

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**FIONA KIDMAN, WRITER:  
A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY**

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
English Literature

at Massey University, Albany  
New Zealand

Anna Elizabeth Leclercq

2012

## **ABSTRACT**

---

Two perspectives are pervasive in Fiona Kidman's writing: the reconstruction of historical female voices, through fictional narrative; the recording of contemporary female voices, through autobiographical commentary and through fictional characterisations. This thesis engages with examples of Kidman's work which show Kidman's literary project to be the shaping of a New Zealand Pakeha cultural identity from a feminist perspective. In other words, Kidman constructs a patriarchal plot in order to demonstrate and expose the historical and contemporary inequalities of women's position within New Zealand society.

Their fictionalisations are influenced significantly by relationship intimacy, but their intention lies deeper. For those who wish to explore below the emotional surface of Kidman's stories, there lies a social metanarrative, a journey of discovery for the reader. Each characterisation is part of an arranged message which Kidman challenges us to decipher. Kidman's constructed narrative is manipulative and manipulated; put together in order to explore and explain the workings of the female psyche under stress; how the female psyche responds to the pressures of living within a patriarchal society; those ways in which the female psyche acts and reacts when seeking to buck the prevailing system, and how the system responds to this. Although not apparent when read piecemeal, Kidman's body of work has an identifiable sense of unity, amounting to a social critique of an epoch.

### Keywords

Fiona Kidman, author; historical; feminist; metanarrative

## **DEDICATION**

---

This thesis is dedicated to my mother who introduced me to the joys of literature.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

I would like to thank the following people for their co-operation during the research for this thesis: Dame Fiona Kidman, Beryl Fletcher, Sharon Crosbie and Dr Anne Else.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Dr J Ross and Dr M Paul for their valued help and direction throughout the research and writing process.

I would like to thank my husband, Peter Leclercq, for his patience and support during the two years it took me to complete the work

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Abstract .....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	v
Table of contents.....	vi
Literature review .....	ix
Methodology.....	xii
<b>INTRODUCTION: .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>The female voice .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Frankness .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Kidman’s politics .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>First published novel - A Breed of Women .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Historical novels.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Problems, grievances, ridicule and resilience .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Feminism .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: CLUB LITANY, THE ORANGE SCENTED TIDE AND OTHER PLAYS.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: A BREED OF WOMEN</b>	
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Writing a first novel .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Storyline.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Geographical locations.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Race.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Harriet’s progress to freedom .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Breaking boundaries and fallout.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Launch of A Breed of Women .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>65</b>

<b>CHAPTER 3: THE CAPTIVE WIFE</b>	
The intervening years.....	66
Introduction .....	71
History .....	72
Researching the protagonists and The Rocks, Sydney –	
historical .....	82
The fictionalised story .....	89
Interpretation.....	93
Adeline (Adie) Malcolm - fictional.....	96
Giving women a voice.....	100
<b>CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>105</b>
Appendix A - Permission from Fiona Kidman to be the	
subject of this thesis Email 1.12.2011 .....	106
Appendix B - Interview with Fiona Kidman 12.03.2011 ....	107
Appendix C - Blanket permission from Fiona Kidman	
Letter 20.05.2012.....	135
Appendix D - Permission to approach Turnbull	
re Club Litany Email 20.8.2011 .....	136
Appendix E - Permission to quote emails from	
Sharon Crosbie Email 26.5.2012.....	136
Appendix F - Permission to acquire Club Litany	
rejection letter from Turnbull .....	137
Appendix G - Letter of rejection from Whitcombe	
& Tombs Limited 12.03.1969.....	138
Appendix H- Permission from Anne Else	
Email 03.04.2011 .....	140

**WORKS CITED.....141**

## LITERATURE REVIEW

---

Whether or not Fiona Kidman would wish to be categorised as a feminist is an argument pervasive throughout Kidman's three autobiographies, *Palm Prints* (1994), *At the End of Darwin Road* (2008), and *Beside the Dark Pool* (2009), all of which were constant sources of information during my research. Yet it has been assumed by many that she has been a feminist all her adult life, and, for the most part, in book reviews, newspaper articles and blogs she is written up as such. However, when Kidman has been asked, and sometimes forced in defence of her family, to define her brand of feminism she finds this difficult as she becomes troubled at "being asked to put belief into boxes" (Kidman, "Darwin Road" 206). Nevertheless, she maintains that her views have been consistently supportive of the Women's Movement.

Kidman revisits this statement by maintaining that when she does explain her own basic philosophy of feminism, "most people nod their heads and agree that this argument is about human rights, rather than pitting men and women against each other" (Kidman, "Darwin Road" 206). This suggests that she may prefer to be defined by the broader definition of human rights advocate. Certainly her active involvement in the civil disobedience emanating from the 1981 Springbok Rugby tour, for example, supports this.

If Kidman prefers the latter term - even though evidence suggests the seed bed of her philosophy was planted by the Women's Movement - does this mean that her novels reflect this wider definition? I believe not because her literary thrust, in my view, targets specifically women's issues. That is to say, although Kidman might have progressed beyond the strictures of feminism in her private life, her novels, and particularly the novels I am dealing with in this thesis, purposefully reflect a feminist critique of New Zealand society.

This thesis supports its argument by use of a multi-faceted approach. Although much information was sourced from texts that Fiona Kidman wrote and from the texts of other writers, part of my methodology was to seek a wider context by drawing on oral sources such as a face to face interview with Kidman herself, and extensive personal communications with Kidman over a long period of time. I also contacted a number of her friends and colleagues as well as other critics and writers, on the basis that the accumulated text is best understood within this wider context.

To explain this approach further, these resources were both primary and secondary. Primary resources consisted of semi-structured interviews and personal communications via telephone and email. Secondary resources consisted of published articles, interviews and books by and about Kidman, plays and short stories written by Kidman, and books by other authors relating directly to the subjects and times Kidman was writing about. Pertinent information was also acquired from the Alexander Turnbull Library chosen from the mountain of private papers donated to this institution by Kidman. Permission for access to these papers was requested and received in written form (see Appendix B and Appendix F). During an unsuccessful search via the Turnbull for copy of a play titled *Orange Scented Tide* the play-script *Club Litany* was discovered. I was able to purchase a copy of this play-script (175 pages) and study it in its entirety. Permission to include the play-script it in my appendices, however, was denied.

Much information is available on the subject of Kidman and her work in the context of other writers, and I used many such books in my research; for example, *Head & Shoulders: Successful New Zealand women talk to Virginia Myers*, *Spiritcarvers: Interviews with eighteen writers from New Zealand*, by Antonella Sarti, *Our Own Country: Leading New Zealand women writers talk about their writing and their lives*, by Sue Kedgley; *Where Did She Come From? New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987*, by Heather Rogers. Yet the areas in these books dedicated to Kidman, her life and her writing would be described at best as synopses comprising no more than thirty or forty pages at best. I found few, if any, in-depth serious overviews of Kidman's work on its own other than Lance Kendrick's *Traveller in the Countries of the Heart*. A Preliminary Bibliography on Fiona Kidman.

. It has been mooted that there is in existence an old thesis written by a student at the University of The Sorbonne in Paris, France, with one of Kidman's novels titled *Mandarin Summer* as its topic, but I was unable to locate it.

In the wider New Zealand context, Beryl Fletcher's book *The House at Karamu* afforded me considerable insight into life in rural New Zealand, particularly for young women growing up, from the 1940s onwards. *The Penguin History of New Zealand* was useful in putting into both global and domestic historical context the rise of the Women's Movement.

Research undertaken to seek out historical sources in order to understand stories that Kidman had used in her two historical novels, *The Book of Secrets* and *The Captive Wife*, produced two important sources: the first, Doreen D’Cruz’s “Women, Time and Place in Fiona Kidman’s *The Book of Secrets*” which appeared in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, September 2007. This afforded interesting insight into the motivation of the book’s female protagonists and the times in which they lived. The second source, Trevor Bentley’s *Captured by Maori: White Female Captives, Sex and Racism on the Nineteenth-century New Zealand Frontier*, was invaluable, not only for the information it contained in regard to the capture by Maori of white females during the 1800s - and particularly in regards the story of Betty Guard - but it also enabled me to put forward more than one possible interpretation of the actions and rituals of the Maori warriors during and following the capture of Betty Guard.

Although this type of research enabled the accumulation and exploration of a comprehensive library of data, as is customary, the work remained under constant review due to new information presenting itself throughout the two years of this project.

As mentioned in the last paragraph of page iv of this Literature Review, I openly sought revitalisation of oral contextualised history. This was achieved through personal conversations and email communication over an extended period not only with Kidman herself but with other contacts Kidman afforded me such as Sharon Crosbie, Chief Executive and Editor in Chief for eight years of Radio New Zealand (resigned in 2003), Beryl Fletcher (writer) and Dr Anne Else (writer). As with the Alexander Turnbull Library, written permission was sought and received before introducing any information emanating from these sources into the body of the work.

## METHODOLOGY

---

As mentioned in the Literature Review above, part of my methodology was to seek a wider context by drawing on oral sources in order to achieve a wider context. Early on in my research I contacted Fiona Kidman by email and requested an interview with her. I was granted an interview which came with an invitation for it to take place at her family home in Wellington. Prior to the day of the interview, and although I intended the interview to be open-ended, I asked Kidman if she would like to view a list of the questions I intended to ask her. She did not feel this would be necessary and declined.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2011, Kidman met me at the airport and transported me in her car to her residence. During the visit I was fortunate to meet Kidman's husband, Ian, who paid me the compliment of wearing his hearing aids from time to time.

For the interview Kidman chose audio-recording (also my preference). Transcribing audio recording is time consuming but it allows uninterrupted conversation and is far superior in accuracy to my note-taking. While setting up the equipment, Kidman perused a copy of the list of questions I would be asking her. These questions are transcribed below:

- What do you consider to be the significance of your career in the wider New Zealand social context?
- Was there a particular incident in your early life which set you on a literary career?
- Do you see yourself as a gender reformer?
- Did you start each story-telling experience with mindful intent to create a social-cultural history of New Zealand in progress?
- Which NZ social themes were constantly present as you plotted your storytelling?
- Would you please comment on the C K Stead London Flat controversy?
- Who were your literary mentors in the early phase of your literary career?
- Do you see yourself distinct from your late 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessors, for example Hyde, Mander, Mansfield?
- Many women writers of the Kidman era had inherited society's acceptance of male dominated depictions of women's social/sexual presence; this fomented their inherent

sense of inferiority as women writers writing about women's lives. For example Sue McCauley says: "There's still an embarrassment about writing of 'women's things'. I still feel defensive if I write about domestic things – about relationships and children and everyday family life. In the back of my head I have this heritage which says those things are trivial and unimportant" (*Our Own Country* 25). Would you care to comment on this?

- Was the adverse reaction to *A Breed of Women* because you put a face to liberated women and was it because the sense of conquest had been removed from men?
- Who do you consider to be the significant commentators on your literary career?
- Which of your works have been launched overseas, apart from Paddy's Puzzle and *The Captive Wife*?
- Do you actively target the Australian market?
- How would you describe the larger NZ cultural context within which you weave your stories, i.e. has the macho culture of the 1960s/70s changed to any significant extent?
- On page 157 of *Our Own Country*, the following quote attributed to you has been reproduced: 'One of the things that gives me great pleasure is when people say, as they do increasingly, that it was actually Fiona Kidman and *A Breed of Women* that started to turn the tide for women writers in this country. Is that the ultimate accolade?'
- Do you feel that what you set out to change in the 1960s- 80s has taken a step back?
- Has writing for you been an act of hope, and, if so, hope for what?
- Will your narrative body of work ever be complete, for you? What is the focus for your future novels?

During the interview Kidman revisited comments she had made in her autobiographies, and introduced additional information on such subjects as the Maori chief's role in *The Captive Wife*. From time to time, as the interview progressed, the flow of conversation tended to veer away from the prescribed questions.

The interview, which I intended should be open-ended, proved of great benefit to my research, and Kidman was generous with the time she afforded me which took up almost the whole day. An edited transcript of the interview is included (apart from remarks made off the record which were omitted) in Appendix B of this thesis.

On re-reading the transcribed text I became aware that meanings of replies to questions were not always clear. Therefore, on a number of occasions I sought and received clarification by email on points that I perceived to be ambiguous.

I did not use the material I secured in regard to The London Flat controversy between Fiona Kidman and C. K. Stead because of word restrictions. Originally I had planned to write a full chapter on this subject.

In the margin of the transcript FK refers to Fiona Kidman and AL to Anna Leclercq. A transcript of the interview was sent to Kidman for her perusal and for her acceptance that it is a fair reproduction of the interview. Kidman agreed that it was a fair reproduction and gave permission for its inclusion in this thesis.

Kidman gave me the names of three of her friends who she felt I could contact for further assistance in my research: Sharon Crosbie, Beryl Fletcher and Dr Anne Else. I contacted all three.

Sharon Crosbie, who worked for a time in the adjoining office to Kidman's at Radio New Zealand, and who remains a good and trusted friend of Kidman, gave invaluable insight into the launch of Kidman's first published novel, *A Breed of Women*. Crosbie also gave her opinion on why Kidman was vilified for this work, and why, in Crosbie's opinion, she stands out from many of her literary peers. Her insight also served to revalidate or contradict facts that had been reported by other sources at earlier times.

Beryl Fletcher, writer, supplied insight into growing up in New Zealand and a woman's place in New Zealand society in the 1940s onwards. I spoke to Fletcher by telephone and she later sent me a twenty minute recording containing a compilation of her memories on the above subject together with a copy of her autobiographical work *The House at Karamu*. Fletcher requested that the personal information not be transcribed from disc nor be published in the thesis, which has been upheld. Nevertheless her reflections and opinions helped me to formulate a picture of, and feel for, the life and times of the period under discussion.

Dr Anne Else directed me to Chapter IV of her thesis *On Shifting Ground: Self-narrative, feminist theory and writing practice* and a conference paper titled *Writing and Reading 'women' in the Seventies*, which also afforded comprehensive insight into her view of that period of recent social history. Permission was sought and received to quote from these papers.

## **Locations**

I familiarised myself with a number of the locations featured in Kidman's works, first by reading many articles on their physical and cultural aspects both recent and past, and then by visiting them, namely Waipu, Kerikeri and The Rocks area of Sydney, Australia. These visits enhanced my understanding of New Zealand and Australian architecture and improved my perception of the locations featured in her books.

Waipu, featured in *The Book of Secrets* and located no more than 60 kilometres from my own residence on the outskirts of Auckland, I visited in order to see for myself where McLeod and his follower's settled in New Zealand. This is also a small town which Kidman lived in for a number of years.

Kerikeri is a town I have visited on many occasions, but on my last trip this year (2012) I decided to drive along Darwin Road where Kidman lived as a child. The street remains a semi-rural location, possibly not much changed over the intervening years.

During a visit to Sydney I was able to spend many hours wandering about The Rocks' area. Although transformed from the impoverished housing and slum dwellings of the 1800s to trendy café and upper class restaurant venues, this area contains enough of the original style of architecture (even recreated) to evoke mind-pictures of what it might have been like to live there during that era.

## **Structure**

The structure of this thesis is set down in chronological order when referring to the dates of the writing and publishing of the novels discussed. This enables the reader to follow the trajectory of Kidman's life as a writer and the progress and development of her philosophy for life.

In historical terms this chronology is reversed. The novel *The Captive Wife*, published in 2005, is set the 1800s; *Club Litany*, written and revised in the 60s, is set in the late 50s early 60s; *A Breed of Women*, published in 1979, is set in the 1960s-70s.

All three works contain females as their main protagonists whose objective is to achieve a “voice”. “Voice” can be interpreted literally, particularly as in the case of *The Captive Wife*, or can be interpreted as “choice”, or can be interpreted as “opportunities to live their lives without limitations being placed upon them by society”. In any event, during the course of her characters’ fights to achieve their goals, Kidman’s readers are afforded a detailed examination, from the 1800s onwards, of the imbalance in the lives of women when compared to the lives of their male counterparts.

### **Limitations**

The most severe limitation to my work is that I did not grow up in New Zealand. Therefore my perspective is that of a person on the outside looking in. On the other hand, not being brought up in New Zealand has an advantage as I have found it easier to recognise the peculiarities exclusive to New Zealanders that New Zealanders themselves might not recognise, ie the points of individuality that are not shared by people from other backgrounds and which make up the unique New Zealand identity.

### **Final note**

On completion of this thesis I sent Fiona Kidman an email suggesting that she might care to view this work in its entirety before it was bound and presented for marking; she replied that she did not feel that this would be necessary.

## INTRODUCTION

---

Prior to the late 1960s, in New Zealand - in the metropolitan centres - general representation of women's lives by female authors had been trivialised to a degree that rendered it almost invisible. However in the late 60s and in the 70s there was a paradigm shift; a new wave of feminists began arguing that patriarchy had high-jacked the female voice and banished it. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), and her later writing, used literary studies to explain the way in which women's history and successes had been effaced and trivialised. Prominent New Zealand feminist, journalist and researcher, Sue Kedgley described Greer's 1979 book, *The Obstacle Race*, as showing that, in England, for example, "a small group of women have enjoyed dazzling literary prestige during their own life-time, only to vanish without trace from the records of posterity" (Kedgley 11), while Dale Spender, literary historian, observed that "Women novelists have been (so) thoroughly edited out of literary records and removed from consciousness, that their absence does not even ordinarily prompt comment, let alone concern" (Kedgley 11).

This study focuses on the life and work of Fiona Kidman, playwright, author and poet, who was typical of her generation in becoming aware in the 1960s that woman's writing, in Spender's words, was not considered "mainstream", (or should that read 'malestream'?) --- meaning that only the male-voiced narrative was seen as providing social and literary integrity; and that writing by women about domestic subjects was considered "non-mainstream" (Kedgley 10) or, indeed, trivial. Spender goes on to say that the genre of the 'women's novel' came to be one of relative abuse. 'It was used to disparage a diverse field of writing and to classify it as undeserving of critical attention. Needless to say, there is no such broad category of men's novels' (11).

This was the context in which Fiona Kidman became one of many women internationally, and a smaller number nationally, who sought to produce a narrative style that would serve not only as an alternative to the male-voice-driven narrative, but one that would turn the mind - and, in particular, the male literary mind - to consider, then revalue, then re-evaluate the 'closed boundaries' of divisive male-versus-female social discourse, then revisit it as a living regular shared social discourse.

Fiona Kidman began her working life first as a librarian, then as a screenwriter for television and a playwright, and only latterly in her late thirties did she become a novelist. This thesis explains the emergence of her career – and shows that not only does she fit perfectly the women’s movement’s literary trajectory of reclaiming the importance of domestic and social narratives previously side-lined, but that her career, unlike the careers of some of her international contemporaries, has continued to search out women’s stories that provide a feminist critique of New Zealand society and patriarchal society generally.

Kidman’s significant departure point in storytelling – particularly during the 1970s era - was to search for cultural truth and understanding through narrative imagery that is story driven. The Kidman voice emanates from a strongly held socialist/realist belief system, interspersed with notes of feminist perspicacity that intensify the significance of the message she seeks to deliver.

I am arguing, therefore, that, notwithstanding some of her own protestations, and the ever changing fashions and appeals of the term ‘feminist’, Kidman is still best understood in this light, and that her work reflects the developing understanding in New Zealand culture around gender and power and other related issues such as class, ethnicity and family dynamics.

In order to argue this, I will concentrate mainly on one unpublished play/novel - *Club Litany* - and two of Kidman’s published novels, one contemporary, *A Breed of Women*, and the other historical, *The Captive Wife* - that cover the span of her writing life.

### **The female voice**

United States critic Todd Martin contends that women of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Mansfield era had achieved little in regard to escaping a life of domesticity or being allowed to manage a dual role of family and professional woman, and a century later, for those women who followed on from Mansfield, the situation had not improved:

She [Mansfield] reflects the tension felt by most women at the dawn of the twentieth century, a tension still evident a century later. Women pursuing a career - writing or otherwise - were generally expected to forego any desire for a home and family, even in contemporary feminist circles, establishing an either/or scenario (Martin 22).

This comment has considerable relevance to Kidman's writing.

In 1975 'feminism' was new news. The International Year of Women, 1975, had a resonance that had struck a particular chord with many New Zealand women – the famous poster can still be found on many walls around the country. The popularity of the 'Year' indicated that male-female relationships were no longer static - they were instead in flux, with women across the country challenging their fathers and sons, husbands and boyfriends to remake their interactions, the veneer of housewifely respectability and contentment had worn thin. A domestic revolution was up and running.

Stepping out of their traditional female domestic environment, aspiring women storytellers were trying their luck in the literary domain, and, in the process, were catching the attention of readers for their feminine insight into life-style culture, past and present – 'woman to woman communication based on shared experience' (Le Marquand ii). New literary works now included a woman's voice and they were acclaimed for that. New narrative structures were also emerging to fit women's stories. Previously unspoken-of domestic scenes - the so called slip-stream, as opposed to main-stream, of social culture - had found an audience, a readership, a buying public.

New Zealand writer Sue McCauley, born in 1941 - one year after Kidman - likened reaction to the lack of books written by women when she was growing up to a hunger or vitamin deficiency. And it was this hunger for books by women that publishers finally tapped into in the mid-1970s, when interest in the women's movement, culminating in the International Year of Women, 1975, finally persuaded them that there was a commercial market for women's books.

New Zealand feminist Sue Kedgley comments in a similar vein, that up to the end of the 1980s '...books by and about women remain[ed] a growth area in the publishing industry' (Kedgley 19). Kedgley reported the significance of the International Year of Women, as being the year when publishers finally responded to the feminist demand for books by and about woman (19). Le Marquand expresses it thus:

Having previously been bereft of female models in the literary world, increasing feminist consciousness intensified their desire for books by women and about women. Writer and reader met each other's needs. Writing women found support for their creations which in turn provided the reader with a point of identification more true to their experience (6).

At last the knock on the door was being heard, and, finally, the door was being opened. Fiona Kidman, Rachel McAlpine and Lauris Edmond feature amongst those women whose work was accepted for publication for that year; each had books of poetry published.

The initial attraction to new books written by women was that the central characters were no longer marginalised or stereotypical figures, but strong feisty women; they were characters whom women could relate to, women who reflected their own lived reality and experiences and 'offer(ed) insight into the female condition' (Kedgley 19).

### **Frankness**

Until the 1960s, few women had voiced their thoughts or put them into words either in the domestic environment or on paper as literary works. However, despite certain New Zealand female writers' enduring sense of literary inadequacy - which McCauley describes as a lingering embarrassment about writing of 'women's things' (Kedgley 25) - the 1970s' and 1980s' social epoch emerged as a significant literary precursor to the expansion of the world of women's literature, when things domestic, dramatically speaking, began to take account of much more than the annotations written off as kitchen and laundry domestics, or 'Aga sagas' (Farrell 121). The multiplicity of female experience as a new literary genre was discovering it had a reading public.

As 'one of the sappers back in 1969' put it: 'The personal is political.' The young woman in her miniskirt had been blessed with opportunity. She had been educated. She could earn her own money. She could take a pill that prevented conception. She might marry and she might not.... She wanted to read *about* women like herself. She wanted to read books *by* women like herself. She insisted that there was a difference (Farrell 120).

And women activist writers were rearranging the social order and supplying the demand for this new genre.

'In the 1980s.... Women writers had never before met such favourable conditions guaranteeing them a 'place' in the New Zealand literary world' (Le Marquand 30). The fictional novel written from a female viewpoint, where, generally their central characters are women, 'of a type women can draw a parallel with' (Kedgley 19), was embraced by women readers as an

instrument for social change and as an example for their own lives. Where previously ‘injustice was a proper topic of conversation, (yet) it was never challenged’, the era of being trapped ‘in a web of ideas and practices that assumed the absolute primacy of men in all things’ (Fletcher 155) was passing. A reconstructed female stereotype was emerging which had a voice that demanded to be heard.

Virginia Woolf had claimed, 40 years earlier, that literature is no one’s private ground:

...literature is common ground. Let us trespass freely and fearlessly find our own way for ourselves. It is thus that English Literature will survive if commoners and outsiders like ourselves make that country our own country, if we teach ourselves how to read and how to write, how to preserve and how to create.

Kidman and her female contemporaries set about trespassing freely and fearlessly: storytelling and storytellers in the Kidman style took on the responsibility of identifying an era of social significance: those three decades or more from the 1970s onwards when, in a New Zealand literary sense, woman writers came into their own.

Ordinary women were searching for a way to experience life beyond the confines of domesticity. Relationships between female and male partners (the married, the unmarried, lovers outside of marriage, casual liaisons and endearing friendships), came to represent individual stories of singular social significance when collectively examined as literary domestic genre. Literary depiction of ‘life in the bedroom’ became a social revelation, and women readers became an economic force in their own right. Their lives in narrative had a new adventurous side. While still domestic in character, women were portrayed in ways which suggested a social journey to somewhere else - a coming of age.

### **Kidman’s politics**

Kidman had developed a love of books from an early age. The answer to life’s uncertainties seemed to lie in books; Ethel Turner’s *Seven Little Australians*, Rolf Bolderwood’s *Robbery Under Arms*, R D Blackmore’s *Lorna Doone*, and Grey Owl’s *Sajo and her Beaver People*. But she especially liked his *Pilgrims of the Wild* ‘in which he described the process of writing adventure narrative’; how he wanted to ‘paint a picture in words’, the sense of excitement he

brought to writing things down and ‘getting them off his chest’, and how he would awake in the night and make notes or read aloud to a beaver called Jelly’ (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 52-53).

This was the first time Kidman had read anything about how a writer wrote, and, later, when reviewing how she began to write, she tells that she adopted similar versions of this process in her own approach to writing (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 52-53).

Kidman had also developed a budding pre-feminist consciousness at an early age at the same time she became aware of literary careers. At about twelve years old, during the time she lived at Darwin Road in Kerikeri, in the far north of New Zealand, Eric Kingsbury, an aspiring author, and his wife, Mary, moved into the house next door. The Kingsburys had moved to this sparsely populated rural area in order to have peace and quiet, and to live off the land so that Eric Kingsbury ‘could write books’ (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 53). The Kingsburys did not have a telephone, but Kidman’s parents did, and from time to time the young Fiona would take urgent messages backwards and forwards in accordance with an agreement the Kingsburys had made with Kidman’s parents.

Kidman had never met a real author, and used her visits to the Kingsbury household to soak up the creative atmosphere. When she entered the kitchen where Kingsbury worked - at one end of the kitchen table ‘amid a confusion of papers, while he sat pecking away at the keys’ of his typewriter (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 53) - she had to speak very quietly so as not to disturb him.

Although none of Kingsbury’s work was, to her knowledge, ever published - ‘he (did not) seem to make money from his work’ - his wife, Mary, on the other hand, would earn money from sending ‘pars’ (paragraphs) about country life to women’s magazines like the *Woman’s Weekly*; and would earn around five shillings for each ‘par’ (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 53).

Kidman’s visits to the Kingsburys - where she studied their family dynamics – also evoked in her a growing awareness of the inequitable distribution of power and esteem between man and wife. Mary Kingsbury wrote her ‘pars’ and earned money from them - she produced saleable material - while Eric Kingsbury never sold anything; yet Mary was ignored, and her husband revered. As Kidman comments: ‘It was hard to tell who was the ‘real’ writer between them but there was no doubt that her husband was the one to whom the deference was offered’ (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 52). It was a salutary lesson through observation which would, as she grew up, fuel Kidman’s later interest in the Women’s Movement.

In the 1950s the social and sexual revolution, which would bring considerable change in social attitudes and family dynamics, was still some years away, but Kidman, at the age of twelve, was already becoming aware of the inequality of women's lives when compared to those of men. In addition, from her encounters with the Kingsburys, Kidman learned two more significant lessons: firstly, 'Although the Kingsbury novel never saw the light of day' (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 52) she glimpsed a world where writing was considered to be important work that was worth making sacrifices for; and, secondly, that money could be made from it.

This feminist consciousness was also encouraged by her first real mentor whom she met when the family moved to Rotorua, and Kidman acquired a job at the Rotorua library. Kit Spencer, her new employer, was 'a woman I (Kidman) think of as a feminist before her time'. She had been divorced and raised a daughter on her own - and fifty years later Kidman met Spencer's son whom circumstances had forced her to give up. Spencer had worked her way up through the library system without formal qualifications and 'her reputation as a public librarian in professional circles was of the highest order'. Kidman describes her as a hard woman, but that from her she learned more valuable life lessons, 'including self discipline and a sense of responsibility' (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 96).

'She was incredibly well read; she was very aware and she was very interested in me. She had pointed me in the direction of women's writing as well as interestingly on the other hand in the (direction of the) Russian novelists and some of the great European classical novelists' (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

She also re-introduced Kidman to contemporary French writers.

Kidman had found her place in life at the library amongst books, and by the time she was eighteen, and in conjunction with Kit Spencer she had been elevated to the position of being in charge of the library and the seven other women who worked there. Later, due to Spencer's ill health, Kidman took sole charge of the library.

If Kidman needed verification, Kit Spencer was living proof that women could achieve in the work force the same way that men could - and without any formal qualifications. Kidman, nevertheless, studied for her library exams. 'Kit's lustre', says Kidman, had rubbed off on her, and her own management skills, her own knowledge of books was becoming respected in the same way that Spencer's was (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 102).

### **First published novel - *A Breed of Women***

*Club Litany* and the play *The Orange Scented Tide* - although both rough and unpolished unpublished early works - became the precursors to Kidman's first published novel *A Breed of Women*. Emerging into the national consciousness of the feminist climate some fifteen years' later, and catching the wave of feminism as it grew in strength and volume, Kidman wrote *A Breed of Women*. It was published in 1979, by which time such material had become a collective idea, and the New Zealand reading public had become supportive of feminist ideals. As a result, *A Breed of Women* became a best seller.

Kidman states that *A Breed of Women* was also written 'when much writing was necessarily driven by several agendas, such as the emergence of women's voices and bicultural voices' (*The Best New Zealand Fiction*, (15)) and when the New Zealand literary scene was being challenged by the emergence of women writers such as Marilyn Duckworth, Lauris Edmond, Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme, Elizabeth Smither. These writers, through their work, set out to deconstruct the orthodox view of women's lives, encourage women to embrace the female experience, fight for better opportunities - opportunities that came as an unearned God given right to their men-folk - and challenge the aura of intellectual superiority men had awarded themselves.

### **Historical novels**

During the late 1980s and early 2000s Kidman produced two historical novels, *The Book of Secrets*, published in 1987, and *The Captive Wife*, published in 2005, where she discovers the historical origins and traditions of patriarchal society and female oppression – brought over from England with the convicts and the settlers – and relates stories of its continuity of experience in a new land.

As there is no personal lived reality to exploit in her historical novels, Kidman, through use of projected lived experience, and through comprehensive research, gives voice to a perceived reality of the lives of those women of a past era whose voices had been erased from narrative, whose very presence in the world had been denied, through men's refusal to acknowledge their right to a voice, either in life or in literature.

Kidman gives retrospective voice to voiceless women in ways that are significantly different from other non-New Zealand writers of the mid to late twentieth century. The New Zealand perspective, due to Maori and European social presence and influences, provided Kidman with a unique platform from which to re-examine home grown history in the present. At the time of writing *The Captive Wife* (2005) - some one hundred and fifty years after the events - Kidman not only re-examines New Zealand social history from a patriarchal viewpoint but, more importantly, more significantly, challenges that viewpoint from a feminist perspective, and writes a woman's voice into that history. Kidman provides a history in review.

### **Problems, grievances, ridicule and resilience**

Motivated not only by a lack of choice in women's lives, but by more radical grievances, Kidman poured into her writing her resentment at the traumatic experiences, the injustices, the ridicule she, and other women in her social circle and working environment, had had to endure. Experiences that had had to be endured as a rite of passage to gain entry into those areas of the commercial work place, the media and the literary scene previously considered male-only territory. These grievances made her write strongly, and gave her communality and support, but in those who spoke out against her work it provoked what can now be seen as defensive ridicule.

There was a stout and unyielding wall of prejudice that women writers faced at the time Kidman began to write her first successful novels. Kidman recalls in her autobiographical work *Palm Prints* (1994) that in 1965:

I once sat in a room full of aspiring women writers and listened to an academic poet (Kendrick Smithyman) from Auckland University telling us how to write. He placed his hands on the table in front of him and intoned: "Lady writers, eh? A nice little hobby. Now would you like to hear what real writers do?" So here it was: men's work was real, women's a hobby (86).

Smithyman appears to have had a history of jokingly putting down literary women. Kidman goes on to relate that earlier, in 1962, in an article he wrote for *Mate* magazine about post-war New Zealand poetry, he remarked:

"To say that in recent years the women who deserve to be called poets appear more intelligent is to sound superior; I do not mean to sound so any more than I

mean to be ambiguous about the advances which women poets have made, but alas, not to me” (86).

Kidman mentions being dismissed as “dirty minded” (Myers 21) due to the explicit sexual subject matter of some of her writing; and, in conversation with a potential lawyer, remembers being ridiculed for calling herself a writer:

He asked me what work I did. I said I was a writer. “A writer,” he said, in a tone of contempt. “What sort of thing is that for a mother to be doing?” I said that it paid some bills. “Oh really,” he said, “and I suppose your poor husband doesn’t get his shirts ironed or a decent meal on the table?” (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 159).

Many successful women writers of the Kidman era continued to be undermined by society’s (traditional) acceptance of male dominated depictions of women’s literary/social/sexual presence. This translated into many of them experiencing an inherent sense of inferiority as writers, and particularly as writers writing about women’s lives. As late as 1989, Sue McCauley commented: ‘There’s still an embarrassment about writing of “women’s things”. I still feel defensive if I write about domestic things - about relationships and children and everyday family life. In the back of my head I have this heritage which says those things are trivial and unimportant’ (Kedgley 25).

Kidman, however, maintains that she had never been conscious of that “heritage” - that women’s lives were inconsequential - and puts this down, in part, to her early childhood where she was the centre of attention in a loving extended family, which engendered in her a healthy sense of self worth. Later, growing up as an only child in a rural environment - when her family moved to Kerikeri - where there was a lack of discourse within the family due to her father’s morose disposition and her parents’ heavy work commitments, there was created in her, still at an early age, an independent, resilient spirit.

Because the rural environment in which she was living was sparsely populated, there was a lack of opportunity to seek out a group of friends of her own age. Therefore, Kidman was forced to look in other directions for ways of entertaining and expressing herself; one of which was books:

Having come from a solitary and patriarchal background, I responded early to the works I read when still in my teens .... De Beauvoir, Duras, Colette, French

women writers who were working outside the perceived boundaries of what was proper, they were the starting off point (F. Kidman, personal communication, March 13, 2011), ‘... and there was feminist debate in their work even then, and I was drawn to the way they approached “la difference” (Kidman, December 10, 2011).

Kidman states that the influence of French women writers, such as Duras and Sagan, was profound, and that Duras particularly had become something of an obsession for her. Duras was a prolific writer. Amongst her many novels is the haunting *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1960) which was also made into a successful film. It is a love story set in Japan - but with flashbacks to occupied France - between a Japanese man and a French woman, and explores how the couple endeavour to come to terms with the dual tragedies of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and living under German occupation in France. Although described as fiction, Duras’ work was intertwined with often thinly disguised reality. Her last work in 1995 was titled *C’est tout* (No more)! Marguerite Duras (4.4.1914-3.3.1996) was born in what today is called South Vietnam, but moved to France at the age of seventeen. She struggled for many years with alcoholism and died in France of throat cancer at the age of 81.

Francoise Sagan was a rebellious French writer. Kidman read her novel, *Bonjour Tristesse*, published in 1954, when Sagan (21.6.35–24.0.2004) was nineteen, which scandalised 1950s France, in 1958 at age eighteen. Cecile, Sagan’s teenage heroine, has much in common with Kidman’s Harriet in *A Breed of Women*, as both are young women who reject ‘conventional notions of love, marriage and responsibility in order to choose (their) own sexual freedom’ (Kidman, March 14, 2011).

Working outside the perceived boundaries of what was proper, as had Sagan, for example - and as Kidman had with *Club Litany* and *The Orange Scented Tide* - Kidman produced her first published novel titled *A Breed of Women*. *A Breed of Women*, published by Harper and Row in 1979 - the culmination of a long apprenticeship working in the Rotorua Library, radio broadcasting, writing plays - put to rest Kidman’s fears that she did not have the staying power to finish a major work, and propelled her into the ranks of successful New Zealand writers. It also realised her dream of becoming famous. But working outside these boundaries also created a downside.

Hand in hand with the accolades afforded her first successful major work, came vilification, particularly as a result of the book's sexually explicit and feminist content. Its publication resulted in a fierce backlash in the shape of adverse criticism from many of her work colleagues (in particular her male colleagues), and alienation of her previously close maternal extended family. In addition - and what was even worse - her husband was denigrated. Yet despite her distress at such hostile reactions to her work, this experience only served to increase Kidman's resilience and resolve to continue writing true to life narrative.

## **Feminism**

In her early life as a writer, Kidman joined those who were vociferous in their desire to achieve changes for women, using a method of persuasion through persistent and sound argument. As a woman with a deep social commitment, she was concerned more with broad social relations and issues affecting, specifically, women: marriage, reproduction, mothering, sexually motivated violence, both in the work place and in the home, expressions of sexuality, domestic labour, and working outside the domestic environment. Many interpreted these interests as being "feminist"; but what was meant by "feminist"?

In his book *Whole Men*, first published in 1996, Kai Jensen wrote: "Most intellectual women these days are feminists": when Harvey McQueen asked Rachel McAlpine (poet, novelist and playwright) in a *Landfall* interview (145, March 1983, 75) whether she was one, McAlpine replied: "Isn't everybody?" (1). Well perhaps, and perhaps not, because so called feminists by no means put up a united front, and this lack of an overall cohesive unit gives space for many interpretations of the word.

In her Doctoral thesis "I'm not a Woman Writer, But ... Gender Matters in New Zealand Women's Short Fiction 1975-1995" (2006), Le Marquand refers to Sandra Coney's work "Why the Women's Movement Ran out of Steam" (1993), in which Coney confirms this lack of cohesion by stating that "what was perceived as a community of women, a united sisterhood, was in fact riddled with factions, 'ingroups' and 'outgroups and hierarchies'" (Coney 59). "The anti-male stance taken by the most radical of feminists divided them from many of their 'sisters'" (Le Marquand 1).

Kidman was less than wholehearted in her endorsement of McAlpine's opinion that all women were feminists, expressing her own dislike of being pigeon-holed - although she did endorse many feminist ideals. Her desire was to be free to express herself without being straight-jacketed by labels. There were many faces of feminism at the time she began writing, and the more extreme faces of separatist radical feminism caused her to eschew the label "feminist writer".

Yet from a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective to label her a "feminist writer" is a label that best fits Kidman when discussing her novels, particularly at the time of the publication of her first book, because many of the ideals of the Women's Movement at that time were those shared by Kidman and explored in her writing. The Feminist Movement was a popular movement in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and women writers were riding that wave.

Merging with the rise of the Feminist Movement in New Zealand - and more or less accepting the nomenclature of feminist writer herself, even though at times coyly - in "*Breed*" Kidman illustrates her brand of feminism of the 1970s through depiction of the life of a young woman (Harriet Wallace), who Kidman's publisher describes as a person: "...who must take risks" (Flyleaf).

Kidman admits, in part, that Harriet Wallace's life experiences share a resemblance to her own - "... which suggests that I was Harriet. Yes, and no, and both answers remain as true, as honest, now as they were then" (F. Kidman, personal communication, November 11, 2010). Yet Kidman's literary voice is not confined, so much as freed, by admitting issues of personal identity.

Although by the late 1970s Kidman was now writing for a known audience, and openly being referred to as a feminist writer, she was still taking a risk of backlash in resolving "consciously" to continue writing what she saw as "the lives and problems of contemporary (New Zealand) women" (Kedgley 22).. Sue McCauley believed that many women writers around that time had a sense of mission "which always gives a bit more heart and an added edge to writing" (22). Certainly, Kidman was never going to be dissuaded from writing about what she believed in so she could well fit into this category.

Yet the risk paid off in 1979 when *A Breed of Women* was published, for, as fast as the first print run of 9,000 copies in hard back was being put on book-stores' shelves, it was being taken off those same shelves and being sold to buyers hungry for something real to get their teeth into. A second reprint quickly followed. This novel enabled Kidman to become sufficiently financially stable as to realise her dream of becoming a full time writer.

Seven years after the publication of *A Breed of Women*, and, by this time, with several more novels under her belt, Kidman qualifies her commitment to feminism by exchanging the words "feminist cause" with "women's interests". In the book *Head and Shoulders*, in which successful New Zealand women talk to Virginia Myers - first published in 1986, when Kidman was forty-six years old - Kidman describes her feminist values at that time thus:

The novels have consolidated my belief in myself. I've stopped having to prove myself, and I don't think I'm writing a feminist message any more. If I have any contribution to make to the women's movement, it is to write about women who have yet to make the quantum leap into leading full lives, unconstrained by the attitudes of husbands, lovers, neighbours. Women who don't necessarily subscribe to or understand the ideology of the women's movement (Myers 31).

In her first autobiography, *At the End of Darwin Road*, published in 2008, when Kidman was sixty eight, she explains her basic philosophy thus:

I believe that women are equally entitled to receive education, adequate health care and recognition in the workplace. I believe, too, that women have the right to choose their sexual partners - that means not being forced or coerced to have sex - and to have control over their fertility. Women are not human chattels. That's all. I don't think women are 'better' than men (206).

In an article in the *Sunday Star Times* (C13) dated July 17, 2011, Kidman elucidates further by restating her belief that equality empowers both men and women. However, in regard to modern feminist thinking, she states that with the passing of time, "the intrinsic issues (of feminism) remain, but what women ask for has changed....that feminism wears many faces". She highlights as examples the legalisation of prostitution, and the 'right to be drunk', neither of which issues she supports. Kidman is hoping that the modern feminist debate leads to "a saner, more open acknowledgement of women's true worth".... "It's time their enormous contribution to the work force, at home or beyond, is recognized. In my heart, I'm still fighting and hoping" (C13).

In narrative form Kidman continues to condemn the inequitable lives that women of the 1950s onwards were forced to live, and the arrogance of their male counterparts. Kidman continues to cry out for change, not only because of the sense of inferiority it engendered in women at that time, but also because of the battles women continue to face, and the risks they were, and are, forced to take during the process of attempting to extricate themselves from the confines of a patriarchal national doctrine.

Although lacking the militant temperament of, say, such writers and feminist activists as Germaine Greer, Kidman remains uncompromising in her criticism of New Zealand sexist society, challenging husbands, employers, male work colleagues, male writers to recognise society's inequalities and reorganise society to allow women to function on an equal basis.

## CHAPTER 1: CLUB LITANY, THE ORANGE SCENTED TIDE AND OTHER PLAYS

---

In the 1950s and even up to the late 1980s in New Zealand, there existed a set of sexual/social behavioural norms - a so called puritan reality, that wasn't - that women were supposed to adhere to, but did not. Although young women paid lip service to these norms in order not to be branded 'tarts' or 'loose', young women were living a very different social/sexual reality.

During the 1960s, and on into the early '70s, Kidman wrote a number of plays for radio and television, amongst them: *Carnival by Numbers* (1962), *Orange Scented Tide* (believed to be 1962), *Club Litany* (1962 onwards, as it was later reworked into a novel), *Martha* (1969) and *Green Apples and a Jug* (1972), none of which were produced.

In 1962, by the time Kidman began work on *Carnival by Numbers* - which is set at Rotorua's annual Lakeside fairground - she had already developed a precocious pre-feminist consciousness. By this time she was also married, pregnant and living in Rotorua. *Orange Scented Tide* and *Club Litany*, (the latter being a hand written play-script which she later turned into a one hundred and seventy five page manually typed piece of prose) followed. Although Kidman describes her work during this period as "a continuum of experiments, and failed attempts to get a play produced" (Kidman, Oct. 7, 2011), *Club Litany* became a forerunner to her first successful novel *A Breed of Women*.

Motivated by dissatisfaction at the limitations in her own life, and disillusioned by personal experience, Kidman craved openness and an end to social hypocrisy. With *Club Litany* Kidman challenged the status quo of New Zealand society in a manner that was both bold and unashamed. She kicked the double-standards of an era into touch, and exposed the cultural lie that had gone unchallenged in New Zealand for decades.

Kidman drew on a store of experiences, both personal and from the lives of other young New Zealand women of the era; stories of brutal socialised sexual abuse - for example, Kidman describes her first sexual encounter as painful, unasked for and conducted in such ignorance (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 90) - and the terrifying realities of unwanted pregnancies that went hand in hand with being young and female at that time in New Zealand history. With *Club*

*Litany* she offers an unabridged account of life at grass roots level; a portrait of a sexist society rooted in rugby club culture and small town New Zealand life. Although, after fifty years, Kidman has little recollection of the details of the storyline, she does comment that:

Club Litany I wrote and re-wrote over a period of years, turning (it) into a novel in the mid to late 1960s. I was pregnant at the time of writing (1962-63), I don't think I had a typewriter then, and my hand-written playscript was typed up for me by a shocked public typist in Rotorua.... I taught myself to type on a battered little Remington, starting a year or so afterwards. The woman, Joan Bell, typed copy for me for a while, always voicing her disgust with my material (Kidman, Oct. 7, 2011).

The play, which she later reworks into a novel - but never publishes - charts a period in the life of Myra Northey, a sexually innocent young woman, who leaves her isolated country life, and the protection of her parents, in the far north of New Zealand, to seek work and new experiences with young people of her own age in Hamilton, a large farming town in the middle of the North Island. Myra belongs to the vanguard of young women who are no longer content to live at home until they get married. She wants a wider variety of experiences in her life before settling down to a life of domesticity.

The social life of her new friends centres round the local rugby clubhouse where young women meet young men, where young men and young women often drink too much, and where young women quickly lose their virginity as a rite of passage; a rite of passage which prepares them for future availability as prospective partners in mating rituals with young All Black (national team) hopefuls. Rugby is the be all and end all of these young men's existence; they even measure years in rugby seasons: 'She wore an engagement ring which Norm had given her two seasons ago' (*Club Litany* 83).

Rugby in New Zealand has been, and continues to be, a religion, and part of the post settler male identity - rough, tough, stoic, outdoor bush and beach, hard working, working class men. Rugby players have always been, and continue to be, looked up to as gods, a premise which Kidman finds at odds with her own values. Therefore, she had no reservations when it came to swimming against the tide when she wrote *Club Litany*; and was unconcerned that her beliefs might be considered heretical:

They play a good game of (rugby) football ... each one waiting to play the team that contains their own pet enemy, so they can kick his teeth in, and then when they have covered themselves in glory, they get drunk and disorderly, steal road signs, use obscene language, and the courts call them good sporting lads and arrest the boy on the street corner and call him a lout. They get in the All Blacks and they go back to the school which most of them never did anything more for than make the first fifteen, which of course might have been enough to make them head prefect, get praised and feted, while the boy with first class honours never gets heard of again (*Club Litany* 108).

Adrian - Myra's boyfriend following her break-up with Branco - confirms what it means to be an All Black in New Zealand culture. He tells Myra that if asked to choose between being "head of the firm, or listen to music every day for the rest of (his) life, or be an All Black", he would choose being an All Black any day (124).

The storyline of *Club Litany* begins with a typical boy-meets-girl scenario. Myra joins the dating game and meets Branco, a Yugoslav (known as a "Dally" in New Zealand vernacular), who quickly seduces her - an act which has more in common with rape than passion: "(He) pushed her face against the seat (of the car) to stifle her protests" (*Club Litany* 15), then takes ownership of her: "Myra stared out the window, curiously at odds with herself, furious, but filled with his possession of her, which made her happy, and again in opposition, fearful" (22). As their relationship develops, Branco makes all the decisions for both of them and Myra goes along with his choices, as was expected of women in the '50s. "Come to a party eh". It was not a question. As far as Branco was concerned the matter was settled. When she does put up weak resistance he replies: "You go where I bloody say, or stay home" (22).

Myra quickly learns that her new found freedom away from her parents - "we have given you your independence and freedom of choice" (27) - is very limited choice and fraught with the pitfalls that go hand in hand with being a woman in a male dominated society, and her new found freedom is as much a form of oppression as was life with her parents. The environment is different, but the freedom of choice, which she expected as her automatic right on moving away from home, becomes nothing more than changing one set of rules for another. The male members of her group of friends hold the power; they decide how their women will think, where they will go, what they will do.

Her working life, though, is different, although it too presents a set of challenges which only become evident as Myra moves into her job. Myra, a pretty and intelligent young woman, finds employment in a local bookshop. Initially she does not stand out any more than any other young female employee. However, her extensive knowledge of books and her willingness to work hard soon become recognised as an asset by her employer. Myra is appreciated for who she is, and is happy.

The novel progresses with Myra's confidence in herself growing by the day. She begins to realise her own worth, and with it develops a belief that she has a right to make her own choices in life as much as any man, as is depicted in this exchange between Myra and Branco:

"I'm going to a party, at my boss' place. They asked me – I've got to go. No way out of it."

"They don't own you" he said, suddenly shouting.

"And neither do you" (48).

Myra breaks free of her entanglement with Branco, despite his protestations and threats:

"You can't leave me baby," he said at last. "We're not different, you an' me. Go like one person."

"It's finished. Don't let's argue," she said exhausted.

"I'll be back." There was a touch of the old menace" (52).

She creates a successful and fulfilling life for herself at the bookstore. However, she has to deal with Jonathon's (the bookshop manager) spiteful, neurotic and overpowering wife, Trish, who owns the bookstore, and who, at times makes Myra's life as much a misery as that of her husband.

As the novel draws to a close signs of a future where men and women begin to understand a little more about each other begin to emerge. Trish develops a life threatening illness, and this illness brings Jonathon and Trish's relationship to a more balanced position. Branco comes to terms with his demons and when he returns to say goodbye to Myra. "... he is speaking softly, not at all the tough one that I know. And is there a faint sound of cheering, and somewhere, the word Unity, echoing on the afternoon breeze?" (*Club Litany* 175).

During the course of the novel a number of disturbing issues of the day are brought out into the open; issues that "society" at that time preferred not to read about in print and would rather

have hidden from in their daily lives; issues that resulted from young innocent women sallying forth into a world their parents had not prepared them for. There is a particularly harrowing scene in the novel where Harriet experiences a friend, Kay, being subjected to a forced abortion. She is depicted sitting naked and vulnerable in a bath of hot water, surrounded by young bucks from the rugby club who are forcing gin down her throat in an (unsuccessful) endeavour to dislodge the unwanted foetus.

This scene brings into stark focus how young women of the 1950s and 1960s, through ignorance and peer pressure, put their lives at risk undergoing “back street” abortions, or condemned themselves and their illegitimate children to live a life forever separated from each other through forced adoptions; adoptions brought on by society’s refusal to come to terms with the realities of life. The time was ripe for a law change which would protect young women and give them choices.

“The pro-abortion rights movement and winning the right to (limited) legal abortion in NZ had a major influence on women's thinking” (Kidman, March 19, 2011). Women submitting themselves to illegal abortions were an every day happening around New Zealand as was the trauma of mothers never seeing their new born babies. Revision of the abortion laws, an important feminist issue, needed attention if lives were to be saved; and attitudes to being unmarried and pregnant needed to be liberalised. In addition, men needed to be persuaded - by law - to take a certain amount of responsibility for the children they fathered.

Much of the book is about what the publishers Whitcombe & Tombs Limited describe with a negative inflection in their letter of rejection dated 11 March 1969, as “disillusionment and decay”. But “disillusionment and decay” were a reality in many women’s lives in that era; it was just that few New Zealand women writers had written about it in such a stark realistic way before and publishers were not ready for it. Nevertheless, Kidman’s message ends on a note of optimism, and her main protagonist, Myra, although often wounded by her experiences, learns from them and rejects any suggestion of being a victim.

By using her novels to highlight issues of this nature in such a graphic way, Kidman could be accused of being over zealous at a time when she was dealing with a conformist public not ready to accept her arrant message, but, on the other hand, if reforms were to be achieved these issues needed to be aired and dealt with - because they were not going to go away.

*Club Litany* - her first attempt at exposing the dark underbelly of the lives of young New Zealanders - was never published despite several re-workings. Gerard Macdonald, the Assistant Editor of Whitcombe & Tombs Limited of Auckland, wrote to Kidman on 12 March 1969 rejecting the novel. The rejection letter began as follows:

These notes are, of course, only opinions and should be assessed as such. To start at the most commercial level, this MS (manuscript) seems potentially publishable. After all, it's loaded with sex and Rugby. On the other hand such honesty in the treatment of sex may be more than W&T can yet accept. This isn't an argument for making changes: it may mean trying another publisher.

This was followed by comments on structure and characterisation, one of which was that "the author's prejudices sometimes show - and are once or twice embarrassing"; however, these prejudices remained unidentified in the letter; therefore there was no indication or explanation as to why they might be embarrassing. The meaning of the word "embarrassing" used in this context is unclear. Indeed, as the writer of the letter seems reluctant to make any kind of critical analysis of the content of the work (except for the one that follows in regard to the abortion scene) an educated guess is all that can be attempted.

Perhaps Kidman's advanced feminist thinking on the issues she raised in this work was too audacious, too explicit; perhaps her language too crude for Mr Gerard Macdonald, Assistant Editor, and writer of the letter, to stomach. The second half of the letter makes three specific points, the first of which is that: "Kay's abortion doesn't seem dramatically to bear the attention it gets", which is followed by the question: "It is largely an excuse for the Auckland trip, which again is thin?"; the second is that Adrian's characterisation is thin; the third, that the lower class Branco's characterisation is much better.

Whitcombe & Tombs described the action of placing Myra in a bookshop as "pretty dangerous" but does not elucidate on the reasons why this should be. Jonathon, (the bookshop owner's henpecked husband who ran the bookshop) on the other hand, "is credible". These comments tend to suggest that Whitcombe and Tombs might have been uncomfortable with women in the work-place.

Whitcombe and Tombs' letter suggests that the current New Zealand reading public was not ready for such sexually explicit or controversial subject matter in literature, nor such potentially emancipated heroines; indeed, Mr Gerard Macdonald was certainly not ready. However, Mr

Macdonald does concede, rather unconvincingly – and perhaps as a sop - that another publisher might take the book.

Overall, the tone of the letter insinuates that the comfortable parochial readership of the publishing house he represented was not yet ready to put into print novels written by bold young women whose storylines broached subjects better left unaddressed.

At the time Kidman wrote *Club Litany* she had been working for the Rotorua *Daily Post*, and had also begun to write stage plays. Around the same time, Kidman wrote another play called *The Orange-Scented Tide*. The play (A Play in Three Acts by J Eakin) – (the name J Eakin constructed from Judith being Kidman’s second name and Eakin, being Kidman’s maiden name), is almost a reworking of the previous *Club Litany* play-script, again acknowledging and celebrating the innovative literary style of increasingly true-to-life narrative of what young men and women really got up to on a Saturday night, as opposed to what society chose to believe they got up to. Although the title evokes the scent of Kerikeri orange blossom, the setting chosen for the play was, once again, the middle of the north island rather than the far north.

Preceding the actual play there is an author’s note, supplied by the Turnbull Library under the Reference Number 90-041-03 which reads thus:

In various parts of New Zealand, but more particularly in the North Auckland region, live the descendants of pioneers who came together to this country from one particular country or area. By reason of their fore-fathers’ original settlement they came to form communities with a distinctly national flavour of their own. Despite the death of the old people and the birth of new generations, their national characteristics, has (sic), in most cases, never died. This play purports to take place in one of these communities, although the one described does not exist except in the author’s imagination, nor do any of the people, and to the author’s best knowledge, no Irish, Northern or Southern, community exists in this country.

Kidman submitted *The Orange Scented Tide* to a play writing competition, and recalls how “the competition’s eminent judge”, on reading the play, commented that it “must have been written by the dirtiest-minded young woman in New Zealand” (Myers 21; Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 115). Writing about sex outside marriage, multiple partners, abortion, was still an untried genre in New Zealand, even in the early 1970s. It was another daring move on Kidman’s part to submit such literature for inspection, and, predictably, bound to evoke adverse reactions in a member of an older generation still out of touch with the lives of young people of that era.

Kidman's reaction to the criticism of *The Orange Scented Tide* is indignant, yet unrepentant, and after a few words in her own defence, it quickly turns to attack:

Firstly, I had not set out to be dirty-minded: I had written about what I knew. Secondly, if what happened up and down New Zealand every Saturday night, year in year out, was shocking and offensive to an older man, then he didn't really know what was going on in New Zealand. And I did. I thought, my life isn't just ordinary, because I know things that other New Zealanders don't. That was really important, really exciting. It was the first indication that I had material at my finger tips simply by being where I was. I didn't have to travel the world to find strange travellers' tales. Just being an ordinary New Zealand woman was actually extraordinary (Myers 21).

Yet Kidman had committed a double trespass with both this play and *Club Litany*: firstly as a woman she had written openly about sex, and secondly, and not necessarily in that order, she had dared to criticise the revered New Zealand rugby culture. It is, therefore, no surprise, but a point of interest, that the judge's comments were directed at the character of the woman author rather than the content of the play. Observations on whether or not the play itself had any merit in regard to its standard of writing, characterisation or the veracity of the subject matter were conspicuous for their absence. Kidman was a young mother who had told men's secrets. She had told on men. She had broken the code (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 115). Kidman had also failed to get her timing right yet again; but not for long.

Not much changed in the intervening years between the 1969 Whitcombe and Tombs Limited's rejection letter in regard to *Club Litany* and the late 1970s. Society was still loath to move out of its comfort zone of "old expectations" regarding gender roles and embrace "new possibilities" (Le Marquand 76) which would allow women to achieve a more powerful sense of self. The conflict between "new" possibilities and "old expectations", which were encountered so often in stories by women writers of the Kidman genre, would have to wait almost until the very end of the 1970s and 1980s before such exposures would be offered to, and accepted by, a New Zealand publisher.

Certainly criticism did not diminish Kidman's resolve to continue writing; in fact, she describes it as a turning point in her life; it was then that she decided she wanted to be a writer

more than anything. In addition, provided that she was true to herself and her "own vision of the world", she made a pact with herself that in future she would not baulk at any criticism levelled at her (Myers 22).

In 1969 Kidman wrote a radio play titled *Martha* - which she describes as "my real breakthrough" - which was bought immediately by New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC), now called Radio New Zealand. The play - based on personal experience during her stay in a Rotorua hospital while giving birth to her own daughter, Joanna - "is set in a maternity hospital where a social worker comes to tell a Maori mother that she cannot keep her child because of her living conditions, and the mother's attempt to keep her baby". However, *Martha* suffered a similar fate to *Club Litany* and *The Orange-scented Tide* in that it was never broadcast as it was considered "too contentious" (Kidman, Oct. 7, 2011).

Finally, Kidman wrote a play titled *Tell About A Man* about the struggles of an intellectually handicapped girl who is befriended by a man who is suspected of wishing to cause her harm. In fact, he wishes her no harm and "illuminates her life with a brief glimpse of happiness until it is undone when the pair are separated by well-meaning authorities" (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 156-157). The play was produced by Antony Taylor and became an instant success. This was followed by a number of plays for broadcast both on the radio and television. In 1971, as already mentioned earlier, Kidman won the Ngaio Marsh Award for Television Writing with *Green Apples and a Jug*, (which was not produced due to budget constraints). Despite the play not having been produced, the award vindicated her belief in herself and her work.

## CHAPTER 2: A BREED OF WOMEN

---

### Introduction

Although Kidman won the Ngaio Marsh Award for Television Writing (1971), the fact that *Green Apples and a Jug* was never produced frustrated her because she still had no work out in the market place; and this situation continued. She remained almost unknown to the general New Zealand reading public for a further eight years.

However, in the intervening years a dramatic swing in the publication of poetry and literature by women authors occurred, and in 1975 - International Women's Year – “nine new collections of works by women poets were published” including Kidman's own: *Search for Sister Blue*, a play (1975) and *Honey and Bitters*, a book of poetry (1975). Other works followed: novels and reprints of earlier works. Feminists set up women's galleries, bookshops, publishers and theatre groups, in addition to “actors' and artists' pressure groups”. They made cultural space for women's perspectives regarding “unspeakable issues such as domesticity and sexuality” (Else 6).

Nevertheless, mere change did not create the literary recognition Kidman craved, and the novel she longed to write still remained unwritten.

Yet, in 1977, at the age of thirty-seven (much later than her planned age of twenty-eight, as she claims in her autobiography) she began to write a book which, as she also maintains in her autobiography, would put her on the national literary map and fulfil her dream of becoming a famous writer (Kidman, *Palm Prints* 32). Publication of her debut novel, *A Breed of Women*, became the demarcation line of her new life as a recognized New Zealand professional novelist, and confirmed that she would not have to seek employment in some other field in order to help finance family life.

“I had come to the point of writing this novel by a long and difficult road. It was not the first one I had attempted, but this time I knew it had to work, or else I needed to get on with my life....” (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 226).

It would also establish her, in the minds of her publisher, her fellow writers, her critics and her reading public, as a feminist author - a “raving feminist” to some (Myers 29); “a feminist icon of the times” to others (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 248) because she was writing once again about those issues that affected women but which, prior to the late 1970s, had been considered taboo subjects.

### **Writing a first novel**

By the time Kidman had decided to write a novel she had become “exhausted by the years of piecemeal work, erratic hours, frustrated ambitions” (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 225). Money was a problem as the Kidman household required a second income to supplement that of her husband. Fortunately, a State Literary Fund grant of one thousand dollars, which she had applied for but had not expected to receive, was awarded her. So, as she put it, this enabled her to put a new roof on her house, which meant that she would be able to write without water trickling down her neck.

In an unguarded and euphoric moment, Kidman states that she divulged her plans for a new roof to a reporter who telephoned her for comment. This information engendered letters of indignation to the newspapers as there were those who felt a new roof was not an appropriate item of expenditure for a State grant; and they might have had a point as, at face value, it does seem unorthodox. However, Kidman ignored the letters to the press deploring inappropriate usage of grant money and settled down to write. It was make-or-break time.

In her autobiography Kidman states that she already had a title for the book, *A Breed of Women*, in her head at the moment she put the first piece of paper into her typewriter. The subject matter she decided upon for the book would be the lives of the women she had known who had muddled through the past decade (1970s) and survived.

In an interview with Antonella Sarti published in *Spiritcarvers*, Marilyn Duckworth, a contemporary of Kidman, tells how she too wrote in a similar vein: “... I was always writing about surviving - how women *survive*...” because in the 1970s women were juggling “their different selves, to be a sexual person as well as a mother, to find a balance between love and career” (25).

Louisa Berry, in her research essay “*the bone people and a War of Position*”, by Keri Hulme, takes a similar stance by stating that when Keri Hulme was writing her novel – for which she was awarded the Booker Prize in 1984 - in the 1970s and early 1980s, “although feminism had challenged many long-held beliefs about women’s place in society, traditional ideas were still dominant” (16). More needed to be written in order to bring about change.

Although by the middle of the 1980s women had become more independent, in the 1970s women were still struggling with combining home life and career, and the attitude of society towards women and careers. A career continued to be considered to be a sideline; home and family were real jobs for women.

By combining writing a novel with raising a family, Kidman was finding herself in a similar position to those women she and Duckworth and Hulme were writing about - juggling a career with marriage and a family - and, in order to do both to the best of her ability, she had to manage her writing time carefully. A book titled *Working It Out: 23 Women Writers, Artists, Scientists, and Scholars Talk About Their Lives and Work* - edited by Sara Ruddick and Pamela Daniels, with a forward by Adrienne Rich - changed her life and helped her plan and execute the writing of her first novel (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 226-228) because it gave her a *modus operandi* for extracting the maximum benefit from the writing time she had available to her.

An essay featured in the book, by psychology professor Virginia Valian at Syracuse University, USA - since established as one of the leading experts in gender equality - gave Kidman the key for making good use of the limited time she had available to write. Rather than spending hours sitting at a desk, Valian explains how she tried working in small time-chunks, say fifteen minutes at a time, with no interruptions or distractions. If the writing was going well she might continue. In any event, “this was the difference between quality time and unimaginable quantities of time” (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 228). This had already become Kidman’s approach to her work, and Valian’s validation enabled her, and other writers who had to cope with family matters, to cope with writing as well.

Kidman worked out a system whereby if she achieved a certain amount of work regularly per day she would finish a project. A friend, Keith Sinclair (1922-1993), renowned New Zealand poet and historian, had mentioned that, “if a writer writes a thousand words a day, it’s possible to

work out roughly how long a project will take. Treat it like a job, until you've finished." This suited Kidman, and once she had become accustomed to the solitude, as she had during childhood, she enjoyed the process: "[I] began to like myself again" (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 229).

Sinclair became a friend and mentor for Kidman, and an invaluable critic of her work, in which he took a great interest; he liked her poems, he talked about her work with her and encouraged her. He was excited when she had a book published. They would sit for hours talking about his work and hers. Their relationship became close:

If I say I loved that man people take it the wrong way. We had a very intense relationship but it was a platonic one. I mean, it could just have easily not have been, I suspect, but it was, and the better and stronger for it. (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011)

He was also fun to be with:

We used to drink a lot together, he'd drink like a fish and I used to drink along with him! We used to riot around town and he'd say, "Take me to a party!" And off we'd go. Oh, God, I'd hate to think now where we used to drive around and so forth. Little Mini lurching around and then we'd get lost but we had great fun. And he used to like it because .... Ian and I both knew a lot of trade unionists and wharf people and so forth and so we'd go off to some of their parties (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Because she had not had a university education - which she regrets to this day - and because she had not been taught how to research properly, Sinclair bestowed upon her a gift of fundamental importance to her craft: he taught her the basic techniques of research which helped her enormously in her role as an historical novelist.

William Austin of NZBC (New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation) became another mentor whom Kidman describes as "a lovely, very handsome, shy alcoholic genius of a man". He and Arthur Jones, an ex BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) script editor, took an interest in, and were supportive of, her work. The playwright Bruce Mason was another; Kidman attended one or two of his workshops when she made trips from Rotorua down to Wellington. One weekend in particular various playwrights submitted their work to Mason to be work-shopped, and he chose Kidman's, titled *Ultimatum*, which she described as a "great" and "tremendous"

experience (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011). Kidman did not elaborate on the fate of *Ultimatum*, and there is no record of it being included in a list of her body of work. Therefore, it is assumed - though not proven - that its literary life ended at the workshop.

Many sought to identify the life of the main character in *A Breed of Women* - Harriet Wallace - with Kidman's own. In fact, everybody assumed that the novel was her story because her own life arc had been very similar.

. . . tiny village to small town to Wellington and I was working as a script writer in television at the time. And Harriet is a front person for television which, of course, Sharon (Crosbie) was, too, at the time. She was in the next office to me. She was in radio and television as we all were in those days – we were working in both media. Sharon was the queen of the airwaves but working in radio and television was my bread and butter (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Novelists write from the perspective of characters that are partly or entirely fictional, so it would be hasty to suggest that *A Breed of Women* was entirely autobiographical. However, Kidman confirms that she did draw on experiences of a number of women - ten in all, herself included - for the novel, and that while writing she became aware of the different voices of these women; argumentative voices, voices clamouring for attention, voices rejecting what she had written (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 231).

By the time she had written about 70,000 words, Kidman tells us that she had begun listening to, and talking to, her characters who were taking on a life beyond the writer. Once she started listening "a magical transformation" took place between the factual element contained in the story and fiction. It was only when this moment of listening occurred that she knew how to write the book. As a result, her first manuscript containing 70,000 words was unceremoniously burned at the bottom of her garden. Although this act of literary arson has never been repeated, Kidman states that, at the time, it was the right thing to do. She began the book again and listened to her characters (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 231).

Looking back on that episode Kidman explains her actions:

None of them felt like proper characters. There was a breakthrough one day. I sat at my typewriter, ready to plough on with this 'recon-structive' mission, when one of the characters began directing herself, a voice quite apart from myself or the

women in the book. And then Harriet responded. At this point I knew I was onto something, and I 'listened' to what they had to say, rather than trying to direct them all the time (Kidman, May 9, 2011).

Kidman sent the finished manuscript to Ray Richards, Managing Director of A H & A W Reed, Wellington publishers, who had set himself up as a literary agent. Within a couple of days Richards got back to Kidman to say that he could not put the book down until he had finished it, and that he would find her a publisher. Brian Wilder at Harper & Row in Sydney became Kidman's publisher of *A Breed of Women* but "it would be nearly two years and a good bit of rewriting before the novel appeared in 1979" (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 235).

In her own words, Kidman describes the unfolding of events leading up to publication:

I'd given it to a typist because my own typing needed a lot doing to it and tidying up. I did work on the typewriter but it was a mess and it was huge, sprawling manuscript. And the woman who typed came back sort of going, "[gasp] Oh my God, I couldn't stop reading this!" And then I gave it to Ray and he rang me at about six o'clock one morning and he said, "I'm ringing you at six o'clock in the morning because I won't be able to say it by the time I've had a sleep." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I haven't been to bed all night, I've been up reading this. I'm sure that it can be published and I'm going to send it off shore to Brian Wilder at Harper and Row in Sydney." And within a week I had a contract, when I had thought people said, "You've written a novel, you'll have to send it round publishers for years," and so forth. Well, within a week of sending it off it was on its way to being published (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

The book underwent heavy editing from the Australian branch of the American publisher in the hope of its achieving international distribution. "British based publishers ask you to make changes to accommodate their ideas, whereas Americans simply do it themselves. So *A Breed of Women* arrived back with thirty thousand words chopped out of it, and the whole thing chronologically rearranged" (Kedgley 170). The contract obliged Kidman to accept the editing, but she contends that it changed the novel to a degree because her intention had been "to draw a picture of a group of city women whose roots had been rural and how that common factor affected responses to situations, but it became, with editing, more of a transitional country-to-town type of novel" (Kedgley 170).

Nevertheless, *A Breed of Women* represents a clear, forceful and accurate picture of New Zealand social history - from a feminist perspective - as it was lived in the 1970s.

## Storyline

As mentioned above, Kidman's original intention in writing the novel had been to draw a picture of a group of city women whose roots had been rural, and how that common factor affected responses to situations, but it became more of a transitional "country-to-town type of novel" (Kedgley 170) after editing, and also it is not really about a group of women, rather the story of one woman.

In a similar vein to Kidman's plays, the narrative of *A Breed of Women* was set in New Zealand society during the late 1950s (onwards). The heroine, Harriet Wallace, and her family settle up North (north of the North Island of New Zealand) on a farm in a place called Ohaka. Her father is distant with his daughter and her relationship with her mother is not close, although there is a strong bond. Harriet is an innovative young woman, who, in her early life, feels that she does not fit in: "They were all friends with each other, whereas she was always an outsider" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 3). She is feisty, unconventional, and frustrated at living in small town society and desirous of a more intellectually challenging future, but there are obstacles: "There's no way outa Ohaka, 'cept by flying young, or dying here" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 82).

Harriet has a traditional Presbyterian religious upbringing (like Kidman's own), yet, at a young age, she challenges the book on which the very belief system of the Church is founded:

"But the Bible can't be proved to be the truth," said Harriet.... "There's no conclusive proof that it is absolutely accurate." But her father, patriarch of the family, is not to be challenged by any belief system other than his own, be the argument logical or not. "Believe me," and his voice hardened, so that she shrank from it, "It is the truth because I say it is" (*A Breed of Women* 15-16).

This is not only a feminist challenge but is also an intellectual one - one that she is not allowed to make. At this point in her early life the battle for self determination is already beginning. Although she had no female role model in her young life, other than a downtrodden and subservient mother, Harriet wants something more out of life than just being a good churchgoing wife and mother. She wants to be someone in her own right: "And what do you want to do?" "Be famous," said Harriet levelly. (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 53).

During her youth Harriett suffers a stream of confusing and contradictory put-downs from many of the men who cross her path; this from her father: "What the hell d'you think you're doing?" he roared behind her. "You stupid, thick-skulled, little cow." (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 9); this from a Jim Collier, who helped on the farm: "You just remember, fellas don't like girls that are smart." (*A Breed of Women* 30); and this from an exchange between Gerald Collier, Jim's father, and Harriet's father: "She'll make a good wife for someone." "Time enough for that," said Gerald [her father]. "She oughter be broken young," replied Jim seriously (*A Breed of Women* 26). Here, the terminology used likens Harriet to a horse.

Her family assumes that her future will follow the same path as her mother's, that of wife and mother born to serve: "Do you want to go teaching then?" said Mary, [her mother]. "You could go dental nursing" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 50-51).

In spite of a lack of positive reinforcement from her father and any of her male acquaintances, and having only her mother's limited experience of life to draw on, Harriet refuses to settle for what others want for her: "I don't want to stay on the farm, and I don't want to go teaching, and I'm damn sure I'm not going to go dental nursing" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 51).

In *Margaret Mahy: a writer's life*, Tessa Duder states that women's horizons were narrow:

Speaking generally, girls left school to become office workers, teachers, nurses or librarians until, with luck, they achieved primary success through marriage. Of course there were old maids, rebels and eccentrics but such lives were not regarded as desirable possibilities (63).

Rather than take on a traditional woman's job, like teaching or dental nursing, Harriet is seeking to overturn the power that others hold over her and make her own decisions. She wants to find a place in the world where she can function as an individual and as an equal to her male counterparts, both on a personal level and a creative level, rather than be labelled and dismissed as inferior because she is a woman. "She would do something better with her life, but if she was going to follow a path which had any meaning for her, it had to be lived through herself, and not vicariously through men" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 301).

Here we see fiction imitating reality. Like Kidman herself, and many other women growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, Harriet wants what a previous generation of women might have dreamed of but never expected to achieve: partnership with a man and a career. Refusing to

accept the constraints of a conventional life, she seeks alternatives. She becomes embroiled in conflict: firstly, in order to establish an individual identity; and later when she moves to the city, to achieve a measure of equality with men both in the home and the workplace, even if she must strike a bargain with life in order to achieve her dreams. The pathway she takes to achieve her goals is pitted with hazards; she gets married, divorces, remarries, has affairs and has a troubled relationship with alcohol.

As explained on the flyleaf of the 1979 edition of *A Breed of Women*, “Harriet is a person who must take risks. In the city she becomes established as a writer and television personality. Her rediscovery of friendship with Leonie Tregear and her relationship with Michael Young force her to realize that, in taking risks, she has both won and lost.” When asked to explain the phrase “both won and lost” Fiona Kidman comments:

The quote encapsulates what it was like for me at the time. In speaking out about women's lives I had won a large popular following, I had become a “voice” of my time. Not something I had set out to do, I was just writing a story, or so I thought. But when you become a “voice” intentionally or not, you lose something of your identity. You belong to others, in a sense. You choose your words with more care. And how you relate to those close to you can be difficult too. ...when you put yourself “out there” in the way that I did in that book, it's hard to get it back again; you become much more careful (Kidman, Nov. 11, 2010).

Keri Hulme's heroine, Kerewin, in *the bone people*, went even further out on a limb than Kidman did at that time. “With Kerewin, [she] challenged gender roles; a woman who was self-sufficient, completely without need of masculine assistance and in every way equal to a man” (Berry 8). Writers like Kidman and Hulme were showing their readers that there were alternatives, but no one was pressuring them to take them. In fact, just knowing that there were alternatives available was empowering.

### **Geographical locations**

The post settler imagery of the book - that is to say of a rugged, industrious, problem solving, modest type of people mainly made up of expatriate British or people of British extraction, who relocated to New Zealand and lived in harsh rural environments - also mirrors that of Kidman's early life, and the changes in geographical elements of place.

Harriet travels from north to south, from the small agrarian township of Ohaka in the far north to larger more cosmopolitan settings such as Auckland, in the centre of the North Island and Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, at the tip of the North Island. Her changes in geographical locations, beginning in a rural setting and ending in the capital city, reflect Harriet's progression from her beginnings as a recalcitrant child to the point where she achieves a true identity and fulfilment as a person in her own right. Each relocation is larger and more sophisticated, each relocation moves her ever closer to her goal of achieving the combination of a good family life and a noteworthy career as a media personality in Wellington.

Ohaka, the first setting, represents the post-settler identity as experienced by Harriet's parents, Gerald and Mary Wallace, who hold on to the customs and lifestyle of the motherland, Britain.

Christmas is always celebrated by her parents in a particularly traditional English manner. In the Wallace household on Christmas Eve, a fire is lit regardless of the summer heat, and the three of them sit in front of it to sing Christmas carols the way their forefathers in Britain did: Her father insists: "If we can't put ourselves out for Christmas, I don't reckon life's worth living. You shall have your Christmas, my girl" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 14).

Here we see the older generation, the settler society, clinging to an anglophilic New Zealand, holding on to their colonial past, refusing to rescind their British cultural mores and loyalties as the only way of maintaining some form of identity for themselves. They have moved to New Zealand for a better life, but instead of being able to embrace wholeheartedly this new land, they live with one foot in one land and one in another, like some kind of cultural hybrid.

The Christmas scenario is reminiscent of Kidman's own family Christmases when English traditional hot fare was dished up year after year regardless of the temperature outside. It could have been a scene out of Adela Stewart's autobiography, *My Simple Life in New Zealand*, in which Stewart tells her readers that for Christmas 1898 she cooked "roast beef, chickens, plum-pudding etc. for selves and visitors" (138). The 'barbie' (barbecue) with its grilled prawns, steak, sausages and fresh salads, followed by a meringue and cream dessert called a 'pav' (pavlova) decorated with rounds of kiwi fruit and served in the open air, which now defines a Kiwi Christmas, was still a long way off.

In the second setting, Kidman uses the larger urban centre of Weyville where Harriet relocates to her Cousin Alice's house in order to achieve a better life for herself: "I want to do well. I want to do better than my parents" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 67).

This setting also contextualizes her progression from farm girl in Ohaka, where she felt both suffocated and energized - suffocated by the constraints put upon her by living in the confines of a small narrow-minded society yet energized by the physical freedom that a rural upbringing engenders - to a sophisticated young woman with aspirations for a new life, new career, and new identity. She has moved forward. In the process she has broken the shackles of the outmoded British traditions of her father's birthplace and begun to assume the identity of a young New Zealander.

The relationship that develops between Harriet and Cousin Alice is reminiscent of that formed between Mrs Brayton and Alice Roland in *Story of a New Zealand River* by Jane Mander, although Cousin Alice is a more judgmental and prickly character. Both Cousin Alice and Mrs Brayton are women of an older generation who have experience on their side, which Harriet and Alice Roland lack; and both women play vital roles in the emotional development of these two young women by offering support as they step away from the security of the known and move towards the unknown.

Cousin Alice gives Harriet a home, company and wise council when she moves away from her own home up North for the first time and is finding her way in a new environment. Living with Cousin Alice in her house in Weyville allows Harriet to follow a more liberal life style yet still be protected. Cousin Alice, however, is 'worldlier than Harriet's mother', and this enables Harriet to open up to her:

"I want..." began Harriet, and stopped. What did she want? "I want to do well. I want to do better than my parents." Alice measured her with a long look re-evaluating, re-estimating. "That's up to you. If you mean that, I think we should get on very well" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 67).

That is, until Harriet offends Cousin Alice's moral code, and has to move on.

Likewise Mrs Brayton appears in Alice Roland's life just when she is needed, at that moment when Alice's spirits are low and she is feeling overwhelmed by her new environment. Mrs Brayton shows a strong character, is welcoming, supportive and encouraging, and by example, proves to Alice that she too can make the transition from English lady to rural New Zealand wife and mother:

Mrs. Brayton smiled... "We must do all we can for each other. You must have a garden and fowls. Nobody can be despondent with fowls about. I have grown to

love animals, even pigs. You must make Roland put up a fence and fix up a fowl run. Haven't you any books?" (Mander 38).

Harriet initially identifies with Weyville, a larger, more prosperous town than Ohaka, but, after making an unexpected visit to Auckland, she recognizes the narrow-mindedness, and restrictive lifestyle Weyville has to offer as no more than a larger version of Ohaka.

Harriet moves from Weyville when Cousin Alice discovers that Harriet, as an unmarried woman, is indulging in sexual activity and asks her to leave.

Eventually, Harriet marries a young Maori teacher, as did Kidman; but, whereas Kidman's marriage has lasted, Harriet's does not (Kidman, *A Breed of Women*, Flyleaf).

As Le Marquand comments:

Kidman creates women who seek self-fulfilment. They are unwilling to play through their prescribed role of marital martyrdom and sacrifice themselves to husband and children. If they cannot find satisfaction within marriage they seek it elsewhere, following their sexual desires outside the domestic realm as Harriet does until she meets her second husband, Max (79).

Harriet moves to Wellington with Max and their two children. There she achieves a sense of self worth through her work as a writer and television personality, and a balance between the sexes; she feels understood, particularly in her home life. She rediscovers old friendships. She is happy, and it shows. One morning Max wakes up and says to her with quiet wonder:

"Harriet, I love you"; she responds in kind. He tells her that he has come to accept her difference as the quality that had first drawn him to her, not a symbol of her failure to conform. The person she is now is a new, better, and more whole human being. The question of mutual trust didn't need to be raised, for it was a mutual assumption (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 303).

Harriet does later return to visit Ohaka, allowing her to look at it with new eyes and to accept her blood lines and cultural affiliation with Britain and her difficult childhood in the North, because it is all part of who she is, who she has become. By forgiving she is able to accept, and approve of (love), who she has become and move forwards. In his poem *Forgiveness*, Alistair Campbell, New Zealand poet, novelist and play-write, explains such a journey:

Forgiveness is a journey I must take  
Alone into my childish fears, and there  
Confront my fathers for my children's sake.

I must go back before I cease to care,  
And the world darkens and I cannot move.  
Forgiveness is a journey from despair.  
Along a path my ancestors approve.  
I must go back and with them make my peace -  
Forgiveness is a journey into love. (39)

Alistair Campbell was born in Rarotonga in 1925. In 1932, when Campbell was seven, his mother died of tuberculosis. The following year his father also died and he and his two brothers were sent to an orphanage in Dunedin in the south of South Island New Zealand. He lived most of his life in New Zealand, mainly around the Wellington region, and for several decades in Pukerua Bay, Porirua.

He completed his school education then went on to university, before embarking on his life's work. He became a teacher and editor for various educational publications as well as becoming an accomplished and highly successful poet.

Campbell would have understood the need to look back at another culture, look back at that period in time when as a child he experienced the loss of his parents, and the difficulties of growing up in a new land. Campbell, like Harriet, would have taken that journey to forgiveness into love.

Harriet forms a new affinity with, and understanding and appreciation of, her heredity which is all part of growing up. She is now her own woman: whole, emancipated and strong in her own identity as a modern worldly woman. "Time to start fighting free of labels. Time to be herself, rather than an image. Time, if you like, just to be a woman." (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 345).

## **Race**

With Harriet's first marriage being to a young Maori, inevitably the subject of race is introduced into the story, raising the issues of racial inequality and tension prevalent in New Zealand society at the time - a concern Kidman feels especially keenly because her husband, Ian, comes from a Maori background.

How to approach the depiction of racial issues in her novels had been a minefield for Kidman. In the early 1970s at a hui in Rotoiti, (a hui, originally a Maori language word, is a New Zealand term for a social gathering or assembly). She was verbally attacked by a fringe group of Pakeha

writers who had attended in order to “give support to Maori writers in their struggle with people like me who wanted to steal their voices” (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 222). Kidman was willing to listen to those who criticized her, but what she found difficult to accept “was that Pakeha people were pointing their fingers at me.” Whilst being greeted by familiar and friendly Maori faces, she had to listen to such comments as, “How can you call yourself Maori? A honky with a tape recorder” (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 222). Kidman had never called herself Maori and felt angry and humiliated by the experience.

Although this was a personal attack on Kidman, other writers of this period suffered similar disapproval. Michael King (1945-2004) - award winning New Zealand historian, author, and biographer - examined Maori culture through journalism, television and books. His biographical work *Te Puea* (1977) was considered to be outstanding. It was not the first biography of a Maori by a Pakeha writer, but many judged it to be “a work without antecedent.” Nonetheless, King came in for criticism “mostly expressed obliquely and indirectly.” However, following publication of King’s biographical work on Whina Cooper titled *Whina* (1983), some Maori took exception to a Pakeha writing about Maori, and King came in for “sharper and more openly expressed” criticism (Gibbons 87).

During her working life Kidman had edited *Te Ao Hurihuri*, a collection of essays written by Maori writers; she associated with the world of Maori for much of her early life and married a man of Maori descent. Yet Kidman found herself on the horns of a dilemma: if, in her own writing, she excluded the Maori voice she would “present the face of mono-culturalism that was, in its way, a form of reverse racism”; if she used the first person Maori voice she would run the risk of being accused of “stealing” it. She found a compromise by treating the relationship between Maori and Pakeha from a Pakeha perspective rather than adopting a first person Maori voice (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 221-22).

Setting aside such personal attacks, in *A Breed of Women*, Kidman exposes the bigotry and condescension with which she feels some Pakeha treated the Maori people in the 1970s. Kidman is unequivocal in her dislike of racial discrimination. To highlight the discriminatory elements embedded in the psyche of many Pakeha New Zealanders she injects into the storyline true-to-life incidents and ways of speaking that were in common use but that would be unacceptable today:

“Don’t go looking for cheap darkies if you’ve got any sense. The only ones I know round here I went to school with, and we sat in the same desks at school, and I reckon they don’t come no cheaper than the rest of us.” After the man had gone, Harriet asked, “Don’t you like Maoris, Mum?” “Of course I do,” said Mary. “It’s just that they’re different to us. They belong with the workers.” “But what about us?” asked Harriet. “We’re landowners,” said Mary. (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 23).

To expose the shaky ground on which all racial prejudice tends to be based:

The occasion was a jumble sale held in a local Maori pa on Family Benefit Day. The theory was that Maoris never had any money except when the welfare handed it out, and if you could catch them before they went to the pub and blew it all, they would spend it on cast-offs for their children. Harriet objected and said she felt that this was an insult to the Maoris. A committee member raised the point, quite reasonably, that the jumble sales had always been a success in the past and that they had raised a great deal of money (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 208).

### **Harriet’s progress to freedom**

Harriet Wallace’s story is “her journey to self awareness” (*A Breed of Women*, Flyleaf) as a woman and as a survivor, and as a feminist - although Harriet, and even Kidman, did not use that label - and the main issue of the novel is that women of that era wanted choices: choice to juggle family life with a professional career, rather than to be restricted to a life of domesticity once they married while accepting that their husbands would make all major decisions affecting their lives; choice to select their own sexual partners; choice to keep their children, even if they were born out of wedlock - all issues that feminism fought for in the 1960s onwards.

Through the characterisation of Harriet, Kidman depicts the innocence of childhood, the disillusionment of adolescence - as the young woman realises how limited her choices are - and the ultimate inevitability of the move into partnership with a man.

Early in the story Harriet speaks ironically of those choices that she would not be faced with as an adult female, and of her lack of enthusiasm for marriage.

This, when she had challenged the veracity of the Bible, and her father had crushed her by stating that if he said it was true, it was true:

Why hadn't she thought of that? There was no more obvious reason for it to be the truth than that her father had said so. It removed whatever concern she had on the subject. She smiled and relaxed. The fire was dying, and the heat was more tolerable.

She felt as if she had been through fire and come out the other side. How good it was not to have to wrestle with problems of the mind. There would be someone to take care of such matters, while she, she would ... do what? Be like her mother? Have children? That meant being married. No, it was all too difficult. Probably she would just spend her life in the bough of a half-fallen poplar alone with the river and the sky, and some wild brown ducks she had seen down at the river. Yes, that would be it, and how beautiful it would be (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 16).

The tragi-comic lines of the above quote form a word picture of Harriet's future life, of women's lives in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, when women expected to have little or no choice in the major issues that governed their lives: that is what men were for, to make choices for them. At this point in the novel Harriet is beginning to contemplate her future and becoming aware of how limited her choices are going to be - how little women are considered, consulted, valued, taken notice of; how they are treated as sexual objects to be dominated and used in order to improve and enhance the lives of men.

Later on in the story, endeavouring to prove this point exactly, Harriet takes issue with a middle-aged lawyer who had been defending a rape case. "Of course, my dears," he said, looking round conspiratorially at them all in the candlelight, "You know, she asked for it. Women nearly always do. But then you must realize that this - lady, if you like to call her that, had chosen to sleep with many men" (Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 212-213).

Harriet challenges the male point of view and highlights the prejudice of the male attitude:

"I can't see what difference that makes". "It makes a great deal of difference in the eyes of the law," said Nick. "Then the law is an even greater ass than some people already suppose," said Harriet. "She didn't choose to sleep with this particular man, did she?" "We don't know that. We don't know whether in fact she's simply paying him back for a tiff they had afterwards." "But you said she was covered in bruises." "Possibly self inflicted." "Do you honestly believe that?" Nick shrugged. "My client denies it, and although he was foolish to become involved, I consider him of better character than the witness." "Because he's a man"(Kidman, *A Breed of Women* 212-213).

Also how, if women were not attached to a male (ie they did not marry and have children) their lives would be considered of no value.

Harriet, however, “accepts that she is clever and that cleverness will allow her to escape her family, and support herself”. Finally, as the novel moves towards its end, at the age of forty she decides “it is time to be herself.... just to be a woman” (Rogers 121-123).

### **Breaking boundaries and fallout**

The storyline for this debut novel being based on an amalgam of previous work, - *Club Litany*, *The Orange Scented Tide* - maintains the original (rejected) impetus, and theme, of women’s general life issues and their fight for equality with men. The continued validity of these issues in women’s lives came to the fore during a talk Kidman was asked to give to some women about writing. The talk took place during the International Women’s Year celebrations in the Wellington Winter Show buildings.

Kidman had expected to be giving her talk to no more than a dozen people. However, in spite of the weather - an unusually virulent storm had left people ankle deep in mud - and having to stand on an apple box, - she is no more than 1.52m tall - Kidman addressed some 400 hundred of the 2,000 people who attended the event. Following her address, women came in droves wanting to talk to her about their lives and the discrimination that they had experienced. As Rosemary Novitz puts it: “Many women learned that some feelings and experiences were not unique to themselves, that they were shared by other women.... Their personal identity became inextricably linked to an identification with other women who shared similar experiences” (57).

And the knowledge that other women shared similar experiences gave them confidence as individuals; women began to accept that they could have lives outside the confines of domesticity, and that in so doing they would have something worthwhile to contribute to the wider world without having to regard themselves as “freaks” or traitors to womanliness and to society.

Despite Kidman not having experienced first hand the type of discrimination these women talked about, she had experienced difficulties while working in television where she had been the only female script writer at the time; these difficulties enabled her to empathise with her audience. During her early working life she had suffered a number of sexual assaults, one of which occurred when she was working in television. As a result, she left her employment with television shortly before she began to write the book, aware that to be a lone woman in the industry invited unwelcome male attention. Following the incident, one of her scripts turned up in the building with obscenities scrawled all over it (F. Kidman personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Kidman was not alone in suffering this kind of unwanted attention. A woman she worked with in radio had a similar experience when she had become separated from female colleagues. Kidman states that she learned to make sure there was always an unlocked door behind her in television! These and many other experiences were ploughed into Harriet Wallace's characterisation (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Although the reason for such a positive reaction to her talk in Wellington was not apparent at the time, in hindsight: "I see that even then I represented a sort of freedom, if you like, which other women weren't experiencing or hadn't arrived at yet. The whole impetus, really, of the Women's Movement became clear to me" (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

After that weekend Kidman developed a much stronger sense of what the Women's Movement was all about and began to identify with the Movement in a personal way and acquire a clear sense of relationship with her potential readers: "[I]f one talks about the context or the significance of my work I think it stems from that time. Because I was identified very much with the Women's Movement" (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Although *A Breed of Women* was not conceived in anger, it was born out of anger, and Kidman relates that "a deep flame of anger" was burning in her when she wrote the novel.

It's true to say that Harriet's experiences are those of more than one person. But at a personal level my own had been terribly destructive, and my sense of injustice was a driving influence at that time. I thought I was getting somewhere in the battle, but it seemed that I wasn't. My response was *ABOW* in which the central character exercises choice. This has become something of a theme of mine. I wrote the book in a state of blind heat over six or seven months (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

*A Breed of Women* broke boundaries, bringing literature into the home, telling ordinary women's stories, portraying them as they really were in New Zealand of the 1970s. "I think that there was a sense that I was breaking some boundaries, some taboos, but I was quite determined to write it" (Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011). Her métier was writing openly about the domestic, private, intimate lives of ordinary women leading ordinary lives; women's sexuality was portrayed in an authentic way; and non-chastity ceased to be an issue to her. She discussed the controversial subject of rape, suggesting that "the forced casual nature of sexual encounters in our youth, and what constituted consent" (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 231) could be included under the heading of rape.

Through this first novel, Kidman became identified as a feminist writer, and the book was both praised and condemned for its feminist perspective. As Le Marquand comments:

Kidman's first novel ... was acclaimed by the reading public...but the critical response (notably, from male academics and critics), on the other hand, was less welcoming. The novel was met with a string of bad reviews centred on, as Cathie Dunsford suggests, its dominant theme of 'a woman's search for individual identity through her redefinition of relationships and venturing out alone, and the effect this has on others around her whether men or women' (Rev of Mrs Dixon 96; Le Marquand 38-39).

Le Marquand goes on to reveal that such feminist concerns were not well received in the "androcentric New Zealand literary world" (39) - ie that the sex of the writer, be they male or female, has no bearing on their work - despite its popularity with the reading public, but this criticism in no way caused Kidman to deviate from her feminist message.

Kidman began living two lives; at home she was a wife and mother, outside she had become a "feminist icon of the times". When she stood to speak, people began to clap before she had opened her mouth. "Fame and notoriety stalked me hand in hand" (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 248). The frank and revealing subject matter of the real lives of mothers, sisters, cousins, friends, girlfriends, and colleagues of average Kiwi blokes - particularly in regard to sex - brought not only recognition for Kidman, but also considerable fallout from the fuss that ensued once the book was published.

*A Breed of Women*, published by Harper and Row in 1979 - the culmination of a long literary apprenticeship working in the Rotorua Library, radio broadcasting, writing plays - put to rest her fears that she did not have the staying power to finish a major work. Fame, however, did not manifest itself quite in the way she had anticipated; hand in hand with the accolades afforded her first successful major work, came vilification, particularly as a result of the book's sexually explicit and feminist content.

Her extended family reacted badly to the book:

My mother was the youngest of a family of six and one of them did have a child eventually when I was grown up. But none of them had any children so here I was adored and then cast out. It was terrible. It really was. Not by all of them. I had an aunt who remained. One had died by the time *A Breed of Women* came out and another one who would sort of walk over coals to be by my side regardless, and my mother always was staunch but the rest, they wouldn't have my book in their houses and stuff like that (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Kidman had hoped the reaction to her book would have included laughter - not of the calculated kind - to some measure; that her readers would appreciate the "moments of comedy, black perhaps, but funny all the same, because reading it with an element of mockery changed the way they read the novel" (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 248). However, many who read the book did not understand the elements of comedy. Kidman puts this down as the reason so many men were troubled by its contents (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 248).

However, at least one woman appreciated the humour. Dr Anne Else described the book as follows:

Like its stubborn heroine, Harriet, it takes off, flounders [*sic*], picks itself up, starts again, stumbles, finds its feet, and gets away with it. It also features the first unambiguous poignant and extremely funny woman's-eye-view deflowering in New Zealand literature - though the humour was lost on shocked reviewers at the time (Else).

Kidman comments on the male response to her book: "There were some men who were driven in another way by it and I find this interesting and sad and I don't quite know how to reflect on it."

She goes on to say that a few men stated that it had made them search themselves in regard to the way they had lived, and that they regretted their attitudes towards women. One of the men

who had written to her subsequently killed himself. Although she could not accept responsibility for his death she was profoundly affected by it:

Presumably there was a whole lot going on in his life and he wanted to get this thing off his chest before he died, before he took his life. But, of course, at the time you think - .... I did feel horrible about it; presumably he would have decided to commit suicide whether he'd read *A Breed of Women* or not. But having read it he decided to write me this letter before he killed himself. Well, you know, thanks a lot (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Demarcation lines at work appeared to be gender drawn:

My relationship with the men in my office had become more difficult through all this blaze of publicity. Helen and the other women in the department were proud of me, and often said so; the men hardly spoke at all (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 249).

The book met with widespread critical hostility on a professional level, deprecatingly dubbed by one male reviewer, W S Broughton, as a type of thinking woman's Mills and Boon story (Broughton, *Landfall*). In the year the book was published a radio interviewer, normally described as Mister Nice Guy, hammered her with questions: "What about the morals of this woman [Harriet], this character in your book? What about her drinking? What sort of example was I setting the women of New Zealand?" (Kidman, *Palm Prints* 93).

The reaction of the audience was to laugh. This interview was never aired, and Kidman puts this down to the fact that the intention of the episode was to demean women. The unsavoury little tale graphically illustrates the way in which, at the most extreme end of the scale, men had decided to deal with women's experience; with calculated laughter and ridicule.

Conversely, the book had struck a nerve with many. Women saw themselves in the characters, and, like Harriet Wallace - and later like Emily Freeman in *Mandarin Summer*, or Clara Bentley in *Paddy's Puzzle* (later Kidman novels) - they wanted more out of life than had been afforded previous generations of women: "It was particularly difficult for me especially as people identified so strongly with the character of Harriet Wallace that they wrote asking for personal advice, and many believed that I had shared every one of her indiscretions" (Kidman, *Palm Prints* 93).

The content of *A Breed of Women* was revolutionary. Although by the 1970s women had become accustomed to confiding in each other about their love affairs and intimate lives, such revelations had not been in print for all to read. This revelatory approach to young women's

lives, particularly their sex lives, caused the book to be banned in many schools and libraries, including the school at which Kidman's own husband, Ian, taught. Eventually, the ban was lifted and free access to the book was permitted to students.

I never set out to offend so many people! I had no idea of what it was going to be like, really. I do remember the morning that it was released: I walked over and I stood there, exactly there, [in front of her sitting room window in Wellington that looks out on to the water] at five o'clock in the morning and it was just coming up dawn. I thought, I don't think my life's ever going to be the same again. Sharon Crosbie had read the book by then. I just had a little inkling that it was going to be a bit bigger than I expected, and it was. I isolated myself in my head while I wrote it. I didn't show it to anybody (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Not showing it to anyone meant that she had no experience of, or expectation of, the public's reaction to the novel, except, of course, Crosbie's and her publishers.

So I guess those things had made me a little bit aware but while I was writing it I remove myself from my surroundings quite a lot. So I wasn't sitting there thinking, how will people feel about this? I think I make myself sound very naïve (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

A number of Kidman's acquaintances and work colleagues were uncomfortable with the possibility that certain characters had been based on themselves. Kidman admitted that the characters "had some strong resemblances" to the lives of women she knew, as well as to her own: "for many of us the 1970s sometimes seemed like a decade of blurred vision," (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 232) partially resulting from consumption of too much alcohol, but she was adamant that she was not Harriet Wallace, the book's central character. In one scene, Harriet goes for a late night drive after having had too much to drink, which Kidman states was painfully etched on her own conscience as being similar to something she had done herself (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 232) and admits that "the bones of [her] own progress from rural to city New Zealand are there, but that the journey is laced with events that never took place" (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 230).

When asked by the Researcher to give an opinion on the strength of the reactions to *A Breed of Women*, Sharon Crosbie commented that she knew that Marilyn French had had a huge impact with *The Women's Room*, and that Kidman had finally written something similar for New Zealand women, though they were, of course, very different.

Before the book it's fair to say that NZ was a very repressed society where things that were controversial or distasteful were not discussed openly. We all knew they went on but being considered 'nice' and having a good reputation and not upsetting the family/ neighbours/friends, etc was more important, so many women stayed in dreadful, unfulfilling relationships "for the children's sake" and subsumed any personal ambition after marriage. The Women's Movement offered permission to be selfish, to look for something better and express opinions, while at the same time it scared the living daylights out of many men and women ... just what would happen if women got off the leash? (Crosbie, Dec. 3, 2010).

Fiona's book talked publicly about a lot of the things that were going on: gender issues, race issues, issues of sexuality. In an accessible story form, rather than any academic research paper, it rocked the boat. There was a lot of bitchiness about "a housewife who dared to write this stuff" from some of the wannabes. But, of course, Fiona was far from any "writing housewife" and was without pretension which annoyed them even more I think. The criticism must have hurt but she rose above it and kept on writing and that was the best revenge in my opinion (Crosbie, Dec. 28, 2010).

On February 19, 2008 in an interview with Graham Beattie - a New Zealand book reviewer, book blogger, and judge of book awards - Kidman answered her critics by revealing that she felt "it shocked people to see such frank comments about the issues facing women actually written down" (Beattie, *At The End of Darwin Road* - Kidman), and that some people found it confrontational. Kidman states that she did not see it as a shocking book, nor did she seek to shock, and that she was surprised by the reaction of some members of her reading public and of some of her friends and professional colleagues.

Conversely, it had a liberating effect on others, and one woman approached her at a reading, claiming that Kidman owed her \$12,000 because after reading the book she had got a divorce!

"Well," she explained, "I read *A Breed of Women* and thought, yes, women can take control of their lives, so I got a divorce. But twelve thousand is what it cost me."

"Are you happy?" I asked. "Absolutely, it was the best decision I ever made." "In that case," I said, "I think it's you who owe me twelve thousand." We both laughed and agreed to leave it at that (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 249).

Kidman did care, though, about her husband Ian being affected by salacious, uncharitable barbs: People would come up and nudge him at parties and shout “What’s it like being married to a raving feminist? Who’s she having an affair with now? Is she still hitting the bottle? I do care about that” (Myers 30).

In the overall political context Kidman admits to a parallel continuum. She had been part of the Women's Movement throughout the 1970s, and was perceived as a recognisable voice for women. She had yet to read Marilyn French's *The Women's Room* when she wrote *A Breed of Women*, which she is glad about - otherwise she might have felt that someone had beaten her to it. The books were judged to be closely aligned and the aims of the two authors to be similar.

### **Launch of *A Breed of Women***

A day or so before the official launch of the book, Keith Sinclair, Sharon Crosbie, and Fiona Kidman took it upon themselves to give the book a spontaneous and high spirited prelaunch launch. The three of them took off in Kidman’s car, driving through town, “with Sharon Crosbie leaning out of the windows waving copies of the book and shouting the good news that there had never been a book like it,” at the same time encouraging Kidman to toot the horn! (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 246).

On the morning of the launch in 1979, Sharon Crosbie, who introduced Kidman’s first two books on national radio, heralded the publication of *A Breed of Women* thus: “Darlings, I’ve got the book we’ve all been waiting for. We’re *all* in it. This book is about us” (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 246).

Kidman describes Crosbie as “one of the most vibrant human beings she had ever met” and that having a good review on her programme “was the New Zealand equivalent of appearing on *Oprah*” (Kidman, “*Darwin Road*” 24).

The morning radio programme was followed by a champagne book launch at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Bowen Street, Wellington, attended by politicians, journalists, members of the Book Council, and the Minister for the Arts, to name but a few. Crosbie delivered another glowing tribute. The week after the launch, the book sold 9000 hardback copies; it went on to sell around 35,000 in the first year, and Kidman became an instant celebrity. She states she found

it very difficult at the time to see any context for such recognition. “But I can see now that it was a book which New Zealand women didn’t feel they’d had any sort of access to people expressing themselves the way that I had” (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

The year *A Breed of Women* appeared in print, Kidman expected it to be among the seven shortlisted for the Book Awards for that year. It was not, even though it had sold thousands of copies and had been the subject of wide discussion. One of the two (male) judges was C K Stead, whom Kidman later crossed swords with over the subject of a writer’s retreat in London. Kidman felt that there was significance to its not being shortlisted; therefore, she took the opportunity to exchange a few words with the second judge:

“Oh, I really liked your book and I bought it to send to my sister in Scotland.” And I said, again, rather naively, I suppose, because you don’t say things like this, you pretend to be stiff upper lipped about book awards. I said, “But not enough to shortlist it for the prize.” And he sort of fumbled and bumbled and said, “Oh, well, it wasn’t really possible. It wasn’t practical in the circumstances.” .... I made certain assumptions and, again, with long hindsight I’m supposing that it meant that C K Stead said I couldn’t be” (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

Through writing a candid chronicle, at the right time, about growing up in New Zealand and what it was like for a New Zealand woman to have a family life and develop her career and her creativity, Kidman won literary recognition which heralded a new chapter in her own life. Kidman’s debut novel had come at a moment of social change: women were on the move from being the unsophisticated, subservient, unfulfilled creatures their mothers had been, toward becoming emancipated risk-taking, independent, politically savvy persons in their own right.

Publication of *A Breed of Women* in 1979 marked the beginning of Fiona Kidman being recognized as a New Zealand professional novelist, a feminist writer; and it also proclaimed the advent of a new era of New Zealand women writers.

## CHAPTER 3: THE CAPTIVE WIFE

---

### Intervening years

Kidman followed *A Breed of Women* with a succession of successful novels: *Mandarin Summer* (1981), *Paddy's Puzzle* (1983), *The Book of Secrets* (1987), her first historical novel, *True Stars* (1990), *Ricochet Baby* (1996), *The House Within* (1998), *Songs of the Violet Café* (2003) and in 2005 *The Captive Wife*, her second historical novel.

*Mandarin Summer*, published two years after *A Breed of Women*, is a type of Gothic horror story. It is a fictional reworking of some of Kidman's own experiences when she first lived in Kerikeri in the north of the North Island for a short period of time from around six years of age. She and her mother lived as servants at Shropshire House, home of Colonel Frank Voelcker and his family, members of a group of expatriate British military people who had returned from the Far East (China and India) around the 1920s and had established an enclave in Kerikeri. Colonel Voelcker was ex Indian Army, ex Pachmarhi, India (Elson-White 96).and was one of the 47 section holders of George Edward Alderton's development of Kerikeri (89) known as the Alderton Group Settlement Scheme under the direction of the North Auckland Land Development Corporation. The Corporation purchased a large block of land in partnership with five other directors; Voelcker was one of these directors (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 39). "Of the 47 section holders, ...29 were from China, three from India, ten from New Zealand and one each from Australia, United Kingdom, Japan, Malaya and the Middle East" (Elson-White 89).

Some lived in houses that Kidman describes as little more than shacks (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 9); a few built houses on a grand scale, architecturally influenced by the Orient, and of such huge dimensions they required servants to run them. Their gardens Kidman describes as often boasting citrus orchards, passion fruit plantings, shady gum trees, and hakea hedges (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 10-11). To this day, Kidman claims that the smell of oranges transports her back to Kerikeri.

*Mandarin Summer* explores in fiction that time of Kidman's childhood when her father, Hugh Eakin, after returning from World War II, bought a smallholding in Kerikeri where he intended to establish a life for himself and his wife, Flora and child, Fiona, along the lines of English country gentleness.

Eakin had been born in Middlesborough in England and had immigrated to New Zealand in 1929 on a Church sponsored passage. This sponsorship required him to stay in New Zealand for five years, during which time he met, and became engaged to Flora, Kidman's mother. Once his five years were up, Eakin went to Australia, where Flora joined him. They married in Perth and later returned to New Zealand "to be near her people" when they decided to start a family (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 23). Kidman was born in Hawera in Mount View Private Hospital facing Mount Taranaki.

Moving to Kerikeri at the age of six wrenched Fiona from the heart and the safety of her adoring maternal grandparents, aunts and uncles, her "glorious band of acolytes" who lavished attention on her as she was at that time the only child amongst adults (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 29). Fiona loved her mother's family (of Scottish Presbyterian stock) intensely, in spite of the fact that they rejected her lower middle class father; and they would come to reject her too following the publication of *A Breed of Women*.

As the land her father purchased sight unseen was devoid of housing, Hugh Eakin created a family dwelling out of a converted army hut. However, pending this achievement - and unbeknownst to Flora and Fiona until the night of their arrival in Kerikeri - rather than find them lodgings, Hugh had arranged to hire out his wife as a cook to one of the grand houses. Thus his wife and daughter found themselves sliding swiftly down, and landing more or less at the bottom, of a social scale that had never been a part of their lives, or, indeed, been a part of the social structure of a proudly classless New Zealand.

This class system, this grading of human beings according to wealth, breeding and education, had been imported to Kerikeri from Britain via the Far East by the British military expatriate community that settled in Kerikeri. Forced to live as servants with people they had never met before, but who, in other circumstances, would probably have been their social equals, Flora and Fiona had to accept their fate and cope with it, which they did; but they did not have to like it.

This experience was a salutary lesson for Kidman and, although possibly unaware at the time, in the future would add fuel to the fire of her socialist principles. Kidman comments on this short period in their lives thus: "Coming from the background I did, becoming 'the cook's little girl' was a big change in status. I was (now) from the scullery class, and in that town was an outsider" (Kidman, May 19, 2011).

In *Mandarin Summer* Constance and Emily Freeman move North to Kerikeri to join husband and father, Luke. They find themselves living and working in Brigadier Frederick Barnsley's family home, Carlisle House, as Kidman and her mother had in Colonel Voelcker's family home, Shropshire House. Constance and Emily are treated like social inferiors, just as Kidman and her mother were. The fictional narrative is given added dramatic dimension by the inclusion of an assortment of bizarre associates, both men and women, who make up the extended grouping of people living in Brigadier Frederick Barnsley's house.

*Paddy's Puzzle* begins in Hamilton during the 1930s Depression. Clara, the principle protagonist, moves to Auckland to seek work. The story ends at the end of World War II. Most of the action occurs in the intervening years in Clara Bentley's flat in a tenement building called Paddy's Puzzle situated in an area known for prostitution - Karangahape Road - where an assortment of strange inhabitants from the low life of Auckland come and go. Clara, whose life has moved into prostitution and illness, is having a relationship with a black American serviceman. Her illness becomes terminal and she is waiting to die either from a bomb or from the termination of her illness. Despite her illness, Winnie, Clara's older sister who raised Clara, has offered her a home to see out her days in relative comfort, but Clara chooses to stay put. The story is about a woman's struggle for independence and a desire to make her own choices, good or bad, against a backdrop of despair and repression.

The title of the novel was taken from a real place. "... it was built by a one-legged man called Paddy Gleeson" Kidman relates, "who built a number of strange places around Auckland in the 1920s, and used to ride around to inspect them on his horse". Ian Kidman, (Kidman's husband), "...lived there with his grandparents during World War II, and Clara's character is based on one of his relatives. I saw the building once in the first year or so of my marriage. It was then known as Avoca Flats (or Apartments), and was demolished shortly afterwards around 1962 or 1963" (Kidman, Nov. 15, 2011).

There was a sharp increase in the writing of mass-market historical novels in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards in both Australia and New Zealand attributed to a burgeoning interest in settler history. *The Book of Secrets*, first published in 1987, is one such novel. It is the story of the

spiritual and intellectual journey of three fictional women. The novel traces the journeys of the followers of the Reverend Norman McLeod, a Scottish charismatic preacher - a true historical character - who, during the time of the Highland Clearances, sets off from Ullapool in Scotland for Nova Scotia in Canada.

The Highland Clearances were part of Agricultural Reform during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. English landlords forced their tenants off the land, sometimes brutally, to make way for more cost effective agricultural management. Those who were forced out of their homes either resettled in the Lowlands or moved overseas to Canada, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand.

In Nova Scotia McLeod founds a religious settlement. Once the settlement is established, he leaves with a small splinter group, and journeys to Australia and then to New Zealand where he founds another settlement at Waipu in the North Island of New Zealand (where Fiona Kidman lived for a time).

Those who challenge McLeod's leadership are forced, as a penance, to live on the periphery of his world. From three women of the same family - Isabella, who does challenge McLeod, who is raped and goes mad; Annie, her daughter, who submits to McLeod's way; and finally Maria, granddaughter, who achieves a certain degree of spiritual emancipation - there emerges the establishment of a line of descendants of mixed Maori/Pakeha race whose blood line is depicted as having become stronger and more united through their mixed heritage. Maria also achieves a kind of independence, although it is more a spiritual independence than a physical one. This mixing of the races mirrors the cultural heritage of Ian and Fiona Kidman's own children and grandchildren.

*True Stars* (1990) stands out in the Kidman oeuvre due to its specifically political slant. It is set in New Zealand of the 1980s, during the latter part of the New Zealand Labour Government of David Lange (32<sup>nd</sup> Prime Minister who served from 1984 to 1989), and depicts the political changes that took place in New Zealand society at that time.

Rose Kendall, the main protagonist, is as emotionally disassociated from her family as many of the New Zealand people are from their Government. Unlike Kidman's novels, there is little

joy and excitement in this tale, and there are no loving connections between people. Apart from an exploration of contemporary New Zealand politics, this is an exploration of people as parents.

Kidman creates fiction, once again, from her own lived reality, the emotional dislocation she experienced from her parents.

*Ricochet Baby* is the story of a baby that was planned and wanted. When it arrives the whole family is thrilled, but post natal depression turns happiness into despair. This book is a study of post natal depression and explores the effects it can have on the sufferer and the family as a whole.

*The House Within* spans twenty five years in the life of Bethany Dixon who must juggle many roles - wife, ex-wife, mother, step-mother, daughter-in-law, sister, and lover - while endeavouring to discover her own identity and forge a place for herself in her world dedicated to others.

*Songs of the Violet Café* is a novel about an eclectic bunch of young people who come together through working in the Violet Café in the 1960s. Although the story begins and ends in New Zealand, its place of origin and termination is not as important as the tales that unfold as the characters roam further afield (eg Cambodia - a place Kidman herself visited). One of the more disturbing aspects of this novel is the almost nonchalant way physical violence is visited upon wives by husbands, suggesting that such behaviour was not only commonplace during that period in New Zealand, but somehow acceptable - so long as no one found out:

Wallace smacked Belle, the first under her eye and then across the mouth, and when he had done that, he took off his belt and hit her on the buttocks three times, each time harder than the last. He loved it, the power of it. She didn't make a sound. Afterwards he put his arms around her and said that he was sorry. "I'll put you to bed and make you a cup of Ovaltine", he said (61).

Beryl Fletcher, writer and contemporary of Kidman, verifies this assertion of endemic domestic violence in New Zealand of the 1950s and beyond, which went unchallenged:

No woman every complained about physical or sexual abuse. Men went where they liked and did what they liked. This was tolerated by the woman as long as the men were seen to be sexually faithful, did not shame them in front of their neighbours and gave them adequate housekeeping money (152).

This novel is all about change through standing up for what one believes in; and this is what Jessie, and to a lesser extent Hugo do, and, by their example, they change and help to make better lives for those around them.

Kidman's novels continued in the same vein of *A Breed of Women*, looking at the problems of women's lives in New Zealand, both domestic and political, loosely following the trajectory of her own life in narrative; with the exception of *The Book of Secrets*, which examined the past rather than the present, yet always with the theme of women's struggle for self determination.

## **Introduction**

By the time Kidman came to write *The Captive Wife*, she had been writing novels for more than twenty five years. Both of her historical novels (*The Book of Secrets* being her first) enlarge Kidman's interest in women's lives, moving into the realm of interest for all settler people - that of post colonialism - and particularly focusing on the courage and initiative of women living in a world that was so dramatically tipped in favour of men.

However, *The Book of Secrets*, with a publication date of 1987, is too close to *A Breed of Women* - published in 1979 - to allow for sufficient time to pass in order to be able to form any cognitive assessment of whether or not Kidman's complete oeuvre should be read from a feminist perspective. Therefore, the novel that I am interested in looking at here, and intend to use to continue my argument about Kidman's feminism, is *The Captive Wife* published in 2005, a fictionalized recounting of the true story of Elizabeth Guard, captured by Maori in 1834. The novel is set in the 1800s when Maori and Pakeha were just getting to know one another, and during which time there were a number of incidences of white women being captured by Maori.

The meeting and clash of cultures provides some of New Zealand's greatest stories. As violent dramas unfolded along the coastal and inland frontiers, around 140 Europeans were captured by Maori, twenty-one of whom were women and girls (Bentley 11).

The title of the book, employing the word "captive" and the word "wife" in conjunction, suggests that the words are interchangeable because at that period in history being a wife meant that a woman was the captive of her husband, hardly more than a chattel (the word "chattel" is derived from the early 13th century old French word meaning possessions, property, cattle). This

interesting ambiguity emanates from the fact that it was not until the 1860s, the date of the passing of the Married Women's Property Protection Act, that women were allowed to keep their earnings and own property. Prior to this Act, in the early 1800s when Elizabeth Guard married John Guard, men and women who were not of noble birth mostly entered into what is called a chattel marriage, where the wife is owned by the husband as part of his personal property. At face value it is little different from slavery. The title could also almost be described as a metaphor for contemporary women wanting to be more than a chattel.

The case of women literally being taken captive by a native tribe has come to represent an early form of feminism. A group of woman, although initially captive, would come to view their captivity in some sense as an escape. They would experience a freedom unknown to the average settler woman and, according to Trevor Bentley in his book *Captured by Maori*, about "White Female Captives, Sex and Racism on the nineteenth-century New Zealand Frontier", because of this new found freedom, on their return to their homes rarely did they 'fully re-assimilate back into white colonial society' (Bentley 20). A few of these women chose never to return.

## **History**

Trevor Bentley relates that it was not unknown during the 1800s to find white males living permanently or semi permanently in Maori communities with Maori wives or lovers, and that this had resulted in the development of a hybrid class known as Pakeha Maori. These men were welcomed into the tribe and lived as Maori. However, if white women were found in these communities it was safe to assume they had entered as captives, and many of these captures were preceded by massacres. Women lived in Maori communities on different terms from men, mainly because of their lack of autonomy on arrival, and the symbolic force under which white women lived with "natives". As mentioned earlier, there were a 120 white women and girls captured by Maori, and Kidman drew on the story of one of these women for her novel; that of Elizabeth Guard.

In the introduction to his book, Bentley provides a list, in chronological order, of some of the women taken as captives during this period in history:

- 1806 Charlotte Badger, a fugitive convict was seized by Ngapuhi at the Bay of Islands after being marooned by the pirate crew of the *Venus*. Her fate remained a mystery\
- 1809 Ann Morley, a former convict, and Betsey Groghton, a child were captured by Ngati Uru and Ngati Pou when the Whangaroa tribes massacred the passengers and crew of the *Boyd*. Captain Alexander took charge of a successful mission aboard *The City of Edinburgh* which rescued Ann, her baby and two others.
- Two women, names unknown, were seized during the turbulent years of the Intertribal Musket Wars.
- 1834 Elizabeth Guard, a shore whaling woman, was held by the Ngati Ruanui and Taranaki tribes when the brig *Harriet* was wrecked on the Taranaki coast. The circumstances of the wreck and Elizabeth Guard's capture are told in detail below, but came about because of the dynamics between the indigenous race and the settler invaders incumbent at that time in history.
- 1838 Mary Bell, a trading, farming and whaling woman, was enslaved by Ngati Toa on Mana Island in the Wellington region. She chose to remain with her captors.
- During the European settlement phase after 1840 three white women and one girl were captured. Maria Bennett, a convict and castaway; Agnes Grace, a missionary woman, and her six children.
- 1868 Eliza Benson was taken by the followers of guerrilla fighter and prophet belonging to the Ringatu Church, Te Kooti Arikirangi.
- 1874 Caroline Perrett, a seven year old farming girl, was abducted by a roving band of displaced Maori. She was discovered by her family fifty years later completely "transculturised".

According to Bentley, Maori did not actively seek white slaves and the capture of white women was "a by-product of European contact, settlement, conquest and territorial appropriation." However, the specifics of individual women's capture were:

more directly a consequence of marooning, shipwreck, cross-cultural misunderstanding and retribution. When the newcomers and Maori failed to establish effective ways of accommodating and interacting with each other, white women were drawn into the vortex of events and were captured (12).

Kidman had first heard Elizabeth (Betty) Guard's story from her husband, Ian, forty five years prior to researching the book. Ian Kidman had held a teaching post on Arapawa Island in Cook Strait from February until December 1951 - the year of the Watersiders' strike in New Zealand - when he was eighteen years old. Elizabeth Guard had gone to the Arapawa whaling station as a child bride to Jacky Guard - sealer/whaler and ex convict, and twenty three years her senior. Arapawa was the site of Jacky Guard's first whaling station before he and his wife moved to Kakapo Bay, south of Picton, around 1830.

The original whaling station was still working while Ian Kidman was there, and, later, was operated by the Perano and Heberley families. Jacky's and Betty's descendents still live in Kakapo Bay - as the family has done for the past 180 years - earning a living by fishing and farming. The fact that Guard descendents still lived in the area meant that Kidman was able to approach them during her research.

Since first hearing the story, she always intended to turn it into a novel "despite it having lain dormant in her head for many years" (Kidman, *Beside the Dark Pool* 283). With the assistance of a Creative New Zealand grant, Kidman began researching and preparing to write the novel, which would take her two and a half years to complete.

Kidman's curiosity in the Betty Guard story spanned not just the incident of her capture and rescue. When Kidman became interested in this woman she wanted to get to know her from an early age. Therefore, Kidman charts a life for Betty from around the age of twelve, when Betty first meets Jacky Guard.

Betty's capture, along with her two young children, John (born in 1831) and Louisa (following soon after), takes place in 1834. Her capture is orchestrated by Ngati Ruanui and Taranaki Maori when Jacky Guard's ship is driven ashore on the Taranaki coast due to bad weather.

Leading up to the capture, Guard and his wife had lived alongside, and traded with, Maori for some time, although at times the relationship between the indigenous people of the area and the white settlers was tense. Betty - who was the first white woman to live in that area - lived and worked alongside Maori women and her two children were delivered by Maori midwives, so there was close interaction between races. In *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography Vol. 1*, Elizabeth Guard is described by Don Grady, her biographer, as “hostage” and “founding mother” (Bentley 103).

The original story relating to Betty Guard’s abduction, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 November 1834, is that of a historically documented shipwreck on 29 April 1834. The Guard’s ship, *The Harriet*, bringing back the family from Sydney to New Zealand, is driven ashore in a gale near Rahoitu. The passengers take refuge in Cloudy Bay where they are attacked by Maori.

Fortunately, “the proceedings of an enquiry that was later held to investigate the outcome” (Kidman, *Beside the Dark Pool* 284-286) had been written up which aided Kidman in recovering the story. Kidman, at this point, could be referring to Jacky Guard’s report to the executive Council of New South Wales dated 22 August 1834.

Virginia Winder mentions that Kidman tracked down four eyewitness accounts of what happened during the “rescue” of Betty and her children. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, two were purported to have been written by British Naval lieutenants (Blue Jackets), one by a British soldier (Redcoat) and the other by onboard surgeon William Barrett Marshall, “who really loathes Jacky Guard” (Winder 19).

Trevor Bentley relates that, in his report to the Executive Council of New South Wales on 22 August 1834, Jacky Guard stated:

The natives, about thirty or forty of them, began plundering the wreck and also what we brought on shore. They showed no violence at this time, the principal number not having yet arrived. We endeavoured to prevent their taking our things by shoving them from the tents but offered no violence to them. They must have seen our muskets (83).

He goes on to recount that: on the 7<sup>th</sup> May around two hundred naked Ngati Ruanui natives arrived, carrying muskets. On the 10<sup>th</sup> they attacked, and in the ensuing incident considerable loss of life was incurred by the Maori warriors. The warriors “closed upon” the settlers and it

was at this point that Betty and her two children were taken. Guard and a group of his men were moved to Moturoa where they were kept in a stockade for around a fortnight.

One boat was left in the area where the *Harriet* had been wrecked, the others having been burned with the bodies of the dead. Guard put it to his captors that he would go to the boat and collect a cask of gunpowder which he would give to them in payment for the boat. He and five men went to the boat together with three native chiefs, leaving his own brother behind with eight men as hostages. They left in the boat and spent two days and nights at sea, stopping at Blind Bay and Cook Straits (84). Guard eventually returned to Sydney to report the abduction to the authorities. As a result, a rescue mission was organised.

Kidman was fascinated by the story, and she enlarged it both fictionally and factually by researching previously unnoticed historical records, and introducing more historical detail. Kidman unearthed letters written by W Telfar in the 1940s, held by the Wanganui Library, explaining that the incident was complicated by European irresponsible behaviour, which caused Te Namu's warriors to turn against those who had been shipwrecked. According to Telfar, two men abandoned the beach-based survivors, stealing goods to trade for comforts at the Maori village. While enjoying Maori hospitality they sexually abused three twelve year old girls, which caused events to turn hostile; the warriors set upon the white people as a form of traditional 'utu' (revenge). Jacky Guard, according to Kidman, was not among those who had gone to the village.

The Ngati-Ruanui would have slaughtered Betty, but Oaoiti (Taranaki), seeing what was happening to her, warded off the stroke that would have killed her and took her away under his guardianship. Her ordeal was later written up in a lurid report in the same *Herald* editorial. According to this report, at the village the Maori stripped her and her children naked, dragged her to their huts and would have killed her, if a chief's wife had not kindly interfered on her behalf, and when the cudgel was raised with the intention of dispatching Betty, intervened and saved her life.

These particular actions of the Maori towards Betty and her children, interpreted as hostile in some accounts, have an alternative explanation when seen in Maori terms, which is an alternative explanation not introduced by Kidman into her narrative. It might be, therefore, that though Kidman is trying to update the colonial perspective, in this case she appears unaware of this other way of looking at the incident.

Trevor Berkley believes that Betty and her children were subjected to the rituals of initiation into the tribe, called whakataurekareka, by the Maori - mistaken for ill treatment in official versions of the story - which were performed in order to expunge Betty's previous identity as both Jacky's wife and as Pakeha, allowing her, if she wished, to take on another identity within the tribe. In other words, from Berkley's point of view, it is formal acceptance by Maori of Betty becoming a member of the tribe. In this way, Betty is no longer bound to her life as a woman in a Pakeha world, to being Jacky's common-law wife and the mother of his two children. As a tribe member, in "captivity", Betty is freed from these identities through the whakataurekareka rituals, which allows for a free desire for Oaoiti to develop; Betty can make sexual choices for herself.

A few days after the rituals were performed, during which time Betty and her children were confined to a hut, the Maori warriors delivered the youngest child into her mother's custody, and took the other child, a boy, away into the bush, and Betty did not see her son for two months.

The tone of the article in the *Herald* suggests that the entire incident resulting in the capture was seen as a manifestation of a lack of law in the new territory. The article goes on to say:

We deplore the extreme indifference of the legislature in affording ample protection to British interests in New Zealand where they are hourly liable to savage violation. We implore the immediate attention of the legislature on behalf of our countrymen, thus surrounded by danger. *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 250).

The plight of Mrs Guard and her children is dire. Citizens can do nothing else but insist that every effort is made to affect their rescue without delay (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 250).

The newspaper report also described how Betty Guard "saw the Natives cut up and eat those they killed belonging to the *Harriet*" (*The Harriet Affair 1*). Other accounts, however, suggest that after the initial fray, Betty Guard was treated well; that she was protected by a chief, Oaoiti, and lived with him as a wife (Grady 1).

History has different perspectives. In European versions of the treatment meted out to Betty Guard by Maori in the early days of her capture, this treatment was judged as hostile, as mentioned above. However, had Maori written down their own version of events, it would most likely have been very different, particularly if the execution of whakataurekareka rituals was true.

The ritual was rough: “She was stripped naked, thrown down and dragged about before being confined to a hut. Her children, meanwhile were also stripped, thrown to the ground and trodden underfoot” (Bentley, 86). During the ritual the Maori “repeatedly ran shouting over the children” (Bentley 86). In official reports of Maori behaviour towards Betty, the whakataurekareka ritual (if, in fact, that is what it was) was interpreted as maltreatment or seen only as bizarre violent behaviour in a geographical area where lawlessness was commonplace. However, from a Maori perspective, as mentioned above, this would have indigenized them and allowed them to become members of the tribe (misinterpreted as hostile actions by the Europeans), which would have benefited them in that they would no longer have been treated as captives and confined.

In two poems taken from *Alistair Campbell Collected Poems*, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell (born in 1925, died in 2009) - whose father was a New Zealand Scot and whose mother was a Cook Island Maori - highlights the different perspectives from which Maori and Pakeha could write up the same incident. In both poems he describes the Maori chief, Te Rauparaha. In the first poem, *Against Te Rauparaha*, he speaks from the Pakeha perspective which is harsh and critical, likening him to Caligula and Commodus (both Roman emperors prone to cruelty and excessive behaviour):

The records all agree  
you were a violent, a pitiless man,  
treacherous as an avalanche  
poised above a sleeping village.  
Small, hook-nosed as a Roman,  
haughty, with an eagle’s glance,  
Caligula and Commodus (49).

And, in the second, *Tamihana Te Rauparaha*, Campbell adopts Te Rauparaha’s son’s voice speaking in defence of his father, insinuating that because he comes from a warrior people his behaviour is acceptable.

Hear me!  
My name is Tamihana Te Rauparaha.  
I am my father’s son.  
I am a man of peace, a Christian,  
Like my father.  
Do not listen to the voices that accuse my father  
Of monstrous evil -  
they lie!

All that he did was tika\*,  
strictly correct,  
and would have raised grim smiles of approbation  
on the carved faces of his ancestors (45).

\*The word tika means just; fair; correct.

These two visions of one man demonstrate how a story can change according to the point of view of the person telling the story, and how the culture he is brought up in affects this viewpoint.

In any event, Betty's life was not assured until, during a later incident when Betty had been living in the village a short while, some angry tribes' people dragged her out of her hut to kill her, and a chief's wife covered her in a blanket and rendered her "tapu", forbidden. Thereafter she was encompassed "within the "mana" (status) and protection of her whanau (family group)" (Bentley 86).

Although Betty and her two young children were held by the Taranaki Maori, the Ngati Ruanui tribe for four months, after a short time Betty and her daughter were able to move about the village in freedom while Betty's son lived separately with the warriors.

Trevor Bentley states that during her captivity Betty "became the lover of her saviour, the Taranaki rangatira Oaoiti". He does not state which sources of information he uses to back up this statement, but Kidman has built this suggestion of a love affair into her novel, although she questions its veracity by stating: "There are parts of Betty's story that are conjecture, like the love story ...." (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Whether or not Betty and Oaoiti were lovers has not been historically documented, but Kidman cites as evidence for the likelihood of their having been lovers "the two finely woven cloaks Betty was wearing at the time of her rescue, woven by Oaoiti's sisters, which would only have been made if she had the status of a chiefly wife" (Thomson).

In any event the evidence that Kidman was able to collect suggests that there was a relationship between the two. "Betty appeared to have a relationship with him and having appeared to from all that I could collect and gather I decided that it should be a proper love affair

in which they did fall in love”. Kidman also states that having fallen in love with somebody who is of Maori descent herself played a part in deciding upon a relationship between Betty and Oaoiti (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

In September 1834, Betty’s husband, Jacky, was part of the rescue party that secured Betty’s release, helped by His Majesty’s Ship *Alligator*, man o’ war, Captain Robert Lambert with twenty-five rank and file, and the Colonial schooner *Isabella* with a detachment of the 50<sup>th</sup> Regiment consisting of two officers and fifty rank and file. The confrontation that ensued involved the first use of British troops on New Zealand soil.

There is a suggestion that Betty may not have wished to be rescued as, after four months, she had “assimilated many of the customs and lifeways of Ngati Ruanui and Taranaki”. The boat’s crews attempted to recover Betty from the beach, but were intimidated by the many warriors that had assembled as observers. “Oaoiti accompanied her to the water’s edge to surrender her”, but Betty declined to wade out to the waiting boats.

Finally:

Oaoiti broke the impasse by wading into the sea to encourage the boat’s crews. Elizabeth was heard to warn him not to approach the boats too closely. Oaoiti announced that he was Elizabeth’s guardian and that he would surrender her on payment of the cask of gunpowder which had been promised by the *Alligator’s* interpreters (Berkley 88-89).

At this point Oaoiti was captured by Jacky Guard and his sailors and dragged on to their boat. Oaoiti tried to escape but in the scuffle that ensued was shot in the leg, then dragged back on board, bayoneted and beaten. Oaoiti had his wounds dressed by William Marshall, the ship’s surgeon.

The following day, 1 October, two of the *Alligator’s* boats were sent ashore carrying Oaoiti. He stood up and spoke to the Maori assembled on the beach and Elizabeth was exchanged for the wounded chief (90).

Betty’s son John’s release was secured after British troops “commenced a bombardment of Waimate Pa” and then razed Waimate and another nearby pa to the ground by fire. In this altercation many Maori were shot and killed, their bodies left scattered on the beach (90).

Mike Crean, in his article “A Prisoner of New Zealand Colonial History”, recounts that “The historical events of her ‘rescue’ are wrapped in a tale of incompetent diplomacy, deceit, gunfire and bloodshed. The captain's role in this further alienates his wife. Freed from the Maori, she is more a captive than ever.” Thomson relates that a rescue by HM Navy and a group of soldiers proves successful, but at the cost of many Maori lives: “A select committee of the House of Commons the following year condemned those involved for using excessive force” (12).

In his book *A Personal Narrative of Two Visits to New Zealand in His Majesty's Ship “Alligator”, A.D. 1834*, published in 1836, William Barrett Marshall, ship's surgeon, also expressed “doubts about the methods employed by the rescue expedition.” He condemned the severity and injustice of the violence meted out to Maori during the operation with the words: “Nothing can justify so foul a deed of blood”. Captain Lambert of HMS *Alligator*, takes the opposite view, stating: “Thus by their cruelty and obstinacy have those guilty tribes been most justly punished” (Bentley 92).

As a result of her capture and rescue Betty aroused great interest in Sydney society as a subject of speculation regarding the circumstances of her capture and incarceration at the village. It also became a massive news story across the Empire, without the complications of revenge or “utu” motives suggested above. In the record of events as described in the Sydney Morning Herald of that time, Betty Guard narrowly escapes death at the hands of her captors. They hit her twice with a tomahawk, and would have split open her head but for a large tortoiseshell comb in her hair, which deflected the blows. Some of the teeth of the comb were said to have remained embedded in her skull for the rest of her life. “Nought but the comb saved me”. (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 80).

Kidman was intrigued by the mystery and speculation, describing Betty's arrival in Sydney as follows:

When Betty Guard stepped ashore in Sydney in 1834, she met with a heroine's welcome. Her survival during a four-month kidnapping ordeal amongst Taranaki Maori is hailed as nothing short of a miracle. But questions about what really happened slowly surface within the elite governing circles of the raw new town of Sydney (Fiona Kidman - Writer).

Although the capture of white women by Maori would have been nothing less than a severely traumatic experience for the women involved, it could not have been a completely negative experience, as some women chose to stay and live out their lives with their captors. Trevor Bentley suggests that because life as a married or single woman in British colonial societies offered little more than domestic slavery, there would have been a certain attraction towards life at the village. Their lives would have been less patriarchal, and Maori ate sparsely, led orderly lives and drank no alcohol. These women would be freed from their lives of subordination, often to “authoritarian or alcohol-soaked males” (15).

In the case of Betty Guard, there is a suggestion of ambivalence in her desire to return to her husband Jacky: Bentley describes it as, “Torn between two husbands and two worlds, and with her son John still captive, Elizabeth refused to enter the sea and wade out to the waiting boats” (Bentley 89). This statement tends to agree with Kidman’s assessment of Betty being involved with two men.

The juxtaposition of the dual accounts by Jacky and Betty contained in the novel achieve, overall, the exposure of the strong possibility of weaknesses and inaccuracies in historical accounts that have traditionally been told from a male point of view. Kidman comments:

The accounts I have read falter in this respect, because there is no clear exchange about how Betty felt, except that she appeared clothed in cloaks, and motioning the ships away. Those who prefer that she was an unwilling captive have interpreted this to being a warning to the ships. I feel there would have been more, and that the eye witness accounts have been fudged (Kidman, April 10, 2011).

Betty is the only one who crossed over the cultural divide, but, as she left no written account, there is no real proof either way.

### **Researching the protagonists and *The Rocks*, Sydney – historical**

**Jacky Guard.** Jacky makes mention of the rational heritage from his father as being a starting point for his own story. D’Cruz, in Fiona Kidman, *The Captive Wife: Introduction*, explains this by stating that Jacky, being male, has no need of establishing a genealogical starting point since his existence is a matter of public record. Historical written records are fixed and permanent and could be used as evidence at any time. Nevertheless, to a degree his voice is still a subaltern

voice (but rather than being powerless, in certain situations it has less power) due to his status as an ex convict (*Study Guide* 174). However, having said that, Jacky still maintains considerable position because he is owner and captain of his own boat, he is a husband, and has considerable wealth. Betty Guard, on the other hand, as a woman has an unrecorded historical perspective.

According to Gerald Hindmarsh, it was established that John (Jacky) Guard had been known to be trading with local Maori as early as 1824 (Hindmarsh 1). Kidman knew that he was born in England c.1792 and died in 1857. Bentley tells us he was “a London-born labourer” who in 1813 “was sent to Newgate Prison for theft - possibly of a quilt - and in 1815 transported to Sydney aboard HMS *Indefatigable* to serve a seven year sentence. An ex convict sea captain, he set up the first shore whaling station in the Marlborough Sounds in 1827; therefore he must have kept logs during his time at sea.

Thus, for a couple of years Kidman spent many hours pouring over log books in the hope that his “voice” would appear. Logbooks were first used in 1702-03 by Captain Reddell of the East India Company on his voyage in the *Samuel & Anna* (May) and was used to determine and record the distance a ship travelled within a given amount of time. Today’s log books contain more detailed information including weather, crew, ports at which the ship docks etc (May).

During this period Kidman describes herself as running the gamut of emotions engendered by the accounts of Jacky’s ambivalent behaviour. At times she was appalled by descriptions in some accounts of his cruelty, “...abandoning two men on the bitter shores of the Auckland Islands;” and at other times, she found herself feeling sympathy for a man who had “had his life turned upside down – by the capture of his wife - and whose best instincts had been taken over and thwarted by military intervention” (Thomson 21-22).

In the Taranaki Museum in New Plymouth, Kidman read Jack Strong’s papers, an unpublished manuscript covering the *Harriet* incident: he was totally unsympathetic towards Jacky Guard as a person and said that it [the incident] was all Jacky’s fault (Thomson 21-22). But Manaia-born George Davies, in his unpublished manuscript, *The Rehabilitation of John Guard*, took another tack: He felt that Jacky “had never done the things he had been accused of doing and that his character had been blackened” (21-22). Kidman unearthed further evidence of Jacky Guard’s positive side in the Alexander Turnbull Library “that suggested he’d taken a leadership role on board his transportation ship ....” and “that suggested he’d decided the best way to get through the experience was to be on his best behaviour” ( 21-22).

Looking back at the novel, Kidman acknowledges the power of her own invention: “Jacky, in a sense, is my own creation, the wounded, angry man who has lost his wife, recording his story in journals that resemble logbooks” (Kidman, *Beside the Dark Pool* 286). Kidman admits that her version of his character is more sympathetic than history portrayed him, and that she ended up liking him. “History tells us that he was a convict, and, after serving out his sentence, turned seafarer, whaler, and trader”. He had come out to the penal colonies from England in 1815 after being convicted for stealing a bed cover. He “married” Betty in 1830 when she was sixteen - some twenty-three years younger than him (“Betty Guard”).

Actually, I have some sympathy somewhere in a peculiar part of me for Jacky. I didn't think he was evil. I thought he was simply a product of being a convict, being in chains, being seven years in captivity wearing ball and chain and all of those things. That's what men were like and that's what men who had been so desensitized in that way were likely to be. But the evidence of how he behaved on the beach when the shipwreck first occurred suggests a better man and so I thought that I would plant that further back in the story about him being a man with some sensibility however deep it might seem (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

In other words Kidman decided to steer a middle course in assessing Jacky's character. Margie Thomson comments on Kidman's creation of Jacky in her article “Digging up the Past” as “a man determined to make his way in the world, relying on his own efforts and intelligence; a man through whom passion and love move, albeit in rough, inarticulate ways” (Thomson 1), who was “a person caught up in a series of astonishing and tragic events” (Winder 19).

**Betty.** Betty's voice in official accounts of that time had been suppressed, removed by the governing order because Betty's is a subaltern voice.

It had to be decided for the purpose of this thesis whether subaltern voices should be interpreted as vehicles for articulated accounts that have been marginalised by dominant versions of history; or whether they represent those voices which have been repressed into silence by the governing social order. The difference between these two possibilities is that one account existed but has been sidelined while the other never had the chance to become an account, in other words it had been silenced.

This thesis takes the view that women's voices have been silenced, and since women's voices have been silenced historically, this recovery would become a work of imagination, giving scope for the emergence of a fictional feminist historiography. Trevor Bentley also takes the view that Betty's voice was silenced; he refers to William Marshall's account of events in which Betty was referred to "... as "the woman", reducing her, in Bentley's view, to a symbol and suppressing her narrative identity" (95). Kidman's narrative fiction allows Betty to speak.

Historically 1785 is an early date for a female voice to be heard - but by electing to identify herself as her grandmother's child, Betty establishes for herself both a starting point (the year of her grandmother's transportation) - historically verified by Kidman's research - and an identity of her own, which counterbalances the official elimination of female genealogies.

Indicative of this inequality in the historical records of males and females was the amount of information to be found on Kidman's storyboard - which was the method she used to chart timelines of characters in her novels, particularly her historical novels - for Jacky and Betty. Although under Jacky's name there was a long line of entries - all the information relating to Jacky nearly filled the entire surface of Kidman's storyboard - she had only two squares of paper relating to Betty (Kidman, *Beside the Dark Pool* 286). It was obvious that she would have to make considerable effort to find out Betty's story or, at the very least, its contexts.

Kidman knew that Elizabeth Parker, later known as Betty Guard, was born in Australia on December 3, 1814, a descendent of convict stock. She was baptized in Parramatta, NSW and died on July 16, 1870, some say as a result of tongue cancer through years of smoking a pipe (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

On 1 October, 1831, Betty (age sixteen), who was reputedly the first white woman to settle in the South Island - although not the first foreigner, as it is believed there was a woman of dark skin living there who was not Maori - gave birth to her first child, John, also the first Pakeha child to be born in the South Island, but who was baptized in Sydney on 25 December 1831. Betty later (1833) had a daughter, Louisa, who died eight months after their rescue from the Taranaki Maori. In 1836 she had another child, Thomas, her second son by Jacky Guard and in that same year, together with her family, Betty returned to Kakapo Bay

where she went on to have six more children. On the or about 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1870 she died at the age of fifty five and was buried there in the Guard family's private burial ground at Kakapo Bay, Port Underwood, near her husband and most of her children (Winder 19).

Betty Guard had gone to the Arapawa whaling station as a sixteen year old bride to Jacky Guard - twenty three years her senior. Arapawa was the site of Jacky Guard's first whaling station before he and his wife moved to Kakapo Bay, south of Picton around 1830. The original whaling station was still working while Ian Kidman was there; later it was operated by the Perano and Heberley families. Jacky and Betty's descendents still live in Kakapo Bay - as the family has done for the past 180 years - earning a living by fishing and farming. They became a useful source for Kidman's research.

Betty's account goes back to 1785, to the transportation of her maternal grandmother from England to Australia as a convict. Kidman was overjoyed at finding the key to who Betty really was when, up to that point, any reference Kidman had been able to find had always referred to Betty as "the woman", although in some accounts there is no reference to Betty at all.

Kidman was able to verify through her research at the Mitchell and Alexander Turnbull libraries that both Betty's grandparents had come to Australia on convict ships - "the story of her grandmother hopping from ship to ship and getting the grandfather" is all true - as it is documented. Kidman was also able to track Betty's siblings being sent to an orphanage while Betty looked after her grandmother who, she discovered, did actually make quilts out of bits of soldiers' uniforms: "And so she's not just "the woman" anymore, she had a history and it's a much more interesting, much more detailed history than Jacky's could possibly have been" (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Kidman mentions that she found one lone folder on Betty Guard in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, holding the only two handwritten sheets of paper containing details of Betty. Kidman describes the information she found in these papers as "gold"; sometime in the 1940s a woman Kidman was unable to identify had researched Betty's life and documented what she found (Kidman, *Beside the Dark Pool* 284-86). As a result, Kidman discovered who Betty's relatives were, where she lived in The Rocks, Sydney, during her childhood, and even the location of the shop she worked in when she first met Jacky. Through this discovery, Kidman was able to extend her research to include the lives of Betty's employers, building up a picture of what they sold in the shop, how Betty was treated, and where she might have gone to school.

Kidman continues:

I know enough about her family background to make some guesses that make sense. I don't know, really, what Betty was like. I've seen a picture of her. There's an old portrait of her in Te Papa as a young woman. Well, it's said to be Betty Guard. We have descriptions of what she looked like: she was tall and slim and handsome. She must have been a survivor (Welch 15).

**The Rocks, Sydney.** In an interview Fiona Kidman gave Denis Welch, published as a journal article in *The Listener*, dated 20<sup>th</sup> September 2005, Welch relates that Kidman feels that in historical fiction writing there is a need to research what the characters might have known. "...the thing that I needed to research so much was just what it would have been like to live in that time, and not see people as a sort of costume drama" (Welch 15).

Kidman quickly established that there really was a Rocks School (Sydney) but did not know whether or not Betty ever went there, although in the novel she does:

I just needed her to...because she's not really educated. It's Jacky who is able to read and write which we know he must have been able to do because he could write logbooks. We don't know for sure whether Betty could or not. I know that she worked in the shop and that really is where she worked. And it's possible I think that she could probably do figures but how well she could write it's really debatable because everything was destroyed. There were no logbooks, no journals; at some point the Guards had purged all of those things so nothing remained. Not a word, not a jot. But I decided that if she couldn't that she should have a very basic sort of working knowledge but she needed somebody who she could tell her story to and Adie is pure invention ... she liked Adie's eager, waspish voice and (that it) offered a great opportunity to explore what Sydney was like in the 1830s (Fiona Kidman – Writer).

While in Sydney, Kidman visited the Rocks where a house is preserved from the days when Betty lived there: "It's really shabby and you get an idea of how airless and tight those little houses were" (Winder 19).

I found a really good book by a woman called Grace Karskens ... which is about an archaeological dig in The Rocks and it's marvellous because there's thousands of pieces of domestic ware that have been catalogued and itemised so you could tell very clearly what it was like in The Rocks, and that's something that the few Australians who have read it (*The Captive Wife*) do say that they feel that I've got this absolutely spot on (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

This research aided Kidman in creating a picture of what Sydney was like in those early days, and as much of a true-to-life image of Betty's working class background as possible. The interpretation of this research created a credible backdrop for the early chapters of the novel.

By the time Kidman had finished in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, in the Alexander Turnbull in Wellington and consulting other sources, Kidman discovered Betty had a very rich, full and long lineage stretching back to the first convict ships (Kidman, April 18, 2011).

During more research (Kidman took two and a half years to research the book before writing it), this time at the Te Papa Museum in Wellington, Kidman found artifacts donated by the Guard family, but the Guards had left no written account of what had happened to Betty when she fell into the hands of the Taranaki Maori.

Kidman decided to approach the Guard descendents at Kakapo Bay, New Zealand. In spite of their initial reticence, the Guards assisted Kidman with information and showed her all over the bay. Members of the family explored a number of genealogical leads that provided a better picture of Betty than Kidman had of Jacky, taking her back to the convict ships and Betty's grandmother's own wild story.

**Oaoiti.** Details of Oaoiti, Betty's Maori lover, on the other hand were sketchy as mentioned before. There may be a longer record in Maori oratory but Kidman found little in the records. Even the cause and date of his death eluded not only her - although there is some suggestion that she believed it was in the Land Wars, twenty years later (Kidman, April 18, 2011). Trevor Bentley on the other hand, refutes this stating that "Oaoiti survived the intertribal Musket Wars, lived into old age and was photographed in 1895" (101). There is a photograph on page 100 of Bentley's book of Oaoiti with the caption: *Oaoiti or Rophia Haungenge Rua Whiti of Taranaki in 1895 - renowned chief, fighting man and peacemaker. In 1834 Oaoiti became the protector and lover of Elizabeth Guard.*

**William Barrett Marshall.** It was Kidman's opinion that Betty told her story in the historical version to the surgeon William Barrett Marshall and that he appropriated it. This is based on Barrett Marshall's detailed description of the Maori villages particularly the second village which was described as "a magnificent piece of work". This detail, Kidman believes, could only

have been acquired by Barrett Marshall through talking to Betty. Both villages were destroyed (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

...there is an account by, I think, the 1940s historian, Eric Ramsden which suggests that Betty talked to Barrett Marshall, that she was otherwise ostracized but Barrett Marshall saw an opportunity to get a story and wrote down what she told him. Which is why he figures as a character in the book (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Kidman goes on to state that Ramsden believes that, in return for his kindness and as a result of the friendship that developed between them on the return journey, Barrett Marshall extracted:

...a full and detailed account of life in the pa sites at villages Te Namu and Orangituapeka, and their construction, and wrote a book about it. BM could not have gathered his own evidence because by the time the troops moved on shore, the villages lay destroyed (Kidman, Oct. 4, 2011).

### **The fictionalized story**

Unlike the official versions of Betty's story where authors focus on Betty's capture and rescue, as in *Captured by Maori* by Trevor Bentley, Kidman charts the life of Elizabeth Guard from childhood, to marriage, to capture, to rescue, to the narration of her story to Adie, and finally to reunion with her husband Jacky Guard, and their return to Kakapo Bay.

Kidman produces the story of one woman who wanted more out of life than remaining a chattel to her husband. It is the story of a woman who sought and won the right to have a choice in the direction her life would take, thus making a firm assertion in regard to her own identity. At a time in history when women were considered of little importance, other than for breeding from or as work horses, this was an achievement.

Kidman's fictionalized story begins with Betty as a young child who is taken under the wing of Jacky Guard (whose initial romantic interest is in Betty's aunt, Charlotte). Although Jacky is twenty three years older than Betty his feelings of protection towards Betty turn to lust, and eventually a desire to have her permanently in his life as his partner. Jacky "marries" Betty and takes her away from Sydney to a life in New Zealand.

The progress of the novel relates how Jacky and Betty Guard settle in the Marlborough Sounds where Jacky establishes a shore based whaling station. The couple forms a thorny association with Te Rauparaha (1760s-1849), a pugnacious Maori chief, War Leader of the Ngati Toa tribe who took part in the Musket Wars. A great warrior, he is one of the prominent figures of New Zealand history.

Te Rauparaha takes it upon himself to visit the Guards now and then when on a sortie from his fortified pa on the Kapiti Coast. This chief indulges in cannibalism and slavery, which the Guards are forced to come to terms with in order to maintain a measure of civility with and protection from the Chief. Conversely, the Southern Ngai Tahu people, another tribe of the area, were not on good terms with Te Rauparaha, which caused the Guards to witness considerable brutality in the form of cannibalism. Taken from the book "The Wairau Incident" Chapter II The Blenkinsopp Saga, the Guards' involvement came about due to the incident described in the following paragraph.

In 1832 this 18 pound "carronade", ships gun, was traded by Captain John Blenkinsopp for the Wairau Plain. The deed of sale was signed by Blenkinsopp and Ngati Toa Chief Te Rauparaha who signed with the lines of his moko (face tattoo). Te Rauparaha, who was unable to read English, believed he was selling the right for Blenkinsopp to take wood and water from the Wairau. On his return to Kapiti the Chief had the deed read to him. On learning he had signed away sovereignty to the Wairau, Te Rauparaha burned his copy of the deed and returned the cannon to its rightful owner - whaler Jacky Guard of Kakapo Bay, Port Underwood.

As has been related earlier in this thesis under the subheading "history", during a return to the Sounds on board Jacky's vessel, their ship fetches up on rocks and is wrecked. There follows an incident with the local Maori, during which time Betty is captured together with her two children and held at a Maori village. In Kidman's version of events there she (Betty) develops a relationship with Chief Oaoiti and becomes his lover. The incident is a significant facet of the historical record and a subject of debate. In her novel, Kidman expands on the relationship giving it the status of a full blown love affair, details of which are related from a number of points of view, but with much of the historical fact surrounding this period intact; from Jacky Guard's journal, from newspaper reports, from the fictionalized version that is Betty's version as she tells her story to Adie Malcolm.

However, Kidman has enhanced the description of Oaoiti's return to his people after having been captured by Guard and some of the sailors. In Kidman's version, Jacky and the others in his party see Oaoiti as inferior, and when they capture and return him, symbolically they strip him of his manhood.

They achieve this by exchanging him for a woman and a female child - woman is considered to be inferior to man; therefore Oaoiti's worth is diminished, as he is being valued as a commodity to be traded. They dress him in English clothing, but put it on back to front; by this act he is converted from a high ranking Maori male into a parody, a clown-like version, of a white man. This signifies that Oaoiti is unable to reach the status of white manhood, yet he had dared to approach a white woman. Thus the possibility that Betty freely loved him is denied. This means that Betty is reclaimed by her husband not as a body dishonoured, as Oaoiti is not a real man. White male pride is maintained.

For a reader of *The Captive Wife*, Kidman's version of this episode - which has been greatly enhanced from the actual turn of events - far from enhancing the "mana" of Jacky Guard and HM Forces, diminishes them as men, as it is an unworthy and petty act; but it enhances Oaoiti's status because he takes the course of events in his stride. Kidman comments: "It entirely diminished them, that's what I wanted to talk about. That was what it was done for but it was also to show that Maori warrior as he truly was - a man of stature" (F Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

It is interesting to note that Maori men attached similar importance to their own male pride when it came to wayward women. If Maori women left their tribes to take up habitation with the whalers, when they tried to return to their tribes they were not wanted, and considered unclean from their association with white men (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 188).

After four months at the village, and following her rescue, Betty and Jacky sail to the Bay of Islands then cross the Tasman to Sydney where there was considerable interest in, and gossip about, both her person and her plight. Trevor Berkley relates that Betty "Already viewed by Europeans as contaminated by her extended contact with Maori, attempts to purify herself, and clear her name by representing herself as a victim" (96).

In the novel Betty refuses to return to her old life with her husband because Jacky, in his fury at the possibility that Betty has been with Oaoiti, offers her to another man. Betty and the young man in question do not have a relationship, but as a result, any possibility of an immediate reconciliation with her husband is dashed.

Later in the novel, Jacky begs forgiveness: “Betty I said. I want you to forgive me for what I did to you at the Bay of Islands” (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 346).

Eventually Betty forgives Jacky and takes him back:

Did it make it easier to forgive because I had not done what Jacky asked of me? I suppose it must, because forgiving is what I have chosen to do. My husband could not have known that, in offering me up in rage, he gave me the first true choice of my life.... Now a second choice has been delivered to me. I will take you back, I said (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 348).

In the meantime when the boat reaches Sydney, Betty returns to spend time with her Aunt Charlotte at her dwelling at The Rocks and later goes to visit Adie Malcolm, her old schoolteacher. During her visits to Adie, Betty begins to relate her version of the events that took place during her captivity. As their friendship deepens Betty goes to stay with Adie at her cottage and continues her story.

In Kidman’s novel, following Betty’s return from the village, and her subsequent voyage to Sydney, both Betty and Adie find themselves outside the patriarchal zone, in a liminal space. Betty finds herself adrift due to her separation from Jacky. Adie has left her position as governess with the Roddick family and returned to her brother’s house, only to be banished by her sister-in-law to a cottage at the bottom of their property on the boundaries of the Australian bush. Adie, as an unemployed, unmarried woman, has no agency. The location is effectively in no-man’s land, “an uncultured arena” away from patriarchal influences.

As Betty and Jacky Guard are no longer living together, Betty is free to pursue her friendship with Adie, and use Adie as a willing and receptive listener to her story of kidnap and rescue. The out-of-the way cottage for Betty’s and Aidie’s meetings is the perfect location where “female discourse may be laying the foundations for its recognition as historiography” (D’Cruz, *Study Guide* 174) because it is outside the patriarchal zone.

Adie is single, not the property of any man; she has been employed as a governess but her free will is contingent on her ability to earn her living. Unlike Betty, Adie is educated - the fact that she has been educated in classic mythology (Greek) shows that she thinks outside the square. But she has experienced little “out of the ordinary” in her life, and she admittedly wishes to taste another kind of life through Betty’s stories. Adie is also older than Betty, which creates a mothering effect in the relationship, even though Betty is the one who is actually a mother.

### **Interpretation**

In New Zealand, emigration from the United Kingdom allowed women the prospect of breaking away from the constraints of Victorian life as a female; life in a new medium offered settler women new opportunities and the possibility of new definitions of womanhood. Kidman’s novel is a story of emancipation by emigration but an extreme case - and in Kidman’s hands perhaps almost romanticized, but that is why it is possible to write about it. It is questionable as to whether this really is a story of love - despite Betty’s assurances to Adie that it was love.

The circumstances of the event of Betty’s capture could be laid at the door of what is now-a-days popularly called the Stockholm Syndrome, terminology used to describe a kind of traumatic bonding with the captor.

The Stockholm Syndrome first came into common usage after a robbery which took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1973 in Stockholm, Sweden. Bank employees were held hostage for six days, but once they were released they displayed an emotional attachment to their captors, and even went to their defence six days later after they were set free.

Sarah Powell in *Qu’en est-il d’amour? Vers un bilan des liaisons interoethniques dans la littérature de Kanaky/Nouvelle-Caledonie et d’Aotearoa, Nouvelle Zelande*, also recognizes that Kidman has aligned Betty’s symptoms to that of a person suffering from Stockholm Syndrome:

Dans cette narration se déroulant au XIX siècle, l’autour neo-zelandais attribue a Betty ‘Peti’ Guard des symptômes du syndrome Stockholm selon lequel les otages finissent par tomber amoureux de leurs ravisseurs en l’occurrence Oaoiti, chef de la tribu Ngati Ruanui (314).

This paragraph translates as: During the development of this story set in the XIX century, the New Zealand author (Fiona Kidman) attributes to Betty 'Peti' Guard the symptoms of the Stockholm syndrome when hostages end up falling in love with their kidnappers, which, in this case, was Oaoiti, chief of the Ngati Ruanui tribe.

Kidman was aware that the love affair could be interpreted as Stockholm Syndrome, because she comments: "I feel as if when I talk about the love affair that is the only part of that book that I feel on slightly shaky ground about because there are the various theories about kidnapping syndromes and so forth". However, "... the evidence that I have been able to collect suggests that Betty appeared to have a relationship with him" (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Powell goes on to say that although Betty tells Adie Malcolm that she has pure love for Oaoiti, the reader is left wondering whether this is the truth or just dramatic infatuation. "Does she also possess the melodrama of her husband and so romanticize her situation? How sincerely we believe in her love remains questionable" (314). At the village Betty can take on whatever role she chooses.

Powell explains that there were many such pairings between brown and white people at that time, as the list above confirms, but that the development of any such liaisons was considered "erotic" but "taboo", and most did not last.

It would appear that Powell is suggesting that the reality of the "love affair" could have been a captor-captive dependency. It is interesting to ponder this possibility, and in the unlikely event that this were ever proved to be the case, it might have the effect of de-romanticizing the real life account of their relationship. However, it would have little bearing on our reading of the fictionalized version of the incident because Kidman has chosen to present it as a love story. In the novel this is the first time Betty feels real love (her marriage to Jacky came about as an alliance of mutual advantage and, in Jacky's case lust, but not love). Betty chooses to enter into this relationship with Oaoiti because she thinks she loves him and the love that Betty feels for Oaoiti becomes the vehicle for Betty's spiritual journey towards independent womanhood. The word "chooses" highlights the feminist use of this incident.

In a conversation with Jacky, Betty tries to explain this journey:

.... I never had a chance to choose anyone. I do not expect you to understand what happened between Oaoiti and me. But it had nothing to do with what I have felt for you. We are different. Jacky replies: Still I said you loved him. Betty: Yes she said, I did and now I do not. But I am forever changed by it (346).

This is what is important here: that Betty is forever changed; she can never go back to being the submissive woman of old.

According to Elizabeth Welsh, such captures and/or relationships as this story is based on challenge the discourses of race and gender, and Kidman's version of the story highlights this. Kidman's interest is two fold as they also reflect similar challenges she has been faced in her own life.

“... having fallen in love with somebody who is of Maori descent myself played a part” (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

The first half of the novel, which she describes as “loosely based on real events and individuals” (Welsh 114-116), covers John Guard's movements and migration to and from between New Zealand and Australia. His narrative voice represents the settler and the settler's preoccupation with the land:

He moves from one land mass (Australia) to another (New Zealand) for one reason alone, exploitation of uncharted territory and economic advantages. John's journey is a manifestation of the Anglo Saxon movement across the globe that aims to convert land and resource into a “paying proposition” (Welsh 114-116).

Kidman positions Jacky at the nexus of various power relations. He has the power to define and construct Betty's identity as he likes, when Betty is no more than a child. The oyster picking trip (Chapter 4) sexualizes the previously parental relationship between Jacky and Betty (Jacky is 23 years older than Betty) and the symbolism of oysters as aphrodisiacs points to Jacky's desire for sexual possession of Betty which, if achieved, would denote the premature curtailment of female autonomy. Jacky later sends Betty to school to learn to read and write, recognizing that this will be useful to him in future as she will be able to help him with his “books”.

Jacky's further manifestations of power are the hunting of seals, sea lions and whales which are part of a bloody and fierce trade by which Jacky makes his living, although he does also trade in flax seed, skins and pigs. The killing of whales is cast as a visible indicator of the internal ferocity of patriarchal culture towards women.

Betty on the other hand, as a married woman, struggles for a place to tell her story. As a point of entry, Betty's account returns to 1785 the date of her maternal grandmother's transportation to Australia. Unlike Jacky, Betty needs to recover a female genealogy because, being a woman, her genealogy has been officially erased. To achieve this Betty needs access to a receptive listener. Kidman invents an imaginary friend for this purpose, Adie Malcolm. In the novel, Adie, an educated woman, is Betty's school teacher during Betty's time living at The Rocks, a tough and poverty stricken area of Sydney.

### **Adeline (Adie) Malcolm - fictional**

Unlike the other main characters in the novel, Adie is a completely fictional character. Kidman appropriated the name of Miss Adie Malcolm from a governess who had worked for members of her own extended family: "The only reality of Adie Malcolm is that when my mother lived on the sheep station in the East Cape in the early part of last century she had a governess called Adie Malcolm" (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

The real Adie Malcolm is described as a plump elderly governess ... who remained after her charges grew older.

"... in the beginning... she was a much older woman because I was using Adie Malcolm, my mother's governess, as the prototype if you like and then I decided that she (Adie) had to have her own story if she was to become interesting enough for Betty to tell her story to. ... So Barrett Marshall (ship's surgeon) doesn't go to dinner with Adie at all. Adie was a person who I wanted to be able to cross boundaries... knew rough children at The Rocks and got invited to the governor's for dinner. So all of that's pure invention. The only reality of Adie Malcolm is that when my mother lived on the sheep station in the East Cape in the early part of last century she had a governess called Adie Malcolm (Kidman, "*Darwin Road*" 15).

But Adie was perfect for the role, firstly, as Betty's schoolteacher at The Rocks school and later as Betty's confidante.

Adie represents the female space where Betty can tell her story, but there is an issue of location due to restrictions placed on them by Lieutenant Roddick, Adie's brother, and his wife Maude, Adie's sister-in-law. Betty and Adie use Adie's cottage on the edge of the bush to set up an arena for female discourse which may lay the foundations for its recognition as historiography.

Betty uses her narrative agency to define the patriarchal plot into which she was written at a very young age. Up to this point, except for her short stay at the Maori village, Betty has been an object of transaction. Betty seeks to subvert this thinking; she achieves it by agency, writing herself into history through her grandmother, and by assuming authority over the interpretation of her experiences and making choices for herself; this is an explicit overcoming of her objectified status (D'Cruz, Study Guide 36).

The heart of Kidman's novel is the part where Betty Guard is kidnapped, because it is then, during her stay at the Maori village, that she, as a captive wife, experiences the joys of free will. Being attracted to her captor, she exercises this free will for the first time by making the choice to become his lover. In these strange circumstances her captivity brings her freedom. On her return from captivity Betty chooses to tell her story to Adie Malcolm, who makes a good foil for Betty because Adie is interested in freedom herself but incapable of making any real steps to change her own life, because she is neither married nor financially independent.

Adie is too late to achieve such freedom of action as Betty, "...in my heart, I envy you. Your spirit has soared in captivity. Despite all you have endured, I would have given much to have lived a life as full as yours" (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 361) but she does find herself in a position to make choices. She decides not to marry, although she did receive a proposal from Lieutenant Roddick, because "I found that I could not surrender myself in a way that would be expected, either in body or soul" (361). However, she has hope for the future: "Perhaps I will see the great temples of Greece again some day." when she accepts Roddick's offer to accompany his children to England. Her hope is that she will be able to stay on with them in England.

Betty's ultimate removal from the village is as a result of negotiation; Oaoiti, who had been taken captive by Jacky Guard and the military, is exchanged for Betty. Betty has little choice but

to agree, because, had she not, Oaoiti would have probably been killed, which would have left her with no reason to remain at the village other than the fact that her son would still have been there. As it was, Betty left with her two children who were included in the deal.

By telling her story and hearing herself tell it, Betty reviews and confronts her life with a new understanding, a new awareness of self. She savours the memory of her freedom during that time away from her husband when she lived and loved in a liminal space with a Maori chief. Her “capture” has transformed her “I am forever changed by it”, she tells Jacky (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 346).

The desire to continue to have dominion over her life and to make her own life choices is a right she is unwilling to rescind. To go back to a life where “Jacky saw me [her] as a rib, a part of himself that he took for granted, except for when Charley was around me, and then he saw the serpent” (Kidman, *The Captive Wife* 267) was no longer an option she cared to consider:

I had been given to Jacky by my family when I was a young girl. I had been proud he wanted me but I had never had this sensation of falling, each time he came near me. And when I was not with Oaoiti, when I was waiting for him to come to me, my flesh felt stripped as if I was not whole (Kidman, *The Captive Wife*, 267).

With Oaoiti she had experienced love and passion for the first time in her life.

Betty’s desire for Oaoiti, however, provokes the standoff between the Taranaki Maori and the Crown’s warships, and Oaoiti’s capture. There is division in the interpretation of Betty’s actions when she sees the ships arriving to rescue her. She waves her hand, some believe, in a desire to direct the ships away from the village, but Kidman believes otherwise.

...some of the Guard descendants would like us to believe that she was trying to warn them that they were in danger. But they weren’t in danger, they had overwhelming power and strength and they knew that and they took Oaoiti and I believe that they must have understood that she wanted to be with him rather than with them which was why they ridiculed him in the way that they did. So she must have been able to intimate clearly that she wanted to be with him and not to go with them (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

Oaoiti is captured when he leads Betty down to the water’s edge.

Having experienced the intoxicating reality of free will, Betty was not about to relinquish hers again on her return. The real choice - the most important choice - she makes is not to return to her husband straight away. When she does return to him she wishes it to be on her own terms.

Jacky wants Betty to return to him despite indicating to her that his only interest is in the return of his son. However, after a period of time Jacky reflects on his life with Betty and begins to realize Betty's worth, and how she has become stronger, and that he treated her badly in the past. .

Betty later tells Jacky that prior to meeting Oaoiti, she had never been able to choose a man for herself. "I never had a chance to choose anyone". (Jacky chose Betty for himself when she was only twelve years old.) As mentioned earlier Betty goes on to tell Jacky that she did love Oaiti but that she no longer does. Jacky accepts Betty's explanation and asks for forgiveness for his previous behaviour in the Bay of Islands. (It is suggested that Jacky had offered his wife, in rage, to another man.) This is a pivotal moment in the development of a more equal relationship. Betty stands her ground; Jacky understands her point of view and asks her forgiveness. Betty forgives him - her choice.

Did it make it easier to forgive because I had not done what Jacky asked of me?

I suppose it must, because forgiving is what I have chosen to do. My husband could not have known that, in offering me up in rage, he gave me the first true choice of my life. I will not explain or defend myself. I know what happened. He will have to decide for himself.

Now a second choice has been delivered to me. I will take you back, I said. The secret of that night stays with me (348).

Here Betty refers to the fact that she and the man she was offered to did not have sexual relations, but did not divulge the truth to anyone, least of all Jacky (346).

Within the novel the Maori warrior is a contrivance to allow freedom of expression for Pakeha women. However, Kidman is still an advocate for the married state.

This is the crux of the Kidman novel, be it contemporary or historical: the journey women take to recognize their own worth and their fight for the freedom to choose their own pathway.

## **Giving women a voice**

Kidman's novel allows Betty to reclaim an allegedly controlled or suppressed identity via her romanticized oral version of the story. It is not just a question of being party to the whole story but rather understanding that the story is dependent on the stories told; in other words, it will change according to circumstances or context.

By having Betty tell her story an imbalance is redressed: that of the "erasure of female voices from public discourse". Kidman's recovery of Betty's voice, although based on truth, will have historical inaccuracies through lack of confirmation through documentation. Therefore what emerges must fall within the description of "fictional feminist historiography" rather than documentary (D'Cruz , Study Guide 173).

It is through the possibilities opened up by early Maori-European contact that Kidman defines a space for female sexuality to express itself in desire. Betty's attempt at articulating the history of her time with the Taranaki Maori springs from this initial differentiation of self. It allows her to erect a position and a point of view for seeing her world. It is thanks to her indigenization that this point of view contains a hybrid quality.

If Oaoiti lives on in her story, he does so especially in the capacity that her story offers for negotiating European-Maori worlds. This is the symbolic legacy from the love of Oaoiti (D'Cruz, Study Guide178).

When asked what her intentions were in regard to writing this book, Fiona Kidman replied as follows:

I like a good story. I'm a novelist, a writer of fiction... This was a great "found" story and I set it to fiction. I suppose, because I have some social conscience, that once I had embarked upon the book, I realized that it would be necessary to take some sides. With respect to the true life characters, I hope I've interpreted them with fairness. But in the end, it's a story, that's what I set out to write. The Nobel Prize winner Isaac Basher Singer said to the end of his long life that "the purpose of literature is to entertain and educate" (Kidman, April 11, 2011).

In spite of the fact that Kidman's comments seem to belie this, we, as readers, see as Kidman's motivation for writing the novel the desire to examine the subaltern voice of the female, her desire to be valued, and how female domestic subordination is just as much a state of captivity as being physically held captive whether it be in the 1800s or the year 2000 and beyond..

Through characterizations in narrative she creates a pathway towards that end. She sets out her perception of the inequalities that exist in women's lives and, during the working of the story, gives women choices that might bring about a better male-female life balance.

The conclusions to her narratives are not always tidy. Her women have to make choices. Whether the choices made are right or wrong depends on the reader's point of view. But that is not what is important. What is important is that women achieve the right to make those choices for themselves.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

---

In her contemporary novels Kidman has sought to reclaim the literary female voice from its place of banishment prior to the 1960s. Her approach has been to represent the life and times of women living in New Zealand during a period in modern western history when social reform for women was being driven by a forceful feminist lobby. In her historical novels though, Kidman had to recreate a voice for those women whose voices had been erased.

Kidman's works are realist and feminist, depicting both historical and contemporary New Zealand women, creating them as believable examples of women in the particular era she writes about. Kidman sets out to explain, to make sense of, and to connect with the circumstances that so many women of the times she writes about were and are experiencing in real life: feminist issues of social and sexual inequality, gender and work-place discrimination, lack of choice in regard to their lives within the domestic environment and their future lives outside the domestic environment, sexual harassment and exploitation; all issues which fall into the category of "feminist writing".

Kidman's characters are commonplace women leading commonplace lives; domestic, private, professional - yet not entirely commonplace, as they share the frustrations of those people who live on the edge, who have difficulty moving between their domestic and professional lives; women who struggle to achieve recognition in a man's world (a situation almost as valid today as it was fifty years ago). Characterizations unfold through domestic core situations, and in so doing, unfold not only as New Zealand cultural realities, but also as social history-in-time; down pathways wherein a woman's presence is not an accessory but is quintessential.

Although Kidman intimates that she has never actively sought to target the feminist literary market, most of what she has to say tends to fit into the feminist agenda; and these issues remain at the heart of Kidman's schema as a writer when discussing her novels, because these were/are the issues that Kidman and her contemporaries were/are dealing with in their own everyday lives.

In spite of this focus to her work, Kidman states that she is not always pleased with being labelled a feminist, probably because of the stereotypical images the word conjures up. Le Marquand tells us that to be called a feminist in the 1970s:

... dictated that the “feminist” label not only indicated an individual’s belief system but also their way of life. Feminists were expected to look a certain way and to behave a certain way.... For women writers of the 1990s being identified as feminist also attached certain expectations to their work. “Feminist writing” was branded as anti-male political treatise, and “women’s writing” as inevitably feminist (323).

And Kidman has experienced this type of stereotyping. As recently as 5 February 2011, when she was interviewed for a chat programme on Newstalk ZB, the male interviewer began the interview by saying: “Well, really you’re the archetypal seventies feminist, aren’t you?” Kidman commented that this assertion did not sit well with her as she felt pigeonholed (F. Kidman, personal interview, March 12, 2011).

In addition, Kidman is keen to state that her stance is not anti-male, and this is one of the reasons she has, at times, distanced herself from the feminist label. Although feminism does not have an anti-male treatise, it has been branded and interpreted as such.

Kidman’s modus operandi is not to condemn; she prefers to put her points across by education and persuasion and she achieves this by placing her characters in situations that allow them to explore and exploit the issues she wishes to raise.

In spite of her own reservations regarding the feminist label, when reading Kidman’s oeuvre there appears no way to understand her work or to critique her work better than from a feminist viewpoint. Her first published novel achieved success in part due to the feminist canon it advocated and the wave of feminism that surged upwards at the time of its publication. Her subsequent novels all relate to issues of self discovery and the social validation of women which fit effortlessly into any feminist manifesto. These issues have become established not only as connecting themes but also all-consuming themes in her work during the years this thesis has chosen to examine.

Therefore I contend that, in recognition of the fact that her work reflects developing understanding in New Zealand culture around gender and power and other related issues such as class, ethnicity and family dynamics, and as a result of the arguments put forward in this thesis, the work of Fiona Kidman is best understood from a feminist perspective.

## ABBREVIATIONS

---

For “*Darwin Road*” read *At the End of Darwin Road*.

For ABOW read *A Breed of Women*.

For “*Breed*” read *A Breed of Women*.

For TCW read *The Captive Wife*.

For Newstalk ZB read nationwide New Zealand talk radio network operated by The Radio Network of New Zealand (TRN).

## **APPENDICES**

---

**APPENDIX A - Permission from Fiona Kidman to write thesis Email 1.12.2011.**

**APPENDIX B - Interview with Fiona Kidman 12.03.2011.**

**APPENDIX C - Blanket permission from Fiona Kidman Letter 20.05.2012.**

**APPENDIX D - Permission to approach Turnbull re Club Litany Email 20.8.2011.**

**APPENDIX E - Permission to quote emails from Sharon Crosbie. Email 26.5.2012.**

**APPENDIX F - Letter from Whitcombe & Tombs Limited 12.03.1969.**

**APPENDIX G -Permission from Anne Else Email 03.04.2011.**

## APPENDIX A

Dear Anna

Thank you for your request for permission to write a thesis concerning my work and its influence.

That permission is granted.

Kind regards

Fiona Kidman

--- On **Wed, 1/12/11**, **Anna Leclercq** <*contador1@xtra.co.nz*> wrote:

From: Anna Leclercq <*contador1@xtra.co.nz*>  
Subject: Permission  
To: "fiona kidman" <*fionakidman@yahoo.com*>  
Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2011, 12:51 PM

Dear Fiona

I would like to make a formal request to you for your permission to use you and your work as my subject matter for my MA thesis, which has as its subject 'What is the significance of Fiona Kidman's literary career within the larger New Zealand cultural context.'

Best regards  
Anna (Leclercq)

## APPENDIX B

### Interview with Fiona Kidman 12.3.2011

#### Audio File DS300026

AK                   What do you consider to be the significance of your career in the wider New Zealand social context?

FK:                   From the early 1960s I'd started to write without any really clear understanding that it was something that I shouldn't be doing – because I lived in the provinces; because women who wrote were considered weird or strange or odd you certainly didn't turn up if you were a young housewife and on the flat sections between us there was just row after row of nappies and there was a lot of competition about who had the whitest nappies and so forth. And mine never seemed to quite win. And I'd be sitting writing and right at the beginning there was that whole sense of "who does she think she is?" and the more that I was provoked to answer that question the more I wrote and the more I began to publish.

There were a couple of significant women's magazines at that time in the sixties – there was "Eve" magazine and "Thursday" magazine. "Thursday" I think was edited by Marcia Russell. There were a series of people who edited "Eve". Anyway, they started taking my work as a freelance writer and I started writing about what it was like to live in suburbia and my neighbours were totally horrified. I described the colour of people's sheets, I looked at the things on the clothesline and I described them and I described the layers of society that lived within this suburb.

I was an only child and I'd grown up in the country and really I had no particular notion of how to behave like a proper suburban housewife. My mother had worked on the farm, my parents didn't have a particularly happy marriage, I had listened as only children do to what was around me and other farming families. I had a very acute sense of nuance and how people were responding to each other and so I started doing this just as who I was and what I did when I lived in suburbia. When I started putting it on the page I realised that I was actually creating huge waves around me. The significant piece that I wrote at that time was published about a month before I was due to leave Rotorua and as it happened Ian was invited to go to an overseas university for a couple of months. I was left in suburbia with the children and with the face of being ... it was like I was sort of a scarlet woman. It was the same thing as if I'd actually done some ... I'd been doing other things, too, like towards the end of the sixties I started going away to writer's courses and also starting to do freelance journalism, which from time to time took me away from home. So in every sense, I suppose, I had started to become sort of randomly different. I didn't set out to be but that's how I was by the end of the 1960s.

So then I came to the 1970s and I became involved with a whole group of writers very quickly. I sought them out and I was still quite young and I won a big prize very soon after I arrived in Wellington. So I was noticed, as it were, and very quickly offered a job

as a columnist in the "Listener". And again it was – how can I put it exactly – I didn't set out to be attention seeking but somehow attention had found me.

It's a very long winded way of answering the question of what the significance of my work is but I started publishing poetry in 1975 and 1977 along with a lot of other poets. International Women's Year came; I was working in television and radio by that stage. International Women's Year in 1975 was celebrated in the Wellington Winter Show buildings and I was asked if I would go along and give a talk about writing to some women at this event. I went there expecting maybe a dozen or so people. It was a weekend that poured with the most extraordinary storm. The mud was ankle deep and over 2,000 women made into the venue. I had an apple box to stand on and my group had about 400 women. So there was the rain overhead, the storm, all of these women and afterwards they came to me in droves and wanted to talk to me about their lives, about the way that they felt discriminated against in a way that I have to be honest and say I didn't really – I did and I didn't. There were lots of things that were really difficult especially working in television where I was the only woman script writer working at the time. But I also had had a lot of lucky breaks. I look back now and I see that even then I represented a sort of freedom, if you like, which other women weren't experiencing or hadn't arrived at yet. The whole impetus, really, of the women's movement became clear to me.

So I'm setting up, if you like, a context for why my work became significant. After that weekend I had a much stronger sense of what the women's movement was and I started to identify myself in a personal way. When I say that I hadn't been, I mean, there were lots of things in my life that had not been okay. I mean, I had a father who was unhappy and overbearing and who wanted to create a very Victorian atmosphere around my upbringing and my childhood. Relatives who were quite rigid in their views but I thought that that was a trigger for me starting on the path to writing "A Breed of Women" and if one talks about the context or the significance of my work I think it stems from that time. Because I was identified very much with the women's movement. I think of myself really as an accidental feminist.

AL: "A Breed of Women" – when I picked that up and read that book I said, my God, I wish I'd had that before. Because it doesn't just talk to New Zealand women, it talks to all women and especially of the seventies and eighties. It's an amazing book and what I would like to know is how you managed to be so brave?

FK: Again, accidentally, I think. I put a lot of that down to my childhood and a certain lack of awareness of how people did things, really. I never set out to offend so many people! I had no idea of what it was going to be like, really. I do remember the morning that it was released, I walked over and I stood there, exactly there, (sitting room) at five o'clock in the morning and it was just coming up dawn. I thought, I don't think my life's ever

going to be the same again. Sharon Crosbie had read the book by then. I just had a little inkling that it was going to be a bit bigger than I expected, and it was. I isolated myself in my head while I wrote it. I didn't show it to anybody.

AL: You didn't show it to anybody until you'd finished it?

FK: No, and I didn't show it to my family, which I had never done until I did the memoirs.

AL: Were you perhaps a little afraid that they might say, "You can't write that!"

FK: Yes. I think I make myself sound very naive. I think that there was a sense that I was breaking some boundaries, some taboos but I was quite determined to write it. It wasn't a particularly happy time in my life for various reasons. I was a little – how can I put it? - a little careless, perhaps, of the outcomes! I mean, another way of putting it that I thought, I don't give a shit, you can take it or leave it!

Then I sent it to my agent at the time, he's not my agent now and he's over 90, and, sadly, we've had a bit of a falling out after having been very good friends for many years. I don't know what he would say to you about me now. I sent it to him and I'd given it to a typist because my own typing needed a lot doing to it and tidying up. I did work on the typewriter but it was a mess and it was a huge, sprawling manuscript. And the woman who typed came back sort of going, "[gasp] Oh my God, I couldn't stop reading this." And then I gave it to Ray and he rang me at about six o'clock one morning and he said, "I'm ringing you at six o'clock in the morning because I won't be able to say it by the time I've had a sleep." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I haven't been to bed all night, I've been up reading this. I'm sure that it can be published and I'm going to send it off shore to Brian Wilder at Harper in Rome and Sydney." And within a week I had a contract which I had thought people said, "You've written a novel, you'll have to send it round publishers for years," and so forth. Well, within a week of sending it off it was on its way to being published.

So I guess those things had made me a little bit aware but while I was writing it I removed myself from my surroundings quite a lot. So I wasn't sitting there thinking, how will people feel about this?

AL: If you did would you be able to write?

FK: No.

AL: You wouldn't because you've got to write for yourself, I presume.

FK: I do write for myself. I do write for myself absolutely.

FK: After that, the next book the first publisher Brian Wilder at Harper and Rowe, in Sydney (Harper and Rowe was the Australian arm of the US publishing company Harper and Rowe) wouldn't take it. He wanted more of "A Breed of Women". "A Breed of Women" had sold over 9,000 nearly 10,000 copies in the first week that it was out. Again, in my ignorance, I didn't realise that was a huge print run for a first novel in hardback. So I s'pose, I mean, I would've known now. I'm lucky if I get 4,000!

AL: It was sort of a mini block buster, in a way?

FK: It was. It sold about 35,000 the first year. And, you know, I'd become one of these sort of instant celebrity people and it was very hard at the time to see any context for it at all. But I can see now that it was a book which New Zealand women didn't feel they'd had any sort of access to people expressing themselves the way that I had. So, you know, it's funny, only last Saturday I did a radio chat programme. The man who was interviewing me on Newstalk NZ started off by saying, "Well, really you're the archetypal seventies feminist, aren't you?" ... but by the end of the interview I think he didn't think I was. But I s'pose it saddens me a little bit if that's the only context that I'm perceived in.

AL: That's a very superficial context, surely.

FK: It is.

FK: Well, you know, chat show hosts get a certain line of thinking. I think also that some of the younger writers as they've come along have seen my reputation as being a bit threatening and the way that people did things in the seventies has changed. And that's fine. But it's easy to put a label on somebody and say that they represent a particular time or certain issues. At times, like last Saturday morning, I felt that I have been a bit pigeon holed. You asked about the context. I think my work has moved on a long way from there.

AL: You've said things that many, many women wouldn't say and that's brave, particularly at that time;; you've put it in such a way, and you have such a good eye for detail, that it's like a history. That is what is also so important about your work. It's of historical value. Of enormous social value of what New Zealand was like then and what you continue to write about.

FK: I suppose so but it's an instinctive eye.

AL: You didn't set out to be a social historian?

FK: Again, I've come back to the circumstances of my own life which, of course, "A Breed of Women" everybody believed was absolutely my story because my own life arc had been very similar. You know, tiny village to small town to Wellington and I was working as a

script writer in television at the time. And Harriet is a front person for television which, of course, Sharon (Crosbie) was, too, at the time. She was in the next office to me. She was in radio and television as we all were in those days – we were working in both media. Sharon was the queen of the airwaves but working in radio and television was my bread and butter. It was what I did to make a living, although I did learn an immense amount from radio. I learned more than I did from television. I learned to make sure there was always an unlocked door behind me in television!

AL: To make your escape if you needed to?

FK: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

AL: I know you have mentioned that when “A Breed of Women” came out that a lot of the men just blanked you. Why?

FK: I think it was men’s secret lives, really.

AL: That were being revealed?

FK: I think so.

AL: It wasn’t the fact that they suddenly discovered that women were not conquests – that they actually had minds of their own and that they felt if they wanted to have a sex life they could and they didn’t need to be conquered in order to have one?!

FK: I’m sure there was. I’m interested in that question and I hadn’t thought about that, really. But I suppose there was an element of it. There was certainly some sort of overpowering threat and certainly amongst male writers. The year that it came out, the book awards came out, and there was a shortlist of seven for the fiction. And, interestingly, one of the judges was CK Stead, but, on the surface at that stage we seemed to get along fine. But there were two male judges and I wasn’t shortlisted in those seven books, even though it had been the book which had sold thousands of copies and was being so widely talked about' (I imagine this is what I said, something like this).

AL: Well, it made the biggest noise, didn’t it?

FK: Yes, it did. I was very shocked. It wasn’t so much that I expected to win although I thought it would’ve been quite nice if I had, of course. One always wants to win the book awards. But I thought that there was something very significant about not being shortlisted in that particular year. And then one of the judges – the other judge – said to me afterwards, “Oh, I really liked your book and I bought it to send to my sister in Scotland.” And I said, again, rather naively, I s’pose, because you don’t say things like this, you pretend to be stiff upper lipped about book awards. I said, “But not enough to shortlist it for the prize.” And he sort of fumbled and bumbled and said, “Oh, well, it wasn’t really possible. It wasn’t practical in the circumstances.”

AL: So possibilities and practicalities come into it? It’s either good enough or it’s not good enough, I would’ve thought.

FK: Well, I made certain assumptions and, again, with long hindsight I'm supposing that it meant that CK Stead said I couldn't be.

AL: But we shall never know.

FK: No, we won't and I don't really care much. No. You say I'm brave but I don't think of myself as brave, really. That didn't occur to me at the time. I s'pose one of the things, too, was that if I might just go back for a moment was that in the fifties – as far back as the fifties – I had been interested in women's literature. I worked for a librarian who I've written about at length at the end of "Darwin Road". She was definitely a feminist before her time. She was very beautiful; she was single; she had brought up a daughter on her own. I didn't know it at the time, although I've learned later, that she had a child who she'd put up for adoption. She was incredibly well read; she was very aware and she was very interested in me. She had pointed me in the direction of women's writing as well as interestingly on the other hand is the Russian novelists and some of the great European classical novelists.

FK: Her name was Kit Spencer. So all of that, I think, she had taught me a great deal about her life and she confided in me and treated me as a friend which she didn't with the other staff. I think all of that had an influence on me writing "A Breed of Women" later on.

FK: So that had spanned really over about a period of more than 20 years before "A Breed of Women" was published.

FK: She was a mentor. She made me her deputy librarian when I was 18 and then she became ill and I ran this library for quite some time with a staff of about seven other younger women. To do that at 18, of course, I look at 18 year olds now and I think, how did I do it?

AL: I think it was very brave to do that in that era. Because you were saying things that probably many women would've wanted to say but wouldn't have dared because they wouldn't exactly have been ostracised but they would've been looked down upon as loose women. Because you were living in a false reality, weren't you? You were forced to live in a false reality at that time which is so bad for anybody. .

FK: It didn't make for an easy life afterwards. Ian found it very hard.

AL: Yes. Because you were really punching patriarchy in the face, weren't you, in a way?

FK: Yes.

AL: Was there a particular incident in your early life which set you on your literary career?

FK: Well, again, it comes back over and over to the kind of growing up that I had. Again, the only child in the country but I had a best friend – Madeline – who it's an astonishing thing that in two of the small country places that I lived in there were like minded children who have become my lifelong friends. Madeline has been my best friend for 65 years. She still is.

FK: Her mother was divorced. We both lived at the end of Darwin Road. I went to live there first and then Madeline came along within a very short while and her mother was divorced and that was absolutely awful. It was a no-no in 1946.

AL: She was divorced in 1946?

FK: Yes, she was and she had three little children.

FK: Nineteen forty seven, I think. As we've got older I've kind of gathered that her father left her mother for a younger woman. Another woman because her mother wasn't very old either. The mother would've only been in her late twenties. My mother was a bit older. Anyway, there was very much a sense of the outsider and there was for me, too, because my parents when they'd first gone north to Kerikeri had gone as servants. That's another sort of story in itself, but Madeline was the daughter of an artist who was quite well known in the 1940s – a man called Frank Gross who was an Austrian, Jewish, I think he was a refugee. And he was in Christchurch and part of the whole Rita Angus school of painters of that time. And she was very artistic, still is, and had beautiful copper plate handwriting. We got together and we shared our outsider status and spent our holidays every summer writing what we called our magazine. So I s'pose the path was set, really.

AL: Do you have to be an outsider to be a writer?

FK: I wouldn't recommend it as a way of life but it's very useful!

FK: Our son is half Greek. And it's sad that he didn't get to see his father or talk to his father.

AK: Does he feel that very strongly?

FK: Yes, he felt bereft. It felt like a death when we were in Greece on the last day there. We went to the Temple of Poseidon and just sat and looked at the sea but as time has passed I think he has come to feel less so because he did have various documents with him which were translated for him which suggested that his father was of a fairly rough lot. I think he must have been a very bright man because my son is a very bright man and his sons are super bright, most of them. They're very clever. They're young doctors and things like that.

Off the record dialogue.

FK: I feel very strongly that my children's stories belong to them.

Off the record dialogue.

FK: One of the effects for me of "A Breed of Women" was that it isolated me from my mother's family eventually and I suppose that's why I can look back now and say that they mistreated my father shamefully.

AL: And that would have had a profound effect on her, wouldn't it?

FK: It did, yes, it did.

AL: To be unloved is a terrible thing in a family, I think.

FK: Yes, it is. But it's interesting even talking about saying I hated suburbia, I mean, it's taken me all of these years because I actually like to be liked. I want to be loved.

AL: But we all do.

FK: Yes, I know.

FK: But I'm thinking, in saying that, I'm talking about a style of life, but, of course, the people who I knew there think that I'm saying I hated them. Sometimes some of them did behave hatefully but it was just a way of life that I really hated.

AL: To want to be loved is a natural desire. But by the same token you have to be loved for who you are and what you are. You can't compromise to such a degree to turn yourself into a model that those people want to love, can you, really. You've got to be yourself. And it's very hard, it takes you ages, don't you think, to be brave enough to do that?

FK: Well, I certainly think when I realised that it was. Some of the things that happened afterwards like the aunts and uncles who had so adored me because none of them had children. My mother was the youngest of a family of six and one of them did have a child eventually when I was grown up. But none of them had any children so here I was adored and then cast out.

FK: It was terrible. It really was. Not by all of them. I had an aunt who remained. One had died by the time "A Breed of Women" came out and another one who would sort of walk over coals to be by my side regardless and my mother always was staunch but the rest they wouldn't have my book in their houses and stuff like that.

But the other thing that you asked was about men and their response. There were some men who were driven in another way by it and I find this interesting and sad and I don't quite know how to reflect on it. But there were a few men who said it had made

them search themselves in a way that they had lived and that they regretted their attitudes and one man wrote to me and then killed himself. You can't hold something like that at your door.

AL: But that wouldn't have anything to do with you.

FK: No, I don't think it did but at the time I was profoundly affected by it because he had written ... presumably there was a whole lot going on in his life and he wanted to get this thing off his chest before he died, before he took his life. But, of course, at the time I did feel horrible about it.

AL: But it was obviously his own actions and the past.

FK: Oh, yes, and presumably he would have decided to commit suicide whether he'd read "A Breed of Women" or not. But having read it he then decided to write me this letter before he killed himself. Well, you know, thanks a lot.

AL: Did you keep it?

FK: I don't think I have got it now. I've sent boxes and boxes and boxes of stuff to the Turnbull and I don't think his letter is there.

AL: That's a terrible thing to place before you, and yet I do really think that when somebody commits suicide although they can do it for all these reasons there must be a certain moment when their mind is so distressed that it doesn't work properly.

FK: I feel so. Oh, yes, I mean, there has been a suicide which has been in Ian's family which had the most, I mean, profound effects, really, ripple on effects through all our lives. I mean, I look back and examine it, as you do, from all angles and being a grandmother of grown up young people you look and you worry and hope that history won't repeat itself. Which, touch wood, I don't think it will now. They're grown adults with good lives. However, that's wandered off the track.

AL: That's an off the record one.

FK: Well, no, I don't mind that. I mean, it's a known fact. It's not something I've written about but in the book that I've just completed which a collection of long stories called "The Trouble With Fire" there are a couple of suicides in it simply because, you know, I think people are talking about it more and more and it's the thing that people talk about being still the hidden thing and yet more young people die of it than in car accidents in this country. Sooner or later we'll start to look at why. I don't think that there's anything particularly deep or meaningful or analytical in the stories that I've written about the reasons why. In fact, one is almost incidental but I think that to not have suicide if you're writing about a broad spectrum of people, suicide touches so many lives. And mine has been touched by it so I'm not being afraid, as you say, am I?

FK: Well, do you want to put that off the record?

AL: Shall we stop for just a minute?

FK: Yes, let's stop and I'll put some lunch together.

[End of recorded material 38.46]

**Audio File DS300028**

FK: I take it that you've read "Beside the Dark Pool"?

AL: Yes.

FK: So you've read my account of Bloomsbury [? 00.19].

AL: Yes. Is there anything you'd care to add?

FK: Not a lot because there's been a lot of mud slung around over the whole affair. I had been prepared to let it rest. I'm a person who can have quite strong and passionate feelings but I also believe that time can heal and I had supposed that it had healed. I learned about Stead's book "Book Self" – have you read that?

AL: No, I haven't, no.

FK: Okay, well, you'd really need to have a look at that in order to understand why I responded. When "At the End of Darwin Road" came out I had that journalist Michelle Hewitson come to see me, and I didn't really want to do that interview but my publicist was very insistent. And so she came and it didn't feel like a friendly interview and people say that ... and I don't think it was a very flattering portrait, really. To in effect it was that I was a prissy mouthed old woman who was hiding lots of secrets. So that's alright, I mean, there could be worse things than that.

AL: It's still not fair though, is it?

FK: No, it's not really fair and in a sense she was right because I'd kind of prepared myself not to be grilled by her and give away ... I mean, the memoirs are what it was about and I knew that I could say something really damaging about myself or be next week's fish and chips wrappings, but the damage would be done. Well, anyway, to get to the point of the story she had in her bag a copy of CK Stead's "Book Self". She said to me, "So, what have you got to say to CK Stead?" And I said, "Nothing, there is nothing to say. As far as I'm concerned it's over. The issues are behind us and we've shaken hands in the New Zealand Embassy in Paris and that's it. I let it be." And she said, "In here I have a book that might make you feel differently, only I can't show it to you because it's embargoed for another two days. What would you do about it?" I said, "I don't think I would do anything but as I haven't seen it there's really ..." Well, anyway, the book, as you will see if you have a look at it and I think if you're doing all of this you really should cross

reference it. He says some extremely unpleasant things about me and his version of our meeting in Paris is that he looked across at me and wondered how the New Zealand government could ever have been persuaded to bestow an honour on such an unworthy person and how I'd ruined literature in New Zealand. He said some really nasty things. I mean, I don't really want to promote his book but in order to understand why ... and I thought that it was libellous and so did some other people. And after thinking about it I thought, no, I really don't want to end up in Court, after all of these years, with Stead. The best thing is to write the story because I knew by then that I was going to write the second part of "The Memoir" and I thought I'll just try and tell it as unemotionally as I can. I don't know how it comes across to you but I tried to keep the tone neutral.

AL: It did. It seems as if it was played down. Because I think if I'd been in your situation I would've gone to town on him but you didn't. You were quite kind, really.

FK: Well, he's now written the first part of his autobiography and I believe he's working on the second part so he may very well respond again. But for his part it's all been mudslinging and describing me as an angry woman which he's also talked about in print on more than one occasion. And I have said in that piece I talk about, Joni Mitchell's ... having said that I can't remember exactly what it says. But if you call a male artist angry it's exotic, or something like that. If you call a woman angry she's a bitch and that's how I've been portrayed in this whole drama, and he continues to use the word "angry" about me. So I thought that really I would try and simply use a really neutral tone and refer to documents, which seemed to me to not be an angry way to approach it and let people judge for themselves. I don't have anything to add about how I feel about his character. I mean, the facts seem to speak for themselves although he seems to have a huge following of admirers and I can't do anything about that. I don't really want him in my life, as it were, and this is a way that I've chosen to try and deal with it. But I suspect that it's not over yet.

FK: I understand, I have been told that he had thought about trying to sue me over that book but it was pointed out to him that what he had said was considerably more libellous than what I had said about him.

AL: So you think it's still a thorn in his side?

FK: Well, I'm quite sure it is. I'm quite sure it is and I feel that the next part of his memoirs or autobiography or whatever I would expect that there will be retaliation. And I don't know exactly what I'll do about it if there is. I suppose I'll have to do something but I suppose what I really wanted is that over the years because he's described me as an angry woman for so many years I really wanted to put the record straight, partly for my kids. In a sense it's, "Oh, God, Stead. Oh, [indistinct 7.54] forget it, who cares? He's a silly old ..." Okay, some day they may say, "What was it all about, that he has placed it on record that I was destructive to literature in this country?" I mean, I wish it had never happened, of course, and I said that in the book. I say that I feel that I was the right person in the wrong place. All I thought that I had to do was to pass on some important information. I had no idea about - if I am going to be emotive - the degree of cronyism that was operating and the things that were already en train when I went to

see Michael Bassett it simply never occurred to me. I was astonished to be asked to go and see him so quickly. When I went to Internal Affairs, sorry, it was Creative New Zealand, I think it was still under that. Somebody at Internal Affairs got in touch with me very quickly and said, "The Minister would like to see you." And I was astonished by that. And, of course, now I understand, or, as time progressed, I understood that it was because he and Stead already had something en train and this was somehow going to make it easier. Make it appear like a choice. And I was totally hoodwinked by the whole separation [9.45]. The thing that I suppose galls me is that this description of me as an angry woman comes from a conversation that I had when Internal Affairs told me that the group were not going to the island. They said, "You'll have to ring Carl and talk to him about it." And I rang him and certainly I was surprised but I can say, hand on my heart, I've examined my conscience many times over this. I didn't swear or shout at him. I may have seemed upset but it's from that and the dismissive thing, "Oh, well, it's Fiona, she's just an angry woman. That's the way she is." So, I guess if you want a view on his character, I do think that he is a highly sexist person, and I think that that is reflected in the criticism that he did of women, race and gender in the eighties. .

FK: I'm sick of it. [off the record 11.13 – 11.57]. I don't wish Stead any harm. I just wish that he'd go away and shut up. We've both had our say for 21 years now. The time has passed. I truly, truly wanted it to be over when we met in Paris.

FK: But his daughter and I have had public spats. Charlotte Grimshaw. She has attacked me in print more than once and that's ...

FK: Well, it makes it hard. I have tried to support her writing. I have edited two anthologies with her work in it. She's getting a lot of kudos for her short stories, and rightly so because she writes them very well. But her first short story I published so, I mean, I've tried to work to the text. But they can't seem to leave issues alone.

AL: Hereditary ones, obviously, then.

FK: Well, hereditary or families can become enmeshed in similar points of view. My daughter would, I think, defend my reputation to the death. She's an academic. So, you know, it's probably not surprising but she seems to have a very intense feeling for her father and she wants to uphold his point of view. Is that okay?

AL: Thank you. I'll ask you about [indistinct 14.09] in a moment. What I would like to know is who your literary mentors were or just your mentors because you've spoken about ...

FK: Kit Spencer.

AL: Was there anybody else really important in your life like that?

FK: Yes, well, when I came to Wellington I met the late William Austin who was the head of radio and was shortly to become the head of television drama and was jointly head of both in the early days of television. He and a man called Arthur Jones who was an old BBC script editor who'd come out here to New Zealand to live. They both took an early

interest in my work and they were absolutely, incredibly supportive to me. And it's interesting, too, because I actually have had a lot of male mentors. When I have the stick waved at me I'm sort of a man hating feminist or whatever a feminist is, of course, I'm a feminist but I'm of the variety that's assumed to hate men. I've actually had splendid support from men and the other one was Keith Sinclair. The late Keith Sinclair who was the President of the New Zealand Book Council when I was its first secretary. And you know who I mean?

FK: Keith took a great interest in my work, he liked my poems, he talked about my work with me, he encouraged me, he was excited when I had a book published. We used to sit and talk for hours about his work and the work that I ... if I say I loved that man people take it the wrong way.

FK: We had a very intense relationship but it was a platonic one. I mean, it could just have easily not have been, I suspect, but it was, and the better and stronger for it. He also taught me the basic techniques of research which have helped me enormously as an historical novelist. Because I haven't been to university and because I haven't been taught to research properly; apart from that he gave me a huge gift.

AL: It comes over when you talk about him, as a really intense, academic relationship in a way and yet a wonderful friendship at the same time.

FK: It was, it was, yes. We used to drink a lot together, he'd drink like a fish and I used to drink along with him! We used to riot around town and he'd say, "Take me to a party!" And off we'd go. Oh, God, I'd hate to think now where we used to drive around and so forth. Little Mini lurching around and then we'd get lost but we had great fun. And he used to like it because I used to know a lot of trade unionists and so forth and Ian and I both knew a lot of trade unionists and wharf people and so forth and so we'd go off to some of their parties.

FK: So those were some of my mentors. I'd say those were the main ones.

FK: William Austin was a lovely, very handsome man. A very shy alcoholic but he was a genius. Bruce Mason the playwright because on one of these trips that I came to when I said before that I'd started going away from Rotorua, I came down once or twice to Wellington to workshops that he was running. And he chose me and there was one weekend that the various playwrights' work was submitted to Bruce before the weekend and he workshopped one and he chose mine. And it was great. It was tremendous.

AL: So that's good because now I've got three or four you've mentioned there. Oh, yes, here's something personal that I want to ask you about. I'm just going to read this to you ... this comes out of "Our Own Country" from Sue Kedgley. "Many women writers of the Kidman era had inherited society's acceptance of male dominated depictions of women's social and sexual presence. This [indistinct 20.19] their inherent sense of inferiority of women writers writing about women's lives. For example, Sue McCauley [sp 20.26] says, "There's still an embarrassment about writing of women's things. I still feel defensive if I write about domestic things, about relationships and children and

every day family life. In the back of my head I have this heritage, now this word “heritage” has really gone boom into my head which says that those things are trivial and unimportant.”” How would you describe that heritage? What does that heritage mean to you?

FK: Well, you know, I have never felt troubled about writing about women’s issues or stories – women’s stories. And it’s interesting that Sue, I mean, I have read that, of course, because I’m interviewed in the same book and I hadn’t ever picked that particular quote out of Sue McCauley’s [sp 21.27] interview.

AL: The word “heritage” struck me, not in the sense of about the domestic things necessarily but an inbuilt inferiority complex that women have. And I would think of it more as a programming rather than a heritage, that it’s something that’s banged into you. And I wondered if you could identify at all with that?

FK: Can I think about this for a moment?

AL: Sure, yes.

FK: I don’t have the same sense of heritage that she talks about. It’s true that I read a great many books by men when I was younger but I also read a great many books by women and, again, perhaps this very profound influence in my library days of what was interesting that was written by women perhaps ... and the fact that I didn’t go to university, I did go to university briefly and I was totally overwhelmed. It was at a time when women of my age were not going to university. And I didn’t last long. I mean, there were other things besides university itself but I did feel very much put on the male periphery, really, as a woman who was a bit older than the students. Perhaps almost there were times when I think that not going to university properly, or just having a dabble and then running off in despair and frustration, was really quite good for me because I don’t think of myself as having any specific trail to follow. I didn’t read New Zealand books until I was in my thirties, apart from things like Nell Scanlan and some of the early what would be now described as relatively romantic fiction writers or writers of light fiction. But there were a lot of women writing in England and America and I was reading their books and loving people like Elizabeth Jane Howard and Penelope Fitzgerald was writing later. There were two or three Penelope’s. “Sunday Bloody Sunday” – which Penelope was that?

AL: I can never remember.

FK: I can’t either. Look, I s’pose the short answer to that is there are two things that I’d like to say – one is I didn’t really have a heritage. I wasn’t troubled by it in the same way. Women’s lives always seemed interesting and relevant and I came very early in her writing to Alice Munro who was my great heroine, if you like, of contemporary women’s writing. I think that she’s laid a path before us which one treads with the most enormous respect and she wrote to me! She and I write to each other. Yes, we have a mutual friend in Canada who has put us in touch with each other. That’s only happened very recently and she’s now quite old and in very poor health. But she wrote and told me that she liked my work and I truly think that she has made such a difference to the

belief and the value of writing about women's lives. It's interesting that now you'll find many male short story writers saying, "Well, of course, if I could write like Chekhov [sp 23.26] or Alice Munro," and I think, oh yeah, okay!

FK: I don't think I've very satisfactorily answered that.

AL: Well, you have in the sense that heritage for her does not mean the same for you because it's a different experience, isn't it? You didn't experience that because I feel she has a sense of inferiority here, don't you?

FK: Yes, I do. I have felt often that there has been an attempt to make me feel inferior in the sense that Stead's criticism of women's writing particularly in the 1980s was designed to make women feel inferior. But I mean, when I first came to Wellington my great friend was Lauris Edmond who knew a lot of the poets and she knew Denis Glover and Denis Glover used to talk about the menstrual school of writing and so forth. And I just thought that was so funny. It was ridiculous and you could see through it.

AL: But at the same time so dismissive, isn't it?

FK: So dismissive, yes, but really so few people would seem to me to be taking it seriously that I couldn't either.

AL: Yes, it could've been a tongue in cheek sort of thing, I suppose, could it, or not?

FK: No, I think it was from the heart. He was sexist but it didn't affect me particularly because by that stage he had ... gosh, I sound as if I've known a lot of alcoholics [indistinct 28.22] as alcoholics! He had sunk by that stage into such an alcoholic mess and he was and, really, I was useful because I used to give him rides around town and so forth. And he would get legless at parties and Ian who doesn't drink at all would often help to carry him home and he'd throw his arms around him saying, "Dear, boy, dear, boy, what would I do without you?" And all of this sort of thing and I couldn't take it seriously.

AL: You weren't upset by him?

FK: Not really. So, I don't feel the way that Sue does.

AL: I couldn't understand quite the word "heritage" because so many women have kicked against it that I didn't like to think of it as a "heritage".

FK: Well, I suppose at the time that she and I were starting to write and she's roughly a contemporary of mine there was a lot of the influence of Sargeson and so forth around which, again, I never took very seriously. I got a job in the writing programme for Radio New Zealand before I'd published a book and Sargeson used to write me quite condescending letters about as if I was a little a little typist or something, which I was in a sense. Well, I was a producer, too, but he used to write to me with some condescension and I had never met him. And so, again, I didn't really take him very seriously. I guess I should've taken more people seriously.

FK: I mean, just as a slight digression, a distant relative of mine is caught up in the court system at the moment. She's a niece by marriage and I've been trying to give her some support and I do watch the whole sexist thing going on again. And I can see that she's from the other side of the tracks, if you like, a kind of rather down trodden woman and I can see that she's getting the run around in a way. When I go into Court with her to give her support having to get up and stand up to Judges – some of these men who are quite unpleasant in their attitudes. I think I don't really like this but, of course, I have to do this because I'm here to give her support and you can't kick against the system but you're reminded. Because I've walked for so long outside of the system or I suppose in many people's eyes become the establishment myself.

AL: I think you've locked horns with the system on many occasions.

FK: Well, I'm an old Dame and all of that sort of thing and so I think I don't how to cow-tow to lots of people. What I'm really trying to say is that it confronts me – the issue of sexism and male power confronts me in a way that I'd forgotten about. Do you know what I mean?

AL: Yes, I understand what you mean. That it should still be alive and well today is an absolute disgrace.

FK: Yes, absolutely. And in order to support this woman I have to go along and fall in with it.

AL: But you do because otherwise you'll never get the outcome that you need and deserve.

FK: Exactly.

FK: So I suppose in a way it's easy to forget, it's easy to lose sight of how it felt and maybe I'm talking from the vantage point of many years of feeling like my own person.

AL: Yes, but you've earned it, nobody gave it to you.

FK: Yes, that may be so and I appreciate what you're saying but it still makes it hard for me to relate to the comment about heritage.

AL: Yes, I see what you mean, yes.

Did you start each story telling experience with mindful intent to create a social history of New Zealand in the process?

FK: No.

AL: That's just happened.

FK: No, not at all. Not at all, no.

AL: I find it has become a social history.

FK: People say that, yes, and I do have an awareness. I can't pretend that I don't have an awareness now that I'm not creating some sort of social history. But it was never my intention and what still captures me is a good story. I like storytelling, I love being told stories. And I just think, now happens a story.

AL: And off it goes again.

FK: Yes, and I don't plot in the sense of now I will create a plot but I also do have a sort of a bell curve of where the story is going when I start.

AL: You'll never give up, will you, you'll just keep writing.

FK: I don't have any plans to give up right now. But I have been working very intensively over the past year and I'm quite ready for a break. I've judged the Commonwealth Fiction Prize which involved reading 76 books over the Summer. Some of them, I have to say, once over very lightly but there were three Judges and so we were all kind of doing our culling and saying, "This looks alright," and some of us would have a book that we thought the others really should read and we'd all agree that that wasn't going to make the cut pretty early on. But it's been very intensive and I've been finishing this book which is 11 new stories which is due out.

AL: This is one you've just been fighting to finish in time.

FK: That's right, yes. And I've just finished the editing on that over the summer so I need a little break. We've had a lot of family stuff.

AL: Yes, and family going as well.

FK: Family going and Ian's had a new hip in the last 12 months.

AL: Books? Novels?

FK: Novels, yes, the next novel is going to be based on the story of Jean Batten.

FK: Well, there's a lifelong love of planes with Ian, you see, in this house and this is why we live here so that he can watch aeroplanes.

AL: Well, you are almost in the clouds yourself, aren't you? (referring to house on cliff)

FK: Yes, and Jean Batten was born in Rotorua where I spent 13 years so I'm really interested about the relationship between her and her mother which was quite extraordinary. And mother-daughter relationships interest me a lot.

AL: Because it was very, very close, wasn't it, quite intense?

FK: Yes, very intense. Her mother wanted to be an actress – a failed actress. Or not failed, that’s a bit cruel but she didn’t succeed in being an actress and many would say that she lived a sort of second life through Jean and her success. Then disappeared and died. I think that fascinates me.

FK: I live them (my stories) very intensely when I’m doing them. I become very much involved in them as part of my daily living for a long period of time and I’m really resisting Jean Batten at the moment.

AL: How long does it take you more or less? Is it a year? Do projects change in time?

FK: Yes, they do. Occasionally a project won’t happen but probably about two years. “Captive Wife” took me about two and a half years.

AL: That’ll bring me onto the “Captive Wife”. I wanted to talk about – I just love that book. I wanted to talk about Betty’s love affair and what happened subsequently. When Betty had to leave the pa when they came to get her, liberate her, which in actual fact, of course, as you wrote was to make her a captive again. When you wrote about the Maori chief who she fell in love with and the appalling circumstance of him being ridiculed by the British establishment, really. That ridicule actually, to me, increased his magnificence in a way. It did because no amount of putting some peculiar clothes on him, some ridiculous clothes back to front, could not diminish him and it so diminished them.

FK: Entirely.

AL: It entirely diminished them, that’s what I wanted to talk about. That was what it was done for but it was also to show that Maori warrior as he truly was – a man of stature.

FK: Yes, it was. Oh, yes. I feel as if when I talk about the love affair that is the only part of that book that I feel on slightly shaky ground about because there are the various theories about kidnapping syndromes and so forth.

AL: Yes, and identifying with the kidnapper.

FK: Exactly, yes. And I have to keep that in the back of my mind – am I being totally romantic there? But the evidence that I have been able to collect suggests that Betty appeared to have a relationship with him and having appeared to from all that I could collect and gather I decided that it should be a proper love affair in which they did fall in love. Also, I s’pose, from the fact of having fallen in love with somebody who is of Maori descent myself played a part.

AL: Did that figure when you were writing it? Were you conscious of that?

FK: Yes, I think I was. Yes, I probably was. And before I met Ian I had been engaged to a young Maori man from the north.

AL: Oh, yes, that was in your book, too.

FK: Yes, it is. It would've been a terrible disaster because actually I think he was gay when I come to ... yes, it wouldn't have worked for all sorts of reasons and I think I might have been a refuge for him. But that's another story altogether. But certainly those relationships I was conscious of when writing this story of Oaoiti and Betty. And the fact it seemed to me that she was prepared ... there's different interpretations of what she was trying to do. Was she trying to send them away or was she trying to warn them? And some of the Guard descendants would like us to believe that she was trying to warn them that they were in danger. But they weren't in danger, they had overwhelming power and strength and they knew that and they took Oaoiti and I believe that they must have understood that she wanted to be with him rather than with them which was why they ridiculed him in the way that they did. So she must have been able to intimate clearly that she wanted to be with him and not to go with them.

AL: And that is why Jacky literally treats her as if she's nothing at all. All he wants is his son and that she's just goods.

FK: Yes. The only part that significantly varies from most of what I've researched is when they go to the Bay of Islands; that had actually happened before. So he had apparently used her as barter before all of these events took place. But as a novelist it seemed to me that that was the place to put it because in narrative and dramatic form if she had been such a chattel you couldn't have identified with Jacky in any way at all. And actually, I have some sympathy somewhere in a peculiar part of me for Jacky. I didn't think he was evil. I thought he was simply a product of being a convict, being in chains, being seven years in captivity wearing ball and chain and all of those things. That's what men were like and that's what men who had been so desensitised in that way were likely to be. But the evidence of how he behaved on the beach when the shipwreck first occurred suggests a better man and so I thought that I would plant that further back in the story about him being a man with some sensibility however deep it might seem. And when Oaoiti is belittled it's like an animal bellowing with pain, too.

AL: That is a terrible and at the same time really beautiful description of that awful act that they did on him. It was just so appalling..

FK: So hideous.

FK: I was just going to say the wonderful village that they had – the second one. They destroyed both villages but the second one was a magnificent piece of work. And the accounts that I think what is generally believed is that Barrett Marshall, the surgeon, actually took Betty's story and he appropriated it. This is the belief because he could not have known the detail of that village so closely and there is an account by I think Eric Ramsden which suggests that Betty talked to Barrett Marshall, that she was otherwise ostracised but Barrett Marshall saw an opportunity to get a story and wrote down what she told him. And all of that detailed description of life in the village could only have been channelled, if you like, through her talking to him. Which is why he figures as a character in the book.

AL: And going back to Jacky, you know how he educates her?

FK: Yes, you mean sexually?

AL: No, no, I mean he actually sent her to school, he paid for her.

FK: Oh, that's right, yes.

AL: Was that solely for his own ends, would you say? That because he had designs on her from when she was a child so did he think, I'll marry her and she can have my children and she'll be very useful to me if I educate her? Or did he see something in her, do you think? Did you want him to see something in her that was worth educating? Because she was so young, wasn't she?

FK: I need to think back, it's a long time since I wrote that book. Why did he educate her?

FK: Yes, it was Charlotte that he was interested in at the time, wasn't it?

AL: Yes, sort of, but then he took Betty – you remember in the book he took her to the seashore and sat her on his knee.

FK: Oh, yes, which is pure fiction.

FK: No, the reason that all of that happens really is if you want the novelist's perspective on why that happens is because I needed her to meet Adie. Sorry!

FK: There really was a Rocks School but I don't know whether she ever went to it or not. I just needed her to ... because she's not really educated. It's Jacky who is able to read and write which we know he must have been able to do because he could write logbooks. We don't know for sure whether Betty could or not. I know that she worked in the shop and that really is where she worked. And it's possible I think that she could probably do figures but how well she could write it's really debateable because everything was destroyed. There were no logbooks, no journals, at some point the guards had purged all of those things so nothing remained. Not a word, not a jot. But I decided that if she couldn't that she should have a very basic sort of working knowledge but she needed somebody who she could tell her story to and Adie is pure invention. The only reality of Adie Malcolm is that when my mother lived on the sheep station in the East Cape in the early part of last century she had a governess called Adie Malcolm.

AL: So she's pure fiction.

FK: Total fiction.

AL: Yet she's three dimensional in that book. But she was there for Betty to tell her story to.

FK: Yes, and in the beginning when I wrote the first draft she was a much older woman because I was using Adie Malcolm, my mother's governess, as the prototype if you like and then I decided that she had to have her own story if she was to become interesting enough for Betty to tell her story to. Then she had to have a story of her own. So that's all made up. So Barrett Marshall doesn't go to dinner with Adie at all. Adie was a

person who I wanted to be able to cross boundaries so that she on the one hand knew rough children at The Rocks and at the other hand got invited to the governor's for dinner. So all of that's pure invention.

AL: And at the end of that book what Betty achieved because it's innate in her almost from the moment she's born – she's strong, isn't she? She's definitely strong. And what she achieves in the end, I presume, is she can choose.

FK: Yes, it's about choice.

AL: And she chooses to go back to Jacky and that is wonderful in a way because that's the choice I have actually chosen, you haven't chosen me. I've chosen you.

FK: Yes, that's what I wanted.

AL: And Adie in a way made a choice, I suppose, but a very sad one. It's not the same kind of choice. So were you sort of paralleling these two?

FK: Yes, I was. This is what I wanted. This is [indistinct 52.28] the feminist literature, isn't it? Betty makes a choice. In actual fact, she went on to have another, I think another eight or 10 children and died of tongue cancer from smoking a pipe.

FK: I found a really good book by a woman called Grace Karsken's [sp 53.31] which I've got downstairs, I'm pretty sure still. Which is about an archaeological dig in The Rocks and it's marvellous because there's thousands of pieces of domestic ware that have been catalogued and itemised so you could tell very clearly what it was like in The Rocks and that's something that the few Australians who have read it do say that they feel that I've got this absolutely spot on. And I do like Sydney, I love Sydney.

FK: While there are parts of Betty's story that are conjecture, like the love story and like the outcome of the Bay of Islands and so forth, what I did discover because she'd always been referred to as "the woman" in the accounts. "The woman appeared on the beach." She's not even given a name in lots of accounts. and there are no references to her. And discovering, finding the key to who she really was that was amazing. It was absolutely wonderful. And when I discovered that both her grandparents had come on the convict ships and that is true – the story of her grandmother hopping from ship to ship and getting the grandfather – that's all true and all documented. And then the children going to the orphanage and Betty looking after grandmother. I was able to figure all of that out. I spent quite a bit of time in the Mitchell Library in Sydney and that was fantastic and I think I've written about coming across this single document but it just had enough clues for me to start digging around. I find in another book that Granny actually did make the quilts out of the bits of the soldier's uniforms. And so she's not just "the woman" anymore, she had a history and it's a much more interesting, much more detailed one than Jacky's could possibly have been.

AL: Yes, that's what makes her stand out, doesn't it? Whereas Jacky's story starts with his logs and it's chronological. Betty's starts with her grandmother, she has a history.

- FK: Well, writing the logbooks was an interesting experience because I read lots of logbooks. I mean, I read logbooks on and off for about two years to try and get the voice because I thought that if he could read and write this is how he would express himself in logbook language. Some people don't like the use of figures and things, numerals.
- AL: I like that because I felt it brought him to life. It was part of who he was. That's where he would've written properly.
- FK: Yes, it was. That's how logbooks were written.
- AL: And going back to Oaoiti and Betty and that dreadful incident, was that in a way almost as an apology? When you brought it up did you feel that you wanted to bring this out into the light because it was so heinous and it should be brought up and it should be recognised as a very bad incident in ...
- FK: Yes, I did. I did. I was very conscious of it in terms of race relations. And it was one of the incidents which was ultimately within a very short time was an influence on the Treaty being drawn up. There were a number of incidents that occurred around the New Zealand coastline but this was the big one. It was the first armed conflict between British military and Maori people. And it was in the light of that that was one of the driving forces behind the Treaty. So you could say it's almost a footnote but it's also a hugely important footnote to the Treaty and to subsequent relations.
- AL: Do you see yourself as a gender reformer?
- FK: No, not really. But I realise that I am perceived as one. And I'm not unhappy with that. I don't get up and think, now I must improve relations between men and women! But that said, and you mentioned before that I had tackled the system from time to time, and I suppose that I do when I have a sense of injustice. I don't know that I always get it right but I try. Well, let's say that I didn't set out to reform .
- AL: But it happened.
- FK: Yes, it's happened and the more that it's happened the more it seemed to me to be fairly central to my work that I don't allow women to be victims.
- FK: I try hard for them not to be. But I don't want them to behave like politically automatons. I want them to make mistakes and I need to allow them to make mistakes which is like me, I s'pose.
- AL: Yes, like all of us That's very important. And that they're not victims.
- FK: So I suppose although I answered that question with a rather short "No," how I think about women is central to the way that I write.

AL: So you wouldn't necessarily at the time of writing have put that nomenclature on it?

FK: No.

AL: But somebody else has put it on and it sort of fits, is that what it is?

FK: Yes, I think so. I am drawn to strong women's stories which is probably why I'm going on to Batten.

AL: Yes, of course.

FK: I have strong feelings about other issues, too. I have strong feelings about racial inequality and I am deeply opposed to war.

#### **Audio File DS300029**

AL: I had to give a 20 minute talk on what I was going to do and I said in regard to you that Fiona Kidman has been talked of as a feminist and I said at times branded as a feminist and there's a bit of a difference there because it suggests a rather more militant approach to feminism and that I felt you had expanded more that feminism came into it but only in the sense of so did freedom to worship as you pleased or not, as the case may be. Definitely on race which is so important. And that it was much wider than just a feminist issue, it was almost that is who you are as a woman. You believe in fair play in all these kind of humanitarian senses and that you couldn't just be branded or just be pigeon holed as a feminist. And we had quite a go about this!

FK: I'm glad, I'm very pleased to hear it because that's how I perceive myself.

AL: Yes, I felt it was narrow and one of the professor's said, "Oh, you're just afraid to say the word "feminist"." And I said, "Well, I'm not afraid to say the word "feminist" but I feel that the word "feminist", the interpretation of the word "feminist", has changed and whereby it was trying to put an end to the patriarchal aspect of women being suppressed. It was not a man hating thing as such but now if you say, "I am a feminist" 'they' automatically think man hater. That is the true interpretation." And I said, I felt Fiona Kidman was not. She came back to me and she said, "Well, you have the wrong interpretation." And I said, "I feel that the interpretation has changed from the true one that you're depicting," which was the patriarch. I said, "I believe that Fiona Kidman not only is interested in women's rights but equally if men were I the situation that women have been in she would've fought just as hard for men and that it's a fair play thing."

FK: Yes, I also think that it's fairer to men.

AL: Yes, it is fairer to men, I agree with you. Once they get used to it.

FK: Yes. Well, I mean, I think to be chosen by a woman, for women to share financial burdens with men, there are all sorts of reasons why it seems to me that it's a better thing for men.

AL: It is, yes, I agree with you. And they sit better in the world for it, I think.

FK: Yes. I like to think that my son and my grandsons are men who respect women and I suppose what Ian's [off the record 3.40 – 4.17]. Thank you for saying that because I think that it's about ... I always remember one particular festival that I did here in Wellington and it was in the Michael Fowler Centre which is a big venue. There were hundreds of women there and I was the last in the panel of five speakers which included the Canadian poet Phyllis Webb, Margaret Mahy, a couple of other international writers – I can't remember who they all were now. And they all started off by saying, and it was to do with women's writing, "Well, of course, I'm not a feminist." And I got up at the last and I thought I felt increasingly uncomfortable and I said, "Well, I have to start off by saying that I am a little bit different from the women who've just spoken because I am feminist." And somebody stood up and started to clap and within a few moments there were hundreds of women standing and clapping. That was amazing. It was an amazing moment and so when the applause had died down I then said, "Well, I am a feminist in the sense that I believe ..." you've heard the things that I believe in. "I believe in equal rights; that women should have an equal opportunity to be educated; to have equal pay in the workforce; to have equal access to health care and equally the right to choose their sexual partners. Meaning that I don't believe in forced marriages and rape and if you don't believe in those things well then put your hand up."

AL: And nobody did.

FK: Well, nobody did, no. I mean, people clapped and cheered some more. At the end of it there was a man who got up and said, "Well, aren't you going a little against history?" He said something really insulting and offensive and people jeered and boo'd. I thought, why are these women denying it? And I made a contract with myself there and then that I when people said to me something about feminism I wouldn't ever deny it. And I would say to them something like, "These are the things I believe in. Do you disagree with them?" And that's something like what I said which is what Margaret Atwood says. I mean, I'm taking my line straight from Margaret Atwood and she and I are almost exactly of an age.

AL: It could almost be said to be a humanist, in a way.

FL: Of course it is. It's a human rights issue.

AL: Exactly, that's what I was thinking. It's a human rights issue and if you do believe in the rights of women you can't help but believe in the rights of everybody, can you?

FK: That's right.

AL: It's a natural follow on from that.

FK: I said that to my rather square, lovely but rather conservative lawyer one day and he said, "Good God, Fiona, I think I may be a feminist, too! You'll have me believing I'm one or something like it!" So because I continue to refuse to refute the word "feminism" and I also say then, "Within feminism there are various ways of interpreting

it. This is the way I interpret it. And, of course, some feminists don't feel comfortable with men around them. That's their right but I'm not like that."

AL: This is what I felt. I don't know why I felt that but I just felt that yours is a more embracing attitude to human rights.

FK: You've made me feel good, thank you.

FK: There's also been a lot of suggestion, or there was back in the eighties and early nineties, that I absolutely had to be a lesbian.

AL: I know, yes. You put that in your book. What a load of bunk.

FK: Well, you know, again, there is lesbian separatist feminism and I acknowledge that as a perfectly valid form of feminism. It's just not a part that I ...

AL: That you happen to be. No.

FK: But it was the easy way of putting women who said they were feminists down was to deny them their sexuality.

AL: Exactly. That's a cruel thing to do, isn't it?

FK: Yes, it is.

AL: It's really hitting below the belt and it's not even an argument, is it? It's not a discussion, it's just being thoroughly nasty and also in putting lesbians down as well.

FK: Yes, exactly.

AL: It's a double whammy, really.

FK: It is.

FK: But it was very commonly and widely practiced and it was very easy to do.

AL: So it's a vicious form of trying to discredit you and when it shouldn't even mean that you should be discredited by being associated with lesbians. Because they have a perfect right to live a normal life the same as everybody else.

FK: Exactly, yeah.

AL: I think we've come almost to the end. You mentioned the Australian market.

FK: The Australian market, yes. I wish.

AL: Who do you consider to be the significant commentators on your work?

FK: I saw that question.

AL: Not Stead?

FK: No. I mean, in fairness, in absolute fairness he's only ever done one critical piece about my work and it wasn't bad. This was before we fell out so badly and he liked my poetry. Who are the most significant commentators? Gosh, I don't know. In the eighties Lydia Wevers (Professor at the Stout Research Centre) was quite a significant commentator on my work. She was a professor at the [indistinct 12.52] Centre in Wellington. I don't think she's so interested in it now. The body of criticism in this country tends to turn over. You get phases of people commentating on literary work. I think and this probably adds to the whole idea that I'm an embattled old man hating feminist is I was very much supported in the early years by the magazine "Broadsheet". Anne Else [indistinct 14.11] was a significant commentator on my work and she still is. But I don't see a continuous critical thread with my work. And I bother academics because I'm not an academic. And a lot of criticism, particularly academic criticism tends to sail around the edge and I worry it. I think I worry them. And I think that that's partly why the easiest thing is to label me. I can't really answer that. And there's not a lot of ...

AL: There aren't a lot of established critics as such really, are there?

FK: No, not really. The real commentators on my work are my readers who continue to write to me and tell me what they think.

FK: Interestingly they still write to me about "A Breed of Women".

FK: When that book came out I had hundreds and hundreds of letters.

AL: It's still valid in a strange way.

FK: It's interesting you say that, that's what people tell me.

AL: Yes, it is. Because in a way we're still fighting many of those battles. Do you feel that it's gone backwards a bit?

FK: Yes, yes, I do. And not only that, I think that women have less choices in many ways. I get very troubled by the young women who from economic necessity go to work. It's not a question about equality anymore, it's a question of economy. When they perhaps feel that they're not ready to and their kids ... you can walk around this neighbourhood which is a upper-middle income relatively affluent almost conservative area and you see women in their suits shovelling their little kids into the car and the wee ones are calling out, "Mummy, Mummy, I don't want to go today, I don't want to go today." And the mothers have got their lovely makeup and you can see that there's pain in their eyes.

AL: They need that double income.

FK: Yeah, they simply have to have it.

FK: And this is something that our son provided for his wife was that she was able to stay home and look after the children and do what she wanted as well.

AL: And get a degree.

FK: And get a degree.

AL: Yes, that's another misconception that some people seem to think that what women wanted to do was to turn themselves into men, and have men's lives, but that's not the case at all. They just wanted to right some of the injustices or as many as possible of which there were many at the time because we were silent voices. And that's what you've done – you've given us a voice.

FK: That's nice of you to say that.

FK: The one book where I think people feel that perhaps my character was a victim was "Paddy's Puzzle" but I don't think she is.

AL: Yes, but she's not, is she?

FK: Because she chooses death. She chooses to die rather than to forego passion. So it's a choice for passion.

AL: I had that here to ask you about "Paddy's Puzzle" because I was a bit confused. I didn't ask that question but that's what I thought at first. She's not a victim because she has a choice.

FK: Yes, I mean, that book was published in America by WW Norton and that was kind of the response was, "Why didn't she get a life? Why didn't she pull herself together and save herself?" But I think the only way she could have was to have gone back to Winnie [sp 20.08] and Winnie's [sp 20.09] trail of disasters and she didn't want that. She wanted colour ...

AL: She wanted to live.

FK: ... and she wanted Ambrose to the end. In saying that I don't think that she necessarily made a great choice but she made a choice.

AL: Because Winnie [sp 20.32], looming large, was something that she had previously rejected, hadn't she?

FK: Yes. I mean, people also say of "The Book of Secrets" it has been said why didn't Mariah simply leave? Well, as she says towards the end of the book, "I'm the voice of conscience, you'll look at me and remember." Of course, I mean, the great anti-patriarchal novel or the big one, if you like, for me is "The Book of Secrets" because, well, for all the obvious reasons. But to me ultimately Mariah has a sort of triumph of her own, I think.

AL: Yes, she does and she has the triumph of the mixed blood coming through. That is true New Zealand. And she was, she was a voice. She didn't give in.

FK: No, she didn't give in.

AL: It didn't really matter where she was, it was the importance that she didn't give in as a human being.

FK: Which is a little bit like me!

[End of recorded material time code 22.11]

APPENDIX C

13 Mizpah Road  
Waiake  
Auckland 0630

20<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

Dame Fiona Kidman  
28 Rakau Road  
Hataitai  
Wellington 6021

Dear Dame Fiona

I am writing to you to confirm your permission to reproduce the material detailed below in my Masters's thesis (presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature) titled 'Fiona Kidman, Writer: A Feminist Critique of New Zealand Society', which I am currently preparing for examination

If you do not indicate otherwise, I will use the usual form of acknowledgment including date, title (if available), author etc.

List of material

Interview: 12 March 2011 between Dame Fiona Kidman and Anna Leclercq, with the proviso that all "off the record" comments be excluded.

Letter of rejection: 12 March 1969 from Whitcombe & Tombs Limited of Auckland rejecting the offer to publish the typescript titled *Club Litany*.

Emails dated as follows: 11.11.2010 (Thesis) (all references to I Allende to be removed), 12.01.2011 (Permission); this email gives me permission to write a thesis concerning your work and its influence. 14.3.2011 (More thoughts), 19.3.2011 (2), 10.4.2011 (Disgraceful incident), 11.04.2011 (Disgraceful Incident), 18.4.2011 (Research), 8.5.2011 (Interruptions), 19.5.2011 (Image 2.17 pm), 20.8.2011 (Permission for access to material in Alexander Turnbull Library) (7.10.2011 (The plot thickens), 11.11.2011, 15.11.2011 (Hello 7.50 pm), 10.12.2011 (ps and pps).

Thank you for your consideration of this request. A duplicate copy of this form is enclosed for your convenience.

Yours sincerely

Anna E Leclercq

*Fiona Kidman*

The above request is hereby approved on the conditions specified below, and on the understanding that full credit will be given to the source.

APPENDIX C

105/12  
*Anna E Leclercq*

Approved

## **APPENDIX D**

This email confirms that Anna Leclercq has my permission to access the script of a play called 'Club Litany', (circa 1960s) if it is lodged in the Alexander Turnbull Library. Note that I am uncertain as to whether it is there or not. If so, it would have been deposited when I first began placing papers with the Turnbull.

This is the only document for which permission is granted

Fiona Kidman

**20<sup>th</sup> August 2011.**

## **APPENDIX E**

Yes of course. Look forward to your thesis...I assume I will be able to read it??? Regards Sharon  
On 26/05/2012, at 1:18 PM, Anna Leclercq wrote:

Dear Sharon

I have been writing a thesis on Fiona Kidman and you were kind enough to send me some information by email. I have now completed the thesis and am writing to ask you if you would kindly email your permission for me to use the material you sent me.

Thank you very much and kind regards  
Anna Leclercq

**Anna Leclercq**

**From:** "fiona kidman" <fionakidman@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "Anna Leclercq" <contador1@xtra.co.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 7 December 2011 4:20 p.m.  
**Subject:** Re: Club Litany  
To Whom It May Concern  
Alexander Turnbull Library

Anna Leclercq has my permission to access the rejection letter for 'Club Litany'

The number sequence is 90-041-16.

Fiona Kidman

--- On Wed, 12/7/11, Anna Leclercq <contador1@xtra.co.nz> wrote:

From: Anna Leclercq <contador1@xtra.co.nz>  
Subject: Club Litany  
To: "Fiona Kidman" <fionakidman@yahoo.com>  
Date: Wednesday, December 7, 2011, 4:04 PM

Hello Fiona

I am writing to ask you if I could have your permission to access copy of a letter from Whitcombe & Tombs rejecting the novel at 90-041-16. If you agree, would you please note on your email the number sequence 90-041-16.

Thank you and best regards  
Anna

12 March 1969

MEMO. FROM Assistant Editor  
**WHITCOMBE & TOMBS LIMITED, Auckland**

To Manager, Rotorua branch

CLUB LITANY

These notes are, of course, only opinions and should be assessed as such.

To start at the most commercial level, this MS seems potentially publishable. After all, it's loaded with sex and Rugby.

On the other hand such honesty in the treatment of sex may be more than W&T can yet accept. This isn't an argument for making changes: it may mean trying another publisher.

On the structural level there seem to me several weaknesses and some room for revision.

In general (and in contradiction of the author's note) I should say that the second half of the book needs tightening more than the first. It's much harder to hold a reader through a time of disillusionment and decay; unless you happen to be, say, Nathanael West.

Then there is the recurrent colonial problem of rendering our own argot. This needs, I suggest, a greater formality - I can only point to Sargeson as perhaps our one successful practitioner.

Finally, the author's prejudices sometimes show - and are once or twice embarrassing. It's pretty dangerous putting Myra into a bookshop in the first place, but the Murdoch-McCarthy-Brontë flirtation is too much. Jonathan, though, is credible.

Three specific points. Kay's abortion doesn't seem dramatically to bear the attention it gets. Is it largely an excuse for the Auckland trip, which again is thin?

This is linked to the characterisation of Adrian, another weak point. Is the author personally undecided about him? Branco - lower class - is much better.

Copies are ~~sent~~ only to facilitate private research and may not be reproduced without the permission of:

The Alexander Turnbull Library  
 P O Box 12349, Wellington

Ref. No: 90-041-16

Fiona Kidman

MEMO. FROM

**WHITCOMBE & TOMBS LIMITED, Auckland**

To.....

And I wonder about that final death on the field. Suspension of disbelief gets a bit of a battering there. Would, say, permanent disablement (smashed knee?) have served the artistic purpose?

These criticisms may sound formidable, but I don't think they are. I'd say that one fairly critical revision would have this MS ready for print.

I wish it the best of luck.

*Ernest Macdonald*

**Anna Leclercq**

**From:** "Harvey McQueen and Anne Else" <mcqueen.else@xtra.co.nz>  
**To:** "Anna Leclercq" <contador1@xtra.co.nz>  
**Sent:** Sunday, 3 April 2011 10:04 p.m.  
**Subject:** Re: Paper

Dear Anna

You have my permission to quote anything of mine, no problem. As for the date and exact title of the conference, you will need to have a look at the website for the Stout Research Centre at Victoria University, and if that doesn't give you the information please contact the centre and they will be able to tell you when it took place in 2004. The venue was at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, and it was in association with an exhibition on the 1970s at the museum.

Best wishes

Anne

----- Original Message -----

**From:** Anna Leclercq  
**To:** Harvey McQueen and Anne Else  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 03, 2011 9:45 AM  
**Subject:** Paper

Dear Anne

I have read your 'Women in the Seventies' paper and have found a number (at least four) quotes that I would like to use in my thesis.

May I have your permission to do this, please, and, if so, would you give me the name of the Conference and the date it was held?

I am now going to study Chap 4 of your thesis because there is bound to be a great deal of information in it that will be very useful to me.

The same questions apply to your thesis.i.e. May I quote etc.?

Hope you are having a good weekend.

Best regards  
Anna

## WORKS CITED

---

Primary: Kidman's works, reviews and personal commentaries

Broughton, W. S., 'Review of *A Breed of Women*, by Fiona Kidman', *Landfall* 34, no. 4 (1980), pp. 365-367.

Crosbie, Sharon. Email to Anna Leclercq re: *A Breed of Women*. 3 Dec. 2010. Email.

---. "A Breed of Women." Message to the author. 28 Dec. 2010. Email.

D'Cruz, Doreen. "Women, Time and Place in Fiona Kidman's *The Book of Secrets*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* September 2007. 64-79.

Dunsford, Cathie. "A Breed of Women." *Landfall* 30 January 1981.

Ensing, Riemke. "Interviews Fiona Kidman." *Landfall* 30 January 1981.

Fiona Kidman - writer. <[http://ww.fionakidman.com/?page\\_id 186](http://ww.fionakidman.com/?page_id 186)> Web 14 April 2010 URL.

Kedgley, Sue. *Our Own Country: Leading New Zealand Women Writers Talk About Their Writing and Their Lives*. Auckland: Penguin Books, 1989. .

Hanson, Paul Michael. "Beyond Settler Consciousness. New Geographies of Nation in Two Novels by Margaret Lawrence and Fiona Kidman." MA thesis, University of Victoria, Wellington. 2008. Web. 21 March 2011.

Kidman, Fiona. *A Breed of Women*. Artarmon, N.S.W.: Harper & Row, 1979.

Kidman, Fiona. "A Breed of Women." Message to the author. 11 November 2010. Email.

Kidman, Fiona. "Re: A Breed of Women." Message to the author. 9 May 2011. Email.

Kidman, Fiona. *At the End of Darwin Road*. Auckland: Random House, 2008.

--- *Beside the Dark Pool*. Auckland: Random House, 2009.

--- *Mandarin Summer*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1981.

--- *Paddy's Puzzle*. Auckland: Heinemann, 1983.

--- *Palm Prints*. Auckland: Vintage, 1994.

Kidman, Fiona. Personal interview. 12 March 2011.

Kidman, Fiona. *Songs from the Violet Café*. Auckland: Vintage, 2003.

--- *The Book of Secrets*. Auckland: Random House, 1999.

- *The Captive Wife*. Auckland: Random House, 2005.
- *The House Within*. Auckland: Vintage, 1997.
- *True Stars*. Auckland: Random Century New Zealand Limited, 1990.
- Kidman, Fiona. "Women's Rights Still Need to be Fought For". Sunday Star Times. 17 July 2011.
- Kidman, Fiona. "Re: Email to Anna Leclercq re: thesis.3 December 2010. Email
- Kidman, Fiona. "Re: hello." Email to Anna Leclercq 13 March 2011. Email
- Kidman, Fiona. re: research to Anna Leclercq 18 April 2011. Email.
- Kidman, Fiona. re: a breed of women to Anna Leclercq 9 May 2011. Email
- Kidman, Fiona re: image to Anna Leclercq 18 May 2011. Email.
- Kidman, Fiona re: the plot thickens to Anna Leclercq 7 October 2011. Email.
- Kidman, Fiona. Personal Interview, Career Investigation for MA project. Wellington, with author, 12 March 2011.
- Welch, Denis. "Denis Welch Talks to Fiona Kidman." *The Listener* 10 September 2005.
- Welsh, Elizabeth. "Fiona Kidman, The Captive Wife." *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* (2006): 114-116.

Secondary: The rest

- Angleviel, Frederic and Levine, Stephen. *New Zealand and New Caledonia Neighbours Friends and Partners; La Nouvelle Zelande et la Nouvelle-Caledonie voisins, amis et partenaires*. Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2008.
- Atwood, Margaret. *Negotiating with the Dead. A Writer on Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Beattie, Graham. Wellington Book Launch *At the End of Darwin Road* -Fiona Kidman 27.05.2010 URL. [http://beattiesbookblog.blogspot.com/2008/03/wellington-book-launch-at-end-of Darwin-road-fiona-kidman.html](http://beattiesbookblog.blogspot.com/2008/03/wellington-book-launch-at-end-of-Darwin-road-fiona-kidman.html)> 27.05.2010.
- Bentley, Trevor. *Captured by Maori. White Female Captives, Sex and Racism on the Nineteenth-century New Zealand Frontier*. Auckland: Penguin Books (NZ) Limited, 2004.

- Berry, Louisa. "the bone people and a War of Position". 139.799 Research Report. Massey University, 2011.
- 'Betty Guard', URL:<http://www.nzhistory.net.nzmedia/photo/betty-guard> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 11 Sep. 2008.
- Campbell, Alistair. *Collected Poems*. Martinborough: Alister Taylor, 1981.
- Catherall, Sarah. "A Tale of Two Writers." *The Dominion Post* 15 March 2008, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.
- Coney, Sandra. "Why the Women's Movement Ran out of Steam". Eds. Sue Kedgley and Mary Varnham. Wellington: Daphne Basell Associates, 1993. 51-74.
- Crean, Mike. "A Prisoner of NZ Colonial History." *The Press* 6 August 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 12.
- D'Cruz, Doreen. 139.707 Women, Desire and Narrative: Study Guide One. Palmerston North, N.Z: School of English and Media Studies, Massey U. a.d.
- de Kock, Leon. "Interview With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*. 23(3) 1992 29-47. <<http://ariel.synergiesprairies.ca/ariel/index.php/ariel/article/viewFile/2505/2458>>.
- Dewey, John. *Experience and Education*. New York: Touchstone, 1997.
- Duder, Tessa. *Margaret Mahy : a writer's life*, Auckland: Harper Collins (New Zealand) Limited, 2005.
- Else, Anne. "'Gender inequalities - Arts and culture'". *Te Ara - Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 28 Apr 2011. Web. <<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/gender-inequalities/6> >
- Else, Anne. "On Shifting Ground: Self-narrative, feminist theory and writing practice." Victoria University, Wellington. 2006. Web. 13 May 2011.
- Else, Anne. "Writing and Reading 'women' in the Seventies." Conf. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. "The Seventies in New Zealand: A Decade of Change". 3 Dec. 2004. Conference presentation.
- Else, Barbara. "New Zealand Novels and Their Readers". *ABD 2001*. Vol. 32 No.1. Web 26 May 2011 <<http://www.accu.or.jp/appreb//09/pdf32-1/32-1p-07-8.pdf>

- Elson-White, Christine Elizabeth Pearson. "Kerikeri 'Gold'. A Behavioural Investigation of the Process Involved in the Evolution of Spatial Patterning and the 'Personalite' of Kerikeri, Bay of Islands. MA thesis. Massey University, 1971.
- Farrell, Fiona. *The Broken Book*. Auckland: Auckland University Press. 2011.
- Ferrier, C. "Jean Devanney, 1894-1962" *Kotare* (2007). Special Issue: Essays in New Zealand Literary Biography, Women Prose Writers to World War I. 2007. Web. <<http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Whi071Kota-t1-g2-t5.html>> 16 April. 2011.
- Fletcher, Beryl. *The House at Karamu*. Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2003.
- Furay, Conal and Salevouris, Michael. *The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide*. Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 1988, ISBN 0-88295-982-4.
- Gibbons, Peter. "Non Fiction" in Terry Sturm. Ed. *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*. Auckland: Oxford UP, 1991.
- Gill, Richard. *Mastering English Literature*. Third Edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Grady, Don. 'Guard, Elizabeth – Biography,' from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. Web. 1 Sep 2010. <<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1g23/1>>.
- Greer, Germaine. *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*. London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1979.
- Hanson, Paul Michael. "Beyond Settler Consciousness. New Geographies of Nation in Two Novels by Margaret Lawrence and Fiona Kidman." MA thesis, University of Victoria, Wellington. 2008. Web. 21 March 2011.
- Hetherington, Carol. "'London Calling? Long-Distance Connections in Australian Literature.'" Conference paper 2003 Published in *London was full of Rooms*, eds. Tully Barnett et al (2006): 244-242.
- Hindmarsh, Gerard. "Discovering d'Urville." *Heritage New Zealand* Winter 2006: 1.
- Jensen, Kai. *Whole Men: The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996.

- Kendrick, Lance. *Traveller in the Countries of the Heart. A Preliminary Bibliography on Fiona Kidman*. Wellington: New Zealand Library School, 1997.
- Lawn, Jennifer. "Domesticating Settler Gothic in New Zealand Literature." *New Literatures Review* 38 (2002): 46-62.
- Le Marquand, Jane Nicole (PhD, English, 2006) "I'm not a Woman Writer but.....!': Gender Matters in New Zealand Women's Short Fiction 1975 - 1995". 2006.
- Lopez, India. Review: Germaine Greer. Web. 27 March 2012.  
<<http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/books/6565631/Review-Germaine-Gre>>
- Mander, Jane. *Story of a New Zealand River*. New York: John Lane Company. 1920.
- May, W.E. "The Log-books used by Ships of the East India Company". *Journal of Navigation*. 1974, 27 : 116-118 DOI: 10.1017/S0373463300025236). Published online: 18 January 2010
- McCallum, Mary. "Congratulations Dame Sir Fiona". *O Audacious Book*. 10 June 2006. Web. 12 July 2011 <<http://marymccallum.blogspot.com/2009/06/congratulations-dame-sir-fiona.html>>
- Morton, Frances. "The Roar Deal of Women". *Sunday Herald*. 3 July 2011. .
- Myers, Virginia. *Head and Shoulders. Successful New Zealand Women talk to Virginia Myers*. Auckland: Penguin Books (N.Z.) Limited, 1986. .
- Nicholas, Jill. "A true star." *Daily Post B*; 25 March 2006: 1-1.
- Norman, Rosemary. "*The Captive Wife* by Fiona Kidman." *Booknotes*. Summer 2005.
- Novitz, Rosemary. "Women: Weaving an Identity". *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*. Eds. David Novitz and Bill Willmott. Wellington: G P Books, 1990. 53-57.
- Pacheco, Anita (Ed). "*A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*." Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. .
- Pinto, S. (2010). Emotional Histories and Historical Emotions: Looking at the Past in Historical Novels. *Rethinking History*, 14(2), 189-207. doi:10.1080/13642521003710748
- Powell, Sarah: 'Qu'en est-il d'amour? Vers un bilan des liaisons interoethniques dans la littérature de Kanaky/Nouvelle-Caledonie et d'Aotearoa, Nouvelle Zelande.' *La Nouvelle Zelande et la Nouvelle-Caledonie voisins, amis et partenaires*. Victoria University Press. Wellington. 2008. Editors: Frederic Angleviel & Stephen Levine.

- Rhodes, H Winston. *New Zealand fiction since 1945: a critical survey of recent novels and short stories*. Dunedin: J. McIndoe, 1968. .
- Robinson, Roger & Nelson, Wattie., Eds. *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Roberts, Heather. *Where Did She Come From? New Zealand Women Novelists 1862-1987*. Wellington: Allen and Unwin New Zealand, 1989.
- Rogers, Anna. and Rogers, Max. *Turning the Pages*. Auckland: Red Books, 1993.
- Sarti, Antonella. *Spiritcarvers: Interviews with eighteen writers from New Zealand*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1998.
- Shafak, Elif. "Writing Across Borders: Empathy in the Age of Conflict." *2011 Forum for European Philosophy Literary Festival Event*. Sheik Zayed Theatre, New Academic Building, London School of Economics. London. 18 Feb. 2011.
- Smart, Peter. "Liberation and Literature." *Landfall* 30 June 1979.
- Smithies, James. *Post-War New Zealand Literary Critique*. Thesis eleven 2008 92:87 DOI. 10.1177/0725513607085046. Published by Sage.
- Stead, Christian Karlson.. *Book Self. The Reader as Writer and the Writer as Critic*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008.
- Steer, Philip. "G. B. Lancaster (Edith Lyttleton), 1873–1945." *Kōtare* (2007). Special Issue: Essays in New Zealand Literary Biography, Women Prose Writers to World War I. 2007. Web. 16 April 2011.<<http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Whi071Kota-t1-g2-t5.html>>
- Stone, Lawrence. "Only women", *NY Review of Books* 32:6 (1985) Web. 20 April 2011. <[ww.mybooks.com/articles](http://www.mybooks.com/articles)>
- Stewart, Adela. *My Simple Life in New Zealand*. London: Robert Banks & Son, 1908.
- The Best New Zealand Fiction: Vol. 1*. Ed. Fiona Kidman. Vintage Books, U.S.A. 2004.
- The Harriet Affair – a frontier of chaos?* <<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/maori-european-contact-pre-1840/the-harriet-affair>> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 11 May 2010.
- Chapter II. "The Wairau Incident". *The Blenkinsop Saga*,(<http://boards.ancestry.com/surnames.blenkinsop/3.2/mb.ashx>) 23 April 2012.

- “The Women’s Room.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 2011. Web. Wikimedia Foundation. Inc. 13 May 2011. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Women’s Room](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Women's_Room)>.
- Thomson, Margie. “Digging up the Past.” *Herald on Sunday Supplement* .7 August 2005.
- Todd, Martin. “To Have her Home and Leave it too: Katherine Mansfield and her Middle Class Values.” Symposium hosted by the Katherine Mansfield Society, Menton, France”. 25 September 2009.
- Van Gennep *The Rites of Passage*. London. 1977.
- Welch, Denis. “Denis Welch Talks to Fiona Kidman.” *The Listener* 10 September 2005.
- Welsh, Elizabeth. “Fiona Kidman, The Captive Wife.” *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* (2006): 114-116.
- West, T J. “The Feminist Impulse in Contemporary Historical Fiction”. Web. 27 March 2012. <<http://historyloversdelight.wordpress.com/2011/12/21/the-feminist-impulse-in-contemporary-historical-fiction>>
- Wilson, Janet; Gorski, Hedwig. “Kidman, Fiona.” *Contemporary Novelists*. 2001. *Encyclopedia.com*. Web. 18 Feb. 2011 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>>.
- Winder, Virginia. “The Adventures of Betty Guard.” *The Daily News* 6 August 2005, First edition: 19.
- Wright, Matthew. “Our History is Found in Sydney Sites.” *The New Zealand Herald* 31 October 2010. 6.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.