judge Helen Gregory MacGill* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1955); S. McClean, *A Woman of Influence. Evelyn Fenwick Farris* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1997). A photograph of the Vancouver Women's Building along with a facsimile pamphlet given to her in 1928 appeared in the booklet Emily Siedeberg McKinnon helped produce: *Otago*

Pioneer Women's Memorial. Being a brief history of the foundation of a Memorial Building dedicated to the Pioneer Women of Otago to serve the interests of present and future generations of women and organised societies in civic welfare (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times, 1958).

8. The study of the cultural meanings of war memorials has grown rapidly in recent years. Of greatest relevance to this discussion are the following: C. Maclean and J. Phillips, *The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials* (Wellington: Historical Branch, 1990); K. S. Inglis and J. Phillips, 'War memorials in Australia and New Zealand: a comparative study' in J. Rickard and P. Spearitt (eds), *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*, special issue *Australian Historical Studies*, 24, 96 (April 1991) pp. 179–91. See also Alex King's excellent study for Britain: *Memorials of the Great War in Britain. The symbolism and politics of remembrance* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998).
9. Maclean and Phillips, *The Sorrow and the Pride*, p. 116.
10. E. Olssen, *A History of Otago* (Dunedin: McIndoe, 1984) pp. 193–4.
11. Address, Centennial Council, MS 665, folder 32, Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, Hocken.
12. Address at Public Meeting, Centennial Council, MS 665, folder 32, Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, Hocken.
13. Address, Centennial Council, MS 665, folder 32, Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, Hocken.
14. See, for example, M. Lake, 'Between Old Worlds and New: Feminist Citizenship, Nation and Race, the Destabilisation of Identity' in C. Daley and M. Nolan (eds), *Suffrage and Beyond* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994) 277–94; also C. Macdonald (ed.), *The Vote, the Pill and the Demon Drink. A History of Feminist Writing in New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1993).
15. C. Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1987) pp. 235–8.
16. *New Zealand Centennial News*, 13 (1 April 1940) p. 21. The rebuilding of the Otakou church came before the Otago Provincial Centennial Committee who approved it as an official activity 'provided there is no responsibility on this Committee for the raising of funds', Minutes of Memorials Committee, 8 February 1938, series 1, Otago Provincial Centennial Otago Provincial Centennial Council Papers, Dunedin City Council Archives, Dunedin (hereafter OPCC Papers, Dunedin).
17. *New Zealand Centennial News*, 7 (30 March 1939) 21. See also *New Zealand Centennial News*, 4 (10 December 1938) p. 4.
18. As well as responsibility for centennial memorials, the Otago Provincial Centennial Council was also charged with building an Otago court for the national Centennial Exhibition to be held in Wellington and co-ordinating pageants and events during the early part of 1940 throughout the large terrain of the Otago province. OPCC Papers, Dunedin.
19. W. E. Parry, 'The Call to Action', *New Zealand Centennial News*, 5 (20 January 1939) p. 1.
20. The meeting took place when W. E. Parry, Minister of Internal Affairs, visited Dunedin, 24 November 1938. See M. Mowat, Acting Honorary Secretary, Women's Centennial Council to Minister of Internal Affairs, 17 September 1938, and Executive Secretary, OPCC, notes of conversation,

- 3 October 1938, and private meeting, 25 November 1938, series 7/3.10, OPCC Papers, Dunedin.
21. *Otago Daily Times* (15 March 1939), clipping in series 12/1, OPCC Papers, Dunedin.
 22. Secretary, OPCC to Honorary Secretary, Women's Centennial Council, 4 October 1938, (enclosed copy of New Zealand Centennial Act), OPCC Papers, Dunedin.
 23. On their eighteenth wedding anniversary, 8 October 1946, Emily made the following entry in her diary: 'although we have had little differences of opinion and little ruffles, ... on the whole life has passed smoothly, - one learns to repress words and acts which might ruffle the atmosphere, and although this has a deterrent effect on happiness, it is better to repress and produce a smooth atmosphere', Diary, 8 October 1946, MS 665, folder 2, Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, Hocken.
 24. She was also anaesthetist at the Dental School and medical officer at the Caversham Receiving Home.
 25. *Otago Pioneer Women's Memorial*, p. 23.
 26. MS 665, folder 32, Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, Hocken. She also chose to reproduce it in the booklet telling the history of the Building, *Otago Pioneer Women's Memorial*, pp. 23-4.
 27. The first New Zealand woman MP was Elizabeth McCombs, successful in a by-election for the Lyttelton electorate. She died two years later. C. Macdonald, M. Penfold and B. Williams (eds), *The Book of New Zealand Women/Ko Kūi Ma te Kaupapa* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991); J. McCallum, *Women in the House: Members of Parliament in New Zealand* (Picton: Cape Catley, 1993).
 28. A. Else (ed.), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand* (Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs with Daphne Brasell Associates, 1993).
 29. See C. Hilliard, 'Island Stories: The Writing of New Zealand History, 1920-1940', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1997; A. J. Booker, 'The Centennial Surveys of New Zealand, 1936-41', BA (Hons) thesis, Massey University, 1983; J. Phillips, 'Our History, Our Selves. The Historian and National Identity', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 30, 2 (October 1996) pp. 107-23.
 30. Diary, 2 Oct 1946, MS 665, folder 2, Siedeberg McKinnon Papers, Hocken.
 31. Plaque, Pioneer Women's Memorial Building, Moray Place, Dunedin.
 32. Otago Pioneer Women's Memorial Association Inc., Papers, 96-127, Hocken. *Otago Pioneer Women's Memorial*. The organizations affiliated with the Otago Pioneer Women's Memorial Association in the late 1940s were diverse and included: Dunedin Business and Professional Women's Club, British Israel World Federation, Catholic Women's Needlework Guild, Women's Division New Zealand Farmers' Federation, Dunedin Housewives' Association, New Zealand Medical Women's Association, New Zealand Society for Protection of Women and Children, Otago Basket-Ball Association, Federation of University Women, The Dunedin Tailoress' and Other Female Clothing Trade Employees' Industrial Union of Workers. See E. Soper, *The Otago of Our Mothers* (Dunedin: Otago Centennial Historical Publications, 1948). The building is still in existence and used by a small

number of organizations but it is struggling to survive and is supported by a small but dedicated, committee. Few of the main women's organizations now use it as a meeting place: author in conversation with Mrs Betty Stevens, President, Otago Pioneer Women's Memorial Association and Mrs Vera Lamb, committee member, 6 August 1997.

33. *New Zealand Centennial News*, 11–15 [final] (30 September 1939–6 February 1941).

12

From Communal Family Rights to Individual Rights in Women's National Citizenship in Norway, 1888–1950

Ida Blom

Around the First World War women in many countries, through changes in laws on suffrage, received the same political citizenship as men. Still, however, their attachment to the nation state remained looser than that of men. Marriage to a foreigner would automatically change a woman's citizenship from her nation to the nation of her husband. Communal family rights expressed the necessity to treat the family as a unity, represented by one person only. That person should be the husband and father. Only slowly in a number of states did the principle of individual rights carry the day, as women and men got the same rights to national citizenship.

Numerically, this was not a problem that concerned very many individuals. The question is, nevertheless, of importance as a symbol of gender differences in political rights and attachment to the nation state. This chapter will trace the discussions of married women's citizenship in one specific country, Norway, from 1888 when the first Law on Norwegian Citizenship was enacted, through the changes made in that law in 1924, until 1950, when it was decided that marriage should not interfere with women's national citizenship. It will especially highlight the consequences of gender inequalities in regard to national citizenship during a crisis situation, the German occupation of Norway from 1940 to 1945, and its aftermath.

Predominance of communal family rights

A basic test for inclusion in what Benedict Anderson has called 'the imagined community' of the nation was political citizenship. The

question of who should be included gave rise to conflicts, in varying degrees constructed around class, race and ethnicity.¹ Gender, however, was also decisive. The 'sexual contract', as established by Carole Pateman, was at work when political citizenship everywhere came later to women than to men.²

Further, as a consequence of the predominance of communal family rights, citizenship was conferred on men in their capacity as members and representatives of a family.³ This meant that married women (and children) were seen as represented by husbands and fathers. Women's *civil status* consequently became decisive for their national citizenship. The French Civil Code of 1802 established that a married woman would belong to the same nation as her husband. These principles were gradually accepted in most nations.⁴

Until the Norwegian Law on Citizenship of 1888, anyone who lived permanently in Norway was regarded as a Norwegian citizen. The Law of 1888 introduced communal family rights.⁵ According to this law, the usual way to become a Norwegian citizen was to be born of Norwegian parents (principle of descent) on Norwegian territory (principle of domicile). But 'parent' in this case meant 'father'. Only children born out of wedlock would follow the mother's citizenship. If an individual did not have a Norwegian father, he or she would have to apply for citizenship. One of the conditions for obtaining Norwegian citizenship was the ability to provide for oneself and one's family, that is, one would not have to fall back on poor law provisions.⁶ These conditions applied to men, unmarried women and widows. The husband's duty as a provider was stressed and the wish to maintain the unity of the family was expressly cited as a reason for not allowing a married woman free choice of citizenship. Only in the few cases where the husband's country of origin did not automatically confer his citizenship on his wife, would a Norwegian woman who married a foreigner keep her Norwegian citizenship. This was to avoid the outcome that she would become 'stateless'.

From 1888 onwards then, a woman would lose Norwegian citizenship when marrying a foreigner. On the other hand, a foreign woman automatically gained Norwegian citizenship through marriage to a Norwegian. No men changed citizenship as a result of marriage. Children born in wedlock would get their father's citizenship. Only children born out of wedlock would follow the mother's citizenship. In accordance with communal family rights, it was deemed important that all members of a family should have the same citizenship. The family was understood as an harmonious entity, represented by the

responsible provider, the husband. The wife and the children were perceived as dependent members of the group.

Communal family rights were, however, from the beginning challenged by the principle of individual rights. A few months after the enactment of the 1888 Law on National Citizenship, another law withdrew a husband's right to decide over money earned by his wife, and affirmed a married woman's right to personal ownership. A tiny majority in Parliament decided that a paragraph on a married woman's duty to obey her husband no longer obtained.⁷ In 1885, three years before the Law on Citizenship was enacted, the fight for the principle of individual rights in the political sphere started, as the Association for Women's Suffrage began the long struggle for gender equality in suffrage rights.

The decades either side of the turn of the century demonstrated Norwegian women's intention and ability to take part in mainstream national politics, such as the strengthening of military defence and the controversy over the abrogation of the political union with Sweden in 1905. Although still excluded from the suffrage, women through their specific voluntary organizations demonstrated political engagement with and support for national independence. Gradually between 1901 and 1913 they won full political rights to the vote on the same conditions as men.⁸

This achievement seemed to include women in the nation on an equal footing with men. But as long as the Law on Citizenship remained unchanged, civil status continued to have a decisive influence on women's national citizenship. This became all the more important as from the late nineteenth century social policies started conferring ever more social rights on citizens of the nation state. The question of citizenship, consequently, acquired new importance.⁹

Towards individual rights

Efforts to have individual rights extended also to married women grew in scope. The International Council of Women had already in 1905 started pressuring for gender equality in the question of marriage and national citizenship. At its quinquennial meeting in Oslo in 1920, it admonished all members to work for women's right to individual citizenship, independent of marriage. The International Alliance for Women's Suffrage and the International League for Peace and Freedom were also engaged in the struggle.¹⁰

Throughout the inter-war period several attempts were made to reach international agreements on common rules for married women's

citizenship, but in vain. The question was complicated, since different nations adhered to different principles. Some nations would not automatically grant a foreign wife the nationality of her husband. If this woman's natal country had laws that made her lose her native citizenship when marrying a foreigner, she could remain without a national citizenship and become 'stateless'. And the other way round, if a woman's natal country let her keep her natal citizenship also when marrying a foreigner, and her husband's nation accepted her as a citizen, she would acquire double citizenship.¹¹

Norwegian women's organizations, sometimes in cooperation with Danish and Swedish women's organizations, repeatedly petitioned their governments to take further action in the question, partly through cooperation with the other Scandinavian countries, but also as a purely Norwegian initiative. The problem was discussed by the League of Nations. Apart from a disputed Convention, adopted in 1931, aiming at avoiding the loss of citizenship as well as double citizenship for married women, it seemed impossible to gain international support for gender equality in the question of citizenship.¹² A Danish initiative in 1937 admonished the League of Nations to follow closely the development of the question within the various nations and discuss it every three years. But nothing was accomplished before the Second World War.¹³ It proved impossible to gain international support for gender equality in the question of citizenship.

Individual countries continued to follow their individual policies in this question. Some changed the conditions for married women's citizenship. During the inter-war period, women in Belgium and in France got the right to choose national citizenship when marrying a foreigner, and so did a foreign woman, when marrying a Belgian or a Frenchman. The Soviet Union in 1918 decided that a woman marrying a foreigner could not change her national citizenship but would remain a citizen of the Soviet Union, and that foreign women, marrying Soviet men, could not become Soviet citizens. The USA, in 1922, ruled that a married woman should decide on her own citizenship. She would not lose her American citizenship on marrying a foreigner, unless she remained for more than two years without a domicile in the USA. A foreign woman would not gain American citizenship through marriage to an American man. In both cases, the woman would have to apply for a change of citizenship. However, as the importance of gender weakened, strict immigration regulations raised race and ethnicity as other barriers to US citizenship.¹⁴

In Norway, several initiatives were taken after the abrogation of the political union with Sweden in 1905 to review the law on citizenship.

Attempts to reach a common Scandinavian approach, as well as problems created by the First World War, delayed results. A number of changes in the law were proposed several times, but changes to the citizenship of married women were not among them. Finally, in 1924 the Norwegian parliament accepted a law which brought some changes for married women.¹⁵ Marrying a foreigner would no longer mean that a woman would automatically lose her Norwegian citizenship. As long as she stayed in Norway, she would remain a Norwegian citizen. Only when she left the country would she receive her husband's citizenship. However, a foreign woman who married a Norwegian man, continued automatically to obtain Norwegian citizenship, and 'legitimate children' continued to follow their father's citizenship. Communal family rights were weakened, but still obtained.¹⁶

According to the bill put forward by the Department of Law in February 1924, changes in the North American law of 1922 as well as strong pressure from Norwegian women's organizations had led the government to reconsider conditions for married women's national citizenship. Indeed, both the Norwegian branch of the International Council of Women, the Norwegian Women's National Council (*Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd*) and the National Association for Women's Citizenship (*Landskvinnestemmerettsforeningen*) in 1923 pressed the government for action in the matter. In a statement sent to Parliament in May 1923, the Norwegian Women's National Council stressed the incongruity between married women's position in society and the law on citizenship. 'A married woman is no longer a dependent being, who as an appendix follows her husband in his changing circumstances. She may decide over her own money, she may have her own job... she has the same citizen rights as her husband...'¹⁷ But while appealing to the idea of gender equality the Norwegian Women's National Council simultaneously argued for cementing family ties: a married woman's free choice of citizenship would strengthen the relationship between spouses. The arguments also built on the concept of the nation as a community of loyal citizens. To let a married woman decide by herself on her national citizenship would make her a more loyal citizen of the nation to which she wanted to belong. The feeling of belonging to the nation would therefore be of importance to who would gain citizenship. Some were critical of the fact that the law of 1888 seemed to indicate that women had 'a less developed national feeling' than men. According to the Norwegian Women's National Council 'women often feel more attached to their homeland than men, since as a rule it is through women that families continue and that the traditions of the

people are maintained and transmitted to the next generations'.¹⁸ As in so many other instances, women used their biological and cultural reproductive capacities as arguments for individual rights. The address from the Norwegian Women's National Council to the government also referred to international support for the principle of individual political rights, mentioning the activities of the International Council of Women in the matter and quoting the example of the USA as a model.

The international importance of the problem was also stressed by the National Association for Women's Citizenship. In October 1923 this organization asked the government to support the idea put forward by the International Congress for Women's Suffrage in Rome in May of the previous year for an international conference to discuss the possibilities of international initiatives in the matter. They demanded at the same time that Norwegian women be given the same rights as men in the question of national citizenship.¹⁹

The changes adopted in the Norwegian Law on Citizenship in 1924, however minimal, strengthened the principle of individual rights. They were, however, in no way satisfactory to those who advocated full gender equality, nor to those who maintained that women were even more attached to the nation than men.

Marriage as treason

The outbreak of the Second World War made the question of nationality especially important. The Norwegian Women's National Council was now joined also by the Norwegian Women's Rights Association (*Norsk Kvinnesaksforening*) in the matter. Cooperative links were established with Danish women's organizations to put pressure on the Norwegian as well as on the Danish government to accept full gender equality in the question of citizenship. But the German occupation of both countries on 9 April 1940 stopped further initiatives.

Loyalty to the nation now attracted new and much sharper attention. The predominant opinion during the five years of occupation was that anyone who had any contact with, not to speak of good relations with, any German person was regarded as cooperating with the enemy. In public opinion such contacts weakened the atmosphere of resistance to and contempt for the occupiers and might even lead to advantages such as better rations for those involved. In a fight where life and death was involved, such behaviour was deemed outrageous and seen as equalling high treason.²⁰

When in May 1945 the German occupation came to an end, the stigmatizing of women who fraternized with representatives of the enemy nation was extremely strong. If such women were unmarried they could not be deprived of their Norwegian citizenship, since that would make them stateless. But women who had been friendly with enemy soldiers or civil Germans were beaten, had their hair cut off or were in other harsh ways thrown out of the national community. As in so many other countries, women's sexuality was regarded as national property, and failure to comply with expected national loyalty was severely punished.²¹

Women who between April 1940 and May 1945 had married a German were considered traitors, regardless of their own or their husbands' political convictions. They were sent to Germany and in accordance with the law of 1924 lost their Norwegian citizenship once they left the country. Some stayed on in Norway, sometimes because they were pregnant or had children under the age of six months.²² Following the law of 1924 they should have been regarded as Norwegian citizens.

A provisional edict issued by the government on 17 August 1945, however, decreed that a woman who married a German during the occupation and 'until the end of the war' was no longer allowed to keep her Norwegian citizenship, even if she stayed in Norway. In the complicated situation at the end of the occupation, this edict was not widely known, not even by authorities involved, until later in the autumn. Hundreds of Norwegian women married German men in this period, many of them unaware of the consequences for their national citizenship. The extension of the edict to 'the end of the war', which did not mean May 1945 but a final peace settlement, resulted in many more women losing their Norwegian citizenship.²³

The arguments legitimating this clause included: 'Most of these women have, by fraternising with soldiers and civil servants of the occupying forces, behaved in an extremely unworthy way. When they married a German, their political attachment to Norway should be broken... And it is very desirable that they leave the country as soon as possible...' 'The failure of the women who engaged in relations with Germans created widespread bitterness... The (Law) Department sees no unreasonableness in this procedure towards these women.'²⁴ Women who had married Germans during the occupation were 'a special problem. They must accept that the problem they have themselves created, is solved in a way that satisfies the interests of society, even if this means that the rules otherwise applicable to women's loss of Norwegian citizenship will have to be changed.'²⁵ The reasoning rested on the

assumption that these women should have understood their marriage as a totally unacceptable act, as treason in the eyes of the national community. Their failure to understand this made them unworthy of Norwegian citizenship. The number of women targeted by this characterization was at the time estimated to be very small, around 300,²⁶ but public opinion certainly was not on their side. Later research has indicated that by the time the last Germans left Norway in 1947, somewhere between one and three thousand Norwegian women had married Germans and consequently lost their Norwegian citizenship.²⁷

The salient point, however, was that only women automatically lost their Norwegian citizenship if they had married a foreigner belonging to the enemy nation. A Norwegian man who married a German woman would not be legally stamped as cooperating with the enemy solely because of his marriage. An individual lawsuit was needed to have a man legally declared guilty of cooperation with the enemy. A woman married to a German would have to appeal to the government for the right to have her personal political behaviour evaluated. On the other hand a German woman who had married a Norwegian would keep her Norwegian citizenship unless she had personally cooperated with the enemy. If after personal investigations she was found to have cooperated with the enemy, she would be expelled from Norway. Otherwise, she would have to demonstrate her ability to remain independent of public economic support, which was easy since a married woman was understood to be supported by her husband. The authorities expressed the hope that such marriages would be dissolved through divorce, in which case the German wives would be sent back to Germany.²⁸ All this proved that women were still perceived as part of a family, not as individuals. The husband's nationality was decisive for the fate of the wife.

Although overall general opinion strongly favoured these rather harsh measures, protests were heard. One of the country's most outstanding law professors, Johs Andenæs, pointed to the gender inequality in the matter.²⁹ The Norwegian Women's National Council also protested this way of repealing the gains made for married women in 1924. They characterized the provisional edict as 'a very strong interference with the...rights Norwegian women had fought for until 1924', one which reinstated the totally abandoned view of married women as appendices to their husbands. They also pleaded that married women should be tried individually in court to have their behaviour during the occupation judged as to whether it was against the interests of the nation. They maintained that private relations between

persons of the opposite sex belonging to warring nations had not previously been seen as treason or as activities against the interests of their nations. It would therefore be against all previous understandings of justice to allow the simple fact of marriage to decide the nature of a person's behaviour in a war situation. This was all the more shocking as the same provisional edict did not change the law of 1924 when it came to the situation of a German woman who during the war had married a Norwegian. In the opinion of the Norwegian Women's National Council, she would retain her Norwegian citizenship after the war, even if her Norwegian husband had sympathized with or even collaborated with the Nazis.³⁰

But this feminist attempt to gain individual rights for married women through debate on marriage to representatives of the enemy nation was not propitious.³¹ Even people who sympathized with the claim for individual rights found reason to criticize the initiative. To cooperate with the enemy would, as one equal rights feminist put it in 1946, qualify a person for 'the severest possible penalty, lifelong imprisonment or beheading' – but only on condition that this applied in the same way to women and to men.³²

The preliminary edict of August 1945 clearly rested on communal family rights. Not only was the citizenship of the husband now again deemed decisive for the citizenship of the wife, but all German husbands, and as a consequence all women married to German men, were understood as representing the enemy. Group identity was decisive for the fate of the individual within the group and few attempts were made to distinguish marriage partners according to individual behaviour.³³

No systematic study of the effects of the provisional edict of 1945 has as yet been made.³⁴ But examples indicate that at least some of the women who through this edict lost their Norwegian citizenship were placed in extremely difficult situations, despite their undisputed loyalty to the nation. One woman, married and widowed during the occupation, had been married to a man who had lived in Norway since the age of six. His mother was Norwegian and he had behaved as a loyal Norwegian during the occupation. But his father, who died well before the war, was German. This made him a German citizen. In 1945, his widow, who had never even left the country, lost her Norwegian citizenship and became a German citizen. To regain her Norwegian citizenship she would have to make a special appeal to the government to have her behaviour during the German occupation evaluated.³⁵

The fact of German citizenship in itself even when acquired *before* 1940 in some cases proved to have long lasting effects. The Law on

Enemy Property (*loven om fiendegods*) of 1946 allowed all money, goods, estates and businesses owned by German citizens in Norway, irrespective of how and when they had been acquired, to be confiscated to the advantage of the Norwegian exchequer. One Norwegian woman who had married a German in the early 1920s, and lived in Germany ever since as a German citizen, inherited from her Norwegian parents a considerable fortune. All of this was confiscated in 1946 by the Norwegian government, and even very personal belongings were lost. Until her death in 1995 she was legally considered an enemy of her nation of birth, although her only 'sin' was in the 1920s, years before the German occupation, when she had become through marriage a German citizen.³⁶

Although these are extreme examples and the number of women suffering from the preliminary edict may have been small, the procedure testified to an understanding of a married woman as 'appendix' to her husband and as an individual with few individual rights. Women's civil status in this crisis situation placed them in a much more vulnerable position than men when it came to national citizenship.

Initiatives to change the law on citizenship

The events of 1945–46 sparked off intense work to finally change the law on citizenship and ensure that individual rights supplanted communal family rights. Again, Norwegian women's organizations mobilized in conjunction with Swedish and Danish women's organizations. Norwegian authorities were quite friendly to demands to change the law. As early as 4 January 1946 the Prime Minister recommended that steps be taken to find an early solution 'since the women's organizations attach so much importance to this question...'. Consequently, he wanted the Department of Law to put a proposal to the other Scandinavian countries in order to avoid a situation where 'cooperation with these countries results in unnecessary delay in finding a solution'.³⁷ The Norwegian delegation to Scandinavian meetings on possible changes in the Laws on Citizenship consulted representatives of the most important women's organizations, the Norwegian Women's Rights Association and the Norwegian Women's National Council. During the Scandinavian meeting in November 1946 the Norwegian delegate pointed to the importance of satisfying the demands of the women's organizations, but this seemed to carry no weight with the other delegates. The Danish delegate found it more important to maintain the unity of the family, insinuating that the married women's vote had resulted in a double vote

for the husband. The Swedish delegate maintained that an international agreement would have to be reached. Similarly, a Norwegian proposal made in March 1946 that a woman, married to a foreigner, should have the right within six months of the wedding to choose between her husband's citizenship or remaining Norwegian, gained no support.³⁸ Consultations between representatives of the Scandinavian governments in 1946 and 1947 produced no results.

In a new meeting between Norwegian, Danish and Swedish delegates in January 1948 it was, however, agreed to go forward with the changes. The Norwegian government in the spring of 1948 appointed a committee to work on changing the law on citizenship. This time two women lawyers, Sigrid Stray and Else Broch, representing the Norwegian Women's National Council and the Norwegian Women's Cooperating Committee (*Norske kvinners samarbeidsnemnd*), were appointed members of the committee. Further Scandinavian meetings were held in April and August 1949. On 17 February 1950 a new Norwegian law was proposed and on 8 December 1950 the Norwegian parliament passed the new law on citizenship.³⁹

Full gender equality was now assured. Men and women alike would, under certain conditions, gain Norwegian citizenship on request and lose it for the same reasons. Marriage no longer made a difference. The changes were legitimized by referring to the 'legal and factual equality with men' that women had now gained in other areas. Gender inequality as far as citizenship was concerned now seemed only a relic of the distant past and could no longer be accepted. Furthermore, several other nations had changed their laws so that double citizenship or statelessness was much less likely to occur. Individual rights had definitely been victorious, communal family rights had lost out. The changes were legitimized by the demand for equality between women and men.⁴⁰

A few signs of the importance of 'the unity of the family', however, were still visible. The most conspicuous relic of the patriarchal family model can be seen in the provision that children born in wedlock would under the new law also get their father's citizenship.⁴¹ Further, it was presumed that only very important reasons would make it possible to separate families where the wife was of foreign nationality. On the other hand, marriage now might give a woman some advantages. A foreign woman married to a Norwegian was given somewhat easier access to Norwegian citizenship than other individuals. Finally, whether social rights flowing from citizenship could be extended to include foreign spouses of Norwegian citizens was discussed.⁴²

It seems quite clear that the persistent campaign of the women's movement lay behind the new 1950 law on citizenship. The various initiatives taken by Norwegian women's organizations, sometimes in cooperation with other Scandinavian women's organizations as well as by the international women's organizations, were mentioned again and again. The fact that the charter of the United Nations stated a belief in 'the equal rights of men and women' and in its first paragraph targeted the aim of 'encouraging and furthering respect for human rights and basic liberties for all, regardless of race, gender, language or religion' was also used as an argument for the changes.⁴³

Conclusion

The long fight for individual rights where national citizenship was concerned engaged the very understanding of citizenship. Accepting married women as individuals was perceived as a threat to the family unit and as trespassing on the boundaries of public and private. National citizenship was for long tied to the idea of masculine duties to the nation, the duties of warfare and of working hard for the prosperity of the national community. As Carole Pateman has pointed out, such duties all fell within the public sphere. Women's duties, giving birth to new generations, raising children in love and respect for national culture and traditions, caring for the sick and the aged, all emerged from and were mostly carried out within the private sphere. Until after the Second World War, only few would consider this sufficient legitimization for remuneration within the public sphere, through the same rights to citizenship as men.⁴⁴

Although Norwegian women were accepted as citizens with full political rights in 1913, it took another 37 years before their individual relationship to the nation was as undisputed as that of men. Communal family rights made married women dependent on husbands for their national citizenship. Only after almost four decades, and mostly thanks to continuous prodding from the women's organizations at the national and at the international level, did the principle of individual rights gain ground.

Notes

1. During the French Revolution, individuals were divided into active and passive citizens, giving priority to independent men with certain economic

- resources: H. Sewell Jr., 'Le Citoyen/La Citoyenne. Activity, Passivity and the Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship' in C. Lucas (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture. Volume 2: The Political Culture of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988) pp. 105–23; D. G. Levy and H. B. Applewhaite, 'Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris' in S. E. Melzter and L. W. Rabine (eds), *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 79–101. The constitution of the United States excluded slaves, that is, all black men. As European countries established their empires on other continents, race figured as an important criterion for exclusion from nation states. In Norway race was of importance mainly in the understanding of the nation state as racially homogeneous. Until the 1960s minorities such as the Same and Kvens were submitted to a systematic policy of integration into Norwegian culture: I. Blom, 'Nation – Class – Gender: Scandinavia at the Turn of the Century', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 21 (Spring 1996) pp. 1–16; G. Hagemann, 'De Stummes Leir? 1800–1900' in I. Blom and S. Sogner (eds), *Med Kjønnsperspektiv på Norsk Historie: Fra Vikingtid til 2000-årsskiftet* (Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 1999) pp. 135–226; I. Blom, K. Hagemann and C. Hall (eds), *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long 19th Century – International Comparisons* (London: Berg Publishers, 2000).
2. C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).
 3. Ursula Vogel, 'Is Citizenship Gender Specific?' Paper presented at the PSA Annula Conference, April 1989, cited in N. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997) p. 79.
 4. M. S. Børresen, 'Gifte Kvinners Nasjonalitet Belyst Internasjonalt', Lecture given Spring 1933, Norwegian Women's National Council Archives. From 1844 a foreign woman marrying a British man would automatically assume British citizenship, while it took until 1870 before a British woman would lose her British citizenship when marrying a foreigner. In the USA, this happened a little later, in 1856 and 1907 respectively: Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, p. 79.
 5. Lov om norsk statsborgerretslove av 21. April 1888, paras 2, 4, 6, 9: A. C. Agerholt, *Den Norske Kvinnebeveggelses Historie* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk forlag, 1973) first edition 1937, pp. 264–65.
 6. Utkast til nye statsborgerretslove, pp. 33–4. Printed as an attachment to Ot.prp.nr. 34–1922. Om utfærdigelse av en lov om norsk statsborgeret.
 7. Agerholt, *Norske Kvinnebeveggelses Historie*, pp. 135–39.
 8. Blom, 'Nation – Class – Gender'; Hagemann, 'De Stummes Leir?', pp. 217–23; K. Melby, 'Husmorens Epoke, 1900–1950' in Blom and Sogner (eds), *Med Kjønnsperspektiv på Norsk Historie*, pp. 227–98; 238–53.
 9. A.-H. Nagel, 'Kjønnsskiller I sosiale rettigheter' in A.-H. Nagel (ed.), *Kjønn og Velferdsstat* (Bergen: Alma Mater forlag, 1998) pp. 320–65.
 10. Børresen, 'Gifte Kvinners'.
 11. Ot.prp.nr. 7–1924: 4–5.
 12. Børresen, 'Gifte Kvinners'. See also C. L. Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage and the Law on Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) Chapter 6: 'Nationality Rights in International Perspective', pp. 195–242.

13. Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd, Archives and Jutisdep. Arkiv, St. med. nr. 3-1933, St. meld. nr. 3–1935.
14. Børresen, 'Gifte Kvinners'. Ot.prp.nr. 15–1950: Motiver: 14–17; Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, pp. 124–8, 135–6, 244.
15. Ot.prp.nr. 30–1916, Ot.prp.nr. 34–1922: 1–2, Ot.prp.nr. 7–1924: 1–2.
16. Communal family rights were also weakened in another respect. It was no longer required to have a Norwegian father in order to become a Norwegian citizen. Any person born in Norway and who had lived there until the age of 22, would automatically be considered a Norwegian citizen. A small concession to a married woman's wish was made in a new paragraph stating that if a foreign man obtained Norwegian citizenship, this should not be extended to his wife without hearing her opinion on the matter. Ot.prp.nr. 7–1924: 5 and 7.
17. Ot.prp.nr. 7–1924: 2–3.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Ot.prp.nr. 7–1924: 3.
20. For a detailed analysis of the reaction to women who had friendly relations with Germans during the Occupation, see K. Olsen, *Krigens Barn. Norske krigsbarn og deres mødre* (Oslo: Forum Aschehoug, 1998) pp. 235–302.
21. *Ibid.* pp. 262–72. Ironically, married men who spent the war outside the country were allowed to marry women of the allied nations, without formal divorce from their Norwegian wives who remained in Norway. Ironically also, Norwegian soldiers, members of the occupying forces in Germany from 1947, who fraternized with German girls in the years just after the war, were never chastised in this manner, although they were strongly criticized: D. Ellingsen, I. D. Bjørndottir and A. Warring, *Kvinner, Krig og Kjærlighet* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelen's forlag, 1995); I. Blom, '1945: Change or Continuity in European Gender Relations?' in S. Bridger (ed.), *Women and Political Change: Perspectives from the East – Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) pp. 27–42; Olsen, *Krigens Barn*, p. 299.
22. Note from Centralpasskontoret (the Central Passport Office), 4 December 1946, Archives of the Law Department: Olsen, *Krigens Barn*, pp. 303–25.
23. Olsen, *Krigens Barn*, p. 307.
24. Ot.prp.nr. 136–1945–46: 2–4.
25. Ramndal in O.t. tid. 1945–46: 679.
26. *Ibid.* p. 3.
27. Olsen, *Krigens Barn*, p. 316.
28. Ot.prp.nr. 136–1945–46: 679.
29. Olsen, *Krigens Barn*, p. 308.
30. Letter from the Norwegian Women's National Council to the Norwegian government, 6 December 1945.
31. Article by Ketil Skogen MP in the Archives of the Law Department. Ramndal in O.t. tid. 1945–46: 679.
32. Ingeborg Boye, according to note of 4 December 1946. Archives of the Law Department.
33. With minor changes, the most important being the possibility for the government to give dispensations, the provisional edict was accepted as a supplement to the law on citizenship in October 1946, regulating this question for possible future war situations and enabling the Norwegian government

- to continue the practice legitimated in the law, until all 'unwanted individuals' had been expelled from the country. Ot.prp.nr. 193–1945–46.
34. Kåre Olsen gives a number of examples of what happened to couples – and to children – targeted by the edict of August 1945: Olsen, *Krigens Barn*, pp. 303–39.
 35. Notat of 12 November 1946 by Liv Kluge, Secretary to the Minister for Social Affairs. Archives of the Law Department.
 36. Verdens Gang, 4 April 1998.
 37. Letter from Einar Gerhardsen to the Law Department, 4 January 1946. Notat to 'Politivdelingen', 1 February 1946, Archives of the Law Department.
 38. Letters to the Norwegian Women's Rights Association and to the Norwegian Women's National Council, 9 September 1946. Note of 18 April 1946, with inscription, signed F. H., 19 April 1946. Report from the Nordic meeting on citizenship, Copenhagen, 27–29 November 1946. Note of 18 June 1948 from F. H. to the Minister of Justice, Archives of the Law Department. PM of 7 March 1947. Note of 19 and 22 April 1947, Archives of the Law Department.
 39. Ot.prp.nr. 15–1950.
 40. Ot.prp.nr. 15–1950: 5 and 7. Motiver for nye statsborgerrettslover: 15 and 18. Printed as attachment to ot.prp.nr. 15–1950.
 41. Only if the father was stateless or if children did not automatically acquire their father's citizenship (because of laws of a foreign nation) would they follow their Norwegian mother. For this to happen, it was required that they were born in Norway. It was argued that full gender equality in this respect would result in a considerable number of people with double citizenship. Not even divorce and the mother's sole responsibility for the children would automatically give them their mother's citizenship. Ot.prp.nr. 15–1950: 14. paras 1 and 2 in the law of 8 December 1950.
 42. Ot.prp.nr. 15–1950: 18.
 43. Report of the Commission on Human Rights to the Second Session of the Economic and Social Council, 21 May 1946. Report of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women to the Commission on Human Rights. Archives of the Law Department.
 44. C. Pateman, 'Equality, Difference, Subordination: The Politics of Motherhood and Women's Citizenship' in G. Bock and S. James (eds), *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship – Feminist Politics – Female Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 1992) pp. 17–31.

13

Social Citizenship and Women's Right to Work in Postwar America

Eileen Boris and Sonya Michel

According to political theorist T. H. Marshall, the right to work is an essential civil right.¹ For women, however, exercising this right depends on acquisition of more rights. These include other civil rights, such as equal pay and freedom from discrimination, as well as the rights of social citizenship, such as child care and maternity leave. Such services or benefits neutralize the cultural assignment to women of child bearing and rearing, thus allowing them to participate in the labour force on an equal footing with men. Insofar as women's struggle for equality in the workplace entails articulating their differences from men – establishing their rights as workers who are also, often, mothers – women become embroiled in the discursive paradox of sameness/difference.² This formulation implicitly casts them as subordinate at the very moment it invokes their responsibilities to home and family.

Historians tend to discuss women's struggle for workplace equity – equal pay, equal opportunity, and equal seniority – as if such rights existed apart from non-workplace factors. But women labour activists have for some time understood that their rights at work required a fundamental transformation of the structures of society that act as barriers to female labour force participation. This in turn depended upon challenging cultural constructions that figured the typical worker as male and associated women with motherhood and motherhood with the home – constructions that employers deployed to justify labour market segmentation by sex, race, marital status and age (factors which all too often worked together). Thus the realization of 'the right to work' that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) found in 1945 to be equally important for women as for men necessitated equal disability benefits for pregnant and non-pregnant workers, only won in the late 1970s.³

This chapter begins to trace the connections, overlaps and conflicts among discourses and struggles for the right to work, on the one hand, and for the rights of social citizenship, on the other, that emerged in the United States after the Second World War. Through analysis of a progressive trade union in a male dominated industry and a coalition of women from diverse unions, we focus on two periods, the late 1940s and 1950s and the late 1960s through the 1980s – that is, before and after Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the second wave of feminism. During the first period, trade unionists relied on economic rationales that often justified women's right to work in terms of her need; during the second, women workers sought to translate needs into rights or social entitlements.

The struggle of American working women must be understood against the background of the nation's liberal welfare state. The 1935 Social Security Act solidified the model of the citizen-worker, linking benefits to employment, but excluding agricultural and service occupations dominated by white women and men and women of colour. Thus its minimal state provisions (primarily old-age pensions) benefited mostly white men and their dependants. After 1945, white male workers made even further gains as corporations, prodded by strong trade unions and encouraged by favourable tax measures, began to offer an extensive set of 'fringe benefits', including health insurance, paid vacations, and supplementary pensions.⁴ Not all firms offered such benefits, and most of them were predicated on steady, long-term employment, a condition which again excluded many white women and minorities whom historical discrimination and the resulting structural impediments had relegated to the secondary sector of the labour market. Moreover, the very content of the benefits offered, while surely boons to all workers, failed to address the specific needs of female workers, such as child care, perinatal care, and maternity leave. Without such provisions, women could not even enter the labour force, much less gain access to the types of benefits privileged male employees enjoyed.

But when wage-earning women turned to the larger public system of social welfare, they also came up empty-handed. Under the 'public/private welfare state regime' that characterized American social provision (and which industrial unions played such a key role in forging in the expanding economy of the mid-twentieth century), the state sector remained underdeveloped, its provisions limited.⁵ Instead of moving toward a universalistic conception of entitlement, the state was mired in a 'residualist' paradigm that tended to offer goods and services only

to those marked as exceptional – poor, pathological, ‘at-risk’.⁶ Since ‘normal’ wage-earning women did not fall into those categories, they were denied access to state benefits. Thus before they could enjoy full citizenship, American women faced multiple tasks. They had to claim simultaneously both social and civil rights, a feat that entailed reconfiguring and expanding a recalcitrant welfare state as well as a discriminatory labour market.

Equal rights at work

‘We women won the right to vote and now we’re fighting for our full economic rights’, announced Helen Quirini, a rank-and-file member of the United Electrical Workers (UE), in 1952.⁷ At mid-century the most progressive industrial unions, like the left-wing UE and the social democratic United Automobile Workers of America (UAW), defended the ‘equal treatment of all members’.⁸ By that they meant equal rights for women on the job – ‘rates of pay, job security, and their right to work at all jobs in the plant’ – inequalities which employers used to undermine the pay and conditions of male workers as well. But while the UE defined ‘economic exploitation of women workers’ as the ‘key problem’, it also recognized the special needs of women: government financed day nurseries, maternity leave, health protection, and ‘problems of married women growing out of family responsibility, such as shifts and absenteeism’.⁹ Trade union feminists and their male allies pushed for such components of social citizenship in order to enfranchise women in the workplace and thus secure equal rights and better conditions for all. But their first consideration was securing the right to work itself.

Expelled from the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1949 for refusing to sign an anti-Communist pledge, the UE lost bargaining power in the 1950s.¹⁰ The UAW, in contrast, stood as the most important trade union in the United States. It linked its prosperity to increasing the overall social wage, advocating low cost housing, full employment, national health insurance, and a more generous form of social security. It supported the civil rights movement, financing much of the 1963 March on Washington. But in the late 1940s, the UAW, like other industrial unions, turned away from independent political action to collective bargaining as its chief means for gaining welfare benefits. In the process, it fostered the development of a major component of the private welfare state that, ironically, stymied the enhancement of the universal citizenship it was fighting for in the political arena.

For access to union pensions and medical, educational and other benefits depended on the employment contract. That, in turn, reflected labour market segmentation by race, gender and racialized gender. Though the union sought equal rights for white women and racial minorities, white men benefited from being first hired into higher skilled, more pleasant and more remunerative jobs. They had seniority, thus greater protection during the periodical layoffs that plagued the prosperous 1950s. They controlled the union bureaucracy.¹¹ As sociologist Jill Quadagno has argued, the seniority system that determined jobs, union hierarchies that gave power to larger locals, and localized grievance procedures that insured male power all undermined the equality ideology of the UAW.¹²

We hardly can separate politics from economics when it comes to assessing trade union policy. During the war, UAW fear that employers would hire non-whites and non-males to undermine wages and working conditions led the union to embrace equal pay.¹³ In the 1950s, the internecine battle between the UE and the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) encouraged appeals to women workers. But this conflict weakened both unions in their relationship to corporate adversaries, thus delaying the winning of social benefits.¹⁴

IUE women, however, lacked their own department within the union. Not until the 1970s were these union feminists able to reshape workplaces by winning equal pay and pregnancy disability.¹⁵ At the UAW, in contrast, sex equality policy took organizational expression through the women's department, which became distinct from the Fair Employment Practices Division in 1955. Most CIO unions had similar committees devoted to racial minorities.¹⁶ From the Second World War, the UAW went beyond federal fair employment directives by prohibiting discrimination in union contracts not only on the basis of race, creed, colour, and nationality, but also in terms of sex or marital status.¹⁷ This commitment occurred despite the predominance of white men within the industry and the union.

The UAW framed its support in terms of equality. The labour slogan 'An Injury to One Is an Injury to All' translated into 'equality of treatment' for women (as well as minority men). As Women's Department chief Caroline Davis explained in 1957, women's 'feeling of confidence, security and partnership ... was made possible through the application by the UAW of the principle of equality, that all workers are entitled to equal justice, equal job opportunity, equal job protection and equal pay for equal work'.¹⁸ The International UAW sometimes disciplined wayward locals. In 1949, for example, it rejected by-laws in

Racine, Wisconsin that 'abolish[ed] a woman's seniority as soon as she is married'.¹⁹

This defence of women's right to work pivoted around economic rationales, creating a conditional right based on need rather than a right derived from gender equity. The leadership described the reasons for women's wage earning to be the same as men's: economic survival. But this elided into the necessity or provider argument. Male members who boasted how their own wives stayed at home could support the labour force participation of women who had to support families. Others accepted the self-interest argument: since women are in the labour force, men ought to defend their rights or their substandard position will impede men. Under Walter Reuther, president from 1946 until his death in 1970, the UAW developed a purchasing power argument: women's wages facilitate demand for consumer goods, which in turn increases employment.²⁰

Voices asserting women's right to work as an unconditional right of citizenship did exist. During the 1955 convention debate over 'job security for women workers', delegate Mildred Szur challenged: 'where is our democracy in this country if a woman cannot be a free individual and make up her own mind? I think that when you start telling women you can or cannot work you are infringing upon their civil rights, which I as a woman resent.' Some men also embraced this justification. 'We can't leave these women idle if they wish to work', one delegate to the 1962 convention explained. 'It's a democratic nation to allow women to work, because if they are good enough to work while we are in the wars, they are good enough to work in peace time.'²¹

The mere right to work, however, was not enough. By embracing the United Nation's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UAW had professed its commitment to a larger social citizenship. It repeated the Declaration's entitlement 'to just and favorable wages ensuring for ourselves and our families an existence worthy of human dignity – supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social provision'.²² Women's right to work required not only supplements but also creative adaptations to domestic constraints. Around 1960, for example, Local 261 in Milwaukee won a working day that began 15 minutes earlier because 'some of the women' wanted 'to get home earlier ... to get a jump on the traffic and get an earlier start for supper and other household chores'.²³

Yet, as historian Nancy F. Gabin has documented, there was a gap between the pronouncements of the UAW International and the practice of its locals. Many resisted equal rights at the workplace by agreeing to

contracts that called for outright discrimination in hiring, wages and seniority. Throughout the 1950s, some refused to bargain for the union's model maternity leave clause (granting six months' unpaid leave, which could be extended for medical reasons for another six months) or accept married women's right to work. The International Executive Board rarely made women's rights a priority, though it would chastise locals for flagrant abuses of union policy. It also would protest when management and local officials blatantly undermined equality, as with single seniority lists established only to assign women to the hardest jobs in their classification in order to force them to quit and thus relinquish their seniority.²⁴

Whether to push for a federal tax deduction for child care expenses in the early 1950s generated conflict within the UAW. Child care, the leadership argued, enabled women to support families. In the midst of the Korean War, it asked the federal government to adequately fund 'well supervised day care centers' (as did the UE).²⁵ But support beyond wartime mobilization generated opposition within the rank and file, which objected to a proposed change in the tax code to permit low-income married women to deduct expenses incurred as a result of going to work. 'I cannot quite see eye to eye with the thinking of a man and wife both being employed who have someone else to take care of their children, or letting their children take care of themselves, and getting an allowance because the wife is working, and having a double income', one resentful Milwaukee delegate to the 1953 convention admitted.²⁶ As another union brother explained, 'Once we organize the husbands, they'll [the women] go back into the home'.²⁷

Women delegates, in contrast, viewed wage-earning mothers in terms that anticipated later second-wave feminist arguments. Szur would contend, 'a woman who works and leaves her children at home, a normal, good mother, sees that they have adequate care. It is not the quantity of the time they spend with the children; it is the quality of the training they give them while they are with them.' While detractors associated maternal employment with juvenile delinquency, another woman delegate presented the UAW leadership position that working mothers understood: 'an even greater contributor to delinquency is poverty and want'.²⁸ Indeed, union leaders framed the tax break in terms of class equity. Wage-earning women 'should be entitled to deduct operating expenses' just like 'organizations that are in the business of making profits', one claimed.²⁹ Soon afterwards the UAW Women's Department boasted that it 'made a significant contribution to the enactment of the Federal Income Tax allowances to working women for the care of children'.³⁰

In the 1960s, however, the UAW followed rather than led on child care. According to Gabin, 'the Women's Department and union feminists began calling for a national child care policy only after women workers complained that the persistent scheduling of mandatory overtime wreaked havoc with individual child-care arrangements'. Gender equality meant, as she reminds us, women subjected to a male norm, rather than men coming under the protections against excessive hours for women, which the courts struck down in the late 1960s in keeping with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.³¹

UAW women long had objected to most protective legislation. Covered by union contract, they viewed women's labour laws as tools of management and of hostile male workers who sought to limit their opportunities and pay. Despite 'equal pay and seniority rights in the contract', North American Aviation delegate Beatrice Turner from Los Angeles complained to the 1962 convention, 'the state laws are being used by the company... to by-pass women in jobs in the matter of grading, overtime, layoff in line of seniority'. She only wanted 'equality'.³² Opposition to hours and weight restrictions distinguished the UAW from its allies in the US Women's Bureau and among trade union women in female-dominated occupations, who more often benefited from women's labour legislation than those in male-dominated or mixed-sex industries.³³

Given this critique, it is not surprising that Caroline Davis and Dorothy Haener from the UAW Women's Department were among the founders of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 or that they initially provided clerical services to that fledgling organization. But male leadership upheld the boilerplate opposition to the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) that characterized most trade unions and forced the women to end material support of NOW.³⁴ Throughout the 1950s, the UAW had endorsed the Women's Status Bill that defended sex-based provisions believed to be in the interest of working-class women.³⁵ As late as 1965, the union warned that the ERA would negate rights women possessed 'under divorce laws, health and safety provisions on jobs, the protection of the courts for their children, or against sexual exploitation; minimum pay provisions applicable to women only'. It also would inhibit passage of maternity leave and benefit laws and 'jeopardize' social security allowances for wives.³⁶

In the early 1970s, following the legal dismantling of protective labour laws, the union threw its support to the ERA. But it always felt that protection under union contract promised more than such laws. As one male delegate explained in 1962, 'unless you have a strong maternity

clause, management would have a right to deny a leave of absence...'. The model maternity clause protected seniority, and the UAW Women's Department touted it as 'How To Respect Motherhood'.³⁷ Still, the Women's Department recognized state-based Western European alternatives to its contractual, that is, essentially private, rights. These included family allowances, 'which are in no sense relief payments', marriage grants, hot lunches for children, rent allowances and paid vacations. By the mid-1960s, it was asking for paid maternity leave on the European model.³⁸

The Women's Department proved to be ahead of the rest of the leadership by becoming active in the welfare rights movement of poor single mothers. A major proponent of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty,³⁹ the UAW actually embodied the contradictions of liberalism, embracing both the first steps toward workfare (labour as a condition for receiving welfare benefits) and a guaranteed income regardless of labour force participation for poor single mothers. Committed to work, as an organization that derived its rationale from employment, it nonetheless retained the belief that mothers of small children should remain at home. Desire to protect the union wage framed policy toward the social wage. It preferred 'to minimize the need for public welfare by strengthening the Social Security system and attacking the root causes of poverty'.⁴⁰

Thus the UAW campaigned for Great Society programmes that reinforced the separation between the relatively generous benefits available to its own members and the social services grudgingly offered to the poor. To the extent that union contracts provided benefits, they undermined the support of trade unionists for the taxation necessary for universal social rights to the disadvantage of uncovered white women and racial minorities. This was not foreordained, but political. The union never challenged larger divisions of labour, nor did it forge internal rules to mitigate the disproportionate layoffs and discriminatory practices that restricted not only married but all women's seniority.

At its best, it offered an alternative vision that, if fully implemented, could have placed women's right to earn on a firmer basis. That possibility required a state capable of guaranteeing social citizenship for women in ways to bypass inequalities built into collective bargaining. But the drain of the Vietnam War, backlash against the civil rights movement, and the shift from neo-maternalist to punitive 'rehabilitative' welfare policy undermined the social democratic possibilities of the mid-1960s.⁴¹ Workplace equality was not sufficient.

Trade union feminists

In the early 1970s, the UAW more directly addressed women's concerns, endorsing a nationally financed child care system, demands for pregnancy to be treated like any other temporary disability, abortion rights and family planning, opposition to rape and other forms of violence against women, and a call for equalization of social security benefits upon divorce or remarriage.⁴² These positions responded to the demands of wage-earning women who organized across unions and apart from mainstream feminism. UAW women played a major role in this activity.⁴³

The women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s articulated women's universal right to work, but its initial focus was more on the civil than on the social aspects of this right. That is, feminists first sought to end discrimination and remove barriers to education, training, hiring and advancement, and only subsequently defined the need for maternity leave, pregnancy benefits, child care and other services that would allow all women to avail themselves of these opportunities. This narrow focus was no doubt an artifact of the make-up of the early feminist movement, which tended to be young, single, white and middle-class. But the stance became self-perpetuating, as working-class wage-earning women stayed away in droves from the 'libbers', whom they saw as classbound and even antagonistic to their own concerns. As one labour studies scholar put it in the mid-1970s, 'The middle-income woman's interest in work as a career, or as a device for self-actualization, is something only remotely related to the blue-collar worker's interest in improvements to the quality of her work life'.⁴⁴

Despite alienation from feminism, wage-earning women understood that their employment problems were primarily rooted in their gender. With the founding of the Coalition of Labour Union Women (CLUW) in 1974, they were able to bring women's concerns to the fore of the labour movement as never before. While avoiding the most blatant feminist rhetoric and issues, CLUW helped to sharpen understandings of women's special needs as workers. These included both an end to discrimination in hiring, equal pay for equal work and for work of comparable worth, and equal access to training and opportunities for advancement, on the one hand, *and* child care, elder care, maternity leave, housing and transportation, on the other. Although not phrased as such, fulfilment of these needs – for both economic security and

practical provisions – fell into the categories we have identified as civil and social citizenship.

The formation of CLUW was the culmination of several years of activism among wage-earning women across the country. Its founding convention attracted some 3200 participants representing dozens of different unions.⁴⁵ From the beginning, its agenda was a dual one that included claims for both civil and social citizenship. The call for the national founding conference stated that it would consider 'positive action in the areas of equal pay, equal rights, adequate maternity benefits and child care, equitable hiring and promotion practices, adequate minimum wage, upgrading and affirmative action, organizing the unorganized women workers and equitable representation of women in union structures and policy making decisions'.⁴⁶

CLUW also saw the need to develop a dual strategy that would simultaneously push unions to address women's concerns within their own structures and procedures as well as in collective bargaining, *and* seek to advance women's rights through legislation at the federal and state level. Such a strategy had several advantages. First, it would help mobilize labour's support for legislation that was in the interest of wage-earning women – support which many women unionists felt had been lacking at crucial moments in the past.⁴⁷ Second, CLUW leaders realized that broadscale, permanent gains could be made only through legislation, not through collective bargaining, which was necessarily limited to the specific group under contract and was also vulnerable to subsequent negotiations. Legislation, especially at the federal level, could potentially define universal rights and establish benefits and services based on greater resources than could be offered by individual employers. Moreover, passage of the equal rights bills of the 1960s made the legislative climate more propitious for women.⁴⁸

Finally, addressing women's issues might help shore up the sagging fortunes of a trade union movement under political and economic assault. Rather than dwelling on the movement's past neglect of and discrimination against women (though inevitably there was some of that), CLUW leaders sought to focus trade union attention on wage-earning women. They constituted the most likely source of new membership for many unions, and could benefit from whatever remaining clout labour had to offer.⁴⁹

One of CLUW's major policy concerns was child care; whenever trade union women gathered, this issue invariably came up.⁵⁰ Thus CLUW members who planned the First New York Trade Union Women's Conference made a point of providing child care for all attendees who

needed it.⁵¹ Though unions had traditionally paid little attention to child care, by the early 1960s, this was beginning to change. In 1963 the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACW) established a number of child care centres in Baltimore, Chicago, and several towns in Virginia with employer sponsorship gained through collective bargaining.⁵² Not surprisingly, two ACW staff members, Joyce Miller and Connie Kopelov, spearheaded child care activities within CLUW, Kopelov in New York and Miller at the national level.⁵³

Despite their union's success at the bargaining table, both women were adamant about the need for government support for child care provisions. About ACW centres, Kopelov pointed out that 'because of the geography of New York in which residence and workplace are scattered and far apart, government action, not collective bargaining, is the only way child care can be achieved here'.⁵⁴ Noting the role of civic organizations as well as employers in sponsoring child care, Miller argued: 'these scattered efforts, however worthwhile, are clearly far from enough. The only real answer is a massive federal commitment to the provision of early childhood development and day care. ... Individual efforts or private group efforts will always be too few, too costly, or too limited.'⁵⁵

Reflecting the political orientation of her union, Miller believed that social democratic welfare systems were superior to the public/private arrangements that prevailed in the US. To bolster her arguments for child care, Miller used the examples of other advanced industrial societies that had developed noteworthy provisions in this area of social welfare. In 1977, with the support of a \$97 000 grant from the German Marshall Fund, CLUW sent a 20-member delegation to study child care provisions in Israel, Sweden and France. The delegates were struck by the fact that in each country, 'child care is part of a comprehensive policy on families and children which supports the family and provides the stability and security it needs'.⁵⁶

It is unclear whether the delegates were actually so naive as to assume that it would be easy to get the liberal US to adopt the child care policies of social democratic and corporatist states like Sweden, Israel and France. Nevertheless, CLUW leaders continued to uphold the child care policies of these countries as a model, while they simultaneously struggled for piecemeal gains in child care both through collective bargaining and with the government at all levels. In March 1979 they organized a Labour Conference on Child Care to commemorate the International Year of the Child, calling on the AFL-CIO, the UAW, and the Teamsters for support. At the same time they distributed a

model resolution demanding passage of National Quality Child Care legislation for unions to adopt at their annual conventions and alerted local CLUW chapters to a national petition campaign supporting the same legislation.⁵⁷ When Senator Alan Cranston (D-California), chair of the Subcommittee on Child and Human Development, decided to remove the bill from the legislative agenda of the 96th Congress, Miller wrote him an irate letter. She explained: 'For us, child care is always on the agenda – it is the number one item for the women who are members of CLUW and their individual unions'.⁵⁸

The AFL–CIO responded to CLUW's call, but tempered it with a dose of political realism. The labour coalition had been calling for a 'massive federal commitment' to child care since the 1960s, renewing its efforts after Nixon vetoed the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971.⁵⁹ At its 1983 convention, the Executive Council decided to revise its position in light of the growing conservative political climate under the Reagan administration. While formally embracing 'a massive federal commitment to providing early childhood development and quality child care services', it had grown weary of 'the likelihood of a national solution'. Thus it pledged 'even greater emphasis on seeking assistance through the collective bargaining process'.⁶⁰

While this position expressed a clear commitment to the needs of women workers, it also had the effect of reinforcing the Reagan administration's overall effort to privatize social provision – a move that would have significant impact on working women, as we shall see shortly. Ironically, the unions that had the greatest success in bargaining for child care were those that represented government employees – the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).⁶¹ Despite their own achievements, however, these joined with other individual unions and CLUW to campaign for federal support. Calling the need 'urgent' in 1987, SEIU envisioned as first steps 'increase[ed] federal funding' and passage of 'child care legislation designed to increase the supply, quality, and affordability of child care'.⁶²

The New York CLUW chapter (NYCLUW), whose child care committee was chaired for many years by Kopelov, also followed a dual strategy. In terms of public support, they participated in campaigns to preserve and extend city and state support for child care. Since the end of the Second World War, both New York City and New York State had underwritten child care for low-income families, but support was always politically vulnerable. Working in coalition with other organizations, including District Council 1707 of AFSCME, which represented

public child care workers, NYCLUW fought to maintain funding, increase workers' wages, and improve working conditions.⁶³ At the same time the chapter pushed for employer-supported child care. In October 1985 the chapter published *Bargaining for Child Care*, a booklet distributed by the national organization. Many chapter members, however, remained ambivalent about the value of employer-supported provisions. At a public hearing held by the New York State Commission on Child Care in September, 1985, Alice Tse, chair of the Chinese Committee of CLUW, testified, 'There are only 70 spaces in the Garment Industry Day Care Center [which had been established at the behest of the ILGWU in the early 1970s] – it's almost like winning the lotto to get in!'⁶⁴

Child care was only one of the social rights CLUW members believed were essential for wage-earning women. Early on, the organization had also become involved in the struggle for pregnancy and maternity benefits. In 1976, addressing a Women's Leadership Rally convened by the Committee for National Health Insurance, Olga Madar, a UAW staff member and CLUW's first national president, pointed to several ways in which health insurance plans discriminated against wage-earning women. Among other drawbacks, many plans denied maternity benefits to women who were on leave from work when they gave birth, offered the wives of male employees more benefits than they did female employees, and provided maternity benefits to women only if they named their husbands as dependants on a group policy (thus making it clear that they, not their husbands, were heads of household). Madar called on labour, and on union women in particular, to support the Kennedy–Corman bill, then before Congress, which would establish a national health insurance programme administered by the Social Security administration.⁶⁵ If passed, the bill (which failed) would have effectively eliminated the need for most private health insurance companies and offered universal benefits that did not subject women's health care to the vicissitudes of collective bargaining or the interests of market-driven insurers.

Aligning CLUW with a number of trade unions and other women's groups, Madar also condemned the 1976 Supreme Court decision in a suit brought by the IUE against General Electric (*General Electric Company v. Gilbert*). Overturning a lower-court decision, the justices declared that GE was not engaging in sex discrimination when it denied disability benefits to pregnant women while covering men for 'the treatment of such things as hair transplant, prostate operations, and alcoholism'.⁶⁶ While calling the decision 'illogical and unfair',

Madar seized upon it as an opportunity to institute CLUW's dual strategy. On the one hand, pointing out that such decisions demonstrated the importance of the labour movement to protect women, she urged 'those women who are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement to organize and join unions'. On the other, she called for a coalition of unions, women's organizations and civil rights groups to put pressure on Congress 'to amend Title VII... so that sex discrimination in disability plans clearly will be illegal'.⁶⁷

Under the leadership of Ruth Weyland, Associate Counsel to the IUE, a coalition soon began to form.⁶⁸ In Houston in November 1976, CLUW pushed the first National Women's Conference to adopt a plank favouring pregnancy legislation. Then, along with more than 300 other organizations, including unions, civil rights and women's groups, it launched a Campaign to End Discrimination Against Pregnant Workers. At hearings on the bill in Spring 1977, Alexis Herman, then director of the Women's Bureau, voiced the Carter administration's support.⁶⁹ This joint pressure ultimately led to the passage of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA) amending Title VII, which took effect in April 1979. The act outlawed all forms of discrimination against women on the basis of pregnancy or related medical conditions; in addition to disability pay and health coverage, it guaranteed seniority to women returning to the same job after disability leave for pregnancy and childbirth.⁷⁰

But passage of the PDA did not end CLUW's concern with parenthood. In the mid-1980s, the New York City CLUW Committee on Child Care began to redefine maternity leave, calling instead for parental leave. 'The current maternity leave plans link maternity leave with disability', the committee noted. 'This has resulted in some cases in reducing the amount of maternity leave available.'⁷¹ By 1986, momentum for the Family Medical Leave Act was building, and CLUW joined in, mobilizing both the national organization and local chapters.⁷²

The push for parental leave, along with the formation of a Family and Work Issues Committee, signalled a new orientation for CLUW – an emphasis on the needs of the *family*, as opposed to those of wage-earning women alone. Though many of the issues were the same, the new framing accorded better with the political culture of the Reagan era, allowing CLUW to avoid being labelled as a feminist organization while capitalizing on pro-family rhetoric in the interest of working-class families. This strategy culminated in the staging of a major national demonstration, the American Family Celebration, in Washington, DC in May

1988. Participants demanded 'responsible government action *now* for a national family policy' that would include 'family and medical leave, quality child care, services for the elderly, comprehensive health care, equality in quality education and economic justice'.⁷³

CLUW rationalized its demands with reference to both local and global factors. Locally, Republican policies had created a crisis situation for working families. With more than half of American mothers of children under six in the labour force, the need for social provisions was greater than ever. Yet, as a model resolution distributed by CLUW pointed out, '60% of American women have no guaranteed maternity leave and the Reagan administration has cut funding for child care by 28%'.⁷⁴ Cuts in health care, along with worsening poverty rates, also disproportionately affected women, minorities, the elderly and children. All of these conditions exacerbated women's double burden of wage-earning and caring, but many of them could be relieved by 'a comprehensive, national policy to strengthen working families'. Once again reaching beyond national boundaries to make her point, CLUW president Joyce Miller declared: 'Incredibly enough, the United States is the only industrial nation – except for South Africa – that does not have a national family policy.... This is an absolute disgrace, and cannot be tolerated any longer.'⁷⁵

CLUW's immediate goal was to put family policy on the agenda for the upcoming presidential election. The American Family Celebration drew thousands of participants and received endorsements from dozens of civil rights, social welfare, labour and feminist organizations and also won bi-partisan support in Congress, where both House and Senate passed resolutions supporting the event and the principles for which it stood. But its long-term impact was muted as Republicans retained control of the White House. Of all the demands made by CLUW, family and medical leave was the only one to emerge more or less unscathed from the legislative process; others, such as child care and health care, underwent major distortions and dilutions that effectively undermined CLUW's original intentions, but even the Family and Medical Leave Act (FLMA), after twice passing Congress, had to await the election of Bill Clinton to become law.⁷⁶

While successive Republican administrations effectively stunted the growth of the public welfare sector, they actively promoted expansion of private-sector welfare, that is, of benefits offered either through employers or through the market. Such a distribution of social provisions, as we argued above, puts women, especially low-income women and minorities, at a severe disadvantage. This was especially true in the

area of child care, where union initiatives proved less efficacious than independent management prerogatives when it came to deciding whether to create employer-sponsored services. ACTWU's (formerly ACW) Chicago centre closed down due to under-use as dozens of plants left the country, but smaller but highly-capitalized non-union firms in fields such as high-tech and finance decided to start on-site facilities to accommodate highly paid personnel who were costly to train. Even so, progress in this area of social provision was slow. By 1987, only 2500 out of some six million American firms – less than 0.5 per cent – were offering some type of child care benefits.⁷⁷

As a result of this skewed, public–private pattern of welfare, most of the rights that make up social citizenship for American women remain primarily the prerogative of middle- and upper-income females. While the FMLA guarantees employees their jobs after returning from leave to give birth or care for a family member, only the most highly-paid women, or those who can depend on other forms of support, can afford to avail themselves of this right. Moderate-income women are ineligible for subsidized public child care but seldom have access to, or can afford to purchase, high-quality employer-supported or market-provided services. Federal law now requires employers to provide equal medical and disability benefits for pregnancy and related medical conditions, but many women workers, particularly new entrants to the labour force, are not entitled to medical insurance, either because their employers do not provide it or they have not worked long enough to receive benefits.

Partly as a result of women's mobilization both inside and outside of the labour movement, in government, and in feminist organizations, and partly as an artifact of the economy, the postwar labour force participation rates of American women have consistently been among the highest in the world, and the US labour market has become more gender-integrated than that in most other advanced industrial societies. Yet while American women enjoy this and other civil rights to a greater extent than do women elsewhere, they do so without the assistance and security of most social rights – rights which women in many other modern societies take for granted. This means that for American women, freedom *from* discrimination (and even this is not assured) does not necessarily entail freedom *to* pursue education or training, work at a financially and psychologically rewarding job, build a career *and* care for oneself and others. Thus the gap between social and civil

rights remains one of the dubious hallmarks of American exceptionalism at the end of the twentieth century.

Notes

1. T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950; reprint, London: Pluto Press, 1992).
2. See N. Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997) Chapter 2: 'After the Family Wage: A Postindustrial Thought Experiment', pp. 41–66.
3. As quoted in S. M. Hartmann, *The Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) p. 59.
4. On the creation of a private welfare state, see Nelson Lichtenstein, 'From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labour and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era' in S. Fraser and G. Gerstle (eds), *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) pp. 122–52; N. Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labour* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); and K. Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945–1968* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
5. For an extended discussion of the dynamics of public–private welfare state regimes, see G. Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
6. The term residualist comes from R. Titmuss, *Essays on the Welfare State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).
7. [Betty Goldstein (Friedan)], *UE Fights for Women Workers*, UE Publication no. 232, (New York: June 1952), inside front cover.
8. Letter to Walter B. Reuther from Lee Romano and William R. Hood, Ford Local 600, 16 September 1948, UAW Fair Practices Collection, box 14, folder 24, Archives of Labour and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University [hereafter, Wayne State].
9. *UE Fights for Women Workers*, pp. 4, 39.
10. Robert Zieger, *The CIO, 1935–1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) p. 285.
11. For the roots of these structural factors see R. Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); see also, N. F. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935–1975* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); for race, T. J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) pp. 17–31, 91–177.
12. J. Quadagno, 'Women's Access to Pensions and the Structure of Eligibility Rules: Systems of Production and Reproduction', *Sociological Quarterly* 29 (1988) pp. 541–58.
13. Quoted in Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man*, p. 200.
14. Hartmann, *The Other Feminists*, pp. 19–24.

15. *Ibid.* pp. 43–6.
16. On the forming of these departments, see Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man*, p. 211; Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement*, p. 93; Report of UAW President Walter P. Reuther to the 16th Constitutional Convention of the International Union, United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), Atlantic City, 7–12 April 1957, 171-D; Report of UAW–CIO President Walter P. Reuther to the 15th Constitutional Convention of the International Union, United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW–CIO) (Cleveland, 27 March–1 April 1955) 7, 93-D.
17. 'Job Security for Women Workers', *Proceedings of the 15th Constitutional Convention of the International Union, United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW–CIO)*, Cleveland, 27 March–1 April 1955, pp. 51–2.
18. Walter P. Reuther, 'The Great Principle That Led to the Greatest Social Victory in History' in UAW–CIO Women's Bureau, *Women Then and Now* (Detroit: Solidarity House, September 1954), box 8, folder 50, p. 6, UAW Women's Department; Dorothy Haener Papers, Wayne State (hereafter UAW Women's Department); Caroline Davis, 'Women's Department' in Report of UAW President Walter P. Reuther to the 16th Constitutional Convention, 170-D.
19. Memo to Caroline Davis and Lillian Hatcher from William H. Oliver, 12 April 1949; Memo to Walter P. Reuther from Caroline Davis on 'Contract Provisions Against Women Workers', 16 May 1949, and other documents, box 15, folder 27, UAW Women's Department.
20. All of these arguments are present in UAW–CIO Women's Bureau, *Women Then and Now*, pp. 7, 15–21, 25. Another reason became 'Women work not only because they need the wages, but also because the country needs them' because of their skills: p. 23.
21. *Proceedings of the 15th Constitutional Convention*, p. 56; *Proceedings, 18th Constitutional Convention, International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)* (Atlantic City, 4–10 May 1962) p. 152.
22. *Women Then and Now*, pp. 2, 25.
23. Letter from Paul Booth to Sister Davis, 8 August 1960, box 15, folder 20, p. 4, UAW Women's Department.
24. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement*.
25. 'Women in Industry', *Proceedings of the 14th Constitutional Convention of the United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW–CIO)*, Atlantic City, 22–27 March 1953, p. 60.
26. *Proceedings of the 14th Constitutional Convention*, pp. 63–4.
27. *Proceedings of the 15th Constitutional Convention*, p. 60.
28. *Ibid.* pp. 56, 53.
29. *Ibid.* p. 62.
30. *Women Then and Now*, p. 37. But this claim is crossed out in the archival copy in what looks like revisions for a new printing – perhaps a response to women as well as men who felt that tax breaks were unfair to those unable to benefit from them.
31. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labour Movement*, p. 209.

32. 'Women Workers', *Proceedings of the 18th Constitutional Convention*, p. 149.
33. On hours, for example, memo to Wm. Bowman, Wm. Lattimore, Gene Wilson, Jack Edwards from Lillian Hatcher, 19 January 1950, box 14, folder 2, UAW Fair Practices Papers. On weights, letter to Caroline Davis, Director of Women's Department, from Ann Le Febvre, Chairman of Women's Council Douglas Aircraft Local #148, 18 February 1962, which explains: 'I have many copies of memos sent out by supervision stating that women may not be promoted or employed in their departments because of the 25lb weight restriction and the 8 hr. law', box 15, folder 5, UAW Women's Department.
34. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement*, pp. 200–1, 208–9; B. O'Farrell and J. L. Kornbluh, *Rocking the Boat: Union Women's Voices, 1915–1975* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996) Chapter 8: 'Sometimes You Have to Rock the Boat: Dorothy Haener, United Auto Workers (1918–)' pp. 159–83.
35. 'Job Security for Women Workers', p. 52. On the Women's Status Bill, see C. Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues 1946–1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) pp. 26–30. On state laws regulating childbirth and employment, 'Some Laws that Affect Women', *Women Then and Now*, p. 31.
36. 'Twenty-five Ways to Look at Working Women', c. 1965, box 8, folder 50, p. 3, UAW Women's Bureau, Dorothy Haener Papers.
37. *Proceedings of the 18th Constitutional Convention*, p. 153; *Women Then and Now*, p. 29.
38. *Women Then and Now*, p. 32; 'Twenty-five Ways to Look at Working Women', p. 5.
39. Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man*, pp. 389–92. For an example of its larger social democratic programme, 'Economic and Social Security for All', *Proceedings of the 20th Constitutional Convention, International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)*, Long Beach, 16–21 May 1966, pp. 431–7.
40. 'Social Security', *Proceedings of the 19th Constitutional Convention, International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)*, Atlantic City, 20–27 March 1964, pp. 248–50; see materials in UAW Women's Department, Dorothy Haener Collection, box 8, folder 31; box 10, folder 2; box 19, folder 12.
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42. 'Women's Rights', *Proceedings of the 24th Constitutional Convention, International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)*, Los Angeles, 2–6 June 1974, pp. 339–44.
43. The most comprehensive study of trade union feminism is D. S. Cobble, 'Recapturing Working-Class Feminism: Union Women in the Postwar Era' in J. Meyerowitz (ed.), *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) pp. 57–83.
44. E. E. Raphael, 'Working Women and their Membership in Labour Unions', *Monthly Labour Review* (May 1974) p. 32.
45. D. Balsler, *Sisterhood & Solidarity: Feminism and Labour in Modern Times* (Boston: South End Press, 1987) pp. 153–8, quote on p. 158. The conference

- was sponsored by the Trade Union Women's Seminar of the New York State School of Labour and Industrial Relations at Cornell: Connie Kopelov, 'Summary, First New York Trade Union Women's Conference', box 1, folder 35, p. 3, Connie Kopelov Papers, Tamiment Library, New York University [hereafter CK Papers].
46. Statement of purpose adopted at the CLUW National Planning Committee Meeting, Chicago, 25–26 January 1974; quoted in Balsler, *Sisterhood*, p. 158.
 47. As a speaker at the New York Women's Trade Union Conference contended, 'Nixon could veto the [1971 child care] bill because the labour movement was not pushing hard on this issue': Pamella Farley, 'New York Women's Trade Union Conference', *PSC Clarion*, 28 February 1974, p. 4.
 48. These include the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
 49. Balsler, *Sisterhood*, Chapter 7.
 50. See, for example, Kopelov, 'Summary', pp. 8–9; Ford Foundation, Conference Report, 'Women in Blue-Collar Jobs', box 1, folder 34, p. 16, CK Papers; Women's Caucus of the Washington State Labour Council, 'What Do Women Want? Changing Roles of Women in the AFL–CIO', leaflet, box 2, folder 8, Betsy Wade Papers, Tamiment Library.
 51. Kopelov, 'Summary', p. 4.
 52. 'Clothing Union Opens Model Day Care Unit', *AFL–CIO News*, 1 May 1976.
 53. Kopelov was Associate National Education Director of ACW and the first vice-president of NY CLUW; Miller was East Coast Vice President of ACW, the first vice president and second president of national CLUW, and eventually a member of the AFL–CIO Executive Council.
 54. Connie Kopelov, Testimony, NYCLUW Panel, NYC Commission on Human Relations on Sex Segregated Industries, 24 April 1975, box 1, folder 34, p. 2, CK Papers.
 55. J. D. Miller, 'The Urgency of Child Care', *American Federationist* (June 1975) pp. 5–13.
 56. J. D. Miller, foreword to 'A Commitment to Child Care', pamphlet prepared by Ruth Gordon (n.p., n.d. [NYCCLUW, 1977]), box 1, folder: CLUW-NYC-Child Care Committee, Joan L. Cohen papers, Tamiment Library [hereafter Child Care, JLC papers].
 57. CLUW Child Care Task Force to All CLUW Chapters, memo, March 1979; CLUW, 'Model Resolution for adoption by international unions', 1979, Child Care, JLC papers.
 58. *Ibid.*
 59. D. B. Cornfield, 'Labour Unions, Corporations, and Families: Institutional Competition in the Provision of Social Welfare' in R. S. Hanks and M. B. Sussman (eds), *Corporations, Businesses, and Families* (New York: Hayworth, 1990) p. 47.
 60. AFL–CIO, *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Constitutional Convention* (Washington, D.C.: AFL–CIO, 1983) vol. 2, p. 170.
 61. Cornfield, 'Labour Unions', p. 49.
 62. SEIU, *Who's Minding the Children?* (Washington, DC: SEIU, 1987).
 63. See, for example, box 1, folder: NYCCLUW, Minutes, etc., 1981, CK papers; and Child Care, JLC papers.

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65. Olga Madar, 'Discrimination Against Women in Current Health Insurance Programs', address to Women's Leadership Rally on National Health Insurance, 9–10 March 1976, Washington, DC, box 216, folder: CLUW-NYC, Amalgamated Clothing Workers papers, Wayne State University. See also J. Randall, 'Health Surety for Women Held Unfair', *New York Daily News*, 20 March 1976, p. 39; and S. Auerbach, 'Sex and Double Standards in Health Insurance', *Washington Post*, 10 March 1976.
66. *General Electric Company v. Gilbert*, 429 U.S. 125 (1976); "'No" to Pregnancy Disability Pay', *CLUW News*, 2, 3 (Winter 1976) p. 1.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Hartmann, *The Other Feminists*, pp. 43–6.
69. D. S. Curry, 'Washington Wrap-Up', *CLUW News*, 3 (Spring 1977) p. 5.
70. Women's Occupational Health Resource Center, 'Fact Sheet: The Pregnancy Discrimination Act', n.d. [1979?], p. 1; for controversy over maternity policy, see L. Vogel, *Mothers on the Job: Maternity Policy in the US Workplace* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993) Chapter 3.
71. Child Care, Inc., Summary Notes, NYC CLUW Committee on Child Care, 21 January 1985, p. 1, Child Care, JLC papers.
72. See box 1, folder: CLUW-NYC, Family and Work Issues Committee, JLC papers.
73. 'Our Nation Needs Strong Families', flyer for American Family Celebration, n.d. [April or May 1988], box 1, folder: American Family Celebration, JLC papers [hereafter AFC], #1; for a critique of this strategy, M. F. Berry, *The Politics of Parenthood: Child Care, Women's Rights, and the Myth of the Good Mother* (New York: Viking, 1993) pp. 171–95.
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75. 'Women's Civil Rights and Religious Groups Join Unions in Call for National Family Policy', article for placement in union publications, February 1988, AFC #1.
76. For a history of this legislation, see Vogel, *Mothers*, pp. 106–13.
77. S. Michel, *Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) p. 257.

14

The Status of Widows in Bangladesh

Shirin Akhtar

Marriage and widowhood have been the two major turning points in women's life in the Indian subcontinent throughout the ages. Early marriage with an older man was a common phenomenon in pre-Colonial Indian society, and so was widowhood at a minor age. The non-existence of the custom of widow remarriage and the absence of the right of inheritance to a father's or husband's property added to the plight of the widows who had to spend the rest of their lives as unwelcome dependants of their in-laws or parental families. The practice of *sahamarana* (the burning of a widow with her husband's corpse) and *anumarana* (the burning of a widow after the cremation of her husband) might have had their origin as a remedial measure against the burden of maintaining the female members, widowed at an early age. However Islam, Christianity and, above all, the long British rule, impacted on this traditional usage in the country. Hence, it is noticeable that in Colonial India, the number of child marriages below the age of ten declined. In 1911, more than 70 per cent of all girls were married or widowed before they reached 15 but by 1931 the number had fallen to fewer than 50 per cent.¹ The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 was to a certain degree responsible for the change of a long standing custom. An attempt had even been made previously during the 1850s to introduce remarriage among the Hindu widows. The Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, however, failed to achieve the desired goal because the concept was opposed to the traditional attitude of the then conservative society. The position of the Muslim widows, though far from ideal, was better because of canonic sanctions of remarriage and inheritance of paternal and husbands' properties. Thus in 1931, the number of women who were widows was one in four among the Hindus while one in eight among the Muslims.²

With such a background, the present study is a modest attempt to evaluate the status of widows in Bangladesh, a country with a pluralistic social structure. In religious adherence the majority (88.3 per cent) of the population are Muslims, 10.5 per cent are Hindus and the rest are Christians, Buddhists and the tribal people.³ As in other parts of the subcontinent, in Bangladesh every citizen is governed by two sets of laws, namely the general law of the land which is secular, and the personal law, set by the religion of the community to which one belongs. Consequently, the practices and problems of widows are varied in consonance with the different religious and ethnic groups.

Although a certain number of articles and monographs on the widowhood have been published in the West, the subject is still a neglected part of historical research in Bangladesh. Women constitute half of the population of Bangladesh, of whom about 5.8 per cent are widows.⁴ In such a situation, the status of widows warrants an empirical study. In dealing with this uncharted field of social history, one is faced with the scarcity of literature. Such a deficiency could be overcome by narrative data through in-depth interviews with the widows.⁵ Such narrative data are important because they 'provide the researchers with the richest and thickest source of explicating their subjects' understanding of their lives'.⁶ In fact, the accounts of the widows themselves give the researchers a first hand knowledge of their emotional experience of losing their husbands as well as their identity in the society. The present study is the outcome of personal contact with widowed friends and relations of mine, an individual survey carried out among a cross-section of the population in a given locality, and the scanty literature at hand.

In Bangladesh society where men and women do not have an equal footing and women are traditionally subordinate to men, widows are not generally supposed to fare better. In both the Hindu and Muslim families, a daughter-in-law enjoys a secondary position. Having no direct access to male protection, widows are usually at the bottom of the hierarchy especially in the joint family structure. However, in addition to the sudden emotional stress, widows irrespective of their age need not only economic assistance but also social support to keep them going.

Social status

Despite the fact that widowhood throughout the subcontinent has usually been a state of economic hardship and social deprivation, some

asymmetries exist within similarities in the duties and privations of widows among the different communities in Bangladesh. For example, the traditional Hindu belief, that if a woman predeceased her husband it would bring prosperity to the family, rendered a widow inauspicious in the family. The widow was pushed to the background and became an unwanted person even in social and religious festivals. Moreover, she was denied good clothes, jewellery and good food. And in this, there was little distinction between the rich and the poor since prohibitions attached to widowhood were part of an interpretation of the religion borrowed from *Kulin* ideology. An idea of the harshly prescribed and enforced fasting and other hardships vested on widows, including the child-widows, can be had from the description of an unnamed writer:

Bengalis are traditionally hostile towards the widow. This hostility can be discerned not only among uneducated lower class people, but among the *Bhadralok* as well. Parents, in-laws and other relations all the time look for faults on the part of the widow. The mistress of the house invariably becomes angry if the widow happens to wear good clothes, sleeps on a bed (instead of on the floor), sits on a good seat, eats good food and laughs with other women of her age. The widow can live in some honour only if her relations are kind and considerate, otherwise her life becomes unbearable.⁷

Traditionally, the Muslim widows were also relegated to a disadvantageous position in the family. Although there was no restriction about food or dress, nobody would have liked to see a widow indulge in luxury. With the change of outlook over the years, some social barriers have been removed, yet the psychological barriers continue to affect the social position of widows. Whereas a widower becomes an eligible bridegroom soon after the death of his wife, remarriage is not easy for widows. While a bachelor would always prefer a virgin as his bride, a widower also would think twice before taking a widow as his partner. Only when the problem of raising the children of his deceased wife comes to the forefront does a widower consider marrying a widow.

The available cross-cultural literature suggests that, throughout the ages, widow remarriage was normally prompted by a widow's need for economic support. Among the caste Hindus until recently, widow remarriage was regarded as an act of sin. Besides, knowing that possibilities of remarriage were remote, widows patiently endured the hardships at the instance of other widows.⁸ The fear of social stigma on the other hand stood in the way of popularization of widow remarriage

among the upper-class Muslims until the colonial period.⁹ Until recently in Bangladesh, as the avenues for independent earnings for women in general were rather limited, a widow with inherited property and pension (if any) of the deceased husband usually would prefer to remain single. Besides, a younger Muslim widow with dependent children would find it difficult to remarry because of the fear of losing rights of inheritance of her husband's property. Since Bangladesh is not a welfare state, no social security service is available in the form of unemployment benefit, child support, Medicare or home help. In fact the basic economic and social support and, importantly, the emotional support needed at the initial stage of widowhood are not easily available here. To make the matter worse, a young widow with or without children even if economically solvent often faces harassment or social constraints. In the male dominated society, the concept of female guardianship has yet to take root, especially in the rural areas. As a result, for personal security or for providing the children with a male guardian, young widows would choose to remarry. On the other hand, examples are common where bachelor or married males of the polygamous Muslim and Hindu societies lured or pressured widows to remarry in order to grab their properties. In many cases such remarriages ended in disaster in the absence of family protection or state intervention. Though the situation in the upper echelons of the society may not be so grim, loss of security and fear of harassment are the manifestations of disempowerment of a section of the women for no fault of their own. Table 14.1 demonstrates the comparatively desolate and often lonely marital status of the women in Bangladesh.¹⁰

Table 14.1 Distribution of population by marital status (aged ten years and over)

Year	Unmarried		Married		Widow/widower		Separated/divorced	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1961	15107	11026	10648	10697	541	2736	65	123
1974	22698	14198	13929	14067	415	2913	29	233
1981	27756	20923	16864	17268	371	3304	18	304
1991	15512	8664	21070	22292	225	3237	20	213
1991								
Rural	11716	6595	16566	18178	189	2723	16	161
1991								
Urban	3796	2067	4503	4113	36	514	04	52

Each population figure is to be multiplied by 1000.

Economic status

Despite the fact that many women today labour hard to earn a living for themselves and the members of their families, the dependency of women on the father, husband or son has remained a marked feature of their social status. In the past, for a woman to work outside the home for wages was considered shameful. It also meant the violation of the concept of *pardah* (seclusion and segregation from males) which is still a powerful social custom. Even in the first half of the twentieth century many liberal minded people were opposed to the idea of women's acceptance of salaried jobs.¹¹ In such a situation, the rural widows of agricultural families and the urban widows of artisans, traders or industrial background had to suffer more from economic hardships than from the ritual restrictions of widowhood. However, with the spread of female education and the overall changes in social values coupled with increased economic pressure on the family, the number of women seeking jobs has considerably increased in the last few decades, principally in the urban areas. Of the women seeking jobs in the rural areas, widows constitute a sizeable proportion. The figures in Table 14.2, for districts representing single administrative Divisions into which Bangladesh is divided, furnish supportive evidence.

Cultural, class and caste restrictions leave the rural women with limited job openings. One of the traditional independent income groups in the region has been the *dais* (traditional midwives) and widows

Table 14.2 Marital status of earning women in sample household¹²

<i>Status of women</i>	<i>Bogra district</i>	<i>Chittagong district</i>	<i>Dhaka district</i>	<i>Patuakhali district</i>	<i>Total</i>
Unmarried	–	–	01 (2.9)	02 (5.7)	03 (2.1)
Married	26 (74.3)	33 (94.3)	25 (71.5)	24 (68.6)	108 (77.1)
Widowed	06 (17.1)	01 (2.9)	02 (5.7)	06 (17.1)	15 (10.7)
Deserted	02 (5.7)	01 (2.9)	06 (17.1)	02 (5.7)	11 (7.9)
Divorced	01 (2.9)		01 (2.9)	01 (2.9)	03 (2.1)
Total	35	35	35	35	140

Figures in parenthesis denote the percentage of the groups in each column.

constitute a significant proportion of the *dais* in many rural areas in Bangladesh.¹³ In quite well-to-do families, elderly experienced widows with landed property would manage their estates in the absence of grown-up sons, or assist their sons if needed. A middle-aged widow on whom her sons can rely for her 'knowledge of farming and her thrift' gets the support and respect of even the daughters-in-law throughout 'old age to a peaceful death'.¹⁴

In the urban areas, a widow in a well-to-do family usually stays with the husband's family which takes the responsibility of raising the children. Middle-class educated widows often seek jobs to lead an independent life. A widow when competent is sometimes offered a job by the autonomous or semi-autonomous employer of the deceased husband. A recent survey¹⁵ of some 1000 married women in the port city of Chittagong shows that younger widows earn their own living, or depend on relief funds made available by charity organizations, while those aged 50 or above (about half of the widows interviewed) depend either on family help or the income from the inherited property.

The legal structure of any society has tremendous consequences for the status of widows. For instance, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Mexican and Hispanic American women were allowed by their civil laws to have an equal share of family property with their husbands and consequently were in a better position than Anglo-American women. It was only in the 1860s, with the passage of the Married Women's Property Acts, that Anglo-American women were allowed to inherit a part of their husbands' properties. In the changed situation the economic status of widows improved since they were empowered to dispose of the property bequeathed by their husbands at their discretion.¹⁶ In Bangladesh, sharp differences exist in the right of inheritance among the Muslim, Hindu and the tribal women, consonant with varied canonic and customary laws prevalent in the country. Hence the status of widows lacks uniformity in Bangladesh. A brief discussion of the varied laws of inheritance would clarify the position.

A Muslim woman is legally entitled to one-eighth of her husband's property and a half of what the brother would get of her parents' property. Although the *Sharia* laws granted Muslim women/widows some rights, the prevailing social norms preclude them from enjoying the benefits of such limited rights. The property claims are not smoothly settled. In the rural areas, a married woman often forsakes her right to her parents' property and thereby ensures her right to visit the paternal home once or twice a year. However, she would be lucky to get possession of the property if she needed it.¹⁷ The extended family system,

time-consuming civil suit practices and heavy legal expenses render it difficult either for the married daughter or the widow to take full advantage of the legally entitled property. Urban widows appear to be in a better position than their rural counterparts so far as the establishment of the right of inheritance is concerned.¹⁸ The assertion of property rights often leads to a situation of conflict resulting in the family's withdrawal of service or emotional support for the widow. This is very typical in the case of the marginalized women (widowed or divorced), dependent on the male members for their overall sustenance.

Again, a practice vetted by some canonical scholars was operative among the Muslims that if a son pre-deceased his father, the grandchildren would not inherit. This really hit the widow and her children hard. Such an obnoxious custom, however, came under severe criticism from feminist groups in Pakistan in the 1950s. By the Family Laws Ordinance of 1961, the grandchildren were entitled to inherit the property of their deceased parents.¹⁹ Unfortunately, like many other reform measures, this Ordinance also has not been fully operative in Bangladesh.

Among the minority Hindu community, females either as daughters or wives do not inherit property unless a will is made in their favour. Under the *Dayabagha* school of law, which is operative in Bangladesh in its original form, the wife can inherit her husband's property only in the absence of sons, grandsons and great-grandsons. The law, however, permits the husband to make a gift outright to his spouse.²⁰ Even then a widow is not allowed to sell the inherited property which on her death passes not to her daughter(s) but to the deceased husband's male heirs. In fact, the basic concept here is to provide the widow only with her maintenance. In a joint family, the widow's right to maintenance is almost assured but in a divided family, it is the obligation of the father-in-law to maintain the widowed daughter-in-law. After his death, the male heirs of the family are expected to look after the widow.²¹ Thus, the patriarchal social system and the absence of unqualified laws of female inheritance not only cause hardship to the widows but also enforce their dependence on the menfolk.

In the tribal societies governed by their own customary laws, the position of women and consequently widows is far more independent than other communities living in Bangladesh. Among the Garo and Khasiya tribes, which are matrilineal, the laws of inheritance decidedly go in favour of women. As Khasiya women are the main property holders, the inheritance descends from mother to daughter. On the other hand, among the matrilineal Chakmas and the Santhals, women are entitled to inherit property and to deal with it independently.²²

The above discussion gives an idea as to how the long-standing tradition of the country moulds the socio-economic status of widows in Bangladesh. It also brings to the fore the discriminatory laws relating to female inheritance which should be replaced in the light of the present day demand for equal human rights. In an age when gender issues such as the economic roles and political rights of women or marriage and family have been receiving a fair measure of attention from the social scientists and activists, the subject of widowhood with its attendant practices and woes should be taken up to put the status of widows in proper perspective.

Notes

1. G. Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849–1905* (Rajshahi: Sahitya Samsad Rajshahi University, 1983) pp. 180–2.
2. D. Engles, *Beyond Purdah? Women in Bengal 1890–1939* (Delhi: OUP., 1996) pp. 41–3.
3. *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh, 1997*, Revised edition (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1997) p. 32.
4. *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh, 1996* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1997) p. 30.
5. D. K. Van Den Hoonard, 'Identity Foreclosure: Women's Experience of Widowhood as Expressed in Autobiographical Accounts', *Ageing and Society*, 17 (1997) pp. 533–51, 537.
6. *Ibid.*
7. A Lady, 'Bamacharana', *Banbodhini Patrike* (March–April, 1871) pp. 366–367, quoted in Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante*, p. 188.
8. Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante*, p. 188.
9. S. N. Amin, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876–1939* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) p. 124.
10. Based on the *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh, 1996*, p. 30.
11. Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante*, p. 99.
12. S. R. Qadir, *Women's Income Earning Activities and Family Welfare in Bangladesh*, Research Report (Dhaka: UNICEF, November 1981) p. 16.
13. T. Blanchet, *Meanings and Rituals of Birth in Rural Bangladesh* (Dhaka: UPL., 1984) p. 141.
14. T. A. Abdullah and S. A. Zeidensatein, *Village Women in Bangladesh: Prospects for Change* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982) pp. 71–2.
15. J. Sultana, A Sample Survey, unpublished (Bangladesh: Jahangirnagar University, 1997).
16. I. Blom, 'The History of Widowhood: A Bibliographic Overview', *Journal of Family History*, 16, 2 (1991) pp. 191–210; 196.
17. S. Sobhan, *Legal Status of Women in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Law & International Affairs, 1978) p. 31.

18. R. A. Banu, UAB., *Islam in Bangladesh* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) pp. 139–40.
19. A. M. Serajuddin, 'Muslim Family Law and the Legal Rights of Muslim Women in South Asia', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, 32, 2 (1987) p. 134.
20. Sobhan, *Legal Status of Women*, p. 37.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–6.

Part III

Women Working Internationally

15

Nationalism and Feminism in the Black Atlantic¹

Deborah Gray White

In 1972 the song 'I Am Woman' hit the pop charts in the United States. It is a song which raises lots of questions, questions of particular significance for my subject, nationalism and feminism in the black Atlantic, and for the subject of this collection – women and human rights, social justice and citizenship. Despite a few negative reviews – one critic said Helen Reddy didn't belong on stage but in a feminist museum – Reddy and her song were immediately embraced by western women who bought 80 per cent of the million recordings of 'I Am Woman'.² In this chapter I look briefly at that song and discuss it in the context of women in the Black Atlantic. I use it to examine black women's human rights, social justice and citizenship concerns, and as a way of querying the very concept of the Black Atlantic as constructed by Paul Gilroy.³

Let's start with 'I am woman, hear me roar/In numbers too big to ignore/And I know too much to go back an' pretend/'cause I've heard it all before/and I've been down there on the floor/No one's ever gonna keep me down again'. Reddy goes on to say that she is wise, invincible and strong. Surely many, many women are – but one can't help but note the presumed unity, the essentialism, noted in the first verse. Putting aside the fact that women *have* been ignored, there is the reality that black women and white women in the Atlantic region, in fact maybe everywhere, do not stand toe to toe, roaring in unison; that indeed there *is* a lot of pretending going on about having the same needs and issues. Listen to Vera, a dark-skinned black Brazilian woman from a working-class neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, speak in the late 1980s about white feminism in Brazil. Like black women in America, Britain and Canada, women whom feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins has called 'outside-insiders',⁴ Vera complained that white feminists in

Rio would not relate to working class women. They 'had the means to form a legal aid group, a medical group, educational aid. To create a group to pressure the state about the women's needs', but they 'haven't got the slightest interest in doing this'. The legalization of abortion was a case in point. Middle-class women, argued Vera, 'go to the clinic and get this little thing removed'. According to Vera, proletarian women could not relate to that approach because 'they get a different kind of medical care [and] the middle-class women are aware of this. When they preach legalization of abortion, they're much more emphatic about our freedom to use our bodies than about the state's obligations and responsibilities.'⁵

Breastfeeding was another example of the real and perceived distance between middle and working class women. Vera maintained that working class women 'breastfeed their children because they can't afford milk. It's the middle-class women who don't want to breast-feed. How will I get the proper nourishment so I can do it? That's what needs to be touched on, because I *know* I have to breast feed my children and, even if I didn't want to, I know I won't have money for a can of milk.'⁶

Vera exemplified the multiple consciousness that Paul Gilroy explores. Like most people in the Black Atlantic she balanced resistance and accommodation; she existed both in antipathy to and as an integral part of western modern life. Feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins sees women like Vera as outsiders-within, women whose blackness makes them perpetual outsiders – outsiders who can see the contradictions between ideologies of womanhood and black women's devalued status, outsiders whose marginality gives them a distinct angle of vision on class and race based feminism.⁷

Vera's complaints echoed the sentiments of the black women in Britain. To some black and third world women the cries of the white and middle-class women who set up the Greenham Common Women's Peace camp in 1981 sounded hollow. 'Whose standards of life were they fighting to preserve', they wondered. Black and third world women stressed their daily battles for survival, food, land and water.⁸ Says feminist scholar, Hazel Carby: 'White women in the British Woman's Liberation Movement are extraordinarily reluctant to see themselves in the situation of being oppressors, as they feel that this will be at the expense of concentrating upon being oppressed. Consequently the involvement of British women in imperialism and colonialism is repressed and the benefits that they – as whites – gained from the oppression of black people is ignored.'⁹ Similar to statements made by African-American women who organized the National Black Feminists

movement in 1973,¹⁰ the women who formed the British Organization of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) in 1978 declared that they were not feminist:

We reject that label because we feel that it represents a white ideology. In our culture the term is associated with an ideology and practice which is anti-men. Our group is not anti-men at all. We have what I'd describe as a 'controlled' relationship with them. When we have study sessions on black history and culture, men come along. Other meetings however are exclusively women's meetings... We don't alienate men because they put down Black women, because we recognize that the source of that is white imperialist culture.¹¹

Vera, the black Brazilian quoted above, sounded a similar chord: 'We proletarian women, when we set out on the struggle for better conditions of life for women, for our men, for our children, we're not fighting against men, we're declaring war on the system...'; 'What we see is a woman behaving like a bourgeois woman, a reactionary woman, who's taking part in the system.'¹²

In America the tension between white and black women was manifested in black women's rejection of the 1970s women's liberation movement. Most black women could not identify with the white middle-class professional woman's demand for work and equal pay, or the white suburban housewife's revolt against leisure living. Although a few black women – Pauli Murray, Aileen Hernandez and Shirley Chisholm, for example – joined the movement, most black women stayed away. The white woman's demand for a more 'meaningful' existence was not taken seriously by African-American women who had more experience as the domestic employees of these women than as their political allies. The fact that the National Organisation of Women (NOW) did not at first identify issues of poverty as women's issues was as alienating as their tendency to compare themselves with minorities and call themselves oppressed. Black women, wrote the Nobel Prize winning novelist Toni Morrison in 1971, 'look at white women and see the enemy, for they know that racism is not confined to white men and that there are more white women than men in this country'. Moreover, explained Morrison, black women had 'no abiding admiration of white women as competent, complete people'. Black women regarded them 'as willful children, pretty children, mean children, ugly children, but never as real adults'.¹³

These examples of black frustration, anger, opposition to white middle-class feminism indicate a centrifugal force uniting the women

of the Black Atlantic, *and* one of their central problems. The centrifugal force has been the belief that women's liberation cannot be separated from nationalist struggles against racism, imperialism and classism, the problem has been how to integrate women's needs into nationalist agendas.

This brings us to another verse of Reddy's song. The one that proclaims: 'I am woman watch me grow ... /but I'm still an embryo/With a long long way to go/Until I make my brother understand'. While the record indicates that Black Atlantic women hardly saw themselves as embryos, but as fully participating equal partners in their people's struggle for freedom and autonomy, it does indicate that they have had to struggle against their men in male dominated nationalist movements. Thus they often find themselves at odds with both white women and black men.

Take the Garvey Movement of the 1920s. In America he was the first black nationalist to gain widespread popular support. In the early 1920s he galvanized urban blacks with his messages of black pride and economic self-sufficiency. Before he was deported in 1925 he inspired millions of African-Americans with his vision of independent black nations and black political agency. These messages spread throughout the Black Atlantic. For example, Brazilian blacks who in 1931 founded the first and only national black political party, the Frente Negro Brasileira (Brazilian Black Front) were influenced by his ideas. Copies of Garvey's organization journal, *The Negro World*, were translated and published as a regular journal in *O Clarim da Alvorada*, a journal published in Sao Paulo under the direction of radical political leader Jose Correia Leite. Black resistance movements in Africa were similarly affected by Garvey. Colonial governments found *The Negro World* so subversive that it and other materials of Garvey's international organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, were banned.¹⁴

Garvey's nationalism epitomized modern nationalist movements that with few exceptions are masculinist. Garvey was quick to exalt black women, to place them on the pedestal that had until the 1920s been the reserve of white women. One of his poems immortalized black women: 'Black Queen of beauty, thou hast given colour to the world!/ Among other women thou art royal and the fairest!/Like the brightest of jewels in the regal diadem,/Shin'st thou, Goddess of Africa, Nature's purest emblem!' and yet, when women in the Garvey movement demanded executive positions, he balked. For example, during the 1922 New York convention, women in the movement demanded to be included in the UNIA delegation to the League of Nations. Garvey

rejected the women's wishes as 'entirely improper to send a lady as a delegate, since it would be contrary to diplomatic custom, ladies never being chosen as members of diplomatic missions'.¹⁵ A perfect example of the gendering of nationalism that Ann McClintock and Nira Yuval-Davis describe, Garvey at one and the same time glorified black women as *symbols* of the black nation ('Goddess of Africa, Nature's purest emblem'), while treating them as non-citizens of that idealized nation. They were the 'symbolic bearers of the nation, but they were denied national agency'.¹⁶ The Garvey movement reflected the age-old idea that the work of nationhood is men's work, women's domain is the family, and inasmuch as men are the head of the family so they must be head of the nation. In this construction, 'tradition' wins out when pitted against racism, colonialism and/or imperialism.

Mamphele Ramphele, an activist in the South African Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s, found this out when she became active in the late 1980s with the Western Cape Men's Hostel Dwellers Association (HDA). This activist-doctor thought she could help men gain their rights to family life and better living conditions. African tradition, though, sanctioned the older men's rights to be listened to with little or no questioning. Neither her conscience nor her nerves would allow her to continue to work as an advisor, fundraiser and advocate for this group of men who perpetuated the inequalities between men and women.¹⁷ Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti had had the same experience a generation earlier in Nigeria. A leader of the Abeokuta Women's Union's two decade long fight against women's taxation, and active in the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies and the Nigerian Women's Union fight for education, voting rights, and equal political representation, Ransome-Kuti found that British colonial forces and Nigerian nationalist forces turned a deaf ear to women's rights.¹⁸

Ramphele and Ransome-Kuti's experiences are not unique to women of the Black Atlantic. Everywhere male nationalists (and their female supporters) have condemned feminism as divisive, asked women to wait until nationalist goals are met, accused women who press for change of being somehow 'less than a woman'. Black Panther Elaine Brown remembered that during the 1960s black power movement in the United States a black woman

asserting herself was a pariah. A woman attempting the role of leadership was ... making an alliance with the counterrevolutionary, man-hating, lesbian, feminist white witches. If a black woman assumed a role of leadership, she was said to be eroding black manhood, to be

hindering the progress of the black race. She was an enemy of black people.¹⁹

Anne McClintock writes of similar sentiments in South Africa. At a Congress of South African Trade Unions convention in the early 1990s, trade union women called for attention to sexual harassment in the unions, but their demand was flicked aside by male unionists as a decadent symptom of 'bourgeois imperialist feminism'.²⁰ Lesbian and gay activists were similarly condemned as supporting lifestyles thought to be no more than invidious imports of empire.²¹

Thus even though women of the Black Atlantic understand the limited nature of a feminism that neglects race and class, and the needs of a developing nation, there are precious few examples of black men recognizing and giving space to women's needs. We see this throughout the Black Atlantic. Although the forms of participation differed in each case, women in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Guinea, black women in the United States and South Africa played pivotal roles in the fight against racism and/or colonialism, but did so while struggling to overcome the sexism of their own men.

In the Caribbean and Africa inequality is most apparent in the area of development. As outlined by Kathleen Staudt in her article 'The Impact of Development Policies on Women', gendered development, as currently experienced, is development failure. Although two thirds of Africa's farmers are women, land reform programmes have created commercially valuable titles that officially consolidated property overwhelmingly in men's names leaving women without surety for credit or a secure property base. In some places wives have become the virtual slaves of their landowner husbands. The overwhelming majority of agricultural field agents are male, and their numbers have increased tenfold in some countries since independence. Men have made and implemented policies and programmes in ways that subsidized their interests and solidified their patron-client ties with state agencies.²² In most African states women have not been a part of authoritarian structures that have institutionalized traditional patriarchal relationships. The few women who are become bogged down by bureaucratic machinery that puts them at a distance from peasant women. Outside donors base their aid and programmes on the public/private dichotomy that seldom applied to any women in the Black Atlantic – women there having a tradition of being both producer and reproducer, of functioning in both the public and private domain, indeed a tradition that ties women's work outside of the home to their responsibilities as mothers.²³

This then brings us back to the *spirit* of Reddy's song. Given the history of female slavery and labour exploitation that Black Atlantic women have and still survive, it is a fair presumption that with some qualifications they could live with the song's chorus: 'Oh yes I am wise/ But it's wisdom born of pain/Yes, I've paid the price/But look how much I gained/ If I have to I can do anything/I am strong (strong)/I am invincible (invincible)/I am woman'. Still, like Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert they might find it a bit too western. In her article 'Decolonizing Feminism: The Home-Grown Roots of Caribbean Women's Movements', Paravisini-Gebert argues that a central feature of US feminist theory is that of the emergence of a fully emancipated woman out of the mire of patriarchal culture. It is an 'image born of the myths of rugged individualism ... woman as maverick'. United States feminism, she argues, feeds on stories like Blanche Wiesen Cook's brilliant study of Eleanor Roosevelt, who was crushed by her husband's affair with her own private secretary following her six pregnancies; who nevertheless rose like a modern phoenix to fund a furniture factory, build her own house, engage in passionate friendships with lesbian women, run her own school for girls, learn to fly with Amelia Earhart, and become First Lady on her own terms. In contrast to this dizzying stuff are women of the Caribbean – women whose feminism has had to reckon with racism and classism, whose individualism has always been tempered by communalism.²⁴ Indeed, a central theme of Black Atlantic feminism has been its relative rejection of the kind of rugged individualism reflected in Reddy's song. Hear for example Anna J. Cooper's address before the World's Congress of Representative Women in 1893. Cooper, an African American activist for civil rights, argued not just for women:

We want ... as toilers for the universal triumph of justice and human rights, to go to our homes from this Congress, demanding an entrance not through a gateway for ourselves, our race, our sex, or our sect, but a grand highway for humanity. ... Woman's wrongs are thus indissolubly linked with all undefended woe, and the acquirement of her 'rights' will mean the final triumph of all right over might.²⁵

Recently some Black Atlantic scholars have tried to capture the holistic essence of black women's feminism by using the term womanism. As explained by historian Elsa Barkley Brown 'feminism places priority on women; nationalism or race consciousness, [places] a priority on race'. Womanism is defined as a consciousness that incorporates racial,

cultural, sexual, national, economic and political considerations.²⁶ As explained by Chikwenye Ogunyemi “black womanism is a philosophy” that concerns itself both with sexual equality in the black community and “with the world power structure that subjugates” both blacks and women. Its ideal is for black unity where every black person has a modicum of power and so can be a “brother” or a “sister” or a “father” or a “mother” to the other ... [I]ts aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing”.²⁷ Surely, those who choose the term ‘black feminism’ would not disagree. Feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins, author of the book *Black Feminist Thought*, defines black feminism much the same way Barkley Brown and Ogunyeme define womanism: ‘a self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize a humanist vision of community.’²⁸ Collins and others, myself included, prefer the term feminism so as not to yield our rights to the word. I prefer the term ‘black feminism’, because I think it forces all women to consider the different ways the term can be used and its different meanings in different context. There is no essential feminism and using the word ‘black’ makes that point.

This issue of ‘womanism’ vs ‘black feminism’ brings me to the final point – a comment on the very concept of the Black Atlantic. I have used Helen Reddy’s song as a way to highlight the differences between black and white feminism, western vs. non-western feminism, and the tension between feminism and nationalism. However, by no means am I trying to essentialize black feminism or women in the Black Atlantic. Indeed there are many differences between women of the Black Atlantic. Women in developing nations do not have the same needs as women in developed nations. The middle and upper class African-American woman may have more in common with her British counterparts and most white American women than with poor women in Africa and the Caribbean. In African nations, ethnic differences keep women apart, and everywhere, everywhere, class divides. We cannot even say that every black woman in the Black Atlantic defines ‘black’ the same way. In the United States, there are women who are visibly white who self-identify as black, and in Britain the term black is often used as a political term to signify Afro-Asian unity.²⁹ In Suriname colour is a signifier of ethnic rather than racial solidarity³⁰ and in many societies of the Caribbean there is as much distance between women who are different shades of brown as there is distance between upper-class white and poor black women everywhere.³¹

Given all the differences it is fair to ask why look at women of the Black Atlantic as a unit. How does the concept change when applied to

women as opposed to men? What does the idea of the Black Atlantic do for its women?

As Gilroy sees things, the history of black people crossing the Atlantic, first primarily as slaves – commodities – but always as people engaged in struggles toward emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship, provides the means to re-examine ‘the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory ...’.³² For Gilroy, the movement of black people from Africa to the Americas and Europe and back to Africa is a movement that continues to remake the ethnicities and political cultures of black people by allowing for the exchange of religion, atheistic traditions, expressive culture and strategies of resistance. As a transpolitical and transcultural concept, the Black Atlantic allows him to bring together separate national and colonial histories of black people as a way to understand and reconceptualize them with an appreciation of their global significance, and as a way to understand the way identity is formed. The reconceptualization begins with a look at the circumstances and experiences that unite the people of the Black Atlantic. Gilroy lists colour and a common ancestral homeland as part of a legacy of Africanisms which among other things made music, art and religion primary expressions of the Black Atlantic’s cultural distinctiveness, a distinctiveness shaped by a common history and memory of chattel slavery, peonage, exploitive wage labour, racism and racial forms of class subordination. In more recent times a common history of repeated migrations has been a force for unity, and always there have been strategies of resistance and a distinct political outlook formed as a result of being colonized or the perennial ‘other’.³³

For all of Gilroy’s insight into the cultural and political unity of black people in the Atlantic, his conceptualization of this transnational unit repeats the sexism of most Black Atlantic nationalisms. If the Black Atlantic sheds light on identity, gender must be a major concern. Unfortunately Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic, Modernity and Double Consciousness* does not even glance at motherhood, beauty, sexism or black patriarchy across the Black Atlantic. In Gilroy’s Black Atlantic women have no agency, they are not important, either as ‘citizens’ or even as symbols. In his conception, music, religion, and political resistance crisscross the Atlantic in ships and planes. The role of women as cultural transmitters, or as cultural signifiers of the national collectivity, is never explored.

Had Gilroy included women, his construction of the Black Atlantic would have had greater coherence, for ideas about motherhood, beauty, femininity and feminism crisscross the Atlantic and the Caribbean as

do strategies of resistance to men, and patriarchy, and strategies of coexistence with men. And there are centrifugal forces that hold together the women of the Black Atlantic. One is the principal subject of this essay – a construction of feminism that is communal and nationalistic but in tension with white feminism and black nationalism. Further research will undoubtedly uncover other uniting forces. Take, for example, the construction of motherhood. Yes, the realities of motherhood are different as one goes from one society to the next in the Black Atlantic, but the way women combine their producer and reproductive roles repeats itself throughout the Black Atlantic. Another centralizing feature is the black woman's struggle to define the black female body as a feminine subject. Everywhere in the Black Atlantic that struggle is different but what is consistent is that the struggle is waged in the shadow of the privileged white female body. Black Atlantic women have an 'other' kind of femininity, an 'other' kind of beauty, an 'other' kind of aesthetic. And then there is patriarchy. Black patriarchy in America and Europe is different from in Africa if only because the 'traditions' invoked by many black men in developed countries are the 'traditions' of an imagined Africa, while those of African men have been transformed by centuries of colonialism and imperialism. Nevertheless, black women in Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean have a remarkably similar history with the patriarchal oppression of both white and black men in both the public and private domains, and their feminist responses have been remarkably similar.

For all the differences then, black women in the Atlantic have much in common. This common base has the potential to serve as a powerful source of identity and strength in a world increasingly marked by global alliances. To globalize the experience of black women is to bring their experiences in from the margins of feminism and women's history, to learn from them, and to understand women's crucial role in the construction of identity in the Black Atlantic.

In a very real way then, this brings us back to Helen Reddy. For if the Black Atlantic holds together at all it is not only because of the common history of enslavement, exploitive labour, colonialism and imperialism but the ways that women in the region remember those experiences and transfer those remembrances through the socialization of their children. Thus although Reddy's 'I Am Woman' song hardly resonates with the black experience, her song 'You and Me Against the World' hits the mark. Sung by a mother to her child in recognition of the enduring quality of that relationship, the words to the song's

chorus may indeed be the key to understanding women's central role as identity makers in the Black Atlantic:

And when one of us is gone
And one of us is left to carry on
Then remembering will have to do
Our memories alone will get us through.

Think about the days of me and you
You and me against the world.

Notes

1. This chapter was presented as a plenary keynote address and is thus designed as a talk.
2. *Current Biography Yearbook 1975* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1975) pp. 340–3.
3. P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
4. P. H. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991) p. 16.
5. D. Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak: Contemporary Life Stories* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988) pp. 94–6.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, p. 16.
8. V. Amos and P. Parmar, 'Challenging Imperial Feminism' in H. S. Mirza (ed.), *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997) pp. 54–8; p. 57.
9. H. Carby, 'White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood' in Mirza (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 45–53; p. 49.
10. D. G. White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894–1994* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999) pp. 251–3.
11. B. Bryan, S. Dadzie and S. Scafe, 'The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain' in Mirza (ed.), *Black British Feminism*, pp. 42–4; p. 43.
12. Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak*, p. 97.
13. See White, *Too Heavy a Load*, pp. 221–2; T. Morrison, 'What the Black Woman Thinks About Women's Lib', *New York Times Magazine* (22 August 1971).
14. R. Hill and G. Pirio, "'Africa for the Africans": The Garvey Movement in South Africa, 1929–1950' in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Essay: Longmont, 1987) pp. 209–53; H. Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU and Rural South Africa 1924–1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); K. Butler, 'Identity and Self-Determination in the Post-Abolition African Diaspora, Sao Paulo and Salvador Brazil, 1888–1938', Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1995.

15. White, *Too Heavy A Load*, pp. 123, 136.
16. A. McClintock, 'Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism, and the Family', *Feminist Review*, 44 (Summer 1993) pp. 61–80; 62–3.
17. M. Ramphela, *Across Boundaries: The Journey of a South African Woman Leader* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1995) pp. 168–9.
18. C. Johnson-Odum and N. E. Mba, *For Women and the Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997) pp. 99–122.
19. White, *Too Heavy a Load*, p. 220.
20. McClintock, 'Family Feuds', p. 77.
21. *Ibid.*
22. K. Staudt, 'The Impact of Development Policies on Women' in M. J. Hay and S. Stichter (eds), *African Women: South of the Sahara*, 2nd edn (New York: Longman Group, 1995) pp. 225–38; 228–32.
23. J. O'Barr and K. F. Sellers, 'African Women in Politics' in Hay and Stichter (eds), *ibid.*, pp. 189–212; Staudt, *ibid.*, pp. 226–7.
24. C. Lopez Springfield, *Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) pp. 11–12.
25. C. Lemert and E. Bhan, (eds), *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Including A Voice From the South and Other Important Essays, Papers, and Letters* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1998) pp. 204–5.
26. E. Barkley Brown, 'Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke'. Originally published in *Signs* 14, 3 (Spring 1989). Cited here from M. R. Malsom *et al.* (eds), *Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) p. 176.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
28. Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, p. 39.
29. Bryan *et al.* *The Heart of the Race*, p. 43.
30. Rosemary Brana-Shute, 'Neighborhood Networks & National Politics Among Working-Class Afro-Surinamese Women' in J. Momsen (ed.), *Women & Change in the Caribbean: A Pan Caribbean Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) pp. 132–49; p. 138.
31. See for example N. B. Barnes, 'Face of the Nation: Race, Nationalisms, and Identities in Jamaican Beauty Pageants' in C. Lopez Springfield (ed.), *Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) pp. 285–306.
32. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 16.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 1–40.

16

Women's Rights or Human Rights? International Feminism between the Wars

Karen Offen

Word games or power plays? The choice of one word over another can be fraught with political significance. Since its origins in late nineteenth-century France, the word 'feminism' (in French, *féminisme*) has been controversial. In the twentieth century, distinguished writers such as Virginia Woolf wanted to incinerate the word 'feminism'; Simone de Beauvoir disclaimed the term for decades. What can explain this phenomenon? Why did this word seem so explosive?

The answer to these questions seems to lie in debates that erupted during the 1920s, particularly in the post-suffrage climate of English-speaking activists. These debates took yet another turn during the 1930s, with the threat to democracy posed by fascist and Nazi states and the attempts by the Third Communist International to spearhead an antifascist resistance struggle. To this day, the long shadow of socialist and communist antagonism to 'feminism' as 'bourgeois' and 'separatist' still hangs over European discussions of feminist history and action – as if a campaign to end the subordination of well over half the population – women – would not enrich the lives of all its members, including men. A further twist would be added by developments in the United Nations, the successor to the League of Nations, where feminist activists had succeeded in putting 'the status of women', if not 'women's rights', on the international agenda. This chapter will briefly survey these developments.¹

Citizenship in the nation-state and workplace became a reality for women in most (though not all) European societies in the period that spanned the years from the end of the First World War to the end of the Second World War. During this period, the goals and aims of feminism were reformulated and new meanings elaborated in response to new challenges. No longer was women's legal and material subordination to

men the most obvious centrepiece of feminist activity; indeed, after 1918, in a mostly post-suffrage Europe (the glaring exceptions being France, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland), 'feminism' did not seem, in the view of some women's movement activists, nearly encompassing enough. Margery I. Corbett Ashby, the English President of the International Alliance of Women (IAW), had summed up this new view in 1928 when she argued:

It is a fact which cannot be ignored that women are not only feminists in a perpetual state of protest against restrictions and disabilities, they are also to an increasing extent, keen citizens, peace workers, reformers and educators. The greatest freedom won by women is surely precisely this equal right with men to effective interest in the whole of life.²

Such a view had been developing for some time, mainly among the post-suffrage English-speaking feminists, and despite the resurgent backlashes against women's emancipation, it blossomed in post-suffrage contexts. Already in 1913, Helena Swanwick had suggested, in her preface to *The Future of the Women's Movement*, that 'humanist' was a better term than 'feminist' for the emancipatory goals she and her associates envisioned.³ Conversely, the term 'feminist' might be extended to encompass all human rights. Such chords had been struck repeatedly during the English controversies over feminism in the 1920s, and as women were pulled increasingly into the political and economic life of their respective nations, it carried over into debates among supporters of the international women's organizations in the late 1920s and 1930s, when they considered the controversial issue of protective labour legislation for women.⁴

In France as well, feminism seemed to critics such as academician Henri Joly to be but a derivative of humanism. 'The idea of humanism had, among other advantages, that it did not postulate any separation between the interests of man and those of women.'⁵ This Frenchman viewed feminism as being all too exclusively about women's 'separate' interests, rather than about the joint interests of men and women (or class interests). Such a statement would have been familiar to anyone who has confronted socialist views on the subject since the founding of the Second International in 1889, but it takes on an even more intriguing meaning in a context in which women constituted more than half the population and were feared as a potential political majority. The questionable view it encapsulates – that feminism is

'separatist' – remains alive and well in France today, even impeding the growth of women's history and women's studies in French university settings. The fact that 'men's separate interests' had dominated European societies for so many centuries went unnoticed by the Henri Jolys of Europe; they were taken to represent everyone's interests. Only women's interests could be construed as exclusive, divisive and threatening.

In the late 1920s, following the schismatic developments of its 1926 Congress in Paris (over protective legislation for women workers) and an ensuing 1927 study conference in Amsterdam, adherents of the newly renamed International Alliance of Women heatedly debated the meaning and scope of the concept 'feminism'. Setting off a series of exchanges in their journal *Jus Suffragii* that continued through most of 1928, one disenchanted activist, C. Nina Boyle, voiced her alarm about the Alliance's embrace of pacifists and social reformers, whom she viewed as 'the two most dangerous rivals and foes of Feminism'.⁶ Rather than joining in the clamour for peace and endorsing protective legislation for women workers, Boyle thought the Alliance should remain focused specifically on abusive marriage customs and laws, and on violence against women – or what she subsequently underscored as 'desperate [sic] conditions, under which women suffer hideous personal and sexual coercion'.⁷

It was in this context that Corbett Ashby defended the Alliance's position of multiple interests in a world in which some women had arrived at full citizenship. She went on to insist that 'a feminist is no less a feminist because she has reached a point at which she dare develop every side of her human nature and natural interests... [A]ll our work must be done from a feminist angle and by feminist inspiration.'⁸ The following month, the ageing German activist Marie Stritt joined the debate, arguing for the intimate connection between feminism and pacifism, and for a broad understanding of feminism. 'Feminism...means nothing else than the struggle against violence in every form – means right and justice instead of violence and injustice.'⁹ This was a breathtakingly encompassing agenda, but it also threatened to neutralize or diffuse continuing campaigns on behalf of issues specific to women.

In the course of this 1920s debate, one point was clarified, and it was that at least for the IAW, working at the international or transnational level, issues concerning free love, birth control, and 'marriage slavery' were ruled out of bounds on grounds that they had religious, national and cultural implications, which the IAW leaders considered to lie beyond their association's internationalist mandate. 'It must advise and

aid very gently, but wait for the women themselves of each nation to move effectively', cautioned the former president of the Alliance, the American suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt. The 'great problems' of the world were within its mandate: 'peace is proper work for feminists', Catt argued. But another point was also clarified by Chapman Catt, and that was the exclusive identification (historically erroneous, but nonetheless solidly embedded in the popular mind) of feminism with the suffrage cause. 'I feel that I have personally moved on and become a humanist since the vote came to me ... I have not ceased to be a feminist nor to be less sympathetic with protests against women's wrongs.'¹⁰

In the June 1928 issue, the British egalitarian feminist Helen A. Archdale, who sympathized with Nina Boyle's concerns, criticized the 'admission' of both Corbett Ashby and Chapman Catt that they had moved on to 'humanism':

A humanist is...one who cares for the joys and sorrows of all humanity, and works directly on their cure. A feminist is one who works for the advancement of women's intellectual and social status ... Peace, for which nearly all our hearts are full of longing, is the business of humanity, of men and women; co-operation, not separation, should be its strength. Equality, defined as we all know as feminism, is the special business of women; the burden of acquiring it must be mainly theirs. I share cordially the deep regret expressed by your correspondents that the I.W.S.A. has deserted feminism for humanism, knowing that each such extravert to humanism is rejecting feminism.¹¹

By December, Archdale (who, along with Lady Rhondda, founded the Open Door Council in 1926 and became a force in the new group, Equal Rights International) was arguing that there could only be one kind of feminist – 'feminists believe in equality [for women] and will accept nothing less ...'.¹²

When the IAW met in Berlin in 1929, its members ratified a 'Restatement of Policy after 25 Years', which reaffirmed its commitment to suffrage work and peace work, and emphasized equal rights in economic, moral, and legal rights. Significantly, neither this 'Restatement' nor the *History* compiled and published by Regine Deutsch for the IAW anniversary celebration included the word 'feminism'.¹³

By the 1930s many whom we might view historically as feminists disagreed on what 'equality' meant and on whether 'women' should be considered distinct from 'men', on account of their physiology and

reproductive roles, or should such 'difference' be disavowed in pursuit of 'rights equal to those of men'? Particularly in the English-speaking world, older notions of 'equality-in-difference' faded from view before the polarization that would increasingly oppose absolute legal 'equality' for individuals to sex-specific needs perceived to rest on women's distinctive 'difference'.

In consequence of these disagreements, the term 'feminist' became identified more exclusively in the public mind with campaigners for an unqualified, all-encompassing understanding of 'equal rights' (this faction was led by the Americans, Alice Paul and Doris Stevens, and their British counterparts from the Six Point Group, in the new grouping known as Equal Rights International). They opposed protective legislation for women on principle, pressing instead throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s for endorsement of an international equal rights treaty. Despite the efforts of Eleanor Rathbone and others to delineate a 'new feminism' that took women's difference and their distinctive contributions and functions as mothers into account, the term 'feminist' migrated and stuck to the more adamantly egalitarian faction.

Debates in the IAW's *Jus Suffragii* and publications by other international women's groups continued to delineate varied understandings of 'feminism', broadly extending the meaning of feminism to encompass the struggle for all human rights and social justice. This line of thinking would be articulated more vigorously in the 1930s, as the menace of fascism to human rights became increasingly pronounced. With the roll-back in opportunities for women imposed by fascist regimes, and particularly in Nazi Germany, where assaults on the civil liberties of Jews and other 'undesirable' minorities, including Gypsies and the handicapped, were already well-known to the international feminist community, organizations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom would broaden their mission to encompass 'the inauguration of a new system under which would be realized social, economic and political equality for all without distinction of sex, race or opinion'.¹⁴

Developments in world politics during the late 1930s brought the confusion and contentiousness over feminism – and the polarization of positions – to a head. These can be studied in the rhetoric of the IAW president, Margery Corbett Ashby. In late 1936, Corbett Ashby had insisted that feminism should not be set aside, as had been done in 1914, in the face of 'more than medieval savagery in Abyssinia, Palestine and Spain'. But she offered a broad definition of feminism, which she

declared, 'is the faith of women who believe in individual freedom and responsibility':

It is but the women's side to the great doctrine of freedom of thought and speech, of ordered self-discipline, of self-government, of free loyalty to the community, of equal opportunity and mutual assistance which in the last century effected a world wide change from medieval to modern conceptions and produced the most amazing progress in science, health, standard of living and amenities of any century known to us. Because our material power has outgrown our spiritual conceptions we are allowing our inventions to bring torture and death, poverty and tyranny instead of happiness, health, riches and freedom... If we insist on our rights as human beings we are fighting the battle of every man who suffers for his race, his creed, his class or his opinions...¹⁵

In this interpretation, which would become increasingly the standard in IAW rhetoric, women's rights *were* human rights, the one stood for the other. Was 'humanism' *en route* to becoming 'the feminism that dare not speak its name', in Pauline Johnson's recent formulation?¹⁶

Hitler's invasion of neighbouring Czechoslovakia in 1938 and the looming threat to Poland sealed a definitive shift in IAW rhetoric from feminism to humanism. By June 1939, humanism had taken the high ground. In speaking of the dramatic changes that had ensued for women since the early twentieth century, and the ways in which women had entered the work for social reform and peace as well as seeking equality, Margery Corbett Ashby underscored that the aims of feminism had seemed relatively straightforward when democracy was in the ascendant. But with the recent political developments and particularly the precarious economic situation created by the great depression, democracy was besieged. 'The equal status and equal influence of women must be seen as more than ever necessary, but we cannot, we dare not be only feminists, we must be humanists as well in order to preserve in society the very rights in which we would share.'¹⁷

Corbett Ashby's French colleague and IAW Vice-President Germaine Malaterre-Sellier seconded the argument: equal rights for women were no longer the main point. 'True feminism imperiously requires, as a vital necessity, that women, fraternally united beyond all questions of nationality, political party, or religious beliefs, come to the rescue of democracy wherever it is threatened – and, alas, this is in a growing number of countries.' Saving women's rights was equated, in Malaterre-Sellier's

view, with saving civilization itself. 'The Copenhagen Congress must organize women's action for the defence of human values in order to save Peace and Civilization.'¹⁸

On the eve of the storm about to be unleashed throughout Europe by the neighbouring Nazi Government in Germany, IAW delegates gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark, in July 1939. There the IAW bravely restated its understanding of feminism in measured yet stirring language, recasting the challenge in terms of 'the fundamental principles concerning the relations between individual and state, and between states', and 'the responsibilities which their feminist conviction entails'. Its 'Declaration of Principles', subsequently published in English and French, concluded with a heartfelt statement:

The woman's battle is that of all mankind. There can be no freedom for women when freedom is no longer a recognised right of every individual. There can be no justice nor economic freedom for women, when all justice is dependent on the will of an oligarchy.

Now we live through difficult times in which life based on our principles is at stake. Therefore, women, with men, true to their fundamental principles, must defend a system which will lead to greater justice, freedom, real peace, general prosperity, and more happiness for all.¹⁹

Ending women's subordination seemed to become inextricably entangled with, or co-terminous with, the broader cause of defending freedom, individual and collective, for women and men alike, and of working for democracy. Women had become citizens. But what would be the fate of feminism?

When the war ended in 1945, the conundrum of feminism and humanism would be revisited in a new setting – the United Nations. The shock impact of the Holocaust against the Jews and other atrocities committed during the Second World War had refocused the attention of world leaders on the issue of 'human rights'. Despite a paucity of feminists – or indeed even a significant number of women delegates (14 women and 521 men) – at its April 1945 founding meeting in San Francisco (or, for that matter, at the first session of the General Assembly in early 1946), the UN Charter of 1945 affirmed and specified 'faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small'.²⁰ Behind this choice of words lies John Stuart Mill's 1867 proposal to change the word 'man' to 'person' in the British electoral law,

but – and this is significant – ‘men and women’ are explicitly mentioned in the UN Charter; no mistake could be made about its intent.

In this new context, the prior work of feminists on women’s issues at the League of Nations in the 1930s found its reward. The women who were present continued to press the point. A subsequent declaration by women representatives, alternates and advisers to the first General Assembly, presented to the delegates by Eleanor Roosevelt early in 1946, emphasized ‘joint efforts’ of men and women, ‘common ideas of human freedom’, and called on women to take part in the ‘work of peace and reconstruction as they did in war and resistance’.²¹

In the spring of 1946, the Commission on Human Rights, a division of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established a sub-commission, but soon bowed to feminist pressure to upgrade it to a fully-fledged Commission on the Status of Women, with an extensive mandate to inquire into ‘improvements in political, civil, educational, social and economic fields’. Influential in this development were the Danish feminist and social democrat, Bodil Begtrup, the Commission’s first Chair, Jessie Street from Australia, and Latin American feminists. In December 1946, feminist delegates pushed for adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution urging that member states who had not yet done so ‘fulfil the purposes and aims of the Charter... by granting to women the same political rights as to men’.²² They intended to revive the examination of the worldwide status of women begun by the now-defunct League of Nations and to carry the reforms proposed during the 1930s to fruition.

The UN Commission on the Status of Women took up its investigation in January 1947. Its work would eventually provide the model for many national commissions (and even regional and local commissions) on the status of women throughout the world. Many landmark UN measures – the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1952 Convention on Women’s Political Rights, the 1967 UN Covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights – all have origins in the work of this Commission. Finally in 1975 a resurgent women’s rights movement would help bring to fruition what the Commission on the Status of Women had been recommending since 1946–47 – an International Women’s Year in 1975 and an International Decade of Women. All of these post-Second World War developments owe a large debt to the bold initiatives launched during the interwar period by feminist activists and organizations working on behalf of women’s issues at the League of Nations. The work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women continues to this day.

Although IAW president, Margery Corbett Ashby, thought in early 1946 that 'at this stage it would be dangerous to set up a "women only" committee to deal with sex differentiation',²³ it soon became clear to some (among them the Social Democratic women of the 1930s who had for so long insisted on prioritizing class differences rather than sex differences) that even in the United Nations, and despite every principled pronouncement, if feminists didn't insist on specifying and making visible women's rights and women's representation, nobody else would. The new terminology adopted was that of 'the status of women' and 'human rights'. But the discourse on 'equal rights' and 'women's rights', and the language of 'feminism', were not forgotten and would soon be spoken anew.

Appendix

International Alliance of Women, 'Declaration of Principles', 1939:

In these serious times where the fundamental principles concerning the relations between individual and state, and between states themselves are being challenged, it is essential that women should be fully aware of the responsibilities which their feminist conviction entails.

The sacredness of human personality has always been the keystone of the woman's movement, which rebelled against an imposed standard of faith, behaviour and economic status. Our great pioneers fought for freedom of conscience and personality, for the right to choose their own career, to participate in national and political life, and to help to shape the destiny of their nation.

Their fight was essentially a part of the great struggle against oppression of creed, race, class and sex. It was in favour of the right to education, and economic freedom as well as of preparation for the task of citizenship.

The woman's movement therefore, although apart from party politics, was founded on a political conception. In consequence it stands for equality of sex, race and creed.

If women believe the State to be an organisation to secure peace, freedom, justice, and well-being for all, they must hold this conviction with passionate sincerity. Faith can only be met with faith. Women must keep alive the belief in democracy, which is obscured only because it has not been carried out in practice.

The barbarism of war, torture and famine threatens to engulf the world. It is for the woman's movement to awaken and strengthen sanity, compassion, wisdom and foresight, which are the gifts of womanhood.

The woman's battle is that of all mankind. There can be no freedom for women when freedom is no longer a recognised right of every individual. There can be no justice nor economic freedom for women, when all justice is dependent on the will of an oligarchy.

Now we live through difficult times in which life based on our principles is at stake. Therefore, women, with men, true to their fundamental principles, must defend a system which will lead to greater justice, freedom, real peace, general prosperity, and more happiness for all.²⁴

Notes

1. This chapter has been adapted from Chapter 12 of my book, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2000). The material is used with the permission of the publishers, Stanford University Press. Copyright 2000 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. An earlier version was presented at the 1998 conference of the International Federation for Research in Women's History in Melbourne, Australia. Questions of definition and of the French origins of the words *féminisme* and *féministe* are discussed at greater length in my articles, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Analysis', *Signs*, 14, 1 (1988) pp. 119–57 and 'On the French Origin of the Words Feminism and Feminist', *Feminist Issues*, 8, 2 (Fall 1988) pp. 45–51.
2. M. I. Corbett Ashby, 'What Is the Alliance?', *Jus Suffragii*, 22, 5 (February 1928) p. 69.
3. H. Swanwick, *The Future of the Women's Movement* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1913) p. vii.
4. Discussed in K. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000) Chapter 10. For further attention to the international feminist organizations, see L. J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
5. H. Joly, *Le Droit Féminin* (Paris: Flammarion, 1922) p. 7. More than 20 years earlier the male feminist Léopold Lacour discussed 'féminisme' in *Humanisme Intégral: Le Duel des Sexes, la Cité Future* (Paris: Stock, 1897).
6. C. N. Boyle, letter to the editor, 15 December 1927, *Jus Suffragii*, 22, 4 (January 1928) pp. 59–60.
7. C. N. Boyle, letter to the editor, 15 March 1928 *Jus Suffragii*, 22, 7 (April 1928) p. 106.
8. Corbett Ashby, 'What is the Alliance?', p. 69.
9. M. Stritt, in *Jus Suffragii*, 22, 6 (March 1928) p. 87.
10. C. Chapman Catt, 'What Is the Alliance?', *Jus Suffragii*, 22, 8 (May 1928) pp. 117–18.
11. H. A. Archdale in *Jus Suffragii*, 22, 9 (June 1928) p. 140.
12. H. A. Archdale, letter to the editor, 30 October 1928, *Jus Suffragii*, 23, 3 (December 1928) pp. 41–2.

13. See R. Deutsch, *The International Woman Suffrage Alliance: Its History from 1904 to 1929* (London: Board of the Alliance, 1929) [30 pages].
14. 'Statement of Aims of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, decided at the Zurich Congress', 1934, as reprinted in G. Bussey and M. Tims, *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915–1965: A Record of Fifty Years' Work* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965) p. 122.
15. M. Corbett Ashby, in *Jus Suffragii*, 31, 1 (October 1936) p. 1.
16. See P. Johnson, *Feminism as Radical Humanism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin; Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994) p. vii.
17. M. Corbett Ashby, 'The Woman Pilgrim's Progress', *Jus Suffragii*, 33, 9 (June 1939) p. 68.
18. G. Malaterre Sellier, 'Vers l'avenir' in *ibid.*, pp. 68–9.
19. IAW, 'Declaration of Principles', *The International Women's News (Jus Suffragii)*, 33, 10–11 (August–September 1939) p. 83. Also partially reprinted in A. Schreiber and M. Mathieson, *Journal Towards Freedom: Written for the Golden Jubilee of the International Alliance of Women* (Copenhagen: IAW, 1955) p. 52 and in A. Whittick, *Woman into Citizen* (London: Athenaeum, 1979), p. 139. See appendix to this chapter.
20. *The United Nations and the Advancement of Women, 1945–1996* (New York: United Nations, 1996) doct. 1, p. 103. My understanding of the UN issues has been greatly enhanced by the suggestions and work of D. H. Linder, particularly her unpublished paper, 'Scandinavian Women's Rights Leadership at the Early UN, 1946–1952' (1995).
21. *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1946–1947* (Lake Success, NY: United Nations, Department of Public Information, 1947) pp. 77–8.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
23. M. Corbett Ashby, 'United Nations Assembly. Women outnumbered fifty to one by men', *The International Women's News (Jus Suffragii)*, 40, 5 (February 1946) p. 51.
24. International Alliance of Women, 'Declaration of Principles', *The International Women's News (Jus Suffragii)*, 33, 10–11 (August–September, 1939) p. 82.
25. *Ibid.*

17

From Self-Determination via Protection to Equality via Non-Discrimination: Defining Women's Rights at the League of Nations and the United Nations

Marilyn Lake

An international question

In the late 1920s, Vera Brittain wrote two pamphlets on behalf of the English Six Point Group in which she made the case that 'the status of women' was an 'international question'. Since the establishment of the League of Nations as 'the triumph of the international idea', she said, 'women have come to regard the League as the one fitting instrument through which justice can be done to women, completely and for all time'.¹ How justice would be best achieved for women was, however, a matter of continuing debate.

In her study of English women's participation at the League of Nations, Carol Miller has observed that 'through its work to guarantee the rights and welfare of minorities and inhabitants of mandated territories, the League of Nations created a role for itself in the legal protection of human rights', but in protecting 'human rights' it was also defining them.² National minorities, it was believed, had the right of 'self-determination'; and so, feminists believed, did women. Importantly, the politics of self-determination was predicated on the recognition of the significance of cultural and sexual difference to the constitution of the self and political subjectivity. By the mid-1930s, however, in a discursive shift influenced by American interventions, the rights of minorities and of women were increasingly conceptualized as accruing not to groups, defined by nationality or gender, but to 'individuals', 'without distinction'.

Self-determination through special protection

From the early 1920s, feminist activists at the League of Nations focused their attention on rescuing women from their condition of 'sex slavery', campaigning for an end to men's use of women's bodies as their property, an end to the 'traffic in women and children'. Their animating vision was that women should be recognized as self-governing, self-determining individuals, the vision expressed by Australian suffragist Rose Scott when she proclaimed in the 1890s: 'Woman has been a slave too long. She has belonged to her Parents and belonged to her husband and now at length she demands that she should belong to herself!'³ Or in the words of her contemporary, the American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, women, like nations, had 'a birthright to self-sovereignty'.⁴ In Australia, the Feminist Club, founded in 1914, affirmed in its Charter that 'the principle of self-determination be applied to women as well as men'.⁵ Feminist commitment to self-determination or self-sovereignty was given fresh conviction, then, by the commitment of the League of Nations to the same principles, which feminists aimed to realize for women internationally within the frameworks established by the 1921 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, the 1923 Convention for the Suppression of the Circulation and Traffic in Obscene Publications and the 1926 Convention on Slavery. The Preamble to the Slavery Convention underlined for many feminists its relevance to the condition of women: 'Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom all or any of the powers attached to the right of ownership are exercised.' Woman declared that at last she should belong to herself.

An Advisory Commission for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People was appointed and a Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children established. Enquiries were conducted. Member States were required to report on whether they allowed 'licensed houses' to operate. Twenty eight countries including Australia, Canada and Great Britain replied they did not; 19 that they did. One of these – France – objected to the presumption of international surveillance: 'The system of prostitution and licensed houses considered in its administrative aspect, remains, in the French Government's opinion, a purely domestic matter, governed by the national legislation of the individual States'.⁶

The publication of the first part of the experts' report on the 'traffic in women and children' in 1927, which detailed 'the facts of the trade',

was acclaimed by feminists around the world, *Dawn*, the journal of the Women's Service Guild in Western Australia, commenting:

While for many years the scare of the White Slave Traffic has haunted women and girls who have read lurid stories of assault and abduction, very little has been known of the actual facts of the trade or how the market is organised.

The extent of the report's reach was also noted:

The fact that Part 1 of the Experts' Report has gone into four editions and that 5000 copies have already been sold and distributed – a record for any League of Nations publication – proves that people are alive to the need for knowledge on this question.⁷

The goals of feminists seeking to enhance the status of women within this framework were to abolish licensed houses, prostitution, the sexual exploitation of minors (through raising the age of consent) and to suppress the circulation of obscene literature.

By 1929, a Coordinating Committee of the International Women's Organisations could report that feminists had mobilized in response to the 'call for help' in connection with

the protection of women and children, the struggle against the traffic, prostitution and State regulation of prostitution and obscene publications and also the organisation of rescue work and education and the setting-up of dispensaries to combat venereal disease.⁸

Member States of the League of Nations were also required to report on the comings and goings of suspected prostitutes.

The Australian Government advised that in the state of New South Wales 'four French women were proceeded against as prohibited immigrants and while on bail left the country of their own accord' and 'a man and a woman of French nationality aged 45 and 35 years respectively arrived in Australia on March 7 ... The woman went to a brothel and the man lived alone in a flat. They were kept under police observance which was followed by deportation to France.'⁹

From South Australia, it was reported that 'the women's associations are endeavouring to combat prostitution, which is not regulated by the State ... Women police are very useful for this work and with their help

real progress has been made'.¹⁰ From Tasmania:

The women's associations realise the disastrous influence of immoral literature and are glad to say that the Tasmanian laws are in this respect in complete agreement with the aims of the League of Nations... As a result of the campaigns which have largely been carried on by the women's associations, the age of consent has been raised from 16 to 18. Considerable progress has been made with regard to the moral and material protection of women before and after marriage.¹¹

In Geneva, Dr Roberta Jull, Australia's substitute delegate to the League of Nations in 1929, reported other measures taken by her government designed especially to protect women and girls: 'Under the Passports Act, females leaving Australia had to be in possession of valid passports or equivalent documents... Under the Emigration Act special permission was required before a female under 18 years could leave Australia under theatrical engagement.'¹²

These reports highlight the centrality of 'protection' to feminists' conception of their work, as did concurrent League of Nations policies on 'natives' and 'minorities', evident, for example, in the terms of the Mandates Commission and the 1927 publication *The League of Nations and the Protection of Minorities of Race, Language and Religion*. The problem was that the political relations of protection secured the subordination of minorities and women, even as their advocates sought their self-determination.

The work of the International Labor Organisation from 1919 reinforced this positioning of women. As a promotion booklet later explained: 'When the ILO's responsibilities first were set forth by the framers of its Constitution in 1919, the protection of women was included among them in recognition of a widely felt need... The ILO's first General Conference in 1919 adopted international standards providing for maternity protection and limiting the employment of women at night.'¹³ In 1930, in a historic deputation, feminists waited on the Director of the ILO, Albert Thomas, to protest against special industrial protection for women.

The ILO's emphasis on women as a group in need of protection, rather than as self-governing individuals with rights, provoked a strong reaction from self-styled 'equal rights' feminists associated with the Six Point Group in Britain and the National Woman's Party in the

United States and led to the formation in 1929 of a new organisation, Open Door International, which advocated women's rights to equal opportunities and pay in the workforce. In the United States, the National Women's Party lobbied the Senate to stop the ratification of 'unequal conventions', but the United States was not a member of the League of Nations and American feminists had no direct representation in that forum.

Equal nationality rights

Although Geneva became the focus of international feminists' intense idealism – 'Geneva is the place where one can obtain most, as all the delegates are penetrated there with the spirit of doing their best for an international understanding'¹⁴ – by the early 1930s, these idealists were beset by 'quarrelling'. 'What with the quarrelling among women, among nations, and among League officials and all telling tales of each other it is not easy to get the truth', declared Helen Archdale, first chairman of Equal Rights International, founded in 1930.¹⁵ Personality clashes exacerbated rivalries for leadership while the ideological conflict over the meaning of feminism and the best means to enhance the status of women deepened. Those who styled themselves 'equalitarians' or 'left-wing' or 'advanced' feminists became more impatient with, and dismissive of, activists associated with the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, the International Council of Women and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, whom they characterized variously as 'conservative', 'old-fashioned' and 'sentimental', concerned 'only' with 'social reform and good works'.¹⁶

Feminists of diverse persuasions were briefly united, however, by the issue of married women's nationality rights, an important issue both for those who conceptualized woman's freedom as a matter of self-determination and recognition of her individuality and for those who saw equality as requiring that women be accorded the same rights as men. In 1930, in the first codification of international law by the court at The Hague, on the subject of nationality, the court endorsed the prevailing rule of 'the old legal system' that a married woman should forfeit her nationality on marriage, acquiring that of her husband. International feminist organizations, claiming to speak for some 45 million women, expressed their outrage, in response to which the League of Nations invited representatives to form the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality ('the first Committee of women ever formed by the League'¹⁷) to advise the League on the issue.

Latin American women were especially important in setting the agenda on this issue, with the delegates from Columbia (Maria de Pizano) and Chile (Marta Vergara) – described in the press as ‘fashionably dressed young women’ – applauded by international feminists for leading the battle for Equal Nationality Rights.¹⁸ They were unsuccessful, however, in convincing sufficient numbers of their fellow delegates to oppose the Hague Convention, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1932, with nine states (including Chile and Columbia) abstaining in protest against what they saw as ‘an effort to implant in international law a system which upholds inequality of the sexes in national rights’.¹⁹

The Equal Rights Treaty

At the same time, the proposal that the League of Nations should endorse an equal rights treaty was formally promoted by the new Geneva-based organisation, first known as the Equal Rights Group, then Equal Rights International (ERI), established on the initiative of the Six Point Group, to help support the American campaign. As Vera Brittain recalled:

The notion of tackling feminist problems by some kind of international machinery was first discussed between the leaders of the Six Point Group and the American National Woman's Party at the Paris meeting of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in 1926. Carried back to the United States by Miss [Dorothy] Stevens, it developed in the creative, legalist mind of Miss Alice Paul into the idea of a comprehensive Treaty of Equal Rights for Men and Women, whose first and major article should run as follows: ‘The contracting States agree that, upon the ratification of this Treaty, men and women shall have equal rights throughout the territory subject to their respective jurisdictions’.²⁰

The Treaty was discussed at the Sixth Pan-American Congress in Havana in 1928, where the Inter-American Commission of Women was formed with Alice Paul as Chairman of the Nationality Committee. The Treaty was endorsed in 1933 at the 7th Pan-American Conference at Montevideo by the governments of Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador and Cuba. American feminists were jubilant. ‘It is the first time in history’, declared Dorothy Stevens, ‘that states have agreed to outlaw unequal treatment of women by international action.’²¹

Although formed to promote the American proposal for the Equal Rights Treaty, the first Chairman of ERI, Helen Archdale from the United Kingdom, was disappointed that the much-admired Alice Paul disassociated herself from it, supposedly because the first Council included twelve British members and only five Americans. Archdale was hurt by continuing reports of Paul's personal attacks on her. One rumour ('only one of many similar in tone') had it that Paul and her friend Mrs Belmont had said that they could not bear to be in Geneva if Archdale were there: 'the mere idea of her presence there will drive us mad. I consider her undesirable from every point of view.'²² Some of the Europeans fretted that the frustrated Paul saw the ERI as the vehicle for her own entry into Geneva, but then had realised that it was not, in fact, hers to control. Lily van der Schalk-Schuster wrote anxiously to Archdale: 'Is it really true what people say – that she wants to start an organisation here in Europe because they don't want her any more in the US?'²³ In May 1932, Winifred Mayo wrote to Jessie Street, Vice-Chairman of ERI:

I have really conceived a profound distrust of Miss Paul and her methods. She has quarrelled with every other International Society and with all officials at Geneva and since the meeting has boasted that 'she has killed bigger things than the ERI'...I am told that Mrs Corbett Ashby had a nervous breakdown as a result of contacts with her!²⁴

Alice Paul had suggested the formation of a Permanent Committee of feminists based in Geneva to advise the League of Nations on all matters pertaining to the equality of women. Van der Schalk-Schuster devised a plan to accede to her suggestion, but bar Americans from membership of the Committee. It was desirable to have a Permanent Committee of 'very advanced feminists' to promote the principle of equality, not just in nationality rights, but 'whenever an opportunity arises', but it should be established formally as a Committee of the League of Nations ('the Americans would be excluded that way, being [not] members of the League').²⁵

The proposal to broaden the campaign for equality beyond the Treaty opened up new divisions between international feminists. The other organizations, most notably the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, opposed the idea, arguing that the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations could do the work. Archdale

was defensive:

I do not see why being represented on or even actively serving on a Permanent Committee need interfere with the individual work of the ERI for the Treaty. To get a really feminist Permanent Committee to watch for and to insist upon equality in matters coming before the League is a long step towards the Treaty. I guarantee that it would persuade the League very quickly that the shortest way out of the troubles caused by inequality was to give equality and that the best way to do that was by the Treaty.²⁶

In the event, Equal Rights International resolved in consultation with the other women's organizations to press for complete equality on *all* committees, commissions and delegations to the League.

The Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations joined ERI in promoting the Equal Rights Treaty as the basis of a proposed Convention on the Status of Women, with most members prepared to relinquish their support for ILO restrictions on women's work (although the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Young Women's Christian Association stood apart). It was ten South American states, however – Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay – who took the initiative in September 1934 and asked for it to be placed on the agenda of the 16th General Assembly the following year. In a letter to the president of the Assembly they explained:

In consideration of the fact that the League of Nations is an international organisation designed to defend human rights, the following delegations deem it urgent that the League take cognisance of the present widespread and alarming encroachments upon the rights and liberties of women and, recognising that the League has no more loyal supporters in its work for international peace than the women of the world, believe that the League should show its appreciation of the services of women by giving immediate attention to every circumstance imperilling their welfare. Since the Bureau has found it impossible to give consideration at the present time to the subject of the nationality of women and has, we understand, put this subject on the agenda of the next session of the Assembly, we, the undersigned, request that there be included on the agenda not only the subject of women's nationality, but also the entire status of

women, giving particular attention to the Treaty...to remove all legal distinctions based on sex.²⁷

Feminists had hoped for a League of Nations Convention 'to secure for women a civil, political and legal status, based on the principle of equality between the sexes', but in the event the Assembly deferred action, referring the matter back to its member States, deciding that information needed to be collected as to the position of women under existing law.

In 1937, the Assembly agreed to the establishment of a comprehensive and scientific enquiry into 'the legal status enjoyed by women in the various countries in the world as the result of the provisions of national law and the application of those provisions'.²⁸ This appointment of a Committee of Experts, whose work was expected to take three years, enabled the League to avoid antagonizing those governments which had declared that 'the status of women was so essentially a matter of domestic jurisdiction that it ought not to be considered to fall within the field of action of the League'.²⁹ Although it was emphasized that the Experts' recommendations would be entirely 'objective', eight international women's organizations – Equal Rights International, the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, the International Council of Women, the International Federation of Women Magistrates and members of the Legal Profession, St Joan's Social and Political Alliance, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the World Union of Women for International Concord and the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union – were permitted to make representations to the Committee of Experts.

Madeleine Doty, member of the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality, wrote in appreciation to the National Woman's Party:

I feel that you of the Woman's Party have started a big movement internationally. I think it can be said that more was accomplished at the Assembly than we could have hoped for under the circumstances. For the first time in history, equal rights for women was considered internationally by all the governments of the world. That is no mean achievement. That is the big story – that, for five days, delegates from more than 40 countries considered the problem of equal status for women and men.... The Russian delegate, Madame Kollontai, characterized the Assembly's resolution on the Status of Women 'as the first step in international action with regard to the equality of the sexes...The resolutions were introduced in the

Assembly and the campaign was conducted by the Consultative Committee, but the achievement represented the work of thousands of women and the whole campaign was made possible by them.³⁰

What was perhaps most impressive about the National Woman's Party's achievement was their international networking: because the United States was not, itself, a member of the League of Nations, the National Women's Party had to work with and through representatives and feminists of member States. The work of feminists in Central and South American countries was crucial in this regard.

The rights of man

Meanwhile, other developments were preparing the way for the formulation of an international declaration on the rights of man, which, feminists insisted, had also to apply to women. The Institute for International Rights meeting in New York, in October 1929, had drawn up for the first time the articles of a declaration of *Des Droits Internationaux de L'Homme* (its proceedings were always conducted in French). It was noted that rights accrued to 'men' and not just 'citizens' and thus the rights were specified as 'individual' rights, to be honoured by nation-states 'without distinction':

Article premier.

Il est du devoir de tout État de reconnaître à tout individu le droit égal à la vie, à la liberté, et à la propriété, et d'accorder à tous sur son territoire, pleine et entière protection de ce droit, sans distinction de nationalité, de sexe, de race, de langue ou de religion.³¹

The words 'de sexe' were added following lobbying by American feminists.

In 1933, the International Federation of League of Nations Unions called a conference at Montreux to discuss the formulation of a Convention on the 'rights of man'. Feminists in Geneva lobbied Lord Cecil, the Federation's chairman, 'with the object of getting it clearly stated in this convention that "Rights of Man" included also "Rights of Women"'.³² Cecil supported their claim (though opposed to the idea of a Convention) and representations were subsequently made to Professor Giannini, the Chairman and other members of the Special Committee on the subject. Equal Rights International was pleased to report: 'The result was that the following draft Convention was presented to the

XVIII Plenary Congress of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies at Folkstone in May [1934] and endorsed by the Congress'. It read:

It is the duty of every State to recognise that every individual, subject to the requirements of public order, has an equal right to life, to material existence, and to liberty, particularly in the free exercise of any religion, language or conviction and to grant to all, without any discrimination, whatsoever, full, complete and effective protection of these rights.³³

Helen Archdale, outgoing Chairman of ERI (to be replaced by Australian Linda Littlejohn), took heart in feminists' historic victory:

In 1928 American women secured the addition of the words 'of sex' among the distinctions to be abolished by this Convention. In 1934 we find no list of distinctions; we find instead the phrase 'no distinctions whatever'. A significant acceptance of our principle, and, moreover, most willingly granted.³⁴

Thus did two different conceptions of women's rights and of strategies to secure those rights jostle with each other at the League of Nations. Those who saw women's subordination as being occasioned by their sexual degradation and forms of exploitation specific to their sex stressed distinctive rights for women – the right to sanctity of the person, women's right to inviolability, their right to self-determination. The international principle of 'self-determination' was appropriated for a gendered politics: to achieve 'self-determination' – to become 'mistresses of themselves' – girls and women needed to be protected from those who would traffic in their bodies. But 'protection' locked women into subordination.

By the late 1920s, numerous feminists had become increasingly impatient with the politics of protection and demanded that women be accorded the same status and rights as men. As Open Door International put it: 'No-one can retain his intellectual honesty and accept the view that there can be equality and protection at the same time'.³⁵ Increasingly the tensions over 'protection' were expressed as an opposition between 'equality' and 'social reform' or what would become known as 'sameness' and 'difference', but many feminists, including the Australians and a number of Europeans, refused this impossible choice, demanding equal rights with men, but also claiming distinctive rights

for women – as prostitutes, as mothers, as wives. The insistence by others that equality entailed a disavowal of sexual difference led ultimately to the opposition of US, UK and Canadian delegates to the creation of a separate Commission on Status of Women in 1945.

Human rights without distinction

By the late 1930s, feminists had succeeded in making the 'status of women' an international question; much lobbying still had to take place, however, at the founding United Nations Conference on International Organisation in San Francisco in May 1945 (chiefly by Bertha Lutz, from Brazil, Minerva Bernadino from the Dominican Republic, Amelia Ledon from Mexico and Jessie Street from Australia) before agreement was reached that the 'equal rights of men and women' should be recognized in the Charter of the United Nations.³⁶ Further lobbying ensured that the Economic and Social Council would establish a Commission (initially a Sub-Commission) on the Status of Women. In London, the revived Liaison Committee of International Women's Organisations waited on the President of the Social and Economic Council to press their point that the Commission on Human Rights must be equally representative of men and women. However, when feminists on the Commission on the Status of Women attempted in 1947 and 1948 to have the Draft International Bill of Human Rights amended to address the distinctive harms suffered by women they were rebuffed by the Commission on Human Rights, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, because the rights in the new declaration had to be 'universal' in character – that is, they had to comprise 'the fundamental rights and freedoms which constitute man's material, economic, social, political, intellectual, moral and spiritual natures'.³⁷

At its first meeting in 1946, the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women drew up its policy in terms of four sets of aims arranged under the following headings: Political, Civil, Social and Economic and Education. Policy on 'civil' matters included principles governing marriage: 'Freedom of choice, dignity of the wife, monogamy, equal right to breach of marriage'. Policy on social and economic matters included the abolition of prostitution and 'special consideration to women on the grounds of motherhood'. In the domains of education and politics there was an emphasis on equal opportunity.³⁸

The reception accorded executive members of the Status of Women Commission by the Economic and Social Council, when the first report of their work was discussed, did not augur well for 'the status of

women' at the United Nations. Vice-Chairman Jessie Street (from Australia) reported to Chairman Bodil Begtrup (from Denmark) in April 1947:

It is obvious that some of the members of the Economic and Social Council are not sympathetic with the work of the Status of Women Commission and are trying to belittle it and narrow it down. The Canadian delegate, Mr Smith, indulged in various irresponsible and inaccurate witticisms which were awarded with considerable mirth at our expense. A resolution was moved by Mr Phillips, the English delegate, which attempted to narrow our work.

Mrs Uralova spoke very strongly.³⁹

Five days later, Street wrote again:

One of the amendments made by the E&SC to our Report was that the office bearers of our Committee should be present only when they discuss the particular rights of women (Canada suggested that we might want to answer something about the rights of nursing mothers...). The intention of our Committee was that the recognition of the rights of women as human beings had been conspicuously absent in the past, for instance in respect of the right to vote, the right to work and own her own property, the right to guardianship of her own children etc. Consequently, we believe all phases of the Bill of Human Rights would affect women and think we should be present during the whole of the discussion on the Bill of Human Rights.⁴⁰

In the event, the discussions in Geneva in December 1947 were attended by Bodil Begtrup, with Jessie Street who was unable to be present forwarding proposed amendments ('Do what you can dear Bodil', wrote Street, 'to see that our Commission is not slighted').⁴¹ The experience of the tensions surrounding women's international work during the previous 20 years was evident in their determination to draw attention to the particularity of the rights required by women, on the one hand, without falling into the trap of 'protection', on the other. Thus did Begtrup advise 'Friends':

I think it would be wise in the future to talk about the special conditions we want for motherhood as 'the rights of motherhood' because this is a service to the community as such, and it will be a

help to cut these rights free from 'protection', which always gives a sense of inferiority that it will be sound to avoid.⁴²

The feminists on the Status of Women Commission tried to steer a path between women on the left who adhered to the ILO position that women (and children) needed special protection and those like Eleanor Roosevelt, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, who 'was against any special mentioning of women' at all.⁴³ Jessie Street explained to Lena Spiegel, consultant for the World Federation of Trade Unions, the first body to be registered as an NGO (non-government organization) by the Social and Economic Council, how she might amend a document she had prepared for the Human Rights Commission:

I should like to see the words 'maternity protection' on p. 10 changed to 'maternity benefits'... The use of the word 'protection' in respect of women workers should be avoided as so often the rights of women workers are interfered with under the pretext of protecting them... Women can be dismissed or discriminated against under the guise of 'protection' which would be avoided by making women entitled to benefits.⁴⁴

The amendments proposed by Begtrup and Street to the draft International Bill on Human Rights reflected the tension between their desire to outlaw discrimination, while calling for recognition of the distinctive oppressions suffered by women. (Street had spent much time in New York and Washington in 1947 'meeting the leaders of the ER amendment and those who are against it. I have done a good deal of work...with these two groups endeavouring to find some common ground upon which they could co-operate.')⁴⁵ On the one hand, then, the feminists on the Status of Women Commission recommended (to no avail) that a prefatory statement to the Declaration make it clear that wherever a male noun or pronoun was used, the rights so designated 'shall be taken to apply without distinction to the female sex' and they proposed, successfully, that the tribute in Article 1 to 'the brotherhood of man' be replaced with the (more gender-neutral?) idea that people should act towards one another in 'a spirit of brotherhood'.⁴⁶

Feminists argued, however, that the principle that women should not be discriminated against did not remove the need to formulate rights specific to women. For there were particular abuses suffered by women as women – as 'creatures of sex', as mothers, as wives. Recent experience in the Second World War had highlighted some of these.

In an attempt to curb the spread of venereal disease among soldiers, many governments had introduced regulations enabling authorities to forcibly examine prostitutes or even women simply deemed sexually active. Jessie Street had, along with other feminists, protested against 'girls being hunted down by Gestapo methods' in wartime Australia.⁴⁷ To her mind it was precisely this sort of violation that should be expressly outlawed in an international declaration of human rights. As she explained in support of her proposed amendment to the Human Rights Commission:

Among the most common injustices suffered by women who are suspected of promiscuity is to be arrested without warrant, to be subjected to forcible examinations, to be detained without a trial or sentence and to be registered as prostitutes... No woman should be subjected to any curtailment of civil rights by reason of the fact that she is suspected of being, or is, a prostitute.

Street recommended the addition of a specific clause to the Declaration: 'No woman shall be deprived of her personal liberty or be subject to arbitrary and unauthorised arrest by laws or regulations passed under the pretext of protecting health and morals', but was assured that the general wording of Articles 3 and 5 sufficed. When Street proposed that the clause prohibiting slavery be extended to prohibit 'white slavery' again the general wording of Article 4 was deemed sufficient.⁴⁸

The Commission on the Status of Women in formulating its policy on women's civil status had addressed the particular subjection of the wife, demanding that international conventions enforce monogamy in terms of the wife's 'right to dignity'. It reiterated its concern to the Human Rights Commission: 'The Commission emphasises its belief in the principle of monogamy and urges the United Nations to work for the acceptance of this principle', but the Drafting Committee was not moved to inscribe such a right as a human right in their Declaration.⁴⁹ Instead, Article 16 stated a person's right to marry and stipulated that marriage 'shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses'.

Feminists on the Commission on the Status of Women were also keen to have the Declaration recognize 'the rights of motherhood', but had to accept instead Article 25's positioning of 'motherhood' along with 'childhood' as a condition requiring 'special care and assistance' rather than 'rights'.⁵⁰ Clearly, it was not just the Canadian member of

the Human Rights Commission who found the idea risible that nursing mothers might have rights. Although the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically recognized the equal rights of men and women, those rights were defined with reference to a male standard, addressing a masculine experience of the world, masculine anxieties and hopes. In this conceptual framework, 'equality' rested on the disavowal of sexual difference or its incorporation into a politics of protection.

In her study of four French feminists, *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, Joan Scott has made the point that Western feminism has been constituted by 'the discursive practices of democratic politics that have equated individuality with masculinity'; in pursuing individual rights so assiduously in the 1930s, feminists associated with the Six Point Group, the American Women's Party and Equal Rights International, in particular, helped reinscribe that masculinity as the universal standard.⁵¹ Their demand for equality was understandable in the historical context, a frustrated response to an earlier politics of protection that promised self-determination, while consolidating political subordination. The early 1930s also witnessed, in the context of the Depression and the rise of fascism, increasing attacks on the liberties of women, especially their right to work. Nevertheless, the insistence of equal rights feminists on the 'universality' of equal rights made it more difficult for the Commission on the Status of Women to secure recognition of the specificity of the abuses suffered by women. The male architects of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights loftily refused their claims, declaring that human rights must be universal, enjoyed by all individuals without distinction. Thus did the nursing mother, nicely symbolic of the messy disorder of women's sexed embodiment, become both joke and gibe, literally unthinkable as a rights-bearing political subject. Well might Eleanor Roosevelt declare the 1948 General Assembly 'the Rights of Man Assembly'.⁵² The challenge of achieving recognition that 'women's rights' are also 'human rights' remains with us still.

Notes

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22. Helen Archdale to Alice Paul, 19 May 1931, ERI papers, Box 331.
23. Lily van der Schalk-Schuster to Helen Archdale, 10 March 1931, ERI papers, Box 331.
24. Winifred Mayo to Jessie Street, 20 May 1932, UA papers, ML MSS 2160/Y789.
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18

South Sudanese Refugee Women: Questioning the Past, Imagining the Future

Jane Kani Edward

Since its independence in 1956 Sudan has been, and continues to be, ravaged by civil wars. First the 17-year civil war (1956–72) and secondly the current civil war which started in 1983. For more than half a century relations between northern and southern Sudan have been hostile and have consisted largely of invasions by northern slave traders and aggression by the successive post-colonial northern-based governments trying to dominate the south. Despite the complexities of Sudan's ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity, the conflict has translated into a north–south dichotomy, with race and religion as its major factors.

According to Dunstan Wai, the north–south conflict in the Sudan dates back to the pre-colonial days.¹ He argued that the conflict between the two groups stems from historical roots as well as from cultural, racial and economic antagonisms leading to distrust and desire for secession. The southern people's experiences with Arab Muslim slave traders and raiders (Egyptians and northern Sudanese) during the Turko–Egyptian rule in Sudan (1821–1885), the Mahadist state (1885–1898), and the brutal ways in which Islam and the Arabic language have been introduced in the south represent the bases for continuous conflict in Sudan.

Divided into two opposing entities, the north is defined as Arab and Islamic, and the south is considered African and Christian. The north–south divide was further entrenched by the British colonizers. For example, during the British colonial rule (1898–1956), the British administrators used the policy of 'divide and rule' known as the 'Southern Policy' of 1930–1947 whereby the south was administered separately from the north.² This policy was intended to protect the south from the Arab cultural and religious influence of the north.

According to the Southern Policy northern Sudanese were not allowed to travel or live in the south without obtaining a special permit from the British Authority. Moreover English rather than Arabic was taught in southern schools.³ However, with pressure from the northern nationalists, the British in 1947 abandoned the Southern Policy and decided to merge southern Sudan with the north.⁴ As a result, since the Sudan's independence in 1956 the successive northern-dominated governments have insisted on Arabism as the defining element of the Sudanese identity. The south therefore is viewed as a fertile ground for religious conversion and Arabization. For instance, the main agenda of the current National Islamic Front regime in Sudan is to establish an Islamic state with Arab and Islamic identity based on the Islamic Shari'a.

The current civil war has led to the massive displacement of about 5.5 million Sudanese. About four million of these people are displaced within the south. As the war continues, the social and economic fabric of the country is being devastated. Furthermore, the lives of more than one million southern Sudanese have been lost. An estimated 1.5 million are forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, such as Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Egypt, while others are resettled in western Europe and North America. Recent studies on the experience of refugees have shown that exile involves not only physical displacement and flights from the home country, but also a dramatic disruption of normal life, social relations and cultural meanings.⁵

This chapter explores the experiences of south Sudanese refugee women in Egypt and northern Uganda and the implication of the changes in women's lives. Although they are forced out of the Sudan, these women strive to make sense of their lives in exile. The chapter focuses specifically on new roles, activities, perceptions and lifestyles that refugee women take up to challenge some of the social and cultural aspects of the southern Sudan society. To understand the meaning of these women's challenging of the traditional south Sudanese society and of their imagining of a different future, the chapter begins by examining some of the social and cultural features and laws that govern the southern society, and by looking into aspects of the host countries' legal, cultural and social organization with which these women came into contact. The chapter then will address the reactions of south Sudanese refugee women to their past as they have experienced refugee life. In order to understand these reactions, such variables as the differing host countries' effect on women's lives, the importance of education, women's exposure to global affairs affecting women, as well as women's personal and collective experiences of exile will be examined.

The study is based on research completed in 1995 and 1997 among southern Sudanese women refugees in Egypt and northern Uganda. The methods of participant observation and interviewing were used during the research. The study will show that southern Sudanese women are actively involved in questioning the past and imagining their future. The chapter argues that the representation of refugee women by researchers, academics, relief workers and policy makers as dependent, a problem, vulnerable and in continuous need of assistance is sometimes misleading. It is true that upon arrival in the host country, refugees may need some help in terms of meeting some of the basic human needs, such as food and shelter. However, displacement also provides an opportunity for women to question some of the societal structures and cultural meanings which constrained their freedom and progress in the past.

As pointed out by Marita Eastmond, the impact of exile on the lives and identities of people occurs in the interplay between historical, political and socio-cultural background factors and the context of each refugee population.⁶ Therefore, exploration of the refugees' past as well as the host countries' situation will help in understanding the particular aspects of this past the refugee women hope to change. Questioning the past, however, does not mean rejection of all cultural values and traditions that shaped people's lives in south Sudan. Instead, the women challenge only those customs, cultural attitudes and traditions that they view as oppressive and discriminatory, given their new experience of war and exile.

Socio-cultural features of south Sudan

The cultural, religious, racial, ethnic and historical diversity in the Sudan in general and in south Sudan in particular does not allow for easy generalizations about its society, culture and laws. However, despite this diversity, one can argue that there exist common features and systems that affect women similarly regardless of their ethnic identity and social position in the society. Within the scope of this chapter, such aspects as gender relations and roles, family or personal laws governing the south Sudan society, polygamy, and the levirate or the institution of widow inheritance will be considered. These features represent the areas which directly affect a large number of women's lives and experiences. Furthermore, it is within these areas where renegotiations, contestations and transformations occur between males and females in the context of exile.

Like many sub-Saharan African societies, the south Sudanese society has undergone many transformations resulting from foreign invasions, particularly the British colonial rule (1898–1956) which brought the colonial patriarchy, the introduction of a ‘Victorian ideology of domesticity’, and the imposition of the doctrine of separate spheres. Amina Mama has identified two sides of colonial patriarchy in Africa, namely ‘violent and benevolent patriarchy’.⁷ On the one hand, there was a widespread violation and degradation of African women through forced prostitution. On the other hand, there was the other side ‘which sought to “domesticate” a significant number of African women’ through the introduction of ‘a bourgeois Victorian ideology of domesticity in Africa’. For instance, missionaries, colonial officials and administrators, through educational and religious institutions, disseminated this ideology. Furthermore, the curricula of colonial education in Africa emphasized subjects that differentiate between public and domestic spheres, with the latter exclusively occupied by women.⁸ Despite the fact that women in the south Sudan shoulder family responsibilities ranging from child care, food production and processing, men are always regarded as heads of the household. This claim is based on the belief that the man is the protector and breadwinner, while women are caretakers of the family.

Socially women are expected to behave in particular ways prescribed by the society. For instance, women’s involvement in politics and other public activities is restricted or discouraged. This restriction is based on the assumption that the public sphere is the world of men while women’s roles are confined to the home. The public/domestic dichotomy in the south Sudan context takes root right from childhood as sons and daughters are socialized differently according to their parents’ roles in both the family and society.

Social relations and roles are strictly gendered in south Sudan. The term ‘social relations’ is used here to refer to the gendered dimension of the social relations structuring the lives of individual women and men – such as the gendered division of labour and of access to and control over resources.⁹ Gender roles, on the other hand, refer to the duties/activities performed by women and men in the family and the society at large. In the south Sudan society, gender relations are based on the subordination of women as well as on the respect and obedience of women to men – whether father, brother, uncle or husband. As daughters women are expected to respect and obey their male relatives. Upon marriage this respect is transferred to their husbands and male in-laws. It is through obedience, respect, hard work and mutual understanding that women achieve men’s praise and love.

Social relations between women and men are further characterized by men's imposition of their power and authority over women. Within the family and in the larger society, for instance, women usually occupy a subordinate position compared with men. This is evident in the fact that women are not involved in decision-making regarding major family and societal matters such as marriage discussions, financial, legal and political issues. Moreover, men exert their power and authority over women through the control of women's bodies, sexuality and their movements. For instance, restrictions placed on women's movement or involvement in public life, and the importance placed on procreation as the main objective of marriage are in a way intended to control women's bodies and sexuality. As John W. Makec argued in his study of the Dinka customary law, 'a man has absolutely exclusive rights over the private part of his wife which may be described as sacred'.¹⁰ Men's exertion of authority over women's sexuality is solely for purposes of reproduction. Jok Madut Jok in his study of the women of Western Dinka of south Sudan, pointed out that, 'in the name of reproduction, a man assumes a right to the woman's sexual services. The rules of sexual taboo are easily breached when the husband is determined to expose his wife to pregnancy before he is taken away for his military duties.' For him leaving his wife not pregnant might lure the woman to seek extra-marital affairs with other men.¹¹

In areas of political power, in property ownership and public events, such as the performance of rituals, women occupy lower positions compared with men. Moreover, women are not allowed to own property. In the case of inheritance male children always have the right to inherit properties in the family. As Jean Buxton notes in her study of the Mandari people of south Sudan, 'Mandari women, though displaying dignity of person, independent mindedness and influence, are still from the point of view of property-ownership and the exercise of political power, much less advantageously placed than men'.¹²

The division of labour is also gendered in south Sudan. Work which is carried out within the confines of the home, such as food production and processing, cleaning, fetching of water and firewood, child rearing and so on, is regarded as women's work. In contrast, hunting, politics, fighting wars, and all other work performed outside the home are regarded as men's work. As such, boundaries between the domestic and public spheres are defined by the nature of the work women and men perform. Crossing from one world to the other is, therefore, regarded as transgression, and thus generates conflict.

Laws governing south Sudan society

There are three kinds of laws in the Sudan. These include Islamic Shari'a, customary law, and secular/English laws. Although the successive regimes in Sudan tried to impose Islamic law in south Sudan, however, these attempts have not been successful due to south Sudanese resistance to Islamic law. For instance, the first attempt to implement Islamic Shari'a in Sudan was in 1983, during Jaafar Mohamed Nimeiri's regime (1969–1985), but it was not successful. As a result south Sudan is governed by a dual legal system in which customary law exists side-by-side with the secular laws. Despite the practice of both laws, customary law, rooted in the traditions and practices of ethnic groups, predominates and governs the private issues relating to family, the home, property ownership, marriage, divorce, maintenance, and child custody.

'Customary law is a non-written law.'¹³ As a result, customary law varies from one ethnic group to the other, and it changes over time, making it very difficult to implement. However, despite its variety and changing nature, customary law affects south Sudanese women similarly across ethnic and class lines. For example, almost all cases of marriage, divorce, property ownership and child custody are dealt with in local courts which are headed by local chiefs and a committee of elders from each ethnic group. Among the Dinka, for instance, the legality of marriage does not lie with the state, but rests on the agreement between the interested parties on both sides, that is, members of the two families concerned.¹⁴ Thus registration or certification of marriages is not the priority, particularly in the rural areas.

Although some Christian southern Sudanese conduct their marriages according to church tradition, still the initial stages of marriage, that is, consent, payment of the bride-wealth and elders' blessings are conducted according to the customs and traditions of the ethnic groups involved. It is only at the later stage that the couple go to the church for further blessing. Cases of divorce and child custody or problems arising in a marriage or family are also dealt with in accordance with the customary law of each particular ethnic group. In such situations women are usually at a disadvantage since they have no power or authority to claim their rights as mothers or members of the society in male dominated local courts. Among all the ethnic groups in the south Sudan, women have no right to custody of their children. The general rule is that children from birth always belong to their father. Thus, upon divorce, the father has the right to take all the children from

their mother. If younger children are involved, for example, those breastfeeding, they are left with their mother until they grow to six or seven years of age when they are handed to the father. However, this does not mean that the general rule does not apply. On the other hand, polygamy is a common practice among all ethnic groups. South Sudan customs and traditions allow a man to marry as many wives as he can maintain well, that is, provide with shelter and agricultural land. Marriage is usually understood in terms of a union between a man and one or more women. For instance, the Dink family or personal law defines marriage as a

union between one man or his successor and one or more women for their lives for the purpose of sexual cohabitation, procreation of the young and maintenance of the homestead; provided that such union may take place between one barren or childless woman and another, or others whom male consorts are provided; provided also that such union may take place between a deceased male person and one or more women through his successor.¹⁵

A review of the above definition of marriage makes clear that it discriminates against women in several aspects. Defined from a male perspective, it gives men rights to control women's lives and bodies. As a result, women are stripped of their right to define marriage and social relations in their own terms. In other words, the practice of marrying for the sole purpose of sexual cohabitation and the production of children again subjects women's bodies and sexuality to further male control and exploitation, without considering the health or reproductive risk that may affect women's physical well being. In such situations women have little say or right to act in the control of their own fertility.

The institution of 'widow inheritance' practised by many ethnic groups, as well as the 'levirate or ghost marriage' practised among the Dinka and Nuer, also subjected women to men's authority and power.¹⁶ For instance, among the Nyangwara of south Sudan, a young widow of reproductive age is usually required by her marital family to be inherited by the deceased husband's brother or relative to continue childbearing. Children born out of this union are legally the children of the deceased.¹⁷ The existence of widow inheritance is due to the fact that bride-wealth in the form of cattle (among the cattle keepers) and goats and cash (among the agriculturalists) is involved. Thus to avoid the return of the bride-wealth, which is the concern of men, a woman is subordinated to such interests.

Despite the spread of Christianity in south Sudan, and the changing social and economic situations in the South due to war, displacement and instability, polygamy still predominates. Jok Madut Jok argues that, 'despite some changes in Dinka marriage patterns, ... the core of the system in the community remains the same'. He went on further to argue that 'Dinka is a polygamous society, with 45–60 per cent of men having more than one wife at some point in their lives'.¹⁸

Polygamy has been regarded as a way of displaying wealth and power. For instance, a chief or any rich powerful man may have several wives who will share the household tasks and will provide him not only with affinities, but also with numerous progeny.¹⁹ In short, one can argue that customary law which is rooted in traditions and cultural practices has contributed to women's suppression, subordination and exclusion from the public arena. The pressures women experience as a result of the dictates of custom further make them reluctant to struggle for their rights or to get involved in politics, public decision-making positions and other public issues. Moreover, polygamy represents another area that has led to the subordination of women and disunity among them. In south Sudan, polygamy is one of the major causes of domestic disputes and family problems as well as contributing to the lack of solidarity among women at the community level.

Questioning the past, imagining the future

Studies of refugee populations have shown that women and men forcibly driven from their countries of origin strive to retain in their place of exile the essentials of their culture and way of life.²⁰ Although women try to retain their culture, social position and lifestyle, the exigencies of being refugees force them to re-examine their perceptions and to adopt both social and economic roles which are counter to their socially and culturally accepted behaviours. Julie M. Peteet in her study of women and the Palestinian resistance argues that, since continuous crisis and war times were periods of cultural ambiguity, patterns of expected behaviour were suspended or redefined as people mobilized to resist their situation.²¹ In other words, exile usually leads to the alteration of many cultural, social and gendered relations between women and men. Moreover, meanings usually attached to cultural practices and gender role expectations are redefined and negotiated to allow for adjustment.

My interviews suggest that changes in women's roles and involvement in public activities were viewed differently by both women and

men. Most of the male refugees viewed the changes in women's role and participation in group work with contempt. For instance, some men refused to permit their wives to join women's groups or to carry out income generating activities. These men usually view women's participation in group work or work outside the home as a threat to their authority over women. During a group discussion in one of the refugee settlements in northern Uganda, the head of the women's group noted the difficulties married women face when they join an association:

Our group is made up of two categories of women. There are those women living with their husbands in the camp and others whose husbands are not in the camp. Usually those women with husbands consider themselves to have many responsibilities than those without. As such, they abandoned the group. However, I later came to learn that, the issue is not family responsibilities, but their husbands don't want them to be members of the group. This realization came after I overheard one man in our block quarrelling with his wife. He said to his wife that, "you have entered that group work. You don't know that the women in that group are those who have no husbands in the camp. They just gather in the community center to be seen by other men. They have no work except knitting, an activity of lazy people. If you return to that group you will face the consequences. Those women consider themselves educated but they are lazy.

Men are also ambivalent about working women. They usually think that women working in the offices always come into contact with other men. As one refugee man in a camp in northern Uganda noted 'men working with the NGOs are not good men, in that they have sexual relations with women working in the offices'. On the other hand, some refugee women tend to complain of the double work they do (house-work and working for income). As some men are unwilling to help with household tasks refugee women come to view changes in their roles as disadvantageous to their physical well being. As one refugee woman in Egypt noted 'doing double work is not an easy thing. It has a negative effect on my health. Because of the demanding nature of this work, now I have developed high blood pressure, a sickness I did not have before.'

The exile situations are usually characterized by economic hardship, poverty, lack of secure jobs for refugees, and exposure to unfamiliar environments, cultures and social lives. Such a situation has a grave effect on the lives of women and men refugees. Being marginalized in

the new setting, refugees' traditionally defined roles, expectations and behaviour are usually put to the test or questioned. Such aspects as gender relations and roles, national and ethnic identities, economic and culturally accepted behaviour are either altered or redefined as people struggle to survive. However, this alteration or redefinition is often a traumatic experience as it involves both loss and gain of roles and social positions for both women and men. Shifts in accepted roles and behaviour usually create tensions between the two genders. In her study of the Southeast Asian refugees in America, Janet Benson identified three kinds of situations in which ambivalence towards working women (or rather shift in roles) occurs:

First...Men experiencing downward status mobility were sensitive to perceived loss of authority in the family, and when wives worked outside the home, the husbands had less control over them. For formerly middle-class or elite men, it was also a matter of prestige to be able to support one's family. Second, if role reversal took place in which a wife supported an unemployed husband, this threatened the husband's position within the family and required him to take on unfamiliar cooking and child care responsibilities. In the third type of situation, the wife was better educated and/or more fluent in English than the husband. She could hold a higher-status job than her spouse, one requiring more interaction with non-related males and Americans in general.²²

The south Sudanese cultural attitudes that perceive men as heads and providers of the family, while women are viewed as dependants of men, have been altered as the exile and settlement conditions proved unfavourable to upholding such attitudes or ideals. As women began to take up roles and activities usually considered men's, they started to question the traditional roles and expectations of the south Sudanese society. My interviews confirm that poverty, economic hardship and men's lack of employment have led to a shift in gender roles whereby women assume greater responsibility for providing for the family. This is how one woman recounted the difficulties she faced as a sole provider for her family in Egypt:

As a result of displacement, I face more problems and carry out the roles which were previously performed by the husband. Here I have to bear the burden of family survival in Cairo, that is, house rent, feeding family members and so on. In fact the money I get from my

teaching job and other income earning activities goes to cover house rent in particular and other services.

To support their families financially, south Sudanese women refugees were engaged in a variety of economic and income earning activities. In Egypt, for instance, getting jobs in the Egyptian formal sector is not easy for foreigners. As such many women refugees entered the informal sector by performing work such as babysitting and house cleaning. Others were forced into prostitution to earn a living.²³

The shift in gender roles further contributed to the reconstitution of power relations between women and men within the family. As south Sudanese women refugees assumed the role of providers and supporters of the family, they began to assert greater involvement in decision-making, particularly on financial issues, an area which has been the sole domain of men in the past. Furthermore, as women became involved in economic activities, they came to realize the importance of women's economic independence, particularly in relation to issues of power and authority within the family. They also began to challenge the long held belief that women are always dependent on men economically. For instance, one south Sudanese refugee woman in Egypt noted how decision-making in the family (particularly on financial issues) could be influenced by the socio-economic status of the wife:

Regarding decision-making on household matters, both my husband and I have a say on issues regarding our house. However, this depends on the husband-wife relations, and wife's socio-economic status and [their] understanding of each other. In case the man is the sole earner of income, then the woman has no right to decide or have a say on financial matters. For the man usually thinks that a woman has no right to inquire about her husband's money. However, when the wife also earns money and supports the family, then both have the right to decision-making on household issues.

As the process of uprooting and resettlement has necessitated shifts in gender roles and relations, it has also led to changes in women's way of thinking about such practices as polygamy, reproduction and marriage. Studies on social change have shown that social and economic transformations in a given society affect individuals' attitudes, perceptions and ways of life. Refugee literature further documents the fact that displacement usually causes changes within the household structure, which in turn have an effect on people's perceptions of the culturally accepted

norms and values of the society. In her analysis of the role of women in changing African families, Luise White argues that women's role in the family has changed, not according to the personal traits of individuals, but as a result of the family's changing relations to natural resources, the state and society.²⁴ Contrary to the above view is Jok's argument that 'women's reaction to gender differentials that affect their health and well being...are not necessarily the product of shared and prescribed norms of shared behaviour. Rather they are the product of individual experiences with the upheavals of war.'²⁵ My findings agree with Jok's argument. This is because refugee women respond to change differently depending on their age, educational level, ethnicity and social status.

South Sudanese women's encounter with economic hardship, poverty and the threat of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases have forced women to view polygamy, for instance, with suspicion. Although women in the south Sudan are familiar with polygamy and polygamous households, in exile, as well as inside south Sudan, polygamy poses a major health and emotional problem for women. A woman refugee in one of the refugee settlements in northern Uganda argued that:

With all the problems facing refugees, some men marry many wives. At the moment household responsibility is difficult, the food which is supposed to be in one family is shared by many wives and children and it is not even enough. Those men who have married many wives tend to encourage other men to do so. Now that there is AIDS, if a man has his first wife, when he brings a second wife, sometimes one finds that she is a 'victim', thus affecting the whole family.²⁶

Besides poverty and health problems associated with polygamy, women's exposure to other cultures through formal education, and the media, have led them to challenge the practice. Although they have not enough power to eliminate the practice completely, women in the country of refuge have worked both individually and collectively to challenge polygamy. For example, individually, women have used economic difficulties, and the new ideas they learned to challenge polygamy. Through group discussions, sharing of ideas and training workshops, women are able to point out the negative impact of polygamy on women's lives and relations. Women have come to regard polygamy as a source of conflict among women, which in turn leads to women's disunity and lack of solidarity.

Marriage as understood in the past is the bringing of two families or clans together for peaceful coexistence. It was a way of establishing

alliances and expanding the family line. Viewed as such, the family background and its social position in the society became the measure for the acceptance of marriage. For women marriage meant the achievement of high status associated with being a married woman, having children and gaining respectability in the society. However, in exile marriage becomes associated with material gains and individual security. Madawi Al-Racheed in his study of exiled Iraqi women in London showed how 'exile leads to the reconstruction of the meaning of marriage which in their minds becomes associated with security, family life and stability in general' rather than with the achievement of high status.²⁷

Family background and the social position of one's family of origin become irrelevant when women marry across ethnic or racial lines, as they tend increasingly to do in exile. Marriage certification and legal registration become important compared with its recognition by the families involved. The marriage certificate also becomes important because of the fact that applying for resettlement in a third country requires certified marriage documents. The absence of elderly family members in Egypt has led many marriages to be witnessed by distant relatives, friends and the church. Bride-wealth is negotiated and agreement signed between the parties involved, so that it will be settled when peace comes.

Education is another variable which has contributed to refugee women's realization of the negative impact on girls and women of some socially accepted practices of the south Sudanese society. The younger generation of women refugees, for instance, through contact with the host country's practices, and the presence of women in positions of power in either the government or NGOs, have motivated refugee women to pursue education as a way to achieve a better life. For instance, this is how one south Sudanese refugee woman in Egypt explains the importance of education for women:

There are changes in my life, health and appearance since I came to Egypt in 1993. My perception and mind have changed greatly. Now I can think of what to do in this world. I came to realize the importance of education for a woman. It is through formal learning that one can go around in a city like Cairo without any difficulty. One can read the directions and names of the street by herself. Also, one can know her rights as a woman and her role in the public sphere. When I was young, I did not go to school because among my ethnic group girls' education is not considered important, since girls are married in an early age. However, in Egypt, although I am married, I joined adult education classes so that I can learn how to read and

write in English. I am sure if I have enough money to pay for education I will continue with my studies until I reach high school.

The belief in marrying at an early age in order to bear more children or in arranged marriages is greatly challenged and begins to be considered as oppressive and discriminatory toward women. Aja, a young girl from the Dinka ethnic group living in a refugee camp in Kenya, was forced by her father into an arranged marriage. However, Aja resisted this arrangement on the grounds that she is still young and in pursuit of her education. In her words, she noted: 'I would like to be a doctor so I can treat people and help them, ... I don't want to marry him. I am still small. I want to learn first.'²⁸

I acknowledge the fact that displacement and life in exile disrupt the normal and orderly lives of those affected. At the same time it can be argued that life in exile can also be of benefit to refugees or immigrants. In the case of south Sudanese women, life in exile has brought them into contact with other societies, cultures and challenges. Because of their life in exile, many refugee women became aware of global events and issues affecting women in general. For instance, in 1994 about a hundred south Sudanese women living in Egypt attended the NGO Forum of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, Egypt. Some women attended the regional conference in Dakar, Senegal in 1995. South Sudanese refugee women from Egypt and Kenya also attended the NGO Forum of the International Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995. The opportunities these women had as a result of living in exile would be unthinkable if they had remained in Sudan. Through attending workshops, short courses on women issues, regional and international conferences, south Sudanese women refugees became aware of women's level of economic, political and reproductive rights.

Besides these regional and international events, the circumstances in the host countries have an impact on women's way of thinking and how they come to view their everyday world. For instance, through contact with Egyptian landlords as clients, south Sudanese refugee women learned about the power and authority Egyptian women have in their families. For example, family homes or apartments in Egypt are registered in the women's names as their property, a situation which does not exist in the south Sudan. For example, in Egypt women's right 'to own and manage their own property is a long established prerogative protected by the state and Islamic law and, in effect, is a key part of the foundation of a woman's ability to go into business for herself'.²⁹ Seeing the availability to many Egyptian women of jobs in the labour market

and of key positions in the Egyptian state and businesses has encouraged refugee women to pursue education and to recognize the important role women can play in the public domain. For instance, many Egyptian women, because of their education, are able to enter key government and professional positions and to run their own businesses. As noted by Earl Sullivan, 'between 1956 and 1979, pathbreaking women participated in Egyptian public life in new ways. Egyptian women started their own businesses, entered parliament, were appointed to cabinet posts.'³⁰

In Uganda, moreover, the country's constitution gives women more rights than are given to women in south Sudan. Women's issues in Ugandan society are considered on the national agenda and in policy debate. Furthermore, the presence of a handful of women in high positions in the state and in many NGOs in Uganda has increased refugee women's awareness of the importance of women's public participation in the society. Observing politically active women in Egypt and Uganda and seeing women coming together regionally and internationally to campaign for women's rights, south Sudanese women became more aware of the importance of organizing and collective action to address the challenges they face in exile. They also became aware of the negative cultural practices that oppress and discriminate against women in their communities of origin.

In Egypt, for instance, south Sudanese refugee women formed five organized women's groups and associations. One motivating factor for the women to get organized was the necessity for a collective action and response to the displacement situation.³¹ On the other hand, in the refugee camps in northern Uganda, the women organized themselves into groups. There were four women's groups during the period of my research (between June and August of 1997). Although these groups carry out different activities, they still have common objectives. These include empowerment and consciousness raising among refugee women regarding their rights through training on gender issues, literacy training, health and reproductive issues. These groups also provided advocacy training and the dissemination of information on political, economic and legal issues related to south Sudan and the difficulties facing women refugees, and the possibilities of how to overcome them.

Conclusion

The impact of war and seeking refuge on the lives of the refugee women and men has both negative and positive dimensions. The negative involves the fact that war, displacement and exile usually disrupt

the normal life of people. Civil wars always destroy the social, cultural and economic structures and institutions that once shaped the lives of women and men. Displacement and seeking refuge further create traumatic experiences, that is, feelings of insecurity, fear and the sense of hopelessness. The positive aspects include the fact that refugees, particularly refugee women, as they struggle for survival by engaging in economic activities, organizational work and taking on family responsibilities previously the domain of men, begin to question the social and culturally accepted norms. This has been true of refugee women from south Sudan.

The representation of African women refugees as victims who are ill-equipped to cope with new demanding situations is inaccurate. For example, African women refugees are usually depicted as lacking the skills and knowledge to initiate programmes that will help them cope with refugee situations. They are represented as dependent on humanitarian aid. As a result, they are regarded as a burden to the international community. However, the experiences of south Sudanese women refugees indicate that they are able, despite the difficulties and constraints, to make refugee life meaningful for themselves and other members of their families. For instance, women refugees entered paid house work and other income earning activities to generate cash for their families' needs. With the absence of husbands and other male relatives in some families, many women assumed the role of heads of household, managing their families' affairs, and providing for their children's education. At the same time south Sudanese women refugees are able to challenge some of the discriminatory cultural practices of south Sudanese society.

The process of challenging the past and imagining the future does not, however, occur completely peacefully, that is, without contest. The process usually requires continuous negotiations and redefinitions of what had once shaped refugee women's and men's lives and situations. Since often the changes in gender-based roles and relations are contrary to the culturally accepted definitions and meanings of the refugees' original society, men may have difficulty in accepting either the new roles acquired by women, or their own inability to support their families and their loss of authority over women. At the same time, women's feeling of work overload and men's reluctance to help them in some household tasks has sometimes led women to feel that their involvement in income earning and other public events is either not appreciated or ignored by men. Such dilemmas sometimes make one wonder as to whether these changes in roles, attitudes and perceptions

will be maintained when peace prevails and people return to south Sudan.

Notes

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9. D. Elson, 'Male Bias in the Development Process: An Overview' in D. Elson (ed.), *Male Bias in the Development Process* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) pp. 1–28.
10. J. W. Makec, *The Customary Law of the Dinka (Jieng): A Comparative Analysis of an African Legal System* (Khartoum, Sudan: St. George Printing Press, 1986) p. 66. The Dinka is one of the largest ethnic groups in the southern Sudan. They combined cattle keeping and agriculture for their livelihood.
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12. J. Buxton, *Religion and Healing in Mandari* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) p. 210.
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16. For more on the levirate or ghost marriage see J. Madut Jok, 'Militarism, Gender and Reproductive Suffering: The Case of Abortion in Western Dinka', *Africa*, 69, 2 (1999) pp. 194–211; 198.

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19

Women's Rights as Human Rights: Grassroots Women Redefine Citizenship in a Global Context

Temma Kaplan

For most of the twentieth century, grassroots women's groups all over the world have been proclaiming their collective rights just as feminists have been claiming their civil and political rights as citizens. Though widely used, the term 'grassroots' does not have a commonly recognized meaning. Grassroots implies being widespread and common, though deeply rooted. The term also suggests being locally based and outside the control of any state, church, union or political party. To the women claiming its provenance, being from the grassroots means being free from any constraining political affiliations and being responsible to no authority except their own group. Though such women generally appear powerless against corporate and governmental opponents, they wield moral authority against their adversaries. At the same time, certain women demonstrate their right to be considered responsible citizens, not only according to official laws, but on their own terms in relationship to their participation in community activities.

Many women of the working classes and of subordinated ethnic and racial groups have worked as grassroots activists. Grassroots movements of women have generally mobilized around quality of life issues concerned with the survival of their families, neighbours, class, or racial or ethnic groups. Struggling to preserve the members of their families and communities by securing food or resisting the conscription of their husbands and sons for unpopular wars, some women claim to speak for a community that they invent, a community that doesn't exist until the women call it into being by speaking for it. Sometimes these communities, as in the case of many groups of African-American, Aboriginal or Mayan women, have long histories as part of an entire people. But as

women speaking for the group, their identities are relatively recent. In some other instances, as in the cases of women in Warren County, North Carolina, who fought against the siting of a toxic waste dump in their neighbourhood, the community came together around a clear and present danger.¹

In most cases, the women embody a community when they speak in its name. The physicality of the notions of community the women in grassroots movements represent provides a counterweight to abstract notions of liberalism. With its emphasis on a public sphere separate from everyday life,² liberalism masks what many grassroots activists of all political persuasions believe: that governments all over the world intrude in every area of life. In order to counter authorities they oppose, grassroots activist women unite concern for the material needs of everyday life with a notion of civic community.

Philosopher Ruth Lister has pointed out that while Western traditions of liberalism have emphasized individual rights and political obligations, Western notions of civic republicanism have acknowledged community concerns.³ However, unlike the notions of community that most contemporary grassroots movements of women promote, Western notions of civic republicanism presume that all citizens are male persons. Not only are they men, but they are men whose bodily and material needs are silently and mysteriously fulfilled. And, they are men who have no need to work for a living.

Certain women, on the other hand, frequently speak about the physical requirements of their communities. Most often, women's groups serve conservative interests, defending so-called 'traditional values', which they claim are in jeopardy. So, in 1970, when a plurality of Chileans elected as president the socialist Salvador Allende, women, refusing to acknowledge their party affiliation or their class, organized street demonstrations against Allende. Claiming to be the victims of shortages and growing tyranny, the women gradually gathered women of all classes to their side. In 1971 and 1973, they mobilized thousands who banged empty pots, signifying shortages of food and other physical necessities. They called on Congress and the army to remove Allende. Uniting with wives of striking mine workers, conservative women of all classes helped destabilize the country.⁴ When the army coup occurred on 11 September 1973, the head of the military junta, Augusto Pinochet, thanked the women for their contributions to saving Chile from communism.

Fewer women mobilize for progressive changes or fight against authoritarian governments, but their numbers and frequency rose in

the last three decades of the twentieth century. Women of the working classes and peasantry protested against increases in the cost of rent, food or fuel, as they did in Spain and the United States in the early 1970s. They fought against displacement from their shacks in the squatter settlements in South Africa and all over Latin America, and they mobilized against their government's agreement to create bases for missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, as women did at Greenham Common in Great Britain.⁵ They demanded information about family members who were kidnapped, tortured, and sometimes murdered, as they did in Bosnia, Iraq and all over Latin America.⁶ They called for the end to violence at home, in public, and in prisons and torture chambers. Whether conservative or progressive, whether middle class or working class, grassroots women activists generally emphasized material and physical goals, such as preservation of their homes, ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and getting their relatives back safely, rather than abstract demands when they took to the streets to express their aspirations.

From the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, other groups of women calling themselves feminists focused on political citizenship for women and campaigns for women's right to vote, to participate in politics, to own property, to bring suit in court, to serve as witnesses, to end their marriages through divorce, to hold custody of their children, and to gain access to better jobs.⁷ But their feminism was not synonymous merely with particular acts: feminists have devoted themselves to the sometimes paradoxical goals of winning equity for women while, at the same time, forcing governments to recognize gender differences.⁸ Highlighting individual rights for women equal to those of men, feminists have turned to national governments to win favourable legislation to provide women with political and civil rights. Feminism may have emerged among women who had fewer economic hardships than those around them, but working-class women have also fought for their political rights, as Jill Liddington and Jill Norris have described in *One Hand Tied Behind Us* and Barbara Winslow has shown in her study of Sylvia Pankhurst.⁹ Yet, frequently when poor, marginalized, working class or peasant women organized for political and civil rights at the end of the twentieth century, they linked them to social and economic changes. And extending the use of the term 'rights', feminists all over the world fought for reproductive rights, guaranteed by particular national governments.¹⁰

Sometimes feminists and grassroots community activists converged, as they started to in the 1970s, especially, but not exclusively, in countries

where women fought against authoritarian governments. Under both liberal and authoritarian regimes, feminist grassroots activists have sought to make community need a corollary of justice, deriving its power from common sense notions of the physical as well as civil and political principles. These women challenged the fantasized separation between their private lives, in which women as actual or potential wives and mothers wielded powers, and an allegedly public sphere in which they were subordinates. These grassroots activist women moved back and forth between demanding specific material requirements for survival – for what has been called economic and social rights or social citizenship – and claiming inclusion of women as citizens, with full powers to act in politics and in the broader society. By challenging the idea of separate spheres, feminist grassroots activists lifted the veil and exposed a hybrid political and social entity that was quite different from what it claimed to be.

To those worried that feminist grassroots activists have unwarily eroded the dams holding back government interference in every aspect of life, the activists respond that throughout the twentieth century, governments as different as those in Spain and Australia interfered in the so-called private affairs of the poorest or least powerful rural and urban groups. As for eroding the rights of citizens by turning everyone into clients of the state, an issue that sociologist Elizabeth Jelin among others has raised,¹¹ it is clear that members of suppressed ethnic or national groups were excluded from citizenship and could never claim any resources from the government, as clients or as individuals. Moreover, national laws never applied equally to all people occupying the same geographical space, as the histories of slaves, Aborigines, Native Americans and Black South Africans before 1994 attest, and as the misfortunes of immigrants and refugees the world over amply illustrate.

What changed in the last decades of the twentieth century was the increasing globalization of local issues concerned with the physical needs of humans. The theme of the Third World Conference of Women, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985, under the auspices of the United Nations, was to 'think globally, but organize locally', which became the mantra of women's groups all over the world in the last decade of the twentieth century. The idea of 'thought' itself has clouded observation that, to an extraordinary degree, grassroots women's groups have been preoccupied with physical need.

On the other hand, through international networks and periodic international meetings, certain grassroots groups developed techniques for putting pressure on individual nations to improve their treatment of

women. By the late 1970s, women's organizations from the Netherlands were raising money for and publicizing grassroots women's struggles to maintain their homes in South Africa and to fight for human rights in Argentina.¹² Women's groups from India were travelling abroad to share with impoverished women elsewhere their strategies for developing their community's economic resources.¹³ So when Charlotte Bunch, Director of the Center for Women and Global Leadership at Douglass College of Rutgers University and a longtime leader in the international movement to end violence against women, first linked women's rights to human rights in 1991, she had no way of knowing how important the claim for women's human rights would become. Grassroots movements of women and girls, having found a term, 'human rights', to express their aspirations for social and economic as well as civil and political rights, united across national boundaries to fight for a variety of issues.

The term 'human rights' incorporated what were long-standing, concrete goals of women all over the world throughout the twentieth century, but they gave them a new twist. When a crisis ensued and the patterns of everyday life came into question because of health threats, shortages, or because of other disruptions of everyday life, certain women who took their identities from their role as mothers and potential mothers argued that justice required that they intercede. By justice, they often meant more balanced government behaviour, an end to violence, and equal distribution of social necessities. Increasingly, they included material resources necessary for survival among the goods they expected justice to distribute. Striving to fulfil human need did not and does not exclude attempts to achieve access to power in the political arena, or protection of rights of assembly, free speech, association or self-protection, though those particular struggles have taken on additional weight: among many women's groups, members now include demands for concrete reforms governing the physical dimensions of life. In fact, women engaged in small enterprises or in the informal economy or in projects to transform or preserve the environment have gone on to participate in local and national politics.¹⁴

The particular brand of justice women have evoked in these kinds of movements rests with fundamental human rights that no existing government or legal system now claims to promote. But these rights for everyone in society to eat, have shelter, remain well, and live in peace are so much a part of what every human being in every culture knows is necessary for survival that only tyrants are willing to say that others should not strive for them. Women in local or grassroots movements

have compared their own collective treatment at the hands of powerful governments and national and multinational companies that endangered the health of their families through violations of justice and human rights. And these women have not been alone. Grassroots women activists all over the world have incorporated demands for concrete changes in their physical environment into their conception of human rights.

Increasingly, the feminists and women community activists have joined forces, as they did in Latin America in the 1980s and at the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995. Focusing on the non-feminist *Madres* of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and on the decidedly feminist Beijing Document of 1995 shows how feminists and grassroots activists have been redefining the meaning of human rights and have infused claims for civil and political rights with demands for satisfaction of bodily needs.

The *Madres* of the Plaza de Mayo

When the military in Argentina seized power on 24 March 1976, they concentrated the means of violence in their own hands. Those marked as undesirable elements had already been disappearing from streets and homes without a trace under the earlier constitutional regime of Isabelita Perón, making 'disappeared' into a transitive verb. The new military government carried out what they called a Process of National Reorganization. The secret kidnapping, detention without trial, torture, and murders of between 10 000 and 30 000 people (30 per cent of whom were women of whom approximately three per cent were pregnant at the time they were seized), continued from 1976 until the end of 1982 when a democratic administration was elected.¹⁵ But that democracy, though it brought a few of the killers and torturers to trial, did not devote economic resources to the underprivileged, and thus even representative democracy fell far short of the goals of justice many of the *Madres* and their supporters had envisioned.

During the Dirty War from 1976 to 1983, however, the police and the army, aided by death squads, kidnapped people at work, in cafes, in the streets, and at home. The kidnappers frequently arrived at people's houses at night or dawn, in groups of ten men in civilian dress. They beat up anyone they found, arresting people indiscriminately, torturing and raping them in front of family members, and ransacking their homes. Those detained were hidden in the basements of government ministries or in places like the Naval Mechanics School or ESME or the

other approximately three hundred detention centres where they were bound and hooded and hideously tortured.

When the jailers had tired of them, some were released. Most were either taken in the same Ford Falcons in which they had originally been kidnapped to the outskirts of the cities and shot above mass graves; or killed, and then arranged like rag dolls as if they had died in guerrilla confrontations with the army; or they were drugged, pushed into helicopters, and dropped alive into the La Plata River.

Speaking unofficially for the Junta in 1977, General Ibérico Saint-Jean outlined its real goals, though officially the Junta assumed no responsibility for the disappearances. Saint-Jean proclaimed: 'First we will kill all the subversives; then we will kill their collaborators; then their sympathizers; then all those who remain indifferent; and then finally we will kill the undecided'.¹⁶ Remaining silent, acting circumspectly, and averting one's gaze became a means of surviving in Argentina, one that the *Madres* reversed with their public demonstrations.

The majority of the so-called subversives were young men and women in their twenties and thirties. Their parents, especially their mothers, made the rounds of the courts, the government ministries, the police stations, and the army barracks, seeking their children. Without prior plan, 14 such mothers descended on the Ministry of the Interior in April 1977. Driven out by the staff, the 14 mothers found themselves in front of the Ministry, in the Plaza de Mayo.

Lying in the financial district of Buenos Aires, at the centre of the downtown shopping district, the Plaza de Mayo is the symbolic capital of Argentina. It is a square around which are the Ministries of the Army and Navy, the Presidential Palace, the cathedral, and the *cabildo* or colonial city hall. The square is filled with palm trees, benches, and walkways, encompassing a space so large that 100 000 demonstrators used to fit during the days of Juan and Evita Perón's rallies. A bit off centre in the plaza is the pyramidal shaped monument commemorating the 1810 May revolution against Spanish domination.¹⁷

Not content with driving the original group of 14 mothers out of a ministry, the police disrupted their impromptu meeting in the plaza, since all rights of assembly were curtailed due to the state of siege. Seemingly without pre-meditation, the mothers simply got up from the benches and began to stroll arm in arm, telling each other their stories as they moved along the circular walk around the column in the plaza.¹⁸

Had their act of defiance not been performed in such a visual way, no one would have remembered the *Madres*. Had they not seen so many

Catholic rites, even if many of the initial *Madres* were Jewish and had never participated in them, they would have had to create their own physical representations which may or may not have had resonance for a larger viewing public in Argentina or abroad. But the *Madres* had grown up in a Catholic country where certain religious patterns were quite familiar: the *Madres* returned to the Plaza on 30 April 1977, to give physical representation to their children who had been detained and disappeared from sight. Establishing Thursdays at 3:30 pm as a regular meeting time, more mothers joined their ranks, and by June, about a hundred mothers completed the *ronda* or walk around the monument.¹⁹

Repression grew apace as the mothers' activities were closely monitored. Eleven family and friends of the disappeared, including three of the *Madres* and a French nun, were kidnapped from the church of Santa Cruz on 8 December 1977, and disappeared. Two days later, another French nun was captured, and Azucena Villaflor, one of the first *Madres*, was kidnapped on the street by one of the ubiquitous grey Falcons. She was never seen again.²⁰ Yet the *Madres* continued to demonstrate as other mothers, frantic that they were unable to find their children, joined the original group marching in their quasi-religious processions under the gaze of soldiers armed with rifles and sabres.

Although the *Madres* were not the only ones to fight against the Junta, or the first, they were, according to Renée Epfelbaum, one of the *Madres'* leaders, 'the first to have done it publicly...'.²¹ They became publicity hounds, staging performances to give their children physical representation, to embody a political community of which their children were a part. And being so visible may have saved many of their lives.

The matter of physical props was of great strategic importance to the *Madres*, and their use of icons grew more sophisticated as their struggles intensified. With state terror desecrating life, the women whom officials denigrated to the curious foreign press as '*Las Locas*', the crazy women, did the only thing possible to give their children material reality: the mothers carried on symbolic funeral processions, substituting photographs affixed to signs or hung around their necks for the bodies of those who had disappeared after detention; the *Madres* wore white kerchiefs with their children's names, their birth dates, and the dates they had vanished. Despite the danger, they marched to re-establish some sense of civic community, one that included their missing children.

Although the *Madres* of the Plaza de Mayo initially acted as individual mothers, seeking their children, their confrontations with the

government alerted them to the systematic nature of the violence they had first believed was sporadic, and persuaded them to fight for a larger civic community. Government accusations that they were bad citizens because they were protesting against their government and had allegedly raised subversive children led them to define what the *Madres* thought citizenship meant: namely pursuing social citizenship for all and gaining equal distribution of the resources of society.

Because of Argentina's ignominious defeat in the Malvinas/Falkland War, the Junta was forced to announce the resumption of civilian government.²² Following the war and up to the elections, the *Madres* finally gained national recognition for their quest for democracy. On 8 December 1983, the last day of the Junta, thousands of people marched with the *Madres* in the Plaza, as they drew silhouettes on the ground to represent their missing children.²³ But the *Madres* did not end their efforts. They maintain a state of permanent mobilization at least insofar as they continue to carry on the *rondas* in the Plaza de Mayo every Thursday at 3:30 pm, demanding that 'those who disappeared in Argentina be brought back alive' (*que aparezcan con vida los desaparecidos en Argentina*).²⁴ Like other grassroots human rights advocates, they insisted on the material reality of the civic community they hoped to bring into being.

The concept of human rights and citizenship the *Madres* continue to uphold in their newspaper, their speeches, and their demonstrations requires that masses of people come together periodically to proclaim their wishes. After the return to elected government, the *Madres* still felt the need to explain what they had come to require of their government. They wanted:

a population who develop the wealth of this country for the benefit of all, ... and [they wanted] to receive an adequate wage, to have enough food, to have a home, ... to educate our children, to have health protection, to improve our intellectual and technical capacity, to have our own culture, and to have freedom of expression, ... to have a police force which protects freedom and respects all citizens, to have impartial judges who guarantee justice, ... to have duties and rights which can be exercised freely; it is simply to have the right to life, but with dignity.²⁵

The *Madres* who survived to the end of the millennium extended their claim to speak for human rights, among which they include the same demands of providing food, clothing, shelter, jobs, and ending

police brutality and attacks on political dissidents. The *Madres* have their own headquarters, where they ally with grassroots human rights mothers groups from all over the world. They have convened groups of mothers from Palestine, Israel, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Algeria and France in the hope of helping to redefine citizenship and human rights in terms of material reality and justice. In the mid-1990s, the *Hijos*, a youth group made up of the children of the children who disappeared, affiliated with the *Madres* and have carried on their own shaming rituals to keep the memory of their parents alive. The young people organized what they called '*Escraches*' by going to the villas where the former leaders of the military Junta live. Wearing costumes and carrying banners explaining what had happened to their parents, the *Hijos* continue the *Madres*' mission of keeping alive those who disappeared into the torture chambers and rivers. Together, the *Madres*, the collateral group calling themselves the *Abuelas*, or grandmothers, and the grandchildren denounce continued violence in Argentina and abroad.

The Beijing declaration and the platform for action

Other grassroots women have also been redefining citizenship and human rights in a global context, but they have chosen to work through international conferences since the United Nations' Decade of Women was launched in 1975 with the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City.²⁶ Following that and with increasing frequency, there have been conferences on women in Copenhagen in 1980, in Nairobi in 1985, and in Beijing in 1995. In addition, women participated in the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993. There women presented a petition in 21 languages, demanding that the conference support the view that women's rights are human rights. A petition signed by half a million women helped organizers force the delegates to recognize that rape as a tactic of war, transporting women for sexual slavery, and dowry deaths were all forms of torture and therefore violations of human rights.²⁷ They could not, however, persuade governments to punish domestic violence, which authorities regard as a 'cultural practice'.

At the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994, despite an unholy alliance of the Papacy and the Mullahs, the women's Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as the International Women's Health Coalition, succeeded in having the document call for reproductive rights for women as a necessary requirement for

development. Feminist activists from grassroots movements forced delegates to recognize that women's health required control over their own fertility and that one cannot speak of development without considering the education of women as a primary element.²⁸

What happened in Beijing in 1995 around human rights issues is that the Third, Second, and First Worlds' women came together beyond nationalism to formulate an international agenda.²⁹ At other World Conferences of Women, feminists like Betty Friedan and women's movement leaders like Bolivian mining-community leader, Domitila Barrios de Chungara, drew swords over what women needed and whether middle-class women from the industrialized countries had anything in common with those from poor areas.³⁰ In Beijing the effort to define women's rights as human rights bridged the gap.³¹

At all the other Women's Conferences in Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi, Arab women and Israeli women locked horns as did other antagonists. Nationalist issues had frequently predominated over international goals; this time, without overlooking differences, the Worlds converged over how to improve the conditions of women, and the shibboleth of 'Women's Rights as Human Rights' cemented the relationship between feminists and members of grassroots movements of women. Even if critic and activist Laura Flanders was right, at the time of the Vienna Human Rights Conference,³² to caution feminists and grassroots activists that focusing on violence rather than on social and economic equity presented problems for the human rights paradigm, the inclusion of social and economic issues at all seems to have advanced the cause of expanding the language of human rights to include what human beings need to survive.

The international conferences in the 1990s mark a turning point in previous considerations of the gendered nature of citizenship and the rights and obligations of governments and international civic community to its citizens. For decades, people will argue about what, if anything, the Beijing Document accomplished, what risks the new arguments raised, and what possibilities the new ventures offered to feminists concerned with human rights and citizenship. Grassroots groups pressured the official human-rights organizations and the United Nations to discount the separation between so-called public and private life and to characterize as human rights abuses such acts of violence as genital mutilation, holding servants as slaves, dowry death, and domestic violence. By creating a third space – a civic community of working human beings with bodily needs requiring care – grassroots activists have opened up an arena in which human need, not national

law or custom, can permanently become the measure of justice. They have led a struggle worldwide to force the United Nations, and through it, member governments, to stop abetting the abuse of women.

One group that brought the experiences of legal and medical grassroots movements together were women from Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa. Discovering that 42 per cent of women in sub-Saharan Africa reported being beaten regularly and that 54 million African girls were victims of genital mutilation, Southern African activists presented these practices not as individual and cultural problems but as violations of human rights for which the United Nations and participating states should have oversight. Women from Southern Africa led the struggle to view mistreatment of women in universal terms that make such treatment unacceptable whatever the religious, cultural and traditional justifications. Effectively, these women and the majority of other participants challenged the notions that cultural context determines women's needs for bodily integrity. Women grassroots leaders from all over the world attempted collectively to supplant cultural differences with universal ethical human standards applicable to all women.

The Platform for Action,³³ passed by 120 of the 185 governments participating in Beijing, placed increased emphasis on a broad spectrum of economic and social as well as political demands as part of human rights. The theoretical issues raised in Beijing went to the heart of what politics will be in the twenty-first century. First, the questions Denise Riley and Iris Marion Young³⁴ have considered about whether we can speak of 'women' at all when class, race, ethnicity, disability and sexual preference mark such differences among women gain new currency as grassroots leaders blur differences in favour of universal human rights.

While feminist lawyers have written the language of rights for women in national as well as UN documents, grassroots women activists have been less constrained by the liberal language of rights and obligations of a disembodied language of civic republicanism. Women in locally based movements want individual rights, but they also demand greater protection for the communities for which they speak. In other words, they want to transform international priorities to fulfil human need despite what customary law may dictate. This may ultimately be the most controversial of all aspirations that the Beijing Document expresses.

Attempts of suppressed minorities to achieve autonomy may, in fact, work to the detriment of women, pitting those who want to defend marginalized racial and religious communities against those who seek

their own and their compatriots' equality before the law. The most famous formulation of this dilemma came with the Shah Bano case in India. Divorced by her Moslem husband to whom she had been married since childhood, Shah Bano pleaded her case for support before the High Court of India. The court took the opportunity to denigrate the entire Moslem community of India. Feminists, unwilling to be pawns in the 50-year long struggle for minority rights for Moslems in the multicultural state of India, fought for her rights and for the rights of the Moslem community that failed to protect Shah Bano.³⁵ In the 1990s in Afghanistan, women suffered extraordinary repression first because of the civil war, during which women grassroots activists tried to maintain civic life and avoid rape and torture when there was no effective government at all. And then, with the victory of the Taliban, strict Moslem fundamentalists who, as the Mujahideen, were trained by the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States to fight against the communist forces in Afghanistan, women's situation grew worse. Taliban restrictions on women's dress and mobility, their prohibition of women working for wages or as professionals, placed all Afghani women under virtual house arrest with the possibility of being stoned to death or executed by other means for appearing in public or failing to cover the windows in their houses. And in 1999, Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe, persuaded that country's supreme court to define women as minors, incapable of bringing cases to court, effectively robbing all Zimbabwean women of their rights as citizens. Although grassroots feminist activists, using electronic mail, tried to mobilize women all over the globe to protest against the treatment of women in Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, there was no international agency capable of stopping the repression. What the international feminist activists were able to accomplish was to alert the global community to what was happening, to shame those in power and perhaps keep a historical record in order to bring the perpetrators to justice some time in the future.

Yet, when the majority of countries in Beijing endorsed the priority of international human rights for women over national and customary law, they were developing a new language of citizenship, even if their commitments lacked any means of enforcement. For some people, conversations about citizenship transcending national boundaries, talk about citizenship for women in the same breath as universal human rights, superceding national law, culture, religious practices and customs, open the way to disaster. For many theorists, the nation state remains the only unit through which citizenship can be expressed.

They argue that whatever the limits of national politics, citizens at least have access to privileges some people have under codified, national law, and some standing before the courts. What rights do individuals or communities have to bring cases to the United Nations? The weakness of international apparatus has become only too clear at the Hague War Crimes Tribunals dealing with atrocities in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda.

Other conflicts also emerge: the emphasis on women's human rights not only creates a new universal claim, but it also demands that the government transcend the division between what used to be considered public and private life. If women's human rights were enacted as national law, the force of the state could come into play against the certain religious and customary practices and the brutality of individual family members. Authorities become responsible for defending women rather than empowering the women themselves. And, as feminist activists have always worried, such growth in state power might increasingly blur the separation of civil society from the state that liberalism promises though it seldom delivers. Increased state responsibility for determining what is violent in sexual relations could put governments squarely in the bedroom. Will this ultimately help or hurt women and gay people? What must we do to gain the benefits of state support while keeping the state at bay?

You might say, why does all this matter? One more universalist statement exists. Where is the accountability? How can we implement such a document? Only a few readers from the US will have heard of the Convention On the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), passed by the UN in 1979, and endorsed by 153 countries, amounting to an international equal rights amendment. The US refuses to ratify CEDAW, as it refuses to ratify most international accords, since the US congress regards such conventions as legislation that it must consider piece by piece after the president proposes it. But CEDAW has had an enormous impact on the countries that have passed it. Gains in women's employment, salary increases, access to schools, scholarships, and even 'special measures', and quotas, stipulating the percentage of women who must be put forward in party lists, can be attributed to CEDAW.³⁶

Activists have embarked on a mission to create a new global community, and the notion of women's rights as human rights is intrinsic to it. Women's human rights now promise the right to a good life, free from torture, intimidation, scarcity and pollution, with access to good education, health care, choices about childbearing, and meaningful

work. No abstract aspirations expressed as rights automatically come into being. The Beijing Platform for Action does not solve the problems of pollution, homelessness or violence against women, and even the signatories do not have to stipulate how they think they can implement the document. But commitments to international platforms set moral standards, providing locally-based groups with leverage they can use on their own governments, and enabling grassroots activists to organize across borders to compel governments to comply. Women whose main focus is on local issues have, nevertheless, attempted to use international agencies to help put pressure on particular governments for economic as well as political and civil rights. Despite fears that undue focus on global rights and international organizations would weaken the political clout of women locally and nationally, the opposite appears to be true. They amount to a list of goals to which large numbers can aspire.

The women at Beijing and the *Madres* of the Plaza de Mayo are just two among many groups of pathfinders, mapping out new routes to democracy, or what activists in South Africa have called 'social citizenship'. In South Africa in the early 1990s, that term came to include the rights of everyone to schools, jobs, health care, and housing, a goal the South African government has been trying to achieve since 1994. The women concerned with human rights internationally continue to commit themselves to concrete transformations in everyday life through collective action to achieve human rights. That form of human rights has never been codified in national or international law, but the increasing frequency with which women's groups have called for it in the past decade indicates that human rights as a social as well as an ethical goal may be closer at hand than any of us had previously imagined.

Yet, it is not enough to follow the dictate to 'think globally but organize locally'. Feminist influence ought not concern itself only with local or national politics, but feminists should also be forming confederations of local organizations to give solidarity to groups striving for human rights all across the globe. Separating local from national and international politics will not achieve material changes for women or for the communities for which they struggle. Clearly, the task before women's grassroots movements is to form the organizations necessary to enforce women's claims of citizenship at national and international levels. Even as the economies of the world are increasingly integrated, the political apparatus through which ordinary citizens and their communities can seek justice remain relatively underdeveloped. The opportunity to build on national institutions to create new international

confederations, based on the fundamental principles of human rights for all, lies in the hands of those who need those institutions most and have the ability to create them: feminist activists in grassroots movements of women.

Notes

1. My own work has largely focused on such movements of women. See especially, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
2. Feminist political scientists have confronted liberalism over its presumptions about separate spheres: a public sphere in which men participate in politics and civic life, and a private sphere of the family in which women prevail. See especially J. B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988); S. M. Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); C. Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989).
3. R. Lister, 'Dialectics of Citizenship', *Hypatia*, 12, 4 (Fall 1997) pp. 6–16; 7.
4. There is a large and growing literature on the antagonism between conservative women and the Allende government. For a sample of the earliest works, see M. de los Angeles Crummet, 'El Poder Femenino: The Mobilization of Women Against Socialism in Chile', *Latin American Perspectives*, 15 (Fall 1977) pp. 103–113, reproduced in Jorge I. Domínguez (ed.), *Social Movements in Latin America: The Experience of Peasants, Workers, Women, the Urban Poor, and the Middle Sectors. Volume 4* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1994) pp. 169–93; M. Mattelart, 'Chile: The Feminine Side of the Coup or When Bourgeois Women Take to the Streets', *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report*, 9 (September 1975) pp. 14–25; and most recently, L. Baldez, *Women and Politics in Late Twentieth Century Chile* (Forthcoming, University of California Press); M. Power, *Right Wing Women and Chilean Politics: 1964–1973* (Forthcoming, Pennsylvania State University Press); and in my own forthcoming book, *Taking Back the Streets: Women, Popular Democracy, and Historical Memory* (University of California Press, 2002).
5. It would be impossible to document all the works dealing with women's mobilization around quality of life issues in the 1970s and 1980s, but a sampling of this literature can be found in I. Dankleman and J. Davidson, *Women and the Environment in the Third World: Alliance for the Future* (London: Earthscan Publishers in association with IUCN, 1988); B. Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 80s* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1991); A. Harris and Y. King (eds), *Rocking the Ship of State: Toward a Feminist Peace Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989); J. Jaquette (ed.), *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Participation and Democracy*, second edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); R. Kumar, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of*

- Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800–1990* (London: Verso, 1993); A. Rodda, *Women and the Environment* (London: Zed, 1993).
6. For testimonies about and summaries of gross violations of women's human rights, see E. Friedlander (ed.), *Look at the World Through Women's Eyes: Plenary Speeches from the NGO Forum on Women, Beijing '95* (New York: Women, Ink, 1996); *Human Rights are Women's Rights* (London: Amnesty International, 1995).
 7. For assessments of the activities of feminists as citizens, please consult the articles by Ellen DuBois, 'Woman Suffrage: A Worldwide Movement', and Nancy F. Cott, 'Race, Blood and Citizenship: A Gendered Perspective on U.S. Immigration Restriction, 1895–1917', papers delivered at the conference Women and Human Rights, Social Justice and Citizenship: International Historical Perspectives, The University of Melbourne, 30 June–2 July, 1998.
 8. The best consideration of the paradoxical nature of the demand for recognition of sexual differences at the same time as feminists require equality between the sexes is found in J. Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
 9. Particularly good studies of social mobilization and campaigns for full political citizenship for women can be found in J. Lidington and J. Norris, *'One Hand Tied Behind Us': The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Virago, 1978); B. Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).
 10. Important considerations of women's struggles for reproductive rights can be found in F. D. Ginsburg and R. Rapp (eds), *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1995) and R. P. Petchesky and K. Judd (eds), *Negotiating Reproductive Rights: Women's Perspectives Across Countries and Cultures* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998).
 11. E. Jelin, 'Engendering Human Rights' in E. Dore (ed.), *Gender Politics in Latin America: Debates in Theory and Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997) pp. 65–83.
 12. A Dutch women's Christian group called Quairos gave aid to the women at Crossroads in South Africa, and another group of Dutch feminists provided the money for the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to buy an apartment in Buenos Aires to serve as their headquarters.
 13. Sangeetha Purushothaman, author of *The Empowerment of Women in India: Grassroots Women's Networks and the State* (New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: Sage Publications, 1998) was instrumental in bringing women from the Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) in Maharashtra to confer with the National Congress of Neighborhood Women in Brooklyn, New York, and having the latter visit India.
 14. An example of how social struggles helped prepare women for political activities can be found in C. W. Dugger, 'Lower-Caste Women Turn Village Rule Upside Down', *The New York Times* (3 May 1999) A1, A10.
 15. J. Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* (Boston: South End Press, 1989) p. 107; P. P. Oria, *De la Casa a la Plaza* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva América, 1987) pp. 39–42.

16. My translation of a quotation in Oria, *De la Casa*, p. 61.
17. M. Millibovsky, *Circulo de la Amor Sobre la Muerte* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Pensamiento Nacional, 1990) p. 40.
18. In addition to the sources already named, the following books and articles provide useful interpretations and insights about the *Madres*, who captured the imagination of most feminists and human rights advocates. Please consider M. Agosin, *The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo: The Story of Renée Epfelbaum 1976–1985*. Translated by J. Molloy (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1990); J.-P. Bousquet, *Las Locas de la Plaza de Mayo* (Buenos Aires: El Cid Editor, 1983); A. Diago, *Conversando con las Madres de Plaza de Mayo: Hebe Memoria y Esperanza* (Ediciones Dialéctica, 1988); and D. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's 'Dirty War'* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).
19. One account of the origins of the *Madres* is by the Madre, Elida B. de Galletti, the honorary president of FEDEFAM (*Federación Latinoamericana de Asociaciones de Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos* – Latin American Federation of Families and Friends of the Detained and Disappeared), whose first congress was held in Caracas in 1981. Galletti delivered a speech, reproduced as Appendix I in Oria, *De la Casa*, pp. 142–8. See also the account in M. Navarro, 'The Personal is Political: Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo' in S. Eckstein (ed.), *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1989) pp. 241–58; 250.
20. Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared*, pp. 68–9.
21. Agosin, *The Mothers*, p. 85.
22. Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared*, pp. 120–1.
23. Diago, *Conversando con las Madres*, p. 154; 190.
24. Bonafini cited in Diago, *Conversando con las Madres*, p. 122.
25. 'Editorial', *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (January 1985) p. 2.
26. For surveys of the world conferences, see M. Alter Chen, 'Engendering World Conferences: The International Women's Movement and the UN' in T. G. Weiss and L. Gordenker (eds), *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996) pp. 139–58.
27. For brief accounts of the development of the campaign for women's human rights, see C. Bunch and R. Carrillo, *Gender Violence: A Human Rights and Development Issue* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Women's Global Leadership, 1991); C. Bunch and N. Reilly, *Demanding Accountability: The Global Campaign and Vienna Tribunal for Women's Human Rights* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Women's Global Leadership, 1994).
28. For close consideration of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, please read: Center for Women and Global Leadership, *From Vienna to Beijing: The Cairo Hearings on Reproductive Health and Human Rights* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1995); R. Copelon and R. Petcheskey, 'Toward an Interdependent Approach to Reproductive and Sexual Rights as Human Rights: Reflections on the ICPD and Beyond' in M. A. Schuler (ed.), *From Basic Needs to Basic Rights: Women's Claim to Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Women, Law, and Development International, 1995) pp. 343–67; A. Germain and R. Kyte, *The Cairo Consensus: The Right Agenda for the Right Time* (New York: International Women's Health Coalition, 1995).

29. Numerous books and guides have attempted to familiarize the larger feminist community with what Beijing accomplished. They include: N. Reilly (ed.), *Without Reservation: The Beijing Tribunal on Accountability for Women's Human Rights* (New Brunswick: Center for Women's Global Leadership, 1996); V. J. Semler, A. S. Walker, L. Wiener, T. Johnson, and J. G. Katz (eds), *Rights of Women: A Guide to the Most Important United Nations Treaties on Women's Rights* (New York: International Women's Tribune Center, 1998); D. Q. Thomas and M. A. Schuler (eds), *Women's Human Rights: Step By Step* (Washington, DC: Women's Law and Development International, 1997).
30. See D. Barrios de Chungara, *Let Me Speak! Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of the Bolivian Mines* (New York: Monthly Review, 1978).
31. See R. J. Cook and V. L. Oosterveld (eds), 'A Select Bibliography of Women's Human Rights', *The American University Law Review*, 44, 4 (April 1995) pp. 1429–71. Available on the internet and updated: http://www.law.utoronto.ca/pubs/h_rghts.htm
32. L. Flanders, 'C. MacKinnon in the City of Freud', *The Nation* (9/16 August 1993) pp. 174–7.
33. *The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action: The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4–15 September 1995* (New York: Department of Public Information, 1996).
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