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BREAKING THE SILENCE:

Protest in the Feminist Fiction of Two New Zealand Writers

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology at Massey University

Lynley Jane Cvitanovich

1984

Everything is speechless when we do not
recognise its speech.

Edith Searle Grossmann:
A Knight of the Holy Ghost,
1907.

ABSTRACT

The thesis is concerned with the work of two feminist writers. The conceptual tools of a socialist feminist critique are applied to the selected fiction of Edith Grossmann and Jean Devanny. Grossmann's novels were written in the late 1890's and early 1900's. Devanny's New Zealand novels were written in the late 1920's and early 1930's. The major aim of the thesis is to illustrate that the protest fiction of Grossmann and Devanny is inextricably linked to the realities of life for women, in the period within which they were writing. In contrast to traditional literary criticism, and to Marxist aesthetics applied in isolation, it sees the need to develop an understanding of the specific problems of women within capitalist patriarchy. The attempted synthesis of radical feminist and aspects of Marxist analysis points toward such a progressive development.

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INTRODUCTION

The thesis focuses upon the selected fiction of Edith Searle Grossmann and Jean Devanny. The novels chosen for analysis are Grossmann's In Revolt (1893) and its sequel A Knight of the Holy Ghost (1907), and Devanny's The Butcher Shop (1926) and Dawn Beloved (1928). The feminist consciousness, which fuels the fiction of both writers, determines their selection for inclusion in this study. Edith Grossmann lived and wrote during the first wave of feminist organisation, in the emergent New Zealand society, in the late eighteen hundreds and the first decade of this century. Jean Devanny lived and wrote during the five years leading up to the depression, and later in the Australia of the nineteen thirties and forties. Her feminist consciousness was shaped during a period when feminist politics and organisation were a thing of a swiftly disappearing past.

Grossmann struggled to make sense of the female experience from within the confines of a broadly based feminist movement. Produced during an unprecedented period of feminist activism in this country, her fiction reflects the same concerns informing that movement. From the feminist critique of a male dominated

social order springs Grossmann's impetus for didacticism. Devanny however, had no such mass based feminist support or incentive to fuel a parallel inclination toward didacticism in her fiction. Her feminist polemics are shaped by different forces. Her political motivation arose from her involvement within a male dominated radical tradition, that of Marxist socialism.

In an age which desired, above all else, security and stability (Roberts, 1981, 8), Devanny's recognition of the oppression upon which such stability must be built is remarkable. Her fiction reflects the struggle both to articulate the specificity of women's oppression, within the existing social order, and to visualise the alternative for women offered by an alternative male dominated left. Lacking feminist support structures, on any organised level, Devanny was largely alone in her attempts to evaluate the range of male determined ideals concerning the 'proper' place of women.

The shaping of the feminist consciousness of each writer is a central concern in the thesis. Both Grossmann and Devanny are 'lost' or minor writers in the landscape of New Zealand literature. Their work, often assumed to be lacking in imaginative vision and in literary value, has tended to be forgotten. The thesis argues however, that the work of Grossmann and Devanny needs to be assessed by different criteria than those of the traditional literary criticism to which it has previously

been subjected. Existing literary standards are called into question and the value of the work of the two writers to the contemporary feminist movement considered. If it is agreed that women, and women as writers, have often been devalued in this society then we need a different set of criteria with which to assess their works and lives.

Works of fiction are not produced within a vacuum. Rather they carry with them the flavour of the social world within which they are produced. The fiction of Grossmann and Devanny is, in this sense, considered inseparable from the lives of women of the period. The feminist polemic, central to the work of both writers, overlays the struggle to understand and change women's lives. This is a concern that continues to motivate contemporary feminism. It is upon these earlier feminist visions and struggles that the present movement is built. In order to see the feminist movement as a continuing and growing force there is a need to uncover the links forged between women from generation to generation. Through doing so there emerges the realisation that the silence of women has not been total. Across the years women have spoken out, alone or in groups, against their oppression.

While the fiction of Grossmann and Devanny is the fiction of protest, this protest is circumscribed by the material and ideological realities of women's lives. Their breaking of the silence does not always take the form of protest. Rather, the

two also inadvertently reinforce dominant ideologies by registering their misdirected support. Breaking the silence is a tentative and alien exercise for these feminist writers. Invariably they either protest, acquiesce or support the oppressive realities of women's lives in a fashion that often appears unpredictable and contradictory.

The uncovering of messages so despatched has a new and important meaning when those messages are deciphered, or unscrambled, with the tools developed within contemporary feminism. It is the tools of socialist feminism, a critical approach aimed at understanding the totality of the female experience and pushing for revolutionary change, that are here brought to bear on the quest for discovery. Only through the lens of this approach, I shall argue, can the lives of women, and women writing about women, at the turn of the century and in the twenties be fully appreciated. Thus the seeming complexities of the fiction of Grossmann, and of Devanny, are brought into focus. The confusing, and often contradictory, message they offer can best be pieced together through the use of such an approach. Feminist fiction, female lives and herstory assume different proportions when abstracted from a perception and evaluation dominated by male interests. It is these interests which have conspired to silence women and against which Grossmann and Devanny were amongst the first New Zealand women to openly contest.

The novels included for analysis in the thesis were selected on the basis of their political concerns. Edith Grossmann's In Revolt and A Knight of the Holy Ghost are more consciously concerned with feminist polemics than are either of her other two novels. Jean Devanny's The Butcher Shop and Dawn Beloved are explicitly concerned with the oppression of women within capitalist society. Devanny published a total of sixteen novels. Of these only seven can be claimed for New Zealand literature, the remainder being both written and set outside this country. The two novels chosen for analysis are representative of her New Zealand fiction. They deal with those issues and ideas which were to be articulated, in a variety of ways, within all her later works of fiction.

The format of the thesis is straight forward. In Chapter I the central concerns of a feminist literary criticism are outlined. Before exploring the relationship of feminist literary criticism to the women's liberation movement itself, I overview the varieties of feminist enquiry and praxis. Socialist feminism is introduced as an approach intended to combine the analytical power and revolutionary strategy of Marxism with the feminist sensitivity to the most subtle nuances of female oppression. The inadequacies of alternative theoretical understandings of women's oppression are seen to also impinge upon their 'radical' approaches to literary criticism. Thus the advantages of a socialist feminist approach are seen as contributing to the progressive development of this field of enquiry. At the

conclusion of the chapter I briefly sum up what I see as being the focus and direction of a socialist feminist literary critique.

Chapter II is the first of four chapters which involve the application of a socialist feminist literary critique. These applied studies follow a similar, though not identical, format. There is no rigid structuring and each chapter explores theoretical, literary and historical material as the need arises. In Chapter II In Revolt, Edith Searle Grossmann's second published novel, is discussed. I seek to understand and interpret the novel in the light of the conservative feminist tradition to which it belongs. Chapter III concerns the sequel to In Revolt. In turning to A Knight of the Holy Ghost ground work for analysis laid in the previous chapter provides an entry into discussion. The novel is essentially part of the same tradition despite the fourteen years separating it from its predecessor.

In Chapters IV and V I turn to the work of Jean Devanny. The feminist politics informing her novels are those of Marxist feminism. Fundamentally opposed to the conservative tradition of Grossmann, Devanny's feminism paradoxically reflects striking similarities to that of Grossmann. I attempt to use the conceptual tools of socialist feminism to unravel such seeming contradictions. Chapter IV deals with Devanny's third published novel, Dawn Beloved. Chapter V deals with her originally banned

first novel The Butcher Shop. The chronological inconsistencies in the order of these dealings is confronted in Chapter IV. In Dawn Beloved Devanny's ideas are more clearly presented providing a suitable entry into understanding the complexities of her work.

Finally I sum up why the work of Grossmann and Devanny has been ignored and the possible value in its rehabilitation and critical consideration. A socialist feminist approach, it is suggested, provides suitable answers for both problems. I conclude that the work of the two writers has a value beyond that measured by traditional standards of literary criticism. Inextricably linked to the reality of women's lives within a specific period their fiction provides an entry into understanding the ordering of those lives. Refracted through the lens of socialist feminism that understanding helps shape strategy for change.

The enforced silencing of women is challenged by Grossmann and Devanny and their struggle to voice the concerns of women is not unlike that faced by contemporary feminists. Spokeswomen for generations of others, conscious and unconscious of the nature of their oppression, Grossmann and Devanny articulate grievances traditionally left unspoken. That their voices have been raised and now go unheard, their message distorted, appropriated or misunderstood, stands as evidence of the struggle women have confronted in attempting to break the silence.

CHAPTER I:

Theoretical Considerations

1-1) Introduction:Understanding and Social Change

The selected fiction of Edith Grossmann and Jean Devanny is the focus of this thesis. That focus, its motivation and direction, is informed by contemporary feminist theory and criticism. The feminist critique of the social world addresses itself to the generating of an understanding of that world. Fiction, as a social product, and the writing of fiction, as a social activity, constitute aspects of a social world feminism is concerned with both understanding and changing.

The feminist way of looking at the world is opposed to the dominant perception of reality. It seeks through its difference of vision, the comprehension of women's experience. The understanding that is pieced together is not however, shared by all feminists. Diversity characterises the struggle to provide an alternative understanding. Out of this diversity come

competing perspectives on the nature of social change and strategies for bringing it about. The perceived need for modification, rather than transformation, or for metamorphosis, rather than alteration, is shaped by the understanding of the dynamics of the social world.

It is my initial intention to outline the nature of a feminist literary criticism, its specific variations and its strengths and limitations. The diversity of feminist theoretical frameworks have implications for every field of enquiry addressed. Literary criticism is no exception. In mapping out the field of feminist criticism the stage will be set for the brief evaluation of competing frameworks. The socialist feminist approach to literary criticism, adopted within this study, is explored and defined in terms of the inadequacies of the alternatives posited. The frameworks of radical feminism, conservative, or liberal, feminism and Marxism are dealt with accordingly. The chapter closes with the summing up of what I see as being the central concerns of a socialist feminist literary criticism.

Women writers and the artistic representation and interpretation of women, in the work of both male and female writers and critics, are the subjects of feminist literary criticisms. In approaching subject matter several assumptions structure analytical orientation. Firstly it is experience of the world which is considered to provide the basis for artistic

creativity. While the element of the unique is ensured by the specificity of individual experience, the element of collectivity is ensured by common denominators in shared experience. Secondly the homogeneity of shared experience is fragmented along the lines of gender, class and race, of which gender largely takes precedence.

1-2) Prescription Versus Description

Gender is not synonymous with biological sex. Contemporary feminists make an important distinction between sex, as a biological category, and gender, as a social category (Barrett, 1980, 13). Sex exists as a descriptive fact. It exists as an objective designation or reality. Gender, on the other hand, has only a prescriptive existence. The attachment of social meaning to biological fact generates the social reality of gender. Thus a social division is enforced between men and women that is assumed to be biologically determined and therefore unchangeable. Most feminists argue however, that gender division is socially determined and therefore subject to change. Importantly they see this division of society and experience as structured by an inequality which accords men power over women. The existing polarity of gender is seen as being advantageous for

men. Its maintenance is therefore a central concern for men as the social group advantaged by the status quo. The male power to prescribe becomes disguised as an immutable reality. What is, in fact, a social tyranny masquerades as part of a 'natural' social order.

Recognition of the distinction between description and prescription, and the struggle to separate the two on a variety of levels, motivates feminism. This is apparent, from the outset, with the struggle to develop an understanding of the social world which opposes the prescriptive understanding proffered. The need to describe women's lives as they really are, rather than ignoring the gap between prescription and reality, is inescapable.

The tension between male dominance and female oppression, within social structure and culture, impinges upon artistic creation and interpretation in so far as it circumscribes the nature of experience. This power relation is reflected in the cultural dominance of 'masculine' perception and creation and the subsequent artistic treatment of women by men. Thus men have been historically enabled to 'create' women both within society and within art. As myth and as stereotype in literature women have been provided with prescriptive models, and with legitimation and explanation of both social position and identity. The exploration of conflict between male and female perception and expression of the female experience is at the core

of the feminist critique.

The power to affect and legitimate the negation of women allows the patriarchy (1), the system that accords men a monopoly on power, to maintain a distortion of both artistic creation and interpretation. Through the projection of negative images of women positive pictures of their opposite, men, are obtained. Reflection and perpetuation of patriarchal ideology, within art and criticism, thus assumes the guise of an objective sexual neutrality. The feminist literary critique (2) begins with the recognition and rejection of patriarchal negation. This includes rejection of the assertion of neutrality which follows on from the power to assert and validate such a negation. Such a distortion of reality is illuminated by a feminist critique which attempts to develop a corrective focus. This focus calls into question the negation of women and the nature of the social structure which relegates her to the role of the 'other'. The nature of designation as the 'other' is outlined by Simone de Beauvoir. She suggests that:

> man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being .... She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. She is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the other. (de Beauvoir, 1972, 16).

In the field of literary criticism this concern with uncovering women's relegation to the role of 'other' is vital. The feminist focus develops new ways of looking at particular writers and works. It is corrective in so far as it recognises the cultural dominance of patriarchal propaganda and seeks to neutralise its effects via imposition of a feminist critique. The counterbalancing enabled by a feminist critique aims to make patriarchal propaganda ineffective. The feminist literary critique therefore involves the undermining of patriarchal propaganda. It seeks to do so by initially highlighting the existence of propaganda within the literary critical field and within society itself.

Feminist criticisms of literature may be divided into three categories. (3). The first is concerned with the presentation of women in some male produced literature. On the one hand it concentrates primarily upon the images of women or the male ideals of female behaviour, thought and feeling. It questions the authenticity of the representation of women along a continuum ranging from virgin/mother at one extreme to bitch/whore at the other.

These stereotypes present certain 'feminine' traits as innate and therefore unchangeable. In effect they are indicative of a literary misogyny which underlies political relations between the sexes. Such stereotypes act as tools in sex role socialisation and as dominant sets of expectations, 'confront a

single imperfect kind of woman caught between them.' (Fiedler quoted in Register, 1975, 7). Similarly that male produced literature which fails to provide positive role models and realistic solutions to female problems is considered in the context of manipulation of woman as reader. In this sense also literature may act as a tool of sex role socialisation in the reproduction of dominant ideology.

The second category is concerned with existing literary criticisms and with the patriarchal claim to objectivity and critical absolutism. Within Register's overview of the field this concern is considered separable from that structuring the first category of criticism. Male produced literary criticism and male produced literature are seen as comprising distinct categories of enquiry. Many feminist critics however, conceive of the two as inseparably co-existing. Each is, for example, ultimately concerned with male rather than female perceptions of women. The critique of masculinist literary criticism questions the supposedly non-ideological approach to criticism of the work of female writers which (a) fails to discuss woman as writer without regard to sex; (b) ignores or undervalues and misinterprets the work of many women writers altogether (c) makes universal statements on the basis of male experience (Register, 1975, 8).

1-3) Aesthetic Versus Political Value

The third category of feminist criticism remains in a formative stage and is concerned with the writing of women and the critical evaluation of their work. The feminist analysis, as I have noted earlier, does not exist as a unified whole. Diversity and disagreement are characteristic of the approach and are readily apparent in the current formative area of feminist literary criticism. The struggle to make sense of women's experience and to institute change is limited by this diversity.

The particular focus maintained within the third category of feminist criticism varies with the political orientation adopted. While it is generally agreed that new standards are needed for evaluating what is 'good' women's writing, the exact composition of these standards is disputed. Similarly the debate surrounding the nature and limitations of fiction as a force for change is a central focus. Invariably the understanding of women's experience shapes the perception of the bringing about of social change. In turn the perception of necessary change has implications for deciding what is 'good' writing. Since the feminist critic is concerned with undermining prescriptive reality she has a responsibility to continually be aware of how her perception of 'good' writing may be influenced by dominant ways of thinking.

Aesthetic value, what is appreciated as being tasteful or 'good', is recognised by feminist critics as being weighted in favour of masculine perception. Aesthetic value is, in this sense, primarily a political judgement. It is not an objective category of judgement, but is inseparable from existing social power relations. It is defined and determined by male standards of what is 'good'. Art which reflects and reinforces existing social relations is art which is most likely to be defined as 'good'. Feminists argue therefore, that aesthetic value may merely be a term to describe art which maintains the political position of men as the powerful group. The advancing, by feminists, of new standards for measuring what is 'good' are therefore aimed at contributing to strengthening the political position of women.

It is of primary importance to stress the differences, rather than the similarities, between feminist political orientations in an attempt to articulate their approaches to defining what is 'good' writing. Liberal, or conservative feminism, may be defined as affirmative in its general acceptance of the existing social structure and its conception of engendering change from within that structure. It is through change in consciousness that change in material conditions is assumed to come about. No attempt at historical speculation is made and the assumption that sex equality can be achieved under capitalism follows on from this (Jaggar and Struhl, 1978, 81).

Liberalism, being neither radical nor revolutionary, poses no threat to the status quo. Because liberal, or conservative, feminism is not critical in essence it follows that it is handicapped in the exposing of an underlying reality. The narrow understanding of the nature of women's oppression means that the explanatory power and the perception of the bringing about of social change are limited. Liberal feminism instead focusses on ending oppression through changing consciousness surrounding sex roles. It is interested in reformism, rather than in radical change, whatever its stated intentions.

For the liberal feminist women's writing, to be 'good', need not be politically motivated. By this very fact its reformist stance is revealed. From a liberal perspective the work of women need not be feminist in order to be 'good'. The difference between feminist art and work that happens to have been produced by a woman is not confronted. Feminist art however, constitutes a category within women's art but cannot simply be equated with it. An emphasis upon shared experience and interests is not enough to make a work feminist. Along with this emphasis must go a recognition of necessary unification among women by political interests (Barrett, 1982, 46-47). If a novel can be 'good' without recognising women's political interests then this contributes little to the furthering of those interests.

Left wing feminisms are made up of variations of the radical and the socialist, each differing to some degree in orientation. Radical feminists insist that the oppression of women is fundamental. Women were the first oppressed group, they are oppressed in virtually every society and their oppression will outlive such social changes as the abolition of class society. The source of oppression has been traced to everything from the childbearing function, on the one hand, to the genetic aggression of the male, on the other. Women are therefore seen as oppressed primarily by sexism and only secondarily by racism and class society. Change may therefore demand the overthrow of capitalism coupled with a technological revolution of biology, or adoption of lesbianism as a personal preference. It may demand a combination of all three (Jaggar and Struhl, 1978, 82).

Socialist feminism is an attempt at the synthesis of Marxist analysis and feminist theory which is more than the simple addition of the two. Importantly women are seen as equally oppressed through the twin powers of capitalism and patriarchy. Though traditional Marxism provides the basis for such an orientation it is seen as inadequate in its assumption that the oppression of women arises primarily from economic relations. Too often gender divisions are seen as a natural, rather than a social, phenomenon for example.

True equality for women, in this context, can never be achieved while the capitalist mode of production continues, and any move to achieve equality through legislation can only been seen as a token. Nor will women's oppression end simply with the overthrow of capitalism. Rather, the material base of patriarchy too must be dismantled once the classless society is arrived at. Most socialist feminists see the need for the articulation of the relations of biological reproduction and production and use Engels as a starting point. The complexities arising from conceptualisation of the relation between sex oppression and economic oppression have necessarily resulted in gradations of socialist feminism.

Both socialist and radical feminisms incorporate a critical analysis of social structure and an orientation toward revolutionary praxis. In the field of literary criticism this implies the extension of concern with political function. Thus literary criticism is seen as inseparable from the formulation of a critique of the social order and the bringing about of social transformation. For Elaine Showalter, a radical feminist literary critic, the third category of critism is concerned with 'woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, of literature by women' (Showalter, 1979, 25). She attempts to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature which she dubs gynocritics.

Gynocritics contributes to the reconstruction of women's social, political and cultural experience. Its application involves the exploration of continuities in women's fiction which are indicative of that experience. Increasingly gynocritics demands that contemporary women's writing must move beyond those continuities which are characterized by female suffering and failure to escape patriarchal confines. Positive role models and the quest 'to discover the new world' (Showalter, 1979, 32), must become integral to a women's art that is truly autonomous.

Showalter's gynocritics involve developing an understanding of why suffering and defeat dominate the female experience, and why they should be overcome. She wants an autonomous female art, yet does not fully deal with how women, through their writing, can contribute to attaining the preconditions for the discovery of a world within which autonomy can become a reality. She disputes the contention that feminist literary criticism and production have a role to play in the revolutionary transformation of society. Advocation of such a bond would, she argues, 'yoke women writers to feminist revolution and deny them the freedom to explore new subjects' (Showalter, 1977, 318). For Showalter feminist literary criticism should be concerned with formulating a critique of literary studies and of society itself. However, this critique is not, of necessity, linked to the formulation of strategy for the bringing about of social change. Discontent with the existing social order and the visualising of an utopian alternative are not bridged by attention to developing

transformative strategy.

Cheri Register's categories for a prescriptive feminist literary criticism are, in a sense, strategies for moving toward an autonomous female art and experience. Along with Showalter she argues for the setting up of new standards for what is 'good' writing from a feminist perspective. However, she moves beyond exploring territories for its application to the explicit concern with its political function.

For Register women's literature, to be 'good' and of value, must be of some use in the struggle for liberation. While this is also true of Showalter, the latter is reluctant to delineate strategies for overthrow of an oppressive social order or to define what 'good' women's writing should include. Register however, outlines what she sees as the five functions literature must perform in order to gain feminist approval. These are expectations of promotion of sisterhood, of augmentation of consciousness raising, of provision of a forum, of provision of role models, and of helping to achieve cultural androgyny. (Register, 1975, 11-24). The stress upon the political importance of women's writing, within the developing third category of feminist literary criticism, is inescapable.

Carole Ferrier, in a critique of Register's categories for a prescriptive criticism, supports the contention that feminist criticism should be, 'employed to establish what role women's

writing can play in the current dialectic of liberation' (Ferrier, 1976a, 93). However, Ferrier suggests the need to extend Register's categories. Thus she rejects the advisability of the promotion of cultural androgyny. Prescribing the modification of society, via gender reform, is limited in comparison to its transformation and fails to place feminist criticism within a general critique of the social system. Ferrier suggests that what is needed in feminist literary criticism is:

> an approach that demands the substitution of revolutionary for gradualist change, and seeks, through its examination of works of literature, to establish a critique of the current state of literary studies and hence of society. Only thus can literary criticism participate in changes that will establish an effective integration of the personal and political, reflected in the lives of individuals, both literary and actual (Ferrier, 1976a, 95).

Clearly, for Ferrier, value of a literary work is primarily political.

The greatest danger in emphasising political function lies in the possible denial of the imaginative character of art. If a work is to be judged largely in terms of its political significance then the notion of aesthetic value may become subsumed within the notion of political value. Radical criticism may thus reverse the mistake of a popular view which claims to accommodate only imagination as a defining characteristic of art (Barrett, 1982, 51). In feminist literary criticism the criteria

for assessing aesthetic value thus remain problematic.

Feminist critics obviously reject the assumption that aesthetic value exists as a universal category or intrinsic property of a work of art. Dominant social groups largely determine what is of aesthetic value in an essentially political context. However, Barrett suggests that a feminist literary critique which attributes aesthetic value on the basis of political progressiveness alone abandons, 'any notion of value which is independent of the political significance of the work at the time it was produced' (Barrett, 1982, 49-50). She instead suggests the need to consider the possibility of the rehabilitation of a category of objectively judged aesthetic value. In doing so she warns against the simple assimilation of patriarchal and bourgeois criteria for evaluation. What is needed instead is a concept of aesthetic value which may be monitored in terms of the skill reflected in an artistic product.

Artistic skill, Barrett argues, can be learned and has an objective element. Without it even the most imaginative of ideas cannot be transformed into a 'good' artistic product. In this sense aesthetic skills can be seen as democratizing, rather than elitist, because they can be learned and are not to be simply equated with 'genius'. Many radical approaches to criticism fail to recognise the learned nature of artistic skill, thereby reinforcing the view that art is the province of an elite. They may also, in the emphasis upon political value, deny the

imaginative character of art altogether. The rehabilitation of a measurement of aesthetic value may be necessary for these reasons. Barrett thus argues that:

> There is, then, something to be gained from rehabilitating what is currently thought of (by radical theorists) as a rather reactionary view of art. Within specific aesthetic forms and conventions we may be able to identify different levels of skill as well as the expression of particular fictional, or imaginative, constructions of reality. To point to this is not to slide into the individualistic romanticism of traditional bourgeois theories of art; it is merely to indicate the extent to which radical criticism has abandoned this dimension of art altogether. (Barrett, 1982, 52).

The importance of Barrett's argument lies in her conclusion that if measurable skill can be identified in the producing of art, and if imaginative expression is not to be considered worthless, then evaluation will depend upon the corresponding consciousness of the audience. She adds that:

> The more we understand about the principles, and skills required, for the construction of particular works the more completely we shall be able to receive them. The more we share, or identify with, a particular consciousness of the world the more we shall enter into a fictional rendering of that consciousness. (Barrett, 1982, 53).

Because individual consciousness in consumption mediates authorial intention in production, Barrett suggests that a novel can be neither intrinsically feminist nor necessarily carry the author's intended message. This clearly has implications for feminist literary criticisms, such as that outlined by Ferrier,

which emphasis political value within fiction. Barrett questions the notion that,'women's liberation needs feminist artists to inspire us for more mundane struggles'. Instead, 'We need to work towards the creation of a cultural milieu in which feminist vision is creatively consumed as well as produced' (Barrett, 1982, 53). A feminist literary criticism which emphasises only the political value of works of fiction is thus ultimately misguided.

Barrett assesses the consequences of the neglect of aesthetic value within contemporary 'radical' approaches to art. In doing so she raises certain issues with regard to the necessary direction of feminist literary criticisms. Clearly the importance of confronting the utility of an essentially political evaluation of art becomes apparent in this context. While Barrett emphasises the fictional, aesthetic and imaginative dimensions of art, she does so largely in order to adumbrate the dangers in a too extensive politicising of art as ideology (Barrett, 1982, 57). This debate surrounding the nature and limitations of fiction as a force for change continues to be a central focus within feminist literary criticism.

Those guidelines for prescriptive literary criticism outlined by Register and modified by Ferrier contribute to the provision of a general framework for this study. Prescriptive literary criticism, with its primarily political conception of what is 'good' writing, is tempered by recognition of the

potential shortcomings outlined by Barrett. From the applied feminist literary criticism of Elaine Showalter I take the methods of isolating and exploring literary constants in the work of the feminist writers with whom I deal. Thus the importance of historical material is highlighted along with an interpretation of conditions and events that is feminist as well as, in this case, Marxist. From the work of Showalter comes the grasp of the legacy left by 'lost' and minor women writers. Grossmann and Devanny are thereby seen as part of a tradition of women writing, rather than as puzzling anomalies. Showalter's work provides avenues for the exploration of imaginative responses to oppression, but it offers less in the way of explanation and delineation of prescriptive categories for evaluation.

In their provision of a framework for evaluating existing work, and setting down guidelines for the fiction of the future, Register and Ferrier connect literary criticism to feminist praxis. They assert, as Showalter fails to, the necessary connections between critical theory and the needs of the women's liberation movement. The limitations and lack of clarity of Register's categories for a prescriptive criticism are refocussed by the socialist feminist approach outlined by Ferrier. She insists that there are important functions for literature that feminist criticism should be concerned with delineating (Ferrier, 1976a, 75). From Register and Ferrier I take provisions for evaluating and exploring feminist fiction. Register provides detail while Ferrier provides a honing of focus

which brings Register's prescriptive categories into line with the revolutionary concerns of socialist feminism.

The explicitly political orientation adopted by Register, and later solidified by Ferrier, I temper with the reservations put forward by Michele Barrett. An evaluation of what is 'good' writing that is purely political is of limited value, she argues. While neither Register nor Ferrier defines value in only political terms the political dimension is clearly seen as being most important. The danger of interpreting their work too literally is averted by recognition of the validity of Barrett's qualifications. From Barrett I therefore take the warning against the equating of the political and the aesthetic.

1-4) 'Diversity' Versus 'Dogma'

No single method is used to structure this study. Though a socialist feminist approach to the critique of the fiction of Grossmann and Devanny is posited, no rigid overall structure is provided. The competing of feminist theoretical frameworks has determined the continuing formative character of literary criticism. Divided understandings, of course, have implications

for progressive development within the field. The diversity of feminist literary criticisms is problematic in so far as it serves to undermine the establishment of the persuasiveness shared by similarly oriented 'social consciousness' critiques. Marxist literary criticisms, for example, owe a good deal of their increasing legitimacy to possession of a coherent system of analysis.

It is misleadingly argued however, that the weakness generated by diversity is also, paradoxically, a source of strength. Annette Kolodny advocates the necessity of diversity in 'Dancing Through the Mine Field:Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism'. Current diversity suggests for Kolodny the strength of a healthy pluralism, rather than the sapping of fragmentation. She argues that:

> What is attended to in a literary work, and hence what is reported about it, is often determined not so much by the work itself as by the critical technique or aesthetic criteria through which it is filtered, or, rather, read and decoded. All the feminist is asserting, then, is her own equivalent right to liberate new (and perhaps different) significances from these same texts; and, at the same time, her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant since she is, after all, asking new and different questions of it.... That these alternative foci of critical attentiveness will render alternate readings or interpretations of the same text - even among feminists - should be no cause for alarm. (Kolodny, 1979, 38).

Just as feminist critics have confronted mainstream critics with the fact that there is no 'right' way to analyse any text, so must sister critics avoid establishing their own 'party lines' (Kolodny, 1979, 38). Only pluralism allows resistance of such oversimplification and enforced rigidity.

For Kolodny the generation of prescriptive categories, and concern with the role of women's writing in the current dialectic of liberation, is not and should not be the purpose of the feminist literary critic. Such a concern supposedly reflects a certain arrogance along with the flaws of reductionism and dogma.

Kolodny's emphasis upon the fecundity of pluralism reflects her assumption that current diversity of feminist theory and practice is based upon a healthy dialogue. Failure to recognise the material base of capitalist patriarchy and its implications for the creation and maintenance of ideology is demonstrated both by the dismissal of the need for prescriptive categories and by the consequent vision of the nature of social change. The need for 'an improved reordering of the present and future' (Kolodny, 1979, 39) is hardly consistent with the push for revolutionary change which characterises radical analysis.

Pluralism becomes an impotent alternative to 'dogma' in its insistence upon the inherent health of diversity. Rather than seriously challenging competing theories it results in the assimilation of fragments of each and in the loss of constructive

dialogue. Radical literary analysis must, by its very definition, push not only for acceptance but for revolutionary transformation of the whole field of enquiry (Eagleton, 1975, 2). The tolerant pluralism fostered within liberal democracy, and advocated by Kolodny, serves only to undermine this goal.

While Kolodny's advocacy of pluralism seeks to undercut the 'dogma' which informs radical approaches, such as those of Register and Ferrier, her argument must necessarily be refuted. The emphasis upon the acceptability of a multitude of critical approaches is directly opposed to the struggle for primacy contained within Marxist and socialist feminist approaches. In adoption of the utility of prescriptive categories within this study the 'diversity' advocated by Kolodny is subordinated to 'dogma'. The formative nature of feminist literary criticism dictates the failure to consistently utilise a single method within this study. The concern with a developing socialist feminist approach however, reflects the need to solidify such an approach as a critical method. It is directly opposed to encouraging the continuation of a 'playful pluralism' (Kolodny, 1979, 38).

1-5) Radical Versus Socialist Feminism

Clearly there is no current concensus with regard to appropriate tools of literary analysis or relation of that analysis to the pragmatic orientation of the feminist movement itself. While this study has not presumed to enter into the debate surrounding the relation between society and art, it has given some attention to the utility of a particular approach to literary criticism.

Socialist feminist literary criticism is a newly emergent mode of analysis. (4). At this early stage its approach is both tentative and uncertain. The tools of analysis the socialist feminist literary critical approach provides however, allow the moving toward overcoming the limitations of other radical approaches. Thus the socialist feminist critique seeks to overcome the failure of Marxist aesthetics to consider the oppression of women as a vital factor in literary criticism. The implications of the specificity of female oppression for women writers, and their fiction, must of necessity be confronted. The socialist feminist critique seeks too to overcome the failure of radical feminism to confront the precipitation of revolutionary struggle and transformation. It is not enough to develop, through literature, a critique of the present and an utopian vision of change. Rather, the role of culture in the current

struggle for revolutionary transformation needs to be articulated.

Radical feminism is ultimately weakened by its inability to initially develop an adequate political strategy for change (Barrett, 1980, 4). Similarly this failure to develop a thorough critique of women's oppression within the existing society is reflected in literary criticism. The inability to accommodate the complexity of the female condition thus has far reaching consequences for radical feminist analysis. Those same debates informing the state of theory and practice on the left then, similarly shape the direction of radical literary critiques.

Socialist feminist theory has grown out of the consideration of the limitations of both radical feminist and Marxist analyses of women's oppression, and their failure to confront the nature of that oppression in its totality. Similarly this failure is reflected in the respective critical approach to literature of each. Socialist feminist theory attempts to understand women's oppression as the product of the determining forces of both capitalism and patriarchy. It, 'postulates the existence of two separate but interlocking sets of social relations, capitalism and patriarchy, each with a material base, each with its own dynamic' (Hartmann, 1981, 364).

The use of socialist feminist theory as the driving force of a particular literary critique is, as I have suggested earlier, not unproblematic. While debate has centred upon the case for the integration of Marxism and feminism, the construction of a sound theoretical base has not been overtly concerned with developing a theory of aesthetics. Socialist feminism in attempting to utilise the tools of both Marxist and feminist analysis to understand women's oppression, in all its complexity, draws on the insights of both. This is necessarily tempered by recognition of the limitations of each approach.

Radical feminism, for example, in insisting that the oppression of women is fundamental, has yet to provide an adequate analysis of that oppression. This has certain implications for approach to literary criticism which include failure to adequately confront the relation between ideology and material conditions. As Michele Barrett notes in Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis, some early radical feminists located female oppression in biology, rather than in social structures shaping the meaning attached to biological sex. The construction of male domination was seen as determined by procreative biology. In rejecting the perceived economic determinism of Marxist analysis these feminist theorists thus went to the opposite extreme. In asserting a 'feminist' biologism they failed to honour the distinction between sex, as a biological category, and gender as a social category (Barrett, 1980, 12-13).

Shulamith Firestone, in The Dialectic of Sex, argues that the fundamental historical dialectic is that of sex. The material base of patriarchy is seen to lie in the work women do in reproducing the species. In effect she develops a feminist use of Marxist methodology. The pioneering of the assertion that patriarchy has a material base (Hartmann, 1981, 12) is however, ultimately limited by the final assumption that oppression is biologically determined. Once biology is asserted as being a determining force strategies for implementing change become limited. If, for example, biology detemines both material reality and ideology the possibility of revolutionary social change is remote.

On the other hand, early work which saw patriarchy as operating only on the level of the ideological reached erroneous conclusions about attaining change. In this tradition a distinct possibility that cultural revolution may free women is assumed. It follows that if the construction of meaning is seen as operating independently of material conditions, then revolutionary art has a direct and unlimited potential to facilitate change (Barrett, 1980, 112). Thus much early radical feminism leads to the logical conclusion that change is either unattainable, or able to be determined within the ideological realm. The political utility of feminist fiction then is either impotent or omnipotent.

In the context of this study the strengths of radical feminism are essentially those which contribute to a critique of the sex-blind orientation of revolutionary socialist theory. Marxism develops categories of analysis which explain the economic dynamics of capitalist society. Certain positions exist in relation to capital. Marxism however, does not explain why men, rather than women, should occupy particular positions. The categories of Marxist analysis give no clues about why particular people fill particular places. They cannot explain why women should be subordinate to men, for example, and not the other way round (Hartmann, 1981, 10).

While Marxism is sex blind it is ultimately unproductive to reject the power of Marxist analysis altogether. Elaine Showalter, for example, suggests that while the impulse to revise related ideologies, such as Marxist aesthetics and structuralism, to encompass the variable of gender is strong feminist criticism must, 'emancipate itself from the influence of accepted models and guide itself by its own impulses' (Showalter, 1979, 37). From this perspective the feminist critique must avoid the threat of losing the value of female experience and the subjective in the 'masculine' and 'scientific' categories of patriarchal theories.

The separatism implied by this position, in terms of both theory and practice, must necessarily be tempered by the recognition that it cannot provide a workable strategy for

change. The resorting to the position of separatism, so common within radical feminism, is illustrative of the continuing inability to articulate such a strategy. Radical feminism does however, provide an entry into the argument that Marxist analysis of women's oppression must go beyond the functional approach which sees that oppression as a necessary function of the needs of capital. It thus questions the assumption that the oppression of women is grounded in the materialist relations of production and that following socialist revolution it will cease to be. Marxist analysis of capitalism is conceived around a primary contradiction between labour and capital and its very objective precludes the equal primacy of consideration of gender relations (Barrett, 1980, 8).

Despite major differences in conceptualisation of 'the problem' or rather, because of these differences, an integration of competing theories is considered tenable. To this end I am not suggesting utilizing the 'materialist' radical feminism of Firestone which attempts to 'take the class analysis one step further to its roots in the biological division of the sexes' (Firestone, 1970, 13). Rather than moving toward a socialist-feminism, Firestone's theoretical goal is to substitute sex for class (Barrett, 1980, 11). Furthermore, the idealist position advanced by some radical feminist approaches is inadequate in and of itself. While ideology is an important site for the construction and reproduction of women's oppression it cannot be dissociated from economic relations.

The shortcomings within radical feminist theory however, must not be over-compensated for by the collapsing of the feminist struggle into the struggle against capital which characterises much Marxist feminism. This Marxist feminism tends toward looking at women's position in terms of the relationship of women to the economic system, rather than to men. It assumes that women's relation to men will be fully explained by the discussion of women's relation to the economic system. For many the 'natural' division of labour becomes unproblematic and largely explainable without reference to patriarchy (Hartmann, 1981, 7).

1-6) Socialist Feminist Literary Criticism

Socialist feminism argues that women's oppression is not an ideological process. Patriarchy, like capitalism, has a material base and the material bases of each are not simply identical. Patriarchy existed prior to capitalism and assumes a particular mutually reinforcing form within capitalism. Women's oppression cannot be fully explained in terms of a Marxist analysis. Neither can a radical feminism, which lacks analytical power and any strategy for change, fully articulate the nature of that oppression. A socialist feminist approach then:

> will involve an emphasis on the relations between capitalism and the oppression of women. It will require an awareness of the specific oppression of women in capitalist relations of production, but this must be seen in the light of gender divisions which preceded the transition to capitalism and which, as far as we can tell, a socialist revolution would not of itself abolish. (Barrett, 1980, 9).

The implications of this for a socialist feminist literary critique include emphasis upon the centrality of the historical specificity of women's oppression and its class specific manifestations. A socialist feminist approach will recognise that the ideological dimensions of women's oppression are neither independent nor deterministic. Rather, a relationship of reciprocity is recognised which ascribes limited influence to the ideological realm. Culture, as a site for the clashing of dominant ideologies and ideational (or agitational) views, becomes a site for struggle surrounding the social meaning of gender. Within feminist fiction and criticism there is the potential to push for the general acceptance of the equation of sexual division with sexual inequality. Culture constitutes an important site for struggle though it cannot be considered an agent of transformation (Barrett, 1980, 112-3).

Guidelines for an applied socialist feminist literary critique within this study have been drawn from several sources. Applied feminist literary criticisms have been utilized along with the theoretical insights generated by Michele Barrett, Cheri

Register and Carole Ferrier. The analytical tools provided by both Marxist and feminist aesthetics are utilised where appropriate. I take as a starting point the assumption that, 'the work of a novelist comes from deep within the culture and ideology of the period; and the ideology is in part determined by economic and social infrastructure', (Basch, 1974, xviii). Clearly there is an insistence upon a relation between novels selected for this study and the particular social milieu within which they have been produced and received. I assume that content bears some relation to social reality in each instance. Attention to socio-historical detail is concerned with the nature of dominant ideology and its effects upon the fictional representation of social reality.

In this study it is novels written by women, which I see as largely concerned with challenging dominant ideology, upon which I concentrate. That ideology is essentially both patriarchal and bourgeois, and in the fortunes of each heroine, it becomes lived experience. I use a socialist feminist method to 'crack the shell' of capitalist patriarchal institutions to, 'reveal what goes on inside'(Ferrier, 1976b, 49). Without understanding institutions, there is no understanding of how to begin to change them. In conjunction with the structural analysis provided by socialist feminist theory I attempt to broaden approach, through the specific reading for feminist consciousness, and to juxtapose 'textual detail with 'real' empirical data of the period' (Harrison, 1978, 192).

My aim in turning attention to the novels is to explore the relationship between the literary representation of social reality and the specific milieu within which they were written. The exploration of this relationship includes a consideration of both the literary representation of the position of women and the historical reality of that position. The similarities and differences apparent between the two will reveal insights into the writers consciousness and relationship both to their work and their society. The aspects of women's lives emphasised, and the implications contained in this, reveal the nature of the writers feminist politics and their limitations. Similarly this will also suggest something about the writers perception of the function of the novel itself (Basch, 1974, xix-xx). Within this broad context the questions I need to ask fall into four categories.

Firstly the dominant way of looking at the world, and particularly the assumptions about the relation of men and women, is of concern. This includes the system of values and the prescriptions relating to the function and purpose of women's role in late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand. In short the dominant ideology of the period includes the upholding of the division of the social world into male and female spheres. This division was largely considered to be biologically, rather than socially, determined. It serves to legitimate male authority over women and contains the assertion of the greater importance of all that is masculine. Through the

exploration of this dominant ideology in each novel its impact upon both heroine and writer will become apparent.

Secondly specific historical conditions of life in post-colonial New Zealand, particularly as they affect women, are considered. These include the legal, political and economic status of women during this period. Thirdly I am concerned with the writers feminist consciousness and, in the case of Grossmann, with the wider social movement of which it is a part. The writers' feminist protest largely shapes their fiction and orders the tension between the depiction of the ideal and the reality of women's lives.

Finally the dominant ideology, the way of understanding that sees men and women as fundamentally and unequivocably different, has certain implications. It impinges upon both the fictional representation of reality and upon feminist consciousness. In this sense the feminist perspectives of Grossmann and Devanny are seen as historically limited in their capacity both to explain the nature of women's oppression and suggest strategy for change. These limitations, and their implications for fulfilling the demands outlined by a socialist feminist literary critique are of central concern.

FOOTNOTES

1. Patriarchy may be defined as, 'a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women' (Hartmann, 1981, 14). This definition is proposed within socialist feminist theory and may not necessarily be accepted by theorists working within competing feminist frameworks.

2. The diversity of this enquiry defies all attempts to conclusively define it, 'as either a coherent system or a unified set of methodologies.' (Kolodny, 1979, 25). An indepth review of its roots, developments and current directions extends far beyond the boundaries of this study.

3. Cheri Register in 'American Feminist Literary Criticism: A Bibliographical Introduction', in Josephine Donovan.(Ed.) Feminist Literary Criticism:Explorations in Theory, provides the basis for discussion of categories of feminist criticism. Showalter, in 'Towards a Feminist Poetics', in Mary Jacobus. (Ed.) Women Writing and Writing About Women, lists only two categories of criticism. On the one hand the feminist critique has been largely concerned with woman as reader. On the other gynocritics has concerned itself with woman as writer.

4. Socialist feminist theory remains within a formative stage. Issues currently being debated are addressed in, for example, Weinbaum (1978), Barrett (1980) and Sargent (1981).

CHAPTER 11:

Conservative Feminism-:In Revolt

Edith Searle Grossmann's first explicitly feminist novel, In Revolt, is set in late nineteenth century Australia (1). The protagonist, Hermione Howard, is the only daughter of a respectable but impoverished middle class family. It is through the experiences of Hermione, and the women in her life, that Grossmann attempts to map out the nature of the reality of women's oppression. Her primary focus in doing so is the social organisation of male power or patriarchy. Grossmann's conservative feminist conception of the system of male supremacy is however, distanced from that of contemporary feminist materialism as will become apparent.

Exploring the realities of women's oppression, in contrast to dominant ideals, fuels the protest which develops in the novel. Grossmann works on the level of conscious analysis of the nature of women's oppression. She is concerned with the social structure which transforms individual problems into shared experiences. Without some understanding of social organisation the tragedies of women's lives are purely random and

unchangeable. On a more sinister level such tragedies are misinterpreted as the product of individual womanly indiscretions. Grossmann brings to her fiction both analysis and the imaginative power of her own personal experience of oppression.

Grossmann presents the reader with the problem of women's oppression and it is her solutions, by virtue of what they fail to include rather than what they do include, which allow some insight into dominant ideology. The horizons of her vision cannot extend beyond the historically gender specific limitations of her existence. However, the very fact of her emphasis upon dominant ideology, and the tension between recognised and unrecognised limitations upon women, provides the starting point for the forging of links to the material processes of production and male supremacy. Her commitment to exposing the relative chasm between dominant ideology and social reality provides an entry into socialist feminist literary criticism.

The importance of developing a feminist analysis of the historical content of bourgeois patriarchal ideology structuring In Revolt, both consciously and unconsciously, is a central concern here. Socialist feminism enables the development of an understanding of why Grossmann's feminist perception of the world is restricted to that provided by a conservative approach. It allows a materialist analysis of social structure and the evaluation of conservative feminism, an idealist approach, as an

oppositional ideological force. To be effective feminism needs to develop such an opposition. The impediments surrounding nineteenth century women's struggle to do so may be traced through Grossmann's fiction.

The contesting of aspects of dominant ideology and of social institutions in In Revolt is paralleled by the focus of the nineteenth century New Zealand feminist movement itself. The supposed nature of the feminist movement and the alleged means whereby women's suffrage was gained vary widely. It has generally been assumed, for example, that women were 'given' the vote with little preamble. Supposedly very little energy was channelled into political agitation for suffrage and its granting was an act of political expediency. (Aitken, 1975, 23). Alternatively Patricia Grimshaw in Women's Franchise in New Zealand, identifies the origins of the franchise campaign in New Zealand with British liberalism. She assumes that inclusion in the franchise constitutes part of a linear progression towards women's equality. (Bunkle, 1980, 52).

Grimshaw's liberal interpretation of the franchise issue and the progressive nature of nineteenth century feminism has more recently been challenged by Dalziel (1977) and by Bunkle (1980). Dalziel argues that rather than aiming at the attainment of equality with men, women in the movement were concerned with, 'the elevation of a separate role and the expression of peculiarly female values'. (Bunkle, 1980, 52). Women were thus

more concerned with curtailing much male behaviour than they were with throwing off the shackles of their traditional roles.

Bunkle documents the origins of the women's movement in New Zealand from a similar perspective seeking to provide a feminist analysis of the seemingly paradoxical nature of that movement. The apparent incongruencies between advocation of increased opportunities in the workforce and advocation of restrictions upon sex education (Bunkle, 1980, 54), for example, cannot be reconciled in the absence of a consideration of the specific historical conditions which moulded the nature of that movement. Rather these incongruencies remain problematic so long as the formative influence of patriarchal bourgeois ideology goes unrecognised. The attempt to gauge and assess the influence of patriarchal bourgeois ideology within In Revolt contributes toward making sense of an authorial position consciously shaped by the ideas of the feminist movement. Those seeming contradictions which characterise the position of nineteenth century feminism are similarly propounded within the novel. The inextricable links between Grossmann's fiction and feminist ideas too are also evidenced by her active involvement in the organised movement. She was a founding member of the influential Canterbury Women's Institute (1892) which campaigned for the full emancipation of women, rather than limiting itself to the issue of franchise. (Grimshaw, 1972, 52). The Institute distinguished itself from those feminists for whom suffrage was largely important only in so far as it might further their interests in

reform organisations.

In Revolt opens with the exploration of middle class family life toward the end of the nineteenth century. The portrayal of the frustration of female aspiration within the patriarchal family assumes a central position. It includes limitations upon both education and employment. This is reflected in the decision reached within the family with regard to Hermione's career plans. Hermione's mother being dead her aunt, Bertha Howard, assumes the position of surrogate mother. As such she forces Mr Howard, her brother, to face the ridiculousness of Hermione's 'unsuitable' ambitions.

> 'What a masculine idea! I suppose she'd like to be a lawyer or a doctor.The girl has not a grain of commonsense....' She paused awhile then took a pathetic strain. 'To think of the interest I have taken in her,... she has not an inch of gratitude....'
> 'Of course, Bertha. You understand these things better than I; but we must be very gentle with the poor child, and I really don't see what she is to do.'
> 'Do!', repeated Miss Howard contemptuously, 'Go out as a governess of course ....'
> As she was driving home her own words sugggested a new train of thought to her, and she mentally repeated the question 'What is to be done with Hermione? ...' But before she had entered Burmapore she had met her question with a mental resolution, 'Hermione must get married.' (p. 44-5).

In so far as the family is depicted as pressuring women to conform to patriarchal mores it represents a primary force in the perpetuation of gender inequalities. Thus Hermione is virtually powerless to translate aspiration into reality in the face of the authority of the patriarchal family. Aspirations apart from

those deemed appropriate for a young woman of her class are considered frivolous and in need of being swiftly stamped out.

At the same time as her sights are forcibly redirected however, the underlying contempt for any alternative other than marriage is evidenced by Aunt Bertha. The implied worthlessness of Hermione as a non-productive member of the family stimulates her desire to enter a respected profession. Similarly this perceived worthlessness is translated by her family into its only socially acceptable currency. Hermione's solution comes into conflict with her family's solution which is to foster her value upon the marriage market rather than upon the labour market.

Her powerless and dependent position within the family is reflected in, and reinforced by, the nature of her formal education. It is intended not to reduce her dependence via preparing her for a position in the paid work force, but to contribute to facilitating the transfer of dependence from father to husband. Thus her education is directed at improving her worth upon the marriage market and at preservation of the status quo. Like the patriarchal family itself, the education system reproduces women's subordination.

Hermione's marketable skills and her intellectual development are circumscribed by the very nature of her higher education. Her revolt against these limitations is suggestive of the nature and futility of her later revolt against the

limitations imposed upon her by her marriage. The circumscribing of intellectual and occupational opportunity is recognised and rejected by Hermione. Along with Lucy Clare, a friend at boarding school, she dreams of, and plans, an alternative. This she makes known to her aunt.

> 'We intend - ... - to get a tutor and some books and begin studying - I mean properly, Latin and things; then we shall be able to do more than most women. I am sorry I have such a dislike to teaching; I never seem to know what the children are doing - I find myself thinking of other things. But if I were better educated there are so many things I could do better suited to me'. (p. 43).

The injustice perpetrated in a gender specific frustration of aspiration is further evidenced:

> In the midsummer holidays Charlie Clare came on a visit .... He had been sent to Cambridge, and managed, by the aid of a tutor, to pass, so they regarded him as a prodigy, though he was nothing more than an ordinary colonial youth. He was by no means loth to display his superiority in a lordly offhand manner to his gentle sister Lucy ... (p. 41).

However, as Hermione writes in a letter to her father:

> ... dear Lucy wants to study too, she is six times cleverer than Charlie Clare, yet she has to be drudging away here while Charlie is sent to the University and ever so many pounds spend on <u>his</u> education, yet he is younger than Lucy. (p. 42).

From Grossmann's depiction of Hermione's schooling we also become aware that not only is it gender specific it is also class specific.

> 'I do hate being so stupid. I hate and detest plain sewing and ugly worsted roses and hideous wax things that aren't flowers at all; I can't always be thumping on the piano.' (p. 42).

Hermione's education equips her to grace the lives of a certain class of men. The likelihood of her success in this is assumed as inherent despite the implication above that she perceives herself as lacking in the peculiarly feminine arts. The nature of her education further assumes that her needs, on all practical levels, will be served by the labours of working class women. As a middle class woman she is circumscribed by a glorified and dependent condition.

While Grossmann recognises that this circumscription works in the interests of men her perception of male supremacy as primarily ideological assumes that its subsequent structural dimensions can be altered via ideas themselves. Thus the emphasis upon the moral aspects of withholding access to resources from women becomes understandable. Despite such analytical limitations Grossmann's fiction exposes the fundamental base of patriarchy. Her exploration of women's exclusion from access to some essential productive resources and of the control over women's sexuality, though embodying a moral critique, exposes the ways in which male control over female

labour power is maintained. Such control comprises the central component of the material base of patriarchy. (Hartmann, 1981, 15). Within this framework the circumscribing of middle class women's aspirations as a result of the dominant idealization of womanhood can further be traced to its origins in the patriarchal control of women's labour power. In this sense not only does the idealization of womanhood legitimate patriarchal control over female aspiration, it also serves to disguise the reality of her value as reproducer and as non-paid worker within the domestic sphere.

In between completing her education and fulfilling her only valid ambition as wife and mother, Hermione is confronted with the rigidity of the sexual division of labour. Though by the 1890's the labour market was opening up, it was doing so only for certain classes of women. The respectability of paid employment for middle class women was not immediately accepted. Indeed only a professional occupation was considered worthy of these women, and professions were largely limited to teaching. (Tennant, 1976, 89). Teaching in schools or governessing in private homes were viable peripheral options for those women from respectable, but impoverished, middle class backgrounds. By 1891 teachers outnumbered governesses six to one. During the nineties governessing positions continued to decline in number as opportunities for women in teaching increased. (Olssen, 1980, 163). While the idealised life of leisure, with all its implications as to the status of the male

provider, was preferable, nevertheless women occupying the grey area of respectable impoverishment needed to be provided for. Teaching, either publicly or privately, granted women economic survival without threatening the status quo. Indeed in 'The Victorian Governess', M. Jeanne Peterson contends that 'The employment of a gentle woman as a governess in a middle class family served to reinforce and perpetuate certain Victorian values'.(Peterson, 1972, 4). The governess evinces the economic status of the employer in so far as she is both ornament and indication of the leisured existence of the wife. Both women become differential measures of male economic status. Peterson likens the hiring of a governess to other outward displays of wealth such as carriages and clothing. At the same time such an occupation would serve to retain a young woman within a patriarchal family structure and in a pastime considered suitably feminine. The guidance and nurturing of children falls 'naturally' within the female sphere and provides suitable experience for future dealing with one's own offspring.

Retention within the patriarchal family too provides for the continuation of the control of female sexuality via the moral supervision of the employer. The latter assumes both control of labour power and safeguarding of chastity in the absence of the father. A similar strict supervision of female behaviour was evidenced within the teaching profession with its formal controls over education department employees. As with governesses the holding of a direct relation to production by a limited number of

middle class women did not facilitate any degree of autonomy in relation to their leisured sisters. Rather the patriarchal control of female sexuality was shifted from father to employer and low wages encouraged female dependence. Such wages could be legitimated by the assumption that participation in paid work was merely temporary and reinforced by the contradictory status of 'lady' and employee.

Hermione's sale of her labour then, is confined to a narrow range of low status occupations. Even the acceptable position of governess or teacher is considered by her family to be a temporary and unavoidable diversion. That even a position such as this is hardly desirable is impressed upon Hermione with predictable results.

> The thought of being a governess had not much distressed her at school, but, by dint of continually holding the position before her eyes and dwelling on its worst features, her aunt had made her shrink from the prospect, though she did try to be outwardly unmoved'. (p. 53).

Governessing is however, preferable to teaching, if only because residency in the homes of the wealthy may increase Hermione's chances of making the acquaintance of eligible young men. That the emphasis is upon governessing as a route to possible marriage, rather than a career, is apparent.

> ... she would go out as a governess. If that resulted in nothing Miss Howard would take her to Melbourne, and surely the gods would at last favour the brave. Now Miss Howard did not put it to herself that she was hawking her niece around for sale; she said she was 'giving her opportunities'. (p. 50).

Within the novel Grossmann draws attention to the economics involved in procuring husbands for middle and upper class women of the late nineteenth century. Her argument against the blatant exhibiting of young women on the marriage market however, is essentially moralistic in tone. The total dependence of these women upon their families for economic survival renders them powerless to withdraw from crude transactions upon the marriage market. It is the inhumane nature of such transactions and women's subjection to the will of the patriarchal family with which Grossmann takes issue. Thus it is not the institution of marriage itself which is questioned, but women's lack of control over the selection of a suitable mate. In the interests of the promotion of human dignity itself the liberal feminist platform advocated the expansion of women's legal rights. Greater educational and employment opportunities were considered central to women's greater control over their own lives in every sense.

The ideal of femininity, which promotes the dependence and passivity of women, is readily apparent in the fictionalised account of life for an unmarried middle class woman. Such an ideal, promoted by the patriarchal middle class, permeated the whole of society following the advent of capitalism and the ascendancy of this new powerful class. The shift in production

from home to factory, along with the acquisition of leisure and reduction of domestic duties for women in the rising class, led to the promotion of the ideal of home as a retreat from the alienation of the outside world. Basch documents the polarisation of spheres of gender which resulted:

> The idealisation of the wife as inspirer of humanity belonged with the Victorian conception of the Home and its meaning within the contemporary system of values. The home, a feminine attribute as it were, the 'outermost garment of her soul', which surrounds the wife worthy of the name wherever she may be found, is like a temple of purity, a haven of peace in a hostile and impure world. It falls to the man, the active ingredient, to take risks outside the sanctuary or bastion and to pit himself against his peers in a bitter struggle that often leaves him wounded, weakened, disenchanted. (Basch, 1974, 7).

The division between home and work was also the division between the private female and the public male worlds. Throughout the nineteenth century in Britain there was a gradual large scale disappearance of middle class women from the productive labour force. (Aitken, 1975, 16). Instead they were confined within the unpaid domestic labour force in various capacities, ranging from housekeeper to living ornamentation. In this era the ideal of womanhood became increasingly inseparable from the narrow confines of the security of family. Women were considered to be passive, gentle and nurturing as a consequence of their inferior constitutions and intelligence. These qualities supposedly endowed them with a special faculty for the providing of a haven of comfort and peace in the face of a hostile outside world. Such a faculty was considered, within

dominant ideology, as simultaneously defining women as incapable of functioning effectively in the masculine sphere of creation, action and authority. (Basch, 1974, 3-15).

In New Zealand this ideal of femininity was, at least initially, diluted. The first women settlers were largely of British working class stock. New Zealand's overall class structure too differed from that of Britain in that she originally acquired a relatively small middle class. The initial class composition of the colony allowed for the dilution of an ideal of femininity which, having been crystallised within the middle classes permeated the subordinate classes with less speed. Secondly this dilution was further encouraged by the actual physical realities involved in the establishment of the new colony. These demanded maximum inputs of hard labour from both men and women under strenuous conditions.

The kinds of work performed by pioneering women in the colony thus called into question the notions of their inherent physical and mental disabilities (Aitken, 1975, 17). By the 1890's however, women's relegation to the private sphere and the reassertion of the feminine ideal were apparent. Concensus about the centrality of motherhood and domesticity in the lives of women as an ideal emerged between the 1890's and the 1920's (Olssen, 1980, 175).

For Grossmann's heroine the feminine ideal becomes the barring of her entry into the outside world rather than providing the supposedly necessary protection from it. The assumption of protection provided for women by men within the family legitimated the virtual absolute dependence of women. Hermione's economic dependence is exacerbated by her lack of marketable skills. The authority of the husband or father facilitated, in part, by this economic dependence was further enhanced by those ideological factors discussed and by legal and political constraints upon women. Indeed during the period In Revolt was written women had no formal political rights, no access to divorce on equal grounds to men, to equal rights of guardianship of children, to equal pay for equal work or even to protection from enforced incestuous relations.

It is certain aspects of the dominant ideology surrounding marriage and family that Grossmann seeks to contrast with perceived reality. Thus she calls into question the existence of the haven of homelife which provides for women shelter from the hostility of the outside world. Instead of the love and protection assumed by a structural organisation which ensures female dependence Grossmann points to a reality which instead allows for the maximum of female abuse. The ideology is at odds with a social world wherein absolute female dependence does not automatically elicit male care and protection. Instead Grossmann perceives that men have power and that they also have a choice how they will use it. Dominant ideology and social organisation

is based, for Grossmann, on the erroneous assumption that the choice of the use of power will ultimately be in favour of women. Naturally however, perception of what will be favourable for women is controlled by men as the powerful group.

For Grossmann's heroine, following her marriage, the haven of home becomes instead the most well appointed site for the unmediated brutality of her husband. Bradley Carlisle's physical abuse of Hermione is the major feature of her marriage. Her fear of him is wellfounded and unmistakable. Following her challenging of his authority he once again threatens her with violence.

> Bradley Carlisle dragg[ed] her back roughly by the arm. She started.
> 'Go back to the hotel, idiot that you are, and don't stand staring there. I have something to say to you at home.'
> Home! The fear was increasing, and he saw it.
> 'I'll give you something to be afraid of before I've done with you'.
> 'I am afraid of you now, if it is any triumph to you to know that', she said, ... (p. 382).

Home for Hermione does not mean safety, but rather the environment within which she is most vulnerable to the aggression of her husband. While the home and family protects her from the potential hostility of the majority of men it does so only for the price of exposure to the actual hostility of her husband. The gross idealisation of women's sanctified role within the private sphere is seen by Grossmann as providing the very conditions for the abuse of women it supposedly protected them

against. The failure for those benefitting from this to recognise its consequences for women was clearly a major issue for Grossmann.

While dominant ideology and policy conceived of male and female relations as an harmonious balance of complementary attributes the reality Grossmann depicts points toward obvious discrepancy. Her fiction, motivated by her feminist consciousness, is committed to outlining the extent of the gap between cultural ideals and the reality of experience. It moves beyond this too, to attack the content of the ideology in a limited sense. Women of all social classes are portrayed as innocent victims of those men who fail to kindly use the monopoly of power invested in them. Women abused in all spheres of life, public and private, people in the pages of In Revolt and indeed of the social world of which Grossmann was a part. Her heroine, Hermione, becomes a testament to the emptiness of the exalted notions legitimating the confinement of middle and upper class women to the private sphere.

Hermione's vulnerability to the romantic advances of the neighbourhood's most eligible bachelor is the problem Grossmann confronts after dealing with the issues of female education and employment. The depth of Hermione's passion and her lack of control over its extent is plain.

> She threw herself into this new passion with all the unreasoning intensity of early girlhood. She had no half measures, no self restraint; more and more he absorbed her life and her own lay dormant beneath the tyranny of love. She was willing to sacrifice all. Indeed, in her more serious moods, it seemed the sweetest thing on earth that she should give up her own life to him, that she should be so utterly his. (p. 90).

The metaphors of love are the metaphors of power. The tyranny of love is the dictatorship of the loved over the lover. It is yet another facet of male supremacy for it is only over women that the despotism of romantic love can be absolute. The male cannot love so entirely and absolutely for he ventures out from the private sphere and into the world. In the competitive and aggressive public sphere of production he must assume those same qualities for his economic survival. His love then loosens its chains, for of necessity there is more to his life than his love.

> ... he was rich, and still young; he could gratify every passion and desire in him. Bradley Carlisle's mind contained only limited classes of ideas - material, sensuous, sensual. Things spiritual - in fact all beyond those classes - were sentimental bosh fit for women. Now Hermione represented to him the gratification of his strongest passion; what he called his love enhanced by a sense of mastery and possession. (p. 95).

For Hermione love swiftly usurps the meagre claims to autonomy, for her life is the enforced middle class woman's life of emptiness. Yet the very passion of her love and the dormancy of her own life beneath its ravages are telling. For dormancy does not mean extinction. Rather it is a state of trance or sleep.

From such a state there always exists the possiblity of an awakening. The very passion fuelling Hermione's submission is, at the same time, suggestive of the impact upon her of an awakening. In Revolt is, after all, the chronicle of Hermione's dawning recognition of a world existing beyond the composite of ideals she is presented with.

Grossmann's focus upon the ideology of romantic love is primarily concerned with the implications of the illusions it creates. In Hermione's case the socially contrived emphasis upon the centrality of love and marriage for women, combined with enforced naivete, facilitates her becoming the willing slave of Carlisle. She is prevented from rationally selecting for herself a suitable mate by her powerlessness in the face of these factors.

Hermione's romantic illusions are those feminine perceptions of reality which are encouraged among women to facilitate their subordination within marriage. The ease of their fostering among young women is reflected upon by Aunt Bertha. She hopes to direct Hermione's interests away from a career and into marriage.

> 'A very young girl', thought Miss Howard, 'is in a state of vibration toward love. She likes all the romance and prestige of courtship. So I think I can manage it.' (p,53).

Hermione's vulnerability to the idealization of romantic love is seen as ultimately resulting from a powerlessness which is morally, rather than materially, defined. Thus its tyranny results not from its interrelation with the material forces of production and patriarchy, but from the ideology of male supremacy which legitimates it. Grossmann's conception of women's oppression is therefore essentially trapped within an idealist tradition.

Such a tradition is based upon the assumption that in the final analysis our ideas create the social world and determine the conditions of our lives. It assumes therefore that social change is predicated upon the force of new ideas. The feminism fuelled by such perceptions of social reality and social change locates the impetus for its success in the propagation of ideas.

A materialist analysis, in contrast to this, begins with the assertion that the material conditions of existence largely determine the nature of ideas and values. Position in relation to material production and reproduction has a determining influence upon consciousness rather than vice-versa. Social change occurs not through the transformative powers of consciousness, but through the inherent contradictions within a given mode of production. These contradictions give rise to antagonistic class relations and consequent class struggle. The transformation of the material conditions of existence occurs with the overthrow of the dominant class. With this

transformation, the transformation of consciousness is facilitated.

A socialist feminist analysis of social change goes beyond this to stressing the importance of contradictions within the system of male supremacy, or patriarchy. It does not assume that consciousness, in its entirety, is structured by the relation to economic production. Rather, socialist feminism asserts that patriarchy, like capitalism, has a material base. Without the transformation of that material base, male control over female labour power, the accompanying ideology of patriarchy remains intact. Thus the transformation of the material relations of capitalist production does not automatically mean the transformation of both bourgeois and patriarchal ideologies. Rather, unless the material relations of patriarchy too are transformed patriarchal ideology cannot be eradicated.

Clearly the feminist analysis structuring In Revolt assumes the transformative power of ideas. In its idealist perception of social organisation and social change the transition to a different sort of society is limited (Lennie, 1978, 135). Change is seen as dependent upon the freely determined individual as the moving power of history. (Guettel, 1974, 3). In this Grossmann's conservative idealist feminism is quite clearly at variance with the analysis proposed within socialist feminism. However, the analytical inadequacies encountered within Grossmann's feminism cannot merely be dismissed as indicative of a lack of insight.

Rather, it is necessary to confront the formulation of these inadequacies, historical and structural.

On the one hand the very infancy of nineteenth century dialectical materialism, as a theory and weapon for social change, needs to be recognised. The dominant perception of the nature of social change within capitalist patriarchy is idealist. This is directly related to the interests of those powerful groups within society who benefit from the contemporary form of material organisation. Idealism offers only a limited potential for social change which is instead defined within capitalist patriarchy as being a transformative potential. This is because the powerful groups, through their controlling positions in material production and the hierarchy of patriarchy, control also the dominant ideas within society. The impact of this upon the formulation of Grossmann's feminism is similarly reflected in the dominance of a liberal feminism within the contemporary women's movement.

This impact can, in Grossmann's case, be seen as further exacerbated by the limited availability of materialist literature and conversants. Indeed scientific socialist thought and writing prior to 1890 was little known in New Zealand as Josephine Milburn has documented in 'Socialism and Social Reform in Nineteenth Century New Zealand' (Milburn, 1960, 63). The demand for socialist literature and the emergence of socialist organisations, stimulated by the growth of the factory system,

sweating and the depression of the 1880's, became apparent after 1890 (Roth, 1953, 57). Even then however, diffusion was limited. Given the paucity of indigenous written materials on socialism, utopian or scientific, Milburn concludes that such theories were not a significant part of early New Zealand thought. As a scholar and activist in Christchurch during 1890 it is likely that Grossmann studied W. Pember Reeves series of articles on socialist theories in the Lyttelton Times. However, influence of a materialist analysis upon her feminism within In Revolt is non-existent.

The analysis and demands of Grossmann's feminism then are limited in their radicalism, at least in part, by the inability to ascertain the nature of social change. This is necessarily seen as an historically determined limitation. Furthermore, it must be seen as having a gender specific dimension in so far as it is also structured by the particular conditions of nineteenth century women's lives. While on the one hand Grossmann's radicalism is implied by the stress upon the inter-connections of capitalism and male supremacy in structuring women's oppression (Du Bois, 1979, 137), on the other it goes unrealised.

The limitations upon feminist radicalism can only be appreciated in the light of the limitations of women's day to day lives. The hegemony of bourgeois patriarchal ideology penetrated the feminist movement itself, spurred on by women's very

dependence upon marriage and the sexual division of labour for their survival. Few women had any alternative to marriage, few could support themselves through wage labour. These realities enforced dependence upon men. Though this lack of options fuelled feminist protest, it also confined it if only because survival beyond the existing realities was so precarious. (Du Bois, 1979, 149).

Grossmann's feminism then is committed to reformism rather than social transformation. It is envisaged that women may thus be liberated within the existing society. This is evident in Grossmann's fictional representation of the nature of romantic love. It is not so much romantic love per se, with which Grossmann takes issue for example, but the socially determined incapacity of young women to successfully negotiate it. Hermione's vulnerability is, in Grossmann's estimation, exacerbated by the extreme youth and ignorance intervening in any rational selection of a marriage partner. The likelihood of the fostering of an increased scepticism with age is nipped in the bud by the emphasis upon establishing youthful alliances.

The destructive nature of illusory romantic love is also seen as inherent within the exalting of love propounded by a traditional divinely ordained ideal of chaste womanhood. Grossmann draws attention to the same results procured by both the sacred and secular idealisations of conjugal love. Before her marriage to Carlisle the impact of the sacred ideal upon

Hermione's already mountainous illusions is assured by the pastor, Mr Howe;

> 'It is the part of a woman to obey and love her husband unto death, and though he wrong her, yet must she cleave to him in perfect forgiveness and obedience. If he be evil, yet must she not leave him to his evil, but by patience and purity win him back to the Lord. For she is given unto him that her life may be a sacrifice to him. For by woman came sin and sorrow upon man, and now must the wife be unto the husband as the messenger of God to redeem him from his natural sins. If she leave him, he is abandoned to evil, and she is the instrument of his destruction.' (p. 113).

The view espoused by Mr Howe cements Hermione's notion of her elevated spiritual, and formerly secular based, romantic love for Carlisle. Whether motivated by the sacred or the secular the centrality of love in the lives of middle class women facilitates the translation of aspiration into reality. The juxtaposition of these two forces in In Revolt, reflects the historically changing legitimation for women's largely unchanged social roles, as primarily wives and mothers, as the secular society gained momentum. Patricia Stubbs in Women and Fiction, Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920, suggests that '(romantic love) became a key part of Victorian mythology once it was felt, in the wake of Darwin's Origins of the Species (1859), that Christianity could no longer offer a firm moral base for human actions'. (Stubbs, 1979, 8).

The subsequent tragedy of Hermione's marriage to Bradley Carlisle is, at least in part, the result of her extreme youth. She is barely sixteen upon her marriage to Carlisle, ten years

her senior. Grossmann stresses that such a young marriage was not to be considered an exception. Though by the turn of the century the average age of marriage for women in New Zealand was around twenty six (Swain, 1978, 69), the age of consent was raised to fourteen only in 1893. In Australia, where In Revolt is set, the age of consent was raised to sixteen in 1910, from twelve in the state of Victoria and fourteen in the state of New South Wales, (Summers, 1975, 364).

The implications of such low ages of consent for women of all classes were of concern to feminists of the period. For working class women they allowed the early conscription into the profession of prostitution. For women of Grossmann's heroine's class they contributed to the iron grip of sexual control which precluded the realisation of ardent love women were led to expect was inevitable. In effect the low ages of consent did not allow women maximum freedom of choice but rather, in Grossmann's estimation, rendered them overly vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous men.

Hermione's youthfulness at marriage, supposedly the gateway to adulthood, suggests the unequal nature of the marriage relation. Female submission to male dictates is not only preached by Mr Howe, for example, but is evidenced in Hermione's translation of sacred ideology into reality.

> The solemn, monotonous voice ceased, his eyes were still bent upon her. A long silence fell upon the twilit room. She waited for words of her own to say her own thoughts, but could find none. So, like a little child, she folded her hands, saying simply-
> 'Yea, verily, and, by God's help, so I will'.
> Then he took her hand and, kneeling down, prayed with her. So, solemnly, sacredly, she pledged herself unto the holy state of matrimony. (p.115).

The divinely ordained self-sacrificial subordination of women advocated by Mr Howe is not at great variance with the ideals of womanhood propounded within conservative secularism. Because these ideals of womanhood become internalised, and because opportunities to reject them are limited, the enforced living out of the female role is interpreted as being 'naturally', rather than socially determined.

Hermione's childlike acceptance of Howe's claims is reminiscent of the child's reliance upon the guidance and judgement of adults. Grossmann suggests that the mirroring of this dependence is inherent in the adult woman's limited ability to survive in the absence of a male provider. Entry into marriage for Hermione then is indicative not of reaching adulthood, but second childhood. The annihilation of her personality and individuality, within male dominated social institutions, is inevitable.

It is in protest at the inevitability of frustration of female aspiration, within a society structured by the ideology of male supremacy, that Grossmann's feminism is directed. She

emphasises that the ideological centrality of love and marriage, in the lives of young middle class women, encourages the further abdication of the individualism considered a natural human right within liberal philosophy.

But Hermione's oppression goes beyond the morally unacceptable domination of her social being. While Grossmann damns a social order which precludes the equality of the sexes she conceives of social change evolving out of moralistic assertion. A materialist analysis however, sees bourgeois romantic ideology as more than a pitfall for the ignorant which will find its parallel in reality only when women become better educated and are given greater opportunities. Rather such ideology will continue to cement the aspirations of certain classes of women. Women will continue to be secured within repressive social relations so long as the material relations of production and the material bases of patriarchy remain intact.

The cultural hegemony of these ruling interests pervades the feminist analysis of romantic love Grossmann articulates within her fiction. This feminism is once again seen as of a limited kind in so far as it is aimed at remedying only certain injustices. The need to eliminate the dangers of romantic love for middle class women must also seek to consider the ways in which the sexuality and labour power of working class women are usurped.

Grossmann's concern with the dangers of romantic love involves not only the recognition of the discrepancy between ideology and reality. It also involves the assumption that in order to reconcile the two, both demand modification. Thus romantic love can continue to maintain a grip upon women so long as it does not equate her elevation with the demand for her passivity and submission. Women are to be respected for their moral qualities and not also assumed to be submissive by nature. Thus self-sacrifice is acceptable so long as it is tempered with the real element of choice and grows out of women's separate being. So long as circumstances no longer force her submissive love, but instead the nature of her love is self-determined.

The determination with which Grossmann clings to this modified ideal of romantic love is directly related to the centrality of the dominant version within the lives of women of her class. Because romantic love is ideally a step on the way to marriage, and because marriage is women's only real option for survival, a total attack upon it is inconceivable. Instead it is retained and modified in such a way that it is reinstituted as an ideal leaving the material relations underlying it unchanged. A purist model of a sexually egalitarian, monogamous and devoted love is introduced into a social world that remains fundamentally unchanged. Indeed the stability of the basis of male power ensures the unequal input into maintenance of relationships which are primarily designed to meet male needs at female expense.

Grossmann's dealing with romantic love contributes to evidencing the ways in which dominant bourgeois patriarchal ideology served to limit the revolutionary potential of feminism. Material realities orchestrated the conservatism of the movement in concert with that ideology. The feminist struggle to articulate the nature of women's oppression foundered upon these factors.

Hermione's marriage to Bradley Carlisle is a central source of conflict in the novel. The union of the powerless with the powerful has certain implications for the realisation of the idealized relationship she has been led to expect. The nature of that relationship is foreshadowed by Carlisle's desire and ability to exert a great deal of control upon the world about him.

This control is reflected in his handling of the mare, Wildfire. The innocent and sheltered Hermione however, takes no warning from Carlisle's handling of the mare.

> He went up to Wildfire, caressing her, while she gave low neighs of pleasure, and rubbed her head lovingly against his arm ....
> 'How fond you are of your horse, Mr Carlisle, and she is so fond of you!'
> 'Yes, I like animals. I broke in Wildfire myself. You see she has to be managed like everything else.'
> Not having the least idea of the process he referred to, Hermione acquiesced vaguely. (p. 67).

Carlisle's taming and domestication of his horse is further likened to his ability to control Hermione by parallels of ownership. He decides he objects to her name and substitutes a 'pet name'. This substitution, and Hermione's acceptance of it, reflects the lack of choice inherent in the relegation to the rank of pet or domestic animal. Her worth can thus be assessed in those same terms as that of a pedigree animal.

> '... Beauty, I care for you more than anything I have in the world. I would not give you up for thousands of pounds.'
> 'And I love you, dear; I could not tell you how much.' She put her arm around his neck, kissed him as if she had been a little child, then went away. In her own room she threw herself on her knees by the bed, and prayed to be better and more gentle. All the day she kept saying softly to herself,
> 'He loves me better than anything, better than anyone, more than all his wealth', ending passionately, 'and I would <u>die</u> for you ... ' (p. 85).

It is significant that Hermione's pet name, Beauty, is commonly a name reserved for a horse. It serves to reinforce the elements of ownership and control Grossmann isolates in Carlisle's domination of Hermione. It also suggests something of the process of his ability to domesticate Hermione, to break her spirit as he has already broken that of Wildfire. In Hermione's case however, the breaking of the spirit means the complete abdication of her will and total severance of her already stringently limited self-determination.

Similarly Carlisle reveals, in his choice of a pet name and in the measure of his love, that Hermione's worth to him can be assessed primarily in material terms. It is her physical appearance that concerns him, just as it is the fine breeding of Wildfire that determines her value.

> He was more completely in love with her than he had ever expected to be with any woman. Her very refinement, though he was incapable of appreciating its origin, was strangely attractive to him. (p. 68).

It is Hermione's air of being well-bred, both in terms of her social demeanour and her physical appearance, that attracts Carlisle and likens Hermione to the thoroughbred mare, Wildfire. Both are physically handsome and both demonstrate the wilful spirit that so attracts those in search of conquest. It is seldom that men are evaluated purely in terms of physical appearance. As a visible symbol of wealth and power Hermione's sleek appearance is as crucial as that of a well-bred carriage horse.

The difference between Carlisle's 'love' for Hermione and her love for him is highlighted in the passage above. Carlisle's love is associated with 'having' and with material acquisition. Hermione's love exists upon an elevated spiritual plane which is directly opposed to the vulgarity of Carlisle's love. The distinct consciousness of each in this respect is inseparable from the material differences associated with gender. Carlisle is absorbed within the masculine sphere of business and commerce,

Hermione within the secluded feminine world of a supposedly tranquil domestic haven.

The parallels between Carlisle's ownership and control of farm animals and his ownership and control of Hermione and his children are implied by a number of instances. In each case his treatment of the animals is suggestive of that to be metered out to the human beings over whom he exercises dominance. That Hermione should recognise these parallels is demonstrated by her enforced witnessing of the branding of the station cattle and horses.

> Hermione in her loneliness had grown to be fond of the animals on the station. Her husband told her one day to go with him and see the cattle driven in and branded; so she went. But never again! To see the creatures lashed as they were being driven in and hear their bellowing agony as the red hot iron seared them made her sick and faint. Then he had some foals broken in, and she saw him cutting at them while the blood streamed from their gashes .... To her it was a sickening sight to see the beautiful animals rush wildly from one side of the enclosed space to the other trembling with terror and pain, their flanks gashed and foaming. (p. 186).

The cattle feel the agony of the symbol of ownership burning into their flesh. Once there, their incarceration is inviolate. For Hermione too, that symbol of ownership, her marriage to Carlisle, becomes a living hell. Thus;

> She looked at her dress, her wedding ring, and the heavy gold chain about her neck .... The chain was his wedding present, and at first she had worn it out of love and then as a symbol of her slavery. Except at night she never took it off, in Melbourne wearing it openly, at Moorabool beneath her dress, though the links hurt her. (p. 216).

Her married name, like the chain of gold, weighs heavily upon her, signifying to the world the degradation of her chattel status. Along with the cattle she is agonised by her bearing of the symbol of Carlisle's ownership. Like the cattle also she is branded for life.

> The name she bore was a searing brand of shame. She felt as if fire surrounded her and scorched her own soul. (p. 190).

Like the terrorised foals 'Beauty' too is enclosed and prevented from escaping Carlisle's cruelty. The physical walls confining the foals become the social barriers thwarting Hermione's escape.

> ... in her mad, lawless moments she dashed herself wildly against the stony walls that shut her in, her own spirit crying out for its liberty, only to fall back yet more bruised and crushed. (p. 193).

The equating of Carlisle's ownership and maltreatment of his animals with his relation to his wife and his family is telling. Hermione feels the yoke of that ownership most forcibly upon confronting her husband's drunken reaction to her attempts to maintain some kind of independence.

> 'Bradley,' she began, softly, then stopped, for he turned his face towards her - a bloated sensual face full of evil passions that she had never seen before, with glaring bloodshot eyes, and yet with that horrible identity to the man she loved. He gripped hold of her shoulder and muttered beneath his clenched teeth -
> 'Damn you - you dare to disobey me, do you?'
> O, God, it could not be! It was some fevered nightmare dream, not waking reality. He lifted his arm, but she clung to him and held it back with a confusion of horror and outraged love, clinging so that he could not strike .... He raised his heavy arm again and struck her twice on the shoulder and breast. (pp. 175-6).

The beatings Hermione endures become more frequent as Carlisle fights to 'break her spirit' just as he has broken that of Wildfire.

> ... he caught hold of her and struck her on the mouth. It was only desperation that kept her quiet; a mist was coming before her eyes, and she could hardly stand ....
> 'Are you going to murder me?' she said, but her voice sounded strange to herself. He gave a coarse laugh, and went on staring at her till she covered her face convulsively with her hands.
> 'You are making me mad,' she said.
> He tore her hands away, and she tried to scream, but her voice died as in a nightmare, and he struck her again. (p. 384).

Grossmann's allusion to the nightmarish quality of these beatings reinforces the sense of their alienation from the idealised romance and domesticity Hermione had been led to expect of her married life.

Grossmann's emphasis upon parallels between marriage and ownership reflects the destructive potential she located in the unequal relations between the sexes. Such potential was readily augmented by legal constraints upon women. Although after 1884 women in New Zealand were permitted to retain ownership of their own property following marriage (Grimshaw, 1972, 9), this was of limited value. Women remained severely handicapped with regard to entry into, and opportunity within, the paid work force. Therefore opportunity to acquire goods on the same footing as men was disallowed. By 1891, for example, only twenty four percent of women aged over fifteen worked outside the home (Dalziel, 1977, 188). Very few of these would have been middle or upper class women and few would have received a living wage granting them independence from men.

Unless a woman received an inheritance she was entirely dependent upon her husband and in essence propertyless. The binding nature of this relation was further reinforced by divorce laws which supported the interests of men. During the nineteenth century a husband could obtain a divorce on the grounds of his wife's adultery. A wife could obtain a divorce only if she could prove both her husband's adultery and his serious physical maltreatment of her (Grimshaw, 1972, 8). The mere fact of physical abuse was not sufficient to warrant the attention of the courts. Furthermore divorce itself was a relative rarity. In New Zealand in the year 1897, for example, several years after the writing of <u>In Revolt</u>, divorces totalled only thirty-three

(Olssen, 1981, 274). Custody of children too was rarely in favour of women.

Grossmann's fictional representation of what she saw as the not uncommon outcome of a stage set for disaster is similarly rooted in history. The male tendency toward aggressive dominance she isolated is fostered within law, politics and economy, and further exacerbated by the excessive use of alcohol. From the earliest days of settlement alcohol consumption was widespread and considered disturbingly high by many (Graham, 1981, 130). Dalziel notes that, 'the worst of all the male abuses was alcohol. The consumption of liquor in the colony was supposedly high. In 1861 New Zealanders drank over three gallons of beer, over two of spirits and nearly one of wine per head of population. In 1879, the first survey of licences showed, there was one licence to sell alcohol to every 287 people.' (Dalziel, 1977, 120). A major concern arising out of this consumption was that alcohol appeared to be the most common cause of criminal offending (Graham, 1981, 137).

The particular aspect of this which dominates in Grossmann's fiction concerns consequences for those already disadvantaged within a sexually polarized and unequal society. Thus the extreme likelihood of defenseless women and children receiving the brunt of a male agression, tempered by alcohol, is a central consideration. Grossmann's fictional account of the consequences

for women of male alcohol abuse is neither exaggerated nor romanticized for women received little protection in law and many were constantly in physical danger with little opportunity for redress. Grimshaw documents the consequences for women arising from male alcohol abuse during the late nineteenth century.

> While it was men who most often drank to excess it was most certainly the women who were chief sufferers. When tales were told of the beatings and physical violence arising from drink, it was so often a woman who had been assaulted by a drunken husband. It was the wife, too, who so often plodded from public house to public house on a Saturday night, in the hope of finding her husband before all the weeks wages had been spent on drink. Again it was the women who, in search of work, became barmaids and were exploited and occasionally demoralized.' (Grimshaw, 1972, 23).

Of central importance with regard to Grossmann's fictional treatment of alcohol abuse is the refusal to stereotype the drunken bully as the uncultivated working class male. Indeed it is Carlisle, the wealthy and powerful ruling class family man, who Grossmann uses to smash this stereotype. While it was women of the working class who most publicly suffered beatings and abuse upper class women suffered too, though in greater privacy. Violence toward working class women appeared to dominate altogether largely because of the high proportion of women concentrated within this class and the frequently high profile of their abuse. Few in urban areas were beyond the hearing distance of neighbours, for example.

The assumption that drunken violence was beyond the experience of middle and upper class women is smashed by Grossmann, just as it was called into question by a speaker in parliament as early as 1873. He tentatively asserted that, '(women) were the greatest sufferers from the evils arising from intemperance and this was not only the case amongst the poor, but even amongst the rich,'(Grimshaw, 1972, 23). Grossmann's treatment of the alcohol problem fails to endorse the assumption that it has little effect upon middle and upper class women. Rather, the lack of discrepancy between fact and fiction that marks her choice of characters in exploring the issue of alcohol abuse reveals something of her own ideological position (Higgins, 1976, 31). Male supremacy is manifest in a variety of ways within all social classes with equally damning consequences for women.

The shaping of Grossmann's feminist analysis of male dominance is noticeably influenced by the perspective of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Though Grossmann was not a member of the Union, the feminism revealed within her fiction reflects similar positions and incongruencies with regard to a variety of issues. The Union was committed to temperance in recognition of the association between alcohol and vice. Alcohol was literally equated with an evil spirit as the Union, within the auspices of an evangelical Protestant crusade for general social reform, gained momentum in New Zealand during the 1880's (Bunkle, 1980, 55).

The W.C.T.U. campaigned for abolition because it considered alcohol to be inherently evil and a significant hindrance in the Union's promotion of individual and social purity. Purity embraced a modesty and self-restraint which stressed the evil potential of both sex and alcohol. It also demanded a selfless commitment to guarding the moral purity of others. Urban, middle class women, primary adherents of the Union's policies, translated the ideologies of femininity and domesticity into a political force. They assumed their socially prescribed and enforced moral rigidity was in fact a spiritually determined capacity for purity. Though all people possessed this potential for purity it was most significantly realised in the qualities of women. The W.C.T.U. recognised the difference in patterns of alchol abuse between men and women and naturally concluded that this reflected the different stages in the moral development of the sexes. Men, far more than women, fell victim to the 'demon drink'. The superior morality of women, which supposedly protected them from over-indulgence, similarly decreed their sacred responsibility for reforming and saving men.

The Union's emphasis then was not upon the modification of women's traditional idealised sphere, but upon extending the role of moral protector and educator enshrined within it out into the social world beyond the home. The W.C.T.U. assumed that its beneficial influence upon the morality of the nation, in its entirety, could best be effected via a greater authority. This authority could be most significantly facilitated by the granting

of suffrage to women (Bunkle, 1980, 52-76). The W.C.T.U.'s concern with closing the gap between the ideology of moral purity for all and sordid reality involved the cementing of the ideals as a means to the forging of a corresponding reality within their confines.

The expansion of women's political rights was thus of significance only in relation to the primary goal of the W.C.T.U., the establishment of a moral social order via feminine condemnation of vice. The preoccupation with vice and its virtual equation with alcohol is illustrated by Bunkle. She documents that it was considered that 'Any contact with alcohol could contaminate, and great caution had to be exercised to prevent the slightest contact. The W.C.T.U. spent nearly as much energy campaigning for the use of unfermented communion wine as for the vote.' (Bunkle, 1980, 70).

The issue of alcohol abuse, though an important focus within Grossmann's feminist analysis, does not assume these draconian proportions in In Revolt. Along with the W.C.T.U. she assumes an inherent male predisposition to alcohol abuse and a need to discourage such tendencies from childhood. The fictionalising of Carlisle's alcohol problem reflects this assumption.

> Bradley Carlisle habitually took too much now, particularly if he found his life dull and had no motive for restraint - his wife had ceased entirely to be that to him .... An innate animalism and inherited thirst for power had been fully developed by his early home-life and upbringing by three years of Melbourne

> larrikinism and the life of a fast young man at Oxford and London. If the vices and follies of his youth had indeed died out, they had, at least, left a numerous offspring.' (p. 181).

Alcohol is not an evil, in and of itself, rather it is seen as adding to, or inflaming, existing male tendencies. Thus Carlisle's beating of Hermione is encouraged by his drinking, it is not caused by it.

> 'Bradley,' she said, desperately, 'you struck me last night'.
> He made no answer, and she went on in hurried, imploring tones,
> 'Did you know? Did you mean to?'
> 'Yes, and what's more, I'll do it again, and worse too if you dare to thwart me. Look here, Hermione,' and he half raised himself up, 'you've got to learn that I'll be master in my own house, and by God, I'll make you feel it'. (p. 179).

The impact of the W.C.T.U.'s assumption of a morally superior femininity upon the nineteenth century feminist movement is outlined by Bunkle (Bunkle, 1980, 52-76). She notes that the W.C.T.U., the only national organisation of women during the early 1890's, included almost all women who were publicly active. Along with Dalziel, Bunkle supports the argument that the elevation of peculiarly feminine values motivated the W.C.T.U. and also structured both nineteenth century feminist analysis and practice.

In In Revolt this influence is apparent in terms of both authorial analysis and shared apparent contradictions. In a world within which women's dependence is cemented by political, legal and economic constructs, their aspirations are frustrated just as their moral superiority is virtually impotent. The heroine's indisputable moral purity is a major feature of her character. She subscribes to dominant bourgeois morality in its entirety. She is therefore chaste, sexless and temperate in all respects. Hermione's character is above reproach. Her purity is, quite clearly, superior to that of her husband. Grossmann's authorial position includes the championing of this moral impeccability. The assumption that bourgeois morality confining women of a certain class is in fact 'natural' and a superior system of social control is apparent. Purity of character is equated with moral superiority.

Within In Revolt, Hermione's purity, unprotected and unsupported, is continually under threat of being sullied by Carlisle's intemperance and sexual immorality.

> Beneath the inpouring of an alien nature, a mind more formed than hers, principles wavered and grew indistinct; wrong seemed no longer clearly defined, but a doubtful perplexing thing. Ideas previously sternly repelled now came to her mind with all the charm of novelty .... her very instincts of right had seemed unsurpassable walls of stone which hemmed in her life, her actions and thoughts. The walls were crumbling before her, and vistas of unknown possibilities were being opened up. Even truth was not immutable; falsehood could take the passport of jest, and go unquestioned. Vice was interesting, cunning and cheating clever .... He little knew with what he was all this while trifling - a woman's deepest love, a

woman's highest purity. (p. 154).

Hermione's feminine values, and ultimately her purity, are desecrated by Carlisle and his equation of purity with childlike ignorance. Certainly Carlisle allows the broadening and opening up of Hermione's view of the world, but she is ill-equipped to judge that world to know what she should reject and what she should retain. Her innocence can only be true innocence if it is arrived at after surveying, then rejecting, evil.

Women's exclusion from the public world however, precludes the anchoring of their superior morality within social constructs. Only if their entry into all spheres of public life, on an equal grounding with men, is assured can that morality triumph. Until then women's capacity to maintain their own morality, let alone positively influence that of men, is in jeopardy. Once Hermione becomes aware that Carlisle's immorality is infecting her she attempts to steel herself against it. This is however, no easy task. Grossmann demonstrates how Hermione's total dependence upon Carlisle threatens her purity of being;

> ... all that had softened and humanised his love had passed away with her own faith in him. Except the ever uppermost desire of self-gratification, his strongest feeling now was a desire to shame her by showing her what she was in his eyes .... The cause of her aversion he called, and even considered, sham and foolery and a woman's jealousy. But although not fully conscious he somehow felt that he was morally degraded in her eyes. The feeling filled him with a devil's determination to drag her down to his own level. (p. 193).

Grossmann assumes purity is naturally morally superior to intemperance. It is 'good' by definition. The bourgeois patriarchal morality structuring the lives of a certain class of women goes unquestioned. Its material base and its role in perpetuating oppression is unrecognised. The measure of purity is defined by Grossmann purely in terms of the bourgeois patriarchal morality she accepts as inherently representative of 'truth' and 'good'. The battle between good and evil is the battle between the powerless and the powerful.

A superior morality cannot struggle indefinitely against an evil that social organisation implicitly encourages. Social institutions, being controlled by men and permeated by masculine immorality, appear immune to the purifying influence of women. Hermione's purer spirit struggles against Carlisle, the personification of evil, but that struggle appears doomed to failure. Carlisle has the entire weight of the social order behind him and Hermione's only ammunition in the battle for retaining her morality and reforming his is her purity. The heroine's moral cleanliness is of major importance for Grossmann. In the novel the issue of morality becomes the battlefield of the sexes. Attention is focussed on moral, rather than material, factors. Thus morality assumes an autonomous existence. Female victory can then be won on this level alone.

In the absence of equal social rights and opportunities however, Hermione's ammunition cannot be added to nor the moral rescue of Carlisle facilitated. Women are thus burdened with responsibility for male morality without the means to control it. Forced to themselves observe bourgeois patriarchal moral ordinances nineteenth century feminists demonstrated their overconformity. Not only were they forced, by the conditions of their lives, into the unquestioned acceptance of these ordinances. They also failed to see why such moral dictates were so rigidly prescribed for, and observed by, only the female sex of a particular class. Nineteenth century feminists therefore actively campaigned for the adherence of all, regardless of sex or class, to the 'superior' morality they themselves assumed they had 'chosen'. The assumption of the role of moral guardian was not new. It merely became transposed into an activist key. Hermione's assuming of responsibility for her husband's moral purity is unquestioned.

In Revolt Hermione's reaction to the discovery of her husband's role in the ruin of a young working class woman illustrates women's carrying of the burden of morality.

> She knew now what his 'love' was. Killed at last within herself every germ of love. Love! - the very thought was loathsome. The name she bore was a searing brand of shame. She felt as if fire surrounded her and scorched her own soul. In her agony she wished that the earth would open and swallow her up, that no one might ever see her again. For he was her husband; they were linked before the world, and the sin and shame he did not feel were cast, with crushing weight, upon her. Death seemed a haven from the gaze of a

> world all conscious of her shame. She felt that she could never more meet the eyes of a man or woman. She wished she could close forever her life, marked with sin and shame... (p. 190).

In keeping with bourgeois patriarchal morality of the period Hermione is rightfully burdened with Carlisle's moral sins. She is doubly shamed by his failure to himself acknowledge his impurity. That shame is the appropriate response to such behaviour, as defined by bourgeois patriarchal morality, is assumed by both Grossmann and her unsullied heroine.

However Hermione recognises the futility of endlessly pitting her purity against the entire matrix of male supremacy. She rejects a struggle for a better world that is confined to a desperate hope for change and a passive faith in that hope. Hermione sees women's dependence upon such a resolution as:

> ...submission, a deadening of every instinct within her, pride crushed, all earthly hopes dead and buried. But its goal? - the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Reached through what means? - servile submission, pandering to all that was base in another's nature. (P. 258).

Such passive acquiescence, tempered by a vague reliance upon the benevolent and timely intervention of a God, appears futile to Hermione. It does not provide a stimulus for change and its very resignation implies a dulled acceptance. Rather, women's passivity idealised within both sacred and secular realms must be translated into a feminine activism if the world is to be

changed.

An overpowering obstacle to both the victory of feminine morality and the translations of women's shared interests into political activism is sex. Sex outside a loving marriage is considered to be basically evil. This is consistent with dominant morality structuring the lives of middle class women. It is inconsistent with legal determinants which do not demand love as a requisite with marriage. A marriage is a marriage regardless of emotional dimensions. The objectivity of law is sensitive only to male interests.

Hermione's purity is threatened by her legally enforced duty to be sexually active with a husband she knows to be evil.

> The passionate love that had made her marriage was utterly dead; or rather had changed to dread and loathing. By this very fact her marriage was destroyed. Henceforth her wedded life could be only a blasphemous mockery.... Legal divorce she did not at first dream of. The solemn contract by which she was bound could not be dissolved but by death. Her own nature shrank from the thought of immediate release from so close and binding a relation as that of a wife to her husband. Dissolution of her marriage, implying possible union with another, would, she believed sink her to the level of a prostitute. So she was hemmed in by two warring contradictions. (pp.192-3).

So long as Hermione is unable to call into question her enforced acceptance of the status quo the superiority of her morality is slowly eroded. Her sexual relationship with her husband is impure and this is to be recognised at any cost. Continuing the

marriage will weaken the morality of both husband and wife and divorce, in this instance, must be advocated. Grossmann's ambivalence about the advisability of divorce is reflected in the assumption that it has been necessitated only by the evil of a male dominated social order. Such a social order renders women both ignorant and without choices.

Within the same vein male exploitation of female sexuality is also manifest in pre-marital and extra-marital sex, in the ruining of the reputation of middle class girls and prostitution of working class women. In all of these situations powerless women are victimised by powerful men. Through the class specific exploitation of women's sexuality women themselves are artificially divided from each other. This weakens their potential as a force for reforming the morality of men. In In Revolt the consequences of male licence for women across all social classes are seen as variations upon the same theme. Female exploitation for the sake of male pleasure.

Grossmann illustrates how the dominant ideals of chastity, virginity and monogamy are perverted by men in practice. For Hermione purity is sacrificed to the ruling class male need for legitimate heirs. Her being is fouled by being bound within a sexual relationship predicated upon lust and reproduction of heirs. The institutions of male supremacy dictate that she is bound and they thus undermine feminine morality. The moral decadence, endorsed by the structures of male supremacy,

similarly stands between working class women and the realisation of the ideals of chastity and monogamy. Thus it is not the actual nature of rigid Victorian morality that is called into question, but the failure of men to observe its dictates. This failure contaminates Hermione and has implications for the other women in Carlisle's life.

Within In Revolt, the differential appropriation of the sexuality of women of different classes is reflected in Grossmann's exploration of the practice of masculine immorality. Carlisle's lust in the absence of love and his desire for legitimate heirs, which are in Hermione's eyes illegitimate, attack her purity. Carlisle's immorality affects his maid, Nora Ryan, differently.

Carlisle has taken advantage of the young Nora, an ignorant and fearful employee. His discarding of Nora, prior to his marriage to Hermione, and the conditions surrounding this he does not disclose to his wife. While Hermione is utterly unsuspecting she is however, curious about Nora.

> After breakfast it occurred to her that she had some associations with the names of Nora and Ryan, and at last she remembered. She looked across to her husband and said-
> 'Bradley, do you know Nora Ryan...?'
> At this time he did not wish her to know about Nora Ryan, though he himself regarded the whole affair without a shadow of remorse; in fact, he thought he had behaved very well to her. He had even a certain amount of natural affection for the child whom he had not seen before. So he strolled down an evening or two later 'to see Ryan about the woolshed'. Nora met him.

> 'Sure and you'll see your own baby, Bradley - Mr Carlisle, I mean'.
> She was not a bad sort of girl, but not one whit above her class. Afraid of him and submissive as she always was, she had a knack of saying the wrong thing.
> 'You had better shut up about that, Nora,' he said... (pp. 158-9).

Nora has been for Carlisle merely a victim of lust. Her child, being a bastard, does not interest him except in terms of his sense of ownership and his masculine ego. Hence his 'affection' for the child need not be tempered with its actual acquaintance. The lack of seriousness with which Carlisle takes either mother or child is emphasised by the fact that he needs to be reminded of their existence by the unsuspecting Hermione. Furthermore he has no sense of urgency in seeing them as his leisurely stroll suggests. Carlisle can dismiss the needs of both mother and child, in relation to himself, with a simple direct command.

This sexual abuse of a working woman is portrayed as exploitative and evil in so far as it is loveless and disdainful of moral purity. Within contemporary feminist materialist analysis however, Nora's vulnerability is promoted by the nature of her labour. She is dependent upon Carlisle because her earnings are not sufficient for her survival. Thus she is not in a position to resist the access he commands to her sexuality. She provides a source of sexual pleasure which is considered to be independent from reproduction. Childbearing is thus the irritating side effect resulting from the appropriation of the sexuality of working class women. At the same time reproduction

is the desired outcome in appropriating the sexuality of bourgeois women.

Nora's daughter, conceived through her union with Carlisle, does not bear his name nor does she merit formal recognition. In contrast to his legitimate heirs Eileen, Nora's child, assumes the working class status of her mother. Transmitting of rights of ownership in production accrues only to legitimate heirs and Eileen has no claim to the property of her father. Indicative of the likelihood that Eileen will follow in her mother's footsteps, and herself become demoralised, is Carlisle's mode of frolicking with the child.

> ... he lay on the grass under the trees, and Nora leant on the fence, while the children played. Once, as Eileen was darting past, he caught her by the arm roughly, and dragged her down to kiss her, but she blushed deeply and drew back with those wild-deer eyes of hers looking askance at him. 'She's a born flirt, Nora,' laughed Bradley Carlisle. 'Here's a shilling for a kiss, Eileen,' and he tossed it on to the path. (p. 357).

Carlisle's tossing of money to the child in return for her favours is strongly suggestive of Eileen's limited options for survival. She has her labour power to sell for less than a living wage. Other than that she has her sexuality to exchange for the support of a husband or to sell in return for money and favours. The tossing of the shilling also suggests that the value of women can be assessed in monetary terms. Such value is directly related to physical attributes as is that of animals.

Carlisle's antics demonstrate to the child that the male is the aggressor and that to resist his advantages is to flirt or be coy. The implication here is that women like to be roughly treated and that resistance is a mere indication of calculated withholding of favours. Eileen learns then that her resistance is not 'genuine' but rather indicates that really she wants to be pursued and is 'asking for it'. It is implied within In Revolt that Nora's ruin, and the possible moral downfall of her daughter, can be blamed upon the decadence of men such as Carlisle.

The novel however, also reveals that for working class women life was untouched in any material way by the ideals of Victorian domesticity (Stubbs, 1979, 5). Just as working class women in England were thrown onto the labour market and exploited as wage earners in industry with the advent of capitalism, a similar situation occurred in New Zealand. The development of manufacturing during the 1880's, along with demographic changes, altered the nature of women's paid work. Domestic service as the major avenue of female employment gave way to production industry.

In domestic service working class women had been subjected to long hours of work, 'arduous and even disgusting duties', poor wages, unsolicited sexual advances and provision of inadequate accommodation. (Olssen, 1980, 162). Within production industry long hours of work, low wages and poor working conditions were

endured by many women, as the Royal Commission on Sweating of 1890 revealed (Dalziel, 1977, 118). The discrepancy between the domestic ideal and reality for working class women was further highlighted by the high profile of prostitution, destitution and illegitimacy as urbanisation accelerated.

Grossmann is concerned with these class based differences between women's experience of their oppression just as she is ultimately concerned with the inequalities between men and women. In refusing to confine herself to exploring the oppression of only a certain class of women Grossmann attempts to consider the nature of that oppression in its totality. While she undermines the dominant ideological perception of women as non-workers in her consideration of the lot of working class women, in the final analysis her intentions in doing so are themselves limited by dominant ideology.

Once again Grossmann's conservative feminist resolution to the oppression of women is seen to lie in a moral, rather than a material, transformation of the social order. It is not the kind of work that these women do, or their working class position as such, that is in question but the immoral appropriation of their sexuality. In an ideal situation the sexuality of working class women will be respected in accordance with bourgeois morality. Such an ideal can only be realised if women recognise and strive for a primary identification as women which transcends class, nationality and race (Bunkle, 1981, 57). Only if such loyalties

are forged can women hope to influence men for the good of all.

The barriers to the forging of loyalties between women are explored by Grossmann in the context of class. Men facilitate their exploiting of the sexuality of women of different classes in different ways. On the one hand romantic illusion and the necessity of marrying binds bourgeois women. On the other poverty and fear deliver up the sexuality of working class women. Grossmann stresses, through her fiction, that emphasising of these insignificant differences undermines the potential unity of women as a whole.

This is illustrated with the introduction of Florry Bright, a young former barmaid seduced by Carlisle prior to his marriage. Forced into accepting bar work, by economic necessity, Florry meets the fate of demoralisation that Grimshaw documents was not unusual among barmaids (Grimshaw, 1972, 23) The W.C.T.U. had unsuccessfully petitioned government to restrict bar work for women in the late 1880's for this reason (Bunkle, 1980, 65). Florry Bright is a product then of the whole matrix of male supremacy and the immorality it allows to go unchecked. We first meet her in the streets of Brooklyn.

> They were in a narrow, dirty lane, which had a bad name in the town for sly-grog shanties and worse horrors. At one corner of a crossing, under a street lamp, stood a group of girls and young men. The girls were bareheaded and dressed in showy finery; they were talking and laughing loudly. Hermione shrank closer to her husband. But one of then went up to him, and, laying her hand on his arm, said gaily -

> 'What, Bradley Carlisle! Have you forgotten Florry Bright?'
> He struck her hand off, but threw her some money .... Something infinitely worse than misery, worse even than sin - for it was innocence degraded and mocked - in that wretched creature's gaiety made Hermione's whole frame shudder. (p. 187-8).

Grossmann implies that Florry's prostitution is not of her own making. Rather, as the victim of Carlisle's immorality, she is driven onto the streets for her own economic survival. Because she has represented only sexual release to Carlisle, and because scores of women of her class are equally vulnerable to such exploitation, she is easily dismissed from his consciousness. His immorality and the power accruing to him through his wealth allow him to stand between Florry and the realisation of the ideals of chastity and monogamy. Following her brief affair with Carlisle the fifteen year old Florry, her life ruined, turns to prostitution.

Grossmann is intent upon demonstrating that Carlisle's exploitation of both Nora and Florry is not unlike that of Hermione. All three are the victims of his lust which is simply realised in a class specific form. Florry Bright's sister, Mabel, confronts Hermione with Florry's fate and clarifies this point. She arranges an appointment with Hermione and visits her at her Brooklyn hotel.

> There was an open vindictiveness about her now. When ushered into the sitting-room she remained standing, fastening her eyes on Hermione, who leant with blanched face against the table.
> 'Who are you?' she said at last, with an effort.
> 'Mabel Bright, Florry Bright's sister ... for all you're so grand and proud, Mrs Carlisle, you're not much better than she is. Do you think he cares for you differently to what he did for her? Not he, he cares only for himself .... She went down to Melbourne after him when he went away, and could not find him. And when she came back she was what she is now, too bad for Bradley Carlisle's wife to look at. You don't believe me, do you? Ask him who is the father of Nora Ryan's child. Oh, I wish you joy of him, Mrs Carlisle', she concluded, with bitter emphasis; (p. 189).

Mabel confronts Hermione with the fact that Carlisle's lust reduces both her and Florry to the same level. He buys Florry's sexuality just as he buys Hermione's, though the buying of the latter's is disguised by the shroud of married respectability. So long as Carlisle's marriage to Hermione is not predicated upon love it is unchaste. Thus he stands between Hermione and the realisation of the Victorian moral ideals of chastity and monogamy also. Hermione's bonds of female solidarity with the Bright sisters however, are precluded by the divisionary impact of class. As the wife of Carlisle, Hermione is not merely discarded as are Florry and Nora, for example. Rather as the provider of legitimate heirs she is maintained by Carlisle. She is thus seen to enjoy a status and material level of comfort in excess of that of most women.

This material wealth separates Hermione from Carlisle's other victims and elicits rejection rather than recognition of shared oppression. This is demonstrated by Mabel's direction of her wrath at Hermione for the sins of the latter's husband. Mabel assumes class allegiance must overcome gender allegiance. Hermione is excluded from any expression of sisterhood by class barriers. She is cut off from her potential allies among working class women. Her position as an absolute dependent upon Carlisle is thus cemented by these barriers to evolving emotional solidarity with exploited working class women. It is implied that unless women identify primarily with other women their potential as a powerful force is limited.

The difficulties in forging inter-class allegiances are further illustrated by Hermione's friendship with Nellie Wood. Nellie, an old school friend, marries down into the working class while Hermione marries up into the ruling class. The marriages of the two women are used to illustrate that women have more in common with each other than they do with the men of their respective classes. Their suffering at the hand of their husbands is virtually indistinguishable. Hermione's difficulty in convincing Nellie that this is so is seen as a consequence of class. The tyranny and physical violence of Carlisle however, cannot be simply cancelled out by material comfort. Nellie assumes Hermione's material comfort is enough to make her happy;

> 'I would be. You have pretty dresses, and a carriage, and a beautiful house and everything you want ... and I am so wretched and poor.' (p. 325).

However it is Hermione's very wealth that disguises so well the misery of her life. It precludes working class women's acceptance of her suffering. Thus;

> The look Hermione dreaded came into Nellie's face. She glanced at the fair face, the dress, the heavy gold chain. She moved a little away, and that slight motion was pitifully significant. (p. 325).

Nellie's husband's marks of ownership are the bruises upon her face and the crippled leg. Carlisle's marks of ownership are the gold chain and Hermione's finery. Yet both women are themselves penniless and totally dependent upon their husband. The husband of each is a drunkard, strikes his children and beats his wife. The fact that one is wealthy and the other is poor is significant, but less significant than their shared brutality toward their wives.

Not only does Nellie's identification as a working class woman weaken her bonds of female solidarity with Hermione, Hermione struggles to identify her interests with women as primary, regardless of class. Carlisle, however, stands between her and the realisation of that commitment. Thus he monitors the time spent with Nellie.

> 'I want to know if you object to my seeing Nellie Pierson to-day'.
> ... he shouted to one of the shearers, then stood thinking for a minute.
> 'Well, but mind you, Beauty, I won't have that woman up her, and I won't have you running there to gossip with her every day. But what do you want to go for?'
> 'We were friends at school, and I have no friends now. When the children are asleep I am lonely.'
> ... 'Of course, you'll go if you want to. But if you interfere it will be the worse for you. I am not going to have your name mixed up with that woman's.' (p. 323).

Carlisle limits Hermione's associations both quantitatively and qualitatively. She is separated from the majority of women by a distance both physical and social. Carlisle assumes gossip or idle talk will dominate female conversation by definition. The only real conversation of importance is between men. Similarly Carlisle does not merit classification as a friend for he is, to all intents and purposes, uninterested in Hermione's happiness. He is the patriarchal watchdog who will enforce Hermione's class interests if she attempts to forge a gender alliance across class boundaries. Her powerlessness and the struggle needed to forge such alliances is illustrated by this and by the reticence of working class women. Finally Nellie's husband, in a drunken stupor, beats her to death. This outcome implies a similar fate is in the offing for the equally victimised Hermione.

The emphasis on the homogeneity of women's experience of oppression can best be appreciated in the light of its specific historical situation. Grossmann illustrates, through her fiction, that divisions between women are defined and encouraged

by male supremacy. Class divisions separate women from one another and from the potential power of their collective moral superiority. Conservative nineteenth century feminism stresses the need to overcome these divisions between women. Until women join together and realise their potential power, through petitioning the good will of men, masculine impurity will continue to triumph. However, once women, through the grace of men, are admitted equally into all social institutions their morality will in turn triumph. Female purity will reform, rather than transform, the world. Masculine immorality will be controlled. There will evolve a social order predicated upon chastity and purity, committed to the fostering of the aspirations of every individual without regard to gender.

This is the view of the world transformed by nineteenth century feminist consciousness. Such a transformation is not indentical to a transformation into an androgynous society. Feminine qualities continue to be specifically female and of an elevated status. Rather it is a continuation of an old distinction between men and women, that of equal but different. On the one hand the idealised perception of feminine purity is retained and elevated separating the social world into polarities of gender. On the other the assumption that women will enjoy equal opportunity with men in all spheres neglects the existence of the material base which largely shapes gender ideology. Similarly the elevation of female values and morality by women themselves, and their advocation of such values for all, neglects

the element of danger. For in a society wherein bourgeois men are the most powerful group there exists the risk of the co-option of the ideologies of dissenting groups.

Counter-ideologies, so long as they lack the weight of support of material relations, may be usurped by the dominant social group and modified to serve the interests of that group. The assumption of a superior feminine morality provides a validation for women's positive influence to infiltrate at all levels of social life. Conversely, it provides for the strengthening of divisions along lines of gender confining women to the private sphere and into appropriately feminine positions, along with limited access, in the public sphere. Along with the elevation of a superior morality goes the need to isolate possible pollutants. In this women could only be guided by male definition and by the experience of their own oppression.

The incongruencies in nineteenth century feminist thought are largely a product of the inability to escape male determined frames of reference. This is reflected in the centrality of the whole issue of bourgeois morality and in the problematic delineation of potential pollutants. Thus, along with alcohol, the women's movement was equally suspicious of the possible compromising of feminine chastity via advocacy of sex education and contraception (Bunkle, 1980, 54). Such developments appeared to these women suggestive of increased male licence in their potential to facilitate the separation of sex from

reproduction. If this separation was successful the double sexual standard could be further cemented allowing men to indulge their passions with an increasing frequency. They could make more demands upon their wives, drive more women to prostitution, and entice increasingly aware, and thus precocious, young girls into unchaste relations.

What is difficult to grasp, at least initially, is why these potentially negative outcomes were emphasised. While contraception and sex education may ultimately have worked for the benefit of men, within a male dominated world, they also presented potential advantages for women. These included the ability to exert an increased, though still minimal, control over fertility with a subsequent decline in dependence upon men. Women too could benefit from the separation of sexuality and reproduction in so far as this could pave the way for options to marriage. The consequences of extramarital pregnancy or enforced celibacy in rejecting marriage could be greatly lessened. Middle class women could limit the size of their families. The prostitute, working the streets for economic survival, might be better protected from the disaster of unwanted pregnancy and the risk of back street abortion.

Assumed advantages for women in contraceptive technology must be tempered by the recognition of the inability of technology alone to effect change in favour of the disadvantaged. So long as a particular class of men control information,

research and access to these resources there is no reason to expect that they shall work in the interests of any other social group. Though nineteenth century feminism did not formulate such an analysis of contraception it too refused to unquestioningly accept its advantages for women. It did so however, for quite different reasons. The greater sexual freedom facilitated via the development of contraception was seen as a threat to the centrality of the marriage relation and the position of women within the family (Bunkle, 1980, 63). The nineteenth century feminists tended toward the fortification of the institution of marriage rather than toward its undermining. Thus the female morality included an emphasis upon sex for reproduction and sex confined within the marriage relation.

The unwillingness to support contraception and greater sexual freedom comes back once again to the very dependence of nineteenth century women upon marriage. This institution still constituted the major means of economic survival and the only real option for women. Thus while women alluded to the need for greater options and increased opportunities, the material conditions of their lives complicated their aims. These conditions also precluded the utilizing of potential advantages such as those gained from the development of contraception. So long as marriage meant survival for most women it was difficult to systematically undermine it. Indeed the concept of a superior female morality aimed at doing the exact opposite in the elevation of the idealized marriage relation. The emphasis upon

sexual purity for both sexes, rather than upon the dynamics of sexual liberation, is dictated by these material limitations.

In this context too the impact of dominant ideology upon the potential radicalism of nineteenth century feminism is clearly discernible. Dominant ideology works in the interests of advantaged social groups and ultimately hides the contradictions of capitalist patriarchy. Ideational views are those systems of ideas which arise out of social conditions and seek to expose the contradictions within capitalist patriarchy. Grossmann's feminism is predicated upon the exposing of the contradictions within women's lives, yet is ultimately co-opted by dominant ideology which instead disguises those contradictions.

The enigmatic nature of the nineteenth century feminism structuring In Revolt, can be better understood within the context of this discussion. The contradictions it contains are a reflection of the state of the historical development of capitalist patriarchy (Du Bois, 1979, 149). The extension of vision and projected change beyond its confines are limited by the very rigidity of structure. The dependence of women upon men, upon marriage and upon the sexual division of labour, determined also their dependence upon men for activating a feminist solution to women's oppression. Nineteenth century feminists seized upon what they saw as being positive feminine qualities and around these their analysis is largely structured. Positive feminine qualities were those defined by men and in

actual practice those relevant only to the lives of bourgeois women. With the elevation of 'female' qualities they envisaged a feminist milleniun within which good would eventually triumph. This they could facilitate only if emancipated.

The conditions for emancipation however, could only be provided by men following petitioning by women. Women were therefore, in the final analysis, dependent upon men to provide the conditions for emancipation. Roberts comments that within Grossmann's fiction it is men who define how and when women will liberate themselves (Roberts, 1978, 58). This is not however, inconsistent with the realities of nineteenth century women's lives and the material constraints upon the radicalism of feminist thought.

Edith Searle Grossmann, in idealising feminine moral purity, accepts unquestioningly the supposed advantages for women inherent within Victorian morality. The assumption that sexual chastity and monogamy must always work in the interests of women is in itself a fallacy maintained within both dominant ideology and feminist analysis. The ultimate dependence upon marriage precludes the recognition of its repressive nature within capitalist patriarchy. This repression is reflected in the husband's monopoly of genital access to the procreative capacity of the wife and the regulation of her sexuality (Harrison, 1978, 188).

Within materialist analysis the nature of Victorian morality can be traced to the need to harness the procreative capacity of women in specific ways. The bourgeois wife must be sexually restricted for she is to provide legitimate heirs through whom will be transmitted rights of ownership in production. There is a material base to the structuring of rigid Victorian morality. It is therefore not merely fortuitous that it is bourgeois women for whom reality most closely mirrors prescribed morality. There is not the same materially determined need to harness the sexuality of men. Nor is there the need for bourgeois men to ensure the chastity of working class women. Because they are the reproducers of labour and not of legitimate heirs their sexuality need not be so harshly regulated. Rather, in contrast to bourgeois women, working class women provide a sexual outlet for bourgeois men which is analytically divorced from reproduction.

Thus dominant bourgeois morality, incorporating the ideals of chastity and monogamy, is both class and gender specific in practice. The actions of men do not reflect the ideals while the sexuality of one class of women is repressed and that of another is bought (Harrison, 1978, 189). The double sexual standard is thus seen to be anchored in material relations rather than constituting a moral issue which is solvable on the level of a moral transformation.

In Revolt is not however, simply the documentation of the frustration of female interests. This would include only the portrayal of women divided through competition, through isolation and through class allegiance. In order to demonstrate the reality of a potential for positive relationships between women Grossman explores, through her fiction, female alliances. These alliances are not characterized only by conflict. The support they provide is Grossmann's focus. In this sense there is the imputing of value to the experience of women in a society which relegates that experience to the realm of the inconsequential.

This is not, however, a celebration of that enforced narrow range of experience. Rather, it is an exploration of the unique values and strategies for survival among women that have evolved out of their powerlessness. The limitations upon these friendships are also recognised in terms of both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. (see page 101 above). Commitments to female friends are held in check by obligations to male-defined prior concerns such as husband and family. It is important to recognise however, the need for women to elude their artificial division as members of the same oppressed sex.

An example of women overcoming these barriers to their sex loyalty is the relationship between Hermione and her husband's cousin Janet. Janet, a dour Scotswoman of God-fearing background, comes to the station as nanny to Hermione's children. The potential friendship between the two women is fostered by a

range of parallels in their lives. Both women are dependent upon Carlisle for their economic survival, both are deprived of a loving husband, Janet by distance, Hermione by circumstance. Hermione and Janet both suffer the death of a loved child, and both are confined to the domestic sphere. Their friendship is not however, realised until the close of the novel as a result of the male-defined barriers of class and traditional religious beliefs.

Janet's traditional religious alliance is of the stoic variety. She appears to Hermione to advocate the passive acceptance of the status quo and to rely upon the divine intervention of a God in human affairs (see page 89 above). Naturally this means Janet supports the biblically ordained sanctity of marriage and the advocation of cheerfully bearing one's cross. Thus Hermione does not expect Janet to sympathise with her desperate need to escape her marriage. Janet is, in effect, a representative of the oppressive domain of men. Hermione feels any gender allegiance with Janet is thus impossible. She can truthfully state that;

> 'I would as soon have the Last Judgement thundering around me as see Janet eternally condemning me with her cold blue eyes.' (p. 314).

In Hermione's opinion Janet has cast her lot in with men and is effectively a member of God's police. She monitors the activity of other women and ensures this matches patriarchal expectations

of female behaviour. Having internalised the judgements of men she joins in projecting these judgements as truths. Janet illustrates too that women are prisoners, consciously and unconsciously, within social structures, ideology and consciousness. Women are thus policed, and encouraged to police themselves, in the art of subordination.

Janet, for her part, feels Hermione's rejection of her is based on class snobbery.

> To herself she said, 'Mrs Carlisle despises me because I am not pretty and graceful as she is, and because I am dependent upon her husband.' (p. 313).

Janet assumes that because Hermione is of the ruling class her sex loyalty will be limited to women of that class. She overlooks the fact that Hermione too is dependent upon Carlisle for her economic survival. The similarities in the lives of the two women are merely disguised by class and by the male emphasis upon competition and physical appearance. Janet assumes that Hermione, in common with Carlisle, values women primarily for their beauty. She assumes Hermione's scale of worth coincides with the scale utilized by men.

The impasse between Hermione and Janet, and the building of their friendship, is augmented by the code of silence surrounding the marriage of Hermione. The notion of the silencing of women within patriarchy is recurrent in <u>In Revolt</u>. They are denied a

public voice, granted a stilted social voice and dependent on transmitting meaning through what remains unspoken when alone with other women. The sanctity of marriage and primary loyalty to the husband effectively gags women's confirmation of a shared experience of submission. Hermione's need to articulate this reality is precluded by Janet's acceptance of the trials of womanhood as unchangeable and to be borne.

Eventually however, Janet's passivity becomes increasingly undermined by the suffering of Hermione which, though unspoken, is recognised as authentic by both women. Finally Janet forces herself to intervene in Carlisle's beating of his wife.

> The suspense became at last too horrible to bear. She got out of bed, put on a dressing-gown and went to the foot of the stairs. There was no sound. It was impossible for her to interfere. Bertha gave a peevish cry. Janet went to the bedroom and called -
> 'Mrs Carlisle?' Bradley Carlisle called out -
> 'What is it?'
> Janet's horror increased that only he should answer.
> 'Mrs Carlisle! Mrs Carlisle - it is I, Janet.'
> 'Get up and see what the idiot wants,' said Bradley.
> 'What is it, Janet?' said the young voice, that now sent a thrill through Janet's heart. Mrs Carlisle was coming to the door, but Bradley said in a rough voice -
> 'Here, Hermione,' and as she came back, 'get a handkerchief; your lips are bleeding.'
> She went to the mirror and tried to wipe the blood away, but found she could not, so came to the door holding the handkerchief to her mouth.
> 'Bertha is crying for you, Mrs Carlisle.'
> 'Thank you, Janet.' They went downstairs, and once she missed her footing and nearly fell, but Janet helped her. As she bent over the child Janet said, in her simple Scotch way -
> 'I was sore afraid I would never hear your voice again, Mrs Carlisle.'
> 'Were you? Poor Janet,' said Hermione, touched, putting her hand into her cousin's. (p. 385).

Janet's initial reaction to Hermione's suffering is prayer. Her intervention can only be accommodated, as in this case, by the amplification of an event. Bertha's mere whimper becomes converted into a wailing for her mother. Janet is unable to escape her religious conditioning in that she cannot lie outright even for the sake of another's safety.

Janet's shift in allegiance from male-defined religious doctrine to women is gradual and dependent upon the recognition that the passivity of prayer is not in itself a force of change. Dominant ideology asserts that marriage and domesticity are women's highest calling, the biggest thing in life. Yet the authenticity of experience increasingly militates against the unquestioning acceptance of these ideals. Marriage is not, at worst, a cross that the martyred must bear. Rather it is revealed to Janet as a potential site for the legalised degradation and brutalising of worthy and helpless women.

When Hermione's suffering is perceived as a reality totally divorced from ideology Janet can no longer go on accepting. She waits until Carlisle is away on business in Melbourne.

> Janet's heart was full of a bitter anger against Bradley Carlisle, and she who had submitted all her life now exercised her authority .... She believed he meant to make his wife mad, so she locked no doors that night, for she knew that this helped to drive Mrs Carlisle out of her mind. (p. 412).

In facilitating Hermione's escape from the station Janet registers her own protest. It is this refusal to go on unquestioningly submitting that cements Janet's allegiance with Hermione. It is the kind of commitment Grossmann implies women must make to each other in order to realise combined power. Thus recognition of shared, if unspoken, suffering creates bonds between women of such strength that the power to defy is born out of powerlessness. Such power is temporary, and it is volatile, but it is a beginning. It is a starting point for realising the shared potential power of women. With Janet's aid Hermione escapes from her husband and mysteriously disappears into the Australian outback at the close of In Revolt.

Hermione is isolated from other women then by both her class position and by physical distance of her country home. Unity among the society women of the district is largely precluded by the advocation of gossip and competition for male favours. This is illustrated by the behaviour of the Farran sisters, guests at the Carlisle station.

> Hermione never could get on with his friends, especially the girls, who were showy and fast, and often talked slang. She knew they did not like her. She overheard the Farrans talking in their room one night.
> 'What a cold, stuck-up manner Mrs Carlisle has,' Lizzie was saying to her sister. 'Mr Carlisle is far too good for her. Oh, Gusta, isn't he just splendid?'
> 'Awfully jolly,' replied Augusta, who, though she was not quite so talkative and fond of giggling, had a bolder face than her sister. Hermione shut her dressing-room door. She despised her guests already, particularly Augusta, who, as she knew, accepted presents from Bradley Carlisle, and flirted noisily

> with him. As for him, he said Hermione was jealous, and all women detested pretty girls. (p. 185).

Because it is men, rather than women, who hold a monopoly upon power, their approval is of more value than that of women. Augusta and Lizzie resent Hermione because she is already married to Carlisle and, because she is merely his wife, her attentions are not cultivated. Being in reality only an appendage to Carlisle, Hermione is in no position to bring advantage to anyone through her sponsorship. She clearly appears to have no influence over Carlisle and no available monetary reserves. Being, to all intents and purposes, powerless she is incapable of winning favours for the ambitious who might otherwise cultivate her attentions.

It is Augusta's competing for Carlisle's favours which offends Hermione. The Farran sisters have no sex loyalty and have been groomed merely as ornaments to grace the lives of men such as Carlisle. Carlisle assumes Hermione is jealous rather than sickened by the sisters total commitment to men. The two unquestioningly accept the confines of their own femininity as Hermione refuses to do.

However, despite these seemingly inescapable limitations upon development of female alliances the often unspoken sharing of suffering provides a paradoxical source of strength. This is exemplified by Hermione's relationship with the genteel Mrs Rolleston. The unhappiness of Hermione's marriage is recognised

by Mrs Rolleston, but she is unable to interfere due to social convention. Her support for Hermione and Hermione's recognition of it remains a largely unspoken understanding between the two.

Accordingly, Mrs Rolleston attempts to use her charm to manipulate Carlisle in order that Hermione might be permitted to spend a few days with the Rolleston family. When Carlisle refuses permission there is no other available course of action. Mrs Rolleston returns to Hermione's room;

> ... she came back and saw the young girl lying there, her face and hands fevered with a burning heat, her lips parched and her eyes full of unnatural pain, her sympathy overcame conventionality. Even in her own life lay some secret that she carried in silence to her grave. When she saw in Hermione's eyes the look that was worse than tears they knew they understood each other.
> 'Pity me, pity me, Mrs Rolleston,' she said, with some wildness.
> 'I do! I do, indeed!' answered the elder lady in helpless sadness. (p. 196).

It is significant that the social convention gagging women cannot altogether prevent them from devising alternate forms of communication. Women continue to identify suffering as being shared and this provides the basis of their support for each other. It cannot merely be extinguished and yet it cannot be translated into a base for political activism so long as women themselves passively accept their subordination. Women are aware of each others secrets and the nature of these secrets is paradoxically defined by the silence within which they are wrapped. Women thus communicate by omission rather than by what

is plainly stated. Sympathy for each others fate may be the only available source of strength and hope.

Male control of female oral expression is further exemplified by the herstory of enforced silence. Similarly public expression is strictly dictated. Carlisle assumes control over Hermione's speech immediately following their wedding ceremony.

> She was looking straight before her, with a sad expression in her eyes, when Bradley Carlisle came to her.
> 'Speak to the people, and don't go to sleep, Hermione.' These were the first words her husband said to her. She gave a violent start and flushed painfully.
> 'I beg your pardon,' was all she answered. Then she turned and tried to talk, but the tears had rushed to her eyes at his tone. (p. 124).

Carlisle decrees when Hermione will speak, who she will speak to, and the content of her conversation.

This is taken to the extreme where Carlisle attempts to dictate the testimony Hermione gives in court following the murder of Nellie by her husband. Ideally, Hermione is to be merely the decorative mouth piece for Carlisle's beliefs and values. Rather than speaking the truth about the circumstances surrounding Nellie's death, Hermione is to cover up Nellie's husband's crime.

> Bradley Carlisle had been at first annoyed that his wife should have to give evidence, but he soon saw that he could turn this to his own advantage ... Carlisle looked at her before she spoke, a warning glance from under his eyebrows. A cold shiver ran through her, but she made no outward sign, and turning away her eyes from him, answered the questions put to her ... (p. 379).

Hermione makes a desperate attempt to avenge Nellie by refusing to be silenced in court. This is illustrative of her total commitment to alliances with women. Nevertheless, the murderer is only lightly sentenced for he has the money of Carlisle behind him.

Grossmann stresses that justice, like any other commodity, can be bought within an immoral social order. Hermione's revolt against the shackles of silence is invariably doomed to failure. Carlisle is empowered to shut Hermione's mouth.

> When Bradley Carlisle and Forbes went into the bar parlour together Forbes said -
> 'Your wife is a very clever woman. She has outwitted you, Carlisle.' His laugh covered a sneer.
> The words goaded on Bradley Carlisle's rage. He would keep Hermione quiet. He would make his wife obey him! .. [he] went to his room, she was standing by the dressing table. He leaned against the mantelpiece and fixed his eyes upon her in a way that made her almost wild.
> 'You liar! ... That will teach you to lie ...' and he caught hold of her and struck her on the mouth. (p. 384).

Not only does Carlisle use his powerful position and his threats to silence Hermione, he also uses his fists to close her mouth physically. Anything she says that he does not dictate becomes an untruth. His attempts to silence her are for the most part effective, and his authority to silence her is considered a right. Carlisle becomes merely the personification of the patriarchal institution of women's mute powerlessness. The extent of male power, and its consequences for women, becomes unquestionable. It is Grossmann's intention that the status quo be re-shuffled.

Just as the feminist movements of Australia, England and the US generated writers both actively involved in feminism and concerned with disseminating an explicitly feminist world view, Grossmann is New Zealand's major representative of this trend. Models for her fiction too were possibly provided by the work of these writers (2) just as the movements of which they were a part generated activist models for New Zealand women. During the 1890's the struggle to realign the rigidity of Victorian ideals is epitomised by the women's movement and its grappling with the altering of ideas rather than structures. This is reflected in the cultural upheaval within which feminist protest fiction sought to undermine the dominant fictional representations of women. (Stubbs, 1979, xv).

For Edith Grossmann the link between fiction and feminism is the inextricable link between art and life. The fostering of such a link has, for New Zealand women writers, been the result of the struggle to come to terms with a world whose outlook has been predominantly male. As Hankin comments;

> Concerned with life itself rather than with the artistic expression of it, the women writers of this country (with the notable exceptions of Katherine Mansfield and Janet Frame) have been less interested in technical innovation for its own sake than in art for life's sake. (Hankin,1975, 144-5).

Grossmann's work represents the beginnings of a tradition of explicit protest against the disadvantaged position of women, which is firmly anchored in day-to-day reality. In keeping with sister writers in the tradition of feminist protest, Edith Grossmann's work, 'blurs the borders between art and propaganda, history and fiction, the individual writer and the collective experience', (Marcus, 1979, xv).

The world she creates, within which women are subjected to a host of injustices, largely corresponds to the reality of the situations in which many women found themselves in the late nineteenth century. Her work is propaganda only in so far as it forces reluctant attention to the gap between the ideal and the reality for women. It is fiction only in so far as it concerns the response of a non-existent character to the realities of a social world existing women may respond to in a similar way. It transforms the individual experience into the collective

experience through the tracing of structured oppression and the stressing of personal lives as politically meaningful.

In this chapter I have been concerned with exploring the relationship between the literary representation of social reality and the specific milieu within which In Revolt was written. This has included the comparison of the literary representation of the position of women with the historical reality of that position. Thus I have been concerned with dominant ideology surrounding the role of women, with women's structural position within social organisation, and with the impact of Grossmann's feminist politics upon her perception of this.

Feminist perception has tended to be undervalued in comparison to dominant social perception which is essentially masculinist perception masquerading as people's perception. I have attempted therefore to highlight what I see as being an alternative way of looking at the world which attempts to give a voice to concerns of women. Similarly the seeming incongruencies structuring those concerns are addressed in the light of their historical specificity. These incongruencies, rather than rendering nineteenth century feminism merely bizarre and inaccessible, point to the very real need to anchor feminist theory and fiction within history. Artificially separated from it, the explanatory power of each is lost along with the comprehension of its driving force. Grossmann's fiction, like

her feminism, does not flourish within a vacuum but within a social reality in part predicated upon the day-to-day suffering of flesh and blood women.

The limitations of her fiction and of her feminist analysis grow out of the very realities shaping women's lives. The inability to escape both masculinist perception and strategy for change is a reflection of these realities. Bound in so many ways by their servitude, nineteenth century women could not create a vision of a different world or a stategy for its implementation. Their feminism, like their femininity, remained dependent upon the male world despite its core of protest. It is the inevitability of this I have stressed and its importance in coming to an understanding of Grossmann's fiction. These concerns which have shaped the discussion of In Revolt, are equally important in turning to its sequel A Knight of the Holy Ghost, in the following chapter.

Footnotes

1. Edith Howitt Searle was born on December 8, 1863 at Wangaratta in the state of Victoria, Australia. She arrived in New Zealand in 1878 and settled in the South Island. In 1886 she graduated from Canterbury College of the University of New Zealand with a Master of Arts degree with honours (Morgan, 1976, 3). Her ties with both Australia and New Zealand are reflected in the setting of In Revolt, and parts of two of her other novels, in the country of her birth. In Revolt was Grossmann's second published novel and it was not reprinted after 1893. Her other novels were Angela, A Messenger (1890), A Knight of the Holy Ghost (1907) and The Heart of the Bush (1910).

2. The feminist phase (approx. 1880-1920) saw a proliferation of women writers in England and in the U.S. The feminist cause inspired many minor 'lost' writers along with the few who have endured. It is likely that Edith Grossmann was aware of, if not familiar with, the work of such writers as Olive Schreiner (The Story of an African Farm, 1883), Charlotte Perkins Gillman (The Yellow Wallpaper, 1891), and Lady Florence Dixie (Gloriana; or The Revolution, 1890). The similarities between her work and that of other writers within this tradition in terms of theme, analysis and resolution strongly suggest their familiarity.

CHAPTER III:

Conservative Feminism-:A Knight of the Holy Ghost

In In Revolt Edith Grossmann is primarily concerned with arguing the case for women's emancipation and with showing how firmly entrenched are the creeds and conventions oppressing women (Cunningham, 1978, 49). A Knight of The Holy Ghost too revolves about these concerns. It continues the story of the life of Hermione Carlisle. The novel is divided into three sections. These largely correspond to Hermione's recovery from madness, into which she has descended at the close of In Revolt, her development as a feminist, and her final defeat and suicide.

In this novel however, Grossmann is less preoccupied with exploring only the realities of women's lives in contrast to both dominant ideals and feminist principles. Rather, she moves further away from the portrayal of what she saw around her to the visualizing of temporary alternatives to the inevitabilities of women's lives. The setting up of a community of women in A Knight of the Holy Ghost provides a haven of escape for the unhappily married, the emotionally battered and the economically exploited. In short it is the focus for women's healing of themselves and each other within an environment of harmony and

communion of equals. It is, in microcosm, the potential society of a utopian future.

The commune is a feminist ideal however, that was scarcely a practicable alternative or an attainable option for women in New Zealand at the turn of the century. As if to acknowledge this Grossmann portrays the collapse of the commune and the forced return to the mainstream, male-dominated society. All the ideals, energy and commitment of the feminists are no match for the power of a social order predicated upon male supremacy. The attempt to translate feminist principles into practice ends in defeat and disillusionment.

The inevitability of defeat grows out of attempting to both argue in favour of emancipation and to show the extent of the entrenchment of oppression (Cunningham, 1978, 49). On the one hand Grossmann puts forward a moral argument in favour of emancipation and, on the other, explores the realities of women's oppression. Inevitably it is the destruction and defeat of women that is portrayed, rather than the depiction of success achieved against overwhelming odds. It is difficult to provide positive role models in women who are strong and successful within the existing system of male supremacy. By definition these role models are rare in actuality. Yet at the same time in order to support demands for emancipation women must be portrayed as active, competent and creative human beings. In order to support her moral position on emancipation Grossmann underlines the

unrealised potential and moral strength of her heroine. If women share many of the qualities of men, and are actually superior to men in some fields, then they should rightly share in the privileges and responsibilities of men.

The realities of daily life and the consequences of oppression remain a primary concern within feminist fiction. The very pervasiveness of these constraints and the misery they generate cannot be overestimated. To show women succeeding against such overpowering odds is merely fleeting in the novels of feminist protest writers. The struggle for success outside the traditional spheres of home and family is ultimately punished by loneliness, poverty or exploitation in the paid workforce. Ultimately defeat is much less foreign to women's experience than is success.

Both In Revolt and A Knight of the Holy Ghost conform to this defeatist tradition in feminist protest fiction. In In Revolt, Hermione withdraws into madness in the closing chapters. In A Knight of the Holy Ghost, published fourteen years later in 1907, Hermione's sanity is restored. She moves through a variety of alternatives to married life before committing suicide as a result of a legal ruling that she should return home to her husband. This preoccupation with madness and with death, as the only sane responses to oppression, is certainly not unique to Grossmann. Rather, such responses to the powerlessness generated by seemingly immovable structures of oppression may be discerned

in the recurring use of themes of escape within the novels discussed in the thesis and within feminist protest fiction in general.

Invariably such themes are presented in the context of being the only sane responses to the insanity of the demands and frustrations of a repressive social order. Cunningham writes that:

> In works so passionately concerned to stir discontent with the established order, to exhort women to greater freedom of thought and action, it is perhaps odd to find such a relentless catalogue of catastrophe. Mental breakdown, madness and suicide are apparently the common penalties the New Woman must pay for her attempts at emancipation (Cunningham, 1978, 49).

Such themes within this fiction are seen to stem from the emphasis upon portraying the whole social fabric as ultimately rotten (p. 50). As themes of escape from a male dominated world they epitomise 'waken(ing) from the drugged pleasant sleep of Victorian womanhood' (Showalter, 1979, 31). Such an awakening to a social reality which offers no place to women who wish to find fulfillment outside marriage invariably demands rejection of that reality. The heroines of this fiction are unable to succeed in moulding reality to their ideals and rather than continuing to struggle they opt out in a variety of ways. Olive Schreiner's Lyndall, Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier, Sarah Grand's Evadne, Emma Brooke's Jessamine - all opt for death or for madness as alternatives to reality and struggle (1).

Along with these heroines of Victorian feminist protest fiction, Hermione finds no other alternative to madness and eventually to suicide. In In Revolt the descent into madness, in the closing chapters, is an expression of the utter futility of continuing the struggle against subordination. Rather than choosing madness, she is forced into it by her refusal to conform to certain dictates of femininity. Hermione's husband, Bradley Carlisle, is instrumental in this.

> Bradley Carlisle, taunting and teasing her ... swore that if she raved as she had done he would have her put into a madhouse; he taunted her with her insanity until she believed in it herself and it became scarcely a lie. He kept the children away from her, saying she was mad. He threatened her that she should never see them again ... (Grossmann, 1893, 409-10).

Carlisle defines madness as the failure to live up to prescribed feminine ideals (2). Hermione is not passive, immersed in her domestic bliss, or subservient to her husband's every desire. Her rejection of such ideals is interpreted as madness by Carlisle. Yet the straitjacket the ideals of femininity and domesticity provide elicits the descent into madness.

Grossmann's disjointed account of this emphasises Hermione's rejection of the imposed patriarchal order. Her withdrawal is total with this emotional retreat into the outposts of her own mind and her physical escape into the Australian outback from Moorabool, her husband's home.

> Wild, strange days followed, like phantasm cloud-shapes passing before a confused brain - days of flight and bewildered fear, a strong agonised soul reckless of a fainting body's hunger and thirst. In the night she fled wildly past a shivering lake and treacherous reed covered lagoon, while a thousand voices followed her, harsh croaking out of black waters, swarming, tormenting, singing in the air, the night bird's startled note, the distant cry of the dingo. Across the boundary line of Moorabool was a rock. She knew that she was free, and she cried aloud and laughed madly .... Now she was free - free! (p. 413).

Hermione's passionate belief that she has gained freedom indicates how far she has moved beyond the 'rational'. She is free only to starve in the self-chosen wilderness, away from constraint but also without any alternative strategy for her actual survival.

Just as she flees before the voices surrounding her in the night she escapes from the voices of duty and conscience and command surrounding her in the real world. The pain of that world and the relief in rejecting it are equally potent images.

> She came to a region where a great fire had raged for days. All the wide plain was one long stretch of black and smouldering ashes, with far-off gleams of flame and grey smoke, wafted wildly by the furnace-blast of the north around up to the smoking heavens above, where a veiled sun smote the earth below with a fevered yellow glare. The hot earth burned her feet, and wandering on, at noon, she came to where there was a mud-stained shrunken river, and the fires ceased. (p. 414).

Hermione must struggle through the ravaged wasteland before finding a resting place where fire and destruction are overcome. It is not unlike the ravages of the real world where-in women, like the landscape, are scalded and charred by the onslaught of forces beyond their control. The male dominated world, like the fire, is destructive in its choking out and deforming of life. The scarring of the earth is also the scarring of women. Beyond the deprivation and barrenness of their lives there is perhaps relief. The shrunken river quenches flames just as escape from a male dominated world may quench the pain it elicits. But like bushfire the existing reality stretches to the horizon, limiting the vision of escape. It is all pervasive and seemingly endless.

Hermione's psychological fragmentation is the inevitable result of prolonged and fruitless assault upon the bastions of male supremacy. There is no room within the Victorian social order for Hermione to become the woman she wishes to be. To retain her moral purity, to stimulate her intellect, to challenge all her faculties she must escape the confines of that order. A society predicated upon moral purity and equal opportunity with men is the ideal Hermione visualises. Yet its attainment appears beyond grasp from her position of powerlessness. In turning away from the struggle to institute change, even within her own life, Hermione is forced to withdraw into a fragmented consciousness. Having seen 'truth' as a thing apart from that embraced within dominant patriarchal ideology she can no longer unquestioningly accept its validity. This is the pain of an awakening into a

reality from which it is then impossible to escape.

Hermione's madness epitomises her rejection of both male dominated society and the social construction of self. Her aspirations thwarted, her purity soiled by her marriage to Carlisle and the weight of the entire social order unwittingly advocating the triumph of moral disorder, Hermione descends into madness. Her mental and physical withdrawal are, however, temporary answers to the oppression of women. They are not strategies for change but expressions of defeat.

In A Knight of the Holy Ghost, the realisation of feminist ideals are once again doomed to failure. Hermione's suicide becomes the only possible solution to the state of siege imposed by the dictates of male supremacy. Hermione's ideals are just, but powerless. Male supremacy is unjust, but all powerful.

> The battle was fought and lost. Hypocrisy and tyranny were victorious ... The pang was to see with amazement that these weak and despicable weapons could actually prevail against the pain of thousands upon thousands of helpless sufferers. God counted them more worth than the cries and the awful silence of women and children, the victims of useless and endless toils, of enforced and undesired birth, and of that shame that haunts the night and makes it dreadful. (Grossmann, 1907, 410-11).

The battle between good and evil, between the feminist idealisation of a universal bourgeois morality and the decadence of male supremacy, ends in defeat for Hermione's army of purity. There is an air of hopelessness surrounding the fight for change

since the weaponry of the status quo is literally invincible. The emphasis upon entrenchment of existing oppressions becomes overwhelming.

> I had the vision of a more spiritual world. I gave my heart and my soul to help accomplish it. I have failed. I have heaped shame upon myself and my cause. Perhaps in some remote time the vision may come to pass. But, O God, the suffering of those who are living now! (p. 411).

Hermione pits all her strength of will, all her hope and commitment against the continuation of the existing social order. Despite maximum input her efforts fail. Death is her reward for failure.

There is little impetus in this for attracting the reader to feminist principles or for the cementing of existing inclinations toward such beliefs. Potential recruits are awed by this level of commitment, shattered by its impotence. The virtual inevitability of failure positions itself between the unity of theory and practice. The ideal society is but a remote possibility. Its very remoteness militates against a life-time commitment to a cause which may even prove to be futile.

Hermione's suicide is her response to a court ruling that she abandon her feminist cause and return home to her husband. Suicide is her only practicable alternative if her defeat is not to be total. The battle is lost on the political level and the courts decree it is also lost on the personal level between

husband and wife. Hermione determines, however, that Carlisle's victory is to be of a limited type;

> 'I vowed to God, when I was an ignorant child, to be his till death. I vowed to God, in my agony, that I never would go back alive to him. I shall keep both those vows .... I deny every right of Bradley Carlisle over me. I will not live to be the instrument of his vices. What are these barbarous laws to me? By all divine and moral law I am not his wife. I never was. My marriage was adulterous. My children dispossess Eileen, the eldest born'. (p. 378).

In the extract above Hermione's assertion of denial of Carlisle's rights over her is inconsistent with her powerlessness. Carlisle, after all, is empowered to take from Hermione everything but the air she breathes.

The recognition of her absolute powerlessness however, is also paradoxically the only source of Hermione's power. In committing suicide her powerlessness is eclipsed by the seizing of her only weapon, the destruction of her own value as the possession of her husband. Through her suicide she registers her final protest against Carlisle and against the depravity of male supremacy he embodies. Self-destruction facilitates the escape from the constraints of the existing social order.

Like the suicide of Miriam in Dorothy Richardson's <u>The Tunnel</u>, Hermione's suicide becomes a 'grotesquely fantasized female weapon, a way of cheating men out of dominance' (Showalter, 1977, 250). As an act of protest

Hermione's suicide is an act of dependence for it is a reaction, rather than an act of meaning in and of itself. It is an act which is, in the final analysis, dependent for its impact upon the counter-response of Bradley Carlisle. Carlisle must not be portrayed simply as angry at the virtual 'stealing' of what is rightly his. Rather, he must be portrayed as remorseful if punishment is to be inflicted upon the guilty survivor. Thus:

> ... in his own heart he knew he had come gloating over her as his victim, and now she lay there still and silent, not resisting or defying him any more, forgiving him, but for ever beyond his reach in her strange victory of despair; and he felt as if he had murdered her. (p. 418).

Grossmann recognises the paradoxical power that grows out of her heroine's powerlessness. Thus, her suicide is both defeat and 'strange victory'. That in the context of this discussion her suicide is ultimately a part of the scenario of defeat is evidenced by the fact that it is a forced response to the intractability of male supremacy. Likewise the ultimate revenge upon Carlisle is not of the martyred Hermione's making. Rather, Grossmann must manipulate the plot in order to allow Carlisle's final demise in a fit of delirium tremens. In keeping with the concerns of feminist protest fiction A Knight of the Holy Ghost, along with In Revolt, is thematically bound up with the idea of escape, both physical and mental, from the rigours of a social order predicated upon male supremacy.

Hermione's suicide follows on from the failure to institute feminist ideals and the forced adherence to those of the patriarchy. The repudiation of Carlisle's sexual rights in the absence of love is central to her stand. Rather than contravene her moral ideals she is prepared to die. These ideals include the belief that;

> '... there are restraints within marriage. A woman's instinct tells her that. The other way is confusion and wickedness. The natural purpose of marriage is not indulgence, but bringing life into the world and tending the life that comes. By purity I mean the subjection of passion and the consecration of instinct to the noblest purpose of the race.' (p. 261).

While she rejects all Carlisle's rights over her, Hermione deals with his sexual rights in a seemingly contradictory manner. She denies Carlisle sexual access because he is impure. Yet she recognises the validity of his sexual rights over her for, by virtue of physical union, she is bound to Carlisle for life. Hermione is unable to form a union with any other man.

Dominant bourgeois ideology of the period dictates that sex is to be rigidly policed. The emphasis is upon the chastity of bourgeois women and their 'natural' disinclination toward sexual activity. The tendency within nineteenth century feminism to equate sexuality with evil is reflected in Hermione's honouring only of her vow to monogamy. She will not love, honour or obey. The repressive nature of the regulation of women's sexuality via monogamy and chastity is unrecognised and it is this repression

that is advocated. In delineating her heroine's chastity Grossmann reveals an adherence to a moral order that is essentially male-defined and predicated upon preserving the interests of bourgeois men. Her vision of women freed is of women and men living lives corresponding to those prescribed within bourgeois morality.

Hermione is not altogether unlike the conventional heroine. She is pure, chaste and virtually sexless throughout the separation from Carlisle. This is underlined by the fact that Hermione resists all attempts to compromise her purity. Her indisputable moral superiority appears to be considered essential by Grossmann for ensuring the positive reception of her feminist ideals by the reader (Stubbs, 1979, 123). Though this concern with portraying the impeccable morality of the heroine may seem unusual to the modern reader it was not easily dispensed with. Hermione's respectability is essential to her being taken seriously as a sympathetic character.

In Part I of A Knight of the Holy Ghost, 'The Chivalric Ideal', Hermione is taken into the care of an old family friend, Doctor Earle. Earle assumes the role of protector upon discovering Hermione hospitalised in Melbourne following her descent into madness and escape into the outback. Hermione is to spend some months living alone with Earle in his villa in Victoria and later in Europe. Indeed the first two sections of the novel are set, for the most part, in Europe and later in the

United States. Only a man has at his disposal the property and wealth needed to shield Hermione from recognition. Earle is able to conceal Hermione upon his secluded property in the mountains and is able to both negotiate and finance her trip to Europe. Few women are in positions of such wealth and autonomy. While wealthy spinsters are not unknown in fiction, or in fact, they are greatly outnumbered by autonomous men of means. Grossmann must therefore allow Hermione's rescue by an unattached man, who is able to devote all his attention to her without the risk of knowledge of her whereabouts reaching Carlisle.

At the same time the need to maintain the unquestionable purity of the heroine demands regulation of a potentially dubious alliance.

> 'I do not trust you,' she said. 'I know you, and I love you.' All smaller sentiments were shrivelled up at once. Dr Earle went back to his study with a feeling of profound reverence for Hermione that he had never experienced before .... all her capacity for the physical passion to which the name of love is so often specialised had been exhausted by her marriage. And though she repudiated every other claim of Bradley Carlisle's, she admitted the bar to a new union. In such an admission there was no sacrifice; her nature demanded it. From that night onward Dr Earle recognised that Hermione with absolute sincerity cherished only the thought of parental and filial love, the dearest and purest affection she had known .... On his side Dr Earle so often wished with all his heart that Hermione were his daughter. (pp. 26-7).

As discussed in Chapter Two, the emphasis upon the non-compromising of the heroine's purity is historically specific. The criticism levelled at women forsaking their virtue for whatever reason, and the likely material deprivation resulting from doing so precludes any suggestion of Hermione's sexual licence. Grossmann's own subscibing to dominant bourgeois patriarchal ordinances too is explicit in the promotion of Hermione's 'natural' sexless contentment in the extract above. The very abandonment of her marriage however, potentially lays Hermione open to doubts about her morality.

At the turn of the century few women would have left their husband and children regardless of circumstances. Ostracism and economic destitution were poor alternatives to an unhappy marriage. The dominant ideological assumption held that women had control over their own destinies and, 'endowed with free will, ... could be dictated to or punished for their transgressions' (Levesque, 1981, 9). Subsequently, if a woman opted to marry a particular man she must 'lie in the bed she has made' and accept whatever is the outcome of her decision. Leaving of a marriage could not be condoned.

This punitive Victorian attitude toward women is further reflected in, for example, the position assumed by the New Zealand Society for the Protection of Women and Children on unmarried mothers. In 1909 it was suggested that unmarried mothers should be imprisoned. In 1912 the Society recommended

unmarried mothers should be detained as they constituted 'a menace to the community' (Levesque, 1981, 5). The degree of ostracism levelled at the unmarried mother is further evidenced by the fact that they could not deliver their babies in a public hospital prior to 1922 (Levesque, 1981, 5).

There was quite clearly a marked division fostered between the good and the evil woman. Women were, after all, the sex burdened with responsibility for purification and moral protection of home and family. To abandon that responsibility, for whatever reason, was a very serious matter. Women were ideally the embodiment of selfless devotion and self-sacrifice. To assert their own needs and desires over and above those of men and children demanded skilful management.

Within nineteenth century feminism the conflict between asserting female needs yet subscribing to bourgeois patriarchal morality is pronounced. Ultimately the validation for women's increased social rights took the form of their alleged moral purity or superiority. Neither the feminists themselves, nor most other members of society, could comfortably support, in principle, the rejection of that morality. The feminists were thus limited in their development of a counter-ideology by the pervasive nature of the dominant ideology ordering their lives. Continually the prospect of threatened moral purity rose up to limit the boundaries of their feminist perception.

Thus the daring of Grossmann's heroine's abandonment of her marriage needs to be validated if Hermione is to remain a sympathetic figure. Carlisle must therefore be portrayed as extremely brutal, sexually immoral and the agent of Hermione's 'legalised prostitution'. Even this portrayal of such conditions is relatively daring in its public exposure of privatised realities. The codes of silence dictated women's concealing of their sexual degradation just as the lack of spiritual and material resources literally debarred the taking of affirmative action (Du Bois, 1979, 148). The support women could potentially receive from other women was circumscribed on a number of levels. Importantly while alliances were forged between women, despite their isolation from each other, the ability to add affirmative action to silent sympathy was a rarity. Prevented from giving other women primacy in their lives women's spiritual resources were curtailed accordingly.

Such realities as those confronting Hermione were increasingly subject to exposure within the auspices of the crusade for moral purity. The crusade, however, tended to concentrate upon immorality surrounding the institution of marriage in the guise of prostitution, venereal disease and illegitimacy. As a result of this bourgeois moral dominance it is essential that Grossmann ensure Hermione's abandonment of marriage is not synonymous with the abandonment of her purity. Her distaste of sex is apparent in enforced sexual relations within marriage and virtual sexlessness outside it. The danger

of the noble ideals of feminism being defined by an immoral heroine are thus minimised. Emancipation means equality of opportunity with men. It does not mean advocation of female sexual licence paralleling that of men. The validation of nineteenth century feminism incorporates its adherence to the traditional female responsibility for male behaviour. Increased opportunities for women are placed within the context of feminism's overarching commitment to the purifying of masculine morality. Increasingly this concern comes to surpass all others. Feminism is thus dissociated from the depravity of 'free love' advocated by the few, and assumed to be representative of the many.

The 'free love' of the nineteenth century was the rejection of legal marriage. If sexual expression inside marriage was the only acceptable sexual expression for bourgeois women, then 'free love' was an outrage. Men had traditionally condoned 'free love' for their own sex. Advocation of female licence was however, altogether different. Grossmann's feminism is not that which equates emancipation with female licence. Rather, it is that which equates emancipation with the institution of universal bourgeois morality.

The difference between these two conceptions of feminism and their acceptability is articulated within A Knight of The Holy Ghost. The feminist collective in the United States, of which Hermione is a part, is confronted with this split in feminist

consciousness. The anarchism of a feminism which advocates 'free love' threatens to undermine the stability of the collective. Clara's passion for this cause is portrayed as a danger to be eradicated.

> The new thing was the true thing to Clara. At one time she took to preaching bloomers as the salvation of the race, having arrived at the extraordinary conclusion that the subjection of woman was entirely owing to the fact that 'they were still in swaddling bands.' (3). Then, again, though she never for one moment seriously thought of forming miscellaneous associations for herself, she advocated 'free love' recklessly - that is, she maintained that the marriage ceremony ought to be dispensed with, that the union should last only as long as love lasted, and ought to be legally dissolved by mutual consent, leaving the parties free to form new unions .... Clara's manner of lecturing was almost as trying as her theories .... Occasionally there were most painful scenes, a perfect uproar going on about her, and the poor little woman, determined not to give in, telling her audience, to their great glee, what she thought of their behaviour. (pp. 186-7).

Clara preaches 'free love'. Her doing so is comparable with her earlier ridiculous assumption of the salvation enabled by bloomers.

By juxtaposing these issues Grossmann intimates that they are virtually indistinguishable. Clara's platform on bloomers is quite obviously ludicrous. By association it is implied that that on 'free love' is also merely absurd. Both are equally irrational. Clara's impracticality, her incapability and her lack of self control are apparent in the nature of her failure to control her audiences. They are also implicated in the 'feminine' illogic Grossmann isolates in Clara's preaching of

'free love'. Clara is not an evil woman. She is merely stupid. Grossmann thus defuses the potential potency of 'free love' feminism via locating it within Clara's thoughtlessness. In this manner she separates it from the feminist crusade she and her heroine champion.

Because Grossmann situates this split within the collective in the U.S., and because there is no evidence to suggest a similar split within feminism in New Zealand, I have located its stimulus within the history of American feminism. Clara's explusion from the feminist collective as a result of her 'free love', and other radical platforms, is paralleled by the American feminist movement's dissociation with advocates of such platforms. In each case the radical politics of 'free love' feminists threatened the moderate reformist politics of the majority. The latter were afraid of their movement falling into disrepute and loosing support because of the 'free love' platform.

In the U.S. Victoria Woodhull and her sister, Tennessee Claflin, constituted a similar threat to that posed by Clara. During a feminist rally in 1871, Woodhull announced her advocation of 'free love' from the stage of Steinway Hall in New York. Because of her associations with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton's feminist organisation the latter was smeared and ridiculed. O'Neill argues that the damage subsequently done to the National Women Suffrage Association by Woodhull's politics

took many years to repair. This supposedly also contributed to the increasing conservatism of the association. (O'Neill, 1969, 27-9).

The scandal surrounding advocation of 'free love' no doubt also coloured the reception of feminism in New Zealand. Grossmann's preoccupation with dissociating the feminist crusade from the immorality of 'free love' and with defusing it as a threat suggest that this is so. Hermione is exposed to a whole range of immoralities, but in this case, as in all others, her moral purity safeguards her. Her rejections of 'free love', of the advances of numerous men and indiscretions of any description are virtually effortless, attesting to her moral worth. Despite living alone with Dr Earle, and later renting her own apartment in New York, the potential undermining of Hermione's purity is not realised.

In Part I of A Knight of The Holy Ghost, Grossmann's concern with the escape of her heroine from an unbearable situation marks the first of her breaks with realism. While Hermione's dependence upon Earle for her survival is in keeping with the reality of women's dependence in general, his sudden and chivalrous appearance is of a romantic variety. Hermione's escape into madness, at the close of In Revolt, is an option in which she is forced. Her recovery and battle for survival are not of her own making. Rather, Dr Earle steps in and assumes responsibility.

While Hermione's capacity to make it alone in Victorian society is of course limited, it is perhaps more realistic to portray that struggle than it is to facilitate a romantic rescue. Earle is, however, the device whereby Hermione is returned to peak condition. From that vantage point she begins to consciously develop a feminist analysis of the world.

Once Hermione is established within Earle's household, Grossmann is enabled to return to her concern with the repressive power of men within the family. Earle assumes the role of beneficent father, Hermione that of devoted daughter. Earle is the provider, Hermione the provided for. The willing assumption of these traditional roles however, is not unproblematic.

> Hermione was really shy with him - shy of his superiority and of the kindly satire with which he treated things that were profoundly serious to her. Unless strongly moved she was afraid to express herself. That light banter of his often disarmed her, and left her completely at his mercy, when violence would have only hardened her will. Quite unconsciously he was submerging her individuality in his, and her own will and heart were continually deserting her and going over to his side. The dominion of man, she was discovering, was supported by a good many other means than force. (pp. 71-2).

By virtue of his greater experience, his seniority and education, Earle sits well in the paternal role. Unwittingly he encourages Hermione's timidity and emotional, as well as material, reliance upon him. Her gratitude to him and her absolute dependence upon his support precludes the reasserting of her own beliefs and needs.

Grossmann thus suggests that even the best intentioned of men must be convinced of the need to allow women to be responsible for themselves. Even men like Dr Earle contribute, though in subtle ways, to the continued subjection of women. Through his insistence upon his love for Hermione, and through her absolute dependence upon that love, Hermione's subjection is facilitated. Carlisle had beaten her into submission, Dr Earle charms her into the same position. By either means Hermione's capitulation is assured. Willingly she resumes her position upon the pedestal of ideal womanhood.

In The Subjection of Women, John Stuart Mill argued that men prefer a willing to a forced slave. They must therefore enslave the minds of women. For Mill the reality of women's oppression is very much a moral issue. He suggested that the master and slave relations between men and women were 'unforgivable remnants of force at a time when mankind is capable of a higher morality' (Guettel, 1974, 5-6). Mill's position is reflected in much nineteenth century feminist thought and is here evidenced in Grossmann's treatment of the relationship between Hermione and Dr Earle.

Earle, like Carlisle, asserts his position of power, via mediating Hermione's relation to production. Carlisle forbids Hermione to perform even charitable work. Earle charms Hermione into visualising work not as a potential source of independence, but as grinding toil.

> '... it is better for a young man to have some share in the activities of the world.'
> 'And for a woman, too.'
> 'That is quite another matter, Hermione.'
> 'But why?' She was looking up at him very earnestly. 'Has not a woman active powers too?'
> 'My love,' he said, lowering his voice, 'you do enough for us without that. You meet death to give us life, and we depend on you utterly all the years of our infancy. No man who has any memory of his mother could endure to see a woman he loved struggling to maintain herself. Surely we may render you some service in return for yours.' (p. 60).

Carlisle enforces Hermione's exclusion from the public sphere. Earle appeals to Hermione's 'reason' and her sense of guilt. The inequity perpetrated by differential access to paid work is thus disguised and idealized by the elevation of pure womanhood. Carlisle had defiled that ideal by virtue of assertion of his mastery. Earle returns it to its rightful position via emphasising its positive elements. Women should ideally be protected and revered by men. Through his reverence of an ideal which Carlisle had desecrated Hermione is unable to resist capitulation. The tyranny of physical coercion is replaced by the tyranny of being trapped inside an ideal.

Earle's failure to recognise that women's domestic labour is also productive legitimates its equation with non-work. The work women do to maintain home and family, even if simply organizational, contributes to productivity indirectly. By going unpaid it can however, remain in the category of non-work

regardless of effort expended.

Once Hermione essentially 'belongs' to Earle, his exerting of control over her labour power increases. The volunteer nursing in Melbourne that Carlisle had forbidden is paralleled by Earle's forbidding of Hermione's nursing of sick villagers near the holiday villa in Greece.

> It did not seem consistent with his former attempt to interest her in the Melbourne hospital; but she had been only Mrs Carlisle then, and now she was his dear Ione. The worst of it was that, when he asked her not to do even what she thought right, she lost all inclination for it. She would rather have faced Bradley Carlisle's oaths than Dr Earle's displeasure. (p. 86).

Increasingly encased within the confines of an ideal, and increasingly powerless to assert her individuality Hermione's frustration increases. Grossmann operates on the assumption that relationships between non-equals are ultimately destructive. This is true despite the fact of Earle's good intentions with regard to Hermione. Thus Earle infers that women are oppressed only by a few brutal men. He is incapable of recognising that his oppression of Hermione is simply more subtle. He suggests to Hermione that oppression has only physical manifestations.

> 'Your marriage was exceptional, Ione. You must not draw conclusions from it.'
> 'It ought to have been impossible. Such tyranny may be exceptional in our class, but it is not among the poor; and, even among people like ourselves it is much commoner than you think; but the shame is thrown upon the sufferer and she is taught to hide what she suffers. The essence of my trouble is common, is usual. In some shape or form that claim to dominate my will and to subdue my nature would have been made, and I should have revolted.' (p. 66).

The emotional tyranny of man over woman, even that which is basically well intentioned as is Earle's, is increasingly questioned by Hermione. At the same time woman is apotheosized her emotional, economic, political and social subordination is secured. In return for reverence she must pay dearly. Even with the payment of such an exorbitant price the match between reality and ideal is a rarity and of dubious worth.

In the extract above, Hermione's assertion that revolt against Carlisle was inevitable is an adumbration of revolt against Earle. The central point remains that women's oppression is multi- faceted and deeply entrenched. The complacency engendered by the protection and love of a wealthy man is, to Hermione, equally as oppressive as the suffering wrought by a brutal tyrant. This she comes to recognise as gradually her mental health returns and her evolving feminist consciousness allows her to see beyond her own privatised oppression. Increasingly she asserts that oppression is structured and that it is the lot of all women regardless of class or race.

Because the oppression of an individual woman cannot be overcome, even within an ideal relationship of supposed equals, the structure of oppression must be confronted. An equal relationship cannot be built within a society structured upon sex inequality. Similarly, it is pointless to rebel only against one man within the context of a personal relationship. Though, as in Hermione's case, such rebellion contributes to escape, it does not improve the situation of other women nor lessen the chances of their being placed within similar positions. Such rebellion improves conditions, temporarily as it turns out, for one woman without altering anything for the majority. Thus, Hermione concludes that, 'what was the use of feeling anger against one ignorant man who acted as the others did? It was the system that had to be attacked' (p. 84).

Importantly the system to which Grossmann's heroine refers is not that of capitalist production, nor that of patriarchy. Rather, it is the system of an ideologically determined male supremacy that is to be attacked. Male supremacy is defined in moral, rather than in material terms. Social structures and institutions reflect male dominance, but are empowered to do so by determining sexist ideology. Agitation must therefore take place on the level of moral consciousness. Hermione takes a giant step forward in the recognition that female oppression is structured. She is mistaken only in recognising how that structure is organised.

The development of Hermione's feminist consciousness reaches the point where feminist concerns motivate her very existence. She can no longer legitimate secluding herself within the sheltered, privatised world provided by Dr Earle. Thus:

> As strength came back, the thirst for a more active life than constant study became more and more intense with Hermione. Day after day she had a stronger sense of a world outside this still, sheltered pool, a world where women and children were suffering and needing help. (p. 68).

Hermione cannot continue as a heroine content only to theorize about the nature of women's oppression and strategy for its eclipse. Her own position much improved she turns to the translation of theory into practice. The interests of women as a homogenous group become the central focus of her life.

The struggle to break free from Earle, to whom she is at the same time devoted, and to turn her back on the material wealth he provides her with is daunting. Upon recognising that her personal life is also political, and that her feminist theory cannot indefinitely be separated from practice, Hermione is ready to commit herself to the struggle for social change. Having come to grips with the nature of women's oppression she recognises that by not committing herself to change she is registering support for the status quo.

That the struggle for her own liberation is fraught with difficulties, and involves so many hard choices, is a tribute to authenticity. The concretising of barriers to Hermione's independence, in the form of employment and income restrictions, are coloured by her psychological reactions to the circumscription of her life. It is not only material hurdles she must overcome, but also those formidable obstacles within her own consciousness.

In Part II of A Knight of The Holy Ghost, 'The Women's War', Hermione rejects the cosseting of the world provided for her by Earle. Instead she opts for independence. In this she is in a unique position, for though Earle has formerly imprisoned her within an impossible ideal he does not have the legal hold over her of a real father. For Hermione this means that by virtue of a range of unique conditions she is virtually in the position to implement autonomous decisions. Her venturing out into the world to become independent however, is cushioned by the knowledge that Earle will provide economic salvation should she fail. Her situation is thus conditioned by an authorial solving of problems surrounding the gaining of independence which were in fact still very real.

Hermione is in the ideal position of being granted an opportunity to survive in the public sphere along with the security of rescue should she fail. Such opportunities continued to be a rarity for bourgeois women at the close of the nineteenth

century. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the scandal of Hermione's relationship with Dr Earle would have opened many doors to employment if she remained in the southern hemisphere. Grossmann's facilitating of her heroine's timely removal to the obscurity of first Europe, and then the United States, overcomes this problem. As an answer to women's oppression such a removal is neither realistic nor accessible. Instead it is a projection of possibility within a less problematic social world.

What is in keeping with the realities of the late nineteenth century, at least for bourgeois women, is the limited opportunities in paid employment. Hermione's independence demands primarily her holding of a direct relation to production. She becomes, for the first time in her life, the owner of her labour power. Hermione looks for a buyer. It is upon the stage as an actress that she is first employed. This door is opened to her by the fact that, 'already some society dames had taken to the stage with little or no training' (p. 111). The rarity of her position as bourgeois woman and wage earner is not lost to her.

> The bounty of the kindest hand could not have given her the pleasure she felt when she received her first season's salary, the first money she had ever legally earned. It is quite true that on the station she had often had too much work; her husband had expected her to manage a large household, entertain his guests, look after four little children, and wait on him hand and foot; but he always kept up the fiction that she never had anything to do but to amuse herself, and that she ought to be in a state of perennial gratitude for his magnificent generosity in supporting her. Now she was supporting herself. (p. 117).

Hermione recognises the fiction of supposing unpaid work is non-work. Her job in the theatre however is recognised as work by people other than herself. She is rewarded accordingly. The limited options in paid employment for women in Hermione's position include governess, teacher, perhaps writer and in an extreme situation, actress. Moving to the England of the late nineteenth century she is confronted with an option of the same low paid, low status, narrow range of occupations open to her in her home country.

The profession of actress held the promise of fame, fortune and independence, all precious commodities and rarely within the reach of bourgeois women in their own right. As a profession associated with such rich reward it constituted a major route of escapism within the fantasies of the many (4). As Hermione is to discover, however, the reality is immeasurably different. In England, employment for actresses multiplied twenty six-fold between 1841 and 1911, though even with this increase opportunities were greatly limited. In 1911, for example, 9,171 actresses were registered in the occupational census (Kent, 1977, 94). In the later decades of the nineteenth century acting became more acceptable as a profession for women as 'society itself was becoming somewhat less rigid in its criteria of social acceptability, while the profession was becoming more socially acceptable' (Kent, 1977, 107). However, the measure of

that respectability remained at best dubious and this is reflected in Grossmann's fictional representation of the theatre.

The more private arts, such as painting and writing, could be executed anonymously, and thus without high public profile. Acting, on the other hand, meant exposure. It could not be done at home and could rarely be done anonymously. Bourgeois women within the acting profession were thus 'caught between Victorian dictates of modesty and the public self-display that the theatre demanded' (Kent, 1977, 95). While on the one hand theatre offered the promise of independence, fame and fortune, it did so at the very high price of compromise for the respectable woman. Hermione soom becomes aware, for example, that her success as an actress has only a little to do with her artistic talent.

> Hermione could not help but see that her beauty and her womanhood, and even her sorrow, were being traded upon once again. It was not enough for her to act her part and do her work well; to get money she must charm it out of men by playing upon the sex attraction. She would not stoop to make that appeal; (p. 118).

She becomes aware that she is valued merely because her physical beauty is considered a 'marketable commodity' (p. 144) by her manager. She is being paid not for her labour, but for the use of her body and the promising allure of her sexuality.

These implications are furthered by Kent's point that, 'The married actress often continued to be billed as 'Miss ---' because there was felt to be a greater drawing power in the appearance of 'availability' in an actress' (Kent, 1977, 105-6). Hermione is thus more of a lure and a feast for the eyes than she is the serious actress that she wishes to be. The attraction to her physical being, rather than to her undeniable talent is demonstrated by visitors to her dressing room at the theatre.

> ... she began absolutely refusing to see visitors. It was not actual rudeness she suffered from, but insolent admiration. Some who were gentlemen had treated her with respect; but in other men, she who had learned by sad experience, could trace the marks of half-glossed ruffian passions excited by her own touching loveliness. (p. 118).

Encouraging the lust of men, it is implied, is the only way to succeed in the profession of actress. Thus sister actress Florence Leroy urges Hermione to compromise.

> 'Now, what's the good of being independent? The thing is to be dependent, and make someone else pay for you. Women can get anything they like if they know how. I've never met a man yet that I couldn't manage. Shultz is tough. Yes, he is very tough,' Florence said, meditatively, untying and retying her sash .... she did manage Shultz though in what way Hermione often wondered. (p. 121).

Florence trades on her sexuality to remain within the theatre. Her questionable respectability in encouraging the attentions of men in the audience is considerably heightened by her reference to the company's manager. Schultz is managed by Florence in a manner we can only guess at. Her tying and untying of her sash and her air of intrigue imply that her method involves a compromise of her already questionable moral purity.

Florence's sexuality is the only thing of value she has to offer within a marketplace wherein women's labour power is the cheapest of commodities. In return for the largely empty promise of fame and fortune she virtually prostitutes herself. Her survival in the world of theatre demands compromise of her moral virtue. Hermione, on the other hand, has the opportunity to refuse to trade upon her sexuality. Yet the limited options open to her in employment contract even further, as she rejects the profession of actress.

Grossmann's portrayal of theatre life clearly draws the conclusion that its respectability is in doubt. It is not women working to which she objects, but women working in occupations which are a threat to their moral purity. With the sexual conservatism of her age she thus denies the possibility of women in the theatre contributing to art, rather than being victims of debasement.

The indictment of acting as a possible option for bourgeois women in paid employment is heightened by this moral threat and by the actual isolation. Hermione is isolated by Earle's disapproval on the one hand and the unsuitability of the other actors as company, and the dubious character of visitors from the audience on the other. The opting for independence, in going onto the stage, plunges Hermione into a loneliness which is in part chosen and in part unavoidable. Thus;

> She had bought freedom at a heavy price, for she was utterly alone .... Hermione had scarcely any intercourse even with the actors and actresses of her own company, and the result was complete isolation. (p. 117).

She is totally deprived of the comfort and familiarity of her former domesticity. It is thus an extreme situation of isolation and independence versus companionship and dependence. In a very negative sense, freedom for women of Hermione's class is inseparable from social isolation (Stubbs, 1979, 125-6). This is the not too encouraging reality for nineteenth century women attempting to forge new kinds of lives. The limited option for women in paid employment and the compromise demanded of women in even these narrow range of occupations is highlighted by Grossmann. Hermione's escaping of the private sphere into paid employment is apparently doomed to failure. What little work she can find brings her loneliness and moral dilemma. Her success in forging her independence is both costly and ambiguous.

Forced through her own moral evaluation to quit the theatre, Hermione breaks her contract while the company is on tour in the United States. Alone in New York, and virtually penniless, her employment prospects are few.

> ... for weeks she simply had to struggle for existence, and she did not know where to turn. There was scarcely any profession open to women except teaching, and that was almost impossible for a woman who had no friends and was in a doubtful position. She answered advertisements, and she advertised in vain. (p. 146).

Both present and future appear bleak for a woman struggling for her independence. However, Hermione is determined to provide for herself.

> This was a matter of principle. She must not slip back into dependence; she must learn by bitter experience how a woman can make her way in the world. Then she tried writing, ... (p. 146).

Writing is Hermione's only surviving viable option in paid employment. As a private activity taking place within the confines of the home, writing is an acceptable feminine pastime. Taking place within the home it can be fitted in amongst the entire range of domestic responsibilities reserved for women. Its primacy, like all those activities reaching beyond the home, is non-existent.

Harriet Beecher Stowe describes her attempts to write, the conditions of her attempts shared by a majority of women writers;

> In ten minutes she was seated (the baby in her lap); a table with flour, rolling pin, ginger, and lard on one side, a dresser with eggs, pork, and beans, and various cooking utensils on the other, near her an oven heating ...
> '... Mina, you may do what I told you, while I write a few minutes till it is time to mould up the bread. Where is the ink-stand?'
> 'Here it is, on top of the tea-kettle.'
> '... Mina, pour a little milk into this pearlash.'
> (Olsen, 1980, 204).

So long as women could produce under these kinds of conditions, without disturbing the domestic routine, writing was permissible. Though Hermione is freed from the constraints of these domestic responsibilities, the strain upon her writing is that of the press of necessity. Having become dependent on her writing for her economic survival she must write successfully or be faced with destitution. As a woman writer she faces gender specific types of problems, as do those women writing within the family situation. She must learn how to compete with other writers in providing material for a market largely conditioned by publishers.

A piece of work is of value only in so far as it has a use value for exchange on the market. Hermione must therefore write in a certain style and on topics deemed saleable by male dominated publishing houses. Her early failures are later transformed into successes with the help of journalist, Val

Mahon.

> ... she had not the slightest idea of the sort of work that pays, and she tried in vain to dispose of unsaleable scholarly articles .... (She) told him frankly how hard she had tried to write articles, and how utterly she had failed. 'They must be wrong, somehow,' she concluded, 'but I don't even know how.' (p. 148).

It is Val who teaches Hermione to concentrate on market demands. His success in media is largely due to his gender accorded privilege. Thus his experience and his education are wide-ranging and of immense value within his profession. Hermione's success is dependent upon the presenting of facts within the range of dominant ideas. Those ideas are concerned with the interests of those kinds of people controlling the media. Ruling class men both control media and benefit from the matrix of dominant ideology, including that legitimating female exploitation.

Hermione cannot therefore find a waiting market for her tracts on oppression, but must in her work reflect dominant sexist ideology, and the legitimate female range of interests. As Val puts it, she must not write about, 'anything that happened to come into her own head, but about anything that happened to be in the head of the public.' (p. 148). In order to succeed as a writer she must reflect beliefs and not throw them into question. Hermione's task is to think and write in terms of the dominant

world view if she is to be published and paid. (5). Once again there is compromise in independence, for Hermione must subordinate her real views and write in the isolation of a tiny room in an almost friendless, foreign city. The rewards of her labour are few indeed.

Into the squalor and sterility of Hermione's life and home in New York come her old friend Clara and gradually the new friends, Josephine, Pauline, Prudence and Hester, and Anna. All are women's rights supporters and most are outcasts or upon the fringes of society as is Hermione. Prudence has formerly lived alone with her sister Hester in a dingy apartment, supporting both herself and Hester on a meagre clerical wage. The misery of the struggle to survive on a pittance is seemingly endless.

> Hester had got accustomed to the uncomplaining devotion of her sister, and found it unsatisfying, dull, almost irritating. Prudence, away all day, came home in the evening so tired, so sad, in such need of comfort herself, and with so little brightness to spare, that her return was generally the signal for pent-up miseries to find expression in fretful tears and reproaches and self-pitying laments. (p. 172).

Like Hermione, Prudence and Hester maintain an independence from men which grants them a lowering of status and a relegation to the ranks of the socially undervalued. Their struggles for such a miserly reward are stressed. Like Hermione, Prudence is confronted with a narrow choice of low paid, low status, suitably feminine occupations. Being of the lower middle class, Prudence

is denied access to the female professions and barred from the lowly ranks of maid or factory hand. The shabby respectability of clerical work is her lot.

Like Hermione, both Clara and Anna are survivors of brutal and destructive marriages. The former marriages of all three women morally preclude the establishment of new relationships, and the dubious nature of their separations divides them from thoroughly respectable 'society'. Although all three share the experience of tyranny it is frowned upon to openly discuss, all three share a need to give and receive the love denied them within marriage.

The coming together of this group of women provides the answers each has been searching for.

> On the whole they got on wonderfully well together, this little household of Women's Rightists. They had two strong bonds - their cause and Hermione as their leader. There is no chance comradeship equal to that of those who fight under one flag, whose hearts and minds move with one will. The members of such a regiment cease to be individual. Transported out of their lesser selves, and out of the petty jealousies, frivolous fancies and desires, and animal instincts of a society based on pleasure, their life anticipates a higher stage of existence. (p. 173).

In the household formerly individual problems and pains become transformed into shared wrongs and sufferings. The emotional starvation engendered by unequal relationships with men and largely superficial relationships with women is replaced by a

communion of equals. Former doubts and flagging courage are buoyed up by a network of supportive and committed friendships hitherto unknown. Furthermore, the women's economic problems too are eased, or at least easier to bear, in this changed atmosphere.

> The associates began to call themselves a commune, though in fact they never did form a real commune, for everyone had the right to keep her separate property. The only approach to community of goods came from the creation of a common fund used for the general support of the household. In this each one had a right to share enough for her actual maintenance, whether she was earning from outside sources or not. (p. 184).

For those going out to work the commune provides a haven to return to at night. The former grinding poverty is partially assuaged by a sense of political commitment which values things other than the purely material. Furthermore the maintenance work, such as cooking and cleaning, performed by those remaining at home in the commune is recognised as work. Those performing these duties have as much right to the communal income as do the paid workers. The women agree that within the commune, 'We are all equal, and all sisters.' (p. 199).

Grossmann's attempt to portray the overcoming of the isolation and the yawning void faced in women's opting for independence is interesting. Hermione is faced with the lack of successful role-models among nineteenth century bourgeois women. The few who choose or are forced to choose independence exist on

the fringe of social respectability. Invariably, within fiction, such heroines retreat into marriage. The largely unknown outcome of facing the world alone by choice appears overwhelming.

All available indicators suggest defeat in loneliness, poverty and virtual exile is inevitable. Thus the problems and pain of independence are virtually insurmountable. Grossmann's fictional response to this inevitability is similar to that isolated by Stubbs in the work of the feminist writer, George Egerton (Stubbs, 1979, 125). Writing in the England of the 1890's Chavelita Dunne, under the pen-name of Egerton, attempted to overcome contemporary obstacles to attaining independence by, 'projecting her women into an ideal future where all the problems of freedom have been solved' (Stubbs, 1979, 125).

Like Egerton's heroines, Grossmann's women overcome those problems associated with independence. The dull friendless days, the cheerless 'making do', the comfortless existence, the insecurity and seeming pessimism shrouding the future are banished. Into the truncated lives of women struggling to survive without men economically, socially, emotionally and politically comes that sense of sisterhood which provides the strength and commitment for the struggle.

All problems surrounding independence are resolved for the commune women meet all of each others needs without demanding subservience and dependence in return. Emotional, social,

economic needs are fulfilled as of right and not in the expectation of exacting the price of subordination. Strengthened and revitalised, basking in their new found joy, these women are enabled to put up a united front toward the world. No longer vulnerable, divided and easily beaten, they recognise the rarity and worth of their alliance.

> Like every other division of the army, the friends of --th street got shamefully abused and misrepresented in society papers and every kind of periodical and in social gossip. They were shrews, viragos, vixens, 'those detestable that brawl their rights and wrongs like pot-herbs in the street'; they were blue-stockings, 'hyenas in petticoats,' 'shrieking sisters' .... But even persecution had its uses, and it taught them to shun most carefully many of the extremes attributed to them. They were women, and new to the rough weapons of public warfare; and the insults often stung and rankled .... There was joy in social martyrdom and outlawry. It bound them closer together and the sense of intimate friendship consoled them for isolation from the mass. (p. 175).

For a brief period a community of women has come into being. It has contained all those elements of unity, commitment and loyalty which are the preserve of men. Women's unity, commitment and loyalty have been circumscribed by their prescribed roles and confinement to family interests. Loyalty and unity with other women, even within the family, has been undermined and discouraged by the patriarchal fostering of feminine division in competition for necessarily valued male favours.

The resources too for translating emotional commitment into material commitment have been distributed in favour of men. Thus, it is men who own the means of executing rescue, facilitating revenge, and initiating escape. The loyalty demanded of men to themselves and to each other has found its most common form in the ideal of organised combat. Within the ranks of armies, male solidarity and commitment are exemplified. Furthermore they represent one sex doing battle for its own interests as well as that of the other. This is conditioned by worthiness, respect and lofty ideals of loyalty.

The women of the commune too see themselves as an army. They share the same commitment to each other and to their cause. They consider their interests and actions of the highest moral order. They belong to a single sex and to a non-family based organisation. The very uniqueness of their position makes them trail blazers for their sex. It also means that in the absence of female forerunners these women are forced to visualize themselves only through parallels with men for whom none of these interests and experiences are new or unique. Thus the commune is an army and the cause a crusade, the world a battlefield and abuse a weapon.

The 'vision of a paradisal female community' Nina Auerbach traces through the fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Auerbach, 1978, 18) becomes explicit in the fiction of the feminists. In A Knight of The Holy Ghost, the vague dreams

become a reality. The feminine 'making do' is replaced by the coming to fruition of the inarticulate yearnings. The idea of a struggling underground female unity and comradeship has as its corollary the fecundity located in the bursting free from patriarchal constraint.

Female unity is thus more fully articulated in A Knight of The Holy Ghost than it can be in the reticent friendships of In Revolt. Within the commune the legacy of a female Eden is realised in the equal giving and receiving of sacrifice, love, devotion and encouragement. All the burden of responsibility for meeting emotional needs becomes shared. This is reflected in, for example, the relationship between Prudence and Hermione.

> ... Prudence came into her bedroom, and, having brought her the clothes elaborately mended, began to brush her hair.
> 'I have always been spoilt,' she said, apologetically. 'At first it was dear Janet, then old Teresa; but they were nothing to you. It is all your fault Prudence.' Then, anxiously, 'I am afraid I am very selfish, using up better people than myself.'
> 'You are not selfish, my own dear,' said Prudence, fondly, putting both arms around her. 'You are always giving out your best to others, and you must receive something ...' (p. 226).

Together the women in the commune itself are freed from the yoke of continually subordinating their needs, desires, and aspirations to those with whom they live. In this little world of equals both sacrifice and reward are shared and the priority of no-one. The suffering out of which the idea of female

community grows is assuaged by the sharing and the understanding limited to those who are its victims. Thus, paradoxically, out of suffering comes the potential for joy.

The strength and solidarity, the comfort and care accorded to women within the communal ideal become however, problematic with the translation into a literary reality. The contradictions revealed within Grossmann's fictional representation of the attainment of the communal ideal are significant. The male prerogatives and pleasures won by women are prescriptively confined to the world of men. The rights to speak, to hold an opinion, to argue and to speculate and most of all to be heard, are only a few of those prerogatives that Hermione and her friends usurp.

Yet Grossmann is clearly uneasy about the nature of this assertive female seizing of male prerogatives. The demanding of the pleasures and power of men elicits a guilt peculiar to those for whom self-sacrifice is both a prescribed duty and an 'natural' tendency. The guilt which accompanies the creation of female earthly pleasure and fulfillment outside marriage can be assuaged only through further masochistic self- sacrifice. Thus the solidarity and commitment of these women cannot be seen as being purely selfish and directed toward the freeing of their embattled sex alone. Rather, woman freed must be woman returning to free her brothers from the self-fashioned chains of their own power.

Woman's payment for the privileges of men must be the enshrining of female selflessness prescribed by the patriarchy. The rejection of many supposedly innate feminine attributes suggested by the ideal of a female commune is potentially threatening to the established male order. This threat is defused by the assurance of continued self-sacrifice in the female commitment to the elevating of masculine morality.

Thus the commune is committed to the social work already widely accepted as being the domain of bourgeois Victorian women. The voluntary work with reforming prostitutes (Levesque, 1981, 7), with the destitute and with women victimised by drunken and abusive men was as much the territory of conformist women as of the feminists. Importantly the emphasis is upon rehabilitating the victim while simultaneously struggling to rehabilitate her environment via a moral reorganisation. From the contemporary perspective this equates with distributing aid whilst leaving intact the material bases generating those of victim status. While working to aid the disadvantaged is, of course, a crucial aspect of political activism the anchoring of rehabilitative strategy in a programme for revolutionary change is a prior concern. In other words action must grow out of a sound theoretical base which incorporates both analysis of the present situation and development of a perspective on the engendering of social change. The conservative nineteenth century feminism Grossmann and her heroine champion instead founders on the distributing of aid in the absence of a programme

for effective change.

When the commune is re-settled in Australia, after leaving New York, the associates continue their voluntary work. Hermione and her associates are committed to those same social concerns which formed part of the domain reserved for the voluntary work of bourgeois women.

> ... the degradation and suffering of women .... It might be some young foolish factory girl, not long from the country, too plainly a willing victim to the brute on whose arm she was hanging, or some unfortunate in silks and jewels, whose cheek showed through powder and paint the scorching brand of disease and shame .... Hermione now decided to have a 'Melbourne Mission'. For about half the year, two or three 'sisters' in turn were to live in Melbourne, lecturing, making themselves acquainted with the social conditions among women there, and, wherever they could, giving help. (p. 210-11).

In America the commune's concerns have been within similar areas;

> ... the searching of history, of criminal records of the day, and visits to women in hospitals and prisons and places derisively called 'homes' -- ... Then an awful tragedy happened in a flat some floors below the commune. A young Italian woman was arrested on suspicion of poisoning her husband, found guilty and condemned to death. Hermione went to see her in prison .... Anna ... used her influence to get her friend permission to visit the prison, and also helped the agitation in the prisoner's favour. (p. 189).

Along with the voluntary charity workers, Hermione and her associates extend their efforts to the greater moral crusade for the purity of men. The associates differ little from those women

who were 'charged with maintaining the moral tone of society. It was their job to restrain and refine the base instincts of men' (Dalziel, 1977, 118). Within Grossmann's fiction that moral duty too shapes the activity of commune members. The tension between the casting off of dominant patriarchal ideology within the commune and the succumbing to its more insidious facets are here again apparent. Along with the rescue and rehabilitation of fallen women the commune organises a fellowship of young men. The nature of this fellowship is envisioned;

> They would be a society pledged to live a higher spiritual life. They will abjure all forms of intemperance. The one form runs continually into the other - excess in drink and food, extravagant indulgence in any sensual pleasure. But most of all they stand pledged to serve, as occasion offers, the cause of purity. (p. 260).

At the inauguration of the fellowship, Hermione outlines the commitment the men pledge, and need to strive for:

> 'Not the things the world immoderately desires - those things for which men and women sell their souls - dress and rich food, wine and furniture, fashion and dominion over their fellows; but the beautiful things of the unseen world - .... Intemperance, in any form of sensual enjoyment, means yielding to the animal and submerging the spirit. The man who yields must sink gradually till he becomes the slave of his lusts. (p. 296).

Hermione and her associates assume responsibility for social morality in a different but not unrecognisable form. That responsibility has always been theirs. Now it merely becomes refashioned and streamlined. The potential for the evasion of such responsibility with the coming into being of the commune thus goes unrealised.

The threat to the established male order embodied within the potential force of female solidarity, is, of course, aimed directly at the bastions of home and family. There are, however, a number of reasons why this threat too largely remains impotent. The commune is after all a haven of retreat and reassessment rather than a viable and attractive option to marriage and family. It is the product of refugees from the embattled world of men.

All the associates are either already wives or else are superfluous, unmarriageable women. They are either disfigured, like the crippled Hester, past their youth like Prudence, or of a class wherein women are over-represented and competing fiercely for husbands like Pauline. Indeed the only woman who leaves the commune is the marriageable, wealthy and beautiful Josephine.

> ... Josephine, lovely, graceful, luxurious Josephine - she obviously had no serious part in this community at all .... by the time they had all accepted her Josephine was beginning to look wistfully back on her former existence, and to find prolonged martyrdom pall exceedingly .... After a good deal of persuasion, Josephine agreed to leave. She made them all presents, about as inappropriate as possible, except the diamond

> star to Hester; she kissed them all, was driven away in her aunt's carriage, and dropped entirely out of their lives. (p. 187-9)

The revolutionary potential of the communal ideal is further undermined by the stress upon the function of family it undertakes for the deprived. The commune provides a surrogate family rather than a serious threat to prescribed family life. Thus the associates are known to each other as 'sister' and members of the aligned fellowship as 'brother'. Within the surrogate family female virtue is not ensured by men, its traditional guardians, but by women themselves. There is no threat of sexual intransigence, as there would be had men too been incorporated into the commune. Grossmann thus intimates that within the commune, as within the patriarchal family, women's chastity is well guarded.

The defusing of the radical potential of female community is enabled by the retaining of the feminine principles of self-sacrifice and purity, and their elevation. The consequences of this retention I have attempted to outline and trace within the novel. The contradictions readily apparent within the fictional representation of female community are most directly implicated in the elevation of feminine principles. As such, they are inseparable from the contradictions within Grossmann's own life and those of all nineteenth century women.

The problem solving the commune facilitates for women on the 'outside' and its even short-term viablity are more utopian than they are true to life. The kinds of total commitment and support underlying the formation of the commune exist on the level of ideals. The reality of women's lives in the nineteenth century throughout the western world, largely precluded this actualisation.

While I would not contest that fact that women gained great strength and solidarity by organising themselves into feminist collectives of all descriptions, few if any could have matched that of Hermione's commune. The commitment of the commune women is primarily to each other and to their cause. Yet it evolves out of sheer desperate desire for security and sustenance. It is as though that need alone is sufficient to call into being the sanctuary of a community of women.

Grossmann takes a reality wherein women's commitment to and support for each other within the feminist movement were significant and transforms them into absolutes. Thus her women do not return to family or husband following lectures or meetings, but live their commitment day in and day out. It is not only a few select needs that the commune meets. Rather, it fulfills all the women's needs, emotional, social, economic and political.

The ease with which it is called into being out of nothingness, the membership which it so readily attracts and the commitment and caring it induces are not problematic for Grossmann. The inevitability of the evolution of the commune and its overwhelming success are factors which are assumed. The nature of its evolution and the recipe of its success are non issues. The realities of nineteenth century women's lives however, point to the fact that the unproblematic overcoming of obstacles to the forging of totally committed alliances among women is scarcely feasible. The need to deal fully with the nature of these obstacles and the processes of overcoming them are ignored in A Knight of The Holy Ghost.

Grossmann provides a solution to female isolation and estrangement which is essentially idealistic in so far as it assumes wholly positive female alliances and fails to assess the possibility of attainment. The commune simply evolves in all its attendant perfection. The constraints upon women, growing out of the material conditions of their lives, fail to limit their commitment and the possibility of the success of their communal venture. Thus while the coming together of women represents the greatest chance for their effective organisation and mobilisation the problems surrounding such a development need to also be realistically assessed.

The ease with which the commune comes into being points to its potential as a viable alternative to both the struggles of independence and constraints of family life. The facts of the limitations of these ways of life appears to fuel the imagining of an idealised and largely unattainable communal alternative. This alternative is however idealistic rather than realistic in so far as the basic framework structuring women's lives enforced dependence upon marriage and the sexual division of labour (Du Bois, 1979, 139).

In extolling the delights of life within a community of women Grossmann neglects the price of delight and the signposting of the path to its attainment. The greater risks inherent in tossing marriageability to the winds and plunging headlong into communal living are not confronted. Yet few women, apart from those driven from cruel and brutal marriages and those with little chance of becoming wives and mothers, could afford to take those risks. The great weight of evidence and experience suggested to women the danger and misery of forced or chosen options to marriage. The realities too pointed to equal burdens in marriage, though dominant ideology vehemently denied them.

The willing hurtling of self into the unknown world outside that socially prescribed for women held little temptation. The solution portrayed by Grossmann fills that void and yet it too ultimately proves untenable, unable to weather the storms of male assault. The commune leaves New York and is re-established and

expanded at Mount Moira outside Melbourne, Australia. With the defeat of Hermione, following the court order to return home to Carlisle, the commune of which she is the spiritual leader, collapses.

Even this stronghold of organised, politicized women, united by their loyalty and persecution, cannot withstand the doing of battle with the representatives of male supremacy.

> ... all in and around the house was desolation. The garden beds were trampled with the feet of carters and with horses' hoofs and the tracks of heavy wheels .... In the wreck and ruin of the commune Anna had behaved like herself ... with Mount Moira she had hoped to save both Hermione and the commune. (p. 383).

Carlisle assumes ownership of Mount Moira, and even the combined funds of all the commune members are insufficient to repurchase it. Their home gone and their leader lost, Anna is unable to hold the commune together any longer.

> All were scattering before the storm. Lady Mowbray had gone to her husband's relatives without even leaving a message for Hermione; Millice had been sent for very authoritatively by her uncle, ... The school had broken up. Many of the later associates had gone. Up till the present time Anna had kept something like order. (p. 385).

It is as though the storm exploding about the commune is as unavoidable as its metaphorical equivalent. The inevitability and inescapability of the havoc wrought by a storm are paralleled by the seeming inevitable defeat of women attempting to organise

in the face of overpowering odds. Male supremacy, like the force of a storm, is indiscriminate in the destruction wrought.

A Knight of The Holy Ghost, concerns more than the portrayal of the day to day realities of women's oppression. Though this portrayal remains important, whether explicitly or as an underlying concern, the preoccupation with escape surfaces. A range of responses to the varieties of incarceration women have known are paraded through A Knight of The Holy Ghost. They include the resorting to madness and to suicide. The envisaging of alternatives to incarceration and suffering includes not only those solutions which are explicitly defeats. Yet those alternatives which hold out hope for the assuaging of the trials of bondage are, in the final analysis, dealt with in an approach which is neither realistic nor progressive.

The journey back from madness leads to the perfect father, Dr Earle. His love for Hermione is as binding as the tyranny of Carlisle and must be transformed if she is to develop. The escape necessitates the independence of paid employment. Yet independence too is hollow sounding so long as it is equated with loneliness.

The evocation of community overcomes both loneliness and the inequality which renders less than perfect the love between men and women. It is put forward as the ultimate solution to female suffering within the existing social order. Within the projected

society of the future moral purity will deliver everyone from the tragedies the commune women evade. Love and commitment are inevitable only between the equals the utopia of moral purity will give rise to. In the present the commune compensates women for riches such as these which is the wealth they are deprived of. Yet even the combined forces of women within the commune cannot overcome the evil of male supremacy. Defeat is inevitable. Even the temporary sanctuary offered women within the commune is illusory. It is outside both the experience and the grasp of nineteenth century women. Women are portrayed as peopling a world of defeat, a world wherein even the stuff of dreams is shown to be destructive.

Footnotes

1. Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm was published in 1883, Chopin's The Awakening in 1899, Grand's The Heavenly Twins in 1893, and Brooke's A Superfluous Woman in 1894. These novels are only a few of those produced by women writing within the tradition of feminist protest.

2. Feminists have recently documented their rejections of many traditional patriarchal principles of psychology. These principles are largely viewed as both a product, and defense of the domination of capitalist patriarchy. The double standard and deterministic nature of psychology are seen as invalidating social and cultural explanations for psychosis. While some forms of mental illness may be chemical, or even hereditary, many more are thus seen as being socially determined. Female insanity is regarded as symptomatic of the oppression of a male-powered and oriented society. This is in opposition to the assumption that such insanity is due to inbuilt individual inadequacies on the part of the patient. In Women and Madness, Phyllis Chesler maintains that 'most twentieth-century women who are psychiatrically labelled, privately treated, and publicly hospitalised are not mad .... they may be deeply unhappy, self-destructive, economically powerless and sexually impotent - but as women they're supposed to be' (Chesler, 1972, 25). Barbara Rigney in Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel discusses attempts of heroines to find their own identities in a social system which demands adherence to an established sex role at the expense of individual fulfillment. Madness and alienation in each instance indicate failure to fulfill sex role expectations and are only temporary answers to oppression.

3. Dress reform was an important, though not defining, aspect of feminist agitation both overseas and in New Zealand. Women demanded a more 'rational' form of dress in keeping with demands for less restriction, both physical and mental. Of course restrictive clothing was seen as a product of subjection and not its cause (Regional Women's Decade Committee, 1979, pp.22-36).

4. The world of theatre was, significantly, far from the reach of New Zealand women. Prior to World War I, New Zealand had no native theatre but was infrequently toured by British and American companies. (New Zealand's Heritage, Part 95, Vol 7, p.2644). Opportunities to become a professional actress would thus have been severely limited. The position of

'fallen' chorus girl would have been somewhat more accessible.

5. Rachel Harrison discusses more fully the restraints upon the success of women writers. The social relations of manuscript production were not neutral with respect to gender. Rather, women were discriminated against in a variety of ways. (Harrison, 1978, 176-93).

CHAPTER 1V:

Feminist Marxism -: Dawn Beloved

The polemical concerns of Edith Grossmann's fiction are refocused in Jean Devanny's third novel, Dawn Beloved. (1) Published in 1928 Dawn Beloved is in many respects autobiographical (Ferrier, 1980, 40), drawing on Devanny's youth spent in the mining districts of Nelson Province. Dawn Beloved has been dealt with, in this study, prior to The Butcher Shop. The confusion of the earlier novel can be grappled with more successfully in the light of the clearer expression of ideas in Dawn Beloved. The themes and ideas informing both novels are closely related and, in some instances, identical.

The influence of nineteenth century feminism, with all its historically specific limitations, is explicit in the work of Grossmann. Her fictional exploration of women's experience and struggle is moulded within its confines. In the work of Devanny, appearing some twenty years later, the concern with women's oppression is reformulated. The fictional representation of oppression is however, consciously mediated by the the influence of Marxist theory rather than the conservatism of nineteenth

century feminism. The opposition of these influences however, paradoxically also generates continuities in perception of the nature of women's oppression. These continuities, I shall argue, are materially determined.

Barely separable chronologically the impinging of dominant ideology and material reality upon Grossmann's portrayal of oppression is also clearly discernable in the work of Devanny. The historical specificity of women's lives in the New Zealand of the early decades of the twentieth century is thus considered central to the successful grappling with the seeming contradictions within Devanny's fiction.

The political orientation adopted by each writer is largely determined by place in time, class and geographical location. The university halls of the 1880's and middle-class women's organisations of the 1890's are far removed from the coal mining towns and Marxist study groups of the West Coast and Nelson Province in the early decades of the 1900's. In these terms Grossmann's life in Christchurch as a feminist and a scholar had little in common with that of Devanny, a school leaver at thirteen, the daughter and then the wife of a coal miner. (Roberts, 1981, 9-10).

Yet while these differences are both significant and far-reaching the same kinds of limitations of gender circumscribe the lives of both writers and of the women of their periods. The

material realities of women's lives, and dominant ideology decreeing the primacy of women's role as wife and mother, were less transformed in the years separating Grossmann and Devanny than they were modified. This can be seen, for example, in the area of paid employment.

Working women of the late nineteenth century were employed largely in domestic service and after the 1880's in manufacturing as well (Olssen, 1980, 162). Bourgeois women were confined to teaching or governessing. By the turn of the century wider occupational opportunities had eventuated. Women were employed as clerks, typists and nurses with the expansion of the tertiary sector. Women in paid work constituted 20.7 percent of the total female population by 1921 compared to 11.1 percent in 1874. (Olssen, 1980, 161).

Yet despite this seemingly momentous change in women's work and subsequent independence their position was not significantly altered. For most women paid work remained a intermediary activity between finishing school and marrying (Olssen, 1980, 164). Marriage and motherhood retained primary importance in the lives of women. In employment women, in relation to men, remained concentrated within a narrow range of low paid, low status occupations. Furthermore these occupations were those which were extentions of the traditional female role of care-giver and supporter. Women continued to earn less than men and to be confined within the lower levels of even those

occpations within which women predominated.

The unchanged conditions of women's lives on this very broad scale between the 1890's and the 1920's implies too the continuation of a specific response within the fiction of women writers. Protest is thus consistent as is its ultimate concern with women's struggles. Out of these unchanged underlying conditions of life comes both broad continuity of response and the welding together of political analysis, experience and assimilation. The commitment to realist writing, fuelled by pedagogic concerns, underlies the value of the work of both women as social history. More specifically, that work contains a record of the influences upon, and the nature and limitations of, our earliest forms of feminist protest. The novels thus provide fictional documentation of the searching for feminist understanding and answers.

The struggle to find a feminist voice, which is capable of articulating an opposition to dominant bourgeois ideology, is as much an issue in considering the work of Devanny as it is in considering that of Grossmann. Just as Grossmann's vision is limited and influenced by the conditions of women's lives so too is Devanny's vision circumscribed and seemingly contradictory. The inability to separate the feminist vision from the patriarchal sycophant is however both understandable and inescapable at this point in history.

To reconcile Devanny's fictional portrayal of oppression with the contemporary socialist feminist understanding of that oppression, its historical limitations must be appreciated and accepted. So long as these exigencies go unmet, her work must be considered largely an enigma in an overall sense. The confusion of Devanny's ideas surrounding women's oppression cannot be successfully assessed in the absence of an historical perspective directed at the gender specific experience of women of the period.

My aim in turning to the fiction of Devanny therefore lies in the providing of a feminist critique of her work in its own right and in comparison with that of Grossmann. To this end my approach will be a continuation of that adopted in the consideration of Grossmann's feminist fiction. It will therefore be concerned with the match between the literary representation of the position of women and the historical and ideological realities of that position. Influences upon Devanny's feminist consciousness will be considered along with the subsequent impact they have upon the aspects of women's lives she chooses to emphasise.

Dominant ideology concerning the 'real' natures of women and men will be found to impinge upon the fictional representation of the social world and upon Devanny's feminist consciousness. It will thus be seen to limit the horizons of the early twentieth century feminist vision and impede development of strategy for

change. This in turn has implications for fulfilling the literary demands of contributing to the transformation of the social order outlined within a prescriptive socialist feminist critique.

Dawn Beloved centres upon the material conditions of life in the rural, and later the industrial, settings of early twentieth century New Zealand. It is specifically the kinds of lives women are forced to lead, as a result of these conditions, and the problems which arise from this which concern Devanny. The most significant of these problems is seen as being the distortion of female sexuality. The Marxist perception of material conditions as determining not only how people live, but how they think, structures Devanny's fiction. Economic production constitutes the material base, and the determining influence, of the matrix of social relations. Most of her characters are thus the unmediated product of their own environment.

This determining power of material conditions is eventually recognised by Devanny's heroine, Dawn Haliday. She reaches this conclusion after pondering over the vast differences in the natures of the farmer and the coal miner. The consciousness of relationship to production is articulated through the contemplations of Dawn;

> The farmer had his roots in the soil, which was as yet incapable of effective speech. Its language was obscure; it was inarticulate to a great extent because the machinery of production used in its cultivation was cumbersome. The farmer must have wide spaces around him. To produce much with the machinery of the day he must have a lot of land, which meant that he was solitary, was separated from his fellowmen. He must work hours so long that he was denied social intercourse, without which brains become atrophied. The conditions under which he lived were relatively unchangeable; so much so, anyhow, that modifications were imperceptible to his obtuseness. He was naturally conservative because Progress, which is born and grows toward fructification in the towns, in the crowded places, barely touched him .... He tended toward the quiescence of his beasts because he lived after their manner.
>
> But the miners congregated. If there happened to be a seed of intelligence in a miner it got an airing; had a chance of living, growing, developing. The coal he dug talked to him, stimulated his intelligence .... In the aggregate they were the vanguard of the soon to be advancing proletarian battle-hosts, the spirit of discontent being induced in them by slow realisation of their paramount importance to the industrial machine ....
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> The miner toiled hard but in company with his kind and held converse with them. Because of inherited short-comings, because of the limitations of his environment, his speech was mostly brutal, often vile ... (Devanny, 1928, 141-2).

The material world underlies the thought and speech of the workers determining their silencing or their coming into speech (Ferrier, 1980, 40). Without the companionship of his own kind the thoughts of the worker stagnate and he lapses into silence. This is the lot of the farmer. With only the companionship of his own kind the thoughts and speech of the worker are stimulated yet bound beyond a certain level. This is the lot of the industrial worker. Yet for him there exists a

much greater potential for change for his environment is relatively progressive.

In Devanny's work the material conditions of life arise from the mode of production. Within the capitalist mode of production two major classes arise, the capitalist and the proletariat. The relation to the mode of production, its ownership or non-ownership, determines class. These two classes are considered to be in conflict with each other as a result of the relation to production. Those who own the means of production are the dominant group in society economically, politically, socially and ideologically. The capitalist class is thereby enabled to control the dominant ways of understanding the social world. It is in a position to impose its own self-sustaining beliefs, values and ideas upon the subordinated proletariat.

The proletariat in turn are forced to sell their labour power to the capitalist in order to survive. The capitalist derives his profit from the discrepancy between the exchange value and the use value of that labour. That is profit lies in the exploitation of the worker and this is the heart of conflict. In this tradition the primary oppression is seen as being economic oppression. It is beneath this umbrella that the oppression of women is ordered.

Yet society is not divided only upon a class basis. It is also divided, or polarised upon the basis of gender in Dawn Beloved. Women as an oppressed group are seen to themselves comprise a proletariat. Women of every social class are subordinate to, at the very least, the men of their social class. The power of men over women, Devanny assumes, stems from their ownership and control of female sexuality and reproduction. This ownership, like ownership within production, generates dominance within all social spheres and includes male dominance of female ideas, beliefs and values.

It is the material conditions of workers' lives which determine their ignorance and subservience. Similarly the material conditions of women's lives, their non-ownership or control over their sexuality and reproduction, determines their 'chattel instincts', their passivity and subservience. The distortion of female sexuality, with all its concomitant problems, is seen to stem from this male ownership and control. Male control over female sexuality and reproduction is seen as arising only with the development of class society. The system of male power as such is inseparable from that of class. Having no material base as such it therefore exists as an ideological construct shaped by the economic infrastructure.

It is within this framework that Devanny's fiction operates and it is essential to grasp these basic tenets if her work is to be fully appreciated. The Marxism structuring her fiction is of

an orthodox variety. Emphasis is upon a class based analysis. Her political involvement, beginning with membership of a Marxist study group in a South Island mining town sometime after 1911, continued through to a twenty year association with the Communist Party of Australia which ended in 1950 (Ferrier, 1980, 38). Devanny's political commitment to Marxism and to Marxist feminism permeated every area of her life from the public face to the personal relationship. Inevitably it was the most important single conscious influence upon her thought and her life and thus upon her fictional portrayal of the social world.

Dawn Beloved tackles the issue of women's oppression within, for the most part, the context of a working class community. In contrast to the novels of Grossmann the heroine is born into, and remains within, the working class up until the closing chapters. Her particular problems, while largely shared by all women, take on a class specific form. Devanny is thus able to more fully deal with the problems of working class women than is Grossmann by virtue of locating her heroine within that class. The lives of working class women are not merely peripheral in the novel. Rather than constituting comparative examples, through which to stress the similarities of women's lives, working class women comprise a central focus.

The novel opens with an account of life for women in a back blocks farming district shortly after the turn of the century. Mrs Haliday, Dawn's mother, is a raw and inarticulate woman, 'too

hardworked for sensuality' (Devanny, 1928, 9). Her nature and lack of perception grow out of her way of life.

> Mrs Haliday was the typical New Zealand backblocks woman. Strong, inured to toil, innately religious without ever speaking of it, and attentive to the physical needs of her children without ever thinking that they might have other than physical needs. To her type a soul was something the common people neither possessed nor mentioned. It bore a definite relation to religion, and when spoken of carried with its mention a mental envisagment of white-winged, lightly-robed creatures of human semblance uprising through space. As for morality - well, one merely lived it. Conception of it was born with one; it was so simple a thing as to need no definition. Cognisance of it was supposed to alight upon one in some inexplicable way quite apart from human direction. (p. 9).

The day to day realities of life for Mrs Haliday preclude the wide ranging of her thought. The eternal concern with the cooking, cleaning, mending, childcare and countless other tasks drains any imagination she may have had. The company of only children, and intermittently of an equally exhausted and overworked husband, stifles any originality of thought or speech. It is these realities which largely determine the knowing of:

> What passed between this poor woman and her vulgar husband in those silent hours of darkness when timid souls gain courage to whisper of emotions and ideas impossible of disclosure by the naked light of day. (p. 10).

Mrs Haliday's consciousness is the consciousness of the worker for whom the grasping of the barest essentials for survival absorb every waking moment. The serious questioning of the social world is precluded by the lack of time and of stimulation. Rebellion is an impossibility determined by isolation and primitive conditions. Perception of change is non-existent.

Mrs Haliday's consciousnesss of being a woman is shaped by the physical realities of womanhood. Being a woman, like being a worker, means only hardship. She is so inured to the extra burden of pregnancy upon the performance of day to day tasks and the trials of child care that the new life is a non-event. Pregnancy and childbirth are to be accepted and borne by virtue of womanhood. They are unchangeable and unmiraculous realities. Thus;

> She bore children because 'men will be men' and never made comparison between the punctilious care accorded the brood mare and the matter-of-fact unconsideration she herself was subjected to. She never caressed the children after they reached two years of age and was chary of endearing words (p. 10).

It is women's absolute lack of control over their sexuality and reproduction that Devanny illustrates. Mrs Haliday does not choose to bear children. Rather, her husband determines this for her. She has no capacity to deny him access to her sexuality and she must pay the consequences for his pleasure, it is implied.

Mrs Haliday does not even bother to resent the injustice. She has not the strength nor the will to contemplate resentment, far less revolt. In orthodox Marxist analysis the function of working class women is seen to lie in the reproduction of the workforce and in the servicing of existing workers. Thus Mrs Haliday's sexual pleasure is subordinated to the demands of capital. Her unpaid domestic labour contributes to the maintenance of Haliday's labouring capacity and that of her children. Her being is totally sacrificed to the needs of the economy. The material conditions of her life, and legitimating ideology, bind her to an unchanging exploitation.

As workers, women like Mrs Haliday suffer in similar ways to men. As women however, their suffering is amplified in specific ways. The working man has as his subject his woman. Her body becomes, literally, his possession. The birth of children, with all its concomitant responsibilities, is her personal burden of suffering. Men, by virtue of their control over female sexuality, enslave women and separate them from the joys that rightfully belong to them. If woman herself was in a position to grant sexual favours at her own discretion, and gave birth only as an outcome of this, those joys might be reclaimed.

But so long as capitalism, with its base within private ownership, continues the ownership of women and control of their sexuality too will continue. Within Devanny's orthodox Marxist analysis fundamental change in women's position within capitalism

is impossible. Socialist feminism however, posits a materially based system of structured male power which is not identical with the economic infrastructure. In this context women's oppression cannot be reconciled within capitalism nor automatically reconciled by socialism. Socialist revolution is however, a pre-requisite for the overthrow of patriarchy.

Devanny exposes the need for the revolutionary transformation of society in opposition to the reformist modification stance of Edith Grossmann. For Devanny the overthrow of capitalism will liberate women. In pushing for such a transformation, through her political activity and in her fiction, Devanny spearheads the crude beginnings of a radical approach to women's emancipation. No longer content only with moral explanations and arguments she begins a more fruitful quest for the engendering of social transformation. Devanny proposes that the suffering and degradation inherent within women's sexual slavery decrees their abhorrence of the sexual and the sensual. Associating sexuality only with degradation and pain, the distaste for it is a logical outcome. Out of the appalling conditions of women's lives comes the disgust of sexuality. Mrs Haliday's reaction to an argument between her children about Dawn's birth illustrates that disgust.

> 'What did he hit you for, Hughie?' She turned to the youngster.
> 'Because I was going to tell Dawn where she came from,' he said maliciously.
> Mrs Haliday was thunderstruck. That a boy like Hughie should know anything so - so - she could not tell what.

> Rage boiled up within her. Her face became as pale as death.
> Dawn said unexpectedly:
> 'Ralph told me to ask you how I got here the night of the flood, Mummy.'
> ... His mother moved towards him with uplifted arm, then whirled and grabbed Hughie, daunted perhaps, by Ralph's size. She thrashed the younger boy till her arm ached then turned to Ralph again.
> 'You're bad!' she spat out.

The disgust of maleness is reflected in the epitaph 'dirty beast' (p. 29) flung at her husband and in the fantasies of sexless romances Mrs Haliday absorbs through her sporadic reading. They are fantasies which 'weave a soul damaging, false romance about physiological facts' (p. 19). Sexuality is to be ignored either by refusing to speak of it or let it be spoken of. It is to be disguised and considered non-existent.

The world Mrs Haliday inhabits is a world wherein woman's control over her sexuality is virtually non-existent. Contraception is unheard of and sexual enjoyment totally alien. Largely debarred from the earning of a living wage and from legitimate pursuits outside marriage, becoming a wife and mother is an inevitability. It is a world within which women's work is within the home and economic independence is the exception, rather than the rule (Ferrier, 1980, 46).

Dawn is thus taken out of school at thirteen and put to work on farm and household chores. As Biddy Fane, Dawn's teacher and friend comments:

> 'These people of the soil regard their children in the same light as they do their beasts, as property or as assets, in that they do away with the necessity of hiring labour.' (p. 60).

Dawn's brothers too are taken from school at an early age to work the land. But, unlike Dawn, they are enabled to eventually strike out alone and leave the farm. Ralph leaves and works instead in the coal mines at Paranga. He leaves in search of 'where the stream of life is flowing, generating force as it goes, the force of Progress.' (p. 65).

Dawn, like her mother before her, is anchored to the land of her father. As a woman her father's sense of property rights in her extends beyond that he has over her brothers. Control over women extends beyond the appropriation of their labour power. In the home and in the fields Dawn's labour goes unpaid and is rewarded only with her keep. Her economic dependence is total. But Mr Haliday also maintains control over Dawn's sexuality. It is his role, and the role of Mrs Haliday as a servant to the patriarchy, to safeguard Dawn's virginity and her chastity. Thus Haliday springs to life 'his eyes glaring' (p. 50) when Dawn is almost sexually molested at the close of childhood. Significantly he is insensitised to any other aspect of the girl's life.

Similarly Ralph is ordered by Mrs Haliday not to mention anything to do with sex to Dawn.

> 'Don't you dare mention such a thing to that little girl again or she'll disgrace us all and you'll be responsible.' She snatched Dawn's hand and dragged her away. (p. 17).

The safeguarding of chastity can, in Mrs Haliday's estimation, only be attained through ignorance. If Dawn is kept in the dark she will be in no danger of becoming 'a fallen woman'. The shame of sexual indulgence outside marriage is explicit in Mrs Haliday's stress. Significantly Ralph's knowledge does not frighten Mrs Haliday in the same way as Dawn's potential knowing. On some level it is accepted that a man will 'sow his wild oats' and not too much harm will be done. Because Dawn is a woman, her sexuality is not hers to dispose of as she sees fit. Rather, it is to be safeguarded within the patriarchal family until such a time as she is delivered up into the care of another male. Her sexuality will then constitute part of his 'territory'.

Dominant bourgeois patriarchal morality aims at regulating the sexuality of bourgeois women via the constraints of virginity, chastity and monogamy. Seeping through to the working class these ideals have, in certain places at certain times, similarly constrained women of that class. In the farming community the Haliday's live in this is the case. Women's reproduction provides not heirs but, equally importantly, labour to work the tracts of ungiving land. The worker-farmers of

Golden Bay rely on their offspring as a source of cheap labour.

For Devanny the need to control working class women's sexuality is also linked to male jealousy and territorial concerns. Within capitalism women are usually the property of one man or another. While the worker-farmers need cheap labour theoretically the fathering of children, so long as it occurs, is a non-issue. Paternity, in the absence of necessary regulation of property transferal, is unproblematic. The need to control sexual access to working class women is seen to be fuelled by male jealousy,as I will later illustrate.

Devanny's portrayal of the lives of women in rural New Zealand during the early twentieth century is in keeping with the historical realities of their oppression. Though Dawn is kept at home on the farm many young women in fact migrated from farms and small towns to the cities. This trend began in the late 1800's and escalated with the urbanization of the twentieth century. The object in this migration lay in the search for work and for a larger marriage market (Olssen, 1980, 161).

In the cities many young women lived either in hostels or in private board. The latter continued the supervisory function of the patriarchal family. The hostels for nurses and occupational trainees were run on a strict basis. Outings and visits were limited and permission for these would need to be obtained. Attempts were thus made to police the sexuality of young women.

At the same time paid employment for women remained only a transitory stage between leaving school and marrying. This suggests that the greater independence attained via migration was of a limited variety and duration.

Dawn's remaining within the family can be explained by the fact that urban migration was most significant among women in the older age group of 21 to 40 (Olssen, 1980, 161). At the same time the search for a wider marriage market, a major impetus for migration, is unproblematic for Dawn. Living in the coal mining districts of Nelson province, Dawn has little reason to assume that her marriage is anything other than inevitable.

On the West Coast and in Nelson, men had far exceeded women from the earliest days of pioneering. The gold rush and later coal mining established these areas as traditional male strongholds. Their legacy was, in Nelson province, a surplus of men to women at a ratio of 100 to 79.7 in 1911, decreasing to 100 to 91.2 in 1916 (Olssen, 1980, 160). Living in a rural area bordering the colliery settlements, Dawn has little reason to migrate in search of a marriage partner.

The economic independence, which is foreign to both Dawn and her mother, is not unusual for their time and place. By 1921, for instance, only 20.7 percent of women were engaged in paid employment (Olssen, 1980, 161). The remainder were confined within the home and in unpaid work within the businesses of

father or husband. Young rural women in Dawn's position were expected to function as unpaid workers on the farm with little encouragement or opportunity to migrate. Job opportunities in rural locations were rare, forcing economic dependence upon the family if permission to migrate was withheld. By the time Dawn is of an age to seriously contemplate migrating she is married to Valentine Devoy. At seventeen the interlude between her leaving school and, ideally, marrying has already reached the then average of four to five years (Olssen, 1980, 165).

The sexual alienation of Mrs Haliday, which Devanny portrays, also has its roots in the material realities of the period. Women's lack of control over their sexuality is reflected in, for example, practically non-existent contraception. Up until the 1960's the main method of family planning was abstinence rather than contraception (Phillips, 1980, 239). Yet, as Mrs Haliday laments, 'men will be men' (p. 10), and she is in no position to even contemplate denying her husband his conjugal rights. The limitation of family size is controlled by Haliday. His decision whether or not to abstain determines whether Mrs Haliday will give birth to yet another child.

Haliday's 'right' to sexual access is unquestioned and is implicit in the lack of legal redress for rape within marriage. Women's limited control over their reproduction meant that on average a child was born within eighteen months of

marriage (Phillips, 1980, 239). It also meant dependence upon men to exercise moderation in their sexual demands. With so little ability to control masculine demands, bone weary and in the absence of emotional solace, many women must have lived in constant fear of yet another pregnancy.

After the 1880's there began a decline in fertility and family size as incentives to have large families decreased. Old age pensions, compulsory education and the falling rates of infant mortality all contributed to lessening the advantages in having a large family. Changing standards of motherhood made smaller families more desirable as did the rising expectation of increased living standards. The latter were considerably reduced with each extra child within a family. Olssen notes that improved contraceptives and abortifacients became available also (Olssen, 1981, 258). This would need to be qualified by the fact that access to such techniques would have remained very much the province of bourgeois women. Rural women, working class women and black women would definitely have been handicapped in this area.

That improved contraception was the province of the few is further suggested by Levesque's point that abstinence and coitus interruptus were the most usual forms of family planning. (Levesque, 1981, 138). She adds that 'as contraceptive information was usually withheld and means of contraception in and out of wedlock always ran the risk of unplanned pregnancies,

accidents must have been frequent' (Levesque, 1981, 138). That women did not wholly live by those moral prescriptions which dictated their supposed desire for maternity and motherhood is illustrated by their recourse to abortion. The availability of abortion during the early twentieth century is revealed largely in references to the practice in newspapers of the period. Abortionists were available and the low levels of fatal casualties suggest their expertise. Pregnancies may have been interrupted also through mechanical means with the aid of female friends or family (Levesque, 1981, 138).

The limiting of fertility began first among urban middle class families. With smaller families children became more important and quality of childcare an area of concern. After the Great War manual workers too had begun to follow the patternset by the urban middle class. Rural families, like the Haliday's, limited their fertility least and were the last to conform to this pattern. (Olssen, 1981, 258). In the rural areas, as Devanny writes, 'Progress which is born and grows toward fructification in the towns, in the crowded places, barely touched [them].' (p. 141). It is into this world, wherein women's biology determines her destiny, that Dawn Haliday is borne.

But Dawn is an exceptional woman. She is not merely the product of her environment. Rather, Dawn retains a core of resistance which is directly opposed to the material conditions

of her life. Her very being militates against all the artificial limitations of her impoverished life. The social construction of class and gender, which stifles human nature, is in conflict with Dawn's affiliation to all that is 'natural'. For women like Mrs Haliday economic and social structures overlay and distort 'natural' feelings and allegiances. In Dawn however, all that is 'natural' defies the destructive nature of exploitative and oppressive forms of organisation.

That Dawn is to be cast in the role of 'natural' woman is foreshadowed by the timing of her birth. The emphasis is upon alliance and communion with nature. She is born at the height of an unprecedented flood in Golden Bay. Her arrival is followed by her presentation to her brother Ralph just as dawn lights the morning sky.

> 'Yes, dawn has come at last,' said the nurse, as she pulled the blanket from the baby's face for the mother and child to see ....
> 'Dawn!' the boy exclaimed. 'She said it was dawn. It's a baby - a baby!'
> The mother touched his cheek kindly.
> 'Dawn, ay?' she said. 'So you thought it was dawn. Well, and so it shall be, child. We shall call her 'Dawn'.' (p. 14).

Dawn brings with it the awakening of day. Dawn Haliday's life too is about an awakening. An awakening to an understanding of human lives as being materially determined. She comes to see how society is organised and why it is that women suffer so much. She is exceptional because her ideas are not determined

altogether by the material conditions of her life. Dawn's sense of oneness with the natural physical world around her suggests that her influences come from elsewhere;

> On summer evenings, when she had been harassed by the commonplace home existence, or when the fine tendrils of her being had been reaching back through the ages in atavistic inclination towards their primeval oneness with nature, Dawn would picture the solitary school ground and its quietude would call to her with irresistible voice. She would cut away like a young wild thing, to sit upon the playground and call softly to the bats which flew from tree to tree. (p. 43).

Devanny's referral to her heroine's 'primeval oneness with nature' is of complicated origin. Her emphasis upon materialist analysis and her drawing upon the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels underlie the characterization of Dawn. Friedrich Engels, in the Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, sees the sexual division of labour and the development of private property as identical. The initial division of labour is the 'natural' division of labour in the family through the sex act. It is through this act that the first appearance of property arises within the family. From this initial division stems that which develops 'naturally' by virtue of predisposition, such as strength. (Eisenstein, 1979, 12-13).

With the rise of private property comes the need for the redistribution of assets to legitimate heirs. This necessitates the shackling of women's reproduction and thus the control of

sexuality. Women and their offspring become the chattels of men. In the communal society of pre-class utopia private property was non-existent. Women, autonomous beings along with men, controlled their own sexuality. Woman was no more man's property than he was hers.

In this 'natural' state, prior to the arising of exploitative and oppressive social structures of organisation, 'natural man' and 'natural woman' existed as complementary halves of a whole. There is no recognition of the unique existence of the sexual division of labour in the work of Marx and Engels, nor subsequently in its application within Devanny's fiction. In classless society the division between the sexes, with its concomitant sexual definition of roles, purposes and activities, implies only differentiation which is 'natural' and not inequality. Patriarchy, or the system of male power, is considered non-existent prior to the rise of private property. Thus there is no recognition of the biological distinction male/female as used to distinguish social functions and individual power (Eisenstien, 1979, 17).

Devanny's historical materialism assumes the original existence of a non-hierarchical social order. It is with 'the fine tendrils of her being' (p. 43) that Dawn unknowingly hankers for the return to such a utopia. She is an exceptional woman because her inner consciousness is formed by the atavistic longing for a time when women were strong and free and in control

of their own sexuality. It is her misfortune to live in a material world wherein the degradation and coarseness of ownership and control of women goes unquestioned. She is a 'natural' woman forced to live in a world wherein women are shackled and have become 'unnatural' in their inclinations.

Women like Mrs Haliday, by virtue of their sexual slavery, come to despise human sexuality. Mrs Haliday's disgust is 'unnatural' and a product of the material conditions of her life. Little Dawn resists such inclinations and is puzzled by them. Thus when it comes to sex 'she had had none but decent, curious thoughts about it.' (p. 17). Mrs Haliday's tight lipped abhorrence of the processes about which Dawn is merely curious cause her to feel 'that there must be something shameful' about them. (p. 17). Dawn's natural sexual interest is distorted and shamed by the 'unnatural' inclinations of women like her mother.

Dawn is a contradiction within Devanny's socialist realist fiction for she is an exception to the rule. Her consciousness is not determined only by the material conditions of her life. It may be coloured by those conditions, but ultimately it is shaped by the material conditions underlying the classless utopia. Dawn is thus something of an anomaly.

The dichotomy between Dawn as 'natural' woman, by sheer fluke, and other women in the novel as the warped women of an unnatural social order begins with the comparison with Mrs

Haliday. Mrs Haliday is 'puny and deformed' (p. 62) of body from childbearing and toil. Yet it is not these things alone that herald her physical disintegration. Rather it is the imposition of 'the artificial standard of womanhood'. (p. 62).

Within an 'unnatural' social order, predicated upon class and sex oppression, relationships between men and women become distorted and standards of physical attractiveness too are 'unnatural'. The artificial polarization of the sexes extends to the artifical polarization of physical appearance. With generations of inculcation of this false standard of womanhood, women with each generation become increasingly puny, increasingly weakened and ineffectual. Dawn is a living refutation of these 'unnatural' standards.

> Dawn grew more 'mannish' as Mrs Haliday called it, every day. That is, she grew closer to the free-living, natural, primitive woman type; strong in body and limb, fearless and brave. (p. 62).

Unlike her mother Dawn retains her 'natural' heritage of endurance and physical strength. These characteristics have been systematically bred out of women rendering them defenseless to the wracks of labour pains and unfit for continual physical toil. They become imprisoned not only as the property of men but thus even within their own bodies as a result of the imposition of male standards of femininity.

Mrs Haliday's incarceration is so complete that she cannot even recognise her daughter's ability to escape. Thus Dawn must contend with the continual 'why don't you try to be like so - and - so?' and 'see what a nice little girl she is,' (p. 32). Refusing to learn fancywork or to sew Dawn finds herself,

> ... maddened by monotony, refusing the customary ways of girlhood, full of unspeakable longings and miseries when the sunset touched the snowy tops of the distant mountains, insisting on riding, running wild in the fields, ... (p. 32).

The strait-jacket of imposed standards of femininity awaits to incarcerate Dawn and to stifle with it's 'unnaturalness' all the inclinations and instincts of the 'natural' woman she is. Mrs Haliday has a special role to play in forcing Dawn's conformity. Her imagination and vision deadened by her way of life, Mrs Haliday is hostile to change and to the disturbing of the status quo. Dawn's vitality and questioning mind are foreign to the world she lives in.

Mrs Haliday's defeat by toil and degradation leaves her only the flickering will for survival. Utterly incapable of seeing how Dawn can evade a pre-ordained destiny of toil and childbearing she feels a sense of unspoken shared suffering with her daughter. Dawn's sense that 'her mother did not like her very much' (p. 18) is based upon the distance between mother and daughter. Mrs Haliday sees Dawn's life as merely a replay of her own, fraught with desolation and suffering. The fear of having

to watch that replay distances Mrs Haliday from her daughter.

The barriers erected by the suppression of emotion do not prevent its welling up when recognition of shared bonds of pain and submission can no longer be ignored. In Devanny's work such occasions occur with experiences which are particular to women. One such occasion, in Dawn Beloved, concerns Dawn's beginning of menstruation.

> In privacy Dawn looked up at her mother, so stern and really suffering that her child should have life's battle before her; she saw the woman's face work and she stammered out a choked: 'Mother!'
> Embarrassed and unable to cope with a situation so outside the scope of her experience, the woman said: 'It is all right, child. Don't worry, Dawn.' (p. 63).

A sense of continuity runs strongly through this episode, continuity of suffering, of toil and of powerlessness from generation to generation of bonded women. Only those who know what Mrs Haliday has known are capable of such compassion. The images of a working woman's life are imprinted so starkly upon her psyche that she is unable to conceive of Dawn's knowing any other way of life. Dawn's bleeding is the first sign that the time to take on her burden is no longer far off.

Dawn's forthcoming marriage to the young miner, Valentine Devoy, occasions another of those events wherein the bonds of suffering draw mother and daughter together. The silence, suppression of emotion, is broken when its maintenance becomes unbearable. The coming into speech is motivated only by an

unendurable pain. Dawn and Val decide to marry shortly after their meeting. The decision to go ahead with their plans is based upon Val's disclosure that he has secured a two roomed whare. All futher negotiation is then conducted between Dawn's future husband and her father.

> Next morning he talked with Mr Haliday in the yard. Dawn, busy in the front of the house, heard her father call for her mother and instinct told her the reason. Like a shot she was through the house and caught her mother at the door.
> 'Mother!' she cried and then stopped dead. She was much agitated. Mrs Haliday softened all over. Tender expression was not her way, but now she said:
> 'It is all right Dawn. I know all about it.'
> Dawn went to her room, threw herself on the bed and sobbed. (p. 87).

Dawn's pain comes from the recognition that she is not a loved and respected individual, but an object of exchange. She is the possession of one man and her ownership is being negotiated for by another. Her being is in effect changing hands without her consideration. Her subordination in the eyes of two men she cares about is illustrated by their blatant disregard of her ideas and thoughts about her own marriage. Her absence, and that of her mother, makes it clear that the exchanging of women is a male preogative. Mrs Haliday's tenderness with Dawn is a recognition of shared chattel status and subordination. Their declining to interfere in the exchange and Dawn's passive revolt are indicative of the silencing of women. The ways women have found to silently communicate the suffering of their bondage to

each other is also reflected in their dealing with this episode.

The suppression of alliance between Dawn and her mother is overcome only upon these rare occasions. The two are divided not only by the patriarchal need to set women in opposition to each other in order to safeguard its own interests. Within Devanny's fictional schema they are also polarized by the division of 'natural' and 'unnatural' womanhood. Dawn's female consciousness is an inexplicable throwback to that of those free women of unbonded pre-class utopia. Her mother, and those women surrounding her, are conversely the absolute products of the material conditions of their lives. They represent bonded womanhood. Even when rarely they catch a glimpse of the nature of their bondage, contemplation of revolt is impossible.

Devanny's celebration of 'natural' women, with the characterization of Dawn, is not defined solely by her socialist concerns. Along with Engels, Devanny assumes that the original division of labour between men and women was 'natural'. Supposedly there was social differentiation between the sexes without social stratification. Men and women were equal but different. Devanny's imaginative vision of this utopia conceives of free women as unbonded by oppressive forms of social organisation and consequent artificial physical disabilities. The true standard of womanhood reigns. Thus 'natural' woman, along with 'natural man' is 'strong and big and fine and enduring' (p. 62).

Devanny does not question the initial 'natural' division of labour and of society itself into male and female dimensions. Thus, while her imaginative vision of free women can conceive of strength of body and limb it cannot extend beyond those 'natural' female instincts. Those socially determined feminine attributes such as maternal instinct and women's fulfillment as dependent upon finding a mate and her 'natural' attraction to the opposite sex are accepted as givens. These 'natural' tendencies may become distorted and degraded under impoverished conditions of life, but under the ideal conditions provided within a classless utopia they flourish.

Thus for the overworked Mrs Haliday, there are 'no compensating notions of the glory of bringing forth children.' (p. 9). The material conditions of her life overlay and repress the maternal instinct haboured within her. Bringing forth children to become, as she is, the property of a man is the ultimate in degradation. That the female tendencies Devanny explores in Dawn Beloved are biologically, rather than socially determined, and therefore unchangeable, is assumed. Her imaginative exploration of Engels scientifically defined classless utopia takes her beyond materialist analysis. The visualising of women's lives and their relationships with men, within this prehistoric utopia, takes Devanny back to a conventional romanticism.

It is the romanticism Linda Hardy detects, interwoven with a materialist analysis, pervading Devanny's The Butcher Shop (Hardy, 1982, 28). It is a romanticism which accepts that, for example, the maternal instinct has an actual objective existence in nature. Thus Devanny can wax poetic about '... the delights which lead the loving woman lightly through the valley of the shadows and nourish sweet thoughts of wonderful motherhood' (p. 9). For the 'natural' woman such 'delights' are part and parcel of daily life. The social division of labour emanating from motherhood, it is assumed, is divorced from any unequal division of power. Without classes, despite the social division of labour along the lines of sex, men and women hold an equal power relation. The limiting role of motherhood thus goes unrecognised (Roberts, 1981, 19).

The inability to extend her vision beyond that of a world wherein women are different from, but equal to, men, is indicative of Devanny's retention of the Freudian notion that biology is on some level, destiny. The androgynous vision is totally alien. This inability to extend the vision of a utopian past is not unlike that reflected in the work of her virtual contemporary, D. H. Lawrence. Roberts, in her introduction to The Butcher Shop, notes that Devanny's novels 'resemble those of D. H. Lawrence in some respects, but there is no mention that she actually read Lawrence (though four of his novels, published by Duckworth, are advertised in the back pages of the fourth impression of the Butcher Shop) (Roberts, 1980, 23).

That Devanny was familiar with the work of Lawrence is also suggested by Carole Ferrier. She detects notable similarities between the eroticism of Lawrence's banned novel, Lady Chatterley's Lover, and that of Devanny's Bushman Bourke, published shortly after the release of Lawrence's novel. (Ferrier, 1980, 42-3). Lawrence too exalted what he called 'natural' man in both his works of fiction and non-fiction.

Devanny's criticism of capitalism, particularly its role in distorting 'natural' human relations, is derived from an economic conception of social inequality. Lawrence's criticism was rather of the industrialisation accompanying the development of capitalism which he saw as frustrating 'natural' life. This frustration, deforming the simplest of 'natural' impulses, launched a particular assault upon the expression of sexuality. Thus, Lawrence makes a plea for the reinstatement of 'natural' man and woman, largely ignoring the fact that his definitions of what was appropriate for each was essentially culturally determined. So:

> ...against the synthetic monstrosity of modern life he sets the values of blood and soil, the first natural values, essential because natural .... He preferred the primitive, for he felt that only the primitive, in a world he hated so much, was still sound. He asserted all the impulses of the natural man, love, hatred, anger, cruelty and found a mystical meaning in the working of the passions ... saw that our senses and impulses were frustrated at every point by the life we live; he wanted a state in which they would function naturally, without distortion. (Muir, 1949, 159).

For Lawrence it is industrialisation which is the crux of all evil. That evil however is manifest not so much in poverty or exploitation, but in the destruction of true sexuality. For Devanny industrialisation is not intrinsically evil. Rather it is the system which allows the few to own and develop it to meet their own needs which is unacceptable. In the communist state of the future the 'marvellous technical development of the era of electricity and steel' (Roberts, 1981, 14), will be appropriated by the workers to meet the needs of a majority. Sexuality is therefore distorted not by industrialisation, but by the ownership of women within class society.

Lawrence's novels, like those of Devanny, are preoccupied with the relation between male and female. He conceived of the world being divided into two historical epochs, one guided by the principle of Law, one by the principle of Love. These correspond to the Yin and the Yang, the masculine and the feminine. Despite the desire to escape the conditioning of modern men, Lawrence's categories reflect the attributing of qualities to Law and Love which are socially rather than 'naturally' determined. Like Devanny his conception of a retrospective utopia is conditioned, in the final analysis, by the dominant ideals of his age.

Though Lawrence rejects the constraints of the civilised world and idealised the primitive, he assumes gender distinctions are biologically determined by mystic force;

> 'Woman is really polarized downwards towards the centre of the earth. Her deep positivity is in the downward flow, the moon-pull. And man is polarized upwards, towards the sun and the day's activity.'
> For women 'the deepest consciousness is in the loins and the belly.' If this is perverted and her flow of energy is upwards, to the breast and head, woman may become clever, noble, efficient, competent in the manly world; but, according to Lawrence, she soon has enough of it, everything collapses, and she returns to sex, 'which is her business at the present moment.' In the domain of action, man should be the initiator, the positive; woman is the positive on the emotional level. (de Beauvoir, 1972, 249).

and:

> ... the heroes of Lawrence ... seem as arrogant as any proud individualist; there is a god who speaks through them: Lawrence himself. As for woman, it is for her to bow down before their divinity. In so far as man is a phallus and not a brain, the individual who has his share of virility keeps his advantages; woman is not evil, she is even good - but subordinated. It is once more the ideal of the 'true woman' that Lawrence has to offer us - that is, the woman who unreservedly accepts being defined as the other. (p. 254).

These kinds of ideas in the work of Lawrence, which assume the objective existence of the feminine and the masculine, are also apparent in Dawn Beloved. Engels takes Devanny far enough to maintain the initial existence of a pre-class utopia. Because she too is steeped within a patriarchal social order which

assumes a sexual polarization, beyond the purely biological, as being natural Engels work is accepted in its entirety.

Just as for Engels the 'natural' division of gender in pre-class society is unproblematic, so too it is for Devanny. Her ideas about what a 'natural' woman would be like, and how she would conduct her sexual relationships, are explored through the characterization of Dawn in the novel. Thus Dawn is the vehicle for the imaginative vision of Woman of the classless past and post revolutionary future. The romanticism, in the Lawrentian sense, which idealises that past, pervades the work of Devanny. It determines a restrictive vision in so far as it conceives of equal relationships between men and women evolving out of classlessness.

That male power over women may have its own material base, not identical to class, is unthinkable. Thus the psycho-social differences between the sexes have nothing to do with power, but with an idealised and mystical sexual complementation which flows from biological differences. The romanticism, interwoven with a materialist analysis of history which pervades Dawn Beloved can, it is hoped, be best traced from the analytical base provided by this discussion. The necessary influences upon Devanny's idealised vision of 'natural' Woman can then be addressed accordingly. Many of her contradictory assumptions and ideas may be refocused and more clearly appreciated through doing so.

With the marriage of her heroine, Devanny's fictional setting is transferred from the stagnant backwaters of rural life to the pulsing of constant potential change in an industrial town. Dawn and Valentine Devoy's married life is inextricably linked to that of a town centred around a prosperous pre- World War One extractive industry. By the late nineteen twenties, when Devanny was working on Dawn Beloved, the mining industry was already on the decline. National unemployment levels were climbing steadily, indicating that lack of work was no longer only a seasonal problem. The fall in export prices, new technology and the decline in the older industries (2) contributed to this rise. The public debt skyrocketed drawing attention to the precarious dependence of providing undiversified exports for a single major market, especially as that market weakened (Chapman and Malone, 1969, 31-33).

Dawn Beloved is however retrospectively set in a more prosperous period suggesting a nostalgia for such times and a reation to the bleak, troubled reality of the late twenties. Thus;

> There were two mines, each employing about one hundred and eighty men ... a tidy few for a New Zealand colliery township. The coal the Paranga mines yielded was unequalled in quality. Though too fierce for steaming, for household purposes the demand always exceeded the supply. In the early years of the twentieth century, New Zealand had recovered from the effects of the big maritime strike (3) and was in the full tide of her great prosperity. Unemployment was unknown; labour was in great demand and burly Dick Seddon's generous kingship lay pleasantly upon the land. (4). The Paranga mines knew stoppages only

> through defective machinery or falls in the pits. (p. 91).

This thriving world, so different from the instability of the late twenties, is the fictional world of Dawn's early married years. It is also the portrayal of those times in which Devanny's own early married life is anchored.

The autobiographical base of Dawn Beloved is not only apparent in that the chronological landmarks within Dawn's life closely follow upon those of Devanny's. The striving for a fictional recreation of those realities and formative influences necessitates a high degree of historical accuracy. The social history incorporated within Dawn Beloved is thus inclusive of the contemporary growth and development of radical politics in the mining towns of the west coast of the South Island. It is an exploration of relationships between individuals set against the historical backdrop of political radicalisation. Relationships between men and women, unpoliticised or politicised as a result of this radicalisation, are a central concern. In effect the novel provides an overview of alternatives. There are relationships with the unpoliticised, with the conservative bourgeoisie, with the Labour supporter and with the socialist. How women relate to men of these persuasions concerned Devanny more than simply as an abstract problem. Its relationship to her own life will be considered at the close of the chapter.

Jean Devanny was born in 1894 at Ferntown, a small South Island mining settlement. Her father was a miner and her mother a gentlewoman, married below her class. At the age of seventeen Jean met, and soon after married, Hal Devanny, a coal miner. Jean's family had by then moved to Puponga, twelve miles north of Ferntown, where she and Hal too settled. In Puponga, Hal Devanny was involved in union affairs (Roberts, 1981, 9-10), and both Devanny's began to read Marxist theory and attend Marxist study groups (Ferrier, 1982, viii). This kind of political involvement was evidenced among a minority of miners in the colliery settlements after the turn of the century.

Between 1905 and 1915 there were more socialist organisations and publications than at any other time in New Zealand history. Josephine Milburn adds that:

> A number of the new immigrants and a few New Zealander's, who had become familiar with the ideas of the American Industrial Workers of the World, began to appeal to the workers and were able to displace the British as a dominant influence in the socialist movement. Among the new immigrants were the Australians Patrick Webb, Robert Semple, Micheal Joseph Savage, Harry Holland, William Edward Parry, and Robert S. Ross, the Englishman John Dowgray, and the Scotsman Peter Fraser. The New Zealander's included H. T. Armstrong and Pat Hickey. All were active at some time in the 'Red' Federation of Labour and the Socialist Party. (Milburn, 1960, 168-9).

Following Seddon's death there was a marked revival and escalation of socialist activity. In the coal mining districts of the West Coast activity was pronounced. This was largely due

to the influence of Hickey, Semple and Webb, who had arrived in the Grey district in 1906. Under their guidance, the State Miners Union, Runanga, formed in 1904, became the centre of dissemination for socialist propaganda and organisation in the Grey district (O'Farrell, 1959, 53-6).

The campaign for a federation of miners unions was begun with Hickey and Semple touring the mining towns of the coastal South Island. In 1909, in the interests of worker strength and unity, the Federation of Miners became the Federation of Labour (Hickey, 1925, 26). By 1911, the year of Devanny's marriage, the programme of dissemination had already reached the mining towns of Golden Bay. After five years the political radicalization, initiated by Hickey and his associates in the Grey Valley, had been felt throughout the mining settlements. Thus O'Farrell comments that 'In many mining towns ... the Socialist Party reigned supreme.' (O'Farrell, 1959, 57). After 1908 the socialist influence too would have been unmistakable in Puponga.

The impact of Marxism upon Devanny's thought is evidenced by her struggle to utilise its tools of analysis to make sense of the oppression of women in Dawn Beloved. She is led to conclude that female servitude is inherent in class society. The explicit election of revolutionary, rather than reformist, politics flows on from this. Yet concern with revolutionary strategy is subsumed beneath a romantic preoccupation with envisaging female lives within the classless utopia. This utopia has little to do

with materialist analysis and is instead ordered by assumptions concerning the 'natural' relations between men and women. In failing to question these assumptions Devanny resembles Edith Grossmann. In accepting men and women are equal, but different, the two writers reach consensus.

Dawn Haliday, like Devanny herself, is born at Golden Bay though not into a mining family. The fictional environs of the novel are reminiscent of those surrounding the colliery settlement of Ferntown. Puponga, a colliery township, was once centred around extensive coal fields on the north west coast of the South Island. North- west too, of Ferntown, Puponga was a further twelve miles by steamship. Both towns were serviced by a coastal steamship operating out of Nelson (The New Zealand Index: 1912).

In Dawn Beloved, Puponga becomes Paranga, situated some twenty miles north of the Haliday home. Like Jean Devanny, Dawn Haliday is musically gifted and plays the piano from an early age. The two also share a fierce love of books of all descriptions. At thirteen Dawn is taken out of school to help at home as Devanny also was. Continuing the parallel, Dawn meets and then marries the miner, Val Devoy, at the age of seventeen. Like the Devanny's, the Devoys settle in a colliery town where Val is involved in union affairs and both Devoys are members of a Marxist study group. From references in Dawn Beloved it is not difficult to ascertain that Dawn and Val Devoy begin their

married life in Paranga sometime between 1908 and 1914. This roughly corresponds to the commencing of that of Jean and Hal Devanny in 1911.

Valentine Devoy, like the young Dawn Haliday, is something of an anomaly in a mining community. Just as Dawn is somehow set apart from those who are the absolute product of the material conditions of their lives so Devanny describes Devoy as;

> ...an extraordinary man. Not that he was above the common rut so much as out of it, apart from it. His appearance was remarkable .... He was innocent. Dawn did not realise just what the difference was. She saw the cleanness of him without understanding that the quality she saw was cleanness. (p. 75-6).

Devoy is an exceptional individual just as Dawn too is exceptional. As a result of his political commitment he is cleansed and, in some measure, less oppressed than his fellow miners for he understands that he is oppressed.

Devoy is class conscious. He is a socialist. His cleanness comes from his relative buttressing against the material conditions of his life. Thus Devoy does not drink, nor gamble, nor is he promiscuous. Unlike the vast majority of the miners he is protected against:

> ...their response to their environment and toil. They were hardworked, hard-living, strong and brave; such men had no option but to find an outlet for their abundant and untutored energies. And Paranga, like other New Zealand mining townships, offered no other. (p. 228).

Devoy's socialism allows him to understand why the miners behave in this way and dictates that he himself, in the interests of political consistency, must reject such a passive and unchanging course of action.

The miners' way of life is not their fault, because it follows on from their oppression. However, once the nature of that oppression is recognised a continuing degenerate lifestyle is not acceptable. It becomes essential for the enlightened few, like Devoy, to reject the trappings of oppression. There is no longer the excuse of ignorance to legitimate the drunken brawling and mindlessness. In the light of best utilising what meagre resources they have available, socialists like Devoy must prepare themselves to precipitate and fight the revolutionary struggle.

Devoy's cleanness and Dawn's 'naturalness' dictate that the two should fall in love, totally and unreservedly. Both stand apart from the politically unconscious masses, Devoy by virtue of his learned socialist perspective and Dawn by virtue of her 'natural' socialistic instincts. Each is thus an exception. Devoy arrives at the Haliday home with Ralph, and he and Dawn meet that same night.

> Dawn was standing at the table, the teapot in her hand preparatory to pouring out the tea. She was looking at Devoy ... when he withdrew his eyes from Biddy and looked around to her at his side. At that moment the two fell in love. In an instant the wonderful flood of emotion that cradles the world on its bosom engulfed them. In an instant mere pallid existence extended its neutral wings and arrowed away. Life, composite of tragedy and comedy, rang up the curtain to stage another play.
> Did Dawn sleep that night?
> Did Valentine Devoy? lying on the other side of the thin wall. Surely not until early morn. Young love can come but once and it were pity indeed if the sweetness of first love's awakening were negatived by mundane sleep. (p. 77).

The love between Dawn and Val is that which approaches the very pinnacle of perfection. It is a love which is total, which is absolute. It consumes the two in its voracious embrace. But it is not the love between two equals that Devanny idealises. Rather, it is the love between Man and Woman. It is the primeval, mystical union of polar opposites similar to that glorified within the work of Lawrence. It is thus magically, if only temporarily, outside the social structure with its coercive pressures on others. Devanny's assessment of the differences between man's love and woman's love reflects the dominant ideological perception of her age. Socially determined stances are accorded a 'natural' content of truth. Thus:

> Love brooded over them. The man-love and the woman-love, so different in fabric. The one dynamic, the other passive; the one usually so secure, given a fair chance, the other so usually and biologically errant. (p. 93).

The love between Val and Dawn is not of a common or garden variety. Given the existing material conditions of life, few are enabled to reach its glorious heights. It is a love which whisks Dawn 'back a million years across the endless bridge of time to when woman was the 'she' and thought, if she thought at all, in terms of her mate' (p. 203). At the same time then, as Devanny fashions an attack upon the weaving of 'a soul-damaging false romance around physiological facts' (p. 19), she reasserts a romantic ideal which surpasses even that of the 'pulp fiction' she condemns. The love match between Dawn and Val is validated by its mystical quality, which links it back through time to a primeval classless age. The common romantic love of the herd pales into insignificance in comparison.

The contradictory position Devanny assumes upon romantic love comes into focus. On the one hand there is a denial of authenticity of a romantic love which conceals the biological realities of marital union and secures women within monogamous marriage. On the other there is an elevation of those extremes of emotion contained within the absolute love of Dawn and Val, which is primeval love. It is the love which dictates Dawn's absolute commitment to her mate. He is her life. The begetting of his children is the only thing capable of comparing with that all encompassing love. Failure to question the idealised and romanticised model of flawless heterosexual love is apparent. Devanny, like Grossmann before her, reveals dissatisfactions with currently attainable relations between the sexes. For both it is

not the ideology of romantic love, in its entirety, which is exposed, but those conditions which militate against the realisation of the perfection of romantic love.

For Grossmann it is frustration of female aspiration and the predominance of masculine immorality that undermines romantic love. A solution is seen to lie in a moral re-ordering of the existing society. For Devanny realisation of romantic love is cancelled out by male ownership of women. A solution is seen to lie in transformation into a classless utopia predicated upon a 'natural' morality. Strangely enough that morality is closely paralleled by the bourgeois patriarchal morality of Devanny's age.

With the regression into romanticism Devanny's work reveals those very ideological limitations of vision which she sought to undermine as determining influences in the lives of women of her period. Rearranged and refocused though it may be, the romantic ideal she asserts is inseparable from that upon which her attack is fashioned. Once again this limitation of vision is to be considered inseparable from the material conditions of women's lives in the early decades of the twentieth century, and from the dominant ideology surrounding them. The centrality in their lives of relationships with men was ensured by a mediated relation to production and lack of control over relations of reproduction.

By the nineteen twenties, the vast majority of women still married, and wifehood and motherhood remained their primary roles. By 1921 women made up 24 percent of the total workforce, but the greatest proportion were young, single women. Married women made up only 9 percent of the total female workforce, reflecting the fact that paid employment after marriage was engaged in largely out of sheer necessity (Olssen, 1981, 260). Even for single women, the bulk of the female workforce, employment was merely a transitory pastime prior to marrying and beginning the 'real' business of life. Careers for women were limited to those of the middle classes, and remained, even then, the prerogative of the few.

Despite dramatic changes in the area of women's work since the 1880's the imprisoning ideology of motherhood and domesticity retained its position at centre stage. In the face of changes in production, with the increased potential for freeing women from their traditional roles as wives and mothers, these roles were cemented. The impact of the changing nature of female employment was thus softened by a renewed emphasis upon traditional roles.

The emphasis on vocational training, evident since the turn of the century, continued on into the nineteen twenties. However, its aiming at boys, rather than at girls is reflected in the first vocational guidance handbook issued by the Department of Education in 1927. Three out of its thirty pages were devoted to careers for women (Olssen, 1981, 269). The sexual

discrimination evidenced by women's employment conditions, opportunities and remittance, both legitimated and ensured marriage and motherhood as women's major option for economic and social survival.

With the decline in fertility and in family size with the new century, changing conceptions of motherhood also emerged. Emphasis shifted from meeting physical needs of offspring to coupling this with meeting psychological needs. As many traditional family responsibilities were usurped by welfare agencies there arose the redefinition of the process of mothering. With stress upon the prescriptive quality of childcare and a higher standard of living limiting of family size was reinforced. (Olssen, 1981, 258).

Those visions of the extension of the female role promoted within nineteenth century feminism became, under the influence of the twentieth century medical profession, justification for new forms of social control. The stress upon enlarging women's sphere in order that her moral supremacy and goodness might beneficially permeate the whole of society fuelled demands for better education and job opportunities.

In the hands of the medical profession the supremacy feminists had asserted, constituted justification for their elevation to the ranks of projected 'scientific' motherhood. After 1907, with the aid of Sir Truby King and the Plunket

Society, education and employment for women came to be seen as important largely in so far as they prepared women for motherhood. Better standards of mothering, King assumed, would strengthen the foundering Anglo race and rescue it from the depths of decadence, selfishness and evil into which it had sunk.

The supposed emergence of moral disorder, sexual disease and the leaving behind of a former golden age encouraged King to analyse this situation and devise some sort of solution. King suggested that character building was essential to the survival of the social order. To this end he advocated quality childcare with a scientific approach to mothering. Women had to become better mothers, and King and the Plunket Society intended to see that they did their national duty by bearing and rearing healthy, well adjusted future citizens (Olssen, 1979, 1-11).

By the nineteen twenties a concensus had emerged with regard to the centrality of motherhood and domesticity in the lives of women. The vocational training stressed since the turn of the century demanded greater gender specific aspiration. For boys it aimed at preparation for paid work. For girls the preparation for motherhood and household management was paramount. (Olssen, 1980, 176). The central importance of the necessity for quality of mothering and household management elevated domesticity and its new 'scientific' base. Thus the 'inherent' feminine capacity for nurturance and moral guidance promulgated by the nineteenth century feminists became, by the 1920's, the

basis for the legitimation of the rigourous circumscribing of women's roles.

The extent of the cementing of an imprisoning ideology of motherhood and domesticity is reflected in the observation that in the 1920's 'the dream of domestic bliss enjoyed a new lease on life' (Olssen, 1980, 181). Women's organisations in this period explicitly revolved around the concerns of motherhood and domesticity. The searching for answers that seemed to have characterised feminist organisations of the 1890's became transformed into the unquestioned promulgation of absolutes in the 1920's. While the conservatism of Devanny's period was not less apparent in that of Grossmann, the ideals of motherhood and domesticity appeared to have assumed a concrete form across all social classes by the twenties.

This world, with its emphasis upon women's innate capacity for mothering and creation of domestic haven, is that within which Devanny attempted to understand and give voice to female oppression. As Roberts notes Devanny's attempt, like that of her contemporary, Jane Mander, is something of 'an anomaly, a lone voice advocating female equality and socialist government in a society which wanted stability above all'. (Roberts, 1981, 22). During the twenties there was no fervour of feminist organisation or mobilisation, and the socialist upsurge, precipitated by the Blackball strike of 1908, was winded by the Great War. The comparative radicalism of Devanny's class politics, in a

conservative age, is also reflected in her feminism.

She moves beyond the idealism of nineteenth century feminism to locating women's oppression within material social relations. Thus revolution, not merely educative reform, provides the solution to oppression. Devanny's use of an uncompromising form of Marxism leads her to the equating of female liberation with the classless society. Yet the acceptance of attaining such a utopia through socialist channels alone is shaped by dominant bourgeois patriarchal ideology of her age. Within such a utopia a 'natural' division of gender is unquestioningly accepted. It is however, a social division identical to that promulgated both within dominant ideology and the sex-blind categories of patriarchal scientific socialism. It is in this context that Devanny's feminism is revealed as subordinate to her Marxist analysis.

Orthodox Marxism paves the way for Devanny's ensuing romanticism. The implications of a utopia for women freed are recelebration of motherhood and romantic love. In an explicit clashing of frameworks of perception the contradictions between a radical analysis of class and a conservative analysis of gender are thrown into stark relief. In Devanny's analysis, male ownership rights in women deform the female spiritually, physically and emotionally, and poison their relations with men. It is not women who are to be upbraided and retrained in order to overcome race decadence, as King suggests, rather it is male

ownership that renders women 'puny and deformed', morally unstable and unfit for motherhood.

It is male ownership which must be overcome if the race is to prosper and motherhood become the delight it should be. Dawn's contemplations in Dawn Beloved are of relevance here;

> There was man and there was woman. And there was life to be transmitted. Nature had worked out ways and means satisfactorily, and had done the best she could for all concerned, and blundering man had upset the apple cart with his artificial restraints, his impositions, his laws, his greedy appetites. Nature had seen in her scheme of male and female a beautiful symphonic movement ascending smoothly from the inertia of lowest living organisms to the topmost pinnacle of life, the realm of highly sensitized humans. But they, forgetting their lowly origin, and the reason they had climbed so high, had diverted the clean current of natural relationships into the muddy channels of unrestricted license and now, consequently, the race was shrivelling in its own artificially engendered heat. (p. 215).

Dawn Beloved, at once so much ahead of its age, is also undeniably a product of its age. The assumption that the race is degenerating is apparent in Devanny's fiction as well as King's beliefs. Similarly they are united by the unquestioned assumption that motherhood is both desirable and inevitable.

Devanny does not consider how motherhood limits women so much as why women have been rendered unfit for maternity. On this level the material realities of women's lives, the centrality of marriage and motherhood, and dominant ideology as promoted by King impinge upon Devanny's potentially revolutionary

consciousness. The extension of vision is blinkered by these historically specific limitations. Thus it is that Devanny, along with King, addresses herself to the race degeneracy and the passing of a golden age, the perceived problems of the period.

Olssen notes that with the escalation of modernization and industrialisation, from the 1880's onwards, those born in the nineteenth century had seen their world transformed by the twenties. (Olssen, 1981, 250). Problems associated with urbanisation were largely assumed to have been non-existent in a previous period of utopia. Devanny too looks back to a golden age, yet she locates it more precisely in a specific form of economic organisation. The realities for women in this later period induces Devanny to contemplate radical changes in the class system structuring their oppression.

The means of exploring the economic dimension of that oppression is facilitated by Devanny's exposure to, and knowledge of, Marxist theory. The struggle to explore the structuring of the system of patriarchy, or male power, as a second dimension of that oppression is largely frustrated. On the one hand the conditions of life for women in the twenties militate against the envisaging of positive advantage in childfree, economic independence. Limited access to earning a living wage, to social value beyond wifehood and motherhood, and thus to economic and social survival beyond marriage remained twentieth century realities.

These same problems which rendered nineteenth century feminism impotent also lead Devanny to idealise an elevated concept of romantic love and motherhood. On the other hand, the collapsing of women's struggles into the struggle against capital, the very sex-blind categories of Marxist analysis itself, coupled with the sexism of the male dominated left frustrate attempts to understand the totality of oppression.

The apparently contradictory content reflected in certain positions assumed in Dawn Beloved can best be appreciated when seen in the light of the specific social milieu shaping Devanny's vision. With so little documented support for feminist concerns in this period, either within mainstream society or the male dominated left, Devanny's confusion and limited vision alone signal a major advance in feminist thought in New Zealand. Despite insurmountable barriers, Devanny struggles toward an understanding of women's oppression that is more than simplistic and idealist.

The marriage of Dawn and Val is the central focus in Dawn Beloved. Life for women in the colliery settlements, and the effect of material conditions of life upon human relationships are refracted through Dawn and Val. The two are not however, simply the run of the mill mining town couple. Rather they, along with a handful of others, comprise the 'socialistic' or 'red element' (p. 175) of Paranga. Thus Devanny looks at the lives of the politically aware and the politically naive, and

compares the effects on each of the material conditions.

Upon her marriage to Devoy the control of Dawn's labour power and sexuality is transferred from father to husband. Devoy, as a miner, must sell his labour power to survive. Dawn enters her husband's class as a member of the proletariat. She does not hold a direct relation to production however, and is an honorary member of her husband's class. As a working class wife her unpaid labour is designated as being non-work and subordinates her to the wage earner.

Dawn's labour though provides for the regeneration of her husband's labour power, and the reproduction of the future labour force. The very fact that Val Devoy must sell his labour power, and that both he and Dawn depend on this for survival, determines the way of life they live. The alienation and exploitation of wage slavery has inescapable effects upon existence. Early in their marriage Val reminds Dawn of this:

> Dawn said: 'The mining life seems to me to be a happy one, Val.'
> '... I hope you will always think so girl. Don't have too much to do with the women here.'
> Dawn became curious. 'Why, Val? Whats the matter with the women here?'
> 'Nothing,' he answered shortly. 'Nothing that they can help. It is the life - the life they are forced to lead. People are only what circumstances make them, Dawn. Have you ever thought about that?' (p.104).

Val's socialism reveals to him the determining influence of the material conditions of life. His way of attempting to counter this influence lies in his remaining aloof from the common herd, the politically unconscious workers. By remaining remote from community life in Paranga he attempts to partially negate the influence of material conditions. Thus he refuses to respond to alienation and exploitation by drinking, gambling, brawling and fornicating. His idealism leads him to hope that this aloofness will protect himself and Dawn, and their marriage, from the uncouth degeneracy of the mining way of life.

The material limitations upon their way of life cannot however, simply be ignored. Gradually 'the iron of the place' (p. ?) enters Dawn's heart. Despite all efforts, recognition of the determining nature of material conditions does not mean they are overcome. Dawn must scrimp to make Val's wage cover all their needs and she, a stranger to the handling of money, is poorly equipped to do this successfully. Thus:

> Rebellion against the hideous shortcomings of the working woman's life awoke in her. She wanted privacy; she wanted to get away from him, for her pride's sake, for the sake of her self-respect, and the limitations of her class decreed that privacy, pride and self-respect were in the category of forbidden luxuries. He very soon came in to her...
> 'If the bills are always going to be like that we won't get along at all.'
> 'No, so I thought,' she answered quietly. And then she began to sob, great, heavy sobs that threatened to wrench her body asunder.
> The man's face showed torture. He swore. For the first time Dawn heard oaths from him; two shocking, blasphemous oaths. Then she was smothered in his embrace. (p. 123).

This episode is the first indication that what should have been a perfect marriage is unable to be fortified against the impinging of material conditions. At this point Dawn and Val stand united in their rebellion against those conditions. Yet, inevitably, the intellectual struggle they maintain against these conditions is doomed to failure. The futility of their struggle undermines their love. The romance between Dawn and Val is like that which will merely be commonplace in the classless utopia. It is a rarity in the existing society and is inevitably doomed.

Devoy's answer to remaining 'above the masses' lies in turning a blind eye to the degradation, the squalor and eventually the scrimping of household finances. By not talking about money and how best to economise Devoy attempts to simply will reality away. This leaves Dawn exposed to the crudity of scrimping and organisation, and its necessary influence upon consciousness.

Despite his political awareness, which protects Dawn from drunken beatings and the soaking up of weekly wages by alcohol, Devoy's socialism brings with it its own problems. Thus the common disregard of the miners for their wives is not assuaged for Dawn by Devoy's socialism. In the homes of the miners it is the wife who must go without in order that her husband is contented. In the Devoy home the pattern is no different.

> So instead of preparing plainer food for both, she made a cup of tea with thinly spread buttered bread suffice for her own breakfast, while Val ate his ham and eggs. Eggs were always dear in the mining townships, fowls being scarce. Sometimes they would be three shillings a dozen. He continued to spread butter and jam half an inch on his bread. And he never once asked her why she was not eating as usual .... He would help himself to his full satisfaction, whether there was any left for her or not. (p. 135).

Val's attempt to transcend the reality of working class life allows him to become totally self-centred, neglecting Dawn's day to day needs. Devanny explores the ways in which working class women suffer and which are gender specific. Similarly, despite his socialistic ideals, Devoy is as sexist as the commonest of miners. He fails to acknowledge the hardship Dawn undergoes which is particular to her sex and class. Thus, after announcing she is pregnant with her first child she finds Val still remains unwilling to make her life easier. Despite the fact it is within his power to ease her burden, he fails to do so.

> Lying awake after he slept that night she thought he would surely be kinder now. Surely he would chop her wood, fetch her coal, drag the heavy buckets of water from the well for her. This last hurt her back already. Besides, she knew that she should not lift or carry heavy weights. Surely he would put in the broken back step now, so she would not have to step so high, and do all the other little things that had wanted doing for so long. In the morning she said to him, very gently:
> `I don't think I should step so high, Val. Will you put the step in for me?'
> `Yes, of course,' he answered. But he did not; nor did he do anything else for her. He would come home at night and sprawl upon the dining room sofa. (p.152).

Devoy's disregard for Dawn, on this practical level, is a continuation of the attempt to escape material conditions through the retreat into self. Like his fellow workers Devoy gradually becomes ground down by the deadening way of life. It is not only Dawn's going without food that Devoy accepts as normal. Her pregnancy, and necessary daily drudgery too, he fails to question the hardship of. These realities are women's lot and are of no special significance. Devoy's socialism is preoccupied with the relation of men to production. Women's role in reproduction within capitalism is secondary to the fundamental exploitation of men in production. Devanny insists however, that women's oppression too is more than just a side issue.

Man's sense of ownership rights in women, so deeply ingrained, allows Devoy to make of Dawn a beast of burden. She is to serve him and make his life more comfortable despite the squalor of her own. Even worse the grandeur, and Devanny assumes the rightful delight, of a mothering woman is denied by man's disregard for the splendour of woman's condition. The romanticism Devanny weaves around biological processes seeks their elevation within a Marxist analysis which instead concentrates upon the categories and processes of production. Capitalist organisation too fails to accord mothering the mystical qualities it deserves. Thus Dawn's life does not improve with her pregnancy. Rather her pregnancy makes more

difficult the inescapable daily drudgery.

> She learned from Mrs Floyd that most working-class women suffered torments when with child. A working-class woman must. She must scrub the floors; get down on her hands and knees and scrub dirty floors. She must stand at the washtub and rub filthy clothes on hard boards. She must stand over a hot stove and bake and cook, often with scraps so inadequate as to worry her to death over the preparation. (p. 184).

Man's sense of ownership rights in women decrees that her labour for him outweighs her right to enjoy the dignity and wonder of her pregnancy. 'Natural' woman's mystical mothering is thus crowded out and distorted by the degradation of her bondage.

Under capitalism women's reproductive function is subordinated to the needs of capital. The offspring of bourgeois women become heirs to the wealth of men. The offspring of working class women become merely a new generation of workers. Furthermore because women are chattels, and objects of exchange, the appropriation of their sexuality and labour power accords power to men. Devanny's romantic elevation of motherhood seeks to undermine what she sees as the existing emphasis upon women as responsible for providing sexual satisfaction and domestic services.

Working class men's sense of ownership in their women is clearly apparent in Dawn Beloved. Furthermore even men who are socialists, and thus radical thinkers, do not question the fitting servitude of women. Thus it is that Gavin Fuller, a

Wellington business man and long time friend, offers Dawn financial assistance which Devoy refuses to accept. Gavin's gift is refused as a result of Devoy's sexual jealousy. Man's sense of ownership in women, most highly developed under capitalism, is seen as the root of his sexual jealousy.

It is significant that Devoy does not question his refusal of Fuller's gift. He is instead astounded that Dawn should presume he 'would let another man keep my wife' (p. 127). Dawn is Devoy's chattel and he will thus provide for her. Devoy's pride and sense of honour allow him to see Dawn go without, rather than see her life be sweetened with the food and goods Fuller offers. Thus throughout her pregnancy the expensive fruits and green vegetables she craves are denied her as a result of Devoy's sense of property rights.

Together, as equals, Val and Dawn may have been able to withstand the impact of their material conditions bolstered as they are by their socialist politics. Yet Dawn is not Val's equal, she is his chattel. This is evidenced by his sense of property rights which give rise to sexual jealousy, and to the disregard of the specific trials of women over and above those of class. Added to this is the problem of the perversion of 'natural' sexual expression arising with the development of private property.

For Dawn, 'natural' woman, sexuality is the means to an end. She is instinctively 'a one-man woman' (p. 151), instinctively monogamous. Sexuality is for her the route to motherhood, women's mystic compulsion. Thus she is:

> ... the mother, informed with the spirit of creation; the mother possessed of the vision which sees back into the beginnings of the world to the first parents and follows through countless aeons the progress of the human ego in its present imperfections; which sees itself the divine mould out of which the builders of the future must spring. Motherhood itself was the passion with Dawn. She would compel her thoughts toward the quickening of the little life. The begetting of child was at this time the greatest thing in her life to her, the culminating of achievement' (p. 151).

Dawn's desire for motherhood is not personal. Couched in evolutionary terms, Dawn's desire for motherhood reflects the early twentieth century concern with the survival and fitness of the Anglo-Saxon race. The perceived threat of degeneration is inseparable from this concern with the moral and physical evolution of a superior race. (Olssen, 1972, 2).

In Dawn, 'natural' woman, the sexual drive is undistorted by the overlay of socially determined restrictions. Her sexuality is as it was intended to be by nature.

> The man nature was different from the woman nature. Nature, in order that the species might endure, had implanted in man an impulse stronger than the fear of death itself. In woman, as the mother of the race, this impulse had necessarily been toned down, refined sufficiently for subordination to maternal instincts. (p. 319).

Woman, in her 'natural' state monogamous, sees her sexuality and mothering as inseparable. Man in pre-class society does not enforce female monogamy as he does with the institution of private property. The female chooses monogamy out of primal devotion to the mate and the primary importance of mothering rather than sexual passion. Man in this state revers the mother-woman and his passion will not permit his violation of the maternal solitude she requires. He must then be polygamous in order that woman is granted solitude and his own passions are spent.

Yet the institutionalisation of monogamy, with the rise of private property, forces woman to be the sexual plaything of her husband at all times. Her mothering, her mystic compulsion, is erroneously subordinated to sexual passion. To fulfil her primal function man's social organisation decrees she must be united in monogamous marriage with the male who thus usurps control over her sexuality. Dawn's 'natural' elevation to primary position of her mothering is desecrated by Devoy. He fails to accord to her pregnancy the centrality it demands. Thus:

> She did not dream her news would be unwelcome to him. Nor was it, really; only not very important. Loving her as he did he would certainly not have denied her children. The two were simply incompatible. She expected Val to rejoice; ... and he had said nothing. Just stroked her hair and looked around as though it had disconcerted him. (p. 151).

Locked into monogamous marriage, both Dawn's compulsion for maternal reverence from her mate and Devoy's greater passion are frustrated. The artificial enforcement of the monogamic state as the norm under capitalism further fuels the greater impulse nature invests in man. This is apparent in Devoy.

> He was growing into a strongly passionate man. Dawn was dimly aware of it and was disturbed. Their relationship as man and wife, a novelty at first, nothing more or less, had become for her first a bore, then plainly obnoxious .... hate herself as she might, she could not forbear thinking that Val was responsible for it to some extent. (p. 136).

Dawn's 'natural' lesser sexual libido is overpowered by Devoy's passion and a monogamic marriage which demands she meet all his desires. Her resentment, however, wars with the feminine need to give and subordinate desires to those of the male.

The same learned feminine need that allows Dawn to go without food so that Devoy might eat extends to the marriage bed. Woman's chattel instinct, developed with man's sense of property rights, encourages Dawn to meet Devoy's passions just as her 'natural' instincts demand her solitude. These warring instincts boil within Dawn, fighting for primacy.

In the majority of women, those who are determined by the material conditions of their lives, the chattel instinct dominates. The mystical compulsion to motherhood and primal devotion to the mate are overlaid and distorted by social

arrangements to an even greater degree than those that Dawn is threatened with. The romantic 'natural' social order assumed by Devanny is frustrated by existing economic realities. Dawn's internal war demonstrates her rebellion against the inbreeding of a chattel instinct. She refuses to accept man's sense of property rights in her. Thus she states that:

> Val is my husband. I love him. But I am not his property .... I am myself and it is my right to decide the great issues of life for myself. If he has my love it is all, and the greatest thing, he can expect. (p.294).

Yet inevitably Dawn cannot stand apart from the material conditions of her life. Devoy's sense of ownership rights in her distorts their relationship, augmented by Dawn's guilt-ridden giving in to the inbred slave-chattel instinct.

The continued repression of her 'natural' sexual impulses and their subordination to the passion of Devoy eventually results in the eruption or reassertion of those 'natural' impulses. Devoy's unwanted sexual advances, usually accepted by Dawn as a result of her chattel-instinct, are repudiated.

> She stood cold and stiff and looked him in the eye. 'You leave me alone,' she said. His arms fell away from her; his expression hardened .... 'I just can't bear to have you touch me. I feel - I feel - I did not think it possible for me to feel towards anybody as I do towards you now. You have always been cruel, you have always neglected me but in spite of it all I've loved you. But now your touch is horrible to me. I should take pleasure in hurting you - hurting you. Don't you touch me.'

> He fell back against the table and clutched at it. He stared at her. She stared back at him, cold as ice. 'So that's it!' he said. (p. 323).

The Devoy's marriage is destroyed by the imposition of 'unnatural' standards. On the one hand Dawn's 'natural' lesser sex drive and compulsion to breed are frustrated by the 'unnatural' emphasis upon passion within monogamic marriage. Devoy, misled by women's enforced sexual availability inside marriage, erroneously assumes that 'If a woman loves she naturally desires.' (p.217).

Dawn's sexual rejection of Devoy is thus interpreted as total rejection. He is unable to appreciate the cyclical nature of female sexual desire that even at its highest point, Devanny assumes, does not match that of man. His own needs are so uppermost in his own mind, despite his socialist politics, that he is not even aware of the degradation perpetrated by his sense of ownership rights. That Dawn's needs should mirror his own is unquestioned and her oppression so deeply entrenched that it goes unnoticed by Devoy.

Devoy's socialism allows him to grasp the framework of social inequality, but Devanny implies that he remains blinded to the more subtle aspects of women's oppression. Obsessed with the relations of men to production he fails to confront the nature of the relations of men to women. Devanny's only tools for

confronting these relations are those of orthodox Marxism combined with early twentieth century romanticism. She rightfully stresses the need for an analysis which extends beyond the categories of Marxism. However, the romanticism for which she opts largely reflects the moral conservatism of her age.

With the recognition that their marriage is imperiled an impasse is reached in the relationship between Dawn and Val. Val, his passion and love for Dawn frustrated, seeks temporary and unpremeditated respite in the arms of Biddy Fane. Duke, Biddy's lover, also a socialist, discovers them thus and maddened with jealously shoots both before taking his own life.

The relationship between Biddy and Duke constitutes a sub-plot within the central theme of female sexual repression. The male sense of ownership in women, arising with class society and the development of private property, gives rise to this repression and to male sexual jealousy. Biddy Fane, like her predecessor Miette Longstair in The Butcher Shop, represents warped civilised woman aginst whom 'natural' woman is measured and ultimately glorified. 'Unnatural' woman, like Mrs Haliday earlier in this chapter, is a product of bonded sexuality. Divorced from her great purpose in life, the delight in maternity, Mrs Haliday is degraded and filled with sexual animosity.

Biddy represents a different variety of female deformity. Devanny characterises Biddy as a 'fallen' woman, through no fault of her own. Blame for 'loose' female sexual behaviour is neatly transferred from an 'immoral' individual to the 'unnatural' social order that has shaped her appetites. Devanny's discomfort with this transferral however, is apparent in her contradictory, and often condemning, treatment of Biddy. On this level once again the dominant bourgeois patriarchal morality of Devanny's period impinges.

In Biddy the desire for motherhood is non-existent and sexual passion is uppermost. Unable to find a man to quench her desires, Biddy flits like a butterfly from man to man. She is polygamous woman. Her chattel-instinct is so highly developed that the compulsion for motherhood is non-existent and devotion to the mate is a warped and tenuous thing. Biddy's polygamous instincts are inherited, but they are derived from a period which follows the development of private property.

A system built upon surplus production, leading to unequal distribution and control of that surplus, released energy among a certain class of women for polygamous passions. In classless society however, women were serially monogamous at their own discretion, but the material conditions of life disallowed polygamy. Devanny works through these ideas in a muddled and indirect manner. From her fictional exploration of the nature of female sexuality these main points are distilled.

Biddy, like Dawn, is a victim of man's social organisation. The warping of Biddy's sexuality is inescapable.

> Biddy knew by this time that all question of free will in the matter of sex was for her kind mere humbug. The conventionalities might demand that she restrain her impulses, and her artificially created sense of right and wrong might cause her to desire to regard the conventions, but experience had taught her that there was not in her the power to restrain her impulses if the opportunity offered for their satisfaction. So she had now reached the stage where expediency, safety, was the only consideration. (p. 253).

Biddy's passion is equal to that of any man, but it cannot be controlled by man-made conventions despite the fact that it is an 'unnatural' tendency created by men themselves. Biddy's philandering leads her from her husband to courting the attentions of Duke.

Duke returns to Paranga to spread the socialist doctrines he has been schooled in on the West Coast. From American influenced comrades in Blackball he learns the inadequacy of dominant 'milk and water socialism as propagated by job hunters and opportunists'. (p. 237). The old established worker leadership is to be undermined and replaced by those revolutionaries schooled in Marxist economics.

Duke is thus the fictional prototype of those militants sent out to propagate Marxist ideals from the West Coast after 1908. It was in Blackball that socialist activity was generated culminating with the strike of 1908. The former predominance of

British influenced unionism laid the base for the erecting of 'an edifice of American industrial union theory as expressed in the propaganda of the Industrial Workers of the World, organised in Chicago in 1905'. (O'Farrell, 1959, 56).

Duke falls in love with Biddy, the veritable butterfly. He cannot however, accept that her love is purely passionate. His own love demands domesticity, companionship, and children. In effect he wants to own Biddy, to possess her within monogamous marriage. Unable to bear Biddy's staying with her husband, and her purely sexual interest in himself, his jealousy becomes overwhelming. Finally all political concerns are subsumed to his need to possess Biddy, and he begins to drink. Finding Biddy with Devoy, his sexual jealousy is released and totally destroys all three.

The inability to control this sexual jealousy through reason is apparent. Duke's politics explain for him the irrationality of man's sense of property rights in women. Despite this knowledge and great effort man's sexual jealousy enslaves and destroys. Duke thus kills Biddy. Jean Devanny explores a similar theme in her short story 'The Springs of Human Action', published in her collection of stories, Old Savage in 1927. A socialist is confronted with the battle between his political analysis and his sexual jealousy. In this story too the desire to possess overcomes adopted socialist principles. (Ferrier, 1980, 42).

Resolution of the impasse created by sexual repression and jealousy is found to be possible only with death. So long as Devoy lives Dawn is prevented from accepting the financial gifts of Gavin Fuller and the escape offered from working class domestic drudgery. Devoy's sense of ownership rights in Dawn bars this route. It is also foreshadowed by Mr Haliday's earlier refusal to allow Fuller to adopt Dawn. In both cases the men upon whom she is dependent control her destiny.

Sexual repression and jealousy are also the centre of conflict for Biddy and Duke. Biddy is imprisoned by her husband's sense of ownership which forces her to sneak about with her lover. She is also incarcerated by Duke's jealous rages.

> He wanted to ask her how many lovers she had had but did not dare. For fear she would tell him. He did not dare to think in that direction. The idea of others caused a drumming in his ears and a thickness in his brain ....
> 'You've made the play, Biddy ... you're too slick on the uptake not to be experienced. But I'm your lover now, and I remain your lover and the only one.' (p. 288-9).

Through Val's death Dawn's freedom is realised. That Biddy, a victim of man's sense of property rights, should die is testimony of Dawn's innocence. She has given Val no cause for his jealousy and is indeed beyond reproach. Biddy however has recognised jealousy in her men and carelessly fuelled it. Val must be destroyed to facilitate the freeing of Dawn's sexuality

and its more positive channelling.

The need to articulate the nature of repression involves the inability to overcome its entrenchment. In the feminist protest fiction of Edith Grossmann, resolution demands the sacrifice of woman in madness and in suicide. In Dawn Beloved fate intervenes to allow the heroine's delivery from an intolerable situation.

Dawn Beloved is a novel of compromise. The characters are largely victims of circumstance and for this reason change can come about only on the level of personal relations. In the absence of an overthrow of the existing social order there cannot be any real answers. Dawn's release, with Val's death, is the release from male ownership. However, it is not a release she herself has engineered and struggled for. The nature of her release does not provide a strategy for change. Rather, it is facilitated by the destruction evoked through sexual repression. Forms of social organisation which give rise to sexual ownership and jealousy ultimately carry the seeds of their own destruction in the novel. Both the wreckage of personal relationships and the decline of the race are laid at their door.

The emphasis is upon the frustrating of change. For Grossmann the social denial of female needs ends in female self-destruction. There exists the possibility that out of the gross sacrifice of valuable women will come compassion and commitment to change. A moral reordering of society will be

undertaken by men in the face of the murderous waste of female talent. Grossmann's perception of social change leads her to the position that female sacrifice must bring its own rewards.

Devanny wrote during a period wherein social change appeared to be an even more remote possibility. For Devanny fundamental change can only occur following socialist revolution. Such a goal is seemingly infinitely further removed than that idealist perception of miraculous change engendered by Grossmann's battle of morality. Grossmann's position is idealist and simplistic. Devanny's is materialist and complex. The sheer enormity of obstacles frustrating change can be grasped only by Devanny. Perhaps inevitably it is her grasp of the nature of social change and the very complexity of women's oppression that leads Devanny to slide completely into romanticism at the close of Dawn Beloved. Overwhelmed by the enormity of the struggle for liberation the opting for an authorial escape into traditional 'happy' endings takes place. Devanny condemns the destructive nature of sexual repression and jealousy which she sees as deriving from economic organisation.

Just as Dawn's release is accomplished with passive inactivity so too is her future decided. Fuller, the older, bourgeois gentleman, whisks Dawn off to Wellington where the two later marry. He provides an escape world wherein the material needs of Dawn and her children are unproblematic, and her security assured. Fuller, unlike Devoy, revers Dawn, and

rightfully puts her mystic compulsion for motherhood ahead of sexual passion.

Fuller's 'blood has thinned' and he has no desire to possess Dawn. His special character is reflected in his confession to Dawn while she is pregnant and still married to Devoy.

> 'Little Dawn! Little Dawn! If that child you are carrying were mine I should be a king - a king among men.
> I don't merely love you. I adore you! I worship you!' The girl straightened her small, heavily-laden body. Pride and exultation flooded her face. Still standing within his embrace she reached out and clenched her hands.
> 'Ah! You would want my child! Gavin, that's the most wonderful thing I have ever had said to me. I shall never forget. You understand? I shall never forget.' She clutched at his coat lapels and searched his agitated face.
> 'I understand everything you can and may mean. I would give my eyes to have you as my wife. Do you understand that, Dawn?' (p. 300).

Fuller, as hero in Dawn Beloved, is something of an anomaly. He, more than anyone else in the novel, understands Dawn. This is surprising given Devanny's emphasis upon the influence of material conditions on consciousness.

Fuller comes from a world altogether different from that of Dawn. It is a world of comfort, travel, good living and culture. Fuller has experienced the world as a bourgeois male. The sense of ownership rights in women is grossly underdeveloped. He is seriously interested in Dawn's personal fulfillment. That Fuller is so perfect for Dawn, in every sense, suggests that he

symbolises man, not as he is, but as he should be. Fuller executes the romantic rescue of Dawn. The Marxist framework, which Devanny uses to explain the nature of female oppression illuminates numerous dilemmas. It supposedly isolates the source and operation of women's oppression. Yet it does not come to grips with its every aspect. Devanny's frustration and confusion with this reality are perhaps reflected in an ending of compromise.

In the idealising of the hero, Elaine Showalter suggests that women writers did not create their ideal lovers, but rather projected their own egos. (Showalter, 1977, 136). Fuller is the considerate and devoted lover largely alien to women's experience. He also has the power, status and public sphere success denied women. Most importantly lust, coarseness, violence and selfishness are alien to Fuller's make-up. He is closer to the dominant feminine ideal than the masculine ideal in terms of these personal attributes.

The inevitable compromise in Dawn's relationship with Fuller lies in the inability of the two to remain untouched by the destructive social forces surrounding them. Only a relationship outside the oppressive class structure, in a newly attained 'natural' utopia, can truly be successful. So long as other women remain bound, Dawn's escape into a vacuum is merely illusory. Middle class security and Fuller's appreciation of equality in the relationship provide a buffer against an

inescapable reality. In the realist tradition the 'successful' escape is firmly anchored in women's historical source of self fulfillment. Knowing value only as wife and mother, it is not unusual that women should confine their goals to severely limited areas.

Dawn is left not redefining her goals in terms of assuming a greater degree of control over her labour power and her sexuality. Rather, she is once again being defined within a relationship with a man. Dawn is defeated in a different way from Hermione Carlisle in In Revolt and A Knight of The Holy Ghost. Finding no positive solution to her own oppression she accepts Fuller's personal attributes and remains tied to a man as an economic dependent. For Grossmann the heroine can be 'martyred' to the feminist cause. For Devanny the pointlessness of martyrdom is replaced by an equally impotent escapist romanticism.

In the end, dominant, sexist, bourgeois ideology is reflected as inescapably potent in Dawn's retreat into love and marriage. Nothing has changed and Dawn accepts her place in the domestic sphere again beneath the veneer of romanticism Devanny constructs. That she does so and that her only resolution to the wider struggle is retreat into the fulfillment of heterosexual love reinforces the idea of inability to effect change. Dawn does not struggle, but acquiesces and sinks into a blissful domesticity with half-hearted resolutions to deliver public

lectures on the socialist cause. It is assumed the bourgeois anti-socialist Gavin Fuller will encourage her to do so. The inability of women alone to conspire for change is reflected, in Grossmann's fiction, in madness and in suicide. In Dawn Beloved the heroine's 'return to the fold' signals this perceived reality.

In Dawn Beloved the problems of sexual ownership and sexual jealousy, particularly as they affect socialists, are of central concern. The implications of these problems for women, and for socialist women in particular, were significant for Devanny as they generated conflicts within her own life. Thus the relationships between male and female socialists come increasingly into focus as the novel unwinds. Their ability to maintain the viability of intimate relationships within a problematic present is unquestioned. While socialists may have a scientific grasp of the nature of female oppression, they do not automatically have the ability to extend adopted socialist principles to emotional life. To understand the origins of sexual jealousy, for example, is one thing. To control it, or to even bother attempting to, is another. In other words, purity of practice within capitalism is demonstrated to be impossible by Devanny. Material conditions are, after all, a powerful determining force upon thought and action.

Devanny understood that the problems of men and of women were not identical. Women were oppressed within capitalism, but they were also oppressed by men. Capitalism accords men special power and not women. Devanny wanted women's specific handicaps to be recognised and addressed.

Yet within the left, while women's issues were given lip-service, the primary struggle centred upon the overthrow of capital and in practice women's issues were largely insignificant. Devanny's stress upon the particular problems of women was possibly seen as divisionary and trivial. At the least it created a range of personal and political problems which were, of course, inseparable in her life.

As a Marxist feminist Devanny was doubly alienated from the masses. Her socialism would have been threatening in a decade which desired stability, as would have her feminism. (Roberts, 1981, 8). Furthermore, the isolation of Devanny's position was undoubtedly exacerbated by the sexism of the revolutionary movement of which she was a part. Women's role in the revolution continued to be that of providing food, encouragement, support and secretarial skills.

The serious consideration of women's issues, a major point of contention in the contemporary new left (Sargent, 1981, xi-xxii) can hardly have been less of a problem in the left of the early twentieth century. Indeed Alexandra Kollontai, a

leading member in the communist party of Russia, wrote in 1926 of her comrades continual inability to conceive of her as other than 'the feminine element which (they) tried to mold into a willing sounding board for (their) own ego(s)' (Sargent, 1981, xxii).

The extent of male dominance within mainstream New Zealand society of the twenties was probably reflected too in the otherwise revolutionary socialist movement. This is apparent immediately in the lack of women active in politics of any description in a decade wherein motherhood and domesticity were prescribed ideals. A number of socialist activists, including Hickey, Semple and Webb, came into prominence in the early decades of the twentieth century. No women are included among those whose political activities have been documented. Aitken notes that despite their contribution to the economy, particularly during the war years, New Zealand women were politically invisible (Aitken, 1980, 12). Women were not inactive however, they merely had no public face other than that of wife and mother.

In the Labour movement the limited role played by women is explored by Devanny in her novel detailing the North Queensland sugar cane cutters and mills hands strike of 1935. Sugar Heaven confronts women's exclusion from serious political debate and action, and the detrimental effect this had on the overall organisation of labour as a force to be reckoned with. Women's exclusion is questioned by Devanny's heroine, Dulcie Lee, and is

promptly legitimated by her husband, a Party sympathiser.

> 'You're letting the strike run away with you kid. That's the trouble with women: no balance. Swing from one extreme to the other. You don't have to worry about the strike. We can cop it. It's all to the good --.' He stopped, for she had turned her eyes on him and Hefty read hatred in them.
> 'What the hell's the matter with you?' he burst out.
> 'The wives of the strikers should rise up and tear you to pieces! No balance! These women who are feeding families - families! - on relief! These women who laugh at their privations because they are loyal to their men! These women who are dying to help their men in the strike and are kept back by such as you - !' (Devanny, 1936, 227)

Dulcie tells Hendry, a communist strike organiser, that her husband has ordered that she should 'not make a fool of (her) self talking about the strike!' (p.232). Hendry recognises the problems presented by traditional notions among men. He adds:

> 'You see, Mrs Lee, most of us are brought up that way. I've got a lot to learn about the capabilities of women myself.' (p. 232).

Devanny's concern with sexism both inside and outside the socialist movement is apparent in her fiction. Her attempts to develop an understanding of the nature of women's oppression, in the face of the sexism of both the society of the twenties and the Left, resulted in confusion. The analytical power of Marxism is consciously applied to the understanding of women's oppression. The attempted use of 'scientific' method in the consideration of an oppression that contains the most subtle of

psychological nuances, and which confines the writer herself, is destined for confusion. A conservative romanticism is juxtaposed with with revolutionary Marxism and a crude synthesis forged. Such a synthesis creates serious problems both for Devanny's analysis and for her fiction.

That this concern with sexism isolated her, and created insurmountable problems is also apparent. In the early 1940's Devanny was temporarily expelled from the Communist Party of Australia for reasons unstated. Her wrangles with Party members in North Queensland about double sexual standards within the party were however, implicated in the expulsion. In 1942 Devanny was reinstated, but finally she resigned in 1950. Her resignation in part derived from her longtime dissatisfaction with 'the conducting of sexual and personal relations within the party' (Ferrier, 1982, xii).

Women's lack of voice, even within the movement, is reflected in Devanny's frustration and the continued emphasis upon the coming into speech of inarticulate groups. In Dawn Beloved it is the silenced working class and women who are of concern. In Sugar Heaven it is once again the proletariat and women, along with exploited racial minorities, especially Yugoslavs and Italians. The drowning out of women's voices in the wake of men's more 'serious' concerns is augmented by lack of representation. By 1935 the Communist Party of Australia boasted a membership of 3000. Just 200 of these were women

(Ferrier, 1982, vii). Even within a progressive movement then the oppression of women perpetrated within the wider society remains evident. Devanny's fiction is a protest against the lack of validity given to women's concerns and issues in a variety of situations. Refusing to ally herself solely with the workers struggle against the interests of capital in the workplace she remained an 'outsider' even within the left.

Devanny's silence is that of incoherence. Struggling to find a language and method to voice her feminist concerns she is frustrated by the availability of only male explanatory frameworks. Marxism allows the enlarging of vision yet proves incapable of retelling all of women's story. Continually Devanny is bought up hard against the wall of sexism within Marxist theory and the practice of the Left. To compensate for those failings she retreats into the romantic notions of bourgeois conservatism. The sexist assumptions of male defined ideologies stifle the feminist voice to a mere choked whisper. The ways of looking at the world these contradictory approaches provide are all that the women of the nineteen twenties had available to them. The majority had only those ways of seeing provided by dominant ideologies to explain all aspects of their lives. Devanny's failure to articulate her ideas with clarity and consistency is inevitable. Her protest is, in part, silenced by her lack of a cohesive alternate framework with which to structure her feminist ideals.

Footnotes

1. Devanny's other novels are The Butcher Shop, (1926), Lenore Divine (1926), Riven (1929), Bushman Bourke (1930), Devil Made Saint (1930), Poor Swine (1932), All For Love (1932), Out of Such Fires (1934), The Ghost Wife (1935), The Virtuous Courtesan (1936), Sugar Heaven (1936), Paradise Flow (1938), The Killing of Jacqueline Love (1942), Roll Back the Night (1945), and Cindie: A Chronicle of the Canefields (1949). Her first seven novels are set in New Zealand and the remainder in Australia. She had published four novels before leaving New Zealand to settle in Sydney in 1929 (Ferrier, 1980, 37). The decision to include Dawn Beloved in this study, rather than its predecessor Lenore Divine, was largely based on accessibility of manuscripts and legitimated by the thematic uniformity of much of Devanny's early fiction. Heather Roberts suggests that 'The plot, characterisation and ideas of The Butcher Shop were to be repeated in most of Devanny's other novels .... The plots revolve around sorting out the relationships among this stock set of characters, in the process discussing and illustrating the ideas that are considered in The Butcher Shop' (Roberts, 1981, 21). The Butcher Shop was Devanny's first published novel, preceding the writing of Dawn Beloved by two years.

2. The prosperity of the mining industry suffered in the 1920's due to bulk distribution of electricity as an alternative fuel. By 1925 there were 6,011 miles of electric power lines in New Zealand, whereas in 1921 there had been only 1,909. By 1925 there were 39 power boards covering 61 per cent of the country (Chapman and Malone, 1969, 15). The demand for coal as a maritime fuel also petered out as coal-burning ships were converted to internal combustion propulsion. Coal became superseded by the cleaner, more efficient fuels provided by the technological revolution.

3. The maritime strike, to which Devanny refers, is that which took place in 1890. This strike heralded the first major conflict between management and unions in New Zealand. The waterfront and mine strike did not take place until twenty-three years later in 1913.

4. Richard Seddon (1845-1906) was something of a legend on the coast, fondly called 'the West Coast Premier' (Richardson, 1968, 7). Seddon arrived in Hokitika from Australia in 1866 and worked in the gold fields before settling at Kumara. In these early days he gained experience

as a miners advocate. His close relationship with the mining workers gave him a special place in their estimation when he entered parliament, as Devanny's comment suggests. In general Union support for Seddon's sympathetic Liberal Party eased early in the century as the needs of each changed. The Labour Party was formed in 1904-10 in response to the needs of the working people and Liberal gradually lost its impetus. The foundations of the Welfare State, laid by Seddon's Liberal government, improved the workers lot during the 1890's however, and survived the later conservative Reform government's reign. During Seddon's term of office (1893-1906) New Zealand enjoyed a certain level of prosperity augmented by favourable market price and demand in Britain. The stability of the early 1900's is reflected in Devanny's reference to full employment and level of market demand for coal. Though Seddon's 'generous kingship' was on the wane, the policy changes made by his government signified a step toward the egalitarianism many claimed had long been established. Whether Devanny's mention of Seddon's 'kinghip' refers to his actually holding office (dating Dawn's arrival in the mining town of Paranga at approx 1905-1906) or to the surviving changes he engineered (dating her arrival closer to Devanny's own re-settlement in 1911) is unclear. The mining districts of the West Coast of the South Island experienced a 'pronounced return of prosperity', a minor boom, not long after Seddon's death (O'Farrell, 1959, 56).

5. Biographical detail is drawn from information provided by Roberts (Roberts, 1981, 9-13). Original stated source is Jean Devanny's unpublished autobiography. Ferrier notes that 'Two of Dawn's relationships in the novel are close to those described in autobiographical material, that with one of (Devanny's) brothers and that with her teacher, Rose (Ralph and Biddy Fane in the novel). (Ferrier, 1980, 40).

CHAPTER V:

Feminist Marxism -: The Butcher Shop

The Butcher Shop, Devanny's first published novel, crudely foreshadows the centrality of female sexual repression, and male ownership and sexual jealousy, in Dawn Beloved. Informed by those same theoretical concerns surrounding the nature of women's oppression, The Butcher Shop both assumes a radical position on this issue and is circumscribed in doing so by the realities of its time. Essentially concerned with the exploring of ideas, the novel concentrates less on character drawing than upon the structuring of human interaction. Women's struggles for autonomy are, in Devanny's work, inseparable from the system of economic production determining their powerlessness.

That this novel should have been described by even the author herself, in later years, as 'a terribly confused and foolish book, its meagre merit sincerity, frankness, and a certain power of phrasing' (Roberts, 1981, 13), should come as no surprise. The ideas structuring her work, and the obvious concern with their adequate formulation, were not of primary interest in the twenties. Rather, it is more likely that Devanny

would have had few soundingboards for her ideas. That they were alien enough and unacceptable enough to cause concern, at least among the representatives of the status quo, is evidenced by the banning of the novel.

The Butcher Shop was published by the London firm of Duckworth. Shortly after its release it was officially banned in New Zealand in April of 1926, in Australia in October of 1929, in Boston and later in Nazi Germany (Roberts, 1981, 11). The heroine's adultery, the subsequent suicide of her devoted husband, and the murder of her guilty, and otherwise respectable, lover are central events. The brutality of these events are paralleled by that of the daily slaughter characterising farming life. This sensationalism was not so unusual as was an authorial position which saw fit to advocate the heroine's sexual activities outside marriage and legitimate the deaths of both central male characters. The reader is thus presented with Margaret, 'a pure woman' who unreservedly commits both adultery and murder, and is asked to feel sympathetically inclined toward her.

The perceived audacity of Devanny's position, and her use of Marxist and feminist ideas to legitimate it, appears to have astounded the political and moral guardians of the New Zealand public. In this country the Censorship Appeal Board determined that The Butcher Shop was 'an indecent document within the meaning of the Indecent Publications Act 1910'. As Bill

Pearson's account of the banning of the novel suggests, the exact grounds upon which The Butcher Shop was deemed to be indecent are unclear (Pearson, 1981, 225-34). Before considering the merit of the novel the members of the Censorship Appeal Board were informed, by official sources, that allegedly its 'depiction of station life (in) New Zealand (was) disgusting, indecent (and) communistic' (Pearson, 1981, 226).

The subsequent banning of The Butcher Shop appears to have been predicated upon these moral and political objections as well as upon its negative portrayal of the Dominion's farming way of life. Its depiction of New Zealand society as being less than perfect, and its assumption that immunity to the problems of the older countries is not guaranteed, were considered by Devanny to be instrumental to the banning. In its decision to implement this banning the Censorship Appeal Board declared that the novel was 'sordid, unwholesome and unclean. It makes evil to be good' (Pearson, 1981, 226). This declaration suggests that the major factor determining the banning was explicit sexual immorality. However, Pearson suggests that the political orientation adopted by Devanny, along with her depiction of the largely ignored negative aspects of farming life in 'Utopia', was equally implicated in the Board's decision.

The banning of The Butcher Shop cannot be fully understood outside the consideration of the material conditions of women's lives in the early decades of the twentieth century, the dominant

ideology surrounding these conditions, and their implications for Devanny as a woman writer. In the previous chapter I have discussed at length the position of women in the New Zealand society of the nineteen twenties. The major landmarks of oppression are apparent in the limited opportunities for participation in the paid workforce and in the continued lack of control over both their labour power and sexuality.

Dominant ideology surrounding women's 'proper' role, as reflected within Plunket doctrine and Governmental policy, held that motherhood and domesticity should be a woman's primary concern. Sexuality was pushed into the background as were aspirations projected beyond the confinement of the domestic sphere. Women were to be passive, acquiescent, self-sacrificial and consistent in all their activities within the home. By providing an example for their children a new generation would successfully have instilled in them the proper respect for self-control, reliability and stability. (Olssen, 1979, 10).

Margaret Messenger, Devanny's heroine in The Butcher Shop is an adultress above all. By this very fact she is, to the contemporary way of thinking, impure. She deceives her husband and has a sexual relationship with a man she has known less than a day. This is the indecency the Censorship Appeal Board may have detected in the novel. Yet it was suggested at the time that the banning of The Butcher Shop on these grounds alone was unlikely when 'dozens of other books that treat sexual love

freely and honestly, or exploit it flippantly and nonchalantly ... make their way into the country' (Spike,1926,40).

Margaret refuses to let her prescribed obligations to home and family spill over into every nook and cranny of her intimate life. She is sexually active outside her marriage without feeling in the least sullied or upset by the fact. She simply loves and enjoys. In the novel this does not, in itself, interfere with her being a good mother and a reliable wife. Her family and domestic life are not threatened or destroyed by her sexuality. Rather, it is the men in Margaret's life who disturb this equilibrium with the claims that they make on her being.

It is the position Devanny assumes, in legitimating her heroine's actions, that was probably considered unacceptable by the critics. Margaret Messenger is not punished for her moral transgressions by death and destruction. Rather, she herself meters out punishment for the sins of society and of men against her. Margaret is active, assertive and competent. Devanny's attempt to reconcile the feminine talent for domesticity with the release from sexual bondage informs The Butcher Shop. It stands opposed to the dominant ideological downplaying of female sexuality and elevating of domesticity in its absence. The sexlessness of women's prescribed role, and their confinement to the playing of complementary second fiddle to husbands, were considered by Devanny to be problematic. Devanny's volatile criticism gives voice to the vague dissatisfaction women may have

felt with these roles, but were ill equipped to articulate.

Margaret Messenger embodies many idealised feminine qualities, but she also lives dangerously and impulsively, and follows her instincts. She is not an advocate of the rigid self-control espoused by King. With the characterisation of Margaret, Devanny fails to reflect, and thus reinforce, those dominant ideals surrounding the behaviour of women. The rebellion inherent in her doing so is inconsistent with her appropriate literary focus and feminine range of interests. Anne Summers suggests however, that women writers who conform to these male defined expectations of their work are largely ignored or trivialised. She adds that, 'the only time a woman achieved notice - and generally it was better called notoriety - was when she tried to crash through the barriers into the male world' (Summers, 1975, 35). Devanny's explicit repudiation of aspects of prescriptive femininity constitutes such an attempt.

In the final analysis the banning of The Butcher Shop cannot be blamed solely on its 'indecency'. It is necessary to consider what constitutes indecency, in the opinion of whom, and for what reason. Devanny retaliates against dominant social groups by putting forward her own opposing conception of indecency. It is, in a sense, an inversion of dominant standards.

Devanny fashioned an attack upon the very foundations of capitalism and, in part, of patriarchy. The political implications of her social critique undoubtedly contributed to the banning of her novel. In drawing attention to women as an oppressed group Devanny stood in isolated opposition to the material realities and dominant ideologies fashioned in the interests of a powerful few. This is not to say that she developed systematic insights into that oppression for her very isolation reflects the pervasive nature of oppression and the hegemony of ruling class interests. Their impact upon Devanny's work is clearly apparent and will be discussed as is appropriate.

Margaret is born into an urban lower middle class family prior to World War One. At the age of seventeen she begins to be a burden upon her family.

> ... It was necessary that she earn something. Since leaving school at fourteen years of age she had been trained by her mother in housewifery. Neither money nor time had been available for more refined pursuits, so in woman's 'natural sphere' alone she could look for employment. (Devanny, 1926, 43).

The daughter of an aspiring upwardly mobile and underpaid public servant, Margaret's employment prospects are limited. Her class position determines that she receives only the compulsory minimum period of schooling.

In 1901 the school leaving age in New Zealand had been raised to fourteen years. With this bare minimum of education, Margaret is ill equipped to consider a career of any description. There had been 'neither money nor time' for career training. Major occupational options for women of Margaret's class in the nineteen twenties were conditioned by the earlier expansion of the tertiary sector. Waitressing, cooking, typing and clerical work over took domestic service in the provision of female employment (Olssen, 1980, 161-2). Factory work too provided employment for unqualified women, as it had done since the 1880's.

Yet these employment options too are denied Margaret. The relatively greater independence gained by young women working in the tertiary sector, and in factories, contrasted to the degree of control maintained over those in domestic service. Aware of the implications of this Margaret's parents, 'sensible, and fully alive to the dangers of the post-war jazz spirit, would hear of nothing but domestic service for her.' (p. 43). Being economically dependent upon her father, Margaret has no option but to accept his dictates with regard to appropriate employment. Underlying this direction is the assumption that employment is a temporary option only. The emphasis upon the primacy of domestic skills reinforced women's relegation to the private sphere. Relationship to production remained informed by relationship to reproduction.

In going into domestic service in a respectable private home Margaret is safely guarded from those influences feared by her parents. The supervision afforded her within her maiden home is reflected in that of her employer. The safeguarding of chastity is shifted from the responsibility of the father to that of Margaret's immediate boss, the agent of her employer. Thus Mrs Curdy can say, 'It is my duty to protect my girls' (p. 42). As a housemaid Margaret is confined to the suitably fitting private sphere. Any freedom that economic independence, or the holding of a direct relation to production, may bring her is denied both by limits upon her free time and by failure to earn a living wage.

Even in 1926 wages for domestic staff were sometimes as low as five shillings per week (Chapman and Malone, 1969, 25). Although domestic service, as an occupational choice, was declining in New Zealand by the nineteen twenties, approximately 17,000 women were employed as cooks and maids in private homes in 1926 (Chapman and Malone, 1968, 25). The young Margaret enters service as housemaid on a remote sheep station in 1924.

In common with Dawn Haliday, and with Edith Grossmann's Hermione, Margaret's employment opportunities are shown to be limited by virtue of gender. While class dictates type of employment sought, within a narrow range of occupations, middle or upper class membership does not provide a greater choice of positions, or ensure a living wage comparable to that earned by

men. Women of different classes are shown to be concentrated in different kinds of work or debarred from paid employment. In each case relation to production is reflected as being determined by family of birth. In each case employment, either taken up or considered, represents only a temporary survival strategy. Marriage remains the major alternative for women and is fostered by both structural and ideological realities. Margaret's poorly paid, non-career oriented occupation, and her thorough training in domestic arts, point toward the inevitability of her marrying.

For Grossmann the extension of the range of employment opportunities for women is not by definition limited within the existing system of organisation. Rather the conditions already exist for greater opportunities to be realised and these opportunities need only be demanded. For Devanny employment opportunities are limited not by the immoral position of men, but by the structuring of capitalism. For both writers the realities of the day are reflected in women's disadvantaged position in relation to production. Primary responsibility for unpaid domestic labour is not contested.

The fact that both Grossmann and Devanny define women's problems similarly points to the underlying continuities limiting the superficial changes taking place in women's lives. Capitalist patriarchy structures the world of each writer in a similar way. Thus while their solutions to women's oppression diverge there is a general consensus on central problems.

Following in the footsteps of Hermione Howard and Dawn Haliday, Margaret is married by the time she is seventeen. Like Hermione she moves up into the ruling class with her marriage to her employer, the wealthy landowner, Barry Messenger. The marriage of Margaret and Barry is the marriage between two exemplary young people. Both are intelligent, honest, physically attractive and physically and mentally chaste. Their union seems destined for success. Margaret's innocence and her ill preparedness for the realities of the married state are stressed. Margaret's ideals are coloured by the example of her parents.

> Mum had talked to her about marriage. Mum and Dad, in their own loving union, had shown her how beautiful even poorly circumstanced married life could be. She had seen their loving intimacy, their 'snoozing' even after twenty years of wedded life. If she married this young man she would bear the same relation to him as her Mum did to her Dad. (p. 54).

The Errols marriage is shrouded by a romantic harmony. This is the reality of married life Margaret presumes will also be hers.

Sheltered from the outside world, within the home of her parents, she is ignorant of the possibility of less blissful marriages existing. Indeed from her knowledge of her parents happy marriage, and the stories of romance she has read, Margaret considers that she, 'knew all about love' (p. 47). Her inability to distinguish between love and sexual attraction is apparent. She commits herself to marriage having known Barry superficially for a matter of a few weeks.

A sheltered innocent, ignorant of the implications for women of marrying, Margaret is secured within monogamous marriage by the illusion of romantic love. That her attraction to Messenger is however, primarily sexual is clear. With their first meeting Margaret's 'sex urge' is awakened for, 'She had looked on the man, and the essence of her had cried 'Man, I am Woman'.' (p. 47). Like her successor, Dawn Haliday in Dawn Beloved, Margaret is a 'natural' woman. Her attraction to Messenger is a primal attraction for 'She, as natural woman, had looked on Man and found him desirable;' (p. 48). It is implied that acting upon this attraction is both valid and pure, even in the absence of commitment within legal marriage.

Thus it is significant that Margaret and Barry consummate their attraction the day before they are legally united by marriage. They do so at Margaret's discretion.

> ... a divine inspiration came to her, a sublime thought born of her sheer naturalness. She raised her head and looked him full in the eyes, the glory of slumbering womanhood shining in her own. 'It is God in us,' she said. 'It is God in us. This is our wedding-day, Barry. Make me your wife today.' (p. 60).

This union, blessed by nature and the divinity of each individual, is more worthy than the next day's legal union. The crude legality of the marriage is an imposition of man-made social convention upon the purity of the natural laws of marriage. These laws determine that monogamous and devoted union with the mate shall last as long as both desire it. Within the

classless society such a union is freely choosen by informed individuals and is thus likely to last a lifetime.

Margaret chooses 'natural' consummation of her relationship with Barry, but in her socially determined innocence her choice of mate is likely to be misleading. Ill-prepared for her sexual awakening, she commits herself to the first male she is presented with. Similarly, Margaret's legal union with Barry is not freely chosen. Kept ignorant and unworldly, by man-made social conventions demanding girlish innocence, Margaret's marriage to Barry is promoted by these factors. Ghettoised within the female workforce and desirous of sexual fulfillment, legal marriage is the option into which circumstances channel her. Encouraged to limit her goals to domesticity, and vulnerable to the ideology of romantic love, Margaret is secured within monogamous marriage.

The doubts surrounding the wisdom of Margaret's commitment to Barry, legal and 'natural' are reflected in the suggested depth of her love.

> The girl ran about disseminating the sunshine of her happiness to all and sundry, thrusting it under everybody's nose like a child with a new toy, but in this very fact was the shallowness of her love manifested. The man's emotions were too deep, were to him too sacred, to be held up for public apprehension. (p. 65).

Margaret's love, it is suggested, is a novelty and a source of only temporary interest to her. This implies that it will be fleeting and eventually discarded when something of greater influence comes along.

Barry's love, on the contrary, is of a more enduring variety. The strength of his desire to retain Margaret as his own mate is foreshadowed by this. The shallowness of Margaret's love is however, beyond her control. Her 'natural' instincts, overlaid by socially determined factors, mislead her in her choice of mate. The imposition of legal marriage concretises the mistake she has been forced to make. The situation Margaret finds herself in has been determined by forces beyond her control.

With her marriage, Margaret is no longer an impoverished low status domestic servant. The life of struggling to make ends meet is soon forgotten.

> She had found it the most natural thing in the world for her to play the lady. At Christmas time she had had her whole family to stay with her for a fortnight. How proud she had been! Of her husband; of his possessions, which were now also her own; of her own great good fortune. Oh, yes, Margaret soon began to think less of such things as wages and workers. Now, in her allusions to the station employees, like Barry himself, she spoke of our 'hands'. (p. 71).

Margaret's contentment and satisfaction with her marriage are inevitable. Messenger is a devoted husband and material needs are provided without difficulty. Thus:

> Had Margaret analysed her mind in regard to Barry, her life in general, after nearly ten years of married life, she would have found little incompleteness .... Her sex-life with Barry she would probably not have reckoned up at all. It loomed little in her scheme of things. (p. 96).

On the surface of things Margaret's marriage appears to mirror the ideology surrounding marriage as an institution. Yet Devanny has set the stage for the presentation of the Marxist argument that women as wives assume the role of chattel. Margaret is to be seen as the property of Barry. It is clear that both Barry and Margaret are blissfully unaware of the real nature of their marriage. Yet indications as to its nature are reflected in the unwitting acknowledgment of economic transaction by both Barry and Margaret (Roberts, 1981, 15). The prospect of marrying Barry brings the thought of being 'mistress of that big house' (p. 53) into Margaret's mind immediately. Significantly her letter to her mother disclosing marriage plans alludes to Messenger's money before Messenger himself. She writes, 'Did you dream of money to burn? You'll have it, Mummy, and the handsomest, best man in all the world for my husband.' (p. 57).

Similarly, Messenger's letter to Margaret's parent suggesting why he would make Margaret a good husband is couched in monetary terms. He writes of his sole ownership of Maunganui Station, the stock it carries and the twenty thousand pounds he expects to clear for the year. These attributes are those which Messenger recognises will secure Margaret as his wife.

While Margaret assumes that the farm 'hands' are 'our hands' and that Barry's property is also her own, Devanny demonstrates that this is merely illusion. Messenger's ownership of land and of animals is paralleled by his ownership of Margaret. As a ruling class male, and owner of the means of production, he holds a monopoly on power. Margaret, as his wife, becomes only an honorary member of the ruling class. She holds no direct relation to production and its dependent upon Barry. Having no income of her own and no structural power she is dependent upon manipulation and upon her personal attributes to gain favour. It is thus that:

> The sheer gold and grace of her maturity had enslaved them all - Messenger, Tutaki, the women about her and the station hands. Her little ones regarded her as the fountainhead of all wisdom and knowledge, ... (p. 92).

Margaret's spell over Barry too remains strong;

> His love for his wife was still undimmed; pre-marital chastity disallowed one roving thought. The glory of her splendid womanhood was ever about him; ... (p. 95).

The limits to Margaret's perceived influence and autonomy are however, suggested by the imagery of ownership. Margaret is as much the possession of Barry as are his sheep. Messenger's control over the sheep is reflected in the brutality inherent in the quest for profit. In the face of economic machinery, humanity is secondary to expediency. Margaret witnesses the implications of ownership at first hand.

> The sheep plunged; the shearer yelled 'Tar!' the tar boy rushed up and smeared hot tar upon the wound. Messenger took his wife aside.
> She tried to compose herself.
> 'That was awful, yet nobody took any notice. Does it often happen?'
> 'No,' Messenger lied. 'The boy is just learning. The tar doesn't hurt you know.'
> 'No, of course not.' Sarcastically. 'Hot tar on an open wound would not hurt! Why do you allow it anyway?' (p. 69).

Significantly the fact that no-one takes any notice of the accident does not lessen the brutality of the situation. The brutality of ownership rights in women too is disguised by the unquestioned commonplace reality of those rights. The possession of private property, of any description, implies an element of choice in its treatment and disposal. This is reflected in one of the station hand's torture of a dog. Margaret discovers the animal still living.

> ... its eye sockets were empty and blood streamed form a gash in its head down over its nose and dyed the yellow grass. Its body was a ghastly mass of clotted blood and raw wounds, as though pieces had been literally hacked out of it, and its hind legs were broken. (p. 75).

Importantly it is Margaret, a dependent creature herself, who discovers the dog with the marks of the brutality of human ownership on it. Choice of treatment metered out to living possessions is assumed. Thus Barry confronts the farmhand who has tortured the dog.

> 'Where is your dog 'Nip', Horty?' he asked, in a voice that trembled with suppressed rage.
> Horty did not look up even then. He arrested his eating for a few seconds, obviously considering, then answered: 'I am not accountable to you for my dogs, Messenger. They are my property.' (p. 78).

Because Horty owns the dog he assumes the right to absolute control over the animal. It is implied that Barry, as Margaret's owner, also has the means to control her. That he is a consistently loving and devoted husband is immaterial. The fact remains that the fair treatment accorded Margaret by Barry is not inevitable. His kindness is merely indicative of the fact that his structural power extends to him a choice in how he will treat Margaret, as his property. Conversely, if he chose to do so, he might mistreat his wife as he saw fit.

In exploring male ownership of women Devanny is more interested in the component of sexual repression and control, than of control over female productive labour. Within the marriage relation women are locked into monogamy. The male's right of sole genital access is reinforced by the female's

limited means of economic and social survival outside the married state. Devanny's questioning of male repression of female sexuality contains, by implication, an indictment of enforced female dependence.

Thus it is that women are forced into monogamous legal marriage by their socially structured lack of alternatives. Sex is exchanged for economic and social provisions. It is the major currency women have at their disposal, for their wage labour is worth only a pittance in exchange on the market. Margaret and Barry, after ten years of marriage, remain ignorant of this reality. Devanny's literary representation of male ownership is reflected in female lack of options and control even by the nineteen twenties.

The notion of male ownership of women, within monogamous marriage, is based upon the absolute dependence of married women. The lessening of dependence, facilitated by paid employment is denied them. The limited opportunities in paid employment for single women were further constrained for married women. Indeed, once married, few women returned to the workforce. Those who did were largely those driven to do so by economic necessity. Few were thus of Margaret's class.

These realities for married women in the twenties suggest dependence upon a male provider remained the norm. The status associated with homemaking had risen with the emphasis upon

scientific method and the importance of childrearing practice and domestic arts. However, despite the increase in status, this work remained unpaid work and women continued to be shackled to relationships with men. The ideology of motherhood and domesticity disguises this reality. The Butcher Shop undermines aspects of this illusory perception, and seeks to expose the crudity of the currency of exchange women are forced to barter with. Margaret's position, at the structural level, is similar to that of Dawn Haliday. Both women are, in reality, the property of their husbands. While Margaret's life is certainly more comfortable than Dawn's, the privileges of honorary membership of the ruling class do not compensate for the realities of being, in effect, a human chattel.

Devanny's emphasis upon the sexual repression of women allows her to overlook the variety of faces of female oppression. The struggle for better opportunities in paid work, and against primary responsibility for unpaid domestic labour, are equally important. Though Devanny recognises the complexity of oppression her preoccupation with its sexual manifestations is apparent. Her confusion is, at least in part, the result of the material realities and dominant ideology circumscribing the lives of women of this period. The 'sentimentalized and romanticized' portrayal of motherhood Roberts detects in The Butcher Shop, for example, is inseparable form the dominant nineteen twenties perception of motherhood itself. (Roberts, 1981, 19).

Devanny's heroine does not question her primary responsibility for childcare, though this activity does not monopolise her life.

> She did not become immersed in a sea of domesticity because of the babe. She came properly to life and dealt most practically with the problems that necessarily surround the nursery. She looked after the baby herself entirely - she and Barry, that is to say; but the fabric of her make-up was too extraordinary to permit complete absorption in any one direction. Unconsciously she assumed the proper attitude toward parenthood; saw it in its right relation to all other things. The bringing forth of young she saw as awesome and wondrous, right enough; but since Nature in this made man its puppet, at one with the lowly worm, why regard it as the supreme achievement and worship at its shrine to the exclusion of all other things? - as the woman of her world almost invariably did. (p. 79-80).

Margaret rejects the dominant ideological conception of motherhood as being all inspiring and the focus of all feminine attention. Motherhood is wonderful, but it is a natural thing and not to be unduly emphasised. All the same the glory of motherhood is seen to enrich Margaret, as a woman, and it is all about her. It elevates her to the highest pedestal for Barry, who 'thought her motherhood divine' (p. 95). In the eyes of those on the station she is the personification of the maternal ideal. We see Margaret, in the evening after dinner, as they see her:

> ... gathering her chickens ready for bed. How glorious she was with the babe in her arms! And what glorious children! The boy was a living picture of delight to the eye. He stood looking up at his mother in adoration. (p. 102).

The glory of Margaret's motherhood is enhanced, rather than dimmed, by her dismissal of the rigid childrearing ideals of the period. Regular habits, developed from infancy, it was argued, would produce a self-controlled citizen. Spoiling of children, through indulging their desires, was to be avoided at any cost. Thus Truby King advocated that, 'mothers shouldn't rock, tickle or play with their babies' (Olssen, 1979, 8).

These 'unnatural' restrictions are rejected by Margaret. Her relationships with her children are characterised by demonstrative affection, spontaneity and playfulness. A parenting determined by rigidity and discipline is unacceptable to her.

> With her babies, now growing out of infancy, the usual superior overlordship and faultless attitude of parents she condemned and disdained. 'The little hearts that err' knew 'Mummy' as one of themselves who had committed their own little faults and learned through experience to do better. No 'angel' philosophy that had been tried and never found wanting. Margaret, once having seen a guest vigorously thrashing a little one for some childish misdemeanour, told Barry and Tutaki that Nature made a terrible mistake in not providing little children with some means of revenge on cruel, ignorant parents who cowardly assaulted tiny people possessed of no means of defence. (p. 96).

It is Margaret's 'naturalness' which allows her to reject a dominant mode of childcare which aimed at producing citizens, 'controlled by a calculating and manipulative prudence' and able to 'easily postpone or forgo immediate pleasures for future gains' (Olssen, 1979, 10).

Though Margaret's 'natural' relaxed attitude toward childrearing conflicts with the artificial restraints championed by King and the Plunket Society her motherhood remains 'glorious'. Devanny's idealisation of motherhood is shared by the dominant ideology, as represented by the propaganda of King and the Society. Regardless of the form of its practice, both Devanny and the dominant prescriptive ideals she rejects, conceive of motherhood as woman's greatest achievement and the facilitator of her maturity. It remains then both her primary responsibility and her greatest joy.

In the idealising of motherhood Devanny's fiction reflects the dominant ideology of the period, refracted, but essentially unchanged. The possibility that motherhood may tighten women's ties to husband and exacerbate their dependence goes unrecognised. The glorification of motherhood, that facet of female oppression Devanny fails to confront, is incongruent with her critique of female dependence.

Similarly Olssen documents that the Australian feminist socialist, Dora Montefiore, Devanny's contemporary, also conceived of motherhood as women's 'supreme function'. Jane Mander too, the New Zealand writer and feminist socialist, exalted the nature of house wifery. It was, in her estimation, an occupation to be honoured (Olssen, 1980, 177). In each case the implications for women of motherhood, and primary responsibility for domestic work, go unrecognised. Devanny's

reluctance to question the oppressive implications of mothering, at this stage, derives from the realities for women. To remain childless by choice was difficult, if not impossible, for the majority of women.

The world that Margaret lives in is effectively buffered from the realities of the outside world. She and Barry exist in a virtual vacuum. Their lack of material want, their fineness of character, and their cordial relationship ensure contentment. The suggestion is that even in the most ideal of situations however, the implications of male ownership over women are inescapable. That Margaret is, in reality, Barry's chattel and the equivalent of his animals is continually implied. The catalyst needed to draw this underlying reality to the surface takes the form of Angus Glengarry, the new station manager appointed by Messenger.

Margaret's first meeting with Glengarry is telling. It is a fine day in the early spring shearing season.

> Glengarry was drafting sheep in the centre of the pens, separating the rams from the ewes, when his employer's wife and children arrived at the sheds. He heard a great clamour of men's voice raised in greeting, but, handling the run gateway as he was, all his attention needed by the frightened, plunging sheep, he gave the disturbance no need. (p. 97).

Glengarry is to expose, for Margaret, the real nature of the relations between women and men. The perception of male ownership, and more specifically of Barry's ownership of Margaret, has up until now been but a vague outline. The polarity between women and men, and its animalistic origins, is brought into focus by Glengarry. Significantly at this, his first meeting with Margaret, he is preoccupied with the separation of sheep by sex. The former insignificance Margaret has attached to sex is implicitly undermined by this.

Glengarry's concentration upon the drafting implies the importance he is to attach to sex and the gender prescriptions following on from it. The realities of the sexual division of power are no longer to be glossed over by love and contentment. Glengarry is also intent upon controlling the sheep, as the property of Barry. This is suggestive of his later direction of Margaret as a woman and wife, the property of Barry also. Margaret is but 'his employer's wife', and not his joint employer. By virtue of her gender she holds no direct relation to production and is neither an owner or controller of capital.

The nature of the attraction which swiftly develops between Margaret and Glengarry on that first day is explicitly detailed. Margaret is affected by Glengarry's very presence. She is:

> ... disturbed - pleasurably disturbed. A genial glow suffused her body, at once unctuous and exciting. She felt herself more and more drawn to address herself to the man. She absorbed his personality and noted his physique. (p. 99).

The sensual and sacred nature of Margaret's attraction to Glengarry is revealed by the physical stimulation she experiences. She literally smoulders with the pleasant warmth of those sensations. Margaret's failure to throw up the barriers of convention to contain her 'improper' feelings are indicative of the 'natural' womanhood Devanny invests her with. It is thus with a keen enjoyment that she basks in the glow of an attraction destined to grow.

Glengarry, for his part, is equally effected. His 'eyes hardly ever left her face' and he is 'entirely captivated' (p. 99), by the spell of her voice.

> He was shaken profoundly by the impact of her personality. He kept telling himself that his nerves were getting confoundedly shaky when the sight of a lovely woman could upset him. The intonations of her voice when she spoke to the children, lovingly, brought a thickening to his throat; when Tutaki kissed her hands a mighty surge of sheer animality caused a singing in his ears, a pounding in his temples. It subsided, leaving him amazed. (p.101).

Glengarry's attraction too is, quite clearly, primarily physical. His desire to possess Margaret is apparent from the beginning with the rush of jealousy he feels as Tutaki kisses her. The passion of attraction is unmistakable.

> .. suddenly Glengarry knew that the tragedy of tragedies had befallen him. Immutable as change, ineluctable as death, stark, staring fact faced him: he loved that woman. He loved her now, had loved her always, and would love her til he died. (p. 102)

Glengarry's love for Margaret is no reasoned and calculated thing. Her status, her interests, her aspirations are absolutely immaterial. His love is an explosion of feeling his rational mind is utterly powerless to control. As such it is a primeval instinct, a pre-programmed inevitability.

That this love is essentially a primeval thing is demonstrated by the crudity of its needs for survival. Regardless of Margaret's thoughts or actions in the present, past or future Glengarry's love will burn just as strongly. It is not dependent on an understanding and appreciation of the love object's very being. Rather, the primeval sexual urge dictates the building up of a secondary relationship upon these biological foundations. The crumbling of social convention, in the face of this most powerful of attractions, is inevitable. Inside a day those conventions become meaningless;

> He came straight to her. His eyes were like coals of fire in his head. He bent over her and lifted her in his arms. Lifted her and crushed her to him. Was it a kiss that scorching flame upon her mouth? Again and again it seared her. He was carrying her away. Where? She did not know - she did not care. She was responding to his madness. She ceased to think. Her exuberant temperament gave forth its full mature richness in response to the man's mighty passion. Blind impulse made them its sport. Reason was dead for

> the time being in both. They were prey to elemental instinct, sharing with the habitant of the lair and the dweller in the temple the throb of creation's invincible urge. (p. 104).

The force of the attraction between Margaret and Glengarry sweeps all other concerns into insignificance. Its power is omnipotent.

In the face of it Margaret's perception of her relationship with Barry is put into perspective.

> She looked back on her first love. Calf love, on her part, she knew now .... She had not been able to help that calf love; how could she be blamed for being misled by it? What did she, a child, know of love or life, that she should be called upon to offer up the rest of her natural life as a punishment for consummating that calf love? (p. 202).

Ignorant and innocent, as a result of the restrictions placed upon women within society, Margaret had been ill equipped to recognise her attraction to Barry as merely a whim. Now she is vanquished by a primeval love so absolute that the earlier attraction pales into insignificance.

A social order however, which dictates male ownership of women, determines that Margaret belongs to that first man with whom she has been legally affiliated. Man's social order arrogates a greater strength than that fuelling the laws of nature. The 'natural' woman in Margaret demands the delivering up of herself to Glengarry. The 'civilised' part of her recognises the problematic nature of this desire.

What passes between Margaret and Glengarry is 'real love' of a primeval, dynamic and overpowering kind. It is a rarity that few confront. Ignorant and worldly, Margaret has been unable to differentiate between 'real love' and awakening sexual attraction. Now, in the context of her relationship with Glengarry, Margaret recognises this difference and discovers Glengarry is her true mate. In effect Devanny transposes the ideology of romantic love into a key which by-passes what she sees as the plastic inauthenticity of being 'shook' on someone, and fixes upon the great primeval passion. It is the passion to end all passions. The skyrockets and shooting stars of a storybook union. While on the one hand Devanny undermines a romantic love which misleads and misdirects women, on the other she elevates a primeval passion which romanticises relations between women and men. That the capacity for the most potent of loves lurks beneath the 'flimsy veneer of civilisation' cements it as both all powerful and unchangeable. It is civilisation and the demands of oppressive social organisation which distort this 'real love' between women and men. The perception of male and female as equal, but different

The attraction between Margaret and Glengarry is more passionate than that between Dawn and Val in Dawn Beloved. However, the 'natural' essence of both attractions are identical. Each relationship begins as a celebration of the 'natural' union of Man and Woman. Devanny's perception of male and female as equal, but different fails to locate in this any sense of power

differentials. The 'natural growth' (p. 175) of Male and Female in the absence of 'the foul conventions of civilisation' is elaborated on by Devanny.

> The being of Woman is strung on the Will to Propogate; she is a fabric woven from the raw material called sex-delight; a builder of bodies, she is fashioned for that purpose only, for that purpose is too great, too all-encompassing, to permit of diffusion of energies.
>
> She brings forth the Man-Child, shows him the hills, the rivers, all the face of the earth, the struggle between humans and the natural world around and says: 'Function here.'
>
> She brings forth Woman-child, shows her the mating couch, and says: 'The race must go on.'
>
> Man needs not the mate. He is always there and waiting, but his being is not strung on the Will to Propagate; his joys and sorrows, his dreams and his aspirations, the smoothness of his body and the Youth of him, have not, as a basis, sexual satisfactions.
>
> Sex is but the Source of his life, the tiny stream upon the mountain-top which widens out and deepens into a river of manifold interests.
>
> Woman needs the mate. Her joys and sorrows, her dreams and aspirations, the smoothness of her body and the Youth of her, are based on sexual satisfaction. Give her that, and she has the whole of life. (p. 174).

The aspirations and attributes of Male and Female are clearly seen as being separate. Furthermore these aspirations and attributes are not socially defined, but are biologically determined. the assumption that Woman is directed by nature toward a fulfillment facilitated only by finding a mate and reproducing suggests that social construction of gender is largely identical to biological sex. Woman's development beyond

this biologically determined role is therefore unlikely. Within civilised society a regression occurs for Man shackles Woman's sexuality and stunts her growth. Because her biologically determined source of fulfillment becomes artifically constrained her very being withers and becomes less than the perfect thing it was intended to be nature.

Barry is the agent containing Margaret's growth and Glengarry is the vehicle of release. Margaret's escape from bondage thus has little to do with struggling for greater control over her labour power and solving the problem of her economic dependence. It is structured by the release from sexual slavery. This facet of famale oppression dominates in the novel at the expense of any other.

Devanny's emphasis upon sexual oppression, rather than the exploitation of female labour power, is apparently contradictory. In keeping with Marxist tenets the struggle for women's greater control over their labour power should be central to the overcoming of their oppression. Yet Margaret Messenger gives no thought to the importance of this struggle. Even in her own life the importance of gaining economic independence is not an issue. Instead Margaret is motivated, in her struggle against male supremacy, by the repression of her sexuality.

Interestingly however, the sexual autonomy Devanny claims for Margaret is not an autonomy that releases women from the equation of biological sex with socially constructed gender. There is no suggestion that female ownership and control over sexuality entails release from the social roles attached to biological processes. Motherhood continues to be seen, along with union with the mate, as the crux of female fulfillment even with the release of female sexuality.

With their new found freedom women do not intend to extend their sphere of activity. Rather, in Devanny's scheme of things, women will remain preoccupied with birth, the nurturing of the young and the great love of the mate. Their freedom is designed for greater autonomy over these 'natural' functions and thus improved facility for attaining fulfillment. It is not designed to facilitate the separation of biological realities from male-determined social meaning.

The social realities of being mother and wife separate female and male. Biological realities given social meaning determine not only sexual differentiation, but also sexual stratification. Men derive power from this social construction of gender. Certain aspects of this reality go unchallenged in The Butcher Shop.

Devanny's heroine, like the writer herself, is incapable of recognising that sexual autonomy does not demand the cementing of women's biological functions as social roles. It is assumed that if women are not owned by men, as in class society, then the social roles of wife and mother are power-neutral rather than powerless. Sexual autonomy, rather, demands control over fertility, over the process of birth and freeing of women from biologically determined social roles. So long as women have primary responsibility for child care and domestic labour they remain imprisoned by the social roles stemming from biology. Because differentiation of labour by sex is, in this instance, also stratification male supremacy remains intact.

Devanny's underlying reassertion of a traditional perspective on the role of women means that the revolutionary potential of a concept of female sexual autonomy is undermined. The kinds of changes envisaged appear radical in the context of the force and directness of their presentation in The Butcher Shop. Margaret commits adultery and is unrepentant, is implicated in her husband's suicide and murders her lover.

Yet the shocking nature of her revolt against male ownership has as its root the demand for modification, rather than transformation. With her freedom Woman wants only to find her own mate to whom she will devote herself and become the mother of his children - 'give her that, and she has the whole of life' (p. 174). The only thing about this which is different is

that Woman will have more choice in the selection of a mate. She will be his equal and not his slave, and her childbearing will be accorded the primacy it demands.

In other words the elevation of domesticity and motherhood, that was consolidated as the century advanced, also tempers Devanny's fiction. The dominant ideological position promulgated by King and the Plunket Society designated motherhood and wifehood as women's greatest and noblest vocations. Devanny does the same. The roles are adjusted and modified but are basically unchanged.

Similarly the peripheral nature of women's paid work, ideological and actual, is reflected in Devanny's failure to confront these restrictions as being problematic. They remain sufficiently unimportant as not to warrant indepth consideration. Further similarities between Devanny's orientation and that of dominant ideology are reflected in the sexual dimension. While King and his colleagues saw the importance of repressing anarchic sexual impulse (Olssen, 1979, 10), Devanny argued for the free expression of sexuality.

For Devanny too sexuality was a powerful and dangerous force to be reckoned with. King saw it as undermining social stability and order if not properly controlled. Devanny saw its repression as inevitably resulting in its eruption and subsequent destruction of human relationships. It needed to therefore be

released and not more rigorously policed. However, with its release 'natural' sexual codes will predominate. These feature monogamy and chastity and are curiously reflective of the dominant prescriptive morality of the twenties. In their 'natural' state human beings are inherently 'moral' by virtue of circumstance.

Within this context the limitations of Devanny's fictional analysis of female appression become apparent. The radical nature of the sexual content of The Butcher Shop, lies only in the 'shocking' manner of its presentation of fairly mild ideas. The packaging, as it were, belies the content. The influences upon Devanny's perception of female sexuality and male/female relations are readily apparent, both material and ideological. The concentration upon sexuality and relationships with men is determined by women's virtual exclusion from the public sphere, even at this late date.

Certainly women were active in paid work, in politics and social events but they were also largely invisible. The majority of women still married and still had children. Their primary responsibility remained in these areas. The overall emphasis on the roles of wife and mother, ideological and material, profoundly influenced Devanny's feminist consciousness. It shaped the failure to see the need to struggle for the moving away from biologically determined social roles. Given the limited range of options for economic and social survival women

shaped a vision of female freedom that remained conditioned by these roles.

The 'confusion' Devanny later attributed to The Butcher Shop, is apparent in the comingling of economic and biological determinism. Just as Margaret Messenger stumbles upon the great truth 'that conditions determine ideas' (p. 136), so too are they implicated in Devanny's fictional exploration of the nature of female oppression.

The relationship between Margaret and Glengarry founders on the sexual repression and ownership of women in civilised society. Margaret finds her 'natural' union with Glengarry pure and above reproach despite the fact that it is adulterous. The union is a 'natural' union born of the finest of passions and is therefore superior to the trivial union forged by man-made laws. Whereas Margaret as 'natural' woman revels in this union Glengarry, sullied by man-made conventions, is ashamed. Glengarry feels he has broken these legitimate conventions and wronged both Margaret and Barry Messenger in doing so. He voices his concern to Margaret.

> 'I have outraged you. You are married - with children. Your husband is a good man. You should have had me kicked off the place'. (p. 107).

Margaret recognises that Glengarry's shame is inextricably bound up with the male sense of ownership in women. He is shamed by his 'stealing' of Margaret as the property of Barry Messenger. Margaret however, asserts that she belongs to herself and will distribute her sexual favours as she sees fit. She is thus content to continue her affair with Glengarry without Barry's knowledge. In this way she will not cause pain to her children or Barry, nor go without the love of Glengarry. This to her is commonsense expediency and is in no sense impure or immoral.

Glengarry, on the other hand, cannot knowingly share Margaret despite the fact that he knows, without a doubt, that her love for him is unflinching. At the same time he feels a blackguard and a sneak enjoying Margaret's favours behind Barry's back. His desire to end this 'sneaking' about, Margaret finds appalling.

> 'You like to think that you are trying to be good, don't you, dear? You like to think that you are trying to be manly and protect me, when what you are really doing is waging the sex-war; you have tried to conserve the rights of the male over the female; despite your love, you have been taking sides with your sex because, unconsciously, you realised the danger to male prerogatives if the female is allowed to assume the attributes of a human being, of your equal .... as woman I must submit myself to the man who is my keeper, for the sake of preserving male prerogatives. You, by encroaching upon another man's preserves, felt yourself a traitor to your class'. (p. 122-3)

price. This sense of ownership perverts Glengarry's union with the pure 'natural' Margaret.

The inability of Margaret and Glengarry to direct their passion and channel the sexual energy of their love eventually ends in disaster. Margaret refuses Glengarry's advances upon recognising his bowing to conventional male-defined moral codes, but is continually led back into physical alliance with him. Glengarry, for his part, is fired by a jealousy of Barry Messenger and his possession of Margaret. The fury of a passion both Margaret and Glengarry are forced to repress by social convention is finally unleashed destroying both, along with Barry. Margaret and Glengarry cannot control the passion that merely makes fun of their rational decisions to discontinue their relationship.

Finally Barry, upon learning of the affair, commits suicide. Margaret recognises that his suicide is the unintended result of the complications generated by the male sense of ownership rights in women. She is maddened with rage against men, and particularly against Glengarry. Glengarry's sense of property rights in women is the worm in the apple. Though Barry too has also been unable to cope with his sexual jealousy that of Glengarry has initiated the disaster. In her fury and degradation at being entrapped by Man's sense of property rights Margaret cuts Glengarry's throat 'from ear to ear'. (p. 224).

In keeping with the heroines of feminist protest fiction Margaret's rebellion against male domination is of dubious worth. Her final act of cold blooded murder purifies her following the degradation to which she has been subjected by male ownership. Margaret is 'once again the radiant, glorious woman'. (p. 224). Yet the murder is an individual act of protest which becomes impotent in the face of the whole. It alters the situation of the heroine, but contributes nothing to social change. Margaret asserts that:

> ... I have revenged the Margaret's of the world. Never again shall men claim property rights in me. (p. 224)

Glengarry's murder is indeed merely a revenge for it is not an act of progressive future prevention. It in no way loosens the shackles of women. Margaret releases herself from the bondage of ownership yet effectively cuts her own throat. The purity of practice she demands, within the existing society, is unattainable. Women cannot be free and those who struggle for freedom, in the manner Margaret struggles, effectively sign their own death warrants. Her freedom is worth very little so long as the existing society is predicated upon the oppression of women.

Margaret's brutal murder of Glengarry is a desperate act comparable to Hermione's descent into madness in <u>In Revolt</u> and eventual suicide in <u>A Knight of the Holy Ghost</u>. Along with

Hermione, Margaret recognises 'truth' as a thing apart from that promulgated by dominant ruling class, sexist ideology. 'Truth' lies in the identification with a 'natural' undistorted self in opposition to the socially constructed self.

Hermione's initial response to this recognition is the descent into madness during which she also undertakes a physical act of escape. Margaret's eventual response too is a brief descent into madness which allows her to physically act to change her situation. Margaret's loss of sanity is suspected by Barry who fears that 'she might be loosing her reason' (p. 221). Following Barry's suicide Margaret's madness is fully apparent to Tutaki. He comes to tell Margaret of Barry's death.

> The Maori had seen at last that there was something dreadfully amiss here, too. He backed away from her with terrified eyes. What had come to Maunganui? Had they all gone mad? .... the superstitious kernel of the man came up through the pakehas training and stayed his steps at the top of the stairs. 'Run away! Run away!' it told him. 'A fearsome monster walks with the woman'. (p. 223).

It is in this state of 'possession' that Margaret goes to Glengarry's quarters and cuts his throat. The focusing of frustration and rage with the slaughter of Glengarry purifies Margaret and releases her, temporarily, from her powerlessness.

Margaret attempts to shatter the silence which the men in her life impose upon her by their refusal to register her arguments against the ownership of women. The men cannot accept that women are, in reality, chattels. However, to Margaret this is a basic fact. Rendered speechless by her frustrated attempts to overcome male ignorance and indifference she is forced to seize upon an alternate mode of expression. The violence of Margaret's response to her oppression and the informing The Butcher Shop is a reaction to the male refusal to even register the reality of female oppression.

CONCLUSION

The thesis has explored the work of two women writers. Each lived in a patriarchal society and was dissatisfied with the lives women were forced to lead within such a society. The rebellion of Edith Grossmann and Jean Devanny was limited by certain external factors. The material conditions of their lives, and of those women about them, limited the visualizing of alternatives to the status quo.

For both women the writing of fiction is a positive and potent act in a world within which female creativity and self-determination are frustrated. Fiction becomes the vehicle not only for the expression of rebellion, but also for the working out of solutions to the female situation without the endangering of self in reality. The imaginative projection of escapes from an unbearable reality provide a safety valve, an outlet for female frustration.

Within fiction woman as writer becomes the manipulator of her heroine. The heroine can sift through the alternatives to her oppressed position and her decisions have repercussions only

upon the imaginative level. Through her heroine the writer can 'test out' alternatives to women's problems. Murder and madness, for example, have repercussions in print rather than in prisons and asylums.

The feminist heroines of Grossmann and Devanny go through the painful awakening to the social realities of their times. During the process of developing such an awareness various seemingly attainable solutions to problems are tested. Hermione, in In Revolt, tries reasoning with her family to secure a better education and thus improved employment opportunities. Later she tries pleading with her husband for similar rights. Dawn Haliday in Dawn Beloved tries finding answers in socialist principles. Margaret Messenger in The Butcher Shop too finds an explanation for her position in Marxist theory, but is unable to convince the men in her life of the relevance of this explanation.

Unable to reactivate their unconsciousness of the realities of women's lives the heroines of Grossmann and Devanny also find their solutions are impotent. Their requests are ignored, ridiculed or silenced. Unable to change the world the heroines of feminist fiction attempt to escape it. Lacking effective frameworks to explain women's oppression effective strategies for change too are unavailable. The escape fantasy is the outcome of this.

The limited ways Grossmann and Devanny had of understanding the nature of women's oppression spelt the channelling of their heroines into dead-end routes. Quite literally death of the body, or of the spirit, is a common result. Even the possibilities of escape facilitated by fantasy are limited to stock categories in this fiction.

In In Revolt, Hermione's descent into madness is the major theme of escape. The ultimate fantasy, madness, creates the illusion of freedom. Withdrawing into her own fragmented consciousness Hermione can pretend that she is in fact outside the confines of a social world she cannot deal with. The world becomes scrambled and transformed by the consciousness. Yet madness represents a dead-end route claiming one more potential revolutionary for illusion.

In A Knight of the Holy Ghost, escape takes three forms. The first is the romantic rescue of Hermione by the noble Dr Earle. Initially convinced that a good man is a solution to her problems Hermione is blinded to the reality that she has simply been given a longer lead. The freedom and joy granted her by Dr Earle cannot change the social system. Like madness this is an individualist and impotent strategy for change.

The commune too provides only a temporary solution to women's predicament. Ultimately it is a haven to house the wounded, a launching pad to a pure and committed marriage for its

younger members and an insurance for the less 'fortunate'. The commune is a fantasy escape in a world which had thwarted women's absolute commitment to each other.

Hermione's suicide, at the close of A Knight of the Holy Ghost, is escape with a vengeance. Willing one's own death may have seemed an almost attractive proposition to those so limited in their ability to inflict punishment and revenge. The fantasizing of death is fired by the picturing of the effect on guilty parties of such an untimely demise. This is no visualizing of change but an indictment of the social order.

In Dawn Beloved and The Butcher Shop Devanny's experimenting with responses to oppression generate the extremes of disappearing into the safety of marriage and the murder of the individual oppressor. Dawn Haliday retreats into romance and the element of fantasy orders the innumerable positive traits of her husband. Gavin Fuller is the equivalent to Grossmann's Dr Earle. He is the powerful and beneficent gentleman who will allow Dawn to fully stretch her wings without actually taking off. The joy and novelty of this stretching alone is enough to obscure the impossibility of taking flight.

Margaret's murder of Glengarry in The Butcher Shop is a potent form of escape mirroring the self-destruction of suicide. Women's options for escape and change in this period too generate an overpowering frustration which is manifest in fantasies of

seizing power and inflicting revenge. So tightly bound by creed and convention women's secret longings for the unproblematic removal of spouses by sudden death may not have been unusual. The assumed root cause of frustration and unhappiness might 'sadly' be despatched by a fantasized accident or illness. The actual slashing of Glengarry's throat is the ultimate in this form of escape. Margaret executes the fantasy and is praised for doing so.

The heroines of this fiction fail to find positive solutions to their oppression. They act upon hopes for change in the absence of understanding and strategy. In the nineteen eighties heroines of feminist fiction continue to suffer and die more often than not. Importantly a significant few find answers and provide us with validation, pleasure and positive reinforcement. These functions too are important considering the unlikeliness that we should ever become immune to less pleasant realities.

Grossmann and Devanny were limited in their responses to their situation. Today's women too are limited by similar material realities yet the push forward is reflected in the widening avenues of escape for a few. For a majority the problems are simply reordered. Madness is no longer sealed off in attics, but is instead incarcerated in surburban homes and dampened down with valium. The contraceptive developments that have 'benefitted' women grant the limiting of fertility in exchange for considerable risks to health and general wellbeing.

The sexual revolution too 'freed' women to explore their sexuality, but also to be constantly available to men. The risks of unwanted pregnancy, inadequate and dangerous contraception and venereal disease were subsumed to demands that we demonstrate our liberated status and rejection of frigidity. In a 'liberated' age the forms of our oppression became more subtle. For a majority of women life is, on an underlying level, little different from that led by their mothers.

In the nineteen eighties the benefits women have fought for over many years most clearly accrue to white middle class women. For us the options of escape have been amplified yet their pitfalls still require careful negotiation. We have won access to a living wage, to educational and employment opportunities approaching those of men and to a greater choice of lifestyles. For the liberal these triumphs are sufficient. Remaining content with their lot at the top of the pile white middle class liberal feminists renounce the struggle for radical social transformation. The illusion of escape is patterned by having a career, hiring a child care worker and 'sharing' domestic tasks with a husband. The underlying structures of female oppression remain essentially unchanged.

For some women greater choice is reflected in the alternative lifestyles of the nineteen sixties tradition. The answers uncovered in self-sufficiency and rejection of the establishment however, become ends in themselves. The wider

struggle is submerged in the struggle to recreate an illusory communitarian model. Similarly feminist separatism is a force for rebuilding strength rather than instigating change. As a temporary response it has positive value. As a solution it is ultimately dead-end. Escape becomes reality only for a privileged few.

The most positive alternative, indeed that which must be considered by those already benefitting from the limited changes possible within capitalist patriarchy, is that structured by a socialist feminist political orientation. The central factor must be the push for change that is revolutionary rather than reformist. To this end strategy must involve working with all women and concentration upon the evolving of a positive feminist consciousness. Breaking down the illusory walls between personal lives and political relities can take many forms. Commitment to developing an effective strategy for such a breakdown should inform the practical day to day realities of supporting women.

Understanding why women's lives are the way they are leads to organisation among feminists for change. The material realities of those lives largely limit understanding and thus options for escape. Socialist feminism enables moving toward the kind of understanding that is capable of generating more than pessimism, or unrealistic optimism, of fuelling strategies for change that will contribute to the reorganising of the social world in terms of the interests of all women. In the here and

now, socialist feminism points the way to an active involvement in feminist organisations without the risk of loss of momentum. If change is seen as a process then today's struggles provide the experience, encouragement and evolving of consciousness to fuel the struggles of the future. Whether lost or won positive value accrues to feminist interests.

Socialist feminism provides the beginnings of moulding an escape that is more than fantasy. The struggle to see and speak of a better world is not content with simple modifications, with token gestures and empty promises. The frustrations of women that have exploded into self-defeat must instead be channelled into the blasting of the walls beyond which women remain confined.

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