


SPIRAL



7



A COLLECTION OF
LESBIAN ART AND WRITING
FROM AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND



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FROM AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Edited by
Heather McPherson, Julie King,
Marian Evans, Pamela Gerrish Nunn



Spiral
1992

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We also thank Heather McPherson who, with Paulette Barr, Kathryn Algie and Alison Mitchell founded the first Spiral collective and has been involved as an editor and co-ordinator ever since. We're glad she's decided to retire from this sort of work to focus on her own writing.

This seems like a good time to say that Spiral is now seventeen and the Women's Gallery Inc thirteen. And to acknowledge those women who've been involved in our work over this time. This project, like most of ours, aims to celebrate our lives and works. And to make visible and documented, those whose art, writing or presence might otherwise be overlooked or forgotten, whether entirely or in a feminist context. This book is our

- third lesbian only publication, following Heather McPherson's *A figure-head: a face* and Saj's *Amazon songs*
- thirty-fourth (or so) Women's Gallery exhibition, following *A women's picture book; twenty-five artists of Aotearoa/New Zealand*
- seventh issue of *Spiral* magazine
- fourteenth book
- fiftieth or so project.

Thank you all.

It gives us particular pleasure that Daphne Brasell, who has supported us so much over the last twelve years is involved in this project; and that *Spiral 7* appears at the same time as I AM: KO AHAU, a lesbian/gay exhibition at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

WE DEDICATE *SPIRAL 7* TO THE MEMORY
OF BARBARA MCDONALD, 1948–1991.

CONTENTS

EDITORIALS	Heather McPherson	9
	Julie King and	
	Pamela Gerrish Nunn	13
	Marian Evans	142

Fiction

AOREWA MCLEOD	'The closing of the Phoenix'	23
CRISSIE LOUISE SMITH	Untitled story	54
JENNIFER MCLEAN	A mystery story in two parts	91
JENNY RANKINE	Periscope	95
MAREWA GLOVER	Out of it	140
MELIORS SIMMS	Sally	154
NGAHUIA TE AWEKOTUKU	So easy to please . . . ; Auntie Marleen	158
POWHIRI RIKA-HEKE	Tattoo; Neighbours	165
SAPPHIC K/NIGHTS	Slouching towards Mount Maunganui	186
SARA L KNOX	Life without an audience	197

Non-Fiction

AOREWA MCLEOD	Review (<i>The exploding frangipani</i>)	29
CHRIS ATMORE	Everything isn't for everyone	41
ELIZABETH KEREKERE	Preparing the art world for Maori dykes	61
JULIE GLAMUZINA	Purple hearts	100
LEAH POULTER	Signs of change	127

Poetry

BEITH MOON	passing women rap; your attention please	33
BETTY DON	Games we play	37
DEBORAH JONES	Long term lesbian relationships are not boring; When you hit me	56
ELEANOR BASSETT	To Terry with love	60
FRAN MARNO	Laughing with the girls	67
GEORGINA SMYTH	On the motorway to Hof	73
HEATHER MCPHERSON	A bodily state of mind	86
JUNE JOYCE	To Sally from June; Flowers	112
KIRSTEN GRACIE	The smear	122
MIRIAM SAPHIRA	Kawasaki 750; Political difference; I am as	156
RANGITUNOA BLACK	Speaking of ourselves; Contra-revolutions, but home grown; Words with Sappho; Sovereignty 1; Oh woman, oh woman; Sovereignty 2; Ra; Sovereignty 3; Face	168
RHONA VICKOCE	Tirade; Ode to Harbour Cone	177
RUBY ELIZABETH	[My sister]	179
RUTH BUSCH	To Peter; Having said Kaddish; I have tasted	181
SARA L KNOX	Cameo; Reading philosophy; Communiques	190

CONTENTS

SUE FITCHETT	Tiritiri matangi	208
TESS HUIA TRELOAR	Karanga	210

Artwork

ADRIENNE MARTYN	Photograph	16
ADRIENNE RANSON	Sculptures	17
ANNE MEIN	Photographs	19
BLADE	Jewellery	39
CHRISTINE REREMOANA PAUL	Paintings and text	50
ELIZABETH KEREKERE	Sketch	61
GAEL MONTGOMERIE	Woodwork	68
GAIL WRIGHT	Paintings	70
JILL GIBENS	Sculptures	98
KANYA STEWART	Batik pictures	113
KATE EWING	Jewellery	115
KAZ BARTSCH	Jewellery	117
KHAREN HOPE	Glasswork	120
LAUREN LETHAL	Assemblages	125
LEAH POULTER	Photographs	127
LINDA JAMES	Paintings	135
MARY MCFARLANE	Metalwork	151
PAERAU CORNEAL	Textile art/weaving; ceramics	161
STEPHANIE LAMBERT	Jewellery	206
WILLA BIRCH	Essay by Rhona Vickoce and paintings	212

HEATHER MCPHERSON

in accordance with a late/nt interest in post-structuralism, suggests that post-feminism be suitably shrunk from its lumpen componentry in the corporate whale's-belly to its proper red herring proportions and embalmed; the fishers among us, continuing to change patriarchal structures, consciousness and parameters can then frolic with dolphin, porpoise, and other mammals without accusations of having been swallowed by a chimaera.

Undertaking a lesbian arts magazine raises many issues. There's lesbian identity itself, with all its queries. There's depth and breadth of work to showcase, our and its perception of identity, and security in that identity – still, as a recent tv programme made clear, unacceptable to parts of the larger community. There's the vision of possibilities of the project, excitement at being part of it, commitment and responsibility, time and effort involved. The conditions – emotional and material – of one's life that offer opportunities for involvement, the shared objectives and confidence – emotional, intellectual, political – for practical and visionary aspects.

At the time I agreed to be part of Spiral, conditions were favourable, the course appeared smooth. But every project has its consequences, and changing conditions can dictate them. Changes in all areas of my life turned Spiral into a struggle, and I have struggled with it. Marian's faith and determination for the project have kept it alive; geographical and financial distance from collective members convince me finally that localised collectives are less problematic than national, unless we have more money.

Lesbian culture in Aotearoa is still being made let alone defined. It's very much in process, various, multifarious, multiferous – even vociferous. And yet, its defining depends on the speaker. Race, class, able-bodiedness,

financial, educational, age, and other assorted privileges will always short-circuit the ease of that seventies 'we'. It's easier to speak of lesbian-feminist culture where consensus has a politics-based and increasingly ethos-based core on which to focus. Still the privileges will modify our approach, still there will be disagreement on issues of sexuality, socialisation, dress, roles. . . . sometimes peripheral, sometimes central to lesbian identity.

I'm continually surprised – and unsurprised – in the wider community by the depths of unexamined racism, sexism, and homophobia lurking under the surface pleasantries. More recently I've become aware of the reluctance to admit financial privilege. The readiness of the highest-paid in the country to ignore poverty in the name of unaffordability and punish the poor in the name of economic realism is, hopefully, being seen as the individualistic indulgence it is, sited on a discredited nineteenth century élitism. Stigmatising the poor, blaming the victim, is being embedded in a system that makes the rich richer and the poor silenced. We are inexorably being increasingly polarised into the morally worthy deserving and the morally dubious exploitable who are nevertheless exhorted and preached at to accept our lot and learn to love the depression.

As a *Listener* letter writer puts it: 'all the poor need is a positive attitude, a woolly hat to wear to bed and a magic chicken which can be eaten three times. Forget political protest, finding the real cause for a bankrupt country . . .'

As benefit and health resources become leaner and less accessible, the implication for beneficiaries in extremis is – die slowly of malnutrition or fast from lack of medicine. Is this our issue? our culture? where do lesbians put our energy?

With so much appropriation of resources being codified into ruling class policy (white and market-oriented), the Spiral collective became particularly sensitive to cultural appropriation. Not unlike a Canadian women's press we decided that in the material we received, cultural referents other than one's own stated antecedents must be questioned. With bi-culturalism being implicitly discredited in the savagery of class divisions, we felt a responsibility to honour our and others' boundaries, not to colonise or appropriate cultural

concepts we are not yet entitled to. If we are to ally ourselves with other oppressed groups in pursuit of the once-proposed just society, then our relationships between groups must be scrupulous. An all Pakeha collective, our justification for taking a lesbian art initiative being that a minority group must have space and resources to take their own initiatives, we felt our active prioritising of lesbian might not be the active priority for Maori lesbians. Our job was to provide conditions for lesbian artists, Maori and Pakeha, who wanted an outlet but might not have time, energy, resources to provide their own. We did not want, as Andrea Dworkin has written of some American lesbian communities, to be 'totally self-referential', with difference the rationale for enjoying privilege within its own context. And recognising, as she writes, 'it's very hard to want freedom or to have any ambition . . . and not identify with men in one way' nor did we want that 'aura of clubhouse sexuality', in which issues of sexuality, sexual power, erotica, s.m. and pornography become all-defining, all-dividing issues.

I believe an Aotearoa identity begins in the recognition of, respect for and alliance with different groups. If we have always had a mild version of wealthy/conservative, working-class/radical political polarisation which in Europe from the twenties translated into wealthy/pro-fascist with attendant race and anti-Semitic policies, we must deny further objectification of the other, further systematic inequalities. The femocrat at the supermarket who sees no relation between herself and the checkout operator who has just negotiated an hourly employment/dismissal contract, objectifies that woman as surely as a finance minister who withdraws study rights from beneficiaries objectifies the unemployed, redundant, the reluctant dependent, the recently bereaved or child-free woman wanting to rejoin the work force. Material conditions can imprison us, as Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith point out; our survival is income-based, our cultural contribution is dependent on our financial resources.

Yet withal, we have increasing lesbian cultural visibility. From the Topp twins to Francis Cherry, to the Maori lesbian artists group, to *subversive acts*, Parker and Hume, LIP, newsletters, dances, The Ball, to workshops on anti-racism, bi-culturalism, ethics, writing, manners and modes, menopause,

incest survival, to lesbian caucuses in Te Kakano/Rape Crisis and many other women-oriented support organisations, the processes of cultural identity emerge. Strength to us.

Two books, *Gender, Culture, Power* by Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith (O.U.P., Auckland, 1989) and *Culture and Identity in New Zealand* edited by David Novitz and Bill Willmott (G.P. Books, Wellington, 1989) helped me with some ideas. The quote from Andrea Dworkin came from her *Broadsheet* 188, June 1991 piece, and the *Listener* letter was in the July 8, 1991 issue.

JULIE KING AND PAMELA GERRISH NUNN

JULIE

This edition of *Spiral* presents lesbian art work. Given the state of invisibility which has obscured so many lesbian lives (including my own) and which threatens to confuse our reality, I welcomed an invitation from Pam to be involved in this edition of *Spiral*. I have enjoyed the opportunity of working with her and Marian as well as catching up with Heather after meeting her in Christchurch in 1975. I had recently arrived from England to lecture in Art History at the School of Fine Arts and Heather was one of a group of women here who were challenging assumptions and breaking new ground by establishing *Spiral* and working for the Women's Art Movement. It hadn't occurred to me to question the absence of women artists from the Old Master narrative we told for such a long time in Art History. The Women's Art Movement in Christchurch, the work in *Spiral* and in *A Woman's Picture Book* have been included gradually into our Art History courses. Working on this edition of *Spiral* has presented new questions coming from my chance to make contact with the contributors – all of whom have taken a stand by expressing their experience, constructing lesbian culture and making us visible.

PAM

As a recent immigrant to New Zealand Aotearoa, I have looked on this involvement with *Spiral* as a valuable opportunity to learn what lesbians in this country are up to, as well as a serious responsibility to show other women living here what that might be. I was invited to play a part in bringing this *Spiral* into being by Marian Evans, whose greater experience and wider knowledge of the radical women of this country and how to work with them

has assisted me no end. I earn my living by discovering, showing, interpreting, discussing and documenting art, and working on this project has been a useful reminder of how meaningless that can become, how stale and unrevolutionary, if I forget to remember whose interests I should always try to be serving and whose I should always be challenging.

JULIE AND PAM

In co-ordinating the visual side of this *Spiral*, we tried to do several jobs – solicit and encourage contributions, accept or reject the material and compile it in sympathy with the literary content that Marian and Heather have co-ordinated. Practical considerations (time, timetables, finance, etc) kept us from meeting all the potential contributors – which we regret – but where the views or choices of co-ordinator and contributor did not harmonise, differences of opinion were exchanged (we wouldn't say necessarily resolved! – there are in the magazine conflicting interpretations of some of the processes by which this *Spiral* became what it has turned out to be) by phone or letter.

Most of the material offered to us has been included in whole or in part, and where we turned down work it was because of the following aims: that the magazine be recognisably feminist, i.e. politicised by a manifest understanding of the politics of gender; that it be not only bicultural but anti-racist; that as many aspects of lesbian art(istry) as possible be included; that as many creative/aesthetic issues as possible be raised; that contributors be shown at their strongest; that contributors be shown as equally as the differing nature of their material might permit.

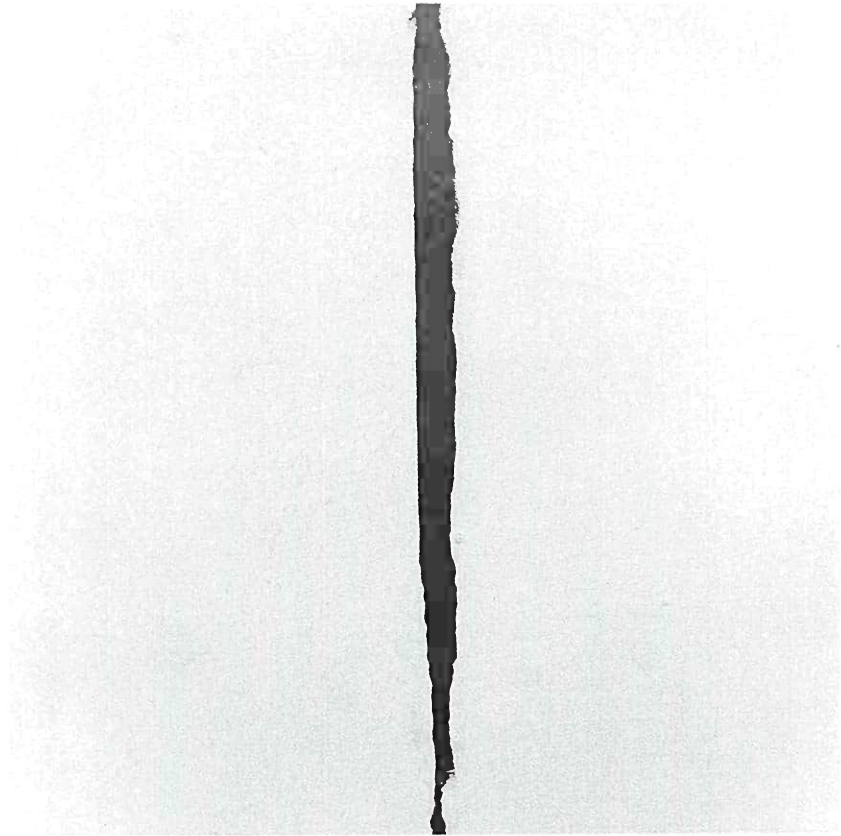
These are some of the issues which we hope the artwork presented here will raise:

- Is there a lesbian sensibility/aesthetic/vision?
- What are the differences between what a Maori lesbian sees around her and what a Pakeha lesbian sees around her? and what does the tau-iwi lesbian see?

- What is the importance of the female body to lesbian art?
- How can lesbians become professional artists in a homophobic society?
- What is the difference between a lesbian art and a feminist art by lesbians?
- How important is artistic excellence, and by what standards shall we recognise it?

ADRIENNE MARTYN

Born 1950, Wellington



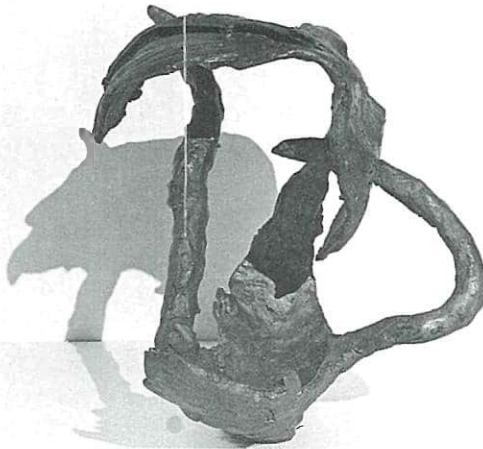
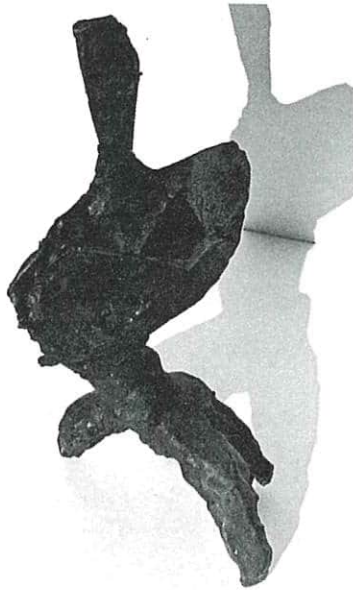
Untitled '91 1991 250 × 250 mm gelatin silver print

ADRIENNE RANSON

Born in Kawerau, I am presently living in Dunedin completing my third year of the Diploma of Fine Arts. I am a self-defence tutor for the Southern Women's Self-Defence Network, a soccer player for the Purple Passions, and actress. My art is centred on women's reproductive organs, Celtic mythology, personal experiences and responses to my ever-changing life.



Bloduwedd no. 1; cast aluminium, approx. 70 cm x 30 cm



Bloduwedd no. 1, another view

Bloduwedd no. 2, cast aluminium, approx. 60 cm x 50 cm

ANNE MEIN

In this body of work, I wanted to explore touch and sensuality in a gentle and relaxed way.

I was consciously influenced and inspired by Rodin's work of the late 19th century. For example, 'I am beautiful' 1882, 'The eternal idol' 1889 and, of course, 'The Kiss' 1886. I took the images of his sculptures, internalised the way he'd expressed these emotions and, in a way, made them my own through these photographs. My images are lesbian but not in a sexual way because I wanted to show that lesbianism is about a lot more than sex. It is also about ideas, feelings and opinions.

Some of the earlier photos are almost androgynous – I like these images' subtlety, they are not ramming the joys of lesbianism down anyone's throat.

With my colours I feel some pressure to move away from the pastels and warmer colours, but I like my colours to relate to the feeling generated by the photograph, so I let my imagination choose the colours that best express that sensation. My colours tend to be clean so they can speak more clearly. Show their true essence. Even the darker murky colours need to work in unison with the purer colours and each other and be a successful combination. (April 1991)

*I hate being unable, to hold my lover's hand, 'cept for under some dimly lit table,
afraid of being who I am. Maxine Feldman*

WORKS AND INFLUENCES: NOV 1990–FEB 1991



Self Portrait with Glass (7/90)



Untitled



*Blandish (4/91) influenced by Rodin, *The Kiss*, 1886*

AOREWA MCLEOD

b. Auckland 1940. Teaches literature at Auckland University, particularly women writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

THE CLOSING OF THE PHOENIX

What are your qualifications? Dare you dwell in the *East* where we dwell?
Are you afraid of the Sun? – When you hear the new violet sucking her
way among the sods, shall you be *resolute*? All we are *strangers* – dear – the
world is not acquainted with us because we are not acquainted with her.
And Pilgrims! – Do you hesitate? and *soldiers* oft – some of us victors, but
those I do not see tonight owing to the smoke, – We are hungry, and
thirsty, sometimes – We are barefoot – & cold –

Will you still come? *Then* bright I record you.

Emily Dickinson to Kate Anthon 1859

They looked out of the car window at the closed Megadrome nightclub. It was Wednesday, women-only night. The night of 'The Phoenix'. They didn't get out. They were fighting. Well, not fighting exactly. Arguing in a high-voiced irritated way. Neither was quite sure what the other had kept doing all night, but each was sure that the other had. *It was the tone of voice. The way you said cheques when I said they won't take cheques. But you kept telling me I was wrong.*

It was one of those sort of arguments.

So they looked out of the car window at the Megadrome and kept talking; neither quite believing what she was saying, but saying it anyway because both felt restless and because the Phoenix wasn't open. Women were waiting outside though, and the big bouncer Bet was there so opening was in the air

and they knew the argument would be stopped by that opening without either of them having to win or concede.

Men in pairs sauntered past lengthening their strides to make their hips swing in a macho way, staring and commenting at the women queuing outside the Megadrome: women in purple lurex tights, women in tuxedos and bow ties, women in leather jackets with shaven heads and just women. Mona, in jeans and sweatshirt, who mowed lawns and cut hedges, was leaning heavily on her partner's shoulder and kissing her ear repeatedly. Another woman in jeans and T-shirt said hello in Mona's direction. 'Introduce me, can't you,' whispered the spikey nosed partner. 'Can't,' mumbled Mona into her ear, 'I don't know her, I just mow her lawn.' It was the usual crowd for this time of night.

'This'll be the biggest turnout since it opened,' said Mel, as she and Judy joined the end of the straggling line, beside Stef, the carpenter who'd built their deck last summer. Stef was wearing black fishnet tights, very high heels, a black leather mini-skirt and a plunging red velvet neckline. She looked languid and very lovely.

'Right,' said Stef, 'a pity it took the place closing down to get us all out.' Then Lyn opened the door and Alix took their seven dollars and gave them each a jellybean. Judy and Mel went straight to the floor and danced. Concentrating, chanting 1-2, 1-2 together they glided into the foxtrot, but the floor was too crowded. It was dark and the music loud and difficult to translate into the two-step, the only dance they could be sure of remembering from lesbian ballroom dancing class. Groups were hugging and shouting at one another. They retreated to chairs on the balcony and Tanya came through the gloom and introduced a woman in a red jacket whose features and name were indistinguishable.

Don't I know you? shouted Judy. The woman shouted something unhearable back. Judy had long ago given up feeling despair at not being able to hear words in noisy dyke backgrounds. She smiled encouragingly and waited for the strobe light to circle round to the face. She didn't think she knew her, but her face had a fluid new lesbian look: she looked like a mother of three who'd left her marriage two years ago, had her hair cut a year ago, and was

now formulating her face. Mel was shouting happily at Tanya and whoever she was.

Later, lying in bed she'd try to keep Mel awake and ask her, *now, who was that one in the red jacket? – What one in the red jacket?*

Evenings at the Phoenix always ended in Judy's realisation that no two people see the same way. Mel would tell her long stories of everything she'd heard about someone's relationship, new job and s/m explorations, only for Judy to later realise that this was not the short spiky haired red head woman in white shirt and black tights called Bo, but a medium height spiky haired blond in punk black called Elaine. She believed in the absence of any absolute subject position and the relativity of all observation and discourse, but at times she did feel frustrated, like when she would say later tonight to Mel, *but surely you must remember the one in the red jacket with the sort of fluid face* and Mel's face would have a sleepily non-comprehending expression of denial.

So, as always she kept an interested, slightly concerned expression on and looked round from the corner of her eyes, while Mel exchanged facts with Tanya. Surely that was Biddy over there with a shaven head, Doc Martens and a short fifties flowered dress under a naval officers jacket. And she seemed to be with Carol, Judy's ex-counsellor who a few months ago had had a shaven head and had been with Anna, but now had only shaven sides and seemed to be embracing Biddy closely. She nudged Mel and hissed in her ear, *Isn't that Biddy? And look she's with Carol!*

What?

She shouted and pointed. *There. Biddy and Carol!* Mel, Tanya and red-jacket (except now she'd taken her red jacket off and had become totally fluid) all turned and stared. Mel shouted something.

Can't hear you.

Mel shook her head and shouted close, spitting in Judy's ear, *That's not Biddy.*

No, there.

That's Franky, mouthed Tanya.

Not Franky. I see Franky. There, over there behind the pillar. Biddy embracing Carol.

By now Bidy and Carol had stopped embracing and were dancing what looked like a compressed tango and as the faces circled the floor seeing Franky and Gloria and Edie and Lyn and . . . she forced herself to relax.

Breathe in and out deeply and slowly, smile, sip your soda water and watch the scene at the Phoenix. It's the last night. And this is my community.

Jo and Jo's partner whose name she could never remember came up and hugged her and Mel. Mel introduced Jo and Jo's partner to Tanya and her friend. Judy marvelled at Mel's skill at penetrating the veil of incomprehensible sound.

In a late night conversation she had worked out she could never remember Jo's partner's name because she reminded her of someone, but who it was she'd since forgotten. Which was the point. *Who don't I like?* she thought. But she'd forgotten. *This is my community and these people love me.* Judy led Mel down the stairs holding her hand tightly, saying *hello, hi* and kissing cheeks. Down to the strobe-lit floor where they stared into one another's eyes and felt the beat go through their feet into their groins and remembered how much they loved one another and how exciting those increasingly less frequent times making love were. Mel stroked her cheek, said something and Judy smiled back and said, 'you too' although she would like to have heard it.

Mel held her close and kissed her ear. *No, she said, though I mean that too. I just said that Tanya didn't know about Sally. And you look lovely, your eyes are so bright.*

Sally.

Whose funeral Judy had missed. Sally, whose painting hung in their hallway. Sally, whose doctor had misdiagnosed her stomach pains. Sally, who'd tried to live pure and clean but it'd been too late. Sally, who'd been redhaired and talented and quirky. Sally, who'd had three exhibitions and had made one short film full of ecstatic multi-shaped women eating and rolling in fruit. *Oh Look! There's Jodi and Maribelle lasciviously feeding one another grapes on celluloid. And there's Kat with rainbow paints dripping down her naked body! And there's . . .*

She and Sally had smiled and said hello at the lesbian film session during the Women and Film weekend. They'd never done more than smile and say

hello. Now, surrounded by women at the closing of the Phoenix she wishes she'd said how much she admired her; a dyke with red hair who was not afraid of the sun, who was *resolute*, who recorded the joy of being a dyke. *I should weep for Sally. Here, jiggling up and down on the Phoenix floor.* She thinks of Sally's death and her own inevitable death (for is she not 20 years older than Sally?), and forgets to look into Mel's eyes. The women moving closely around her blur through the tears and the smoke. Who are they?

What are your qualifications?

Hey, says Maryanne. I just heard about Louis. Or I suppose she's back to Louise now? How does it feel having three ex-lovers who've gone straight?

She feels a momentary panic. It's true, but she hasn't realised anyone has worked it out. *Well, she shouts, it's true. But Josie is married to a gay guy. And it's only because they both wanted a child.* She grins at Maryanne's unheard reply. Josie had always been a liar. So probably Mike was as straight as a die. Or was it dye? What did it mean? As straight as a dyke? It's just a phrase they say. A phase. Tanya's daughter Vanessa had been a baby dyke for a year – hung about with labyrises and dyke T-shirts and going to Algy meetings – Auckland Lesbian and Gay Youth. Now she was 'relating with' gentle and sensitive Simon who was a folkie and in Theatre Workshop.

Rebounding this morning Judy had watched the Arts programme on T.V., where balding white-fringed Peter Brooks pontificated on acting and the theatre. *A metaphor for life,* he said. He talked about his nine-hour production of the Indian epic the *Mahabharata* which he thinks is superior to 'even Shakespeare' for encompassing the whole of human experience. The stage was full of battle and death. It's an enormous saga about wars. And more wars. And the final war which decides who will be the fathers of the human race.

Whose world is this? shouted Judy at Peter Brooks as she panted up and down on the rebounder. And tonight, sitting across from Maryanne who's talking passionately at her, she shouts. *It's true. She's gone straight. It's because lesbianism is no longer seen as the vanguard of feminism. And where is feminism anyway? It's true. Vicki ran off with her professor. Male of course. Louis merged into New Age personhood. Peoplehood! And had an exhibition celebrating her new found heterosexual sexuality! And she used to run lesbian coming-out rituals!*

And now she's a fucking counsellor! Counselling us! She's shouting. Shouting with tears running down her cheeks. Maryanne's nodding so perhaps she's heard her. Mel puts comforting arms around her.

It's okay. It's okay, she murmurs. We are hungry, and thirsty, sometimes – We are barefoot and cold . . .

I cannot hear you, says Judy, What are you saying? Who are we?

REVIEW

The Exploding Frangipani: Lesbian Writing from Australia
and New Zealand

ed. Cathie Dunsford & Susan Hawthorne.

New Women's Press

\$19.95

No one is proud of dykes (not family not neighbours not friends not workmates not bosses not teachers not mentors not universities not literature societies not any nation not any ruler not any benefactor not any priest not any advocate). Only other dykes are proud of dykes.

Gillian Hanscombe

It is accepted that about ten percent of our population is homosexual. That means that ten percent of our women are lesbians/gay ladies/dykes/homosexuals or whatever name we use to identify ourselves.

However, if you think you don't know any lesbians, it's probably because they're not 'out'. There's some of us out in Grey Lynn, Ponsonby, Western Springs and Westmere, but there's a whole lot more closeted in the suburbs, in the small towns, or in positions of responsibility and power. As American Julia Penelope says:

A majority of lesbians – today in 1990 – are afraid to be honest about their lesbian identity, and with good reason.

If we look back to the past of women's writing a disproportionate number are lesbians. Perhaps women who have children have no time to write? But perhaps writers who are doubly marginalised – both as women and as deviant women – have a unique position as outsiders and observers. Certainly much of the experimental writing of the last century has been by lesbians – Dickinson, Woolf, Stein. But also many women writers have been lesbians hiding (encoding) their lesbian identity into works that could be read as heterosexual. And much of the most exciting recent feminist criticism has been the decoding of writers like Dickinson, Woolf, Cather, Mansfield.

This collection is long overdue. There are some splendid pieces in it. Nancy Stone's 'Moments' is a vivid sensual creation of the sexual act and all the appalling and difficult thoughts we have as participants. Ngahua Te Awekotuku's 'He Tika' recounts how a young Maori woman finds that her two 'aunties', two women who have lived together and yet been accepted by their community, recognise and accept her as one of them. The story suggests, as does Te Awekotuku's collection *Taburi*, that lesbianism is transhistorical. That is, that within Maori culture lesbians have always existed – women identified women.

Much of lesbian academic theorising has been based on Te Awekotuku's vision. That if we look back into the past we will find women like ourselves. Yet it is possible to say that lesbianism as we know it is very much a phenomenon of our time. Only in the twentieth century with women being able to earn independent incomes and live independently of male controlled families is there a possibility of a lesbian culture as we know it. For Dickinson, writing in the 1850s & 60s her lesbianism must be covert 'tell the truth but tell it slant'. But even today, Marewa Glover's story in this collection about a woman trying to get a farm job with her friend as a 'married couple', shows how you have to tell the truth 'slant'.

Given that there's been a lot of incisive and exciting lesbian feminist critical theory published in the last two years the introduction is disappointingly bland and directionless, or perhaps multidirectional might be a better phrase. The Introduction to its 133 pages says:

In this collection we are exploring the themes of colonialism, assimilation, solidarity, invisibility, language, art as transformation of consciousness, land struggles, aroha, culture and relationships with other women: mothers, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, friends and heterosexual women. We also explore our relationship to nature and the wilderness, to patriarchy and to corporatisation, to resistance to these things and to the institution of patriarchy . . .

Well! Well, Eva Johnson's prose poem does almost live up to this. Here's a bit of it:

God I get pissed off Sara.
 pissed off at having to always justify my Aboriginality
 to everyone –
 because I don't live in the bush,
 because I have a relationship with a woman,
 because I own my own house,
 because I won't be patronised,
 because I don't sell out for a well-paid job,
 because I look as if I have my shit together,
 and I look pretty contented and comfortable living in this
 society, and to them I don't look too Oppressed.
 As if I just turned my oppression off.
 It's not a matter of just slipping back into it again.
 Oppression didn't just come to me, I didn't choose it
 I was born into my oppression.
 I don't just think that, well today's a good day to be
 oppressed, I think I'll look oppressed.

...

Eva Johnson, Nancy Stone, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. Theirs are stories any editor would have chosen. Gillian Hanscombe and Wendy Pond and Annamarie Jagose have written intriguing and innovative pieces. And for those of us in the community Sue Fitchett's moving poem 'And (Partner)', Miriam Saphira's jaunty 'Lipstick' and Louise Simone's hilarious satire 'The Exploding Frangipani' are all pieces that give us a sense of ourselves. But I'd have liked to know why the editors chose the other stories/poems/pieces. These are not all new pieces. Some, they say, have been published before. They acknowledge some of these. But they do not acknowledge the printing of Wendy Pond's lyrical and sexual 'Love Affair with Boats' in *Islands* 35. Wendy's story won an Air New Zealand short story prize but Air New Zealand refused to print it in their *In Flight* magazine because of its content. Isn't this the sort of detail we'd like to have in a lesbian collection?

Given that this is the first Australasian lesbian collection there are some extraordinary omissions. I can only speak for New Zealand. Where is Heather McPherson? – undoubtedly one of our finest poets. And when I say *our* I mean New Zealand contemporary, as well as *ours*. Where are Frances Cherry, Annabel Fagan, Renee? – all published, and all out lesbians.

An introduction to a collection needs to tell its readers why these particular pieces were chosen. Particularly if it's the first collection for a community whose identity is both fragile and at risk. For me, a lesbian thinking and reading about what makes me what I am, here and now in 1991 in Auckland, this book is a disappointment. I wanted an introduction that excited and challenged me, and stories and poems that I could identify with, or that would disturb and challenge me. I wanted stories and poems that would make me think – *yes* – this is what it's like to be a dyke.

For those readers who are not in the ten percent – well, it's a great title, but the selection of contents, like the pleasantly picturesque cover – fail to live up to its suggestions of explosive sensuality.

However this is a first. I look forward to the next. Good on you Cathie and Susan for your courage in speaking for us.

This review was written for the *Sunday Star*, where it appeared in a shortened form.

BEITH MOON

beith (Celtic month of beginning and symbolised by the birch tree) is less a way to hide an identity than to celebrate a new beginning for my creative and lesbian selves. It is also a way to honour my Celtic roots. In the patriarchal world I juggle three jobs (including teaching English Literature and Women's Studies) with the commitment my partner and I have to each other and to raising our two sons.

'PASSING WOMEN' RAP

used to be in days gone by
that 'passing women'
lived by the rules.

they dressed as men to 'better'
their lot, but still, inside,
they were wimmin too.

didn't hurt their sisters – not
at all – 'married' wimmin,
treated them all right.

now-a-days, the rules have changed
the 'passing women'
don't dress as men -

they dress the part of the top
exec. and carry
a briefcase – not a heart.

from inside, out, these women
are men – and play by
the rules of the patriarch.

don't know their sisters – and
don't care – 'sisterhood'!
it's a joke to them!

they've got theories all down pat
for the way they play –
screw the rest – they're O.K.

these 'passing women' don't count
for me – they've sold their
souls to 'the boys' you see.

YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE

'Fuck!'

Now that I have your attention
let me tell you how it's been
for me.

How I have lived in
someone else's skin
and never could get
attention unless I
did some mad, outrageous
thing.

'You think that's what
I'm doing
now?'

So let me tell you how it's been
for me
I never was the daughter
that my parents wanted.
Gave that up at fifteen
as I sweated under
some shit's 'lust' –
a girl who dared to beat
the boys at their own
game.

'So I asked for rape, but
then we always do –
don't we?'

So let me tell you how it's been
for me.
I never was the wife
my husband wanted.
Couldn't hack the sex.
His sweat reminded me
of something else
and his straightjacket
didn't fit – no matter
how I tried.

'So I asked for the punch
the way we always do –
didn't I?'

But let me tell you how it's been
for me.
I tried to be the mother
that my children needed.
Didn't think I came too close –
and plenty people

gave the nod to that.
Funny how the children
love me
as I am!

‘So what you hear’s
“not good enough!”
- you’re right!’

But let me tell you how it is
for me.
I never was the person
I could be
until I saw myself
in my own eyes,
not someone else’s
and knew that what I
felt was not
unique.

‘So I don’t need
your attention any
longer . . .’

BETTY DON

Betty Don has recently retired after 35 years as a primary teacher. She lives in Hamilton and is attending Waikato University, majoring in Women's Studies. After a life-long interest in the spoken and written word, Betty now has time to write poetry and short stories, and is a founding member of 'Scratching the Surface', a Waikato based lesbian writers group.

THE GAMES WE PLAY

Writing lewd poetry
is not my scene,
but at the moment
I must admit
I've a one-track mind.
There's nothing
I want to do more
than make love
with you. Therefore
I was not surprised
at my reaction
when you said,
while talking of
championship tennis,
'I'd rather watch
the women play
than the men.
With men it's

all bang bang!
The instant picture
in my mind
was not of tennis.

With men, 'two love'
may be the score.
With women, 'to love'
is something more.

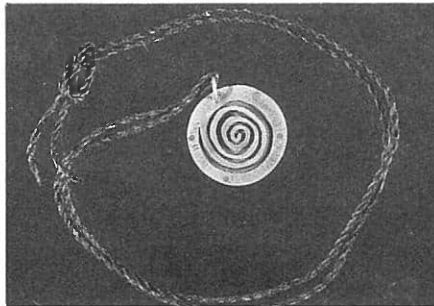
BLADE

I am a silversmithereen who lives and works in Christchurch. I have been making jewellery for about six years now and for the last year I have been able to devote a lot more time to it than in the past.

I moved to Christchurch just over a year ago and before that I lived on the West Coast where I worked with Kate Ewing. Kate, Jacquelyn Beri and I have the Lynx Gallery cum workshop here, which opened last year.

I work mainly with silver but enjoy using copper and brass as well. One day I hope to have the skills to make all the designs I have in my head. At the moment a lot of my time is spent making the more 'traditional' lesbian jewellery, which is sold in our gallery and through women's bookshops. I enjoy making one-off original pieces and find doing commissioned work can be an exciting challenge, as it involves combining someone else's ideas with my skills. All my life I have had a passion for spirals in any form, and a lot of my work incorporates a spiral shape.

At the moment I have another job to support myself: my goal is to one day make my living solely from being a smithereen, although in the current economic climate for women, jewellery is hardly the first thing on shopping lists.



Spiral pendant, silver with copper rivets



Small spiral earrings, silver; flame pendant, silver and brass; spiral pendant, silver and copper rivets

Flame earrings, brass and copper

CHRIS ATMORE

Chris Atmore describes herself as a 'lesbian-feminist post-structuralist', the contradictions of which she finds both confusing and enlivening. Her previous political and academic work has included feminist organising against pornography and child sexual abuse. At present she is completing her PhD in sociology at Victoria University, where she tutors in social inequality and research methods.

EVERYTHING STILL ISN'T FOR EVERYBODY:

some notes on lesbian social science research and post-structuralism *

In 1987 I carried out a piece of research which was eventually published as "Everything Isn't for Everybody": Some Experiences of being Lesbian in the Workplace' (1990). Not long after that, I discovered post-structuralism (or rather in keeping with the theories, post-structuralism discovered me).¹

The 'fit' between post-structuralist theories and explicitly lesbian social science work² is an imperfect one. Some aspects of post-structuralism offer exciting and powerful applications for lesbian research; others threaten to undermine much existing work and question the entire basis of lesbian identity politics.³ I am concerned here with some of the potentially positive applications.

* Thanks to Allison Kirkman for comments on a draft of this paper.

¹ Post-structuralist theories including their feminist variants which interest me the most here, can be off-putting and heavy going for anyone not already familiar with them. These ideas have made far more inroads in areas like film and literary criticism than in social theory. On the latter, Weedon (1987), Harding (1986), Lather (1989) and Nicholson (1990) are helpful.

² This is opposed to academic work merely carried out by lesbians.

³ Two examples of work located in this ambivalence are Kitzinger (1987) and Phelan (1989).

The structure of 'Everything Isn't for Everybody' ('EFE') is an amalgam of textbook social science (from Introduction through to Appendices, with appropriate jargon) and a feminist attention to the politics of research. Not surprisingly given the constraints of Honours degree requirements and standards, it is the feminist intentions which suffer. For example, the headlong career towards work deadlines made the research far less of a participatory exercise than was promised by my discussion of feminist research methods.⁴

However what interests me here is the way the research was written. One of the themes I have found most helpful in feminist post-structuralist thinking is its extension of the feminist critique of objectivity to an emphasis that even – and especially – the language we use is not transparent. How we structure our accounts of oppression, even when we are trying to do emancipatory work, can lock into the same relations of power we are trying to oppose.⁵ We therefore need to pay increasing attention to how we write and interpret texts. These texts can range from a poem for a lesbian newsletter to a paper for a medical journal: both are equally socially constructed and both use certain rhetorical devices to guide the reader toward a preferred interpretation.⁶

Feminist post-structuralism suggests that we make these constructions explicit, not simply because this is now 'better' scholarship but because in emphasising how we put together our accounts we are less likely to universalise on behalf of all women (or whatever group we happen to be talking about). Instead the idea is to stress that the knowledge of each person, including especially the narrator, is only partial and is a product of their particular social location (Haraway, 1988; Rich, 1987). Any text is not the last

⁴ For instance, I sent all of the participants a copy of the completed report, but did not seek their active ongoing input – a much more time-consuming process.

⁵ For a powerful example, see Chandra Talpade Mohanty's (1984) deconstruction of Western feminist accounts of the 'Third World Woman'.

⁶ See for example, Krieger (1983); Clifford and Marcus (1986); Kitzinger (1987); Lather (1989); Peters and Rothenbuhler (1989); Shapiro (1989); Jones (1990). Many post-structuralists can be just as anti-feminist as the next man. I see the increasing popularity of post-structuralism in academic settings as giving us permission to do what we have always tried but been disallowed because it was 'not objective enough'. Some politicised post-structuralisms urge us as feminists to go even further in recognising that our own constructions are not exempt from these challenges.

word on the matter but only a contribution which deliberately leaves a space for other voices. Feminist post-structuralists try to decentre themselves as narrators and to be explicit about their own positions and assumptions in constructing the text.

Alison Jones provided me with a useful approach to the issue of self-reflexivity, in her article, 'Am "I" in the Text? The Positioned/Partial Subject and Writing in the Feminist Classroom' 1990.⁷ When I applied the question in her title to my own text, the answer on first re-reading appeared to be 'no'. This seemed connected to the particular context of lesbian academic work.⁸ I structure my thoughts around some possible interpretations of Jones' question, and a series of (not totally fictitious) crises.

Am I in the Text? (I)

The situation of a lesbian academic is a tenous one at best. Revealing a lesbian identity is highly likely to decrease and increase one's chances of being hired and fired respectively, especially if one is also politically active (e.g. American Sociological Association's Task Group on Homosexuality, 1982). But less dramatic than this and equally important, whether we are lecturers or not, is the effect of being known as a lesbian researcher on the status and reception of our research (e.g. Plummer, 1981b). It is not simply the topic's status as potentially 'controversial' and open to 'biased' interpretations, but as if as lesbians we are suffused with subjectivity.⁹ Anything written by a lesbian is automatically particular rather than having any claim to the universal. We are further marginalised in a different sense when the content of courses and

⁷ The section in the article where Jones reassesses her doctoral thesis, 'What to do with one's own text after meeting postmodernism' (pp 13-20), has been especially helpful to me.

⁸ Although probably not unique to it. However in general, self-conscious accounts of research carried out by a member of an oppressed group, where the group is in some way also the specific 'topic', and which also addresses post-structuralist issues, seem to be rare. Feminist post-structuralists raise the question in relation to women, but they are not usually members of the particular groups they research (e.g. Lather, 1989; Patai, 1988).

⁹ Which we are of course, but no more than anybody else.

books ensure that lesbians remain peripheral to social science (e.g. Plummer, 1981a; Adam, 1986).¹⁰ Am I in the text? Barely.

Am I in the Text? (II)

When I try to do academic work I feel sometimes caught between being too academic and not being academic enough. I try to write within the limits of academic requirements (including until recently, needing to get as good grades as I could), from a basis of lesbian politics. The fact that I am writing for two constituencies which hardly overlap produces a dilemma. The different groups have differing accessibility requirements. On the academic side, I am constantly looking over my shoulder. I want to convince, so I explain in 'EFE' the significance of a pink triangle badge, and what 'coming out' means (I can take nothing for granted). When this paper is eventually published by the department, at my instigation (unlike, as far as I know, the invitations extended to the other contributors to the series), the juggling between the poles becomes a distinct source of anxiety.

Elizabeth Ellsworth (1988) describes the 'illicit pleasures' lesbian viewers of the film *Personal Best* took in 'watching them get it wrong' about lesbians. This is also a favourite reading mode of mine (when the alternative is *Three Men and a Little Lady* you take what you can get). But a nagging worry begins. I read Susan Krieger's huffy dismissal of Deborah Goleman Wolf's *The Lesbian Community* as

... written like a tourist's guide to the San Francisco lesbian-feminist scene – [it] does not further the kind of understanding this essay seeks to encourage

(Krieger, 1982: 97 n13).

Wolf's book 'often-times treats lesbians as specimens' (Glikman, 1980: 415). Another lesbian review is more positive, but points out the difficulties and

¹⁰ Even the critiques of social science, like the field itself, marginalise lesbians by subsuming us under such labels as 'homosexual'; and are, like the texts, almost always North American or British in origin.

pitfalls in an 'outsider' study – 'I found myself wincing' (Star, 1980: 417). Boston's *Gay Community News* pounced with delight on Wolf's captioning of a photo, in the first edition of the book, as 'a lesbian couple showing affection' (*ibid*). I enjoy this too, but now the doubt's really set in. It's all very well to watch these outsiders getting it wrong,¹¹ but for a lesbian to fall into the same traps seems particularly embarrassing.

Admittedly the Victoria University Department of Sociology and Social Work Working Papers series isn't up to the big time of *Signs* and the *Journal of Homosexuality*, but still . . . Next I take to heart Renato Rosaldo's (1987) comment that in anthropology texts, the 'subjects' rarely laugh and enjoy themselves. My paper is redeemed in this respect by my liberal use of quotes from the lesbians who participated. Looking back, these are the parts I find most interesting, but they are situated in a format which implies that they are secondary, illustrations for what was 'really' going on. They are 'treated as garnishes and condiments, tasty only in relationship to the main course, the sociologist' (Richardson, 1988: 205). Am I in the text? I hope not! (In fact, take my name off the cover!)

Am I in the Text? (III)

There is a lot of discussion among feminist post-structuralists about the need to work against the construction of research 'subjects' as Others. Generally 'Others' is conceived of in a doubled sense: in terms of the dynamics of the research relationship and due to the 'researched' being different to, and often in a position of less power than, the researcher.¹² For me as a lesbian, this doubled claim of Othering is somewhat problematic. I have not escaped tendencies to objectify inherent in the research process, and I am aware that the differences between me and the lesbians who participated in 'EFE' worked mainly to my privilege, which is not to be minimised. But on another level, I also do lesbian academic work as an Other.

¹¹ Wolf was heterosexual at least at the time of researching the book.

¹² Jones' (1990) discussion of her position as a Palagi doing research with Pacific Island girls addresses both issues of Othering.

The impulse for my work in sociology has mainly been fuelled by my own experiences as a lesbian. In 1983, for example, I wrote two papers on issues surrounding lesbians' decisions to come out to their families of origin, and the reactions when they did. It was more than coincidental that I was coming out to my own family at the time, but this does not appear in either paper. In 1987 I wrote two Honours essays about the Homosexual Law Reform Bill campaign: here at least I claimed my own involvement as a source of knowledge if not the inspiration for the work.¹³

In 'EFE' I actually state that the study '... began from my experiences as a lesbian in the workplace ...' (Atmore, 1990:22), but I don't take this any further. Part of the reason for not locating myself specifically was my never-made-explicit assumption that I had nothing to contribute – well, no distinct experiences of discrimination as an out lesbian in a fairly liberal environment. But when I looked at the paper again, I read that the study would

... attempt to elicit qualitatively some factors which influence lesbians' perception of the workplace and their position within it, and to identify coping strategies used by lesbians in their everyday work lives

(Atmore, 1990: 16)

And I conclude that coming out 'may not be the once-and-for-all process sometimes suggested by research, but is one coping strategy among many' (Atmore, 1990:47). Lesbian oppression is not only expressed in overt examples of workplace discrimination:

¹³ Changes in the way I have researched 'lesbian topics' have paralleled changes in my political beliefs. When I look in retrospect at the work I did when I first came out, I seemed to be trying to prove that we were as 'normal' as everyone else. This stance was highlighted one night when I spotted a woman I knew at the Railways Tavern and we shouted across the room in unison – 'you're in my deviance class!' (And see Kitzinger, 1987). In 1987 the defeat of Part II of the Bill and the vociferous opposition mobilised by the right led me to concentrate on the strategies and problems of a social movement, and the ideologies and symbols used by all sides in a political campaign. Now in 1991 I'm working on my PhD on some media constructions of lesbians in Aotearoa, and I've switched from a focus on lesbians as stigmatised or even as political campaigners, to trying to deconstruct dominant discourses of compulsory heterosexuality. In my present work it is not simply easier to focus on 'them' rather than 'us'; it puts the Other research dynamic in a new light.

The things that have happened to me . . . have been so subtle that there's nothing you can actually put your finger on

(Jane, Atmore, 1990:45).

Am I in the text? No – and yes.¹⁴

Everything isn't for Everybody – but I Wish it Was

These three different interpretations of the question, 'am I in the text?' all seem related to a central tension. In contesting marginalisation and particularity, and wanting to convince not just the already-persuaded, I wish to be as authoritatively heavy as I possibly can. I don't think my paper goes to the extent of research which

. . . serves to incorporate deviant and potentially challenging versions of reality into the explanatory framework of the investigator, thus liquidating them.

(Kitzinger, 1987: 70).

I still think 'EFE' makes a useful if limited contribution. However, it does bring the participants into line with my views without being explicit about the process.

'Everything isn't for everybody' was originally from an interview with 'Mary', a statement about oppression.¹⁵ I wanted particularly in the wake of the defeat of the anti-discrimination initiative in the Bill, to come up with evidence of discrimination which I already knew existed, and to present it in an acceptable academic form. My wish that everything would be for everybody also expressed itself in the structure of my text. But 'everything isn't for everybody' can also be read as a claim against universalising and as a call for

¹⁴ This was brought home to me when I was interviewed about 'EFE' by a *Dominion* journalist whom I knew from my secondary school, 'pre-lesbian' days.

¹⁵ Mary said, 'I used to have the notion that if anyone worked hard enough they could have what they liked . . . that laws did protect people . . . really naive sort of basic ideas . . . [but the Homosexual Law Reform Bill conflict] brought to my awareness that everything isn't for everybody . . . that only certain people get rewards no matter what you do because of your economics or class or sexual orientation, race and all those sorts of things' (Atmore, 1990, p 44)

explicit positioning, for texts which specify 'something' and 'somebody'. It is this narrative decentering and positioning which was lacking from my own text. This was not inevitable; 'I' was there all along.

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CHRISTINE REREMOANA PAUL

Te Arawa, Ngati Awa, Tuhoe. Born 1960; 1986–87 Certificate Craft Design Maori Graduate; 1988-89 Diploma Design Maori Graduate; 1989 exhibited Rotorua Artists, Rotorua Art Gallery (Sculpture Award), commissioned to make mural at Cafeteria Waiariki Polytechnic; 1990 exhibited Maori Women Artists, Rotorua and Lesbian Artists, Rotorua, commissioned to make mural in DSW foyer, Rotorua, also numerous logo and t-shirt designs; 1991 commissioned to make mural in Family Violence Prevention Co-ordinating Committee head office, Wellington.

Kia ora koutou nga wahine takatapu

I was born in Whakatane in 1960, and lived in the Bay of Plenty until I left school in 1976 and moved to Christchurch. Looking back at the 'culture shock', the only positive thing to happen while I was there, was that I came out as a lesbian.

I had always enjoyed drawing and creating and it wasn't until I returned north to Rotorua and was lucky enough to work on a Maori Arts and Crafts skills course that I began to realise art was an area I could work in. This led to the Craft Design Maori course at Waiariki Polytech in 1985. It was the Maori content that attracted me.

It was very difficult being the only lesbian Maori and 'out'. By the time I graduated in 1990, lesbian visibility had increased to four, one of whom became my lover. This is my first year 'out' after graduation and I am experiencing the freedom to explore and express lesbian, Maori and contemporary themes without the restriction of homophobia, racism and sexism that is typical of institutions, though I acknowledge the support of the few.

The themes to my work are women-based: Maori women in mythology,

Maori women of our pasts. I explore traditional Maori compositions and styles and develop them to express my concerns. Although the forms and symbols I work with are Maori, I do not refer only to Maori people. My involvement in the Women's Refuge movement spans seven years. This and my own life's experiences is the strong women's base from which I work.

I am currently working on a commissioned mural for the Family Violence Prevention Co-ordinating Committee at Wellington head office (talk about networking!). It is a multimedia triptych of harakeke, wood, paint.

My lover and I are setting up a workshop from scratch and raising an instant family of two teenage women, hens, cats and a dog.



Whaiapo, 600 × 1200 cm, custom board, acrylic paint, 1991



Untitled, 152 × 27 cm, acrylic on canvas, 1991

Hineahuone, 152 × 37 cm, acrylic on canvas, 1991

CRISSIE LOUISE SMITH

I am named after my maternal grandmother Crissie Louise Beattie from Ireland. My ancestry is mostly Scots (Highland) with Irish (northern) and Maori (East Coast). I came out as a lesbian when I was 16 (in 1981). Writing for me is a very rare event, I wrote this piece early 1991. I'm presently in my first year studying for a diploma in computer graphic design at Whanganui Polytechnic.

Gertrude believes that a dyke must have strong political principles and must be able to vocalise them in any situation and that it is a serious compromise for the revolution if you do not.

Gertrude has a high profile and standing
in the political lesbians circle because
Gertrude can do this
Gertrude reads lots of books
Gertrude believes in women loving women
Maori Sovereignty bi-culturalism and the working class
and is able to speak for five minutes and 15 seconds on
each subject

Gertrude goes home and tells her woman lover
that she is having an affair with another woman
(G believes in free relationships).

It happens to be the same woman that G's lover called
a racist bitch last week
but G can't remember exactly why that was
and it doesn't matter anyway
cos this woman means nothing to G

Gertrude's lover starts to bleed from her eyes
Gertrude tells her not to stain the new white couch

Gertrude's lover tells G
that some of her family are passing through
and they're going to stay for the weekend
G tells her it is not possible
because she's hosting the lesbian anti-racist group
meeting
with the issue of bi-culturalism from a white lesbian
perspective
so they can't have men and non-whites in the house
and after all it is G's house
bought with the hard earned money
of her grandfather who worked down the mines in
Australia
and died because of it
wealthy, working class, and dead

Gertrude's lover starts to bleed from her heart

Gertrude is going to see her folks and takes her lover
with her but she leaves her at the door
Gertrude's lover's feet are bleeding all over the doormat
the dog licks it up
G finds her lover on the back doorstep with the dog and
tells her to come in but then accidentally shuts her in
the hot water cupboard. G's mother in search of a tea
towel finds her there but can't quite see her and shuts
her fingers in the door
Gertrude's lover bleeds from her hands

When they get home Gertrude announces that after visiting her
family she's a bloody mess.

DEBORAH JONES

At the end of 1991 I will have been a committed feminist for 20 years. This is the single most significant choice that has shaped my adult life: it seems that all my other choices have flowed from this source. At nearly 40 I have entered a fundamental crisis of meaning and being, and I don't know in what shape I will emerge.

LONG TERM LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT BORING

This is for Hilary Lapsley and Rosemary Curb who said the reason no-one writes much about long term lesbian relationships is probably that they are boring.

A couple of years ago I was talking to Linda,
sitting at the kitchen table.
Things were rough between you and me, then;
I was scared I was staying with you
for all the wrong reasons –
fear of being alone
fear of what my family would say
fear about money, the future, old age.

Once before I had stayed
long past closing time
I was scared I was doing it again.
I didn't know how to tell if I was.

When Linda asked me why I was staying
Why I stayed, when it was so hard

I said: I guess she has just always seemed to really
love me.
And I knew you did.

A tree growing into the side of the cliff
looks as if any minute
it will slide into the sea.
The forces of gravity seem against it.
Then you see the roots, their strength,
digging in.

When I fell in love with someone else, I panicked.
I staggered around
like I'd been punched in the heart.

We met by the lake to discuss terms.
We wanted freedom, love, everything,
just like we always have.
That's why we're lesbians.

We were at a conference the other week,
sitting eating at the table. Morrigan asked you
if we were lovers.
She knew we were together, of course.
She wanted to know if we were – after seven years –
Still lovers.

I'm glad she asked, I wish we all talked more about sex.
I'm glad you said yes.

Ruth died a couple of years ago;
we know it can happen any time.
I want love that can face that,
Not just with you.
There's a kind of love I know about now,
tough and homemade, transcending like and dislike;

not just for lovers, strong, wiry, a Bailey bridge
thrown over the void.

I want all of us
to love each other enough
to make a bridge we can walk forward on
stronger than decay.

We love against the grain:
swimming upstream, we enjoy the fight against
the current,
feeling our strength.
We love to bask in the quiet pools upstream;
sometimes we rest there
in the peaceful waters.

WHEN YOU HIT ME

When you hit me
when your fist smashed my head
against the door post

my spirit left my body.
From across the room
I watched a horror movie
unfolding.

I told two women.
One didn't believe me.
The other felt powerless to help.
So I kept it to myself.

Now I remember a time before it happened.
I remember crossing a bridge at sunset

to meet you.

The sky was huge, pink, orange
above the dark hill.

I felt such joy.

ELEANOR BASSETT

Eleanor Bassett was born in the Waikato in 1944 and at present lives in Torbay close to the sound of the sea with her daughter and two cats. She spent ten years living and working overseas and since her return has been a woodwork teacher at Auckland's alternative school, Metro. Her poetry has appeared in the *Womenspace Journal*.

TO TERRY, WITH LOVE

These few weeks
that I have known you
Laughingly
Lovingly
have plucked at my mind
with quick-sand force.

When I lie next to you
my arms ache
body cracks
I slide into you
and wonder
if I am caught
in your drift-net.

Greenpeace warriors
who set the fishes free
leave me entangled
in my
Rainbow
ecstasy.

ELIZABETH KEREKERE

Elizabeth Kerekere was born a Scorpion Snake in Turanganui-a-Kiwa, 1965. She's been known as the artist in her family for years and is slowly working her way to an exhibition. Elizabeth is currently based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Project where she works as a Project Officer.

Artists Elizabeth Kerekere, Lauren Lethal and Jane Zusters spoke to a capacity audience at the Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, on Sunday 27 January 1991. The session, 'Lesbians Discuss Heterosexual Visibility in the Visual Arts', was facilitated by Madeline Macnamara. This transcript was edited by the artists and Megan Cook and first appeared in *Lesbians Newsletter*.

PREPARING THE ART WORLD FOR MAORI DYKES

Tena ra koutou katoa.

Na te mea tuatahi, e whae, e Papatuanuku,
tena koe.

Tena koe na o hua nei e whakamahana nga mokopuna.

E nga marae whanui o e motu, tena ra koutou.

E nga tini aitua o te motu, haere. Haere ki nga tupuna kua riro
ki te po.

E nga kaitiaki e mahi ana i nga wharetaonga
o te motu kia kaha e hoa.

No Turanganui-a-Kiwa au

Ko Rongowhakaata, ko Ngai Taimanuhiri,

ko Te Aitanga a Hauiti, ko Te Aitanga a Mahaki, ko

Kahungunu, ko Ngati Oneone, ko Te Arawa nga iwi.

Nga mihi atu ki a koutou, e nga wahine
Maori, e nga wahine takatapui, e nga hoa,
taku hoa wahine, ko Peati, naumai haeremai.
Kia ora huihui mai tatou katoa.

I've been working for a lot of years on issues to do with Maori people, Maori youth, Maori wimin, areas of sexual abuse. This is the first time I've ever had to speak publicly on something with lesbian in the title and I'm really excited about it. I've chosen to express my view of heterosexual visibility in the arts by focussing on one particular aspect of it, and it's a subject that's close to my heart: sex. I look briefly at the open sexuality depicted in traditional Maori carving and then how Maori women artists are choosing to express their experience of sexuality now. I'll conclude that only Maori lesbian artists are capable of producing work that is unrelated to men.

In earlier times, in so-called traditional times, when we wore grass skirts, slept in wooden houses on the floor, carvings were very explicit. If we accept that art was a method used then, as now, to reinforce the order of the times, we can also accept that heterosexual sex was an open, accepted and very obvious part of life – I'd say it was rampant. In so many different areas that we looked it was always there. [Slides shown of Te Hau ki Turanga pare or lintel, and Teremoe, a large waka, both in the National Museum.]

The pare shows what we think is Papatuanuku and Ranginui in sexual embrace, I presume while Papa was producing her 70 male offspring and before their eldest child Tane Mahuta ripped them apart to let light into the world. Tane went on to be the God of Creation, no less, created the first woman and abused their first daughter. Creation myths aside, this is a common image used on carved houses in reference to the myths. They are also common on pataka (storehouses) in reference to abundance and the fertility of the land and the tribe.

This is a favourite of mine. [Slide of Tuterangiwhakaea carving – see illustration previous page] This is from the Ngati Pikiao tribe of Te Arawa in Rotorua. It is said to be one of several carvings from a building carved by Tuterangiwhakaea. The building was probably a pataka and the carving a

paepae (threshold), or rauawa (sideboard) of the storehouse. Now, some say this is an ancestress and she should be upright like a poupou. I think whatever position she is in, it's quite clear what she is doing. Perhaps it wasn't Tuterangiwhakaea who carved this – maybe it was his lesbian daughter.

Another feature of this time was the exaggerated sexual organs, especially male sexual organs. Very explicit detail was commonplace. Things began to change about the time of the missionaries. I think they had what could be called an unhealthy interest in heterosexual visibility in the visual arts. They set about an almost embarrassingly active collection policy of sexual organs. It's true, this is not heresy or hearsay. There are many recorded incidents of this throughout the country. Apparently it got to the stage that in some tribal areas they wouldn't even carve them on for fear of this religion of closet penis worshippers. To be fair though, on some carvings it's not clear whether the organ was chopped off or whether it fell off by itself.

I've always been taught that weaving was the appropriate work of women, that in a marae the work of women complemented the carving of the men and that both were an essential element of the whare – they provided the balance and they complemented each other. As well as the brilliant work in weaving that our women continue, Maori women artists in more recent times have claimed other media to express themselves.

Whatever the issue, whether it's the Treaty of Waitangi, colonisation, abuse or sexuality, it's very much in a heterosexual context. [Slides shown of contemporary Maori women artists, including Robyn Kahukiwa, Shona Rapira-Davies, Emily Karaka and Haatea, exhibiting at the National Museum and Wellington City Art Gallery.]

A lot of Maori thinking is that we need that complementary thing. To be whole, it has to have male there. I've come to the conclusion that for female Maori artists to express themselves as separate from men then they're probably going to have to be lesbian, and since many Maori lesbians want the approval of their Maori male family and colleagues and the women who support them, I think possibly we might have to be separatist as well.

We've been told that there were lesbians in ancient Maori times and I've got no doubt that they existed. I do doubt the level of acceptability that they

had: we don't see a lot of carvings of women together, we don't see our love-making glorified and captured in wood for future generations to admire and emulate. I think it's left a huge gap in our cultural heritage.

It's even a problem, the accepting of the labels. To say that you're an artist in Maori families where everyone's assumed to be creative in some form or other, it's like you're putting on airs to say, 'well I'm an artist'. In a Maori community calling yourself lesbian is an insult to the family (as I'm sure it is in most communities), you're not doing your part to add to the total of mokopuna that are running around. So there are lots of binds in accepting all the labels necessary to call yourself a Maori lesbian artist.

I think arty people like to think themselves very liberal but this is an area with room for improvement. One of the things the art world could do to prepare for Maori dykes is to say 'this is a lesbian artist' when they have their work, even when it's not a lesbian exhibition. And to say that 'this lesbian artist is in a relationship with this lesbian whose work is over here.' Things that are very usual in the labelling of exhibitions. Another aspect is that the perspective is different: it's not the same as Pakeha lesbians, or lesbians of colour, it's not the same as Maori women, and they may need to accept that this is an experience of being Maori that's not connected with our men, that's not connected with the tribe, and that's not connected with complementary roles of males and females.

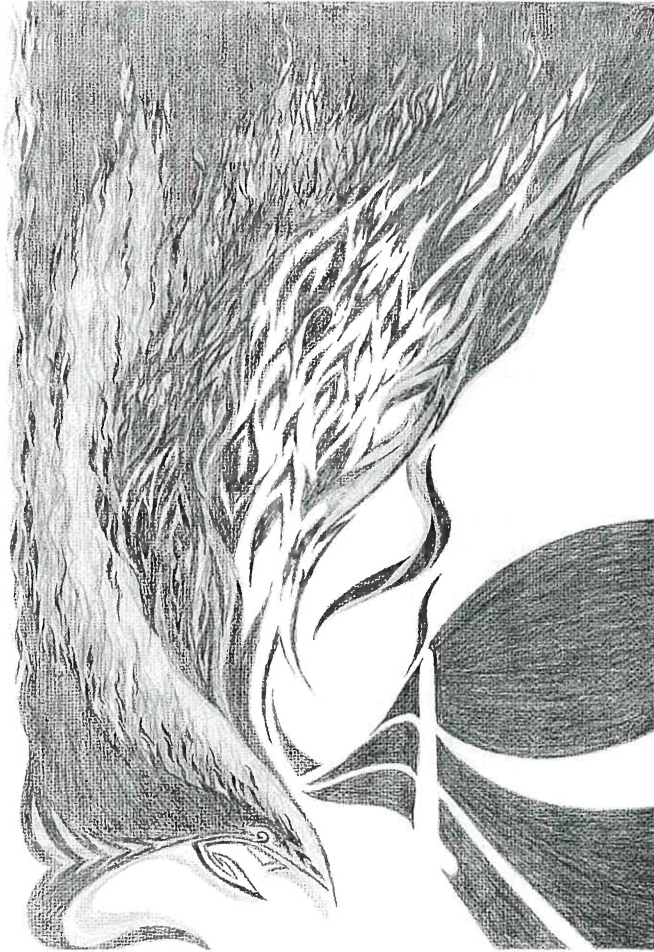
When one of the first Maori lesbian hui was held in Auckland in 1988, the women were quite hard put to find images in traditional Maori art that were about women with women. So they created their own. The next year we had the hui in Wellington, and we claimed the work 'takatapui', which means intimate companion of the same sex and it can be used for either male or female. I think that's a word that will probably stick with us.

I think the art world has moved a long way in recent times in terms of taonga and Maori collections and in their institutions, and so although white racism isn't directly addressed, biculturalism has become the solution to our problems. So I'm sure the art world will find a way to bypass those dirty words 'lesbophobia' and 'homophobia' and come up with something really

positive. A way that they can openly support and fund a lesbian visibility in the visual arts.

Mai te Tairawhiti, mai te Taitokerau, mai te Taihauauru, mai te Waka a Maui, Te Waipounamu, mai te Moana nui a Kiwa, e nga whanaunga o te motu, tena koutou, tena koutou, kia ora tatou katoa.

Postscript: I had also debated finishing this talk with some of my own work. My paid employment is very much Maori oriented. I find my art is about women, about lesbians. It's about heat and passion and fire, completely removed from men. It's my art work that best expresses being a lesbian separatist. Unfortunately, I couldn't have any completed works of mine here. Of course, this is the problem when your friends are spread throughout the country and you don't speak to your ex-lovers any more. I'll just have to see you all at an exhibition opening of my work.



I'm black inside but I'm a rainbow when you look at me. 50 × 70 cm.
Pencil on cartridge. Sketch for painting based on a song 'Wahine Toa'
by Mahina Tocker.

FRAN MARNO

LAUGHING WITH THE GIRLS

She could be your daughter
propping up the bar
with the bar dykes
and
laughing
and eyeing the women

She could be your daughter
out on the town
with the girls
got you worried?
And so you should be.
How's she going to

find a man
get pregnant
be a mother
wife
drudge
sludge
slave

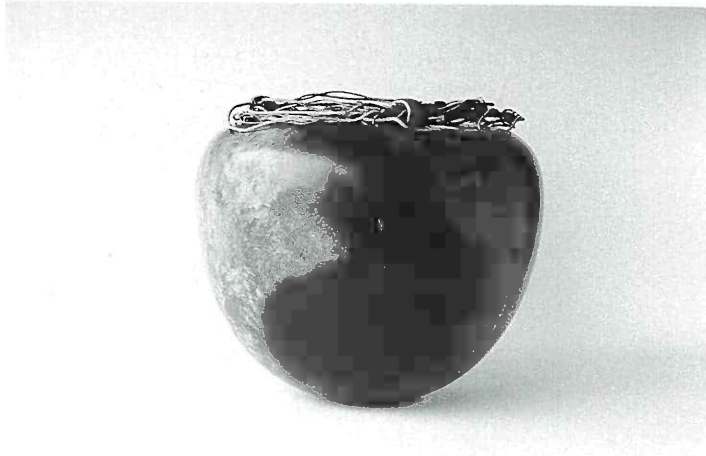
if she hangs out with my girls
laughing.

GAEL MONTGOMERIE

These pieces reflect my current exploration of wood as a medium for surface decoration. I use sycamore for its silvery paleness and because in Dunedin it is a readily available weedout of our public parks and reserves where it competes over-rigorously with our slower growing natives.

Acrylic colours are stippled, rubbed or sponged straight on to the sanded form which is sometimes scorched as well with an oxyacetylene torch. The growth ring at the neck of the vessels is formed from vines, or the tip twigs of pliable species such as willow and eucalyptus, and is symbolic of the life force of that tree which is still a part of the pieces made from it.

My work is available in New Zealand at Compendium Gallery, Devonport; Crafts Council Gallery, Wellington and Dunedin; Cave Rock Gallery, Christchurch and at the del Mano Gallery in Los Angeles and Ten Arrow Gallery in Boston.



Sycamore, acrylic paint, twigs, 200 × 180 mm



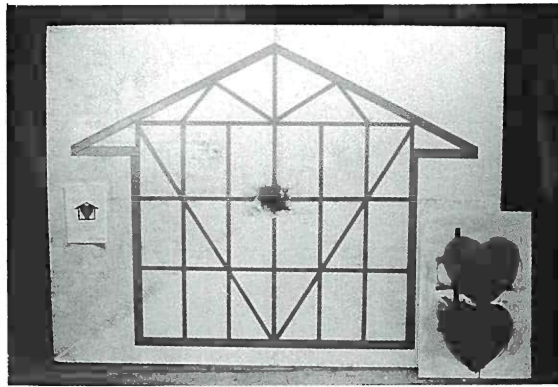
Elm, vine, 370 × 140 mm

Sycamore, acrylic paint, twigs and vine, 350 × 200 mm

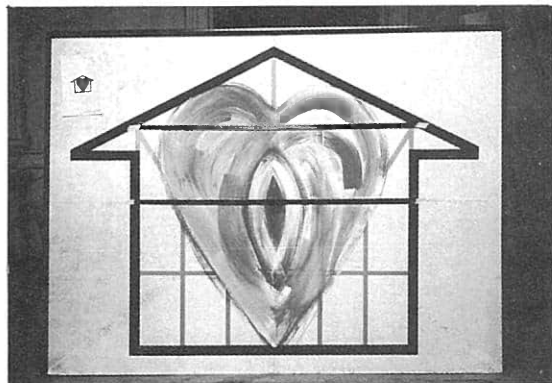
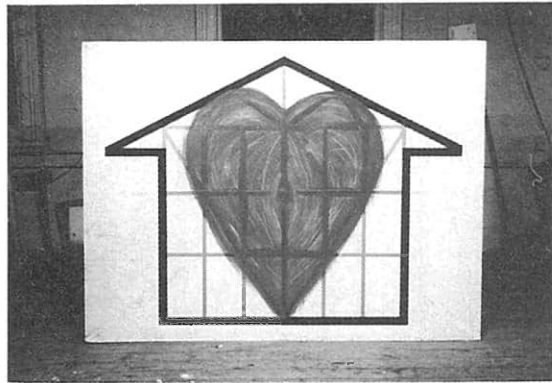
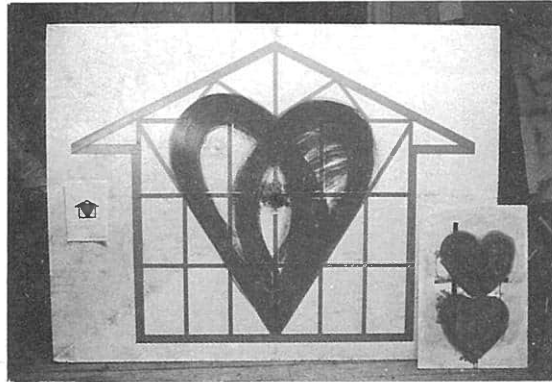
GAIL WRIGHT

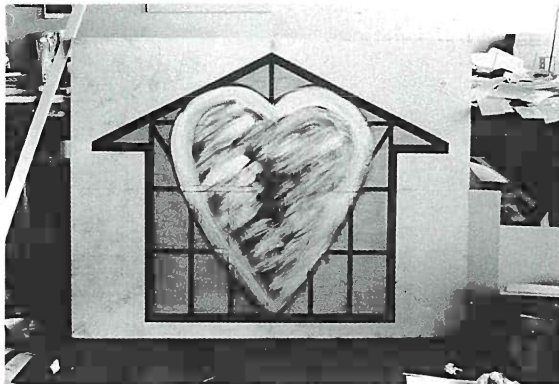
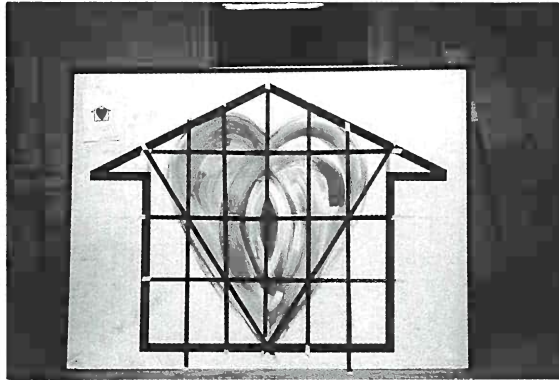
I am happy this work is being placed in an appropriate context. Regarding the painting and its process – which is why I took the photographs – I have very little written in my diary at that time.

What I remember is that the work took about two months, each stage of the painting being left to sit and be viewed. The idea of the work was to produce a structure on which I would be expressive and gestural – something that doesn't come easily to me. I suppose this was one of the most layered paintings I had ever done in my bid to learn and teach myself about painting. There – I have told you very little of the meaning of the work for me personally – but very sexually based.



House/Heart Painting (1987), acrylic on hardboard, 1200 × 1500 mm
A sequence of 6 photographs of the painting and its process.





GEORGINA SMYTH

ON THE MOTORWAY TO HOF

Excuse me, but my heart's a bit shaky,
I know it doesn't look like it,
but my heart's a bit shaky.
I don't exactly know
if a four-and-a-half-hour journey
actually lasts
four-and-a-half hours.

I don't exactly know if
what is, is.
Yes, my heart's a bit shaky.
I can't store data very well.
For me, things flicker a bit.
Sometimes I seem hard, or very capable, or strong
and I'll make it, I'll get through,
only my heart's a bit shaky.
I'm 41, I don't always know what's right,
whether I've done that right,
or done it well.
Or what I've done wrong.

I wonder, if it's having trouble
deciding
what something is, what something
actually is.
Coz although I know
what something is,

it might be something
else as well.

In actual fact, things didn't go quite right for me,
I mean, right at the beginning there.

Yes, shortly after the starting point actually,
it got a bit confused,
it's a bit mixed up
there.

There where there's
still fog.

I still can't actually see too clearly,
can't see.

But there, at the beginning, there was
a bit of confusion.

I mean, a brother is a brother
and a little sister is a little sister
isn't that right?

And what he did to me
that's not important, is it?

That's right, isn't it?

Or what is right?

Or what

is?

What am

I?

What was I?

A four-and-a-half-hour journey
doesn't last four-and-a-half hours, does it?

I mean, I'll get by.

I've already made my career –
well, now and then.

Sometimes I couldn't anymore.
Then there was a period of relaxation,
so to speak. I was
put out to grass,
so to speak.
Even so,
how long does a four-and-a-half-hour journey last?

Because if four-and-a-half hours
actually
are four-and-a-half hours,
then isn't a brother a brother?
And isn't a sister a sister?
And from a brother
don't you expect
shelter, or warmth, or feeling
or at least being-there, support?

What if I say to you
that a four-and-a-half-hour journey
can last three hours?
Can it sometimes
last longer?
or shorter?
I mean, if you start out straight away?
I mean, if I have five dollars
are you sure that couldn't be 5000?
or . . . not?

I mean,
green is green,
isn't it?
And
a brother

is really a brother,
isn't he?
Can that be true?

How long is it going to go on?
With this IQ –

150 or thereabouts they said –
that

can't even see

five dollars

as five dollars.

Doesn't know how long

the journey lasts,

has to fight all the time

against other ideas.

I'm always so uncertain –

is a brother

a journey

of 4½ hours?

Does that mean, if I see

40

that I have to drive 40?

Does it also mean, you can

actually drive 80 or 40?

Does 40 really mean 40?

What's pressing on my heart?

That I hear

and don't hear.

I can tell you,

I'm feeling better now.

A year's therapy.

Now and again I can see something

new.

I can do things.
I can imagine
making plans – for me.
Instead of that endless
up and down, all over the place.
One moment here, the next somewhere else.

I have to sit down. And work.
I can't. I have to.
What do I have to do?

Where do I have to go?
Have to go and see someone.
Who then?
Her? Or her?
Will I find something perhaps?
What am I trying to find?

I'm trying to find the answer
to why I never know the answer.
Can never understand
why it takes so much energy
to accept that four-and-a-half hours
is four-and-a-half hours.
That five dollars
is five dollars.

I have to fight.
I have to say
'That thing is what it is.'
Of course there are other things I can't even
make a start on.

I think
I can.
I've always managed to.

I'm going to keep on
managing to.

If green is
green,
does that mean
that time is time
and not longer?

Then I have to say
I'm not important.
What's inside me, moves around,
bodily, beneath my consciousness
there where I can't see,
that means,
it's not true.
There's no uneasiness,
there is, after all these years,
no cry
no fight
but actually
 there is.

Otherwise I wouldn't have trouble
with
four-and-a-half hours
would I?
Or with brother?
Or with touching?

Otherwise I wouldn't grin at you
so nervously.
And then laught like a child
and try
to please.

I can't see how deep this well is.
It's dark, I can't see the bottom.
I only know that there's a weight on top.
Other people laugh.
Even my friends say
oh her, she's always late.
Late?

Why am I always working?
After a whole day's work
why do I have to sit down and work some more?
Why shouldn't I actually pull up a chair,
pick up some book or other? . . .
Oh no – get to work,
prepare something, prepare yourself, take notes,
write it down, write it down.

And you know something?
That's exactly what I do.
I never come home and say
hey, you did all right today.
Take a seat, take a break.
Do something you like.

Well . . . a break.
What does a woman do
in the break?
Does she listen?
Relax?
Can this woman afford to relax?
Can she allow
nothing to happen?
Because if nothing happens,
what happens then?

These strange feelings in my stomach,
whatever's in me,
perhaps something will come out of them.
In the break.
For instance.

Maybe I won't take a break.
That'd be better.

And in any case –
who do you think you are?
Take a break?
You haven't worked well enough,
not good enough.
You haven't done *everything*,
you haven't looked at *every* possible book,
haven't done *every* possible exercise,
to be sure once you've covered everything a 1000%
that you can choose the *very* best out of them.
You know, you haven't been thorough enough.
You haven't done everything.
You've gotta keep working.
You haven't done things very well today,
you've been a bit slack.
You *haven't been perfect!*

Yes, how dare you sit down?
You! You don't know anything
you can't achieve anything
you can't get anything done. You're lazy.
Don't you dare sit yourself down
to rest.
Don't you pick up some book that you might enjoy.
You're not fit for that.

You're not born for it.
You *don't exist!*

I can tell you,
Sometimes it's more than I can stand.

Nana's holding me in her arms.
It's quiet. It's safe. One can rest.
Will Nana believe me?
She never asks me things.
When I was 14, I could take refuge
at her place. She never asked me why.

But she was there when I was 4, too.
And 6 and 8.
And nobody asked.
Why I'd withdrawn, gone inside myself,
gone away.

My mother once said to me,
when I was in the psyche-clinic,
'When you were 5 you sort of went
inside yourself. I didn't know why. I couldn't do
anything about it.' I could've said:
Why didn't you ask?
It was your own daughter, after all.
But she couldn't handle feelings.

Why should I sit down and relax?
There's still a lot to be done.
Somehow
I must get to understand
that four-and-a-half hours
are four-and-a-half hours.
That what is,

is.

But surely
it isn't,
what it is,
is it?

It can't be,
what it is.
There aren't any nasty people in the world,
are there?
Only misunderstood ones?

What is,
isn't.
I'm not,
right?
Sisters are for that,
aren't they?
Sisters don't have rights,
do they?
They're not allowed to say anything.
They have to be still.
They have to accept things,
let them happen.
It's not a question of
allow. Coz nobody asked.
He came like a bulldozer.
And ran over me.
I was not there.
I did not exit or
I was nothing.
I was worth nothing.
I have no feelings.

I wasn't his sister,
was I?

I can tell you, proudly,
how long I've been overseas.
Me – well, when I was –
at 16 or 17, I'd already left
my own country.
Gone away from
my own country,
 that I so dearly loved,
 from the green fields
 from the bush
 from the hushing sea.

The waves, the eternal waves,
the puzzling, mysterious waves.
The sky so far and wide,
the mountains that changed
hour by hour, minute by minute, every day.
Home sick.

Yes, at 17 I left home.
Had courage, eh?
Actually it never occurred to me
that a woman needed courage
to go away from home
to live half a world away
from
friends, aunts, mother, cousins.

I've done it lots of times.
First for one year.
Then for three.
Yes, I've lived in France.

Yes, I've lived in England.
Yes, I live in Germany.
And every time
I accidentally
hear the voice of a man
who has exactly the same accent
as he has.
Then my stomach tightens up
and the black fear steps out
without warning, unaware, unwanted
and invincible.
Once it happened that I accidentally met a man in Munich
with whom I exchanged a couple of words –
first in German, then in English.
Then I said, real quick,
Do you come from my country?

Because my heart had started
to beat faster
and in my belly
black sharp waves rose up.
My belly knew before I did –
isn't that funny?

And you know what?
I only hear this accent
once every two years,
maximum.
I only have to experience something like that
once every two years.
Or in my sleep.
Or when I'm too tired
to keep the memories out.

Is it possible
that a woman would go 19,000 kilometres away,
in order not to have to hear an accent?
Away from her own beloved land?

Don't ask me.
I don't know the answer.
I'm busy
with four-and-a-half hours,
with five dollars,
whether it's true that
what is,
really is.

HEATHER MCPHERSON

A BODILY STATE OF MIND

I read in
The *Woman's Weekly*
how a woman
sited her life
as a Marilyn
Monroe lookalike &
with her James
Dean lookalike
fitter hit
the hot spots
till he
nicked a sixteen
year school girl
pillion and
boked off into
the blue and
she being
a Marilyn double
with pills and
empty vodka bottle
beside her died
like her

I never he
said realised
how she had
nobody in her
life but me

then I read
how the bag-ladies
swap bed-shifts in
a convent dosshouse
cos their good
nights must be
transient and
otherwise litter
footpaths porches
doorways underground
loos where
they're pissed on
by young hookers
calling them
scum

these elderly
(sister daughter
lover) orphans
of small disasters
go totting up
the homeless streets
till crazier
needling others
steal their bags
their crumbs their
tongues listen
I say, listen

it's happening here
say the refuge
women

these psychic hospital
lockouts too

out-of-it too
manic among women
and children left
from battering
men get put
on a bus to
the next town
the next refuge
the next down
and outers house
till they can't
cope Greyhound
therapy we name
it listen
I say, listen

there
was a policy
in this country
of jobs for
all homes for
all a commission
called for social
justice and we
loved it being
asked to make
our mark embody
credo till
suddenly it turns
unaffordable these
days when user
pays in ways
the body does

not recover from
and we get
smaller as
the poor listen
I say, listen

a bag-lady stiff
among rubbish bins
isn't the stuff
of politicos bad
dreams when
Marilyn and James
wishalikes stalk
the fantasy wards
the billboard haunts
as hungrily
as any abandoned
psyche with no
home and crazier
needling others
strike haphazardly
as any missile
scud across
a gulf

but listen
I say, if
we make a
voice in the
mind of a
state saying
nobody's state just
me and mine

and we our
kind figure
homelessness
a bodily state
of mind won't
offer up body
sacrifices
to the bag-god
in his mansion
in his mind
dead lookalikes
inside

if
listen, we
say

JENNIFER MCLEAN

Born 1933. Degree in English from Canterbury University College, then spent 30 years raising nine children. Lesbian-oriented from earliest years but conditioned otherwise. Since what I thought/felt was unacceptable to others and inexplicable to me, I devised a mythology as explanation/communication. Now live with lesbian partner in Dunedin.

Jennifer McLean's story is intended for telling, or at least reading aloud.

A MYSTERY STORY IN TWO PARTS

The first part is called *Your Own Free Range Egg Supply*. It concerns a woman and some animals of which one is a small ginger cat named Sappho.

The story is set in Dunedin, very much Dunedin as you know it, except that, located within the city boundary, is the Garden of Eden. Eve makes a brief but significant appearance, and, as you already know, when Eve is involved, the management is usually upset.

Noeline has a great liking for eggs from free range hens. Accordingly, one day Eve brings her some from the hens that range so freely in the Garden of Eden. Noeline eats most of them but somehow one is left sitting in the bowl on the table in the kitchen which is gently and continuously warmed by a coal range.

One morning Noeline comes into the kitchen to find a heap of fragmented shell in the bottom of the bowl and a small, damp, newly hatched bird drying out in the sun on the window sill.

'Good morning,' says the little bird, inclining politely towards her. 'Your own free range egg supply, and some for Sappho also,' it adds diplomatically, seeing the green and yellow eyes approaching across the floor.

Noeline is not accustomed to talking chickens.

'Are you magic?' she asks.

'No,' says the little bird, 'I am mysterious.'

'Humph,' says Sappho, 'Noeline's a mystery, too. You must be sisters.'

As it turns out, they are all sisters, all three of them, an harmonious household.

The little bird grows, down gives way to ginger feathers.

'I would have preferred red and gold, blue and green,' she says to Noeline, 'but I thought it more tactful –' and she glances toward Sappho's ginger fur. It is a good move. Sappho is besotted with the little bird.

'Did you ever see such beautiful fur?' she says as she grooms the little bird, licking each feather meticulously into place.

Sometimes in fact, Sappho is a confounded nuisance. When the little bird asks, 'How many eggs would you like today, Noeline?' before Noeline can say she wants six because she has visitors coming for lunch, Sappho chips in and says, 'None at all little bird. You just have a rest. You're working too hard.'

Useless animal.

Useless animal? Wait till you hear the rest of the story.

One day there is a knock at the door. Noeline is out so it is Sappho who strolls round the corner to see who wants what.

'Yes?' she says to the man on the doorstep.

'The neighbours are complaining you are keeping domestic poultry in conditions completely opposed to all City Council regulations and bylaws,' says the man. 'You'll have to get rid of it. I'll be back in a fortnight to check up.'

'I'm sure we can arrange something,' says Sappho. 'We do like to keep to the rules, you know.'

'Poultry,' says the man as he goes back to his car. 'Talking cats is what I'd be worried about if I lived round here.'

How right you are, man. Sappho couldn't even talk until the little bird came, now she can read as well and she hasn't wasted any time. She has read every book available on cats, including the story of *Tobermory*, so she knows what a talking cat can accomplish in terms of human discomfiture.

That night, Sappho goes prowling, sliding in doors left momentarily ajar,

slipping in and out open windows, peering through chinks in the curtains of windows closed and obscured.

Next morning, she locates herself on the pavement as the neighbours are going to work.

‘Good morning,’ she says to the man who is desperately sensitive about his receding hairline. ‘I do like your new hairpiece.’

I shall not detail Sappho’s comments to the other neighbours. You may keep my secrets and I’ll keep yours, and that’s the arrangement she comes to with the neighbours.

They ring the Council. ‘We were mistaken,’ they say. ‘Noeline isn’t keeping poultry. It’s just a canary.’

Canary

The little bird is very thoughtful when she hears about the canary.

‘Noeline,’ she says eventually, ‘a canary might be rather nice.’

‘I think so, too,’ says Noeline. ‘I like music. I used to sing in the church choir!’

‘How many eggs do you need over the next three weeks?’ asks the little bird.

So Noeline makes a nourishing mash for the little bird, gives her a handful of wheat and a tin of fresh water as well, and the little bird lays a three weeks’ supply of eggs.

Then she arranges herself on the table in the living room, where she can get a good view of the sea, and lays one more egg, which she proceeds to incubate.

Sappho perches beside her, to keep her company and watch over the egg when the little bird leaves it once a day to attend to her affairs elsewhere. But Sappho is puzzled.

‘Noeline,’ she says, ‘come and have a look at this egg, will you?’

‘It’s got music all over it,’ says Noeline. ‘*Ode to Joy*. I recognise it, we sang it in the choir at Christmas!’

‘Anything else?’ says Sappho.

‘Well,’ says Noeline. ‘It is a bit big for an egg that’s supposed to produce a canary.’

‘That’s what I think,’ says Sappho.

Smart Sappho. When is that cat ever wrong? Inexperienced, that’s what the little bird is when it comes to canaries. What she hatches is a Light Sussex Rooster.

A Light Sussex Rooster is a beautiful bird – white, with a blue-black ruff round its neck and blue-black feathers in its wings and curling tail as well, but it’s at least half as big again as a Ross Brown. When it crows, you can feel the vibrations a couple of metres away and you can hear it right across the block and beyond.

This time the neighbours are right. You have to admit it. It’s all very well for Noeline. She reads and writes until dawn anyway, but what about the rest of us?

The moment comes. The rooster is six months old, he is ready to crow. He opens his beak and into the morning soars a perfect rendition of *Ode to Joy!*

‘No hope,’ says Noeline. ‘The neighbours hate Beethoven! Especially the neighbours hate Beethoven!’

There is a knock at the door. It is the neighbours.

‘Get the axe,’ they say. Then they add kindly, ‘Don’t take it to heart, Noeline. After all, it’s nearly Christmas and he’s a lovely size for the table.’

Dumb with grief, Noeline goes to get the axe. Sappho droops after her. But look! Look at the little bird. She is not grieved. She is sitting enigmatically, as one supervising. What is going to happen?

Noeline returns, ‘I cannot find the axe,’ she says.

‘I shall get mine,’ says a neighbour. He returns. ‘I cannot find my axe,’ he says.

No neighbour can find any axe. It is a mystery, whenever the neighbours want an axe to chop wood, there the axe is. Whenever they want to kill the rooster, there is no axe.

So the rooster grows unharmed and eventually the neighbours get to like Beethoven, even at sunrise. If you ask me, that’s the biggest mystery of all.

JENNY RANKINE

Jenny Rankine is not sure which she enjoys most – drawing women’s bodies or writing about them. She’s a displaced Australian who has worked as a journalist in Aotearoa for 10 years, mostly outside mainstream media. Her education really started when she came out as a feminist and then as lesbian in 1979.

PERISCOPE

I’m lying next to her. I’ve missed her, I want to be sexual, but I can’t keep my mind away from work. There was another fraught meeting today and the factions just dug themselves deeper into their trenches.

She starts stroking my back in circles, very lightly. I imagine my skin reaching up to meet her fingertips, rising in whorls and flattening after her fingers pass.

I concentrate my inner eye under the middle of my back. That doesn’t seem right. I pull my inner eye back into the centre of my head, where I can feel her fingers on my back as well as her thigh brushing mine, and the faint flow of air over my calves.

But I’m aware of my awareness. This monitor sits in my mind, measuring how fast I’m getting aroused. Or telling me how silly I look in this position. I want a touch to fill my world, but my conscious mind treads water, its periscope ceaselessly turning. I’m afraid to stop monitoring. I’m scared of giving myself up, putting my body in other hands, no matter how trusted.

She’s stroking my buttocks now, slow circles growing wider and lower. My clitoris wakes up. The goosebumps tighten my skin as the evening cools, and I sneeze. She pulls the covers over us.

She touches my thighs, stretching to reach the backs of my knees, not quite ticklish. My thighs open. My crotch is humming.

She slides her hand inside my lips, but I'm not wet yet, hardly moist, and she moves her finger up my crack. KY again. I wish I could get so wet I'm dripping.

I'm not sure she knows where she is. When she touches me from behind I'm scared she'll touch my arsehole by mistake. My thrush could come back – last time it hurt to sit. I had to paint myself with gentian violet and a week's worth of knickers got dyed purple.

Sometimes I can't find my way when I'm touching her backwards. I'm looking for her clit and get lost in the folds, or keep trying to find her cunt in an outside lip.

Ow! A hair's caught. She's pulling my pubes. I can feel the hair lift and part my lips slightly. She moves her thigh off mine, I part my legs and it stops hurting.

It's no use. Whatever she does I'll find something wrong with it. I decide to touch her instead. I hold her tight and roll over on my side. She moves with me until she's on her stomach.

She lifts up onto her elbows, her breasts dangling. I love the weight, the floppiness of her breasts cupped in my hand. Soft, with big pale pink velvet aureoles and pink nipples. Her nipples harden quickly, pulling the aureoles into tight puckers. I love stroking from her nipple to her armpit, long strokes against the weight and sway.

I roll with her again so she's on her side. I hold her breast in both hands, lower my lips to her nipple. It slowly approaches, like the Flash Gordon space rockets docking. I feel her watching.

The loop begins. I'm me lowering my lips to her hard waiting nipple, and I'm her, holding my breath in anticipation, watching the lips descend. When I touch her, I feel the touch from both sides. Her pleasure merges with mine.

I lick her puckered skin, suck on the nipple, pulling hard and feeling the pull in my cunt. Turning, I crawl like a slow lizard down her body. My mouth leads, sucking her creases, nipping the steep ski-slope of her buttocks, sliding a tongue into the back of her knee. My fingernails follow, barely touching, over the pale downy hairs on her back.

I stroke her arches and her narrow ankles. My lips flow down to her feet,

over her big toe, slowly engulfing it. Sucking, pulling, massaging the tip with my tongue. Pleasure is looping between us. I'm surrounded and sucked, and sucking. My clitoris thrums.

She squirms when I lick in between her toes. I swallow each toe in turn, watching her bum rise and fall, her other leg gradually move apart, her dark pubes glisten.

I slide back up to her, blowing cool breath over her moist pubes, her wet creases. I end up on my back. She rolls over onto me, her thighs on either side of my good leg. I shove it into her crotch. Her stomach muscles jerk and her thighs grip my leg. I grab her hips, pulling her onto my thigh in time with her rhythm. She rubs her crotch slowly forward and back. Her breasts are dragging over my stomach. I feel her lips cross and recross the ridge of my thigh bone.

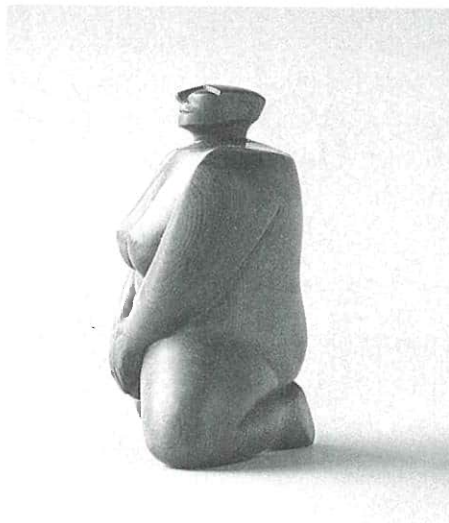
She opens her eyes and focusses. 'How's your knee, lover?' she asks breathlessly. I love her concern swimming to the surface in the midst of a favourite sensation. I could eat her up.

Suddenly, she puts both hands on either side of my jaw, controlling the angle of my face. She lowers her mouth hard onto mine. I love her swooping down on me, but I feel caught and hesitate. In that instant I realise I have a choice. I give myself to being held, restrained, swooped on. I lower the periscope and drown.

JILL GIBENS

I specialise in wood carving but I am also a welder, builder, leatherworker and shoe repairer. I started out making wooden spoons three and a half years ago and have since expanded to include hand-carved bowls and other three dimensional pieces. I love the sensuous warmth, smell and feel of wood and much of my inspiration is drawn from the natural magnificence of the West Coast where I live for part of the year.

My work can be found at the Compendium gallery in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin Crafts Council galleries, Waikato Museum and 'House of Wood' in Hokitika. Recent commissions include a piece for B.P. (NZ)'s head office collection and the crozier for Bishop Penny Jamieson's ordination.



Untitled; pink pine, 3 inches high



Untitled; red beech, 14 inches high

JULIE GLAMUZINA

I came out in Auckland in 1973 and then lived in Wellington for twelve years from 1976. For the last three years I have lived in Hamilton. I am co-author with Alison Laurie of *Parker and Hulme: A Lesbian View* (New Women's Press, Auckland, 1991) and have published other historical work. I have recently completed a booklet called *Lesbian Politics in Aotearoa, 1962–1985: A Pakeha Survey* (Old Bags Press, Wellington, forthcoming). I have one story published in the *Subversive Acts* anthology (Penguin, 1991). My cultural background is Yugoslav.

PURPLE HEARTS

Auckland, New Zealand, 1966

I sat up in bed. I held the scalpel in my left hand, put it in the middle of my neck at the back and pulled it deeply – right around to the front. Stopped accurately in the middle. Blood soaked my mattress.

Then I tried again, with my right hand pushing the right side of my jaw, bruising the inside of my mouth. And looking in the mirror. More difficult.

Then I tried doing all this while shouting. 'Help me. Help me. Open the door, come in and help me.'

I must have been dead already.

I was standing at the door, watching MDAD, my darling, hold the scalpel at the back of her neck. Someone heard her call out. Or was I calling? They tried the door then ran outside to the window and forced it open. I leaned out. Told them everything was all right, everything was under control. They went away.

I remember leaving her room, running to my car and driving the mile or

two back to my quarters. They found me in the morning. But I'd already swallowed a bottle of pills. I had one of the scalpels from the medicine kit in my right hand and my throat was cut – just a nick. I was clinically dead for fifteen minutes before they revived me and put me through a 'bloody nightmare' trial.

Nurse Found Dead at RNZAF Base¹

'The charge sister at the Royal New Zealand Air Force base at Whenuapai was found dead in her bed on Saturday morning with a deep wound in her neck. She was *Nursing Sister Raewyn Kathleen Joy Petley, aged 40, unmarried, of the Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps.*

Auckland detectives are treating the death as a probable case of murder.

Sister Petley occupied a single room in the women officers' quarters. Her body, clad in pyjamas and covered by bedclothes, was found by another nursing sister about 9:40 am.

Detective Inspector B. Wilkinson, officer in charge of the inquiries, said Sister Petley was thought to have died in the early hours of Saturday morning. . . .

Her injury could have been caused by a sharp instrument and it is believed that a surgeon's scalpel may have been used.

No weapon was found in the room. There were no obvious signs of struggle. . . .

Mr Wilkinson last night gave an assurance to Whenuapai residents and to relatives of those working at the airbase that there was no cause for concern that a dangerous person might be at large in the district. . . .

A critically ill nurse was taken from other quarters at the Whenuapai base to Auckland Hospital later on Saturday. Her condition last night was described as 'still very sick'.

The nurse, a member of the Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps, was being treated for a drug overdose.²²

In March 1967, Doreen Ellen Davis, aged 30, nursing sister, was put on trial in the Auckland Supreme Court for the murder of Raewyn Petley.

The prosecution, led by D. S. Morris, alleged that Davis murdered Petley by cutting her throat with a scalpel. It said that she then escaped through a window, drove back to her own quarters several miles away, and there took

an overdose of barbiturates. Bloodstains were found on the window in the dead woman's room and on Davis' clothing. The suggested motive was a conflict arising from their lesbian relationship.

Mum, what's a lesbian?

Oh, nothing.

But mum, what is it?

Oh, I don't know.

The dictionary said a woman who has carnal relations with a member of her own sex.

What is carnal?

Sexual intercourse.

What is sexual intercourse?

Something to do with where you pee.

Raewyn Petley had been with the nursing corps for about twelve years. Initially she worked in Whangarei and later in Tauranga and Fiji, but from February 1964 was stationed at the Whenuapai air force base, north of Auckland city.

Ellen Davis, born in Lyttelton, trained as a nurse at Grey Hospital on the west coast of the South Island and then worked in Western Samoa and the Solomon Islands. In 1962 she joined the Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps.

In mid-1966 they met when Davis was transferred from Waiouru in the centre of the North Island to the Hobsonville base, near Whenuapai. A relationship developed between them soon after Davis arrived.

In the air force it was widely rumoured that Raewyn was a lesbian. Three years before her death she was reported to air force authorities for having a close relationship with another servicewoman. However, she continued having lesbian relationships. Nurses who shared quarters at Whenuapai with Raewyn testified that they had seen other servicewomen going into Room Thirteen, her flat.

Raewyn and Ellen saw a lot of each other and Ellen was also seen many times in Raewyn's flat at night. Often they visited Raewyn's sister at Point

Chevalier and her mother at Maraetai. They exchanged photographs of each other and wrote letters. While Ellen was in Britain from 29 August to mid-September Raewyn wrote each day, accumulating forty-six pages in which she clearly expressed her attraction to Ellen. She described how difficult it was to '[cover] up one's feelings'. She also wrote about feeling depressed, but she looked forward with excitement at the prospect of Ellen's return.

Ellen also wrote. Two unsigned letters were later found addressed to Raewyn. They were dated 14 and 15 November, only a few days before her death. The letter of 14 November read in part '. . . I do love that smile darling more and more each time we meet in our life to come . . .'.³ When first confronted with this letter, Ellen said she thought she had written it, but later denied it was hers. The final letter stated '. . . Please don't ever deceive, darling, in any way at all. There is more to me and you know it, Raewyn. You mean too much to me and I do to you.'⁴

Ellen later explained away the second letter and stated that she had not wanted a lesbian relationship with Raewyn.

Hello, Natalie, and how are you today . . . you know the doctor's receptionist across the road there . . . she's Petley's sister . . .

What did she say Mum?

Shush!

Other air force personnel noticed their relationship, particularly nurses who lived in rooms adjoining Raewyn's. One said she had noticed 'something strange' between them while another said that she had been 'disturbed' and 'disgusted'.⁵ She later reported them to a senior officer. The commanding officer of the RNZAF hospital at Whenuapai heard rumours about Raewyn but did not believe them. In August, the matron in charge of nurses at Whenuapai discussed the matter with him. They did nothing further at this stage. But in September, after visiting Whenuapai and observing the relationship between Raewyn and Ellen, the matron reported them to the director of medical services and the director of nursing services. 'To begin with, the situation was considered carefree and at this stage nothing further was done,'⁶ she said later. However, by mid-October they decided that Raewyn and Ellen

should be separated and Ellen was given a posting to Wigram, in the South Island.

Ellen was very upset by this. In the weeks before Raewyn's death, Ellen was reported to have been 'distressed', and on one occasion 'seemed to be under the influence of a narcotic.'⁷ She was ill during the week of 7 November and was given two days sick leave. On 14 November she asked for her transfer to be deferred. On 18 November she was told this was not possible and that her posting was to take effect from 26 November. Later that day she informed her commanding officer that she was contemplating applying for a premature release from the Corps. At her trial Ellen stated that she did not want to be transferred to Wigram because this would have placed her near an army officer with whom she had a relationship in 1965. She revealed that she had taken several months leave from December 1965 and in March 1966 had given birth to a son but had kept this from the father and her superior officers.

Around 9 pm that evening staff at Whenuapai were instructed to prepare for an emergency aircraft landing. Ellen was already at the officers' quarters at Whenuapai with Raewyn and, after the emergency was over, stayed on to talk. The prosecution alleged that after a brief struggle around 12:30 am, Davis murdered Petley.

The defence, however, insisted that Petley had killed herself. Kevin Ryan, defence counsel, contended that Davis had been the unwilling recipient of Petley's lesbian advances. He said that Davis had come to Auckland, alone, a stranger, after giving birth to her 'illegitimate' child. There, 'she had been befriended by a woman outwardly kind and sympathetic but inwardly a hunting lesbian.'⁸

He called Ellen to give evidence about her relationship with Raewyn.

The Defendant:-

'I found her at first very generous and kind. She seemed to me like a "tom-boy".'⁹

In August, while staying with Raewyn's mother:

‘Before I knew it, Raewyn was in bed with me. I got a fright at first. She looked different. She said she wanted me. She tried to kiss me and did. I got out of it best I could.’ [She] ‘looked like a man, not a woman.’¹⁰

‘During the last weekend in September she did make an advance, but I violently rejected it and told her to cut it out or I would report the matter to a higher authority.’¹¹

‘It was Labour weekend at Mareatai that I finally gave in to Raewyn. Raewyn came into the room and got into my bed. She kissed me and asked me to put my arms around her. I did.’¹²

Davis said that the next morning she felt ‘unsettled’ and ‘unclean’. She said that she was ‘concerned and worried about her experience’ and resolved that she would never be alone with Petley again.¹³ Ellen said that on the night of the death she had gone to the Whenuapai officers’ quarters at Raewyn’s request after learning that other servicemen and servicewomen would be there for a party. During the emergency she and another nurse were in Raewyn’s flat. After the emergency was over around 10:15 pm Ellen began to leave, but said that Raewyn had asked her to stay and talk. She did. But later when she went to leave a second time, Raewyn ‘made a grab’ for her.

‘I turned round to go, and the look I had seen on Raewyn’s face was more domineering than I had ever seen before. She made a grab for me . . . With everything else on my mind plus the incident of the emergency, I told her to just leave me alone and I went to the door.’¹⁴

Davis said it was at this point, after being rejected, that Raewyn cut her own throat.

‘I don’t know what it was, but I turned around and Sister Petley was looking at me directly – she was semi-sitting up in bed . . . The next thing I saw was this knife or something around her neck . . . I saw a lot of blood and that cut on her neck . . .’¹⁵

The defence called two doctors who testified that it was possible for someone to cut their own throat.

An alternative defence was raised as well. A psychiatrist, Dr Charles Henry

Bethune, testified that in his opinion, Davis had undergone a form of 'automatism' on the night of the death. This state had been brought on by the accumulation of the experiences of the year, added to the stress caused by the emergency and the shock of Petley's alleged sexual advances. Therefore, the defence asserted that even if Ellen Davis had killed Petley, she could not be held responsible for her actions. Further, the defence suggested that she would have been acting in self-defence anyway in the face of aggressive advances from Raewyn.

Bethune considered that Petley was constantly under pressure from keeping her lesbianism hidden.

She was a congenital or essential lesbian. But under this mask was a seething cauldron of emotions which she could contain for the most part, but which had to have an outlet.¹⁶

The strain of keeping this up was suggested as the reason for her alleged suicide. He also questioned Petley's mental stability. She was rumoured to have attempted suicide while working in Whangarei and it was known that she had been depressed in September 1966. A search of her room after her death revealed a variety of drugs – including a type of pill commonly known as a 'purple heart'. Bethune considered that Petley's case was similar to others he had known and he concluded that she was mentally ill.

. . . The ones we are most afraid of are those who put the mask on. Some even smile and are called 'smiling depressives'. These people will take their own lives, often in most bizarre ways, and this is why depressiveness is such a lethal illness.¹⁷

I had a vision of you and me.

The hotel room was dirty, dark. I was lying on the bed. Pills, a knife.

I was dead.

I was thirty. And I was nineteen.

Justice Moller summed up. ‘You may have been surprised, you may have been puzzled, perhaps even disgusted at some of the evidence you have heard as to the alleged relationship between the two,’¹⁸ he stated. However, he urged the jury to decide ‘without prejudice’ against either Davis or Petley.

He cautioned the jurors that they had only Davis’ evidence for much of what had happened between her and Petley. He reminded them that there were many discrepancies in the evidence for the defence.

He then discussed Bethune’s evidence and said that the jury must consider that ‘Sister Petley was a potential suicide all along’. He said that according to the psychiatric evidence Petley was ‘constantly under strain because of the two sides of her character – the aggressive lesbian side and the mask of carrying on as an efficient nurse, with a kind, friendly disposition.’¹⁹

The jury of three women and nine men retired to consider their verdict. Their task was difficult – they were faced with conflicting accounts, some unexplored details and, according to the prosecution, a virtual ‘lottery’ of defences.

The Deceased	not a monster good nurse a smiling depressive disgusting essential lesbian hunting lesbian
The Accused	slightly built determined nervous unmarried mother dedicated and efficient nurse seduced

Two and a half hours after retiring they returned and asked to hear notes of evidence about an alleged suicide attempt by Raewyn while she was working in Whangarei Hospital. Six hours later they returned again, this time to read

again the evidence of the two people who had heard scuffling noises coming from Petley's room around the time of her death. After eleven hours they were still having difficulty in reaching a unanimous decision but were instructed by the judge to continue.

Finally, after thirteen hours, just before 2 am, they decided.

Not guilty.

Davis collapsed and burst into tears while her mother and two sisters sobbed with relief. People from the public gallery went up to Davis and shook her hand or patted her on the back. Some jury members surrounded the defence lawyer and congratulated him.

Ellen Davis was free. Not without a price. Apart from the trauma of her suicide attempt and the trial, she had to dismantle her relationship with Raewyn.

The Acquitted couldn't stand watching a knife
 maternity work only
 I'm no lesbian
 I'm no hunter
 Don't think I could ever marry anyone now
 I want to go on living

The dissection of the relationship between Ellen Davis and Raewyn Petley was reported in some detail in the newspapers. Lesbian and other readers alike learnt that lesbians were 'disgusting' and lesbian relationships 'something strange', 'puzzling' and 'hard to understand'. The case reinforced essentialist notions of sexuality and of the role of women. Associations were made linking lesbians with mental instability and murder. In some sense it did not really matter which mouthpiece articulated these messages – whether it was the judge, lawyers, psychiatrists, doctors, or the accused. For lesbians the reports of the Whenuapai case offered few encouraging symbols.

The idea that sexuality was an innate characteristic was clearly stated during the trial with Petley described as a 'congenital lesbian' by the defence. However, the term also implied that there might be at least one other kind of lesbian – one who became a lesbian, like Davis. In her case though, it was insisted, she was allegedly an unwilling partner in the relationship.

This also allowed the interpretation that lesbians were not 'women'. If they were not women, then what were they? In a society where sexual relationships between men and women were the prescribed norm and the only legitimated possibility, there was only one alternative, however ironic: lesbians were like men. Petley was described as 'like a man', and in male-associated terms such as 'hunter' and 'aggressive'. This helped to objectify her and make the trial outcome more readily acceptable.

The idea of lesbians as 'hunters' of other women seemed generally accepted at the trial. Raewyn Petley was said to have 'hunted' for 'female consorts' when the stress of leading a double life became too much. While the defence insisted that Raewyn Petley was no 'monster', nevertheless, its concept of her as a hunter raised connotations of something less than human, something bestial. The use of 'consort' suggested someone on a different level to the 'hunter' – perhaps a partner who had been seduced. There was an implication that a 'consort' was a reluctant partner. The message was clear – lesbians were sexual assaulters. The accused then, took the role of victim, while the deceased could be regarded as the criminal.

The case clearly associated lesbians and mental illness. Petley's depression in September and her use of drugs (not unknown at that time) was noted. The defence psychiatrist classified her as 'grossly disturbed' and a 'smiling depressive'. Fellow workers, however, noticed no deterioration in Petley's personality or competence at her job. Nevertheless, Raewyn was described as a prime candidate for suicide. It seemed almost normal, inevitable even, that a lesbian would commit suicide.

Lesbians at that time could not be open about their relationships without incurring social and economic punishments. This was most likely the reason Raewyn kept her lesbianism from her family. Ironically, her survival tactic was used as further proof of her mental illness. Hiding her lesbianism was said to have put her under strain which in moments of extreme stress then supposedly caused her to become a 'hunting lesbian'.

There was a certain feeling of relief conveyed when Davis was found not guilty. Jury members congratulated the defence counsel. Readers could rest assured that Davis would now return to normality, albeit tainted: 'Who

would want to touch me after all this?' she questioned.²⁰ She was reported as having bought a gift for her one-year-old son and as looking forward to seeing him and being with her family in Christchurch. Order had been restored.

Prior to the establishment of lesbian and gay organisations in New Zealand in the 1970s, there were hardly any reports about lesbians in the mass media and these were typically in the context of crime reports. Lesbians existed and survived largely invisible to the unseeing heterosexual majority. Therefore, the few public constructions of lesbians and lesbian relationships provided dangerous role models and frightening images for lesbians. In such a climate, it is not surprising that there seem to have been no lesbians who were prepared to be public about their lives. I think that the effect was the opposite – lesbians ran for cover.

The case gave an insight into the treatment of lesbians in the New Zealand armed forces at that time. From the evidence given at the trial it seemed that the hierarchy chose to deal discreetly with the relationship between Petley and Davis – even though the rumours about Raewyn's lesbianism were widely known. Instead of Davis or Petley, or both, being dishonourably discharged, the hierarchy arranged for Davis to be transferred. Possibly it was thought better to keep things quiet rather than draw attention to the fact that lesbians existed and that they were present in the armed forces. Either way, lesbians would have remained invisible to the wider community.

It is difficult to imagine what meaning the case had either for the individuals who were directly involved or for newspaper readers. In any case the accounts of the trial disrupted the flowing-smooth assumption that heterosexuality was the only option: clearly there were women who did not conform to the prescribed model. Precariously positioned within the armed forces, symbol of male power, existed one lesbian world. There might be others.

In 1967 I read the newspaper accounts of the trial trying to come to some conclusion about what had happened on the night Raewyn Petley died. I found the defence – the many defences – unconvincing and the prosecution frustrating. There seemed to be so many questions which were not followed up and important details which were not verified. Over twenty years later the same frustrations and questions remain.

The case drew me. I re-read the few words frozen in the newspapers, hoping each time to find a new word, one I'd perhaps missed. But I could squeeze no more out of the trickle-thin columns. I learnt, though, that there were women who got into bed with each other and that this was shocking to adults. I wondered whether the two women who came and danced together at the family parties at Uncle Nick's and Auntie Rae's were anything to do with the women at the air base. I felt then, without understanding how, that all these lives were shapes for my life. It wasn't until I began researching the events at Whenuapai as a herstorian that I realised it was this case which first gave me the word 'lesbian'.

Julie, why don't you wear a dress! You're nothing but a tomboy!

Notes and Footnotes

I constructed this account from my own experience and from newspaper reports of the case published in November-December 1966, January 1967 and March 1967. The reports covered the discovery of the death and the subsequent hearings in the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court. I read these in the *NZ Herald*, *The Auckland Star*, *NZ Truth* and the *Sunday News*. I have footnoted only some references but the rest of the account comes from these sources.

Since I have relied on newspapers reports of the trial it is possible that there may be discrepancies between the official transcripts and these reports. I do not think this is a significant problem for the purposes of this article.

I was born on 27 May 1954 in Auckland and lived in Port Chevalier.

¹ *Sunday News*, 20 November 1966.

² *NZ Herald*, 21 November 1966.

³ *NZ Truth*, 21 March 1967.

⁴ *NZ Truth*, 21 March 1967.

⁵ *The Auckland Star*, 23 January 1967.

⁶ *NZ Herald*, 24 January 1967.

⁷ *The Auckland Star*, 23 January 1967.

⁸ *NZ Herald*, 18 March 1967.

⁹ *The Auckland Star*, 14 March 1967.

¹⁰ *NZ Truth*, 21 March 1967

¹¹ *The Auckland Star*, 14 March 1967.

¹² *NZ Truth*, 21 March 1967.

¹³ *NZ Truth*, 21 March 1967.

¹⁴ *The Auckland Star*, 14 March 1967.

¹⁵ *The Auckland Star*, 14 March 1967.

¹⁶ *NZ Truth*, 21 March 1967

¹⁷ *The Auckland Star*, 16 March 1967.

¹⁸ *The Auckland Star*, 20 March, 1967.

¹⁹ *The Auckland Star*, 20 March 1967.

²⁰ *NZ Truth*, 28 March 1967.

JUNE JOYCE

June Joyce spends her time dreaming, talking to her 5 outdoor goldfishes, laughing with, or yelling at her 3 children. Sometimes she reads a book, less often she gardens. She likes canoeing, paid work and trying to dance vigorously to 60s music.

TO SALLY FROM JUNE

I hope when I'm 91
I'll walk on the balcony
in my nightdress and
throw poems up high
for the wind to catch
and drop
word by word
in little corners of the city

FLOWERS

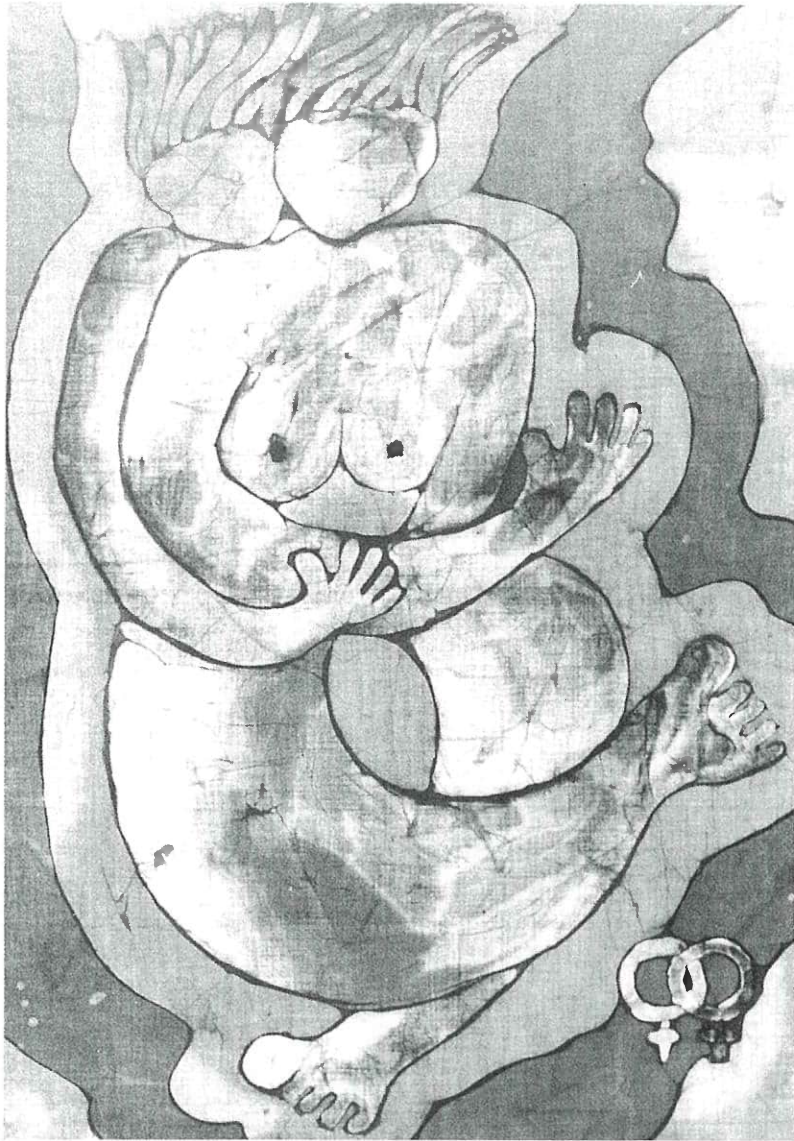
When I was sick
one friend came with flowers,
another brought music.
I danced with the flowers
when they left.

KANYA STEWART

I have been exploring images and imagination for twenty years through film and video production, photography, batik, drawing, dreamwork and more recently healing through guided imagery and meditation. I now teach Yoga, market cards of my artwork and work in the area of complementary cancer care. I have recently exhibited my work at Outreach Gallery in an exhibition called 'Different Women' with Kathryn Algie and Fran Marno. My next project will be preparing for an exhibition in September at Gallery on One at Waiwera.



Celebration, batik



Holding, batik

KATE EWING

I am a 24-year-old self-taught jeweller. I began working with silver in 1983 when I was 16 in an isolated area of the West Coast. Later I attended a ten-day repoussé workshop in Dunedin and was introduced to the jewellers at Fluxus Gallery. After a two month trial period with them I ended up moving to Dunedin to join the co-operative for two-and-a-half years. Working co-operatively is difficult work. I find it especially so with persons of the opposite gender.

So I returned to the Coast and leased an ex-Post Office building to house my new workshop, along with Blade, who was learning jewellery at the time. This workshop was assisted by a \$3000 grant from QEII Arts Council. At this stage I was still not earning a living from my work. I managed a year on the Coast before deciding to move to Christchurch and open a gallery there. This decision was based on there being no gallery already there specifically for jewellery, and the city's larger population presenting more potential customers. Now I am one of three partners, the two others being Jacquelyn Beri and Blade, at Lynx Gallery.

I continue to work mainly with the repoussé technique which enables me to achieve more three-dimensional designs. I feel I work from a gut level – I usually don't have an 'idea base' or reason in expressing the design. Each year I think soon it will all fit together and soon I'll have words for this. But now I avoid involving myself in analytical conversations about art and being intimidated by the intellectual aspect of my field. I am a woman and don't need to understand it in my head when I know it in my heart.

My work is sold through Lynx Gallery (2nd floor, 130 Hereford Street, Christchurch 1) as well as Fluxus in Dunedin, 33½ in Wellington and Fingers in Auckland.



Dreaming woman brooch, silver
Cone spiral earrings, silver
Small tree earrings, silver

KAZ BARTSCH

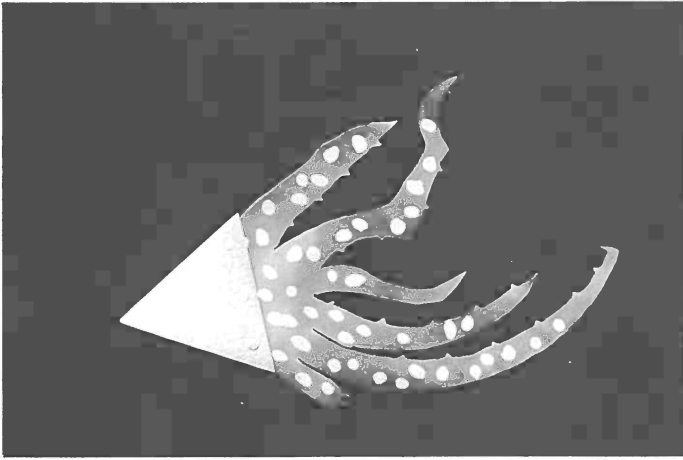
Born in Melbourne in 1956, now a resident of Dunedin, gateway to the south pole. In 1990 I completed three years of the Craft Design course at Otago Polytechnic, majoring in the making of contemporary jewellery. The jewellery shown here was designed to express the ideas of healing and transcendence that I have been working on in my life. In a very literal way I have translated images of the aloe vera plant into jewellery. These grew, over time, from two dimensions into three. They have an organic feel to them achieved through applying layers of patination. I like working with colour and have been using titanium with silver and copper to make windows of light in silver-framed brooches.

The alchemical associations of working with metals and transforming them into jewellery appeals to my sense of magic.

As a lesbian jeweller, I make jewellery that expresses my ideal experience of the world, gynocentric and dynamic.



Three green pendants, patinated copper with sterling silver rivets and ends;
13 cm to 19 cm



Flying Aloe, brooch, sterling silver and copper; 5 × 9 cm

Gemini, brooch, sterling silver, titanium and copper; 3 cm × 4.5 cm

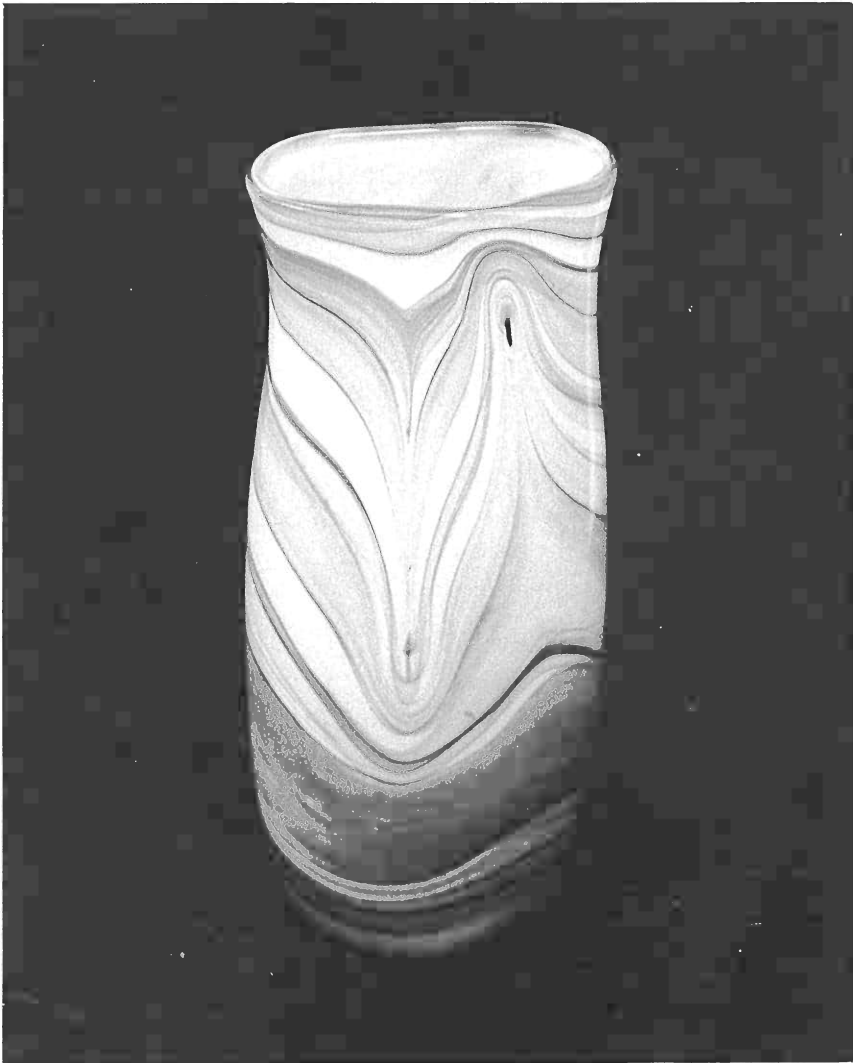
KHAREN HOPE

I originally worked with flat glass which led me to wanting to learn more about glass itself. I chose to learn more through hot glass, and have been working with it ever since, though I'm still interested in all aspects of glass.

For a while I've been thinking it would be a good idea to have an exhibition of lesbian art/craft works (creations) and thought maybe to have a travelling show – if it hooked into the regional arts council touring programme it wouldn't be too much hassle – but I don't want to organise it myself. Sometimes I think it would be great to have it 'unselected', to open it to all lesbians prepared to be out, to encourage lesbian creativity, validating those who make things but don't see themselves as creative, also showing the public how brilliant and how 'normal' lesbians are. Other times I think it would be too big and impossible to manage – and then still other times I think it would be possible to have both a large exhibition that was in one place only, then a smaller one that travelled.



Betty – the woman who wanted to be a doctor. Glass.



Glass form

KIRSTEN GRACIE

I am 24 years old and currently living and working in Manhattan, New York. I've lived and worked in various places since completing a BA degree (English major) in 1987 from Canterbury University. I hope to return to university in New Zealand and immerse myself in studies in women and literature and other related topics.

THE SMEAR

Take off your bottoms
Lie on the board
On the paper.
Open your legs.

In goes the metal
Fast and hard
Flinch, and clench my fists.

Try not to think
Or feel
Or see.

I am one of the millions
Smeared by this human machine,
Who has seen so many cervixes
He no longer knows, or cares for
His rusty movements.
He's doing a job he's never
had done to him,
or ever will.

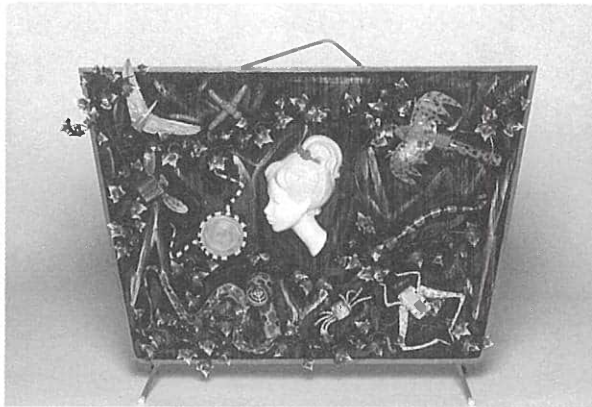
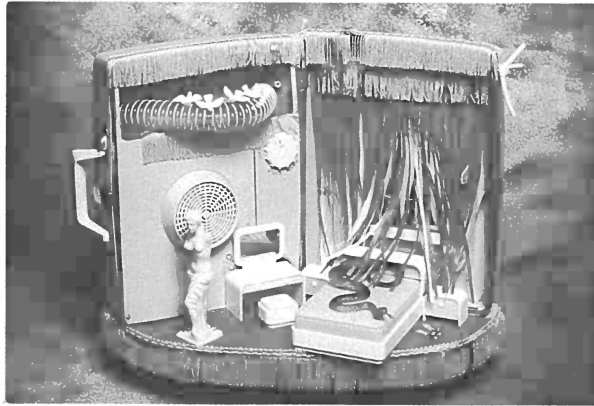
No thought given to the fact I am
A person
With feelings, a sensitive body,
A clear mind
And a cervix that can feel
Metal instruments inside.

LAUREN LETHAL

Going on the gallery trail presents some dilemmas. I have a strong commitment to community art and this will intensify soon because I am starting to get sucked in by the gallery games that go on, and they take me away from my original objectives in art. These include giving back to women through my art and making it accessible in psychiatric and penal institutions and community and political groups. I like to put art where it is least expected. Another objective is to have lesbianism and lesbian art taken seriously, and to offer entirely different dimensions to the margins of the art mafia. This doesn't intimidate me because the half of me which isn't Southern Irish is Northern Italian. If I'm to be in the margin it suggests that I'm a little something on the side and that can be quite exciting – I am a survivor of marginalia.

A lot of my art comes from my delinquent state. There is nothing so gruesome as a 42-year-old woman still being delinquent. What can they do with me? Take my pocket money away? Ground me? I think not! I said at a seminar recently I might capitulate and paint flowers – but I would call them 'Where have all the delinquents gone'!

(with thanks to Tilly Lloyd)

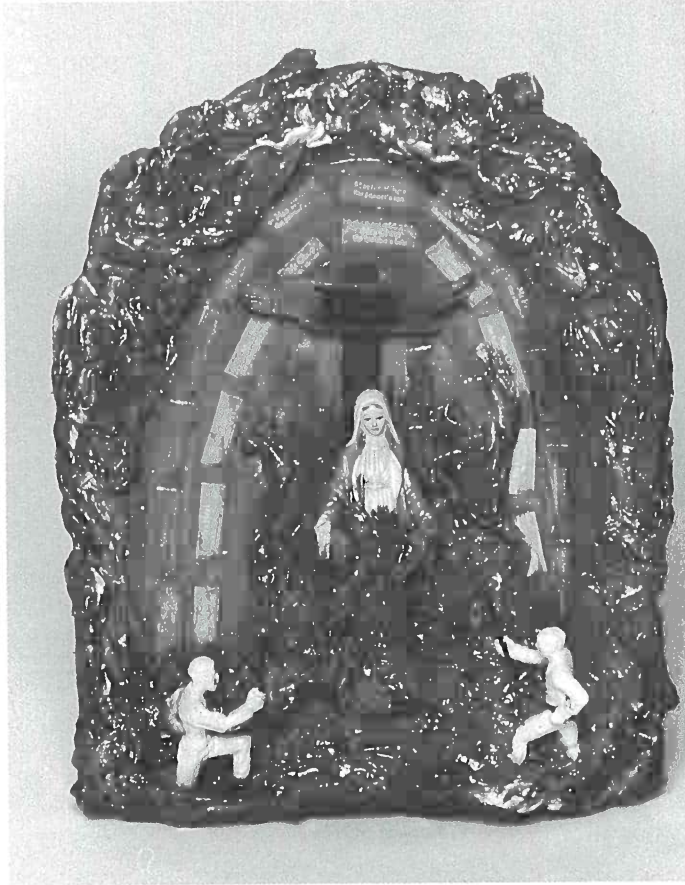


Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow

Made from an old hair-drier, just saying what happens sometimes in relationships.

It's a Jingle out there!

I have done a series of firescreens: when I found this one it had the profile of a young woman on it. I turned cosmetic containers into wild creatures – it's a piece for young people warning them about consumerism and the conning that goes on in the 'beauty' industry.



The Martyrdom of the Solo Mother

I made this after the benefit cuts were started earlier this year – yet again the ‘mums’ suffer.

LEAH POULTER

Lives and works on the Otago Peninsula near the albatrosses. Evolving through writing, teaching, counselling and astrology into a futurist – assisted by my computer and animal and other worldly friends.

A HIGHER TWIST OF THE SPIRAL THE BIRTH OF THE GODDESS CONSCIOUSNESS

Signs of Change

The symptoms reappeared in the sixties. Women began to question seriously the assumptions about men's and women's roles in life. Yet another mass challenge to patriarchy arose.

Patriarchy has had one of the longest, most stable reigns in the history of human consciousness. It seemed too much to dare hope it would collapse. But women began the work to destabilise it.

As the pressure to explode this ancient structure intensified, women evolved the technique of consciousness raising. We learnt with and taught each other how to expand our visions, our values, our assumptions, our paradigms – to embrace a vision *greater than* the narrow, rigid, obstructive cell of male rule.

After a while, it became obvious we wouldn't be liberated in ten years (as many of us had believed). Nor twenty for that matter.

The multiple expansions of the sixties in the civil rights, feminist, and green movements went underground in the eighties where they gestated. People thought it had all died. The political had returned to the personal. We were working it out privately. Many of us secretly thought we had copped out.

But we hadn't. Something very different was happening. Every epiphany, to be useful, has to be integrated into daily living. We didn't realise it then, but we were growing a completely new type of revolution which didn't take place on the streets, wasn't bloody, didn't involve political displays, shows of power or organisations to trumpet its existence.

We became the covert networkers. Small cells of like-minded individuals began working around specific issues – childcare, abortion, health, education, business training. Hot files of women eligible for government and departmental posts were set up. Research was done through every avenue possible. Conferences were held where information was exchanged, more contacts made, more names added to the flourishing informal network which today webs New Zealand in *every* field of activity, including religion.

The brilliant success of this mushrooming activity lies in the fact that it can't be crushed – *because it can't be found*. It does not have a 'spokeswoman'. It does not have a national organisation, it has many organisations. Many of the participants don't know each other but they're all linked.

It can't be identified as a threat because the changes are taking place in the dark – *in consciousness*.

Members of the network know each other because they share, largely (with individual variations of course), in a state of mind.

This new state of mind has been exhaustively described by many current thinkers and synthesisers – the Aquarian/Solar/New Goddess Age is characterised by these shifts:

Patriarchal Age

linear, logical thinking
emotionally polarised
domination dynamic
patriarchy
sense of separateness
competition
aggression and greed
selfishness

Goddess Age

intuitive, lateral thinking
intellectually and intuitively centred
partnership dynamic
gylany (malefemale linked)
sense of interrelatedness
co-operation
sharing and caring
selflessness

religion	spirituality
nationalism	global citizenry
isolation	unity
entropy	synergy

Is patriarchy really crumbling? The answer is, yes. In fact the entire Western Civilisation as we know it is stumbling to its knees. But it won't lie down and die without a mighty fight.

That fight is taking the form in our country of the frantic attempts by politicians, bureaucrats, financiers and friends, to figure out *within their limited framework* how to 'get the country back on its feet'. But already New Zealand is showing the tell-tale symptoms of 'democratic decay' – increasingly secretive decision making, domination of single interest groups, stalemate in the major centres of government, moralistic attitudes, and the possible collapse of the school system.

Our current crisis is no ordinary small cycle crisis. It is a crisis in global civilisation which has never been experienced before. It has been described as the 'wilderness' period of humanity, in which we will learn a completely new set of values to do with our survival on the planet *as a group*. Fossil fuels, for example, will be virtually exhausted by 2030. In fewer than 40 years, we have to develop and spread a completely different renewable energy technology right round the globe, for the largest population the earth has ever had to nurture (about 11 billion).

This period is already exacting great suffering from people. It is obvious certain methods of thought will no longer work. Victim and attack mentality are no longer survival techniques. We learn to work and share together or we perish together. We learn also to do every task as though what we do makes a difference to the planet. We learn that not one of us is as smart as all of us.

Survival during this time depends totally on group responses and solutions, not on individual ones. Nations can no longer go it alone. Everyone in the world is affected when a nation stumbles or makes bad decisions. The fragile interconnectedness of every life form on the planet is now part of our normal consciousness. Many of us are actively acting on this awareness.

We are witnessing the blossoming of the 'voluntary simplicity' lifestyle that thousands of kiwis already practise. They have rejected the consumer economy and have cut their consumption to make 'minimum impact'. They are often highly aware ecologically, and frequently they pursue a system of personal and inner growth.

They value good health, good relationships, well-being and self actualisation. They work to decentralise structures. They have a wholistic approach to whatever field they work in (from finance to gardening). They use their imaginations in problem solving and aren't afraid to take risks. Their spiritual path is basically feminist and inclusive. They experience a joy in their lives, which didn't used to be there.

We have been given the privilege of our humanness at a time unprecedented in the species' history. We are witnessing a death and a birth. And even as we witness, *we are the death and we are the birth* because we are alive and breathing and part of the One Life. The ease of the transition to the New Age depends on how gracefully we let go of the old.

After the Fall – the Ascent

Begin at the centre – the One, the Life in whom we live and move and have our being.

Move from that One outwards into multiplicity.

Experience yourself as an isolated, unique individual, separated from others by the physical fact of skin, the 'encapsulated ego'.

Stand in that position, of isolation, separateness, individuality and gaze back towards the One.

Slowly forget what Oneness felt like. Begin believing that multiplicity is All That Is.

Such was the slow, graceful, spirallitic fall. But everything enjoys balance. So there is an ascent. The ascent is being made in full, wakened consciousness.

This awakened consciousness is the state of mind called the Solar Age, the New Age, the Goddess Age, the Age of Aquarius. It is the Age of the Planetary Caretaker, of the Global Brain Awakening.

The awakened person experiences the Oneness of all life and acts accordingly. S/he thinks and acts harmlessly. S/he doesn't judge herself or other humans. S/he responds automatically to suffering and fear, with compassion. S/he is essentially inclusive in her dealings with people. S/he works towards synthesis and synergy. S/he respects the individual and s/he seeks the highest good of the group. S/he is non-partisan and s/he is silent in the face of evil. S/he knows her specific purpose and s/he works patiently and quietly to bring it about on the earth.

S/he lives skilfully, wisely, courageously and truthfully. S/he is the spiritual warrior, penetrating to the reality behind appearances. S/he accepts that events are cyclic, patterned and responsive to a plan which transcends immediate human perception.

A Higher Twist of the Spiral

Fettered as we are by memory, belief and assumption, it is challenging to envisage a global community acting synergistically. Yet that is the future whose unfolding we are daily witnessing.

Our solar system vibrates to the frequency of love. It is the immediate purpose of our species to express this as a group.

The theme is the integrity and value of the individual as well as responsibility for the group.

We are unfolding on another level to our species purpose. We are to act in harmony with the intelligence of the planet itself. We are to act as guardians and mediators for the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. We are to act as caretakers for one another and for the generations.

We will cease to experience ourselves as unacceptable, or better or worse than others. We will not act judgmentally or with hatred or envy. We will accept and love and observe the abundance in our lives. Instead of despairing of human habits, we will see cause for hope, we will search for signs of

change and transformation. We will notice acts of love, selflessness, honesty and courage and will understand that when the new growth is strong enough, the old dies and drops off.

The new age is the age of the Goddess. It is the age of enlightened partnership. It is the age of Grace. It is the age of the largest population the earth has ever, or will ever sustain. It is the age of due proportion in personal and planetary affairs.

The Goddess rules creativity. Her Age is the age of creativity borne of simplicity, harmony and an inspired awe for the unknown.

The Age of the Goddess is the S.H.E. Age – Sane, Humane and Ecological. It is the Age of the Survival of the Wisest.

I am indebted to the following thinkers and writers for their time, energy, commitment and genius: Renée Weber, Riane Eisler, Stephen Hawking, Gary Zukav, H. P. Blavatsky, the Tibetan, Alice A. Bailey, Rudolph Steiner, Ilya Prigogine, Rupert Sheldrake, David Bohm, Father Bede Griffiths, the Dalai Lama, Dhyani Ywahoo, Sianna Lamore, Fritjof Capra, Marilyn Ferguson, Pythagoras, Meister Eckhart, Kandinsky, Paul Klee etc etc.



The Empty Chair (1986)

This was taken in mid-winter in Provincetown, Cape Cod, USA, during a rehearsal for the writers' workshop multi-media public performance.



At the Railway Station (1986)

These two friends changed in the Dunedin Railway Station waiting rooms, where they told the delighted cleaner that the one in black was about to get married to a man in white – if he turned up!

LINDA JAMES

I am a 40-year-old feminist lesbian and live with my sons, Luke and Jamie, and lover, Kathleen, in Christchurch. I have a studio in the Old Mill in Addington, and have been an artist part-time for ten years and full-time for four. I've come to realise through my own experience and observation, that women's art is women's art – something separate and definable. We have our own links with the past and future which differ from the so-called mainstream and all other categories art can be put into. By recognising this I have found the clarity and strength to nurture my own creativity, appreciate what comes of it and separate myself so that I am not adversely affected by the patriarchal art world.

I am primarily interested in women's art and artists. This has helped me find my own voice, given me support, verification and understanding of my life as an artist, and has helped me see my way through the maze of self-doubt which seems to afflict most women.

I have been reading a lot of books on women artists to see what they have done and to hear what they have said. Quotes from Helen Frankenthaler and Lee Krasner were the basis for two works in this series. These two women were in the thick of the Abstract Expressionist movement in the USA.

As artists and artists' wives, they had to battle their way through the gamut of sexist attitudes in this watershed of the patriarchy in 'Art History'. They seemed to possess enviable patience under the circumstances and expressed only an occasional snappish outburst and made serious attempts to understand their positions as women artists in a male world. It seems to me, if any women are entitled to be bad tempered and sour, these women are.

I find the notion of women's art being separate and our own, terribly exciting. I am sure that very interesting, rich and creative ideas will flow from it. For this reason, I will do all I can to support and enrich women's creativity – out of curiosity as to what will happen and a personal desire to survive.



Artemisia Gentileschi, 1990, mixed media

This is the ring and these the promises you gave me. And this will show your highness what a woman can do.

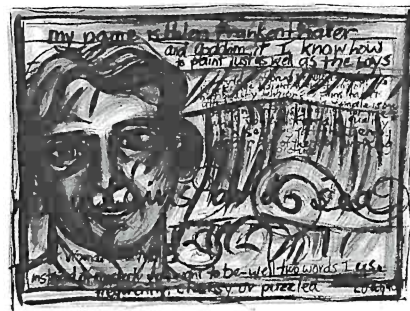
Constance Meyer, 1990, mixed media

I am ugly.



Georgia O'Keeffe, 1990, mixed media

The men like to put me down as the best woman painter. I think I am one of the best painters. The unexplainable thing in nature that makes me feel the world is big far beyond my understanding, to understand maybe by trying to put it into form. To find the feeling of infinity on the horizon line, or just over the next hill.



Lee Krasner, 1990, mixed media

Any woman artist who says there is no discrimination against women, should have her face slapped. (1971)

I mistrust anything that isn't in my direct range of experience. I couldn't run out and do a one woman job on the sexist aspects of the art world, continue my painting and stay in the role I was in as Mrs Pollock – I just couldn't do that much. What I considered important was that I was able to work and other things would take their turn. Now rightly or wrongly I made my decisions. (1975)

Helen Frankenthaler, 1990, mixed media

My name is Helen Frankenthaler and goddam it, I know how to paint just as well as the boys.



Eva Hesse, 1990, mixed media

I realise how hung up I am about always feeling that what I do is wrong, not good enough, that in art my work will always break, wear badly, not last, that technically I failed. It does parallel my life for sure. (1966)

I will abandon restrictions and curbs placed upon myself. (1960)

The way to beat discrimination in art is by art. Excellence has no sex. I wonder if we are unique. I mean the minority we exemplify. The female struggle . . . to me insurmountable to achieve an ultimate expression requires the complete dedication seemingly only man can attain. A singleness of purpose, no obstructions allowed seems a man's prerogative. His domain. A woman is side-tracked by all her feminine roles, from menstrual periods to cleaning houses, to remaining pretty and young and having babies. If she refuses to stop there, she yet must cope with them. She is at a disadvantage from the beginning. She also lacks conviction that she has the right to achievement. She also lacks the belief that her achievements are worthy. Therefore she has not the steadfastness necessary to carry ideas to the full . . . there are handfuls that succeeded but less when one separates the women from the women that assume the masculine role. A fantastic strength is necessary and courage. I dwell on this all the time. My determination and will is strong, but I am so lacking in self esteem that I never seem to overcome also competing all the time with a man with self confidence in his work and who is successful also. (1965)

MAREWA GLOVER

Born 1961 of Maori/Pakeha parents. Currently studying for a Diploma in Community Psychology, and working part-time as a counsellor with Rape Crisis Te Awamutu. Published own collection of work *Mooncall* in 1990 and has had pieces published in *The Exploding Frangipani*, *Subversive Acts*, *WomanScript* and *Broadsheet*.

OUT OF IT

'Let's walk.' From where I don't remember, but she was going to walk me home, I know that much.

It was not dark anymore, though it was still night time. The day only starts later when the traffic fills the roads and feet beat the footpath repeatedly for hours.

We walked along streets I didn't really see. Buzzing as I was. She smiled, condescendingly I think, at my constant chatter. Pointing at this, pointing at that.

I feel surreal, or is it unreal? Or both. I experiment with staring at the footpath as it rushes up towards me. It's as if I'm wearing someone else's glasses or I'm looking through a wide angle lens. Absently my hand checks my face. No glasses there.

Dizzy, I grab at her arm, linking mine with it. Giggling. Never mind the public, they're asleep. The morning streets belong to the lesbians walking arm in arm. I don't care if anyone sees us.

My flatmates are up having a champagne breakfast. Now I care. Will they be able to tell from my manner, my chatter, my nervous flutter? If they look in my eyes what will they see? Perhaps all the colour has gone leaving two big black holes.

I whisk my lover, (my pusher) to my room and hide there. Waiting for my paranoia to leave, we turn the pages of Saturday's *Herald* unseeing. I play eerie music, supposed to be relaxing, ambient. She doesn't make love to me. I wonder why she stays. We're not tired but we've run out of things to do – though I have plenty to say.

Prophesising, philosophising, just blabbering.

'How long will it last?' I ask her. She shrugs. I want to get on with my day, normally.

I want to turn it off like a TV programme. Thank you, that was good, but that's enough for now. Can we stop it now? What if it doesn't stop? What if I'm going to feel like this forever? What if I can't stop talking? Ever? Or I'm never to sleep again? Always to be paranoid that people will be able to tell that I'm out of control, or it is under control?

'I better get going,' she says. But what am I going to do? Who will I talk to? Hey you can't leave now, what if I spin out? She hasn't even made love to me.

'OK – when will I see you again?' I say.

Before she answers, the phone rings – it's for me. Now I've got to pull myself together and try and act normal. In the hallway mirror I risk a peek at myself. My pupils are small, beady, not dilated. Otherwise I look normal.

Feeling less paranoid, I take the phone. The front door closes behind my chaperone. I concentrate hard on imitating a memory of myself.

MARIAN EVANS

She wants me there while she bathes. So I squeeze into the little bathroom with a stool and the newspaper. I remember her lying in the bath when I was a child, flannel covering her pubic area, while I did whatever I'd needed to visit the bathroom for. I can't remember seeing her naked elsewhere. And I assume, now, that it's only for fear of finding herself unable to breathe in the steam that she's suggested I come in. So I read, head down, while she splashes about. Then she speaks. I have to look up, directly at her. Pass her what she needs. Return to the paper. And, now she's washing, glance sideways at her scar. Can see why so many amazons went for the idea. Scarification: risk/courage/meaning. Well, risk. – Would you like me to wash your back? – Yes, thank you. Her back is beautiful. She's told me how Grannie used to put handkerchiefs across their shoulders on the beach at Bournemouth to protect their skin from the sun. And I can't remember her sunbathing: another exposure she didn't risk? So the skin is beautiful, too, smooth and golden. I wash very gently, knowing that beneath the skin somewhere there are tumours. She has little pain, but I don't want to trigger even a twinge. After I wash her I wet a flannel then squeeze it across her shoulders, down her back. She enjoys it. I bite my lower lip so I don't shriek *yay!* (maybe she'll let me massage her feet) . . . Your scar's healed well, I say. We talk about the process. I've missed a lot, hearing bits only, on the phone.

It's different for me, I say, I'm godless. – Of course you're not, she says, the grace of god shines out of you. I sigh. – Shall we have a cup of tea? Endless cups of teas and meals, many visitors. She avoids using the little machine which gives her more oxygen, while visitors are here, is animated, 'normal', gets up and dressed, sits on the verandah among her tomato plants in the sun. Lots of mail, too, she and Father read theirs while I deliver the lunch. I keep mine for later. They know I have work to do while I'm here, and I have the kitchen table down here in the shed, but it's hard for them to leave me for

long and from lunch till afternoon tea when I could be working I feel so pooped from the domesticity I go to sleep. I must finish the Spiral but the last bit's always so fiddly and I'm so anxious about what I may have forgotten or lost it's hard to start.

Oh dear. We talk about her funeral and what she wants. We enjoy the discussion (lengthy). But then we talk about my being her executor. I tell her I'm also an executor for a friend, the woman she knows as an important part of my life: – Is she married? she asks. – Yes. The next day she asks again. – Is she married? I don't answer this time. It's a conversation I don't want. Later she asks, having told me she finds it wonderful that I've 'unravelling' myself and how glad she is that we're 'at one': – do you still feel the same about sexual things? – o yes I answer with a big grin, and then, because it follows naturally somehow – o I am going to miss you. My grin fades, I feel my throat block and I turn away then back to face her. We look sadly and lovingly at each other: she isn't frightened of death itself, hopes only for a 'good' death. Preferably without the sensation of being unable to breathe as it approaches. I can love her freely. And grieve openly. We've talked about so much, Maori self-determination which she supports (I'm surprised); how a fantail flies in when someone close to her dies; her father.

Pam rings. They've just about finished their bit. Lovely to hear her, feel the warmth of her sisterly concern. But somehow, not real. This culture of clergy and the dying swaddles me: the rhythms of morning prayer and evensong, district nurses, elderly people, some of whom eye me with what seems to be distaste; m'sisters seem the strangers. (I respond to those who seem to find me distasteful with my most 'well brought up' and delightful behaviour, enjoy it if they then become confused, check whether I am the daughter they think I am.)

One of the many women who helps is a dyke. I'm sure of it. Mother can't get in the bath now, so we washed her in the sitting room, sitting up in a chair. I found myself wanting to make jokes about amazons while we fiddled with the towels, to say – can I come over, there are parts of me drying out in this relentlessly heterosexual environment. But I can't. Mother loves her, her

stories. And likes to converse with her on her own, banishes me when she visits, sometimes. Sees her as 'her' friend, not mine. Don't want to risk upsetting the ecology here, too much juggling as it is.

It's good caring for her: her body a slightly jellied version of mine. Massaging her feet and lower legs regularly, she loves it, but can't bring myself to offer her a complete massage. Have been waiting for her to say – stop mauling me, but the only time she's come close is when I was massaging her hands, and just enjoying the feeling of them in an abstract sort of way: she suddenly said very firmly – that's *enough*. O.

Have moved inside: Mother needs me at night. Regular ditditditdit as the breath machine starts up, its huuuuhaaaah, huuuuhaaaah. She moves from bed to armchair to bed searching for comfort. Father still tucked up and sleeping in the bed too. Take them both Horlicks around 11 pm. Less talking with Mother now, amazing change in just a few days.

She was dozing in her mask in the armchair holding my hand and suddenly seemed a very long way away. My mother, who'd said 'stay and hold my hand' a few minutes ago was gone. Frightened and lost and lonely I just howl and sob. And wake her up. – O darling, bless you, it'll be all right . . . I've never seen you like this you'll be all right. I bend my head over the arm of the chair so she at least can't *see* how awful I'm feeling and she strokes my hair. And after a little while I stop. She's right: I always concealed my grieving from her. Never trusted her response.

Pl and I cut down most of the feijoa tree, so M can see the inlet and sea from her bed and from the verandah. Wonderful view, tides in and out. J came to garden, stacked the branches in a huge pile. Aunt B has sent a parcel of beautiful English nightclothes, including a glamorous long pink quilted dressing gown. Mother wearing it, dozing and beautiful on the verandah chair: the weight loss and pinkish cheeks suit her.

B arrived. At first I didn't realise who she was. The house is like a railway station. And there was this dark still woman in a dark long coat. I was tidying

up the kitchen and it must have been evening but time has become confused. I blinked a couple of times and she moved and I recognised her. We hugged. The vomiting is dreadful. The morphine. Combined with the pissing every time she coughs or heaves: just the pits. She was enjoying the look of food and the smell, but eating less. Now she's not eating, vomiting bile. Vomiting most medication. Still little pain, but she's had enough. – I hope it won't be much longer, she said.

I've fallen in love with one of the regular visitors: always a sucker for a potent combination of tenderness, alert intelligence and humour. Wonderful direct intense pleasure in his company. Fortunately I know myself well enough to do absolutely nothing about it except enjoy what is there as it is and wonder if I'm forever going to fall in love with those who are for some reason impossible. And *why* I do it. Fortunately too, anyone who might notice my delight is absorbed in M. Or too kind to show they've noticed. Fantasise, briefly, about better food, more warmth next winter. And a live-in father for P, a small virgo who fervently desires a heterosexual home.

Trying to keep awake, B resting. M found breathing impossible, the doctor came and tried ventolin, she walked around as she wanted to, he tried morphine: – when does your other sister come? He nearly overdosed her. We talked about overdoses, the grey area between making someone comfortable and killing them, how to recognise when someone has had enough. She and Father in bed, now, holding hands, fast asleep, the machine quiet, me in her armchair under the window, wrapped in her crocheted blanket, feet (in her slippers) resting on the footstool.

That's it really. On to intravenous morphine through a narrow tube leading from a little pump attached to one of her many pillows. There is a blue plastic butterfly attached by tape to the top of her breastbone. It holds the needle. I lie on the bed beside her, holding her hand. I can't watch the district nurse insert the needle, bury my head in my shoulder and weep, very quietly, over the pillows. Keep my spectacles on so my tears aren't obvious (I think, silly). For the first time, she shakes my hand off when I stroke her arm.

She sleeps most of the time now. Comes to every four hours, as the additional medication wears off, insists on using the commode. No coughing, no wetting herself, and she seems hardly conscious enough to notice . . . – Stop mauling me, she hissed at us last time we manoeuvred her and the pillow and the pump off the bed and towards the commode.

She became alert for the last time when Jo & C arrived, a warm welcome, as usual, but from behind the mask. Her eagerness without enough energy to delude them into believing that she was anywhere but at the end. The machine and mask are off briefly, then on again. Ditditditdit the machine goes and behind the mask she sings dadadada. – ah I say, just like Mr Whippy. She laughs, stops: – oh you're wonderful people. No goodbyes.

I wash her face and hands. Hold each hand carefully in the orange plain plastic bowl, swirl the water around them, squeeze water over them. Look at what my hands will become. Wash carefully behind her ears. Dry everywhere softly and carefully. Clean inside her mouth with L's special damp buds. She likes the flavour. Help her drink.

After midnight they both sleep. B sits on the footstool, at the edge of the bed, says compline. I sit on my heels, lean against her, tuck into her. My tears drip down her neck.

Then M's breathing changing, great gasps and pants accompanied by a pushing down into her body, rhythms I associate with the final stages of giving birth. Her face bright red. Then another change: long slow breaths with long pauses between each breath. Her colour changes, paler. I ring T. Nothing we can do except keep her comfortable.

I ring Al, tell him she's dying, to think of her through our night, hoping she'll last till J gets here from Norway. – Can I speak to her? He asks. – No, she's unconscious. He cries: – Have they got my postcard from Nice? he asks after a while. – No. He sobs again. – So she won't read it. Sobs. Has friends at work with him to talk with, they will also think of her while they cook.

After we ring off I keep awake by trying various ways of saying 'my grandmother is dying' in French. Knowing it will roll off his nineteen year old tongue.

Her mouth looks so dry, she can't even take water on a spoon, the buds haven't enough moisture, I try ice and it keeps slipping out. I give up, hope she's so unconscious she doesn't feel thirst. At four Father gets up and dressed, says the prayers for the dying. She doesn't die. At six, I have a shower, turn on the sitting room heater, resist the temptation just to sit on it for a while, do a couple of Qi Gong routines and feel a lot better. A arrives, puts M into the recovery position, T arrives, prepares some morphine, injects her and says – this will be her last few breaths. She lives another five hours. We take it in turns to hold her hand. Most of the time I just watch the pulse in her neck.

B starts to menstruate, ten days late, five minutes after M dies. D arrives three hours after she dies. I don't recognise him, a stunning young man in a flowing coat and wearing shades, bursting into the sitting room, opening his arms to me. My beloved son. J arrives four hours later. She starts to menstruate the next morning, ten days early. The morning after that I stay in bed, shooting pains up my thighs down from my ovaries down my lower back. Exhaustion, or my wombless body trying to join in. Anyway, it's nice to lie in bed, meals delivered and chats with the gorgeous D, taking great care of me, with nephews and niece. – I'm going to have a big bonfire the night of the funeral, my way of saying goodbye. – And we'll burn Grannie on it? asks one. A lovely postcard from I. I clutch it most of the day. Yes the rest of my reality is still out there; she's there; I'll get back. – I'll stay as long as you need me, says D.

Bridie rings again. Wonderful to hear her. But we're in the midst of an argument about what the family wants said at the funeral. I am insisting that the health centre people are acknowledged, by name. But for them M couldn't have stayed home to the end. I cut Bridie short. Wish we could have a private conversation. Wish she was here.

Ring Alex again. He's been thinking of coming home for the funeral. Am glad he's decided against it. His postcard has arrived and he'd like it put in the coffin with her. O my sons, they touch my heart again and again.

I've helped Father organise the funeral. I'll be there but I can't participate in the same way as the others. The rest of us to read lessons etc.

She says home till the funeral. I ride in the hearse, between Father and the funeral director. Discuss women as funeral directors with the funeral director. Enjoy his company. Father in his black suit, me in mine.

P & W at the cathedral, W in tears, P a small presence trying to bind himself to my side, but together they join the other grandchildren and sons-in-law as pallbearers. Around 500 people, clergy everywhere, two bishops, she'd have loved it. Can't resist the singing, join in enthusiastically; B behind me sings inclusive language versions; sometimes I alter them as I go along but I'm without her commitment to the church, mostly just enjoy the old favourites, fortissimo. Psalm 103: 'As mortals their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. (What do you want to be remembered for? asks Heather – my children, I answer, without thinking: but I've never been a cultural feminist.) Stand by J while she speaks for the family, uncertain whether she'll get through it: she does. P comes back from getting a blessing, whispers details: he enjoys the differences, the subtleties of blessings he's given. I hold Father's arm going down the aisle, heading for the hearse and the committal at the crematorium. We pause at the hearse door and a flutter catches my eye on the nearest tree. A fantail. At eye level. Throw myself towards the middle of the huge front seat of the Dodge. Hit my head on the rear vision mirror. Turn to Father. Wonder what he's seeing. Don't ask. Put my hand on his.

A huge fire on the beach at the end of the garden, mostly the feijoa tree, years of accumulated newspaper ferried by the children; and some branches I later find were promised for someone's Guy Fawkes celebrations. It blazes wonderfully, immense heat. Some bits of burning paper fly off towards the neighbours. W worries about me setting fire to their hedges and homes, organises

hoses and buckets: the fire generates metaphor for some of our past difficulties. The patriarchs stay inside watching the news. A neighbour comes out and tells us not to worry when the fire station alarm goes: it's not us, it goes every Thursday at seven.

We drop W D & P at the airport, just make it at the appointed time to bury the ashes, a lovely hillside, Father in cassock and surplice, saying every possible prayer. Finally I ask – Father can we sing? J suggests 'Now Thank We All Our God'. We sing. And fill the little hole with earth cover it with flowers.

R rings – How are things? – We buried the ashes yesterday. – O. She hadn't known; somehow I'd assumed she'd have seen the paper, there always seems to be one in her little office. Exemplary damages, Social Welfare hearings, R herself seem like dreams.

Julie phones: they have finished, where shd she send the material. Here, I say, looking forward to the stimulus to finish my bit. She's marvellous, each artist has her own envelope she says. That'll save me. Nothing like an academic lesbian feminist. She and Pam great treats in this process with many treats.

The parcel comes. Excitement. Wonders. What a range. What pleasures. I do my bit with prose and poetry, F's old envelopes and the green address labels, odd bit of expensive xeroxing at the health centre. Jolt to read Rhona on rejected images. Immediate defensiveness re menstrual image: difference doesn't necessarily import lesser/more dichotomy. I also had difficulty with a white woman's portrayal of an apparently Maori woman. Off goes most of the ms. to Daphne, from a little office where they don't even write her address on the form. Hope it gets there. Haven't kept a copy. . . .

Leave Father with five pots of marmalade – I'll come back when you finish them, make some more.

Now for an editorial. It's hard. Why join in developing a printed culture to complement and contribute to a vibrant oral culture? Wellington lesbian access radio doing the best job in the world of publishing, why bother? More local lesbian stories being printed, for all sorts of reasons. Some established

and out lesbian artists and writers either aren't interested in a wholly lesbian publication, or (writers) send work that's less than their best, sometimes looking v. tatty, presumably from having done the rounds elsewhere, unsuccessfully. Sometimes not surprisingly, because of content, sometimes not surprisingly, because of quality.

Hate editing, hate rejecting work even more, mistrust my partly Aristotle/ Revised Standard Version etc shaped judgment, fear the possibility of my voice echoing the silencing of my childhood, the attempted silencings of more recent times. Often recognise hesitancies and awkwardnesses that parallel my own, want to publish them for what they are and what they mean; and what may then follow. Holding always the small memories of the many literary stick figures who told me *the bone people* was unreadable, we should have edited it. But I wonder if some writers are aware of the sort of process outlined by Dorothy Allison in her foreword to *Trash*, wish that some would relax into their imaginations and language, like Jeanette Winterson at her best.

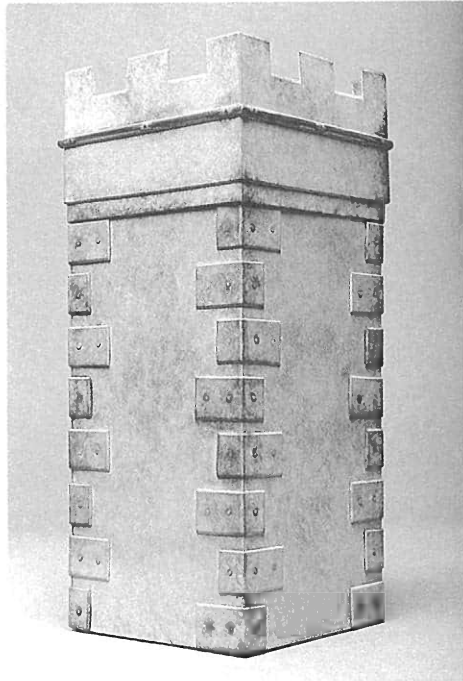
What joy though to see and read and feel some possibilities being freely explored; fluidity I associate with lesbianisms and feminisms I love: work that's water flowing past, against, through, over the dams others have constructed, whether prescriptive lesbian feminists; frightened heterosexuals; or patriarchs who hate us (I most dislike the closet ones). Finding our own courses: the hardest part of editing deciding where the local terrain requires that a contribution be diverted.

This feels like the last Spiral project for me, the last time shrugging at what's conventionally given, meeting my own needs for things to look at and to read which engage me and include me. I can't imagine being without some collective project, taking its time. But survival's becoming more difficult, it's time to retreat. To love and resist elsewhere.

Thanks again to Tilly and Bridie; and to the contributors for their work and patience. And to those lesbians I love, &/or whose work I love and who couldn't or wouldn't contribute to this book: which exists within contexts they help create.

MARY MCFARLANE

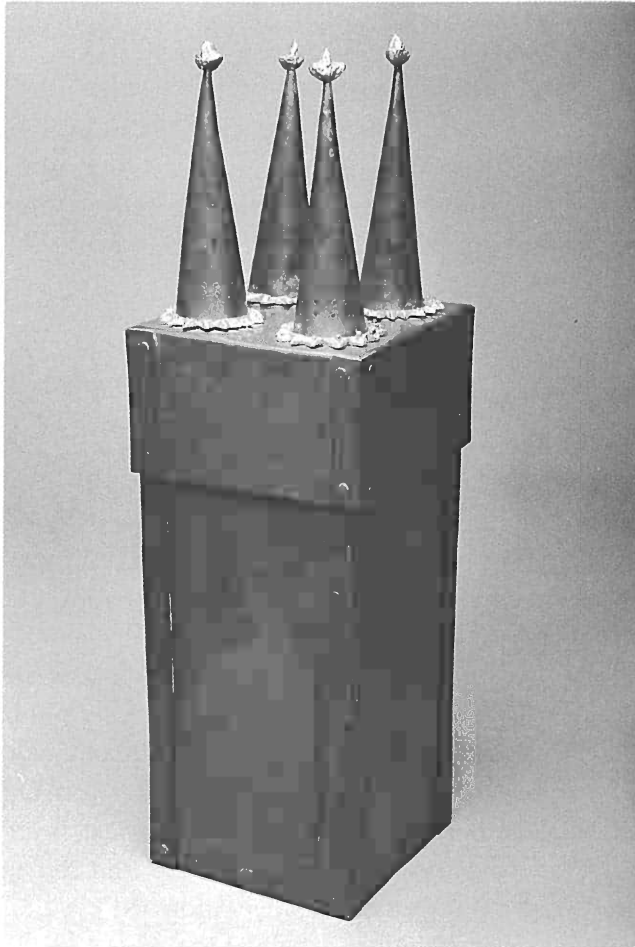
I am a graduate in art history of the University of Canterbury, and of the Craft Design course (metalwork and jewellery) at Otago Polytechnic School of Art. After travelling in India, England and Wales in 1990, I worked for several months at Silverweed Jewellers Workshop, South Wales. Two of these tower boxes were made there. Architecture continues to be a main theme in my work. I now work in Dunedin.



Tregaron Tower. Blue-green patinated copper, brass coursing 205 × 85 × 85



Fatehpur Sikri Enclosure. White patinated copper 150 × 55 × 55



St Joseph's Tower. Black patinated copper, silver castings 300 × 82 × 82
Photography by Jane Dawber, Dunedin.

MELIORS SIMMS

Meliors Simms was born in Canada in 1966 but has lived in New Zealand most of her life, and in Dunedin for the seven years to mid-1991 when she left for overseas. She is the single mother of a five-year-old daughter and never has enough time to write as much as she would like. When she gets the chance, she writes poetry, fiction and non-fiction.

SALLY

Sally is notorious for her baby dykes. She likes to bring them out, or rather, catch them on the rebound from that first rollercoaster affair, teach them a few tricks and settle them into the life. She's been doing it for nearly twenty years and her style has hardly changed. Sally looks happy enough and her lovers don't seem to mind being part of a tradition.

Usually everyone stays friendly and I've heard Sally joke in private that our social circle of the lesbian community is practically a Sally's old girl club. But sometimes things get messy, like her latest affair. Occasionally one like Pen wants to stick around a bit longer, maybe even be the woman to settle Sally down. But every three months or so Sally spots her next lover and starts to ease out of one relationship and into the next. Pen wasn't to be eased. I could tell because she turned up at Stuart's Coffee Shop red eyed and puffy for a whole week. It didn't take a genius to attribute the cause to Sally's courting of an equally broken hearted girl fresh out of her gym slip and her first relationship.

Scandal broke out as it does for Sally every three or four years. Not as exciting as the time she was chased down the street by an angry mallet-waving father, but certainly the most entertaining thing to happen around here since last summer when June went to Samoa on VSA and the rest of the collective

played musical lovers. Anyway, Pen broke the rules and made a scene in public. Not just at a dyke dance or even the Wimmin's Centre but for all the coffee drinking world to see, at Stuart's.

Sally was consoling her latest prospect with cappuccinos and custard squares when Pen stormed in waving Vida's *Our Right To Love*. Sally gives all her lovers a copy, she bought a crate of them in 1978. Pen smacked it down on the table splattering them both with custard and coffee. She started yelling and screaming and trying to pull the other baby dyke's hair, only she'd just shaved it all off and there was nothing to get a hold of. Sally was trying hard not to laugh as the situation was obviously serious.

All the straight people at Stuart's were pretending this wasn't happening and watching out of the corners of their eyes. All the dykes, and there were about six of us at the table closest to Sally's, were tripping over each other to get involved. Except me, I decided to let the self defence teachers bearhug Pen into submission and comfort the object of her attack.

I caught Sally's eye and that did it, the giggle she'd been holding back bubbled right up. The two weeping teenagers looked at her in disbelief. I'd maintained my self-control fine until then but the sight of their stricken faces was too much. I let out that big belly laugh I'm famous for and before you knew it Sally and I and the three other women at the table who'd been through Sally's Sapphic initiation were laughing so hard we were crying.

It was cruel. I know I'm sorry, and I'm sure Sally is, at least because that girl was never seen again. You can't laugh at the young, their egos are so overblown and sensitive, like that last day of a rose when the petals fall in the slightest breeze. We should have laughed behind their backs, as is only polite. Pen still isn't speaking to me, though she's made friends with Sally.

For the first time since I've met her Sally hasn't had some fresh young thing hanging off her arm. She'd gotten a bit tied up in her reputation and a little lost in reframing her life across the generation gap four times a year. I'm getting reacquainted with Sally my old friend. We've been going walking, like the old spinsters we are. Climbing mountains in sensible shoes, chuckling.

MIRIAM SAPHIRA

POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

Dogs barking at the pound and baring teeth
are more welcoming than six politically correct liberals
who oppose your point of view. I did not like it,
I felt I was chewed, a rag doll rather than a shin
bone and all the time they were so
righteous.

The Cathedral might well have rung its chimes
upon my head too but no horn blew, just activists
spitting venom because I took the risk
of putting my neck out for an idea,
so don't give me that look
I'll miss your meeting
I'm sticking to books.

KAWASAKI 750

She roared into my life with an open
throttle and a basket
full of blooms
picked in a dawn patrol.
Riding our love
we felt the thorns
never believing
until picked and pained
that the petals
dropped on the road.

I AM AS

I am as fragmented as the mother
of millions dropping new leaves
from a clay lip like a faux pas
at family gatherings where they hide
the shotgun in the closet
with moth balls and lavender bags.

You may well ask, what
other parts of me?
Five demi-replicas, occasionally alike,
frequently at loggerheads yet for all
that bitching they are mine.
They encompass five backs to clothe,
at least one trek to Israel,
fifty toes to shoe, and the food,
the kreplach, oh, my bioluvil buddies.
I cannot ask you to like them,
care or even accept them, can
I ask you for anything? For
I am fragmented as the mother
of millions, the wandering jew,
the dandelion,
blowing her thyme in the wind.

NGAHUIA TE AWEKOTUKU

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku is a writer, teacher and dreamer currently working at Auckland University. She has published two books, *Tahuri* (1989), a short story collection about growing up lesbian, and different in a traditional Maori community; and *Mana Wahine Maori: Selected Writings in Maori Women's Art, Culture & Politics* (1991), a non-fiction work. Her stories, reconstructed myths, essays, poems, academic papers, and other diverse offerings appear in a variety of anthologies. A waterless Taurean with Aries rising and four Arian planets, she is a fantasy/science fiction fanatic, and quite crazy about cats.

SO EASY TO PLEASE . . .

She was soft, so soft. And so easy to please. I loved loving her, touching that warmth upon her belly, sensing that way of her, waiting. Waiting.

Sometimes, I'd take her ear between my teeth, just the utmost tip of it, and I'd nip, delicately. Carefully. She'd squeak with pleasure, stretch herself, long and languid, nestling against me. Othertimes, I'd run my fingers low along her back, tasting the incredible strength of her spine, rejoicing in her grace, her suppleness, her form.

We'd lie for hours in the sunlight, in the twilight, in the moonlight . . .

Then I'd get up, drag on some clothes, walk to the fridge.
And she'd leap from our rumpled bed, green gold eyes dancing, voice singing gently.
Asking me . . .

for her jellimeat.

AUNTIE MARLEEN

They were off in the taxi, Mum and her husband, just as Auntie Marleen came through the door, following her smells, which always came in first. Grease, sour tobacco, and oiled rows of chestnut hair running short-cropped from the forehead to the neck. Motorbike fumes, dust, and worn-out leather in the soft brown folds of her fighter pilot's coat. She was my babysitter; she'd arrive in a crackle of smoke – from her Three Castles roll-your-own and her machine's exhaust – and she'd pull up by the house, the engine of her Norton chugging reluctantly to a standstill. With a smile to my mother, and a slight nod to the man at her side, she marched smartly up the back steps, her heavy lace-up shoes creaking, the sharp grey edges of her flannel trousers catching the sun.

She had a routine, which was always strictly followed. She would shake my hand, and I'd always wonder at the coolness of her ivory white fingers, and severely clipped nails, and the spoiled bit of skin, stained by nicotine. Then she would take off her coat and unroll a long green knitted scarf from around her neck, revealing a buttoned shirt collar sitting above a thick navy blue pullover. The shirt was blue, too. She'd hang the coat and scarf on the back door hook, taking some stuff out of the pockets. Three Castles, matches in a Beehive box, blackballs, and a book, red cloth covered with brittle library plastic. The Famous Five again. I watched, thinking greedily about a blackball, melting sweet and gooey in my mouth, as she made two cups of cocoa. And with the Famous Five's latest adventure tucked into her armpit, the drinks steaming and balanced in one hand, and the blackballs in the other, she walked ahead of me, into the bedroom.

After the cocoa, I was allowed one blackball. Just one, which I'd clatter between my teeth and lick beneath my tongue, willing it to last and last. And as

she turned the fourth page, my head heavy with cocoa, and the day's activities, I was out cold . . .

Auntie Marleen's voice was like that – soft and low and droning, even at the most exciting bits, where Jo catches the runaway horse, or Quentin grabs the smuggler; Auntie Marleen's quiet monotone stayed on the same dogged, slow dreary level, and I drifted quietly away, safe in the murmur of the story . . .

That was part of the routine too; that I fell asleep early, so that she would go back to the kitchen, make another cup of cocoa, turn on the wireless, and read the paper. She was doing this one night when I had to go to the lav; she didn't notice me creeping around; she was behind the paper hidden by clouds of curling tobacco smoke.

Auntie Marleen. She had broken little teeth with mossy brown edges from all the smoking; and an awkward, rare lopsided smile, so that if she smiled, she showed only the left side of her jaw – where the teeth were not so bad. Her skin was downy and sallow, and moved a lot as she talked; soft creases and deep grooves around her very neat, very straight nose. And her eyes were kind and hollow, the colour of fading autumn leaves; sad. She never ever laughed.

Auntie Marleen gave me my first cat.

And my very first look at what I could become.

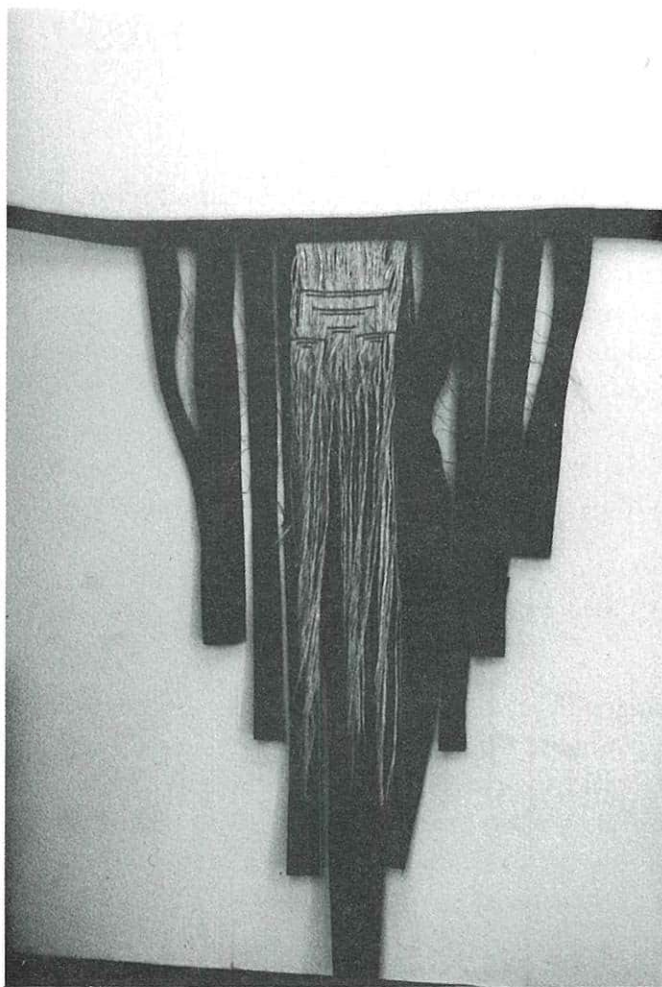
PAERAU CORNEAL

Tuwharetoa, Te Ati Hau a Paparangi

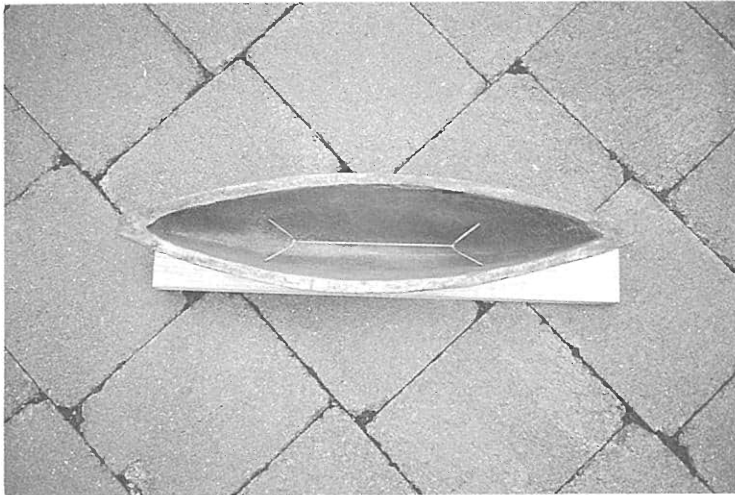
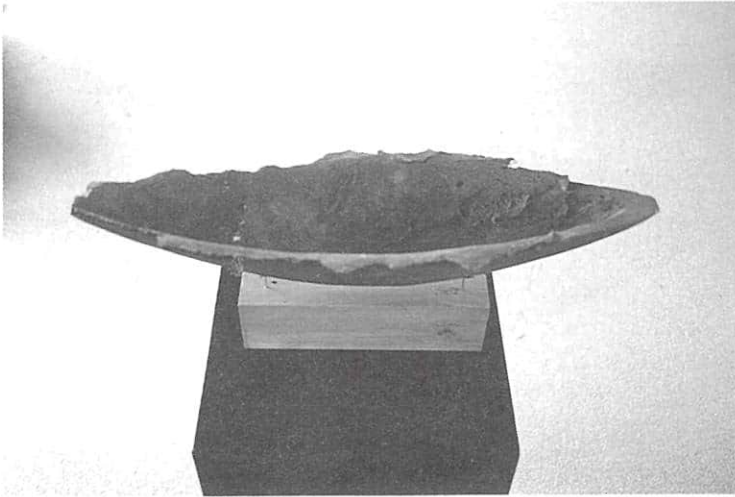
Born 1961 in Rotorua; 1986-87 Certificate Craft Design Maori Graduate; Diploma Craft Design Maori Graduate; 1988 exhibited Pahiatua Annual Arts, Pahiatua; 1989 exhibited Rotorua Artists, Rotorua Art Gallery and Out of the Woods, Sarjeant Gallery, Whanganui; 1990 participant in Whanganui Wood Symposium, Whanganui Summer School and exhibitor After Woods, Sarjeant Gallery, Whanganui; exhibitor Maori Women Artists, Rotorua; Lesbian artists, Rotorua; Te Koanga, Auckland; Kohia Ko Taikaka Anake, National Art Gallery, Wellington; 1991 commissioned for ceramic work for NZ Ceramics display at Glass Exhibition, Expo, Seville, Spain in 1992.

I began working with raku as it is a spontaneous and relatively cheap process. These forms symbolise the equal status of waka and wakahuia. The sexual symbolism is female, the taonga within are materials such as shell, muka, copper. The wakahuia forms were developed in my graduating year on Craft Design course and my focus for 1991 is to continue with larger, more sculptural versions of these forms.

The sources for my work are a blend of traditional, contemporary, Indigenous and European art forms, and my inspiration is from the perspective of being Maori and lesbian.



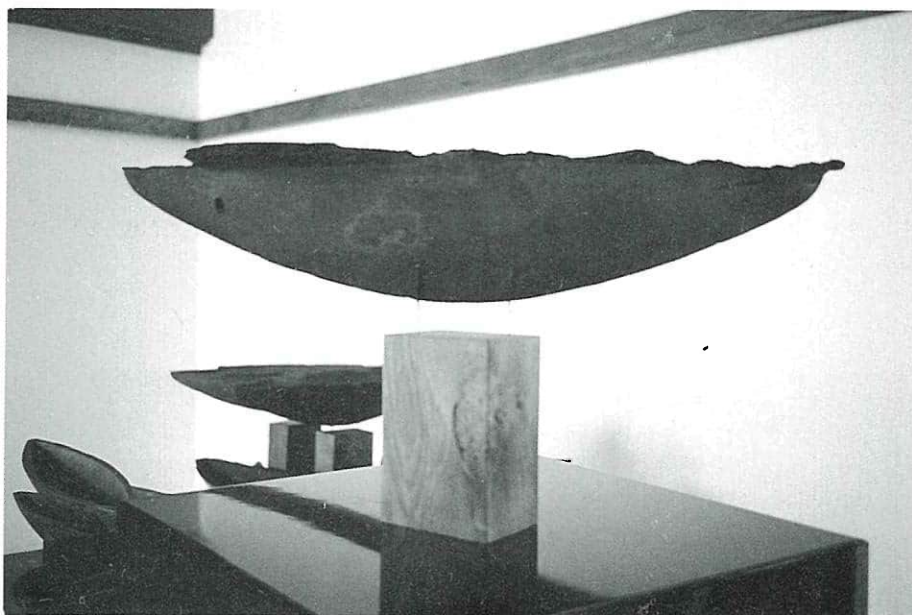
Te Maro o Hinenui Te Po, totara bark, copper wire, muka
The Maro traditionally was a woven triangular cloth of muka to cover and protect the pubic area. The scale and contrasting media in this work are an attempt to acknowledge the potency of Goddess Hinenui-Te-Po, who, of her many trials, blessed man with mortality.



Wakahuia series

Fumed Red 1990, 51 × 14 × 23 cm. Clay, steel, totara bark, multi fired

Fumed Red 1990, 51 × 14 × 7 cm. Stainless steel, clay, rewa rewa, multi fired



Untitled 1990, 51 × 14 × 31 cm. Totara, steel, clay, multi fired

POWHIRI RIKA-HEKE

Of Ngapuhi, Ngati Kahu, Ngati Hine, Te Rarawa, Te Aupouri, Irish, English and Scottish descent, her waka include Ngatokimatawhaorua, Mamari, Mataatua, *Flying Foam*, *The Mary* and *Elizabeth*. She is a member of the Waikato writing group Scratching the Surface and Wellington-based Maori Women Artists' Collective, Haeata.

NEIGHBOURS

Been neighbours for years; longer than we care to remember. You moved in some time after we did. Heck, it's part of the history of the place the day you officially took up residence. Some even celebrate it – never could understand that. Lots of your mates decided to pack up and come here too. We played host – treated you like honoured guests. Gave you food when you were short; looked after your kids; cleaned your house; even gave you some of Granpa's land across the way. At the time your need seemed greater than ours.

Yep! We remember those early days. Funny how things change though. You and your mates kept coming 'til we lost count. Nowadays we come to you for our food because we're always short. You look after our kids – apparently we're not capable of doing for them what we'd done for years before you came. We still clean your house – that hasn't change. We never did get Granpa's land back. In fact, you've even got our palace now. Funny people, neighbours.

TATTOO

‘Haere atu ra, e hine
 Takahia atu ra te ara whanui a Hinenui-te-po
 Haere, haere, haere . . .’
 The karanga ringing across the marae.

Leaden footsteps shuffling forward, taking me closer to the moment of confrontation – the moment when I would have to look upon the face of death – the moment when I could no longer deny that the woman I had loved and lusted with would never again share her warmth, her passion, her laughter. Through tear-blurred eyes I see her sisters, her mother, heads bent, hupe and roimata flowing, leaning over the coffin, stroking Huhana’s face, her hair, her hands.

How I loved the feel of that black, curling, soft, soft hair brushing my face as she held herself above me. Loving me until I was reaching out, weaving my fingers through her hair, pulling her to me, kissing her eyes, her nose, her lips, whispering into her mouth, her mind, while hands loved gently, well.

She crashed while on manoeuvres at Kawhia. The cliff the convoy was travelling along had been undermined by recent rains. Huhana was driving the third supply truck the regulation distance behind the second when the earth simply fell away, sending her rolling, crashing, dying to the rocks below.

They say it was instant. Broke her neck, didn’t feel a thing. But I do. Oh, hell! They’ve dressed her in uniform. I hate that uniform and all the rules and regulations that go with it. She couldn’t openly show her love for me – they would have crucified her. Yet, she couldn’t, wouldn’t give it up. Said it made her whanau proud, especially since she’d gained her stripes – Sergeant Huhana Walker. Those stripes gave my popular Huhana even more standing. Sure, there were other dykes in the unit, both officers and O.R., but they behaved, out of the bars, as if ‘it’ wasn’t real life. If they faced the reality of their lesbianism they would be forced to leave the security of the army, and many had nowhere else to go – no family, no haven.

The woman in front has moved, is weeping into Rangī’s arms, the mother

comforting and being comforted. I can't move! My darling love, help me! 'Haere mai, e ko. Kaua e tangi,' Rangi beckoning, 'nau mai, nau mai . . .' Tears falling. A moaning coming from somewhere – filling my ears, my head. It's me – don't let me lose it now.

Somewhere, outside my grief, crowding in on my pain, a drum roll begins, beating, throbbing, pulsing; sharp staccato commands intrude, shouted above the regular tread of army-booted feet. What the hell's happening? Goddess, I'm going to laugh, must be hysteria. Here lies Huhana, wept over by her lesbian lover, and they're playing 'The Last Post', a bloody military tattoo!

RANGITUNOA BLACK

Kiaora, my name is Rangitunoa Black. I am a lesbian-feminist poet from the Tuhoe tribe. Nine other poems of mine will appear in Witi Ihimaera's forthcoming work, *Te Ao Marama*. Through the eyes of my years, these are my poems, in print for the first time. They are markings of self-forgiveness on my headstone. As a sistered-lesbian, poet, maori, my love of heart, mind, spirit, soul, was and is, with all of you.
Arohanui, Rangitunoa.

SPEAKING OF OURSELVES

Moving deeper into wiser
A rock into solid stone
Life consistent with the questions
that meet me at creeks distance

When am I really right
Made time with a fish
Now a light, broken by distance

I have longed for you
Our children, giving their births
to a punctured future

Women of ourselves
drink the light from my
eyes
I have loved you many times

CONTRA-REVOLUTIONS, BUT HOME GROWN

You called me woman
Did you call me woman
A woman full of contradictions
Then you should have known
That I would make you
A bloating stone, rock hard
Never to shit again

WORDS WITH SAPPHO

Sappho, in reply to you
My breasts are full
She, the moon woman has come
And I am truly well

Sappho I heard you
And so, don't soften my heart with stone
But take to it, as surely as you would
With a caress and ever so gently with
hands until juices flow, like moon tides
ago

Sappho, look at me
My days are my eyes for my nights

Sappho may I grizzle to you
There were people, and caught in
webs
But not ancient of your time and mine
But of this, woven hate, not pain

Sappho come lie on this tree with me
And ask me, if I as a child
Saw you between my thighs, licking
dew and such sweet honey from me
until I cried

Sappho, did you, in your time
See me crawl into many hollows
in trees, asleep, until the brush of
your lips, I of fallen raindrops
from your eyes

Sappho, was I in time, and ripe
But then to see you float away
To dance in the morning sky

SOVEREIGNTY 1

The thick white sun throws paint at my feet
My mouth still, a dried leaf
The thick white sun, throws paint at my
feet
And I wonder, thinking in stills

Woman am I this
The will of my own white teeth
carved into wooden sills

The thick white sun throws paint at my
feet
Your mothers will woman
To skin our teeth, be it in salt or sand
for her mothers land

OH WOMAN, OH WOMAN

Oh woman, Oh woman
Where are we now
And did you know
That yesterday, I forced myself
out, again into the tides
Headless, eyeless, wingless, voiceless,
wordless and a driftwood for a
heart

Oh woman, oh woman
Where are we now
Do you want me, to feed you
feel you, to kiss, hug and
self-love you

Then make me back
on my head, eyes, wings
voice, words, heart, to body
speak, move lips, tongue lick
you between your sky straddling
thighs
the woman that we are
headful, eyeful, wingful, voiceful,
wordful, would for heartfelt,
to be gayful
Oh woman, oh woman

SOVEREIGNTY 2

I grow of stones
Courtied in netted seas
A fish stone, line fed
And politics taught to me
I grow of stones

RA

Ra, are my eyes old
Cracked greenstones
That when I first saw you
Gently, now, now
Lying against dry light
And no woman, my finding was
old
Ancient in the girating
Solid against soul
It will have seemed we were
meant to be alone
Ra, are my eyes old, alive
Rise my lives are old
So hear me as I saw to
you
That we needn't deny ourselves
of those rich crimson swellings
We have had in the early
hours

Whether we've been thinned out
Into feeling, that our lives
should run through our, hands
like quick sand
Screeching in our parrot heads
Ra, the air in some valleys
are clinically old

Ra, are my eyes old
Like so, That I have seen
the flesh of the fish in gold
In your after-birth, and a
breed of women coming
And with this, we will never
need to question whether we
should be together alone

Ra, I have found you
So let me touch you
You and I do know of
such sweetness
As we have parted, many
times, leaving breath, births
upon stone
In our wetness, we screaming
nobody knows

Ra, perhaps in this time, speaking
You will come to know
That my eyes broke before moonlight
And flew like glass splinters through
The corridors of winter
And of an adze that I lodged

through the body of a door, whose
knob was played in me, for in any
thinking, that I wouldn't be, in the doing
Ra

Ra, let fire now drip in from these
wings
And just for a while, come, come down
down, rest for a while, though somewhere
near, they are calling you ra, don't be
scared of making, the difference ra

Ra, know I think not
Be ruthless in your definitions of
nice
So as we never freeze, the lips
of children rising in the east,
falling in the west ra

Ra, less we find our eyes
empty sockets and filled
with toilets of rain
Or worst still, crushed like
hay
Rotting in speckled moon bays
The stench horrific
Etched that smell into rain,
twigs breaking

Ra, dry and brittle, eyes criss-crossing
Splice me the night, thick and soft
And see this fury dancing on hot
sand
And just for this time

Let me tell you baby
Though cock-roaches splits wood
against my brain

Ra, see this high born woman
and anything that will come from,
her conscience
You or I will see fully tattooed
warrior queens, resting against the
prows of their old carved bone canoes
Shallow sleeping, ra

So, as to recognising you
the patterns are in their tattoos
to ra, so know that I am
solidly with you
that I am, your own kind of woman

So therefore, come, come, and I will
greet you, and again on this earth
Across her breast, and lips in full
moon
As I do find you heavily delicious, ra.

SOVEREIGNTY 3

Koau dances in the shape of a boy
Breath blown along bone
And in a rattle from souls
Buried alive, koau a well documented
leaf, being there, watered on down
by medaling streams

FACE

Am I the cloud that walks across
you face
Here to remind you, there is work to
do

The day that I should know about
Remember me I sang yellow songs
Desirable to any waiting that has to
be done

For you to take my hand
There is work to do
And I should remember, that the day
does make track, track, tracks
And again we will plant the corn

So hear this
Am I the cloud that walks across
your face
Here to remind you there is work to do

Oh I am so used to this
It's my way
So if I don't hurry this
day
The cloud will walk across
my face

RHONA VICKOCE

Rhona Vickoce is a 42-year-old lesbian of Fijian and Pakeha ancestry. She has been living in Port Chalmers near Dunedin for over a year now, and is almost used to the idea. She loves the sea, writing, the Goddess, working in the area of literacy, a certain tall blond Australian, cats, her children and having her hands in the earth. She looks forward to a moral revolution led by lesbians.

THE TIRADE

I never forgave you, babyface,
Goddess as witness I tried
But somehow forgiving you
Meant accepting my own part in it all,
My own addleheaded acquiescence, acceptance of you:
Of your longlashed comehitherance
Of your girlish dimpled giggles,
Of the myriad shortcomings of your overprivileged youth.
Dirty feet in my sink,
Rip Van Winkle in my bed,
Defensiveness, depressiveness, diminution of delight,
Bed and board took on new meaning,
How to make love to someone whose face is always
Filled with a cigarette,
Or even more to be dreaded
With excuses, exquisitely elaborate excuses for everything;
Responsibility is not mine, saith the Rose of August.

I am not the one who birthed you
I have no desire for that distinction,
Do not give me your teen rebellion
I'm too busy with my midlife crisis,
What possessed me to have such patience
Such tolerance for tiresomeness?
What maniacal martyrdom
To wait until you'd had enough
Before even beginning to admit,
My yearning for all that you are not.

ODE TO HARBOUR CONE

Through the Laserlite Port Chalmers looks like Ponsonby
Houses elbowing each other higgeldy piggeldy on the hill
Three steps left and *hallelujah* Port Charming, swanning it
Sunnily, sweetly, smugly small.

And there rising out of Corpus Koputai
That image of female fascination *harbour cone*
oh harbour cone, thou art so wondrous,
wondrous fair!

Confusing corrugations triplicate your beauteous aspect from my
back door

Three adolescent tits swim tantalisingly past my passing by
While out beyond Laserlite stands the one true Goddess
Giving new meaning to the Trinity, *maiden, mother, crone,*
Three tipped, proud, erect the sun shines just for you,
How you flutter my little lesbian heart,
oh harbour cone, oh harbour cone, thou art so
wondrous, wondrous fair

RUBY ELIZABETH

Ruby Elizabeth was my maternal Grandmother's name. I am named in memory of her and apparently (she died thirteen years before I was born), I am physically quite like her. She has guided and dragged me through the lonely and brutal terrain of childhood sexual abuse and I dedicate this poem to her.

My sister remembers what
I cannot or
will not

crying down
the hill to
the car
& waiting parents
my distress
so apparent
police were called
a man detained
& returned to hospital
Sunny Side up

I am afraid to ask
my Mother
- she knows
I did say –

My version
filled with gaps

half-hour w/holes
playing endlessly
nowhere

until
in the car
tartan rugged
happy to have my
parents full attention
total devotion
aware that some thing
is
storming around
me
over me
not through me
curiously unmoved
an observer
of a life

RUTH BUSCH

Born in the Bronx, a lawyer, a recent immigrant, 3 kids, 1½ dogs, with a deep and abiding interest in sex, love and rock and roll (legal of course).

TO PETER

Swastikas scrawled on the fronts of buildings
Remind me that I am not like you
White/male/academic
With your fancy theories about civil liberties.

I am the child
Of a people
Nearly exterminated
By those symbols
And crosses
And have re-lived
The dying in the trains and the gas chambers
Six million times over.

My own grandmother
Whose name it was too painful
For my mother ever to repeat to me
Was fed slivers of glass in food
And died
Impaled within herself.

An old woman
Who

Simply
Wanted to live out her years
Among her children's children
Most of whom
Except for me
And two or three others
Died with her.

I do not doubt the meaning of those swastikas
Herr/Professor/Doctor
And I do not doubt that you benefit
From the terror inherent in them
No matter how progressive
Or sensitive
Or Jewish
You may say you are.

HAVING SAID KADDISH

Having said Kaddish for my father
dead now for two weeks
I am flooded with images of him
wearing his tallis
a long white and black fringed cloth
which he wrapped himself in every
morning
and which is now buried with him
Pop, at your funeral here
thousands of miles from your body
I stumbled over the Hebrew words
wishing I had spent more time

learning them right
wanting to honour you in a way
you would have understood

the reasons I could not
my life-long anger at your God
did not seem so important then
standing with a sidden in my hands
sounding out like a child
the words of my mourning

Oh Pop, there was so much between us
so much hitting
so much yelling
so much anger
so much hiding
so much silence
so much running away

so little empathy
so little holding
so little time

so many questions
left unasked
so many names
dead with you

I have been told that at your real funeral
in New York
my brother Harold said you were
a man of quick justice
and then broke down
crying for the pain we had suffered
from you

for the harshness of your life
and ultimately
for the loss of you
now and since childhood

Pop, searching for some meaning
in all this

I realise that
had you been there
and one of us had died
you too would have wept
for exactly those same reasons

I HAVE TASTED

I have tasted the musky
Odour of the sea
On my lover's body
And know
That I will never be
A ladlubber again!

I have often expressed
The utmost scepticism
About feminist ritual

Maligned (if not worse)
The move to spirituality
I have at times
Felt very foolish
Trying to direct

My cones of energy,
Know the colours
Of my lover's aura,
Figure out my life signs
In the Southern Hemisphere.

But even my logical mind
Cannot deny
Sitting in the sun
Still feeling my lover's fingers
Inside me
That woman's energy is the
Source of life
And I,
Wrapped in her arms,
Am healing, healing, healing.

SAPPHIC K/NIGHTS

We've come to Aotearoa via Lesbos (and a few other bars along the way).
We're interested in rhythm, poetry, point/counterpoint.

SLOUCHING TOWARDS MT MAUNGANUI

We were having a hard time in our relationship. Not an unusual beginning for a lesbian love story.

We met to talk, to work it out – keeping our distance. Not knowing what limits could/would be set – as careful with each other as shoppers manoeuvring in a car-park and as distant.

– A hot pool, yes?

– Yes!

A bit of warmth in what might be a cool interaction. Late August, sunny Sunday, in sight of the Mount . . . maybe that should have been a clue. When we let ourselves do it, rather than introspecting what it meant, and to whom – seemingly at times to the whole world – we usually got through . . .

So we drove up Bethlehem way, turned off for a kilometre or two, then sharp left down a steep driveway into a small ferny valley. A squarish maze-layout of ponga walls, a subdued excitement of voices and splashes rising inside it.

Too busy maybe, in the communal pool?

The woman at the counter is pleasant.

– Private pool? Yes, we've got one free now.

She turns back with the key, her head a little to one side, a smile hovering back in her eyes.

– You don't mind a bit of singing do you?

Singing? We look at each other. We'd had our share of soft-shoe shuffles . . .

– What sort of . . . ?

– No, I don't think . . .

Curiosity and courtesy confounded, we pause.

– Well there's a baptism in the next-door pool. They come here occasionally . . . it's not really noisy. But if you'd rather wait . . .

Baptism?

An immersion, a submersion . . . Not quite our style but maybe we'd know some of the moves. A perversion to some. Much the same could be said of lesbianism . . .

– Guitars, and people singing. It's not everyone's cup of tea . . .

We'd taste it, anyway. Give it a go.

*In the next-door pool they come and go
Singing in voices tremulo*

We did have qualms.

Only one of us could even have a shot at knowing the words.

Same culture, but another age, and besides, that wench is dead . . .

The innocence of baptism, the intensity of conclave – an odd combination to weave into one context.

So we were tentative, undressing modestly, as if we'd never touched, with the lean, half-lidded glances of women pretending emperor's new clothes, no bare bodies, no bare consciousness. Or so much it had congealed and we behind it

hunched a little, curving inward over breasts and vulnerabilities. Pure vessels, we, with garden walls and railings between our gazes . . .

– Brethren, we have come together today to celebrate God’s kingdom as it is manifest in one of his infants . . .

Half a right-angle between us, we slip into the water.

Birthday suited, and that appropriate enough.

The water hot, the pool deep, the sun a breath to lift the sky and us . . .

– As we gather in God’s sight . . .

On different edges of the pool, our sights lighter, our eyes meet, hold, laugh a little.

– And as the lamb of God has washed us of our sins . . .

Laughter turns conspiratorial . . .

Chord strums waft over the top of white-washed concrete walls, spread drift-nets into the rising steam, catch eddying in ponga leaves and drip benignly on us.

Is it the talk of en/rapturing, second comings, is it the talking in tongues . . . who can be certain?

Green water streams around us, enveloping sounds lead, as night the day, to entwining limbs, floating melodies . . .

– He’s got the whole wide world in . . .

whose hands, where, how wide . . .

Into our own conversion . . . subversion?

Baptism’s a beginning, wetness a climax, or may precede it . . .

Drowning . . . full fathom five . . . those were jewels that were her thighs

We try to walk on water, end spluttering instead . . . O goddess, you always warned us love was moving, fluid, never fixed

Over the wall they're dryer.

– Into thy hands, we commend this child, O Lord, into thy keeping . . .

whose keep? whose coming . . . ?

The baby wails a little, the preacher welcomes it to the flock.

One of us moans O O o . . .

– All things bright and beautiful
all creatures great and small

 jolting to consciousness and fundamental baptism, we spurt in
 silent laughter, choke, choking, coming up three times, going
 down, clutching each other . . .

– Rock of ages
cleft for mee-ee
let me hiiiiide myself in thee . . .

Who's hide? how wide? enough to be born again?

Oh goddess . . . what tempestuous beast
Its time come round again
slouches towards Mount Maunganui
to be born?

SARA L. KNOX

Sara was born in Wellington and has lived all her life there (sigh!). She is currently completing her Masters in American History, and will continue into doctoral study (preferably *not* in Wellington!). She has previously been published in *Sport, Landfall*, and *Poetry Australia*.

READING PHILOSOPHY

Words bring you to mind
they come apart
like the clothes you shed
on your way to bed
(I mark each discard;
tracking your body)

only your gloves alarm me:
their mute declaration
of the immanence of departure

centrifugal (this word
cups your sad face): a force that scatters,
that casts out

I am staggered, I gather
your empty clothes, a shoe on its side
under the bed, *fatal* but not *final*
the photograph that is a bookmark
announced you again

and also
that I have stopped reading.

COMMUNIQUES

1 The Commanding Officer

There was no state of war;
no bloody coup;
no protracted conflict between
cadres of the right
and leftists under the sway
of foreign ideologies

it was, it should be said,
situation normal;
a matter for routine presence
and weekly reports to the effect
that there was no slow
unravelling of power
into the people's hands

2 The Bystander

She could often be found
sitting in the café
sipping black coffee
and chain-smoking American cigarettes;
refusing to talk politics
for more than half an hour;
talking poetry;
alluding to a larger reality
that is the motherland
to which all truths return.

I grew to love the way
she turned a coin
over her long, tan fingers
as she spoke;
respecting her fast unfaltering Spanish
that made her unlike the outsiders
who, feeling their own guilty difference,
stayed silent.

One night when drunk,
uncharacteristically quiet,
she climbed into my bed
instead of her own
and we made love,

then she slept –
so completely still beside me
it was hard to believe
such inertia was not conscious.

3 The Commanding Officer

At 13.40
we received this message:
my position
(it said)
has become untenable here

4 The Spy

They believed me
as I believed myself –
beginning to write poetry
in the quiet of the early morning;
also beginning to see

that there are no edges
to existence –
that I, like it, am borderless

But on Sunday
while I was walking to the café
a bird fell out of the sky
to my feet –
black eye winking
open and shut;
small red beak
open and shut –
portentous bird,
dying at my feet.

This became the riddle
my life refused to explain.

5 The Bystander

Everybody liked her
at first.
But then there seemed to be
no point to her charm;
no revelation
in her arguments

I could not see
why she should be here
and charming,
rather than
there and charming

and, it seemed,
those truths about which
she so lovingly spoke

could only be true
if unreturning;
could not, like her,
bear close examination,
or my arms
tight around her, still and sleeping.

6 The Spy

That night
she sat across
the bed from me,
turning the book over
in her hands

saying:
I feel as though
I was taken in by you

now I inspect
with an analytic eye

love; lust; companionship,
finding also,
to my horror,
doubt; perishability; deceit

7 The Commanding Officer

The last communication from the field
received at 22.15 hours:

*my position
has become untenable here.*

*I have been found out –
made naked*

*by the many unanswered questions
I have tried so hard
in theory,
in flesh,
to suppress.*

The final report
(here appended)
can make few conclusions
based on such conflicting data.
This last message,
even decoded,
makes little sense,
and its context
is something purely for speculation.

Thus
I must request in future
more stable Operatives.

Message ends.

CAMEO

I.

Would it have been better
if everyone I had ever loved
had been a movie star?
Then, at least, I could still
hear them, watch their walk,
the certain way (even playing different roles)
one might light her cigarette, or,
laughing, lift her head.

But no, not one of them has left their finest roles
recorded. Though I have scripted

touching goodbyes, and raucous evenings
at the pub with friends,
and far too many bedroom scenes
to sustain any viewer's interest (but my own)
the scenes are flawed –
where is the score
to offset the sudden silences in the script?
the *film noir* lighting to suggest
the imminent deceit?

II.

The lead players, it seems,
have walked off the set
leaving the film unfinished.

Somewhere there is a café
where they meet to go over old scripts.
They discuss the relative merit
of roles, how this or that scene
might have been
with a surer hand
to direct.

They laugh into their gin
as they retell stories
of sexual indiscretion.
The waiters pretend not to listen.

Hours and days pass,
everything becomes more expensive
months and years pass
and the chemical quality of the film
becomes unbalanced.
They see themselves kiss pale lips

under a sky that is a colour
no one can identify.

LIFE WITHOUT AN AUDIENCE

She lost her shoes on the train, a crowded commuter special. On disembarkation, her embarrassment kept her on the platform, feet cold, looking in the lighted window as the train pulled away. Her good court shoes, off on an adventure. A couple of years later she lost her whole bag. But it was named, and like a prodigal, came home to her.

The train ride gave her ideas. They came into her head, and then just as easily left: they travelled. But one idea took up residence. It called itself an *insight* and mocked her with the wisdom of its simplicity. She realised that the universe was made up of two things: herself and everything else. Now she felt like she was adrift, looking shoreward, and knowing the tide was on its outward turn.

Immediately she became obsessed with re-connection:

. . . she would go out to bars and reach out for the hand of the stranger sitting at one side of her, or across the table. Startled by this sudden uninvited contact, the stranger's hand flew back to protectively clutch the whisky glass: glass and hand exchanging damp secrets, excluding her from their communion.

. . . she'd drive out along the freeway, flashing her lights at oncoming cars, as if to say 'I'm here! I'm here!' The other drivers would slow down, anxiously searching the road for highway patrol cars or the chaos of an accident, quite oblivious to the woman driving on through the night – she who was, herself, an accident in process.

. . . she'd ring up DJs on late night talk shows, saying, 'Remember when . . .'
and starting in on some story. Like the run about the ruckus created by the Borough Council when it had the river diverted and sunk half a block of the old town under water. Who else stood on the riverbank with her that day? Anyone, someone she didn't know then, but who might now appear, a voice

on the radio saying: 'I was there' (*and so were you/it happened/there was a riverbank/the day was cold/you could see your own breath on the air*). The callers remembered but couldn't describe the event, as if it had come to them second hand; was not their own memory at all. Thus it happened that this woman, one ear to the telephone receiver and one to the radio, found she was not remembered.

She took up reading, intent on discovering herself between the densely-knit print. Spending three days curled on the couch, wrapped in a comforter, reading Phillip Marlowe detective stories. Making coffee, she narrated her tour around the kitchen, working in half-light to faithfully recreate the film-noir atmosphere.

She bought herself a greatcoat, returning to the bars she'd frequented those months before. Tipping the brim of her hat back from her head she'd ask the bar staff (always careful to address them by their first-names) if they'd seen this woman; unfolding from her wallet a picture of herself taken a year before:

'No . . .' they'd say, '. . . I've never seen her . . .'

'. . . Not in this bar.'

'. . . Not in this part of town . . .'

So she'd walk back out into greasy late-afternoon light, more sure than ever that no-one could find this woman she was looking for. Maybe this woman didn't even exist.

Walking past the mirrored facade of buildings, face averted.

Dialling her own telephone number, hearing it ring unanswered.

Travelling only at night, in little and diffuse light: afraid that she will discover her own shadow missing, and have to search for that too.

One sunny Saturday morning she finished her last Raymond Chandler novel. That done, there was nothing left to discover and no further need to retain the services of the detective.

She could let herself go.

Then a voice on the telephone surprised her with its intimacy:

'Eleonora, it's your mother here . . .'

But Eleonora was the woman for whom she had lately been searching – could this be a clue? Now where was the darn detective? She marshalled all the calm available to her; injecting a certain lack of guile into her reply:

‘I’m afraid your daughter isn’t here, Mrs . . .’

‘Pattison . . . but Eleonora, I thought . . .?’

‘No. She was here, but she’s gone now . . .’

Why did that feel so true, when it was something she did not know? A woman called Eleonora – whose eyes were olive green, who changed her hair colour and her style of clothes frequently, who suffered stiffness in her joints in winter – had been here and was now gone; leaving behind her a wardrobe full of clothes and the intimate messages of the unwashed coffee cup by the sink and the dark hairs in the bathtub.

She firmly placed the receiver back into its cradle; noticing the letter on the telephone table as she did so. The letter told her:

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

*Your entry has been selected
from the draw; qualifying you for the
GRAND MYSTERY PRIZE
to be presented live before our studio audience
on the ‘Cash and Carry Show’
brought to you by MJT TV, Minnesota’s finest!*

The letter, which addressed her as ‘The Resident’, required only that she present herself at the right time on the day in question to claim the prize. She did not have to prove who she was to take the prize, merely where she lived. Not who had been there *before*, nor who would be *after*, but the woman whose cat had run away, and who had forgotten what day the trash was collected: the Resident.

Intermezzo

Reaching for his third beer he knocks the photograph of his wife from the coffee-table to the floor. The dog, wakened by the movement, puts its nose against the glass, leaving a patch of condensation there. Behind the non-reflective glass a dead

woman smiles at a dead child, whose arms encircle the neck of the dog who will be, and is still, alive. The man sips at his already warm beer, and looks at the back of his hands. The television is sleeping, not turned off, but paused by the remote that lies by the mans knee. The man, whom the dog knows only as a smell and a particular cadence of voice, is waiting for his dead wife's favourite quiz show to come on. In the meantime he is counting the curling hairs on the back of his hands.

'Dog' he says, pressing the button to command the television to life. Just as he had meant to do when he slipped the remote-control into his suit pocket before the funeral: pointing its infra-red at the matching walnut coffins of his dead wife and daughter; their pale, carefully made-up faces neatly rising to the light; picture perfect.

('Anything . . .,' she'd say as she came out from the kitchen to sit before the TV set, . . . anything at all is possible on television . . .!')

'Good dog . . .!' he says, hand lightly resting on its head. He is aware of its arbitrarily alive body, his own distance from the dog; from the door; from the television set; thinking this body not his own, but a rental; feeling unsettled in the old clothes bought for him by a dead woman; his wife. Inside his shoes his feet feel like unwelcome guests.

The television telling him about 'a hundred big winners annually'.

'Not just ten . . . not even fifty . . . but one hundred (count 'em) winners every single year!!! And every one a surprise!!!'

For a small man this M.C. produced large sound. Perhaps, she mused hopefully, his hair-piece will come loose and fly off. Onstage this petite and dapper young man was flirting with the studio-audience, even attempting to seduce the glassed surface of the camera. She felt herself conjured onto the stage as the continuity man prodded at her elbow to signal her entrance. The lights hit her, dazzled, she paused at the dais' edge.

The M.C. ('call me Hardy') was beside her, his hand on her back, propping her up; he the ventriloquist and she the dummy.

‘So, Minnesota, this is Eleonora. Tell us what your line is, Eleonora . . . (say, I bet you shorten that name of yours – it’s a real mouthful, isn’t it!?) . . .’

Two rows up from the front, toward the middle of the aisle, a woman in a pink sweater was waving a sign at her saying *WE LOVE YOU SWEETIE! YOU’RE A WINNER!*

She shut her mouth and then opened it again, saying: ‘My friends call me Ellery — I’m a Private Detective.’ Her mouth formed itself into the most perfect, canny smile. She was way ahead of everyone — not just one step ahead: now it was her manufacturing the clues, not following them. Yet still the M.C.’s hand performed a short but vicious tattoo on her backbone, as if to say *hey, I’m wise to you . . . you’re no detective . . . don’t be smart, that’s my job . . .*

The M.C. suddenly separated himself from her, leaping at the audience as if to bite the unwary in the front row. His white teeth flashed.

‘Now, on the ‘Cash And Carry Show’ our questions are just a formality — but we’re going to put Eleonora (sorry, Ellery) here through it, aren’t we Minneapolis??!’

The studio audience hooted its assent, the woman in pink shoving her hand-lettered sign high above her head and winking, conspiratorial, at Eleonora: *You can do it, honey!*

At the corner of the podium a perspex booth, complete with telephone, awaited her. The audience’s rumbling subsided as she stepped into it and lifted the receiver; hearing the M.C.’s voice robbed of its richness by the wires. She looked out at him as the audience looked in at her, suddenly remembering a foreign film in which a bearded man becomes trapped in a telephone booth, in confrontation with an evil unseen authority. Gritting her teeth, she dared them: ‘O.K. Hardy, gimme your worst!’ The crowd, pleased with her offhand charm, broke into whooping laughter.

Hardy leaned in the direction of the audience, directing the question at them, his face turned disdainfully from her:

‘Who was the assassin responsible for the death of President Abraham Lincoln?’

She didn't even have to think about that one:

'John Wilkes Booth.'

Nothing but silence. The M.C. turned to her, beginning to smile:

'WRONG! Sorry 'bout that, but you've given the wrong answer . . . It was Lee Harvey Oswald that shot Mr Lincoln . . .' raising one finger suggestively to his forehead he squeezed the imaginary trigger and yelled *' . . . BANG in the head with a bolt action rifle, that's how he did it!'* The woman in pink nodded sagely at this, clearly disappointed in her champion. Any grade-schooler knew the answer to *that* one.

Eleonora opened her mouth to protest, but the M.C. was on to his second question.

'In the "Big II" what countries was the United States at war with between 1941-1945?'

She counted in her head, and folded a finger down for each tentatively: 'Germany, Japan and Italy (but only up to 1944 with Italy)'. Now she was damn sure *that* was right!

'And . . . and who else . . .?'

'No-one that I know of.'

The M.C.'s eyebrows danced a delighted jig upon his forehead. 'Another answer wrong! Minnesota, do you want to tell our guest the *right* answer . . .?' The crowd's response was swift, the woman in pink — perhaps feeling it her particular duty to put Eleonora on the right track — almost propelled herself out of her chair with the force of her shout: *'Germany, Japan, Italy and RUSSIA!'* No. This couldn't be happening. Wasn't she the one who was meant to have all the clues? She ground her teeth and flipped up her jacket collar against the cool stare of the audience.

'O.K. Ask me another.'

'This is your *last* question. You ready? Right. *Who dropped the atom bomb on the city of Hiroshima?* You've got 30 seconds to answer.'

Eleonora tilted her head back, swallowing at the light as if it were water.

'I've got the answer on that one. It was China. Communist China dropped a bomb on Japan.'

The audience caved in upon itself, hands waving, faces thrust forward, and

its choreographer was taking small, dancelike steps toward her across the floor, his arms extended. He was yelling, 'She's right! That's the right answer!' and in a moment he was at her elbow, pulling her from the booth.

The prize was through a gold curtain at the back of the stage. Large, vibrantly pink arrows directed the viewer's eye to the base of the curtain. Eleonora and the M.C. followed those arrows, as meek before their future of fortune as Dorothy had been taking her first steps on the yellow brick road. Eleonora peered back over her shoulder at the audience, hidden behind the haze of the footlights. She could hear the low mutter of their anticipation. Tugging at the back of the M.C.'s jacket she whispered, '*The questions . . . I have to ask you something about the questions . . .*' but Hardy did not appear to have heard her, so intent was he on the Prize.

The curtains parted. They rung back, fanning upwards in rich folds, pleased with themselves, pleased to reveal their secret. Something covered in a black tarpaulin. Not a car, the wrong shape for a car. The right shape for a phone-booth (or a polling-booth). The audience applauded the shape, applauded her, applauded Hardy. He unleashed a smile upon them that would have dazzled Liberace.

'Now folks, let's show how hospitable we are here at MJT TV, Minnesota. Each and every contestant a winner, and every prize a mystery. That's how *you* like it!' (The crowd, hearing its name, howled joyfully). Eleonora moved toward the shape of the prize as its cover was lifted off. Surprisingly it *did* look like a phone booth, but not in the right colours, and without glass. Quite opaque, it sat with its one black door closed, a room the size of a small elevator.

'Eleonora, we'd just like you to say something to the audience and then claim your prize through that door.' Hardy offered his palms to her, empty, the hands of a trustworthy man, a servant of the public: keeping the public informed. An informer.

She turned to the invisible audience and, not knowing what she'd say, said:

'Once upon a time in Imperial China (I don't remember which dynasty so don't worry about it) the Emperor commissioned a new garden for within the walls of

the summer palace. The garden was landscaped and the insides of the walls painted to suggest an infinite garden spreading out from this, the centre of the world. The garden's designer, the man who crafted this wonder, was invited to its opening by the Emperor himself. He was even called upon to speak, and so he led the group to a corner of the garden where a door was painted upon the wall. A small red door. And he smiled without saying anything to his venerable host; opened the door and walked through it and was not seen again in the Middle Kingdom from that day to this.'

And she smiled at what she had said, turned her back on the audience and walked through the door to collect her prize.

In the car she was forced to sit upright in the back seat, held erect by the belt pulled tight across her chest and lap. Her mother, paranoid about road safety, felt better with this system of restraint. But it meant Eleonora was stuck in the middle of the seat, not near the windows. Apt to be car-sick.

'*I'll be sick!*' she warned her mother, who was driving, head down with concentration.

'No you won't. It's not long till we're home anyhow.'

By craning her neck Eleonora could just make out the arched top of the church's stained-glass windows as they sailed past. Next the graveyard. She sucked in her breath, as she always did when passing this place – fearful of smelling all those bodies rotting in the underground. *1..2..3..4..* and the cemetery was behind them, the car tyres rolling off the smooth blacktop, over the lip of the sidewalk, onto the concrete drive, sliding to a stop before the garage. Her mother came round to the side door and leaning in undid the belt and lifted her out.

'*Home again, home again, diddly-squat.*'

Inside the booth the light was dull, as if it had forgotten that its duty was to illuminate. The prize, a black plastic telephone, was sitting on the plinth in the centre of the empty room, a centrepiece happily identified by a tag. It explained itself to Eleonora:

NOW YOUR PRIZE!

*This certificate entitled the bearer to a lifetime of
free telephone and fax usage
- courtesy of Bell Telecommunications Corporation*

Gingerly detaching the receiver from its cradle, she listened for a second, her face registering displeasure. Down the telephone line people were talking away her time and money. She couldn't seem to get a word in edgewise. 'Hey! This is my line! Get off my line!' She slammed the receiver down to disconnect the call and then brought it back up to her ear. The line burped at her, irresponsibly engaged.

Everyone in the world was talking, leaving her outside the conversation.

Envoi

On the television the flag has just run up the flagpole, and the gunpowder stars are sputtering into darkness. The man is asleep before the television, and the dog, restless, noses at the door, wanting its run outside. She comes from the kitchen, opening the door for the dog, and switching off the television. It is not as if she has been away. It is not as if things end arbitrarily. She flicks on, like the next day's programmes on the television. There just is no having a say in the matter.

STEPHANIE LAMBERT

The Work

Making jewellery is an exercise in metalwork, aesthetics and observing the theatre of our human situation. This is image/imagery worn on the body. It affects the wearer, the viewer and the interaction between them. To show these images on the pages of a book calls for an act of the imagination by the reader. (That is a creative act in itself.)

The Worker

I have been designing and making contemporary jewellery for seven years since the birth of my daughter necessitated some changes in lifestyle.

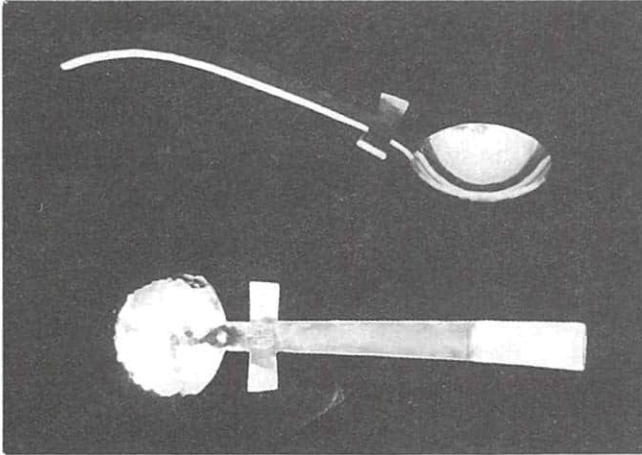
For four years I worked and learned in a shared workspace – Fluxus – and now with the help and inspiration of some fine women, have built a workshop/studio in my own home.

The work can be seen at Fingers in Auckland, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ in Wellington, Lynx in Christchurch and Fluxus in Dunedin.

Thanks to the Goddess for a chance to be seen and heard . . . and worn.



'We touch the skin and dream we hold the heart'. Sterling silver heart badge, red words, 1990



't-spoons'. Sterling silver, 12 cm long, 1989

Ozone ring, silver 2.5 cm diameter, 1990. The ozone ring has a hole which penetrates the middle of the lozenge.

SUE FITCHETT

Once I was a Wellingtonian, then I was an Aucklander and now my sense of place is dominated by the Hauraki Gulf. My home is Waiheke Island. My home is my lover. My home is a dog and three cats. Themes of place, home and identity currently intrigue me.

TIRITIRI MATANGI

On the chart only this

Fl.15 sec.

(ash in
the mouth

flash 15 seconds

flash 15 seconds

flash 15 seconds

all night

a sharp star

waxing & waning

each dusk

as we draw curtains

come in cold

unbalanced by

winter's dark ferry

take one last look

at the world before

sleep & when we can't
sleep night after
night
after

in dawn's thin wash
I spread the chart
rub out Fl.15 sec.
write instead

warm

&

safe

&

home.

Not long after this poem was written Tiritiri's light was turned down as an economy measure by the powers that be.

TESS HUIA TRELOAR

Kia ora. I was born 30.1.61 and am from Ngati Porou descent. I am also part Scottish and part Irish. For most of my life I have lived in Tauranga but have recently moved to Hamilton with my lover and three children. At present I'm completing a Bachelor of Social Science majoring in Women's Studies and Psychology. I'm interested in music, home crafts and cooking. My favourite pastime is playing backgammon with my lover. Poetry for me is an outlet for those emotions which can't be expressed otherwise or through tears.

KARANGA

Without karanga
I am voiceless

There is no whaikorero for me
My spirit has been silenced

The Maori in me
moves swiftly down the awa
strongly over maunga
silently across Papatuanuku
searching for my kuia to guide me

To hear another woman call
brings tears to my face
Inside I karanga to my tupuna to awahi me
their voices trapped inside

like a child in a white man's attic
clawing

The darkness
it hurts

WILLA BIRCH

Willa Birch is an artist/healer whose art expresses both her political and spiritual beliefs as well as her sense of fun. As her healing arts are an integral part of her life so are her artworks which can be as domestic as dripping textured roses decorating a bedstead; as austere as a uniquely translated aboriginal Milky Way motif on a rusty fence; as supposedly traditional/realistic as a painting of dolphins on a proper canvas stretched on a frame.

Willa's paintings can never be taken on only one level without missing their rich symbolism. Her feeling for the land, for Australian reds and browns (she grew up in Adelaide) for the ethnic primitive which connects with land, trees, the ocean and animal life is a seamless whole with the people, places and events she depicts. She handmakes her frames and canvases and their shapes and textures add to the depth of emotional experience for which she is aiming.

One such is a painting entitled *Aramoana* which sprang direct from the November 1990 killings and which is framed in driftwood from Aramoana beach. The love which transcends the tragedy within the piece is echoed by the almost heart-shape of the frame. This painting represents the way in which Willa's work has developed from the early eighties when she was first on Waiheke Island. It is a painting of inner strength and knowing, in which pain and loss are owned, experienced and then transcended.¹

In Willa's recent work rebirth or the possibility of rebirth is always present. The spiral continues; we hold the Infinite in our own hands. The theme of Willa's earlier work was overtly and often fiercely feminist with little sense of subtlety of presentation, but always with a marvellous use of colour and sym-

1 *Aramoana* This painting was not acceptable to the Spiral collective because it does not have a feminist perspective, ie it does not directly blame the man with the gun for the whole tragedy and so see the Aramoana incident in the dualistic terms of the patriarchy, us versus them. Feminism to Willa is as spiritual as it is political, to claim the infinite, long denied to us, is a radical step. It is as important as to recognise the ways in which we as lesbians, ourselves help perpetuate the patriarchy with our own violence.

bolism and with bold experimentation with shape and texture. Her 1985 work *Menstrual Blood* is an example of this time. It is an extremely striking work using reds, browns and white on a black background to very good effect.²

Many of the earlier paintings had shells, feathers, bones, wool, fur and sculptured wood or fimo additives as well as words or quotes. These were to become largely separated into sculpture and painting as time went on, although there was a transition period when added effects were still possible. Now however, feathers, shells, hair and so on could be painted rather than added on. In general, Willa's work has developed from the line work of earlier days to more fully painted paintings. Sculpture happens in bursts in Willa's art. An array of fantastical animals: dragons, dolphins, seahorses, snails, winged creatures of fairytale origins, as well as garden goddesses and gnome-like creatures, were a large part of her work in 1989 and many of these concrete and wire mesh beings reside in Auckland homes and gardens.

Circle Dancing is a painting which shows the transition time quite clearly; still some line work, still whimsical added hairdos for the dancers but much more of the painting technique than the line work and low relief of earlier works. It depicts the fun and bonding of women with a common spiritual purpose and is painted in glowing colours which furthers the sense of mutual enjoyment.

Since moving from Auckland to Dunedin at the beginning of 1990, Willa's painting has reflected the Otago landscape and her physical closeness to the sea. A painting earlier in the year on a holland blind entitled *Blind Faith* depicts an angel/woman who is also part of the soft brown hills of Dunedin harbour. She flies, eyes closed, wings outstretched, accompanied by a magpie, a ghost gum tree forming a border ahead of her. Willa has found similarities between her familiar Australian landscape and the more open, less tropically green land of the lower South Island and the softer colours come through in her most recent paintings.

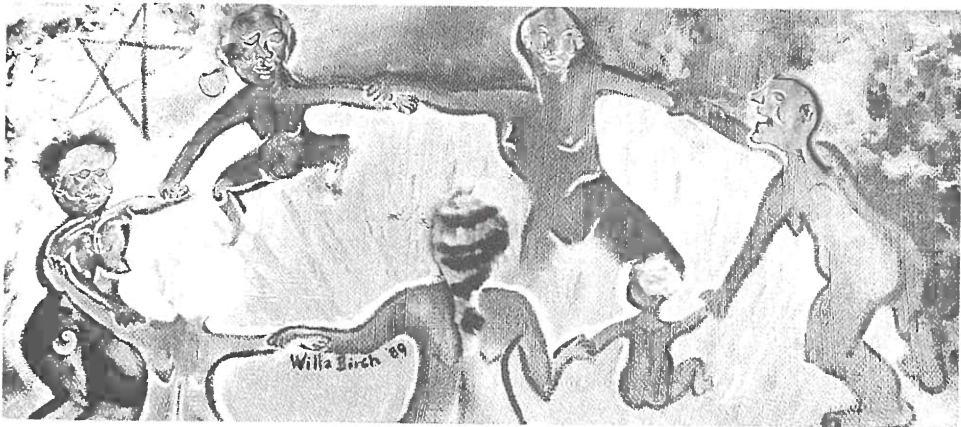
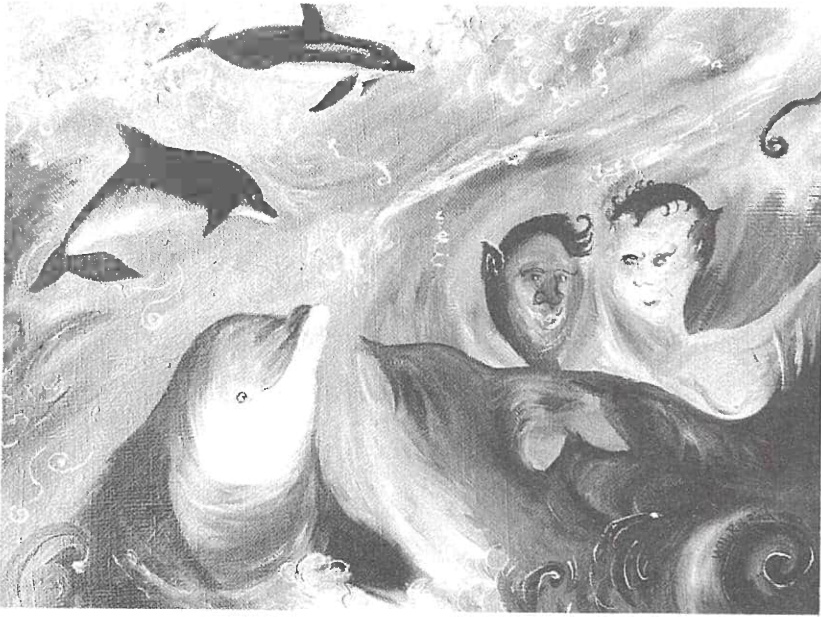
2 *Menstrual Blood* was also unacceptable to the collective because of its subject matter. The last Spiral Women's Art publication ran into trouble over the issue of Maori tapu and so was not prepared to go over the same ground. The artist and her writer both find themselves unable to support other lesbians in aspects of any culture, be it brown or white, which defines women as lesser.

Dolphins are a life form to which Willa feels particularly akin and her blue/green painting *Seasprites* with its playful dolphins and onlooking sprites, who seem to be egging each other on to join in, is a good example of the fun and joy of life which often comes out in her paintings even when the subject matter is less frivolous than *Seasprites*. Fantasy and reality have no real dividing lines in her work and laughter is as legitimate a reaction as tears, anger or spiritual upliftment. For Willa her artwork is a celebration of the unity of life and death.

Rhona Vicoce

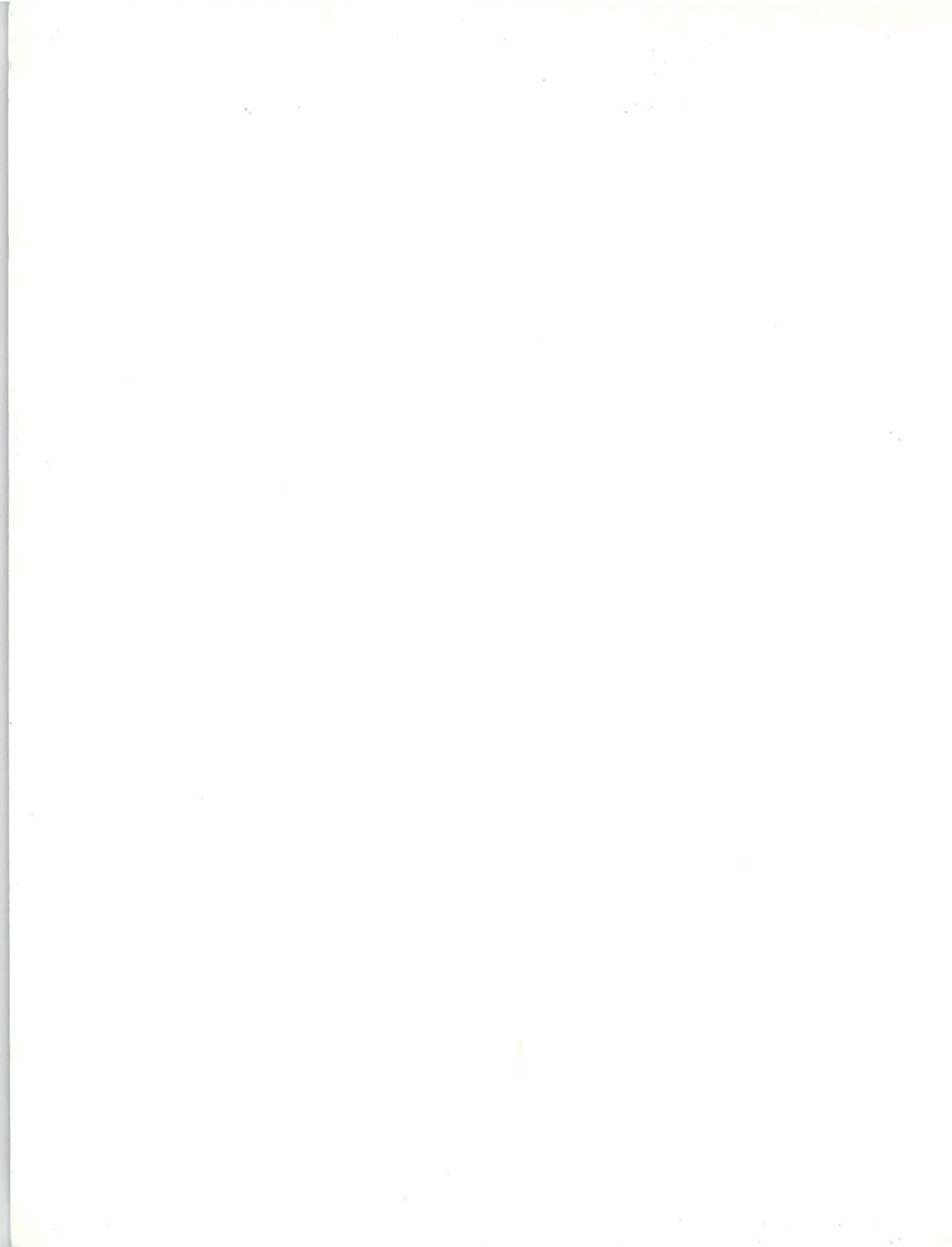


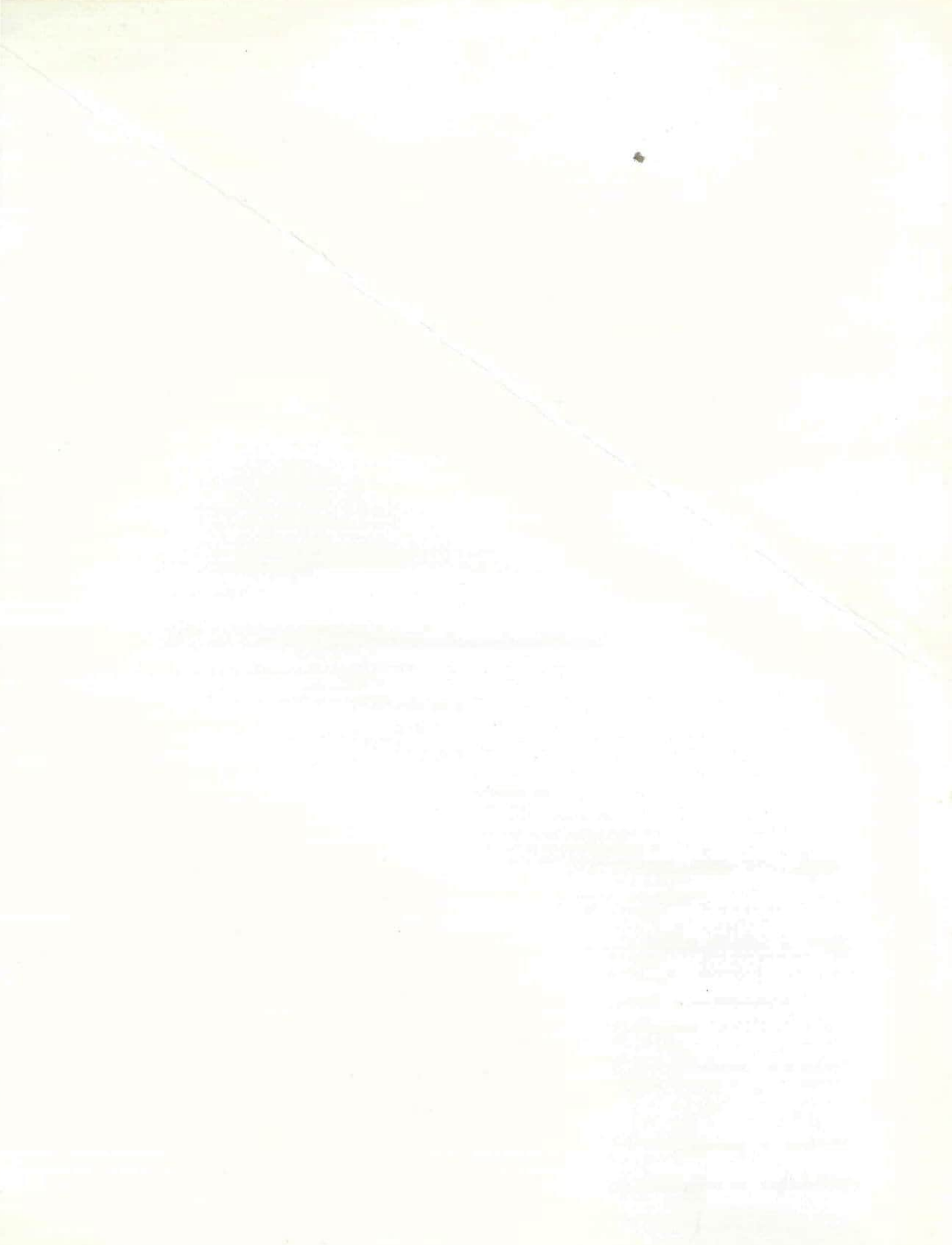
Untitled oil on holland



Seasprites oil on canvas

Circle Dancing acrylic, collage on canvas





Spiral 7: A collection of lesbian art and writing brings together current work by lesbian artists and writers in Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

The collection of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and art, craft and design shows something of the diversity of a culture whose freedom of expression in the wider community is still at risk.

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