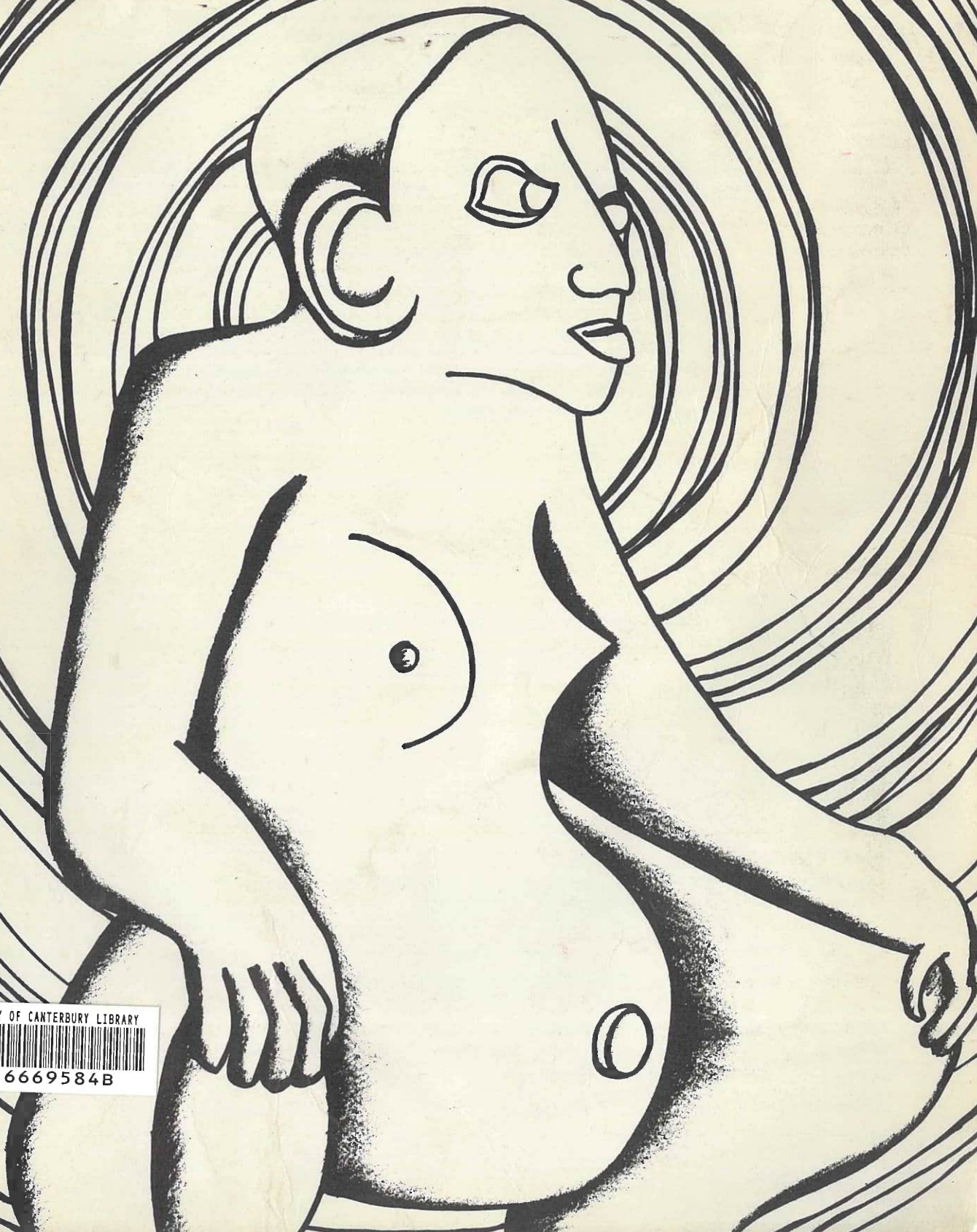


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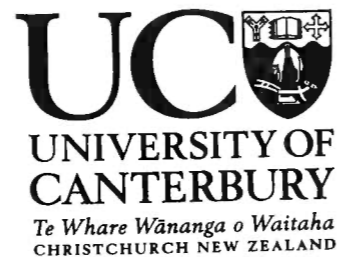
Still available is

Heather McPherson's *A figurehead: a face*, distributed
by Brick Row Publications, Box 190, Wellington.
Our next book will be *The bone people*, a novel by Keri Hulme.

Spiral first appeared in 1976, put together by women connected with the Christchurch women artists group. Each issue has been produced by a different collective, with different editorial priorities; however all the collectives have been motivated by recognition of the need for a separatist publication where women's art and writing is seen within the context of women's place in society, where women's work is published not on a token basis, or according to male defined criteria, but because it speaks to women and about women and illuminates some aspects of our lives.

We hope this issue of *Spiral* will stimulate more writing, more art, more collaborative work; and further development of a rigorous and feminist-based criticism.

Please write to any of the women whose work you respond to strongly. Comments are always welcome because without them it's hard to know if you've achieved what you wanted. *Spiral* will forward any letters.



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PATRICIA GRACE: aspects of her stories in *Waiariki* and *The Dream Sleepers*, by Keri Kaa

"And from the two — the land, the woman — these ones have sprung. And by the land and by the woman held and strengthened. Now from knowing this, the old one in turn draws strength as the old light dims, as the time of passing comes."

This paragraph from the ending of *Transition* sums up for me the essence of Patricia Grace the woman, the Maori, the writer.

Patricia the woman is modest, unassuming and a person of great integrity.

Patricia the Maori is 'sprung' from the land of Raukawa, a descendant of an illustrious line-up of chiefs both male and female.

Patricia the writer is important because she uses her gifts to articulate for many of the silent Maori people, their agonies, hidden feelings, pain, joy and secret dreams. While her stories are rooted in the land of her childhood and her Raukawatanga, they have a universal appeal because they are about ordinary happenings, living, loving, fighting, dying, dreaming.

As I re-read them the words of Carl Sandburg come to mind when he talks about travelling and seeing —

"The wonder of human mind, heart, wit, and instinct. People flung wide and far born into toil, struggle, blood and dreams ... You wonder, you weep, you question and then you say:

'This will be haunting me in a long time with a loveliness I hope to understand better.'

For me Patricia's stories have a haunting loveliness. My responses to them vary from shrieks of delight, to solemn agreement, to tears, to acceptance because the style of writing is such that I can feel and dream and get into the heads of her characters.

I respond warmly to Rose in *A Way of Talking* because many Maori women like Rose and me, have been sent away from our small villages to be "educated". We eventually go home with our new found city ways, mannerisms, vocabulary and sophistication and we frighten our families because we have a new hard edge to us. We have been educated beyond our village roots and our new ways and our anger causes our families much pain. We struggle to fit into village ways of talking, thinking, dressing and living. Because we are "better schooled" we must make the cultural switch. While there is great pride in our achievements, we carry the burdens for those left at home, who do not have the opportunities to express their hopes and dreams, to others of the majority culture.

Patricia writes about human events and everyday happenings. Going fishing, planting, sewing, gardening, making bread, eeling, placing bets at the TAB. In the story *The Dream* the family spend ages trying to interpret correctly Raniera's dream. I have lost count of the number of times I have sat around and listened while my relations have tried to interpret dreams so that they can get their bets right at the TAB. I have myself on occasion phoned dreams through to cousins who have placed bets on the right horses. I was once sent a koha of \$12 as my share of a TAB win in exchange for my dream.

It's this instant recognition of oneself in familiar events that gives her stories for me, an enchanting quality. As the 'ordinariness' of her characters shines through, so does the 'wairua' of her Maoritanga.

Most of the stories in *Waiariki* are told by women, only four are narrated by men.

In *At the River*, the old lady tells the story of the old man's last eeling expedition. She talks about her dream, her 'moemoea' because she has seen the 'waitohu' (omens) indicating the old man's death.

The old lady has had a dream, a dream of death.

"He came to me in the dream, not sadly but smiling with hand on heart and said, "I go but do not weep. No weeping, it is my time!"

The morepork visits her.

"Go," I said to the bird. "He comes not with you tonight. He is well and strong. His time is not here."

But it cried, the morepork. Its call went out. Out and out until the tears were on my face."

Our old people are close to death, most of them talk about welcoming death. Patricia explores with great sensitivity a hidden subject in a clear and direct way. The "wairua" shines through.

Let me illustrate with two stories from my own family. Our mother knew that our father was dead hours before the hospital phoned. She had dreamt that she was sitting in a tub outside the meeting house at home, washing herself, when our father arrived to have a chat. He was wearing purple robes and when he turned away the back of the robes were undone. Wife-like she pointed this out but he simply smiled and walked East. By the time the hospital phoned through with the news that our father had died they were amazed at her calm acceptance and her answer, "I know because he came to say goodbye and it's a peaceful going because he is heading East to new life and new hope."

Our village is Te Urunga O te Ra, the place of the Rising Sun. To head East in death is symbolic, to face East in life is strength — giving.

The morepork features strongly in my own family as a good or bad omen. Our mother says when the morepork screams, it's bad news, but when he sings cheerfully everything is fine. Late last year one of my brothers nearly died and was saved by some emergency surgery. He was in hospital for two months recovering. The night he came home, the owl sang and sang all night after being silent for two months. One of my guardians, 'kai tiaki' is an owl. We don't find it easy to talk about this hidden part of our lives, we are ever alert to the cynical challenges from pragmatic thinking friends. We have grown up surrounded by a belief in the supernatural; we have learned to accept the inexplicable, and to bend with the mauri of the world of spirits. I understand perfectly the hidden meaning in the story *At the River*:

"The two have come to bring me sad news of him. But before them the bird came and before the bird the dream."

Enough of symbolism, now let us look at relationships between young and old people in the story.

The two grandchildren in the story are so normal. They won't listen to the old man's advice and wisdom. They are disrespectful. Not all Patricia's characters are perfect. Let me illustrate my point with yet another story from my own childhood.

As children we had to help with kumara planting. After a year at boarding school my brother and I decided that the Biology teacher knew more about kumara planting than our parents. So, instead of laying the roots of the plants to the East in the traditional way, we planted our 'tipu' every which way. When they grew they all choked each other and died. Our father said sadly to us, "where is the science now?". The whole point of laying the tubers East is because they thrust in one direction only, the process is highly scientific. The lesson has never been forgotten because the money made from the sale of the kumara paid for our travel to and from school. That year there was no money for extras. I really felt for those cheeky grandchildren. Growing up is painful, but having a granny who comforts you, eases the pain.

"And now we weep together, this old lady and these two young ones by her. No weeping he said. But we will weep a little while for him and for ourselves."⁴

I wept too.

Patricia's style of writing is often described as *lyrical*. When she writes about the seasons of the year in the *Valley* section of the *Wairiki* collection she paints a canvas of words. Talking of colour, sharp line, warmth, light, heat shimmering sun-filled skies. One can see, smell, feel and hear the sights and sounds of summer.

In *Valley* she describes the teacher's first meeting with her class.

"We find a place for everyone at the tables and a locker for each one's belongings. But although they talk in whispers and nudge one another they do not offer me any words. And when I speak to them they nod or shake their heads. Their eyes take the floor!"⁵

If you've read Joan Metge and Patricia Kinloch's book called *Talking Past Each Other* this paragraph will make sense.

Non-verbal communication is a newly discovered area of our schoolrooms. Many of our children have difficulties in their early years at school because this silent language is not understood or recognised by many teachers. It's not easy to write about such characteristics without sounding preachy but, Patricia skillfully weaves these hidden things into her stories.

Autumn is for me another canvas of colour unfolding. My response is to see if I can paint the picture of Autumn which she so vividly describes.

"Autumn bends the lights of summer and spreads evening skies with reds and golds. These colours are taken up by falling leaves which jiggle at the fingertips of small-handed winds.

Trees give off crowds of starlings which shoot the valley with scarcely a wing beat, flocking together to replace warmth stolen by diminishing sun.

Each day we have been visiting the trees — the silver poplar, the liquid amber, and the plum, peach, and apple. And, on looking up through the branches, each day a greater patch of sky is visible. Yet despite this preoccupation with leaves and colours and change, the greater part of what we see has not changed at all. The gum tree as ever leaves its shed bark, shed twigs, shed branches untidily on its floor, and the pohutukawa remains dull and lifeless after its December spree and has nothing new for this season.

About us are the same green paddocks where cows undulate, rosetting the grass with soft pancake plops; and further on in the valley, the variegated greens of the bush begin, then give way to the black-green of distant hills."⁶

Winter is a moving little story about the death of a teacher in a country school. It has a starkness and desolation about it. The introduction tells all.

"It rains

The skies weep

As do we."⁷

Another example of her close attention to detail and the feeling I have that she is not only 'sprung' from the land but has a highly personalised relationship with the landscape:

"The trees we have visited daily are bare now, clawing grey fingered at cold winds. Birds have left the trees and gone elsewhere to find shelter, and the insects that in other seasons walk the trunks and branches and hurry about root formations have tucked themselves into split bark and wood holes to winter over!"⁸

When writing about deep emotions it is easy to become sentimental but in the story the narrator becomes the bridge between sorrow and laughter. She remembers the laughs shared with the teacher who'd died.

"She had laughed about my washing too that morning. My classroom with the naps strung across it steaming in the fire's heat. I'm coming in for a sauna this afternoon. And a feed. I'm coming in for a feed too."⁹

I remember taking my nephew to school with me because his mother was ill. I remember stringing up nappies across the room during lunch hours and steaming up the classroom. And being too scared to open the doors in case the Principal came in.

The gentle description of the teacher's tangi ends with a message of hope.

"It is right that it should rain today, that earth and sky should meet and touch, mingle. That the soil pouring into the opened ground should be newly blessed by sky, and that our tears should mingle with those of sky and then with earth that receives her.

And it is right too that threading through our final song we should hear the sound of children's voices, laughter, a bright guitar strumming."¹⁰

In the Maori story of the Creation, Sky-father and Earth-mother are forcibly separated by Tane, God of the Forest. Their grief is terrible and Rangi's tears cause a great flood on the Earth-mother's body. Those tears are the rain which falls. Rain for us is symbolic. It's a sign of Rangi's blessing. We have a proverb:

'It only rains when all the chiefs are gathered together.'

If it doesn't rain when you have a wedding, hui or tangi you are indeed a 'nobody.'

Spring: "The children know about Spring

Grass grows.

Flowers come up.

Lambs drop out.

Cows have big bags swinging.

And fat tits.

And new calves.

Trees have blossoms.

And boy calves go away to the works on the trucks

and get their heads chopped off."¹¹

Here is the life-cycle as seen through children's eyes. I can remember hiding 'bobby calves' from our father so he wouldn't send them away to the works to get their heads chopped off. Even the promise of a beautiful calf-skin rug

didn't help.

One area I haven't touched on is the language Patricia's characters use. She certainly doesn't make the mistake so many other writers make when their Maori characters talk — they write in broken English what I call a 'Hey Boy' style. Patricia's characters speak in Maori English — a valid language all on its own.

"Wii the fox.

Us, we don't like the fox.

That's why, the fox is too tough.

Cunning that fox."¹²

When I go home and sit and chat in the kitchen at the Marae I don't use the sort of English I use when I'm in the city because it sets me apart from my cousins. They call it talking *posh*, being whakahihi, so I use Maori-English so that I belong again.

The explanatory notes on the back cover of *The Dream Sleepers* state that these stories are:

"Stories of tension, transition and change; of the contrasts between young and old, city and country, modern and traditional; of what it means to be Maori in a Society whose predominant values are alien, above all, elegant, evocative stories displaying the depth and range of Patricia Grace's talent."

The beginning of *The Dream Sleepers* is delightful.

"The houses sit on their handkerchiefs and early in the morning begin to sneeze. They do not sneeze in unison but one at a time, or sometimes in pairs or threes, sometimes in tens or dozens."¹³

I read this out to a friend who was visiting, she responded by saying they don't just sneeze they hoik up like people coughing up to get rid of the phlegm.

I recognise many people in this story.

I have family who are three o'clockers, they clean Government buildings till 6 o'clock, go home, wake up families, get them off to work and school and then go on to other jobs during the day. My two Aunts who look after the Women's Toilets at Wellington Railway Station are the five o'clockers. At seven I'm one of the dream sleepers who staggers off in grim silence to catch a bus to work. I get to my office at eight o'clock and don't really come alive until ten o'clock. My early morning classes suffer until then.

Between Earth and Sky is a lovely story about the birth of a baby. I like the paragraph when the mother chats to her new-born babe.

"You are at the end of the table, wet and grey. Blood stains your pulsing head. Your arms flail in these new dimensions and your mouth is a circle that opens and closes as you scream for air."¹⁴

There's a rawness and a strange kind of beauty in this story.

Mirrors is about a pair of slippers which get called various names; gridders, gaspers, trippers, flappers. The narrator's feet are called 'limp fillets of cod.'

The story floats about and dives deep into hidden places, then it ends with the slippers being destroyed in the incinerator because they trod in (tutae-kuri) dog-bog. Lovely stuff!

So far I've not talked about humour. There's a lot of laughter in Patricia's stories. Recently I heard her read *It used to be green once* to a predominantly Maori audience. They roared their appreciation throughout the reading, identifying with great gusto, themselves, their childhood, their poverty and the great warmth and passion of belonging to a whanau.

Beans is a gem.

Letters from Whetu is full of tension. I recognise the boredom and frustration of Whetu plodding on at school and wondering if all this education is worthwhile. At boarding school we wrote letters to each other on our blotters and passed them back and forth. They were often written in a kind of code. Poor Whetu sitting at school waiting to realise her potential and dreaming about flying about like a seagull. She describes her frustration:

"E hoa I want to walk all over the world but how do I develop the skills for it sitting in a plastic bag fastened with a wire-threaded paper twist to keep the contents airtight."¹⁵

Many of us who have made it in terms of the education system, the so called 'brown middle class' have experienced those same sensations. It's like being hemmed in by a great square of canvas with no scissors available to snip your way out. And knowing of course that if you break free you wreck not only your future but you let down a generation of elders and close up the openings for the next generation.

Burdens indeed, but that is what it means to be Maori especially a Maori in the Eighties. We are 'in the midst of great social upheaval and confusion'. Our women in particular carry the weight of that burden. I believe we hold the key to that change as witnessed by the development of a small but powerful *Black Feminist Movement* whose methods cause our elders much sorrow and pain. We as women need each others' support. We will survive because traditionally we have always been the bearers of cultural burdens. Some of us know who we are, some of us are still searching for ourselves and some of us wish we had never found ourselves as Maori.

I would like to end with a look at the story *Journey*, from *The Dream Sleepers*:

"He was an old man going on a journey. But not really so old, only they made him old buttoning up his coat for him and giving him money. Seventy-one that's all. Not a journey, not what you would really call a journey — he had to go in and see those people about his land. Again. But he liked the word Journey even though you didn't quite say it. It wasn't a word for saying only for saving up in your head, and that way you could enjoy it. Even an old man like him, but not what you would call properly old.

The coat was good and warm. It was second-hand from the jumble and it was good and warm. Could have ghosts in it but who cares, warm that's the main thing. If some old pakeha died in it that's too bad because he wasn't scared of the pakeha kehuas anyway. The pakeha kehuas they couldn't do anything, it was only like having a sheet over your head and going woo-oo at someone in the lavatory ...

He better go to the lavatory because he didn't trust town lavatories, people spewed there and wrote rude words. Last time he got something stuck on his shoe. Funny people those town people."¹⁶

The old man is 71: he is getting his affairs tidied up. He is, to quote my Raukawa father, 'coming down the rainbow' and wants to sort out his land. The old man catches the train to town and on the way reflects and philosophises about change and the effects of subdivision on the land he knew as a child:

"And between the tunnels they were slicing the hills away with big machines. Great-looking hills too and not an easy job cutting them away, it took pakeha determination to do that. Funny people these pakehas, had to chop up everything. Couldn't talk to a hill or a

tree these people. Couldn't give the trees or the hills a name and make them special and leave them. Couldn't go round, only through. Couldn't give life, only death. But people had to have houses, and ways of getting from one place to another. And anyway who was right up there helping the pakeha to get rid of things — the Maori of course, riding those big machines. Swooping round and back, up and down all over the place. Great tools the Maori man had for his carving these days, tools for his new whakairo, but there you are, a man had to eat. People had to have houses, had to eat, had to get from here to there — anyone knew that. He wished the two kids would stop crackling, their mothers dressed them in rubbish clothes that's why they had colds.

Then the rain'll come and the cuts will bleed for miles and the valleys will drown in blood, but the pakeha will find a way of mopping it all up no trouble. Could find a few bones amongst that lot too. That's what you get when you dig up the ground, bones."¹⁷

The old man seeks advice concerning his land and is confronted by words like: subdivision, development areas, surveying, kerbing, channelling, adequate access, right of ways, initial outlays. He goes home depressed, upset and angry.

Like many of our old people he is bewildered by change and worried about where his bones will lie.

The story ends with the family anxious to know what has happened and the old man exploding.

"When I go you're not to put me in the ground do you hear. Burn me up I tell you, it's not safe in the ground, you'll know all about it if you put me in the ground. When I go, burn me up, no-one's going to mess about with me when I'm gone."¹⁸

That is where I leave you today because that is where we are as a people. In a dilemma — imposed on us from the majority culture and from within ourselves by our own uncertainty.

The magic of Patricia's writing has helped me as a woman and a Maori to know where I belong on the wider New Zealand landscape. I hope some of the magic rubs off onto you.

Patricia — thank you — kia ora tatou.

(from a lecture in the series Images of Women, Women's Studies Department, Victoria University of Wellington, 1982)

NOTES:

1. Patricia Grace, *Waiariki*. Longman Paul, 1975. p.18
2. *Waiariki*, p.11
3. *ibid.*, p.14
4. *ibid.*, p.15
5. *ibid.*, pp.53-4
6. *ibid.*, p.58
7. *ibid.*, p.65
8. *ibid.*, p.66
9. *ibid.*, p.67
10. *ibid.*, p.68
11. *ibid.*, p.69
12. *ibid.*, p.71
13. Patricia Grace, *The Dream Sleepers and other stories*. Longman Paul, 1980. p.[3]
14. *The Dream Sleepers*, p.14
15. *ibid.*, p.41
16. *ibid.*, p.50
17. *ibid.*, p.55
18. *ibid.*, p.66

References as used in order in this paper:-

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| From <i>Waiariki</i> | From <i>The Dream Sleepers and other stories</i> |
| <i>Transition</i> | <i>The Dream Sleepers</i> |
| <i>A Way of Talking</i> | <i>Between Earth and Sky</i> |
| <i>The Dream</i> | <i>Mirrors</i> |
| <i>At the River</i> | <i>Beans</i> |
| <i>Seasons</i> | <i>Letters from Whetu</i> |
| | <i>It used to be green once</i> |
| | <i>Journey</i> |

A letter to my mother

Keri Koo

We've never really talked woman to woman. Our conversations have always been mother/daughter, parent/child, half-way talks. We've never talked or listened with each other. For me you've always been this immense personality on the perimeters of my life, always available to take care of my physical needs, but somehow distant and a bit frightening.

I began by loving you. I depended on you for sustenance and nurturing. Then I went away at the age of twelve to boarding school and slowly the situation changed. I began to view you in a different light. There were so many secret thoughts I wanted to share with you during my teenage years but you were busy or too tired to listen. I also had trouble knowing how to begin to tell you. By the time I plucked up courage to do so, you were needed elsewhere and thus moments were lost. So I coped by keeping my dreams to myself, or else I shared them with other people's mothers who were less threatening. Silly, isn't it, hurtful too. I felt vulnerable and exposed where you were concerned, I still do. Why is it that I who cope fairly well with all sorts of situations and crises in my working life, am reduced to a frazzle by a negative comment or a funny look from you. I suppose daughters all over the world have asked that question many times. Do you know the answer to that one?

You've always been around when I've been in difficulties and come to my rescue, no matter what your private feelings of the moment, you've rallied round to protect me. Thank you for that. In a sense I have taken your stability and strength for granted and now I realise it is time to take stock and reflect on our relationship before the years race away.

I now realise what sorrow I must have inflicted on you over the years, sometimes wilfully and often unconsciously. Trying to rear Peter has made that clear to me. He wounds me in the ways I wound you. It has been a painful voyage of discovery for me. Parenting is the only Profession we are not trained to do. While there has been much sorrow and anger in my relationship with Peter, there have been many moments of delight. Brief but joyful encounters which set my mind wondering.

Sometimes I wonder why you go on loving when I'm shouting at you and insisting on having the last word. I wonder too, why you care, specially when I'm horrid to you and tell you you are a failure as a parent.

Perhaps I'm searching for the perfect parent and you for the ideal daughter. Who knows?

Laughter I don't recall as a part of your mothering. Too many children plus Koro, Kuia and other members of the whanau. Certain childhood sounds I will always associate with you. The old wooden table creaking as you kneaded endless batches of bread, your treadle machine whirring busily so I could have new clothes instead of castoffs, and the squeaking and thumping as you washed all the clothes by hand in that old tin tub. Busy sounds.

I remember some sad sounds too. How you keened and quietly sobbed for months after the baby died in 1948 and how helpless I felt, because I didn't know how to comfort you. Painful but important memories.

Amazing how your spirit has burned fiercely all these years, under the weight of all your burdens. I've never told you how I felt about you before. I truly respect the parent you have tried to be and above all salute the woman that you are. But don't expect me to love or obey you, just because you are my mother.

I remember your courageous stance on family-planning at the hui in Ruatoria in the sixties, and the shocked looks on people's faces because you were the wife of the village pastor. I know our father was upset and felt you had made a public exhibition of yourself. I was secretly proud of you.

I haven't forgotten how you stood firmly with us when we opposed the Springbok Tour, even though the whanau criticised us and you, and especially as your cousin and our beloved uncle George is still a legend in the rugby world. I hope my spirit survives as strongly as yours when I am nearly eighty, for then I might be able to understand the elusive heart of you.

Arohanui
Keri

barefoot boy

a ballad for Ben Couch

DO YOU REMEMBER?

summer smells of
fruit and flowers
sweetcorn leaves
flapping in the breeze
racing down to the river
squishing your toes
through oozy mud
watching water-rats
darting into holes
in the river bank

CAN YOU HEAR?

the shouts of other children
"Hey you fullas!
backy me 'cross the river
I wanna come too!"
as everyone rushed off
to sample luscious pears
borrowed
from Tuhaka's tree
while he snoozed in the
heat of the noonday sun

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Ani's salty fried bread
the nut-like flavour
of dried karaka berries
crunching your teeth
into sweet apples
stolen
from Tom Lima's trees
tasting for the first time
furry yellow loquats from
Great Uncle Poi's orchard

CAN YOU REMEMBER?

cold frosty mornings
teeth chattering
numbed feet in
stiff gumboots stumbling
after a stubborn horse
rounding up sleepy cows
counting furiously
to get them all in
for milking

DO YOU HEAR?

milk pinging into shiny buckets
pigs squealing below
cats mewing by the cream spout
calves bawling across the yard
Star the dog dancing about
knocking buckets over
Father shouting anxiously
"Is the cream truck here yet?
Get to the road now!"

DO YOU REMEMBER?

warming frozen feet
in cow shit
picking and licking
at pieces of ice
from the roadside
hearing the school bells
ringing
and racing
to line up for yet another
Morning Assembly

WILL YOU EVER FORGET?

the agony of health inspections
lining up for Toothbrush Drill
heart thumping madly
'cos you didn't have a toothbrush
and worse — no proper toothpaste
only salt or pungarehu
your Granny gave you

CAN YOU TASTE?

the halibut capsules
given out by teachers who
never took them anyway
and at morning break
the sweet flavoured malted
milk drinks
provided by a caring
Education Department

DO YOU REMEMBER?

hanky inspections
proudly showing your
clean rag pinned to
you clean shirt
and the monitors laughing
hiding your long dirty
fingernails in your pockets
and the SHAME
of having your tapu head
checked for nits and
everyone pointing as they
wrote your name
on the District Nurse's list

WILL YOU EVER FORGET?

the joy of singing
and dancing about
your own history in
your Mother Tongue and
the terrible trials of
morning talks and
endless exams
ALL IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

DO YOU REMEMBER?

the desperate hope
that you would win
a scholarship to
Te Aute College
leaping like a kahawai
into the seas of learning

NOW barefoot boy

you are a city man
a graduate a Member
of Parliament
maybe you have a house
mortgages perhaps a
chauffeur driven car
nice children smart clothes
posh neighbours and
far too many pairs of shoes

DO YOU SOMETIMES

THINK ABOUT THAT
barefoot boy?

Te Ata — The Morning

for Elizabeth
Heard seagulls
this morning
above the roar
of Air New Zealand jets.
Their wailing calls
made me homesick
for Rangitukia where
surf booms and crashes
onto the shore
and you're sure
the sea will come
pounding into your bed.
I lie still listening
to the day's heartbeat
gently thudding.
Red buses racing by
Puffing snorting dragons
Peter splashes about
in the bathroom
thumps downstairs
late again
Silence trembles
Elizabeth phones for a chat.
Somewhere above
seagulls are wailing.

Book Review

The kuia and the spider/Te kuia me te pungawerewere, by Patricia Grace, illustrated by Robyn Kahukiwa, translated into Maori by Syd Melbourne with Keri Kaa. Longman Paul/Puffin Books, in association with Kidsarus 2, 1982.

When is fantasy, not fantasy?

Well, take one of the main characters in Pat Grace & Robyn Kahukiwa's *The kuia and the spider*:

she's slightly stout, lined face, greying hair. She wears full white aprons and cardigans and shapeless comfortable black slippers. Everybody's Nana. Well, everybody's Maori Nana, because the kuia is indisputably a ... kuia. Her kitchen and house are painted in warm primary colours. There is a big window overlooking a sunny beach, and there is always a kettle or pots on the glowing range.

What could be more ordinary, less fantastic, than this?

Aha!

"In the corner of her kitchen was a spider, who made webs."

And one day, the spider called out to the kuia — whoops. About this stage, you discover the kuia and the spider have been having a running battle for years. And the fantasy begins, in a gloriously easy fashion, with a challenge by the spider,

"E kui, he pai ake aku mahi i au."

I won't tell any more of the story — Pat Grace has done this in timeless supple prose. (Keri Kaa and Syd Melbourne have made a translation into equally sinewy and beautiful Maori.) I recommend, right now, that you obtain a copy — it's only \$10.95 in the hardback English edition. Why not complement that, do yourself a favour, by buying the Maori version too? (\$4.95 in paperback.)

But I would like to comment on some aspects of this excellent children's story. The first thing that struck was the *Maoriness* of it, not simply the kuia herself, but all the subtle touches in the pictures and the words. The decorated gourd on the mantelpiece by the clock. The kits and strips of flax and the sleeping mats immediately *there* in the kitchen, not obtrusively, but an obviously intrinsic part of the room. The flax lapping the kuia's porch. The marae over the road from the kuia's house, and the way the old lady and the children go to bed (not in the kitchen I hasten to add.)

And the second thing was the character of the Spider (in the English version he is male, which makes all my nice comparisons to the old Greek story of Arachne and Athene completely redundant, but in the Maori, thanks to our non-sexist pronouns, you can make the spider female or male.)

The spider has fierce pupilless yellow giglamp eyes (one of my smaller cousins thought that would be very frightening at night — "but when you're asleep you've got your eyes closed so you probably wouldn't see that?") ("You never know, kid.")

Thanks to Kahukiwa's painting, you can feel the velvet of the spider's subtly-banded grey body, magnificently tentacular legs. And the webs are works of art (one of the kids I tried the books out on, pointed how like the Southern Cross the collection of feasting spider mokopuna were. Smart-arse brat, *that* one.)

It is a spiderly spider, being as normal and ordinary a spider, even to the transparent spiderlings, as you could wish for. Like the kuia.

But they quarrel. They squabble, they argue. You know reading it aloud or otherwise, that their fighting is meat and drink to them. It is, happily, a bickering, a row that goes on until the end of their lives. Did you know that words for 'an enemy' in Maori are 'he hoariri' (i.e. an angry friend)?

Anyway, you can hear these two scolding and abusing one another long after the story is finished.

Hoha!

Taureka!

He pai ake aku mea

Kao! Kao! Kao!

and loving every minute of it.

Children I read it to, or let them read for themselves, had many favourable reactions. One of the smaller ones got fascinated by the kuia's jewellery. "E look! Now it's a shark tooth!" One of the older ones, whom I thought too old for it at 11, was delighted with the appearances of the kuia's grandchildren. "They must be a bunch like us, all mixed up." By which she meant the carefully shown fact that some of the mokopuna had Pakeha parents. My niece was a bit young: she just drooled and poked loving fingers at the succulent exciting colours. Well, when you're a year or so older Mereani ...

I don't think anything like *The kuia and the spider*, *Te kuia me te pungawerewere*, has been published in New Zealand before. Everybody is to be congratulated, Pat Grace foremost and Robyn Kahukiwa; Keri Kaa and Syd Melbourne; Kidsarus and Longman Paul lastly, for recognising a good thing when it was offered to them.

Some last words — dear people, be two-tongued! Maori isn't a hard language to pronounce (and thanks to the macrons used in *Te kuia me te pungawerewere* you'll know where to put an elongated vowel sound) and you'll find small children particularly enjoy the sound even when they don't know the meaning, trouble is, they will nag you to translate. And once you've given them

Piki ana ratau i nga pakitara ma runga i nga tukutuku tawewe.

Rere atu ki tena pakitara

rere mai ki tenei pakitara

tarere ana i nga tukutuku tawewe

with that implicit chant, are they, or you, going to be satisfied with "They went climbing all over the kitchen on the climbing webs./They went swinging from wall to wall on the swinging webs.?"

This is a book I will give with gladness and gratitude to the younger children in my family group. Kia ora koutou katoa.

Keri Hulme

A Wedding

In the year nineteen hundred and thirty-six, Aunty Prue married our insurance man. His name was Mr Armitage. He was an Englishman, a widower, tall and fair and always beautifully dressed in pale silk shirts and salt-and-pepper suits. He came to see us more often than his job warranted, but nobody minded because we all liked him. He was clever and kind and funny in a gentle way and he brought Cotton and me cigarette cards and paper twists of acid drops. They got married in our front room. Aunty Prue wore a honey coloured dress and blue coat with a little feathered hat and blue shoes that hurt her. She looked plain and nice and she looked happy. Mr Armitage looked a complete stranger in a dark suit and white shirt. It was the first time we'd ever seen him in anything other than a donegal tweed.

★★★★★

We had no idea about him and Aunty Prue at first. We had no idea about anybody and Aunty Prue. She was nearly forty — quiet and ordinary and selfless. Not like Mama. Beautiful laughing Mama who turned men's hearts over with a look. I guess we thought it was really Mama Mr Armitage came to see. Then when Aunty Prue told us she was going to marry him, we were shocked. She was ours — and now she was going to marry the insurance man.

★★★★★

“Who'll give her away?” Vanny wondered.
 “What do you mean, ‘give her away?’” I asked.
 “She has to have someone give her away at the wedding.”
 I knew nothing about weddings — “What for?”
 “It's traditional,” Vanny explained, “the bride is always given away to the groom. It's usually the father.”
 “Oh well,” I said, “there's only Mama and Gram. It had better be Gram.”
 Vanny looked pained. “It has to be a man — you loony twit!”
 I quailed from her scorn. And then I thought about it.
 “One of the fathers, then.”
 She pursed her mouth thoughtfully, then she shook her head.
 “Their wives wouldn't like it,” she said.
 “But they're our fathers,” I persisted.
 She nodded. “Yes, they are,” she said, “but this is Aunty Prue's wedding, not ours.”
 I went to ask Aunty Prue who would give her away. She said Mr Green from the office. Mr Green was a small grey man with a stoop and I would much rather it had been one of our handsome fathers.
 “Why can't it be a father?” I asked.
 “No,” said Mama, “that wouldn't be right. It's up to Prue to choose. And anyway, I wouldn't know which one to ask.” Mama never did know which one to choose.

★★★★★

Until she was a girl of eighteen, Mama and Aunty Prue lived with their parents in the same street as the gas works. The Heron twins worked for the gas company. Every day they walked past the house and eventually they saw Mama. And they fell in love with her. And Mama fell in love with them. Both of them. They were exactly alike and she never bothered to discriminate. When she found out about Vanny they both wanted to marry her but she couldn't bear to choose. Grandfather insisted that she marry one or the other and in desperation she ran away. Aunty Prue and the twins found her in a tiny room in the city and Aunty Prue said she would run away too, and they would find a house together. Aunty Prue was twenty-one and she had a good job, so they would manage, she said. And they did. Grandfather never forgave either of them. He forbade Gram to have anything to do with them, but when Vanny was born Gram sneaked away to the nursing home with lots of things she had been secretly making ever since Mama ran away. The Heron twins were there, both delirious, and Mama held a hand of each. In the background, Aunty Prue held Vanny. She didn't care what Grandfather thought or which twin was the father, she just held Vanny and let the love flow. Five years later, I was born and Aunty Prue went through it all again. Mama and the Heron twins made the babies, but Aunty Prue made a home for us and filled it with comfort and love. In between me and Cotton Grandfather died and the twins got married. They waited a long time for Mama to make up her mind, but she never could. So they married sisters which was the closest they could get to the relationship they had with Mama and then they went right back to the old setup. Mama loved them more than ever and when I was seven, Cotton was born. She is Mama's favourite. Vanny and I are both redheads like Mama, but Cotton, with her grey eyes and thick dark hair is the image of our fathers. Vanny has always been Aunty Prue's favourite, I think, but Vanny says I am. So I guess we both are. And that's nice.

★★★★★



Illustration: Susie Roiri

Everybody got new clothes for the wedding. Or nearly new. Vanny bought a yellow wool dress that cost her three week's wages. Mama couldn't decide and kept putting it off. The fathers gave her a pound note for Cotton and me and Vanny took us down to Mrs Barrett's 'GOOD AS NEW' shop. Straight away I saw a shiny red dress and grabbed it, but Vanny hit my hands away.

"What the hell's wrong with you?" she hissed. "You want to look like a bloody toffee apple?"

So I knew I'd have to go to the wedding looking sensible. At school I wore a sensible gym dress, a sensible cardigan and sensible shoes. And I hated the lot. Only the hard up kids had sensible clothes. The lucky ones wore frills and bows and patent leather shoes.

"When I grow up," I muttered, "I'm going to wear what I like and nothing's ever going to be sensible."

"Shut up," Vanny breathed "or you'll wear your gym dress to the wedding."

She chose a brown corduroy jacket and skirt and herded me into the cubicle. There was a cracked mirror on the wall that showed me a lopsided picture of myself, but Vanny stuck out the tip of her tongue and nodded her head happily.

"That's it!" she said. "That's lovely!"

I looked sadly in the mirror.

"I don't think I look right in this," I said.

Vanny didn't even hear me.

"You can wear my cream blouse with it and I'll buy you new shoes and socks."

Mrs Barrett put her head around the curtain and instantly Vanny became a countess.

"I'll take this for my sister Hazel and I'd like something as nice for Rachel."

Mrs Barrett almost bowed. Cotton flashed her a radiant smile and Mrs Barrett beamed.

"What a lovely child Rachel is!"

She bustled away. I stared at the floor. I still wanted that red shiny dress. I felt the tears starting.

"Look happy you stupid sheep!" whispered Vanny, "or I'll tell Aunty Prue you're out to spoil her wedding!"

She gave me a stinging clout over the ear and grabbing Cotton's hand, she swept out into the shop. She came back a little later with a fluffy yellow jersey and a green plaid skirt. Mrs Barrett hovered behind her watching Cotton with melting eyes.

"Really Vanessa — what a little princess!"

She was. I nodded at Vanny, open-mouthed in admiration.

Vanny forgot about Mrs Barrett and gave me a cross between a hug and a shove.

"You're a princess too. Now hurry up and put your other clothes on."

All the way home Cotton danced and twirled and skipped her delight thinking about her new clothes, but I lost out, even with the new socks. I wanted the pale pink lacy ones to the knee, but Vanny shuddered and bought us both plain white ankle socks.

We had a dress rehearsal for Mama and Aunty Prue. I looked in the long mirror and it wasn't me at all. They said I was going to be a beauty. I laughed and poked my tongue at the red haired girl in the mirror. She poked hers right back at me and her dark eyes danced.

★★★★★

The August days grew warmer and we were sure the sun would shine for Aunty Prue. Cotton and I could hardly wait. And then one day at school it hit me that after the wedding she wouldn't be living with us any more. I thought I would faint. I put my arms about my head to shut out the awful reality but it stayed and then I was sick. I went home in the headmaster's car. Mama was frantic.

"What is it? What's wrong with her? Oh!"

The headmaster couldn't tell her and I wouldn't until he had gone. When I told her Mama leaned against the kitchen dresser and turned her face away.

"Mama?" I said anxiously, "Mama?"

"I don't want to talk about it," she whispered. She began to sob and it terrified me.

"Mama —"

She pushed me away.

"Go away and leave me alone!"

I went outside and sat on the back step. The wedding was no longer a joy to look forward to. It was a black shadow that would ruin all our lives. I stared at the garden without seeing it, without seeing anything but the terrible emptiness that living without Aunty Prue would bring. I was still sitting there when Cotton came around the corner of the house.

"Why are you home this early?"

"I was sick."

"Were you?" Her small face tightened in concern, "Shall I get Mama?"

"No, don't worry Mama. I don't think she's very well either."

She sat down on the step beside me. After a while she slipped her arm through mine and rubbed her cheek against my shoulder.

"It's all right Hazel," she said, "Vanny will be home soon."

But Vanny came home with Aunty Prue and they were both full of excitement because Aunty Prue had the material for her wedding outfit. So I went to bed. I stayed awake till Vanny came and then I told her. She didn't say anything at first and I thought she had fallen asleep. Then she rolled out of her bed and came over to mine.

"Move over," she said, "and give's a hug."

In the safety of her arms I let all the fear and pain go. She held me, rocking and murmuring sounds of comfort. It was quite a long time before I realised that she was crying too. In the morning I heard her singing in the bath. There was a note on the chair by my bed.

'Hazel' I read, 'you have to realise that sooner or later everything changes. Nothing stays the same even though you might think it does or hope it will. We've been lucky having Aunty Prue all our lives but now she's going to make a life of her own. We won't be happy about it but she will and that's what matters. She's always looked after us but now we have to mind ourselves. And Mama. We'll have to mind Mama. The fathers will help. They're always very good. Probably Gram will move in with us — I think Mama would like that. Anyway Aunty Prue won't be far away. We'll see her often and we can have turns to go and stay.'

I didn't have time to talk to you about this so I wrote it down. And I think it's better written down than we won't cry over it. Can you understand what I'm trying to say? I hope so because I don't know how else to explain. Love — Vanny' When she came back from the bathroom I said,

"Thanks for the note."

She smiled. "That's okay," she said.

★★★★★

Every night and weekend Aunty Prue shut herself in her room and sewed. We played cards and ludo or read. Usually one of the fathers was there and Mr Armitage, but it was odd without Aunty Prue even though she was only in another room. Mr Armitage was so delighted about marrying her, he grew handsomer by the hour. He was a tall thin man with thick curly hair the colour of his suits and his eyes were blue as the sky. At first the fathers hadn't trusted him. They thought he was after Mama. But when they saw his blue eyes following Aunty Prue's every move, they relaxed. Not that they understood him. How any man could look at another woman when Mama was around was beyond them. Especially Aunty Prue. When fate doled out the good looks she certainly didn't do Aunty Prue any favours. Mama got the lot. Every man ogled Mama, from college boys up. Except Mr Armitage. Aunty Prue's plain face and pale wispy hair, her plump body and legs, were only the packaging as far as he was concerned. Her light blue eyes twinkled with intelligence and her laughter was merry and innocent as Cotton's. He saw her as she really was. He saw the strength and the love and the wisdom in her and he knew he was a lucky man.

★★★★★

Two weeks before the wedding Vanny decided which boyfriend she'd invite and I was sick with jealousy. She had about a dozen to choose from but the only boy who fancied me was Ernest McCutcheon and I towered over him by about half a head. Secretly I longed to ask the school heart-throb because along with the rest of the girls at school I was in love with him, but I decided against it. My being in the third form and his being in the upper sixth didn't help, and there was the sad fact that he didn't know I existed.

I took my misery to Vanny but she was unmoved.

"For god's sake! You're twelve years old! Just be patient. In a few years you'll be fighting them off. And remember — it's Aunty Prue's day — pull a long face at the wedding and I'll flatten you!"

I didn't always understand Vanny.

The fathers bought Mama a green velvet dress and she was ecstatic. She tried it on for them and they could only gaze at her. She looked like a tulip on a stem. I had a sudden thought that in a few years I could very possibly look a little like that and my stomach turned right over. I stopped being jealous of Vanny having a boyfriend for the wedding right then.

★★★★★

Aunty Prue took the week off before the wedding and she and Mama were like giggling girls about the house. It shone as it never had before and the garden glowed with spring flowers. Gram came over every day and baked till all the tins were full and then she brought all her tins over and filled them too. On the last day she roasted a ham and Mama and Aunty Prue made sponges and little layered sandwiches which they wrapped in wet towels. I went to bed at ten but I was too excited to sleep. Vanny came home from the pictures with her favourite beau of the moment and I could hear them talking and laughing softly on the front steps. That's another thing I'll have to look forward to I thought. I fell asleep imagining myself in Mama's green dress and pale shoes, queening on the front porch to some tall beautiful young man who could only whisper my name and cover my two hands with burning kisses.

★★★★★

I awoke in the early hours because somebody was moving about in the kitchen. It was Aunty Prue making a cup of tea. We lit the gas fire and pinched two biscuits from the laden tins. We didn't talk much.

She said, "Aren't your feet cold without slippers?"

"A bit," I said, and held them out to the fire. We sipped our tea and smiled at each other.

"You'll have a room to yourself after tomorrow."

"Yes — unless Gram comes."

"Would you like a room of your own?"

"Yes — no. I don't know — I'd miss Vanny."

"Of course. And I'll miss you all."

I slid down on the floor at her feet and she put her arms around me. Her wispy hair bristled with curlers and her plain plump face streamed with tears.

"I love you," I said, "I love you more than anyone in the world."

Later I made another pot of tea and just when Auntie Prue was opening another biscuit tin, Cotton came padding in. We laughed and Mama called,

"What are you doing out of bed?"

Then she came into the kitchen with Vanny in her wake and I got three more cups.

We were still sitting there, talking and laughing and sipping tea when the sun came up in a great blaze on the perfect spring morning of Auntie Prue's wedding day.

Bub Bridger.

Because

Because it's spring, apocalypse time —
when snow winds lift, when greenfrocked trees
spread tipsily, a blind sun climbs
the spirit-logged skull, and petals
strew the drive ...

because I am nearly forty
and my last three lives are dead
because once — those three lives ago
I shook a crazy head

because I have stood much — no more
than any woman can
because I have felt most — see more
the ways of gods in man
because I will no longer lie
tell me it is sweet

because I take no make-believe
escort down the street

because I see what I have been
the scars, the waste, inside a blame
because I know, bone-dry, what I am
and what I shall never be
because I brush what I might have been
and grasp a sharper hoe



because I have hung stubbornly
in my own space right and wrong
because I have lived with love, without,
its wingbeat brief, too long
because I have been careless
wanting much, too soon too strong
because I faced a diabolic twin
hid her, saw her surface, win
because I wrestle her at night
wake gritty, swollen, out of fright
because I wrestle her enemy
by night, day, willpower, hourly
because I stall the fathers' game
inside my father's father's name
because I can dissect my place
its patriarchs, its made-up face
because I saw a beaten child
and hold the hand that hurt
because I have seen the beaten wives
not see — not see for — blows
because I knew a panic woman
bled life, and foetus, slowly on the floor
because I have seen where bodies lie
with open mouths, half-open eyes
O Goddess a woman twists her fingers tight

To change, to change
"the self-perceiving eye
the rapist, his shrunk victim
the myth woman, the lie"

we start from what we know
who know long sight

O Goddess a woman throws back swaddling cloth
Magpie-blackened air knots
thin fierce ghosts ... a door
half-closed gives up a dull rock beat ...
Quick, quick, I must pick them out
the cries — weave them, glittering wire
into rope mesh — the thirtyninth thread,
my fishing net — to stiffen
its breaking strain

O Goddess a woman rages across the day
And up and down the street
the lilac trees breathe scented pools
I breathe, and think that
when we meet, who stand much, who
in rage, or fun, rebut the power men's line —
blue air electrifies, an old well-trodden
street springs lilac —
unexpected, brief.
And then I toast a green-struck agelessness!

Heather McPherson

I find it hard to write or talk about my work; that's why I express myself visually, for me it's my best means of communicating my ideas, visions and ideals. It's always been an instinctive and intuitive process.

I'd been living with someone who had done batik for a long time, and had watched and admired his work with great interest and enthusiasm. Then during a time of immense frustration with myself and everything around me I found myself turning to creative work as a means of self preservation. I found to my surprise that I could do things that turned out all right, and slowly learned to have confidence in my own creativity.

Most of my batiks are intensely personal; they come out of my own experiences and growth. The images of women that are my primary subject matter portray, I hope, the strength and power of the women around me, lesbian women. But the importance to me of my work is in the statements it makes about all women.



Leaving Rainbows Behind batik 79 x 84.5



Weekend at Port Waikato batik 76 x 115



Study in Blue batik 82 x 107



Tea at Ring Terrace batik 75 x 75

ORIGINS (after reading The First Sex)

And god was quoted as saying:
I will take a piece of your rib,
And from it will create woman.
And in response, man has said:
She will be my diversion,
And she will acquiesce to my dictates.
And woman, rose out of the pages of time, saying:
I am not a graft of your bone,
To be quelled,
By a historical conspiracy,
And conquered by your covetous will.
I am an intrinsic part of evolution:
I am perennial
I am SHE.

alison j. laurie

the last lesbians

and too late
the women learned to love women,
and the men to embrace men,
for every blade
of grass was eaten;
each inch of space
allocated
to the children
of heterosexualism.
in their last
dying famines
on the polluted planet,
the last lesbians
starved in their closets.

Adrienne Rich & separatism: the language of multiple realities

For Adrienne Rich, the struggle to understand and respond intelligently to the issues of separatism and gynophobia among women is a struggle to alter our methods of perception, of interpretation and of articulation. This struggle is the meaning of feminism in Rich's writing: "... *contemplating last and late/the true nature of poetry. The drive/to connect. The dream of a common language.*"

Traditionally, patriarchal language has provided in its syntax and its dichotomous forms, a system for organising experience and ideas, validating some while negating, even erasing the others. In its content, its nouns, this language has provided a system for naming, for pinning down concepts, objects, and perceptions. In other words, the moving force behind the language has been the urge to relate, define, limit, and thereby control experience and thought. Language has been seen as an instrument of logic, the tool which allows the divisive and often artificial construction of experience into syllogistic form. Physical and emotional realities are severed from the powerful context of immediacy through the abstractions of language. Obviously, through the need to organise experience in order to communicate it, language provides the means and the motive to falsify experience by reducing it, by denying the truth of contradictory forms and perceptions. A political system based on hierarchy and domination has no room for a language of multiple truths.

Adrienne Rich calls for, and attempts to create in her poetry, a new language with a very different purpose. Whereas patriarchal language defines experience in order to reify it, to make it permanent and limited, and ultimately to approve or reject it, Rich's language would evoke women's experience in all its multiplicity and undeniable immediacy in order to recognise it, understand it emotionally as well as intellectually, and affirm it as valid simply because it is true and existent for the individual who experiences it. This is not to say that Rich is without a programme or set of values and goals which she views as the aims of lesbian/feminism. Rather, this new language and the mode of perception and evaluation it implies *are* the aims of her feminism. If I learn to express my experience as a woman in its entirety, in its physicality, in its complexity, without self-censorship, without employing externally imposed categories or evaluations, and with the conviction that my experience is valid, coherent, and deserves attention, I will be speaking a new language. If I truly hear and accept another woman expressing the sense and meaning and physical truth of her life, despite its contradictions with my own experience, then I will have learned to understand this new language. For Rich, the language of lesbian/feminism seeks to open out into multiplicity, rather than to define and limit its subject matter. It seeks to make connections, to dare to see similarities and their implications in the expressions of women, rather than to create categories, difference and therefore, polarisation. And while the commonality of women's experience is sought and expressed, this language must respect and express particularities in women's experience. Rather than attempt to abstract, simplify,

codify and defuse experience, this language must remain physical, a bodily function intimately tied to and reflecting the other physical experiences of the speaker. Patriarchal language denies the reality of women and other oppressed groups for it denies them an affirmative means of expression; they are relegated to negations — non-white, non-mother, non-male. Their experience is defined in relation to the patriarchal "norm." They are denied the immediacy of their physical reality. In contradiction, lesbian/feminist language must evoke the reality of all women and through its immediacy of expression allow women to see where they are reacting to the same oppressions, to understand their manipulation without denying the real pressures brought to bear upon them, to see their common goals without feeling the need to submerge their individual identity and experience.

In my efforts to describe the differing aims and methods of patriarchal language and Rich's concept of lesbian/feminist language, I have been labouring under an uncomfortable handicap. I have tried to describe a non-dichotomising, non-abstracting system of expression by means of the dichotomising, abstracting language of traditional prose. The very fact that I tend to describe this new language in terms of negations — non-dichotomising, non-abstracting — is telling. Moreover, my description of Rich's concept of new language suggests an immediate question or conflict. How can feminists affirm the experience and perceptions of all women, and still hope to move forward with a radical transformation of society? How can lesbians create a woman-identified, woman-centred community without alienating and isolating themselves from anti-feminist, male-identified or heterosexual women? This is the point at which Rich's struggle toward a new language is identified with and directly related to her struggle with the issue of separatism among women. The need for a new language becomes readily apparent when we realise that the very aims of lesbian/feminism, as Rich perceives them, cannot be convincingly or positively expressed in the old tradition.

For example, traditional logic and value systems presuppose that truth is monolithic or single. To say "yes" to an idea or a political principle, for instance, means saying "no" to innumerable other principles. In traditional prose, I find it virtually impossible to see my way beyond this conflict between *the* truth and everything else that is non-truth. There is scholarship now that claims the falsehood of the so-called "objective viewpoint" and calls for a new awareness of the author/researcher's participation in the shaping of a particular argument. However, this runs contrary to the direction of most scholarship which still erects its claims upon the disproof of a previous hypothesis. Our patterns of thought and research are formed on this competitive, hierarchical model. Consequently, I begin to feel a necessity for lesbian/feminists to separate themselves from heterosexual women, to see their choices as mutually exclusive. Rich understands this idea and she also shares the emotional pressures imposed upon lesbians by heterosexual women, as well as by men. It is especially painful to be misunder-

stood and insulted by women when we are actively trying to affirm our female selves and forge a unity among ourselves. However, Rich writes:

All lesbians know the anger, grief, disappointment, we have suffered, politically and personally, from homophobia in women we hoped were too aware, too intelligent, too feminist, to speak, write, or act, or to remain silent, out of heterosexual fear and blindness. The gynophobia of men does not touch us nearly so deeply or shatteringly as the gynophobia of women. Many times I have touched the edge of that pain and rage, and comprehended the impulse to dyke separatism. But I believe it is a temptation into sterile "correctness," into powerlessness, an escape from radical complexity.²

"Radical complexity" is the aim of a new language and it is that which is lost in patriarchal writing and thinking. This complexity allows multiple truths, non-divisive insight, and the drive to connect. And this complexity of language, and by extension of thought, determines Adrienne Rich's response to separatism among women.

Yet, just how can we affirm multiple perspectives when some of those perspectives will be anti-feminist and/or heterosexually oriented? If the aim of lesbian/feminism is exploration, recognition, and affirmation of our female selves, how can we accept and affirm women whose lives are based on a denial of their female strength and sexuality, and on a denial and hatred of female strength and sexuality in others? These are difficult and painful questions and yet we could ask the answering question: how can we affirm our female selves if we deny those women who disagree with us? As Rich puts it, "*to turn our backs upon millions of our sisters in the name of loving women is to deceive ourselves most grievously.*"³ This separatism is self-deception to the same extent that the patriarchal modes of perception and organisation that spawn it are self-deception. It is simply not true that there can be only a single truth for women. Men have used this argument to posit that there can be only a single truth for humanity, and that it is male.

Furthermore, the self-deception of separatism becomes more apparent when we realise that the male-identified values of the women we would separate from, are also present in ourselves. In her article, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Rich describes the process of indoctrinating adolescent girls into male-identification and she explains that, to a certain extent, growing up in a male dominated, sexist society has scarred us all.⁴ Referring to Kathleen Barry and her book, *Female Sexual Slavery*, Rich writes: "*She [Barry] sees the rape paradigm — where the victim of sexual assault is held responsible for her own victimisation — as leading to the rationalisation and acceptance of other forms of enslavement, where the woman is presumed to have "chosen" her fate, to embrace it passively, or to have courted it perversely through rash or unchaste behaviour.*"⁵ This paradigm is an expression of patriarchal reasoning but an inflexible, intolerant separatism among women is simply another adaptation of this specious reasoning, a reasoning which obscures the political, social, personal conditions surrounding each woman. To reject or deny heterosexual woman is "to blame the victim" and by doing so, women become instrumental, once again, in the oppression of our own sex. We have been "educated" into a rejection of our erotic possibilities and of those who pursue them, just as we have been "educated" into a rejection of women of different races.⁶

So if separation from heterosexual women is a form of self-deception and an internalisation of a patriarchal method, that of fragmentation and blaming the victim, how can lesbian/feminists accept and deal with male-identification in themselves and in other women, heterosexual or lesbian? Adrienne Rich posits the concept of a "lesbian continuum":

I mean the term lesbian continuum to include a range — through each woman's life and throughout history — of woman-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support; if we can also hear in it such associations as marriage resistance and the "haggard" behaviour identified by Mary Daly ... — we begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of "lesbianism."

This continuum allows for a recognition of the common impulses and needs among women, while giving room for differences and for progression or evolution of consciousness. It allows us to remember and own the histories of women who *used* heterosexual marriages to secure a position of relative strength or safety within sexist society. We may reject this "double life" but we must understand and affirm the intentions of such women if we are ever to find answers for the problems they face and if we are ever to claim the scattered and fractured forms of feminism which have existed in the past.⁸ To reject these limited forms of assertion is to reject the very history and tradition of strong women that can ground and feed our struggles.

Rich also explains that it has been the pattern of male political writers to locate the enemy "*outside the self, the struggle somewhere else.*"⁹ Consequently their struggles for change seldom involve a critique of their own methods and values and often involve attempts to force their "clearer, fairer" vision on other groups — a version of the "white man's burden." No wonder most socialist efforts have been marred by a deeply ingrained sexism within the revolutionary party. The self-awareness and self-criticism necessary to perceive and change this sexism is simply not there; revolutionary males are usually too busy identifying with the oppressed groups to be able to question their own participation in a deeper and older form of oppression, an oppression on which their ego development and maintenance is heavily dependent.

Women, on the other hand, are subject to the internalised guilt that plagues an oppressed group. And although this guilt is largely destructive, separating us from a faith in and affection for our own sex, it does establish the habit of self-inquiry. Adrienne Rich encourages this inquiry in order that we may uncover our buried desires and strengths as well as our internalisation of the fear and hatred of women our society promotes. Rich encourages this self-questioning not as a means to further guilt but rather as a means to self-recognition and to change. This recognition will allow us to perceive the extent to which we are all male-identified and the extent to which we are all feminists (if only latently).¹⁰ And this self-questioning must be thorough; we must not only ask what our attitudes and values are, but *why*. This questioning of origins and perceptions provides a check for the "blame the victim"

tendency. We have all been scarred; the purpose of our inquiry is a peeling away of these injured layers in order to find and nourish the feminist foetus within.

So I have been describing the language of lesbian/feminism that Rich envisions. More than anything else, this language demands and creates new patterns of thought: multiple perspectives, the impulse for connection, simultaneous recognition of similarity and difference, and the bond between physical experience and thought, between body and language. I have pointed to the fact that these patterns of thought run contrary to the idea of separatism among women. And yet, separatism is a genuine, a deeply-felt need for many women. Isn't a rejection of their separatism as much a failure of perception as their rejection of heterosexually-oriented women may be? If the new language Rich writes of springs truly from the impulse to explore, understand, and affirm all women's experience and if our fluency in this language means the struggle for multiplicity and connection, then we cannot write off the heartfelt separatism of lesbian/feminists. Rich knows this and she writes of her own temptation to this choice. She expresses the need for a "psychic" separatism in the attempt to sever ourselves from the patriarchal within us¹¹ and she recognises the uses Mary Daly and Marilyn Frye have found for separatism.¹² Clearly Rich is taking the subject very seriously. She recognises the need for women to create an environment where we can affirm our female selves and our female sexuality without oppression, and separatism in some forms for some women for some periods of time may be necessary. She writes in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" of the female-identified women throughout history who severed themselves from the rest of society in attempts to create a freer context for living. Rich would not reject these women; on the contrary, she owns them as strong and important ancestors in feminism. Ultimately, however, Rich sees the richest, the strongest, the most intelligent in lesbian/feminism as arising from attempts to understand and draw connections among all women's common experience while trying to learn from their differences. Rich sees our progress in the attempt "to reveal and express and support our female complexity, acting towards rather than reacting against."¹³

"Radical complexity" is a phrase I quoted earlier in this essay and it well describes Rich's position on separatism. She rejects always the reductive, the simplistic, the inflexible. She asserts the importance of evoking the bodily and emotional experiences of all women in our writings and our art so that our various truths cannot be ignored and so that our shared purposes will be recognised. Reading Rich's prose and attempting a synthesis of her views reveals these values, but it is her poetry that allows me to actually experience their validity. It is her poetry that communicates as a new language.

Adrienne Rich's vision of poetry is not the Platonic imitation, twice separated from the real. Rich identifies poetry *with* experience. Her poetry is political action; it is the active changing of our ideas about ourselves. Rich's poetry does not simply represent the truth as she sees it; her poetry is the experience of that truth. She accomplishes this through her connection of the body with language. Rich's poetry is not easily accessible if I try to read her words and translate them into my own. Instead I have to react first viscerally, with my body. I feel the power of her images, the impact of her use of temperatures, images of tearing, cutting, shattering, of blood and semen, of sexual ecstasy and sexual violence. I respond first to this

physicality with recognition, anger, or desire, and then these responses lead me to the sense of her words. I have read many of her poems this way, sensing first their physical truth and only then coming to understand their literal meaning. And this illustrates her effort to merge poetry with politics. If "My Politics is in my body," if political reality comes from physical experience, then a poetry that speaks through the body is a political act.¹⁴ In this way, Rich's poetry does not simply *represent* a political viewpoint, but rather it *is* a political and physical experience — specifically the experience of women's reality.

Rich's most recent book of poetry, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*, seen in this light as a political experience, is particularly important in a discussion of separatism among women. In *The Dream of a Common Language*, I experience the poetry's moving force as a drive toward the recognition of our common origins — a woman's body and love; our common loss — that woman's body and love, and consequently our own; and our common strength — the reclaiming of our bodies, our self-love, and our love for all women. Although aware of individual differences and the particularity among women, Rich's emphasis is the rediscovery of lost connections. In her latest book, however, Rich struggles to express more of our "acute particularity," that distinctly personal immediacy of experience that — in the forms of race, class, religion, politics — has been used in the past to keep us apart.¹⁵ Rich evokes these multiple realities with such a power and an empathetic understanding that, as reader, I am pulled into each individual woman's circle of experience, despite my efforts or tendencies to distance myself. Rich expresses the sense, the explicability of each woman's life with a respect that makes my empathy and identification virtually inescapable. Unlike the previous collection, *The Dream of a Common Language*, her emphasis in this book is less centred on the commonality of all women's experience in the larger, more general sense of a shared femaleness. Still, the dialogue Rich creates between the individual women of her poems and the author (Rich herself) — be the dialogue implied in the poem's viewpoint or explicit in its form — causes a certain commonality or shared experience to emerge. Even when the women treated in the poems do not share the lesbian/feminist viewpoint and values of the author, they seem to be asking and answering the same questions. The emergence of a shared concern and the respect for differing responses to it creates an atmosphere of complicated community — the kind of community I might posit as an alternative to lesbian separatism.

The women evoked in *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far* range from early feminists to the women of prehistoric cultures to Willa Cather to Rich's grandmothers. Their political and feminist perspectives are similarly diffuse. Yet, there is a centering on the same issues again and again: the problem of power, the need to make oneself seen and heard, the internalisation of hatred and guilt, the desire/need to accept contradictions and diversity in oneself. A look at the poem, "Mother-In-Law," will illustrate this sense of shared concerns between very different women.¹⁶

This poem is written in the form of a dialogue, half-imagined, half-spoken, between the poet and her mother-in-law. The poem centres around the mother-in-law's phrase, "Tell me something," uttered half as a demand and half in fear of an answer. It is the half-angry expression of a woman who craves to feel connected: "Tell me what

daughters tell their mothers / everywhere in the world, and I and only I / even have to ask ... " It is the half fearful expression of a woman who doesn't want to hear the truths that may reveal how limited her life has been, that may release a rage she fears she has suppressed, and so she responds to threatening confidences with: "You'll feel better when the children are in school." It is the half-desperate expression of a woman who knows she made a choice long ago, long before she knew of an alternative: "They think I'm weak and hold / things back from me. I agreed to this years ago." The poem is extremely personal and yet it opens out onto all women's experience. It expresses our fear of feminism at the same time that it expresses our hunger for it. And the poet's imagined responses to the mother-in-law's plea are equally complex. She expresses the feminist's resentment at being thwarted in her efforts *by other women*: "I would try to tell you, mother-in-law / but my anger takes fire from yours and in the oven / the meal bursts into flames." She expresses her anger at being forced to torture all her meanings into the acceptable forms: "I polished the table, mother-in-law / and scrubbed the knives with half a lemon / the way you showed me to do / I wish I could tell you — " She expresses the failed desire to make contact: "I've been trying to tell you, mother-in-law / that I think I'm breaking in two / and half of me doesn't even want to love ... I am trying to tell you." And finally, she admits that she is as frightened and as confused as her mother-in-law, that she knows the issues but does not know where to start, and she prays, "Ask me something." The pain of this dialogue is the desire to communicate, the need for daughter and mother to communicate, in the face of a lack of words, the wrong words, a fear of words. These women are struggling toward the recognition that they have things to say to each other, that they have things in common, but they are both afraid. The mother-in-law is afraid to hear and the daughter is afraid to speak. They are afraid that the words spoken will separate them from each other or from their past selves.

Rich understands this fear and yet her poem is, in some sense, an answer to it. The fear of a language that will cut me off from my past self is answered in this poem which reveals the meaning and the reasons for my past life. I can own my life without guilt because I can understand and express it, as I empathise with the mother-in-law. On the other hand, the fear of a language that will cut me off from other women is answered in this poem which similarly understands and expresses differing lives. At the close of the poem, I truly desire a conversation between the mother-in-law and the daughter for both their realities have been expressed and I sense the pain and need in each.

This kind of poetry, this language, expresses multiple truths and multiple realities and it evokes each of them with all the immediacy and certainty of physical experience. Through this poetry, Adrienne Rich conveys the "radical complexity" of her politics, the complicated community necessitated by her "lesbian continuum." While conveying the anger and frustration between the poet and her mother-in-law, she also implies an intensity of desire and a potential bond between them. While comprehending the fears and the pressures within the non-feminist woman, she also proclaims the necessity for radical self-inquiry and inner and outer transformation. While understanding and even sharing the temptation to lesbian separatism, she is convinced of the need for women to affirm women — always and all women. She conveys this affirmation of women's variety and strength in the

language of her poems. And when this language of multiple perspectives and multiple realities becomes the common language, then all our lives will become a kind of poetry.

FOOTNOTES

1. Adrienne Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language Poems 1974-1977* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978), p.7
2. Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected prose 1966-1978* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1979), p.227
3. Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p.228
4. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1980, vol. 5, no. 4, p.645
5. Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," p.643,644
6. Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p.307
7. Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," p.648, 649
8. Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," p.654
9. Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p.49
10. Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p.155
11. Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p.229
12. Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p.202
13. Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p.228
14. Adrienne Rich, *Poems: Selected and New 1950-1974* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1975), p.140
15. Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*, p.8
16. Adrienne Rich, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far Poems 1978-1981* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1981) p.31,32. All quotations in the next paragraph of the text will be from this poem and this edition.

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Emerging from Underground: The Women's Art Movement in New Zealand.

When in the late 60s American women painters and sculptors struggled to draw on their female experiences in their work, they looked to the immediate past for strength and encouragement. There they discovered artists who could be called their true cultural grandmothers: Mary Cassatt, suffragette and socialist, who devoted herself to the theme of mother and child while deftly avoiding the trap of the sentimental stereotype; Frida Kahlo who so courageously laid bare the autobiographical content of her own life; Georgia O'Keefe, whose flower centres revealed more of herself than she ever consciously intended; and Louise Nevelson the self-styled "architect of shadows", who built monumental, original sculptures and said of her work. "My whole life is in it, and my whole life is feminine."¹

These cultural grandmothers as I have called them were women who, consciously or unconsciously, began to reveal themselves as females in their work. The women's art movement in England also has its grandmothers: artists such as Barbara Hepworth who believed that "there is a whole range of formal perception belonging to that feminine experience."² By no means every woman artist falls into this category; many of them made it in a man's world, steadfastly denying that their sex was in any way relevant to their art. Such a woman was optical artist Bridget Riley, offering little moral support to the new women's art movement:

"Women's Liberation, when applied to artists, seems to me to be a naive concept. It raises issues which in this context are quite absurd. At this point in time, artists who happen to be women need this particular form of hysteria like they need a hole in the head."³

Seeing how important women like Cassatt and O'Keefe are to American feminist artists, I asked myself the question: do we in New Zealand have our own cultural grandmothers? Were there any outstanding women artists who, by sensing the new current of a search for female identity, produced work that might inspire and support what is now happening for women working today?

The more I searched, the more I was disappointed. Frances Hodgkins, our most outstanding woman artist, identified more with the modern currents in European art than she did with either New Zealand or her female identity. Others, like Edith Collier, who returned to New Zealand at the age of 37 from her European sojourn, were stifled by the strait-jacket of the provincial society in which they tried to survive. It was a double pressure. As a "mature and experimental painter"⁴ she was ridiculed by the press; as a female painter she was pressured by her own family.

It was hard enough for a woman to study from the nude, even in the 1920s, but the blow must have been crushing when she returned from a trip to Wellington to find that her father had burned her nude studies done in Europe. Five years after her return to New Zealand Edith Collier put painting aside to devote herself to domestic life and the nursing of elderly relatives; both acceptable female roles.

Fiona Kidman has spoken out about similar pressures put on women writers throughout the 50s,⁵ and Patricia Godsiff has told of Denis Glover's verdict on her timid

offering of her first book of poems: "Your function is to be a wife and mother: the world can do without your little posies of flowers."⁶ It seems that the combination of provincialism and sexism has been deadly to our women artists. It has left them with two alternatives for survival: get out of the country, or stay here and become "one of the boys" — as good as them, but definitely on their own terms.

Aspects of the work of Olivia Spencer Bower provide some happy exceptions to this statement. While in her studies of the Russian Ballet company in 1937 she may have been following in the footsteps of Degas, her 1948 work on Maori mothers and their babies at the Rawene Hospital is more unusual. These paintings and drawings arise out of her close study of the intimate days following the birth — an unusual view of the subject. Also of great interest are her studies of her aged mother, and the series of works showing women spinning, done in the 60s and 70s. Olivia Spencer Bower is known mainly for her landscape work. Aptly, she wrote to Janet Paul in 1979, "I feel that there is something that women can do that no-one else does and haven't had the chance to let come out."⁷

The other artist whose work hints of other possible directions is also best known for her landscapes: Rita Angus. But there are also her self-portraits, where she treats her own face like a chiselled rock, strong and stereotype-defying. Even more memorable is her striking and well-known portrait of Betty Curnow. It is interesting that Rita Angus asked her subject not to hide her pregnancy behind loose clothing⁸; Betty Curnow is shown in the context of both her domestic present and her colonial family past. A feeling of respect between artist and subject is conveyed; the subject is presented as enduring, yet accessible.

The most interesting self-portrait shows the artist in her red painting smock, with her easel in hand. Her face is half lit, half shaded and behind her shines a full moon on one side, and two embracing fish on the other. There seems to be a flash of connection between this and such recent work as Anna Keir's *Tree of Life* (1977), and her portraits of Heather and Carrick.

Some of Rita Angus's flower studies are also suggestive, especially the red open *Passion Flower* of 1943, which is startlingly O'Keefe-life.

Rita Angus and Olivia Spencer Bower may be the nearest we have got to cultural grandmothers; but even so their works are little more than tantalising suggestions, hints of a powerful current which does little more than surface for a moment before becoming resubmerged. It is disappointing to have to admit that among New Zealand women artists we have nothing equivalent to the consistent female imagery of Georgia O'Keefe, the sense of female self of an artist like Louise Nevelson, or a suffragette painter like Cassatt. When the women's art movement began to appear in New Zealand in the 70s, it was a movement nourished by sources other than our own artistic past.

The movement arose when radical feminist ideas had an impact on creative New Zealand women, especially a core group in Christchurch. The most radical were lesbian separatists who threw away their books by men, and took

down from the walls paintings by men. The vacuum that remained was to be filled by a quest for new sources of art, new female imagery, and the discovery of herstory. When news of Judy Chicago was carried back to Christchurch by a travelling woman, and the first copy of *Through the Flower* came with her, certain artists and writers had already begun to discover their own female images. News of the women's art movement in America came as confirmation of something that had already spontaneously been born in Christchurch — because it had arisen out of the same radical sources.

For those who did not share in the original experience, the new art was hard to accept and understand. This was not the sort of art New Zealanders were used to receiving from its women artists. Perhaps the scarcity of cultural grandmothers has something to do with the difficulties people have had with the work and ideas of the women's art movement, but it cannot be this alone. The feminist ideas out of which the movement sprung are both challenging and threatening in themselves. From men comes derision and put-down; from women, fear and denial. Women artists who were well established before the new movement began to have an impact have often been the most vocal in their denial,⁹ although there are others whose work has been transformed by the new challenge (Claudia Pond Eyley being the most striking example).

Even today, the vicious press received when the Women's Gallery opened in January 1980 is shocking but typical.¹⁰ *Art New Zealand*, that mouthpiece of the art establishment, refuses to acknowledge the women's art movement because of its origin in feminist ideas. When I phoned the editor to enquire whether he would be interested in an article about the movement, I was told curtly, "We are not interested in propaganda, only art."

The Nature of the Movement

I now wish to examine the kind of work arising out of the women's art movement. I hope that by describing the richness and variety of this work it will become apparent that only a small part of the spectrum is concerned with what might be called overtly political subject matter.

The first important point to be made is that this movement is like no other in the history of art, for it is the first time that such a movement has been initiated and led by women.¹¹ The second point is that whereas most art movements have been based on radical stylistic innovations (impressionism, cubism, abstract expressionism), the women's art movement is not. The key factor is not style but content.

Women are now discovering a new centre from which to work. The assumption of female identity becomes the starting point for unlocking new subjects in art, some of them scarcely touched over the centuries of art history (e.g. birth, nurturing, female sexuality, female views of men, of ourselves).

Naturally some stylistic differences arise out of this new orientation: the use of fabric, the reclaiming of devalued arts, but none of these stylistic departures are central. Content is the central factor.

It is content that distinguished Georgia O'Keefe as a grandmother of the women's art movement, while eliminating Helen Frankenthaler. Frankenthaler's major breakthrough was stylistic (the pouring of paint on to raw canvas); of great significance to her male colleagues such as Morris Louis, and even to Gretchen Albrecht here in New Zealand, but of little value to women in the 70s who were challenging the content and orientation of contemporary art.

Stylistically the new women's art is characterised by an extraordinary variety of media and techniques. In New Zealand it ranges from the conventional figurative style of Jackie Fahey (whose subject matter however is far from conventional), to the abstract expressionist watercolours of Allie Eagle, the installation work of Di Ffrench, and the sophisticated graphic work of Vivian Lynn. A feminist artist may explore the subject of lesbian relationships while being inspired by the stylistic innovations of Kandinsky.

Because content is the key factor, the women's art movement is closely connected with feminist-inspired developments in poetry, music and drama. All are linked by a common approach: throwing off stereotypes, reassessing what it means to be female, challenging the assumptions of the patriarchal culture, understanding oppression, and building a new, positive identity. There has probably never been a political movement with such far-reaching and exciting effects on the arts. Feminism has been like a kind of Pandora's box, that when opened reveals not monsters but germinating seeds of new growth. Women are being liberated from their past oppression, their consciousness is being widened, their imagination taken into areas they never knew existed. For women artists the implications are immensely exciting.

New themes, and new angles of old themes have been surfacing rapidly since the late 60s. The unlocking effect of radical feminist ideas on our women artists has been so intense and rapid that nearly all of the major themes being treated by American and British women artists have also been tackled here. I have grouped these themes under eight main headings.

1. *Political Work*: about rape, abortion, oppression.
2. *Domesticity*: what it means to be a housewife, to rear children, to give birth.
3. *Sexuality/Spirituality*: what it means to have a woman's body, to menstruate; our connections with the moon cycle, with ancient mysteries; connections with the natural world through our sexuality, spirituality.
4. *Search for Identity*.
5. *Female Heritage*: identifying our mothers, grandmothers, ancient goddesses.
6. *Relationships Between Women*: not the light sentimental of the Impressionists, but intense, loving, often sexual.
7. *Personal Revelation*: "the personal is political"; diaries, revelation of the struggle beneath the surface. Small domestic details of everyday life made important.
8. *Collaborative/collective work*: breaking down the isolation, creating sisterhood and a community of women.

Many of these themes place an emphasis on very positive values: reaching out, opening, connecting. The web, the spiral, the blossoming flower, the emerging butterfly — all are images that express this. Whether such images are specifically female, or whether they are rather images that arise out of the liberating process itself is a question that cannot be answered at this stage in our history.¹²

The History of the Movement

I have already referred to the core group of Christchurch women who allowed radical feminist ideas to transform both their lives and their art. Elsewhere, individual artists were responding to the same current. In 1974 Louise Lewis declared herself a "feminist, and a very angry one"¹³ when she exhibited her *Little Women Living in Obscurity* series in Wellington. In 1975 New Zealand

saw its first public art exhibition inspired by feminist ideas. Allie Eagle, one of the Christchurch core group of separatists, was also exhibitions officer for the McDougall Art Gallery. She wrote to women artists all over New Zealand, inviting them to send work for an exhibition to commemorate International Women's Year. The result was the show *Six Women Artists*, which drew on the work of women responsive to the new wave of feminist awareness.

In her introductory essay, *Some Thoughts on Women's Art*, Allie Eagle discussed how the feminist movement had radicalised the attitudes of women artists and writers, pointing out that:

*"A basic premise needs to be established though, in order to understand the notion of a woman's art: That is, that while there is in this country at least, as yet, very few stylistic differences between New Zealand women and men painters there are a great many cultural experiences and socio-economic factors that make them quite different."*¹⁴

When at the end of her essay she quoted Judy Chicago, it was to introduce a name little known in New Zealand at that time:

*"What has prevented women from being really great artists is the fact that we have been unable to transform our circumstances into our subject matter, unable to step out of them and use them to reveal the whole nature of the human condition."*¹⁵

Allie Eagle was corresponding with Judy Chicago about this time, hoping to get her to come to New Zealand, but for various reasons this never took place.

In the catalogue the six artists, Jane Arbuckle (Zusters), Joanne Hardy, Helen Rockel, Rhonda Bosworth, Stephanie Sheehan and Joanna Harris (Paul), all made comments about themselves as women artists. Stephanie Sheehan's remarks are especially relevant:

*"It has been generally accepted that woman has been a slave too long; unfortunately a slave mentality is imposed on us at birth and to express oneself truthfully involves throwing off more chains than one was aware of carrying."*¹⁶

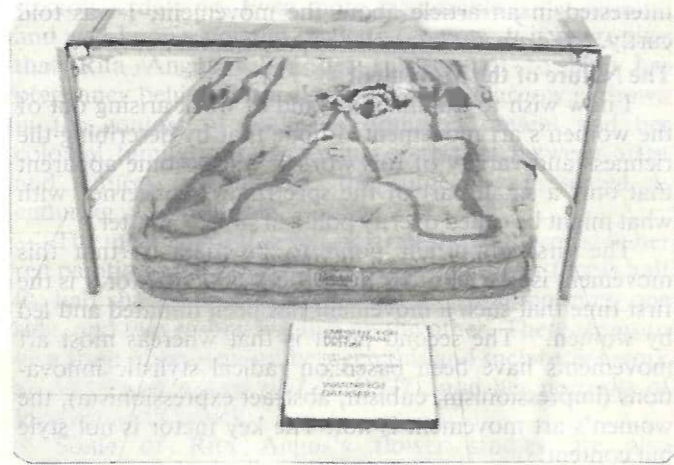
This was a radical exhibition for its time. It is interesting to compare it with an apparently similar show mounted in the same year, also to celebrate International Women's Year: *New Zealand Women Painters*, shown at the Auckland City Art Gallery (June 1975).

This show lacked a feminist perspective. No acknowledgement is made of the women's art movement that was by this time gathering considerable force in America. The catalogue entries refer to the women's "one-man shows", without any sense of contradiction, and the introduction by Anne Kirker and Eric Young perpetuates rather than challenges the myths about women's art:

*"the art of the women painters in no way differentiates from the art of the men ... Femininity is not involved any more than masculinity is involved in the work of men painters. Art transcends sex."*¹⁷

In 1977 Christchurch saw an even more challenging event that was mounted to coincide with the United Women's Convention. It was a total concept, inspired by an American feminist venture called *Womanspace*, and taking the form of a women's art environment housed by the CSA Gallery. Collectively organised, it took a year of preparation. Allie Eagle's account in *Spiral* shows the intent behind the show:

"Our group began planning for the women's environment with a sense of wanting to reveal the

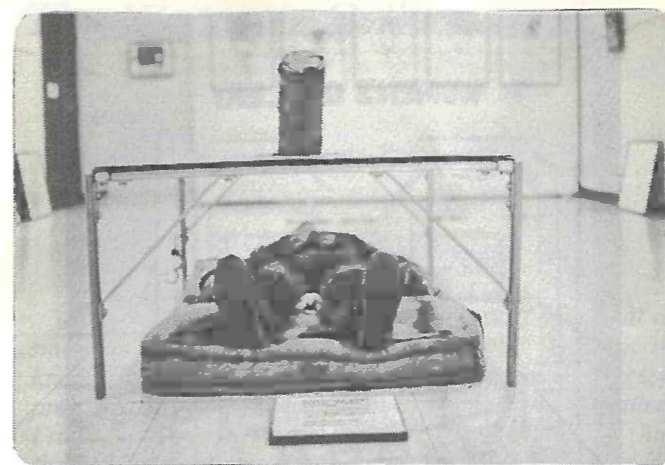


Allie Eagle *Empathy for rape trial victim: for judges, men and boys. For clear viewing/lie on mattress/look up/WARNING!/DANGER!* 1978

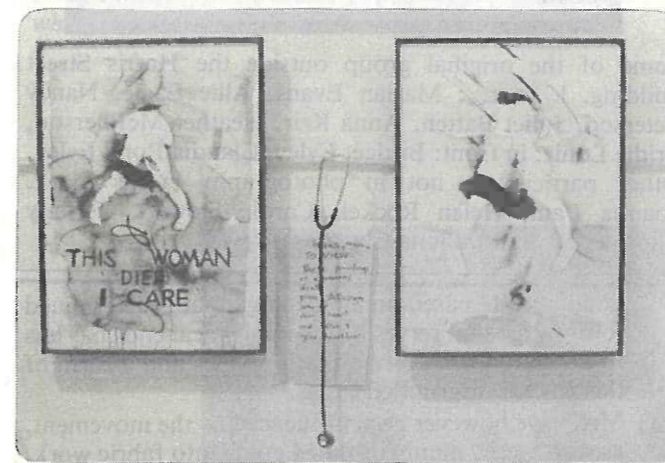
'Three women artists' C.S.A., Christchurch.

The steel table was made from unistrut modular bolted aluminium with rubber cushioning for the plate glass top. The tubular/aluminium shaft had black plasticine and sump oil over it. It squashed a mixture of eggs, spaghetti and jelly, and penetrated the underlying space, where the outline of a woman was drawn on a slashed mattress.

Glimpses of other three dimensional work *Live limbs that buttress the patriarchy* appears in the background.



Allie Eagle *Empathy for rape trial victim* 1978



Allie Eagle *This woman died, I care* watercolours 63.5 x 50.8

'Three woman artists', C.S.A., Christchurch. These works hung in the Gallery with a stethoscope between them, and a notice: 'Empathy exercise / To view / these paintings / of a woman's / death / place stethoscope / over yr / own heart / and listen to / your heartbeat.'

*nature of women's work and experiences from a feminist perspective: where we could make parodies on public images of women, make references to our vulnerability, our powerlessness and our powerfulness, show woman's self-images (countering the heavily popularised images of woman by man), work communally, make tributes to women's collaborative abilities. The ideas for the environment came individually and collectively as both a painful and revealing process of recognising exterior oppression. We wanted to break taboos that were and are so strong few of us realised they existed."*¹⁸

The work of professional artists was hung next to the work of women who had never exhibited before. Personal details of the women's lives were laid bare: Joanna Paul's works about her child's death, Allie Eagle's pelvic X-ray and surgical corset documenting her painful accident:

*"Mostly the images and messages we made were not simply illustrated, crude propagandist statements, but instructing and revealing and often shattering statements about womanhood. They admitted publicly to private parts of women's experience."*¹⁹

It was not surprising that women only were admitted during the first three days. Before men were admitted, some of the work was removed by the artists. The creation of separatist space in a public gallery was one of the most radical aspects of the show, and predictably, the one that drew most fire from the public. But another aspect also drew resistance: in this show so-called "amateur" and "professional" artists exhibited together. This was too much for the Arts Council and provided a "reason" to refuse a grant for the show.

Yet for New Zealand feminist artists this was a key event; it showed what could be done; it was a celebration and a triumph over the often painful process of collectivism, a revelation of aspects of being female that had never been shown here before.

Other events followed: *A Season's Diaries* (1977) in Wellington (travelling later to Hamilton and Christchurch), where a mixture of "professional" and "amateur" artists again got together, this time to document their lives in drawings, words, paintings and collage throughout a chosen month. And in 1978 three feminist artists (Jane Zusters, Allie Eagle, Anna Keir) exhibited at the CSA Gallery in Christchurch.

Auckland has seen some women's art shows since 1975 but always these have been put together on a much less radical basis than those of Christchurch and Wellington. The 1979 *Womanspirit* exhibition of illustrated poems was not an exclusively women's show. The danger of including men was evident when the press chose to picture only a man/woman team, ignoring the female emphasis of the show.

In June 1980 the Outreach Women Artist's show was initiated by a man and mounted without the artists having any shared philosophical base. They had not even met one another before the opening night, although a women artists' association later formed as a result of the show.

Nowhere is the difference between Auckland's conservatism and Christchurch's radicalism more evident than in the recent *Images of Men* show at Outreach (1981). Images of men is the one theme I did not place on my list of themes treated by the women's art movement, although it has appeared as a theme in both Britain and America. The reason for this is timing; images of men come at the very end of the process set in motion by the feminist process, after the vein of self-examination has been thoroughly explored. The first stage for women has been to turn their

backs on men in order to look at themselves. It is only in the last few years that books on men have begun to come out of the women's movement. As far as most New Zealand feminist artists are concerned, the radical process has not yet led to a return to images of men. There is still a need to work on female themes, to establish the importance of women as sisters, before that last step can be taken.

How is it then, that Auckland in its comparative conservatism, could put on an "Images of Men" show? Simply this: while in Christchurch women's art was transformed by radical feminism and separatist ways of doing things, in Auckland the influence came from a secondary source. It came not from feminist politics, but their offshoot, the American and British women's art movements themselves. It was as if Aucklanders had come in at a later stage of the process, without having gone through the anguish and blood-letting that got radical feminists in America and Britain to that stage in the first place. It might seem pure masochism to claim that the anguish is necessary, but without it there is a danger that women use the new art movement as a place for shelter rather than challenge, as a place to confirm the stereotypes rather than explode them. The images of men were produced in the main by artists who had never turned their backs on men. As a result the show, with very few exceptions, was yet another ego boost by women to men.

When in January 1980 the Women's Gallery opened in Wellington, the event was part of a process that had begun in Christchurch. The aims of the gallery were radical, in a sense that the Auckland exhibitions were not.

Two openings were held: one for women only, in the afternoon, and one for the general public in the evening. The women's art movement had come out from underground.

Notes

- (1) Elsa Honig Fine, *Women and Art*, New Jersey, 1978, p203.
- (2) Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower*, New York, 1977, p114.
- (3) Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker, ed., *Art and Sexual Politics*, New York, 1973, p83.
- (4) Janet Paul in Phillida Bunkle and Beryl Hughes ed., *Women in New Zealand Society*, Auckland 1980, p193.
- (5) Fiona Kidman's address to the writer's workshop at the United Women's Convention, Wellington, 1975.
- (6) *Spiral* I, p23.
- (7) Bunkle, ed., p201.
- (8) Betty Curnow in TVNZ film on Rita Angus.
- (9) For example, Gretchen Albrecht: "The question women as artists is an improper one. Quality in work is not predetermined or made necessarily easier or harder by one's sex. I presume it is just as hard for a man to express ideas, in images that flare and find response in the viewer's imagination and change his consciousness, as it is for a woman." (catalogue of Zonta women artists show, 1973).
- (10) The *Evening Post* called the gallery sexist (Jan 8, 1980); and Neil Rowe on Feb 2 in his review stated there was "no such thing as 'women's art' or, for that matter, 'men's art'." The show contained "the same old cliched rhetoric and banal symbolism of the bra-burners, the women's libbers and the abortion lobby." He claimed that a gallery "that is so



Some of the original group outside the Harris Street building. l. to r. : Marian Evans, Allie Eagle, Nancy Peterson, Juliet Batten, Anna Keir, Heather McPherson, Bridie Lonie; in front: Bridget Eyley, Claudia Pond Eyley. Other participants not in photograph: Fiona Clark, Joanna Paul, Helen Rockel, Carole Stewart, Tiffany Thornley. photo: Fiona Clark

dogmatically based on an ideology that is determined to show art that serves its own polemical ends has less to do with art than it has with politics and a form of therapy for disgruntled ladies."

- (11) Men have however been influenced by the movement, as seen by the number of men going into fabric work, or even the title of Murray Edmond's recent book of poems, *Patchwork*, and its domestic child-oriented subject matter.
- (12) Eleanor Munro in her book *Originals: American Women Artists*, sees the new women's art as very connecting, at a time when male art shows the opposite tendency: a rejection of the past, a symbolic overthrow of their fathers. Women on the other hand, she believes, are seeking to discover, symbolically, their mothers (pp280-281).
- (13) *Evening Post*, Oct 12, 1974.
- (14) *Woman's Art: an exhibition of six women artists*, catalogue for Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 1975, p3.
- (15) *Woman's Art*, p6.
- (16) *Woman's Art*, p10.
- (17) *New Zealand's Women Painters*, Auckland City Art Gallery, June 1975, p4.
- (18) *Spiral* no. 3, 1978, p28.
- (19) *Spiral* no. 3, p34.

The Women's Gallery

Bridie Lonie

It is awkward to say, in a devious sort of way, that the small baby (luckily female) who is sitting between my knees as I type this, would not have been so easily produced if I hadn't worked out my angst in the Gallery. From broken selfimages/mirrors and eggs and hay, through a hangmans noose and a strangling/fucking clay couple, to a cool recognition that what one wants should be got, my messy artistic procedures meandered.

Shared preoccupations with different solutions are part of the mixed loving and alienating experiences one gets, come hell or high water, in a place like this. The water is amniotic, the hell political.

MAEVE slips out easy, licks, small witch, wet crested raven, sleeps

MAEVE roots for a tit as big as her head, whinnies and chitters

MAEVE is me laughing and crying, the miraculous body, we

MAEVE smells of ginger, yells at sleep, beating with fist and foot

MAEVE all small animals she reaches humanity, we laughing meet

Bridie Lonie, a member of the collective which started *The Women's Gallery* in 1980, later worked as co-ordinator for several exhibitions, including *Women and the Environment*. This statement was made for a second exhibition of work by women who founded the Gallery, September 1982.



The current Women's Gallery collective, (except for Sue Turner), outside the new building, 323 Willis Street, Wellington. l. to r. : Linda Pearl, Celia Elizabeth, Barb McDonald, Linda Hardy. photo: Barb McDonald

Women's Gallery sign: Debbie Bustin

Rosemary Johnson 1942-1982



SPIRAL has brought together this material about Rosemary Johnson as a tribute to her and her contribution to the women's art movement.

Heather McPherson writes below about Rosemary's work in Christchurch. Because of her involvement there with the Art Environment during the 1977 United Women's Convention, Rosemary was invited to take part in the Opening Show of The Women's Gallery. She was too ill to come to Wellington, but sent us several very supportive letters and an exciting series of slides on sculpture by American women artists — I remember some slides of Jody Pinto's work particularly.

The first Women's Gallery exhibition Rosemary sent work for was Diaries 1980: fragile batiked pieces of orange cloth (she had a strong belief in the powers of individual colours, and she believed orange to be the most healing) with white paper clouds attached, on which she had written her diary. Bridie Lonie's piece on the next page discusses Rosemary's subsequent contributions to Gallery shows, the last before she died being her installations and performance for Women and the Environment. We have also included in this tribute a biography Rosemary sent to the Women's Art Archive, her statement about her Women and the Environment performance and an extract from an interview with Bridie Lonie for Radio Access.

Rosemary's visits to Wellington were always stimulating and joyful occasions for me. She was as scrupulous in her dealings with those of us who worked in the Gallery as she was in making her art; very often, the stress of exhibiting or performing, felt as much by women who as established artists were using the Gallery as somewhere to try new things in a supportive environment, as by women who did not see themselves primarily as artists, made for substantial additional demands on Gallery co-ordinators while exhibitions or performances were being set up. When Rosemary visited, we could relax about her part. We already had, well before she arrived, all the information we needed about her pieces and about what she needed help with. She was a completely calm and orderly presence, always, in the midst of the chaos of hanging group shows.

And she took other women's work so seriously. Not only did she make being a co-ordinator easier for me, but she also encouraged me to take risks (which no-one else did, possibly because working at the Gallery is such a recognised risk in itself). For example, when Rosemary and Claire Fergusson decided to do simultaneous performance during the Spirituality exhibition, there was a difficulty with documentation, as they couldn't do it for each other as originally planned. When I said that I could take photos (though I felt uneasy with colour) Rosemary suggested putting her camera on a tripod and swivelling it alternately between her and Claire (on opposite sides of the space), one under strobe lights moving fast, the other (Rosemary) slowly dying and being reborn by candlelight. Her steadfast 'you can do it' and meticulous organisation of my equipment worked; the photographs are beautiful. She gave me a lot of confidence, and I miss her.

We are sad that we are unable to print any of Rosemary Johnson's work in colour here as her work used colour very effectively. Making black and white reproductions from colour photographs is often unsatisfactory too. However, we understand that the Robert MacDougall Gallery is mounting a retrospective of Rosemary's work, and expect a colour catalogue will be a part of this.

Marian Evans

Biography — Rosemary Johnson

Born: 1942

Studied: Canterbury University School of Fine Arts 1962 to 1965 graduating with honours.

Travelled to Europe 1966 and through several countries. Later studied at the Central School of Art and Design, London. In July 1969 I married and returned to New Zealand, going to live in Dunedin.

Exhibitions etc:

May 1970 I had my first one woman exhibition with the Barry Lett Galleries; subsequent exhibitions in 1972 and 1975.

1970: I sent work for exhibition at the Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.

1970: I exhibited with 'The Group' for the first time and was invited to become a member. I showed with 'The Group' most years until it was decided by group members to put it out of existence.

1971: One woman exhibition Dawsons Ltd. Gallery, Dunedin in March. We moved to Christchurch and I took part in the New Zealand Young Contemporaries exhibition Auckland City Gallery.

The National Art Gallery, in Wellington, bought one of the 'Beyond' pieces in 1972 and another in 1973.

I took part in the Hansells exhibition years 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974 and was guest exhibitor 1976. Several years I took part in the Christmas exhibition Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, 1972, 1973, 1974.

March 1972 my daughter was born.

I lectured at the University of Canterbury Department of Extension Studies 1972 and 1973. Taught at Christchurch Girls High School one term only in 1971.

1973: I exhibited in '8 Young Artists' at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington. (A departure for me I suspended 5 clouds in the centre of the room, near the steps, underneath, spread sand, and two largish bronzes, engraved 'Distance'.

1974: Commonwealth Games exhibition 'Art N.Z.' Also at the C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch in 1974. A one woman exhibition. 'Clouds', I had an opening and closing, where I made vapour and mist, using dry ice and liquid nitrogen. For the opening a taped sound track and the closing a flautist.

1974: The Dowse Art Gallery, Lower Hutt, Wellington bought a 'Distance' piece.

1974: The McDougall Art Gallery bought a 3 piece bronze 'Landscape'. The Labyrinth Gallery opened above my husband's restaurant 1974.

1975: Participated in the Christchurch Arts Festival, 'Environmental Structures' 'Cloud Box' in Cathedral Square. (Blue scaffolding box, containing 10 suspended clouds.)

1975: Completed the Sculpture and Fountain, Christchurch International Airport. (Area enclosed by glass on all sides, roof open to the sky, with a staircase passing from the sculpture area to the roof. The sculpture, 3 suspended clouds and 3 stainless steel extended domes, one with water straying from the top.)

1975: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council grant towards costs.

1977: I became interested in the Women's Movement and took part in the 'Women's Art Environment' at the C.S.A. Gallery during the United Women's Convention.

June 1977: my son was born.

1977: One woman exhibition at the Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch. Subsequently, a 3 piece perspex sculpture on loan to the Teachers College, Christchurch.

1978: Co-organised and participated in the Christchurch Arts Festival exhibition 'Platforms' in the C.S.A. gallery.

1978: Attended the 10th International Sculpture Conference, Toronto, Canada. Also joined a pre-conference foundry course run by the Ontario College of Art; chief interest here was to learn the ceramic shell process. Visited New York on the way home.

1979: Completed the scale model, for a projected sculpture. Christchurch Teachers College (piece to run through the main body of the college with sight lines linking it with surrounding buildings - : stone, sight line, post sight line, post acting as anchor point for the whole sculpture, brick line to brick outlined extended circle and stone, also from anchor post pathway crossing mound to far side of Auditorium area, continuing out of the far side of the mound a batten fence rising to central steel circle, fence continuing out at right angles to the steel and on to end of the pathway, finally a stone.)

Rosemary Johnson Muller

Heather McPherson

When the Women Artists Group in Christchurch expanded and began working towards a specific objective, the art environment in conjunction with the United Women's Convention (1977), Rosemary, one of the city's few established and recognised woman artists to express understanding and practical support for its aims, joined the group.

She was very pregnant, her child due about the same week the show opened. But she came to all the meetings and participated fully in plans and discussions.

Since the group felt strongly that art should not be separate from the environment where it is made, since women's art is most often made in spaces between a welter of other activities, we wanted the CSA to become not a gallery but a living space, a celebration of the private creativity channelled into homemaking and the "decorative arts" as much as the creations visible on the wall.

One of the projects we envisaged was a gigantic mother goddess image to be part of the entrance to the show — a womblike entrance, symbolising the place and importance of the private environment and emphasising process as much as product.

Some of us felt daunted by the construction skills needed to undertake such an ambitious project. Rosemary did not. If we could provide the materials she would organise the design and building. She, Anita Narby and Allie Eagle worked out the necessary material. To some of us the talk of rods, piping lengths, construction yards, cutting and polythene measurements were baffling. I

admired Rosemary's obvious knowledge and familiarity with building materials and tools.

Someone hesitantly mentioned Rosemary's pregnancy. She waved away the concern, saying only that she would obviously need help with climbing.

We did not get a grant and the idea went unrealised. We concentrated on single projects and the rather chilly gallery to be humanised. Rosemary offered to do the entranceway as her project. With the birth on her mind, and ours, we felt it a happy choice.

As we became more involved with our own contributions we saw less of each other. Rosemary's quiet presence at the top of the stairs, her tapemeasures, became one of the strands in the necessary confusion of activity. Her support and resources were there when required — I could not have completed my wooden frame successfully without the use of Rosemary's jig-saw.

When the show opened, Rosemary's curtains — birth panels — one of the softest moments of the environment, were successful. Many women remarked on the sense of anticipation and mystery they felt as they came through.

★★★★★

In one of the post-environment meetings, Rosemary talked about her finding of great boulders in a riverbed near Darfield, and how they seemed to her like eggs. She talked about her sculpture for the teachers' college and how she had visualised the boulder-eggs. Later, Gladys Gurney suggested that as it was such an interesting idea I should write about it for *Spiral*.

Rosemary was pleased and generously co-operative. (She once spoke of her disappointment that so few women sculptors came out of art school and even fewer were interested in learning her skills of casting and working with metals; that she would have liked to teach and/or work with other women in her field.)

I visited with Rosemary a number of times, saw and talked about her plans with her, and one fine blustery winter's day, accompanied by a very small child in a fold-up pushchair, we went out to the site.

Some characteristics of Rosemary's work habits stand out. As with the birth panels, she insisted on absolute accuracy of measurement and faithfulness to her original conception.

Where there were problems of communication, as there were on the teachers' college project, she quietly persisted in meeting with and talking to all parties. She mentioned difficulties with the Ministry of Works, of boulders having to be shifted and trees replanted. But she smiled as she talked of disagreements and gave every indication of confidence in achieving what she had set out to do.

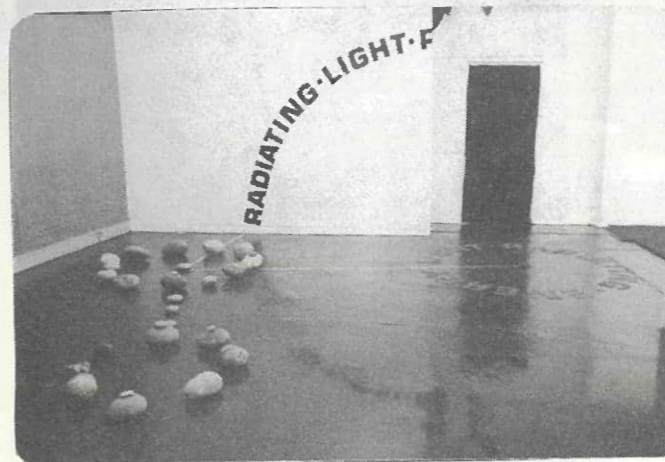
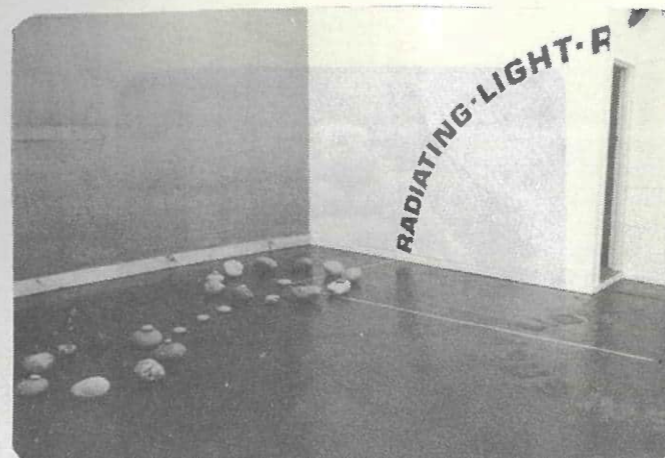
After I had written the interview, Rosemary read and vetted it. She deleted personal references and made the article an accurate statement of her intentions. If I occasionally felt that Rosemary's ideas were more vital than the cool controlled expression of them through her sculpture could indicate, I also felt that her overriding idea was successful — to bring back to human scale the great windfunnel between the concrete buildings where we stood and shivered that day. And I admired the number of factors that Rosemary took account of — from nor'westers which might tip the big central disc (sun/moon) over, to harmony of materials — the fence posts adding a warmer touch among the concrete and stone.

★★★★★

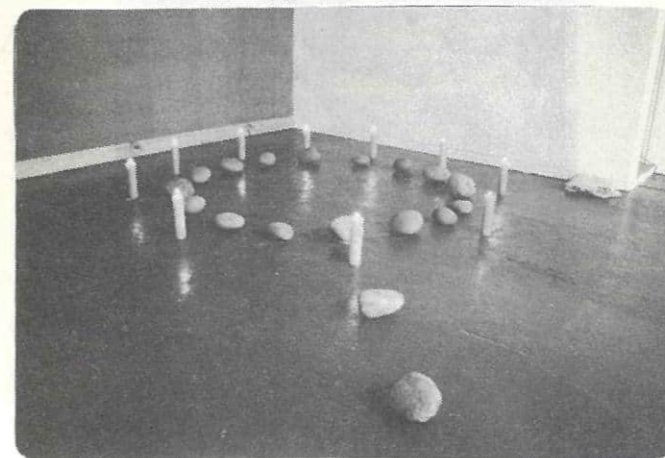
During her long illness I remember her sensitive and vulnerable courage in trying to heal herself, in coming to terms with changes in her capabilities and appearance, and in accepting the loss of her family.



Rosemary Johnson *Fence-line link* 1981
Wellington City Art Gallery



Rosemary Johnson *Light radiating light* 1980
'3 sculptors', The Women's Gallery



Rosemary Johnson *Ring of light* Installation 1981
Spirituality, Women's Gallery

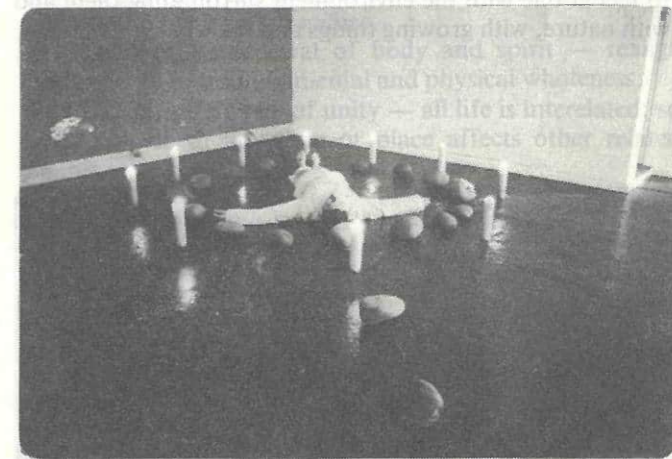
about Rosemary:

She came to the Gallery three times in the last year, to do a series of pieces concerning cairns and circles, cycles of spiritual renewal and cairns of burial. She used stone circles, tape, candles, wool, and wood, all renewed or recycled materials — the stones were the same stones; the colours were white, brown, yellow: candles, overalls, tape, wood; & grey & brown stones. The performances she gave in and around her pieces were tentative — the first piece had none, the second a private ritual within a stone & candle circle, in the third piece the audience formed the circle, holding candles. She was unsure about the last piece, the wind blew the candles out, the circle was interrupted by people with messages; the ritual aspect didn't overcome the mundane. For the people forming this circle, this didn't mar its beauty.

Her piece at Anzart, the *Falling Fence*, in its tension and pain, was a stark contrast to the Gallery work. She was working on all levels, exploring new ideas and media, to examine both despair and belief.

I think of her often, of her clarity and courage, and with what simplicity she would proceed on her journey, with no distinction between art and living.

Bridie Lonie

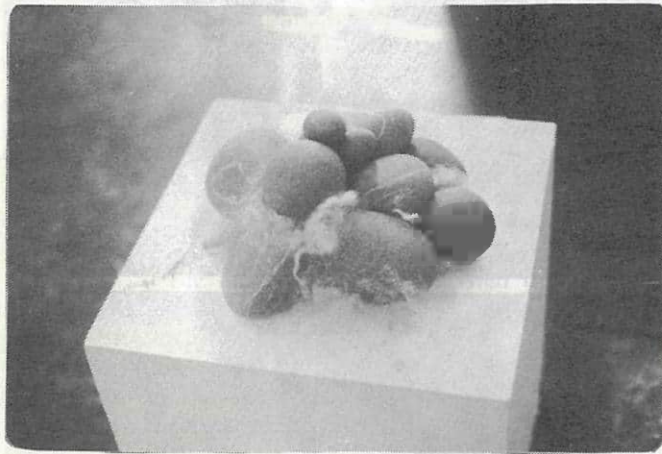


Ring of light Performance

Rosemary Johnson talks to Bridie Lonie: from an Access Radio Programme during the *Women and Environment* exhibition, The Women's Gallery, November 3 - December 5, 1981

Rosemary: I'll start with the piece by the Gallery. The cairns have a basic ground plan which is circular. They are very small and the stones used are oval shaped, the idea being that there's a total containment within the circle and it's a universal symbol which has a continuity without a beginning or end; it is like a lot of things come back to their point of origin. Like the universe everything is going in a circular motion. The cairns also have wool coming out of them. This is symbolic of burial — the wool is in fact almost like a fibrous decayed animal that's died — the cairn is also a symbol of burial. The burial aspect is related to the fact that I have personally been through certain things which I felt I had buried, put behind me. So that was a personal statement, too. The piece over in the other park which was used as a basis for a performance with a group of women, uses a circle as a symbol of unity.

The *Renewal* performance entailed walking along a line of battens and making a circle within the circle which is laid along the ground and each person considered various aspects of the environment in a conscious form and held-linked hands. This also had the effect of helping people to feel at one with the environment surrounding them and with nature, with growing things and the wind.



INSIDE OUTSIDE 1981 Two cairns, one inside the Women's Gallery, linked visually with one outside across Harris Street, in the rose gardens.

Renewal - a performance piece

Performance for a group of people.

Each person lights the candle of the person behind — a chain reaction. Then, singly, each person walks up the line of battens and round the inside of the circle at the end of the battens — clockwise. They will then sit on the right hand side of the circle, round the inside of the circle, evenly spaced.

The lit candles will be pushed into the ground in front of each person — or held in their hands. Each person considers an aspect of renewal, (which can be shared with the group).

After a time the first person to enter the circle will stand and holding her candle retrace her steps round the outside of the circle anti-clockwise and back down the battens leading into it.

The participants will each walk round the inside of the circle to the right hand side then anti-clockwise round the outside and back down the battens.

Conclusion — each person puts out the candle of the one next to her.

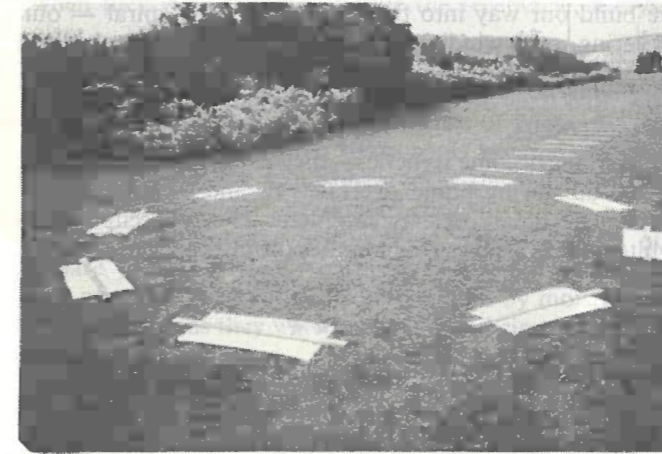
Some related thoughts

The battens from fallen trees — consider our responsibility to the earth and to nature.

The candles renewal of body and spirit — realign body energy to result in mental and physical wholeness.

Cloth strips a circle of unity — all life is interrelated, so what you do at any time or place affects other related matter.

Rosemary Johnson



Renewal performance

Rosemary Johnson *Renewal* installation 1981
'Women and the environment'
The Women's Gallery

Beyond the Pale, Part II, a performance towards an installation, by Ngaire Mules and Mary Louise Brown, performed at the Drama Theatre, La Trobe University, as part of the first Australian Sculpture Triennial, Melbourne, March 1981.

The audience observe from an above balcony, a large, pale sand arena. Barely visible, it fills the entire theatre. Twenty-eight small, white jagged stones glow faintly, tracing a circular path towards a darkened centre. The centre holds a white inflatable paddling pool. The pool's core holds a white maypole, thrusting towards the ceiling, 20 feet above. Two twisted, white cords spiral down, trail out and terminate at points back and front of the arena. At each point, a mound of ochre sand sprouts eleven red flags and three white flags. A child's plastic bucket and spade wait nearby.

Somewhere water drips — splashing on metal — two-toned, phasing in and out. A gradual illumination reveals the source, two bulging, oversized, white muslin bags oozing red liquid — (making jam / releasing blood). They hang from the roof over preserving pans, suspended precariously above the floor — opposite one another — challenging, on the circumference. The blood/fluid drips onto the amplified pans, ringing and marking time. Suddenly, the lights focus on clear plastic tubes emerging from the top of each bag, describing their own spiral through the sand and disappearing into the pool.

Action commences — we move into the pool and deliberately release two clamps at the end of the tubes. We move to the outer rim, and knot the maypole ropes around our waists. Then clip the dangling microphones to our chests. A slow flow of red escapes from the bags. Syphons suck. Action increases. We squat opposite each other by mounds of sand, fill buckets and overturn, making castles. Every second construction is pierced by a red flag — substitution for the white stones. We throw the stones into the pool. Each subsequent action increasing in distance from mound to stone marker, 28 times. Breathing harder, we build our way into the ever diminishing spiral — our tethering ropes winding tightly to the maypole. Backwards and forwards we synchronise still keeping abreast of the flow. Red flags become white — an indication of our own personal cycles.

Actions become frenetic — they reach their natural end as the advancing liquid overtakes us and gushes into the pool. The lunar cycle is complete. The red eclipses the white pool as a silvery light bathes the installation.

A FULL MOON APPEARS.

★★★★★

An earlier version of *Beyond the Pale* was performed at 100M², Auckland, 1980.



PHOTO: D. Minton

Mary-Louise Brown and her *Howlback* installation, at *The Women's Gallery*.

Art Review

Howlback is an art performance about menstruation and energy cycles, performed by Mary-Louise Browne, during the *Women and the Environment* exhibition, Women's Gallery, November 3 - December 5 1981.

The Women's Gallery contained *Howlback* after many days of physical preparation and many more creative hours.

A red light staged outside and above the circle, 10' in diameter. The light focussed on a punch bag filled with salted water. The bag hung from the ceiling and was positioned above the centre of the circle. A small hole at the base of the bag was taped up to contain the fluid. Underneath sat a receptacle to catch the drops of fluid when they were released. Beside the receptacle, a crystal glass.

The circle on the floor was composed of a fine layer of red oxide dust, on top of which was a layer of white sand. The circle gave an immediate presence of white, but with further viewing, small red oxide spots became evident as the moisture in the atmosphere drew the red powder up through the sand as if bleeding fractionally.

On the outer edge of the circle at four corners of a square were four tape recorders. The sound on the tape was pre-recorded from the sound caused by moisture and even pressure as they were applied to and circulated on the rim of a crystal glass.

Mary-Louise planned and marked numbers, letters and strokes on the floor in white and chalked these out systematically as she progressed through the performance.

Performance

Dressed in white: a blouse, skirt, leggings and socks, with a deep red and black cotton striped shirt, Mary-Louise entered the room. Silence. She walked to the centre of the circle, untaped the bag and applied a little pressure. Water dripped into the receptacle. She caught a small amount of it in the crystal glass which she held in her hand. With wet fingers she made a circular motion on the rim of the crystal glass. This movement created degrees of sound and intensity, waning, drifting, reaching at times a peak of sound tolerance. She walked from the centre slightly scuffing her stockinged feet in the sand leaving a red oxide groove as she went. She moved from the centre, close to her audience, to one of the four points at the edge of the circle and back to the centre.

During these movements from the centre to the outside of the circle, Mary-Louise held a crystal glass, sustaining a clarity of sound. When she reached the edge of the circle she placed the glass on the ground beside the tape recorder, raised or lowered the volume of this sound on tape, according to the intensity of sound she either felt or wished to inspire. She picked up another crystal glass, took it to the centre and sustained a newly created sound from moisture, crystal and her own finger pressure.

With this plan of movement and sound, were other visual images which left a strong impact. Her stockinged feet, as they scuffed through the sand, picked up the red oxide. She peeled the stockings from her feet and draped them over the receptacle as if a period pad, soiled. Her deep red and black shirt was removed towards the end of the performance to reveal her white cotton clothed body, clean, crisp and in contrast to the other image of herself clothed in red and black. She placed her crumpled shirt on the floor beside the receptacle and socks. A sense of relief,

a cloak removed; now free and light.

As the sound and movement drifted away, Mary Louise appeared to reappraise the images. The external physical images awaited another cycle of events. An atmosphere of internal calm, white, and in parts spoiled, a temporary reprieve.

Images

The performance inspired reactions in me which I will attempt to express by relating the feelings and images as they affected me personally.

- RED LIGHT Warmth, heat, energy.
- PUNCH BAG Womb, as the bag was gently squeezed I felt a relief of abdominal tension.
- SAND Texture, cold.
- RED OXIDE Warmth, fire, emotion, dust.
- FLUID SALTED WATER To add salt to one's wound — blood, salt, water — tasty. The fluid as it dripped — drained and relieved.
- RECEPTACLE Vessel, containment.
- CRYSTAL GLASS Sensitive, vulnerable.
- SOUND Tension, calm, balance. Variety.
- TAPE RECORDER Electric, energy, technology and the determination as she controlled its expressions.

MARKS PLANNED ON THE FLOOR REPRESENTING THE PATTERN OF HER MOVEMENTS.

- To calculate, to document — the ovulation energy and moon/mood cycle was being chalked out as phases in the life cycle/performance passed by. Menstrual, moon, energy cycles have similar rhythm and effect. 7 (days) x 4 (weeks) = 28 moon cycle.

- WHITE CLOTHING ... White, clean, purity, stark, relieved.
- SHIRT (Red and black) . Blood of old and new, burden.
- RED OXIDE ON SOCKS As her feet scuffed through the sand I felt weighted, then relief as she removed socks.

CRUMPLED SHIRT ON FLOOR Blood, placenta.

The performance was intense, calculated and controlled. For me it was an impressive and creative expression of my own menstrual cycles. A realistic expression of my experiences, I felt that the changes which I undergo regularly and strive to be in tune with were able to be shared with empathy. This powerful experience and

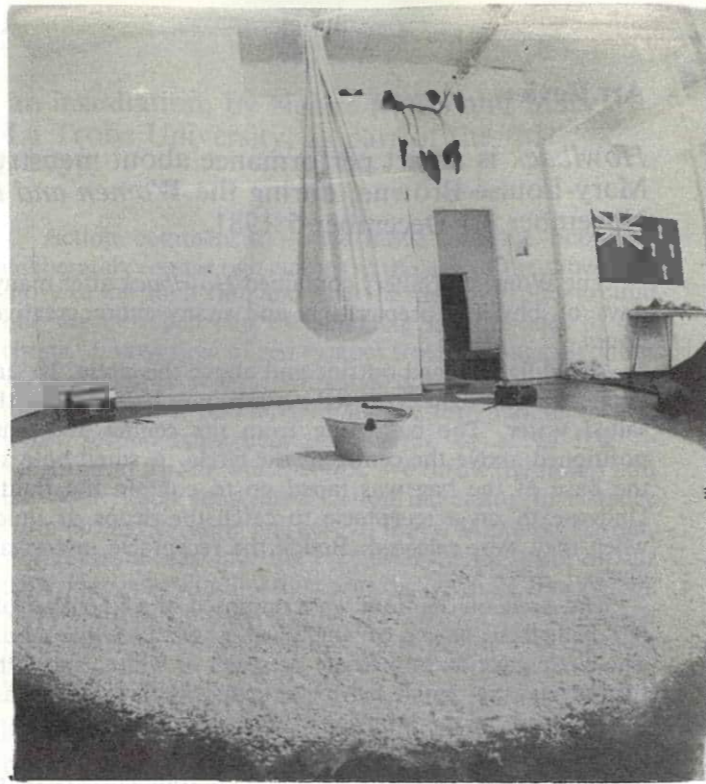
knowledge of ourselves and other women has great scope for expression through this creative medium. Mary Louise chose the physical experiences to be represented by static imagery and movement while the emotional experiences were represented by sound.

It was a powerful and extremely valuable art performance to share.

Margaret Leniston

Margaret Leniston is a former Women's Gallery co-ordinator. She is currently researching the collective process of four groups involved in women's art projects and would be interested to hear from women doing similar research, or with material available for the Women's Art Archive.

Although the National Art Gallery has no staff or funding available for the Archive, it is still there and a group of Wellington women are looking for ways to maintain and extend this important women's resource.



When we started to work together both Ngaire and I were involved with rhythms based on pre-determined systems, Ngaire in her video work and I in text sound work. Neither of us can explain how we came to do a performance unless it was to do with safety in numbers or/and some kind of empathy.

In *Beyond the pale* and *Howback* we use actual rhythms and symbolise a greater rhythm: LUNAR/life cycle; and a lesser rhythm: MENSTRUAL/our personal cycles. Both were important to the structure of the works. In *Beyond the pale* the irregular/regular sound of dripping bags & fast/slow building of sand castles. In *Howback* the circular waxing/waning moan of crystal and slow pacing squaring the circle.

Ngaire and I divided up into our own areas of experience. Important however was the idea of harmony which can and did lead to a form of independence. Rhythm arises from a strong basic two-fold beat — something we hoped would lend emphasis to duality.

After *Beyond the pale* we started work on *Howback*, dealing again with the notion of double or two-fold rhythms. However, as Ngaire prepared for the birth of her son Matthew it was inevitable that she would concentrate on that event. She began labour the day before we were due to perform. Perfect timing. The pacing around my own circular and moonlike arena, a rather barren ground, contrasted greatly with Ngaire's activity. But there were parallels, to do with pain & exhaustion, changing & return, enhancement & enchantment.

Mary-Louise Brown

Mary-Louise Brown has been exhibiting, and working as a performance artist, since 1978. She also makes books: *Transmutations Part I & II* and *White Papers* (1979); *Around Ninety Days* and *Some Choice* (1980); *Multiple Choice* and *De-Construction* (1981); *Black &/or White* (1982). She is Exhibitions Officer at the Dowse Art Museum.

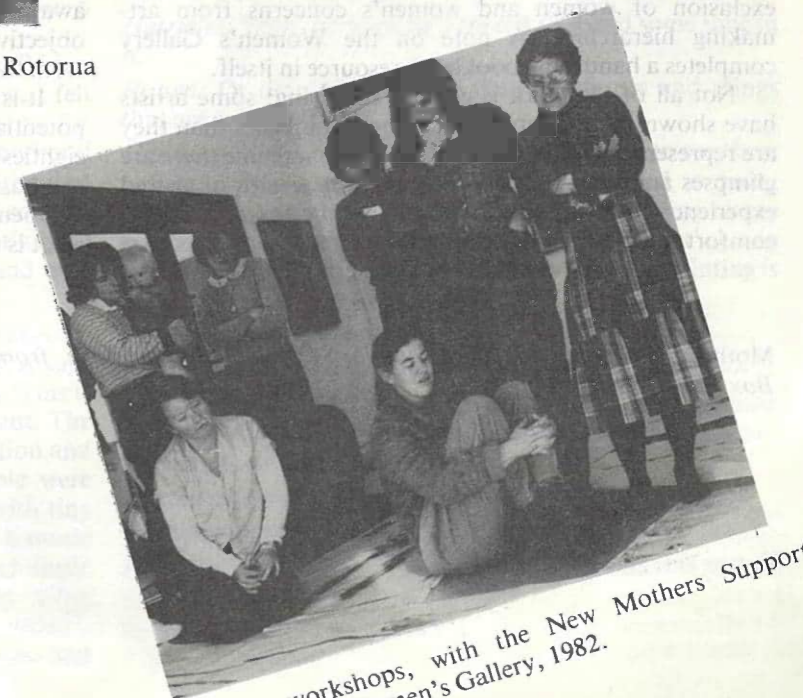
Mothers

Mothers, an exhibition about being a mother and being a daughter, was curated by The Women's Gallery, and toured public galleries throughout New Zealand during 1981-2. In October 1982 a large proportion of the work in *Mothers* was exhibited in Sydney, as part of a huge Women's Arts Festival.

In many centres, women worked with their local gallery to organise associated programmes while *Mothers* was on show, and these photographs illustrate something of the sorts of activities which brought women into galleries while *Mothers* was there.



Rotorua women's workshops during *Mothers*, Rotorua City Art Gallery, 1981.
photos: Ruth Gerzon



Mothers workshops, with the New Mothers Support Group, at The Women's Gallery, 1982.
photos: Barb McDonald.

Art Review

Mothers. Exhibited at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 1982.

Any role has its moments; few need to be worn so constantly nor cover so many demands as the 24 hours a day, 7 days a week role of the mother.

This travelling exhibition is work by women who may or may not have chosen a mother's role but as artists must come to terms with conflicts in their choice and particularly conflicts involving a less than total submergence in this most approved-of woman's place.

In both media and impact *Mothers* is a varied collection. Disappointingly and dismissively hung squashed along a corridor and two bays at the McDougall, its treatment here ironically demonstrates the point of its existence.

As if in a stately home the old masters of the permanent collection pose spaciouly in the end drawing-room, dignified, but eventually remote and somewhat dull. The women's work, as if relegated to the kitchen, is crowded and cluttered and has raw bits here and there but is ineffably more vibrant.

The catalogue texts briefly survey motherhood as a subject in New Zealand painting and aspects of it in Western art, and an essay by Robin McKinlay argues the need for a re-evaluation of the role of mothers in our society. The show's hanging illustrates the thesis. Some catalogued works have not been hung at all. Others are unlabelled or wrongly labelled. The large paintings are given insufficient room to view them, small works are bundled together. Artists' works are separated from each other and collective coherence. Would any other travelling exhibition be treated in such a way?

The catalogue also includes reproductions, poems, lists of films and books on motherhood and women's art. It emphasises the Women's Gallery policy that art grows out of and is not separate from our lives and that women's lives, particularly mothers' lives, have scarcely been touched as subject matter: in line with the large scale exclusion of women and women's concerns from art-making hierarchies. A note on the Women's Gallery completes a handsome booklet, a resource in itself.

Not all of the work is equally satisfying; some artists have shown more interesting or powerful pieces than they are represented by here. But as aspects of a theme there are glimpses and recognitions to suggest the wealth of shared experience and associations yet to be explored. No comfortable depersonalised madonna and child icons gaze

benignly from the walls. Jill (Carter-Hansen) Stewart's *Madonna* shocks, as the explosion of a child's cry can, as a distraught mother's cry can. Robyn Kahukiwa's large, stylised, quietly glowing *Hinetitama*, mother deity, gazes directly at and past the viewer; Keri Hulme's *Hine-i-turama* squats defiantly, gleefully, mocking her accusers.

Sharon Alston's bird woman (sculpture/construction) flies above the pathetic boxes of pills scattered on the ledge below; Joanna Paul's *Magdalena at 7* shows the incipient woman, contained, appalled, resigned, already rounding into the weight of knowledge and work that has settled over Robin White's *Florence at Harbour Cone*.

Helen Rockel's drawings examine the almost exultant pain of childbirth and the enclosed absorption and tenderness of mother and child breast-feeding; the figures are powerfully and closely drawn but blue tonings over charcoal and ochre filter perception as if through gauze to hold the viewer balanced between intrusiveness and distance.

Jo Cornwall's quilt, at first glance a simple applique patchwork of a day's feelings is less simple on closer inspection. There is a satiric edge to the medal under "Devoted", the "Happy" smile is reminiscent of a plastic stick-on button, the "Tired" flower on its black ground jumps out centrally, "Down" is a sagging line of nappies (probably dripping with rain). And the mother cat's expression under "Tenderness" suggests wry, longsuffering patience.

This is a small sample of the works; others touch on the complex of emotions motherhood arouses. Anna Keir's child and thrown-away doll is a disturbing image, as is the *Broken Truck* of Juliet Batten, or Jacqueline Fahey's "Mother and Daughter quarrelling". Di Ffrench's cool fibre glass vessels, which should have contained water through which photographs of *Daughter, Mother, Woman* could be viewed, but here did not, seem a serene world away from much emotional involvement, but their objective, delicately conceived and webbed shapes, derive from the same source.

It is a pity the McDougall gallery did not recognise the potential of a new source and force in the art of the eighties. Its lack of consideration for works by women emphasises the need for that redefinition sought by The Women's Gallery, of "not only what is female but also what is the human experience"

Edited transcript of a discussion between *Harriette Blount* and *Robyn Belton*, after seeing *Mothers*, Nelson 1982.

Robyn: I went a number of times to *Mothers* and one morning I went into the very quietest room to look at Helen Rockel's drawings. Two women came in, in age like mother and daughter. They were looking at Di Ffrench's bowls and they just didn't move. The older woman started off, not disapproving, but just wondering what on earth these things were. They spent a long time bent over looking in the bowls and the older woman stayed looking at the one with the clear face much much longer and they started talking about the bowls while they were looking in them, which I thought was a lovely thing. I wished I'd brought some pencils and paper to draw them although it would have been a bit obvious. Then they started talking not just about the bowls but about their lives: it was totally spontaneous — they started having a small kind of an argument and I wondered if I should leave the room but it was too interesting. This went on for quite a long time and all this time I stayed looking at Helen Rockel's drawings. The couple came back to talking about the bowls, about the space and the shapes and why they liked one bowl better than another, why the older woman liked one especially, what it meant and then they went on to look at the rest. I was impressed by what that one piece had done to two people who'd been caught unawares and had revealed something of themselves to each other. That was quite exciting. I wanted to run away and tell someone.

Harriette: The most remarkable thing for me was that there was another exhibition, of watercolours, running at the same time in the Gallery which I hadn't been aware of. But having moved through the exhibition of women's work I suddenly became aware of a change. I felt here's somebody playing games. I felt very uncomfortable and by the time I'd looked at two or three watercolours I was quite convinced that it was no longer women's work. For me that's really important because I'd been looking at ancient art and trying to distinguish woman's hand in it. I'm quite sure in many cases I can. Perhaps it's more difficult when we've looked at Egyptian wall paintings and always assumed they've been painted by men to change our minds and discriminate between what's been painted by women and men in contemporary times. So that was a very sharp contrast for me.

I remember also coming away from the exhibition thinking God only knows what women will do now. I felt that it was a most fantastic idea to choose that theme for women, and for them to explode the myths of motherhood and perhaps acknowledge some of the subtle truths that filter through. I felt that it opened the doors for all sorts of possibilities. For the last two hundred years what's been shown is men's work and their particular vision and now we're going to show the other side of the coin.

Robyn: I'd like to say that school children were taken to *Mothers*, for example, Girls' College groups and groups from other secondary schools and while I can't say 'This is what they thought', I don't even think that's relevant. The fact is that it's important to have done that exhibition and you aren't ever going to know how many people were affected by it and in what way. It's like dealing with tiny children. I was amazed to take Kate (aged 4) to a music class and for the whole of that hour and a half in her music class with ten other children she, and the ten other children, did nothing. They peered into each other's earholes, they stared at each other's lunch boxes and

bootlaces and you would have thought they learned nothing at all. But all the next week Kate spent a little part of each day just reminiscing and telling me what she'd learned, without even my asking. And that's a sort of illustration about not expecting obvious tangible results, isn't it? I think there will have been a terrific lot of good from having hung the thing up, got the thing together and hung it up, wherever it's gone.

Harriette: I felt immensely proud, I really did you know. I remember also feeling that I wanted men to come and look at this exhibition and learn from us, instead of the reverse happening as it has in the past, — them showing us what they think mothers and babies are all about — for us to show them and for them to recognise something different. I hope very much that they can take a step in our direction, a step towards us but I also fear that for many of them they'll just push it aside and say, you know, women's business. It's a very very worthwhile theme — it's what separates us from men, the ability to bear children, what alters our lives. I think it's a theme to use again and I think for every woman you added to the exhibition there would be another interpretation. I remember feeling gosh, I wish there was more and then realising of course the enormous task of collecting women's work together without the systems, the structures that are all laid down ready and waiting for men.

Robyn: One encouraging thing for me was seeing work, seeing paintings done by painters who are also mothers. I enjoy seeing paintings about children. Joanna Paul's drawings of her son and those toys and lots of drawings of babies and so on. Just saying things like it is OK to make a work of art out of drawing children. Now, saying that, I think well what a lot of bullshit because you know we've just seen that Phillip Trusttum exhibition and he had a whole lot of pictures of his kids' nursery and there's Michael Smither ...

Harriette: Yes, but they're probably influenced by what women are doing, the fact that Trusttum's taking an interest in his children's nursery.

Robyn: Do you think so?

Harriette: Yeah, perhaps he's forced to spend some time in it.

Robyn: Or didn't he just see the nice shapes and things that are around there?

Harriette: But men wouldn't be prepared even to see them before, would they? Men were strictly defined as being apart from household things and what we're trying to say is 'come on you should be a part of this, look what's going on' and that he's chosen to comment on it in his painting is good.

Robyn: Yeah, true, but it has ...

Harriette: But it's a spinoff of what women are doing —

Robyn: Right, but I'm totally bamboozled now because I've got flashes of Rubens and Rembrandt and co. painting their kids ...

Harriette: But in what kind of way?

Robyn: I've gone and got myself tangled up here —

Harriette: But you see their interpretation was this sort of idealised type —

Robyn: Right, it was too —

Harriette: They didn't have any genuine ... or perhaps more than the men today do ... but they didn't have the same experience of the muck and dirt involved in child rearing. All their cherubs were spotless.

And you've got a fine example here of two women trying to tape with small children, pre-schoolers, needing their quota of attention. But we're plodding on regardless just as we do with our own work. John Wheeler, in a radio interview about *Mothers* asked me was it as easy for women to achieve in painting, in the art world and to me there's absolutely no question — no of course it's not. If you're a mother there's no way it's going to be easy. A third person there said she thought in fact yes, it was just as easy, but it was in our heads, and that raises a big question to me. I mean you can't call the shit and dirt that children create a problem in your head. It's an actual physical problem. And though it may now be illegal to ban women from life classes, they still put obstacles in our way, still they dismiss us as having nothing significant to contribute.

Robyn: Harriette you came into this room and said to me, you said, you poor old thing or something, why are you doing this on this day when you've got all the kids. And I said oh because I'd forgotten which day, I'd actually forgotten I was having the kids here for a play group. And then you said, oh you shouldn't be doing this. Is that what you said?

Harriette: No, I said you shouldn't be having a play group at your house when you're trying to do books.

Robyn: Then I said, but I've chosen, this is my day, I've chosen to do this.

Harriette: Yes. But then later on we got to that whole thing of you saying that you had thought you could be superwoman, you could bring up a family and still be a painter.

Harriette Blount

I have spent the last fifteen years muddling along as a mother, trying to keep alive something which is very much part of my identity. I'm appalled looking back at what I used to paint, that I was trying to find acceptance amongst the males of the art world, disguising the fact that I was a woman, signing myself as simply Blount in order that nobody would discover I was a woman, knowing very well that I would be dismissed.

The things that are important to me in life, are my painting and my feminism, but I'm not sure whether my political awareness comes through in my work. Occasionally I consciously try to make my work obviously political, so that what I'm saying cannot be ignored. I hope my feminist politics come through in other ways, in the subject matter I choose and the way I interpret it.

I realise more and more the impact which graphic work can have, and with that awareness I hope to go on pushing forward a woman's viewpoint. The brilliance of a hundred percent of the population has to be tapped, not just fifty percent, not just in the fine arts world. I would like to see the elitist element disappear from all the arts.

What I do to a large extent now, I consider to be a

Robyn: Oh right, it's a total vanity thing. I started off wanting to be everything BE a great painter and BE a great mother.

Harriette: You said you chose, and I questioned how much you did, any of us had. We're conditioned to believe that we will have children and in that way we'll be accepted and reap the rewards of society etc etc., the whole conspiracy to conceal the facts of child rearing.

Robyn: Yeah, I don't think you can ever know, can you, until you are actually there yourself in having had several children or a child, you can't know the impact it's going to have on your life, ever, nobody can tell you.

Harriette: And in fact men don't have to make that decision, whether to have children: they can have children and still do what they want to do.

Robyn: Do you think that's changing?

Harriette: Oh yes, but very slowly and in small pockets.

In trying to assess the impact of *Mothers* I remember also thinking gosh there are enough women in Nelson too, if only we get organised to get an exhibition together and I'm sure at some stage we'll do this. There are a large number of us, covering a broad spectrum and we should be able to do something quite staggering. Probably have to look two or three years ahead or something like that but it's certainly sparked off that idea. So ... it's not easy to assess the immediate impact or even the long-term impact or to decide where these ideas come from, but that's definitely one.

Robyn Belton is an illustrator for School Publications; she has also illustrated a number of titles in the *Story Box* series, edited by Joy Cowley and June Melser.

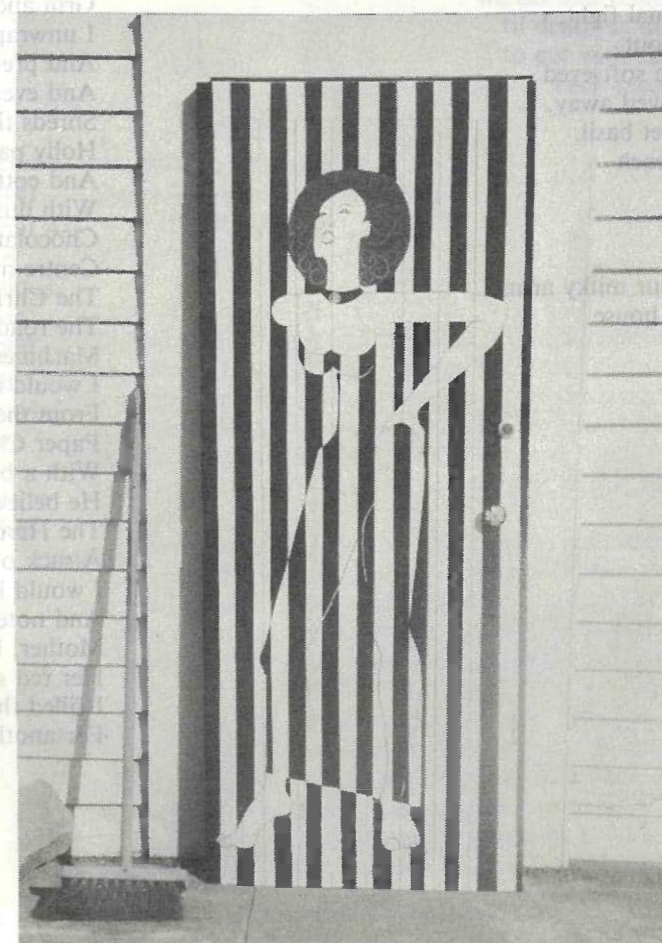
contemporary folk art. Unfortunately, most of our contemporary folk art is restricted to commercial advertising in contrast to what people produced a century ago, not in elitist studios but using their own ways of decorating pots or carts. I would like to restore integrity to folk art; the integrity that is lost in our society because advertising has attempted to dictate what we choose to surround ourselves with, and how we respond to everything. That sounds ambitious but it's what I want to do.

Nelson has been very good to me but as a place it's difficult for a painter to survive. Survival is all I expect to manage, to make enough money to eat, not necessarily from my painting.

I wouldn't function at all well if I didn't have a women's support group, which I've been involved in since September 1981. One of my commitments to the women's movement is to facilitate the forming of new support groups. Women give me support by being there, they're the people I go to to discuss problems, to whom I admit that I am frightened or weak or scared; they're the ones with whom I can be honest. They feed me by being what they are, whether they are feminist or not.



untitled exterior oil house paint 200 x 74 including architrave



untitled exterior oil house paint 215 x 100 including architrave

There's a Man Growing in my House

The red clock chimes. Bolt
The door and turn the chair.
Cycles of roundness,
Crescents of darkness; touch
The inward room of madder
Flow, where no man dares to
Enter. Herbs wither and leaves
Fall in this sacred time.
Whisper and be still.
Something is stirring in the
Next room, and a voice calls
Mother.
There's a man growing in my house,
Planted by a man, seven year seed
That made my belly wax and wane
And thrust him down the fierce
Contracting passage into day.
He suckled my breasts,
White moon-flow drinking,
Then cocked his weapon
And aimed for my heart.
There's a man growing in my house.
I gave him Violet, my mother's
Doll; but a parcel came to the door:
Rat-tat-tat, here is Basil
The bully, big with his brush.
And now at night the ritual fight:
Basil and Violet work it out
Watched by the bear, the soft-eyed
Bear whose growl was loved away.
Violet/violent; Basil/sweet basil.
The child sleeps, one in each
Arm, reconciled.
Cycles of roundness,
Crescents of darkness,
Goddess enfold me in your milky arms;
A man is growing in my house.

Christmas Time

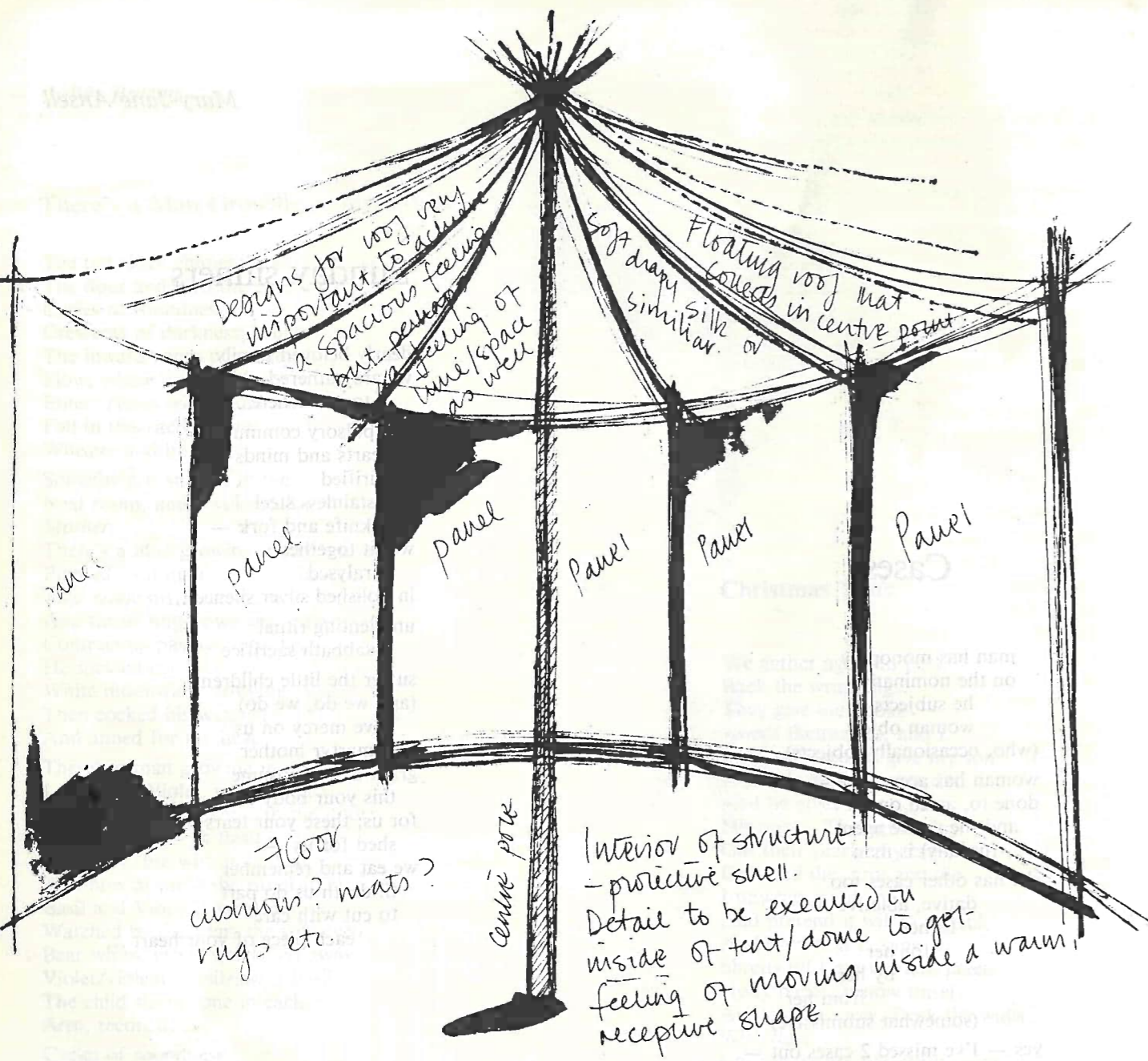
We gather again to peel
Back the wrappings.
They give me books
About themselves, and I
Am not here and give my son
A puzzle he will never do,
And he gives me
His anger. The lights play
Out their yearly rhythms,
Grin and die, grin and die.
I unwrap my despair
And pretend it will be useful.
And even that he rips to
Shreds till I am red and green
Holly paper, yellow tinsel
And cotton snow. Deck the walls
With dust.
Chocolates are passed; in each
Centre melts the wail of a siren;
The Christmas suicides are on
The road, being driven to their
Machines.
I would hang my monster
From the tree, but it is a flimsy
Paper Christmas, a hollow cracker
With a bad joke in a plastic ring.
He believes only in Santa,
The Hero who comes by night with
A sack of love to last a year.
I would have left an empty bag
And note: Santa is your
Mother, bleeding for you in
Her red suit; instead
I filled the bag of deception
For another year.

Cases

man has monopoly
on the nominative
he subjects
woman object
(who, occasionally, objects)
woman has accusative —
done to, acted on
and the active agent
(usually) is man
she has other cases too
dative, ablative —
to her
for her
by her
from her
(somewhat submissive)
yes — I've missed 2 cases out —
vocative and genitive
but it's more than obvious
which gender is vociferous
and has possession taped
that makes the score 3-all,
a draw; an equal match, maybe —
but what a shame
that in this game
nominative
takes
priority ...

Sunday sinners

dearly beloved family
we are gathered
together here ...
compulsory communion
hearts and minds
purified
like stainless steel
knife and fork —
we sit together
paralysed
in polished silver silence ...
unrelenting ritual
sabbath sacrifice
suffer the little children
(and we do, we do)
have mercy on us
martyr mother
grant us to consume
this your body bled
for us; these your tears
shed for us —
we eat and remember
til death us do part
to cut with care
each piece of your heart ...



FULL CIRCLE is a co-operative project facilitated by Carole Shephard. Originally Carole planned to make a tipi structure, but detailed assessment of the practicalities involved, and long discussion with friends on the aim of the project resulted in a change, to a dome/marquee like structure. The information which follows comes from a Full Circle newsletter.

The newsletter does not discuss in any detail one of the most valuable results of this collective project (to date): the very positive comments which filter through about the pleasures of being one of the women working on it. Carole's flexibility and openness to the ideas of the other women involved does mean that the project will not be finished to any deadline; ensuring that the process is an enjoyable one which enriches all participants, and valuing the contributions of each individual does not make for speed. However, sharing in decision-making and being supported in learning new skills is obviously very satisfying for participants in Full Circle and of as much value as the structure itself will be, in its finished state.

The **Full Circle** title came after much discussion on the aim of the project. Because she believed a 'cone/dome' like structure best symbolises women, their hopes and aspirations, the celebration of their sex and a positive attitude towards the future, Carole wanted to keep the dwelling-type structure when the tipi idea proved to be unsuitable. The circular shape of the **Full Circle** structure symbolises growth (womb), warmth (tummy), nurturing (breast). The conical dome symbolises the home, the family, the land. The full circle encompasses birth, menstruation, death, all activities which have taken place in this sort of structure.

It is made of polished wood, covered inside with a skin of decorative detail, parallelling the menstruation and birthing huts of many third world peoples. The exterior is the protective shell (skin), the interior has the warmth of the inside of our bodies. The sides of the structure will be panels of approximately 7' x 3' then angled into a central point (painted pole). The decorative work will appear on the inside so that panels can incorporate 3-D elements if

desired, e.g. a panel on woman in the environment may include a 3-D soft sculptural figure emerging from a background that echoes her form.

This project is about working together on a group activity towards a single goal, sharing ideas, feelings and experiences; and about being a woman. It is for all women, for those with skills and those whose skills have yet to be developed. As Carole writes to women who say 'I haven't any creative ideas of my own but I want to be involved':

"Just try. Try to be positive about your wish to take part. Be positive about your own creative potential. Don't underrate your experiences as women and the value of sharing these with others. Whether you feel your energies may be best served in research, administration, clerical work, or in the practical areas of sewing, embroidery etc., don't be surprised if at some stage you get hooked into the 'making' of the structure."

Carole has written us an update on the progress of **Full Circle** which follows.

Carole Shephard

The **Full Circle Project** is alive and well and women are contributing in many ways. The small sample squares for the patchwork quilt, are coming in and I feel these could be an ongoing thing so any women who wish to become involved can certainly do so at any stage.* We met in August to discuss the panels and it seems that fifteen panels 7' x 4' will begin soon. Full scale drawings are being done and women are starting to work in groups, with a designer. The designers come from a variety of backgrounds, ages and experiences. For example, one group of women has worked with Carole Davies, an energetic artist from Okaihau, Northland. Carole has acted as visual recorder for a group of about ten women who want to express what it is like to be rural women. Finally they decided that they needed to work on two panels to realise their designs fully, and they expect to meet weekly to work on them. The panels will be executed in a variety of ways: patchwork, applique, batik, and so on.

The themes overall embrace many aspects of women and the general feeling about the ideas is that they show women in a very positive way; they don't necessarily reflect past pains and hassles but a strength and belief in oneself. Themes like sexuality, rural women, self image, motherhood, rebirth, environment, nurturing, ageing, have emerged along with many others.

I have recently taken over a large studio, with a friend, so the **Full Circle Project** will soon have its own home. Women will be able to have access to this space to work on their squares, panels or whatever and to hold workshops.

September 1982

*for details about the squares, see illustration.

Carole sends out an excellent newsletter, including information about forthcoming workshops, about different embroidery forms, and about the progress of the Full Circle Project. We're not sure about the cost, and suggest sending a donation to cover printing and postage of the newsletter, to: Carole Shephard, C/- Outreach, 1 Ponsonby Road, Auckland.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY: Patchwork Quilt
STAGE ONE: Individual Squares.

ABOUT THIS STAGE:

This 12" square is to be worked on over a 10 week period at home, in workshops, in small groups or whenever. Already four women have formed a small group to meet weekly and to talk, socialize, and discuss the activity while they stitch! You are asked to complete a sample that demonstrates your skills, ideas, techniques - don't judge yourself too harshly and be too hyper-critical at this stage please. Skill is an experience thing and can't replace creativity. After the squares have been stitched, we will work co-operatively to assemble a patchwork quilt along traditional lines. At this point the designs for the larger panels should have been decided upon and women will be able to choose panels to work on either because their style, skill, techniques etc., might be appropriate to the design or because they feel a closeness to the subject or designer.

THEME: WOMAN (experiences, feelings, beliefs, states etc..)

IDEAS: Sexuality, Motherhood, Environment, Menstruation, Symbols, Love etc., etc..
* Any style - abstract, expressionist, representational or whatever.

SIZE: Image size is to be 12" x 12" - allow at least a 1 1/2" border.

MATERIALS: Base material: Calico (prewashed)
Any materials can be worked on top of this as long as they have been prewashed!

from Full Circle newsletter

Statement about Jeanette

The idea for an autobiographical piece based on a month in Jeanette's life developed separately from my other works although I had wished for some time to attempt something of this nature.

While I was aware of the intimate nature of the idea, I was unprepared for the emotional difficulties I had to face when it came time to put idea into practice.

All the dozens of photos I had taken had to be appropriate to Jeanette's mood of that day and I developed a pattern of talking with Jeanette for some time before actually taking the photos.

Well before December 1981 I had talked to Jeanette about the idea of an autobiographical piece, given her time to decide and tried to make her aware of the repercussions to her family, children, friends, associates. She agreed to give me full control, I agreed to attempt to show her feelings through my eyes as honestly as I could.

What emerged finally from Jeanette was page after page of a very intimate diary that, when I read it, moved me deeply. At this point I felt so involved with Jeanette's pain and anguish I could not continue with the piece. Each time I attempted to extract the essence out of each day I felt like an intruder, an imposter and someone to whom had been entrusted the life force of another. I felt I needed to work on the fairly mundane, predictable areas like printing the photos but where I had earlier thought a single image would be enough, I found myself playing with double exposures and negatives that linked organic elements with the images of Jeanette herself.

I had been asked to put a piece in the *Political Statements* exhibition at the Auckland Society of Arts, and up until the last ten days I still had not worked on assembling the actual piece. Realising that few women were being represented in the exhibition and that at some stage my feelings about the photo/collage had to be dealt with, I worked on it solidly for three days. Cutting, selecting, overworking, framing. Spent much time on the phone to Jeanette asking if she wished to see how it was going and feeling alone when she said "no, it's your piece". Even up to the morning of the hanging I had still not made the decision to exhibit it. But I did. It hung amid work entirely different in content and idea.

Women viewers saw their own lives in the piece: Jeanette became a symbol for many women and because of this public exposure was important. But *Jeanette* remains with us.

Poem written by a friend after seeing the piece in the *Political Statements* exhibition.

For Jeanette

Cover me
 For I am naked
 Before your gaze
 Your gaze
 my children
 Your gaze my
 husband
 Your gaze my parents
 Cover me
 for I am naked
 The ground feels cold
 and unfamiliar
 Beneath my unprotected
 Flesh

Caroline Hoby

JEANETTE

DECEMBER 1981

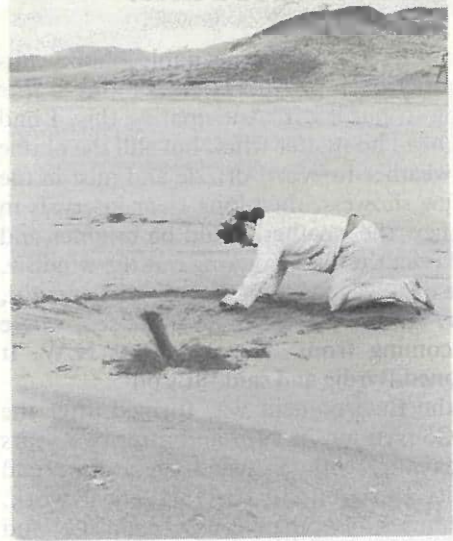
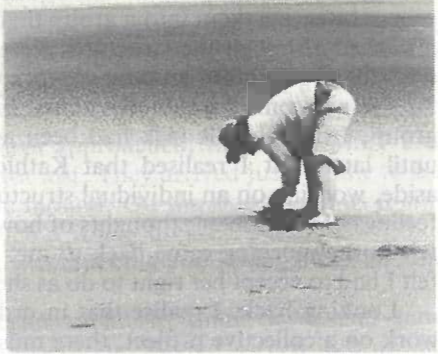
| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | | | |
| | | 1 I have nothing left to give out. Emptiness. | 2 Early morning sounds. | 3 We will never be together An impossible dream. | 4 Children are fractious Fighting Naisy Tiring. | 5 Just hold me Cover me. |
| | | | | | | |
| 6 I feel washed out, close to the edge, alone. | 7 Dreams, Nightmares. | 8 I want to sleep forever. | 9 Children are happy and loving Relaxed. | 10 I tower above my friends Questions Sensuality Fear. | 11 Rush! | 12 An exquisite sleep My own space. |
| | | | | | | |
| 13 Bad dreams again, vivid, intense, tortuous. | 14 Woke early Children are sleeping and still. Silence. | 15 Breakfast under the trees Private, lazy, warm. | 16 Feel apprehensive and diffident about Xmas. | 17 His presence in my dreams is constant. | 18 Indam urko. We talked until late. | 19 Murrells' day! Beach Picnic, Kaiti Spine. |
| | | | | | | |
| 20 The brittleness lets go, the alienation remains. | 21 The bonding with my women friends is strong. | 23 Doris Lessing Fragmentation. | 24 Xmas Eve. | 25 Midnight Mass No feelings No joy Nothing God I feel awful! | 26 I feel so alone. Lonely God I feel awful! | 27 Tiredness pain. Wound Black & Snow. A. J. ... |
| | | | | | | |
| 28 I choose to spend a lot of time in the garden Peace. | 29 I must take control of my life again. | 30 Dreaming constantly. | 31 I have glimpses of the past present and future me. | | | |



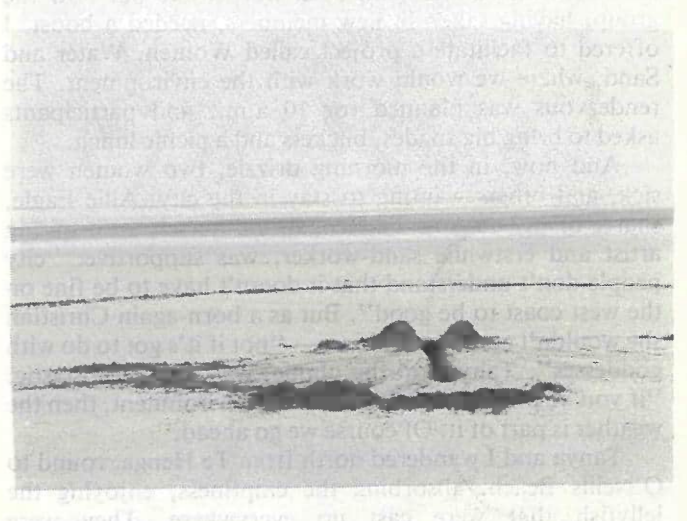
Floating 1982 lithograph 25 x 25

Women, Water and Sand: Feminists for the Environment at O'Hia's Beach, near Te Henga, Auckland, Sunday December 1981. A personal account.

Another. The sea reached its lowest ebb, and must have turned itself, without our noticing, into a vast, flat, white expanse. The sea reached its lowest ebb, and must have turned itself, without our noticing, into a vast, flat, white expanse.



from the first day we were there. It was a hot, sunny day, and the sand was very dry. The water was very shallow, and the waves were very small.



At the time, we were all very young, and we were all very excited. We were all very young, and we were all very excited.



Allie Eagle untitled sand works 1978 at Te Henga

to dig the hole, building the mound, making the walls, trying to use sand taken from one place to fill up on

Women, Water and Sand: Feminists for the Environment at O'Neills Beach, near Te Henga, Auckland, Sunday December 6, 1981. A personal account.

Te Henga, 8 a.m., Dec 6: the inevitable phone calls from the faint-hearted back in Auckland, wanting a fine sunny day, wanting to put it off. Anticipating this, I had said that we'd go ahead no matter what, but still the phone calls. Ringing the weather forecast: drizzle and mist in the morning, then a few showers, then long clear intervals in the afternoon. I knew the weather would be brighter and fresher out here than in the city. Looking out the window, I could see that the mist was touching the top of Taumaiti, but came no lower. And it was bright over the sea, where the weather was coming from. The wind was N.W. It looked good. I phoned Byrdie and said "it's on".

Feminists for the Environment was formed after the United Women's Convention in 1979 and after two years of collective endeavour, with a dwindling group, had finally produced its Declaration. The theoretical work, making the connections between feminist and environmental issues, had been worthwhile but now the group, having taken in new members, needed a boost. I offered to facilitate a project called Women, Water and Sand, where we would work with the environment. The rendezvous was planned for 10 a.m., and participants asked to bring big spades, buckets and a picnic lunch.

And now, in the morning drizzle, two women were sick, and others wanting to stay in the city. Allie Eagle, sharer of my bach at Te Henga, and herself an inspiring artist and erstwhile sand-worker, was supportive: "city people don't understand that it doesn't have to be fine on the west coast to be good". But as a born-again Christian she wouldn't come and join us — "not if it's got to do with goddesses". Tanya, on the phone, was also enthusiastic: "if you've planned to work with the environment, then the weather is part of it. Of course we go ahead."

Tanya and I wandered north from Te Henga, round to O'Neills Beach, absorbing the emptiness, enjoying the jellyfish that were cast up everywhere. They were beautiful, with their fine spiral of red lines radiating from the centre, or with a sprinkle of deep red spots. Tanya collected them in her bucket.

By 11 a.m. only 5 of us were there: Tanya, me, Claire, Claudia (an invited guest) and her 13 year old daughter Bridget. Mist hung on the cliff tops. As I had anticipated, a straggly start made a genuinely collective effort impossible. So I unfurled the chart I had brought. The suggestion was that we build two large forms, a mound and a pond. The positive/negative images were simple, and related to female experience (breast/womb; outward swelling/inward containing). By setting each in a triangle we could create a central "temple" for a city of "dwellings" that could then be constructed individually.

The others were happy with the format, and eager to begin. The structures would interact with the tide, which was to turn at 12 noon.

★★★★★

Delicious to break into the untouched sand, to draw the first circles, running around on the beach, letting the body describe the forms.

Soon we were totally absorbed in the hard slog of digging the hole, building the mound, making the walls; trying to use sand taken from one place to build up on

another. The sea reached its lowest ebb, and must have turned, silently, without our noticing.

It must have been an hour later when the carload from the city arrived: Kathleen, Byrdie, Yvonne, Evelyn and Wendy. By this time we were well underway and the task was to integrate them into a group that was already totally absorbed although the structures were so large that there was still an enormous amount of work to be done on them. As the newcomers gradually joined in, merging with the group, I thought the task had been achieved. It was not until later that I realised that Kathleen had set herself aside, working on an individual structure. I struggled with feelings of resentment; thoughts of how unsupported I had felt in the morning came back to me. At the same time I felt I had to accept her right to do as she wished.

Looking back, I realise that in order to have a group work on a collective project, there must first be a sense of togetherness and consensus. Our choice on that Sunday was either to wait a full hour for the stragglers to arrive, and then enter upon discussion about the project, maybe taking up to another hour before we actually began work. Or we could have simply begun, which is what we did. It was my first beach project, the first time that particular group had worked together, and it seemed important to get on with it. On reflection, I am glad we did so.

As we worked on, there were some magical moments; Bridget scooping out a channel with a fruit-juice tin, made a line of circular impressions alongside it, absorbed in her personal rhythm. The colour contrasts of blue-black wet sand against almost golden dry sand. The textures. The sensuousness of the sand and water as hands dug deeper. Claire and I working with identical coal shovels on the triangular wall around the mound, leaving textured casting shapes as we went. Byrdie and Evelyn connecting the two triangles, using a fruit juice tin each, leaving tall castles on either side like sentinels. The pond growing deeper, awash with the seawater that welled up from below; then Tanya releasing her jellyfish into it, their tendrils swirling softly about. Yvonne adding great spade chunks of sand to the mound, and the moment when I lay upon it and discovered that it could be massaged into shape. It felt as if the gentle breast form had been there all the time, just waiting to be nurtured from the rough sand.

We broke for lunch and sat on the rocks, watching the tide. It was moving faster than expected, and invasion seemed imminent. We decided to invite the tide into the pond, using channels; but to try and divert it from the mound, using walls and channels. We knew we would have to work quickly.

Tanya made the first diversionary channel, with her big spade, producing large chunky castings all along the edge. The sun came out; the pond and moat sparkled and turned blue. It was as if the jellyfish were floating in the sky.

Suddenly a big wave rushed towards our structures. Panic. We had to hurry. The channel was brought right through to the pond, connecting it directly with the sea. Now we got excited, waiting for the next wave to rush down the channel and into the pond; the first entry. But it must have been half an hour before that happened. The big wave had been a freak, not to be repeated until we stopped expecting it.

The next stage was a watching one. Now there was something tangible by which to measure the tide. We were transfixed by its advance; took too many photos and used the films up.

The water was licking at the triangles; it began to invade the pond, and we deepened the channel to encourage it.

A wave washed over Tanya's spade-chunk wall, and suddenly half of it was a beautiful softly-weathered mountain range. The jellyfish swirled gently together, as if planning their escape. We had thought they were dead!

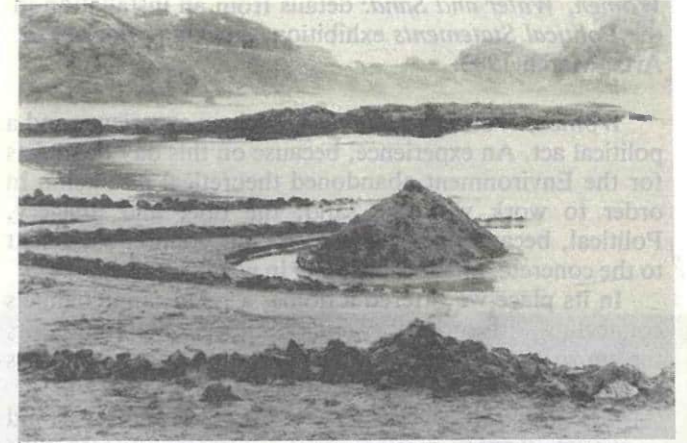
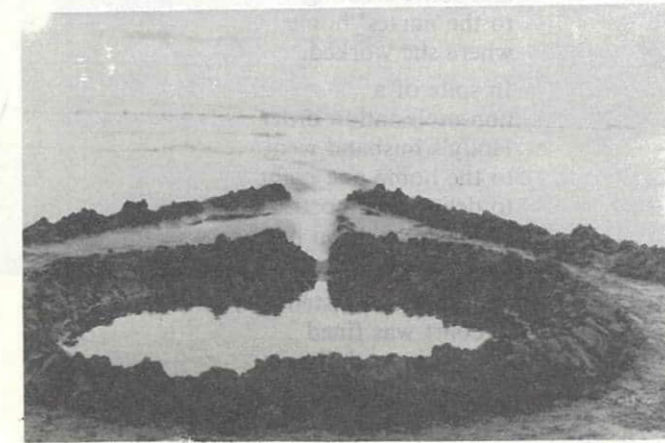
The water now washed over the walls of the triangles, softening their outlines. Yet it was amazing how the imprint of what we had made persisted, like a memory in the water.

Two pastel figures approached; they were Mary and Shelagh, who had got lost. They arrived just in time to see the water eating the mound. On the side facing us it still looked perfect ("such a young breast", said Evelyn), but on the other side it was cracking and falling away like the processes of old age.

Waves now began to hit it, quite hard, and sand jumped off with impact. The mound turned into an old medieval castle on a hill. Tanya had suddenly put yellow lupin flowers on the top, but they were lifted off by fingers of sea, and then the great mass finally crumbled and fell.

I didn't feel sad to see our work reclaimed by the sea. Somehow it felt right. As I followed the leaping naked bodies of Tanya, Claire, Shelagh and Mary into the tingling surf, I felt totally elated. There was a strong sense of connection with the sea, the beach, the sky, and even the cool norwesterly that had come to shift the morning mist.

Juliet Batten



Women, Water and Sand: details from an installation in the *Political Statements* exhibition, Auckland Society of Arts, March 1982.

Women, Water and Sand was both an experience and a political act. An experience, because on this day Feminists for the Environment abandoned theoretical discussion in order to work with the sand, the tide, and imagery. Political, because here we enacted our counter-statement to the concrete, phallogocentric city in which we live.

In its place we offered a dome, a pond, and channels connecting with each other and with the sea. Within hours the entire work was erased, just as women's achievements have been erased throughout history.

Meanwhile the concrete phalluses of power stand earthquake-proof, erosion-proof, maintenance-free, like the patriarchal structures of economic and social power that they represent.

The next few decades will see more threatening structures imposed upon the lives of New Zealanders: the aluminium smelter at Aramoana, the high dams of the Clutha, the synthetic petrol complexes in Taranaki, mines that turn Coromandel mountains to dust, an extended steel mill at Glenbrook and eventually the most permanent of all in its impact: the first nuclear power station.

We are told that these developments will bring more jobs for men. As women we are not impressed.

Women, Water and Sand both mourns and celebrates a way of working that leaves no monument, that steals no resource, that leaves no poison. When the tide receded the beach was there for the gulls, the welcome swallows nestling in the cave, the banded dotterels and pipits behind the dunes, and whoever cared to wander by.

★★★★★

Women, Water and Sand audio visual sequence and display boards Juliet Batten.

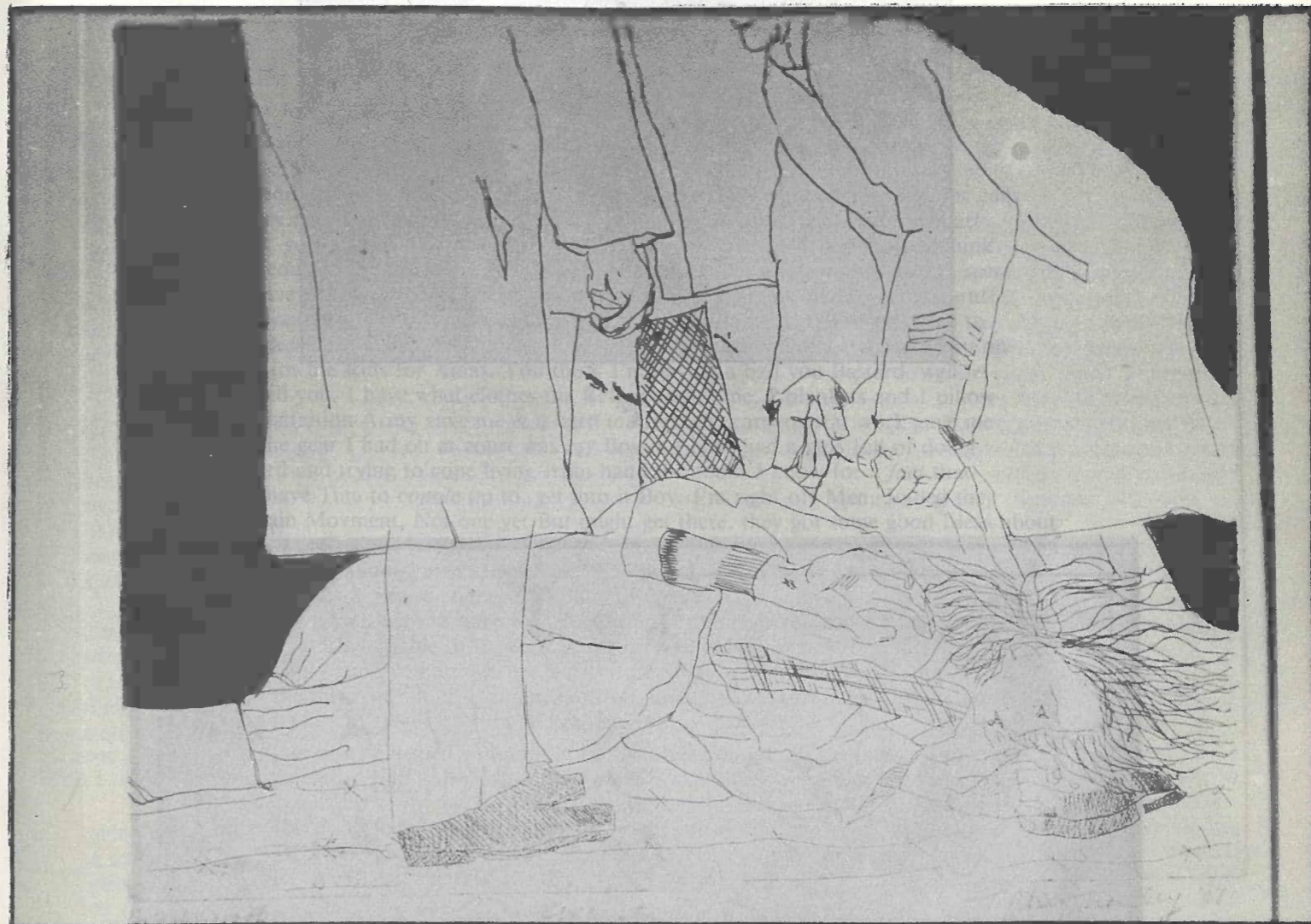
Women, Water and Sand records an event that was designed and facilitated by Juliet Batten for Feminists for the Environment, December 6 1981 at O'Neills Beach (near Te Henga). Photos are by Juliet Batten, Claire Butcher and Claudia Pond Eyley. Music is from *Moon Circles* by Kay Gardner, recorded by the all-woman company Urana Records for Wise Women Enterprises.

HOLLY'S HUSBAND (a found poem)

used to strip her, tie
her up, and threaten
to cut off her nipples
and other parts
with a razor blade.
This preceded rape.
One night she left home,
taking the children
and some clothing
to the nurses' home
where she worked.
In spite of a
non-molestation order
Holly's husband went
to the home one night
to deliver his most
vicious assault on her.
She was taken across to the hospital
and he was arrested — next day
in court was fined
thirty dollars.
After
cutting
the brake cable
in her car
he was
charged,
convicted by a jury,
and fined one hundred dollars
by the judge, for
interfering
with a
MOTOR VEHICLE.

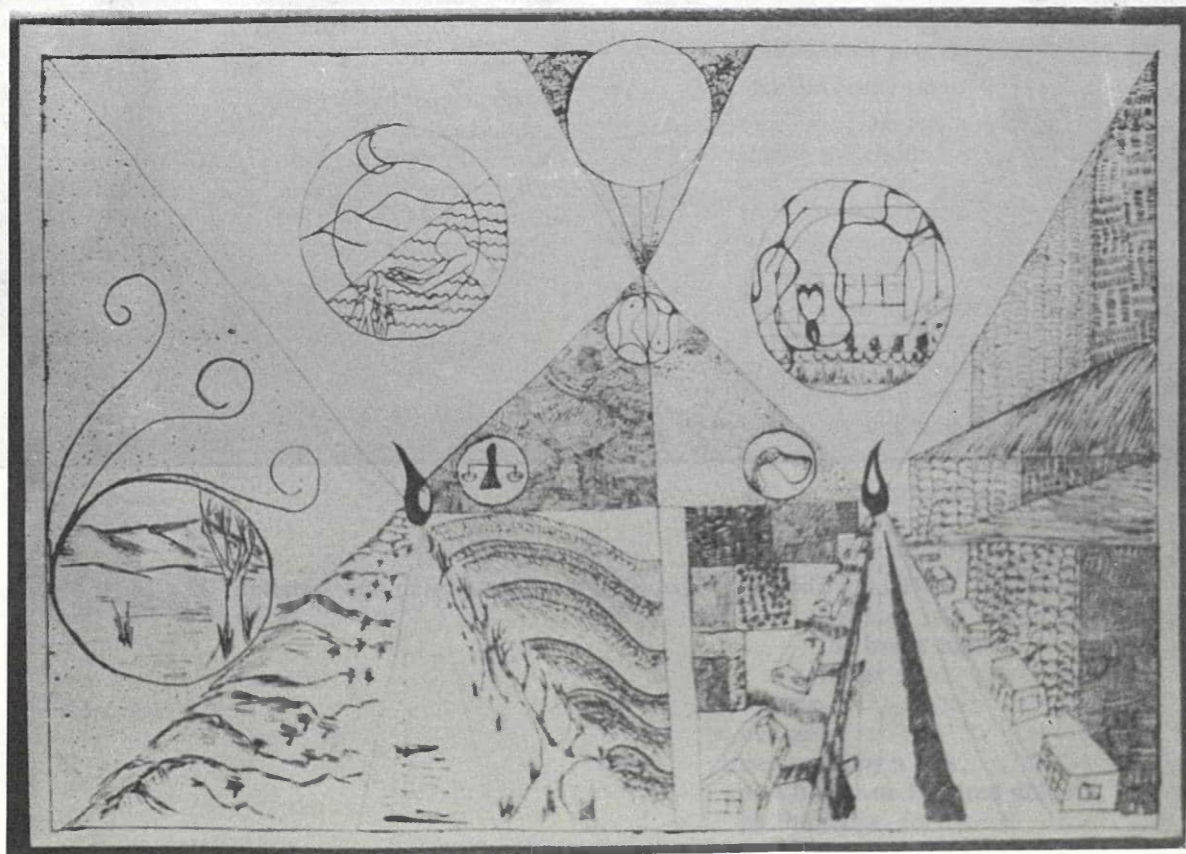
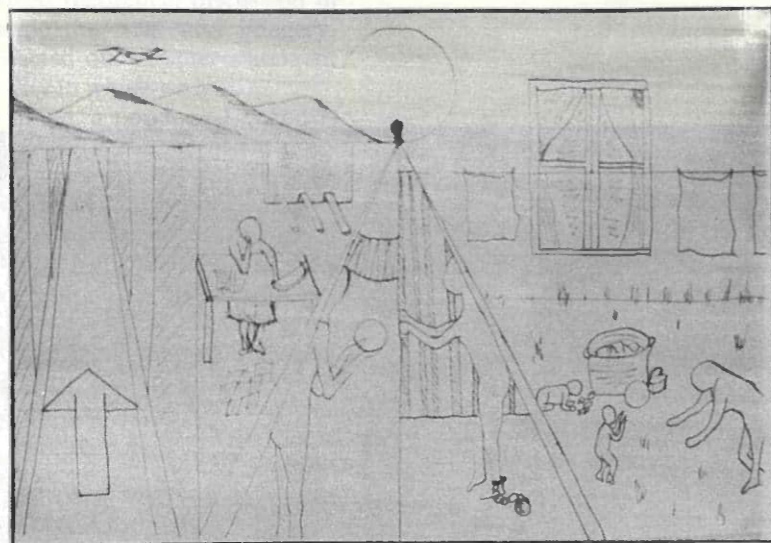
Patricia de Joux

Tiffany Thornley



Tiffany Thornley *Arrest* 1981 line etching and aquatint 22 x 28

The Refuge trip 1982 pen and ink 30.5 x 45
 Telling of Women trapped in Bad Marriage situations, then turning to the Refuge Movement to find a way to a better future.



Star emotions 1982 pen and ink 25.3 x 37.7
 Is about two very close friends of mine, telling how their star signs affect them.

After being a Wife and Mother to Four Boys and One Very Domineering husband for Nine years, I left to start a new world of my own, But only Through the Help of the Women's Refuge.

When I arrived in Wellington from the Bush (on the West Coast South Island) I was very lonely and Depressed. So one of the Workers in the Refuge took me in hand, and with her and some of her friends' help, I started to Draw and paint again after 11 yrs. They also helped me to get my

Present job as Print Workshop Technician, in the Wellington Art Centre Print Workshop. The Art Centre sent me to Wellington High School where I am doing S.C. Art with R. McLeod.

Though the life here in the City is far from what I was use to, Having Been, Shepherd, Fencer, Horse-Breaker - Trainer, Oppossum Trapper, Butcher etc. While raising Four kids. I'm Learning to adjust through the love of my Art and the Help of Friends.

Dear John

Well your letter was a bit of a shock. I thought after 9 years of Marriage you could of at lest been civil.

Do you think Im mad enough to ring you I have had your Arbuseive phone calls before and don't think I could handle anymore you think you are very smart don't you sending Sarkey letters. Well its not going to work any more, I think you could of let me know how the kids were and sent a few photos as you seem to have plenty eg (court house you were throwing them at me) To get my stuff transported up here is impossible as I only get \$110 a week 1/3 of this goes to pay *your* Matainince then comes Rent and Food. then whats left I put down on toys for the Kids for Xmas. You think I'm having a ball you Bastard. well let me tell you. I have what clothes the Refuge found me. 2 blankets and 1 pillow the Salfaition Army gave me & a hard mattress the carpenter at work gave me All the gear I had on at court was my Bosses I have had a guts full of doing it hard and trying to cope living from hand to mouth I know for a *fact* that you have Tina to *copule* up to, get into it Boy. I'm right off Men. Joined the Lesbain Movment. Not one yet But might get there, they got some good Ideas about Guys that Bash Women.

I found out about travle to get from Wellington to Collingwood. it takes 3 days as No Buses & Ferrys connect, and lots of Money.

which you seem to have I don't. Owing to the Fact you can Buy New Clothes, Boots, and Being able to fly Back & forth. Well Money is one thing I dont have. But seeing you are getting Narsty I might as well go you for 1/2 the farm & keep the insurance money. It sure wold set me up In my Art course. Which will take 4 years of sloge & 2 jobs to keep going.

All those years I helped you and Stood By while you got all the praise. Don't you remember who was always right there in the killing shed, pig sty, fence line, mud & guts up to my knees. OH yes that knee you wrecked is still stuffed even after Drs & phiso which cost heaps. So might prosacute for Grives Bodily harm. OK. falling off my horse every day Ha Ha OH yes I can go you for plenty you want to play hard lets see if you can take the dirt you like to shove.

No I am not living with any Guys or Been with any. Am Staying with a Solo mum and 3 kids. I never asked for much from you John only love & Warmth. I know I'm hard to get on with so were you. But we Both tryed & failed so why Be Bitter I wasn't asking for much and I could of taken so much from you.

All alonge since I left ever one said take the farm get something out of 9yrs work I said No. Now after your letter I am thinking very seriously about it you want to be mean, I know you all ways were But shit for that much work I gave you why should you take all and sit back and laugh at me.

I didn't ask much John only about the kids I miss them very much you couldn't even say if they got the presents Hurt me will you

So can I, where it hurts you the most Money. Man I'll make it tough. Hope Tina's as good in Bed as I was and Makes you happy so go cry on her shoulder now and have a good fuck for me. I just got Smelly to coulddy up to and thats all I need

V.

Last year I was so stereotyped into a bush person land girl even when a mother — an outdoor person alienated from the other world of literary comments, attitudes. We never even had a newspaper in the house.

I'd been painting since I was seven. When I was sixteen Dad died. I did a painting for Mum. It got ripped up. Old Sam asked me to paint. I painted a little Maori boy playing in the dirt. That was one and a half years before I was married. The last.

John had the same attitude as Mum's. Painting is a waste of time and money. It should be crushed, never make money from it.

So I stayed there with horses and never thought about it. It was easy for a while because Dad wasn't there. And my love for Art just ceased to be. I suppose that is why I was so emotionally unbalanced. I was hard to get on with. Frustration, because that part of me couldn't get out. It was the frustration of not being able to paint. In a thunderstorm I would strip off and ride the horse straight into the waves for about two hours, get out pent up feelings and come home. I used to forget. To me it was a split second in time and yet it would be two or three hours.

When I was fencing everyone I knew in that world used to say fencing is a man's world. I was as good as everybody else. So to them it was fine.

Now I've changed. I've crossed the boundary. It's scary.

I sit there thinking, you know people's ideas change too. Like when before they'd say 'What d'you do?'

'I'm a fencer, scrub cutter.' They'd say 'Oh yeah', and realise that I was.

Because I mixed with those people I was treated as an equal, accepted. Now they say 'What d'you do?', and I say 'I'm an artist' and I get an abrupt barrier.

At our drinking table 3 or 4 guys are pleased I'm an artist, not the usual — I've changed my whole pattern of people. Computer operator, that sort of thing. people who've dabbled in art are interested. Others say 'you are not in our league'. If I hadn't done art I would have thought it's a different life style, too, not been interested. But I was always interested in art. Art was always there. When I married John it was a case of putting it away. I managed that. I lived so long in that other world. Now I've crossed over. I just don't fit in. Art people can't handle my being a fencer. Neat, Wow but not interested because they don't understand.

I had the choice when I was a kid (some of my relatives are rich, I used to stay with them, housekeeper, artworks) of living that way of life or being with Dad. I chose Dad because I believed that was real people. They said 'you don't know any better'. I said 'I've had the choice of lives: being phoney and uptight like you or being with the down and outers.' I think the down and outers when coming up (not going down) have more to offer. Really appreciate friendship.

If ever I go back to live in Auckland I will probably have to go back to live with rich relatives. Like Thorndon elite, velvet walls, spa pool, colour TV room. Uncle said to me 'you're still a rebel aren't you, you haven't accepted this family.'

Now I'm on the boundary. I'm hopping backwards and forwards. It's lonely. I haven't found anyone who's there. Others are in their own limbo but not sharing the same thing with me.

It's a different life and worlds.

I gave a drawing to Brian. I said that was him. He said 'no that's not me. I'm not into contemporary art.' I said that wasn't the point, it was my feelings towards him. He said our life styles were completely different whereas in February they were the same. Yet that part of me is still the same, still longs to be on the fence line, cutting scrub, riding horses, mustering sheep.

They say I've changed. If I want to go back it's not a case of still having my art with me because that sort of life style would never accept me. They would say I was strange.

That's what I am, strange.

I've seen it before. When I was shepherding people up the road were known as hippie come weirdo come hermit. It's accepting loneliness to live either way. To the art world I am different and weird. I don't fit into their life style either. It's spooky. Makes you wonder if it's all worth it. I've seen so much of life. I should have fitted into one slot or another. I fit into many circles, wandering. I feel like a piece of rubbish in space floating from galaxy to galaxy.

I know so much, but where can I put it. Been there, done that but what use is it to me. A guy came up to me the other day. He was getting his photo taken and asked me to hold his baby. It came naturally to hold the baby, hold it on my hip. Same as picking up a hammer, or picking up a paintbrush, doing an etching, going to a horse that's been badly treated and knowing how to handle it. What do I do with all these things?

I feel alienated because I dress how I feel comfortable, in bush shirt, swaney and steel capped boots. Everyone at the Arts Centre looks odd but can be put into an artistic category. You can pick them. Like coming over on the ferry I picked out two guys as being shepherds, they were really neat guys to talk to until they found out I did art. Instant barrier. You on that side, us on this. Yet I've spent my whole life with those people. I feel really lost. It's the same at the Arts Centre. To the whole lot of them I'm different.

Like my swearing. Swearing to me is a way of life. Ninety percent of the time I do not notice what I'm saying. Like everyone I've ever worked with Father swore, school we swore, though Mum wouldn't tolerate it in the house. Every job I've had, you didn't say 'Come here you dumb dog,' it was 'come here you fucking dumb bastard.' Now I swear, and people choke. I can't handle it. It's just me.

Brian was brought up in a middle class family where women don't swear, smoke in the street or walk on the outside of the pavement. Yet I can go into the pub and act the goat, not feminine and that's all right.

I just can't understand why one side or the other can't understand where I'm at. That letter I got from Don in prison was really nice. He was one of the Mongrel Mob. He said before going in 'I think the world of you, but our lifestyles are different. I wouldn't ask you to come down to my level.' But ever since I've been a kid I've been on that level. When did I change. I get on with everybody and I get pissed off with it. I don't want to be me.

The only one I recognise a bit like me is Keri Hulme. But though I'd love to live like that, in the bush, country way of life, doing my own work, I couldn't handle the isolation. I'm not at that point where I feel strong about where I am. I've never had that sort of security. I lived

with John so long, a bad security. Now I'm lost. It was like being locked in a cage. Now I've been let out I've not got a safe cage to go back into when I can't take the knocks. I've friends, but it's not the same. Scared I'll end up sort of a lost person. That's why it hit me hard when Brian said our life styles are different. Because he represented security. To me the Marae would come first. But I can't go back there now. That whole part of my life has crumbled. It finished when my girl friend's grandmother died. She was the elder. The old lady was the one who held us together. That's another thing people don't accept in me. My Maoriness. Because I'm Pakeha, but the way I was brought up was the Maori way. The Maori I know, know me, but to those I don't know I'm the honkey white trash, what are you doing among us. Pakehas say what are you talking about you are white not Maori. I'm asked where am I going to stand in a clash between Maori and whites. I'm stuck fair in the middle and I don't like it.

The Spiral Collective and me

Being asked to join the *Spiral* collective was a mixture of many feelings for me, from pleasure and happiness at the thought of being on the team, to fear and worry that I wouldn't be able to help enough or pull my weight where matters that I didn't understand left me floundering.

But we have such a great team and all got on well so putting the thing together was a fantastic experience for me as never in my life have I ever been involved in anything like it. I have learnt so much from just being involved that I hope it will continue so I will improve my own views of life and of the world we women live in. And be able to give more of myself to the magazine so in time I become engrossed in all aspects of it instead of being only able to understand the graphics and writing.



*If I relive
 what hurt,
 what's ugly
 go back for what was missed —
 if I turn a searchlight in the pit,
 the hard proud flesh around
 it, scrape the roots, take
 back my child past —
 then he who took
 and used it will not loom
 diminishing
 me.*

*If I breast
 the hot tight tears,
 numb love, its underbelly, hate —
 if I turn out, ruthlessly, home truths —
 bone-cracking, the unburied rage, howls, keening —
 if I nurse the child
 back to feeling
 lovingly —
 I lose the wound.
 I touch a scar.*

...

*Then, Mary Gypsy
 Anna, St Mary Egypt, Mother
 of All Living — and
 sometime fish-tailed, wave-bright
 deity —*

*I climb back
 up through father power,
 the corporate house,
 the dower —
 to a lit place
 changed, and ready
 for more changes —
 to a sea birth
 and a bush green tree.*

Unstoppably.

(extracts from a long poem)

THE LAST TABOO: Incest

You can't really describe the feeling, because it is all feeling,
You want to talk, but with what is it you're dealing,
They say it's private, it's all taboo,
but surely mum you've got a clue,
There's a scar there, that will never heal,
but it won't be so sore, because I won't feel.
You pretend it's not there and it's all gone away,
but it hasn't, because it's there night and day,
Why to hell didn't you believe,
all these times nothing did I ever achieve,
I blocked it out and with it my most important years,
He lived his life a lie, while mine with fears.
You can't describe any of it, these are words out of
every day talking,
but the hurt in me, I feel every day walking,
The word I can't put into place is hate,
but now the world knows the truth, it really is too late.
It made me lose a part of me,
I locked my heart and there's no key,
Please help me, will it open or shall it be closed,
those nights it happened, when I lay there and froze.
You lose self-respect, and acting a slut you get a name,
They used to laugh and think it was a game.
And when it's made known, and people say you're mad and it's in your head,
Why won't they face reality, don't they know the victims
are better off dead.

and then when they find out it's true,
and they give you sympathy and try to make it up to you,
but it's all wrong, there's nothing I can do.

I can intellectualise it happened, but emotionally I'll never
confront it, it was never me,
and all people want to know is what occurred, for shit sake
can't they see,

You don't touch yourself, you don't know what it's like to feel randy,
and to me SEX will never be handy.

All these hang-ups I carry round,
It's wrecked every love I've ever found.
What will it do in the future and what will it hold,
Will I be brave or will I collapse and fold,
Will it break up my marriage and will I ever be secure,
I wish I had answers so I could be sure,
The man who was supposed to love, to be mine,
how could I be so stupid, was I so blind,
Why did I freeze, why *COULDN'T* I scream,
Please tell me it was all in a bad dream.

It's not really happening to me — it didn't really happen —
nobody else said it happened — is it in my head —
am I mad — everybody used to say I was bad.
Of course it happened, I know it did, it was me,
Why then can't I please see,
Why can't I speak out,
of course people will doubt, — If I do,
but it is true.

I used to carry out guilt and shame,
and for myself I took the blame,
but I didn't ask it to happen, why was it me,
he could've got it from his wife for free,
but the price I've paid is the largest amount,
too much for any of the world to count.
Why didn't it bother me till my teenage days,
If I was a child I could carry on in my ways.
I wish I hadn't told anyone at all,

but I hate them, I want them to feel hurt and fall,
I know I'm not the only one it every happened to,
but do they all feel mixed up like I do.
Do they all hurt and feel like me,
If so, why then can't everyone see,
It drives me mad, I should be in a home,
but I'm too scared of being alone,
and when it happens, you know it's wrong,
so why can't you tell mother, sing her our song, —
instead of us carrying round hurt for so long.
Will I always be confused not knowing what to think
or will my fucked mind slowly sink,
Why couldn't I look mum in the eye, why did I feel
like dirt,
Please, I only wanted you to share my hurt,
I'm sorry, so please don't give me any blame,
I'm not asking anything, no power, no fame,
Mum I used to think you'd be jealous,
you'd hate me as if we were to compete,
but you can have him, and please for me,
please win, please beat.
Me — your daughter will mostly express my anger in outbursts,
for I used to see you as failing to protect me, from my
father's advances first.
I don't want you to feel guilt for him and I don't expect you to be "SUPERMUM",
Just understand, and be my friend, sister, mother in one.
Rebellion is easier to let-out than affection, or mixed-up
rage, hate and anger towards him.
I tell myself I have no feeling for him, in flesh or skin,
If one day you hate me or blame me, put yourself in my place,
Could you handle it? how much could you face?
He loved me those nights and before and after,
but the rest of the time, no happiness, no laughter,
I had an empty garden in which to play
He was drunk so it was night or day,
I used to wish he'd have a heart attack at the time,
but what would happen if someone was to find,
Why do I feel sick and repulsed at him, even what he looks like?
He says I'm wicked, a slut and need a psych.
He's the one who's sick isn't he, he must be for sure,
I want him to get better, there's got to be a cure,
What hurts most is the good times we shared,
I feel guilty about them, but I never really cared,
the goodness only lasted an hour or so,
and the hurt I feel will never go.
Mum I've got to develop a sense of trust that only
you and I can share,
So please don't leave me, always be near,
and of what I speak, never close off and not listen
or hear,
Please mum, let's you and I and the world care,
Let me be protected and have peace and not let it
happen again,
and never upon me, anyone put any blame or shame,
I can't really cope with family tension or stress,
so someone help me fix this mess.
When I'm depressed or withdrawn,
just understand that my scar gets torn,
What happened I'll never forget or forgive,
part of me is dead, but the rest of me has to live,
With a rape victim, they make a fuss or bother over
the rapist, send him to jail,
but with a child victim, they don't
want to believe, so for them, nothing's there but to fail,
If anyone ever says I'm damaged goods,
understand if I hate them and not just for looks,
My scar won't heal I don't think ever,
but let it grow over, and don't remind me never.

Rosemary

Incest Survivors Group: First report

The Incest Survivors Group met first on 20th October, 1981. Apart from a break of 7 weeks over the Christmas/New Year holiday period we have met weekly since then.

The group stabilised at 5 members between the ages of 24 and 39. We have worked on these understandings of our position and experience:

1. That a child *cannot be held in any way responsible for a sexually exploitative action done to her/him by an adult.*
2. That the sexual molestation we suffered by male members of the family or extended family, including uncles, family friends and neighbours, has affected our lives in a damaging way.
3. That we are aware of the damage and want to come to terms with it and the experience to further our emotional growth and stability.
4. That talking about the assaults with as much physical and psychological detail as possible is the best way of releasing emotions of fear, grief, anger, guilt and self-negation which gather through years of silence, misunderstanding and trivialisation.
5. That sharing the incidents and details with those who have had similar experiences is of most healing value.

Although we quickly established trust between us, it was very frightening to talk specifically about the assaults.

No compulsion was laid on any member to talk. Each woman chose the time and experience she would talk about, but we sometimes found that if a member did not volunteer to talk we tended to avoid speaking directly of the assaults. We would therefore sometimes set a theme or group topic for the following week, e.g. the effect of the assault on relationships and/or sexuality, in order to be able to approach the painful memory.

All decisions were made by consensus.

We began each meeting by discussing the previous week's events and feelings. Distress and anger surfaced in even "safe" discussions. It often continued through the week after meetings in the form of vulnerability towards or sexual rejection of partners and hostility towards males, male relatives and male children. We often had nightmares or powerful dreams related to the assaults.

We noticed we are all extremely sensitive towards and feel much distress and anger in reading reports of sexual assaults and rape of women and children. We consistently felt that molesters and rapists are protected by the courts and some of us felt we would like to harass and humiliate the offender, particularly when their defence was that the child "instigated" or "asked for" the assault.

Before the holiday break we decided that as it was often difficult to approach the subject in our limited time, particularly when other areas of our lives (children, partners, work) were time-consuming or draining, we would arrange a weekend together.

We booked a house at Akaroa for the weekend 5th-7th March. In the two weeks before this we set ourselves specific projects of what to do during that time, i.e. what assaults we would talk about, what we felt about it/them and the offender/s, how we wanted to feel eventually, how we would express our present feelings in order to reach psychic wholeness.

We all felt extreme tension and vulnerability in the weeks preceding the project. Reactions varied from "clinging" to a partner to having a "high anger quotient", being "easily upset to the point of tears over minor incidents" etc.

On Friday evening 5th March we travelled together by bus to the house. After dinner that night we each repeated our previous week's intention, and again the following morning before beginning the session, in order to give each other support and incentive in what had become a very anxious time.

We had brought a tape recorder but found the sound quality was poor and the presence of the machine inhibiting to some of us. Four women spoke on the Saturday and the fifth on Sunday. We had to vacate the house by 2 p.m. on the Sunday and at least one woman felt pressured by the time limit. We may yet decide a further weekend is warranted.

All women spoke in detail. We had agreed to prompt each other with questions when our natural instincts seemed to wish to skate over the most unpleasant details. This was helpful and supportive, as was the general discussion and support after each of us had spoken.

Reactions

When recalling the assaults our first common reaction was to relive a sense of bewilderment. At the time we simply did not understand what was happening. Sometimes the state of shock was recreated, as in shaking for a long time after as well as before and during our description of the incident. Shaking, crying and feeling cold were common, and after the incident, without exception we felt it had been unpleasant — "awful, horrible, sickening". Subsequent assaults, with no lessening of the unpleasantness also caused depression. Some of our reactions to the assaults were:

"I felt lost/dirty/guilty/ frightened/alien/sick.

I felt different from the other kids.

I felt much older than the other kids.

I felt I must have done something to cause what happened.

I felt that everyone must know and think I was dirty.

I felt particularly vulnerable to other sexual advances.

I was able to recognise the signals a mile off. I still can.

I felt if I just let it happen they would go away and leave me alone.

I tried to keep away from him as much as possible.

I had an overwhelming urge to please everybody, especially adults. I felt I had to placate everybody. I am still fighting against this.

I became frightened of men. I am still frightened of men.

I thought all men were after sex. I still think this.

I hated men. I still hate men."

Of the five women in the group, two were molested by fathers, two by brothers, one by a grandfather, one additionally by a neighbour and the neighbour's friend, one additionally by a friend of the family and one additionally by an uncle. One was also later raped by the husband from whom she had separated.

None of us as children had felt able to protest against the assault. None of us had been able to tell our mothers/parents for the following reasons:

We thought that:

1. They would not believe us.
2. They would say it was our own fault.
3. They would punish us.
4. They would not do anything about it.
5. They would not protect us from other men who knew what had happened.

With regard to the last reason, one group member told how an assault by a neighbouring boy was found out by the boy's parents who told her mother and family. One of her brothers went and "beat up" the offender but gave her no personal support. Some time later he molested her himself.

When, as adults, we have told husbands, lovers, counsellors, parents about the assault their reactions have been mostly negative or unsupportive. Some typical reactions have been:

1. Disbelief — "you probably imagined it." This comes into the now discredited Freudian axiom that children "desire" their parents, expressed as "most girls fantasise sexual relationships with their (fathers, grandfathers etc.)"
2. Dismissal. As in: "It's over now so best forget about it."
3. Identifying or empathising with the molester, as in: "Poor man, he must have been sick" or in: "It's your mother's fault — she must have frustrated him."

One (male) counsellor, ignoring his client's feelings entirely, suggested she was "using" the assault to avoid sexual relations with her husband.

Longterm effects of the assault

As adults we have had to cope with the following effects of the assaults:

1. Feelings of self-hatred, worthlessness, and helplessness.
2. Being timid and fearful with strangers and in new situations.
3. An inability to talk about feelings.
4. Difficulty in making or holding longterm relationships.
5. Having sexual hangups directly related to images of and associations with the assault, e.g. dislike of certain sexual advances, dislike generally of touching or being touched.
6. Confusion of affection with sexual demand, and withdrawal from affection.
7. A general fear, distrust and hatred of men, and a persistent feeling that men are interested only in sexuality.

Lack of support and understanding from adults who had not experienced sexual abuse was the impetus in forming the group.

None of the molesters was apprehended at the time and none has ever been charged or brought to court. Our and other women's experience indicates that a molesting father will become a molesting grandfather, and a molesting brother will become a molesting father.

Subsequent Feelings

Sometimes during the telling of the assault but most often weeks or months later, anger and a desire for revenge arise. Most of us have wanted to beat or kill the molester. We have found it valuable to imagine ourselves confronting the molester, and to act out what we would say or do. One of us did this during a week night group and two women did this on our weekend intensive. One woman who had felt she needed the group's permission to act out her hostility physically did so using a cushion and a

chair. She found that her image of the molester had changed, had ceased to be threatening and sneering, and she later found she could be generally more assertive with men.

In some cases the molester is now dead. In other cases the women have decided to confront the molester. One woman is still too frightened of her molester's violence to consider confronting him. Where the molester is still in the community we have all felt much concern for his children, particularly the girl children.

In general we have all felt more positive about ourselves and our ability to handle relationships, or situations with men. We all feel we have yet more work to do before the effects of the abuse cease to affect our lives in a constricting or negative way.

Action

We are sending this report to the Mental Health Foundation and circulating it among women's groups in the community. We hope they will:

1. Publicise the extent of the problem.
2. Publicise Miriam Saphira's book "The Sexual Abuse of Children", the only publication we have found that is clearly supportive to the victim and suggests practical ways to help children protect themselves from abuse.
3. Educate the law and counselling agencies on the real facts of child abuse so that the "stranger-danger" be a part of, and not the whole of children's knowledge on the possibility of sexual abuse. The NZ Police pamphlet "Who can you trust" is totally inadequate when placed beside research figures that indicate 85% or more assaults are done by close family or friends of the child. A child has the right to know she has the right not to be abused by *any* adult. We therefore urge:
4. The pamphlet "Who can you trust?" be replaced by a pamphlet similar to that produced by the American National Organisation of Women, Child Sexual Abuse Task Force, and the Gay Rights Chapter, American Civil Liberties Union, which we include here.
5. We also suggest that the Mental Health Foundation point out strongly and often that films, tv shows, advertising, books and magazines that consistently show men as aggressors and women and girls as victims or objects will perpetuate the real-life sexual abuse by men of women and children.

This report was first prepared in April, 1982. Since then, we have made preparations to begin a second group and the original group are discussing the necessity for a further weekend.

*Incest Survivors Group
Christchurch.
April - June, 1982.*

father

I loved you as a child
a child's love
trusting loyal
total.

In return you left me
a legacy
of doubt, anguish
mistrust.

Did you realise with your betrayal
the price I would pay

And what of your punishment father

For I never withdrew my love
nor did I betray you.

I carried your sins with me
and
now
as an adult
I love restricted, afraid, controlled.

Give me back my childlike love
that you took
like a thief
in the nite

Heather McPherson

Incest

1

The child vomits in the handbasin.
Cold tap water hurtles down and round
the plughole.

Behind her head, a blackringed hole
opens wide, wider. It falls back, back.

She holds the tap. She stares inside
the water. It swirls, thin blue-green veins
inside a stream. Her stomach hardens,
knots.

The plughole drops. Dull gold bars
cross over it. The basin's blueish, the water
colourless. She turns it off.

Now she faces two ways when she goes
out to play.

2

The girl is locked in a stage-set
maze. Gib board doors open up on empty
shelves, on coat hooks, a broom cupboard.

She cannot find the exit. She cannot
look behind where it is dark.

She is drawn to the last room
where a man waits. And a bed. She knows
what she must do.

She lies back.
And her head and body split.

3

A white deer bolts
across a stony riverbed, and into
the undergrowth.

Book Review

The Sexual Abuse of Children, by Miriam Saphira.

Published with the assistance of The Mental Health Foundation, New Zealand, 1981.

This is the most important book on child sexual abuse available in New Zealand and the only one I have yet seen that I can recommend to survivors and counsellors.

Simply and concisely Miriam Saphira lists the myths about sexual abuse and debunks them with fact. She describes what typically happens, some of the effects on the victims, needs for counsellors, and ways in which children can be taught to protect themselves as far as is possible from the sexual molester.

Contrary to popular belief the molester is less often a stranger than a trusted relative or family friend. Studies put the ratio variously as 75% to 89% of offenders who are known to the child. This, along with the statistic that one in four or five girls will be sexually molested before the age of eighteen, makes it vital that along with the "beware of strangers" information children are given, they also be taught the essential right not to permit sexual approaches from any adult.

Crucially too, in this book, Miriam Saphira draws attention to the Freudian cover-up where the child's experience is denied in order that the child can be fitted into Freud's ready made theory of "victims guilt". Incest featured so prominently in Freud's young women patients that in a mental juggling obviously sprung from a desire to protect his friends and himself he decided that rather than fathers wanting to seduce their daughters, daughters wanted to seduce their fathers and fantasised such.

It is repetitively, damagingly, commonplace today for sexually assaulted girls not to be believed by their counsellors, to have it suggested they imagined the assault, and for male counsellors to question them, often insistently, about their "enjoyment" of the assault.

Freud's supposed shattering of the "myth" of childhood innocence reinforced the Christian heritage of woman as "temptress Eve", the sexual provocateur. This attitude extends to girls, and continues. Recently an English judge partially exonerated a molester with the

comment that a five year old girl appeared to be "sexually experienced". A frequently successful defence by New Zealand molesters is that the girl "asked for" or initiated the assault. The child does not give evidence in court.

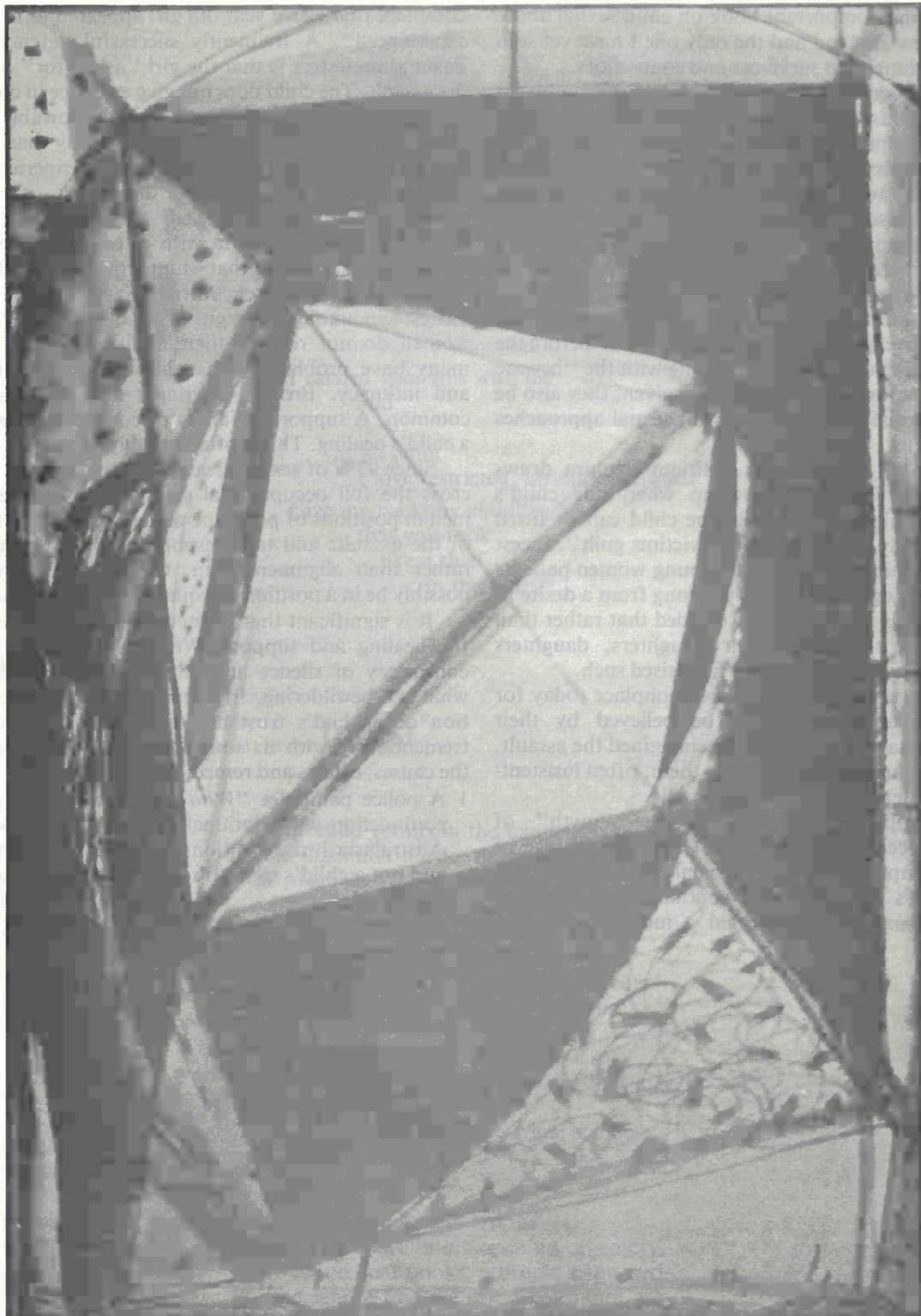
On the criterion of the maximum allowable sentence, incest is apparently regarded less seriously than rape. Yet now that women are talking about their experience of and feelings about the assaults, the effects are seen as damaging and long-lasting in all areas of their lives. Typically, problems begin with a low self-esteem. Susan Brownmiller² states that numerous prostitutes were sexually abused children; Miriam Saphira mentions a low self-esteem among "ship girls" for the same reason. Many women do not recover their ability to enjoy sexuality; many have problems with achievement, communication and intimacy. Broken marriages and relationships are common. A supportive family or counsellor is essential to a child's healing. This is often notably lacking.

Since 97% of sexual assaults are by men and like rape, cross the full occupational spectrum, it is essential that men in positions of power be made aware of the frequency of the assaults and take responsibility for prevention of, rather than alignment with, the abuser. No child can possibly be in a position of equal power with an adult.

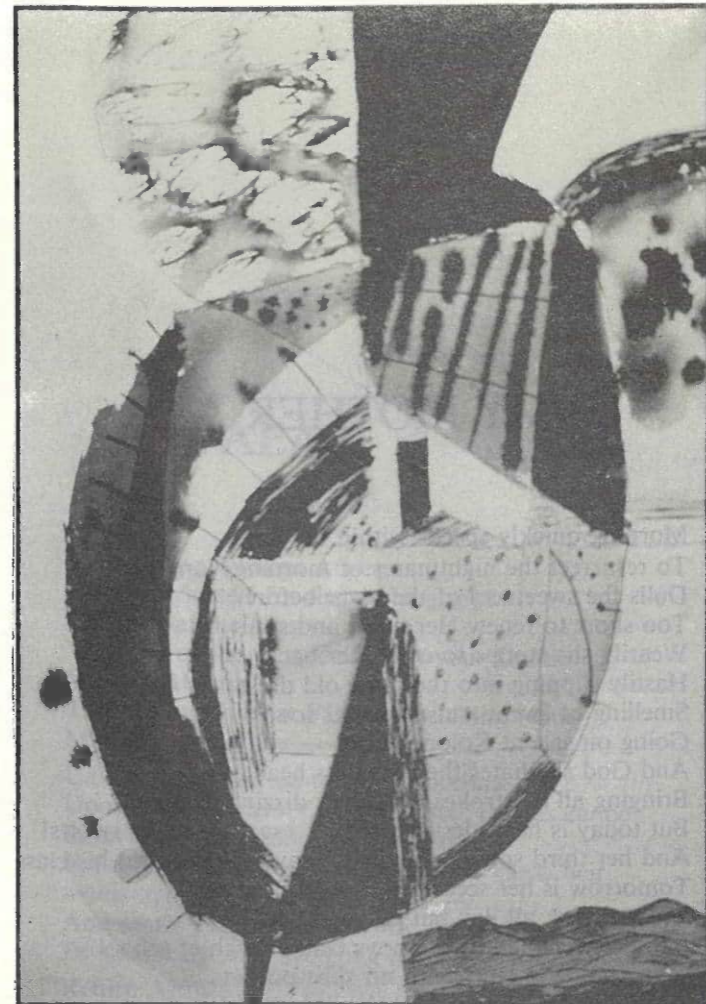
It is significant that women have turned to each other for healing and support. We have begun to break the conspiracy of silence around, and enforced consent to, what is a bewildering, frightening and damaging exploitation of a child's trust and affection. This book helps tremendously with its sound matter-of-fact approach to the causes, effects and remedies of child abuse.

1 A police pamphlet "Who Can You Trust" printed in conjunction with National Mutual Life Association of Australasia Ltd., mentions only the "stranger danger" and not a child's right to refuse sexual approaches from known adults.

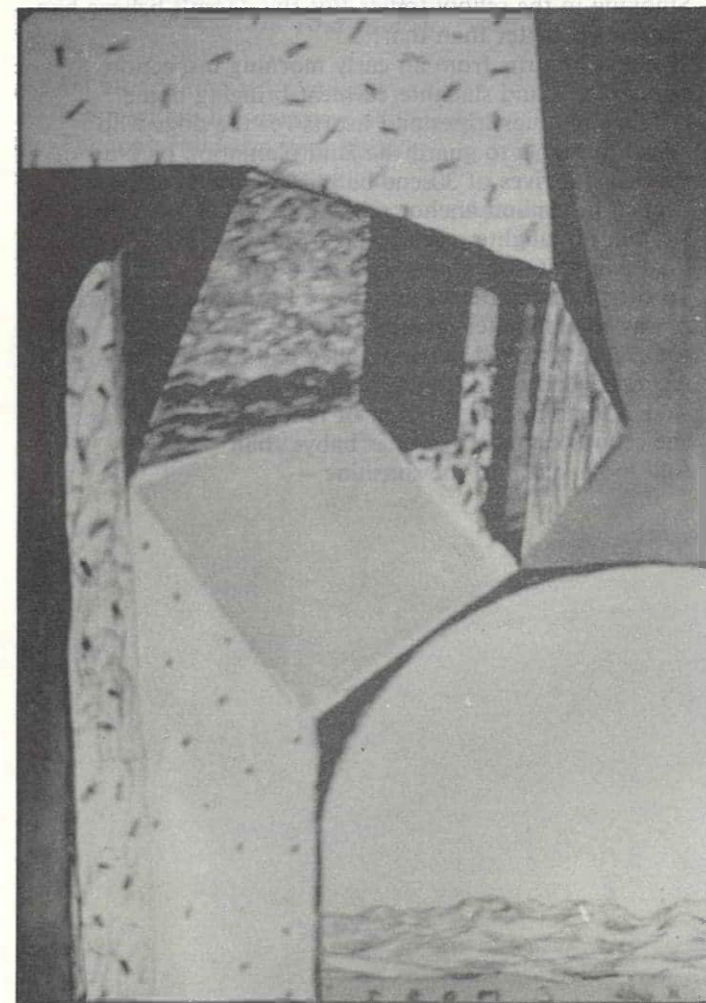
2 "Against Our Will: Men Women and Rape", Secker & Warburg, 1975.



Linda James room 4 1982 pen and wash 55.8 x 78



Linda James room 1 1982 pen and wash 55.8 x 78



Linda James room 3 1982 pen and wash 55.8 x 78

MY MOTHER

Morning quickly speeds within the day
To resurrect the nightmares of mornings long gone
Dulls the sweetness of the night before
Too short to renew Her mind and soul
Wearily she stoops to crack her back
Hastily slipping into the same old dress
Smelling of sweat and mackerel soup
Going on sale at Kolones store
And God she hates the relentless heat
Bringing all its strokes migraines dizziness nausea
But today is her eldest daughter's exam — never swotts!
And her third son's prize-giving day — he topped his class
Tomorrow is her second sons english exam
Did no work all day but eat swott eat swott
Baby complained of the boys being rough at school
Came home in tears with no shirt pocket
Again her first boy tells stories of his eldest sister
Smoking in the school toilets But she doesn't believe him
She knows better than that! ...
Husband returns from an early morning inspection
Of carcasses and slaughtered meat bringing home
Offals and lungs tripe and hearts for the dogs who
Prowl at nights to guard the land plantation pick-up ...
Breakfast arrives of 30sene butter and loaves of bread
Dipped in tea and anchor milk
No talk no laughter each in his own world
Planning that afternoons dare-devil trip
To the pictures after exams to see Last Tango in Paris
A way to eliminate cigarette fumes
An excuse to avoid playing volley ball to meet
A girl beyond the school plantation
And 7.30 arrives with a sigh of relief
She scoops crumbs from her babys chair
And looks out into the sunshine —

VAEA

Vaimauga e Awaken Arise
Prepare yourself for the onslaught of
Tuifitis warlike sons —
Warriors of the west Call upon your Goliath ...
Vaea e! Ala mai!
Tuifitis canoe lies at Faleata stretching from
Mulinu'u to Safune — Aue!
Ua tino le soifua, ua to i tua Apolima
Upon his shoulders Vaea has lifted Tuifitis canoe
Return to your shores sons of Fiti
For unknown to you Apaula is with Vaeas heir
— his name shall be Tuisavalalo —
And many years from now his life shall not
Be spared by your avenging hearts
Return Apaula for Vaea has changed
In his pining for you into a mountain
Seek Va'atausili for your revenge
Travel to Savai'i ...
Ua atoa le tino o Va'atausili
From within the darkness of Falealupo
The man-child has slept his fill
Emerging as did Vaea of old
To avenge the child of brother; — Apaula
The daughter of Tuifiti —

Telherphone Conservation

Hey don't lay your trips on me!
I've since long learnt that guilt is free
Whether on streets or between liberal sheets
You me and the cleaners at Vic are suspect elites

— 1 hr later —

Do you ever acknowledge our commonalities
Or only if existing within feminist ideologies?
If trendy and conformity is a lesbian fantasy
Then apolitical radicals must be taken seriously

— 30 mins too soon —

Movements are never too big or small
Too high or low for any to fall
So if gossips the fad and monogamy is sad
Is it no wonder that we're all quite mad?

— following on —

I have enough troubles living as a woman
Without gaining labels that make me feel common
So if you don't gossip and are glad of monogamy
Reality for you may be unsound-politically

— many confessions after —

No don't lay your trips on me
With rising inflation guilt demands a fee
And if on streets or between liberated sheets we meet
Remember telephone conversations are a two way street

Carmel Peteru

A POETRY READING

Chatter, Smile, blow rings of smoke, gossip,
gossip, laugh, Sip wine, More gossip, more wine
Indistinct smoke rings
Blurred vision, blurred hearing, blurred thoughts
refill glasses
Talk about her, talk about them, talk about us
— about the weather
When are they gonna start?
7.30 — lights dim/light up/sit back/drink up/snuggle-
up — What's she saying?
Unemployment/dykes/oppressions/lesbians/fists/middle-
class/sellouts/copouts/streetkids/rainbows/Black
white/witch/sunshine — Half time ooh good where were we
at?
Chatter/giggle/slur/gossip and wine — wasn't she good?
Pass the wine — Talk, rave, rant, babble
What was she talking about?
Words/lip service/verbal diarrhoea/lights dim cut the turkey talk
Reading continues — capitalism/racism/sexism/triple oppression/
patronising/tokenising/not realizing still theorizing —
What more do you need?
End of reading/sombre faces/empty glasses/full
ashtrays/Searching thoughts to past conversations
One by one struggle past intent on reaching
bed/bath/party/lover
— Yes an entertaining evening/good to meet old
mates/hear whats been going/call me for lunch
sometime catch up with the grapevine
Room empty but for dense smoke veiling waxing
moon through curtainless windows/I prepare to leave —
Wommon staggers back finds my hand
A drunken handshake — That was a good reading
— Reeks of wine and embarrassment —
What do you care?

Kei

I am Kei.

It is a good morning. I have been up since dawn. I poked the coals in the range, fed them heartrata, waited for the kettle's thin chirrup to break the silence. I rolled the first smoke of the day. I smoked after drinking the first tea of the day. I ate, brown bread that had baked in the oven overnight. Thick and crusty, spread with fat. I like it like that.

I took a kete from behind the door and folded it into a pocket.

Then down the path. The flax blades are steely after last night's rain. Some of the leaves are taller than my head. They grow shorter by the lagoon though.

It is not one of *those* lagoons, palm trees and sun and a bright reef sea. My lagoon is mud-bottomed, an egress for two glacial rivers struggling to the sea. It's been there for quite a while, but the mud and the swamp-plants and the waterweeds seem to be winning. It shrinks, year by year. One day I'll wake up and it will be an estuary. Mudbar. Plain bog. Like one day I'll be dead.

But not yet.

See me, then, on a good morning.

I am just sitting, early sun warming the back of my neck. I am watching the lampreys flow past. I came to collect cockles for lunch. I have a kit full. Then the lampreys came.

They glide swiftly, like swirling lively silk. They are sheens of blue-green and lavender in the river. Kanakana, the old people called them. Rubbing their hands, rubbing their bellies, calling Aaaa, haere mai ka kanakana! Ka nui te pai!

That fine mouthy rolling ring to the old words.

Gidday, Geotria australis — doesn't have it eh.

So under my breath I say, "Kia ora, kanakana!"

Come in your plenty, come in your hordes. Lots of lampreys means lots of whitebait.

And lots of whitebait is what it is all about, here.

I should be fishing. I should have a net out there, where the incoming tide swings round the island. Should have lines out too. But it is a morning for watching.

High thin streaks of clouds in the high blue sky.

No movement in the flax. No movement in the bush fringing the lagoon edge.

Still, warm, quiet.

Little grey mudcrabs scuttle about in the mud, tide-agitated. Wholly grey females, males with upraised startling-red claw. Watch out! Jack Crab's about!

You poke a toe near them (I do) they lunge at it rather than scuttling down their muddy crab-holes. (They lunge. I stamp. Crack squash.)

Flash into the water. Kotare, kingfisher of the lagoon. He flicks out again, a glass-eel writhing in his bill.

Ah hah. Late lampreys and early glass-eels, and crabs very early lustful. The whitebait are going to run thick and erratic this season.

I know. I've been watching things for fifty years: seas, tides, waters of all degrees and floods. The swimmers, the wrigglers, the crawlers, the fliers. I've watched them all. Seasons regular and seasons strange. I know.

I'm picking up the squashed crabs, sliding a fine-mesh bag from my pocket. Poking them, ooze and splinter and stink, into it. Tying a line to the mesh (I have seven different lines in the pockets of my greatcoat, and a slim plastic box of hooks and lures, and sinkers in this department and my ever-ready everhandy knife in that.) Slipping the loaded bag, unobtrusive as a bubble, into the tide.

Ahhh. Lamprey. Kanakana.

I remember forty years back, a North Island marae: some old bloke, don't recall his name, just old, wrinkles, smokessmell, sharp unfriendly eyes. Showing me smoked lamprey preserved in its own fat.

"E, like some Kai Tahu?" cough, snicker.

Making double-edged puns, showing contempt for these mongrel South Island tribesfolk who can't speak proper Maori.

I had a stiff young pride, then. Yes, I say to the old devil, I'd like some of that prized food. He says I can have it all, all yours he says, pushing the delicacy to me, rich fat glistening, all yours, eat!

I disinter one from the kit.

"Ahh!" he says. "Eat it from the head end though! Hee hee hee!"

You ever seen a lamprey's head, even a young lamprey's head?

They have vacuous bulging eyes (when they're smoked they bulge more, like milky tumours.) They have a sucker rather than a mouth, rimmed with sharp excrescences. Chewing that head was like chewing smoked nasty gristle, with sharpnesses in it, and sudden sickening squashes.

The body tastes like sardine. Better than sardine. Sweet and rich and strong ...



The line trembles against my finger, as though something is nosing the mesh-bag.
Something is, of course.

Eel or kanakana.

The sun is warmer on the back of my neck. I wait another minute.

Slowly, steadily, delicately, I draw the line in. The noser at the other end of the line digs its teeth in. Gently, Kei, pull it quietly, slooowly

and jerk it snap! out of the water.

It is blue and green with a purple sheen, screwing itself in knots round the line and that treacherous little bag of crab. Snared in my fingers. No more chances for you, fish, to nose appetising little bags, suck on to them. I bite it behind its head. It stills. The taste is sea-salt, flesh-salt.

I sigh in the sunlight. Almost too good a day.

This one I'll smoke tonight, enjoy for breakfast tomorrow. Imagine, forty years since that first taste!

Shaking my head, I'm getting old.

Look at me. Face thickening, eyes losing candour and wit. The sudden odd tremble in fingers doing a routine task — folding this line away and they twitch — be still you hoha things! Aue, look, they're turning knobbly, thickening too. And my bones ache, these winter mornings. Maybe I should wear shoes ... gazing vacantly, thought away on a dozen caravans ...

my voice is throaty, soft, rusted by whisky and smoke. I can chant the old songs in the high keening pitch of the old people. But when it's like this, water barely moving, everything quiet, I use a mouth-organ. It is a long-ago gift, and like the ax that is still the same ax, only head and handle replaced a few times, it's still the same gift. Changed its bodies, but never its sound. Hohner, single chord. I can make it reedy and dirge-like, or like a hot singing fiddle making the floor jump at some whitebaiters' ball.

Now I play a long winding song, quietly melancholy, crooning it over the moving water, the still bush, up into the high blue sky, keeping it going easy as breathing until the tide reaches my patch of raupo and mud.

This must look weird, grinning to myself, making a chuckle in the music, old old person crouched by the water, wrapped in a greatcoat, dead kanakana at big bare feet, playing a mouth-organ like a child ...

O but I never grew up. Mystery and crank and hatter and recluse they call me. Kei! That dry old stick! Fossicks for greenstone, fishes for 'bait. Been a smuggler, some say, putting their fingers to the side of their noses, sly, we know. Na, just a traveller say others. Roams around, or used to. Sticks down in the mud by the lagoon now. Kei! She really a woman? Tough and silent, lean and very tall. Rude as hell, won't talk unless under the golden spell of whisky, and then the words, the words she spills ... did she really push someone over a cliff? Stick a knife into that pig-hunter? Could've says the publican, doubtfully, you ever see her collection of knives? An artist in knives, maker thrower collector wielder ...

An oystercatcher pipes nearby. The tide has covered the mudflats. Too late for your breakfast, torea!

I stand unsteadily. The knees are stiff, the calves cramped. Old fool.

Pocket my music-maker, collect the kete of cockles, lamprey on top, and trudge out to the beach.

They say our sun is more dangerous than any other sunlight in this world. The ultraviolet content is higher, because of the clear clear sky. Paint falls off houses. Fabrics fade. Skin burns, turns cancerous. I believe that, sometimes. It feels dangerous, like the sun is trying to damage you, scourge you. But I am safe behind my wrinkled browny mask.

Too bad, sun! You should've caught me earlier, in the days when I was pale and soft. My bookish days, forty years ago. O yes. I was bookish. Used to live in books, by books, through books. Something - someone - made books unreal. But that's not this story. Now I have three books, and one real book. The beach.

I can hear you saying it. Balmy. The old twit's mind is gone.

Look, for moment, see through my eyes:-

the sea by my side is calm this winter-morning. No thunder of big combers crashing on shore. Even the Tasman has its quiet times.

The waves rise, green as jade at the base and then the light catches the bending crest — aue! the heartaching beauty of that colour, bluegreen, piercingly clear, aquamarine, tangiwai! Long ago, eyes of light ... and then, the wave's breaking, curling white and shattered into foam over the black sand.

The sand is the page. Printed on it: many things. Changes. Futures. Pasts. They look like shells, ordinary shells. Flat triangular pipi shells. Worn cockles, their darkpurple caves turned flourywhite by the sun. The occasional olive, once chestnutbrown with dark blue and white bands, now worn by the sand to dun. Broken volutes. Ordinary shells. And then one ... that's odd. It has the weight of years and it is full of whispers. Put my ear to it and hear conversations meant for others. Light voices talking someone into ruin. I put the shell back carefully, where I found it.

They look like driftwood. There is always driftwood on this beach. There is bush all over the hills, great forests still untouched by saw and ax. Yet come a flood, and the trees founder, are swept away by the rivers. And they end, piles of once-proud trees, broken limbs, worn pieces. Sometimes, the way they are scattered says something.

Who was this sapling, all by itself just out of the tide's reach. Once a young totara, full of green pride, once a boy. Fond of bikes I hear a windecho tell, now broken.

None of my business.

Old driftwood, two pieces, searotten, wormeaten, leaning on one another like tired friends. I will see Cluny Harris here, before the week is out.

And here a strange root of kahimahi, kaimai birch say the Pakeha, coiled in on itself, foetal shape but not foetus. This is the coiling of someone dead, knees to chin and decently buried. Someone important has died ... ahh see it lies on a northwest axis and sand has cupped the base ... which politician has kicked the bucket? Who cares? Now a drift of peagravel, nothing interesting there today. The gravel gets coarser, becomes sorted into fist-size stones — have you ever wondered how and why the sea sorts things?

And there, a strange set of rocks. Blind circles. Pieces of quartz trailing each other round and round. And they read, they read

this is the last whitebait season for me.

And someone terrible is going to happen.

(extract from a forthcoming novel, *Bait*)

Trying to Appease Mother Earth

E kara —

whakarongo mai nei,

Ka tangi au

Whati mai, whati mai, tamariki ma!

Ka haere te pouri nui, aue!

Hear

the tick tick dead of night of a weta combing food from the trunk of the tree
my tree that holds the ceiling aloft, my tree with its parody of god
koan and hungering guess, Issha, guest under my roof forever,
nailed three times with metal, bone and wood, for our birth and living and dying
as I am earth child and guest and creature under the wild night sky
questing for the lost star until I become quiet rotting bones
another kind of host in the deep cathedral, with Ladynight Earthkeeper,
another silent forgotten sleeper

Why should I weep for the bug that breeds and dies for my bread and beer?

Do the worms cry over that thick adiopocere corpse my own?

Should I grieve for those small busy cells, autonomous beings, working my gut
for food and bed and dying daily?

Lost amoebas, strayed in from the far great sea to this small warm tidal belly,
breed-ground and greed-ground and burial place ... myself the charnel house!

O my mother earth ... keening of whales and the wail of gulls and the snap of the cricket
and the jaunty croak of a weka stealing away with stolen food
like some gaunt joyous careering child, triumphant for once,
the slow shush of a seedling breaking soil ... I need these sounds

Dolphins nightly scan my dreams, and liver, while I seek that sybil caught, whorled
screaming in the dense of spiderweb, cocooned and losing all
the voices of birds bewail me, crying for answers beyond any human reach
the music-entranced, drugged with singing

o my mother, I need their lungs and tongues and tuning to keep the world round
and she wounded so deep, so deep

The harbour of my heart, flanged, hinged on strange notes, complex, always changing
wavers before this onslaught, land and sea crying

Issha, weeping god, how to tell the space and span and dying in any small way
of this great round beast?

To start:

there is dawn light, the hazy rose, a pink you find on special shells
which shrinks as the sun grows bolder round the turning side
how *trite* to say — unsung by whales — birth of day! did night strain and swell and
spread her legs and heave forth the brawling bawling infant day? No! just this flush
who steals so neatly onward, a boldfingered adult light
fearing only those weirds the black holes which covet time and light, any vagrant wave
squatting in uttermost dark they lurk, snatch and suck light down into their impossible
trunks; traps, hell-tunnels, devilshot, where waves die burning and wretched
and compressed beyond belief or relief again;
death at the heart of matter.

There is hope:

I see them as creels, potnets, that
when we star-fare, we will empty, being of greater cunning
letting loose all the screaming souls, dead seeds, ancestors,
contorted warps of waves, old old hopes gone rotten, and unknitted selves ...

What has this to do with mother earth?

Our honey-vale, our middle-age home?

She is moaning, o good lady, though still ready to her trust of creation,
salvage, guarding, the strong defender, nearer ending than ever before
as each new human ape gasps/opens mouth/clasps/sucks upon her flesh
we are already too many for her kindness, the stroke for her own survival is next
Breakage: the staggering land gaping, overturned
wrench the seas — fiery death, the dark has come

O, I want continuance, I want sharing, I respect the shadow of us all
each sheep and whale and gnat and gorse, hinau, penguin, fern and mould
snapping shrimp and spider, kelp tendrils, elephant, peacock, hungry-eyed human
harlequin anenome, jellyfish, mushroom, and the gardens of hermit crabs
and those sad heaps found in quarries, the gizzard stones from extinct moas
bees' wax, and wasp castle, and herald's tabard, and feathers from all the birds
of paradise

it is us, entire, earth being in earth child:

soft hoof of newborn calf; that contained patience of big cats
kakapo drumming, mason-bee humming, meld of finger string and hollowed wood
o saintly guitar! to the cleft palate of a beggar
dancing vapours, winter rain on steely-bladed flax, ked and flea
young ti-trees in their kilts of dead leaves, dusty flickering moth ...

All: kowhai and blazing fire, rubies and glass-eels, golden bait and tapeworm,
lithe snake and toadstool, bread and beer and my belly
and the last tuatara in some far time, pacing one weird clawed foot after the other
down a muttonbird burrow, into the whole of night.

The tall green spires of manuka beckon:

am I to be lost in cerulean and saffron, amongst the flamboyance of dragon wings?
O the slow slow exhalations of the living rock, a thousand years out
to a thousand years in ...

My mother:

I have slung my last word at the face of the sun
at the end, it is night, and now we creep, seeking our lost souls, the lost star
As singing brought nothing, ashes, nothing,
maybe your hate will slake in the cold mines of deep iron
where the words write themselves in feathered geometrical crystals, laid about your heart
The once-molten core turned blackhole, abyss of the dead ...

Earth cooled, ceased turning, swinging in vast inchoate silence,
all singing sung, all quiet, all done ...

Tera Matariki huihui ana mai-
Ka kitea ra te whetu marama?

I rongo ia i te aureretanga o te uta
I rongo ia i te pouri o te tai

aue aue aue ... e ... e ... e

Keri Hulme

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