"PHILOSOPHERS IN PETTICOATS"

A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE DISCURSIVE PRACTICES OF MARY TAYLOR, MARY COLCLOUGH AND ELLEN ELLIS AS CONTRIBUTORS TO DEBATE ON THE 'WOMAN QUESTION' IN NEW ZEALAND BETWEEN 1845-1885

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Feminist Studies at the University of Canterbury

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This thesis is dedicated to my nana Florence Wright (nee Morley) b. 9 June 1892 d. 25 September 1988 and to my mother Carol Ngaire Coleman (nee Wright) b. 19 July 1929, both of whom have shown me strength and love.
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ABSTRACT

Utilising a feminist poststructuralist analytic framework and employing methodological assumptions associated with the New Historicism, this study considers the processes involved in developing resistant discursive strategies and the theoretical potential of marginality as a site for the transformation of social relations. This is accomplished through attention to the subjectivities, identities and social practices of three nineteenth century women’s rights advocates - Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis. The women at the centre of this study are positioned as ex-centric subjects with subversive subjectivities. It is argued that, in their assumptions regarding the natures of 'woman' and 'man', in their understandings of themselves as women, in their strategic invocations of identity, and in their daily social practices, each of these women disrupted dominant nineteenth century understandings about women's nature, place and role. In challenging the boundaries of women's prescribed activities in their own lives, and in encouraging other women to do so, each made significant contributions to women's increased participation as women in many aspects of social and political life in the mid- to late-nineteenth century in New Zealand.
ABBREVIATIONS

CP = Christchurch Press

DSC = Daily Southern Cross

EP = (Wellington) Evening Post

LT = Lyttelton Times

NE = Nelson Examiner

NZH = New Zealand Herald

VM = Victoria Magazine

WT = Waikato Times
INTRODUCTION

Debate about the relative natures of woman and man and their respective positions in social organisation intensified in nineteenth century western social democracies. Hegemonic nineteenth century discourses constructed Woman's essential nature as passive and dependent and assigned women to a quiescent position. Competing discourses emerged during this period which disrupted dominant understandings of what it meant to be a woman. These disruptions to dominant constructions of women's subjectivity are most apparent at the level of self-representation and in the micro-political practices of daily life. In focusing on the subjectivities of three nineteenth century advocates of women's rights, this research is concerned with an exploration of the processes involved in developing resistant discursive strategies.

The specific focus of this research is on discourses associated with the 'woman question' in New Zealand during the period from the mid-1840s to the early 1880s. During this period there was no easily recognisable 'women's movement' in the colony.\(^1\) There were women, however, who, either in direct contact with women's rights advocates in Britain and the United States or with some awareness of these movements, sought to effect change in various aspects of women's situation within the colony through legislative change and through challenging dominant social attitudes. By publicly voicing their critiques and analyses of the prescribed nature of women's lives, and in challenging the boundaries of 'woman's sphere' in their own lived practices, these women placed the 'woman question' on the political agenda in colonial New Zealand well before the emergence of organised forms of political activism.

The lives and writing of three such women, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, are the focus of this research. These particular

\(^1\) Throughout this study, the capitalised Woman is used to designate dominant nineteenth century conceptualisations of woman, whereas single inverted commas are used to indicate instances where this concept or category is used for analytical purposes and is, therefore, contestable.

\(^2\) An organised women's movement developed in New Zealand in the mid-1880s with the establishment of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. See Chapter 2.
women have been chosen because of the availability of access to primary source material regarding their lives and their views on women's collective situation in the nineteenth century. An analysis of these texts provides the opportunity to consider the ways in which their discursive practices disrupted dominant understandings of women's nature, place, and role in the social order.

Mary Taylor emigrated from Yorkshire in her late twenties and lived in Wellington from July 1845 until early 1860. During this time she was self-employed running her own dry goods store with the assistance of her cousin Ellen Taylor. During the fifteen years she spent in New Zealand she corresponded regularly with friends in England, began writing a novel and thought about the "other book" through which she intended "to revolutionize society". On her return to England, Mary Taylor began contributing articles to the Victoria Magazine, some of which were published separately in 1870 as The First Duty of Women.

Mary Colclough emigrated from London in her early twenties in 1859. Almost a decade later, as a widow and mother of two young children, she began contributing articles and letters to the Auckland newspapers on a range of issues concerning women under her pen-name "POLLY PLUM". In mid-1871 she began lecturing on women's rights and toward the end of 1874 went to Melbourne where she again stimulated public debate on

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3 While there were many advocates of women's rights in New Zealand during this period, the differences between the personal situations of the three women chosen, along with the depth of material available on their views, offers the opportunity for a complex analysis of their subjectivities and discursive practices.

4 Most of her correspondence during this time has survived due to her friendship with Charlotte Brontë and has been reprinted in Stevens (1972).

5 This novel, Miss Miles: A Tale of Yorkshire Life Sixty Years Ago, was finally published in 1890.

6 Letter to Charlotte Brontë, 10 April 1849. [Stevens (1972) Letter 18]

7 The Victoria Magazine was established by Emily Faithfull in 1863 as a monthly magazine for women. It continued for seventeen years and consistently covered issues relating to increasing educational and employment opportunities for women and women's suffrage, offering a focus for the fast-growing community of women who sought changes in a variety of aspects of women's social, economic and political situation. It was printed by the Victoria Press, established by Emily Faithfull in March 1860 to provide employment for women in the printing trade. [See W.E. Fredeman (1974) "Emily Faithfull and the Victoria Press: an Experiment in Sociological Bibliography" THE LIBRARY Fifth Series, Vol XXIX, #2, pp.139-64.]
the 'woman question' through newspaper correspondence and public lecturing. On her return to New Zealand she disappeared from public view, teaching in Canterbury schools until her death in 1885.

Ellen Ellis emigrated from Surrey, England in July 1859 with her husband and two sons. She was active in temperance work, in fostering links between the European settlers and Māori, and in organising opposition to the Contagious Diseases Act in Auckland. In 1882 she published a novel, written especially for "working women" with the intention of "awakening thought" and marking an "epoch" in the lives of women readers.

Colonial advocates of women's rights often saw themselves as part of an international women's movement. Mary Taylor received newspapers and books regularly from England and retained a keen interest in the arguments and activities of those attempting to effect changes in the position of women in Britain during this period. Her return to England coincided with an intense period of 'feminist' activism and within a few years she was contributing regularly to the recently established Victoria Magazine. Her involvement with this magazine, which continued until at least 1877, brought her into contact with many of the key participants in the women's movement in England. Although it is not possible to ascertain how many copies of *The First Duty of Women* found their way to New Zealand, it is highly probable that there were New Zealand subscribers to the Victoria Magazine.

Living in Auckland as a contemporary of Mary Colclough, Ellen Ellis would have had access to the articles concerning the activities of participants in the international women's movements which were reprinted from time to time in the colonial press. She also had

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8 *Everything Is Possible To Will*, published in London.

9 Ellis (1882) p.iii,vii.

10 See, for example, her letters to Charlotte Brontë, June to 24 July 1848, and 1852. [Stevens (1972) Letters 16 and 24] In the former of these letters, Mary Taylor admonished Charlotte Brontë for not making use of her novel *Jane Eyre* (published in 1847) to make political comment on the absurdities of doctrines confining women's spheres of activity.

11 See, for example, references to lectures by Miss Anna Dickinson [DSC 11 December 1869, p.6., 15 April 1870, p.3.; NZH 12 February 1872, p.3.], the Women's Suffrage Convention in San Francisco [NZH 24 June 1871, p.2.] and the Women and Prison Congress in London [NZH 1 October 1872, p.3].
access to the local debates on women's rights spear-headed by Mary Colclough and contributed anonymously to these debates under the persona of "A WOMAN".\textsuperscript{12} Her novel clearly indicates her awareness of some of the writings and activities of women's rights advocates in Britain\textsuperscript{13} and in 1882 she was in direct contact with the London National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act.\textsuperscript{14}

Mary Colclough also had definite links with women's rights advocates in England. From late 1872 she had been in direct contact with some of the leaders of women's organisations, sending and receiving letters and papers and acting as "a recognised agent and advocate in this part of the world" on issues pertaining to women's rights.\textsuperscript{15} In early 1873 she was appointed a member of the Ladies' Vigilant Society of England and was requested to lecture and write on their behalf in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{16} She was also a correspondent and friend of the Vigilant Society of America which had been formed to monitor all legislation affecting the "weak", particularly the laws relating to women's rights and property.\textsuperscript{17}

This thesis explores how each of these three women understood their position as an advocate of women's rights. The focus is on understanding how they utilised various discursive strategies to construct meaning and knowledge. To facilitate this aim, this study draws on aspects of feminist poststructuralist analysis. As a mode of

\textsuperscript{12} Historical evidence to support this claim is provided in Appendix I.

\textsuperscript{13} This is evident in her admiration for the writings of Harriet Martineau, her respect for "troublesome characters to orthodoxy" such as Mary Sommerville and Mrs Elizabeth Fry, and her references to the (in)famous Bradlaugh-Besant case on the controversial issue of family planning. [See Ellis (1882) pp.199, 238, 135-36., see also Chapter 11.]

\textsuperscript{14} In 1882, when Ellen Ellis organised a public meeting to provide information to local women on the workings of the Contagious Diseases Act she stated "I have much information as valuable and trustworthy to offer thereupon, such perhaps as no one else in Auckland." This information contained details of the operation of the Contagious Diseases Acts in England and on the continent and had been provided by the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act in London. [See "ELLEN E. ELLIS" NZH 23 September 1882, p.5., and "The Contagious Diseases Prevention Act" NZH 28 September 1882, p.5.]

\textsuperscript{15} See Editorial note DSC 31 October 1872, p.2.; see also "Women as Wives" DSC 24 February 1871, p.3.

\textsuperscript{16} See report of lecture at Alexandra DSC 17 April 1873, p.2.

\textsuperscript{17} See report of lecture in Melbourne DSC 23 November 1874, p.3.
knowledge production which makes use of theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions, a feminist poststructuralist analysis offers a way of understanding the intricate webs of power relations in which these women were positioned. Feminist poststructuralist analysis is particularly useful in this study because it provides some strategies for examining how meaning and knowledge are discursively produced through language and other signifying practices. Given that Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were each positioned within, and drew upon, multiple discourses in their understandings of themselves as women and in their advocacy of women's rights, feminist poststructuralist analysis offers theoretical tools with which to consider the subversive potential of their subjectivities. It is also useful for an analysis of their invocations of various identities and their knowledge claims. Accordingly, texts produced by these women and texts about their lives will be analysed as examples of how language and other signifying practices constitute subjectivity. Particular attention will be given to consideration of how each of these women utilised discursive strategies which resisted and undermined dominant political interests.

Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each developed a political analysis of women's situation which was based on a construction of women's collective identity as women. According to Mary Taylor, this shared identity arose out of the "artificial state" in which women lived as a consequence of the limited and erroneous construction of women's nature created by men. This "artificial state" effectively made women's existence impossible in this world. According to Mary Colclough, women's collective identity arose out of their status as a "subject class, depending on the will of man for everything". Likewise, Ellen Ellis described women as "slaves" on the basis that they were denied "the subtle potency of recognised being". This focus on the artificial expectations placed on women due to idealised notions

18 These texts include written texts produced by and about each of these women as well as their daily lived practices. A full discussion of issues relating to this definition of texts is provided in Section Three.

19 See "Feminine Idleness" and "Feminine Work" in The First Duty of Women.

20 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 24 May 1871, p.3.

21 Ellis (1882) p.63.
of Woman, on women's subjection and subserviency, and the use of the metaphor of slavery, was heavily influenced by discourses on women's rights within Britain and the United States. An understanding of the international women's movement during the nineteenth century is therefore crucial to an appreciation of the specific features of the women's movement in New Zealand during this period. Accordingly, Section One, *Texts and Contexts*, begins by contextualising the women's movement in nineteenth-century New Zealand within an international framework of discourses on the 'woman question'. This is followed by consideration of specific aspects of colonial New Zealand which influenced the emergence and development of the 'women's movement' during this period.

Section Two, *Theorising Subjects*, focuses on the theoretical framework for this research and on the key theoretical issues that inform the analysis of texts produced by Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis and information available about their lives. A significant feature of nineteenth-century debate on the 'woman question' was concern about the constructedness of woman's 'nature' and how this was integrally related to women's subservient role in social organisation. Contrary to dominant constructions of the female subject, however, there were individuals who asserted themselves as active, reasoning, and autonomous female subjects. Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis asserted understandings of themselves as women and of their relationships to the world which differed significantly from constructions of female subjectivity represented in social and political discourses which dominated public debate. This difference cannot be reduced to either a straightforward contradiction of dominant constructions of women's subjectivity nor to a simple rejection of societal dictates of women's nature and role. The subjectivities of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were simultaneously marginal to dominant hegemonic discourses regarding women's nature and role, and marginalised by these discourses. For these reasons, an analysis of their subjectivities within the context of their advocacy of women's rights, both within their polemical writing and in their social practices, provides an opportunity to develop more complex understandings of the features of "marked" subjectivities.\(^2\) Such an

\(^2\) The phrase "marked subjectivities" is taken from Nancy Hartsock to refer to the subjectivities of those who share the experience of being marginalised and devalued. [See Hartsock (1990)] For a detailed discussion of the epistemological features of such
analysis also offers an opportunity to explore their strategic discursive practices in terms of the ways in which they may have opened up positions from which to disrupt and challenge the hegemony of dominant constructions of subjectivity and of dominant claims to knowledge. Chapter 3, Ex-Centric Subjects, presents an argument for both the necessity for, and the possibility of, constructing new forms of subjectivity before considering more closely the theoretical potential of marginality as a site for transformation.

An important theme within the arguments presented by nineteenth-century advocates of women's rights was the need for women to be autonomous and self-determined. In Patricia Grimshaw's analysis:

The fundamental wish of feminists was that women should have autonomy in the determination of their lives; that they should be allowed to define for themselves the areas which they would or would not enter, according to their individual talents and potentialities.\(^\text{23}\)

At the age of twenty-six, Mary Taylor confided in her friend that she liked to establish her right to do "odd things."\(^\text{24}\) Whether it was taking the "imprudent" step of teaching in an all-boys school in Germany,\(^\text{25}\) astonishing Wellington society by lodging with a widower while employed to teach his daughter even though she had no intention of marrying the man,\(^\text{26}\) or, when aged in her sixties, accompanying groups of young women on tours in the Swiss Alps,\(^\text{27}\) Mary Taylor consistently acted according to her own dictates of appropriate behaviour. She wrote of the need for women to make "unrestricted use" of their own powers and repeatedly stressed that women must take responsibility for their own situation and struggle against the evils they suffered.\(^\text{28}\)

Similarly, Ellen Ellis emphasised the need for women to realise that they had a 'will of their own' and that changes in the relationship


\(^{24}\) Letter to Ellen Nussey, Winter 1843. [Stevens (1972) p.50.]

\(^{25}\) See letter from Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey, written in Brussels 1843. [Stevens (1972) p.51.]

\(^{26}\) Letter to Charlotte Brontë, June to 24 July 1848. [Stevens (1972) Letter 16]

\(^{27}\) See Murray (1990) p.xviii.

\(^{28}\) See, for example, "Feminine Idleness" in The First Duty of Women.
between the sexes and in the material situations of women were dependent upon women developing and exercising their 'wills'.

This theme of the need for women to achieve autonomy and self-representation persists within much contemporary feminist writing. Poststructuralist analysis, however, problematises this notion of 'self-definition'. Chapter 4, Subversive Subjectivities, addresses these issues of autonomy, will and self-determination. It presents an argument for the possibility of 'self-determination' and agency and shows how this is linked to what has been described as "the discursive battle for the subjectivity of the individual". The interconnection between reconstructed subjectivities and the need for a shift away from traditional bases of knowledge claims which have undermined women and inhibited their participation in political debate is an important underlying premise of this study. While there have been risks and exclusions associated with the knowledge claims made by women, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis are evidence that women have not been silenced. The possibilities that reconstructed female subjects, subjectivities and identities offer as challenges to the hegemony of dominant discourses are also discussed in Chapter 4.

Section Three, The Politics of the Past, discusses the underlying feminist historical methodology which informs the present study. While this research offers a contribution to women's history, to feminist history and to the history of feminism in New Zealand, in both form and content it is both produced and located on the margins of each of these agendas and their corresponding historiographies. This study is based on a particular approach to feminist historical practice which is referred to as the 'New Historicism'. As a form of historical practice informed by feminist poststructuralist theories, my approach is premised on the understanding that a study of the history of feminism is different from a study of women's lives. In Chapter 5, Feminist Historiography, I discuss the theoretical assumptions that have informed my conceptualisations of the women's movement in nineteenth century New Zealand, involvement in that movement, and my choice and treatment of texts. This chapter indicates how a study of the discursive practices of individual historical subjects can contribute to an understanding of the history of feminism both as a discursive field and as a political movement for change.

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The remaining chapters of this thesis focus on the texts produced by Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis and on material available about their personal biographies and lived experiences. The main concern of this study is an analysis of the different ways in which they developed resistant discursive strategies. This involves an exploration of the subjectivities of each of these women in the context of their advocacy of women's rights. On the basis of my argument that disruptions to dominant constructions of women's subjectivity will be most apparent at the level of self-representation and in "the micropolitical practices of daily life", Section Four, The Politics of Everyday Life, explores the subjectivities of each of these women through an analysis of texts which provide insights into the various identities constructed by them and by others as well as their social practices. It will be argued that just as their politicised identities destabilised and challenged dominant nineteenth century understandings of the basis for women's identities, in challenging the boundaries of prescribed activities for women they increased the possibilities for women's participation as women in many aspects of social and political life.

Section Five, Philosophers in Petticoats, furthers this exploration of how, for each of these historical individuals, their subjective understandings of themselves as women were simultaneously critical of, opposed to, and yet contained within dominant nineteenth century constructions of Woman. Chapter 8, Essential Differences?, focuses on the ontological assumptions regarding the natures of 'woman' and 'man' and the relationship between the sexes in the writings of each of these women and considers them in relation to dominant ontological assumptions of nineteenth century thought. This is followed by an analysis of their views on femininity, religion, education, marriage, women's suffrage, and alcohol. Through an analysis of the positions they assumed within these discursive fields, consideration is given to the political implications of the subject positions each of these women privileged.

This thesis offers a feminist analysis of the contributions of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis to debates on the 'woman question' prior to the formation of an organised and readily identifiable women's movement in New Zealand. Its aim is to contribute

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to the study of the history of feminism in New Zealand and to the analysis of the processes involved in the construction of resistant and subversive discursive practices.
SECTION ONE
TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

INTRODUCTION

The signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 marked the beginning of New Zealand's official status as a British Colony. During the initial period of Crown Colony government, while in theory political power was concentrated in the Colonial Office in London and in the crown-appointed Governor, in practice issues which required formal approval of the British Cabinet were generally matters of routine and did not elicit public debate. With the passing of the 1852 Constitution Act, New Zealand gained separate political and legislative status from Britain, although Māori policy remained reserved to the Crown. Ongoing political and economic ties to Britain coupled with the British Isles being the main source of immigrants, ensured that New Zealand continued to have a particular association with Britain throughout the nineteenth century. These features of New Zealand's social, political and economic systems had a significant impact on the emergence and development of the women's movement in New Zealand during the colonial period.

While the women's movement in colonial New Zealand had a particular relationship with Britain, the women's movement in Britain during the nineteenth century was, in turn, greatly influenced by discourses of women's rights and the 'woman question' in the United States. Although organised feminism developed earlier in the United States than in Britain, it was rooted in similar social conditions. In both

1 See McLintock (1958) p.78.

2 Although women had been involved in a number of reform movements in the early decades of the nineteenth century in the United States, the emergence of an organised women's rights movement is traditionally associated with the first women's rights convention held at Seneca Falls in New York in 1848. In Britain, an organised women's movement can be dated from the mid-1850s with the formation of the Langham Place Group and the subsequent establishment of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (1857), the English Women's Journal (1858), the Society for the Employment of Women (1859), and the Victoria Press (1860). As Boulding notes, however, women's suffrage activism can be dated from the 1830s. [See Bolt (1993), Boulding (1992) p.244., Hollis (1979), Melder (1977),]
countries, women's movements emerged within the context of developing industrialised and urbanised economies which had an influential middle class and predominantly Protestant culture. Both America and Britain shared a heritage of Enlightenment ideas which emphasised enlarging political rights and political tolerance. The changes which accompanied the emergent industrialisation and urbanisation of the United States and Britain during the early nineteenth century destabilised many aspects of social relations. Definitions of 'womanhood' and 'manhood' were in a state of flux as discourses associated with industrialisation and capitalism were in dialectic with traditional discourses concerning the social, economic and political ordering of society. An inevitable consequence of such tensions was a questioning of the assumptions regarding the place and role of women, men, and the family unit.

In focusing on the emergence of women's movements in Britain and the United States, Chapter 1, The 'Woman Question' in an International Perspective, will attempt to show how the analyses, strategies and political resources for the women's movement in nineteenth century New Zealand were influenced by New Zealand's positioning within an international movement concerned with the roles and rights of women. Chapter 2, "Inoculating" the Women of New Zealand with "Pestilent and Foolish Doctrines", will consider how particular features of colonial New Zealand society impacted on the emergence and formulation of debates regarding women's rights.

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O'Neill (1969)

3 See Bolt (1993) p.3.

4 For further discussion of these issues, see Poovey (1989).
CHAPTER 1

THE 'WOMAN QUESTION'
IN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Throughout the course of the nineteenth century, ideologies associated with developing industrialism and emergent capitalism were in dialectic with ideologies of patriarchy within the Western world. In drawing attention to the social and political aspects of the role of women in society, the ideological changes associated with industrialisation and capitalism destabilised concepts of what was 'natural' and therefore fixed. As a consequence, many aspects of social relations were destabilised and assumptions regarding the respective 'natures' and roles of women and men were questioned and challenged.

Under patriarchy, adult women were required to subscribe to the heterosexual contract - to be defined by, and in relationship to, men. In material terms, this required women to bond with men in the institution of marriage - to enter a legal contract which confined women to the 'private' sphere by placing the wife in a position of economic dependence, and which demanded strict obedience and subservience to the 'needs' and demands of her husband. Industrialisation and capitalism, on the other hand, offered possibilities for increased economic independence, educational and employment opportunities, and participation in the 'public' sphere. For some women, the experience of the contradictions of these competing ideologies within their own lives led them to question their relationship to men and their position in society. These tensions between the old certainties and the new possibilities also stimulated a widespread reemergence of the debate on the 'woman question'. This chapter will consider how nineteenth century Anglo-American versions of the 'woman question' were influenced by ideologies of domesticity, religious revivalism and the political structures of Britain and the United States as well as by intellectual traditions which questioned women's social position. In considering how these social, political and ideological factors related to the situation of women in colonial New Zealand, it will be argued that while the women's movement in nineteenth century New Zealand drew on a heritage of ideas, analyses
and strategies from Anglo-American discourses on the 'woman question', particular features of colonial New Zealand society reshaped the priorities and concerns of activists for change in the New Zealand context.

**Ideologies of 'Republican Motherhood' and the 'Cult of Domesticity'**

The American Revolution, triggered by colonial resentment at the commercial policies of Britain and by lack of American participation in political decisions which affected the interests of that country, served as a significant impetus for serious debate on the 'woman question' in the United States. While in part, this was a consequence of acknowledging women's contributions to the war, it was also due to the fact that for republicanism to be viable and successful, it needed to involve all citizens. In terms of the 'woman question', the most significant outcome of this situation was the need and obligation for a public role to be defined for American women. What emerged was the concept of 'republican motherhood' wherein women were accorded the political responsibility of rearing virtuous children who would become patriotic citizens. In effect, this conferred a public dimension to what had always been viewed as women's traditional roles. In making women the guardians of the moral welfare of their communities, the ideology of 'republican motherhood' also opened up increased possibilities for women, on the basis of their ascribed identities as women, to engage in charitable work as a means of using their moral influence to the benefit of American society as a whole. Stimulated by these ideological prescriptions, arguments began to emerge in the early nineteenth century in America for the need for women to have increased educational opportunities to enable them to better fulfill their prescribed roles. Hence, an effect of societal demands that women be good mothers and capable homemakers was dramatic improvements in the educational opportunities available for females during the early decades of the nineteenth century.

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2. For further discussion of 'republican motherhood', see Kerber (1980) and Norton (1980).
3. See, for example, Norton (1980) and Kerber (1980).
Britain had its equivalent of the American cult of 'republican motherhood' in the early 1800s in what has been variously termed the 'cult of the domestic angel' or the 'cult of domesticity'. Within this ideological construct, decorative 'idleness' and dependency were viewed as both virtuous and appropriate to women's 'essential' role of ministering to men. As feminist historians have shown, ideological dictates of what it meant to be a 'woman' were in a continual state of flux during the course of the nineteenth century and concepts of domesticity and the notion of 'public' and 'private' spheres on which they were based were neither static nor evenly applied. Moreover, the effects of these constructions of ideal womanhood differed for women depending on their class status. For many middle-class women, the 'cult of domesticity' accentuated their extreme economic dependence and social isolation while, for women who were not married, it frequently resulted in an experience of being considered 'redundant'. The tensions inherent in this ideological prescription were even more polarised for working-class women for whom the distinctions between the worlds of paid employment and family life were blurred. On the one hand, economic necessity increasingly demanded that working-class women enter the public domain of paid employment. On the other hand, working-class women were also subjected to a version of the 'cult of domesticity' which demanded that they remain in the domestic sphere and provide a sanctuary for their men.

Various explanations have been offered by feminist historians as to why this domestic ideology emerged as the dominant ideal for women at this particular period in history. Christine Bolt has associated its

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5 See, for example, Murray (1982), Kraditor (1968).
6 See, for example, Cott (1978), Murray (1982) p.5.
8 During the middle decades of the nineteenth century this status become increasingly ascribed to educated middle class women who were not married. See Chapter 9 for further discussion.
10 The implications of this ideology also differed for working class women depending on their marital status. For young single working-class women, this ideology constructed 'femininity' as the ability to earn their own living and to be good workers, in particular, good domestic workers, where as for married working-class women, this ideology demanded that they be good wives and mothers. Where there were young dependants, this latter group was often forced to engage in poorly paid work within the home. As a consequence, the 'separation' of home and work, which was held to be a characteristic feature of Victorian society, was, for married women of the working classes, more ideological than real. [See Purvis (1989).]
emergence with the evangelical desire to preserve respectability and social order in the midst of working class and intellectual unrest.\textsuperscript{11} Phillipa Levine has suggested that its underlying purpose was "to idealize a situation created by the new industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century\textsuperscript{12}" while Deborah Gorham maintains that it was to relieve the tensions that existed between the moral values of Christianity and the competitive values of capitalism.\textsuperscript{13}

In locating the prescriptions associated with this domestic ideology within the transformation of the system of patriarchy during the nineteenth century, and arguing that such a transformation was necessary to accommodate the emerging capitalist economic system, Zillah Eisenstein offers a functionalist explanation for the over-determination of this ideology.\textsuperscript{14} Her argument is based on an understanding of 'patriarchy' as a familial-social, ideological and political system which is based on male dominance. She maintains that a crucial part of accommodating the emerging capitalist economic system involved men reasserting control over the reproductive power of women and over women's place and role in the political structure of society. Given that the emerging capitalist relations of production had the potential of making women economically independent from men, a reassertion of patriarchal control in the form of such pervasive prescriptions of domestic ideology could, in this form of analysis, suggest that at this particular moment in history, 'woman' did not simply represent domestic virtue but sexual ordering itself.\textsuperscript{15}

In their tendency to assume that the social system itself is the prior causal reality, such functionalist arguments are problematic within the

\textsuperscript{11} Bolt (1993) p.47.

\textsuperscript{12} Levine (1987) p.12. R.J. Morris offers a similar explanation, maintaining that nineteenth century prescriptions of respectability represented attempts "to assert order and self-control on the lives of individuals faced with the uncertainties of industrial society." However, in his study "Class and Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution 1780 - 1850", in which he argues that the two status concepts which emerged in the mid-1800s were those of 'the gentleman' and 'respectability', he fails to consider how the former was conceptually dependent upon an over-determination of the corresponding concept of 'the lady'. [See Morris (1979) pp.62-69.]

\textsuperscript{13} Gorham (1982) p.4.

\textsuperscript{14} Eisenstein (1981) p.18.

\textsuperscript{15} For development of this argument, see Alexander (1984) p.144.
framework of a feminist poststructuralist analysis. Rather than understanding these prescriptive domestic ideologies as a response to tensions between competing ideologies of Christianity, capitalism and patriarchy, they need to be considered within a web of discursive practices which accompanied the rise of industrialism and the emergence of capitalism in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Within this context, nineteenth century ideologies of domesticity can be understood as a critical site in which the competing discourses of patriarchy and capitalism vied with social, religious, economic and political discourses in assigning status to the individual. Traditionally, status was accorded on the basis of class distinctions, with a person's class being determined through a combination of occupation and income. For women, this was linked to the occupations of either their fathers (if they were single) or of their husbands. During the Victorian period, however, the social unit of the family, as opposed to the male head of that unit, assumed the crucial function of being an indicator of status. Moreover, status was no longer simply accorded on the basis of material wealth but was also based on the manifestation of particular personal and cultural attributes as dictated, for women, by the various versions of the 'cult of domesticity'. While single working class girls were accorded status through being good domestic workers, middle-class girls and women were expected to fulfil these domestic ideals within the family unit and any attempts to raise their own wealth or standing through individual effort in the public world constituted a loss of status. For girls of the middle-classes, the expectation was that they devote their attention to developing accomplishments which would make them attractive to a future husband and prepare them for their future roles as wives, mothers and 'ladies'. Being a 'lady' involved following established routines of etiquette and managing the household: a 'lady' was not expected to engage in routine manual tasks, and, while she might engage in unpaid philanthropic and benevolent work, ideologies

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16 In discussing the limitations of functionalist analysis, Don Martindale notes that "[b]y taking the system as the object of study and treating it as the cause of all else, all other social phenomena are thrust outside the pale of analysis or distorted to fit the a priori notion that all social events are system-determined." (p. 159, Don Martindale (1965) "Limits and Alternatives to Functionalism in Sociology" in Don Martindale (ed.) Functionalism in the Social Sciences Philadelphia; The American Academy of Political and Social Science)

17 See, for example, Caine (1977), Burstyn (1980).

18 See Gorham (1982).
of domesticity dictated that she not engage in any form of paid labour. Because status was increasingly assigned on the basis of such personal and cultural attributes, middle-class women were assigned a crucial role in the determination of the social status of the family unit because they managed the outward forms that both manifested and determined social status.19

As ideologies, 'republican motherhood' and the 'cult of domesticity' functioned more as prescriptions for women's behaviour than being accurate descriptions of women's reality. The reality for the majority of women in the nineteenth century was that they were engaged in the practical necessities of daily domestic life. While some middle-class women had access to domestic servants and governesses, few were exempted from the daily work of managing a household and raising children. As Phillipa Levine notes, while the ideal division between 'domestic woman' and 'public man' was never realised in many homes and never became the dominant reality, as an ideology it was highly effective in ordering people's values according to its precepts.20

These ideologies were both a response to, and a product of, the process of the increasing separation of 'home' and 'work' which was occurring in response to the demands of urbanisation, industrialisation and capitalism during the course of the nineteenth century in Britain and the United States. By constructing women's place as within the domestic sphere, and not defining women's activities within that sphere as work, these ideologies operated within the interests of both capitalist discourses and patriarchal discourses. In this respect, therefore, they can be understood as both operating within, and in response to, a complex matrix of changing power relations within nineteenth century Western societies.

"Housekeeping in the bush"

While these prescriptive domestic ideologies were evident within the colonial New Zealand context, they were modified by the particular demands and conditions of pioneering life. Thomas Arnold's statement in 1848, that "housekeeping in the bush without a wife is next door to

19 Ibid., p.8.
an impossibility", bears testimony to the status ascribed to colonial wives on the basis of their functional contribution to the process of colonisation. Within the colonial environment, wives were highly valued commodities because their domestic and reproductive labour was integral to the European settlement of the colony.

Because the business of homemaking in the colonial context was, for all but a few elite upper-class European women, generally incompatible with the expectations of genteel refinement, colonial versions of domestic ideologies were less rigid in their prescriptions than in Britain and the United States. While prescriptions associated with women's access to and involvement in 'public' spheres of activity remained, the practical necessities of daily life in primitive and harsh isolated conditions, coupled with the severe shortages of domestic servants, tended to allow for a widening of the spheres of acceptable activities for European women, particularly for those of the middle-classes. Not only was it deemed appropriate for pioneering women to engage in physically demanding and menial work in the domestic sphere while living in primitive conditions with only the most basic of amenities, but it was expected of women, and hence was their duty, to fulfil this role.

Some middle class women experienced this widening of their expected duties as liberating and their rigorous daily routines engendered a degree of self-respect which had not been experienced within the confines of genteel idleness. Jane Maria Atkinson, for example, wrote "I consider myself a much more respectable character than I was when I was a fine lady, did nothing for anyone but made a great many people do things for me." Similarly, Ellen Ellis wrote that "the freedom from restraints & hateful conventionalities (sic) of the Old World life are to me delightful". In her experience, the demands of colonial life were constant evidence that "a woman may be a perfect servant, and a perfect lady, at the same time".

22 See, for example, Macdonald (1983) and Anne Summers (1976) who develop the argument that the process of colonising the land was facilitated by the colonisation of women by men through heterosexual coupling.
25 Ibid., p.127.
life created opportunities for some women to extend their range of activity, it also lead to experiences which made some women critical of doctrines about women's inferiority. Hence, while Ellen Ellis delighted in the freedom of her new possibilities and gained enormous personal satisfaction from some aspects of colonial life, her experiences also strengthened her critical views on how a wife becomes the property and slave of her husband within the marriage contract.\(^\text{26}\) Despite this analysis, however, Ellen Ellis' satisfaction that a woman could be a "perfect servant" and a "perfect lady" at the same time bears testimony to how colonial women's subjectivities remained closely intertwined with prescriptive ideologies of domesticity and socially sanctioned forms of femininity.

**Religious Revivalism**

The late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century also marked a major period of religious revivalism in both Britain and the United States and this also had a significant influence on the emergence of organised movements for women's rights. The dominant religious tradition which had emerged in both Britain and the United States was Protestant Christianity. While there was a great deal of diversity within this tradition, many sects such as Quakers, Nonconformists, Congregationalists, Calvinists and Evangelicals, stressed that an individual could have a direct relationship with God, unmediated by church officials or church doctrine. One important outcome of this belief was that, on the basis of religious inspiration, women could challenge institutionalised attitudes and authority.

Evangelical religion appealed to many women because it was based on duty and placed service above doctrine, emphasising the 'feminine' qualities of emotion, humility, self-denial and obedience.\(^\text{27}\) Within a framework of traditional ideas about women's role as moral guardians of the home and family, it extended their sphere of influence to wider society and, ultimately, to responsibility for the redemption of the world. Some denominations, such as Unitarianism and Quakerism, also provided enlarged opportunities for women to engage in leadership and preaching, and a myriad of female associations, Bible and missionary societies, and female mutual aid societies were established in Britain.

\(^{26}\) See Chapter 11.

\(^{27}\) See Rendall (1985).
and the United States. While many of these organisations were specifically concerned with benevolent activities and raising funds for specific congregations, they provided a forum for women to express themselves, work towards specific tasks, and form female support networks. The development of charitable day schools and Sunday schools also provided educational opportunities for girls and teaching opportunities for women.

While there was not necessarily any systematic connection between these benevolent organisations and the more radical women's groups which emerged over the following few decades, for some women such experiences were a forerunner to involvement in the overtly political reformist campaigns against slavery in both Britain and the United States. Women's involvement in these organisations also created situations in which women could acquire confidence in asserting their unwillingness to accept male controls on their reform endeavours and provided some women with experience of speaking on a public platform. Moreover, because evangelical revivalism followed a similar pattern in Britain and the United States, a set of ideological and personal connections between British and American political radicals, humanitarians, Nonconformists and evangelicals emerged. As later

28 While such organisations were generally established by white middle class women, working class black women in the United States also established many benevolent and welfare organisations from the early 1800s. [See Anne Firor Scott (1990) "Most Invisible of All: Black Women's Voluntary Associations" THE JOURNAL OF SOUTHERN HISTORY Vol 56, #1, pp.3-22.]


30 For a contrasting view, see Blanche Glassman Hersh who maintains that feminism in the United States "grew naturally out of antislavery because the abolitionist's argument for human rights transcended both sex and color, and because the obstacles that women faced made their efforts to work against slavery a feminist consciousness-raising experience". [Hersh (1979) p.252.]

31 As Christine Bolt points out, the contribution of British women to abolitionism has generally been underestimated. While on a smaller scale than their American counterparts, British women were involved in anti-slavery campaigns through participation in abolitionist debates, making financial contributions, and utilising their power as consumers in supporting the boycott of slave-grown sugar. Their role in bringing about abolition in the British Empire was acknowledged by William Lloyd Garrison in his appeal to American women in 1833 to take up anti-slavery work. [See Bolt (1993) pp.35-36,65-69.]

32 Ibid., p.34.

33 Ibid., p.35. Women's involvement in a wide range of female activities throughout the early nineteenth-century has also been linked to the development of what has variously been called "the development of a female consciousness", a "caste consciousness", a sense of female identity and solidarity, and a sense of "sisterhood". [See, for example, Offen (1988) p.125, n.12.; DuBois (1979) pp.238-39.; Restor (1985); Melder (1977).]
chapters will show, involvement in benevolent and religious organisations had a particular significance for European women in the colonial New Zealand context in terms of the opportunities these activities provided for women to engage in activities associated with moral reform on the basis of their ascribed identities as women.

**Political Structures**

The political structures of the United States and Britain also had a significant impact on the development of the women's movements in both countries. While the women's movements which emerged in Britain in the nineteenth century were significantly influenced by ideologies of utopian socialism and social scientific enquiry, these ideologies developed within and in response to a heavily class-stratified society. The centralised political system of the British government meant there tended to be limited options for pressure groups compared with the revolutionary legacy of the United States. Hence, whereas in Britain agitators for social change had to work within the constraints of rigid party loyalties, the federal political system of the United States allowed for the potential for social change through state 'experiments' which did not necessarily pose substantial risks to the nation as a whole.

In some respects, the strategic possibilities available to advocates of social change within the New Zealand political system during the early provincial period of government were similar to those in the United States. Although Britain retained control over aspects of colonial legislation in New Zealand until the late 1850s, and colonial legislation was predominantly based on British legislation, the Provincial system of government which operated until 1876 allowed for provincial experimentation with regard to government policies. It also had some impact on what issues assumed priority for advocates of women's rights in the colonial context. This is particularly evident with regard to the Contagious Diseases Act of 1869. While on the statute books for the whole colony, the central government was not

These concepts are discussed further in Chapter Five.

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Phillippa Levine argues that socialist ideas remained largely in obscurity in England throughout the nineteenth century as a result of sharp class divisions which hindered rather than fostered such ideas. ([See Levine (1987) p.16.](#)) Workers' rights movements, however, in particular the Chartist Movement, were well organised by the early decades of the nineteenth century, and working class women were active at all levels in such movements. ([See Boulding (1992) Vol 2.](#))
empowered to administer this legislation and it was therefore up to individual provinces to invoke this Act. Canterbury and Auckland were the only provinces to do so (the former from 1872 to 1885 and the latter from 1882 to 1886) and this stimulated activism on moral and legislative reform within these provinces.\(^{35}\)

Due to the political structures in both the United States and New Zealand, therefore, advocates of social change could exploit respective federal and provincial jealousies to pressure local governments to assert their difference and progressiveness from other states and provinces. In New Zealand this strategy was effectively used by advocates of women's rights and supporters of female education. For example, in 1871 Miss Learmonth Dalrymple, influenced by the ideas of female educationalists in Britain, established the first Girls' High School in New Zealand, in the province of Otago.\(^{36}\) The curriculum and organisation of this school was held up as a model by advocates of female education throughout the colony who made reference to the progressive developments of the Otago system as compared with the relative backwardness of the other provinces.\(^{37}\)

**Intellectual Traditions of the Nineteenth Century Women's Movements**

During the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries major changes in world views took place which not only affected all branches of knowledge but which had significant influences on the debates surrounding the 'woman question' during the nineteenth century in the Western world. New "emancipatory metanarratives"\(^{38}\) developed based on principles of individualism, utilitarianism, and liberal humanism. These emergent discourses offered a wide range of conceptual tools with which advocates of women's rights could argue for changes in the social relations between the sexes.

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\(^{35}\) See Lévesque (1986) and Macdonald (1986) and (1990). For discussion of Ellen Ellis' activism in opposition to this legislation, see Chapter 7.

\(^{36}\) See Gardner (1979) and entry in Oliver (ed.) (1990).

\(^{37}\) See, for example, the Editorials in DSC 11 October 1879, p.2., and NZH 29 February 1872, p.2.

\(^{38}\) Sabina Lovibond uses this phrase in her discussion of the connections between contemporary feminism, postmodernism, and the philosophical tradition of Enlightenment thought. [See Lovibond (1989) p.12.]
Within the 'Old World' view, human nature was perceived as a static and unchanging amalgam of traits, wants and desires. It was believed that humans were put on earth by God who decreed their characteristics and hierarchies of social status.\(^3\) Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, traditional forms of authority, namely, faith and divine revelation, were rejected in favour of the belief that everything in nature, society, and the universe could be explained through systematic observation and experimentation, rather than primarily in spiritual terms. While not all aspects of religious authority were rejected,\(^4\) a new climate of opinion, in which all accepted systems of belief and conduct came under scrutiny, gradually gained prominence throughout the eighteenth century. Traditions, along with the forms of authority on which they were based, were increasingly challenged on the basis that a body of truths existed about man, society and nature, and that these truths could be perceived rationally and universally agreed upon.\(^5\) As this belief in scientific objectivity gained dominance, reasoned judgement was also purported to embody a progressive logic which enabled humans to transcend the personal and the subjective.

With developing industrialisation during the eighteenth century, the cosmos was further reconceptualised away from a God-centred universe to a universe ordered by scientific, utilitarian and rational premises. As logic and reason emerged as the standard by which everything was measured, the emergent 'mechanistic discourse' of industrialism required a rational 'man' to look at this new scientific and rational world. It was within this context that the human subject was

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4\(^\) During the course of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the ecclesiastical authority associated with medieval theology, which had been the basis of the western world view for centuries, was rejected as the final and ultimate authority of knowledge and truth. While this did not mean that religion itself held no authority as a means of knowing, the relationship between religious faith and the institutional authority of organised religion changed dramatically throughout this period. These changes were epitomised in the rejection of religious dogma which accompanied the religious revivalism of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Underlying the resulting emphasis on the need for a direct relationship between the individual and God, unmediated by church officials or church doctrine, was a growing tendency to accept reason as the basis for religious faith. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, for example, stressed that religion and reason went hand in hand and that irrational religion was false religion. [See Wesley, cited in Cragg (1964) p.159.] For a detailed discussion of changes in religious authority as a basis for knowledge during the eighteenth century, see Snyder (1955) Chapters 1 and 3.

5\(^\) It was view which premised the assumption that 'human nature' could be universalised and homogenised.
reconceptualised as a unitary rational subject. On a theoretical level, this construction of the abstract human subject placed all subjects in an equal position before the law. Rationality as a character trait, however, was universally ascribed only to male subjects; female subjects were universally constructed as dominated by an emotionality which excluded rationality. An important consequence of this reconceptualisation of the human subject was that an individual's position in society could be justified in terms of their essential biological nature and certain members of the community could be excluded from equal standing before the law on the basis of their perceived inability to make rational decisions.42

The tensions, inconsistencies, and contradictions in this construction of rational beings triggered many intellectual debates. In terms of early significant feminist contributions to these debates were the anonymous writings of Mary Astell which appeared between 1694 and 1705. While conservative in her acceptance of class distinctions, Astell maintained that both men and women possessed rational faculties and that it was circumstances which determined the extent to which these were exercised.43 Outspoken in her conviction that female inferiority sprang from educational rather than natural deficiencies, Mary Astell was an important voice in the vigorous debates which emerged throughout the eighteenth century regarding the object and content of female education.44

By the late eighteenth century there had emerged an intellectual grouping known as the British Radicals who drew on a long British tradition of utopianism, republicanism and sexual nonconformity.45 Although a diverse group, they shared an underlying emphasis on the importance of individual freedom and acknowledgement of the rationality and basic equality of all human beings. Although this group was not generally concerned with the 'woman question', a significant advocate of change in the status of women emerged from this tradition in the voice of Mary Wollstonecraft.

43 See Astell (1694).
44 While there had been pleas for women's right to higher education throughout the latter part of the seventeenth-century, Mary Astell was the first to propose an institution of higher learning for women. [See Kinnaird (1983)]
45 See Bolt (1993) p.27.
Whereas Mary Astell had demanded an end to women's systematic exclusion from the life of "reasoning creatures", Mary Wollstonecraft both contributed to and critiqued eighteenth century discourses on the character of rational life. As Pauline Johnson notes, "Wollstonecraft appealed to the standpoint of 'improvable reason' to demand the participation of the distinctive voice of women in unfolding the meaning of the rational, happy life." 46 In her most famous work, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman first published in 1792, Wollstonecraft argued that while Nature had made women inferior to men in physical strength, it was inferior education that had resulted in giving women the appearance of weakness in understanding. Wollstonecraft maintained that it could not be demonstrated that woman was essentially inferior to man because she had always been subjugated:

[I will allow that] bodily strength seems to give man a natural superiority over woman; and this is the only solid basis on which the superiority of the sex can be built. But I still insist, that not only the virtue, but the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and that women, considered not only as moral, but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the same means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of half being. 47

Drawing on her own experience and reflections, Wollstonecraft maintained that the subordination of woman was harmful to both sexes and to children and that female emancipation could procure the emancipation of the whole of society. Written at the time of the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft's Vindication brought together many ideas that had been circulating in Britain for the past century. While it attracted immense interest both in Britain and the United States, 48 Wollstonecraft's political and sexual radicalness and unconventional lifestyle limited the popularity of her ideas. Her insistence on the need for a revolution in female manners, for women to be treated as rational beings, and for changes in the education of women and the basis for ascribing status to both women and men, were important themes which were developed in the arguments made by women's advocates during the nineteenth century.

47 Wollstonecraft (1792) p.54.
From the late 1830s there was a flourishing of 'feminist' literature regarding specific aspects of the 'woman question' both in the United States and Britain. Patricia Hollis has identified three key events which served as catalysts for awareness and writing by women on what emerged as the key issues for the early period of organised women's movements in Britain: firstly, a 'surplus' of women stimulated awareness of the need to find employment for women to enable them to become self-dependent; secondly, publicity of the plight of governesses rekindled organisation around the movement for women's education; and thirdly, the divorce case of Caroline Norton triggered an increasing awareness of women's legal status and the need to address issues surrounding the legal position of married women.

In 1839 Sarah Lewis published *Woman's Mission* in which she argued that women's dependence on men was necessary if she were to retain her high moral character and perform her grand mission of regenerating society. This conservative text which supported the status quo was reprinted thirteen times over the following decade. It prompted many responses from advocates of change, amongst which were Marion Reid's (1843) tract "A Plea For Women" and Ann Richelieu Lamb's (1844) book *Can Women Regenerate Society?*. Both these writers strongly refuted Lewis's.

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49 The 1851 Census indicated that the excess of women over twenty years of age in Britain was 405,000. [Greg, cited in Hollis (1979) p.37.] This imbalance was, in part, structural (in that there was a higher child mortality rate for boys, males were lost in war, and higher numbers of males than females emigrated from Britain), and partly due to social factors (in that men were marrying later). Census figures also indicated that 30% of all English women between the ages of twenty and forty years were unmarried and this raised concern for the potential undermining of the social fabric of society. [See Murray (1982) p.48.]

50 Given that working as a governess was considered to be "the single most important occupation open to gentlewomen" the overcrowding of the profession and publicity about poor qualifications and pay, linked the 'plight' of the governesses to the wider phenomenon of 'surplus' and 'redundant' women. Advocates for change used this situation as the basis for organising for the certification of governesses to both introduce professional standards and to increase their potential earning power. [See Murray (1982) p.226,82.; Bolt (1993) p.53.]

51 After an unhappy eleven year marriage in which Caroline Norton had made significant financial contributions to the family income through publication of her articles, poetry and novels, her husband locked her out of the house and petitioned for divorce on the grounds of adultery. While the jury rejected the case, during the course of the trial proceedings and the publicity the case generated, Caroline had been libelled by the British and Foreign Quarterly and had lost the custody of her children. The laws at that time accorded married women no separate or independent status and consequently she could not defend herself against any of the charges brought against her. Neither could she sue for libel, prevent her husband from obtaining her mother's property, gain custody of her children, or legally end the marriage. To draw attention to the abuses of laws regarding married women she wrote several tracts. [See Norton (1854); Hollis (1979); Murray (1982)]
arguments, Reid maintaining that the common system of female education merely produced a mechanical performance of duty, while Lamb encouraged women to be discontent with their dependence upon men and stressed the personal advantages to women of remaining single.\(^52\)

The following decade saw the publication of Harriet Taylor Mill's (1851) "The Emancipation of Women" in which women's moral state was denounced as one of debased servility. In 1854, influenced by the case of Caroline Norton, Barbara Leigh Smith (later Bodichon) published a pamphlet entitled "A Brief Summary, in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws of England Concerning Women, Together With a Few Observations Thereon" which summarised the current legal position of women. Arousing fierce debate and the scrutiny of the Law Amendment Society, Smith's pamphlet eventually led to one of the first large-scale organised actions in support of women's rights in England in the form of a petition with 26,000 signatures in support of the right of wives to financial independence. This action subsequently became the basis for the Married Women's Property Bill of 1857.\(^53\)

In 1862 William Rathbone Greg published a very influential article entitled "Why Are Women Redundant?" in which he addressed the growing phenomenon of unmarried, and therefore "redundant", women.\(^54\) Greg argued that the situation of single women "having to carve out artificial and painfully-sought occupations for themselves" was abnormal and constituted an "incomplete existence".\(^55\) Mary Taylor countered Greg's arguments directly in her 1870 article "Redundant Women".\(^56\) She suggested that rather than women not marrying due to lack of opportunity, they were showing foresight in choosing not to marry. Maintaining that women who preferred a single life were disadvantaged socially and economically, Mary Taylor strongly challenged Greg's

\(^{52}\) For extracts and discussion of these writings, see Murray (1982).


\(^{54}\) "Why are Women Redundant?" was first published in the National Review April 1862 and subsequently reprinted in Greg's collection of essays, Social and Literary Judgements (1869) which is the version cited.

\(^{55}\) Greg (1869) p.282.

\(^{56}\) "Redundant Women" was first published in the VM Vol XV, June 1870, pp.97-108., and later reprinted in The First Duty of Women which is the version cited.
implicit assumption that "marriage is the proper and only cure for feminine poverty".\(^{57}\)

An important impetus for the publication of 'feminist' literature and organisation in England was due to the combined efforts of a group of women's advocates who came to be known as the Langham Place Group.\(^{58}\) In 1860, Emily Faithfull established the Victoria Press to introduce women to the trade of printing and to promote the dissemination of publications in support of the women's movement. The Victoria Press was responsible for publishing the \textit{Englishwoman's Journal} (1858-1864), the \textit{Victoria Magazine} (for the period 1863-1870), and Mary Taylor's \textit{The First Duty of Women}.

Among the earliest writers on equality of the sexes in the United States was Sarah Grimké who, in 1838, published \textit{Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women} in which she used scriptural texts to demonstrate that the Bible did not authorise women's present status.\(^{59}\) Reaching a wider audience than Grimké's \textit{Letters} was Margaret Fuller's \textit{Women in the Nineteenth Century}, published in 1845, in which it was argued that woman must fulfil herself not in relation or subordination to man but as an independent human being. Margaret Fuller maintained that:

> What woman needs is not as a woman to act or rule, but as a nature to grow, as an intellect to discern, as a soul to live freely, and unimpeded to unfold such powers as were given her when we left our common home.\(^{60}\)

The "Declaration of Principles" which emerged from the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 also became an important document for several

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\(^{57}\) Taylor (1870) p.27. For further discussion of Taylor's critique of the concept of 'redundant women', see Chapter 9.

\(^{58}\) Named after the address of their meeting place at 19 Langham Place, London, this venue provided a club and luncheon room, a reading room, and offices. During the 1850s and 1860s it was the basis for the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, the Society of Female Artists, and the editing of the \textit{English Woman's Journal}. Among this group of extremely accomplished women were such names as Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, Anna Jameson (who supported herself, her mother, sisters and niece through her writing and who gave drawing-room lectures on subjects such as the employment of women), Bessie Rayner Parkes (editor of the \textit{English Woman's Journal}), Isa Craig, Josephine Butler (best known for her commitment to the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts), Jessie Boucherett (who founded the Society for Providing Employment for Women and was also editor of the \textit{Englishwoman's Review} from 1866-71), Maria Susan Rye (founder of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society), Emily Davies (who founded Girton College) and Emily Faithfull (who founded the Victoria Press). [See Banks (1985); Lacey (1986)]

\(^{59}\) For a discussion of Grimké's ideas, see O'Neill (1969) and Bolt (1993).

\(^{60}\) Fuller (1845) p.38.
generations of women's rights activists in America. The "Declaration" amounted to a reworking of the language and principles of the American Declaration of Independence to present a women's manifesto based on a belief in natural rights and the perfect equality of women and men.\footnote{For discussion of this document, see Flexner (1975) and Bolt (1993) p.87.}

Perhaps the single most influential publication on the 'woman question' in the nineteenth century was John Stuart Mill's essay "The Subjection of Woman" published in 1869.\footnote{Although published three years after the death of Mill's wife Harriet Taylor, "The Subjection of Women" is recognised as a joint endeavour by both Mill and Taylor, representing the outcome of ideas formulated from their many discussions of women's situation during their twenty years of personal intimacy and intellectual collaboration. [See Rossi (1973) pp.183-196.]} Drawing on the political language of justice and freedom, and paradigmatic in terms of its formulation of the main concerns of liberal feminism, Mill referred to women as a "subject class" and an "enslaved class". Maintaining that many of the observable characteristics of women that were believed to be natural (such as passivity over activity and emotion over reason) were a consequence of women's social position, Mill argued for the removal of legal restraints which kept women in a state of dependency and subjection. In describing the object of his essay, Mill wrote:

... that the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes - the legal subordination of one sex to the other - is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.\footnote{Mill (1869) (1883) p.1.}

Mill's essay had particular relevance to the development of debate on the 'woman question' in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Whereas many of the publications previously mentioned may have had limited circulation in New Zealand, extracts of Mill's works were reprinted in the colonial press\footnote{See, for example, NZH 3 February 1870, p.7.; DSC 2 March 1870, p.5. On the reception of Mill's ideas, see, for example, correspondence by "D.E.F." [DSC 3 May 1871, p.3.], "Y.Z." [DSC 8 May 1871, p.3.], "MOLLY" [DSC 10 May 1871, p.3.], and "SAMUEL EDGER" [DSC 13 May 1871, p.3.].} and the influential Non-Conformist minister Rev. Samuel Edger was "so impressed with its deep truth and almost immeasurable importance as bearing on social reform" that he purchased as many copies as he could for the purpose of lending them to all who
desired to read the work. Mary Colclough attributed her conversion to the cause of women's rights to Mill's writings and adopted the name of his essay for several of her public lectures on women's rights.

This rich heritage of ideas influenced the analyses of women's situation presented by the subjects of this study. Many of the arguments they constructed drew on the language and imagery of women's rationality and essential equality with men as fellow human beings. While advocates of women's rights in nineteenth-century New Zealand drew on a shared heritage of intellectual traditions from their counterparts in Britain and the United States, their formulations of the 'woman question' were not simply colonial copies translocated to the 'Britain of the South Pacific'.

Colonial Differences

Some of the social conditions which impacted on the emergence of women's movements in Britain and the United States were evident in colonial New Zealand. Particular features of the social, economic and political situation in the decades immediately following New Zealand's establishment as a Crown Colony, however, differentiated New Zealand from Britain and the United States in terms of the forms in which the 'woman question' and the women's movement developed.

One important feature of the social fabric of colonial New Zealand was that while many immigrants had rejected the rigidity of the social order in Britain, the majority did not reject the dominant values of the societies in which they were raised but sought relief from the conditions of severe unemployment and poverty which existed in their countries of origin. Being predominantly Protestant in composition and heavily influenced by the Chartist movement in Britain,
majority of the working class immigrant population were motivated by the belief that life in a new colony would provide them with the opportunity to be self-sufficient and to assume their political rights as individuals in society. 70 Despite efforts to attract middle class culture and capital as part of creating a stratified social and economic order through the process of 'systematic colonisation', colonial New Zealand was "overwhelmingly a working settler's society". 71 As Sutch notes, the "builders" of New Zealand "were working people" for whom "[p]overty, or the fear of poverty, formed the background of their lives." 72 While the majority of the European colonial population was working class, 73 middle class value systems, in particular the desire to improve their circumstances and the belief that increased social status would accompany material prosperity, held a great deal of influence in colonial New Zealand and equalitarianism emerged as the dominant social tendency. 74

Unlike Britain and the United States which were rapidly developing as urbanised and industrialised economies, New Zealand's early decades as a colony were characterised by predominantly scattered and isolated rural settlements and an underdeveloped infrastructure. One outcome of the establishment of the provincial system of government in 1852 was century in response to the socio-economic upheaval that accompanied the rise of industrialism. Based on the belief that one of the most important steps toward social improvement was that all classes should justly share in political power, the Chartist movement's main priority focused on gaining parliamentary representation for the working classes through universal male suffrage. [See W. Lovett and J. Collins (1840) (Reprinted 1969) Chartist: A New Organization of the People Leicester; Leicester University Press] For an analysis of women's participation in this movement see Jutta Schwarzkopf (1991) Women in the Chartist Movement New York; St. Martin's Press.

70 See Sutch (1942).


72 Sutch (1942) p.9.

73 Only 3.1% of males and 0.9% of females in the Colony were in professional occupations for the year 1874. The remainder of the population was listed as Domestic (37.1% of males, 95.2% of females), Commercial (7.7% of males, 0.2% of females), Agricultural (19.9% of males, 0.5% females), Industrial (25.4% of males, 2.6% of females), Indefinite and Non-Productive occupations (6.8% of males, 0.6% of females). [Census 1874 Part VI, Table 1.]

74 Pickens (1977) p.393. Pickens attributes the origins of colonial equalitarianism to economic factors in that by virtue of the labour force being small and in great demand, employers could not insist on traditional signs of social difference or resist the demands by labourers for fundamental changes in the economic and social relationships between workers and employers. Living in Wellington in 1851, Mary Taylor made the simple observation that "[c]lasses are forced to mix more here, or there w[ou]ld be no society at all." [Letter to Ellen Nussey, 11 March 1851, Stevens (1972) Letter 23]
a lack of cohesive centralised national planning. The often intense rivalry between the provinces resulted in a situation in which, until the 1870s, the colony basically consisted of many communities. Communication links were particularly undeveloped with irregular shipping (and consequently postal) links existing both nationally and internationally. Telegraphic links did not exist among South Island settlements or between the South and North Islands until the mid-1860s and telegraphic communication within the North Island was delayed until the early 1870s due to intertribal Māori wars and ongoing hostilities between Māori and European. It was not until 1876 that the Tasman cable connected New Zealand with Australia and consequently opened up communications with the rest of the world. Roads and public works developed unevenly throughout the colony until Julius Vogel, as Treasurer to the Fox Ministry of 1869-1872, embarked on a massive project of overseas borrowing to construct a national network of roads and railways.

In the 1860s, internal communications changed markedly with the introduction of new printing technology. This new technology allowed for moves away from the previous pattern of newspapers being owned by, and expressing the views of, prominent politicians, toward commercialisation of the press. The subsequent decreased costs, wider circulation, and less overtly partisan nature of newspapers, along with an increase in the types of communications published (such as religious and temperance publications) had an important impact on the spread of ideas and opportunities for public debate on a wide range of issues. To a large extent, therefore, the opportunities for women in colonial New Zealand to have regular and up-to-date access to a broad range of ideas and points of view through various forms of printed media, did not exist for the most part until at least the mid-1860s.

75 See Morrell (1964) p.24.

76 It was not until 1870 that a steamship service to San Francisco was established which greatly reduced the time necessary to send mail to Europe.

77 These changes were of huge significance to New Zealand. Not only did they bring a degree of cohesion to the many settlements throughout the country but also allowed for such changes as the standardisation of time and pricing of goods throughout the country as well as syndication of national and international news and events. [See Day (1990)]

78 Ibid., p.111.
Equally important to the emergence of public debate on the position of women was a particular set of circumstances which, while delineating a particular role for women in New Zealand society, assigned a measure of status to that role which had not previously been accorded to women. As Raewyn Dalziel has shown, the diaries and letters of European women in New Zealand during the early decades of colonisation suggest that within the colonial context, women's roles as wives and mothers provided demands and challenges that not only held a high degree of personal reward and satisfaction but which also offered a greater degree of personal independence than these women had previously experienced.79 Hence, while some of the catalysts for critical reflection on their assigned roles and status in society may have differed for women in New Zealand, Britain and the United States, there were close parallels in the underlying dominant cultural and ideological systems within these countries. These, coupled with shared intellectual traditions, helped foster consciously trans-national links between the women's movements which emerged during the nineteenth century. As the following chapter will show, all these factors had a significant impact on the emergence and formulation of debates on the 'woman question' in colonial New Zealand.

79 See Dalziel (1977).
CHAPTER 2

"INOCULATING" THE WOMEN OF NEW ZEALAND WITH "PESTILENT AND FOOLISH DOCTRINES"

The previous chapter has attempted to show how the political resources for the women's movement in nineteenth-century New Zealand developed within the context of international discourses concerned with the roles and rights of women. In drawing attention to general themes which emerged in Anglo-American formulations of the 'woman question', Chapter One also indicated that there were specific aspects of New Zealand's social, political and economic system which differed from Britain and the United States and which subsequently influenced the emergence and development of the women's movement in nineteenth-century New Zealand.

This chapter is concerned with a closer analysis of how particular social, political and economic features of colonial New Zealand impacted on the ways in which the 'woman question' was formulated. This will involve consideration of the nature of the debate as articulated by both advocates of change and those resistant to change, as well as consideration of what influenced the emergence of these debates at particular times and places in the colony.

The 'first wave' of feminism reached its peak in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1890s and was largely associated with attempts by advocates of women's rights to gain suffrage, to expand educational and employment opportunities, to advance the temperance cause and to improve the moral fibre of society. An organised women's movement emerged in New Zealand during the mid-1880s with the establishment of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.). The role of the W.C.T.U. in amassing public support for widening the spheres of women's influence in society was based on an ideology which focused on the belief that real social change was largely dependent not upon changing the structure of institutions but upon the interior transformation of individuals. Such arguments, which emphasised creating societal change through changes in the psyches and behaviours of individuals, were also

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1 See Bunkle (1980).
significant characteristics of the women's movement in New Zealand during the four decades prior to the formation of the W.C.T.U. During this colonial period, the focus of the women's movement was a combination of attempts to increase public awareness and effect attitudinal changes towards women's situation, as well as attempts to effect material changes in response to the immediate needs of particular groups of women.

Some of the earliest attempts to secure better conditions for European women within the New Zealand colonial context were associated with providing a wide range of assistance to single female immigrants. The educational provisions of the colony were also a constant topic of discussion throughout the early decades of colonisation and this issue peaked during the 1860s and 1870s. Amid debates on systems of education, examination and registration of teachers, the content of the curricula, and the issue of denominational versus sectarian schools, were women such as Learmonth Whyte Dalrymple and Jane Maria Atkinson who, along with their male allies, were actively engaged in attempts to establish girls' schools and higher education for girls. By the end of the 1860s, the issue of women's political citizenship had been raised by Mary Müller in Nelson and the controversial Contagious Diseases legislation had been passed. Public debate on such a wide range of issues facilitated some individuals to politicise women's social and legal situation within the colony and advocate for change.

During this early period the women's movement in New Zealand was very diverse and had multiple aims. For women of European descent, the women's movement tended to develop around specific issues such as temperance, education and extending women's fields of employment. For

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3 See Fry (1985).


5 In 1869 Mary Müller, under the pseudonym "Féminina" published a short pamphlet entitled "An Appeal to the Men of New Zealand" in which she outlined why women in New Zealand should be granted the franchise. Although it generated some public debate on the issue of women's franchise in New Zealand (see Chapter 10), it was not until the parliamentary sessions of 1878, led by Sir George Grey, and 1879, led by Sir John Hall, that legislation was first introduced to secure the franchise for women. In the intervening decade, however, arguments for and against women's suffrage entered popular and political discourses and gradually assumed increasing significance as an issue that had to be addressed in the Parliamentary arena.

6 The Contagious Diseases Act was passed in 1869.
ngā wāhine Māori, organisation tended to centre on attempts to retain their tribal lands and regain land confiscated by the British Crown. From the early 1880s, the concerns of both European women and ngā wāhine Māori began to converge as each began to focus their attention on attempting to gain a political voice as a means of achieving their various aims. As a consequence, the mid-1880s marked a distinct change in the political priorities of women in the colony and in the form taken by the women's movement. The various activities of the W.C.T.U., in particular its franchise campaigns, began to emerge and be recognised as the public face of the women's movement in New Zealand. Ngā wāhine Māori, however, were also involved in a second women's movement which was focused on attempts to establish Te Kotahitanga, a separate Māori Parliament.

The 'woman question', was, of course, not a phenomenon restricted to the nineteenth century; the position and role of women in society had been challenged and debated for centuries. Nineteenth-century versions of this question, however, were marked from previous versions of the debate in two significant ways. Firstly, during the nineteenth century there was a significant intensification in the extent and urgency with which this question emerged within a variety of discursive fields; versions of the 'woman question' emerged within popular, political, philosophical, scientific, economic, legal, religious, literary and educational discourses. Secondly, in Britain, Europe, the United States, parts of Asia and in Australasia political associations and movements organised around issues such as female education and access to professions, the legal position of married women, temperance and suffrage.

7 See Rei (1993).
8 Ibid.
9 For overviews, see Lerner (1993) and Boulding (1992).
10 Collectively, these groupings and political associations make up what is here designated as the 'women's movement'. Many of the issues addressed by activists in various areas overlapped, as did membership within particular organisations. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that all advocates of any particular cause necessarily shared common goals and assumptions about that cause, or that they viewed themselves as advocates of women's rights. This theme will be explored more fully throughout this study. The specific issue of the implications of making distinctions between the 'women's movements' and the 'women's rights movement' and discussion of the conceptualisation of the women's movement on which this study is based will be addressed more fully in Chapter 5. For an overview of historical sources relating to the emergence of women's organised political activity within an international perspective, see Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall (eds.) (1991) Writing Women's History: International Perspectives Bloomington,
Although during the nineteenth century there were many pronouncements about the essential natures and roles of women and men, the predominant form of Victorian writing about women was framed in terms of debate. An important theme within the controversy surrounding the 'woman question' in colonial New Zealand was concern, by both proponents and opponents of change, with setting and clarifying the terms of this debate. Amid contention about woman's 'nature', position, and role in society, reference was frequently made to the 'legal disabilities' that women faced and to the 'rights and wrongs', the 'rights and responsibilities' and the 'rights and privileges' of women. Arguments were put forward in many areas for the need for women to have access to 'equal opportunity' and a great deal was said on all sides of the debate about women's moral influence and how this should relate to women's roles and behaviours in society.

The Problem of Women: Female Emigration

From the onset of New Zealand's status as a colony, women constituted a problem. While in Britain there was growing fear about the 'surplus' of women and the growing phenomenon of 'redundant' women, in the colonial New Zealand context men significantly outnumbered women. This imbalance of the sexes and the ongoing propaganda to attract women to the colony had important implications for the beginnings of feminist organisation in New Zealand and also contributed to early feminist analysis of the position of women in colonial New Zealand.

During the 1840s and 1850s, immigration schemes specifically targeted single women and skilled labouring men to supplement the natural migration flow. As Charlotte Macdonald has shown, however, a particular type of woman was wanted - she had to be of good moral character and suited to domestic service. Hence, from the earliest years of organised European settlement of New Zealand, the moral character of women was under scrutiny and this was to become a constant theme in future debates concerned with such issues as contagious diseases legislation, alcohol licensing, and laws concerning the rights of married women and the custody of children.

Indiana University Press.


12 See Appendix II.

Propaganda associated with the various immigration schemes emphasised that life in the new colony offered opportunities for improvement of one's circumstances with unlimited opportunities for employment, high wages, and a healthy climate. Some people, however, expressed concern for both the physical and moral protection of single female immigrants during their voyage and until they secured appropriate accommodation and employment in the colony. Female emigration came to be seen as an important area in which philanthropists and social reformers could be involved and a number of societies were formed to provide financial and practical assistance to female emigrants. While the aims of these societies were not necessarily motivated by feminist concerns, they did constitute important early opportunities for women to organise both in the interests of women and on the basis of a shared identity as women.

There were women, however, who, motivated by 'feminist' concerns, saw female emigration as an opportunity to alleviate the distressful conditions suffered by England's 'redundant' educated middle-class women. Foremost among this group was Maria Susan Rye who was involved in the London-based Langham Place Group and the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women. Her belief that the colonies offered many opportunities for women to gain employment and achieve economic independence motivated her to establish the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society (F.M.C.E.S.) in 1862 as a venture that would be of material benefit to both England and New Zealand. During her visit to New Zealand, with the express purpose of reporting to the London Times "the exact condition of the immigrants' barracks in the Australian colonies", her reception was not as enthusiastic as she had expected. This was largely because the acute shortage of domestic

14 For example, the National Benevolent Emigration Fund for Widows and Orphan Daughters of Gentlemen, Professional Men, Officers, Bankers and Merchants, established to resettle women in the colonies without loss of standing; the Fund for Promoting Female Emigration which provided passages to the colonies for London needlewomen; and the British Ladies' Female Emigrant Society which provided a temporary home in London prior to emigration, supervision and materials for employment during the voyage, and reception on arrival. [See Macdonald (1990) p.8.; VM Vol I, May 1863, pp.91-92.]

15 Maria Rye had established a law-copying office in London to provide employment for young women. When she received a hundred times more applicants for positions than were available, she turned her attention to emigration as an opportunity to find employment for women on a larger scale. [NE 26 January 1867, p.4.]

16 See letter by representatives of F.M.C.E.S. in NZH 15 November 1862, p.3. This letter erroneously dates the establishment of the F.M.C.E.S. as formed in 1861.

17 LT 5 September 1863, p.3.
servants in the colony was seen as a much greater priority than the very limited demand for educated, middle-class women. Her critical comments in the London Times about the approaches taken by the Otago and Canterbury Provincial Governments toward female immigration caused a storm of controversy and even raised the suggestion in London that the disparity of the sexes in the colonies was being intentionally perpetuated and indicative of an unsettled state of society.

Maria Rye's arrival in Dunedin in February 1863 coincided with an upcoming general election in that province for the Superintendency. On the basis of her criticisms of the substandard provisions for female immigrants, in particular the unhygienic conditions and the "immoral and irregular proceedings" which took place at the Princess Street Barracks in full cognizance of one of the under matrons, John Hyde Harris, a candidate for the Superintendency, made "electioneering capital" of the issue. Harris asserted that the Government had been irresponsible in bringing out female immigrants without adequate protection during their passage and without means of remunerative employment and that, as a result, "the ranks of prostitution in this city have been weekly recruited from the Immigration Barracks."

Amid the backlash of public opinion directed at Maria Rye, the Editor

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18 See the report in VM Vol I, July 1863, pp.282-83. In a letter written from Kaiapoi, Maria Rye was damning of the conservative attitudes in the Canterbury Province with respect to the position of women, stating that perhaps by the year 1900 she may be able to report some progress with her plans [LT 26 November 1863, p.4., 3 December 1863, p.3. See also VM Vol 1, August 1863, p.571.]

19 In reference to Maria Rye's reception in New Zealand, the English 'feminist' publication the Victoria Magazine stated: "Miss Rye's letter confirms the doubts of those who have questioned whether the disparity of the sexes in the colonies is not a legitimate and inevitable consequence of an unsettled state of society. It is reasonable to believe that if the want of women were felt to be a remediable evil, the better class of colonists would take some effectual measures for encouraging female emigration. That they are not doing so, indicates a conviction on their part that an excess in the male population is a necessary condition of pioneer life." [VM Vol I, August 1863, p.571.]

20 CP 3 April 1863, p.2.

21 Mr Harris subsequently won the election with a large majority. [See LT 18 April 1863, p.5.]

22 LT 18 April 1863, p.5.

23 CP 27 March 1863, p.2.; see also LT 1 April 1863, p.4.

24 The Government accused Maria Rye of "recklessly and cruelly attacking the characters of decent girls" while the Editor of the Christchurch Press described her as having "strayed out of the cover in which single young ladies ordinarily while away their spinsterhood". [CP 23 April 1863, p.2., 17 September 1863, p.2.] Similar censure had been received from the
of the Christchurch Press stated that while "[t]o such a strong minded
lady, a war a l'outrance with Superintendent, Provincial Secretary,
Immigration Agent, Matrons, &c., may not be a very serious affair", the
charges made in Otago could have been dealt with in a more satisfactory
manner had they not been made in a general election. 25 For Maria Rye,
however, the affair was very serious and any personal criticism she
received for publicising this "kettle of very stinky fish" 26 was
secondary to politicising the issue in a way that amassed public
support for change. In this respect, the fact that her visit coincided
with the election for the Superintendency was fortuitous and offered
increased possibilities for widely publicising the issues. Although
her embroilment in the controversy in Otago preceded her, Maria Rye's
subsequent efforts to establish a servants' home in Christchurch were
received in warmer tones.27

Although Maria Rye was only in New Zealand for eighteen months, she was
an important catalyst throughout the colony in drawing attention to
specific features of women's situation during the early 1860s. As well
as assisting in finding employment for hundreds of female immigrants
to New Zealand 28 she initiated the establishment of a servants' home in
Christchurch 29 and the establishment of a girls' boarding school in
Melbourne which referred to her "indiscreet" letter to the Times,
the "failure of her ill-conceived, ill-executed plan" and "her present
eccentric orbit of activity". [LT 19 September 1863, p.3.] The Editor of
the Lyttelton Times was particularly harsh, stating "[a] lady who can
accept the hospitality which has been freely offered her for some months
in this Province, and at the same time coolly malign her entertainers
before the whole world, is hardly of the sort from whence proceed
good deeds. We are reluctantly compelled to believe that Miss Rye's
charitable pretensions are a miserable sham, when we see qualities in that lady so
glaringly inconsistent with true charity." [LT 26 November 1863, p.4.]

26 CP 23 April 1863, p.2.
27 Her efforts to establish this home were hailed as "noble work" and an
"excellent undertaking" and that she was doing "good service in bringing
the subject forward". [CP 12 June 1863, p.1., "A HOME FRIEND" 13 June 1863
p.2.; "L" LT 24 June 1863, p.5.; see also "W" LT 19 September 1863, p.5.,
"G. ORAM" 1 December 1863, p.5.] While the Editor of the Lyttelton Times
considered her language to be "perhaps a little dictatorial", he
acknowledged that it was prompted by an earnest desire to do good. [LT 20
June 1863, p.4.] The Editor of the Christchurch Press noted that given
her experience in the field of female emigration she was "entitled to be
heard on the subject with a deference to which very few can lay claim."
[CP 17 June 1863, p.1.]

28 See LT 5 September 1863, p.3.; NE 5 March 1864, p.3. See also Macdonald
29 The Christchurch Home for Women of Respectable Character situated in
Worcester Street was opened on 25 January 1864 but was forced to close at
the end of 1868 due to lack of funds. [See Macdonald (1990) p.32., n.35.]
Napier. Her public comments stimulated scrutiny and debate on a range of issues surrounding female immigration, female employment, and the need for homes for the destitute. Of equal significance, Maria Rye's proposals provided opportunities for women, on the basis of their assigned superior moral status, to engage in philanthropic organisation on behalf of other women.

The controversies surrounding female immigration flared up again almost a decade later in Auckland when Mary Colclough voiced her criticisms of what she considered to be misleading propaganda to attract female immigrants to the colony. When it was suggested by the Editor of the New Zealand Herald that women's rights advocates would do well to focus their attention on sending respectable young women to the colonies to meet the demand for domestic servants, Mary Colclough's passionate response constituted a powerful political analysis of the ascribed status of single women in the colony. She pointed out that respectable young girls were being enticed to the colony under the pretence of being domestic servants when, in fact, they were wanted as wives for the settlers. Such a deception, she argued, amounted to exporting women:

...like herds of cattle to foreign lands to make marriages of the grossest materialism, marriages with complete strangers, with the coarsest and grossest of motives for marrying, who want simply a woman to bear them children and cook their dinner.

The following year Mary Colclough also took the controversial step of writing to the London Times to correct some misconceptions intending

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30 See entry in Oliver (ed.) (1990) p.381.

31 See, for example, "ARGUS" LT 29 August 1863, p.3., 5 August 1863, p.4; CP 3 April 1863, p.2.

32 For example, the training of servants and mistresses [see "A GOOD SERVANT" LT 4 July 1863, p.3., "A NEW BROOM" 8 July 1863, p.5.] and the unfair distribution of wages amongst female servants [see CP 13 April 1863, p.1.].

33 For example, "ANTI-LEVITE" [LT 19 August 1863, p.6.] See also, Editorials CP 13 April 1863, p.1., 12 June 1863, p.1., LT 20 June 1863, p.4.

34 Maria Rye had been accused of wanting to send single women to the colonies to increase their marriage prospects. [See "ANTI-LEVITE" LT 29 August 1863, p.3.] In responding to this charge Rye explained that this misrepresentation of the aims of the F.M.C.B.S. was largely due to a well-intentioned but misjudged letter by Professor Charles Kingsley in the Times. She was adamant in her denial "that either directly or indirectly, publicly or privately, has marriage ever been alluded to, by myself or my co-adjutors". [LT 5 September 1863, p.3. See also Editorial, 2 September 1863, p.4. and "UP COUNTRY" 16 September 1863, p.5.]

35 "MRS MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 3 July 1872, p.3.
emigrants may have formed about life for single women in New Zealand. Foremost was her concern that the colony was not suffering from a want of single women but from a shortage of single women who were prepared to work as domestic servants. She also pointed out that there were fewer openings for genteel women in the colony than in England, that domestic servants had to work harder and under more primitive conditions than their English counterparts, that women's prospects of marriage were not significantly greater than in England, and, because drunkenness was such a prevalent vice, there was no guarantee that men who made good wages would also make good husbands.36

A decade later, the arguments were still a matter of public debate. In 1882, promoters of the F.M.C.E.S. announced that they had a large supply of well-qualified women seeking employment in New Zealand in a variety of fields. The Editor of the New Zealand Herald responded with the familiar line that it was domestic servants that were required in the colony, not educated women, governesses, school mistresses or women to do missionary work. He added:

In fact, in this colony, where there is so much hard common work to do, we have no need for these women at all. ...But let hard-working servant girls come here - girls who do not think it a degradation to do washing and scrubbing, and who would not be ashamed of having sweethearts who are mechanics. They will find employment at once, will lead a very independent existence, and be well paid for their labour while they are servants; and they will very soon have an opportunity of changing their state of life, and getting houses of their own, becoming the wives of men who in this community have the best chance of rising to independence and even opulence.37

This controversy over female emigration which continued for as long as government-assisted immigration schemes operated38 was only one aspect of a much wider debate on the status and position of women and the issue of 'women's rights' within colonial New Zealand.

34 NZH 14 July 1873, p.3. See also, Editorial note NZH 7 July 1873, p.2., Editorial 14 July 1873, p.2., and "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" 21 July 1873, p.4. As Charlotte Macdonald's research has shown, because the age at which most people emigrated coincided with the age at which it was most common to marry, the marriage rate of emigrants should not be confused with the assumption that emigration was instrumental to marriage or that increasing one's marriage prospects was an overriding consideration in the decision to emigrate. Moreover, because demographic pressures to marry were counterbalanced by the constant availability of paid employment, particularly for those prepared to enter domestic service, marriage was not the only route, or even a guarantee of, economic security. [See Macdonald (1990) Chapter 5.]

37 NZH 15 November 1882, p.4.

38 Government immigration was curtailed in 1888.
The 'Nature' of 'Women's Rights'

While Maria Rye was staying with Mary Müller in Nelson in January 1864, a short unsigned article under the heading "Woman's Rights" was published in the Nelson Examiner. It presented the conservative view that a woman's 'rights' consisted of administering acquiescently to the needs of her husband:

It is woman's right to have her home in order whenever her husband returns from business. It is woman's right to be kind and forbearing whenever her husband is annoyed. It is woman's right to examine her husband's linen, and see that it wants neither mending nor buttons. It is woman's right to be satisfied with her old dresses until her husband can afford new ones. It is woman's right to be content when her husband declares he is unable to take her to the sea-side. It is woman's right to nurse her children, instead of leaving it to the maid.39

While this article did not generate any response from correspondents, the Nelson Examiner regularly reprinted articles from English periodicals which discussed issues pertaining to women's rights.40 By the end of 1868, however, an article written by a resident of Auckland was published in the Daily Southern Cross which raised the issue of the need to widen the employment opportunities for women who were unmarried due to overcrowding of "the so-called legitimate ways by which women earn their bread".41 Later in the same week there appeared another article decrying the expectation that all women be "low-voiced, soft-tempered, gentle, and meek". What was needed, the writer maintained, was tolerance and respect for the fact that women were as varied in their natures as were the leaves of plants.42 These two articles were both written by "POLLY PLUM" and they marked the beginning of an extensive public debate on the nature and position of woman within colonial New Zealand.

39 NE 19 January 1864, p.3. Given that the Nelson Examiner had a reputation for being a very influential and progressive newspaper, the publication of this article which appears to employ a deliberate irony could have been an attempt to stimulate public discussion on the topic. The Editor, Charles Elliott, was not only related to Mary Müller by marriage but was also a key personal friend and supporter of her advocacy of women's rights. He protected her identity as "Femmina" and used his contacts to distribute her articles as widely as possible. [See Mary Müller to Kate Sheppard, 18 August 1898, Folder 10, Item 310, Kate Sheppard Papers; "Mary Ann Müller" in Oliver (ed) (1990) p.303.]

40 See, for example, "Married Life" 26 March 1864, p.3., "Wives and Husbands" 9 July 1864, p.4., "Mr F. Newman on the New Social Danger" 12 December 1867, p.3.4., "What Is Woman's Work?" 26 May 1868, p.3., "Female Suffrage" 7 July 1868, p.3., and "Ideal Women" 3 November 1868, p.4.

41 See article "Women's Work", DSC 24 December 1868, p.5.

42 See article "Pattern Women", DSC 29 December 1868, p.4.
While, for the most part, the debate was focused in the Auckland province, its influence was felt throughout the colony. In July 1871, an editorial appeared in the Wellington newspaper the Evening Post in which reference was made to the "latest novelty" introduced in Auckland by indoctrination of "Yankee notions on social subjects". The Editor claimed that "the last phase of their eccentricity", the agitation about woman's rights, had been introduced to the Auckland public by Mrs Colclough. He wrote:

We do not dread that 'Polly Plum' will achieve much success in disseminating her pestilent and foolish doctrines, or in inoculating the women of New Zealand with the advanced opinions held by a noisy and insignificant portion of the sex in America. The whole tendency of the age is to concede to women every possible protection and just right which the law can confer. Women are fully entitled to the protection of their own earnings, to the control of their own property, and to the privilege of certain safeguards which would shield them from ill-usage or wrong in the married state. But, apart from this, it is only foolish and impertinent persons who would chatter glibly about perfect equality and independence, or try to subvert an order of things destined to exist by the laws of Nature and Providence.43

A few months earlier, the Editor of the New Zealand Herald had written about the need for people, especially women, to agree on "the nature and precise character of what are called 'Women's Rights'!", adding that "the 'rights of women' must, we presume be associated with the responsibilities of men, or the phrase can have no meaning whatever". This writer made a clear distinction between what he believed to be women's 'rights' and women's 'privileges':

We do hear the word 'privileges.' It is the privilege of a lady to get a gentleman's seat at a concert, in omnibus, railway; it is her privilege to make a man work for her; it is her privilege to stay (if she is wise) out of scrapes, excitements, disagreeables; to play the piano, and work berlin wool; it is her right to nurse baby with the 'whooping cough,' to wipe away his tears and the rheum before mentioned; it is her right to look pretty, be agreeable, and get a dinner. But has she a right to be a man?44

On the same day a correspondent wrote to the Daily Southern Cross saying "I would like to know what is meant by 'rights.' The wrongs are well and truly described; but let us hear what the ladies want, and how they wish to be protected by their husbands."45 An anecdote supplied

44 Editorial NZH 22 May 1871, p.2.
45 "R" DSC 22 May 1871, p.3.
by the Auckland correspondent to the Hawkes Bay Herald suggested that it was not only men who were unsure of what was actually meant by 'women's rights'. This correspondent recounted a conversation with an acquaintance regarding how his wife had changed after hearing Polly Plum lecture on "The Subjection of Woman". The friend's wife, Emma, would sit and moan for hours at a time and, when asked what was the matter, could only cry and say she wanted her "rights". When her husband asked what she meant by this, she either could not or would not tell him.46

Correspondent "JANIE PLUM" was at least clear on what she did not want and that was "man's privileges" which, she considered, would amount to "women's inconvenient privileges".47 While "JANIE PLUM" believed that women had power enough if they knew how to use it, and that God had made men and women equal but different, many correspondents assumed that demands for equality either meant, or would result in, erasure of the differences between women and men. This was the premise for the question posed by the Editor of the New Zealand Herald, "[b]ut has she a right to be a man?" and which was also the basis for the arguments presented by "OLD PRACTICAL":

If there is to be a universal equality between men and women as to their capabilities, requirements, and privileges, of course they must be eligible to serve as soldiers, sailors, constables, and policemen, &c. I cannot understand why it is that in the present age this new light of 'woman's rights' has dawned upon some folks.48

A similar position was expressed by the correspondent "NEMO":

If Polly fancies that women are tyrannised over, are not free enough, and should have the rights, privileges, and immunities enjoyed by men, let her also acknowledge that women should be subject to the same burdens that are laid upon the backs of men to bear as good citizens. Granted that men are freer, granted that they have stronger legal rights and privileges than women, what have they to pay for this liberty? Have they not the privilege of being tapped on the shoulder by a constable, and summoned to a

46 Auckland correspondent of the Hawkes Bay Herald NZH 15 July 1871, p.3.

47 "JANIE PLUM" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.

48 "OLD PRACTICAL" DSC 23 January 1871, p.3. "OLD PRACTICAL" was a well-known correspondent to the Auckland press who wrote regularly on a variety of topics. He was named, along with Polly Plum and Rev. Samuel Edger, as one of Auckland's three "notorieties". [See "VERITY" DSC 23 August 1871, p.3.] His views were frequently criticised by readers and "MAUNGAKARAMEA" believed that he, along with Polly Plum, should be limited in the amount of newspaper space they could occupy. [See Notices to Correspondents, DSC 22 September 1871, p.2. For Polly Plum's response to this suggestion, see DSC 2 October 1871, p.3.]
coroner's inquest, to view the mutilated body of a suicide, or the decomposed body of some poor drowned inebriate? Is this a privilege that Polly would like women to enjoy?"59

"NEMO's" advice for Polly Plum was that she should "[l]eave off talking about Women's Rights and go in for Women's Education".50 As Rev. Samuel Edger had already pointed out, however, education was, among other things, one of woman's rights. Not wishing the agitation of woman's rights to run into "wild extravagance", Samuel Edger qualified his support for this cause as being a question of "woman's duties" because "rights" signified "a principle as applicable to man as to woman". Within this context, he stated that "it is one of woman's rights, to fit her for her duties, that she should enjoy an education as thorough in quality as that which is thought necessary for men."51

"NEMO" and Samuel Edger were not alone in considering that support for women's education was acceptable and quite separate from the more radical notion of 'women's rights'. "OLD PRACTICAL's" comment, that "[t]he very circumstance of their so boldly fighting for what they call their rights shows pretty clearly that a very large latitude is extended to them",52 implied that women should be content with the 'privileges' already bestowed upon them and pursue causes that did not threaten the status quo. Likewise, "F.A.H." believed that women should be educated to the utmost, but "not that they may be enabled to do the work of men, but that they may be able effectively to do the work which God has given to them exclusively."53

During the course of this debate as to the precise meaning of 'woman's rights', the issue of the relationship between Scripture and the rights of women emerged as an important theme. In January 1871, "OLD PRACTICAL" asked "[d]oes not the Scripture very forcibly describe the relative position of men and women?"54 Mary Colclough's response was to ask "why quote Scripture on the subject?" because "[t]he Bible obligations are all purely moral obligations, and have nothing to do

59 "NEMO" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.
50 "NEMO" NZH 10 August 1871, p.3.
51 "SAMUEL EDGER" DSC 8 June 1871, p.3.
52 "OLD PRACTICAL" DSC 23 January 1871, p.3.
53 "F.A.H." NZH 7 August 1871, p.3.
54 "OLD PRACTICAL" DSC 23 January 1871, p.3.
with the legal question."\textsuperscript{55} A couple of weeks later when she suggested that the Ten Commandments, which were "of infinitely superior authority to the epistles", did not touch once on the duty of wives to their husbands, she was deemed to be "breaking loose" from orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{56} Having been taken to task for her "doctrine of discrimination", Mary Colclough responded with humility, at pains to make clear that she considered God's laws and Christ's teachings to be of the very highest authority; her "war" was with man's laws which were oppressive and insulting to the female sex.\textsuperscript{57} She explained that the only reason she had "dragged the Scripture into the controversy" was because her opponents were constantly maintaining that her views were contrary to Scripture.\textsuperscript{58}

Just as this debate over the Scriptures was drawing to a close, "E. STEPHENS" took it upon himself to settle the question of what constituted 'women's rights' and the place of the Scriptures once and for all. Accordingly, he sent a declaration of "Woman's Rights" to the newspaper "for the edification of the [female] sex" from which, he claimed, there could be no appeal.\textsuperscript{59} Contrary to his intentions, however, this did not settle the issue and the debates continued.\textsuperscript{60}

It is significant that it was largely men who sought clarification of what exactly was meant by 'women's rights', and what these entailed. Many would have agreed with the Editor of the New Zealand Herald that "[t]he whole subject, indeed, partakes of the nature of the being whom it principally affects - it is volatile, subject to sudden interruption of sequence, overloaded with historical platitudes, or functional diseases of the heart."\textsuperscript{61} While Emma may have been reduced to sitting and moping for hours each day, unable to articulate what "wanting her

\textsuperscript{55} "POLLY PLUM" DSC 6 February 1871, p.6.

\textsuperscript{56} "POLLY PLUM" DSC 27 February 1871, p.3., "AMI" 1 March 1871, p.3.

\textsuperscript{57} "POLLY PLUM" DSC 2 March 1871, p.3.

\textsuperscript{58} "POLLY PLUM" DSC 13 March 1871, p.3. For further discussion of Mary Colclough's use of religious discourses to support her advocacy of women's rights, see Chapters 6 and 10.

\textsuperscript{59} "E. STEPHENS" DSC 4 April 1871, p.3.

\textsuperscript{60} For responses to E. Stephen's declaration of woman's rights, see "POLLY PLUM" DSC 6 April 1871, p.5., "SAMUEL EDGER" DSC 8 April 1871, p.3., "E. EARNEST" DSC 24 April 1871, p.3., and a rejoinder from "E. STEPHENS" DSC 24 April 1871, p.3.

\textsuperscript{61} Editorial NZH 22 May 1871, p.2.
rights" actually meant, there were women who were very clear and articulate about what they wanted.

What Women Want

Some opponents of social change feared that the extent of the changes women sought amounted to "a reconstruction of the relation between the sexes" and "a social revolution incomparably more important than all possible political revolutions put together". The Editor of the Wellington Evening Post, for example, maintained that it was only "foolish and impertinent persons who would chatter glibly about perfect equality and independence, or try to subvert an order of things destined to exist by the laws of Nature and Providence." Likewise, "MOUNT ALBERT" claimed that the changes proposed by advocates of women's rights amounted to "changing the whole course of nature". A cursory glance at the range of women's demands confirms that such fears as expressed by those who wished to maintain the status quo were well-founded. While there were many women who sought change in only particular areas such as education or temperance, there were "foolish and impertinent" voices who sought changes that would impact on every area of social relations.

One of the many women who simply wanted changes in the provision of education for girls and in teachers' conditions was Mrs Frances Shayle George, a teacher herself with over twenty years experience. Mrs George believed that women's sphere was not to govern the world, but to purify it and she considered the education of girls to be of the highest priority because it provided the training which would fit, or unfit girls, to be the future mothers. Accordingly, her concerns were with setting standards for female education through such changes as requiring teachers to undergo examinations and submitting all schools to annual inspections.

For "RANGIORA", the key issue was pay parity. This correspondent drew attention to the widespread practice, particularly in country districts, of mistresses of girls' schools being expected to discharge

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62 Taylor (1868) p.218.
64 "MOUNT ALBERT" NZH 16 August 1871, p.3. This letter is cited at length in Chapter 8.
65 "FRANCES SHAYLE GEORGE" NZH 2 March 1872, p.3.
their duties for half, or less than half, the pay received by the
masters of the boys' schools. AN OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER also
complained that the salaries of female teachers were inferior, despite
having to meet the same standards of proficiency as for boys' schools.
This correspondent drew attention to the fact that girls' education was
treated as less important than boys' even to the point that the
playground facilities in girls' schools were inferior and there was no
provision of state scholarships for girls with ability.

For "JANIE PLUM" and Ellen Ellis, one issue which took precedence was
the abuses women and children suffered under the hands of drunken
husbands. While "JANIE PLUM" did not think the marriage laws could be
altered for the better, she did concede that a law was needed to
protect wives and children from drunken husbands. Writing under her
pen-name "A WOMAN", Ellen Ellis was more forceful in her demand that
drunken husbands should not be able to inflict torture on their wives
with the sanction of the law. She was adamant that there should be a
single code of moral conduct for men and women and that women should
not be placed in circumstances of cruel disadvantage and then be
despised for not having risen above them. In maintaining that girls
needed to find a nobler purpose in life than simply making "popinjays"
of themselves to attract men, Ellen Ellis articulated the more radical
view that rather than marriage being the sole aim of a woman's life,
women should have the opportunity to be independent, if that was what
they chose, and that any efforts on women's behalf to obtain an honest
living through effort should be appreciated.

These views as expressed by "A WOMAN" were based on the belief that
there needed to be recognition that women and men were equal and
independent beings. The same conviction was behind Mary Müller's
appeal for women to be a represented body of people. Mary Müller
believed that, despite women's current legal status, women were
separate and independent entities, independent of their husbands or

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66 "RANGIORA" CP 13 November 1876, p.3., see also "A TEACHER" 30 April
1877, p.3.

67 "AN OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER" CP 7 June 1877, p.3.

68 "JANIE PLUM" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3. "MAGGIE PLUM" endorsed Janie
Plum's sentiments fully, however her priorities were focused on the more
immediately practical level of the need for provision of new docks,
railroads, water supplies and drainage. [NZH 5 August 1871, p.3.]

69 See "A WOMAN" NZH 27 October 1870, p.3.; DSC 13 October 1870, p.2., 3
January 1871, p.3., 2 February 1871, p.3.
fathers, and therefore it was neither appropriate nor possible for women to be properly represented by their husbands or fathers.\textsuperscript{70} Maintaining that the laws needed to be fitted to the times and the people, she argued for a "calm unprejudiced consideration" of women's condition.\textsuperscript{71} Based on her belief that women's 'proper sphere' was "the very highest that her intellect and energy can attain", Mary Müller also wanted the "protective duty" that men placed on women's physical and mental labour abandoned and saw no reason why, if women attained the required standards of proficiency, they should not be entitled, as a right, to sit university examinations.\textsuperscript{72}

Notable amongst those who "chattered glibly about perfect equality and independence" were the voices of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis. These women stood out from many of their contemporaries because they offered complex analyses of women's social and legal subordination. While they had differing views on what constituted the basis of women's oppression and what was needed for women's emancipation, each articulated an understanding of how male dominance operated systematically through social, familial and political organisation and pervaded dominant ideas and religious beliefs. Although their arguments were infused with the competing ideologies of humanism, individualism and capitalism, each illustrated how the abstract principles of 'rights' and 'duties' impacted on the daily lives of real women. Consequently, their arguments need to be appreciated within the context of the wider debates throughout the nineteenth century on the role of the individual and the role of the state.

In opposition to the dominant view of woman's primary role as being to administer to the needs of her husband and children, Mary Taylor, writing in England in the late 1860s, maintained that a woman's first duty was to protect herself from the danger of being forced to marry.\textsuperscript{73} She believed that women's economic independence, regardless of her marital status, was of primary importance. Above all else, she maintained, women had to develop their own characters and work out

\textsuperscript{70} Müller (1869) p.3.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p.8,13.

\textsuperscript{72} "FEMMINA" NE 20 May 1871, p.6.

\textsuperscript{73} Taylor (1870) p.209,218. This article titled "Marriage" was first published in January 1868.
their own destinies. This necessitated a complete rejection of the false morality into which women were socialised because this morality was both dishonest and debasing for women. Mary Taylor also maintained that, along with the need to remove all legal disabilities to women's independence, the notion that the sexes were in competition with each other and the associated assumption that one sex could only benefit at the expense of the other had to be broken down.

In contrast to these views, both Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis believed that God had ordained that marriage was the appropriate relationship for men and women and that within this union, husband and wife were complementary equals. Both agreed that the underlying problem was that human decrees contravened the laws of God. The priority, according to these two women, was change to the laws which gave men absolute power and control over their wives.

While Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis shared the belief that under their existing social and legal state women could not acquire a character of their own, for Ellen Ellis this had much deeper implications. She maintained that women's need to gain the "subtle potency of recognised being" and the personal liberty that accompanied a woman's separate entity being established by law, was necessary to help women fulfil God's divine plan for the moral universe.

"If people would only ask the question at the right time it would be easily answered"  

At the very least, these debates about the meaning of 'women's rights' indicated that the 'crisis of gender' in the English-speaking world in

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74 Ibid., p.213,98,161.
75 Ibid., p.8. For a fuller discussion of Mary Taylor's arguments see Chapter 9.
76 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 5 August 1871, p.3.; Ellis (1882) p.73.
77 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 13 March 1871, p.3.; Ellis (1882) p.73, 205,219.
78 Ellis (1882) p.186,63,72. For further discussion of these ideas see Chapter 11.
79 This comment was made in response to Polly Plum publicising the case of a widow who had six dependent children who was in gaol for debt. In a letter to the press Mary Colclough had asked what a woman in this situation could do. [See DSC 18 January 1871, p.3.] "HUMBLE-BEE" had responded by saying that had the woman asked herself this question during the first month of her married life, and been counselled to live on half her husband's income and put the rest aside for protection against changes in circumstances, she would not have found herself in this situation. [See "HUMBLE-BEE" DSC 24 January 1871, p.3.]
the mid- to late-nineteenth century had definitely found its way to the colony of New Zealand by the early 1870s. But why did these debates emerge at this particular time in New Zealand and why was the debate so intense in the province of Auckland? What particular configuration of circumstances contributed to these debates which surfaced in the popular press in the late 1860s and early 1870s?

Firstly, there were significant demographic changes in New Zealand during this period. The European population for the colony had increased from 218,668 in 1867 to 299,514 by 1874. This rapid growth of population was particularly significant for the province of Auckland which, in 1871, accounted for nearly a quarter of the European population of the colony. Between 1867 and 1871 the population growth for the Auckland province was nearly twice the average for that of the colony as a whole, due, for the most part, to the discovery of gold and the opening of the Thames goldfield in 1867.

In terms of the proportion of the sexes, colonial New Zealand was typical of settler societies in that men significantly out-numbered women. Perhaps of more significance than the relative proportions of the sexes was the conjugal status of the adult population. Between 1867 and 1874, the proportion of single women increased from 62.41% to 65.28%. Women's marital status assumed a particular significance for the colony both on a practical level and in terms of the 'settlement' of the colony. In pragmatic terms, woman's reproductive and domestic labour was crucial to the general growth of the colony, but woman's so-called 'moral influence' was also called upon as a necessary stabilising and settling influence on the men of the colony. Large numbers of single women posed a potential threat not just to the traditional and 'ideal' roles of women as wives and mothers confining their labour to the domestic sphere, but also to the moral stability of society and, hence, to the colony's status as an 'ideal society'.

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80 Census 1896 Part I, Table V.

81 This trend reversed abruptly between 1871 and 1874 with the growth of population for the Auckland province falling to half the colonial average. This decrease has been attributed to the effects of Vogel's immigration schemes in the South Island. [See Elphick (1974)]

82 See Appendix II.

83 Census 1874 Part V, Table I.
During the decade 1865 to 1875 there were also dramatic fluctuations in the economy. By the late 1860s, New Zealand was in a state of recession and this was exacerbated by the excessive speculation which accompanied the discovery of gold at Thames in 1867. In sharp comparison, the economy was revitalised by the dramatic expansion associated with Vogel's public works schemes and the early 1870s signalled a prosperous period. Such swings in the economy had important implications for "the question of the employment of women". As advocates of women's rights consistently pointed out, there were increasing numbers of single women, deserted wives and widows with dependents who were forced to support themselves. Under conditions of prosperity, there were more openings for employment for such women, whether as domestic servants, governesses, private teachers, lodging-house keepers, shop-keepers, or in needle-work. Under conditions of recession, however, the employment of women was viewed as an encroachment on men's domain.

This period was also a time in which the shortcomings of the provincial system of government were threatening the political stability of the colony. Uneven developments between the six provinces, particularly in areas of infrastructure, public works and communication, and education, had resulted in a gradual increase in support for the view that the colony needed to embark on a centralised policy of development. In effect, many of the Provinces had been "pensioners" of the Central Government for years and by 1873-74 the inequalities in

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84 At the height of speculation on the Thames and Auckland stock exchanges in June 1871, prices reached the equivalent of $425 per share. [See Hays (1968) p.42.]

85 See Elphick (1974).

86 This phrase is from the Census 1874 Report, p.11. Statistics on the occupations of the European population were reported for the first time in this Census. In reference to this, the Registrar-General cited the census report for the English Census of 1871 in which it was stated that the tables for this section required exhaustive study in connection with special inquiries, among which was "the question of the employment of women".

87 See, for example, "Women's Work" in DSC 24 December 1868, p.5., "A Woman's Sphere" 14 July 1869, p.4., "A Widow in Gaol for Debt" 18 January 1871, p.3.

88 See, for example, "OLD PRACTICAL" who questioned the wisdom in women taking men's employment when there was, at all times, hundreds of men out of work. [DSC 17 February 1871, p.3.]
the financial circumstances of the provinces had never been more
evident.\textsuperscript{89}

The issue of educational provisions throughout the colony assumed a
particular relevance for advocates of social change at this period.
Teaching standards varied enormously between the provinces and there
was vigorous debate throughout the colony for many years on the need
for registration of teachers, state inspection of schools and the more
controversial issue of religious education in schools. During 1867-68,
financial difficulties led to the virtual collapse of the education
system in Auckland. In response to this situation, the Central
Government solicited a report from every province on the efficiency of
their educational organisation. This report confirmed that extreme
inequalities existed throughout the colony and, with the exception of
Hawkes Bay, educational facilities in the North Island and in the
poorer provinces of the South Island were totally inadequate.\textsuperscript{90}

The collapse of the educational system in Auckland resulted in
intensification of debates around education in that province during the
late 1860s and early 1870s. A direct result of this situation was the
1869 Education Act which set up an Educational Board to control
education within the Auckland Province. This Act also adopted a purely
secular system of education for public schools and was the first
province to do so.\textsuperscript{91} Given that education was a key issue for advocates
of women's rights, these local and national debates around education
provided an immediate and topical opportunity for expression of
arguments relating to the education of girls, the employment of women,
and the disparities between male and female teachers on issues of pay.

These demographic and economic changes coupled with aspects of the
political situation in New Zealand during this period also contributed
to a growing instability in the social fabric of the colony. Although
the European population had outnumbered Māori since the late 1850s,
Māori were still dominant over much of the North Island. There was a

\textsuperscript{89} Morrell (1964) p.231.

\textsuperscript{90} Lack of consensus as to the best solution to this situation meant that
nationally coordinated legislation was delayed and it was not until after
the abolition of the provinces that a national system of education was
established. This was finally achieved with the 1877 Education Act which
made education free, secular and compulsory throughout New Zealand. [See
Butchers (1929)]

\textsuperscript{91} See Mackey (1967).
general sense of uneasiness amongst the European population, particularly in the north, due to uncertainty over whether the hostilities with Māori had ended. 92 Physical reminders of this were evident in the forts and blockhouses which remained standing throughout the 1870s in Taranaki and the Waikato. 93

While social patterns within the colony varied depending upon the type of settlement, 94 the province of Auckland, being reliant on extractive industries such as gold, kauri gum, flax and timber, tended to experience the problems associated with mass influxes of migrant workers and the consequent large transient male-dominated population more keenly than most other provinces. 95 Not only were drunkenness, 96 vagrancy, 97 wife desertion, 98 assault, 99 and theft 100 common, but

92 See, for example, the letter by "NEMO" in NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.
94 Ibid., p.256.
95 Although in terms of density of population per square mile Auckland province rated less than Wellington, Westland, Canterbury and Otago in 1874, with the exception of Otago, the proportion of single men was significantly higher in Auckland than in the other provinces. In terms of total population figures, the Auckland Province (population 67,451) ranked second to Otago (population 85,113) and apart from Canterbury (population 58,775), all other Provinces had populations of less than 30,000. [Census 1874 Part I, Table VI, Table XI; Part V, Table IV.]
96 Numbers of Europeans taken into custody for drunkenness for the period 1865 to 1874 ranged from 4091 in 1869 to 6434 in 1874 with a total of 58201 convictions within the colony throughout this period. Figures for the province of Auckland generally accounted for between 20-30% of arrests and convictions. [SOURCE: STATISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND 1871 #64., 1872 Part V, #10., 1873 Law and Crime p.11., 1874 Law and Crime p.213.]
97 The Vagrant Act (1866) set out the definitions and penalties for idle and disorderly persons, rogues, vagabonds and incorrigible rogues. While 'vagrant' generally referred to having no visible means of support, the terms of this Act and The Vagrant Act 1866 Amendment Act (1869) were far-reaching. Those liable for prosecution included: any non-Māori "lodging or wandering in company with any of the aboriginal natives of New Zealand"; habitual drunkards; prostitutes; occupiers of houses frequented by thieves or persons of no visible lawful means of support; persons armed with offensive weapons; persons soliciting alms in a public place; anyone knowingly permitting prostitutes or persons of notoriously bad character to meet together in a public house; and anyone using indecent or abusive language in a public place. [NEW ZEALAND STATUTES 1866 pp.47-51, 1869 p.185.] Europeans convicted under this Act between 1865-1874 range from 339 in 1865 to 919 in 1874. [SOURCE: STATISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND 1871 #64., 1872 Part V, #10., 1873 Law and Crime p.12., 1874 Law and Crime p.214.]
98 Changes in the categories included in the official statistics of the colony give an indication of changing patterns of social behaviour as well as to governmental responses to such changes. Whereas prior to 1872 incidence of desertion of spouse or children was not recorded, 'Deserting their Families' was included as a category in 1872 with fourteen males and one female being listed as taken into custody for that offence. The following year an additional category of 'Deserting Wife' was included, for which six males were taken into custody. In 1874, this figure had increased to thirty five. [SOURCE: STATISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND 1872 Part V, #10., 1873 Law and Crime p.11., 1874 Law and Crime p.213.]
increasing numbers of women were appearing before the courts and
imprisoned either because they had no visible means of support or were
unable to pay their debts. While these features of social life
 gained the attention of legislators, philanthropists and social
reformers, they were also seized upon by some advocates of women's
rights and used to publicise and politicise the situation of women.

One particular case which gained public attention was that of a widow
with six children who was incarcerated in Mount Eden gaol for a debt
of £12. During her imprisonment, this debt had accrued to £20. Mary
Colclough read of this case in the newspaper and at first thought the
woman involved must have been flagrantly dishonest and lacking in
principle. But the fact that the woman was a widow with six children
to support signalled to her that this was more than just an individual
case of hardship. She surmised that this woman had likely been trained
in the "erroneous system that fits women solely for dependence" and
consequently her situation was symptomatic of much deeper issues. In
response to this case, Mary Colclough stated:

...it seems to me the greatest social anomaly to forbid
women to vote, tie their hands with reference to a choice
of employments, prate of their domestic sphere as the

99 Convictions for common assault were generally less than half of the
cases taken into custody for that offense. While numbers of arrests for
assault remained reasonably constant throughout the colony for the period
1865 to 1874, generally ranging between 1200-1550, there was a sharp
increase in convictions amongst Europeans in the province of Auckland in
the early 1870s. [SOURCE: STATISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND 1872 #62, #64., 1872

100 During the early 1870s numbers of Europeans taken into custody for
theft (including offenses against property) increased dramatically from
903 in 1872 to 1475 in 1874. [SOURCE: STATISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND 1872 Part
V, #10., 1874 Law and Crime p.213.

101 See STATISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND 1865 #52, #59., 1866 #52, #60., 1867 Part
II, #56, #58, #63., 1868 #62, #69., 1869 #62, #69., 1870 #62, #69., 1871
#62, #64, #69., 1872 Part V, #8, #10, #11., 1873 Part V, p.6, 11, 12.,
1874 Part V, pp.208, 213, 214, 216-17.

102 Between 1865 and 1875 there were a number of laws passed which
attempted to regulate social behaviour and maintain social control in
various ways throughout the colony. For example: The Outlying Districts
Police Act, 1865 (which intended to maintain peace in the outlying
districts of the colony); The Vagrant Act, 1866 and Amendment Act 1869;
The Malicious Injuries To Property Act, 1867; The Offences Against the
Person Act, 1867 Amendment Act 1868 (which covered a wide range of
offences including homicide, attempted murder, intent to cause bodily
harm, assault, rape, abduction and attempts to procure abortion); The
Lunatics Act, 1868; The District Courts Criminal Jurisdiction Extension
Act, 1870; The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1872 (to improve the
administration of criminal justice); The Licensing Act, 1873 (which
regulated the sale of intoxicating liquors).

103 Maintenance costs during prison sentences were charged at the rate of
one shilling per day and food costs in this particular case were estimated
at seven pence. See Provincial Council Report, DSC 17 January 1871, p.3.
only proper one for women, curtail their sphere of usefulness so that it is almost impossible for a self-helpful woman to earn a decent living, and yet, whilst loading her with all these disqualifications, to make her as liable as any man to the pains and penalties of the law.104

Her analysis of the situation of this widow was challenged by "HUMBLE-BEE" who maintained that the fault lay largely with the individual concerned and that too many women either lived beyond their husband's incomes or were too proud to engage in honest labour when circumstances necessitated they earn a living.105

Another significant occasion where Mary Colclough found it necessary to dip her pen into the "sad social mire" to get to the root of prevalent social problems was with regard to the "social evil" of prostitution.106 Whereas public perception placed the blame for prostitution squarely at the feet of women of disreputable character, Mary Colclough identified the root of the problem with "male depravity that stalks unchecked". In doing so, she drew attention to the double standards of morality which led to the "frightful" situation in which "the unfortunate girls are punished whilst those who make them what they are walk unblushingly in the light of day".107

For several years Mary Colclough was a key voice in drawing public attention to social problems such as drunkenness, the treatment of female prisoners, the organisation of the female prison at Mount Eden, and the care of neglected and orphaned children, making political connections between these issues and the social and legal status of women.108 While such social concerns lent themselves to public debate and were seized upon by outspoken advocates of women's rights as opportunities to politicise the situation of women, there were other important factors operating which ensured that such issues would be debated in the public arena. These had less to do with seeking changes in the social and legal status of women than with the exigencies of emerging forms of capitalism in New Zealand.

104 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 18 January 1871, p.3.
105 "HUMBLE-BEE" DSC 24 January 1871, p.3. For Polly Plum's response, see DSC 2 February 1871, p.3.
106 "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 4 October 1871, p.5.
107 Ibid., p.5.
108 For further discussion of her analyses and activism in these areas, see Chapters 7 and 10.
The Role of the Media

Of central importance to a consideration of influences which affected the emergence of these debates on women's rights in the colony was the role and the power of the printed press. Rather than signifying a widespread wave of conversion to the cause of women's rights in the colony, a key influence in the upsurge of debate on the 'woman question' during this period lies in the structural and political workings of the press.

During the 1860s and 1870s there were important changes within the newspaper industry which both facilitated publicity on the international women's rights movement and served to benefit from generating local public debate on the 'woman question'. Given the amount of control that newspapers had both in terms of what was printed and in terms of influencing public opinion, the proliferation by the press of debate on the 'woman question' can be seen as an important means through which the tensions inherent in the competing values of capitalism and patriarchy converged.

During the 1860s, population increases, the general growth of the economy, and technological advances in the printing press and telegraphic communication, contributed to the development of newspapers as profitable business concerns. Increasingly dependent upon advertising income, and in fierce competition for readership, a new group of newspaper proprietors emerged whose orientation was primarily that of business entrepreneurs rather than political activists. New technology meant that newspapers could be cheaper and more up-to-date for an increasingly literate population. Telegraphic links enabled world-wide communication on a daily basis as well as the beginnings of syndicated news items. In some major centres, however, this also meant increased competition for readership and hence the potential benefit to a newspaper's circulation in encouraging public debate on controversial issues.

Central to this convergence of capitalist and patriarchal values was the everyday workings of 'editorial discretion' which played a

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110 The percentage of the European population who could read and write increased from 63.51% in 1858 to 68.15% in 1874. [Census 1874 Part VII, Table I.]
significant role in dictating what articles and correspondence would be printed. At various times, this control was overt. For example, Charles Elliott, as Editor of the Nelson Examiner, could protect the identity of "Fémina" and make use of his influence to ensure Mary Müller's articles in support of women's rights were widely circulated. On the other hand, 'lack of space' could be used to obscure a variety of political decisions over what assumed priority on any given day, just as correspondence could be closed on any given topic at the sole discretion of the Editor. Hence, while assuring readers that the Daily Southern Cross was committed to opening its columns "for the proper discussion of public questions of importance", the Editor could justify "a little judicious condensation" of letters on the basis of more frequent communication with the "sister provinces" and Australia putting pressure on the amount of space available for correspondents' letters.111

In a similar fashion, editorial leaders introducing articles and the positioning of articles could be used to influence public opinion in more covert ways. For example, while explaining that a letter in response to an article by Polly Plum could not be published due to lack of space, the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross proceeded to devote twenty lines to excuse his closing of the discussion by relating the story of the "practical good sense" of the Speaker of the House of Commons who, in response to a deputation of women, bid them to go home and wash the dishes.112

Another area in which subtle forms of editorial control and the demands of capitalism merged with the values and priorities of patriarchy, was in the area of providing for female readership. Given the amount of newspaper space conferred to the Auckland debate on women's rights (especially between 1868 and 1874), the range of issues that were aired during these debates, and the support given at various times by the Editors of the New Zealand Herald and the Daily Southern Cross to the arguments by proponents of women's rights, this was not a simple case

111 See Editorial note regarding Correspondents' Letters, DSC 14 September 1869, p.5.

112 DSC 1 June 1870, p.3. Other pertinent examples including the withholding of a letter which vindicated Polly Plum from charges of plagiarism, and eventually printing only parts of the letter [see DSC 30 June 1870, p.3., and 2 July 1870, p.3.] and closing discussion regarding Polly Plum due to the "correspondence assuming such large dimensions". [see NZH 16 August 1871, p.2. and 18 August 1871, p.2.]
of capitalism reinforcing prescriptive patriarchal ideologies. Rather, the vagaries of the press, in terms of its simultaneous encouragement and criticism of issues pertaining to women's rights, needs to be understood as the workings of the tensions inherent in the competing ideologies of capitalism and patriarchy. For example, the New Zealand Herald and the Daily Southern Cross both provided sporadic information on the activities of women's rights advocates within the international women's movement.\textsuperscript{113} The tone, leaders, and positioning of these articles, however, often belied a trivialising attitude to these activities.\textsuperscript{114} The Daily Southern Cross also provided limited space once a week for "a résumé of lectures addressed to the ladies of Auckland".\textsuperscript{115} These generally consisted of gardening lectures and occasional talks from missionaries who had returned from overseas. Moreover, the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross acknowledged that coverage of these lectures was treated as a form of amusement, albeit at the expense of the ladies. He justified this approach on the basis of his belief that "\textquote{[i]t was such a comical idea that in this town the ladies should venture to think of anything beyond daily food, good works, and what the frivolous foreigner terms 'chiffons.'}\textquote{116 In apologising for any offence "our little laugh" may have caused these women, the Editor employed metaphors of the "clinging ivy" and the "shrieking sisterhood" to clarify his position with regard to women's 'proper' roles:

Without wishing all the fair sex to go in for Women's Rights, and competition in the professions with our hitherto privileged selves, we think these lectures should be encouraged. We are far from wishing our fair friends to become masculine, and de facto a bad imitation

\textsuperscript{113} For example, on several occasions short articles regarding Miss Anna Dickinson, a "female orator" in the United States who was considered to be a "great advocate" for women's rights appeared in the Auckland press [see DSC 11 December 1869, p.6.; 15 April 1870, p.3.; NZH 12 February 1872, p.3.], a review was printed of a lecture on women's dress reform given by Mrs Stanton in St. Louis [DSC 21 September 1870, p.2.], acknowledgement was given to the Woman's Suffrage Convention in San Francisco [NZH 24 June 1871, p.2.] and to the Women and Prisons Congress in London [NZH 1 October 1872, p.3.].

\textsuperscript{114} For example, the Editor of the New Zealand Herald, in responding to what he referred to as the "stupid remarks...made in public in Auckland by would-be champions of the so-called 'women's rights',' introduced an "amusing and instructive" work in which the (female) writer countered the claim that "it is man that thwarts every effort of women to rise to eminence". In his view, it constituted an "excellent reply to such illogical and ill-natured suggestions". [NZH 7 November 1871, p.2.]; see also the Editorial on "Woman's Rights" NZH 22 May 1871, p.2. and the article "A Woman's League Against Their Tyrants" 21 October 1882, p.6.]

\textsuperscript{115} See Editorial note, DSC 18 May 1872, p.3.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p.3.
of man. The type represented by the clinging ivy has a charm to which the 'shrieking sisterhood' need never aspire. Let them glory in their womanhood, and remain feminine in ideas and pursuits, but let them not suppose that they lose their charms by using their faculties. They are rational beings, with heavy responsibilities. Some are destined to care, sorrow, and trouble. We maintain they will bear their destined portion the better for being able at times to withdraw their thoughts from sordid cares and material speculations.\textsuperscript{117}

Despite there being an expressed demand for a regular ladies column which could include more detailed coverage of activities associated with the international women's movement and "those works of charity and philanthropy in which [women] are specially interested",\textsuperscript{118} the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross made no apology for providing such limited space for issues of particular interest to the ladies of Auckland.

Nevertheless, it was the Daily Southern Cross which commissioned Mary Colclough to write a series of articles on 'Social Topics' in 1869.\textsuperscript{119} This newspaper also regularly published short articles written by Polly Plum on topics of interest to the female readership.\textsuperscript{120} While

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p.3.

\textsuperscript{118} Mary Colclough made this suggestion, writing "[s]urely the men of Auckland are not so intensely selfish as to think any apology necessary for the mention of such matters as are interesting only to ladies. Columns and columns are written solely for the information of men and the matters in which only they are interested, and it would be churlish in the extreme to grudge the ladies an occasional column or half column of news or information for their special benefit." She added that given that there is no special ladies journal in the colony, as was the case in England and America, there was an even greater need for newspapers to cater for women's intellectual needs and tastes. Given that the young ladies like to hear of the fashions, Mary Colclough suggested that "two respectable columns of fact and fancy might be weekly provided for the ladies". ["MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 20 May 1872, p.3.]

\textsuperscript{119} The topics included "Going A-Courting", "The School for Wives", "Early Married Days", "The Rising Generation", and "Coming Out". (The third article in this series was on the topic of becoming a wife although the title in the newspaper is illegible.) Polly Plum's treatment of these social topics included what men should consider when choosing a wife, the preparation needed by girls to become wives, considerations such as the size and furniture of the home, how to make a happy fulfilling marriage, ideas on raising children and guidelines for when girls and boys should "come out" in society. Her advice was generally very conservative - avoid reckless extravagance, make your first thought in marriage to love and study each other, forbearance in the marriage relation is the offspring and nourisher of love, girls should not enter society until they have a clear perception and knowledge of right and wrong. She consistently stressed that women should always approach marriage and life in general with the forethought to be prepared to be self-reliant if necessary. This series of articles was published in the DSC on 15 October 1869, p.3., 18 October 1869, p.4., 28 October 1869, p.6., 4 November 1869, p.4., 18 November 1869, p.7., 30 November 1869, p.7.

\textsuperscript{120} It is difficult to ascertain which of the many articles Polly Plum contributed to the Daily Southern Cross were commissioned pieces apart from the 'Social Topics' series, particularly as the policy of the Daily Southern Cross was to allow contributors to stipulate the title to the piece submitted (see extracts from 'Editorial Notes' by "MARY A. COLCLOUGH") in "The New Zealand Gentleman" (DSC 30 March 1870, p.3). Her article "Sisterhoods" (DSC 22 July 1869, p.6.) and her article "Sisterhoods" (DSC 30 March 1870, p.4.) was one of the few acknowledged to have been written specifically for the Daily Southern Cross.
interspersed with overtly political articles and letters written by Polly Plum, it is significant that the articles this newspaper commissioned from Mary Colclough were amongst the most conservative pieces she wrote.\textsuperscript{121} Hence, while profit motives may suggest the efficacy of generating a wider female readership through regular ladies columns which provided information on a wide range of issues of interest to women, conservative views regarding women's interests tended to be reinforced through the press.

In considering why debates on women's rights emerged within New Zealand during the late 1860s and early 1870s, this chapter has argued that while particular social, political and economic features of colonial society during this period facilitated particular attention to the situation of women, it cannot be claimed that there was a widespread support for women's rights in the colony. Within a rapidly changing society, however, conditions emerged which enabled some women and men to reflect critically on the situation and status of women and to develop a critical consciousness of gender. The following section will explore the theoretical implications of the tensions and contradictions within and between competing discourses and the possibilities which these engender with regard to women's subjectivity and to the emergence of resistant discourses.

\textsuperscript{121} Despite this conservatism, one correspondent took contention at Polly Plum's suggestion that the traditional Christmas fare of roast beef and plum pudding were unsuitable for the Southern hemisphere and should be replaced by cold chicken, strawberries and cream! See article "Children and Picnics" [Christmas Supplement, DSC 24 December 1870, p.1.] and response by "OLD GOOSEBERRY" [DSC 6 January 1871, p.3.]
SECTION TWO
THEORISING SUBJECTS

INTRODUCTION

As Section One has shown, throughout the nineteenth century there was intense philosophical and political debate regarding the essential natures of women and men, the relationship between the sexes, and the associated social roles of each gender. In analysing the contributions to these debates by three particular historical individuals, this study is concerned with the subversive potential of marked subjectivities and the knowledge claims made within resistant discourses. Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each identified as advocates for women's rights, sought to effect changes in the material social relations between the sexes, and, through their writings and social practices, challenged dominant constructions of what it meant to be a woman. An analysis of their subjectivities, both within their polemic writing and their social practices, not only provides an opportunity to develop more complex understandings of the features of marked subjectivities in the nineteenth century, but also allows for consideration of the ways in which these particular women utilised subject positions from which to disrupt and challenge the hegemony both of dominant constructions of subjectivity and of dominant claims to knowledge.

In seeking to explore the subjectivities of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, and in positioning them within resistant discourses, this study is based on particular constructions of the nature of, and relationship between, dominant and resistant discourses, the discursive production of subjectivity, and the subversive potential of knowledge claims. A number of questions arise from this approach: How is subjectivity discursively produced? What is the nature of the dominance of dominant discourses? How do resistant discourses emerge and operate? How do they resist dominant discourses? On what basis can it be claimed that marked subjectivities constitute a challenge to dominant constructions of subjectivity? What is the relationship between marked subjectivities and knowledge claims which challenge traditional understandings?
The first chapter of this section, *Ex-Centric Subjects*, begins with a discussion of theoretical assumptions associated with my use of a feminist poststructuralist analysis. Central to the political agenda of nineteenth century advocates of women's rights was the need to effect changes in women's material circumstances. This agenda needs to be understood within a wider project of transforming a range of social relationships organised around gender, class and sexuality. An integral component of transforming the ways that relationships between people were organised in society involved challenging the hegemony of dominant constructions of subjectivity. In studying how Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis discursively constructed female subjectivity within an oppositional framework, a central argument of this study is that new forms of subjectivity are important to the transformation of societal relations. In presenting a theoretical rationale for this argument, *Ex-Centric Subjects* explores how new forms of subjectivity may be possible. This chapter also considers the potential of marginality as a site for the transformation of existing power relations and argues for possibilities for agency being located within the operation of competing discourses.

The next chapter, *Subversive Subjectivities*, is concerned with a more detailed engagement with issues relating to 'experience', 'identity' and 'subversion'. In the context of considering how particular ontological and epistemological positions may disrupt and challenge the bases of dominant knowledge claims, *Subversive Subjectivities* considers how we might identify resistant 'feminist' subjectivities. This discussion is intended to provide a theoretical basis for my consideration of the identities and social practices of each of these women in Section Four as well as a context for my consideration of the subjectivities and knowledge claims of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis in Section Five. Chapter 4 closes with a discussion of how resistance and subversion may be claimed and located.
CHAPTER 3

EX-CENTRIC SUBJECTS

To facilitate exploration of the subversive potential of the discursive practices of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, the chosen analytic framework for this study is a feminist poststructuralism. Poststructuralist theories developed within a particular historical context in which notions of the existence of essential truths and the ability to understand history were radically destabilised. Not only were ideas associated with liberalism and Marxism challenged, but the underlying structures on which Western thought had been built were questioned in relation to their ideological underpinnings and operations. Theories which focused on structures (as opposed to functions) and which constituted themselves as organised, coherent, homogeneous and logical, were exposed within poststructuralist analysis as 'fictive totalities' and were analysed from the perspective of their political implications. As Leslie Wahl Rabine has written:

The structures of Consciousness, Identity, Reason, and Logic were all subjected to an analytic light that showed them to be Western sociohistoric constructions, appearing universal and natural through ideological imposition, and all serving the political ends of Western and bourgeois mastery.

In rejecting the possibility of absolute truth and objectivity, and constructing all knowledge as inherently transient and unstable, poststructuralist theories which emerged in response to these critiques viewed meaning as actively constituted in language and therefore not fixed, but necessarily fluid and plural. As Nicola Gavey notes, the view of language which underlies this approach contrasts markedly from "the liberal humanist view of language as transparent and expressive, merely reflecting and describing (pre-existing) subjectivity and human experience of the world." Within this context, practices of

1 Some of the key political events as identified by Rabine which led to this destabilising of the ability to understand history included the Hungarian revolt and the critique of Stalin by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, the Algerian war of independence, the U.S. war in Vietnam and the Czechoslovakian revolt in 1968 and the student protests throughout Europe of May 1968. [See Rabine (1988) pp.11-12.]


definition are analysed as attempts to fix meanings and essences that do not exist. In their resistance to these attempts to fix meaning, poststructuralist theories can be characterised by their constant deferral of meaning.\(^4\)

In constructing a feminist poststructuralist theoretical framework for the present study, my intention is to draw on aspects of poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions, in a manner which privileges a feminist political agenda. In describing the underlying motivation that has (and continues to) engender feminist analysis, Barbara Johnson refers to a "scepticism toward the authority of existing cultural arrangements, toward the supposed 'universality' or 'impartiality' of existing 'truths.'\(^5\) It is precisely such a scepticism which can be traced through the writings of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis of last century and which has motivated women to effect changes in the social relations between the sexes for centuries. It is also the impulse which motivates the current research.

As an approach which treats knowledge as being socially constructed and as privileging the interests of certain categories of people, feminist poststructuralism provides a political epistemological framework in which knowledge production can be viewed on a strategic level. This approach can be used to demonstrate the social relations which construct particular claims\(^6\) and the political implications and deficiencies of particular discursive practices. As a consequence, the feminist poststructuralist theoretical approach on which this study is based emphasises both the variability and the political nature of the construction of meaning and knowledge.

Within this context, knowledge production is understood as an active process that necessarily implicates the researcher. As an embodied, located and interested subject, the meanings that are constructed throughout this study will necessarily and inevitably be shaped by the political interests vested in the locations and subject positions which I, as researcher, occupy. Inherent in this process is the exercise of

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\(^4\) Ibid., p.460.


\(^6\) For further discussion of this, see Hawkesworth (1989), Smith (1990), Scott (1988) and Hartsock (1990).
power in respect to my selective utilisation of the words and life experiences of the women who are the focus of this study. Carole Ann Taylor has written that "[a]ll scholarship, of course, emanates from some subject-position(s), but the difficulty inheres in how subject-positions imply object-positions and skew value toward the subject." Critical instances in which my own positioning and political agenda may be seen to "skew value toward the subject" are with regard to my constructions of what constitutes 'feminist subjectivity' and how particular positions and practices may be claimed to be subversive. Furthermore, because my identification as a feminist locates me as both insider and outsider in relation to studying the discursive practices, subjectivities and identities of nineteenth-century advocates of women's rights, the distinctions between the 'subjects' and 'objects' of this research are complexly intertwined.

Given that poststructuralist theories are characterised by their fluidity and resistance to fixed meaning, and that there is a great deal of variety in the ways that proponents of poststructuralist theories articulate assumptions about language, knowledge and subjectivity, some clarification of how particular theoretical concepts are used in this study is necessary. Accordingly, in this chapter I shall indicate how 'discourses' are conceptualised and how these operate within the discursive construction of subjectivity. In discussing how dominant nineteenth century discourses constructed female subjectivity and the subjectivities of knowledge producers, I shall then demonstrate how these discourses operated within a complex network of hegemonic social practices to draw attention to the relationship between dominant ideological constructions of the female subject and forms of social dominance. With this in mind, I shall then argue that the theoretical reconceptualisation of female subjects is linked to the wider feminist project of transforming social relations.

**Discourses and the Discursive Construction of Subjectivity**

For the purposes of this study, discourses are understood as interrelated systems of statements cohering around common meanings and values which may be contained or expressed in organizations and

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7 Taylor (1993) p.56. Taylor cautions that the academic tendency to conflate "position" with "perspective" or "viewpoint" erases these relations of power. (Ibid., p.74.)

8 The implications of these aspects of my relation to the subjects of this study will be addressed in Section Three.
institutions as well as in words.\(^9\) As a structuring principle of society, discourses constitute and are reproduced in social institutions, modes of thought, and individual subjectivity.\(^{10}\) Within a feminist analysis, discourses can be viewed as the means through which both material power is exercised and power relations are established and perpetuated.

As discourses are always multiple and offer competing ways of giving meaning to the world, this study is concerned with how particular historical individual subjects made use of various 'positions' within discourses, or "possibilities' for constituting subjectivity"\(^{11}\) and how these subjectivities may have varied in terms of their political implications. Furthermore, if we understand every subject position to be part of a complex set of discourses associated with an intricate web of practices, then every practice is, by definition, both discursive and material.\(^{12}\) This understanding of discourses allows for an analysis of the social interactions of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis as examples of discursive practices. Such a focus on discursive practices also facilitates the preservation of the active presence of these three historical subjects by analysing their discursive productions within the social relations within which they were embedded.\(^{13}\)

How, then, did dominant discourses construct the subjectivity of knowledge producers in the nineteenth century? As noted in the previous section, the dominant philosophical tradition throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was that of Enlightenment thought. With its emphasis on reason and individualism, Enlightenment thought marked a substantial epistemological shift from earlier dominant philosophies which were based on tradition and religious authority. While traces of these earlier philosophies continued to form the basis of knowledge claims throughout the nineteenth century, the concept of reason and reasoned judgement assumed a crucial role within the


\(^{10}\) See Weedon (1987) p.41.


\(^{13}\) See Smith (1990) p.197. Dorothy Smith emphasises that discourses can only be investigated "as actual social relations ongoingly organised in and by the activities of actual people." [Ibid., p.160.]
Enlightenment tradition. Reason was considered to be objective and it was believed that disembodied reason could produce accurate accounts of the world. As the belief in scientific objectivity gained dominance, reasoned judgement was also purported to embody a progressive logic which enabled humans to transcend the personal and the subjective.  

The reasoned individual of liberal humanism presupposed a unique, fixed, stable and coherent individual. This unified rational individual could 'know' and speak with authority. There was, however, a fundamental tension within this dominant epistemological framework. At the same time as it was held that humanity was characterised by the capacity to reason, it was maintained that the essential natures of Woman and Man were opposite and that, whereas Man was ruled by the head, Woman was ruled by emotions. As a consequence, Woman's emotions interfered with her ability to engage in logical, reasoned argument. Woman was, therefore, an unreliable source of knowledge. As shall be evident in later chapters, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were marked from dominant nineteenth-century constructions of Woman in this respect, not only because of their claims that woman was a reasoning human being capable of producing reliable knowledge, but also on the basis of their own engagement, as women, in reasoned debate and discussion.

Within the nineteenth-century context, dominant ideological constructions of Woman were based on the binary opposition of male and female. Woman's nature was constructed in relation to Man's nature in a way that was not simply based on a notion of sexual difference, but within an oppositional framework of mutual exclusivity. Woman was constructed as a passive being of inferior intellectual capacity, ruled by emotionality, superior to Man in her capacity for moral influence and yet more susceptible to base instincts. On the basis of these ascribed essential characteristics, women's prescribed place and role in society was within the private domestic sphere, administering to the needs of the male, and principally responsible for the bearing and

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rearing of children. In the words of the influential nineteenth
century Christian social reformer John Ruskin:

We are foolish, and without excuse foolish, in speaking
of the 'superiority' of one sex to the other, as if they
could be compared in similar things. Each one has what
the other has not: each completes the other, and is
completed by the other: they are in nothing alike, and
the happiness and perfection of both depends on each
asking and receiving from the other what the other only
can give. Now their separate characters are briefly
these. The man's power is active, progressive,
defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the
discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for
speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for
war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever
conquest is necessary. But the woman's power is for
rule, not for battle, - and her intellect is not for
invention or creation, but for sweet ordering,
arrangement and decision. She sees the quality of
things, their claims, and their places. Her great
function is Praise; she enters into no contest, but
infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office,
and place, she is protected from all danger and
temptation. The man, in his rough work in open world,
must encounter all peril and trial; - to him, therefore,
must be the failure, the offence, the inevitable error:
often he must be wounded, or subdued; often misled; and
always hardened. But he guards the woman from all this;
within his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has
sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause
of error or offence. This is the true nature of the home
- it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from
all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division.15

Dominant nineteenth century discourses within various discursive fields
reinforced and supported this construction of Woman's nature and role.
For example, religious discourses maintained that Woman was second in
the order of creation, having been created for Man, and was therefore
subservient to Man.16 It was the husband's role to rule over his wife,
and therefore she should "learn in silence with all subjection" and not
usurp Man's authority.17 Moreover, women should love their husbands and
their children and be discreet chaste keepers of the home.18 Legal
discourse also reinforced this notion of Woman as subservient to Man

15 Ruskin (1908) pp.107-108. This is from Ruskin's famous lecture "Of
Queen's Gardens", originally delivered in 1864 and published the following
year.

16 1st Timothy 2:13; 1st Corinthians 11:9. These and the following
biblical texts were cited by "E. STEPHENS" in his declaration of "Woman's
Rights" as ordained by scripture, submitted to the Daily Southern Cross
for the 'edification of the sex'. [See "E. STEPHENS" DSC 4 April 1871,
p.3.]

17 Genesis 3:16; 1st Timothy 2:11-12.

18 Titus 2:4-5.
and under his absolute control and authority. For example, prior to the Married Women’s Property Act of 1884, upon marriage women had no separate legal, financial or social status independent of their husbands. Any property a woman may have acquired either before or after her marriage passed into the control of her husband. Medical and educational discourses maintained that not only were women physically unsuited to higher education, but an elementary education was accepted as sufficient for women to adequately perform their assigned roles. These few examples serve to illustrate how discourses which constructed Woman’s essential nature as passive, ruled by emotionality, and as best fitted for administering to the needs of men and children within the domestic sphere, were hegemonic throughout the nineteenth century.

This concept of hegemony, as developed by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, is used here to denote the means by which dominant social groups establish a system of legitimation or consent for a prevailing social order by encompassing a complex network of mutually reinforcing and interwoven ideas. As Benedetto Fontana explains:

Since...reality is perceived, and knowledge is acquired, through moral, cultural, and ideological ‘prisms’ or ‘filters’ by means of which society acquires form and meaning, hegemony necessarily implies the creation of a particular structure of knowledge and a particular system of values. The social group or class that is capable of forming its own particular knowledge and value systems, and of transforming them into general and universally applicable conceptions of the world, is the group that exercises intellectual and moral leadership.

As noted earlier, however, discourses operate within a complex web of social practices and hence description of the mere existence of these dominant constructions of Woman’s nature is not sufficient to provide an understanding of their operation in the discursive construction of subjectivity. As Ana Maria Alonso notes, “[h]egemony is produced and reproduced, challenged and negotiated in social action and action is always historically situated.” Hence, an analysis of the historical, material, and social practices within which these hegemonic discourses

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19 The language of this legal discourse embodied the ideological construction of women being defined in terms of their relationships to men and of men being the protectors of women. *Feme sole* signified a woman without a husband, whereas *feme covert* signified a woman under the cover or protection of her husband.


21 Ibid., p.140.

were embedded is necessary to understand how the production of these discourses was controlled and managed. Such an analysis also draws attention to the precarious nature of the dominant status of these discourses and hence to the potential sources of resistance and subversion.

A crucial social practice through which dominant nineteenth century discourses exercised power within the construction of subjectivity was through according social legitimation to individuals who assumed particular subject positions as defined by dominant discourses. By virtue of their hegemonic effects, dominant discourses are invested with a great deal of social power. In effect, they offer the inducement of social approval and status to individual subjects who assume positions in accordance with their precepts. This exercise of power is achieved through a variety of means which determine not only what counts as reason and truth, but also determine who can speak with authority and under what conditions. As described in Chapter 1, during the course of the nineteenth century ideologies of domesticity emerged as a means through which the competing ideologies of patriarchy and capitalism converged around the issue of assigning social status. This led to a situation in which status was increasingly accorded on the basis of the manifestation of particular personal and cultural attributes. The apportion of social legitimation and status to individual women in relation to their perceived manifestations of the assigned cultural attributes of Woman constituted a fundamental and powerful means through which dominant discourses shaped the construction of female subjectivity while simultaneously reinforcing their own dominance and power.

This was not a simple or straightforward process whereby passivity + meekness + subservience = social approval while activity + assertiveness + self-determination = social censure. At any given time, an individual subject is positioned within a multiplicity of discourses which offer a range of positions invested with a variety of political interests. Moreover, even within hegemonic discourses, the positions available may be in tension with each other. For example,

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23 See Michel Foucault (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith) London; Tavistock Publications.

24 See also Ana María Alonso who writes: "As the privileged locus of masculine power and feminine virtue, gender was a key site for the reinscription of subjectivities and for the negotiation of honor." [Alonso (1992) p.417.]
dominant discourses simultaneously constructed Woman as passive and yet of superior moral influence, incapable of reason and of inferior intellectual capacity and yet vested with primary responsibility for the education and training of female and male children. Because positions which were based on the 'essential' natures and ascribed roles of women were vested with some degree of legitimation by dominant discourses, women could not only claim some sense of authority in an active fulfilment of their ascribed roles, but could also argue for wider participation in society on the basis of their ascribed superior moral status. In doing so, however, these women were assuming positions which were in tension with the dominant construction of Woman as passive and incapable of reason. The existence of such positions which competed with dominant constructions of the female subject not only exposed the gaps between the myth of Woman and the subjective experiences of individual women, but also drew attention to the political interests vested in dominant constructions of the female subject.

In arguing for such things as increased educational opportunities, wider fields of employment and political citizenship, nineteenth-century advocates of women's rights utilised dominant discourses regarding women's moral superiority and discourses about freedom, justice and citizenship in ways that disrupted and challenged dominant constructions of the female subject. In asserting themselves as active, reasoning human beings, capable and entitled to pursue their own interests and abilities, these historical subjects were, on a fundamental level, engaged within the project of reconstructing themselves as female subjects.

Reconstructing Female Subjects

As previously discussed, dominant constructions of the female subject have been based on an ontological framework of sexual difference and binary oppositions. Janice Raymond describes this world view, in which woman exists only in relation to man, as "hetero-reality" and argues that what it means to be a 'woman' needs to be reconceptualised outside

25 In this respect, they had access to contemporaneous discourses regarding the human subject which were competing for dominant status. [See, Auslander (1992) p.166.]

26 The concept of 'ontology' used throughout this study is based on the branch of metaphysics which is concerned with the nature of being and assumptions regarding existence or the nature of existence.
of this dominant conceptual framework. She offers an alternative construction of "original woman" as "who belongs to her Self, who is neither copied, reproduced, nor translated from man's image of her." Within a feminist poststructuralist framework, however, Raymond's analysis is highly problematic as it assumes the possibility of positioning female subjects outside of, and separated from, dominant discourses.

In contrast to Raymond's analysis, Dorothy Smith attempts to theorise female subjects from within the dominant conceptual framework of "heterosexual sociality" in which women and men meet as socially constructed feminine and masculine. While exposing the underlying dominant conceptual framework as based on sexual difference and sex opposition, Smith draws attention to the constructed nature of femininity and masculinity in a manner that treats these social relations not as "fixed relations between statuses" but as a form of organisation in which "the seams, cracks, varieties, and contradictions in the multiple sites and modes of being a woman or being a man are reduced and homogenized." Smith's discussion of the social practices which construct gender difference is extended by Monique Wittig in her assertion that this dominant ideological construction of sexual difference functions as a form of censorship. Wittig argues that, by making recourse to nature, the ideology of sexual difference serves to mask the social opposition between men and women:

Masculine/feminine, male/female are the categories which serve to conceal the fact that social differences always belong to an economic, political, ideological order. ...'Woman' is not each one of us, but the political and ideological formulation which negates 'women' (the product of a relation of exploitation).

Wittig's analysis is based on her belief that "there is no sex". Rather, the dominant construction of sex as a pre-discursive category, an 'already there', is, according to Wittig, the thought of domination:

The category of sex does not exist a priori, before all society. And as a category of dominance it cannot be a

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28 Ibid., p.5.
30 Ibid., p.159,160.
product of natural dominance but of the social dominance of women by men, for there is but social dominance.\textsuperscript{32}

Wittig's analysis is useful for the present study because it does not preserve an investment in pre-existing forms of knowing and being that are distinct and separated from dominant discursive constructions of subjectivity. Similarly, Smith's insistence on the need to understand gender as a form of social organisation and to attend to the varieties and contradictions of modes of being a woman, also offers a useful theoretical perspective from which to consider the subjectivities of the historical individuals under study.

Like Wittig and Smith, Teresa de Lauretis also makes explicit links between the social construction of gender and the organisation of social inequalities. While acknowledging that meanings may differ between cultures, de Lauretis maintains that "a sex-gender system is always intimately interconnected with political and economic factors in each society" and is thereby systematically linked to the organisation of social inequality.\textsuperscript{33} In elaborating on the political significance of adherence to such a conceptual framework, de Lauretis clarifies how the notion of sexual difference makes it difficult to articulate the differences of women, as real historical beings and social subjects, from Woman, the constructed representation of an essence inherent in all women, as well as the differences between and within women.

De Lauretis's analysis connects with Simone de Beauvoir's thesis "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"\textsuperscript{34} which stresses that in order for a woman to become a 'true woman' she must see herself, and be seen as, 'Other' in contrast to the 'Self' of the male, as object in contrast to the (male) subject. De Beauvoir's analysis serves to highlight how dominant ontological assumptions define the female subject in relation to the norm of the male subject and designate the

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.2,5.

\textsuperscript{33} De Lauretis (1987) p.5.

\textsuperscript{34} De Beauvoir (1957) p.249.
female subject as 'Other'.35 Within these male-defined parameters of being, women, as subjects, disappear and cannot assert themselves.36

In unmasking the potential effects of dominant ontological assumptions regarding the differences between the sexes on an individual woman's subjective understanding of herself as a woman, de Lauretis's and de Beauvoir's analyses draw attention to the need to theorise alternative constructions of female subjects. If the social and political ordering of society is enculturated within dominant conceptual constructions of the female subject, then a crucial part of the feminist agenda for change necessitates a shift away from parameters which construct woman as 'Other', as inessential object. As Alice Jardine notes, such an agenda constitutes radical feminist practice:

...as long as we do not recognize new kinds of artificial, symbolic constructions of the subject, representation, and (especially) experience, we will be engaging in what are ultimately conservative and dated polemics, not radical theory and practice.37

In responding to Jardine's challenge to engage in radical feminist theory and practice by recognising alternative constructions of female subjects, this study accepts Wittig's assertion that "[t]here is nothing abstract about the power that science and theories have to act materially and actually upon our bodies and our minds, even if the discourse that produces it is abstract."38 In accepting that such abstract theoretical constructions of subjects do act materially on our bodies and our minds, and that such conceptual frameworks are related to forms of social organisation, the question arises as to how changes in such conceptual frameworks might potentially affect social relations. How might different forms of subjectivity which contest and challenge the hegemony of dominant constructions of subjects and their relation to the world influence social relations and institutions? Underlying this question is the assumption that the transformation of self and society are intrinsically linked. Such an assumption is

35 The feminist debate on the efficacy of perpetuating the usage of the concept of 'woman' is very complex and cannot adequately be represented here. The extent of the debate may be glimpsed in the variability of positions which include those that stress the need to replace unitary notions of woman (see, for example, Fraser and Nicholson (1990) pp.34-35.) to those that privilege the notion of woman as positionality (see, for example, Alcoff (1988)). See also, Scott (1988) and Smith (1990).


evident in the "passionate beginnings" of 'second wave' feminists in Britain in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, of this period of renewed feminist activism, Sue O'Sullivan wrote:

We weren't going to wait for a revolution before we tried to change our lives...the more we could transform ourselves, our relationships, our consciousness, the more we could move towards a possibility for fundamental change.\(^{39}\)

In linking what has come to be termed 'personal politics' with the feminist agenda of transforming social relations, O'Sullivan's insistence on the need for changes in subjectivity is consistent with a feminist poststructuralist analysis of how discourses, as they are constituted through social institutions, modes of thought, and individual subjectivity, operate as the means through which material power is exercised. Within this theoretical framework, feminist critiques of social relations, be they expressed as 'male domination', 'patriarchy', or 'the inequality of women', are not solely based on abstract theoretical notions of inequality, discrimination or oppression. They are based on the operation of discourses within everyday material practices between individuals, and subsequently experienced by individual subjects as lived realities. For example, there was nothing abstract about the way Mary Taylor was forbidden by her mother to talk about what she had been learning because "people did not like it"\(^{40}\) nor about being laughed at by the local community when she decided to set up her own shop with her cousin.\(^{41}\) Similarly, there was nothing abstract about Mary Colclough being left on a bare floor in an empty room with her two young children, the furniture she had paid for from her own earnings having been repossessed by her husband's debtors.\(^{42}\)

Within male-dominated societies, material practices of domination and subordination are not only institutionalised within the systems and structures of society, they are enacted on a daily level by men and women in all social practices. An important consequence of this is that while every social relation and every social practice is a


\(^{40}\) Taylor (1870) p.2.

\(^{41}\) See letter from Ellen Taylor to Charlotte Brontë, 13 August 1850. [Stevens (1972) Letter 21]

\(^{42}\) "POLLY PLUM" NZH 18 August 1871, p.3.
potential site for the re-production of existing social relations, it is also a potential site for change. Personal politics', therefore, are a critical part of transforming the power relations of society; changing institutionalised relations of power and changing the institutions, structures and systems which perpetuate domination are inextricably intertwined.

If we accept this argument that every social relation and every social practice simultaneously offers the potential for either perpetuation of, or change to, existing forms of social relations, then forms of subjectivity which contest and challenge the hegemony of dominant constructions of male and female subjects become critical in the process of effecting changes in the social relations between the sexes. How, then, might female subjects be reconceptualised in ways which open up possibilities for different forms of subjectivity which carry the potential to subvert dominant understandings of female subjectivity?

Poststructuralist analysis offers a conceptualisation of the subject as being fragmentary, multiple, and divided. This conceptualisation poses a subjectivity that is precarious, conflicting, contradictory, and in process, being reconstituted in discourse each time the subject thinks or speaks. As Teresa de Lauretis has shown, however, to use the notion of 'the subject' as a generic term erases sexuality and sexual difference from subjectivity. To avoid such an erasure, de Lauretis maintains the need, within feminist theory, for the development of a theory of "the female-embodied social subject that is based on its specific, emergent and conflictual history". Such a theory, according

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43 As Elizabeth Spelman has shown, feminist discourse can also be seen as a potential site for replication of a politics of domination in that feminist analyses can implicitly enact domination by both the assertion of difference and the refusal to take into account differences between women. [See Spelman (1988)]


45 This has been a persistent theme within contemporary feminist theory. For example, Sarah Hoagland, in her study of lesbian ethics, maintains that we need to undermine "heterosexualism" - a way of living that normalises the dominance of one person and the subordination of another - as a way of relating. [Hoagland (1988) p.7.] Similarly, bell hooks speaks of the need to transform ourselves and society through not participating in a "politics of domination". Maintaining that it is first the potential oppressor within that we must resist, hooks argues that we then must re-form our interpersonal relations, observing that "if we are unable to resist and end domination in relations where there is care, it seems totally unimaginable that we can resist and end it in other institutionalized relations of power." [hooks (1989) p.21,22.]

46 De Lauretis (1990) p.267. As Rosi Braidotti notes, the embodiment of the subject is a key concept in feminist reconstructions of subjectivity.
to de Lauretis, needs to take into account how significant socio-cultural divisions and representations, such as sex, gender, race, class, sexuality and the like, constitute modes of social and subjective existence. As de Lauretis cautions, these female embodied social subjects are sites of difference and cannot be collapsed into a fixed identity; to do so risks replicating the imposition of a sameness of all women as Woman. In a similar vein Biddy Martin states that:

...the 'subject of feminism' cannot be thought as a stable, unified or internally coherent woman, or lesbian, without arresting and obscuring the plurality of discursive domains, the 'unpredictable and inadvertent contingencies', in which subjects are constituted.

These theorists emphasise the need to conceptualise female-embodied social subjects as multiple and contradictory, both inside and outside the ideology of gender, and as ideologically interpellated into a feminine gender identity through conscious and unconscious social processes. Acceptance of this conceptualisation of female subjects is dependent upon discursive spaces being available from which to engage in this critical discursive practice of reconstructing female subjects.

Elizabeth Grosz has written of the need to move beyond the discursive boundaries of phallocentric discourse which, by conflating the two sexes into a singular 'universal' model, renders female autonomy and self representations impossible. Monique Wittig, on the other hand, maintains that we need to take up a frame of reference outside of that offered by "the straight mind". In her analysis, the discourses of heterosexuality deny the possibility of creating our own categories by preventing us from speaking unless we speak in their terms. Teresa de Lauretis argues a similar position, maintaining that we need to reconstruct gender in terms other than those dictated by the

It needs to be understood as neither a biological nor sociological category but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological. (Braidotti (1992) p.184.)

51 Wittig (1992) p.25. Wittig comes to the conclusion that oppressive forms of domination can only be challenged through a refusal of the heterosexual contract.
patriarchal contract which is a heterosexual contract. Given the hegemony of dominant discourses and the material power they exercise on the minds and bodies of individual subjects, is it possible to refuse the patriarchal heterosexual contract and yet simultaneously avoid positioning female subjects outside of and separated from dominant constructions of the female subject? What discursive possibilities may exist for reconstructing the subjectivities of female subjects?

**Marginal Spaces**

In constructing a conceptual and discursive space which can facilitate an individual woman's self-definition as female being or as female-gendered speaking subject, Teresa de Lauretis analyses the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective's reference to a "female genealogy". Their use of the concept of a genealogy of women refers to taking up a position in a symbolic community which is discovered, invented, and constructed through feminist practices of reference and address. Within this framework, 'taking up a position' refers to actual practices in relationships between women in everyday life.

Teresa de Lauretis locates this space on the margins of hegemonic discourses, describing it as "social spaces carved at the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparati." In her analysis, it is the constant movement between the discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and these spaces between the margins which leads, not to a dialectic or integration, but to a space of "the tension of contradiction, multiplicity, and heteronorm" in which resistant positions and practices at the local level of resistances in subjectivity and self-representation are opened to us. This kind of discursive space is based on what Nancy Fraser would describe as a "pragmatic model" of discourse which treats language as sets of multiple and historically specific institutionalised social practices.

\[\text{De Lauretis (1987) p.17. See also Hoagland (1988) who maintains that this necessarily entails a withdrawal from heterosexuality on the personal level.}\]

\[\text{De Lauretis (1987a) p.2.}\]

\[\text{De Lauretis (1987) p.25.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., p.26.}\]

\[\text{See Fraser (1992).}\]
As such, it allows a view of speaking subjects as socially situated agents.

Within this discursive space emphasis is placed on women-centred forms of analysis while simultaneously recognising that we are also subjects within discourses that have been structured upon frames of reference outside of ourselves. Thus, in the case of the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, there is theoretical analysis of the possibilities of existence of female subjects "not altogether separate from male society, yet autonomous from male definition and dominance".57

If discursive spaces are available on the margins of hegemonic discourses and it is the movement between these spaces that allows for reconstructions of female subjectivity, 'marginality' presents itself as a crucial site for the transformation of existing power relations. If we accept that, as female subjects, we are simultaneously inside and outside dominant discursive constructions of subjectivity, on what basis can marginality be claimed? Does this concept not accept and reinforce a norm of the centrality of dominant discourses? Moreover, how might the subjective experience of marginality differ when considered from a marginalised position as compared to a position of constructed centrality? Does a marginality that is imposed by dominant discourses differ from a marginality that is embraced by subjects? Is it possible (and desirable) to collapse this centre-margin opposition and yet retain a concept of marginality without it being reliant on a single centre?58

bell hooks describes a space of refusal where one can say "no" to the colonizer as being a profound edge, located on the margins.59 It is a space from which the process of decentering the oppressive other and claiming our right to subjectivity can occur because there exists a counter-language which, while it may resemble the colonizer's tongue, has undergone a transformation and has been irrevocably changed.60 In her analysis, the process of becoming subjects:

57 De Lauretis (1987a) p.11.

58 For development of this theme, see, for example, Stephen Muecke, (1992) Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies Kensington: New South Wales University Press, pp.186ff.

59 hooks (1990) p.149.

60 Ibid., p.22,150.
...emerges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one's own life, as one develops critical thinking and critical consciousness, as one invents new, alternative habits of being, and resists from that marginal space of difference inwardly defined.

(Emphasis added) 61

In effect, hooks disrupts this margin-centre opposition by constructing marginality within dominant discourses as a central location from which to engage in the production of counter-hegemonic discourses and practices. In the process of locating marginality as a crucial site for the production of counter-hegemonic discourses and practices, however, hooks tends to construct the process of becoming ex-centric subjects as a matter of rational conscious choice. Moreover, her emphasis on individuals developing critical thinking and critical consciousness and inventing new ways of being tends to reinvoke the rational agentic subject of liberal humanism. In stressing the need for women to engage in self-definition as a means of achieving autonomy, hooks represents a recent voice in a long tradition of feminist writers, among whom Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis can be included. Within a poststructuralist analytical framework, this notion of 'self-definition' is problematic.

'Self-definition' and Agency

Poststructuralist theories posit that all meaning is socially and historically constructed and that any particular subject positions which an individual may assume are constructed by our social and historical positioning within discourses. Within this framework, 'assuming a subject position' involves a process whereby the individual assumes that she is the author of the discourse which she is speaking, and consequently speaks and thinks as if she were in control of meaning. 62 Given that meaning is actively constituted through language and discourse, it is neither fixed nor essential to the individual. An individual's self-report, therefore, needs to be understood as an instance of language constituting subjectivity, and, as such, is treated as a discursive practice rather than as a reflection of 'true' experience.

Given that an individual subject exists within this network of discursive relations which construct her subjectivity and the subject

61 Ibid., p.15.

positions that are available to her, what sense can be made of the claim to be 'self-defined'? Can there be a theoretical basis for arguing that such a claim is possible? I want to argue that within a feminist poststructuralist analysis, such a claim is possible. While our subjectivity may be the product of the society and culture in which we live, the individual is always the site of conflicting discourses which construct our subjectivity. These discourses, which compete to give voice and meaning to our experiences and thereby constitute us as subjects, offer differing and sometimes contradictory versions of our social reality. It is our capacity to reflect critically on these contradictions, and to accept or reject the various alternatives of meaning, which provides the possibility for agency and the construction of new meanings.

In considering the individual subject as agent, it is crucial to consider the effects of a subject's positioning within various discourses in terms of the possible range of subject positions available to that individual. This is not a case of taxonomising an individual subject's various categorical positions in a linear fashion and maintaining that the individual subject is simply the sum total of all her positions in discourse, however, for this assumes that these positions can be separated and unproblematically distinguished from each other. Such an approach fails to take into account how subject positions are multiple and shifting. It also fails to show how the political interests privileged by particular subject positions differ for each particular subject: the consequences for particular individuals assuming particular subject positions can neither be predicted in advance nor can they be assumed to be the same.

The argument presented here is that as individual subjects we are not powerless victims of 'discourse determinism'. As Teresa de Lauretis states, "one's possibilities of existence are not simply the effect of

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64 Fuss (1989) p.34.
65 Chantal Mouffe suggests that rather than treating this plurality as simply the coexistence of multiple subject positions, we need to be aware of the constant subversion and overdetermination of one subject position by the others. (Mouffe (1992) p.372.)
66 See also Elspeth Probyn who writes: "We can no longer take the meanings of discourses for granted and must turn to the ways in which individuals may be differently positioned by them." (Probyn (1990) p.181.)
one's subjective limits and discursive boundaries". Weedon furthers this point by explaining that:

Although the subject in poststructuralism is socially constructed in discursive practices, she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices. She is also a subject able to reflect upon the discursive relations which constitute her and the society in which she lives, and able to choose from the options available.

In maintaining that we can "choose from the options available", Weedon, like hooks, appears to invoke the rational subject of liberal humanism in depicting agency as simply a matter of rational choice, albeit limited by the "options available". Rather than asserting an essential humanist rationality, Weedon's construction of agency can be understood as a contingent and situationally specific possibility that is produced when individuals are situated within, and reflect upon, contradictory discourses. Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, maintains that:

It is only when we discard the view of the subject as an agent both rational and transparent to itself, and discard as well the supposed unity and homogeneity of the ensemble of positions, that we are able to theorize the multiplicity of relations of subordination.

Rather than suggesting we must reject the notion of agency along with the rational subject, Mouffe stresses the need to reject a reinvocation of the rational subject being transparent to itself. Her insistence on this point is useful as it reminds us that "the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices", to use Weedon's phrase, also involves multiple and contradictory unconscious processes and desires which, by definition, are beyond our subjective limits. Hence, while our consciousness of a range of subject positions can act as a stimulus to reflect critically on the subject positions we assume, and thereby offer possibilities for the exercise of agency, unconscious processes will always mediate the 'options' we 'see' and the 'choices' we make. Just as to be constructed by discourse does not necessarily imply that one is determined by discourse, the exercise of agency does not necessarily imply simply a rational and conscious choice.

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In constructing agency as a conscious process mediated by the unconscious, possibilities for exercising agency can be located within the forms in which discourses are reproduced. As Judith Butler notes:

Indeed, when the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. "...'agency,' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition."70

Within this framework there is room for women, as active agents, to engage in forms of self-definition and self-determination as they reflect critically on the discursive practices that have constructed them as women and strategically utilise the subject positions available to them on the basis of the political strength of the interests those subject positions represent. The question of agency, therefore, rather than being an effect of the subject's self delusion as maintained by the French philosopher Louis Althusser,71 is reformulated as a question of how signification and resignification work. As stated earlier, this is not a simple matter of rational choice but a matter of the range of possibilities for action and the reconstruction of subjectivity that arise from a consciousness that is both fragmentary and contradictory.

Given the complexity of an individual's positioning within multiple discourses, the fluidity of subject positions within those discourses, and the fact that the effects or political implications of particular subject positions and discursive practices cannot necessarily be predicted with any certainty in advance, this process of signification and resignification is precarious. It is, however, integrally connected with how feminists engage in the process of self-definition and reconstruction of their subjective experiences.

Within the analytical framework of the discursive construction of subjectivity, this chapter has linked dominant nineteenth century constructions of the female subject to forms of social organisation which confine women to narrow, male-defined roles and spheres of influence. It has been argued that reconceptualisations of female

70 Butler (1990) p.145.
subjects are a necessary and integral part of opening possibilities for female subjectivity which, by contesting the hegemony of dominant understandings of women, have the potential to transform social relations. Discursive spaces on the margins of hegemonic discourses and within the operation of competing discourses have been located as possible sites for agency and subversive practice. The following chapter will explore issues relating to the process of developing resistant discursive strategies and the subversive potential of eccentric subjectivities.
CHAPTER 4

SUBVERSIVE SUBJECTIVITIES

Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were all involved in the active construction of counter-hegemonic female subjectivities. This chapter explores the processes involved in developing subversive subjectivities. It will be argued that because experience and identities are ongoing processes by which subjectivity is constructed, resistances to dominant hegemonic discourses can be located within forms of subjectivity, strategic invocations to identity, and social practices.

The Role of Experience

The notion of the validity of women's experience has always been crucial to feminism and feminist theory. As Alice Jardine writes:

Feminism, while infinite in its variations, is finally rooted in the belief that women's truth-in-experience-and-reality is and has always been different from men's and that it as well as its artifacts and productions have consequently been devalued and always already delegitimized in patriarchal culture.1

According to Jane Gallop, however, this conceptualisation of experience tends to encourage a conservative politics because it preserves traditional ideological constructs which, rather than being recognised as constructs, are taken for the 'real'.2 As Diana Fuss points out, such a conceptual framework is also problematic at the levels of ontology and epistemology. She writes: "'Experience' emerges as the essential truth of the individual subject, and personal 'identity' metamorphoses into knowledge. Who we are becomes what we know; ontology shades into epistemology."3 This is precisely the situation which gives rise to 'identity politics'4 and which effectively makes an

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1 Jardine (1985) p.147.
4 The concept of 'identity politics' was initially developed from the Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement" which, working from the premise that we first have to recognise and understand our own oppression, collapsed this into an inward-looking focus which conflated the development and assertion of personal identity as a substitute for
object of and reifies women's experiences. Within such a framework, experience is presented as authentic and uncontestable and, as Joan Scott points out, questions about the constructed nature of experience are left aside.\(^5\)

In contrast to these approaches, poststructuralist analysis begins from the position that it is not individuals who have experience but rather that subjects are constituted through experience.\(^6\) Within this analytic framework, experience is not considered to be a stable base for knowledge production.\(^7\) This type of analysis, however, can lead to an erasure of the concept of experience and hence presents a significant challenge to feminist epistemologies which are based in some way on a notion of a repressed and devalued female 'experience'. The issue for a feminist poststructuralist analysis, therefore, centres on the possibility of retaining and valuing a concept of 'experience' within feminist reconstructions of subjectivity that does not ascribe an essential authenticity to experience, but acknowledges that experiences and the meanings placed on those experiences are constituted in language and other signifying practices.

According to Liz Bondi, to claim that experience is valid is not the same as claiming it to be true; rather, "experience can be viewed as salient but contestable, rather than as a foundational phenomenon."\(^8\) This approach to experience necessitates a focus on social forms of consciousness and consideration of the social relations that organise experience.\(^9\) As Teresa de Lauretis explains, it is in this way that experience becomes an ongoing process by which subjectivity is constructed:

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7 See Fuss (1989) p.27.
8 Bondi (1993) p.95. See also Nicola Gavey who states that because meaningful experience is constituted in language "[t]his does not mean that experience does not exist or that it is not important, but rather that the ways in which we understand and express it are never independent of language." [Gavey (1989) p.461.]
9 Smith (1990) p.163,164.
Through that process one places oneself or is placed in social reality, and so perceives and comprehends as subjective (referring to, even originating in, oneself) those relations - material, economic, and interpersonal - which are in fact social and, in a larger perspective, historical. The process is continuous, its achievement unending or daily renewed. For each person, therefore, subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one then interacts with the world. On the contrary, it is the effect of that interaction - which I call experience; and thus it is produced not by external ideas, values, or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective, engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, and affect) to the events of the world.  

This theoretical understanding of experience provides the tools necessary for an alternative feminist critical practice than that offered by identity politics. Diana Fuss outlines clearly what this new practice, based on a constructionist theory of experience, entails:

'Essentially speaking,' we need both to theorize essentialist spaces from which to speak and, simultaneously, to deconstruct these spaces to keep them from solidifying. Such a double gesture involves once again the responsibility to historicize, to examine each deployment of essence, each appeal to experience, each claim to identity in the complicated contextual frame in which it is made.  

Similarly, Joan Scott suggests that:

Given the ubiquity of the term, it seems to me more useful to work with it, to analyse its operations and to redefine its meaning. This entails focusing on processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of 'experience' and on the politics of its construction.  

By engaging in this type of critical practice we can come to a consideration of experience as discursively constructed within the wider context of the construction of subjectivities.

In emphasising the need to examine each appeal to experience, Fuss also insists on the need to examine "each claim to identity" within the contextual frames in which they are made. Such a statement appears to be based on an assumption that identity has some coherence for the individual subject. Within poststructuralist theory, however, the concept of 'identity', which has traditionally signified an essential,
stable and unified aspect of the self, has been relegated to the status of a fictive totality, being a mere creation of history, politics and culture.\(^\text{13}\)

**The Subjective Experience of Identity**

In the previous chapter, identity was noted as one of a number of structures of consciousness that served the political ends of Western bourgeois mastery.\(^\text{14}\) Implicit in this view is the assumption that all invocations of identity are fundamentally complicit with controlling ideologies of domination. Can there be any theoretical basis for a consideration of identities as structures of consciousness which operate in resistance to dominant constructions of women’s subjectivity?

Critiques of identity as fictive totalising structures are based on the inadequacy of the liberal humanist construction of identity as an essential, stable and unified aspect of the self. In contrast to this model, poststructuralist accounts of identity maintain that each subject is composed of multiple identities which often compete or are in conflict with each other. Moreover, these identities are historically provisional political constructions and, as such, are replaceable. Within this conceptual framework, therefore, identity is necessarily viewed as multiple, fragmented, non-unified, non-rational and socially constructed. According to Diana Fuss, however, such views of multiple identities fail to effectively challenge the traditional understanding of identity as unity because difference is simply relocated from the space within identity to the spaces between identities. She states that "[d]ifference is seen as a product of the friction between easily identifiable and unitary components for identity (sexual, racial, economic, national...) competing for dominance within the subject."\(^\text{15}\) To avoid treating identity, or multiple identities, as unity, and to retain possibilities for exercising agency, identities need to be viewed as provisional and created through action.\(^\text{16}\) Such an approach, rather than treating identities as the outcome of possession of ’essential’ attributes, as

\(^{13}\) See, for example, Ryan (1989).

\(^{14}\) See Rabine (1988).

\(^{15}\) Fuss (1989) p.103.

\(^{16}\) Allanah Ryan (1989) and Jenny Bourne (1987) also advocate this approach.
in the case of 'identity politics', allows for identities to be treated as points of departure and as strategies of survival and resistance. Viewing identities as discursive strategies also offers the challenge of considering the political implications of the positions that are being privileged through the conscious political reconstruction of identities.

Elizabeth Spelman considers what may be involved in approaching identities as forms of strategy. She writes "if we think about identities and points of similarity and difference as things that are always being negotiated and challenged, we may think more about the particular purposes of those who create and maintain them." Spelman's suggestion that we think more about those who create and maintain identities is particularly useful as it reminds us of the complexity of processes involved in what Nicola Gavey has referred to as "the discursive battle for the subjectivity of the individual." Given the precariousness of the processes of signification and resignification, the conscious political crafting of identities must be considered within the context of ongoing processes of subjectification of the individual. Spelman alludes to this when, in reference to the political construction of identities, she says:

...insofar as we feel moved to do battle over them, we exhibit both a sense of being subject to them against our will and a sense of being able to do something about the power they have over our social and political positions to the extent that they depend on those identities.

Like Spelman, Teresa de Lauretis also favours a notion of identity as strategy. In aligning her view with that expressed by Elly Bulkin et. al., de Lauretis states that identity needs to be understood as not a statement of any essential nature of Woman, but rather as "a political-personal strategy of survival and resistance that is also, at the same time, a critical practice and a mode of knowledge." In

17 For examples of this approach, see de Lauretis (1986), Bourne (1987) and Ryan (1989).
21 See Bulkin et. al. (1984).
22 De Lauretis (1986) p.9. Connections between identities and epistemology are addressed later in this chapter. For a discussion of the relationship between the identities and knowledge claims of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, see Chapter 6.
viewing identity as an ongoing and political construction that can never be definitively established, the issue of how identity is constructed still needs to be addressed. What investments operate to regulate and construct identities within discourses, particularly within marginal discourses?

In Judith Butler's analysis, the defining institutions of identity within masculinist culture are phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality. Rather than settling questions of primary identity, Butler's interest is in considering the political possibilities which emerge from a radical critique of these defining institutions of identity categories. Within this agenda, she presents a radical inquiry into the political construction and regulation of identity. Her primary engagement is with the questions:

To what extent do regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person? To what extent is 'identity' a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity? In other words, the 'coherence' and 'continuity' of 'the person' are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility.

Butler asks how, on a strategic level, "incoherent", "discontinuous", or "unintelligible" genders might operate as resistant subject positions which disrupt and perhaps even undermine the hegemony of

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23 In contrast to my approach, Jenny Bourne insists that the question that needs to be asked is not what constitutes our identities but what they are for. [Bourne (1987) p.21.] Both questions are relevant to an understanding of the personal and political identities of the three historical individuals of the present study.

24 The term 'investments' is used here to signify the satisfactions, pay-offs, rewards or reasons (not necessarily conscious or rational and possibly in contradiction with other resultant feelings) which may have induced the individual subject to assume particular subject positions within discourses. [See Hollway (1984)]


26 Ibid., pp.16-17. In contrast to this approach, Rosalind Coward explores the links between subjectivity, identity and desire. While accepting that phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality are the primary defining institutions of identity within masculinist culture, Coward's concern is with how women live within a network of representations which are largely 'man-mades'. She maintains that "[f]eminine positions are produced as responses to the pleasures offered to us; our subjectivity and identity are formed in definitions of desire which encircle us. These are the experiences which make change such a difficult and daunting task, for female desire is constantly lured by discourses which sustain male privilege." Coward's analysis emphasises the need to acknowledge that at some level we invest in those desires. [Coward, cited in Probyn (1990) p.179.]
dominant discourses. An extension of her concerns is to consider how these disruptions might impact on the feminist political agenda of creating material changes in the structures of society and in the lives of individuals. These issues become more complex when we consider that the boundaries of what is culturally intelligible are not fixed and immutable. There are historical changes in cultural intelligibility and coherence and the effectiveness of any resistant discourses or practices will be influenced by this. Butler alludes to this when she observes that the sexuality which emerges within the matrix of dominant power relations is not a simple replication or copy of the law itself that uniformly repeats a masculinist economy of identity. Rather, these productions:

...swerve from their original purposes and inadvertently mobilize possibilities of 'subjects' that do not merely exceed the bounds of cultural intelligibility, but effectively expand the boundaries of what is, in fact, culturally intelligible. 27

Hence, while the fluidity of cultural intelligibility opens up positions of resistance, it simultaneously has the potentially limiting effect of minimising the disruptive effects of marginal resistant discourses which can be coopted and subsumed under liberal pluralism. 28

It is within this context that Butler reformulates what is at issue:

If there is no recourse to a 'person', a 'sex', or a 'sexuality' that escapes the matrix of power and discursive relations that effectively produce and regulate the intelligibility of those concepts for us, what constitutes the possibility of effective inversion, subversion, or displacement within the terms of a constructed identity? 29

Butler's argument here is that because 'being a woman' is an ongoing discursive practice which is continually open to intervention and resignification, it is within the multiplicity of the constructions of gender that the possibilities exist for disruption. In moving from Butler's agenda to my own, the issues of interest involve understanding how feminist subjectivities and identities may be both contained by regulatory practices of gender formation and yet also expand the

27 Butler (1990) p.29.

28 There are two issues at stake here: firstly, the issue of how dominant discourses depoliticise acts of resistance from marginalised discourses; and secondly, the issue of how the subversiveness of 'culturally unintelligible genders' can be limited by virtue of the boundaries of cultural intelligibility being expanded. These issues will be addressed in Sections Four and Five in the context of the potential subversiveness of the identities, social practices, subjectivities and knowledge claims of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis.

29 Butler (1990) p.32.
boundaries of 'culturally intelligible genders', thereby destabilising the hegemony of dominant constructions of what it means to be a female social subject.

In the context of maintaining that identities act as both strategies of survival and strategies of resistance, Teresa de Lauretis also locates identities as a mode of knowledge.\textsuperscript{30} In the previous chapter it was maintained that ontological and epistemological shifts from dominant conceptual frameworks which construct Woman as 'Other' toward a "difference inwardly defined" were simultaneously a consequence of, and a precondition for, changes in consciousness. In considering what may be constitutive of feminist subjectivities, therefore, issues of 'difference' with regard to epistemological features of subjectivity need to be addressed.

\textbf{Toward a Construction of Feminist Subjectivities}

Teresa de Lauretis speaks of an essential difference between 'feminist' and 'non-feminist' knowledges, discourses, and practices of cultural forms, social relations, and subjective processes. She maintains that this difference is essential in that it is constitutive of feminist thinking and therefore of feminism:

\ldots it is what makes the thinking feminist, and what constitutes certain ways of thinking, certain practices of writing, reading, imaging, relating, acting, etc., into the historically diverse and culturally heterogeneous social movement which, qualifiers and distinctions notwithstanding, we continue with good reason to call feminism.\textsuperscript{31}

For de Lauretis, it is the nature of this specificity or what is of the essence in feminist thought and self-representation that has been, and remains, an object of contention. Rather than constructing this essence as pre-determined and fixed, de Lauretis maintains that it is historically and culturally fluid. Unlike Judith Butler who argues that, on a strategic level, feminist identities need to be constituted and relinquished according to the specific project at hand, de Lauretis appears to be arguing for a more stable notion of what is necessarily constitutive of feminist identity as a precursor to feminist action. While Butler's position is open to the critique of the concept of feminist identity lapsing into an apolitical relativism, de Lauretis' \textsuperscript{30} De Lauretis (1986) p.9.

\textsuperscript{31} De Lauretis (1990) p.254.
position is open to the critique of fixing feminist identity, albeit within changing contexts of historical specificity. The question therefore arises, can there be a middle ground which retains a notion of 'feminist identity' as, by necessity, an ongoing and always incomplete process, but one which, at any given historical moment embodies some recognisable features constitutive of feminism?

Sandra Lee Bartky's tentative discussion of what constitutes feminist subjectivity is helpful in addressing this apparent impasse. Theorising from a Marxist perspective, Bartky proposes that the existence of contradictions in one's society and "the presence, due to these contradictions, of specific conditions which permit a significant alteration to the status of women" are necessary conditions for the emergence of feminist consciousness. She maintains that it is when the position of women within the social whole is altered that new conceptions of self and society come into conflict with previously held ideas about women's role and nature. Within this context Bartky suggests that "feminist consciousness is the apprehension of possibility." For the purposes of the present study, it is important to explore some constitutive features of feminist subjectivity which can be used for a detailed consideration of the subjectivities of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis. Bartky's construction of the precursors for the emergence of a feminist consciousness is based on a notion of the political location of the subject and of the 'subject as positionality'. However, she does not provide an understanding of

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33 Ibid., p.25. When considered within a poststructuralist framework, Bartky's analysis links the development of feminist consciousness to the emergence of discursive spaces which de Lauretis refers to as "social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparatus". [De Lauretis (1987) p.25.]
34 In suggesting this, I do not mean to suggest fixing a universal or tranhistorical definition of constitutive features of feminist subjectivity, rather, that Bartky's conceptualisation of feminist consciousness as "the apprehension of possibility" is too vague for the purposes of the present study. My approach differs significantly from that of Gerda Lerner who, in her tranhistorical study of the development of feminist consciousness claims that this was dependent upon a variety of factors, namely, "the ability of a sizeable group of women to live outside of marriage in economic independence; the demographic and medical changes which enabled larger groups of women to forego reproductive activity or to limit the number of their children; women's access to equal education and last, the possibility of creating 'women's spaces.'" [Lerner (1993) p.232.]
35 For discussion of this conceptualisation of the subject, see Mohanty...
why, when positions are available from which such transformations of consciousness can occur, some subjects assume these positions and other subjects do not. Neither does her analysis consider how, given that the individual subject is always the site of competing subjectivities which are themselves "precarious, contradictory, and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak"., some forms of consciousness may assume dominance within the individual subject. To gain a more specific analysis of the particularities of nineteenth century configurations of feminist subjectivity we need to consider what discursive positions may have been available in the nineteenth century which could foster a feminist consciousness and what investments may have operated for individual subjects to assume these positions. We also need a more complex consideration of underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions which may be involved in the formation of feminist subjectivities.

According to Rosi Braidotti, feminist theory amounts to an expression of women's ontological desire, "women's structural need to posit themselves as female subjects". The disposition of the subject towards representing herself in language is, in Braidotti's analysis, an ontological tendency which "inscribes the subject into the web of discursiveness, language and power. For Teresa de Lauretis, however, while this redefinition of the self is fundamentally an epistemological undertaking, it is integrally linked to a corresponding ontological shift:

...the understanding of one's personal condition as a woman in terms of social and political, and the constant revision, reevaluation, and reconceptualization of that condition in relation to other women's understanding of their socio-sexual positions, generate a mode of apprehension of all social reality that derives from the consciousness of gender.

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36 Leora Auslander also raises this issue in her discussion of Denise Riley's 'Am I That Name?' Feminism and the Category of 'Woman' in History. Auslander writes: "[The book] Thus gives me little understanding of how or why individual women in nineteenth-century Britain, who seemed to occupy similar social locations with similar histories, could become many kinds of feminists, or antifeminists, or apparently indifferent to all politics." [Auslander (1992) p.165.]


39 Ibid., p.184.

This "consciousness of gender" and de Lauretis' proposal of "a movement from the space represented by/in a representation, by/in a discourse, by/in a sex-gender system, to a space not represented yet implied (unseen) in them" both necessitates, and is based on, an ontology which conceives of what Braidotti terms "she-self". The subject is, as Braidotti argues, always gendered, but it is this ontological consciousness of gender that differentiates the 'feminist' female subject from the female subject-object of traditional dominant patriarchal ontology who is marked and defined only in relationship to the male subject. The feminist project must, therefore, involve reconstitution of ontological and epistemological representations of the female subject in a way that is neither opposite nor dyadic. Caroline Whitbeck explains this as the need for the relation of self to other as not being taken to be represented by gender difference and, hence, "gender is neither taken to be, nor to be symbolic of, an important ontological difference".42

The feminist ontology which these theorists construct is dependent on the "space not represented yet implied" becoming 'visible' - on the theoretical level through subject positions which extend, challenge and resist dominant patriarchal representations of woman - to enable the internalisation of different (which I here designate as 'feminist') forms of subjectivity. Moreover, this feminist ontology is, in Whitbeck's analysis, dependent upon and necessary for a core practice of the mutual realization of people. This is possible because,

Since an other is not taken to be opposite to the self, the character of the self does not uniquely define the character of the other by opposition to it; others may be similar or dissimilar in an unlimited variety of ways.43

As will be shown in Chapter 8, the ontological assumptions which underpinned Mary Taylor's, Mary Colclough's and Ellen Ellis' conceptualisations of woman and man and the relationship between the sexes were not based on fixed universal oppositions. While their underlying constructions of the female subject were essentially different from dominant nineteenth century constructions of Woman, these differences were not necessarily in opposition to some aspects

41 Ibid., p.25.

42 Whitbeck (1989) p.51. Whitbeck's analysis is compatible with Monique Wittig's insistence on the need to reject the categories of sex, however, the only concept Wittig maintains can be beyond the categories of sex is 'lesbian'. [See Wittig (1992) p.20.]

of dominant assumptions regarding the essences of Woman and Man. Rather, while each retained varying notions of essential differences between the sexes, each rejected the assumption of the female subject as being defined solely in terms of opposition to the male. Each of these three women exhibited what Braidotti refers to as an ontological consciousness of gender which simultaneously refused the dominant assumption of gender as being symbolic of ontological difference. At the epistemological level, this consciousness of gender generated a mode of apprehension which resisted dominant representations of Woman and thereby facilitated the internalisation of different forms of subjectivity.

The epistemological potential of such ontological shifts needs to be considered within the context of a redefinition of traditional understandings of epistemology. Within traditional usage, epistemology is generally used to signify theories of the grounds of knowledge or ways of knowing. Such an approach borders on the essentialist assumption that individuals have knowledge with the task being to understand or validate how that knowledge is acquired. For the purposes of this study, therefore, epistemology is used to signify critical philosophical and political inquiry into the presuppositions of knowledge claims.

Feminist scholars have shown how traditional epistemology supports male dominance and patriarchy by supporting the elites who exercise authority through knowledge-making institutions. A consequent aim of feminist epistemology has therefore been to criticise patriarchal epistemology in ways that subvert it and lead to the end of male dominance, in part by showing how social organisation is crucial to knowledge.

In self-consciously asserting themselves as knowing women, capable of engaging in reasoned debate and capable of producing alternative

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44 For a detailed discussion of these issues see Jane Duran (1991) Toward a Feminist Epistemology Maryland; Rowman & Littlefield.


understandings of the world, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis not only challenged dominant nineteenth-century assumptions of Woman's essential passivity and irrationality, but also challenged dominant notions of what constituted knowledge, of who was capable of producing knowledge, and of the authority on which knowledge claims could be based. Moreover, in making political connections between knowledge, subjectivity and power, they also exposed and challenged the systematic domination inherent in dominant nineteenth-century epistemologies. Throughout the nineteenth century, Enlightenment philosophies were in tension with philosophies of capitalism, utilitarianism, humanitarianism, individualism and liberal theory. Their positioning within these multiple discourses offered a wide range of conceptual tools with which to argue for changes in the social relations between the sexes. In effect, therefore, the specificities of their historical positioning within competing discourses, facilitated both the apprehension of new possibilities for relations between the sexes and enabled these particular historical individuals to make use of "space not represented but implied" to develop resistant discursive strategies.

To facilitate a more complex analysis of how Mary Taylor's, Mary Colclough's and Ellen Ellis' subjectivities as knowledge producers were simultaneously separated off, opposed to, and yet contained within dominant epistemological traditions, consideration needs to be given to the epistemological features of dominant nineteenth-century thought and to those of subjectivities which operate in resistance to dominant traditions. Nancy Hartsock has identified five inter-related epistemological features which characterised the tradition of Enlightenment philosophical thought. These are:

1. the 'god-trick,' that is, the assumption that disembodied reason can produce accurate and objective accounts of the world;
2. faith in the neutrality of reasoned judgement;
3. the assumption of human universality and homogeneity based on the common capacity to reason;
4. the possibility of transcendence through the omnipotence of reason; and
5. denial of the importance of power to knowledge and denial of the centrality of systematic domination in human societies. 47

Hartsock contextualises these as having developed out of, and being expressive of, the social relations of the expanding capitalist societies of Europe. She maintains that the Eurocentric, masculinist, capitalist world which was constructed both in theory and in practice during the age of Enlightenment was fundamentally based on a dualistic construction of the world and that this world view had significant effects in terms of epistemologies and subjectivities. Hartsock writes:

Duality, inequality, and domination were established in the name of universality and progress; ironically, power relations were institutionalized in and through a mode of thinking that denied any connections between knowledge and power or between the construction of subjectivity and power.48

Hartsock's agenda is to locate alternative epistemologies which offer emancipatory potential for marginalised and subjugated groups who need to understand the world systematically in order to change it. In questioning the sorts of subjectivities which can grow out of the experiences of being marginalised and devalued, Hartsock offers a generalised outline of the epistemological features of what she terms "marked subjectivities", that is, those which have grown out of an experience of domination. These she characterises as:

(1) being situated knowledges, located in a particular time and space, and therefore partial49;
(2) being social and collective knowledges;
(3) not being fixed but expressing multiple and often contradictory realities;
(4) being both critical of and vulnerable to the dominant culture; and
(5) being self-conscious about their aspects and assumptions.50

On two accounts, Hartsock's outlines of the epistemological features of Enlightenment thought and those of marked subjectivities are of particular relevance to the present study. Firstly, the features of marked subjectivities which she proposes51 are similar to aspects of

48 Ibid., p.18.
51 Hartsock does not claim that all members of marginalised or devalued groups will uniformly share an epistemology. Differences in material conditions of existence, for example, will have a significant influence
feminist poststructuralist thought in that they problematise and question ideas about the fixity and essentialism of language, the self, notions of truths, and knowledges. Hence, on a theoretical level, they provide a useful and appropriate model for embarking on a feminist poststructuralist analysis of the knowledge claims of subjects which have grown out of an experience of domination. Secondly, because the discursive productions of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis exposed how duality, inequality and domination were institutionalised through dominant modes of thinking and through social practices, each of these historical subjects can be seen to have made political connections between knowledge, subjectivity and power. On the basis of Hartsock's framework, therefore, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis can clearly be located within the epistemological frameworks of both Enlightenment thought and of marked subjectivities.

A number of questions arise from these issues: In what ways did the subjectivities of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis share epistemological features characteristic of Enlightenment thought and those characteristic of marked subjectivities? How did their knowledge claims expose the dualities, inequalities and forms of domination inherent in dominant nineteenth-century knowledge claims? On what forms of authority did they base their claims to knowledge? How might their claims to authority have disrupted the hegemony of dominant understandings of what constituted legitimate bases for claims to knowledge? These issues will be explored in the context of analysing various features of the subjectivities and discursive practices of each of these women in Sections Four and Five.

In maintaining the need to reconstruct subjectivities in a manner that marks a shift from traditional ontological and epistemological assumptions, I do not mean to imply either the existence or desirability of a single feminist subjectivity or epistemology, or give the impression of the need to reassign epistemic privilege to marginalised subjectivities. While I am arguing that Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were ex-centric subjects with subversive subjectivities, as this study will show, there were marked differences between the meanings each of these historical individuals placed on their subjective experiences of themselves as women. This study is on how individuals experience their marginalisation. According to Hartsock, however, there will nevertheless be some uniformity within the epistemologies of subordinate groups. [See Hartsock (1990) p.26.]
concerned with an exploration of the ontological assumptions and epistemological features of feminist subjectivities in order to gain an understanding of how subjectivities and identities may be discursively constructed and reconstructed in ways which subvert and challenge the hegemony of dominant constructions of subjectivity and how these may relate to ideological and material changes in social organisation. My approach to the study of feminist subjectivities is therefore focused on the strategic implications of reconstructed subjectivities in operation, that is, of particular historical feminist subjectivities within the context of the complex web of discursive practices and social relations in which they occur.\(^{52}\) While it is based on an understanding of marginality as a potential site for resistance and challenge to dominant ontological assumptions and epistemologies, this study does not operate from the assumption that marginality alone necessarily corresponds with, or leads to, resistant epistemologies which subvert and challenge dominant forms of social organisation.\(^{53}\)

**Avoiding Epistemic Privilege**

In discussing the tendency of feminist and non-feminist scholars to attribute epistemic privilege to socially marginalised groups, Bat-Ami Bar On notes that this practice is based on two problematic assumptions; firstly, that there is a single centre from which degrees of marginalisation presumably radiate, and, secondly, that epistemic privilege is grounded in the identity and practices of the marginalised.\(^{54}\) Bar On's analysis concludes that while there may be some strategic uses of the claim to epistemic privilege, such claims lack social power because marginalised groups cannot exclude, silence and command obedience from a dominant group. In effect, such claims are therefore inevitably normative and serve to ultimately inscribe the values and practices used to socially marginalise the group in the first place.

What Bar On offers as an alternative strategy to using the 'master's tool' of epistemic privilege is to disobey the rule of silence on the basis of it being an oppressive rule. She maintains that the

\(^{52}\) My underlying premise here is that just as power needs to be viewed as a relation, existing only when it is exercised (see Foucault, 1982 p.219\(^{5}\)), the strategic effects of reconstructed subjectivities also need to be viewed in operation.

\(^{53}\) See also Henrique et. al., (1984) p.115.

justification for this type of disobedience is not "a special kind of expertise guaranteed by epistemic privilege but rather by the demands of justice."\textsuperscript{55} Disobeying the rule of silence presents a challenge to the dominant ontological assumption of Woman as passive 'Other'. While every instance of the speaking 'Other' is, on a theoretical level at least, a challenge to the hegemony of dominant discourses, given the complexities of discursive practices, such disobedience hardly constitutes a reliable strategy for effecting material changes in the position of women in the social body. If alternate or additional bodies of knowledge produced by marginalised subjects are not sufficient to guarantee a challenge to conventional knowledges,\textsuperscript{56} on what basis can resistance and subversiveness be located and claimed?

\textit{Locating Subversion}

If resistance, whether in the form of disobedience or the production of alternative bodies of knowledge, is not necessarily fundamentally subversive, what might be the relationship between resistance and subversion? Nicola Gavey maintains that:

\begin{quote}
Subversion requires a challenge to, rather than an uncritical preservation of, the practices and forms of subjectivity (that is, ways of being, identities, desires, ways of behaving, and so on) required by existing social institutions...\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Hence, while resistances to dominant hegemonic discourses can be located within forms of subjectivity, presuppositions of knowledge claims, strategic uses of invocations to identity, and social practices, to ascertain the potential subversiveness of these resistances we must consider their discursive effects.

In their definition of 'resistance' as it occurs in everyday social relations, Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash offer a means of identifying ways in which various forms of resistance may subvert dominant practices and forms of subjectivity. They define resistance as "those behaviours and cultural practices by subordinate groups that contest hegemonic social formations, that threaten to unravel the strategies of domination" (emphasis added), noting that "'consciousness' need not

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.97.

\textsuperscript{56} See Fox-Genovese (1991).

\textsuperscript{57} Gavey (1989) p.462.
be essential to its constitution". Similarly, Laura Brown describes subversion as a process in which "the power of the patriarchy is turned upon itself". As Judith Butler notes, where subversion is possible, it will be within the terms of the law, "through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself." Hence, strategies of resistance will necessarily correspond to where subjects enter relations of power.

As a consequence,

[i]n order to understand resistance, we cannot simply focus on institutional politics but must also pay attention to the politics of everyday life, to the ways in which power is experienced and negotiated outside of formal contexts, to the effects of power on identities and bodies. (emphasis added)

Within this understanding of the potential subversiveness of resistant subjectivities, alternate epistemologies assume a crucial significance because they challenge dominant processes of thought and legitimation. As Barbara Collins notes, "[i]f the epistemology used to validate knowledge comes into question, then all prior knowledge claims validated under the dominant model become suspect." At an epistemological level, therefore, oppositional, resistant or marginal discourses have the potential to disrupt and destabilise the hegemony of dominant discourses. In bridging the quantum leap from changes in consciousness associated with feminist subjectivity to effecting changes within dominant discourses and social practices, however, we need to at least pose the (perhaps unanswerable) question: do subversive discourses need to become dominant for social relations to change? Teresa de Lauretis addresses this issue by questioning:

How do changes in consciousness affect or effect changes in dominant discourses? ...if we say that certain discourses and practices, even though marginal with regard to institutions, but nonetheless disruptive or oppositional...do have the power to 'implant' new objects and modes of knowledge in individual subjects, does it

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58 Haynes and Prakash (1992) p.3.
60 Butler (1990) p.93. See, also Leora Auslander's reading of Denise Riley's argument in 'Am I That Name?' Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History which draws attention to "the importance of dominant discursive transformations in generating their own opposition, or in creating interstitial space in which opposition can be formed." [Auslander (1992) p.162.]
follow that these oppositional discourses or counter-practices...can become dominant or hegemonic? And if so, how? Or need they not become dominant in order for social relations to change? And if not, how will the social relations of gender change? Given the uneven power differentials invested in dominant and resistant discourses, and the complexity of the regulatory practices within dominant discourses (particularly with regard to the fluidity of the boundaries of what constitutes cultural intelligibility), such questions can only be explored through a consideration of the effects of such disruptions and subversions.

In locating possible 'evidence' of subversion, therefore, we can consider the effects of resistances and disruptions at the local level of individual subjectivity and self-representation and at the wider level in terms of changes in forms of social organisation. Our attention therefore needs to turn to discursive practices associated with "the micropolitical practices of daily life" and the cultural productions of and about women, to enable us to locate instances in which the stability and authority of dominant discourses is contested through "the tensions of contradiction, multiplicity, and heteronomy." The issue is, therefore, not one of replacing old discourses with new discourses, but, as Wendy Hollway succinctly expresses it, one of exposing the contradictions (and possibilities) of "our positionings, desires and practices - and thus in our subjectivities - which result from the coexistence of the old and the new."

This chapter has argued for maintaining the salience of experience and identities as ongoing processes by which subjectivity is constructed. Approaching experience as constituted in language and other signifying practices, and employing a strategic notion of identities as provisional and created through action, offers the possibility of a more complex analysis of the processes of developing resistant discursive strategies. Discursive spaces within the operation of discourses have been identified as possible sites for resistant and subversive practices. While subversion itself cannot be pre-determined

65 De Lauretis (1987) p.25,26. 'Heteronomy' is here used to signify the presence of, and subjection to, a different law.
or fixed, it has been argued that the effects of subversion will be manifest at the levels of ontology and epistemology, subjectivity, and within the micropolitical practices of daily life.
SECTION THREE
THE POLITICS OF THE PAST

INTRODUCTION

In exploring the ideas and practices of nineteenth century advocates of women's rights, this research simultaneously contributes to the agendas of women's history, feminist history and the history of feminism in New Zealand. In terms of its underlying methodology, however, it draws on what has been referred to as the New Historicism. This approach to history facilitates the study of the discursive production of subjectivity and the inherent partiality of all positions assumed within the matrix of language/power/knowledge. Hence, rather than pursuing a discernible, retrievable historical 'reality', as in the case of traditional approaches to historiography, this research is concerned with the historical analysis of representation.

Chapter 5, Feminist Historiography, begins by locating the current research as a contribution to women's history, feminist history and the history of feminism in New Zealand. In my discussion of the assumptions of textuality on which this study is premised, however, I also differentiate my methodological framework from those associated with women's history and feminist history while also identifying key features of feminist historical research as they impact on this study. Given that the period of focus for this research is that prior to the existence of an easily identifiable and organised women's movement in New Zealand, the conceptualisation of the women's movement, and what constituted involvement in that movement in New Zealand during the period under study is then elaborated. Within this context, factors influencing the choice of historical subjects for study are discussed.

In my discussion of methodological issues relating to this study I draw on the work of a number of feminist writers in the disciplines of history, philosophy, and feminist theory. My selection of authors may

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be eclectic, but it is not arbitrary. While it embodies the interdisciplinary nature of feminist scholarship, my primary interest is in the implications of current ideas within strands of feminist theory for feminist historiography. Chapter Five concludes with a closer discussion of the theoretical assumptions associated with the forms of textual analysis employed in Sections Four and Five.

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5 This type of approach, described by Joan Scott as "inter-disciplinary borrowing", has received some criticism. [See, for example, Joan Scott (1993) "The Tip of the Volcano" COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND HISTORY Vol 35, pp.438-443.] Given that my stated interest is in the implications of contemporary feminist theorising for practices of feminist historiography, I do not intend to engage in the ongoing debates within the respective disciplinary fields from which I 'borrow' unless they are of immediate relevance to the issues under discussion.
CHAPTER 5

FEMINIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

My belief is that the collection of documents of 'forgotten female production'...is not much more useful than the reverential collection of used baby clothes, unless one can also theorize both their production and their consumption.¹

Women's History, Feminist History, and the New Historicism

In offering a feminist analysis of the contributions of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis to the nineteenth century women's movement in New Zealand, this research simultaneously contributes to the agendas of women's history, feminist history, and the history of feminism. In terms of its methodology, however, it moves beyond the assumptions and practices generally associated with these approaches to history.

Women's history, or 'herstory', is directed at redressing the balance of androcentric history. This involves a process of filling in the gaps and giving value to experiences that have been ignored and devalued in a way which insists on female agency.² While crucial in providing access to knowledge about women's achievements and experiences, women's history has generally adopted traditional historical frameworks. The process of writing women into history has challenged a number of traditional assumptions regarding the practice of writing history. As a consequence, practices associated with women's history have drawn attention to the need to redefine and enlarge traditional notions of historical significance, to challenge the traditional historical separation of the 'private sphere' and the 'public sphere', to challenge male-defined periodisations of history and the sexist bias which pervades traditional history, to not treat women as a universal and homogenous group, and to redefine the notion of what counts as texts.³

Feminist history, while also placing emphasis and value on the experiences of women, is, in part, a response to this much broader and overtly political agenda. As a political practice informed by feminist theories, feminist history seeks to challenge fundamental assumptions and practices of traditional history through asking questions about what it was like to 'be a woman' at various times in history. A significant part of this process involves an exploration of women's subjective responses to their environments.4

In their tendency to uncritically invest authority in women's accounts of their experiences, the practices of women's history and feminist history have received criticism for investing individual women with the power to alter their material conditions of oppression.5 To overcome this, a feminist poststructuralist approach focuses on representations in texts and the discursive construction of subjects. Louise Newman has argued that these various practices of history share the common goal of "articulating the history of the interrelationships between 'experience' and 'representation' of cultural forms" and that they need to converge to enable the feminist historian to write meaningful accounts of women's experiences within the context of examining how cultural meanings are represented.6 In endeavouring to construct a meaningful analysis of the contributions of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis to the women's movement in nineteenth century New Zealand, the current research represents an attempt to combine these various approaches to history.

In engaging in an historical analysis of representation, the methodological assumptions on which this study is based draw on assumptions which have been referred to as the New Historicism.7 This approach to history utilises poststructuralist assumptions about

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4 See, for example, Matthews (1984) Ch.2., Matthews (1986), Gordon et. al. (1976).
5 See, for example, Scott (1988) and J.M. Bennett (1989) "Feminism and History" GENDER AND HISTORY Vol.1. #3, pp.251-272.
7 For the main part, New Historicism can be understood as a response to poststructuralism, particularly with regard to the latter's critiques of objectivity and the inevitability of partial representation. For a discussion of the relation between these two paradigms, see Thomas (1991) Chapter 2.
knowledge, language, experience and subjectivity. As Judith Newton notes, practitioners of New Historicism place systems of meaning at the heart of their investigations. Hence, rather than attempting to reconstruct the experiences of nineteenth century advocates of women's rights, this research is concerned with analysing the sets of understandings available to nineteenth century advocates of women's rights which enabled them to give meanings to their experiences in the ways they did. This approach necessitates an analysis of the discursive contexts in which meanings are constructed. In this respect, this study offers a significant contribution to the history of feminism in nineteenth century New Zealand. While it 'fills in the gaps' with regard to the contributions of three individual women to the women's movement in nineteenth century New Zealand, and brings a feminist analysis to the content of their contributions, it does so in ways that provide a more complex and critical analysis of 'feminism' as a discursive field that is "both critical of and vulnerable to the dominant culture... separated off and opposed to it, yet also contained within it."10

Feminist Research

Within this study, my use of poststructuralist analysis and methodological assumptions associated with New Historicism represents an attempt to use a feminist historical methodology to study aspects of the history of feminism in New Zealand. By methodology, I am referring to the overall conception of this research project in terms of how the theories used impact on the research strategies that have been adopted. Some key methodological features which have been identified as constituting feminist research are that the research starts from women's experiences, that it provides 'for women' explanations of the social phenomena they want to understand, and that the researcher places herself "on the same critical plane as the researched".11

8 As Judith Newton points out, many of the assumptions which inform the new historicism were, at least in part, generated by feminist critiques of male-centred knowledges for their assumption of objectivity, by the feminist assertion of the politically and historically specific nature of knowledge itself, and by feminist analyses of the cultural construction of female identity. (Newton (1989) p.6.)

9 Ibid., p.6.

10 Hartsock (1990) p.29.

A primary concern throughout this study is to acknowledge and respect the meanings which Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis placed on their own experiences but to simultaneously problematise notions of the authority of their understandings of their experiences. On the basis of my construction of agency in Chapter 3, my approach is to consider the understandings these women shaped of themselves and of their relation to the world as contingent upon the range of discursive positions available to them. Moreover, because my readings of the available texts are also contingent upon my own discursive positioning, the analyses offered in this study cannot be treated as fixed but necessarily remain contestable.

As a contribution to understandings of the history of feminism in New Zealand, this research is intended to be research 'for' women in the sense that it addresses issues that are significant and meaningful to women's lives and experiences. In attempting to provide understandings of what it meant for women in the past to assume feminist identities, and in considering the discursive and material construction of the identities and social practices of nineteenth-century advocates of women's rights, this research aims at being instrumental in providing understandings which could assist contemporary feminists in their constructions of subversive identities and political practices. Due to the historical focus of the research, placing myself on the same critical plane as the research subjects necessarily involves a process of historical imagination. As a consequence, my reconstruction of the contexts in which Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis lived and wrote will inevitably be partial and shaped by the discourses available to me from which to understand their lives. This is particularly so with regard to my conceptualisation of the women's movement in the nineteenth century, to which I shall now turn.

The 'Women's Movement' and Involvement in that Movement in Nineteenth Century New Zealand

In considering how Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were both positioned in, and made strategic use of, various discourses in their advocacy of women's rights, this study is concerned with analysing their contributions to the women's movement prior to there being an easily identifiable and organised women's movement in New

Zealand. How, then, is the 'women's movement' in New Zealand for the period 1845 to 1885 conceptualised and what constitutes involvement in that movement? On what basis is the 'feminist consciousness' of the historical individuals under study being defined and what relation does this have to an analysis of their writings and social practices? How might feminist resistance be constructed within the nineteenth-century context?

Within feminist historiography there has been a great deal of discussion and debate regarding the terminology and definition of the nineteenth century 'women's movement'. Lack of distinction between movements for 'woman's rights' and movements concerned with 'women's emancipation' has, according to Gerda Lerner, resulted in "semantic confusion" which has hampered scholarship in the field.13 In maintaining that such a distinction is crucial, particularly when dealing with women of different social classes, Lerner characterises the 'woman's rights movement' as being primarily concerned with attaining civil rights, and, as such, representing a specific phase of the broader feminist movement.14 Lerner argues that the 'woman's rights movement' is clearly distinguishable from the movement for 'women's emancipation' which was concerned with "freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex; self-determination and autonomy."15 Lerner also maintains that, because striving for women's emancipation has predated the women's rights movement, it need not be conceptualised as dependent upon involvement in a movement; rather, that "it can be a level of consciousness, a stance, an attitude, as well as a basis for organized effort."16

In discussing the connections between the movement for women's rights and the abolitionist movement in early nineteenth-century America, Ellen DuBois maintains a need to make distinctions between the 'moral reform movement' and the 'anti-slavery movement'. She argues that an


14 Although Lerner's specific concern is with conceptualisations of the women's movements in nineteenth-century America, the issues she raises are pertinent within the wider field of feminist analysis of nineteenth century women's movements.

15 Ibid., p.243,237. See also J.A. and Olive Banks who make a distinction between 'feminism' - "the deliberate attempt to achieve equality between the sexes in the political, economic and domestic spheres" - and the wider concept of 'the emancipation of women'. [Banks (1965) pp.11-12.]

"incipient feminism" is evident in a wide range of early nineteenth century female activities.17 Ruth Bordin, on the other hand, maintains that the American temperance crusade in the last quarter of the nineteenth century needs to be understood as a feminist movement and that "Temperance became the medium through which nineteenth-century women expressed their deeper, sometimes unconscious, feminist concerns." (emphasis added)18

Alongside such arguments for making distinctions between the 'woman's rights movement', the 'women's emancipation movement', and movements for women's education, moral reform, temperance, abolition and the like, are critiques of studying feminist movements as discrete entities. Elizabeth Sarah, for example, maintains that such an approach is at the expense of developing an awareness of the continuity of feminism and prevents us from identifying areas and activities which co-existed with feminist movements but were not necessarily a part of them.19 Tereza de Lauretis adds to the debate by proposing that there is no real boundary between feminism and what is external to it; rather, there are only "discursive boundaries" which delineate sets of possible meanings.20 While this position is compatible with an understanding of feminism as a diffuse and dynamic ideology,21 to facilitate analysis of the contributions of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis to the women's movement in nineteenth century New Zealand some constitutive features of the women's movement and participation within that movement within the colonial New Zealand context need to be explored.

19 Sarah (1982) p.520. Sarah maintains: "The distinction that feminist historians make between feminists involved in feminist movements and 'the prescriptions drafted by isolated social thinkers' rest on a very questionable assumption concerning the context in which collective identity is formed and social change is made." [Ibid., p.520.]
31 See Offen (1988).
For the purposes of this study, therefore, the women's movement in New Zealand during the period 1845 to 1885 is conceptualised as operating through a continuum of discursive and social practices which sought to improve the position of girls and women and reorder the social relationships between the sexes. Within such a continuum are practices associated with increasing public awareness, challenging public opinion, and effecting material changes in areas such as education for girls and women, widening spheres of employment for women, temperance, social welfare and moral reform, prison reform, legislation affecting women, political citizenship and franchise. In allowing for consideration of particular practices by individuals which challenged notions of women's nature, position and role, this conceptualisation of the women's movement does not define an individual's involvement by virtue of their participation in particular activities or groups (although any such affiliations may be treated as signifying support for the objectives and aims of such groups). Instead, the focus shifts to what can be referred to as "a range of possible relations between belief and action, a range of possible denotations of ideology or movement"22 with the intention of exploring the feminist nature of these relations.23 This approach also avoids what Rosalind Delmar has described as the unquestioning assumption that feminism and the women's movement are co-terminous.24

In keeping with this fluid definition of the women's movement in nineteenth-century New Zealand, and to avoid fixing a transhistorical definition of what constitutes feminist consciousness and feminist subjectivity by imposing any pre-determined criteria for who can be considered a feminist, the three historical individuals of this study have been chosen on the basis of their own identifications as advocates of women's rights.25

22 This phrase is from Nancy Cott's use of the term 'feminism' in her book The Grounding of Modern Feminism. Cott claims that unlike the nineteenth-century vocabulary, this term resists boundaries. [Cott (1987) p.4.]

23 A similar approach can be seen in the work of Barbara Caine (1982) in her discussion of the feminism of the nineteenth century English women's movement and in Gerda Lerner's (1980) analysis of how the suffrage movement and the women's emancipation movement in the nineteenth century each represented different kinds of feminism.


25 Each of their articulations of their identities as advocates of women's rights is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.
For each of these historical individuals, their involvement in the women's movement was enacted in different ways. Mary Taylor challenged dominant stereotypes of women throughout her life in her advocacy of a single life, her lived commitment to the necessity of women's economic independence, and her active engagement in the 'public' sphere. While she was only a resident in New Zealand for fifteen years, her activities in Wellington and comments she made with regard to various aspects of women's situation in her private correspondence during this period, constitute important contributions to the women's movement in colonial New Zealand. Moreover, references in her private correspondence indicate that her experiences while living in Wellington, coupled with the opportunities she had for reflecting on wider issues surrounding the situation of women during this period, contributed significantly to the analyses she presented in the articles she published following her return to England. Hence, even though many of Mary Taylor's published articles deal with topics and issues of specific relevance to the British context and were published after she left New Zealand, they have a connection and relevance for a consideration of the women's movement in colonial New Zealand. 26

Mary Colclough's involvement in the women's movement took the form of raising public awareness of arguments for women's rights through contributing letters and articles to the local press and through public lecturing, as well as engaging in practical attempts to improve the material situation of women through prison visiting, prisoner rehabilitation, provision of work for women and care of children, and involvement in campaigns to restrict liquor licensing. She was also involved with networking on an international level with women's rights activists and acted on behalf of the objectives of the Ladies Vigilance Society of England and corresponded with the Vigilant Society of America regarding laws relating to women's rights and property. 27

While Ellen Ellis used her novel as a vehicle for expressing her critical views on the situation of women, she also corresponded to the

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26 On her return to England in 1860, rather than participating in particular campaigns, Mary Taylor's involvement in the women's movement took the form of challenging public opinion through engaging in the debates surrounding the value and nature of 'women's work' and through her activities associated with arranging alpine tours for groups of young women. [See Chapter 7.]

27 See Editorial note, DSC 31 October 1872, p.2., "POLLY PLUM" DSC 24 February 1871, p.3., and review of lecture, DSC 23 November 1874, p.3.
Auckland newspapers on a range of current social issues. Her active involvement with the local Māori community, the public stand she took on the local issue of the amalgamation of the church, her work with the Good Templars, and her involvement in campaigns opposing the Contagious Diseases Acts in Auckland during the early 1880s, all constitute important aspects of her involvement in what might be broadly defined as the women's movement.

On a more pragmatic level, a fundamental factor influencing why these particular historical subjects have been chosen for study is that they produced 'texts' which have been preserved. By 'texts' I am not only referring to the published documents written by these women, but also to texts written about them which have survived and which offer some insights into their daily lives and the impact of their interactions with others. Ironically, it is because of the existence of such texts that these women should not be held as representative of women's rights advocates at this period in history. As published writers and newsworthy individuals, they stand out from the majority of women's rights advocates of their time. While the differences in the personal situations of each of these women draws attention to the diversity amongst advocates of women's rights, a common feature by which each of these women could be seen as 'exceptional' is the high degree of literacy each obtained coupled with their use of these skills to publicise and politicise the position of women and the need for political and social change. That these women had the ability to write and the opportunity to engage in activities apart from basic domestic commitments in their households, marks them as different from many of their contemporaries. This is particularly so for Mary Colclough who, as a widow with two young dependent children, had the constant pressure of supporting herself and her children economically amid her writing and campaigning for the cause of women's rights.

In the case of Mary Taylor, the preservation of some texts was fortuitous, by virtue of her lifelong friendship with Charlotte Brontë and because the shop she established in Wellington was one of the earliest successful business establishments in the town. Ellen Ellis would probably have considered the survival of her novel to be a stroke of divine intervention, given that her son believed he had destroyed all copies.


Texts and Textual Analysis

According to Michael Warner, the 'motto' of New Historicism is "the text is historical; and history is contextual." He explains:

The first part means that meaning does not transcend context but is produced within it; the second part means that human actions and institutions and relations, while certainly hard facts, are not hard facts as distinguished from language. They are themselves symbolic representations, though this is not to say, as many old historicists might conclude, that they are not real.

Because our access to the past is conditioned by textuality, we can only 'know' the past through the texts that have been produced and preserved. While all such texts will be necessarily partial, both in terms of being incomplete as well as deeply embedded in political assumptions, they are also indexical in that their meaning is not fully contained in them. Dorothy Smith maintains that because texts are both situated in, and structure, social relations, they cannot be isolated from the discourses in which they are embedded and which they, in turn, organise. In this study I examine various texts produced by Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis within the context of the wider discursive field of constructions of 'woman' during the mid-nineteenth century. A major consideration is how these discourses may have shaped the subjectivities of each of these three women and have set the parameters for their political choices by constructing possible subject positions and identities. My interest, therefore, is in studying discursive representation through the study of particular texts and exploring how different forms of representation legitimise and privilege certain kinds of knowledge.

In using the phrase 'discursive representation', I am referring to a range of discursive practices that are used as textual sources for this study. These include extant documents such as personal correspondence, published articles, correspondence to newspapers, diary entries and a novel, as well as texts produced in response to the documents produced by these historical individuals. I also look at texts about the life

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30 Ibid., p.7.


33 Ibid., p.162,163.
experiences of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis. Because practices are, by definition, both discursive and material, my approach to textual representations of their social practices is based on an understanding of social practices as the "construction, presentation, and negotiation of accounts or versions - everyday verbal 'texts'." In effect, I consider the texts of these women's lives in relation to the texts they produced about women's lives. This approach is in keeping with the practice within New Historicism "to read written texts and 'social texts,' constructions of 'experience' or the material world, in relation to each other."35

There is cause for speculation on the 'authenticity' of the diary entries which are cited in Vera Colebrook's biography of Ellen Ellis and which are referred to during the course of this research. In her preface, Vera Colebrook states that any diaries, letters, or papers which may have provided more insights into Ellen Ellis' life had long since been destroyed and that she had subsequently "extracted from her novel whatever I knew to be relevant to Ellen as a character".36 Moreover, Colebrook describes her identification with Ellen Ellis as "obsessive", adding that "as I wrote her life-story, I almost felt at times as if I were Ellen. I seemed to know so exactly what she would say and do in any given circumstances."37 The texts of these diary entries as cited in Colebrook's biography parallel passages from Ellen Ellis' novel very closely. This could indicate either that Ellen Ellis reworked parts of her diaries into the text of her novel or possibly that Vera Colebrook, in basing her biography "wholly on the facts as I could confirm them",38 may have rewritten extracts from the novel which were based on Ellen Ellis' life experiences into diary from.

Because my approach throughout this study is to treat textual sources as forms of discursive representation, these diary entries are neither problematised nor treated as significantly different sources of knowledge about Ellen Ellis. My approach to texts as discursive constructs differs significantly from traditional historiography which

37 Ibid., p.10.
38 Ibid., p.10.
attempts to discover and narrate a past reality. As Kali Israel points out, for the historian there can be no such return to the 'real' outside of representation and the historian's project is, therefore,

...the delineation of these multiple representations in their relations - to each other, to other texts, to the meagre few 'hard facts' of a life, to the subject's self-representation and her reading of others' readings of her life, and to our own attempts, individually and collectively, to create images of lives (including our own).”

In treating these multiple representations as textual sources worthy of study, this approach not only redefines what counts as historically significant but simultaneously collapses the separation of 'public' and 'private' within traditional historiography. The material circumstances and experiences of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis in the 'private' sphere were shaped by 'public' discourses on the natures and roles of women. Moreover, as will be argued in later chapters, each of these women disrupted the opposition and separation of the 'public' and 'private' spheres by politicising aspects of their 'private' lives within 'public' arenas. Hence, their positioning within both 'public' and 'private' discourses shaped their understandings of the mutual dependence of notions of 'public' and 'private'.

My treatment of the texts under study involves, in part, a deconstruction of their underlying ontological assumptions and of the basis of the knowledge claims they make. These are considered in relation to the ontological assumptions of dominant constructions of women's natures and roles and the basis of knowledge claims within dominant discourses. This approach has been chosen because such deconstructive practices not only expose the tensions and contradictions within all discursive representations, but also enable the identification of positions within resistant discourses which disrupt and challenge the hegemony of dominant representations.

The practice of deconstruction is, by necessity, simultaneously a practice of reconstruction. As a researcher embodied in a different temporal, political and sexual space from that of my historical subjects, I am continually engaged in the practice of constructing partial meanings of the texts under study.40 In attempting to create

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40 For a discussion of the privilege and power associated with the
a scholarship that encompasses the complexity of what women have had to say about their experiences and their pursuit of new identities, this research draws on an understanding that 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' constitute modes of knowing, analysis, interpretation and understanding, and, as such, cannot be independent of each other. As a self-defined feminist living in late-twentieth century New Zealand researching the feminist subjectivities of nineteenth-century advocates of women's rights, I, as researcher, am both knower and known, 'insider' and 'outsider', and share what Maria Mies describes as a "conscious partiality" due to my partial identification with the research objects. Given that I am unable to dialogue with my research subjects, this partiality carries a greater potential for 'skewing value' toward my own biases as to what constitutes 'feminist' subjectivity and subversive practice. In some respects, however, this is an inevitable outcome because the issues that are explored in this research are issues that affect myself, my understandings of my identities, and my attempts to explore and understand ways in which hegemonic discursive and social relations can be disrupted to challenge dominant representations of women and to effect changes to the situations of women's material lives.

**Historical Fictions**

Within this research the texts chosen for analysis include examples of 'fictional' and 'non-fictional' writings. Given the persistent debate within historiography as to the status of 'fiction' and forms of biography as historical sources, the practice within feminist historiography of redefining and enlarging what counts as texts, and poststructuralist ideas which displace 'facts' and 'realities' in researcher's position of dominance in relation to the subjects under study, see Taylor (1993).


Mary Taylor's 'fictional' texts include: "An Old Dispute" (1870), "A Tale" (1873), "The Shah on English Laws Relating to Women: A Dialogue that might have been" (1873) and "A Servant Girl's History" (1876). Although not a primary focus for this research, some references are also made to the travel diary Mary Taylor co-wrote, *Swiss Notes by Five Ladies* (1875) and her novel *Miss Miles, or A Tale of Yorkshire Life Sixty Years Ago* (1890). The 'fictional' status of Ellen Ellis's novel *Everything is Possible to Will* (1882) is, in itself, complicated given that it is generally considered to be semi-autobiographical. [See, for example, Colebrook (1980), Roberts (1989), and "Ellen Ellis" entry in Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements and Isabel Grundy (eds) (1990) *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present* London; B.T. Batsford Ltd.]
favour of a notion of representations and a critique of fictive totalities, the methodological assumptions associated with my use of these particular texts deserve further consideration.

Traditional historiography has historically and politically had a great deal invested in maintaining a distinct separation between the disciplines of History and Literature. Within this framework, novels are viewed as 'fictions' which reshape the 'real world' and therefore do not constitute reliable, 'authentic' historical texts:

...novels, by the nature of the fictional form, are...always dealing not with the social world but with a very particular reshaping of that world. It is a world...based not on the real world but on an explanation of that world.⁴⁴

In contrast to this position, although stopping short of claiming the status of historical document for Victorian novels, Barbara Kanner maintains that, as a social medium which served as "a shaping force in the process of enculturation", nineteenth-century novels deserve the attention of historians.⁴⁵ As Pauline Nestor points out, however, the popularity of fiction in the nineteenth century made it a potent form of social commentary.⁴⁶ Despite her assertion that literature "provides access to deeper levels of consciousness", Nestor remains cautious with regard to the use of novels as historical texts:

To view literature as historical source material, a simple reflection of a recoverable 'reality', is naively to ignore both the nature of the creative process and the limitations of our access to the past.⁴⁷

Patricia Otto Klaus, on the other hand, argues specifically for the use of novels in the historical study of women on the basis that they "enable us to read what women had to say, though couched in fictional settings and with imagined characters, about Victorian society, the position of women, and the relations between women and men."⁴⁸

Nineteenth-century novels and other forms of fictional writing were undoubtedly a potent form of social commentary and do provide an important site from which to study ideas about the position of women

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.3.
and the relations between men and women. Within a poststructuralist analytical framework, however, they do not constitute a privileged site, nor do they provide "access to deeper levels of consciousness" or reshape the 'real world' in ways any less partisan than any other representations. Within this context, it is therefore of secondary importance whether the texts produced by these historical subjects were constructed in fictive form. Rather, attention shifts to consideration of the strategic possibilities that fictional forms of writing may have opened up for these historical subjects. For example, Bell Gale Chevigny suggests that we need to read autobiographical texts "as strategies by which the author seeks to explain or justify her current sense of herself". It is possible, therefore, that while Ellen Ellis stated that she chose the form of the novel on the basis of her belief that this would be accessible to her target audience ("the untaught"), couching her political analysis of women's degraded social position in fictional settings with imaginary characters may have enabled her to construct understandings of her own experiences in more overtly political ways. The point I wish to stress, however, is that consideration needs to be given to the range of possible meanings which various forms of writing opened up for these historical subjects.

In considering the strategic uses of various forms of writing, it is also important to remember that writing novels was a socially sanctioned activity for women in the nineteenth century. As a consequence, this activity was invested with a level of authority. By 'authority' I do not mean to imply a guarantee of 'truthfulness' to the content on these novels; rather, as a socially acceptable practice for women, writing novels constituted an important means by which women could assert themselves as speaking, knowing subjects and enter into public discourses.


50 Ellis (1882) p.iii.

51 For a discussion of 'authority' in nineteenth-century women's writing, see Mary Jean Corbett (1990) "Feminine authorship and spiritual authority in Victorian women writers' autobiographies" WOMEN'S STUDIES Vol 18, pp.13-29. See also, Carole Ferrier (1990) "Resisting Authority" HECATE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION Vol 16, Part 1/2, pp.134-139.

52 Diary-keeping was another important form of socially legitimated writing for women in the nineteenth century. (See Margo Culley (1989) "'I Look at Me': Self as Subject in the Diaries of American Women" WOMEN'S STUDIES QUARTERLY Vol 17, Parts 3/4, pp.15-22, and Cynthia Huff (1989) "'That Profoundly Female and Feminist Genre': The Diary as Feminist Practice" WOMEN'S STUDIES QUARTERLY Vol 17, Parts 3/4, pp.6-15.)
With these factors in mind, consideration of the various forms of acknowledgement of 'authorship' by the writers of these texts can also provide insights into the various identities these historical subjects constructed for themselves. Until the publication of *The First Duty of Women* in 1870, Mary Taylor's articles in the *Victoria Magazine* were largely anonymous, either being unsigned or signed "T". From 1868 to early October 1871, Mary Colclough wrote under the pen name "Polly Plum" but lectured and wrote on some issues under her own name, referring to herself as either Mrs Colclough or Mary A. Colclough. Ellen Ellis wrote under the pen-name "A WOMAN" for a short period but signed her full name to her novel and to her correspondence to the newspaper regarding the Contagious Diseases Act. In considering the identities these women constructed for themselves and the possible strategic effects of their various forms of writing, attention therefore needs to be given to the possible relationships between their 'anonymous' writings and those to which they signed their full names or identified themselves by their marital status.

These issues relate to my treatment of these various texts as 'indexical' and consequently mark my form of textual analysis as departing significantly from strands of poststructuralist literary analysis which insist on the 'death of the author' and the 'stand-alone' status of the text. This is not to say my approach marks a return to what Toril Moi has described as the "patriarchal practice of  

53 Of the seven articles Mary Taylor contributed to the *Victoria Magazine* after *The First Duty of Women* was published, "Feminine Profitable Labour" (1871) and "A Tale" (1873) were signed "T"; "The Revolt and the Revolters" (1871), "Plain Sewing" (1872) and "The Shah" (1873) were signed "M. Taylor"; while "A Servant Girl's History" (1876) and "Once More the Woman Question" (1877) were signed "M.T.".

54 It would appear that while some acquaintances knew that Polly Plum was Mary Colclough's pseudonym, it was not until her first lecture on "The Subjection of Woman" was advertised that Polly Plum was publicly identified in the Auckland press as Mary Colclough. [See *DSC* 13 November 1869, p.4.; *NZH* 12 June 1871, p.2.] It was the editorial of the *Daily Southern Cross* to not publish letters unless accompanied by the real name and address of the writer "as a guarantee of good faith". [See *DSC* 10 June 1869, p.4.]

55 See, for example, Roland Barthes (1977) "The death of the Author" in Stephen Heath (ed) *Image Music Text*, London; Fontana. For feminist debate on the political implications of this concept in contemporary literary criticism, see Benhabib (1995) and Butler (1995). Benhabib argues that the "strong view" of this thesis - in which the subject dissolves into simply being a position in language and hence concepts of intentionality, accountability, self-reflexivity and autonomy disappear - is not compatible with the goals of feminism. Butler, on the other hand, maintains that such a critique of the subject, rather than being a negation or repudiation of the subject, needs to be understood as a way of interrogating its construction as a pre-given or foundationalist premise.
authority" by treating the author as the source and origin of the meaning of the text. Rather, the forms of textual analysis employed in the present study are based on the assumption that just as all texts are 'indexical', so too is all meaning contextual. This necessitates retaining a notion of the writer behind the text while simultaneously disrupting the 'authority' of the 'author' in fixing the meaning of the text. In practice, this requires analysis of the relationship between the discursive positioning of the writer of the text (as opposed to the author of the meaning of the text), and the subject positions, or possibilities for constructing meaning, that are offered in the text.

Another important implication of treating texts as indexical and meaning as contextual, relates to the silences embedded within the text. In her study of women, power, and subversion in British fiction, Judith Newton maintains that:

…it is not only what a text does say but what it does not say that reveals its relation to dominant images, ideas, and values. It is in the 'significant silences of a text, in its gaps and absences, that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt.158

Likewise, Harriett Blodgett, in her study of English women’s diaries, notes that "the impress of female conditioning almost inevitably finds expression in women’s diaries whether in words or through silences." (emphasis added)59 These "gaps", "absences" and "significant silences" remind us of the active process of engagement with a text in the construction of the meaning of that text.

To summarise, the methodological assumptions on which this study is based represent a particular convergence of feminist history and New Historicism and cohere around assumptions of the partial nature of representation, the interrelationships between experience and representation, the discursive construction of meaning, and the inherent partiality of constructions of meaning. The women’s movement in nineteenth century New Zealand is conceptualised as encompassing a broad continuum of discursive and social practices which sought to improve the material position of girls and women and to reorder the

57 Ibid., p.155.
social relations between the sexes. Rather than operating from a fixed and pre-determined notion of what constitutes feminist subjectivity and feminist action, the feminist nature of a range of possible relations between belief and action will be explored. The specific texts under study are analysed in terms of their discursive construction and their potential to challenge, destabilise and subvert dominant constructions of women's nature, subjectivity, and place and role in the social order. Similarly, the identities and social practices of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis are explored in terms of their discursive construction and their subversive potential.
SECTION FOUR
THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

INTRODUCTION

The ways in which Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis articulated their sense of themselves as women and their relationship to the world differed significantly from how dominant nineteenth century discourses constructed women's subjectivity. This section considers the nature of that difference through a focus on the identities and political practices of each of these women.

According to Teresa de Lauretis, the effects of resistances and disruptions to the stability and authority of dominant discourses can most clearly be seen at the local level of individual subjectivity and self-representation, in what she refers to as "the micropolitical practices of daily life".1 This section will therefore show how the identities and political practices of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were both marginal in respect to hegemonic discourses regarding women's identities and roles in the social order, as well as marginalised by these discourses. This approach is influenced by the need to understand discourses and signifying practices in the context of the forms of social organisation within which they are embedded and the associated need to treat material social practices as forms of discourse.2

Chapter Six, Resisting Identities, will explore how each of these women negotiated their identities as advocates of women's rights within the context of their articulation of other identities which they both constructed for themselves and had ascribed to them. It is based on an understanding of identities as multiple, in process, created through action, and thereby provisional.3 It will be argued that while some aspects of their identities acted as strategies of survival, other

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2 See Chapter 3.
3 For discussion of this construction of identities, see Chapter 4.
aspects of their identities acted as strategies of resistance which destabilised dominant nineteenth century understandings about women and challenged the boundaries of culturally intelligible female identities.

Chapter 7, "Overstepping the Boundaries", focuses on some aspects of the biographies of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis to consider how these women embodied their political analyses of social organisation and the changes needed in the social relations between the sexes in their daily lived practices. It will be argued that in "overstepping the boundaries" of prescribed activities for women, they increased the possibilities for women's participation as women in many aspects of social and political life.
CHAPTER 6

RESISTING IDENTITIES

This chapter will begin with a consideration of how Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis articulated their identities as advocates of women's rights and their involvement in the women's movement. It will then consider their articulation of other identities associated with their marital status, their status as 'working women' and their identities as writers. Various aspects of their multiple identities will be analysed in terms of how all three used forms of self-representation both as strategies of survival and as strategies of resistance. It will be argued that each of these women utilised aspects of their ascribed identities to actively construct legitimate speaking positions from which to articulate their advocacy of women's rights. In doing so, they also used the discursive resources at their disposal to counter attempts to discredit advocates of women's rights.

Missionaries and Revolters

The primary motivation for Mary Colclough's and Ellen Ellis' support for the cause of women's rights was their religious convictions. In describing their advocacy of women's rights in terms of engaging in God's work, they constructed an identity for themselves as 'missionaries'. For both of these women, their identities as Christians were an inseparable facet of their identities as advocates of women's rights. In marked contrast, Mary Taylor identified herself as a "revolter", her revolt being against current social arrangements which, she maintained, induced an artificial helplessness in women from which men, individually and collectively, profited. Although she did not align herself with any particular groupings within the women's movement following her return to England in 1860, from as early as 1849, when she was living in Wellington, she had a clear sense of herself as engaging in a form of activism which, she hoped, would revolutionise society.

1 Taylor (1871) p.193.
2 Letter to Charlotte Brontë, 10 April 1849. (Stevens (1972) Letter 18)
Mary Colclough's statement of her identity as an advocate of women's rights was explicit; not only did she refer to herself as "a firm and earnest woman's advocate" but was "content and grateful to be so considered" by others.3 Ellen Ellis' identity as an advocate of women's rights was articulated in terms of her expressed commitment to devote her every effort towards lifting the burden of her "less fortunate sisters".4 For all three of these women, therefore, their identities as advocates of women's rights were, above all, performance orientated. It was their active engagement with contemporary social issues, be it through writing, public speaking, or providing practical assistance to women, which shaped their understandings of what being an advocate of women's rights signified.

The predominant imagery in Mary Colclough's self-disclosures regarding her commitment to women's rights was drawn from religious discourses. In referring to her "conversion" to this cause, she described the cause of women's rights as "high and holy", and as being "the cause of right and truth".5 Her commitment to this cause was total: as a missionary doing God's work, she was prepared, if necessary, to be a martyr in His service:

You will believe that I am true when I declare on my honor (sic) as a Christian woman that dearly as I love my life, and many and close are the ties that bind me to it, I would this day, gladly and gratefully lay it down, if by doing so I would serve the great work which, next to my God, claims my highest service. No Missionary ever yet went amongst the heathen, who was ever more firmly convinced that he was doing God's service, and working to His honor (sic) and glory, than I am convinced that I am doing God's best work in the path I have chosen to follow. I fully believe, and am convinced, that neither I or my little ones will suffer in this enlightened nineteenth century, by my carrying out my earnest convictions of right; but even if it were otherwise, and I should be counted 'worthy to suffer,' I hope and believe the strength will be given to say, 'Even so Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight, not my will but Thine be done.'6

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3 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 31 July 1871, p.3.

4 Ellis, cited Colebrook (1980) p.146. Her use of the phrase "less fortunate sisters" suggests that Ellen Ellis constructed her identity in relation to other women whom she identified as in a different position to herself. This will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

5 See "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" NZH 10 November 1871, p.3., "POLLY PLUM" NZH 31 July 1871, p.3., and "POLLY PLUM" DSC 13 March 1871, p.3.

6 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 31 July 1871, p.3. This passionate statement of her commitment to the cause of women's rights met with a particularly hostile response from "NEMO" who wrote: "Polly Plum fancies that she is a martyr,
In the context of what Mary Colclough considered appropriate occupations for women and men, identifying herself as a missionary in God's service provides a critical insight into her understanding and construction of her identity as an advocate of women's rights. When her name was put forward to be appointed missionary to the Mt. Eden hospital and gaol in September 1871, she publicly stated that had she been born a man she would likely have entered the ministry and engaged in missionary work. It was only because her reading of the scriptures indicated that only men should be allowed in the ministry that she did not embrace this vocation. Hence, while to be a missionary in the religious sense of saving souls was something Mary Colclough did not consider to be appropriate for herself on the basis of her sex, to be a missionary in the social sense of dedicating one's life to the "holy cause" of "truth", was, in her view, an appropriate calling for a woman, provided it was based on conviction and commitment.

In attributing the highest of possible motivations for her advocacy of women's rights, Mary Colclough's self-identification as a missionary in God's service was very subversive. In using features of conventional discourse regarding missionary work to legitimise her political advocacy of women's rights, she challenged the boundaries of socially approved female benevolence. Her challenge to the social regulation of women's involvement in moral and social reform, however, went further than this in her claim that women were at least as capable as men to hold public positions of authority within social, religious and political institutions.

Ellen Ellis' identity as a missionary in God's work, while not articulated as directly as Mary Colclough's, was similarly based on a passionate commitment to her religious principles. She also drew on

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and would like everyone else to think the same. I verily believe that it would please Polly beyond measure [to] see men so incensed with her as to violently seize her, bind her to a stake, and reduce her body to ashes; but Polly may rely upon it, that she will never fill a martyr's grave, at any rate by the hands of the tyrant men; the only restraint (if any) that would be likely to be placed upon her would be at the Whau." ["NEMO" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.] Polly Plum's response to the insinuation that advocacy of the cause of women's rights was lunacy is discussed later in this chapter.

7 "PHIANTHROPIS", "C.B." and "WOB" wrote to the press suggesting that Mary Colclough be considered for this position. [See DSC 20 September 1871, p.3., 21 September 1871, p.2., 30 September 1871, p.3.]

8 See article "A Woman's Sphere", DSC 14 July 1869, p.4.

9 See review of public farewell, NZH 27 September 1872, p.3.
conventional discourses regarding missionary work as well as discourses of predestination to legitimise her advocacy of women's rights. Ellen Ellis articulated her identity as an advocate of women's rights in terms of a process of coming to terms with difficult aspects of her own life. As a child she had been labelled an "incorrigible dunce" by her school teachers and her family and had been treated as peculiar because of her resistance to the codes of manners and behaviours expected of young ladies. Her subsequent marriage to Oliver Ellis had been very difficult, due in great part to his domineering behaviour as a husband, his disrespect for her religious convictions, his abuse of alcohol and his speculative business deals. Moreover, two of her three children had died at very young ages. Over time, Ellen Ellis came to the conclusion that God had denied her a happy marriage so that she would not become complacent with her life. She gradually accepted that there was a divine plan behind every one of the difficulties she had faced in her life, including the premature deaths of her sons; God had chosen her to suffer so that she would be fitter and stronger to fulfil His purpose for her:

I saw that this had been predestined for me from the beginning. God had denied me a happy marriage, so that I should not become inturned upon my own satisfactory life. He had taken Alec & Little Tom to Himself, to free me from the responsibility of looking after them. He intended me to drink to the dregs of sorrow's cup. He had given me my present freedom, so that I could devote my every effort towards lifting the burden of my less fortunate sisters. This being so, how could I fail in my purpose?

In contrast to Mary Colclough who constructed her identity as a missionary in God's work as a calling she had chosen, Ellen Ellis constructed her God-given mission to help her "less fortunate sisters" as something she was destined to do. By providing a meaningful framework from which to understand her whole life up to that point and beyond, this identity as an agent in God's work was, for Ellen Ellis, a strategy of survival. In some respects, however, this identity was also a strategy of resistance. The basis of Ellen Ellis' perceived difference between herself and her "less fortunate sisters" was that,

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10 While Ellen Ellis' reconstruction of these events in her novel exaggerated aspects of Wrax's behaviour, Vera Colebrook's biography indicates that, at least until the early 1870s, the difficulties Ellen Ellis faced in her married life were exacerbated by her husband's over-indulgence in alcohol, his unsound business practices, and his belief that in the marital relationship the wife should be subservient and submissive to her husband in all things. [See Colebrook (1980)]

despite her childhood and life experiences, she had managed to empower herself through education and the realisation that women had a key role to play in the divine plan for the moral universe. Her strong political analysis of women’s position as wives and mothers, her commitment to empowering women with practical knowledge and her efforts to organise women to speak out publicly on controversial issues in the political arena were all outcomes of her identity in her God-given work of advocating on behalf of women. In these respects, her identity as an advocate for women’s rights operated as a powerful strategy of resistance which, while cast in the language of philanthropic 'service', challenged the boundaries of socially approved female activity.

Mary Taylor stood apart from both Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis in that religious convictions were not a dominant feature of her subjectivity. In contrast with the dominant image of a missionary as a peaceful beneficent individual who ventured into strange and often primitive environments to educate and convert the heathen, the image conjured by Mary Taylor’s self-identification as a "revolter" is suggestive of an individual in a mood of protest and defiance rebelling against authority. Hence, while Mary Colclough stated clearly that she did not advocate social rebellion, and Ellen Ellis stressed that changes needed to take place within the hearts and souls of women and men, Mary Taylor self-consciously drew on discourses of protest, rebellion, and social revolution.

While these respective self-identifications as 'missionary' and "revolter" may appear to signify underlying philosophies which were in opposition to each other, they can be understood as identities which conceptually privileged different aspects of nineteenth century

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12 These social practices are discussed in the following chapter.

13 For a detailed discussion of Mary Taylor’s positioning within religious discourses, see Chapter 9.

14 In response to her critics, Polly Plum wrote: "I find generally that my opponents persist in considering me a rabid revolutionist. All my protestations to the contrary, all that I have written with respect to the responsibilities, duties, and obligations of wives, all this is utterly disregarded and passed over, and I am treated as though I advocated social rebellion on the part of women. Nothing can be more unjust or further from the truth." ["Polly Plum" DSC 13 March 1871, p.3.] However, she did argue that the more educated women became, the greater would be their objection to legal subjection and they would be less likely to submit to current social arrangements. She also maintained that educated wives, if treated like children, would rebel. [See "Polly Plum" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3., and article "Woman and her Master", DSC 16 May 1870, p.2.]
discourses of women's rights. Embedded in the critiques of current social arrangements offered by each of these three women, were various rationales and possibilities for the reconstruction of relations between the sexes through new forms of social organisation. While Mary Taylor's self-identification as a "revolter" emphasised the unorthodoxy of women's rebellion against existing social arrangements, Mary Colclough's and Ellen Ellis' identifications as 'missionaries' emphasised the new 'doctrines' they sought to 'preach' regarding the basis for new forms of social organisation. Hence, their respective identities as "revolter" and 'missionary' were provisional upon their critiques of women's place and role within society and politicised strategies of resistance which were available to nineteenth century advocates of women's rights.

**Spinsters, Wives and Widows**

As the main social indicator of ascribed identities for women during the nineteenth century, marital status had a significant impact on the understandings advocates of women's rights had of themselves as women. While Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis presented powerful critiques of the ascribed identities of single women, wives and mothers, each also made recourse to their marital status as a standpoint of authority from which to justify their knowledge claims. An analysis of their respective identifications with regard to their marital status, therefore, offers insights into a more complex understanding of their positioning as advocates of women's rights.

Remaining single throughout her life, Mary Taylor rejected notions that she was a 'redundant' woman, preferring instead to describe herself as a "normal" and dutiful woman. In maintaining that "the 'normal woman' cannot be one who has given away her liberty of independent action", and that a woman's first duty was to provide for her own economic security, Mary Taylor's identity as a single, self-dependent woman reversed dominant constructions of the basis of a woman's primary

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15 See Section Five.

16 Mary Taylor also used her novel, *Miss Miles*, to emphasise how 'independent' women were revolting against current social arrangements. One of the characters, Mrs Dodds, had "an uneasy idea that Miss Bell was getting into a state of rebellion with things as they were, which was much the same as insurrection against the powers that be." The reader is informed that "[t]his was altogether unorthodox, especially for women." [Taylor (1890) p.354.]

17 Taylor (1868) p.218.
identity as wife and mother, dependent upon and subservient to her husband.

While framed in different language, Mary Colclough's analysis was also critical of the implications of marriage for women. She argued that upon marriage a woman "completely sinks her identity" by placing every aspect of her life "at the absolute disposal of another". This bears testimony to her own experience of having lost what Mary Taylor referred to as "the liberty of independent action" as a single woman. Mary Colclough's analysis of the limitations imposed by dominant constructions of women's primary identities would have been heightened by the changes in her social and legal status which accompanied her marriage and subsequent widowhood. In marked contrast to Mary Taylor who claimed authority for her views on the basis of her "independent" status as a single woman, Mary Colclough claimed authority for her advocacy of women's rights on the basis of having fulfilled her primary duties as wife and mother. As Polly Plum she wrote:

Had I been an old maid I never would have ventured to be a public advocate. The fact of my never having married would, in a prejudiced community, have quite destroyed my influence, no matter how sincere and earnest and talented I might have been. The fact that I fulfilled a wife's duties to the best of my ability, and now try to be a good mother to my children, and am a woman's advocate from conviction only, has its effect with many.19

Hence, while being critical of the restraints of marriage, Mary Colclough was prepared to make use of the status ascribed to married women to consolidate her authority in advocating for the extension of the rights of married women. Her identity as an advocate of women's rights was, therefore, both provisional upon and in resistance to her ascribed identity as a widow and a mother.

Ellen Ellis, on the other hand, constructed the 'non-identity' of married women in terms of their having been denied the "subtle potency of recognised being" and having become a possession of their husbands upon marriage. Like Mary Colclough, she had lived the contradiction of having to assume responsibility for aspects of her family's economic security while being denied the recognition, status, and privileges which traditionally accompanied those responsibilities when performed

19 See article "Lords of Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7. For a detailed discussion of Mary Colclough's analysis of the marriage relationship, see Chapter 10.

19 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 14 August 1871, p.3.
by men. Hence, as a consequence of their own experiences of the marriage contract, Ellen Ellis' and Mary Colclough's understandings of their identities as wives and mothers did not conform to dominant constructions of those identities as primarily based upon submission and subservience to their husbands and confinement to purely domestic responsibilities.

In similar respects, Mary Taylor's identity as a single woman did not conform to dominant nineteenth century understandings of that identity. She did not consider herself dependent upon her male relations for her economic security and her personal correspondence and journal articles give no clear impression of her having either aspired to marriage or of having entertained any serious regrets for not having married. In effect, she embraced her identity as a single woman, describing it as a freedom she had chosen over matrimony. In this respect, her identity as a single woman needs to be understood as provisional upon her critique of the constraints of marriage as it was then organised. In this context, the critiques Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis offered of marriage as a form of slavery were implicit in Mary Taylor's construction of single life as freedom.

By virtue of having given birth and having primary responsibility for their children, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were ascribed identities

20 The only indication of a possibility that Mary Taylor may have considered marriage was in references made by her friends to her attraction to Charlotte Brontë's brother Branwell Brontë. In a letter to Ellen Nussey in November 1840, Charlotte Brontë wrote: "Did I not once tell you of an instance of a Relative of mine who cared for a young lady till he began to suspect that she cared more for him and then instantly conceived a sort of contempt for her -? You know to what I allude - never as you value your ears mention the circumstance - but I have two studies - you are my study for the success the credit, and the responsibility of a quiet, tranquil character. Mary is my study - for the contempt, the remorse - the misconstruction which follows the development (sic) of feelings in themselves noble, warm - generous - devoted and profound - but which being too freely revealed - too frankly bestowed - are not estimated at their real value. God bless her - I never hope to see in this world a character more truly noble - she would die willingly for one she loved - her intellect and her attainments are of the very highest standard." [See Stevens (1972) p.17.]

21 The only hint that Mary Taylor felt she may have missed out on something valuable from not having married was her comment, made in reference to her choice to not marry, "I would rather not have my all of earthly pleasure hang on so slender a thread though it might be that my enjoyment were less intense." [Letter to Ellen Nussey, 4 June 1858, Stevens (1972) Letter 32]

22 In a letter to Ellen Nussey in which she comments on the marriage of her sister-in-law, she refers to "my choice being free". [See Stevens (1972) Letter 32]

23 See, for example, "What Women Want" in NZH 31 July 1871, p.3. and Ellis (1882) p.63,122,124,186.
as mothers. Both embraced this identification and role and expressed a passionate devotion to their children. Both also referred to their own childhoods as being sad and difficult times and shared similar philosophies with regard to raising children, stressing the need to teach them independence and strength of character from an early age and to create a loving home life.

Mary Taylor also constructed a metaphorical identity for herself as a mother; her 'baby' was the book she thought about writing while living in Wellington:

I write at my novel a little and think of my other book. What this will turn out God only knows. It is not and never can be forgotten. It is my child, my baby and I assure you such a wonder as never was. I intend him when full grown to revolutionize society and faire époque in history.

Mary Taylor's devotion and commitment to her 'baby' was as passionate as Mary Colclough's and Ellen Ellis' commitments to their children. While this self-identification as a mother may not be relevant to other aspects of her identity as a writer, Mary Taylor's commitment to her writing, like that of Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, was integrally connected to her advocacy of women's rights.

**Scribbling Women**

Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each stood apart from the majority of their contemporaries through their use of their literary abilities to politicise the situation of women and to advocate for social and political change. As Harriet Martineau had observed in 1832, writing was virtually the only means of action in politics that...
was within women's power at this period in history. Given that each of these women self-consciously crafted identities for themselves as writers, and that their expressed purpose for writing was to advocate for women, an analysis of these identities is critical to an understanding of their identification as women's rights advocates.

During her fifteen years in Wellington, Mary Taylor engaged in a wide variety of literary endeavours ranging from an account of the 1848 earthquake, an article entitled "Physiognomy of the town of Wellington" to working on her novel. Although her "active work" and "want of freedom of mind" impinged on her opportunities to write as often as she would have liked, her personal correspondence indicates that her commitment to writing was an important part of her day-to-day life. She also acquired a local reputation for being learned in literary matters, due to local knowledge of her personal acquaintance with Charlotte Bronte and to her having travelled extensively and being fluent in French.

Even though Mary Taylor's personal correspondence indicates that she had a strong political analysis of women's situation while living in Wellington, it was not until after she returned to England in 1860 that she began publishing her views on women's rights. From December 1866 she became a regular contributor to the Victoria Magazine over a period


29 See Taylor (1870a) p.226,217.; Ellen Ellis' Preface to Everything Is Possible To Will; and "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 4 October 1871, p.5. in which she states that women must dip their pens in the "sad social mire" if they wish to get to the root of social injustices. For Mary Colclough, her writing was also an important source of income. In response to an "ungenerous" comment made by the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross, Polly Plum wrote: "I merely write down my thoughts on things as you write your leading articles - because it pays me to do so." ["POLLY PLUM" DSC 2 June 1870, p.3.] This aspect of her advocacy of women's rights is discussed further in the following chapter.

30 During this period Mary Taylor submitted a number of articles to Tait's Edinburgh Magazine and Chambers Edinburgh Journal although there is no record in her private correspondence that these were published. (See Letter to Charlotte Bronte, 24 July 1848, Stevens (1972) Letter 16)

31 See, for example, letter to Charlotte Bronte, 5 April 1850. [Stevens (1972) Letter 19]

32 In a letter to Ellen Nussey, Mary Taylor wrote: "I have told people of my acquaintance with the writer of J. Eyre and gained myself a great literary reputation thereby." [Letter to Ellen Nussey, 11 March 1851, Stevens (1972) Letter 23]

33 See, Letter to Ellen Nussey, 9 February 1849. [Stevens (1972) Letter 17]
of at least eleven years. She also co-wrote a travel memoir following a trip to Switzerland,\(^3^4\) and published her novel *Miss Miles*.\(^3^5\) In a review of *The First Duty of Women* published in *The Englishwoman's Review* in 1871, a brief discussion of her article "What Am I To Do?" was followed with the comment "[w]e have a shrewd suspicion that Miss Taylor has already found the answer to her question. If she has not we will reply, 'write.'"\(^3^6\) Her review of the work of Eugenie de Guerin was singled out for particular praise of her literary abilities:

> Does not this insight into feelings and power of description go a long way towards making a good writer of fiction? We advise Miss Taylor to try her powers in that direction. In the meantime she has contributed a clever book on the women's question.\(^3^7\)

With regard to these journal articles, Janet Horowitz Murray noted that while Mary Taylor used a variety of personas from ingénue to elderly housewife, she most often took the stance of a "fellow sinner and sufferer, addressing her readers like friends meeting over tea".\(^3^8\) This, according to Murray, was evidence of her "novelist's bent".\(^3^9\) While Mary Taylor tended to make more use of 'fictional' genres from the 1870s onwards,\(^4^0\) her identity was as a writer with a "doctrine to preach" rather than simply as a novelist. Given the variety of topics on which she wrote,\(^4^2\) this identity, while not being provisional on her

\(^{3^4}\) *Swiss Notes by Five Ladies* (1875) was written by Mary Taylor, Grace Hirst, Fanny Middleton Richardson, Minnie Nielson and Marion Ross. For a brief discussion of this book, see Stevens (1972) pp.142-43., and Janet Horowitz Murray's "Introduction to the Oxford Edition of Miss Miles" (1990) p.xviii.

\(^{3^5}\) For a full list of Mary Taylor's publications, see Appendix IV.


\(^{3^7}\) Ibid., p.26.

\(^{3^8}\) Murray (1990) p.xvii. Murray notes that "[i]n effect she was extending the circle of her inspiring letters from her immediate friends to women at large."


\(^{4^0}\) See, for example, her use of dialogue form in "An Old Dispute" (1869, reprinted in *The First Duty of Women*) and "The Shah on English Laws Relating to Women: A dialogue that might have been" (1873). For examples of her use of short story techniques, see "A Tale" (1873) and "A Servant Girl's History" (1876).

\(^{4^1}\) Mary Taylor used this phrase in comparing herself to her friend Charlotte Brontë. [See Letter to Charlotte Brontë, June to 24 July 1848, Stevens (1972) Letter 16]

\(^{4^2}\) The articles Mary Taylor submitted to Tait's Edinburgh Magazine and Chambers Edinburgh Journal did not deal with the 'woman question'. Likewise, two of her early articles published in the *Victoria Magazine*, "Cooperation and Competition" (1867) and "Drifting" (1867a) were not ostensibly concerned with an analysis of women's situation although the views expressed constituted a theoretical basis for her later articles
advocacy of women's rights, was, from at least the mid-1860s onwards, her principal means of advocating her views on the 'woman question'.

In effect, Mary Taylor's identity as a writer operated as both a strategy of survival and as a strategy of resistance. Her private correspondence indicates that to write was as important and as necessary to her well-being and sense of herself as was eating, sleeping and remaining active. It was also the means through which she could articulate her critical analysis of women's situation, engage in topical debates, and challenge public opinion in the hope of revolutionising society. The persistence and centrality of her self-identity as a writer is encapsulated in her finally publishing the novel she began writing in the late 1840s while living in Wellington, in 1890, at the age of seventy-three, just three years prior to her death.

Mary Colclough referred to her identity as a writer as being long-established and recognised both nationally and internationally. In a letter to the Daily Southern Cross in March 1869 she referred to herself as "your old correspondent" and later that same year made reference to having been "some little time before the public, writing for the English and colonial press" having had articles accepted and which explicitly focused on an analysis of women's position on society. "Cooperation and Competition" presents an analysis of economic principles prior to and accompanying capitalism. Within this context, Mary Taylor's argument cohered around the position that "[m]utual help and kindness, or even passive good-will, may be very desirable, but are only practicable in a differently constituted world. In the present one, the indulgence of such feelings is incompatible with the business of making a living." [Taylor (1867) p.224.] "Drifting" provides an analysis of how understandings are contingent upon the political interests and partialities of the writers of history. In questioning "of how much are we ignorant, and in what are we deceived?", Mary Taylor's conclusion is that "[w]e prosper only as we have honesty and wisdom of our own." [Taylor (1867a) p.301, 305.]

43 See "POLLY PLUM" DSC 5 March 1869, p.5. The earliest reference to writing by Polly Plum located in the current research is in the Daily Southern Cross on 23 September 1868. Given her statement in March 1869 of her long association with the colonial press it is possible that she had contributed articles to this newspaper or other periodicals prior to this date. She also made reference in June 1869 to her intention to publish a volume of her essays and, although she stated at this time that she had secured "the highest patronage for my forthcoming work" there is no record that this eventuated. [See "POLLY PLUM" DSC 30 June 1869, p.4.].

44 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 22 July 1869, p.6. Mary Colclough also contributed a few articles and correspondence to the Auckland Weekly News and the Thames Advertiser & Mining News, some of which were reprinted in the Daily Southern Cross. See, for example, DSC 23 September 1868, p.4., letter signed "VERITAS" 11 May 1870, p.4., Notices to Correspondents 2 July 1870, p.3., and editorial note in NZH 3 June 1870, p.3. The Thames Advertiser and Mining News, a morning daily established in April 1868, is available for use at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington and the Auckland
paid for in New Zealand, England and America. Moreover, a London editor had spoken in complimentary terms of a long story she had written and several other editors had accorded credit to her work.

In establishing her credibility as a writer in this way, Mary Colclough made a clear distinction between her status as a writer and that of anonymous letter-writers to the newspapers. This is evident in her response to a correspondent who signed himself "JEMMY JENKINS", with whom she had engaged in a prolonged banter. Wishing to end this badinage, Polly Plum wrote:

One of my weaknesses is a keen perception of the ludicrous, and it struck me as intensely funny that an unknown writer should address a lady, who had been some little time before the public, writing for the English and colonial press, 'Do not be frightened, Polly,' &c, as though he expected 'I should weep with delight when he gave me a smile, And tremble with fear at his frown.' ...I hope Mr. Jenkins will see the propriety of retiring into private life - unless he is prepared to come before the public as a writer (not a letter-writer).

Having "come before the public as a writer" herself, Mary Colclough's construction of her identity as a writer extended beyond her association with the colonial press to her identification as a participant in an international women's movement. Being provisional upon her advocacy of women's rights, this identity as a writer constituted the basis for her subsequent identities as a public

Weekly News is available for use at the Auckland Institute and Museum Library.

45 Ibid., p.6. See also "POLLY PLUM" DSC 2 October 1869, p.5.

46 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 22 July 1869, p.6.

47 This is an interesting distinction to make given that her reputation as a writer for the colonial press was gained under the pseudonym Polly Plum.

48 On occasions this was written as "JIMMY JENKINS" although this appears to be a printing error.

49 The debate between Polly Plum and Jemmy Jenkins appears to have been triggered by Polly Plum's article on "Public Men" published in the Daily Southern Cross on 25 June 1869, p.5. It culminated in a final letter in which Jemmy Jenkins defended his own credibility as a writer. The letter, entitled "JEMMY JENKINS LAST" simply read: "Well, Polly, Friend, - I thought you must have the last word, to prove that you were womankind - so be it. - Yours truly JEMMY JENKINS A Correspondent of the Times, Blackwood's Magazine and the New Zealand Press for the last 18 years."

[DSC 29 July 1869, p.5.] For the debate, see DSC 25 June 1869, p.5., 30 June 1869, p.4., 1 July 1869, p.6., 3 July 1869, p.4., 5 July 1869, p.9., 9 July 1869, p.4., 12 July 1869, p.5., 22 July 1869, p.6., 29 July 1869, p.5.

50 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 22 July 1869, p.6.
lecturer and a colonial agent for the international women's movement. Moreover, it was complemented by her practical involvement in the local community in temperance work, prison visiting, and in schemes to assist the rehabilitation of female ex-prisoners.51

Within the colonial context, Mary Colclough's identity as a writer was crafted through the persona of Polly Plum. However, soon after she was publicly identified as Polly Plum, Mary Colclough stopped using this pseudonym.52 If, as Charlotte Macdonald claims, the most important item of personal identity is a name,53 a consideration of Mary Colclough's persona as Polly Plum is crucial to an understanding of her identity as a writer.

The name itself, along with Mary Colclough's responses to correspondence regarding her pseudonym, provokes a playfulness which contrasts sharply with the critical content of her writings. As a diminutive form, "Polly" suggests something that is trivial and inconsequential and has a nursery-rhyme feel about it. It is also suggestive of succinctness and of the innocence of childhood. As a common nickname for Mary, "Polly" could simply have been a name from Mary Colclough's own childhood.54 "Plum", on the other hand, evokes the common expression of 'having a plum in one's mouth', which, given that Mary Colclough taught elocution, seems rather appropriate. In introducing herself to the Melbourne public in November 1874, Mary Colclough stated that the sobriquet "Polly Plum" had been given to her as a consequence of her having used that name for a series of articles

51 The connections between Mary Colclough's advocacy of women's rights and her practical assistance to women in her local community will be discussed in the following chapter.

52 The advertisement for Mary Colclough's first public lecture in Auckland revealed the true identity of "Polly Plum", most likely to ensure a large attendance. Three months later she wrote to the Daily Southern Cross announcing that because the discussion of women's rights had "degenerated into tiresome reiteration" and that all possible arguments had been advanced by both sides, she had no ambition to continue the controversy through the columns of the newspaper. She added that "[n]one but a confirmed egotist writes from any other motive than the hope of doing good, and when sensible writers feel that their communications are becoming wearisome they gladly relinquish the pen, as I willingly do, if my friends and opponents will permit me." ["POLLY PLUM" DSC 2 October 1871, p.3.] Apart from one further letter signed "MARY A. COLCLOUGH (POLLY PLUM)" [DSC 31 October 1871, p.2.] she did not use this pen-name again in her correspondence with the Auckland press.


54 Mary Taylor was also known as "Polly" to her close school friends. [See Stevens (1972) p.14.]
she contributed to the *Daily Southern Cross*.\(^{55}\) While it was not uncommon for writers, particularly female writers,\(^{56}\) to assume pen-names at this time, Polly Plum's choice of nom-de-plume was the subject of interest by some respondents to her letters in the Auckland press. Some correspondents even related themselves to Polly Plum, as in the case of "JANIE PLUM", "MAGGIE PLUM" and "PEGGY PLUM", although the basis for their adopted kinship was not always clear.\(^{57}\)

While Polly Plum may have accepted Janie Plum and Maggie Plum as namesakes, albeit with rather patronising reference to their level of enlightenment, she was adamant that she was the only person who could **rightly** call themselves "Polly Plum". Defending herself against the charge of answering "foolish advertisements", she wrote:

> It has come to my knowledge that some mean or malicious persons have taken the unwarrantable liberty of using the

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55 See review of lecture, *DSC* 23 November 1874, p.3. In September 1868 Polly Plum sent an article clipped from the *Ladies Own Journal and Miscellany* to the Editor of the *Weekly News* which was subsequently reprinted in the *Daily Southern Cross* with a short leader by Polly Plum. Over the following twelve months, twenty-one articles written by Polly Plum were published in the *Daily Southern Cross*. Letters to the Editor under this pseudonym appeared regularly from 10 February 1869. Hence, contrary to Mary Colclough's statement that this identity had been given to her, it would appear that she actively pursued this identification.

56 It was also common for pen-names to be based on alliteration, as in the well-known case of "Fanny Fern". While Polly Plum may have first appeared in the colonial press in 1868, the "Plums" could apparently trace their ancestry back to the biblical flood and hence, were established in their respectability. As "POLLY PLUM" explained: "I don't like an affected make-believe sort of lady, and I don't consider the fast variety a lady at all, though she may trace her ancestry back to the Flood, for I believe all families that are families trace from that. I know we (the Plums) do". [See article "A Lady", *DSC* 18 July 1869, p.4.]

57 Of Peggy Plum nothing is known; her letter was not printed because it was received after correspondence relating to Polly Plum was closed due to having occupied an "undue proportion" of space. [See Notice to Correspondents, *NZH* 18 August 1871, p.2.] Janie Plum certainly did not agree with most of the views expressed by Polly Plum and considered it "unseemly" and "altogether unwomanly" for women to even wish to infringe on 'man's sphere' in any way. [NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.] The motivation for Maggie Plum's sense of kinship appears to have been a desire for the approval of her namesake. She considered Polly Plum to be a person of more than average intellect who, rather than wishing to be a martyr, as "NEMO" had asserted, simply wanted to be known and admired as a clever woman: "She does not like her light to be hidden under a bushel." Maggie Plum claimed a special insight into Polly Plum's character because she felt she was in a similar situation to that of Polly Plum before the latter began publishing her views in the newspapers. As a poetess, Maggie Plum had often wished she could publish her effusions rather than "blush unseen and waste my perfume on the desert air," or have my fine temperament destroyed by minding a cross baby all the day long". [NZH 5 August 1871, p.3.]While Polly Plum appears to have accepted "JANIE PLUM" and "MAGGIE PLUM" as her sisters, she distanced herself from their views, stating that she would rather back Lady Amberley, Mrs Jacob Bright, Miss Nightingale, or Miss Emily Faithfull against Janie or Maggie Plum any day. It was not that she depreciated the amount of culture in her fair sisters, but that "living in a retired way, in an out-of-the-way corner of the world, their opportunities of becoming enlightened are limited." [See *NZH* 14 August 1871, p.3.]
name of 'Polly Plum,' in answering silly advertisements, and that it has been done more than once. Of course I feel annoyed; and, though no one who knows me would believe me capable of such a thing, those who do not may be deceived. I wish I could discover the names of these reprehensible practical jokers, and I would publicly expose them, as they justly deserve. I have not had occasion to answer an advertisement for years, and in every case I have always signed my full and proper name, as the advertisements concerned me professionally, and required testimonials, &c. No other advertisements have ever been answered by the one and only lady who has really the right to sign herself, POLLY PLUM.58

The personal sense of injustice expressed in this passionate disclaimer bears testimony to the intensity with which Mary Colclough constructed and protected her identity as Polly Plum. While she welcomed debate, criticism and censure of her views, believing that "[a]n author is not well used till he (sic) has been well abused" and maintaining that "'Plums' grow all the better for the use of the pruning knife",59 personal criticism and slurs to her private character were intolerable.60

Another highly significant aspect of Mary Colclough's identity as Polly Plum was that she was definitely not "Mrs Plum". In February 1871, she had published an article entitled "The Law and the Bible" in which she censured men who adapted the Scriptures to their own purposes.61 Amid the debate that ensued, a correspondent referred to her as "Mrs. 'Plum'".62 In her response, Mary Colclough signed her letter "POLLY PLUM, not 'MRS. PLUM.'"63 Given that the title 'Mrs' defines a woman in terms of her relationship to her husband, Mary Colclough's rejection of this title for Polly Plum could signify that Polly Plum's identity was that of an independent woman and, as such, should not be defined in terms of any relationship to a man.

What is clear about Mary Colclough's identity as Polly Plum is that it was a self-consciously crafted identity which enabled her to assume a

58 DSC 13 November 1869, p.4.
59 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 30 June 1869, p.4.
60 We can only surmise whether Polly Plum deemed it a compliment or an insult to have a racing horse named after her! [See racing column NZH 30 December 1874, p.3.]
61 See DSC 27 February 1871, p.3.
62 See "AMICUS" DSC 8 March 1871, p.3.
63 DSC 13 March 1871, p.3.
public persona which was separate from, although influenced by, both her private and professional life. As such, it provided a means through which Mary Colclough could challenge dominant assumptions regarding women's place and role in society and the bases of women's identities as women. Hence, while Polly Plum was a widow, mother and missionary in God's work, she was, above all else, an independent woman and a writer who aspired to the status of "author"^{64} in her chosen home. This aspect of her identity clearly operated as a strategy of resistance although, given that Polly Plum's articles to the colonial press also provided a source of income,^{65} this identity simultaneously operated as a strategy of survival.

Having been dismissed from school at the age of thirteen^{66} with the label "incorrigible dunce", Ellen Ellis' identity as a writer operated in resistance to her teachers' and her family's estimations of her intellectual abilities. As an adult living in Auckland, she engaged in a variety of forms of writing to develop her rhetorical skills before deciding that the form of a novel offered her the most scope for the expression of her political analysis on women's situation.

Between July 1870 and February 1871, Ellen Ellis wrote letters to the local Auckland newspapers under the pen-name "A WOMAN" to express her views on a wide range of social issues^{67} and to articulate her ideas on women's rights.^{68} In a letter to the Editor of the New Zealand Herald, written under this pen-name, Ellen Ellis stated that:

I never write for writing's sake, still less for idle discussion. My purpose is, to change the tone of public opinion, as to the right of women tamely to submit in silence to indignities heaped upon them by bad men. ... I

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^{64} See "POLLY PLUM" DSC 22 July 1869, p.6.

^{65} Between September 1869 and June 1871, Polly Plum contributed nearly sixty articles to the Daily Southern Cross. In a letter Mary Colclough stated that she wrote articles on various topics because she was in the position of having to buy her dishes as well as wash them. ["POLLY PLUM" DSC 2 June 1870, p.3.]

^{66} For a detailed discussion of Ellen Ellis' positioning within discourses of education, see Chapter 11.

^{67} As "A WOMAN" Ellen Ellis wrote on the desirability of converting the Albert Barracks to a public park [NZH 23 July 1870, p.5., 5 August 1870, p.5.], the need for a self-supporting Home for the poor [NZH 5 September 1870, p.3.], her support for the teachings of Rev. Samuel Edger [NZH 13 October 1870, p.2.], the moral training of children [DSC 3 November 1870, p.3.], and the Permissive Bill [NZH 10 December 1870, p.2.].

^{68} See, for example, letters entitled "On Woman" [NZH 29 September 1870, p.3.], "Women's Rights" [DSC 3 January 1871, p.3.], "A True Man" [DSC 17 January 1871 p.3.], "True Dignity" [DSC 2 February 1871 p.3.].
write in desperate despair, with a sort of last wild hope that by such untoward means, I may touch a chord in the heart of one who is worth saving, tho' alas every legitimate effort has proved of no avail. Deeply should I deplore it, if the acrimony of 'bitter personal experience' mars the work.69

It was Polly Plum who had observed that there was a "root of bitterness" in the letters of "A WOMAN". Although critical of what she perceived to be a "wholesale censure" of men in the writings of "A WOMAN", Polly Plum added:

No doubt it is simply the bitterness of experience, and not of heart. She has often written before, I fancy; and I think she is one who has suffered through that pregnant source of evil, drink, or has seen some one near and dear suffer by it.70

While deploring the idea that "the acrimony of 'bitter personal experience'" might mar her work, Ellen Ellis' primary motivation for writing her novel, as stated in her Preface, was to make her own "bitter experience" useful to others.71 Her identity as a writer, therefore, as in the case of her identity as an advocate of women's rights, needs to be understood as part of the process of coming to terms with her own life. Integral to this identity was a process of rejecting the label "incorrigible dunce" which had been given to her by her school teachers and her parents. According to Vera Colebrook, Ellen Ellis "could not and would not" accept the pronouncement of "dunce".72 In Everything Is Possible To Will Zee also rejected this label: "...never, even in thought, did she own to being a dunce."73

However, "A WOMAN'S" response to criticism of her writing skills by "A MAN"74 suggests that Ellen Ellis did own this label for many years:

'A Man' would never expect an answer to his wise, I had almost said wordy letter, from me, if he knew for how many years I had owned the title of 'incorrigible dunce.' Then, too, there is little satisfaction in newspaper

69 "A WOMAN" NSH 27 October 1870, p.3.
70 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 5 October 1870, p.2.
71 Ellis (1882) p.iii.
73 Ellis (1882) p.13.
74 In responding to a letter by "A WOMAN" published in the New Zealand Herald 29 September 1870, p.3., "A MAN" wrote: "instead of following the rules generally adopted by those who choose a text as a starting point for their literary undertakings, the writer has, without any apparent hesitation, entered the 'ring,' and boldly placed before us a rather unsparing and indiscriminate attack on what, I suppose, she considers the vulnerable reputation of the masculine gender." [NSH 17 October 1870, p.3.]
correspondence, your letters are mutilated, and in the
heat of a discussion, a bird of prey swoops down on the
poor fledglings, saying 'this correspondence is closed.'

While her own satisfaction with newspaper correspondence appears to
have been relatively short-lived, Ellen Ellis' choice of pen-name is
of particular significance to the subversiveness of her contributions
to the newspaper debates on the 'woman question'. In foregrounding her
identity as a woman, she made recourse to the standpoint of moral
authority ascribed to women. In doing so, she both challenged dominant
understandings of what it meant to be a woman and dominant
prescriptions regarding women's participation in public discourses.

As was the case for Mary Colclough, both Ellen Ellis' ability as a
writer and the content of her writing was questioned and criticised.
For both Polly Plum and "A WOMAN", however, this public censure served
to strengthen their assertions of these identities and fuelled their
commitment to publicly advocate for women's rights.

**Working Women**

In the nineteenth century, 'working women' usually signified women of
the working classes who had received little, if any, formal education,
and who engaged in remunerative employment. Given that Mary Taylor,
Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were each raised in middle class
families, their strong identifications as working women were in tension
with popular understandings of this identification. While for Mary
Taylor and Mary Colclough, this identity was embraced with respect to
their need to provide for their own economic security, for Ellen Ellis
this identification was not provisional on her receiving monetary
payment for her labour.

In the preface to *Everything Is Possible To Will* Ellen Ellis wrote:

> Written especially for working women, by one of
> themselves, the narrative and its reflexions (sic) have
> been patiently elaborated with the 'Line upon line,
> precept upon precept' simplicity needful to the untaught
> notwithstanding that conciseness of word and thought
> appeal more forcibly to the cultivated mind."

This dedication would seem to suggest that the basis of Ellen Ellis'
identification as a working woman was her low level of formal education
and her collective identification with other women who had not had the

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75 "A WOMAN" NZH 27 October 1870, p.3.

76 Ellis (1882) pp.iii-iv.
opportunity to develop 'cultivated' minds. Moreover, because this statement of her identity as a working woman was made in the context of her intentions to prove how women were "crippled by their enforced ignorance and degraded social position...in their God-given work to bless mankind", this identity would appear to be integrally linked to her identity as a writer and her use of writing to advocate for women's rights. Hence, because Ellen Ellis did not engage in paid employment, her identity as a working woman needs to be understood as provisional upon the status ascribed to her on the basis of her elementary education.

Mary Taylor and Mary Colclough, on the other hand, were both of the educated classes and it was by virtue of their practical material circumstances that they had to engage in some form of paid labour to support themselves. In the case of Mary Colclough, engaging in remunerative employment was also necessary if she was to support her children. Hence, for these two women, their identities as working women, while consistent with their political analyses of women's collective situation and their arguments for increased fields of employment for women, operated on a fundamental level as strategies of survival.

Mary Colclough articulated her identity as a working woman through persistent references to herself as a "self-dependent" and "self-helpful" woman. While she made reference to "the blessed feeling of being self-helpful" and "the beauty of an earned shilling", the practical realities of her situation as a widow with two young children meant that this aspect of her identity was an economic responsibility, albeit also a source of personal empowerment.

Given nineteenth-century societal prescriptions regarding middle-class women engaging in forms of remunerative employment in the public sphere, Mary Colclough's identity as a woman involved in paid work was

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77 See chapters 9 and 10.

78 As will be discussed in the following chapter, several of the schemes Mary Colclough proposed for the amelioration of the material circumstances of the lives of women in her local community also held the potential for generating paid employment for herself.

79 See, for example, reviews of her lectures, NZH 27 June 1871, p.2. and DSC 4 September 1871, p.3.; "MARY A. COLCLough" WT 22 April 1873, p.2.

80 See article "School for Wives", DSC 18 October 1869, p.4.
continually negotiated within the terms of dominant prescriptions regarding appropriate behaviours for 'respectable' women. Her awareness of the social prohibitions against women engaging in forms of paid work, and of the implications for women who overstepped the conventions of prescriptive feminine behaviour, had been developed at an early age. It is significant that her realisation of these limitations on women's spheres of activity was formed in association with the first women's rights advocates she ever met. These early role models were three sisters, one of whom was chief clerk in a telegraph office, one a designer in a factory, while the third, with the assistance of a servant, kept their father's house. Mary Colclough described the two sisters who went to the city each day to conduct their business as "unobtrusively and really gentle-women as any ladies I have ever known". They were, however, ostracised by some members of the community who thought it low and common for women who wished to be thought of as ladies to go out to work. Polly Plum commented, "[t]hus these good heroic girls, the first 'women's rights' advocates I ever knew, were slighted, and snubbed, and passed by where the idle and dishonest had been feted and visited. It is this that wants altering."

Mary Colclough's status as a widow and her qualifications, experience and high reputation in the teaching profession, heightened her possibilities of remaining within the boundaries of feminine respectability while engaging in paid work. In similar respects, Mary Taylor's circumstances of being a well-educated unmarried woman mediated and legitimated her engagement in paid employment. In her choice of positions, however, Mary Taylor disrupted and overstepped the boundaries of what was considered appropriate employment for respectable women and she received disapproval for some of her activities. For example, her acceptance of a position in a boys' school in Germany in 1843 was considered, even within her closest circles, to be an imprudent step. In Wellington in 1848 she

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81 In response to a court case regarding the inquest of a child who had died of starvation, Mary Taylor also presented a strong critique of the implications of the doctrine of 'respectability' for women who had no option but to engage in forms of paid employment in the public sphere in her article 1868 "Our Feminine Respectability", reprinted in The First Duty of Women.

82 See article "Women as Wives", DSC 24 February 1871, p.3.

83 Ibid., p.3.

84 See Stevens (1972) p.51.
"astonished this world" by residing with a widower while employed as a tutor for his daughter as well as by setting her annual fee at £70. In reference to the social comment these actions engendered, Mary Taylor wrote:

Now that I have begun the same people can't conceive why I don't go on and marry the man at once which they imagine must have been my original intention. For my part I shall possibly astonish them a little more for I feel a great inclination to make use of his interested civilities to visit his daughter and see the district of Porirua.85

As her cousin and business partner Ellen Taylor noted, Mary Taylor's shop in Wellington also astonished and amused the local community: "Our keeping shop astonishes every body here, I believe they think we do it for fun, some think we shall make nothing of it, or that we shall get tired; and all laugh at us."86 While there is no record of public responses to Mary Taylor's business dealings associated with trading cattle,87 the variety of activities in which she engaged to earn an income challenged socially sanctioned forms of legitimate and appropriate female employments. In effect, therefore, Mary Taylor's identity as a working woman clearly resisted dominant nineteenth century understandings of such an identity.

"Disappointed and ill-tempered old maids"88

Denise Riley has written of identity as being "an acutely double-edged weapon" which is both risky and fundamentally dependent upon the context in which it is invoked. She cautions that "the closeness between an identity and a derogatory identification may, again always in specific contexts, resemble that between being a subject and the process of subjectification."89 Having considered some aspects of the various identities which Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis constructed for themselves, closer attention will now be given to the processes of subjectification against which their self-identifications

85 Letter to Charlotte Brontë, June to 24 July 1848. [Stevens (1972) Letter 16.] In this letter Mary Taylor also wrote that her sister in law (Waring's wife Mary Knox) considered her to be "astonishingly learned but rather wicked" for calling her favourite parson a "spoon" and for only attending chapel for amusement.

86 Letter to Charlotte Brontë, 13 August 1850. [Stevens (1972) Letter 21.]

87 See Letters to Charlotte Brontë, June to 24 July 1848 and 5 April 1850. [Stevens (1972) Letters 16 and 19].

88 This phrase was used by the Editor of the Evening Post to refer to champions of women's rights. [See Editorial, EP 13 July 1871, p.2.]

as advocates of women's rights were constructed. In considering the impact of derogatory identifications made by nineteenth century opponents of women's rights, I shall focus on the ways in which these may have been incorporated and/or resisted in the positive identifications each of these women constructed regarding their advocacy of the cause of women's rights.

Despite their analyses of women's collectivity as a "subject class", Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each retained a sense of confidence and empowerment in their own identities as women. To the twentieth-century observer, the most outstanding feature of their self-identifications is the passion and assuredness with which they identified with the cause of women's rights amid a constant barrage of desultory public opinion directed toward advocates of this cause and the cause itself. This confidence and unflinching commitment belied any suggestion that they were "disappointed and ill-tempered old maids".

In response to the popular view that the current generation of spinsters were living in peculiar circumstances which made them exceptionally poor, Mary Taylor asserted that the only difference between them and their predecessors was that the current generation could make more noise.\footnote{Taylor (1870) p.36.} The ability to make more noise, however, did not necessarily correlate with being heard. As Mary Taylor herself pointed out on reflecting on "the quietude of all the press" in 1877 as compared with a decade earlier, it almost seemed as if the 'woman question' "were settled and disposed of".\footnote{Taylor (1877) p.209.} This was despite the fact that both in England (where she was then living) and in New Zealand there had been no significant changes in the fields of employment open to women or of married women's legal position with regard to ownership of property, protection from spousal abuse and custody of children.

With regard to popular attitudes toward women's rights advocates in New Zealand during the late 1860s and early 1870s, however, the press was all but quiet. These "strong-minded women",\footnote{For examples of use of this epithet, see "FAIRCHILD" [DSC 22 September 1870, p.2:], "OLD PRACTICAL" [DSC 17 February 1871, p.3:], "FRANCIS FOSCARI" [NZH 25 August 1871, p.3] and Editorial [NZH 29 February 1872, p.2].} the "shrieking
sisterhood", and were described as a "queer lot" of "intensely disagreeable types." They were even considered by the Editor of the New Zealand Herald to be "not the least dangerous of the social ulcers of the present century." These "philosophers in petticoats" were, of course, breaking the fundamental rule of woman as quiet, passive, inessential 'Other'. Hence, they were not considered to be 'real' women, but were lunatics, "female monstrosities", "half-man, half-woman", and "unsexed" due to exhibiting masculine qualities which betrayed an underlying desire to be men and to usurp the roles and places of men.

However noisy these 'unnatural' women were, they were not deemed by opponents of women's rights to constitute a significant portion of the 'fair sex' and hence their outbursts and demands could not be held as representative of their sex. They were simply the voices of a few isolated individual women, dissatisfied with their own situations and with a grudge toward the opposite sex.

Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were certainly strong-minded women, however this was not a quality which they considered 'unsexed' them or made them more like men. To the contrary, their

93 See Editorial note DSC 18 May 1872, p.3.
95 Editorial, NZH 29 February 1872, p.2.
96 See, for example "NEMO" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3., and "Ode to Polly Plum" in Chapter 8.
97 "JANIE PLUM" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.
98 Ibid., p.3.
99 See, for example, the articles "Modern Views of Women" (reprinted in NZH 20 June 1870, p.4.) and "The Sacred Sex" (reprinted in NZH 14 August 1871, p.3.).
100 See, for example, "JIMMY JENKINS" [DSC 5 July 1869, p.9.] and "FRANCIS FOSCARI" [NZH 25 August 1871, p.3.].
101 Amongst those who articulated this popular view were "G.M." [DSC 31 May 1870, p.6.], "OLD PRACTICAL" [DSC 17 February 1871, p.3.], the Editor of the Evening Post [EP 13 July 1871, p.2.], "JANIE PLUM" [NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.] and "NEMO" [NZH 10 August 1871, p.3.].
102 See, for example, "Colonial Fern Leaves" in Appendix III.
103 Mary Colclough strongly refuted this claim in a letter to the Editor in DSC 10 July 1871, p.3. In her Preface to Everything Is Possible To Will Ellen Ellis acknowledged that "the spirit, purpose, and unrestrained naturalness of the writer may surprise conventional prejudices" but added that "if the book be 'wild' to English taste, the fault will be in taste to those who love wild flowers!" [Ellis (1882) p.vii.] Under her pen-name
primary identities were as women, albeit based on a different construction of womanhood than that espoused within dominant discourses. As Mary Taylor succinctly stated, "[t]he thick-headed opposition that has made 'blue-stocking' and 'strong-minded woman' into terms of abuse, shows that pressure has been applied somewhere, and that some people don't like it." Although each were critical of the abuses of power at the hands of individual men, not one of them could be accused of holding a personal grudge toward members of the opposite sex.

Mary Taylor acknowledged that given that "[t]he hand, or at least the will of every man will appear to be against her" it would be difficult for a woman not to feel her heart to be against every man. This did not justify any condemnation of men as a group, rather:

A woman has none but herself to blame if, after having carefully kept herself incompetent, she finds her needs neglected, her terrors laughed at, and perhaps her helpless ignorance abused. She has taken a wrong standard of perfection, and a wrong deity to worship.

Hence, whereas men's judgement may have been mistaken and their opinions selfish, according to Mary Taylor women were at fault for having followed them. Within the wider analysis which Mary Taylor constructed of women's collective situation, however, the fault lay in forms of social organisation which were based on the belief that it was the duty of men to maintain women. This belief, in Mary Taylor's

"A WOMAN" she took "FAIRCHILD" to task for being "unjust and ungenerous to the 'strong-minded.'" [NZH 29 September 1870, p.3.] She also stated: "I never believe the ravings attributed to strong-minded woman; I don't think women are such fools." [DSC 13 October 1870, p.2.] On another occasion she wrote: "Oh! if men had but the sense to drop that word 'masculine' when speaking and writing about clever women." [NZH 27 October 1870, p.3.]

104 For a detailed discussion of the ontological assumptions which underpinned their understandings of 'woman', see Chapter 8.

105 Taylor (1870) p.276.

106 Ibid., p.108.

107 Ibid., p.73.

108 Ibid., p.73. Toward the end of her novel, Mary Taylor articulates this position through the character of Miss Everard in a conversation she has with a younger woman who thinks it cruel that her male friend discouraged her from trying to help a young female friend take control of her life. Miss Everard responds: "Fiddle about cruelty...the mistake was in your wanting guidance, and being willing to take his...you seem to think that men are a bundle of principles that you can understand and count upon. They are no such thing...If you take men's advice and are ruined by it how can you blame them? It serves you right." [Taylor (1890) p.459.]

analysis, suited the interests of men, both individually and collectively, over the interests of women. Within this context, to be considered 'strong-minded' was, therefore, a positive identification operating in resistance to women's constructed passivity and subservient acquiescence.

Mary Colclough also embraced the epithet of being a strong-minded woman but rejected the accusation of applying "wholesale censure" to men. In direct response to her opponents, Polly Plum wrote "[f]or my part, I can speak favourably of the intelligence and kindness of men generally. I have made many friends among the opposite sex by my advocacy of 'Women's Rights.'"110 She spoke freely and warmly of the personal support and encouragement she had received from men, maintaining that:

Many men are ready to give us all that a reasonable common-sense woman could ask; some men would even give us more than I think women are at all entitled to; and, as a rule, men are much better and kinder than the laws.112

Like Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough also believed that "[i]t is the system, not the men" that was at fault.112 Ellen Ellis, however, while critical of many aspects of social organisation, considered that fault lay in the hearts and minds of individuals. She asserted that men were, by nature, more susceptible to debased selfishness and this opened her analysis to the charge of 'wholesale censure' against men.

As previously mentioned, some of her letters to the Auckland press written under her pen-name were met with this criticism from Polly Plum.113 In Ellen Ellis' view, men were innately endowed with more weaknesses of character than women and this was manifest in an inclination toward self-love, "woman-slavery" and "drink-slavery".114 These individual failings were exacerbated by the social and legal system which denied women "the subtle potency of recognised being", gave husbands complete power over their wives, and placed women in a position which was ignominious to God's divine plan.

110 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 14 August 1871, p.3. See also "POLLY PLUM" DSC 26 July 1871, p.3.

111 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 5 October 1870, p.2.

112 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 5 July 1869, p.9.

113 "A MAN" also accused her of an "unsparing and indiscriminate attack" on men. [See letter titled "On Man", NZH 17 October 1870, p.3.]

114 Ellis (1882) p.221.
Of these three outspoken women, however, it was Polly Plum who encountered the most intense and hostile backlash for her personal advocacy of women's rights. Correspondent "JELLABY PATTER" considered her letters to be "full of sound and fury" yet signifying nothing while "NEMO" accused her of making "insane assertions with regard to herself and woman's position". Various accused of plagiarism, of "dishing up truisms in a new garb" and charged with want of modesty, it was also suggested that the cause of women's rights was lunacy and that people such as Polly Plum could likely find themselves restrained at the lunatic asylum. In response to this, Polly Plum wrote:

As to residence at the Whau, if all the believers in Woman's Rights in Auckland were sent up there to keep me company, we should be a very pleasant party, composed of a large number of intelligent men and women, and there would not be a few grass-widowers in town. 'Nemo,' in many respects evidently a sensible intelligent man, makes a mistake when he tries to put down Woman's Rights by that sort of argument, insults always return upon the insulter, and when the movement has spread so widely, and among so many intellectual and excellent people, to characterize the advocacy of the cause as lunacy, is an unpardonable insult and can only result from ignorance (on this point at any rate).

115 NZH 16 August 1871, p.3.
116 NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.
117 An article entitled "The Indisposition of Young Men to Marry" published in the Auckland Weekly News and wrongly attributed to Polly Plum led to a charge of plagiarism. Polly Plum's response to this charge was vehement, she stated: "Such a charge to an honest mind is most monstrous; 'Veritas' clearly accuses me of literary theft, which is morally as bad as any other kind of robbery. I have never been guilty of anything approaching it. Bad or good, my productions are absolutely genuine. I declare this solemnly on the honour of a lady." [See private note from "POLLY PLUM" to the Editor, DSC 11 May 1870, p.4.; see also "Notices to Correspondents" DSC 2 July 1870, p.3.] Elsewhere Polly Plum wrote that while she never claimed to write on original subjects, "I don't copy and I don't borrow. I just write my thoughts on what occupies my mind, and, as there is 'nothing new under the sun,' the same things have doubtless occupied the minds of great and wise men, much better able than I am to deal with the same subjects." [DSC 30 June 1869, p.4.] Several weeks after the accusation of plagiarism, Polly Plum made a similar charge against the writer of a local farce entitled "The Three P. Smiths" which had a "peculiar coincidence" with a manuscript titled "Three J. Smiths" which she had submitted to a well-known actor several years earlier. Her script had not been deemed suitable for the stage but had not been returned. The author of "The Three P. Smiths" refuted the charge. [See DSC 27 July 1870, p.4., and "RALPH LEVOI" in DSC 28 July 1870, p.5.]
118 "JIMMY JENKINS" DSC 25 June 1869, p.5.
119 See review of lecture at Otahuhu, DSC 4 September 1871, p.3.
120 "NEMO" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.
121 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 5 August 1871, p.3.
Mary Colclough's efforts to politicise the situation of women were also countered with the view that any change in the situation of women would "be brought about silently and quietly, by the efforts of women, individually, to retain the affection of their husbands far more surely than by any noisy demonstration or agitation." Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis all quite clearly disagreed with such a view, believing that what others referred to as "noisy demonstration" and "agitation" could effect changes in public opinion and attitudes which would lead to changes in women's individual and collective situation. Hence, while each pursued individual solutions to aspects of their own situations with which they were dissatisfied, they also used their identities as advocates of women's rights to effect changes which they hoped would ultimately improve the material situations of all women. Each were concerned with bringing what were generally considered to be 'private' experiences into the public domain and thereby fostering some kind of 'feminist' consciousness amongst women in particular but also amongst 'fair-minded' men. They utilised discourses about alternative identities for women and, in publicising such identities, contributed to the process of publicising discursive spaces from which women could negotiate and politicise different identities as women. As shall be shown in the following chapter, their daily social practices also opened up new ways in which women could actively engage in the 'public' sphere and challenge dominant nineteenth-century understandings of women.

122 "G.M." DSC 31 May 1870, p.6.
CHAPTER 7

"OVERSTEPPING THE BOUNDARIES": LOCATING NINETEENTH-CENTURY 'FEMINIST' PRACTICES

"Why do you keep looking at me so, Miss Everard? Do you think I am somebody else?"
"There is more changes in you than your dress," she answered; "you are different; you are - I don't know how."
"Pray find out; do, please!"
"Well, you are grown more; you are like a man."
"How? In what way?"
"Well, as if you had something to do - business-like; and then as if you could do it - confident."
"Well, I suppose I am getting improper, is that it?"
"Well, yes."
"And I am determined, as most sinners, to go on in my own way. I think I will come here to Repton and lecture furiously on the rights of women."1

In politicising aspects of their various 'private' identities through their advocacy of women's rights, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis disrupted the opposition and separation of 'public' and 'private' spheres. As shown in the previous chapter, in doing so they drew on a variety of discourses to articulate different kinds of public identities for women and to construct legitimate speaking positions for women. Through an analysis of the social practices which accompanied their critiques of women's prescribed in the social order, this chapter will explore how each of these women challenged and disrupted dominant understandings of Woman's 'nature'2 and ability to participate in various types of activities in the public sphere. It will be argued that in challenging the boundaries of prescribed activities for women

1 In a letter to her friend Ellen Nussey, Charlotte Brontë said of Mary Taylor: "It is vain to limit a character like hers within ordinary boundaries - she will overstep them." [Letter dated 3 January 1841, cited Stevens (1970) p.18.] In a letter to the Auckland press, Mary Colclough wrote: "[Women] must live, or, at any rate, they want to if they can; and they like comfort and means as well as men do; and they see that neither of these is to be attained unless they insist on overstepping the boundary some prejudiced folks would fain make impassable." ["POLLY PLUM" DSC 10 July 1872, p.3.]

2 Taylor (1890) p.447.

3 For a detailed discussion of how each of these women constructed 'woman', see Chapter 8.
in their daily lived practices, and in encouraging and assisting other women to do so, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis made significant contributions to increasing the possibilities for, and justifications of, women's participation as women in many aspects of social and political life in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

In marked contrast to dominant nineteenth century ascriptions of woman's essential passivity and social prescriptions which confined women to domestic spheres of responsibility, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were constantly engaged in active pursuits in the 'public' sphere. While their personal circumstances differed considerably, both over the course of time for each individual and between each of these three women, each engaged in a variety of activities to redress their own personal dissatisfactions and to effect change in the material situations of other women.

Prior to emigrating to New Zealand, Mary Taylor had travelled extensively, worked in a wide field of employments, and had furthered her education through learning French, German, music and art. During her fifteen years in Wellington she vastly extended her range of occupations, supplementing her income with tutoring and teaching piano, leasing a house she had built, trading in cattle, and establishing a drapery and haberdashery store. This latter venture, undertaken with the assistance of her cousin Ellen Taylor, involved a variety of manual and intellectual tasks, and many of these skills were learned in the process of running this commercial business. During this period, Mary Taylor also nursed her ailing cousin (who died of consumption within two years of arriving in Wellington), regularly visited local acquaintances, explored the surrounding country-side on her pony, and helped organise and attend various community social functions. Following her return to England most of her energies were focused on her writing, however she maintained regular trips abroad to Switzerland.

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4 While most of her early life was spent in the Gomersal district, in her mid-twenties Mary Taylor attended a school in Brussels. She travelled extensively through Europe and spent some time teaching at a school in Germany. [See Stevens (1972)]

5 By her own account Mary Taylor's artistic abilities were not particularly notable. In the early months of Ellen Taylor's arrival in Wellington, the two cousins had regular sketching sessions on Sunday afternoons, of which Mary Taylor commented: 'We seldom succeed in making the slightest resemblance to the thing we sit down to but it is wonderfully interesting.' [Letter to Charlotte Brontë, 5 April 1850, in Stevens (1972) Letter 19]
where she organised and accompanied groups of young women on alpine tours.

The variety and pace of Mary Colclough's active pursuits was no less daunting. Always close at hand were the domestic responsibilities associated with raising two young children. As a widow, she had the ongoing pressure of the necessity of securing an income and often her teaching positions were supplemented with private tuition in the form of evening and weekend classes. Amid these commitments, Mary Colclough contributed articles and letters to the local newspapers, at times on almost a daily basis. From mid-1871, she was involved in various public lecturing engagements and lecture tours throughout the upper North Island. She was also actively involved with local temperance organisations, maintained a regular schedule of prison visiting, attended court sessions, arranged employment for female ex-prisoners and, on several occasions, fostered young children. In October 1874 she went to Melbourne where she initiated local community projects to provide accommodation and employment to various groups of women. She also contributed letters to the local Melbourne newspapers on women's rights and presented several public lectures. Following her return to New Zealand early in 1876, she disappeared from public view, settling in Canterbury and teaching at Rangiora and Papanui.

This commitment to activity was also evident in Ellen Ellis' life, particularly following her return to Auckland in the mid-1860s after spending eighteen months in England. Freed from the responsibilities of childcare, she immediately taught herself book-keeping and took over the financial responsibilities for her husband's failing business. When her long-promised new home was built she cleared the surrounding bush single-handed and landscaped the property. This demanding physical work took several years to complete and the garden she eventually cultivated proved to be the envy of the local neighbourhood. Having taught herself how to write fluently, Ellen Ellis engaged in a variety of forms of research and composition, culminating in the publication of her 245-page novel. Active also in

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6 Given her husband's extravagant and speculative behaviour, it is unlikely that Mary Colclough was left with any form of inheritance from his estate.

7 Her son Tom had drowned on the voyage to England in 1864 and William had remained in England to complete his schooling. He did not return to Auckland for several years, by which time he was an adult.

church and temperance work, particularly with providing support and assistance to the wives of drunkards, in the early 1880s she devoted her energies to organising local opposition to the Contagious Diseases legislation.

While the daily lives of European women in New Zealand during the early decades of colonisation typically involved long hours of intense manual activity, this was, for the vast majority of women, confined to domestic spheres. What is immediately notable about the daily activities of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis is the extent to which they participated in the 'public' domain, both in terms of the physical spaces they inhabited and in the realm of political ideas and actions. What is equally as notable is the extent to which their various pursuits connected to their analyses of the changes which needed to take place in the 'private' and everyday lives of women.

**Private Lives/Public Spaces**

One of the primary motivations behind Mary Taylor's decision to emigrate to New Zealand was the prospect of widened opportunities of employment. In the words of her friend Charlotte Brontë, "Mary has made up her mind she can not and will not be a governess, a teacher, a milliner, a bonnet-maker nor housemaid. She sees no means of obtaining employment she would like in England, so she is leaving it."\(^9\)

The practical necessities of the early phase of European settlement of New Zealand provided an opportunity for her to enter the public sphere of business and commerce. By 1850, the European population of Wellington had grown to over 5,000.\(^{10}\) Given the increasing pace of settlement and the general lack of facilities and services, Mary Taylor's shop catered for a growing demand for material, clothing and general haberdashery items.\(^{11}\) Although the idea of a woman engaging in such a venture was initially treated with amusement by the local

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\(^9\) Letter from Charlotte Brontë to Emily Brontë, 2 April 1841. [See Stevens (1972) p.19.]

\(^{10}\) At the time of her arrival five years earlier, Wellington had a population of around 4,074. By 1850 this figure had increased to 5479, of whom 2454 were female. [STATISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND FOR THE CROWN COLONY PERIOD 1840-1852 Table 1, Table 15.]

\(^{11}\) Mary Taylor's shop was located "in the heart of the town" although at that time the township of Wellington consisted mainly of 'paper streets' with only a few dozen buildings established. Within two years of opening, her shop was sited in the Wellington and Southern Province Almanac as one of the principle stores. [See Letter to Charlotte Brontë, 5 April 1850, in Stevens (1972) Letter 19; Stevens (1969)]
community, the ongoing demand for such services, coupled with the fact that Mary Taylor proved herself capable and competent in the practical aspects of this enterprise, meant that her foray into the public sphere of business did not solicit public censure for engaging in spheres of activity generally deemed inappropriate for members of the female sex.

Both Mary Taylor and her shop made a lasting impression on the local Wellington community. An early colonist remembered buying marbles and jew's harps at "Miss Taylor's little shop" and that it was well-known and well patronised. "S.F.D." of Wanganui remembered Miss Taylor riding out to visit his grandparents on her pony named Korey and described her as having "a decided manner", being a good conversationalist, and as "an educated English lady whom it was a pleasure to meet in those early days of Wellington." While Mary Taylor's personality and individual circumstances, coupled with the demands of early European settlement in Wellington, may have facilitated her opportunities to disrupt dominant ideas on appropriate spheres of activity for women, Mary Taylor's decision to establish a private business, particularly in the sphere of commerce as opposed to the more socially sanctioned sphere of teaching, was thoroughly consistent with her own views on appropriate employments for women.

In this respect, Mary Taylor was her own best role model for demonstrating that sex was no barrier to women's capacity for engaging

12 See letter from Ellen Taylor to Charlotte Brontë, 13 August 1850. [Stevens (1972) Letter 21.]

13 As argued in the previous chapter, Mary Taylor's personal circumstances of being a highly educated and unmarried woman also mitigated social censure of her efforts to secure financial independence through engaging in paid employment in the public sphere.

14 According to Joan Stevens, the business Mary Taylor founded had, by 1969, become the largest department store in Wellington. [See Stevens (1969) p.321.]

15 See "OLD HAND", NEW ZEALAND FREE LANCÉ 14, July 1926, p.8.

16 "S.F.D.", THE DOMINION 4 December 1937, p.3.

17 Like many emigrants, Mary Taylor believed there was unlimited potential for earning an independent living in New Zealand. Of the "dozens of schemes" she had thought of, in her view, the most reasonable alternatives were keeping a school or keeping a shop, the latter, being the healthiest although the most difficult to accomplish. She left the final decision to her cousin Ellen Taylor and, as both had an objection to sedentary employment, once the decision was made to open a shop they entered "heart and soul into the project". [See letters to Charlotte Brontë, 10 April 1849 and 5 April 1850 and letter to Ellen Nussey, 9 February 1849. [Stevens (1972) Letters 18, 19 and 17.]

18 For discussion of Mary Taylor's views on appropriate employments for women, see Chapter 9.
in forms of employment which required manual and intellectual faculties, financial transactions, working for profit, and hence, the means to achieve economic independence.

While Mary Colclough also challenged accepted notions of appropriate spheres of activity for women through her social practices, there were significant differences in the circumstances which accompanied her situation in Auckland in the late-1860s and that of Mary Taylor in Wellington twenty years earlier. Although remembered as having "a decided manner", it is significant that Mary Taylor did not discuss her views on the position of women with her circle of acquaintances while living in Wellington. For the most part, this was because she did not meet with anyone whom she felt would understand, let alone sympathise with, her ideas. In fact, from her observations, the only "legitimate subject of conversation" apart from gossip seemed to be the price of meat! Consequently, while occasionally articulating her political views in her private correspondence, Mary Taylor did not publicly express her political analysis of women's situation until she began contributing articles to the *Victoria Magazine* in the late 1860s.

Mary Colclough, on the other hand, had a very public profile for her controversial views on women's situation (albeit initially under the persona of Polly Plum) almost immediately upon beginning to contribute articles to the *Daily Southern Cross* in 1868. Moreover, from mid-1871, when she was publicly identified as Polly Plum, this reputation resulted in increased public scrutiny of her actions. On two particular occasions in point, Mary Colclough made use of this public scrutiny to further political awareness of the systemic injustices of women's social and legal position by drawing attention to the specific injustices of the Auckland prison system and the treatment of female prisoners.

On several occasions toward the end of 1871, Mary Colclough had submitted letters to the Auckland press expressing her concern for the situation of female prisoners both during their sentences and following their release from gaol. In January the following year she wrote to

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19 See Letter to Charlotte Brontë, June to 24 July 1848. [Stevens (1972) Letter 16]

20 See, for example, DSC 25 September 1871, p.3., 4 October 1871, p.5., 12 October 1871, p.3., 6 December 1871, p.3., 13 December 1871, p.3. Mary Colclough also raised these concerns at her public lecture on "Strong Drink and its Victims" at the Auckland Y.M.C.A. on 8 January 1872. [See
the *Daily Southern Cross* requesting clarification on whether prison authorities had the power to forbid members of the public who expressed criticism of the abuses of the justice system from visiting the Mt. Eden gaol. Several months earlier she had been informed by the Governor of the gaol that any complaints should have been communicated to the appropriate authorities before writing to the press and that where this procedure was not followed, the privilege of visiting the gaol could be withdrawn. In reference to this Mary Colclough stated:

> I felt indignant at this, because I think it is interfering with the liberty of the visitor. The Gaol is a public institution, and the authorities ought to know of all existing abuses, and not need any information from unofficial people; and if they know of them and allow them to exist, as in the case of the woman's department of the Gaol, the public ought to know of it: it is a matter of general interest.\(^{21}\)

On the pretext of not having followed the appropriate channels for the communication of her complaints, Mary Colclough had been restricted to visiting the prison on only one or two pre-arranged days of the week. Her questioning of the power of prison authorities met with a strong response from Ellen Ellis' husband, Oliver Sydney Ellis. He considered this restriction on her visiting rights to be an act of "unwarrantable tyranny" particularly as it represented an attempt to debar "those who are confined on the assistance of those who freely, gratuitously, and for the well-being of their fellow-beings, make an attempt to reform them."\(^{22}\) Describing the Superintendent of the Auckland Province, Mr. T.B. Gillies (who held ultimate responsibility for the administration of the Mt. Eden Gaol) as "the little monarch of our province", Oliver Ellis considered such "monstrous acts of the powers that be" to be reprehensible and a gross abuse of authority.\(^{23}\)

A second occasion on which Mary Colclough used her public reputation to draw attention to the injustices of the penal system toward women occurred several months later when she criticised the judgement of the

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\(^{21}\) "M.A. COLCLOUGH" *DSC* 6 January 1872, p.2.

\(^{22}\) "O.S. ELLIS" *DSC* 11 January 1872, p.2.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p.2. Several weeks later Oliver Ellis wrote again to the press complaining that the Harbour Board was over-stepping its powers of authority in proposing to charge entry to the Queen Street wharf for the day of the anniversary regatta. [See "O.S. ELLIS" *DSC* 26 January 1872, p.2.]
police and the magistrate for convicting a young woman of vagrancy and sentencing her to one month's imprisonment. Following this woman's release from prison, in an act described as "generously impulsive", Mary Colclough advertised for a position for the woman, openly acknowledging her criminal conviction but insisting that she was honest, sober, and a good servant. A respectable local tradesman employed the woman who, within a few months, allegedly abused her position of trust and stole from his household. In relating this series of events, the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross stated:

The scum which floats on the surface of society, like the scum which rises to the top even of molten gold, requires skimming off and setting aside - the ash-pit for the one, the gaol or reformatory for the other. It is very good, so far as intention goes, for philanthropic ladies and gentlemen to attempt to conceal the moral scum which comes under their notice by mixing it with the good material of which respectable society is composed, but it will only float to the surface again after leaving behind it some of its impurity.\(^2^4\)

In his view, moral persuasion and efforts directed toward self-dependence were of no use in such cases; however, "bread and water and plenty of hard labour - not sewing or knitting - may have some [use]."\(^2^5\)

In responding to what she considered to be a "highly sensational and exceeding cruel" article, Mary Colclough was at pains to point out that the woman in question not only displayed the marks of long-term physical abuse, but was not entirely sane and could be easily bribed. Having managed to escape from her abusers she had, on the promise of marriage, lived with a bushman for three years. Unfortunately, he had been a drunkard and had absconded to Thames, leaving her penniless. These circumstances had led to her initial arrest for vagrancy. Although there was strong presumptive evidence that this woman had taken the three shirts which had gone missing from the tradesman's home during the two months of her employment, they had not been traced to her possession. Mary Colclough believed that the most likely scenario was that she had been enticed to steal these items by criminals she had met during her prison term. Subsequently, in Mary Colclough's view, the real problem was the disastrous consequences of "the great mistake committed in sending her to gaol" in the first place.\(^2^6\) Given that it was by no means the first time such a "mistake" had been made by

\(^{24}\) Editorial note, DSC 3 April 1872, p.2.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p.2.

\(^{26}\) "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 5 April 1872, p.2.
justice authorities, and, despite the fact that the government had agreed to allocate £200 to establish a reformatory, Mary Colclough's primary concern was that every effort needed to be made to provide employment for such women as soon as possible to avoid them being ruined by being "unwisely and hastily consigned to Mount Eden, to make the acquaintance of, and herd by, all the worst characters in town." \(^{27}\)

The details of these two incidents have been related because they illustrate how Mary Colclough's wider view of women's collective situation impacted on the micropolitical practices of her daily life. The motivation for her "humble efforts" to do whatever she could, "without means, without encouragement, and without help" \(^{28}\) to assist women whose circumstances placed them in such vulnerable positions, was based on her conviction that the root of the problem lay not with the women themselves, but in the structure and organisation of society. This was, in her opinion, based on erroneous attitudes and beliefs regarding women's natures, capabilities, needs and rights. She believed that society's oppression of women as a class was systemic: not only did social, legal, educational and economic structures systematically treat women as inferior and subordinate, but individual women were unjustly blamed for not having risen above their particular circumstances. \(^{29}\) The unnamed woman arrested and imprisoned for vagrancy epitomised the cruelty and injustices of such a system. Ill-treated and abused all her life, "half-witted" and uneducated, thrown into the company of hardened criminals, she had been abused by society as much as she had been physically scarred by the people who raised her. The final injustice was that she was then considered to be worthless "scum", beyond help, and held entirely responsible for her own circumstances. Mt. Eden prison was full of many such women who, according to Mary Colclough, simply needed practical support and, above all, the opportunity to engage in productive employment.

In direct response to the needs of women who had, through circumstances beyond their control, fallen victim to the vagaries of the justice system, Mary Colclough proposed a scheme whereby concerned members of

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p.2.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., p.2.

\(^{29}\) Similarly, Ellen Ellis wrote that woman "has been placed in circumstances of this cruel disadvantage, and is despised for not having risen above them". [See "A WOMAN" NZH 27 October 1879, p.3.]
the public could put up a bond to help female ex-prisoners secure outwork from shopkeepers.\textsuperscript{10} She also sought to generate public support and governmental pressure for the establishment of a reformatory and women's home as an alternative to prison, particularly for young girls and first offenders. For this latter venture, she actively sought donations from the public to establish a refuge for women. She envisaged that this could be more or less self-supporting, with the residents taking in washing and sewing and hence enabling them to become useful members of society on completion of their sentences.\textsuperscript{31} Given that it was likely to be some time before such a refuge could be established, and meanwhile "the bad work of gaol-corrupting influences is going on", Mary Colclough argued for the interim measure of classifying prisoners to separate those "moral and really decent married women who have, alas, succumbed to temptation" from the more hardened women who, whatever their ages, were "old in vice". She also lobbied for the provision of a teacher for the female prisoners and for the establishment of an almshouse (workhouse) for old, helpless and incapable women,\textsuperscript{32} to take the pressure off the Ladies' Benevolent Society's Old Women's Home. In her view, there were many women who were "so intolerably vicious in their habits" that they were unsuitable for the services provided by the Ladies' Benevolent Society which specifically catered for the repentant.\textsuperscript{33} As well as proposing practical and more appropriate alternatives for women than being sent to prison, Mary Colclough also used her own home as a 'receiving house' for women to stay following completion of their prison sentences until such time as they gained employment. For this she was reliant on private charity.\textsuperscript{34}

This commitment to providing practical assistance well beyond the usual philanthropic benevolence deemed appropriate for respectable middle-class ladies was also in evidence when Mary Colclough went to Melbourne

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\textsuperscript{10} See "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 12 October 1871, p.3. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

\textsuperscript{31} "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 4 October 1871, p.5.

\textsuperscript{32} Mary Colclough suggested that residence in this proposed alternative home be made compulsory to enable the rations given to be used for their legitimate purpose as opposed to being sold for alcohol.

\textsuperscript{33} See "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 25 September 1871, p.3., and 18 March 1872, p.3.

\textsuperscript{34} See "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 10 July 1872, p.6.
at the end of 1874. Her stated intention was to place the necessity for legal and social reform of the condition of women before the Melbourne public. Her initial efforts to achieve this focused on a series of public lectures as well as contributions to the local press. The correspondence her views generated in the Melbourne press regarding the condition of women, their capabilities, and the relationship between the sexes, indicates that Mary Colclough certainly succeeded in awakening local awareness on the issue of women's rights, even if she did not manage to generate more practical support for this cause. She soon became convinced of the pressing need for a cheap home for young seamstresses and a refuge for local women. Her attempts to solicit local community support for the first of these ventures generated less response than did her outspokenness on the "sham and idolatry" of the language of the marriage ceremony. Her subsequent efforts to establish a home for young needleworkers were also not well supported and the venture did not succeed. Undeterred, she turned her attention towards establishing a bed and breakfast home for servant girls. While this was short-lived, and notwithstanding ill-health and constant critical scrutiny of her endeavours, Mary Colclough succeeded in establishing a lodging house for low-waged women in Gore Street, of which she was the superintendent.

35 On news of her departure, the Editor of the New Zealand Herald commented "[w]e really do not know that Auckland has sustained any serious loss in the absence of this lady, or that Melbourne has won a grand prize in her acquisition." [See Editorial note, NZH 21 November 1874, p.2.]

36 For discussion of Mary Colclough's correspondence to the Melbourne newspapers and local responses, see Kelly (1982) pp.1-6.


38 These comments were made in her lecture on "Women as Wives and Mothers" delivered in the Athenaeum Hall in Melbourne on 27 October 1874. For Australian reviews of this lecture see the Argus 28 October 1874, p.6., Herald 29 October 1874 (no pagination) and the Age 31 October 1874, p.4. See also DSC 23 November 1874, p.3.

39 For the most part, the local community did not support this venture because of a perceived lack of demand for such a service. Just over a year earlier, Mrs A'Beckettt, whom the Editor of the New Zealand Herald described as "a lady of considerable means and large social influence, and a philanthropist of quite a different stamp to Mrs Colclough", had, through the Committee of the Melbourne Home, conducted a survey amongst local female factory workers to ascertain their residential needs. Of the 682 questionnaires returned, it was found that "no exceptional effort was necessary to provide for the women employed in the manufacturing trades". [See Editorial NZH 11 February 1875, p.2.]

40 See Daily Telegraph 11 March 1875, p.3., NZH 14 April 1875, p.2. For correspondence regarding Mary Colclough's various schemes to provide residential services for women in Melbourne, see the Argus 8 January 1875, p.6., 15 January 1875, p.6., 29 January 1875, p.6., 8 February 1875, p.6.,
In Melbourne, Mary Colclough was depicted by the press as an "irrepressible busybody" who actively sought out female misery and offered support to the undeserving.\textsuperscript{42} Such critics, who considered her commitment to be misdirected, noted the demise of her various projects with unmasked satisfaction.\textsuperscript{43} Her persistent efforts to meet the practical daily needs of various groups of women in both Melbourne and Auckland bear testimony to the passionate commitment with which Mary Colclough attempted to effect changes in the material situations of women, a commitment premised upon her identity as a missionary in God's work. As the media rightly observed, her philanthropy was of a "different stamp" than that traditionally ascribed to respectable nineteenth century middle-class ladies. Inspired by both religious and political commitment to the cause of women's rights, Mary Colclough's efforts to draw attention to the systematic injustices in women's collective situation and her challenge to the accepted notion that individual women were wholly responsible for their immediate circumstances, overstepped the boundaries of the humanitarianism ascribed to respectable ladies of her time.

According to Ellen Ellis, increased education and women banding together as a moral force were the principal means of effecting long term change in unjust forms of social organisation. In her view, changes needed to begin at the individual level in order to establish the conditions by which all people could work together for mutual good. Her commitment to the view that "the good and true of all sects, and of both sexes" needed to live and work together for noble ends\textsuperscript{44} is particularly evident in her daily practices with the local Māori community.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{41} Argus 1 October 1875, p.4.

\textsuperscript{42} A writer for the Argus questioned whether the "very poor and underpaid working women" to whom Mary Colclough had turned her attention were, in fact, deserving of help. According to this writer, these women were directly responsible for their own poverty, having chosen starvation wages in a factory over the good pay and comfortable working conditions of domestic service. (See Editorial NZH 11 February 1875, p.2.)

\textsuperscript{43} See Editorials in NZH 11 February 1875, p.2., 14 April 1875, p.2.; Argus 11 January 1876, p.10.

\textsuperscript{44} "ELLEN E. ELLIS" NZH 23 September 1882, p.5.

\textsuperscript{45} Neither Mary Taylor nor Mary Colclough appear to have had any significant personal contact with local Māori. In 1849 Mary Taylor commented in a letter: "The Maories (sic) are quiet and we begin to wish for another disturbance for fears the troops should leave the country."
When Ellen Ellis and her family first arrived in Auckland in 1859, one of her earliest impressions was how quiet the local Māori were. She immediately began learning their language, initially for the practical reason of facilitating trade of fruit, vegetables and fish.46 Much to the chagrin of her husband and many of the local European settlers, she quickly developed a friendship with local Māori.47 Not only did she let them enter her house freely and provide food and embers from her fire, but she encouraged her two sons to play with the local Māori children48 and began to teach the women English. In a letter to her parents in England, she described Māori as generous and "scrupulously honest", but also observed that they were "importunate beggars" who were courted and flattered by the Europeans, sometimes to their own undoing.49

It was Ellen Ellis' belief that Māori were not only equal with European but that they were the rightful owners of the land which caused most concern, particularly to her husband. When fighting broke out between Taranaki Māori and British troops over the government purchase of land at Waitara in early 1860, Ellen Ellis wrote to her parents of her sadness that her "cordial relations" with her Māori neighbours had been interrupted.50 Despite her total abhorrence of the principle of using any kind of force to settle disputes, she was unable to prevent her

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46 See Letter to her parents, 13 October 1859 (reprinted in AUCKLAND WAIKATO HISTORICAL JOURNAL #59, September 1991, pp.25-28.).

47 There was a pa situated on the road between the Ellis home and Freeman's Bay where William and Little Tom frequently bathed. Consequently, Ellen Ellis' daily activities brought her into regular contact with local Māori. [See Caughey (1994) p.128.]

48 Her son William became a fluent speaker of Māori and following his return to New Zealand (having completed his schooling in England) bought a wagon and team of bullocks and began trading with Māori in the Waikato. His fluency with the language earned him great respect and trust and he later became a confidante and advisor to the Māori king. He married a Māori princess, Sarah Manawa Francis (1862-1955) from Maniapoto, and became known for his pioneering work in saw-milling and as a landholder of thousands of acres. [See Colebrook (1980) p.157.; Dick Craig (1990) King Country: New Zealand's Last Frontier Te Kuiti, Waitomo News Ltd., p.150,154,175.] For Ellen Ellis' account of her son's dealings with Māori, see Appendix to Everything Is Possible To Will p.230.

49 To her amazement, she had also discovered that according to Māori the devil (tipo) was white. [See letter to parents (undated) cited by Colebrook (1980) pp.99-100.]

husband from encouraging William (then aged seven) to be a "loyal little Englishman" and enlisting him as a look-out scout. In writing to her parents Ellen Ellis stated:

It grieves me to see children being led to believe that war is admirable and manly. I believe that only when boys, and girls, are shown the frightful aspects of war, can mankind ever hope for a peaceful world. O! when will men learn to dissolve their differences through discussion rather than destruction, through education rather than elimination! And when will women band together to insist that there shall be no more war. 51

To further her own understanding of what had provoked the Taranaki uprising, Ellen Ellis tried to find out the facts of the situation from the local European settlers but her inquiries were met with a mixture of prejudice, fears, and sexism. In frustration she wrote to her parents "[e]ven if the facts may have been known to those I have sought to interrogate, they have considered that because I am a female, I would be incapable of forming any judgement of my own." 52 All she had managed to find out was that it was "something to do with the Treaty of Waitangi". Undaunted, she made a personal commitment to pursue the matter, stating "[i]t is my intention, at the first opportunity, to discover for myself what pledges were given by both sides when the Treaty was signed; so that I may examine them carefully, then come to my own conclusions". 53

Despite the disapproval of her husband, whose business was dependent upon the income received from renting accommodation to the British troops, as well as the disapproval of local European settlers, Ellen Ellis was convinced that it was her mission to attempt to bring about a reconciliation between the two races. She turned to her neighbouring Māori community to find out about their grievances under the Treaty and came to the conclusion that Māori were justified in their defence of their land which, through dishonourable Government legislation, had been unjustly confiscated from them. The underlying problem which she identified, however, was a lack of understanding (and lack of willingness on the part of the Government to attempt any understanding) of the Māori tradition of communal ownership of land and the concept of 'tapu'.

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52 Ibid., p.101.
In July 1860 Ellen Ellis' cousin took her to the Kohimarama Conference convened by Governor Gore Browne at which 200 Māori chiefs met to consider a number of Government proposals regarding Māori affairs. She spoke out strongly within her local community for the need for greater understanding and communication between Māori and European, despite meeting with overt expressions of European prejudices against advocating support for Māori and against women expressing their opinions on political matters.

Her determined resolve to make a public stand upon matters of principle, despite strong social disapproval of women engaging in such actions, was also evident several years later when Ellen Ellis became embroiled in a local controversy regarding the amalgamation of the church. After her self-imposed lessons to discipline her style of writing and develop her skills of effective and fluent communication of her ideas through various forms of composition, Ellen Ellis engaged in the project of critically examining the doctrines of various sects. As she later stated in her novel, she believed that sectarian jealousies were "childish" and that, when men were inspired with an enthusiasm for personal goodness, sectarianism would ultimately disappear. Convinced of the truth of her ideas, Ellen Ellis voiced them publicly.

At this time there were plans to amalgamate three struggling local churches into one united congregation. In the debate that ensued, each church attempted to assert its difference from the others. Although Ellen Ellis was not alone in voicing her hesitations regarding the proposal, the church authorities took great offence at the idea of a woman speaking out on such an issue and demanded a written confession from her. In Ellen Ellis' record of the events, she wrote:

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54 As Claudia Orange notes, the underlying motivation for this month-long conference was for the Governor to consolidate sovereignty by securing the support of the major Māori chiefs for his actions over the recent Waitara land sales and his condemnation of the King movement. (Orange (1987) p.145.) At the time, Ellen Ellis observed that given that the sixty or so Māori chiefs who were in attendance were already friendly, the conference was largely a waste of time and that until Europeans realised the spiritual dimensions of the concept of tapu, there would be no significant changes in the relations between the two races. [See letter to parents, 26 July 1860, reprinted in Colebrook (1980) p.106.]


56 Ellis (1882) p.vii.
Apt to express myself roundly on crooked designs in general, and on the stupidity of this one in particular, I was no worse than some others in denouncing the amalgamation proposal. But I had the misfortune to be quoted, and misquoted possibly; & presently found myself to my profound disgust, closeted, at his request, with the senior Deacon, who had been deputed by the lords in council - i.e., the Minister & other Deacons, to obtain from me, & transmit in writing, a confession of what I had said on the amalgamation question. Told to confess! I!!! I did not do so, rest assured. I had not uttered one word more than the occasion warranted, and if truth proved unpalatable, it was not truth's fault. In fact I defied the Deacon. 57

As a consequence for her defiance, Ellen Ellis was, in her own words, "black-balled, with the usual floss & gloss of 'Christian regard' & 'Christian spirit', by my persecutors" whom she described as "a few men possessing irresponsible powers, who lorded it over the consciences of others." 58 The whole proceedings aroused her husband's "fiercest indignation" and he caused great offense to the church officials by publishing an account of the incident in pamphlet form and having it widely circulated. 59

In her outspokenness regarding the superficiality of outward forms of religious observance, Ellen Ellis overstepped the boundaries of socially sanctioned activities for women, as she had done earlier when she voiced support for Māori in their land grievances. In both cases, not only had she ventured into political concerns which were not deemed appropriate for women, but she had dared to assert a right to have an opinion as a woman.

**Educating Women**

Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis all constructed powerful analyses of how the education deemed appropriate for girls and women in the mid-nineteenth century served to reinforce the limited spheres of activity ascribed to women. In differing ways and through a variety of social practices, each challenged accepted notions of the function

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57 Ellis, cited in Colebrook (1980) p.140. Ellen Ellis also reconstructed a fictional account of this incident in her novel. [See Ellis (1882) pp.194-199.]


59 See Colebrook (1980) p.141. No record of this pamphlet has been traced.
and type of education considered necessary and beneficial to girls and women.60

Mary Taylor defied social codes of appropriate behaviour for female teachers both through her choice of teaching positions and in the level of remuneration she demanded for her private tuition in Wellington. Her mentoring and supervision of groups of young women on alpine tours through Switzerland which she organised during the 1870s also challenged both the function and content of women's education and dominant understandings of women as educators. During these trips, Mary Taylor assumed a variety of roles ranging from motherly companion to tour guide and translator. Not only did she encourage her young protégés to seek out adventures on these trips but, despite being close to sixty years of age and suffering shortness of breath, she participated fully in physically demanding activities herself, exploring glaciers and scaling the steep alpine peaks.61 By engaging in such activities and encouraging and assisting younger women to actively engage with the physical world, Mary Taylor challenged many aspects of age-appropriate and sex-appropriate behaviours.

In her practices as a highly qualified and well-respected teacher, Mary Colclough also challenged dominant understandings of both the content and function of girls' education and traditional attitudes regarding women as teachers. When she first set up a private ladies' school of instruction in the township of Auckland in 1871 funded from the proceeds of her public lectures,62 she set up a new system of teaching for girls based on a combination of lectures and focused study on a few subjects at a time. While these classes offered "thoroughly sound practical instruction in all the branches of an English Education", they also extended the traditional range of subjects to include History, Geography, Grammar, Arithmetic, Composition, Natural History,

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60 For a detailed discussion of their respective analyses of women's education, see Chapters 9, 10 and 11.


62 At a lecture on "The Education of Women" at Grahamstown on 7 August 1871, Mary Colclough announced her intention to open a school in either Auckland or Thames and that she hoped to acquire the necessary funds through her lecturing. [See review of lecture, DSC 9 August 1871, p.4.] It was suggested that she include light entertainment at her lectures to boost attendance [see unsigned letter, DSC 7 September 1871, p.2.] and although she was critical of entertainments detracting from the content of her lectures, she included musical entertainments at some of her subsequent lectures. [See "POLLY PLUM" DSC 10 January 1872, p.2., 29 June 1872, p.3., NZH 13 August 1872, p.2.]
Domestic Management and Mental Training. Mary Colclough was particularly concerned with attracting students who wished to become teachers and she used these classes to put into practice her preferred methods of teaching. Her school was endorsed by the Editor of the New Zealand Herald who commented:

From Mrs Colclough's large experience in teaching, and her popularity in the treatment of all subjects appertaining to female education, we have no doubt that her effort to establish ladies classes in Auckland will be a success.

Mary Colclough intended for this new system of "high-class education for young ladies" to become a self-supporting enterprise. On the advice of some local gentlemen, she sought honorary members who would pay a guinea a year to support this scheme until it became firmly established and self-supporting. In June 1872, while still teaching during the weekdays between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., she advertised a course of six evening lectures open to the public. While

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63 Advertisement simply as "Classes for Ladies", they were held at the Provincial Council Chambers daily from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Enrolments were either weekly or monthly with charges set at half-a-crown per week. [See advertisement in NZH 21 October 1871, p.1.] In her opening address Mary Colclough presented her philosophy of teaching and the basis for the system of education she would offer in these classes. [For a review of this address, see NZH 31 October 1871, p.3.]

64 The advertisement for these classes stated that "[y]oung ladies who have been superficially and imperfectly instructed, and ladies desirous to qualify themselves to pass the Board of Education, will find this an excellent opportunity." [NZH 21 October 1871, p.1.]

65 Editorial note, NZH 21 October 1871, p.3. Her teaching views and methods were enthusiastically supported by Henry Worthington, an outspoken advocate of educational reform. [See "HENRY WORTHINGTON" DSC 6 November 1871, p.2.]

66 See advertising feature in DSC 1 November 1871, p.3. While thoroughly committed to the importance of this type of educational opportunity for young women, the need to secure a regular income would also have been an important motivation behind Mary Colclough's efforts to ensure that this venture became self-supporting. Given that her prison work was unpaid, and, while she continued to correspond regularly to the two Auckland newspapers she had ceased contributing articles several months earlier, these teaching commitments were most likely her sole source of income at this period. In response to suggestions that she had been receiving payments for her work with female prisoners at Mt. Eden gaol, she had written to the Daily Southern Cross to clarify that no payment was attached to this work and that given her current teaching commitments she was not able to devote her time to this pressing cause. While she would continue in her unpaid "large servants' agency business", she appealed for women who, unlike herself, were not dependent upon their own labour for their living, to fill the demand for regular prison visiting. [See "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 10 July 1872, p.6.]

67 See NZH 21 June 1872, p.1., p.2. and DSC 21 June 1872, p.2. It was proposed that this series of lectures would address the topics of "Mental Culture", "English History", "Social Reformers", "Ancient History", "The Women of History" and "Society in all Ages". The series was cut short due to Mary Colclough leaving Auckland at the end of September 1872 to take up a teaching position at Tuakau. For reviews of the lectures given, see DSC 29 June 1872, p.3.; NZH 29 June 1872, p.3., 13 August 1872, p.2.
she included aspects of her political analysis of women's situation in the first of these evening lectures, they were ostensibly organised to provide opportunities for the Auckland public to widen their knowledge on various topics. In this respect, they were part of the colonial tradition of providing evening entertainments which combined intellectual and musical tastes.68

Involvement in private teaching practices afforded Mary Colclough a level of autonomy in terms of the number and type of teaching commitments she undertook which was not necessarily available when she was employed by public school boards. This became apparent in 1873 when she obtained the position of head teacher at Kauwaeranga Girl's School, notable for having the highest attendance in the province.69 While employed as head teacher, Mary Colclough had engaged in private tuition to supplement her income. The school committee claimed that in doing so, Mrs. Colclough's service was "injurious to the school" and subsequently wrote to the Board of Education requesting authority to advertise for a successor.70 In specific reference to the Kauwaeranga district, a Board of Education report stated:

The Board expressed its opinion that it did not consider that teachers, of large schools especially, should engage in teaching private classes, their time being fully required for the public schools and for instructing the pupil teachers, who add so much to their average attendance and consequent salary.71

On receipt of the school committee's letter and a subsequent letter from Mary Colclough objecting to the action taken by the school

68 Mary Taylor had attended similar entertainments at the Mechanics Institute in Wellington twenty years earlier, where weekly lectures were held on such topics as Phrenology, Astronomy, Terrestrial Magnetism, Zoology, the Immortality of the Soul, and Banking and Currency. [See Letters to Charlotte Bronté, 5 April 1850 and April 1850 in Stevens (1972) Letters 19 and 20] For discussions of related aspects of the development of community in colonial New Zealand, see Rollo Arnold (1990) "Community in Rural Victorian New Zealand" NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF HISTORY Vol 24, #1, pp.3-21., and Caroline Daley (1991) "Taradale Meets the Ideal Society and its Enemies" NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF HISTORY Vol 24, #2, pp.129-146.

69 See Board of Education column, NZH 30 September 1873 (Supplement), p.5. Mary Colclough's salary of £200 p.a. at Kauwaeranga Girls' School was determined by her qualifications and the responsibilities associated with her position based on the size of the school roll as a result of new pay scales which were introduced on 30 June 1873 for all teachers holding certificates from the Board of Education. As in the determination of numbers of teachers for each school, pay scales were determined by average attendance of scholars with separate rates for head teachers and for country and town schools. [See NZH 28 July 1873, p.2.; for details of changes in pay scales for teachers, see DSC 11 April 1873, p.3.]

70 See Board of Education column, DSC 29 May 1874, p.3.

71 See Board of Education column, NZH 17 April 1874, p.3.; see also DSC 17 April 1874, p.3.
committee, a meeting of the Board of Education decided that the school committee give more specific reasons for their proposed action and state clearly in what way they considered Mrs. Colclough's service to be injurious to the school, particularly as school attendance was increasing. Within a few weeks of this public aspersion on her professional reputation, however, Mary Colclough tended her resignation and the following month left for Melbourne.

While Mary Colclough did not encounter the same constraints on her private activities when she took up the position of head mistress at the Rangiora Girls' School in April 1876, her position there was also shrouded in controversy. Although her teaching responsibilities during this period were demanding, the main difficulties she encountered were due to situations largely beyond her control. Both nationally and locally, the education system was in a state of flux. On the local level, the Rangiora District School had been plagued by financial difficulties since it was established in 1874. There were constant staffing shortages and conflicts within the school committee around the issue of co-education. On the national level, pressure was mounting to legislate for a standardisation of teaching qualifications, rates of pay, and a coordinated system of education.

Throughout the colony, controversy had again resurfaced over the issue of religious teaching in schools and there was a great deal of local need for reform. Both nationally and locally, the education system was in a state of flux.

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72 See Board of Education column in NZH 7 August 1874, p.3., and DSC 7 August 1874, p.3.

73 DSC 4 September 1874, p.3.

74 As soon as she was established in the Mistress's house with her children, now in their early teens, Mary Colclough began teaching music and dancing lessons on Saturday mornings to supplement her income. [See Hawkins (1973) p.30.] She became an active member in the local community and was a popular participant in fund raising events. Her readings from Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures were particularly popular and received an encore at the entertainment held to raise funds for the Rangiora District School prize fund. [See LT 9 August 1876, p.2.; see also the report of a concert held at the local Literary Institute to raise funds for the Rangiora Parish Church, LT 8 July 1876, p.2.] Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures were originally published in Punch in 1845 and were immediately successful in Britain and the Continent. The 'lectures' were comprised of monologues on "the joys, griefs, duties, and vicissitudes comprised within that seemingly small circle - the wedding-ring". Mrs. Caudle was the archetype of the bednag, who had a remarkable talent for turning molehills into mountains. Her creator, Douglas Gerrold, describes her as "not a woman to wear chains without shaking them". [See Douglas Gerrold (Reprinted 1974) Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures London; Harvill Press.] For examples of colonial adaptations of Mrs. Caudle's Lectures, see NZH 15 July 1870, p.5., 21 July 1870, p.4., 10 August 1870, p.4.

75 Her application for this position was unanimously accepted at a special meeting of the Rangiora District School Committee. [See CP 25 March 1876, p.2.]
debate on this issue in the Christchurch Press during May and June of 1877.\footnote{See, for example, Report of Education Conference [14 May 1877, pp.2 
3.], "A TEACHER" [16 May 1877, p.3.], "MELIORA" [28 May 1877, p.3.], 
"THOMAS TANCREDE" [11 June 1877, p.3.], 14 June 1877, p.3., 16 June 1877, 
(Supplement) p.4., 20 June 1877, p.3.], "JASON" [13 June 1877, p.3., 15 June 
1877, p.3., 25 June 1877, p.3.], "AN OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER" [16 June 1877, 
(Supplement) p.4.], "A CATHOLIC" [19 June 1877, p.3., 21 June 1877, 
p.3., 26 June 1877, p.3.], "AN UNSECTARIAN CHRISTIAN" [21 June 1877, 
p.3.], "OMEGA" [22 June 1877, p.3.], "A FLORENCE" [23 June 1877, p.5.], 
"SENX" [23 June 1877, p.5.].} Under the new 1877 Education Act, a national system of free, 
compulsory and secular education was established. As the majority of 
parents of children at Rangiora District School were in favour of 
religious instruction, and the school committee had jurisdiction over 
the use of the school buildings, extra time was added to the school day 
to allow for bible readings. In the case of the Girls' School, Mary 
Colclough instituted a system whereby bible readings began at 9:00 a.m. 
and usual classes began at 9:40 a.m. Although the school committee 
approved of this timetable it did warn Mrs Colclough that what she was 
doing was illegal. While Mary Colclough was prepared, in this 
instance, to give priority to her religious convictions over legal 
obligations, the arrangement was short-lived due to the disruption to 
classes as a result of many of the children not arriving at school 
until after 9:30 a.m.\footnote{A month earlier, a correspondent to the Press signing themselves 
"RANGIORA", had written about the "manifest injustice many ladies have 
suffered" with regard to pay equity under the old regime of the Board of 
Education. This writer stated: "In several cases, in the country 
districts especially, the mistresses of the girls' district schools have 
been expected to assume the whole responsibility, and discharge the entire 
duties of the girls' schools for half, or less than half, the pay received 
by the masters for the same work in the boys' schools. In this district, 
Rangiora, the injustice is very apparent. The girls' school is 
numerically as large as the boys', and yet our mistress receives only half 
what the master is getting." ["RANGIORA" CP 13 November 1876, p.3.].} 

While teaching at Rangiora District School, Mary Colclough was also 
proactive on issues of pay parity. In December 1876 she had written 
to the school committee requesting an increased salary based on the 
increase in her division of the school. The average attendance for 
that year was 98 girls and, at the time of writing to the committee, 
she had only one teaching assistant.\footnote{See Hawkins (1973) p.33.} The unequal appointment of 
salaries, particularly for female teachers, was only one aspect of the 
intense local debate surrounding the 1877 Education Act. The issue 
which impacted most significantly on Mary Colclough's appointment at 
Rangiora, was the issue of the inspection of schools. For some, this 
appeared to be based on arbitrary authority, and, like school
examinations and the examination of pupil-teachers, needed to be standardised. For the Rangiora District School committee, however, the serious staffing problems at the boys' school took priority and were used to lend support to the controversial idea of combining the teaching of the girls and boys in mixed classes. The Schools' Inspector, Mr Restell, strongly advocated subdivision of the school into an Upper, Lower, and Infants' School with mixed classes to better utilise the teaching staff. His inspection Report made references to the inefficiency of the girls' department and the low number of examination passes made within the girls' section compared with the boys'. He commented:

For years past the education of the girls has been retarded by sacrificing them to inferior teaching for the sake of separating the sexes. A main difficulty in the efficient organisation of some of the larger district schools is the rarity of the really competent mistress, and unless where there is an able master, trained and certified, and the older girls allowed the benefit of his instruction, their parents must be contented with their inferior acquirements.

In response to this critical judgement on her area of responsibility, Mary Colclough wrote to the school committee urging a second inspection of the school. By this time, however, intense public debate had arisen regarding the Inspector's recommendation of mixing the schools. Despite the actions of those opposed to the changes, the schools did integrate and the new infant school was opened early in 1878. Although it was to be run separately from both the girls' and the boys' school, the school committee did not advertise for an infant mistress for some time. During this interim period, with a roll of around sixty, it was run under the direction of Mary Colclough and her pupil teachers.

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79 See, for example, "A TEACHER" [CP 30 April 1877, p.3.] and "AN OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER" [CP 7 June 1877, p.3.].

80 Rangiora District School Inspector's Report, CP 28 January 1878, p.3.

81 A petition was organised by parents and over eighty signatures were recorded in support of a public meeting to protest against any changes being made to the organisation of the school. [See CP 30 January 1878, p.3., 6 February 1878, p.2., 9 February 1878, p.2., 13 February 1878, p.2., 20 February 1878, p.2,3., 25 February 1878, p.3.]

82 By January the following year the school committee reported that "[w]ith regard to the mixing of the sexes, of which so much was said the last annual meeting, no impropriety worth mentioning had been committed, and the general well being and efficiency of the school was increased by the mixing." [CP 28 January 1879, p.3.]
The burden of responsibilities during this very difficult period took its toll on Mary Colclough's health which deteriorated badly and, only a few months into the school year, she was seriously ill and granted leave. She did not return to her teaching post at Rangiora but in 1881 took up the position of infant mistress at Papanui School. The annual Inspector's Report for 1883 was again very critical of the level of achievement by pupils under her responsibility. At a subsequent meeting of the school committee at which the Inspector's report was read along with a report from the Head Master giving his opinions as to the cause of the Inspector's "condemnation" of the Standard III section, it was recorded in the minutes that:

...in view of Mrs Colclough's state of health, the Inspector's unsatisfactory report upon Standard III and the Head Master's report thereon this committee feels compelled - and with very much regret - to request her to resign her position in the school.

At this meeting it was further decided that "in the event of Mrs Colclough's failing or declining to resign her position in the school that the Chairman request the board of Education to dispense with her services".84

While Mary Colclough did not publicly advocate for the cause of women's rights following her return from Melbourne in early 1876, what is known of her life from this period indicates that her daily social practices centred on her participation in local community activities and her passionate commitment to teaching as a profession. Despite failing health, she continued to take a public stand on issues relating to the education of girls and the status of female teachers. While the mid-1870s marked a period in which Mary Colclough was narrowing the focus of her energies to practical aspects of her profession as a teacher within formal systems of education, for Ellen Ellis, this period marked a widening of her efforts to provide informal education and practical assistance to women in her local Auckland community.

When Oliver Ellis accepted the challenge given by the Rev. Samuel Edger to take the pledge of abstinence in the early 1870s, Ellen Ellis supported her husband by joining the Order of the Good Templars.85 This

83 Minutes of Papanui District School Committee meeting, 23 July 1883.
84 Ibid., 23 July 1883.
85 The first branch of the Independent Order of Good Templary was established in New Zealand in 1872 and soon became the most popular and successful of all the temperance societies reaching a membership of 7,000
brought her into close association with the wives of drunkards and a
chance visit to the asylum led her to making a commitment to providing
assistance to the wives and children of drunken men. At the asylum she
was shocked at the dreadful scenes she encountered and was greatly
disturbed by the matron's comment that by far the majority of residents
were women who had been deranged through ill-treatment by drunken
husbands. Of this experience, Ellen Ellis wrote:

Day & night, those dreadful scenes remained with me; I
could still hear the dismal howlings of the demented.

For a season, sleep rarely closed my eyes. I was
distracted for the poor creatures & their plight. Even
before they had reached the point of admission to the
asylum, the conditions of their lives would have been
quite dreadful. Such women would be beaten repeatedly by
their drunken husbands. Even if the unfortunate
creatures had spirit enough to take the children & go,
the law would allow them nothing. There came a point
when I knew that I must do more than merely sympathise
with them. I must actively fight to ensure that in the
future, women should never be brought to such shame &
degradation through no fault of their own.***

While committed to providing practical assistance to such women, during
the decade of the 1870s writing her novel became a consuming passion
and it was not until the early 1880s that Ellen Ellis stepped into the
public arena.

**Organising Women**

In 1871, Ellen Ellis attended a meeting in support of the suppression
of the liquor traffic at which women had been conferred the right to
vote on this issue. For the first time in her life she had longed to
make a public speech.** Eleven years later, she did so at a ladies'
meeting which had been organised to establish regular
interdenominational prayer meetings for the women of Auckland.

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**Ellis, cited Colebrook (1980) pp.144-45. For her fictional
reconstruction of these events, see Ellis (1882) pp.148-49.**

**At this time, she wrote that while she thought women should remain
silent until they could speak "incomparably better than the average of
public speakers", she added that only if, after the same training, she
could do no better as a speaker than the majority of college-taught men,
she would refrain from speaking publicly. [See "A WOMAN" DSC 27 February
1871, p.3.]**
Requesting permission to address those gathered, Ellen Ellis drew attention to the provisions of the Contagious Diseases Prevention Act which was about to be introduced to the Auckland Province, stating that while prayer was all very well, to achieve any good, women must act.88 While the organiser of the meeting felt that it was not appropriate for the meeting to be detained for this topic to be discussed, a further meeting of women was held the following month to consider what action could be taken to prevent the Contagious Diseases legislation being brought into operation in Auckland.89

Believing it to be of the "utmost importance that women generally should be able to form an intelligent opinion on the Act and its workings", and having a great deal of information on the matter herself, Ellen Ellis convened another public meeting for women on 27 September 1882 to discuss the issue fully before providing an opportunity for those present to sign a petition against the enforcement of the Act.90 While the advertisements for these respective meetings suggest that there were some political differences between the organisers,91 it was hoped that they would eventually merge and that "the two sections of ladies [would] combine against the common enemy".92

The meeting organised by Ellen Ellis, which attracted about two hundred "principally middle-aged matrons", provided documented evidence and pamphlets on the operation of Contagious Diseases legislation in England and on the Continent, based on information she had received from the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act (London). Several quarters believed that her actions in organising these meetings and "familiarising women in hundreds of households with phraseology, thoughts, and matters regarding which they would otherwise

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88 See report of women's meeting at Y.M.C.A., NZH 11 August 1882, p.5.

89 This meeting, held on the 18 September 1882, was convened by circular and provided some information on the workings of the Contagious Diseases legislation before encouraging married women to sign the petition against the Act. For a report of this meeting, see NZH 19 September 1882, p.5.


91 The initial meeting had been adjourned and the advertisement for a reconvened meeting, advertised under the heading "The Contagious Diseases Act", stipulated that it was "irrespective of, and unconnected with" the meeting advertised by "Miss Ellis". The meeting organised by Ellen Ellis was advertised directly beneath this advertisement under the heading "IS PROSTITUTION A NECESSITY?". [See NZH 26 September 1882, p.1.]

92 See report of meetings, NZH 28 September 1882, p.6.
have gone to their graves in merciful ignorance" were inappropriate.\textsuperscript{93} One correspondent wrote to the press stating "I fail to see how the Act affects a true mother and a true wife, and why Mrs. E.E.E., or any other chaste woman, should call for indignation meetings."\textsuperscript{94} Others, however, who drew attention to the one-sidedness of the legislation. Correspondent "X.Y.Z.", for example, wrote:

We all know that man is most frequently the suitor and seducer, and very often the contaminator, and yet the law lets him go free; nay, it is chiefly for his protection that the law is proposed. In all fairness the law should begin with him; but would it be tolerated for an hour? Let him be at the mercy of a sworn information before a Justice of the Peace, liable to be summoned before a Magistrate, and exposed in all his loathsome ness, subjected to repeated inspections, treated in a reformatory, and imprisoned if he rebel. Let the Act operate in this way, applying to both sexes; and I, for one, shall feel less hesitation in giving it my hearty support...\textsuperscript{95}

In Everything is Possible to Will, Ellen Ellis referred to the Contagious Diseases Acts as "legalised infamy", maintaining that they were, along with the liquor traffic, evidence of men's "utter disregard of life".\textsuperscript{96} She wrote:

Those infamous Acts sap the very foundation of the home, of the affections, of the entire domestic economy; and what is England without her homes?...Men should have thought of what they were doing when they framed such legislation...No wrong in the universe is a 'necessity,' except as discipline. To have licensed the drink traffic is bad enough, but to license the most degrading, undisguised profligacy, is an outrage on common decency, that good men ought to resist to the death.\textsuperscript{97}

Supporters of the legislation believed that it would diminish, if not eradicate, both prostitution and contagious diseases. As the Rev. Dr. Wallis pointed out, however, there was no evidence to support that this

\textsuperscript{93} This view was expressed at a meeting of clergy on 28 September 1882. [See report, NZH 29 September 1882, p.5.]

\textsuperscript{94} This writer believed that prostitution was a "necessary evil" and that men had no option but to resort to prostitution because young women, not being prepared to accept a lower standard of comfort, were delaying marriage. ["HARRY LEWIS" NZH 28 September 1882, p.3.]

\textsuperscript{95} "X.Y.Z." NZH 28 September 1882, p.3. A deputation of clergy also raised this issue at a meeting with the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Dick, on 30 September 1882. Stating that this was the first time he had heard such a proposal, Mr. Dick's response was that he did not know how the law could be applied to both men and women because with women the disease existed amongst a class, whereas with men it did not. [See report of meeting, NZH 2 October 1882, p.6.]

\textsuperscript{96} Ellis (1882) p.74,136.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., pp.136-37.
had been the outcome in countries in which similar legislation had been enforced. According to correspondent "MORE LIGHT", who agreed with the clergy's depreciation of the actions of women such as Ellen Ellis in entering public discussion on this "unsavoury subject", those who desired to do something useful:

...should endeavour to ameliorate the condition of fallen women and girls, by urging them to leave their present wretched life, finding employment for them, and not expect that more goody-goody talk and tracts will be of any use, or a fitful zeal to put down something which they are prepared to stigmatise as a crime before they know of what they are talking.

Likewise, correspondent "M.R." believed that the remedy for the social evil of prostitution lay in the hands of the ladies and that more active steps than petitions and resolutions were required. Although the petition organised by Ellen Ellis was signed by 1168 women, the Mayor refused to receive it. He further maintained that because it was undesirable to fully explain the "disgusting details" of the legislation to the public, any vote of the public on this question would be of no value. Undeterred, Ellen Ellis subsequently organised a Vigilance Committee to generate support from local gentlemen.

While attempts to prevent the Contagious Diseases Act coming into operation in Auckland failed, these organised protests were of enormous significance for the emergence of an organised women's movement in New Zealand. The basis for the resolutions and petitions offered by these women was that bringing the Contagious Diseases legislation into operation signified an indignity to women and an insult to their common humanity. Hence, these efforts represent important beginnings of large scale organising of women as women on public issues within the political arena. They were also based on an understanding of the need for women to be fully informed about important social issues and to not accept that the dominant (male) view was the only view or that it

98 "JAMBS WALLIS" NZH 30 September 1882, p.5.
99 "MORE LIGHT" NZH 2 October 1882, p.3.
100 "M.R." NZH 4 October 1882, p.6.
101 The basis for this refusal was said to be due to the "informal" nature of the petition and that there was reason to suspect that some signatures had been obtained through a misrepresentation of the Act. [See report of City Council meeting, NZH 6 October 1882, p.6.]
102 See report of ladies' meeting, NZH 21 October 1882, p.4.
103 See report of meeting organised by Ellen Ellis, NZH 3 October 1882, p.6.
necessarily represented women's interests. These efforts to organise around the Contagious Diseases legislation also provided important opportunities for women to meet publicly as women, to network and liaise with a variety of community interest groups, to formulate petitions and organise for signatures, to learn about the legislative process and the operation of local politics, and to organise for political representation through deputations to local government representatives.

It is highly significant that it was at a ladies' prayer meeting that Ellen Ellis first raised her concerns about the Contagious Diseases Act. Her determination to provide women with a forum for discussing this issue, and her tenacity in organising opposition to this legislation in the midst of public disapproval for women broaching such subjects let alone attempting to effect changes in the political arena, position her quite clearly as overstepping the boundaries of women's prescribed spheres. Like Mary Taylor and Mary Colclough before her, she challenged dominant assumptions regarding women's nature, interests, capabilities, and spheres of influence and, in doing so, opened up widened possibilities for women to engage as women in social and political life.
SECTION FIVE
PHILOSOPHERS IN PETTICOATS

INTRODUCTION

In claiming Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis as ex-centric and subversive historical subjects, this section explores the links between their ontological assumptions regarding woman and man and their subjectivities as nineteenth-century advocates of women's rights. As previously mentioned, this study is premised on the assumption that, in asserting themselves as active reasoning human beings who were both capable of and entitled to pursue their own interests and abilities, nineteenth-century advocates of women's rights were engaged in a process of reconstructing themselves as female subjects. In Section Two it was argued that this process involves a shift away from dominant ontological assumptions of woman as 'Other'. It was suggested that such an ontological shift was linked to different forms of subjectivity which, while not separated off from dominant forms of subjectivity, contested and challenged dominant constructions of what it meant to be a Woman. This section will explore the nature of this difference with regard to how Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis constructed understandings of themselves as women and their relationship to the world.

In Chapter 8, Essential Differences?, I focus on the assumptions regarding the natures of 'woman' and 'man' and the relationship between the sexes which underpinned the ontologies of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis. In considering these in relation to dominant nineteenth-century essentialist ontological assumptions, I shall explore how the conceptualisations of 'woman' and 'man' from which these three women spoke and wrote differed from dominant nineteenth-century conceptualisations of Woman and Man. Did these women assume an essential difference between 'woman' and 'man'? If so, what was the basis of this difference and how was it manifested? Did they retain some notion of an essential womanhood? How did they conceptualise the relative roles of 'woman' and 'man' in the social order? In what ways did their assumptions regarding the natures of 'woman' and 'man' challenge dominant nineteenth-century ontological
assumptions? Moreover, how may the differences between their ontological assumptions and dominant nineteenth century ontological assumptions have facilitated the formation of subversive subjectivities?

The following three chapters of this section focus on how the subjectivities of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis differed from dominant nineteenth-century constructions of what it meant to be a woman through a consideration of their views on femininity, religion, education, marriage, women's franchise and temperance. These chapters explore the ways in which their subjectivities were ex-centric to, and subversive of, dominant nineteenth-century understandings of what it meant to be a woman. By focusing explicitly on their critique and analysis of dominant constructions of woman's place and role in the social order, Chapters 9, 10 and 11 respectively will consider the political implications of their discursive practices in terms of the subject positions they assumed and politicised.
CHAPTER 8

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES?

THE ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF MARY TAYLOR, MARY COLCLOUGH AND ELLEN ELLIS

"ODE TO POLLY PLUM"
(By the delirious Hauhau)

I conclude that you're a human,
Polly Plum, Polly Plum,
I suppose that you're a woman,
Polly Plum.
But judging from your talk,
And also from your walk,
I should say that you're a rum'un,
Polly Plum, Polly Plum.

You would like to be a man,
Polly Plum, Polly Plum;
You'll be as like one as you can,
Polly Plum.
You despise the playful fan,
And you frighten by your ban,
Every pretty little flirting Mary Ann,
Polly Plum.

I wish you would skedaddle,
Polly Plum, Polly Plum,
Before your brains you addle,
Polly Plum.
For you lecture and you write;
Irrespective of what's right,
Till I'm weary of your noise and of your twaddle,
Polly Plum.

I've watched you from afar,
Polly Plum, Polly Plum.
Estimated you at par,
Polly Plum.
And I've thought of Mister P.,
And I've blessed my destinee,
That I wasn't born to be that pakeha,
Polly Plum.

Then preserve your senses now,
Polly Plum, Polly Plum;
Don't be making such a row,
Polly Plum.
This chapter examines the ways Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis constructed understandings about woman's nature and man's nature. It locates their ideas within the context of dominant discourses about gender differences in the second half of the nineteenth century. In what ways did the ontological assumptions which underpinned notions of woman's nature and man's nature in the discursive practices of each of these women differ from dominant constructions of the natures of Woman and Man? What political implications for the reorganisation of social relations between the sexes were possible as a result of these different constructions of 'woman' and 'man'?

The following letter, written in 1871, articulates dominant assumptions of the natures of Woman and Man from a mid-nineteenth century New Zealand perspective. The letter was published in the New Zealand Herald in response to the writings of Mary Colclough. It is cited here at length to serve as a basis of comparison for constructions of 'woman' and 'man' as articulated by Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis.

SIR, - Would you allow me a short space in your columns, in order to try and show poor 'Polly Plum' (what she certainly does not yet seem to know), man and woman's position. With regard to woman, man is the positive and operative principle, and therefore compared with the son (sic) and light. Woman stands opposed to him as a restraining power, without whom he would be lost in an immeasurable and boundless speculation, forgetful of his highest relationship. Woman is man reversed, his mirrored image, whilst he is a self-acting principle, productively striving outwards, and ever seeking the universal, the infinite, - ready from man's expansive energy to reduce concrete forms. Man and woman are an inseperable (sic) whole, one forming the ideal the other real. In man the ideal has sway in woman's feelings; thus she adheres more to the concrete and external, and has an innate living sense; - she is possessed of an inward presentiment of the world; thus she is endowed with unerring tact and arrives at maturity sooner than

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1 "Ode to Polly Plum" appeared in a booklet entitled Rhymes Without Reason written by D.S. Cross and published by the New Zealand Herald. The booklet was advertised amid public debate on the conditions at the Auckland lunatic asylum and elicited some criticism for its insensitivity to inmates at the Whau (see, for example, "A MAN IN THE MOON" DSC 7 December 1871, p.3.; see also DSC 1 September 1871, p.2., 2 September 1871, p.2.). The poem is reprinted in AUCKLAND WAIKATO HISTORICAL JOURNAL April 1993, #62, pp.9-10..
man, who desires to attain all knowledge through his own exertions. The aspiration of woman is towards the pure and the noble, and she attracts to herself man, who is ever seeking after that peculiar nature with which she as woman is endowed. She is his guide, wandering by his side through the labyrinths of life, and by her gentleness, patience, and love, softening and restraining his fiery impatience of character. In this sense, woman may be called the 'crown of man.' But high as is the destiny of woman, yet she has a closer affinity to the right-side of nature than man, and is especially exposed to temptations, such as deceit, curiosity, indiscretion, the desire to enslave man by her charms, and to see the creations of her imagination realised. These are the shadow side. So, where would woman be if she usurped man's position? And if woman was what 'Polly' wishes her to be, it would be changing the whole course of nature.2

This text is clearly situated within an ontological framework which defines Woman and Man in terms of binary oppositions, as having fixed essential natures and as being in a complementary relationship. Nature has endowed each sex with particular attributes which, in turn, determine the relative positions and roles of each sex within society. To attempt to change these relative positions would constitute "changing the whole course of nature". Whereas Man is the "positive", "operative", and self active principle, Woman is possessed of an "inward presentiment of the world" and aspires toward the pure and the noble. Woman is both a restraining power for man as well as in need of restraining from her "shadow side". While her peculiar nature, unerring tact, gentleness, patience and love fit her well to restrain Man's "fiery impatience of character" she is also exposed to the temptation of desire to "enslave man by her charms".

With this articulation of dominant nineteenth-century ontological assumptions in mind, the ontologies of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis will now be considered. To what extent did they challenge or accept these assumptions about the fixity of woman's and man's natures, of woman's inward presentiment and moral duties, and of the relative positions of women and men in the social order? In what ways did they adhere to the dominant conceptual framework of binary oppositions?

Fixity of the Natures of the Sexes

Both Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis assumed that woman and man were inherently different and considered that these sexual differences were

2 "MOUNT ALBERT" NZH 16 August 1871, p.3.
ordained by both God and Nature. In her questioning of the nature of 'femininity', however, Mary Taylor disrupted the notion of sexual difference by destabilising the binary opposition of masculine and feminine.

Mary Taylor challenged the assumption of a discoverable inherent femininity in her response to an article printed in the Contemporary Review in which the writer maintained that "a certain distinctive type of humanity has been universally recognized as the feminine type". Mary Taylor acknowledged that "[part of 'humanity' is masculine and part feminine, and the fact has always been known. If the 'feminine type' means anything else than this it needs a definition." In her view, both "what is meant by the 'type'" and "why they should call it the feminine type" was a puzzle because "[n]one of the things mentioned are feminine, either in the sense of not belonging to men or in that of belonging to all women." Based on her observation that "[w]hen ever a man writes about women the chances are that he will praise her nature up to the skies, and then begin to blame her for not following it", Mary Taylor questioned what constituted woman's 'nature':

Passing by for the present the office here given to women, what is the nature she is to be true to? For one gathers that she is as yet not true to it. She is now something different to what is her nature to be. It is her nature now to be unnatural; or she is made so by education. But this last explanation will not suffice, unless the writer means to lay an immense charge against the present generation of teachers, and he must mean that the woman's nature is not to be true to her nature. I think this meaning the more likely, because I have observed it is so common. In drawing attention to the inherent contradictions in this construct, Mary Taylor also questioned whether the phenomenon of 'woman's nature' actually existed. She stated, "[c]oncerning the dislike of any woman

3 "The Cry of the Women" published in June 1869 and cited in Mary Taylor's article "What Am I To Do?" reprinted in The First Duty of Women.

4 Taylor (1870a) p.218. Due to a printing error in The First Duty of Women, references to the article "What Am I To Do?" are taken from its original publication in the Victoria Magazine Vol XV, July 1870, pp. 215-226.

5 Taylor (1870a) p.219. The 'feminine type' to which Mary Taylor was responding had been characterised by "a rich, affectionate nature, overflowing with generous sympathies, yet controlled by a strong feeling of duty and common sense", refined but simple tastes, and a mind which was the dwelling place for all sweet sounds and harmonies. (Ibid., p.219.)

6 Ibid., p.220.
to womanliness, it is a very curious phenomenon; if it exists." In casting doubt on what attributes, if any, constituted 'womanliness', Mary Taylor posited that any such attributes were mutable and historically contingent:

Now, as these often change, have changed since the last generation, and will certainly change again in the next, we ought to have a reason for preferring the present ones before we condemn rebellion against them. For instance, there was a time when dressing wounds was a womanly occupation; now it is a much more womanly attribute to faint at the sight of blood. Is there any particular reason why this present characteristic of womanhood should not be changed again? Again a very common feminine characteristic of the upper classes of the present generation, though not so much as of the last one, is feeble health and deficient muscle power. Is there any reason why we should hold fast to this state of things? Or, again, should we continue to cultivate the amazing capacity for fear that has somehow got developed in the present age among those who ought to be cultivated women? So common is it, that their protectors have not only to guard them against danger, but to save them from being frightened when there is no danger at all. All these characteristics are so general among women of this age that they are very commonly cultivated and exaggerated by those who think themselves deficient in them, in order to appear more womanly. Yet they are all such as we should be well rid of, and if womanliness is a thing that must go with these we are well rid of that too.

In her suggestion that women could and should reject social conventions of womanhood, Mary Taylor exposed the political implications of dominant constructions of women's nature with regard to the social ordering of the sexes. This position is also evident in her response to the commonly used conservative argument that rather than seek paid employment women should 'follow nature'. Mary Taylor maintained that if fifty people were asked to explain precisely what this entailed, they would probably agree only in one point, namely, "[t]hey would call that natural to which they had been accustomed. Whether the word could be applied to anything new, and how far, no two of them would agree." On this point she added that "[t]hose who 'follow nature,' that is, custom, can point to a time when such a custom was not." Hence, according to Mary Taylor, dominant ideas about 'woman's nature' as

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7 Taylor (1871) p.196.
8 Ibid., pp.196-197.
9 Taylor (1870) p.38.
10 Ibid., p.39. Likewise, the character Maria in Miss Miles stated: "I hold custom is not a law, and ought not to be a law, for women, any more than for men." [Taylor (1890) p.358.]
amounted to social conventions which had the status of established notions rather than being an essential Truth.

While Mary Taylor convincingly asserted that 'nature' amounted to custom and convention, she did make assertions about an "inalienable womanhood". This she conceptualised as women having a "real self" as opposed to the artificiality of feminine grace. Maintaining that "[t]he definition of her 'nature' is given only to be ignored, and great part of what constitutes her real self is left out of it", she asserted that "[feminine grace] is an artificial quality, and the inalienable womanhood that it covers would be better without it". Rather than constructing this "inalienable womanhood" in terms of particular traits or characteristics, however, Mary Taylor conceptualised it as women's active use of all their facilities. In contrast to dominant constructions of woman's nature as passive, she asserted that "the strenuous use of all the facilities they possess is not unfeminine, for it must be womanly to use all the powers belonging to a woman". (emphasis added) Hence,

It is as natural to a woman to help herself as to take help when she can get it... It is as natural for her to depend on herself as on others, and most natural of all that she should choose which it shall be. Mary Taylor's response to the charge that 'independent women' were 'unfeminine', offers a further insight into her assumptions regarding "inalienable womanhood". She implied that such women, by virtue of being "less under the necessity of pleasing the world of possible husbands than their mothers were", may in fact be closer to 'real' femininity:

They do not appear to satisfy the old-fashioned idea of what a woman ought to be or to do. ...As to being unfeminine, perhaps they will teach us for the first time what femininity is. Without expecting anything superlatively good it would be well to know. According to the orthodox definition of it, women are so constantly unfeminine that we can only come to the Irish conclusion that women seldom are women.  

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11 Taylor (1870) p.44.  
12 Taylor (1871) pp.197-98.  
13 Ibid., p.199.  
14 Taylor (1870) pp.44-45.  
15 Taylor (1870b) pp.562-63.
Hence, while Mary Taylor dismissed what others asserted as 'natural' as being mere convention, she retained a notion of there being some essence of 'femininity'. Woman's 'character', however, could not be ascertained because current social conventions both prevented woman from developing a character and simultaneously required that woman have no character:

...it would be difficult to know a woman's character when she has not got one, and this is the case with most women long after their natural activity would have given them decided habits if it had been allowed free play. ...So long as a woman can live till thirty or forty years old without the liberty to take upon herself a serious decision even in a matter of right or wrong, she has little opportunity of showing a character, or of making one.16

As shall become clearer later in this chapter, despite this insistence on woman's lack of opportunity to develop a character of her own or to reveal her 'true' self, Mary Taylor did not see any significant 'natural' differences between woman's 'nature' and man's 'nature'. In contrast to this, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each retained a clear notion of there being separate essential differences between the natures of woman and man.

Mary Colclough clearly accepted that there was such a thing as a 'true woman' which she defined in relation to a 'true man'. This 'true woman' had a tenderness for manly failings (as distinct from manly vices) and would admire a man all the more for "the little faults and foibles that are so thoroughly masculine".17 'Masculine traits', which she identified as being virtues in a woman's eyes, were "[h]is hardness, his carelessness, his dauntless headstrong daring". She asserted that man's essential difference from woman was attractive to women: "the more manly, the more opposite to herself, the more she thinks of him".18 She also asserted that woman was "more self-denying naturally than man; has more mental endurance, more tact and quickness"

16 Ibid., p.222-23. Mill also articulated this position in "The Subjection of Women", stating that "[w]hat is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing - the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others. It may be asserted without scruple, that no other class of dependents have had their character so entirely distorted from its natural proportions by their relations with their masters". As to the true capabilities of women's nature, Mill added that "[i]t is a subject on which nothing final can be known, so long as those who alone can really know it, women themselves, have given but little testimony, and that little, mostly suborned." [Mill (1869) p.40,44.]

17 See article "True Women", DSC 23 November 1869, p.3.

18 Ibid., p.3.
although this, in her view, did not denote any superiority of women over men. Rather, this signified that woman should be satisfied to be man's equal in some things, his superior in other things, and, in many things, his inferior.\textsuperscript{19}

While there are similarities between Mary Colclough's assumption that woman and man were opposites and "MOUNT ALBERT's" articulation of the view that "[w]oman is man reversed, his mirror image", Mary Colclough's insistence on the need for recognition of a variety of natures within women as a group significantly marked her ontology from dominant ontological assumptions which constructed Woman as a fixed, immutable category. According to Mary Colclough, "Nature" had ordained "degrees and shades of difference" within the characters and natures of women\textsuperscript{20}:

\begin{quote}
Nature has varied her works as much in womankind as in other things. Can the lively bright-tempered witty girl, instinct with life and vitality, cut and trim herself down to the low-voiced gentle standard? Of course she cannot! Nature forbids it.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

This had important implications for the ordering of social conventions: as a consequence of the dictates of Nature, women, in Mary Colclough's view, should not be expected to fit the current favoured type of womanhood that required them to be low-voiced, soft-tempered, gentle and meek - for women to try and fit any kind of "pattern" would be the equivalent of acting out a character, imitating a model, and, in effect, changing the course of nature.\textsuperscript{22}

Ellen Ellis, like Mary Colclough, also adhered to the dominant ontological assumption that woman was a more delicate organism, naturally modest and retiring and who possessed finer qualities.\textsuperscript{23} She also accepted that God had given woman to man as his helpmeet and moral guide, that woman's influence was "on the side of virtue", and that man was, in return, woman's protector.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[19] See article "Lords of the Creation", \textit{DSC} 4 May 1870, p.7.
\item[20] See article "The Legal Position of Woman", \textit{DSC} 15 September 1869, p.6.
\item[21] See article "Pattern Women", \textit{DSC} 29 December 1868, p.4.
\item[22] Ibid., p.4.
\item[23] Ellis (1882) p.72,iv,122.
\item[24] Ibid., p.73,iv.
\end{footnotes}
Ellen Ellis believed that despite woman's current underdeveloped state she was "nearer to the heart of things" by virtue of her more delicate organism and her intuitiveness. While this intuition, which "MOUNT ALBERT" referred to as woman's "innate living sense", was attributable to woman being so closely attuned to nature, Ellen Ellis maintained that it was also, in part, a product of women's social circumstances. This view is evident in her construction of the fictional character Zee, of whom Ellen Ellis writes "her perceptions being the clearer through not being over much clogged with learning, her ways of looking at things and her ideas generally were wholly a matter of intuition". This affinity with nature, and the wisdom this accorded to woman, was, according to Ellen Ellis, a crucial area in which women stood apart from men. However, the "intelligent goodness" that was an outcome of this affinity with nature was destined by a "subtle alchemy, analogous to the decomposition and decay ever going on in the vegetable world" and was therefore part of a natural cycle of maturity and completeness. Hence, while Ellen Ellis constructed this wisdom as an essence which all women possessed by virtue of being female, her ontology was also based on the assumption that it was an essence that was neither fixed and unchanging for all time nor one which was restricted solely to women. On the basis of her belief that "human nature is eminently improvable", Ellen Ellis maintained that men could, if they desired, also develop this wisdom. Hence, there is an important difference between "MOUNT ALBERT's" articulation of the view that woman is endowed with a "peculiar nature" which "man...is ever seeking" and Ellen Ellis' view that all women have this essence by virtue of being biologically female, but that it is also something which can be acquired by men and developed by both sexes.

Like Mary Colclough, Ellen Ellis also made a distinction between the 'true' (as opposed to the 'ideal') woman and the 'true' man. Under her pen-name "A WOMAN" she stated that "[a] true woman can never deny her nature, no matter what her surroundings." Woman's essential femaleness, however, had been obscured by ignorance and social constraints:

25 Ibid., p.iv.
26 Ibid., p.4.
27 Ibid., p.v.
28 Ibid., p.225.
29 "A WOMAN" NZH 29 September 1870, p.3. See also "A WOMAN" DSC 3 October 1870, p.3.
...the fear, expressed in various ways, that given a liberal education woman will forget herself, and assume the masculine position and functions, evidences a lamentable ignorance of and want of faith in woman. The really good are good under all circumstances, and it is well to demand that woman shall be woman in all she says and does: but given an honourable, responsible position...she will become the more, not the less, modest and retiring.\textsuperscript{30}

Just as she agreed with the view that "[i]f Nature has not qualified women to fill the offices they seek, we may be certain their ambition will be speedily checked",\textsuperscript{31} Ellen Ellis believed that 'essential womanhood' would be even more apparent when woman was granted the "subtle potency of recognised being" and given an honourable and responsible position in society.\textsuperscript{32} Likewise, 'true manliness' would be achieved when men believed in the soul and worked to discipline their wills,\textsuperscript{33} for "[t]he will is the man, and if it be perverted the man is lost until it be restored."\textsuperscript{34}

Another assumption which Ellen Ellis shared with Mary Colclough was the acceptance of differences between women. Whereas Mary Colclough maintained that for women to attempt to fit social dictates of woman's character was going against Nature and was therefore, by implication, 'unnatural', Ellen Ellis' primary concern was that social conventions which imposed a particular type of womanhood prevented women from developing and expressing their 'true' natures. Because these conventions possessed no elasticity they made "truth play lackey to expediency".\textsuperscript{35} Hence, it was as a result of women having been "trained by repression" and "schooled...in all the arts of coquetry" that they were forced to live their lives "seeming" rather than "being".\textsuperscript{36} The issue was not simply that prescriptive societal codes of behaviour repressed woman's 'true' natures, but that "conventionalism"\textsuperscript{37} was incompatible with 'true' womanhood.

\textsuperscript{30}Ellis (1882) p.iv.
\textsuperscript{31}"A WOMAN" DSC 3 January 1871, p.3.
\textsuperscript{32}Ellis (1882) p.63.
\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p.185.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p.63.
\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p.13,22.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p.70,117,130.
\textsuperscript{37}Ellen Ellis' use of the term 'conventionalism' is discussed more fully in Chapter 11.
Like Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis saw women's attempts at conforming to dominant social expectations as impediments to the expression of their 'real' selves and 'true' natures. Each of these women resisted dominant conventions and suggested that such conventions were a product of custom rather than expressions of essential 'natures'. At the same time, however, they did make assertions about how women might be if they were not subject to such conventions.

**Women's Inward Presentiment and Moral Duties**

Ellen Ellis' observation that women were forced to live their lives *seeming* rather than *being* draws attention to a key dominant ontological assumption of the mid- to late-nineteenth century, namely, that woman's 'natural' work and power lay in *influence* rather than *action*. "F.A.H.", a correspondent to the *New Zealand Herald*, articulated this position succinctly:

> But Sir, it appears to me that 'Polly Plum' and many of her fair sisters have mistaken wherein a woman's true and most effective power lies. Let women be educated to the utmost; widen their minds by every possible means - (Heaven knows how greatly most of them require it); - but let this be done, not that they may be enabled to do the work of men, but that they may be able effectively to do the work which God has given to them exclusively. A woman's great, natural, and, I confess, to me, obvious work in this world consists in *influencing*, not in *acting*.\(^{38}\)

Likewise, correspondent "J. WOOD" maintained that "[t]he power they wield is all the more formidable because it is generally so quietly exercised, and when exerted in a good and holy cause it is simply irresistible."\(^{39}\)

Whereas both Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis operated within this dominant construction of woman having been charged by God with special moral duties, Mary Taylor rejected such claims on the basis that woman's supposed higher *moral* qualities, like most of the qualities assigned to her 'nature', was a social construct which suited the needs and desires of men.

In rejecting the view that nature had endowed woman with superior moral qualities, Mary Taylor argued that justice, truth, and kindness were not innate or woman's particular moral reserve but were acquired

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\(^{38}\) "F.A.H." *NZH* 7 August 1871, p.3.

\(^{39}\) "J. WOOD" *DSC* 17 June 1872, p.3.
qualities which "grow by practice when room for such practice is given, and where there is resolution to cultivate them". Because she did not object in principle to holding up an ideal of morality to which others could aspire, the issue for Mary Taylor was how women might obtain such an ideal:

How best may that ideal be obtained? At least this is the point of interest, except with those who believe she has it by nature, which may be inferred of all those who assign to her the exclusive business of holding it up. From the attitude taken by those who object to the modern demands of women, it seems that the things women wish for - science for instance - are thought to be inconsistent with this ideal. In simple terms they are wrong.

Hence, while rejecting the assumption that woman possessed special moral attributes, Mary Taylor asserted that "the modern demands of women", rather than being inconsistent with holding to an ideal of morality as commonly asserted, constituted an important means which could assist women in attaining superior moral qualities.

In rejecting this construct of 'woman' as innately morally superior, Mary Taylor also rejected the associated assumption that woman's God-given work was to influence people for the moral good. Her response to this assumption was typically pragmatic:

I should like to see a human being, man or woman, whose main business was to influence people. How do they make a business of it? What time does it begin in the morning? And how do they fill, say a few hours every day in the doing of it? Not commanding or teaching, but influencing. It is said that no two minds can meet but the stronger will influence the weaker, and therefore of two people of different sex one will influence the other. But these two influences every woman must receive as well as exercise.

Given the emphasis she placed on productive activity, this pragmatism is also evident in her response to the assumption that woman's 'mission' was largely one of self-sacrifice. According to Mary Taylor, woman's supposed "inward presentiment" was yet another social imposition designed to prevent women from employing their time for their own benefit. As such, it represented "an indistinct attempt to make a virtue of natural feeling":

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40 Taylor (1870) p.165.
41 Taylor (1870a) p.222.
42 Ibid., p.221.
43 Taylor (1870) p.74.
People who maintain that women are fond of self-denial point to the frequent instances in which the feelings of a wife or a mother lead her to give up other pleasures for the sake of gratifying her affection, or where they have led her to most strenuous exertion, and even seemed to increase her strength and ability. But these affections are not sources of self-sacrifice, but passionate enjoyments. They do not tend to annihilate any part of a human being; they do not prompt to the renouncing of any pleasure except for the sake of a greater.  

This "natural" impulse to assist others and set the world right was, in Mary Taylor's analysis, essentially a human feeling. The assumption that it was an expression of woman's moral superiority and constituted woman's primary mission in life exemplified how women were "misled by the teaching of a false morality" which was both dishonest and debasing for women. For woman's "higher morality" to have any credibility in Mary Taylor's view, it would be "something more than a readiness to bend to public opinion" and would enable women "to choose a path of their own". As it stood, however, woman's higher morality was a convenient fiction produced by men:  

They have drawn on their imaginations that gave this description of women; and, once having taken leave of the trammels of fact, it would be no harm for them and go a little farther and invent a planet to put the creature in, for, on this one, her existence is impossible. Mary Taylor claimed that phrases such as "her place" and "her natural position" were "all various modes of begging the question whether [woman's] employments might not be changed with advantage":  

They say, in fact, that she is right where she is, because she is there. But to those who believe in the possibility of progress, it may be interesting to dwell

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44 Ibid., p.74-75.  
45 Ibid., p.82.  
46 Ibid., p.60. While debunking the idea that women's engagement in charitable and religious work was an expression of an innate moral superiority, Mary Taylor did acknowledge that women had been able to make use of this construction of their natures to their own advantage, albeit within certain restraints: "A great many feelings besides the kindly inclination to assist the suffering, are gratified by this sort of employment; and most particularly that tendency to regulate the proceedings of others, that always seem to take possession of those who have relinquished the command of their own. The plea, half religious, half philanthropic, that it is for others, gives them a liberty of action that custom does not allow them without loss of caste, when working for their own benefit. Through this loophole they have crept out of prison, and though they move in fetters yet they move." [Ibid., p.78.]  
47 Ibid., p.57.  
48 Ibid., p.75.
on the evils of the present system, as the first step towards amendment. 49

Although Mary Taylor appeared to accept the assumption that it was woman's "natural destiny" to marry, she also implied that it was not unnatural for women to reject marriage. 50 Hence, while accepting that marriage may be woman's "natural" destiny, Mary Taylor did not assume that marriage was a woman's inevitable destiny. Similarly, while accepting the assumption that women's desire to make their husbands and children comfortable was a "natural taste", she cautioned women against confounding the gratification of their "natural tastes" with the work they had to do, maintaining that "the first must be the consequence of the second, not the concomitant of it." 51

These distinctions between "natural tastes" and social duties are also evident in her assumptions regarding mothering. While accepting that it was a mother's "peculiar duty" to educate her children and asserting that mothers would always take care of their children first and foremost, 52 in keeping with her rejection of woman's "inward presentiment" Mary Taylor constructed the moral duties of a mother toward her children as a social obligation rather than as something intrinsic to the physical reality of being a mother. As support for her assertion that mothering was a social obligation, she claimed that not only "[i]n no class does a woman spend her time in doing this" but also that "nor is it possible to do so." 53 Her basis for claiming that women's fulfilment of mothering duties was an impossibility lay in her belief that for mothers to really show love for their children and to be of material service to them, they must make use of all their faculties. An outcome of women living the prescribed conventional life was, in her view, that they were unfitted for the charge of mothering:

But merely to have gone through nothing, to have known few people, and only the conventional side of those few, to have done little, to have seen few changes and no trials - in short, to have had a very limited experience - unfit a woman for this charge. ...To remain a child

49 Ibid., p.199.

50 Ibid., p.208,219. For further discussion of Mary Taylor's positioning within discourses of marriage, see Chapter 9.

51 Ibid., p.90,86-87.

52 Ibid., p.90,224.

53 Ibid., pp.90-91.
does not give the ability to instruct or educate children.54

In marked contrast to Mary Taylor's views, Ellen Ellis accepted fully the dominant assumption that woman's God-given work was to bless mankind and that God had endowed woman with superior moral qualities. In reference to her observation that the younger generation of women tended to accept a low standard of manly excellence and were not good and pure in themselves, Ellen Ellis wrote "if they did but know the power of unconscious influence arising from innate superiority, they would never make themselves so cheap - never, never".55 Ellen Ellis believed that "woman's influence is always good wherever it is brought to bear"56 and that God had accorded woman a key role in working out the "divine plan of the moral universe".57 She accepted the construct of woman as man's helpmeet, however she asserted that God had intended woman to be man's helpmeet in "all the walks of life, social, commercial, political, and religious" (emphasis added).58 While believing that the home was "unquestionably" woman's sphere, Ellen Ellis claimed that it was man's ignorance that had shut woman within doors and hence it was man, and not woman's essential nature, that had restricted woman's sphere of influence.59

According to Ellen Ellis, woman's special moral duties - her role in the divine plan of the moral universe - was to be man's moral teacher and to help him learn what was meant by "strength of will".60 To achieve what God had ordained for woman and for man, women needed to be granted the "subtle potency of recognised being" and to be man's helpmeet in every sphere of social and political life:

God has made woman's cause man's care, and he shirks it at his peril; man and woman shall rise or fall together; their interests are identical, not antagonistic. And to teach man that he can and must control the animal passions, and to so raise woman in her own esteem that she shall refuse to sacrifice herself to man's lusts, it

54 Ibid., p.93.
55 "A WOMAN" DSC 3 January 1871, p.3.
56 "A WOMAN" DSC 27 February 1871, p.3.
57 Ellis (1882) p.iv,72.
58 Ibid., p.73.
59 Ibid., p.73.
60 Ellis (1882) p.240,iv.
is imperative that both sexes shall stand on an equally free social, and above all moral, platform.\textsuperscript{61}

Within God's divine plan, therefore, moral influence was not intended to be woman's sole domain; just as women and men had souls to form, moral training of young minds was a parental responsibility.\textsuperscript{62}

Mary Colclough also accepted the dominant assumption that God had entrusted women with special moral abilities and responsibilities. She maintained that the "mission" of a married woman was "the superintendence of her household, the training of her children, and the lightening of the load of responsibility on the shoulders of her husband by every attention to her duties as wife and mother".\textsuperscript{63} She believed that "[t]o train young souls for their conflict in this world and their home in another" was the "highest and holiest work on earth".\textsuperscript{64} Like Ellen Ellis, Mary Colclough maintained that it was social customs which confined women's spheres of activity and this negated women from using their God-given abilities to maximum effectiveness, particularly in public life.\textsuperscript{65} While she was adamant that where the husband was the breadwinner, a wife's sphere was the care of the household, she also considered that it was only "little minds, impelled by envy and jealousy" that limited women's spheres "for no better reason than because they are women" or because they wished to secure for themselves better, more domestic wives.\textsuperscript{66}

One of the tensions inherent in dominant nineteenth-century ontological assumptions regarding the essential nature of Woman, as evident in "MOUNT ALBERT's" letter, was that, simultaneous with the assumption of Woman's moral superiority, Woman was believed to be "especially exposed to temptations, deceit, curiosity, indiscretion, the desire to enslave man by her charms, and to see the creations of her imagination realised".\textsuperscript{67} Whereas this was often attributed to Woman's "closer

\textsuperscript{61} Ellis (1882) p.73.

\textsuperscript{62} See article "Moral Training - A Mother's Work" by "A WOMAN", DSC 3 November 1870, p.3.

\textsuperscript{63} See article "The Mission of Married Women", DSC 20 January 1869, p.5.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p.5.

\textsuperscript{65} See, for example, "POLLY PLUM" DSC 18 January 1871, p.3.

\textsuperscript{66} See article "A Woman's Sphere", DSC 14 July 1869, p.4.

\textsuperscript{67} "MOUNT ALBERT" NZH 16 August 1871, p.3.
affinity to the right-side of nature",68 according to Mary Taylor, this was an inevitable outcome of the solitary and uneventful life women were supposed to lead:

There is another consequence of a solitary uneventful life that not only weakens the mind, but warps it. Sheer vacuity makes a woman fill it with imaginary things, and that in such a manner that she cannot herself distinguish between what is true and what she has invented. A woman leading such a life can become quite positive as to the motives and feelings of those she deals with, and be quite unconscious that it is her own imaginations that she has substituted for them, and chosen to believe in. As her life gets farther and farther removed from actuality, as her circle narrows, her inventions expand, and as this removal leaves the imagination unchecked, the few facts that become over-run with such a growth of fictitious concomitants, that she herself could not tell her own history.69

Rather than women being predisposed to deceit, curiosity, attention to outward appearances and fanciful imaginings due to a "shadow side" of their nature, Mary Taylor claimed that such behaviours were a product of adherence to societal prescriptions concerning womanhood. In her view, the potential consequences of such adherence were that it led women "to approach the borders of insanity".70

Like Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough also claimed that it was a consequence of the "slavish position in which women is placed" that women tended to become more artful, having learned that it was better "to fiddle a fool than fight one".71 In rejecting the assumption that this behaviour was indicative of women having given in to temptations of a "shadow side" or a "desire to enslave man by her charms", Mary Colclough claimed that such behaviours were attributed to woman's nature because men "hate the sight of a strong determined self-reliant woman, able and willing to make her way in the world" and that men "dread to give us power, avowedly from the fear lest we should oppress them, as they have hitherto oppressed us, and place them where they have not hesitated to place us".72

68 Ibid., p.3.
69 Taylor (1870) pp.116-17.
70 Ibid., p.118. In her novel Miss Miles, Mary Taylor wrote: "One approving friend will sometimes keep the mind steady, when on the borders of insanity, from the sheer darkness surrounding it." [Taylor (1890) p.56.]
71 See article "Lords of the Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.
72 See article "Injustice of Society to Women", DSC 20 July 1869, p.5., and "POLLY PLUM" NZH 31 July 1871, p.3.
Mary Colclough was also adamant that it was men who needed to be restrained and that women provided this restraining function. The idea that women needed to be restrained was, in her view, another erroneous belief which resulted from men's fears. The underlying issue, in her analysis, was one of power - social and legal power of men over women. This was not a product of any innate or essential traits of woman and man but was a result of social conditioning and custom. While men boasted superiority, they could not control themselves and feared women's strength and independence:

The argument that men are coarser - grosser - than women, is unfortunately better borne out by clear evidence than I think at all consistent with their very high assumption of superiority. They argue that they 'cannot' resist temptations to which they think it awful for women to give way. Where, then, is their boasted courage and strength? Custom has greatly debased men as a body in this respect. They are absolutely their own judges, and a very lenient code they have made for their own government. Women they have to a great extent put down, and prevented from complaining, by sneering at all who would not consent to be led by the nose as strongminded.73

While Ellen Ellis believed that the characters of all individuals were flawed, she maintained that much of women's deceit and attention to outward appearances was a consequence of the "conventional pretentiousness" which religion and social custom engendered and which encouraged a woman to act "outside and apart from herself".74 Like Mary Taylor, Ellen Ellis believed that the ultimate responsibility for such behaviours lay with women themselves. In her view, just as good and bad men must stand alone and face the consequences of their own acts, a woman could not be saved from the consequences of her own wrong-doing.75

With regard to the dominant assumption that Woman's essential nature was based upon an "inward presentiment", therefore, while Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis accepted that women were, by nature, morally superior to men and charged by God with special moral duties, Mary Taylor rejected these assumptions as convenient fictions, produced by men in their own interests. In her view, moral qualities, rather than being essential traits of character, were qualities which were acquired through opportunity and practice. All three women agreed that not only

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73 See article "Lords of the Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.
74 Ellis (1882) p.43.
75 Ibid., p.225.
did social conventions interfere with a woman's ability to develop and exercise her abilities to their maximum effectiveness, but also that unquestioning adherence to social conventions of femininity was detrimental to a woman's psychological well-being and had the potential to lead to deceitful and manipulative behaviours.

Relative Positions of Women and Men in the Social Order

Whereas dominant nineteenth century discourses made recourse to the attributes endowed by 'nature' on Woman and Man to determine and justify the relative positions and roles of women and men in society, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis all attributed the current relative positions of women and men in the social order to social conventions. Contesting the rationale for women's social and legal subjection to men constituted a critical site in which the ontologies of each of these historical individuals diverged significantly from dominant ontological assumptions.

As previously mentioned, Mary Taylor claimed that dominant ideas about woman's nature amounted to social conventions and needed to be understood as "established notions" rather than essential 'truths'. Just as she believed that most of the qualities assigned to woman's nature were socially determined and represented the interests of men, Mary Taylor also asserted that woman's social position had been determined by men as a way of advancing their own fortunes. In her view, the basis of men's position of power to dictate and control women's activities had nothing to do with innate differences between women and men or to divine ordination; rather, it lay simply in the fact that women were economically dependent upon men and hence were reliant on men for their daily subsistence:

It has become an ordinary claim to make on women that their pursuits shall be not only such as do no harm, and interfere with no duty, but such as men like to see them employed in. To follow zealously any serious pursuit which men disliked, would bring about a stoppage of the supplies."

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76 Taylor (1870) p.77.

77 Ibid., pp.78-79. In her novel, Mary Taylor articulated this position through the character of Miss Everard who states: "We go to the borders of falsehood, we keep our opinion secret, when we should speak out; and all to keep friends with the wrong-doer, because he is the bread-giver. We get a great deal of praise for doing so, but the world would be better if we had not to do it." [Taylor (1890) p.328.]
Rather than it being woman's sphere to tend to domestic concerns and man's sphere to tend to business matters, in Mary Taylor's view "[m]oney-getting is the business of those who want money, and it is not one for which women have naturally little faculty."\textsuperscript{78} The basis of women's "neglect" to provide for themselves lay in the erroneous theory that it was the duty of men to maintain women.\textsuperscript{79} Consequently, men had limited the fields of women's employment according to their own pleasures rather than in the interests of women.\textsuperscript{80} According to Mary Taylor, women needed to understand that "the selfishness of trade unions, and the various interested motives that make men wish to keep women poor, and desire them to be dependent, are the main causes why these disabilities were inflicted, and why they are not removed."\textsuperscript{81} Hence, in contrast to dominant assumptions that women's natural position was subservient to and dependent upon men, Mary Taylor asserted that it was "natural" for a woman to "help herself" and to depend upon herself, even if this required labour, hardship and unpleasantness.\textsuperscript{82}

Like Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough was also very clear that it was men, whom she designated as the "lords of creation",\textsuperscript{83} who were responsible for constructing the subservient place and role of women in society. She described women as being "a subject class, depending on the will of man for everything".\textsuperscript{84} In her view, this was not a question of sex, but a question of subjection and social position:

Subservience is so destructive to all the higher and finer traits of character, that no despotically-ruled people have ever yet been equal to a free people; nor will a subservient sex ever rise to the level of a free and responsible sex - not because nature prevents them, but because circumstances and position do.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{78} Taylor (1870) p.86.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p.174.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p.17.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p.45.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., pp.44-45.

\textsuperscript{83} See, for example, "POLLY PLUM" DSC 5 July 1869, p.9.; article "Injustice of Society to Women", DSC 20 July 1869, p.5.; article "Lords of the Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.; and review of lecture DSC 17 April 1873, p.2.

\textsuperscript{84} "POLLY PLUM" DSC 24 May 1871, p.3.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p.3.
Mary Colclough believed that women and men were equal in God’s eyes, however, she maintained that within the marriage relationship the wife was subordinate to the husband. She referred to this relationship as one of "rational subordination" and, because she believed it to be ordained by scripture, it was not in contention: "All Christian women who think in accordance with Scriptural doctrine, hold that the rational subordination of a wife is the right and orderly position for her to occupy."86 Mary Colclough made a clear distinction between this "natural" subordination of woman to man, as ordained by God as the ideal relationship between the sexes within the institution of marriage, and the unjust and unnecessary social and legal subjection of women:

I think God meant woman to be, and that she will always be, as a rule, subordinate, but not by law subjected...She was truly meant to be his yoke-fellow, and, as I think, to be subordinate to man, but certainly not in legal subjection to him. Subjection is quite at variance with the very spirit of the Gospel, and must in the end follow all old abuses.87

According to Mary Colclough, therefore, God had ordained that women be "subordinate" to men in the natural order but not that women be in a state of legal and social subjection to men. "Rational subordination", therefore, was based on a wife's understanding and acceptance of her roles and responsibilities as ordained by God within her position as a wife. Hence, on the basis of her belief that legal domination was anomalous to such divinely ordained subordination, Mary Colclough considered the current legal position of women to be unjust and cruel, constituting "a barbarous blot on the statute books".88 In this respect, Mary Colclough’s ontological framework was marked significantly from dominant nineteenth century ontological assumptions: whereas the latter assumed that legal structures reinforced divinely ordained relationships, Mary Colclough believed that the current legal position of women was inconsistent with what God had ordained.

This distinction between "rational subordination" and subjection had important implications for the ordering of the social relations between the sexes. For Mary Colclough, "rational subordination" signified an ideal relationship, based upon mutual respect and mutual fulfilment of

86 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.
87 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 5 August 1871, p.3.
88 See article "The Legal Position of Woman", DSC 15 September 1869, p.6.
duties and responsibilities. Rather than denoting a fixed hierarchy of duties, responsibilities, and authority on the basis of one's sex, Mary Colclough's understanding of "rational subordination" was based on a utilitarian model of ability and practical circumstances. This is evident in her comments regarding the husband being the head of the family. This she regarded as "a very nice idea, if one were quite sure of getting a capable head". In her article "Hen-Pecked Husbands", she elaborated on this issue:

We cannot respect and obey a man simply because he is our husband, when he proves that he has no respect for himself and no qualities to entitle him to our reverence. He who cannot rule himself cannot rule others, and as there must be some head to a household it often happens that the wife, in spite of all the difficulties that the law and public opinion put in her way, seizes the reins of office from the hands too weak to grasp them. Hence, within the marital relationship, if men could show that they were capable, it was appropriate that they show authority, but this authority was not appropriate simply by virtue of them being male.

Ellen Ellis was also critical of attributing the current social position of the sexes to "human nature" and the natural order of things. In her view, "[t]o call the life commonly lived human nature is a libel on God and man." She described the existing social relations between the sexes as "monstrous" and, like Mary Taylor and Mary Colclough, saw men as responsible for women's subservient position: "But, thinking he knew better than God, man doomed woman to ignorance and, shutting her within doors, became to all intents and purposes his own and woman's betrayer - not her protector, as God intended." What Ellen Ellis believed was needed was to "cease to chatter of our 'poor human nature!'" and to raise women in the scale of being. Based on her belief that the moral, physical and intellectual disabilities that women faced were a consequence of their "ignominious social position", Ellen Ellis maintained that it was society, rather

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89 See article "Lords of the Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.
90 See article "Hen-Pecked Husbands", DSC 12 April 1871, p.3.
91 Ellis (1882) p.118.
92 Ibid., p.37.
93 Ibid., p.73.
94 Ibid., p.237.
95 Ibid., p.187.
than God or woman's nature, that had relegated women to a situation in which her moral elevation was dependent upon her social degradation. This was reinforced through legislation which regarded the wife as the property of the husband, and hence, anything woman could or should possess, including her moral rights, were considered to be the property of her husband. Whereas Mary Taylor stressed that it was not the duty of men to maintain women, and Mary Colclough maintained that authority needed to be based on capability, Ellen Ellis stressed that the principle of a single code of morals for men and women needed to be extended to the issue of authority in the marriage relationship:

There ought to be but one code of morals between husband and wife. William and Mary must ascend the throne together; and he or she who knows how to rule will say very little about it - certainly never suffer the two wills to clash, nor be forever thrusting the sceptre into the other's face. What matter whose hand holds the sceptre, if the rule be right?

While Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each rejected the dominant view that the relative positions and roles of women and men in the social order were determined by the 'natures' of the sexes, they offered differing rationales for the basis of women's subservient position. For Mary Taylor, women's economic dependence upon men was the key factor behind her degraded social position. For Mary Colclough, the assumption that "rational subordination" necessitated social and legal subjection was at the heart of the problem, while for Ellen Ellis, the erroneous belief that woman's moral elevation was dependent upon her social degradation was the central issue. As shall be shown in later chapters, underlying these different views as to the social factors which had resulted in women's social and legal subjection to men, were differing ideals for the reordering of the social relations between the sexes.

Framework of Binary Opposites

One of the most salient features of dominant nineteenth-century ontological assumptions was an adherence to a conceptual framework based on binary oppositions. Within this framework, not only was each term of the binary defined in opposition to the other as constituting mutually exclusive categories, but one term of the binary, namely, that

96 Ibid., p.122.
97 Ibid., p.219.
98 Ibid., p.52.
generally associated with the male, was attributed with more desirability and accorded more privilege than the other. This framework and ordering of the various terms of the binaries is clearly evident in "MOUNT ALBERT"s" references to the binary opposites of man/woman, active/passive, light/darkness and operative/restraining.

In her assertion that there was no essential difference in the basic natures of woman and man, Mary Taylor's ontological assumptions significantly disrupted the fundamental binary opposition of male/female. Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each retained a clear distinction between male/female although, like Mary Taylor, they also employed ontological frameworks which constantly reconceptualised commonly accepted binaries. In this respect, the disruption and reordering of binary oppositions constituted another significant site in which the ontological assumptions held by each of these three historical individuals disrupted and challenged dominant ontologies.

As mentioned earlier, in her questioning and problematising of the nature of 'femininity', Mary Taylor destabilised the binary opposition of masculine/feminine. In doing so, she simultaneously exposed the socially constructed nature of these categories and disrupted the supposed universality of 'woman' as an homogeneous category. In collapsing this dichotomy of masculine/feminine, Mary Taylor articulated a form of "humanist feminism" which located women's oppression within the inhibition and distortion of women's human potential.99

Mary Taylor's insistence on woman's common humanity with man is immediately evident in her significations of woman as "one half of humanity" and "that large class of the human race".100 This humanism also underlies her insistence that women's access to education and fields of paid employment should be on the basis of the accepted belief that "learning is universally admitted to raise the human being" and

99 Iris Marion Young describes "humanist feminism" as an analysis based upon the argument that society ascribes a distinct feminine nature to women and uses this to justify the exclusion of women from most of the important and creative activity within society. Within this analytical framework it is argued that any assumptions concerning women's ability to achieve what men have achieved need to be put aside until women have been able to develop to their full potential as individuals. [Young (1985) p.173.]

100 Taylor (1870) p.8,137.
"that women must accept the condition of the rest of humanity, and live by their labour when the labour of others has not provided for them".101

Consistent with her rejection of the dichotomy of masculine/feminine in favour of a human model of the individual subject, Mary Taylor attributed particular needs and desires, such as the moral aspiration to set the world right and the ability of one human being to serve another as helper, comforter or enlightener, to human rather than to gender-based feelings and qualities.102 In doing so, she stressed that it was independence that made human beings capable and, hence, the most fatal of all injuries that human beings could receive was the loss of their self-dependence.103

In collapsing this traditional opposition of masculine/feminine in favour of a model based on a common humanity, Mary Taylor effectively destabilised all other binary oppositions which associated particular activities or attributes on a dichotomous male/female opposition. This is particularly evident in her constant shifts in signification of concepts such as 'work', 'profit', 'value' and 'labour' away from their traditional gender-based distinctions based on the dichotomies of 'public' and 'private' spheres. Mary Taylor accepted the traditional signification of the concept of 'work' as an activity which was engaged in for 'profit' and whose 'value' could be measured in monetary terms. On the basis of this definition she maintained that many of women's activities which had traditionally either been designated as forms of 'idleness' or which had not been accorded any 'value' in monetary terms, needed to be understood as constituting forms of work which were engaged in for 'profit'.104 An effect of this disruption of the traditional dichotomy of work/idleness was that Mary Taylor simultaneously destabilised the association of woman with passivity.

In advocating that the activities of women and men needed to be judged by common standards, Mary Taylor maintained that the appropriate standards for valuing an individual's work were those which men had used to judge their own work. In this respect, her disruption of the

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101 Ibid., p.5,37.
102 See, for example, Taylor (1870) p.82,178.
103 Ibid., p.251,259.
104 The development of these arguments is a dominant theme within the writings of Mary Taylor and is discussed more fully in Chapter 9.
traditional binary of work/idleness was in a manner which left the dominant term of the binary intact but which redefined the second term of the binary. In doing so, however, Mary Taylor simultaneously disassociated the dominant term from the male. Hence, her reordering of this binary was based upon a rejection of androcentric assumptions in favour of an ontological assumption of the human individual as the norm by which individual women and men should be measured.

In contrast to this, aspects of Mary Colclough's disruption of commonly accepted binaries involved a shift of signification in which woman was presented as the norm by which man was measured. This can be seen in her statement that while God had given man mental and physical superiority over woman,\textsuperscript{105} men, taken as a whole, "are pretty nearly on an equality with women".\textsuperscript{106} She also maintained that "[m]an has strength of intellect, woman quickness of intelligence. Man is more just, woman more loving. Man more cautious, woman more perceptive."\textsuperscript{107} In playing with such traditional oppositions of strength/weakness, justice/inequity, and caution/recklessness, Mary Colclough not only disrupted the dominant term of the binary but also disrupted the way privilege was accorded to the part of the binary that was traditionally associated with the male. For example, 'intellect' traditionally signified reasoning and thinking as opposed to feeling, and this Mary Colclough attributed to males. Women, however, were associated with 'intelligence' which has traditionally signified a quickness of understanding based on the ability to think and reason. By juxtaposing these two attributes it could be suggested that Mary Colclough constructed 'intelligence' as constituting a more desirable and practical application of 'intellect'. Similarly, her statement that "[m]an has strength of intellect", with strength being traditionally associated with power, could be read as implying that intellect was a more powerful attribute than intelligence.

Mary Colclough also claimed that man was more "just" whereas woman was more "loving", and that man was more "cautious" whereas woman was more "perceptive". In doing so she again disrupted traditional binaries associated with justice, love, caution and perceptiveness. A consequence of such disruptions was that the particular hierarchies

\textsuperscript{105} See article "The Legal Position of Woman", DSC 15 September 1869, p.6.

\textsuperscript{106} See article "Lords of the Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p.7.
traditionally associated with these attributes were challenged. In this respect, Mary Colclough's use of language constituted a crucial site in which she both subverted some aspects of dominant conceptualisations of Woman's and Man's attributes and natures, while also sustaining gendered binary oppositions by associating particular attributes with women and with men.

While Ellen Ellis' ontological assumptions constructed 'woman' and 'man' within a framework of binary oppositions, aspects of her ontology simultaneously disrupted the mutually exclusive nature of this dichotomy. On the one hand, she conceptualised 'woman' and 'man' as separate and discrete entities who embodied essential sexual differences, yet she also constructed 'woman' and 'man' as constituting two parts of a single entity, neither complete on their own and yet each possessing different qualities and roles. There was, however, a marked ontological difference between Ellen Ellis' construction of this essential relationship between the sexes and "MOUNT ALBERT's" articulation of Man and Woman as an inseparable whole in which Woman formed the "ideal" and Man formed the "real".

Fundamental to Ellen Ellis' ontology was that every individual, regardless of sex, had a soul to form.108 Hence, on the basis of her adherence to the view that there were no sexual distinctions in the soul, 'woman' and 'man' were discrete entities. At the social level, Ellen Ellis adhered to the assumption that within the holy state, woman constituted man's right hand and right eye.109 Within this divinely ordained state, the interests of woman and man could never be antagonistic because "what is good for man is good for woman".110 She added that "[t]o be one with man" was not dependent upon woman always being at his side.111 Hence, while Ellen Ellis' ontology was based on the assumption of an essential complementarity of woman and man in the social order, this was, in turn, premised on a conceptualisation of an undifferentiated human individual at the metaphysical level. Consequently, Ellen Ellis' ontology disrupted the mutually exclusive nature of the binary opposition of male/female at

109 Ibid., p.240.
110 Ibid., p.iv.
111 Ibid., p.73.
the metaphysical level while reinforcing the binary opposition of male/female at the social level. In her emphasis on woman being man's "teacher" and on man being an incomplete entity on the basis of his refusal to accept the divinely ordained relationship of woman as his helpmeet in all walks of life, Ellen Ellis also destabilised the privilege and power associated with the established hierarchy of the male/female binary.

Despite disrupting aspects of this male/female binary, Ellen Ellis' ontology was fundamentally dependent upon adherence to the conceptual framework of binary oppositions. Her underlying assumptions regarding the relative roles of woman and man in "the divine plan of the moral universe" necessitated an over-determination of the binary opposition of right and wrong. Hence, while Mary Taylor's ontological assumption of a non-gendered human subject destabilised the conceptual framework of binary oppositions, Ellen Ellis' disruption of the dominant ontological assumption of a gendered subject reinforced aspects of this conceptual framework.

This chapter has argued that while the ontological assumptions within the writings of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were different in significant ways from dominant nineteenth century ontologies, these differences were not necessarily in opposition to aspects of dominant assumptions regarding the essences of woman, man and the relationship between the sexes. Each of these women resisted constructions of woman as 'Other', and, in this respect, their ontological assumptions appear to be based on what bell hooks described as a "difference inwardly defined". While this is most immediately evident in Mary Taylor's rejection of many of the dominant ontological assumptions regarding the essential natures of woman and man, it is also inherent in the subtle resignifications of aspects of dominant ontological assumptions in the ontologies of Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis.

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112 While this will become evident in the discussion of specific features of Ellen Ellis' subjectivity in Chapter 11, some examples of her over-determination of the binary of right/wrong include her insistence on the need for public opinion to "pronounce woman free to do the right", man knowing right from wrong, Zea agonising over the right and wrong of every question, there needing to be a clearly defined demarcation between right and wrong, and it not mattering who holds authority in the home as long as the rule is right. [See, Ellis (1882) pp. v,44,71-72,52.]

113 hooks (1990) p.15.
All three women tended to assume the inevitability of what Dorothy Smith has called "heterosexual sociality" as the normative order of social and sexual relations. For Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, the assumption that sexual difference and sexual opposition was ordained by both God and Nature underpinned their acceptance of the essential complementarity of woman and man, their belief that woman and man were equal in God's eyes, and their belief that God had given women special moral duties. It also underpinned Mary Colclough's understanding of the "rational subordination" of a wife to her husband and Ellen Ellis' assumption that woman and man were interdependent parts of an inseparable whole. Mary Taylor's insistence that it was woman's duty to protect herself from the danger of being forced to marry and her assertion that it was not unnatural for women to reject marriage may appear to suggest that her ontology operated in resistance to this assumption of "heterosexual sociality". She did, however, accept that it was woman's 'natural destiny' to marry and her reference to the need for women to be able to own unrestricted property "without the cruel necessity of celibacy" would seem to indicate that she did not conceptualise any viable non-celibate relations outside of heterosexual marriage.

While each of these women retained some notion of an essential femaleness in their assumptions regarding woman's nature and character, none accepted a totalising universal conception of Woman. By attending consciously to a variety of social relations which constructed different ways of being a woman, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis engaged in what Dorothy Smith has referred to as an analytic process which "preserves the presence of women as active subjects" and which considers the social relations which organise the experience of being a woman. Their assumptions regarding varieties of modes of being a woman, and their assertions that many of the characteristics generally attributed to Woman were social conventions rather than natural attributes, significantly marked their ontologies from dominant ontological assumptions regarding Woman.

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114 See Smith (1990)

115 Taylor (1870b) p.562. This aspect of Mary Taylor's writings is discussed further in Chapter 9.

Each maintained that man's authority should not interfere with God's laws and that ultimately the interests of both sexes were the same. As this chapter has shown, however, their interpretations of what was good for women and what was good for men differed in significant ways. The nature of these differences and the relationships between their ontological assumptions and their discursive practices with regard to the positions they privileged within various discursive fields will be further explored in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 9

DUTIFUL WOMEN?

THE DISCURSIVE PRACTICES OF MARY TAYLOR

Mary Taylor's writing and life experiences disrupted dominant nineteenth century assumptions regarding the subjective experience of being a woman. In both New Zealand and England she constantly asserted herself as an active speaking subject capable of engaging in reasoned debate. By employing a variety of personae and linguistic devices, Mary Taylor grounded her theorising and critique of women's position in society in a manner that offered a range of subject positions from which to argue the necessity of women becoming self-dependent individuals. This chapter will explore aspects of her discursive practices through consideration of her views on femininity, religion, women's education, marriage and women's suffrage.

Mary Taylor's views on femininity

Having been born into a long-established, affluent and highly respected middle-class family, many aspects of Mary Taylor's socialisation embodied the prescriptions associated with nineteenth-century middle-class respectability. Receiving a rudimentary education until the age of fourteen, she spent her later teenage years engaged in self-directed study interspersed with trips abroad, and later attended a finishing school in Europe. In her home life, household duties were shared amongst servants and the other female members of the family and consequently only occupied her "for an hour now and then".\(^1\) Despite their reduced means following the financial crisis in England during 1825-1826, the Taylor family maintained the lifestyle prescribed for the middle class, spending a good deal of time visiting and entertaining.

There were many strong and conflicting influences in Mary Taylor's early life which marked her socialisation in ways that diverged significantly from the dominant construction of femininity as passive

\(^1\) Taylor (1870) p.5.
and ornamental. Her father, Joshua Taylor, was a Yorkshire Radical who stressed the values of exertion and independence and the need to question authority. Mary was his favourite child and he encouraged her to take an active part in the lively political discussions for which the Taylor household was well-known. Her mother, on the other hand, was of a "dreary and sombre disposition", and considered "all gaiety...to be unbecoming levity". She reinforced dominant prescriptive codes of femininity by telling her daughter in private that it was not appropriate for young ladies to discuss matters of learning because "people did not like it".

Mary Taylor's independence and determined personality showed at an early age. Her lifelong friend Ellen Nussey remembered her at school as quiet in demeanour, industrious and lively in games that engaged the mind, and described her rebelliousness as "never outspoken". From her early youth there were signs of the determined independence of action which characterised her later life and were a distinctive feature of her writings. One such occasion was while she was attending Roe Head school, when, having attained a level of proficiency beyond that which her teacher could accommodate, she was given a book of letters to memorise by heart. Mary Taylor refused to cooperate with the exercise, deeming the task a useless and unproductive activity.

In describing her as an adult, Mary Taylor's other lifelong friend Charlotte Brontë said:

Mary alone has more energy and power in her nature than any ten men you can pick out in the united parishes of Birstall and Gomersal. It is vain to limit a character like hers within ordinary boundaries - she will overstep them.

As discussed in the previous section, in her own life, Mary Taylor certainly overstepped the "ordinary boundaries" of prescribed attitudes and behaviours associated with middle-class femininity, preferring

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3 Edgerley (1944) p.215.
4 Taylor (1870) p.1.
6 Ibid., p.10. The penalty for her disobedience was going to bed without supper for one month.
7 Letter to Ellen Nussey, 3 January 1841. [Stevens (1972) p.18.]
instead "to establish [her] right to do odd things".\(^6\) She was severely critical of the expected codes of behaviour assigned to females purely on the basis of their sex and questioned in whose interests such social conventions operated. In her writings she was most critical of the social conventions of femininity which required that women should assume a passive dependence upon men.

A persistent theme in the writings of Mary Taylor was her opposition to any form of unproductive female activity. She drew attention to the irony in social conventions which, on the one hand, expected that women fill their minds with lovely things and not inquire into the workings of the 'public' sphere, while on the other hand, prescribed it as a duty for women to never be idle. As a consequence of such contradictory logic, women were generally satisfied with employment which, according to Mary Taylor, was little better "than digging holes and filling them up again".\(^9\) One example of such "useless" activity was women labouring for hours over tapestries and sewing elaborate frills onto their garments. In Mary Taylor's opinion, such activities functioned "not so much to produce anything as to keep the uselessness of their productions out of sight".\(^10\)

Mary Taylor maintained that the social mores were such that it had become a sort of feminine virtue for women to know how to invent 'work' in order to remain occupied:

> The real reasons why the useless employment called work is so much followed by women are, the soothing effect of sedentary monotonous occupation, the advantage of having a subject of common interest that the silliest can understand, and, above all, the filling up of time.\(^11\)

For young single women of the middle-classes, this required passivity was constructed as a period of 'waiting' for marriage. Dominant social conventions prescribed that appropriate 'feminine' behaviours during this period of a young woman's life should centre on becoming proficient in activities such as music and drawing. The object of

\(^6\) Letter to Ellen Nussey, winter 1843. [Stevens (1972) Letter 12]

\(^9\) Taylor (1870) p.62.

\(^10\) Ibid., p.64.

\(^11\) Ibid., p.71. This position is also developed in Mary Taylor's novel through the character Sarah. The reader is told that "she was possessed by the feminine idea that her fortune was to come to her, not to be made by her, and [she] had all the faults and inefficiency that come of habitual waiting." [Taylor (1890) p.256.]
acquiring such arts, as far as Mary Taylor could gather, was to entertain people. While she did not condemn the entertainment of people per se, she pointed out that "the fact remains that I am left without means of entertaining myself."\(^{12}\)

As Mary Taylor noted, even single women of the working-classes, for whom the necessity of earning money to contribute to the family unit had always been accepted as a matter of duty, were expected to fulfil their 'natural aspiration' to model their lives on those who were better off.\(^ {13}\) Hence, even working-class women were inculcated into the dominant ideological construct of femininity which expected them to attach value to outward appearances and pecuniary gain.

Within dominant nineteenth-century discourses of femininity, women's attention to their dress and adornment was constructed as being the outward manifestation of woman's inherent grace, beauty and refinement. For Mary Taylor, however, this emphasis on dress and adornment, rather than being indicative of an essential characteristic of women, was an historically specific social expectation. Pointing out that "two hundred years ago, men used to value dress as women do now", Mary Taylor linked current dress conventions with the demands and priorities of capitalism: "To be handy, portable, and showy, are the best qualities property can have, where it is impossible to make it yield a return, and its main use is to produce on others the impression of wealth."\(^ {14}\) According to Mary Taylor, however, there was another motive for attaching such value to women's outward appearance and this was located within the demands of a morality that was constructed by, and served the interests of, men. The evidence for this could be found in the fact that "the position of a woman is not improved in the eyes of the world by any skill or industry she may be known to possess".\(^ {15}\) As a consequence, within dominant frameworks of feminine respectability, the ways available to women to make themselves more attractive to men were restricted to those associated with outward appearances. Moreover, "[a] young woman of ordinary good looks cannot fail to learn

\(^{12}\) Taylor (1870) p.4.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p.52.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p.68. In an early article titled "Co-operation and Competition", Mary Taylor wrote of the mutability and transience of other social or political doctrines which, having been in favour for some time, may fall out of fashion. [Taylor (1867) p.215.]

\(^{15}\) Taylor (1870) p.69.
that fear, ignorance, and helplessness, are often attractive, and it will occasionally be to their advantage to exaggerate her share of all these defects.\textsuperscript{16} For women to pursue any other course of action would amount to being 'unfeminine' and thereby to risk the loss of one's 'value': 'if she 'unspheres' herself, she is condemned'.\textsuperscript{17}

According to Mary Taylor, the wider morality in which such constructions of femininity were embedded associated women's 'value' and 'profit' with their outward appearance and their creation of the impression of wealth.\textsuperscript{18} In this respect, Mary Taylor argued, women were effectively "doing what men do for themselves in the study, the counting-house, the workshop; struggling to improve their pecuniary position".\textsuperscript{19} Hence, it was "rather impolitic" for a woman to put forward her accomplishments, such as the ability to earn or save a shilling or two a day, "for they interfere to prevent the producing of a much more profitable effect".\textsuperscript{20} Adherence to 'feminine' behaviours, on the other hand, held the prospect for single women of promoting "the acquisition of an income of some kind" through attracting a wealthy husband:

...it is 'a good investment' for young women to spend the whole of their means in dress; and if their means were doubled by any chance, they could find no better use to put them to, than to make their case so much more like the 'case of a countess' than they had been able to do before. It is not vanity, still less the indulgence of natural taste that makes them never want anything but clothes and ornaments, and induces many of them to increase their possessions of this kind by every means within their power. It is the hope that the appearance of a certain income may some day produce the reality, or at any rate may promote the acquisition of an income of some kind.\textsuperscript{21}

The primary issue for Mary Taylor, however, involved questioning the basis of men's approval of what was considered 'feminine behaviour' with regard to social prohibitions against women earning money. Given

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.72.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p.273.
\textsuperscript{18} Given Mary Taylor's analysis of dominant ideologies of femininity, it is somewhat ironic that in establishing her own haberdashery and millinery shop while residing in Wellington, Mary Taylor utilised ideologies which prescribed that women attend in detail to their outward appearances to her own financial profit.
\textsuperscript{19} Taylor (1870) p.70.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.69.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., pp.69-70.
that "the real conditions under which humanity lives are that comforts are gained by labour", Mary Taylor asked:

Are we right, one and all, in folding our hands, even though we bear both our wants and our idleness with patience, and though some of us feel no present evil, and can shut our eyes to the future? It is customary; it is feminine, in the sense that women generally do it; and it is approved of by most men. But is it right? ...I have said that men generally approve of this conduct. Is it the rectitude, the forethought, the delicacy of it that they approve, or something else?22

In considering the fields of employment that were deemed appropriate for women at that time, namely, educational work, charitable work and artistic work, Mary Taylor asked "[a]re these limitations made with reference to the interest of women or to the pleasure of men?"23 Whoever's interests they may have privileged, one point Mary Taylor was very insistent upon was the extreme costs to women of such prescriptions on their lives. She stressed that because the years that should be passed in active work, or at least in learning how to engage in productive active work, were spent in waiting, "the untaught woman is made incapable for life".24 The influence of such teaching over women's lifetime made them unconscious to the fact that they were leading useless lives, "and not only hides their uselessness, but invests it with the appearance of virtuous industry".25

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mary Taylor articulated even more serious consequences of this situation for women: within such a construct of femininity it was impossible for women to acquire a 'character'. Moreover, the necessity of avoiding all inquiry into the objects of their purposeless work gradually took away women's power of application and, as a consequence, women lost agency.26

According to Mary Taylor, the psychic consequences for women who lived within the conventions of this prescribed life were potentially totally debilitating. Not only were women's minds weakened and warped, but, in time, women lost the capacity to distinguish the 'real' from the

22 Ibid., p.18.
23 Ibid., p.17.
24 Ibid., p.203.
25 Ibid., p.267.
'imaginary'. While Mary Taylor believed that this "artificial state of misery and ignorance may be the fate of any woman", she claimed that it was most likely to be the case for women whose "serious interests are managed for them by other people". She had met such women while living in Wellington, and, in a letter to her friend, described them as "[p]robably...not worse than other women but never called upon to stand alone or allowed to act for themselves, of course they lose their wits in time."

In her own life, Mary Taylor was not immune to the paralysis and morbid self-absorption that was so common among Victorian women. In a letter, written shortly before making her final decision to emigrate to New Zealand, Mary Taylor told her friend:

I am alone and melancholy. We sometimes take it into our heads - at least I do, to wonder what we live for, to look all round and see nothing in this world worth getting up for in the morning. I am particularly apt to be of this opinion when something has occurred (sic) to show me that those things which I value, those virtues I strive after, that moral beauty which makes the charm [of e]very day life - all that is worth living for in fact is despised... This...always makes me feel alone in the world.

Her response to such feelings was to engage herself in activity. Following the death of her younger sister Martha, for example, she chose to spend some time in Germany, explaining in a letter "activity being in my opinion the most desirable state of existence". While in Germany, she wrote "I am decidedly better - better than I have been since I left England and Brussels, or perhaps my moral condition there did not agree with me. I felt overpowered with weakness now I am cheerful and active." (emphasis added)

Living in Wellington and being so far removed from her friends and from intellectual circles posed particular challenges for Mary Taylor.

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27 Ibid., pp.116-17.
28 Ibid., p.125.
29 Letter to Ellen Nussey, 11 March 1851. [Stevens (1972) Letter 23]
31 Letter to Ellen Nussey, 1844. [Stevens (1972) Letter 14]
32 Letter to Ellen Nussey, 1 November 1842. [Stevens (1972) Letter 9]
33 Letter to Ellen Nussey, 16 February 1843. [Stevens (1972) Letter 10]
Rarely meeting anyone with whom she could discuss literary matters let alone engage in political discussions on topics which engaged her mind led her to conclude that "living among people with whom you have not the slightest interest in cannon is just like living alone, or worse". On several occasions she likened her situation to living a double life:

I can hardly explain to you the queer feeling of living as I do in 2 places at once. One world containing books England and all the people with whom I can exchange an idea; the other all that I actually see and hear and speak to. The separation is as complete as between the things in a picture and the things in the room. The puzzle is that both move and act, and [I] must say my say as one of each. The result is that one world at least must think me crazy.

She was well aware of her own tendency toward reclusiveness which generally manifested itself in her preference for spending her time reading and engaging in intellectual pursuits rather than attending to the details and responsibilities of running her shop. She did not consider her reclusiveness the problem; it was when she was inactive that Mary Taylor often felt overcome with depression:

No one can prize activity more than I do little interest [though] there is in it. I never long am without it but a gloom comes over me. The cloud seems to be always there behind me and never quite out of sight but when I keep on at a good rate. Fortunately the more I work the better I like it - I shall take to scrubbing the floor before it's dirty and polishing pans on the outside in my old age.

34 Letter to Charlotte Bronte, April 1850. [Stevens (1972) Letter 20]

35 Letter to Charlotte Bronte, June to 24 July 1848. [Stevens (1972) Letter 16] On another occasion Mary Taylor wrote that the best part of her life was the excitement of arrivals from England: "Reading all the news, written and printed, is like living another life quite separate from this one. The old letters are strange, very, when I begin to read them but quite familiar notwithstanding. So are all the books and newspapers, tho (sic) I never see a human being to whom it wd (sic) ever occur to me to mention anything I read in them." [Letter to Charlotte Bronte, 1852, Stevens (1972) Letter 24]

36 See, for example, Letter to Ellen Nussey, 4 to 8 January 1857. [Stevens (1972) Letter 29] Although Mary Taylor described herself on several occasions as "obstinately lazy", this belied the fact that for many years she was engaged in long hours of often physically very demanding work managing her shop which involved visiting and ordering goods from warehouses, unpacking and itemising the imported arrivals from England, attending to the book-keeping and accounts and serving customers, as well as attending to household duties. While for the first two years she shared many of these responsibilities with her cousin and business partner, Ellen Taylor, she had also been nursing Ellen through an illness from which she did not recover. Following Ellen's death in December 1851, Mary was in sole charge of the shop for two years before she hired an assistant. During this time the shop had prospered to the extent of enabling Mary to build an addition which nearly doubled its size. For further details regarding her shop, see Stevens (1969).

37 Letter to Charlotte Bronte, 1852. [Stevens (1972) Letter 24] Far from resorting to polishing pans on the outside in her old age, Mary Taylor
Through her critique of the constructed passivity of women's lives, Mary Taylor exposed the gap between the dominant ideal of femininity and the material realities of the lives of middle-class women. By turning the underlying reasoning within the dominant arguments used to restrict women's spheres of activity inward upon itself, Mary Taylor argued for financial recognition of the value of women's work and ultimately for extended fields of employment for women.

Within dominant nineteenth-century constructions of femininity, women's first duty was to their (current or prospective) roles as wives and mothers, their rightful sphere of action being within the home. Above all, conventions of social respectability dictated that middle-class women did not engage in remunerative employment or inquire into matters pertaining to finances. In Mary Taylor's observation, "as soon as a woman rises above the lowest working-class she comes under the oppression of the social law which forbids her to work, or at least to work to purpose". Hence, while women knew it was "disgraceful" to be without money, "they think it equally so to question, to inquire, to care for it, above all to give their minds to earning it".

Mary Taylor's immediate concern was for single middle-class women, like herself, who, through force of social convention, faced either poverty or dependence on their families and friends. Drawing on changing demographics which indicated that increasing numbers of women were either remaining single or postponing marriage for some years, Mary Taylor argued for the necessity for single women to support themselves. In articulating this argument, however, she made reference to the monetary value of the responsibilities of married women of the middle classes.

Having observed that married women did not give themselves up to the employments of nurse, housemaid, and sempstress as soon as they were in a position to pay for such services, Mary Taylor questioned whether the physical performance of such work by wives and mothers was essential to the welfare of the home and children or whether, in fact, remained physically active throughout her whole life and became something of an institution in a Swiss alpine resort with "a season hardly being considered complete till she has made her appearance". [Stevens (1972) p.141.]

38 Taylor (1870) p.129.
39 Ibid., p.60.
it was a woman's duty simply to ensure that these activities were done. She presented her case in unequivocal terms - either one of two things was true:

Either all this work is done to save money, or it will continue to be done when money-saving is of no importance. But if the money is not the motive, how is it the labour is gone through only where it is scarce? That every-one of the 'peculiar duties' is delegated as soon as the wife and mother has means to pay for the service?

Mary Taylor maintained that if, as dominant discourses ascribed, women's "peculiar duties" and "natural tastes" were within the domestic sphere, why was it not common for wives who were offered assistance in the form of charwomen, washerwomen, cooks, house-maids, housekeepers, sempstresses, tutors and governesses, to refuse such assistance on the ground that it interfered with their "peculiar duties" or prevented them from gratifying their "natural tastes". She concluded:

If it is not done for money, and is not a woman's duty, just in proportion as money is needed, and may not be neglected just in proportion as it is plentiful, then their inveterate tendency to escape from it must show a hopeless state of depravity in our feminine community. The general willingness to assist them in doing so is a wickedness fearful to contemplate. The shamelessness with which all who are able, delegate their 'peculiar duties' must bring ruin on the nation!

In drawing attention to the situation of working-class women who, due to economic necessity, physically performed these duties themselves, Mary Taylor demonstrated how the same duties were given different recognition and value dependent on the class status of the women concerned. If, as it was commonly recognised, a woman of the poorer classes had an important money value to her husband through the money saved by physically performing these duties herself, why, Mary Taylor asked, was it that a woman of the higher classes received no such recognition for the money saved through her own performance of such work?

The position which Mary Taylor privileged was the need to recognise that household duties constituted work that was, in one way or another, engaged in for profit: when women turned their attention to making one

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40 Ibid., pp.20-21.
41 Ibid., pp.88-89.
42 Ibid., p.89.
43 Ibid., p.23.
guinea do the work of two, "this is earning money!" Women's earnings, therefore, could be measured by, and were effectively the same as, their savings. The fact that women did not receive the actual money should not detract from an admission that monetary value was assigned to their domestic work:

Do not mystify yourself with the common-place nonsense that it is a man's business to get the money, and a woman's place to look after its economical outlay. What she must do is to spend her time and labour to profit. Whether she earns a small sum, or saves it out of a larger one, her day's work can be measured in money.

Mary Taylor's intent was not simply to redefine the 'value' of a woman's contribution to the home to that which could be measured in terms of the money saved through the performance of household duties. As she stressed, even when a servant was employed to perform household duties the woman of the household could never be replaced. In drawing attention to the accepted superiority of the wife and mother over the servant, Mary Taylor argued that the morality of current social convention, through its failure to ascribe status to the domestic work of married women and to ascribe monetary value to that work, was based on a contradictory logic:

The woman may be superior [to the servant] - so superior that her loss can never be replaced - but it is not her work that made her value; it is not her time that has been employed. This talent is left on her hands, and the curious invention called work was created to employ it. If it were intended for more than this it must be to produce some money value, or save some money expenditure. Its importance, then, may fairly be reckoned in money. The workers themselves, often in all good faith, deny this, and really believe that the value of their productions should be reckoned in no such vulgar way. They are not entirely responsible for the error. It is carefully inculcated that what is wanted of them is not work, but affection, grace, beauty, cheerfulness etc.

Having demonstrated that the value of women's work in the 'domestic sphere' could be measured in the same terms as the value of men's work in the 'public sphere', Mary Taylor presented her main argument: once it was admitted that women could and did engage in work that was done for profit, the fields of employment opportunities for women should be

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44 Ibid., p.176.
45 Ibid., p.130.
46 Ibid., p.265.
47 Ibid., p.66.
48 Ibid., p.66.
extended to enable them to engage in work that generated a greater amount of profit. Hence, not only should women be taught how to earn money more effectively, but restrictions on them being able to own what they earned needed to be removed to make it profitable for women to invest in such learning.49

The radical nature of Mary Taylor's arguments lie in her assertion that it was neither a privilege nor an exception for women to earn money, but a duty. Moreover, it was women's first duty, and, for most women, it ought to be their constant and life-long business.50 This was more than simply a matter of duty but was also a matter of honesty:

It is dishonest to incur debts which you cannot pay; is it honest, then, to know nothing of your means of paying? It is dishonest to spend money not your own; is it honest to accept and spend it your whole life long without inquiring whence it comes? It borders on dishonesty to know so little of your future means as to have no sure provision for your future wants; for sickness, age, and chance misfortune, and especially for those dependent on you whom your neglect would leave to the charity of strangers.51

For reasons of honesty, therefore, it was necessary for women to know the source of their income, to be able to judge its permanence, and, if it was liable to fail, to be taught some means of replacing it.52 Consequently, "[a] person who does not wish to be led into temptation will take care not to neglect these duties."53 In employing the religious metaphor of temptation, Mary Taylor implied that it was a 'sin' for women to neglect these duties. The following discussion will consider how she utilised religious discourses to construct her analysis of women's situation.

Mary Taylor's views on religion
Mary Taylor was raised within a long tradition of religious dissent.54

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49 Taylor (1870b) p.556.
50 Taylor (1870) p.175.
51 Ibid., pp.48-49.
52 Ibid., p.49.
53 Ibid., p.49.
54 The relative seclusion of the Gomersal district in which Mary Taylor was raised made it a safe haven for persecuted nonconformists and was the birthplace for Yorkshire Moravianism and Wesleyanism in the eighteenth century. However, Mary's grandfather, John Taylor, remained aloof from the Wesleyan sect despite his close friendship with John Wesley. He preached in the family's own chapel to an independent following which has
Her father, Joshua Taylor, whom Charlotte Brontë described as "not irreligious but a member of no sect", was known for his outspoken criticisms of the church. Her mother Ann Waring Taylor, on the other hand, has been described as "a cold, Calvinistic chapel-goer who...emphasized the punitive aspects of her religion". Of these two divergent influences, Mary Taylor appears to have inherited her father's inclination of contempt for organised church hierarchies, preferring instead a personal religion.

Consistent with her assumption that women did not possess superior moral qualities, Mary Taylor repudiated the idea that woman was created as an expression of "God in him". While accepting that as "helper", "comforter" and often as "enlightener", "one human being may serve another", Mary Taylor rejected completely the notion that one human being should ever be the "unquestionable authority" over another. For this reason, she maintained, no human authority should come between one person and their maker:

> As the Lord liveth every man shall save only his own soul by his righteousness, and in vain would women receive their opinions from the wisest man on earth, if they could find him; it will be living wisdom only so far as it is their own working out. They must inquire out their own principles and decide on their own practice for themselves, and judge those with whom they are in contact as to whether they can learn of them or not. It would be folly to count on having someone wiser than themselves always at hand, and if such a blessing were given them their object should be to grow like him, not to let him do their work for them.

In marked contrast to Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, Mary Taylor's religious convictions, while congruous with her political analysis of women's situation, were by no means a prominent feature in the arguments she proposed for changes in the social relations of the

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been described as having much in common with "the Quaker-like, quietest Moravians". [Hammerton (1979) p.74.] Moravianism was a Protestant sect which considered the Bible to be the only source of faith and advocated a simple unworldly form of Christianity.


57 Hammerton (1979) p.74. When asked directly what religion she was, Mary Taylor's response was that it was a matter between God and herself. [Gaskell (1911) p.126.]

58 Taylor (1870) p.177.

59 Ibid., p.178.
sexes. She did, however, make extensive use of the concept of morality.60

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mary Taylor claimed that women had been misled by the teachings of a false morality which was both dishonest and debasing for women. In her view, "[t]he kind of morality that is floating as it were in the air all round them, and impressed upon them by constant repetition, is such as to keep them low if not to sink them lower."61 In contrast with this false morality, Mary Taylor posited a "true morality" which consisted of urging upon a woman "the duty of looking to herself, and herself only, for subsistence".62 This view was the basis of Mary Taylor's assertion that it could only be claimed that women exhibited a "higher morality" when they chose their own path and did not bend to public opinion.63

In defining and contrasting 'true' and 'false' morality, Mary Taylor was, on a fundamental level, concerned with the philosophical question of the nature of 'good' and 'evil'. While acknowledging that "[t]here are circumstances in everybody's life that may yield a blessing if made a proper use of, but the same may become curses by our own misconduct",64 Mary Taylor believed that many aspects of the present system of social organisation were evil.65 Foremost among these evils was women's dependence upon men. Freedom, on the other hand, which to Mary Taylor signified not being bound by another's authority, was good.66 Consequently, there was "little real good will in those who make quiescence a condition of their assistance".67

60 Mary Taylor's articles "Feminine Honesty", "Feminine Character" and "Crystallised Morality", all of which were reprinted in The First Duty of Women, deal extensively with this theme.
61 Taylor (1870) p.159.
62 Ibid., p.45.
63 Ibid., p.57.
64 Ibid., p.218.
65 Ibid., p.199. Mary Taylor described women's indifference to money matters as an evil, to be pinched in means and without any serious employment as constituting an evil situation, and maintained that the economic necessity of marriage for women brought evils upon women that were as great, if not greater, than poverty itself. [Taylor (1870) p.102,103.; (1870a) p.215,212.]
66 Taylor (1870) p.268.
67 Ibid., p.136.
According to Mary Taylor, the only way women had been taught to lessen these evils was "to complain and get helped - or not helped, as the case may be, or else to accept starvation without complaint". In her view, it was only through women's own exertions that this situation could be remedied, hence, "[i]nstead of complaining of those who teach them because they have neglected to teach them what was essential, or because they habitually put limits to feminine acquirements, their best way would be to learn for themselves." Consequently, a woman's moral well-being, as in the case of her financial security, could only be achieved by women taking responsibility for all aspects of their own lives and learning for themselves what they needed to know.

Mary Taylor's views on women's education

As previously mentioned, Mary Taylor received a rudimentary education at school until the age of fourteen, followed by a period of 'self-improvement' until, at the age of twenty-five, she attended a finishing school near Brussels. During the years in which she was fulfilling her prescribed 'duty' of 'self-improvement', Mary Taylor began to reflect critically on the inadequacy of the education that was deemed appropriate for young women of her social standing. This coincided with an awareness of herself as different from the company in which she mixed, a difference which she often experienced as social disparagement and censure for her behaviour and views. Reflecting back on this time Mary Taylor wrote:

I was laughed at for talking of any of the subjects that I studied, and my mother privately told me that young ladies had better not discuss such things, people did not like it. I can see this is true. ...But I found all my friends even more averse to speak of books of any kind except novels, than older people. They all had the impression that it was wrong; not morally wrong, perhaps, but a sort of solecism in manners like putting your knife in your mouth. Not anything that would prevent you getting in to Heaven, but fatal to your acceptability on earth.

Having no passion for her studies, no one with whom to discuss her ideas and "only a general idea, like everybody else, of the elevating character of education, of the superiority of those who have it to those who have not", she abandoned her studies: "I turned my mind, not unwillingly, to my proper occupations, and strove to get into my proper

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68 Ibid., p.1.
69 Ibid., p.146.
70 Taylor (1870) p.2.
place. And I have been seeking it ever since. I am now writing to be enlightened as to what it is."

In seeking this enlightenment Mary Taylor posed the question "[c]an it be explained to me why learning is universally admitted to raise the human being, and why I was forbidden to learn?" In the critique she offered of the education deemed appropriate for women, Mary Taylor focused on how this education simply reinforced the very narrow limits that society prescribed for women's lives. In considering the contradictions inherent in the commonplace recognition that people profit by knowing and that it was desirable at all times to gain knowledge and understandings, Mary Taylor drew attention to the workings of phallocentric discourse:

But in saying this he will perceive on reflection that he speaks of men only. Almost everyone will put some qualification, some limit to their agreement if it is expected to apply to women. Either, it is thought, they cannot acquire it, or they ought not to have it, or it is acquired for them by their friends from whom they profit, and whose advice they ought to follow. Sometimes they are allowed to learn something, at other times more. The boundary line varies with the age and character of each man, and changes in each generation. In a time when reading and writing are little in fashion, it is enough for them to know how to read their Bibles. Where light literature abounds they may make imperfect acquaintance with a part. Often it is thought, they may study a good many things, but not profoundly. But wherever the limit is put it is not where a woman would put it herself - at the extent of her mental appetite and no nearer."

Hence, in Mary Taylor's analysis, the boundaries set upon the limits of women's learning were not fixed either by a woman's tastes, interests, or capacities, even though these were often used as arguments for such decisions. Instead, they were historically mutable, being set by the tastes and interests of those who paid for a woman's instruction. This situation, she maintained, was an inevitable outcome of women's economic dependence upon men. Just as she asserted that if women needed money it was up to them to earn it, she argued that if women suffered from ignorance it was their duty to provide themselves with knowledge. The underlying issues, according to Mary Taylor, were identical - the real evil was women's dependence on men

71 Ibid., p.5.
72 Ibid., p.5.
73 Ibid., pp.140-41.
74 Ibid., p.141.
75 Ibid., pp.136,141-42.
and the only solution was for women to remove themselves from this relationship of dependence:

The evil is in the dependence, which nothing but a woman's own exertions can remedy. ...All the obstacles put in the way of women's learning really have their root in this, that they cannot pay for it. Public opinion and general practice are against their being educated, and their own wishes would not alter the fact. It would be altered in a twelvemonth if the majority of them could pay for learning as well as wish for it. But the majority know too little to wish for knowledge, and are too dependent to be willing to take a way of their own about a thing they so little value. Thus their ignorance keeps them ignorant, as their poverty keeps them poor. 76

Within the wider field of women's access to knowledge, Mary Taylor singled women's lack of access to medical knowledge as being of particular concern. 77 Because women had no option but to relate their personal health experiences to each other, the best medical information most women could obtain was limited to what could be acquired through observation. 78 Having been ill herself for several extended periods of her young adult life, and her complaint having been wrongly diagnosed for a long time, Mary Taylor had personal investments in this issue. 79 Again, however, the remedy, according to Mary Taylor, lay with women themselves and their commitment to take the trouble to acquire such knowledge. 80

Mary Taylor's views on marriage

During the 1850s and 1860s there was a marked proliferation of discourses regarding women and marriage, stimulated to a large extent by the findings of the English Census for 1851 which indicated that up to 30% of all English women between the ages of twenty and forty were unmarried. While in New Zealand such demographic changes were treated as indications of a much-needed source of single female emigrants, in England they reinforced growing concern as to the reasons for, and

76 Ibid., pp.147-48.
77 Ellen Ellis also singled out women's lack of knowledge in biology and physiology as being a major deficiency in women's education (see Chapter 11).
78 Ibid., pp.143-44. Hardly a letter passed between Mary Taylor and her friends Charlotte Bronté and Ellen Nussey without mention of their states of health and discussion of what may have been contributing to their various conditions.
79 Mary Taylor's medical problems appear to have been attributed to "a disordered stomach". [See Stevens (1972) p.15.]
80 Ibid., p.145.
implications of, large numbers of women not marrying.\textsuperscript{81} For Mary Taylor, however, these changing demographics were embraced as indicating support for her view that women were rejecting marriage on the basis that the current social and legal conventions of this institution were oppressive.

In 1862 William R. Greg published an article in The National Review entitled "Why Are Women Redundant?\textsuperscript{82}" which framed the terms of this debate within dominant constructions of woman's essential nature and place in society. Premised on the belief that the two essential features of woman's being were that they were supported by man and that nature prescribed that women minister to men, Greg maintained that women who did not marry were not simply neglecting their social duty but were acting against the prescriptions of nature. The stated object of his article was to protest against what he believed was an inappropriate solution to the situation of single women. Greg believed that there was "a tendency in the public mind" to call the "malady" of single women by the "wrong name" and to seek in the "wrong direction" for a cure.\textsuperscript{83} This "wrong direction" was the endeavour to alleviate the poverty of such women by allowing them to engage in remunerative employment. Instead, Greg proposed two directions for women to effect a cure to this situation; firstly, that women should not claim so high a position in marriage and thereby make it easier for potential husbands to maintain them, and secondly, that single women should emigrate.

Greg's article, which was reprinted several times over the following decade, was very influential and generated a great deal of response. A spectrum of views emerged as to the status of 'redundant' women, ranging from those who considered such women to be unnatural freaks who were in neglect of their social duties to less conservative positions which viewed such women as social failures to be treated with either

\textsuperscript{81} See Murray (1982) p.48. As was shown in Chapter 2, the debates that ensued on the status of these 'surplus' women in England, which cohered around the construction of single women as 'redundant' to society's requirements, impacted on the attitudes toward single women in New Zealand.


\textsuperscript{83} Greg (1869) p.284.
contempt or pity. For Mary Taylor, however, such women, amongst which she herself could be placed, were neither unnatural nor were they social failures. Although a heterogenous group, Mary Taylor maintained that within the category of so-called 'redundant' women, were two very significant groups of women: firstly, women who, despite the enormous pressure of societal prescriptions on women to marry, practised forethought by not marrying poor men; and secondly, women who preferred a single life to the demands and constraints of matrimony as it was then organised.

In Mary Taylor's view, not only was Greg asking the wrong questions, but the assumptions on which his notion of 'redundant' women were based were erroneous and misleading. In response to Greg's identification of 'redundant' women as those over the age of twenty years who had not married, Mary Taylor asked "[w]hy should not the redundancy consist of both sexes or of both in proportion to their numbers?" In her view, the question that really needed to be asked was not "why are women redundant?" but "why do so many women not marry?" Mary Taylor maintained that, for whatever reasons such women and men chose not to marry, "it must be that they prefer that thing to matrimony". In reframing the terms of the debate in this manner, Mary Taylor shifted the parameters of the debate to the margins of hegemonic discourses and, in doing so, opened up positions from which to critically examine both the 'nature' of 'woman' and the 'nature' of the marriage relationship.

Nineteenth-century social conventions prescribed that the maintenance of single women was the responsibility of the male relatives of these women. Consequently, men had a significant financial investment in ensuring that their daughters and sisters married. As Mary Taylor was at pains to point out, 'redundant' women frequently signified "starving women...and almost always women whose means have fallen so much below their position that they are miserably poor". As a consequence of this, she argued that "[t]o call the single poor woman redundant in any

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86 Ibid., p. 25.
88 Ibid., p. 27.
sense that does not apply to poor people in general, a man must believe that marriage is the proper and only cure for feminine poverty." Hence, the underlying assumption of the view that marriage was the proper and only cure for feminine poverty was premised upon an understanding of marriage as primarily and fundamentally an economic relationship. This construction of marriage was substantiated, in Mary Taylor's opinion, by a consideration of why it was that women, and single women in particular, were so poor. Given that wealth and comfort were either inherited or were the product of human labour, it followed, in Mary Taylor's reasoning, that within a society which denied women access to their inheritance and prohibited them from working for profit, it was an inevitable outcome that women, as a group in general, would be poor.50

It was from this position that Mary Taylor considered that Greg's proposed solution, that redundant women should marry, signified a desire to keep single women poor through constructing married life as easier and therefore more attractive.51 This, in her opinion, was "offensively unjust" and "wantonly cruel."52 Even if it was poverty in the form of women refusing to marry below their station that led some women to not marry, Mary Taylor urged "then think what is to be said of the cruelty of carefully systematically, on principle, thwarting the efforts of one-half the celibates to remove the main obstacle to marriage!"53 Mary Taylor firmly articulated the position that under current conventions marriage was ostensibly an economic relationship in which women traded their independence for a maintenance: "They do not join fortunes with their husbands as their greatest pleasure, they adopt a set of duties towards them and are paid for doing them."54 Given women's socialisation, the proposition they offered men upon marriage was:

I am educated with no other object than to be a wife. My qualifications are - that I know nothing of the fight against poverty, and the struggle with the world. I shall leave the work entirely to you, unhelping,

50 Ibid., p.27.
51 Ibid., p.28.
52 Ibid., p.30.
53 Ibid., p.31.
54 Ibid., p.34.
unknowing; only, I expect it to be successful, and only marry when certain that it has been so hitherto, and is likely to be so for the future. I have been carefully kept from learning or practising any means of increasing my income, and all that I could do with that intent would earn or save so very little, that it would be meanness in you to insist on my doing it. The most I can promise is, to be content with the comforts I have been used to; at least so long as you cannot afford more. As soon as you can I think I have a right to them. My main employment I consider ought to be to maintain before the world as great an appearance of wealth as possible, and for this purpose I will lay out what you give me as economically as I can, and for the same reason it shall be my constant endeavour to get as much to spend as I can. I shall probably know nothing of any subject, literary, scientific, or political, wherewith you will fill up your leisure time, for though I promise not to follow any intellectual pursuit farther than you wish it, I by no means undertake to follow it so far. 

Given her strong adherence to the view that, in by far the majority of cases, a woman's choice was either poverty or a mercenary marriage, Mary Taylor was adamant that a woman's first duty was to protect herself from the danger of being forced to marry:

She must secure an alternative, and one not too repulsive to be accepted. Instead of looking to marriage to provide her with means she needs to get it clearly into her mind that it needs the means to make the marriage probable.

Hence, it was not marriage per se that Mary Taylor objected to, but women's position of economic dependence that typically accompanied the marriage relationship. Rather than constructing the marriage relationship as inevitably corrupt, Mary Taylor believed that, like other circumstances in one's life, it could be either a blessing or a curse, depending on the particular circumstances. There was, however, "no more certain way to make marriage a curse than for one party to throw the burden of her duties and responsibilities on the other" and this was the situation which current social conventions dictated as the appropriate role for women within the marriage relationship.

Unlike Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, Mary Taylor did not engage in public debates regarding the legal rights of married women although she did present a powerful fictional exposition of the injustices of

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95 Ibid., pp.210-11.
96 Ibid., p.209.
97 Taylor (1870) p.208.
98 Ibid., pp.208-09.
current English laws regarding a wife's access to her own income and property in her short story "A Tale", published in 1873.\textsuperscript{99} Given that she was not particularly optimistic of the possibility of framing laws which acknowledged the obligations of marriage while at the same time providing an escape for those who had made a mistake in the matter, what became of crucial importance was "the duty of removing causes that tend to make it a necessity; the poverty that makes any change welcome; the custom that makes marriage the only means by which a woman's relations can free themselves of the burden of her maintenance".\textsuperscript{100} Once these obstacles to women's independence had been removed, Mary Taylor believed that each woman would be in a position to decide for herself how she would resolve the question of earning her living, be it in marriage or living a single life.\textsuperscript{101}

Mary Taylor's views on women's suffrage
Although the need for women to be granted the franchise did not assume any priority in the writings by Mary Taylor, she described herself as "deeply interested" and "tolerably well-informed" on the subject.\textsuperscript{102} Mary Taylor entered the public debate on female suffrage in direct response to an article published in the Pall Mall Gazette, the main argument of which she paraphrased as follows:

The argument of the Pall Mall Gazette is, unless the present proposal (to give the suffrage to spinsters and widows) is intended as the thin end of the wedge it is unintelligible and idle, and if it is so intended it is either disingenuous or inconsistent.\textsuperscript{103}

The writer of the Gazette article was clearly in favour of the status quo and considered that any attempts to put women, particularly married women, on the same footing as men constituted "a general reconstruction

\textsuperscript{99} Published in the VM Vol. XXI. pp.395-416., "A Tale" presents the poignant story of an only child who, orphaned at the age of sixteen, leaves her comfortable household to live with an unwelcoming couple of limited means with six children to support. She eventually marries but her husband proves to be an abusive drunk who deserts her, returning periodically to take her earnings. She struggles to make a living but has repeated visits from debt collectors who repossess her few belongings to repay her husband's debts. Eventually her uncle and her employer pay for her furniture so that it cannot be repossessed.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., p.218.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p.iv.

\textsuperscript{102} Taylor (1868) p.213. Apart from the article "Feminine Suffrage and the Pall Mall Gazette" published in 1868, there do not appear to be even indirect references to the topic in her published articles and correspondence.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p.211.
of the relations between the sexes" and that those who advocated female suffrage but who did not intend this magnitude of change were acting "idly and unintelligibly". ¹⁰⁴

In a somewhat condescending tone, Mary Taylor premised her discussion of the Gazette article with the comment:

...people whose opinions are unpopular, ought to take every opportunity of hearing argument that is offered them. It is not good to hear only one side, even if it is the right one; so that it behoves the advocates of feminine suffrage to take note of the little reasoning that comes in their way, and profit by it, if possible. ¹⁰⁵

In Mary Taylor's view, while people who denied the vote to married women on the basis of their supposed incapacity stigmatised married women as inferior, at least they were consistent in that they generally denied the vote to all women. ¹⁰⁶ She also acknowledged that proposals to enfranchise spinsters and widows would likely meet with fewer opponents. This was because such proposals were based on acceptance of the dominant view that granting the suffrage to married women was unnecessary because both the women themselves and their interests were cared for by virtue of them being under masculine control. ¹⁰⁷

In Mary Taylor's opinion, the latter argument did not do justice to the realities of the situation for some married women. While many married women may have been content with their situation, having no grievance with the social and legislative system which gave their husbands complete control over them and their property, the experiences of some married women had resulted in them having grievances "which men either don't care for, or are interested in maintaining". ¹⁰⁸ For women in such a position, enfranchisement would provide them with a voice in the choosing of legislators, and thereby equip them with the means to effect changes in society with regard to their grievances.

The Gazette article had claimed that women had no such grievances. In response, Mary Taylor maintained that the fact that not many women spoke emphatically on such issues could not be taken as a reason to

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 211.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 211.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 214.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 214.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 215.
refuse to remedy the unjust laws which denied women access to their own earnings and property.\textsuperscript{109} She also maintained that granting suffrage to any particular groupings of women should not be based on them having a "special grievance".\textsuperscript{110} The potential contradiction between these two positions was resolved through Mary Taylor's identification of the central and connecting issue as being male power over women. She stated, "[b]ut not the less do the governors know that to extend the suffrage is to part with power. Not the less does the class that gains or controls the suffrage get their interests attended to."\textsuperscript{111} Opponents of change who considered that supporting female suffrage was equivalent to proposing a "reconstruction of the relations between the sexes" were, in Mary Taylor's view, quite correct: the enfranchisement of women would, she believed, amount to "a social revolution incomparably more important than all possible revolutions put together". This language of revolution, through its association with the violence of the social and political upheavals of the 1688 English Revolution, the 1776 American War of Independence and the 1789 French Revolution, constituted very powerful rhetoric. But, as Mary Taylor pointed out, not all revolutions were violent: "The constant peaceable change that goes on from age to age by advancing social opinion and legislation, producing each other alternately, is only called revolution when it is held up as a bugbear."\textsuperscript{112}

There was some tension within the positions Mary Taylor privileged with regard to women's right to the vote. Having already maintained that the vote should not be granted to any particular groupings of women on the basis of them having a "special grievance", Mary Taylor engaged specifically with the debates about whether married or single women had a stronger case for being granted the vote. While she asserted that "the implied superiority of the single [woman]" had no existence in

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., pp.214-15.  
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p.217.  
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p.220.  
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p.218. Mary Taylor's privileging of the position that not all revolutions are harmful to society is interesting when considered within the context of her family prospering during the French Revolution by virtue of her grandfather specialising in the production of army cloth. [Hammerton (1979) p.72.] No doubt her forebears would have approved of her relishing the political crisis which surrounded the election of the Superintendent in Wellington in 1858, her principle interest being in the potential to profit from the sale of election ribbons! [See Letter to Ellen Nussey, 4 June 1858, Stevens (1972) Letter 32]
fact, she effectively constructed single women as a special category in the matter of rights, be they the right to vote or any other right. In doing so she employed the language of 'normality' and inverted the dominant construction of the 'normal woman' as being wife and mother. Her context, as with the suffrage issue in general, was that of male power over women:

To say that 'the real test of the theory of women's rights is the fitness of normal women, wives and mothers, to possess votes,' is to begin at the wrong end. The 'normal woman' cannot be one who has given away her liberty of independent action, and if the right of voting, or any other right, belongs to any woman whatever, it must belong to those who have not done so.¹¹⁴

On first reading, it is tempting to suggest that Mary Taylor's articulation of this position is an outcome of her own positioning as a single woman who considered the current social and legal construct of the marriage relationship to be inevitably a relationship of dependence. The assumption embedded in her assertion that '[t]he 'normal woman' cannot be one who has given away her liberty of independent action" is that by virtue of a woman being single, she has "liberty of independent action". Such a premise not only homogenises single women into a universal category, but misrepresents the realities of the lives of single women in the nineteenth century, including Mary Taylor's situation.

While many of Mary Taylor's experiences mark her as different in significant ways from many of her single middle-class sisters, throughout her own 'independent' adult life she received a great deal of financial support from her family and friends by way of loans, gifts of money, and an inheritance.¹¹⁵ During her fifteen years in

¹¹³ Taylor (1868) p.217.
¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.218.
¹¹⁵ During Mary Taylor's first four years in Wellington she was involved in a variety of occupations and, while she could not be described as wealthy, she did have the financial backing and security to experiment in various employments. At one period she dealt in cattle purchased with money borrowed from her brothers in England. When this proved to not be a profitable exercise, she was saved from financial loss by virtue of her brothers converting their original loan to a gift. The men in the Taylor family provided the capital for Mary and her cousin Ellen Taylor to lease a subdivision of a Town Acre on which they built their shop and house. While both women prepared the design, it was Ellen Taylor who paid for the building. On Mary Taylor's return to England in 1859 she collected her inheritance of £3000 which she used to build her house in Yorkshire. [See letter from Mary Taylor to Charlotte Bronté, 5 April 1850, Stevens (1972) Letter 19; letter from Ellen Taylor to Charlotte Bronté, 13 August 1850, Stevens (1972) Letter 21; Murray (1990) p.xvii.]
Wellington, she also received gifts of clothing and was taught bookkeeping by her brother. Hence, not only did she not have to make a financial investment in order to gain these skills, but did not need to spend money to employ someone to perform these responsibilities.\textsuperscript{116}

This discussion of Mary Taylor's views on different aspects of women's situation indicates that her sense of herself as a woman living in the mid to late nineteenth century differed significantly from dominant constructions of women's subjectivity. Central to the positions she privileged within discourses of femininity, education, religion, marriage, and women's suffrage, was her conviction that women's economic dependence upon men was the key to women's degraded social position. Her strong critical analysis of the causes and effects of women's prescribed dependency upon men was integrally linked to her own attempts to become a 'self-dependent' single woman. While her critical analysis of women's position in society was based on logical reasoning, close analysis of her discursive practices suggests that her subjectivity as a woman was complex and, at times, contradictory. This is particularly evident in her understandings of what 'independence' signified, her construction of single women as 'normal' and her privileging the positions of single 'independent' women while simultaneously insisting that no particular groups of women should be singled out for special consideration.

While it is clear that her ontological assumptions regarding the essential humanness of individual subjects shaped her political analysis of concepts such as 'independence', 'work', 'value' and 'productiveness', the basis on which she made her knowledge claims regarding the status of women in the social order also marked her subjectivity as different. In her privileging of positions which emphasised the social and economic benefits to men of women's prescribed place and role in social organisation, and in her insistence that women could only remedy their situation by their own exertions,

\textsuperscript{116} By the time Mary arrived in Wellington her brother Waring had set up a small general business and importing agency dealing in wool, cattle and goods. Along with teaching her book-keeping, he passed on a great deal of knowledge, practical skills and assistance to Mary in her various involvements with importing, purchasing and selling goods, cattle and land. Waring Taylor also acted as Mary's agent when she purchased property and subsequently built and rented a house. [See Stevens (1969); Letter from Mary Taylor to Charlotte Brontë, 5 April 1850, Stevens (1972) Letter 19; letter from Ellen Taylor to Charlotte Brontë, 13 August 1850, Stevens (1972) Letter 21; Letter from Mary Taylor to Ellen Nussey, 15 August 1850, Stevens (1972) Letter 22]
Mary Taylor's investments within capitalist and humanist discourses present as key influences on her subjectivity.
CHAPTER 10

THE "HOLY" CAUSE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

THE DISCOURSIVE PRACTICES OF MARY COLCLOUGH

There was a Plum who once did try
To leave its pudding and its pie,
To flutter in the public sight
And little articles to write.
There was a boy who took the Plum
Between his finger and his thumb,
And said "Oh dear, how silly t'is
When Plums begin to preach and quiz;
Stay in your pudding or your pie,
And let us boys the preaching try."

DIANA DAWSON

Daily Southern Cross 3 July 1869, p.4.

Through her correspondence to the Auckland press and her public lecturing, Mary Colclough asserted herself as an active speaking subject passionately committed to the "high and holy" cause of women's rights.\(^1\) As a committed Christian, teacher, and, in Mary Taylor's terms, "self-dependent" widow with two young children, she was positioned within a wide range of discourses regarding women's place and role in colonial New Zealand. This chapter will explore the ways in which her discursive practices contested and utilised dominant understandings of what it meant to be a woman through considering her views on femininity, religion, education, marriage and married women's rights, women's suffrage, and temperance.

Mary Colclough's views on femininity

Mary Colclough presented as somewhat of an enigma to the Auckland public who, at different times, extolled her womanly traits while also condemning her 'masculine' proclivities. Her particular combination of investments in the outward manifestations of femininity and her 'unfeminine' behaviour of entering public spaces to express critical views of accepted notions of women's place and role in society mark her

\(^1\) "POLLY PLUM" NSH 31 July 1871, p.3.
subjectivity as simultaneously inside and outside dominant constructions of femininity.

Her views on the issue of women attending to their manners and appearances typifies the way in which she drew on multiple and conflicting subject positions in constructing her own understandings of femininity. On the basis that God had provided a model by making all His works beautiful, Mary Colclough maintained that it was fitting for women to attend to their appearances on the proviso that it did not exceed their means and remained subservient to their higher duties and pursuits. In an early article she wrote "[d]o I despise beauty and elegance and grace? No, indeed I do not. I admire all the beautiful works of God, and a lovely woman is one of the most beautiful, and it is fair and pleasant to look on and admire her." She also made recourse to Nature and economics to support this view:

Nature teaches us the lesson: she throws a sweet mantle of green over the unsightly stump and the ragged and broken thatch. Even the grass of the fields and the insects have each their own beauties of form and colour, apart from their use. So long then as we make these things subservient to our higher duties and pursuits, I think we do well to devote some thought to them, and I think, also, that the education of the eye and taste is a very desirable, if not absolutely requisite, branch of a young lady's training. She will find the knowledge of how to dress not only serviceable in improving her appearance, but also an absolute saving of money. 

While critical of the social patterning of gender relations and the present "favourite type of womanhood", Mary Colclough exhibited many of the manners and behaviours which were associated with dominant definitions of femininity. In introducing her at a public lecture, the Rev. J. Macky said that had she not been present at the time he could have spoken more of her gentle and womanly traits of character that could not appear in the writer and lecturer but which adorned her public life. An extremely well-spoken woman, recognised as excelling as a teacher of elocution, Mary Colclough was well known for her

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2 See article "Early Married Days", DSC 4 November 1869, p.4.
3 See article "Coming Out", DSC 30 November 1869, p.7.
4 See article "Pattern Women", DSC 29 December 1868, p.4.
5 See review of her lecture at Otahuhu, DSC 4 September 1871, p.3.
6 See article entitled "Mrs Colclough's Educational Classes", DSC 31 October 1871, p.3.
"calm, dignified, and impressive" manner of public speaking. These attributes, along with her exhibiting the manners and appearances befitting a 'lady' would undoubtedly have encouraged more conservative members of the Auckland public to attend to her arguments.

While she distanced herself from the "affected make-believe sort of lady", Mary Colclough accepted the view that "[w]e have a right to look for grace, courtesy, and refinement in her mind and manners." Rather than viewing such behaviours as the outward manifestation of woman's innate qualities, Mary Colclough stressed that these were learned behaviours. Moreover, while simultaneously maintaining that it was a "right" to expect such grace and refinement in a woman, she also considered it to be a deficiency in women to not exhibit such behaviours. In articulating this position, Mary Colclough drew attention to the relationship between such outward conventions of behaviour and women's social standing:

To hold herself nicely, and to move with ease and grace is a regular part of a lady's education; to fail in these things would be to lose caste, unless she had great wealth or position to excuse the deficiency, and even then it would only be excused, not hidden. In maintaining such an investment in these outward expectations of femininity, Mary Colclough was simultaneously positioned both inside and outside dominant understandings of what it meant to be a woman. An effect of her particular investments in socially sanctioned aspects of femininity would have been increased attention to, although not necessarily acceptance of, her views. In this respect, her outward conformity to the manners and appearances of a 'lady' and her consistent advocacy of the necessity and desirability of such conduct and deportment, effectively increased the subversiveness of her arguments regarding the constructedness of social modes of being a 'lady' and the political interests that these constructions served. Hence, it is in the tensions between the multiple positions which Mary Colclough articulated within discourses on femininity, in terms of her simultaneous contesting and reproducing of dominant positions, that she destabilised the hegemony of dominant discourses on femininity.

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7 See review of lecture, DSC 27 June 1871, p.2.
8 See article "A Lady", DSC 18 July 1869, p.4.
9 See article "The Rising Generation", DSC 18 November 1869, p.7.
10 However, as the previous section showed, some members of the colonial public considered that in her public advocacy of women's rights, Mary Colclough irreversibly overstepped the appropriate and acceptable bounds.
Mary Colclough's views on religion

As discussed in previous chapters, religious discourses were fundamental to Mary Colclough's understandings of woman and man and the relationship between the sexes and to her identity as an advocate of women's rights. While advocating a non-sectarian approach to religious concerns and forms of social organisation, Mary Colclough's personal religious allegiance was a firm attachment to the Protestant faith.11 Because her advocacy of the cause of women's rights was premised on her religious convictions, Mary Colclough's positioning within discourses of religion assumed a crucial significance in her understanding of herself as a woman.

Mary Colclough's religious beliefs clearly situate her within the general principles of the Protestant faith.12 While she believed fully in the principle of private judgement in the interpretation of Scriptures, she disrupted the Protestant notion of the Bible as constituting the only source of revealed truth in the emphasis she placed on the need to locate the Bible within the particularities of the social and historical contexts in which it was written.13 This belief premised her criticism of the Church as "falling greatly behind the age" and as not, apart from a few individual clergy, making an effort to keep up with the times:

...the majority are quite content to believe that the Popes or John Knox or Calvin or Luther or Wesley found out all that was to be found out in the Bible. It is useless to tell them art, science, and knowledge are progressive; they persist in believing and thinking exactly as some dead-and-gone people did a hundred or more years ago. They will neither read nor think of anything new. If they listen to arguments they do so with a predetermination not to hear them. Yet their entire ignorance of the matter does not in their ideas incapacitate them from giving an opinion on the subject: nay, they pass impressive judgments on all sorts of matters they never read about, never studied, and know literally nothing of, but through the medium of their prejudices. I am afraid this is the great fault now-a-days: our spiritual teachers are behind their hearers in knowledge and liberality of sentiment."14

of womanhood (see Chapters 6 and 7).

11 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 5 March 1869, p.5.

12 Most notably, Mary Colclough subscribed to the doctrine of justification by faith alone and believed in the universal priesthood of all believers.

13 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 5 August 1871, p.3.

14 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 31 August 1871, p.3. Ellen Ellis was also very
It is significant that some of the exceptional few whom Mary Colclough identified were outspoken members of the Protestant clergy who were also public in their support of women's rights.\

One very public occasion on which Mary Colclough acted on her progressive religious views was in her inclusion of criticisms of texts of the New Testament in her public lecture entitled "Signs of the Times: Religious Agitations, Social Revolutions, the Revival of Superstition, Spiritualism, and Scepticism". In his introduction to this lecture, the Rev. Samuel Edger remarked on the bravery shown by Mrs Colclough in speaking publicly on these issues which he considered to be the pre- eminent topic of the day. In addressing the "moderately large and respectable audience", Mary Colclough stated that she believed that the current religious agitations were indications of a deep awakening which augured well for the Christian religion. She also made references to many instances of spiritualism, citing several spiritual manifestations she had seen herself, and her belief that the cause of these might be found in animal magnetism.\

Critical of the established church, particularly with regard to what she observed as the current tendency to make a profession of religion and to allow sectarian interests to take precedence over moral teaching (see Chapter 11).\

Three such men, who were part of Mary Colclough's network of close personal supporters and who presided at her public lectures, were the Anglican vicar Rev. Vicesimus Lush, who chaired Mary Colclough's lecture on "The Subjection of Women" at Thames, the Presbyterian minister Rev. J. Macky, who was a long personal friend of Mary Colclough's, and the Non-Conformist minister Rev. Samuel Edger, who chaired her first public lecture on women's rights. On chairing her lecture on "The Subjection of Woman" at Otahuhu on 31 August 1871, Rev. Macky, while expressing some hesitancy for showing approval for women lecturing on a public platform, acknowledged that Mary Colclough was among those few women who had unusual abilities and might therefore be permitted to enter those spheres usually set apart for men. In acknowledging that he would have preferred to have seen her devote her talents entirely to the education of youth, he stated that by the end of the lecture he had been struck with the moderation of her views and was, as a consequence, closer to being converted to advocating legal freedom for women. Rev. Samuel Edger took the chair at a number of Mary Colclough's public lectures in Auckland, including her lecture on "Signs of the Times: Religious Agitations, Social Revolutions, the Revival of Superstition, Spiritualism, and Scepticism". [See reviews of lectures, DSC 27 June 1871, p.2., 4 September 1871, p.3., 11 May 1872, p.2., 29 June 1872, p.3.; NZH 27 June 1871, p.2., 12 July 1871, p.3., 11 May 1872, p.2., 29 June 1872, p.3., 13 August 1872, p.2.]

The phenomenon of 'animal magnetism' is more commonly known as mesmerism, and refers to a hypnotic state produced in a person by another's influence over the will and nervous system. This procedure was based on the theory that sickness resulted from obstacles to the flow of a fluid which penetrated and surrounded all physical bodies. While this theory peaked in popularity in Europe during the late eighteenth century, early nineteenth century strands of mesmerism utilized popular contemporary theories of natural law which emphasised reciprocal moral and physical causality. [See Robert Darnton (1968) Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France Cambridge, Harvard University Press] For reviews of Mary Colclough's lecture, see NZH 11 May 1872, p.2. and DSC 11 May 1872, p.2.
Mary Colclough also adopted a controversial position in debates about the issue of religious education in schools. She believed that it was the place and privilege of parents to impart sacred knowledge to their young ones and that willingness to depute this task to a stranger was indicative of a lack of earnestness about the matter. This did not mean that she was opposed to religious education in schools. Rather, she thought that the variety of modes of faith would make it difficult to teach religion in a manner that suited all. The best situation, in her view, was for "all but Romanists and Jews to unite in one common plan." In support for this view, Mary Colclough drew on economic arguments:

I think that all teaching that tends to widen breaches and create cliques hurtful, but it is not on these grounds I urge non-sectarian teaching: I do so because I believe that a denominational system would be entirely unworkable, especially in country districts, because the system would be much more expensive than a common school system, and because it would be entirely impossible to procure good teachers at the small salaries that would have to be offered under a denominational system.

As a widow raising two small children and being dependent on teaching for her income, Mary Colclough had an obvious economic investment in teachers' conditions. However, her positioning on the issue of religious education in schools needs to be appreciated in the wider context of her positioning within the public debates regarding all aspects of the system of education in the colony.

Mary Colclough's views on education

Like Mary Taylor and Ellen Ellis, Mary Colclough was educated within a system which favoured rote learning. Up to the age of fifteen, she

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17 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 10 February 1869, p.5.

18 As was discussed in Chapter 7, Mary Colclough did actively support the teaching of religious education in schools and was prepared to give priority to her religious convictions on this matter over legal requirements. For a discussion of the debates and legislative process of instituting a secular system of education in New Zealand, see Richard P. Davis (1968) "The 1877 Education Act" HISTORICAL NEWS #16, pp.9-12.

19 Underlying this view was her belief that the differences that divided the Protestant Church into sects were "trifles light as air" compared to the many vital points of agreement. [See "POLLY PLUM" DSC 10 February 1869, p.5.]

20 "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" DSC 14 August 1872, p.3. She had offered the same argument three years earlier amid debate in the press on the merits of denominational schools, maintaining that "[t]o secure a really good teacher we must pay a good salary, and where a district is broken up into denominational schools few of them can afford to secure the services of a first-rate master." ["POLLY PLUM" DSC 5 March 1869, p.5.]
attended a school "where it was the rule to learn columns on columns of spelling". Following this, she attended Queen's College in London, described by the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross as "perhaps the best conducted educational institute for females in England". Known for its strict Church of England atmosphere, Queen's College offered a curriculum which included theology, English literature, music, ancient and modern languages, natural philosophy, mathematics, dancing, and fine arts. The College was based on a philosophy which advocated non-competition and the absence of rewards and punishments. In her own teaching practices, Mary Colclough rejected rote learning systems of teaching in favour of pupils learning through exposure to a wide vocabulary and range of topics, a variety of dictation exercises and a combination of lessons being interspersed with more formal lectures.

Under the Provincial system of government in New Zealand (1852 to 1876) there was no nationally coordinated teaching system and no minimum qualification required for teachers. During the 1860s, these issues became a focus of public debate in the newspapers, among school Boards and within central government. Mary Colclough was one voice among many who argued for policies which would systematise teaching services on a national level and facilitate the development of teaching as a profession.

21 See review of opening address of her private educational classes in Auckland, DSC 31 October 1871, p.3.

22 Editorial note regarding Mary Colclough's lecture on "Female Education", DSC 31 July 1871, p.2.

23 Queen's College opened in March 1848 and was initially an offshoot of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution which sought to raise the standard of accomplishment within the governess profession and thereby entitle governesses to higher remuneration. It was initially open to ladies from age twelve upwards and offered preparatory classes for young ladies between the ages of nine and twelve. In 1852, the College separated from the Institution and offered both a day school and evening lectures, open to all. [See "Founding of Queen's College" (reprinted in Hollis (1979) p.116.; Janet Dunbar (1953) The Early Victorian Woman: Some Aspects Of Her Life 1837-1872 London, George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., pp.140-143.; Priscilla Robertson (1982) An Experience of Women: Pattern and Change in Nineteenth Century Europe Philadelphia, Temple University Press, pp.471-72.]

24 Throughout her teaching career Mary Colclough taught a range of age groups in both rural and urban schools. The teaching practices mentioned here were used in her private school which specifically catered for older females who wished to gain teaching qualifications. [See DSC 31 October 1871, p.3.]
Mary Colclough was an ardent supporter of compulsory education. In contrast to the view that compulsory education interfered with the liberty of the individual subject, Mary Colclough considered that it protected the weak from the tyranny of the strong, thereby "reliev[ed] little slaves from bondage". In her view, a parent had no more right to deprive their children of knowledge than of food, clothes or shelter:

For the sake of the little ones, I stand up for compulsory education; and I confess I should like to see the State take cognizance of all schools, public and private, regard the children's education as its special care, and legislate alike for rich and poor, securing to each the advantage of educated and efficient teachers.

On this basis she supported State assistance according to means testing of parents so that no child would be left uneducated. Mary Colclough also strongly advocated that all teachers should undergo an examination, hold certificates, pay a license fee, and that lists of licensed teachers be published. Moreover, all schools should be open to inspection, and bonuses should be awarded for extra good management and tuition. As a supporter of non-sectarian education, she believed that denominational schools should be supported by the particular body to which they belonged rather than come under the class of schools that received State aid, but that they should, like State schools, be subject to inspection. Mary Colclough also believed that the most thorough system of learning was to focus on only a few subjects at a time and she advocated competitive examinations and published prize lists as the best system of fostering excellence. She also strongly supported the establishment of a teachers' association and provision for sickness leave and pensions after a number of years service.

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25 She cited the education system in Prussia - in which it was compulsory under pain of fines or imprisonment to send all children to school - as a model system. [See article "Education", DSC 31 January 1870, p.3.]

26 Ibid., p.3.

27 Ibid., p.3.

28 In her article "American Schools" she held up the American system of high taxation to provide free, high quality education as a model worthy of consideration for New Zealand. [See DSC 28 April 1871, p.3.]

29 See articles "The Rising Generation" [DSC 18 November 1869, p.7.], "Education" [DSC 31 January 1870, p.3.], "The Education of Girls" [DSC 21 June 1870, p.4.], "License the Teachers" [DSC 26 November 1870, p.5.] and "Examinations in Ladies' Schools" [DSC 23 January 1871, p.3.].

30 See article "Examinations in Ladies Schools" [DSC 23 January 1871, p.3.] and the report of her opening address of her private educational classes [DSC 31 October 1871, p.3.].

31 See editorial note regarding Mrs Colclough's letter on educational
A persistent theme within the positions Mary Colclough assumed with regard to educational reform related to ensuring financial security for teachers. Throughout her career as a teacher she had experienced and observed many instances which highlighted the inadequacies of educational legislation. She welcomed the Education Act of 1872 as an advancement on the previous Act and considered its advantages to generally outweigh its shortcomings. One important improvement publicised by Mary Colclough was the way the Act strengthened teachers' positions in relation to school committees.

Mary Colclough's positioning within such debates over teachers' conditions and systems of education were not only influenced by her own experiences and concerns as a teacher, but were influenced by her positioning within wider discourses which focused on issues relating to the content and rationale for the education of girls.


32 These were particularly evident within rural areas in which the Government and the local school committees shared responsibility for payment of the teachers' stipends. While Mary Colclough was fully informed of her legal requirements and always stipulated these clearly when applying for positions, she had known of teachers who had not been paid the required amount by the local district and had been forced into manufacturing receipts up to this amount to qualify for the government grant. She also drew attention to the hidden demands on teachers' salaries which were not addressed in the legislation, such as school prizes which were awarded to pupils from the teachers' own salaries. [See "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" *DSC* 31 March 1873, pp.3-4., and article "Examinations in Ladies Schools", *DSC* 23 January 1871, p.3.]


34 Her own experiences while teaching at Tuakau had a significant influence on her support for this aspect of the new legislation. Soon after her appointment to the school at Tuakau in October 1872, she had written to the Inspector of Schools requesting that the school house be relocated closer to the teacher's residence. At that time, it was three quarters of a mile away and in winter the unsealed road was often impassable for weeks at a time. Her request, which was subsequently turned down by the Board of Education, sparked animosity from some local residents who felt that her services could not be bought at the expense of the whole district, particularly as there were plenty of well-educated men and women who would be prepared to accept these conditions. The controversy surrounding the school-house at Tuakau was part of a wider discontent within the Tuakau community regarding educational issues. Public debate regarding the issue of religious education in schools had resurfaced and Mary Colclough's outspoken views on this issue were often contentious. The local community was also against the proposed enlargement of the school district and it was reported in the Central Board of Education column that the local residents were opposed to all aspects of the new Education Act. [See *DSC* 26 February 1873, p.3., Central Board of Education column *NZH* 26 February 1873, p.3., "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" *DSC* 10 March 1873, p.3., "A TUAKAU SETTLER" *DSC* 11 March 1873, p.3., "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" *DSC* 31 March 1873, pp.3-4., article on Tuakau, *NZH* 17 June 1873, p.3.] For other instances of Mary Colclough's controversial dealings with school committees, see Chapter 7.
A dominant theme within colonial discourses which supported the higher education of females was that improved education for girls would better prepare them for the practical duties of 'real life'. Amongst the many advocates of this position was the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross who maintained that preparation should be made in a woman's education for "the intelligent performance of the duties of real life". In a similar vein, the Editor of the New Zealand Herald supported proposals to extend a woman's education, provided they were "of a character to qualify her for the duties expected of her". These practical duties amounted to the prescriptions associated with the roles and responsibilities of wives and mothers, as intellectual companions and true helpmeets to their husbands, and as mothers to the next generation.

Mary Colclough's contemporary, Mrs Frances Shayle George, also supported the need for educational reform and advocated that a standard of female education be fixed, that all teachers be required to pass examinations and that every school be submitted to Government inspection. Her views were premised upon the assumption that "a woman's sphere is not the world, nor to govern the world - but to purify it; to be the leading principle of good order, peace and refinement in man's sole remaining Paradise, his own Home". Mrs George's fundamental concern was that the current educational system was "lamentably deficient" in providing the young girls of the Colony with the teaching and the training "which is to fit, or unfit them to be the future mothers of a great State". The Editor of the Daily Southern Cross, while disassociating himself from being an advocate of "so-called 'women's rights'" and the views that demanded that every sphere of work monopolised by men should be thrown open to women, also premised his support for the intellectual advancement of females on this position. He stated, "[a]nd yet still we mould our educational systems for the intellectual advancement of our boys, while almost ignoring the minds of those who will give birth, and form, and bent to the intellects to come." His concern was supported by the Editor of

35 Editorial, DSC 11 October 1870, p.2.
36 Editorial, NZH 24 July 1871, p.2.
37 "FRANCES SHAYLE GEORGE" NZH 2 March 1872, p.3.
38 Ibid., p.3.
39 Editorial, DSC 11 October 1870, p.2.
the New Zealand Herald who stressed the usefulness of women to society, maintaining that "[i]f our object is to elevate woman and to improve her position socially and materially, then we must educate her for extended usefulness. This we conceive to be the true pathway to progress." According to this writer, woman's "proper position" in the social scale, as assigned by both nature and the law of God, was "a quiescent subjunctive position". A liberal education, as proposed by Mrs George, did not threaten this position:

There is plenty of room in this direction for woman to progress upward and onward, without passing beyond the boundary of her proper position in the social scale. The moment she does that her progress is backward and downward, in spite of anything that can be spoken or written the contrary. In the very nature of things - in the constitution of society - it could not be otherwise.

Hence, while each of these writers supported extending aspects of the education of girls and women, the reforms they proposed reinforced the dominant construction of women's place and role in the social order as being subservient to men:

Disguise it as we may, the great aim of our education of girls is not to fit them for the independent exercise of those gifts which Nature has conferred on them, but for that state of dependence upon others which is set before them as the object of their hopes.

In some of her arguments, Mary Colclough also articulated the position that education "in good hands, and properly imparted" may be a help "to girls whether as wives and mothers". For example, it was such a position which premised her proposal for a large boarding and day-school which, she maintained, would meet the needs of educating girls in a more complete manner to enable them to meet their roles and responsibilities as adults. In her questioning of the causes of, and remedy for, the deficiencies of girls' education, her proposal for a

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40 Editorial, NZH 24 July 1871, p.2.
41 Ibid., p.2.
42 Editorial, DSC 11 October 1870, p.2.
43 See article "Examinations in Ladies' Schools", DSC 23 January 1871, p.3.
44 See article "Good Housewives", DSC 8 May 1871, p.3.
45 Mary Colclough identified the causes of the deficiency of girls' education as being incompetent teachers, the frequent and injudicious changing of schools, and the want of early home discipline. In stressing the need to teach girls self-discipline as a preparation for their future life, she also maintained that children should be made hardy and self-reliant at an early age to shield them from the "rough blasts of adversity" they would encounter as adults. [See article "The Education of Girls", DSC 21 June 1870, p.4., and article "Children", DSC 29 January 1869, p.5.]
"thorough system of female education" went well beyond the position of simply preparing girls for future domestic responsibilities.

Mary Colclough was by no means a lone voice in articulating the position that the practical realities of life held the possibility that not all women would marry or that some may find themselves in the situation of having to support themselves and possibly their children. For example, despite his view that it was appropriate that the education of girls should prepare them for the duties associated with their future state of dependence upon others, the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross acknowledged that:

...in the uncertainty that hangs over life and property, and the future of families, and in the possibility that girls may be called on to make use of every gift that Nature has bestowed, to earn a livelihood for themselves and those who may be dependent on them, there is something more required in their education than that which fits them only for the calm and the sunshine of life, and for gracing the fireside of happy homes. 46

In her articulation of the view that it was absurd to educate girls solely for domestic life, Mary Colclough drew attention to another situation in which women may be faced with the need to support themselves and their dependents, namely, the situation of women married to incompetent providers:

How often have the advocates of women's rights to reiterate that, so long as many women must remain single and self-dependent, many more become poor widows with little ones to support, and some, when married to idle improvident men, really the breadwinners - so long as all these instances of compulsory self-helpfulness in women exist, it is perfectly ridiculous to talk of educating women so as to fit them solely for the domestic sphere. 47

In articulating this position, Mary Colclough was not simply adding to the list of extenuating circumstances by which women might be forced into a "compulsory self-helpfulness"; she effectively challenged the dominant assumption that man was, by nature, woman's protector and better fitted to activities associated with the 'public' sphere. Moreover, the positions she privileged on girls' education also challenged the dominant assumption that the domestic sphere was a woman's proper sphere. This is evident in her statement that "up to the age of seventeen let every girl's education be useful and thorough, with a strong admixture of the domestic element, and at that age let

46 Editorial, DSC 11 October 1870, p.2.
47 See article "Examinations in Ladies' Schools", DSC 23 January 1871, p.3.
her choose her future sphere." (Emphasis added) Hence, while Mary Colclough believed that each girl's choices should be dictated by her particular circumstances, her arguments opened up the position from which to consider female education as being necessary and desirable in enabling women to choose their future spheres. In this respect, Mary Colclough differed from many of her contemporaries who argued for better systems of female education so that women might better fulfil their assigned roles and, only if individual circumstances made it a necessity, enter paid work to support themselves and their children.

A related theme within these discourses of women's education was the argument that educated women would provide a necessary refining and civilising influence on the colony. The Editor of the Daily Southern Cross, for example, made explicit links between the social position of women and the general advancement of civilisation:

It has been often remarked what a relation respect for the general female intellect and general qualifications of woman has borne to the advance of civilisation. As the beast of burden in savage life, as unfitted for entering on the abodes of the blest according to the Arabian faith, the position of woman has experienced degradation and elevation in accordance with the barbarism or intelligence of the age...

This view maintained that because the minds of women exerted great influence in moulding the characters of those with whom they came into contact, educated women were in a position to exert an even greater influence which would be of beneficial effect to society. This argument premised the assertion made by some sectors of Auckland society that the present system of female education was a main factor behind the "growing indifference on the part of young men to marriage" and that this contributed to the growing numbers of men, who, bereft of the necessary restraining moral influences of wives, were succumbing to the evils of drink.

48 See article "Women as Wives", DSC 24 February 1871, p.3.

49 In an Editorial which suggested that the time for "smearing" at issues regarding women's education had passed, the Editor of the Daily Southern Cross conceded that "it is humiliating to think that there is no liberal calling open for ladies who desire to live by their own independent exertions, and that our daughters are only reared for the matrimonial market." (emphasis added) [DSC 1 April 1871, p.2.]

50 Editorial, DSC 11 October 1870, p.2.

51 See, for example, the Editorial in NZH 29 February 1872, p.2.

52 Editorial, DSC 11 October 1870, p.2.
As the earlier discussion of her ontological assumptions showed, Mary Colclough accepted that women were charged by God with special moral duties. Based on her belief that women were better placed to thoroughly educate children in the moral spheres of life, Mary Colclough articulated the view that the more thoroughly educated a woman was, the better she would be able to perform these moral duties. Hence, it was on the basis of the dominant assumption that women's natures and roles were best suited to providing a pure and noble influence on the world, that Mary Colclough maintained that women's spheres of influence should be extended for the good of all of humanity. Mary Colclough also articulated the view that it was a matter of natural justice to educate girls on an equal basis with boys. In doing so, she challenged the dominant assumption that 'nature' had endowed males and females with different intellectual capabilities. Such an assumption, she argued, could not be asserted so long as females continued to receive an inferior education.

Another significant point at which Mary Colclough's views differed from her contemporaries was in the explicit links she made between the current education of females and the political status of wives. As Polly Plum she stated:

All the intelligence and learning of the present day has done very little for women as wives. It has increased their mental status, without ameliorating their condition. It has made them able to think and act reasonably and individually, and yet still insists on tying their hands - educates them like men, treats them like children, and they will rebel.53

Mary Colclough believed that this rebellion would be facilitated through education: "the more they are educated, the more will be their objection to legal subjection".54 This position was in sharp contrast with many advocates of female education who believed that the rights of women would be completely secured through social means. Proponents of the latter view maintained that provision of a better education would elevate women and improve their condition socially and materially:

The question is purely a social one, and any attempt to give it political significance is proof of great ignorance, or bespeaks a love for notoriety which has overcome all regard for sound judgement and sober sense.

53 See article "Woman and her Master", DSC 16 May 1870, p.2.
54 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.
...Nothing can be clearer than that woman's elevation must be social and intellectual, not political.\textsuperscript{55} While advocating that women's social standing be raised, this writer was supportive of the status quo as far as women's political standing was concerned. He accepted that women did have rights which needed to be met, but these amounted to a right to the right sort of education, namely, that which would guarantee woman's 'true' position, which, as mentioned earlier, was held to be a quiescent subjunctive position.

For Mary Colclough, however, the political significance of the question was paramount and the situation would not be remedied until there were changes in the legal position of women. This was most urgent in the area of women's legal status within the institution of marriage.

\textit{Mary Colclough's views on marriage and married women's rights}

Mary Colclough believed that marriage was the holiest and highest institution in life and that a wife's duties, taken on "at God's altar and there promised to perform", constituted the most solemn and holy of missions.\textsuperscript{56} While she accepted the dominant construction of marriage as a 'vocation' ordained by God and, as such, the "most important station on the highway of life", she added that it was not the "terminus".\textsuperscript{57} Given her assertion that all women preferred the vocation of wife and mother, this significature of marriage as not being the terminus in a woman's life could simply have referred to her view that it was a "lamentable fact" that not all women could get husbands because nature had denied some women the charms that win love.\textsuperscript{58} Alternatively, it could have referred to women in her own situation who were widowed and for whom the option of remarrying "seems a change for the worse".\textsuperscript{59} When considered in conjunction with Mary Colclough's assertion that after the age of seventeen each girl should choose her sphere, this construction of marriage could also be understood as

\textsuperscript{55} Editorial, \textit{NZH} 24 July 1871, p.2.
\textsuperscript{56} See article "The School for Wives" \textit{DSC} 18 October 1869, p.4.
\textsuperscript{57} See articles "The Mission of Married Women" [\textit{DSC} 20 January 1869, p.5.] and Social Topics Series, number three (title illegible) [\textit{DSC} 28 October 1869, p.6].
\textsuperscript{58} See article "Women's Work", \textit{DSC} 24 December 1868, p.5.
\textsuperscript{59} See article "What Can She Do?", \textit{DSC} 24 October 1870, p.3.
offering a position from which to challenge the dominant view that marriage should be the goal and focus of every woman's life.

While such views may have challenged dominant constructions of woman's 'proper' place and role, Mary Colclough was passionate in her acceptance of marriage as being a solemn duty, albeit one which required some sacrifices on the part of women. In full accordance with dominant discourses, Mary Colclough described the "mission" of a married woman as being responsible for her household, for the practical and moral training of her children both for this world and for the next, and to lighten the load of her husband. She maintained, however, that it was the husband's income, rather than the pleasures or abilities of the wife, which would determine the extent to which performance of these duties was active or passive. In Mary Colclough's view, if a woman was not prepared to make these sacrifices, she should remain single. Hence, while dominant discourses constructed marriage as the natural and inevitable path for a woman to follow, Mary Colclough articulated a position from which women could resist marriage on the basis of not feeling able or prepared to enter the marriage contract on the terms that God had decreed for that contract.

In maintaining that a wife "is just as dishonest as anyone else that takes the wages of a situation without doing the work", Mary Colclough's construction of marriage in terms of an economic relationship closely mirrors Mary Taylor's analysis that, under current conventions, wives traded their independence for a lifetime of economic maintenance. In contrast to Mary Taylor's position which questioned the importance of a wife actually performing the household duties herself, Mary Colclough, while allowing for the possibility of wives not physically performing such duties themselves, did not believe that wives had a right to be "governed by inclination on this point" and that waste, discomfort and confusion would be the inevitable outcome of wives leaving the management of the household to hirelings. In such cases, she argued, the wife was to blame if her husband was grumbling or even despotic, and she deserved any domestic misery which

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60 See article "The Mission of Married Women", DSC 20 January 1869, p.5.
61 Ibid, p.5. See also her article "The School for Wives", DSC 18 October 1869, p.4.
62 See article "The Mission of a Married Woman", DSC 20 January 1869, p.5.
63 Ibid., p.5.
eventuated: "She deserves no pity: all feeling and sympathy is in favour of her really ill-used husband and unoffending neglected children." Hence there is some tension between the positions which Mary Colclough assumed with regard to a wife's performance of her duties within the marital relationship. On one hand, by virtue of having entered the marriage contract, Mary Colclough constructs the wife as totally responsible for the proper performance of all her wifely duties and accords no blame to the husband for any despotic behaviour in which he may engage in response to the inadequate performance of such duties. On the other hand, however, she was critical of the legal disabilities which married women faced, particularly in cases where the husband was an irresponsible or incompetent provider.

A key to the possible source of the tension between these positions may lie in Mary Colclough's personal experience of the marriage contract. While critical of her husband's extravagant and speculative behaviour which was at great personal and economic cost to herself, she did not, as was the case for Ellen Ellis, privilege the view that each individual must take responsibility for their own shortcomings. Rather, Mary Colclough stressed that unjust social and legal conventions were responsible for this state of affairs. Consequently, she excused her husband from any blame because he was not abusive and never wilfully wronged her or the children. However, despite her husband's incompetency as a provider, Mary Colclough was able to secure paid work herself to provide an income for her family. Hence, her understandings of the injustices of social organisation were simultaneously a product of, and mediated by, her contradictory positioning as breadwinner within discursive practices which only accorded status and recognition of that role when it was fulfilled by a male.

In this respect, Mary Colclough's experience of the marriage relationship, and the meanings she placed on that experience, separated

64 "The School for Wives", DSC 18 October 1869, p.4.

65 Mary Taylor privileged a similar position in "A Tale" in which the main character, on reflection on her life of poverty and hardship, came to the conclusion that "I have learned that my sufferings...were owing to no ill-will or malignity on the part of those who inflicted them, but were the inevitable consequences of social arrangements, that one or two individuals could neither resist nor contravene. I was cruelly used; and it was, so to say, nobody's fault." [Taylor (1873) p.395.]
her from the situations of many women who, because their husbands did engage in despotic and abusive behaviours, lived in households where there was no source of reliable income. Consequently, her condemnation of wives who did not perform their marital duties in full needs to be understood as a product of her complex and contradictory positioning within religious, social, and legal discourses relating to the obligations of wives within the institution of marriage. The positions she privileged need to be appreciated within the context of her own experience of the injustices of social organisation as well as within the context of her conviction that a legal contract was binding and, once entered, must be followed to the letter. To excuse wives from their obligations on the basis of the injustices of the current legal position of wives, would not only have been inconsistent with her high moral principles which required strict adherence to contractual responsibilities, but would also have undermined any arguments for change to legislation concerning the rights of married women.

Fundamental to Mary Colclough's complex positioning within discourses of marriage was her belief that, while marriage represented some women's only chance for emancipation from parental rule, the only acceptable reason for women to marry was for love. She believed that the crucial element in any marriage was that both parties were governed by the same moral and religious principles. This was imperative because, at the altar, a woman placed herself, her goods and her future "almost absolutely at the disposal of another". Mary Colclough maintained that in the ideal situation, namely, where both parties were governed by the same moral and religious principles and where each was "one in heart, one in thought, one in faith", there was no reason for the wife to refuse implicit obedience in all important things. Hence, she constructed wifely obedience as conditional; it was ordained by God as a Christian obligation rather than a legal bond:

God meant, and St. Paul enjoins, that every Christian wife should practice all the Christian duties toward her husband, but He never meant this Christian obligation to be tortured into a legal bond to bind a woman down as the legal bond-slave of her husband, giving him entire power

66 See articles "On Writing Novels", DSC 16 December 1868, p.4., "Useless Women", DSC 30 September 1869, p.5.; and "POLLY PLUM" DSC 27 November 1869, p.4.

67 See article "Lords of the Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.

68 Ibid., p.7.; see also "POLLY PLUM" DSC 13 March 1871, p.3.
over her children, and the unlimited control of her money.\textsuperscript{69}

Mary Colclough also articulated a position which implied that marriage was ultimately and inevitably a form of servitude:

At the altar she completely sinks her identity - she places herself, her goods, her future almost absolutely at the disposal of another. When that other is completely at one with herself - one in heart, one in thought, one in faith, one in life - the chain, though it exists, is never felt, never galls. But how often does it happen that the rosey garland of love and truth is not there to hide the fetters! And then how black, how bitter, how real the yoke is, none can know but those who feel it. What a risk there is in marriages! (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{70}

In employing the imagery of chains, fetters and yokes, Mary Colclough seems to suggest that even in the ideal situation, "the rosey garland of love and truth" can only ever hide what is, in the final analysis, a relationship of bondage. Such a position, however, is in tension with her construction of marriage as being the "holiest and highest" institution in life. This ambivalence between the Christian ideal and her description of marriage as a union in which the wife completely loses her identity, needs to be understood as an inevitable outcome of the legal position of wives at that time.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the dominant construction of marriage was that it was a union for life in which, while the husband and wife formed a single entity, the husband retained the status of 'master'. As the sole guardian of the children, the husband held full financial and legal responsibility for both his children and his wife. Until the Married Women's Property Act of 1884, a wife's property, be it acquired prior to, during, or after the marriage, passed into the absolute control of her husband. Having no separate legal status also meant that a wife could not write a will without prior written consent from her husband and, if she left the marriage, she would lose her children as well as any maintenance. In short, the legal position of married women in New Zealand prior to 1884 could be summarised as wives having no independent legal status, no control over their property and no guardianship of their children.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{69} "POLLY PLUM" NEH 31 July 1871, p.3.

\textsuperscript{70} See article "Lords of the Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.

\textsuperscript{71} Throughout the nineteenth century, New Zealand legislation regarding marriage and the rights of married women was closely modelled on British laws. There were two Acts which offered some legal protection to wives. The Married Women's Property Protection Acts (1860 and 1870) allowed for
According to Mary Colclough, it was "the tremendous and unfair legal jurisdiction over themselves, their children, and their property" that constituted women's main complaint. In her view, the most fearful example of the errors in the marriage laws could be seen in cases where women did not marry the men they lived with because their legal status as married women did not enable them to fulfil their responsibilities for home and children if their male partner was a drunkard or incompetent provider. She described this situation as "iniquitous" and believed that the marriage laws were being used as a shelter under which married women were being oppressed: current legislation offered no protection from any abuse of extreme authority exercised by the husband within a marriage and, in effect, acted to sanction any such abuse. For Mary Colclough, this amounted to wives being placed in a situation of legal subjection.

As was the case for Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough's sexual positioning had a crucial impact on her views with regard to the status of married women. At the age of twenty five she had married a farmer thirty years her senior and had two children within the first three years of marriage. In a letter not intended for publication, she described her husband as "not a bad, but a thoroughly unbusinesslike, unenergetic man [who] spent pounds and pounds of his wife's earnings in profitless and even in ruinous speculations". It was obviously not an easy marriage

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72 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 6 February 1871, p.6.
73 See article "Drink", DSC 31 March 1871, p.3.
74 "POLLY PLUM" NZH 14 August 1871, p.3. Similarly, Ellen Ellis wrote: "None but the drunkard's wife can know the exquisite torture he can inflict under the shadow of the law". [See "A WOMAN" DSC 13 October 1870, p.2.]
75 Mary Barnes married Thomas Caesar Colclough on 9 May 1861 at Onehunga. Her daughter, Mary Louise Colclough, was born at Papatoetoe on 1 November 1862 and her son, William Caesar Sarsfield, was born at Otahuhu on 26 January 1864. Her husband died on 29 July 1867. [See entry in Orange (ed.) (1993) pp.92-93.]
76 See letter titled "Answers to "Jellaby Pater"", NZH 18 August 1871, p.3.
as can be seen in her recollection of one occasion in which "all the little home comforts she had gathered around her, by unremitting toil" were repossessed due to her husband's "mistakes" and she was left with her two children, the eldest not yet two years old, on the bare floor.77 In reflecting on her own experiences, Mary Colclough concluded that "[t]he fault was just this: I was the breadwinner, whilst he had all the breadwinner's powers and privileges, and such a position leads naturally to many troubles and complications."78 As a widow, however, Mary Colclough's status reverted back to that of feme sole and this would no doubt have sharpened her awareness of the injustices of her former legal status as a married woman. No longer being legally subjected to a husband and being economically independent, although by no means well off, would also have provided greater opportunity in speaking out publicly on the injustices of the social and legal position of wives and mothers. She constantly insisted that it was not the institution of marriage itself that was at fault, but the legal subjection of wives which interfered with women fulfilling their God-given duties.79 In contrast to Mary Taylor who believed that only women could change this situation through their own exertions, Mary Colclough stressed that it was men, and Christian men in particular, who needed to assume responsibility for changing this situation:

The cries of wronged women and helpless children rise to God bearing witness to the deep blot on our country's fair scroll, and believe me, Christian men, so long as you defend this law; so long as you even tacitly oppose reform, no matter how excellent and admirable you may be in your own family relations; no matter how pure and good and holy your moral and religious views may be, so long as you defend the existing marriage laws; so long as you are opposed to the doctrine of perfect legal equality between man and woman, so long do you share the blame of all the sin and shame born of these evils; so long are you in part answerable not only to man, but to your God, for every robbery and every brutality committed under their shelter.80

Mary Colclough subsequently wrote to the *New Zealand Herald* to clarify that this had been intended as a personal letter for the Editor to pass on to "Jellaby Pater" and that had she known it would be published she would not have disclosed private details of her own marriage. [See "POLLY PLUM" *NZH* 21 August 1871, p.3.]

77 See letter titled "Answers to "Jellaby Pater"", *NZH* 18 August 1871, p.3.

78 "POLLY PLUM" *NZH* 21 August 1871, p.3.

79 See, for example, her article "Women's Property and Women's Plagues" in which she wrote: "what a terrible burden we have made by our laws of what God intended to be a holy institution of maternal love." [DSC 29 July 1870, p.4.]

80 "POLLY PLUM" *NZH* 31 July 1871, p.3.
Hence, Mary Colclough sought equality for women under the law not only on the basis of this being necessary for the efficient fulfilment of women's role as moral guardian within the home but also as a matter of basic equity. Whereas the current marriage laws were premised on the assumption that the husband represented the interests of the wife in all matters of importance, Mary Colclough's particular concern was for women who had to assume the responsibilities of men. She maintained that women in these situations should be entitled to the same power and privileges as men. This assumption is also evident in her positioning within discourses relating to the enfranchisement of women.

Mary Colclough's views on women's suffrage

The publication of Mary Miller's pamphlet "An Appeal to the Men of New Zealand" in 1869 stimulated debate throughout the colony on the issue of women's franchise. In August of that year, in an article entitled "What Have Women to do with Politics?", Mary Colclough stated "I am not particularly anxious that votes should be allowed. I think they ought in common fairness, yet I will not press it". In this article, Mary Colclough articulated the commonly held position that married women did not need an "active" share in politics because they could generally influence their husbands. With regard to women who were "actively engaged in the world" as householders and taxpayers, however, she assumed a different position. For these women, Mary Colclough believed it was a matter of "common fairness" that they be able to express an opinion and share the privileges that were accorded to men. She also refuted the argument that women were unfit for politics, stating that "some of the best and most able sovereigns the world has known were women".

Five weeks after this article was published, Mary Colclough raised the issue again in the context of articulating her views on the legal position of women:

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81 See article "The Legal Position of Woman", DSC 15 September 1869, p.6.
82 DSC 4 August 1869, p.5.
83 Ellen Ellis expressed a similar view. While she described herself as a "Conservative" and as taking no interest in the female suffrage question, she added that hers was a "conservatism of ignorance" and that there was no reason to believe that women's influence would be harmful to politics. As a matter of justice, she maintained that "women holding property ought to hold an interest in the state". [See "A WOMAN" NZH 29 September 1870, p.3.; DSC 27 February 1871, p.3.]
84 Ibid., p.5.
It may be that to married women electoral rights would create endless confusion, and in cases where they do nothing and do not contribute individually one penny to the revenue their claim hangs on a very slight thread; but the law should give those women who are householders and taxpayers, who have a definite stake in the question of government, a right to vote, and unless it does, women will argue, and agitate, and take up an antagonistic position.85

Mary Colclough was adamant that education and circumstances, and not sex alone, should dictate legal entitlements. As was the case with Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough identified that the right to vote was an issue of power. She believed that independent women, whom she referred to as "self-helping women", should be entitled to the same opportunities and channels of influence as men on the basis that "[t]he right to vote is a power: men find their votes of use in giving them position and influence. Why should self-helping women not share in any privilege likely to help them in their struggle for a livelihood?"86 A few months later, however, when she raised the issue in her first public lecture, she had moved to a position of support for the vote being extended to married women. While insisting that the question of women's right to vote in elections was not one of inclination but one of equity,87 she made reference to the fact that at many elections it was drunken men who played a leading part and that this was a bitter satire on man's boasted superiority. In asserting that a sober woman would be better than a drunken man under such circumstances, Mary Colclough concluded that if granting the franchise to women would mitigate such evils she would heartily like to see women go to the polls.88

85 See article "The Legal Position of Woman", DSC 15 September 1869, p.6.
86 "FOLLY PLUM" DSC 6 February 1871, p.6.
87 The review of her lecture which appeared in the New Zealand Herald misrepresented Mary Colclough's views on this point, however she corrected some of these inaccuracies in a letter to the Editor the following day. [See NZH 27 June 1871, p.2., and "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" 28 June 1871, p.3.]
88 NZH 27 June 1871, p.2. Mr. R.J. Creighton was another of the few public voices at this time who related the issue of female franchise to the problems associated with drunkenness. Largely responsible for ensuring that women were conferred the right to vote in the suppression of the liquor traffic, Creighton stated in a letter to the Editor: "Indeed, I see no good reason why principle should not be carried much further. I see no sufficient reason for withholding the elective franchise from females. They are subject to the same laws, and contribute to the revenue in like manner, as males; they are on the average quite as intelligent, and there can be no reason to doubt that they would exercise the franchise quite as honestly as men." ["R.J.CREIGHTON" DSC 23 February 1871, p.3.]
The following year when Mary Colclough was leaving Auckland to take up a teaching position in Tuakau, she had moved again in her positioning with regard to the issue of franchise. Speaking at her public farewell, she articulated a more radical position, stating that she believed the time would come when women would be eligible to fill any office in Church or State. By the time she gave her public lecture on "Woman's Rights" at Ngaruawahia in April 1873, her arguments, at least to the Editor of the Waikato Times, were considered to be well-worn:

The franchise question as a matter of course came in for its share of attention. The old doctrine, that those who are governed have a right to have a say as to how this shall be done, also as to the expenditure of the revenue to which they contribute. It was true that women at present knew very little of politics. But why was this? Simply that having no say in matters political it was useless for them to study the questions of the day; enfranchise them and matters would soon mend.

Increased public familiarity with arguments for women's franchise, however, did not signify increased support for granting women the vote. The review of her lecture "Women's Rights and Men's Wrongs Towards Them" given at Alexandra in April 1873 stated "[w]ith the exception of her claim that women should be entitled to the franchise, there appeared very little anyone felt inclined to cavil at in her address". In response to her argument that a sober woman's vote would be better than a drunken man's vote, however, "JANIE PLUM" had a warning for Polly Plum:

...but remember, Polly, that a sober woman's vote would not retard the drunken man's vote, and be pleased to remember that drunken women would also enjoy the same privilege. What would then ensue? it would be confusion upon confusion; indeed, one might fill volumes about the evils that would ensue in granting the franchise to women. I earnestly hope the men will not be so blind to their own interests and ours, as to grant it.

Although Mary Colclough did not respond to this warning, as an active member of the temperance movement she would have shared "JANIE PLUM's" concern regarding the abuses associated with alcohol.

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89 See reviews of public farewell to Mary Colclough in NZH 27 September 1872, p.3., and DSC 27 September 1872, p.3.
80 See review of lecture, WT 17 April 1873, p.2.
81 DSC 17 April 1873, p.2.
82 "JANIE PLUM" NZH 2 August 1871, p.3.
83 Mary Colclough distanced herself generally from "JANIE PLUM's" views in a letter responding to her critics. (See "POLLY PLUM" NZH 14 August 1871,
Mary Colclough's views on alcohol

Mary Colclough was a member of both the Temperance Society and the Auckland Alliance for the Suppression of Liquor Traffic and wrote and lectured frequently on the subject of drink. While she was critical of what she described as a lack of an essential spirit of unity within the Temperance Society, her views on the evils of alcohol were uncompromising. In her opinion, alcohol constituted a "potent source of evils" and her public condemnation of drunkenness was succinct: "It takes the income, it exhausts all provision for comfort and happiness, and it had nothing to show in return for the outlay but impaired health and ruined credit." Having been a supporter of moderation for many years, her experiences as a prison visitor, coupled with a visit to Chancery Lane, led her to become a firm teetotaller. Convinced that alcohol was the reason why most bad husbands were bad, on the strength of her convictions she took the controversial step of drawing attention to the "dreadfully prevalent vice" of drunkenness in the colonies in a letter written to the London Times correcting some misconceptions about life for female emigrants in New Zealand.

In March 1872 she spoke at a special meeting of the Auckland Total Abstinence Society, convened for the purpose of taking measures to prevent the granting of new licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquor. At this meeting, which reportedly had more than one thousand people present, Mary Colclough argued that it was necessary for the Government to take responsibility for putting down drunkenness and that representatives of this cause should support the case at the Assembly. In rejecting the view that this approach was attempting to make people

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94 Immediately prior to her leaving Auckland in September 1872, Mary Colclough made a formal complaint regarding the lack of assistance given to her in her work by this Society. She also felt slighted at not having been proposed for the position of committee-woman at the Annual General Meeting and notified the Society that she would now refuse to be available for such a position even though the omission of her nomination had been unintentional. [See Editorial note, NZH 23 September 1872, p.2.]

95 See article "Drink", DSC 31 March 1871, p.3.

96 Her letter was reprinted in NZH 14 July 1873, p.3. It gained attention both in England and in New Zealand, was criticised harshly by the Editor of the New Zealand Herald, and was disputed by one particular woman who had recently returned to London after living in New Zealand for five years. [See Editorial, NZH 14 July 1873, p.2., "HARRIET H. HERBERT" NZH 22 July 1873, p.3.]
moral by Acts of Parliament, she claimed that such legislation was needed to prevent people from being outrageous. 97

Her main concern, however, focused on finding practical remedies to assist women in escaping from the debilitating cycle of drunkenness and poverty. In October 1871 she publicised a strategy whereby concerned members of the public could provide security to shopkeepers for needlework for discharged female prisoners. Many such women, whom she described as having the characters of "common drunkards", constantly approached her for money and clothes following their discharge from prison. Believing it short-sighted to offer them money or articles which could immediately be sold to support their drinking addictions, but wishing to offer some means by which these women could obtain gainful employment, Mary Colclough invited concerned members of the public to put forward a bond of about five or ten shillings which could be forwarded to the shopkeepers as a security for outwork. If the women stole or pawned this work, as some were likely to do, they would forfeit their opportunity to receive such assistance again. For those who sincerely wished to reform their habits, however, such a scheme offered practical assistance in obtaining honest remunerative employment. 98

Mary Colclough's proposal to provide opportunities for these women to support themselves, bears testimony to her analysis of the relationship between alcohol, inadequate education, and the plight of many of these groups of women. In her letters and articles to the newspapers and in her public lectures, she continually stressed the links between the abuses of alcohol and the need for education. 99 In the course of her regular prison visiting, she had seen children, whose mothers were serving sentences, growing up thinking of the gaol as their home. While her outspokenness on the less than satisfactory conditions in the gaol for female prisoners and her practical attempts to support these

97 Accordingly, Mary Colclough moved "That this meeting approves the action of the Auckland Alliance in its efforts to prevent the granting of any new licenses to sell intoxicating liquors in the City of Auckland, and pledges itself to support the Alliance in its canvass of the city against the new licenses applied for." The motion was seconded and carried unanimously. [See report of special meeting of the Auckland Alliance for the Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, NZH 21 March 1872 p.2.]

98 "MARY A. COlCLough" DSC 12 October 1871, p.3.

99 See, for example, her article "Drink", DSC 31 March 1871, p.3., and her letters regarding female prisoners in Mt. Eden gaol and the need for an Auckland women's home [DSC 25 September 1871, p.3., 4 October 1871, p.5.].
women raised public criticism, one of Mary Colclough's fundamental concerns was that young children should not spend their early years growing up surrounded by "criminal influences" and thereby increase their prospects of joining the "criminal class" in their adult lives.

Mary Colclough also argued for the abolition of public houses on the basis that probably ninety-nine percent of prisoners were in gaol because of alcohol-related offenses. She claimed a standpoint for women on the issue of the Permissive Bills on the basis that women were the greatest sufferers, "not only in their homes, but in their bruised and beaten bodies, from the sin of drunkenness in men". As a supporter of prohibition, Mary Colclough's position on the Permissive Clause was very clear:

I question very much if it makes any difference to the ill-used wife whether her husband got drunk on adulterated liquor, or on the pure spirits of the Crown Distillery, unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that good whiskey (sic) produces only light beatings, and that the heavy ones are due to the extreme adulteration of the drink. It will also have to be clearly shown to the wives of drunkards that good whiskey (sic) for their husbands is preferable to good bread for their children. Unless this can be proved I think we should find the women are advocates of the Permissive Clause.

In an article published in the Daily Southern Cross entitled "Woman and her Master", Mary Colclough argued that a law was needed to make husbands obliged to hand over a certain portion of their incomes to their wives for household expenses. This, she maintained, would do more than any Permissive Bill to prevent drunkenness and to enable wives to get justice without having to resort to the absolute break-up of all conjugal relations.

The positions Mary Colclough advocated around issues concerning women and alcohol were clearly influenced by her political analysis of women's social and legal position. Underlying her proposals for ameliorating the situations of women who were either drunkards

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100 See Chapter 7.

101 See "MARY A. COLCLough" DSC 4 October 1871, p.5.


103 See article "Drink", DSC 31 March 1871, p.3.

104 Ibid., p.3.

105 See DSC 16 May 1870, p.7.
themselves or who were married to drunks, was an insistence on the need to effect changes within all aspects of women's social and legal situation to both enable women to be self-dependent where necessary and to better fulfil their God-given duties.

In 1870, a correspondent who signed him/herself "G.M." made the following observation in response to the articles by Polly Plum:

Hitherto, in these colonies, we have heard very little about 'woman's rights,' and what we have heard has come to us across the ocean. Would it not be well to consider whether any good will result from attempting to force the subject upon public attention? ... Change is not necessarily progress, and, if any alteration takes place in the desired direction, it will be brought about silently and quietly, by the efforts of women, individually, to retain the affection of their husbands, far more surely than by any noisy demonstration or agitation.106

The following year "NEMO" wrote "I cannot say that 'Women speaking on a public platform' is a means to bring about reform in anything, but by temperate writing much good may be done,- it ventilates the subject."107 Mary Colclough clearly believed that some good could come out of forcing the subject of women's rights upon public attention and that women speaking on a public platform was an effective way of ventilating the subject of women's rights. In her writings, lectures, and daily social practices, she challenged many accepted notions of women's social, economic and legal situation. Drawing on a range of discursive strategies from sometimes contradictory discourses, she presented a sustained set of arguments for enlarging women's traditional spheres with regard to education, employment, and political activity.

106 "G.M." DSC 31 May 1870, p.6.
107 "NEMO" NZH 10 August 1871, p.3.
CHAPTER 11

WILLING CHANGES

THE DISCURSIVE PRACTICES OF ELLEN ELLIS

The dominant feature of Ellen Ellis' subjectivity was her belief that there was a "divine plan to the moral universe" and that the purpose of mortal life was for women and men to form their souls. As was shown in Chapter 8, her underlying ontological assumptions regarding woman's nature and man's nature and the relations between the sexes cohered around this belief. While this premise was integrally connected to her religious beliefs, as a dimension of her subjectivity its significance needs to be understood as something beyond being simply a feature of her positioning within religious discourses. Rather, it needs to be understood and represented as a form of 'spirituality' which infused her positioning within all discursive fields.

In the preface to her novel, Everything Is Possible To Will, Ellen Ellis stated that the explicit purpose of her narrative was to prove that women "are crippled by their enforced ignorance and degraded social position...in their God-given work to bless mankind" in both public and private life.¹ In reconstructing many aspects of her own life through the fictional character of Zela (Zee), Ellen Ellis' novel offers a critical commentary on the social and legal position of women during the nineteenth century. In doing so, the reader is offered many positions from which to construct political understandings of women's socialisation and education and their socially defined roles as wives and mothers. Through a consideration of aspects of Ellen Ellis' own life and writings, and her fictional representation of the character Zee, this chapter will explore features of Ellen Ellis' discursive practices through consideration of the positions she privileged within discourses of femininity, education, marriage and married women's rights, temperance and religion.

¹ Ellis (1882) p.iv.
Ellen Ellis' views on religion

Ellen Ellis was raised within a tradition of staunch sectarian Protestantism. Her father, William Colebrook, is said to have lived his life in strict accordance with the Ten Commandments and to have sought the daily guidance of God in both his farming and personal affairs. He was apparently a man of contradictions, warm and loving to his family, yet stern in his religious beliefs and observances. Ellen Ellis remembered him as a loving father who quietly lived his religion:

His unwearied industry, unswerving integrity, unwavering love, with a singularly happy temperament, and broad unsectarian piety, made it quite impossible for his children to choose an evil course. In his family his lips were beautifully silent on religion: he just lived Christ, and had the rare grace to let his life do all the talking.

Ellen Ellis was deeply influenced by the "dark theology" to which her father subscribed. Foremost among the beliefs of the Protestant sect to which her father belonged were the principles of 'original sin', 'predestination' and 'election'. Ellen was raised with the strong commitment to putting her beliefs into daily practice and to testify to others that they too may be among the saved.

Despite being raised within an Old Testament tradition, Ellen Ellis did not conceptualise God as a "remote, nebulous figure sitting in judgement well away above the clouds". Rather,

He was a very-much-alive Entity, present in every room, watching every move, aware of every thought. He was a stern father-figure, kindly if one did entirely as He decreed, instantly angry if one strayed the least from the Path of Righteousness.

Although Ellen Ellis' husband had been raised within the Church of England, Oliver Ellis did not share his wife's commitment to religious

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2 In researching her biography of Ellen Ellis, Vera Colebrook was unable to ascertain to which sect William Colebrook belonged although she located its basic tenets as being common to many of the splinter groups which formed under the Methodism of John and Charles Wesley. [See Colebrook (1980) pp.15-16.] In Everything Is Possible To Will Zee's father is described as a "Bethel-pillar". [Ellis (1882) p.43.]

3 Colebrook (1980) p.11,16.

4 See, for example, references made of William Colebrook by his son John at a speech given in 1901 at a family reunion. [Colebrook (1980) p.16.]

5 "A WOMAN" DSC 3 November 1870, p.3.


7 Ibid., p.39.
principles and this proved to be an ongoing source of conflict in their marriage.⁶ According to Vera Colebrook's account,

> Before marriage, Oliver had regarded Ellen's rigid Calvinism with mild amusement. To him, religion was a permissible female hobby like water-colours and, as his wife, Ellen would, of course, go with him to the Church of England. But this she could not do. She sincerely believed that only members of her particular Sect would survive the Day of Judgement, and that if she departed from these teachings, even in the slightest, God would punish her.⁹

There were inherent tensions between the religious teachings Ellen Ellis has been raised to accept and the social and legal construction of her status and prescribed behaviours as a wife. While her religion required strict obedience to the teachings of her sect, within the marriage contract she was required to submit to the authority of her husband. The immediate implications of her complex positioning within these discourses were that on the basis of her religious convictions she could, on some matters, refuse to accept her husband's authority.¹⁰

Ellen Ellis' positioning with regard to adherence to the religious precepts of her upbringing changed significantly during her life. Within her novel, Ellen Ellis' representation of Zee's spiritual awakening involved Zee coming to the realisation that she had "permitted herself to be talked into adopting [an] order of saintliness" which amounted to "a kind of top-dressing, to be put on and off at will, a something outside and apart from herself" (emphasis added).¹¹ In effect, Ellen Ellis constructed Zee's moral development

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⁶ However, as discussed in Chapter 7, Oliver supported Ellen in the stand she took on the issue of the amalgamation of the church. While this could simply have been a reaction by Oliver to the attempts of church officials to exercise authority over his wife, and thereby undermining his authority, a letter written by Oliver Ellis to the Daily Southern Cross in January 1872 suggests that he had become more lenient in his religious views. The letter, written in response to "H.I." who had suggested that he had become more lenient in his religious views. The letter, written in response to "H.I." who had suggested that a day be set aside each week to pray to God regarding Auckland's water shortages, decried the hypocrisy and "white-chokerism" of the Auckland public. Oliver Ellis stated "[e]ach of us should at all times and hours seek of Hm relief and assistance" and trust that "our beneficent Almighty will in His good time supply our wants as He sees fit". ["O.S. ELLIS" DSC 20 January 1872, p.2.]

⁹ Ibid., p.39.

¹⁰ In this respect, the implications of her positioning were similar to those of Mary Taylor and Mary Colclough. All three women utilised the protestant conception that there should be no intermediary authority between an individual and God as a means of asserting women's autonomy as individuals.

¹¹ Ellis (1882) p.43. She also made reference to the uselessness of "mere lip religion" and stated that "Orthodoxy is not Christianity". [See letters signed "A WOMAN", DSC 3 November 1870, p.1. and 13 October 1870, p.2.]
as dependent upon a rejection of the type of religion upon which Ellen Ellis was raised. Her underlying critique was of adherence to socially-defined codes, in this case, codes of religious conduct, which separated women from their innate "intelligent goodness" and hence required that a woman act outside or apart from herself. Consequently, the relevance of her critique extended to religious codes beyond those in which she was raised:

And becoming, by 'making a profession of religion,' a worse, not a better, woman - a Pharisee, exclusive and repelling - she lost much of the ingenuity native to her, and substituted a conventional pretentiousness which taught her to shun, as she would shun the devil, all who were professedly less favored (sic) on heaven than herself, lest she should fly in the face of Providence and imperil her 'precious, never-dying soul.'

In relegating the teachings of her own youth to the status of "misdirected conscientiousness", Ellen Ellis maintained that the conscientiousness of Christians would only be turned to good account "when once men understand that they have souls to form, in contradistinction to the popular notion of souls to save. The formed soul is the saved soul."  

As Zee's moral development progressed, she gradually assumed the position that sectarian jealousies were "childish" and needed to be put aside to achieve good for all people. This was the position that Ellen Ellis came to assume in her own life. In a letter to the newspapers regarding the Contagious Diseases legislation, she wrote "[t]he good and true of all sects, and of both sexes, should live and work together for noble ends - for the happiness, not the misery of the people." Her biographer, Vera Colebrook, attributes this change in her religious views to a conversion to New Testament christianity through the teachings of Rev. Samuel Edger. Colebrook writes:

It seems perhaps strange to talk of Ellen being converted to Christianity, but in effect this is what happened. In spite of certain reservations, her religion had remained that of the Old Testament. 'Vengeance is mine! I will repay! saith the Lord.' Now she opened her heart and mind to the gentler teachings of Christ, to tolerance, kindliness, and good neighbourliness. The transformation

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12 Ellis (1882) p.43. This contrasting of the 'natural' and the 'artificial' is a recurring theme within the writing of Ellen Ellis.

13 Ibid., p.44.

14 Ibid., p.vii.

15 "ELLEN E. ELLIS" NZH 23 September 1882, p.5.
did not happen overnight, of course, but she presently came to see, she says, how much her 'crepe and bombazine theology' and her 'whip and scorpion administration of it' had contributed to the unhappiness of her marriage.\textsuperscript{16}

There can be little doubt that the teachings and personal support of the Rev. Samuel Edger had an enormous positive influence on Ellen Ellis. On one occasion she wrote to the newspaper to publicly express her support and respect for his teachings.\textsuperscript{17} In her novel she also paid tribute to his teachings and, identifying him by name, stated "from whom she has received almost every thought that has made life precious, and well worth the living; to whom she would lovingly dedicate this book if certain that he would esteem it a compliment".\textsuperscript{18} Rev. Edger's religious views would have held strong appeal to Ellen Ellis. As a radical and outspoken Nonconformist, Samuel Edger rejected all sectarianism, institutionalism and theology, believing these to be hindrances to "true" Christianity. He also made "scathing attacks" on the hypocrisy behind the church-going of many fashionable and respectable citizens.\textsuperscript{19} His views on total abstinence and his ongoing active participation in the temperance movement would also have enhanced his status in the eyes of Ellen Ellis.\textsuperscript{20} He was a strong advocate of women's rights and an "uncompromising pacifist" who believed that war was not only "dishonourable" but "essentially cruel and cowardly".\textsuperscript{21}

While acknowledging the significance of the contribution of the Rev. Samuel Edger's teachings on Ellen Ellis' spiritual development, it would be both simplistic and reductionist to merely attribute the changes in her religious positioning to a conversion to New Testament principles. The critique she offered of organised forms of religion needs to be understood both within the context of, and as an integral part of, her subjective positioning within a wider range of discursive

\textsuperscript{16} Colebrook (1980) p.142.

\textsuperscript{17} See "A WOMAN" DSC 13 October 1870, p.2. For a contrasting opinion on Rev. Edger's ministry, see extract from letter by "A MAN", DSC 17 October 1870, p.2.

\textsuperscript{18} Ellis (1882) p.198.

\textsuperscript{19} Elphick (1974) p.143.

\textsuperscript{20} In his obituary it was stated: "Perhaps Auckland had no stouter champion of Good Templarism and total abstinence principles than Mr Edger, and he was ever ready to give his service and the aid of his pen for the cause of temperance reform." [NZH 6 October 1882, p.5.]

\textsuperscript{21} Elphick (1974) p.143., see also "SAMUEL EDGER" DSC 8 April 1871, p.3.
fields and cannot be separated from her analysis of the relative position and status of women within all forms of social organisation.

Ellen Ellis' views on femininity

Through the character of Zee, Ellen Ellis comments on the processes by which girls are socialised into the "conventionalism" that society requires of women. Whereas society requires that women fit a particular model of womanhood, Zee struggles throughout her life to be true to her own heart, "to be appreciated as she is" and "to be rather than to seem". Zee's struggle, therefore, is with the social codes that require that she devote her every thought and act to learning her place and role in life, namely, to secure a husband, fulfil his wants and needs, and raise his children.

From an early age, Zee enjoyed an active engagement with the world, her favourite pursuits being to scramble through hedges and climb trees: "No thought of young ladyism deterred her, she only wished that girls dressed like boys; frocks would tell tales of climbing." The conventional codes of girls' dress not only detracted from her ability to engage in these pursuits, but also betrayed her as having engaged in behaviour unfitting for a young lady. As a consequence of her being "excused" from school early for being a "dunce", Zee was never properly 'finished' as a young lady. It was not only the social codes associated with being a 'lady' that Zee was struggling against. Nature had not only made her tall and given her a brew that was "too lofty for a woman", but she was considered to be "peculiar" in her rustic simplicity: "As shaggy without and within as a Shetland pony, she is a forlorn hope to herself and to her friends, who can make nothing of the inexplicable girl of the untamable soul." Consequently, Zee was dubbed a "character" and she accepted this "distinctive appellation as a badge of disgrace". Her 'peculiarity' was attributed to the fact that she was "singular in all she says and does" and "seasonable in nothing". It was not that she was completely devoid of accomplishments befitting a young lady; she was adept in needlework and

23 Ellis (1882) p.8,130.
24 Ibid., p.4.
25 Ibid., p.7.
26 Ibid., p.10.
27 Ibid., p.8.
able to cook better than any of her sisters.\textsuperscript{27} The problem was that Zee would "submit to no paring-down process" and would only bow to conventionalism with ill grace.\textsuperscript{28} Because "conventionalism possesses no elasticity", the reader is left in no doubt that the signs were not good for her future.\textsuperscript{29} As the narrator warns, "[t]he danger is that, instead of living out her true life, she will submit to the conventional paring down against which her own soul wisely revolted at that time.\textsuperscript{30}"

Despite her reluctance to bow to conventionalism, Zee had her dreams and these included love and marriage.\textsuperscript{31} She believed she was worth loving even though it was unlikely that any man would discover this:

> Easy to be won she would not be, however unlikely to be sought. The few beings of either sex whom she deigned to honor (sic) with her esteem must bear the wear and tear of a life-long friendship, into which compact she never entered lightly, even with a girl.\textsuperscript{32}

When Wrax, who had been courting both Zee and her sister Sadai, revealed to Zee on the eve of her leaving for a trip to Scotland that she was his favourite of the two, Zee, while feeling "a puzzled sort of gratitude at his having singled her out as the object of special favor (sic)...was conscious of no tender sentiment, no aching void within which he alone could fill".\textsuperscript{33} While this suggests that Zee assumed the position that love should be the main impetus for marriage, Zee's mother articulated the position that love would grow after marriage. Her parents also assumed that if Wrax loved Zee, she must love him and they complimented Zee on Wrax being all that could be desired in a future husband.

With nine daughters, there were obviously many investments operating for her parents to encourage Zee to marry Wrax, especially as she had shown no interest in the rituals of courtship and had not had any other suitors. In part to escape, and in part to resolve these contradictory

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p.12.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p.13,8.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p.13.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p.16.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p.17.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.17.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p.23.
messages, coupled with her own hesitations regarding Wrax's suitability as a husband and her own conflicting feelings toward him, Zee went on a trip to Scotland and managed to delay her return home for a year in the hope that Wrax would find someone else to love. On her return, the narrator announces that Zee had matured; not only was she "every inch a woman, possessing a quiet confidence", but "Zee had changed grievously; she had become conventional" (emphasis added).\(^{34}\)

Zee had become conventional. What did this signify to Ellen Ellis and what made this such a grievous change in Zee? Throughout the novel Ellen Ellis makes many references to "conventionalism": it possesses no elasticity, it makes truth play lackey to expediency, and its deepest curse is that it "made the woman question unpopular".\(^{35}\) Conventionalism, in Ellen Ellis' use of the term, operates as a metaphor for the status quo regarding society's dictates of what it meant 'to be a woman'. To be conventional was the end goal of a socialisation process which shaped girls into a particular type of womanhood. This was based upon girls learning the art of coquetry, learning to be appealing to men, and, above all, learning that pleasing men was their role in life. Later in her life, after Zee had emigrated to New Zealand, she would see the pattern repeated in the lives of ngā wāhine Māori: "Wahine wears her sex's badge of disgrace - she is schooled, as is her fair sister who ought to know better, in all the arts of coquetry, coaxing, ogling, wheedling, giggling."\(^{36}\)

For Ellen Ellis, conventionalism had grievous implications, not only for women but for the moral well-being of all human beings; "Zee had changed grievously; she had become conventional - traitor to the higher, truer life in seeking the good-will of her fellows, rather than their good."\(^{37}\) In allowing herself to place the approval of her fellows over and above what was for her own, and Wrax's, good, Zee had deviated grievously from the path of truth and moral well-being. Mary Taylor had articulated a similar position in her insistence that women were misled by the teachings of a "false morality" and that they had taken

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p.30.
\(^{35}\) Ibid., p.13,22,73.
\(^{36}\) Ibid., p.117.
\(^{37}\) Ibid., p.30.
"a wrong standard of perfection, and a wrong deity to worship". Zee's "readiness to bend to public opinion", to use Mary Taylor's phrase, meant that the difficulties she subsequently faced in her inward battle over whether or not she should marry Wrax, were due to her lack of moral courage and strength of will. As a consequence of this moral weakness, she allowed herself to drift into an engagement with Wrax even though spending time alone with him was "little less than purgatory".

Zee could only find Wrax's company acceptable when she successfully quietened her inward misgivings as to whether he was all he ought to be. Even though she discerned a want in his character, Zee's biggest fear was "not whether Wrax was good enough for her, but whether she was the right woman for him - whether someone else might not make him happier than she could ever do". It was this fear which marked Zee as conventional. Wrax, on the other hand, despite Zee's hesitations regarding her love for him and her constant deferral of a response to his persistent proposals of marriage, was content with the love she had to offer, "knowing full well her devotion to duty would be as unswerving as if inspired by love". This devotion to her prescribed role and duty signified the triumph within Zee of "the conventionalism that makes truth play lackey to expediency".

Through the character of Zee, Ellen Ellis constructs the social conventions of femininity as a process which operates in tension with woman's 'natural' intuition and finer qualities and which thwarts her moral development. When the reader first encountered Zee, she was, above all, a child of nature, "living, quivering flesh and blood". From early in her childhood, however, all that Zee had to learn

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38 Taylor (1870) p. 60,73.
39 Ibid., p.57.
40 Ellis (1882) p.33.
41 Ibid., p.42.
42 Ibid., p.45.
43 Ibid., p.46,48.
44 Ibid., p.22.
interfered with her ability to actively engage with the natural world. As a result, her life was continually at war with her surroundings. While she remained "nearer to the heart of things", Zee gradually learned that she had to quieten her inward misgivings and become a "traitor to the higher, truer life" in order to fulfil her social duty of bonding with a man and giving priority to his wants and needs. Hence, as a consequence of becoming increasingly conventional, Zee became unable to develop the wisdom accorded to her by her intuitive affinity with nature.

In effect, Ellen Ellis uses an essentialist ontology as a political tool to resist conventional practice and to legitimately construct alternative modes of feminine conduct. In doing so, tensions are revealed between her essentialist construction of 'woman's nature' and her positioning of Zee as 'essentially' different from other women. While maintaining that conventionalism possesses no elasticity, Zee's process of becoming conventional was significantly different from that of her sisters and the other girls she grew up with. Even though the school Zee attended "was unequalled for well twining youthful twigs" and Zee's sisters "made satisfactory progress", Zee failed to learn the childhood lessons associated with becoming a lady. The reader is told that Zee's difference from the other girls she grew up with was due, at least in part, to her different "nature". While in social terms, this difference was treated as a failing, Ellen Ellis offers the reader a position from which to construct an understanding of Zee's difference as something positive.

Zee's sisters were described as "more proper" and this was directly associated with their unquestioning acceptance of the status quo: "her more proper sisters...make a smooth path to their feet by smilingly accepting all things as they are". It is significant that her sisters' outward physical appearances conformed to the current standards of beauty. Zee, on the other hand, is described as "the black sheep amid a bevy of fair daughters" and as having a nose that was as "peculiar" as everything else about her. In employing a

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46 Ibid., p.2,4.
47 Ibid., p.4.
48 Ibid., p.7.
49 Ibid., p.10,7.
symbolism which embodied social acceptability within particular physical attributes, the reader is given the impression that Zee's sisters were also "more proper" because their physical attributes conformed with social conventions, or at least that their physical attributes made it easier for them to accept socially defined codes of 'true womanhood'. It was not simply that Zee was disadvantaged by the physical attributes that Nature had bestowed upon her, but that Zee also had a different "nature". Whereas her sisters accepted things as they were, Zee "agonised over the right and wrong of every question". Hence, Ellen Ellis leaves the grounds for constructing an understanding of the relationship between Nature and the 'natures' of individuals open and contestable.

The reader is also informed that Zee's mother would speak openly to strangers about her daughter's "deficiencies" and that Zee often felt "painfully humiliated". During her adolescence, Zee was filled with doubts and rebellions:

...she lashes herself with the rod she makes for her own back, in impotent resentment of that mysterious something which makes her unlike other people; the while she fails signally in attempting to be a copyist, hedged in, as she is, by strict conscientiousness coupled with felt incapacity! Her "felt incapacity" came to the fore on a visit to London where, in the company of 'society girls', Zee felt like "a senseless lump". It is at this point in the novel that Ellen Ellis provides the reader with another position from which to consider Zee's difference. This is achieved through two women who briefly enter Zee's life. The first, described simply as "a lady friend", perceived that Zee was "torn by conflicting emotions" as she compared herself to one of the other girls she had met. This friend helped Zee to see that she was being unjust to compare herself with the particular woman in question who, being an only child, was "the favorite (sic) alike of nature and fortune". While admitting that Zee may have neglected her opportunities for improvement, this friend insisted upon Zee that "dissatisfaction with present attainments in itself evidenced a capacity for improvement,

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50 Ibid., p.46.
51 Ibid., p.12.
52 Ibid., p.11.
53 Ibid., p.15.
54 Ibid., p.15.
pointing to the fact that some natures ripen by slow degrees because of the excellence of the fruit maturing". On Zee's return home, "a good genius of another form is found gravitating towards her" in the character of Ruby. A gem in name and character, not only was Ruby "naturally taciturn" but she was a "blue stocking". Zee felt safe in Ruby's company and, for the first time in her life, was able to express herself frankly.

Through the character of Ruby, Ellen Ellis provides a position whereby Zee encounters, for the first time in her life, the possibility of pursuing a 'sensible' life, that is, a life in which she need not "shirk life's noblest duties" but could be faithful to her convictions and not neglect the development of her soul in the performance of such duties. This clearly positions Ellen Ellis on the margins of hegemonic discourses of femininity. While accepting that woman's rightful path was toward marriage and children, and that her noble duties and God-given work was to bless mankind, Ellen Ellis maintained that the proper performance of such duties required that she not bow to "the conventionalism that makes truth play lackey to expediency".

Although very brief, Zee's friendship with Ruby had a lasting impression upon her. Although Zee did not manage to avoid submitting to the "conventional paring down" process, as a direct result of her friendship with Ruby she "resolved to find her own way up the ladder of learning". Through Ellen Ellis' account of Zee's schooling, and her reflections on her own processes of learning, the reader is offered a number of discursive positions from which to construct political understandings of women's education.

Ellen Ellis' views on education

In describing the early school experiences of Zee, Ellen Ellis presents a strong critique of the system of education she herself experienced in England in the early to mid-nineteenth century. She also articulates positions which make political connections between the enforced ignorance of women and their degraded social position.

55 Ibid., p.15.
56 Ibid., p.15.
58 Ibid., p.16.
Ellen Ellis received her early formal education at a Seminary for Young Ladies in Quarry Street, Guildford, England, during the late 1830s and early 1840s. Advertised as "A Temple of Learning", this school provided teaching in the subjects and skills that were considered appropriate and sufficient for girls - elementary reading, writing and arithmetic, some French, sketching, posture and needlework. Her personal preferences were for the study of mathematics, science and biology but dominant discourses on women's education at that time determined that those subjects were both unnecessary and unsuitable for girls.

As an adult, Ellen Ellis engaged in a number of projects for her own self-education. Prior to her emigration to New Zealand, she engaged in her own research regarding the legal status of women with the intention of writing pamphlets. Soon after settling in Auckland, she engaged in self-education to ascertain the causes of the Taranaki uprising and to come to her own understanding of the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi. While she found these projects very satisfying intellectually, various domestic responsibilities and the disapproval she received from her husband and their circle of acquaintances brought these intellectual pursuits to a halt. In mid-1865, she taught herself book-keeping skills in order to balance her husband's neglected business accounts. Several years later, with the encouragement of Rev. Samuel Edger, she began training herself with writing exercises in order to write her novel, having decided to use this form of writing to present her arguments for the need for legal and educational rights for women.

In the opening chapter of Everything Is Possible To Will, the reader encounters Zee sitting on a grassy knoll musing fitfully over her school books. She is accused by her teachers of not having looked at her lessons when, in fact, they have absorbed most of her play hours.

60 Ibid., p.135.
61 For further discussion of this, see Chapter 7.
63 Vera Colebrook notes that after "concentrated days and nights of work" she managed to get the books in order and subsequently proved to be an efficient debt-collector. [Colebrook (1980) p.132.]
64 Ibid., pp.135-37, 145.
The narrator constructs Zee as a victim of a system of learning in which there is no room for spontaneous impressions, intuition and curiosity. In sharp contrast to this, Zee dreams of going to school in the woods where "everything is plain", learning directly from Nature's many live lesson-books. Zee's teacher, Miss Pout, however, believed in the "cramming system" and followed a creed of "bend or break". Zee, on the other hand, could not sufficiently focalise her powers to commit words, possessing no meaning to her dormant faculties, to memory; there was, in fact, too little of the parrot about her to learn readily by rote; and yet, she evidenced a surprising aptitude in garnering information from all which transpired around her.

The narrator's voice stresses that it was not that Zee was unable to learn, but that her teacher, "being ignorant of all modes of developing natural gifts", would not accept responsibility for "the failure of her belauded 'system'". Labelled an "incorrigible dunce", Zee spent many hours of her school days in the stocks, holding the blackboard and swinging the dumb-bells as punishments for not having completed her lessons.

Through Zee, Ellen Ellis articulates her belief that "what the teacher is is of more importance than what he can impart". Ellis was certainly not alone in her critique of this system of teaching. Similar concerns were raised, for example, by J.G. Fitch, an Inspector of Schools in England, in his 1864 article "The Education of Women". Fitch stated:

Methods of instruction long ago disused, not only in good grammar schools, but in the humblest schools for village children, are still in full force in expensive 'establishments' for girls. Tasks are committed to memory but are seldom or ever explained. Dates and tables are learned, while the events to which they relate are not understood. Books in the catechetical form are used abundantly; although every intelligent teacher knows that such books tend to check a genuine spirit of inquiry, and to destroy continuity of thought, and that

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65 Ellis (1882) p.2.
66 Ibid., p.6.
67 Ibid., p.5.
68 Ibid., p.5,6.
69 Ibid., p.131. In an earlier letter on the subject of moral training, Ellen Ellis expressed a similar view, stating "[i]t is what we are, not what we teach, [that] carries conviction." ["A WOMAN" DSC 3 November 1870, p.3.]
the only questions which are worth anything, in teaching, are those which grow naturally out of the subject, and which are spontaneously asked either by the teacher or by the learner. On the whole, it is difficult to point to one of the methods in common use in boarding schools which is wisely adapted to awaken a love of truth, or to show the processes by which it is to be acquired.\textsuperscript{70}

Fitch's conclusion as to what this signified for girl's education was that "[i]t is assumed tacitly, if not in words, that her education is superficial, and that 'accomplishments,' and external finish are the main things to be secured."\textsuperscript{71} In a similar vein Ellison Brown, an English supporter of widened employment opportunities for women, questioned why education, which he defined as "intellectual culture" rather than "mere school routine and book knowledge", was not considered a necessary part of a woman's training.\textsuperscript{72} On the basis of his belief that it was important that women develop the power of fixing their thoughts in the midst of many bewildering petty vexations, so that they could better perform their domestic duties, Brown's argument was for women to be taught to reason and reflect:

Would a woman who had been early taught to reason and reflect, be less likely to fill the numerous petty duties which are forever claiming the attention of the mistress of the family? Surely the fact that she had been trained to think soundly, and therefore to arrange and systematise, instead of unfitting her for her multitudinous small cares as well as her more important ones, would enable her to discharge them without the mental worry which the sterner sex often unjustly consider frivolity.\textsuperscript{73}

Zee's aptitude for garnering information from all which transpired around her, her natural curiosity, and her openness to impressions could have flourished under a system of teaching such as that proposed by Fitch and Brown. She would also likely have responded well to the approach to learning which Mary Colclough advocated, namely, of dispensing with "meaningless lessons, to be learned with parrot-like precision" in favour of making "every lesson a real study and a pleasure which a whole class can enjoy together".\textsuperscript{74} After persevering at

\textsuperscript{70} Fitch (1864) pp.435-36.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., pp.436-37.

\textsuperscript{72} Brown (1868) p.388.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p.389. In his article, Brown argued for legitimate fields of employment to be allowed for women and for their services to be fairly and honestly remunerated. He called for every class of the community to lay aside their prejudices and assist women in their struggle so that the next generation of (single) women could escape poverty or dependence upon charity.

\textsuperscript{74} See review of opening address of Mary Colclough's private educational
school for many long years, however, Zee's parents were informed that to keep such a "dunce" at school was a waste of their money. Given that her sisters had made satisfactory progress, neither the abilities of her teachers nor the system of teaching itself was considered to be the problem; rather, it was that "the square girl would not fit the round hole".

Whereas Ellen Ellis owned the title "incorrigible dunce" for many years, Zee gladly put her school days behind her, and, never accepting that she was a dunce, blamed her teacher for failing to make the acquisition of knowledge available to her. Years later she would have her own sense of her intelligence confirmed by her friend Ruby's observation "that there was more in Zee than in any of her sisters, in that she had a mind, whereas they possessed only retentive memories and a great capacity for instruction, i.e., cramming."

Ellen Ellis also used the character of Zee to articulate her views on the implications of the limited content of the education provided to girls and of the constraints this placed on women fulfilling their assigned function of motherhood. One particular aspect of the deficiencies of women's education which impacted significantly on Ellen Ellis' own life was in the lack of knowledge provided to women in the areas of biology and physiology.

Ellen Ellis had thrived on her first pregnancy and had looked forward to the possibilities that motherhood seemed to open up for her. The pregnancy and delivery went smoothly and, while Ellen was unwell for a short time following the birth, William was a healthy and happy child. However her second son, Alec, was delicate from birth and Ellen experienced problems breast-feeding him. As the months went by and he did not gain any strength, Ellen "felt her ignorance keenly".

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classes, DSC 31 October 1871, p.3.
75 Ellis (1882) p.6.
74 Ibid., p.6.
77 See "A WOMAN", NZH 27 October 1870, p.3.
78 Ellis (1882) p.16.
80 Ibid., p.59.
she was four months pregnant with her third child, Alec died. In Ellen Ellis' biography, Vera Colebrook writes:

She implored her doctor to impart to her the medical facts relating to the carrying of, and the caring for, infants, so that with her next child she might perhaps avoid in the future her errors of the past. Her doctor was rather shocked. He said that there was no need for her to know these things, that they were usually discussed (if this were necessary) with the patient's husband. Her angry reaction was forgiven as being due to her condition.81

Her third child, "Little Tom",82 was also delicate from birth and as he approached his first birthday he suddenly became extremely ill and appeared to be dying. The only advice the doctors could give her was to give the child laudanum if his cough became excessive, keep his room as hot as was bearable, and keep the windows tightly closed day and night.83 Contrary to this advice, Ellen Ellis believed that, while the child needed to be kept warm, he also needed as much fresh air as possible.84 In Everything is Possible to Will, the narrator comments:

So dense is woman's ignorance of all physiological knowledge, the marvel is that an infant ever arrives at maturity. To taboo subjects as 'unfeminine,' 'unbecoming,’ which may be worth more to her than life itself, while a new-born babe is put into her hands to rear, is the maddest folly. If all knowledge came to woman by nature, if the 'little stranger' came in its 'monkey'-jacket, prepared to shift for itself, the instinct of cow and calf might suffice. But since it is not so, if life and health are worthy of one moment's consideration, to make women scale Alps of opposition in order to emerge ultimately from her worse (because of our boasted enlightenment) than Cimmerian darkness, will surely merit and receive the condemnation of history.85

In decrying the lack of investigation into the "lamentable" mortality among infants Ellen Ellis noted that, even though the study of physiology was more important to women than to men, doctors' jealousy of women entering this field was delaying the attainment of knowledge which would be of infinite benefit to "the entire human family".86

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81 Ibid., p.60.
82 Ellen's son was referred to as "Little Tom" as Ellen had a brother by the same name.
83 Ibid., p.64.
84 Tom's health became a major consideration in the Ellis' subsequent decision to emigrate to New Zealand. In an appendix to her novel in which Ellen Ellis provided information about Auckland for intending emigrants, she stressed the healthy benefits of the climate and living conditions.
85 Ellis (1882) p.84.
86 Ibid., p.84. In a letter to the newspaper she wrote that man had just
Ellen Ellis was also critical of the current social expectations of women's body shape and the physical damage caused to women by both the 'wasp waist' and the lack of appropriately designed under-garments for women. Her expressed hope was that as more women became doctors they would invent and popularise "some simple contrivance which shall support the bust from the shoulders without in the slightest degree compressing the waist" and she looked forward to the day when "wasp-waist monstrosities" would be consigned to the "vulgarisms of the dark ages". 87

In making recourse to women's biological capabilities and their socially defined roles as child-rearers, Ellen Ellis argued for changes in both the education of females and in the professional fields considered appropriate for women. The position she articulated was that, by being informed and practised in areas of physiology and medicine, women could develop their wisdom in the rearing of children and that this would enable the human family to live stronger, longer and happier. 88 Women's lack of knowledge in these areas, however, had serious implications that extended much further than on their abilities to care for their children.

In the novel, Zee's second son, like Ellen Ellis', was born with a very delicate constitution and she was unable to provide him with sufficient nourishment. While her doctor was puzzled by this "unusual deviation from the ordinary course of nature", Zee believed that "the cause lay deeper than his skill could reach - a wounded spirit, not a distempered body, asked healing balm". 89 It is significant that while this second child is not given a name in the novel, he is described as a "dear little black-eyed rogue" who is "his mother's image". 90 The "wounded spirit" which "asked healing balm" but which, like the infant's "distempered body" was beyond the doctor's reach, belonged to Zee. Throughout her difficult marriage, she had turned her problems inward and "so shut her up within herself that it told upon her". As a

reason to fear woman's rivalry in certain fields of employment as woman may "outstrip him in the race". [See "A WOMAN" NZH 29 September 1870, p.3.] Three of Ellen Ellis' nieces were amongst the first women in England to qualify as doctors. [Colebrook (1980) p.161.]

87 Ellis (1882) p.85.
88 Ibid., p.84.
89 Ibid., p.83.
90 Ibid., p.83.
result, "it had robbed her baby of its proper nourishment". As she watched her child die, Zee's first impulse was to tell Wrax that it was his cruel desertion of herself that had led to their child's death. "[w]ith increased knowledge", however, "Zee believes the child to have been sacrificed to her own unreasoning ignorance rather than to anything wrong in Wrax". In effect, the infant had become a sacrificial child in Zee's spiritual journey. She could not blame Wrax for his death, just as she could not blame her own, or the doctors', lack of medical knowledge. It was her own neglect of her moral well-being and development that had told upon her body, and caused this "unusual deviation from the ordinary course of nature". Zee came to the understanding that this was yet another step in her "special training": "She was learning, in passing through the furnace, that all things work together for good only in so far as we turn them to good account." Just as neglect of one's spiritual development may have serious consequences for one's maternal responsibilities, Ellen Ellis also constructed enforced ignorance as one of the means by which women were crippled in their God-given duties. In politicising the connections between this lack of education and the ways women were viewed and treated in society, Ellen Ellis argued for a liberal education for women:

...for so long as the chief seats of learning remain closed against woman, as if she were unworthy or incapable (or both) of a liberal education, she will, of course, fail to command the respect of beings treated as her superiors. What is good for man is good for woman; and the fear, expressed in various ways, that given a liberal education woman will forget herself, and assume the masculine position and functions, evidences a lamentable ignorance of and want of faith in woman. Ellen Ellis believed that the enforced ignorance that women suffered through being denied a liberal education was symptomatic of a much deeper issue. While accepting that there were essential differences in the natures of woman and man, Ellen Ellis maintained the need for recognition that every woman had a fundamental right to be recognised

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91 Ibid., p.83.
92 Ibid., p.86.
93 Ibid., p.9.
94 Ibid., p.86.
95 Ibid., p.iv.
as an entity in herself, and, until this right was acknowledged, the interests of the sexes would continue to appear to be antagonistic. 96 Her plea, based on her assertion of woman's fundamental equality with man, was for woman's access to the same educational provisions as deemed appropriate for men. 97 The position Ellen Ellis articulated was not simply that, as a matter of equality women should receive the same mental training as men, but that woman needed to be raised in the scale of being and to be as free as man was free:

...for as long as the law declares her non-entity men will profess to believe in her incompetency, despite their individual experience to the contrary, and, despising her co-operation, will continue to believe that, in her present undeveloped condition, she has reached the zenith of her powers and will remain what she is if educated as man is educated. 98

In Ellen Ellis' view, woman's debased position on the "scale of being" was nowhere more evident than in the current legal and social conventions of the marital relationship.

Ellen Ellis' views on marriage

Like Mary Colclough, Ellen Ellis maintained that the contemporary situation of wives and mothers, being dominated by their husbands and being the victims of uncontrolled reproduction, constituted forms of slavery.

Zee, like Ellen Ellis herself, was the second of seventeen children and one of nine daughters born to parents who, believing children to be heaven-sent blessings, did not engage in "moderation". While her father "radiated an atmosphere of wondrous love and peace", Zee's mother's life is described as one of "slow martyrdom". 99 According to

96 Ibid., pp.72-73, 186, 37.

97 A similar position was articulated in a lecture presented by W.S. Hodgson in 1864, on behalf of the Society for the Promotion of Social Science in England, on the higher education of girls. Hodgson stated: "The true and sole question for our present consideration is not wherein lie the essential innate differences, if any, between the male and the female mind; nor whether in the highest region of creative thought and independent power the female mind is equal to the male; but simply this, whether any of the differences commonly affirmed or admitted to exist between them, ought in any way to prevent similarity and equality in the mental training of both, or can at all disprove woman's power, and consequent right, to learn whatever man learns, as a part, that is, or instrument, of his general education and mental discipline. The question, in short, is one, not of origination, but of reception, of learning, not of creating." [Hodgson (1864) p.250.]

98 Ellis (1862) pp.72-73.

99 Ibid., p.10.
the narrator, while Zee's mother loved her husband, she could never forgive him the suffering she had experienced through giving birth to so many children:

...she felt instinctively that she had been cruelly wronged in being made to suffer so much for the selfish gratification of another. Her sufferings embittered every moment of her existence...and it is certain that had her husband been less kind, she would have committed suicide to escape her long martyrdom.\(^{100}\)

Ellen Ellis was strong in her articulation of the view that parents should limit their families to the number of children to whom they could do full justice.\(^{101}\) The 'population question' was a contentious political issue during the late 1870s and entered public discourse through the court trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh in London in 1877 for their views on limiting family size. Ellen Ellis fully supported the position taken by Mrs Besant and Mr Bradlaugh and considered that in their "noble stand" they were doing Christ's work.\(^{102}\) Having no desire to "tread the same weary path as her mother had done",\(^{103}\) after the birth of her third son, she wrote in her diary:

Gradually I perceived that though I was worthless in law I was not, in fact, powerless. With faltering courage I came to a decision. I would not have a large family. I would not consent to have a child every year. I believed that I had a moral right to refuse to allow my body to be so used at the will of any other person. On my return home I communicated this decision to my husband; and in this matter my strong will ruled.\(^{104}\)

In her novel, Ellen Ellis forcefully articulated her position on the issue of family size and a woman's right to control her own body. She maintained:

It is inhuman, brutish to frequently subject a woman to the martyrdom of maternity; the suffering it entails, if nothing else, should limit the size of the family; besides which, when children crowd upon each other, the mother's health is not sufficiently established to give

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\(^{100}\) Ibid., p.135.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., p.134.

\(^{102}\) In her novel she wrote: "The world needs such fearless leaders, and such leaders need the support of earnest-hearted men and women willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their determination to put down all wrong in such a manner as shall constrain men to exclaim: 'Is not this the Christ?' Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant are strong - there is no real strength apart from absolute goodness - their every word and deed, judged by the noble stand they made on the above question, prove them to be strong in the all-conquering force of righteous convictions bound to over-ride unreasoning opposition." [Ibid., p.136.]

\(^{103}\) Colebrook (1980) p.51.

to each child the robust constitution it has a right to
demand. ... Violate the sanctity of the domestic circle,
make woman the creature of man's convenience, not at all
titled to his consideration, and where is the
prosperity of the State - where? In contrast to Zee's mother who embodied the view that a wife was fated
to have as many children as God sent her, Zee articulated the view that
family size should, in part, take into account the ability and
commitment of the father in providing properly for his children. While
Zee did not experience the "martyrdom" of continual pregnancies and
maternal responsibilities, she did experience the marriage relationship
as a form of slavery which was of inner torment to her soul.

Soon after Wrax began courting Zee, he started to arrive at her home
early in the mornings to check on how she conducted her household
duties. While there is no indication that Zee felt there was anything
untoward in this behaviour, the narrator's voice comments on the
audacity of this double standard:

By the way, does the god consult the happiness of himself
or of his goddess, when he goes prying into her
scrubbing, cooking, and sewing qualifications? What if
she were to return the compliment, and starting on a
voyage of discovery on her own account, overhauled his
private affairs to satisfy herself that he was the Simon
Pure he represented himself to be? Is the prying less
necessary in the one case than in the other? Hence, while Zee feared that Wrax had been worshipping her as an ideal
and that once he saw "the veritable flesh and blood" his illusions
would be dispelled, Ellen Ellis' argument was that such double
standards would remain until woman was removed from her idealised
status: "Once let the goddess become a thoughtful woman, and she will
take certain of the prying gender down from their high horse."

Zee had learned that as a woman it was her inescapable destiny upon
marriage that she would become the possession of her husband, and that
as a possession, she would instantly lose value in his eyes. Consequently, as the day of her wedding approached, she was
increasingly overcome with gloom. It was Zee's father, in his reproach
of her behaviour, who gave voice to the implied metaphor of marriage,

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105 Ellis (1882) p.135,137.
106 Ibid., p.31.
107 Ibid., p.31.
108 Ibid., pp.46-47.
for women, constituting a death. In response to his admonition that no-one could look forward to the occasion when she was treating the event like a burial, Zee decided that she must hide her heart and put on the appearance of a buoyant spirit. Ellen Ellis' position was clear: in accepting her destiny in marriage, woman must deny her inner truthfulness and assume the outward manifestation of fulfilment; she must seem rather than be.

This metaphor of marriage constituting a death is reinforced by Zee's affinity to the natural world: on the day of her wedding even "Dame Nature", bearing a "glum" face, was in mourning for Zee: "The very sparrows were drenched to the skin, and the leaves of the trees wept as if bewailing Zee's untimely end." The "tragedy" took place, and Zee trembled as she uttered the words that sealed her fate. During her honeymoon, her prescribed duties as a wife were reinforced in the counsel of her aunt "to be hand, head, heart, love, duty, and delight to her husband; to anticipate his every word and whim".

Although Zee took every opportunity to show her complete trust in her husband and presented an appearance to others that everything was alright, she grew increasingly suspicious of Wrax's absences from the house, believing that alcohol was somehow at the root of the problem. As the narrator informs us, however:

...the secret of his indifference lay in the fact that Zee had become his property, his slave, by marriage. Wrax would have been a devoted husband - an immeasurably better and happier man, and Zee a by no means worse woman, had she been free - free as Wrax was free. He would then have respected in her what he valued above all things in himself, the subtle potency of recognised being - the all of dignity comprehended in the words personal liberty; but having become a wife, she was comparatively worthless.

The only way Zee found to cope with her situation was to adopt a "peace-at-any-price domestic creed". Consequently, her marriage signified the beginning of a life of inward turmoil and protest in

109 Ibid., p.49.
110 Ibid., p.49.
111 Ibid., p.51.
112 Ibid., p.63.
113 Ibid., p.75.
which her soul was in a "chronic state of revolt against her practice" and her life feeling like "one long base lie". 114

Passionately opposed to women being creatures of men's convenience in any form, Ellen Ellis' novel offers a powerful critique of the marriage laws which gave husbands complete power over their wives. According to Vera Colebrook's account of Ellen Ellis' life, "Ellen had no reason before her own marriage to know of the snags of wifehood. Her father treated her mother as an equal partner in the home and in his farm business." 115 While it appears that Ellen Ellis partially recreates this partnership in her novel by referring to Zee's parents as both being "heads of the household", her subsequent description of Zee's mother's life as being one of "slow martyrdom" in which she felt "instinctively that she had been cruelly wronged" by her husband does not support a view of their marriage as being an equal partnership. 116

It was through Zee's experiences of the marriage relationship, however, that Ellen Ellis exposed the fiction of the marriage vow 'with all my worldly goods I thee endow'. 117 In her view, the fact that "almost no value attaches to the mere form of marriage" as articulated in the marriage vows, was "proved conclusively" by the ease with which husbands could evade their marital responsibilities. 118 Ellen Ellis identified the Church as being heavily implicated in this unjust state of affairs:

By preaching up man's supremacy and woman's subserviency, irrespective of all rights and duties, the Church has so wickedly played into the drunkard's hands as to be accessory to making him what he is. ...And perceiving that so long as woman's nonentity is established by law, man will in a measure despise her co-operation, the enlightenment of the present century will, it is hoped, prompt the bishop to work to the death for woman's emancipation. 119

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114 Ibid., pp.74-75.
116 Ellis (1882) p.10,135.

117 In a lecture on "Woman as Wives and Mothers" given in Melbourne on 27 October 1874, Mary Colclough also offered a powerful critique of the marriage vows. She maintained that the vow 'With this ring I thee wed' was sorcery, that the vow 'With my body I thee worship' was idolatry, and that the vow 'and with all my worldly goods I thee endow' was a lie. [See editorial note, NZH 21 November 1874, p.4.; review of lecture, DSC 23 November 1874, p.3.; "MARY A. COLCLOUGH" NZH 2 December 1874, p.3.].

118 Ellis (1882) p.213.
119 Ibid., p.186.
Ellen Ellis maintained that once it was recognised that woman had a right to a will of her own and was permitted to legitimately exercise it, women would forgive the injustices of the past, and prove beyond question that they were essentially practical and that their administrative ability was of the highest order. This, she argued, had already been substantiated by what intelligent women had done, and were now doing, despite the physical, intellectual, and moral disabilities of their present degraded social position.\textsuperscript{120}

Despite her acceptance of the position that marriage was a sacred union for life, Ellen Ellis appears to have offered a position from which to allow for the appropriate dissolution of a marriage. On the premise that "[i]f two beasts are penned together and one displays vicious tendencies they are separated forthwith", she maintained "when purity innocently marries pollution, a healthy public opinion ought to declare, as does One above, it is a cheat and a lie, and let the woman go blameless."\textsuperscript{121} Immediately following this statement, the narrator comments that "Wrax and Zee were never married, were never one in any true sense, though a parson tied the knot securely enough!"\textsuperscript{122} Hence, while Wrax and Zee were married according to the legal and social conventions of the time, Ellen Ellis suggests that, in spiritual terms, they were not married. The assumption underlying this position was that current social and legal conventions of marriage were not in line with the union God had ordained for man and woman. True marriage, according to Ellen Ellis, was a union which was based upon a union of souls, hence, "[w]hen sex is put down and the soul is put uppermost - and the soul is more cared for than its surroundings - every institution will be tested by its effects on the spirit of those concerned in it."\textsuperscript{123} This understanding of the ideal marital relationship as ordained by God, closely parallels Mary Colclough's construction of the ideal in which each partner is "one in heart, one in thought, one in faith".\textsuperscript{124} In looking toward the time when woman has been granted the "subtle potency of recognised being" and when priority is given to the formation of each individual's soul, Ellen Ellis

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., pp.186-87.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., p.214.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p.214.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., p.214.

\textsuperscript{124} See article "Lords of the Creation", DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.
appears to allow for the possibility of dissolution of the social and legal union of a husband and wife when this union is in contention with the fundamental relationship which God had ordained for husband and wife.

*Ellen Ellis' views on alcohol*

Ellen Ellis' nephew, Percy Colebrook, remembered his aunt as a "bloody-minded teetotaller" who "would have driven anyone to drink!" When asked if this meant that her husband Oliver drank, Percy's reply was: "If you so much as sipped half a glass of beer Aunt Ellen wrote you off as a complete alcoholic."  

Her father, William Colebrook, had been converted to absolute teetotalism at a young age. In her diary, Ellen Ellis confided that while she was "strictly teetotal" she knew that Oliver Ellis enjoyed wine. In her novel, however, she claimed that there was no such thing as a "moderate drinker": "Drink means drunkenness clearly" and the only alternatives she offered were "bestial drunkenness or total abstinence". Having had no personal knowledge of the effects of alcohol, her reaction to seeing her own husband "return after late hours spent with his friends, no longer dignified, but flushed, garrulous, argumentative, the edges of his personality blurred, his fine appearance distorted as in a flawed mirror" was one of deep shock.  

According to Vera Colebrook's account, Ellen Ellis found it impossible to disguise her deep-rooted disgust for drink of any kind in any quantity and how she felt about the way it affected her husband.

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126 Ibid., p.8. It was Percy who helped his cousin Willie (Ellen Ellis' son) burn all the copies of Ellen's novel that they could acquire.  
127 Ibid., p.42. William Colebrook's opposition to alcohol was so strong that when he took over the management of the Great Tangley Manor farm, he refused to continue the practice of giving the farm workers an allocation of cider as part-payment of their wages. Instead, he paid them in money, which he gave directly to the workers' wives so that the men could not spend it on alcohol.  
129 Colebrook (1980) p.44.  
130 Ibid., p.46.
Oliver Ellis' drinking, interrupted only by periods of forced abstinence when he was incapacitated with gout, was a perpetual source of contention throughout the marriage. It was not until the early 1870s that this pattern changed. Ellen and Oliver had begun attending the church services held by Rev. Samuel Edger, who challenged Oliver directly on his ability to turn down the offer of a drink. Oliver accepted the challenge and took the pledge of total abstinence. He and Ellen joined the Good Templars and became actively involved in that Order, Oliver serving several terms as Grand Secretary.\footnote{Ibid., p.144. See also the obituary to Oliver Ellis in \textit{NZH} 13 March 1883, p.1. and Adams (1876) p.143.}

In her letters to the Auckland press Ellen Ellis constantly drew attention to the evils associated with drunkenness and to the situations of the wives of drunkards.\footnote{See, for example, "A WOMAN" \textit{NZH} 29 September 1870, p.3.; \textit{DSC} 3 October 1870, p.3., 13 October 1870, p.2., 3 January 1871, p.3., 17 January 1871, p.3.} She strongly supported the Permissive Bill\footnote{See "A WOMAN" \textit{NZH} 10 December 1870, p.2. and \textit{DSC} 24 January 1871, p.2.} and publicly thanked Mr. R. J. Creighton for having conferred upon women the right of voting for the suppression of the liquor traffic.\footnote{"A WOMAN" \textit{DSC} 27 February 1871, p.3.}

As Vera Colebrook notes, Ellen Ellis "pulls no punches" in her fictionalised account of Wrax as an habitually drunken husband and in her tirades against the evils of drink.\footnote{Colebrook (1980) p.147.} Given the consistency with which so many of the story's details mirrored aspects of Ellen Ellis' own life, it was most likely the extremely unflattering portrayal of Wrax that offended the Colebrook and Ellis families and caused them to subsequently cease contact with Ellen Ellis. However, as Vera Colebrook observed:

\begin{quote}
They did not understand that if Ellen were to wring the hearts of her readers as she set out to do, the husband of her heroine had to be an abandoned drunkard; otherwise there would have been no case to make, no drama - in fact, no story.\footnote{Ibid., p.158.}
\end{quote}

In Ellen Ellis' view, the harm that drunkards inflicted on themselves and others was criminal as was the fact that, being considered a respectable member of society, the 'sot' was encouraged to do as he...
liked so long as his means lasted.\textsuperscript{138} Given her belief that no-one could save anyone else's soul, Ellen Ellis' plea was for the drunkard's wife "on whom the curse of drunkenness - the worst of woman's wrongs - falls with crushing force".\textsuperscript{139} Hence, if the church was going to play into drunkards' hands by preaching up man's supremacy and woman's subserviency, it should at least be consistent:

If vice is inherent in human nature, as the 'total depravity' dogma teaches, if strength is found in licentiousness alone, it is absurd to attempt to stamp it out. ...Well, let men think and drink as suits them; and add to these virtues adultery, murder, theft, lying, cursing, and all the other graces found in combination with a much-vaunted revenue from the gay and lightsome gin-palace.\textsuperscript{140}

Ellen Ellis' uncompromising views on alcohol and superficial religious dogma are integrally connected with her passionate analysis of the ways in which social organisation had deviated from God's divine plan for the moral universe. In her view,

So long as a man is enslaved by intemperance every avenue to his soul is closed; he is not open to good influence; in vain is every effort to help him, except you first remove the thirst: we cannot deal with sin in detail, we must go to its roots.\textsuperscript{141}

While many aspects of her views appear to be very conservative in terms of her underlying conceptualisations of right and wrong, the implications of her analysis of woman's role and place in the social and moral order held a great deal of radical potential for every aspect of social organisation. By virtue of her son destroying as many copies of the novel as he could acquire, many of the discursive positions Ellen Ellis offered within \textit{Everything Is Possible To Will} from which to construct understandings of women's situation and from which to effect changes in forms of social organisation, were denied widespread circulation within public discourses. Her letters to the newspapers under her pen-name "A WOMAN", her efforts to educate and organise women of Auckland on social issues, and her daily social practices within her local community, however, all ensured that her challenges to dominant understandings of woman's nature, role and place within social and moral spheres entered public discourse.

\textsuperscript{138} Ellis (1882) p.185.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., p.221.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p.211.

\textsuperscript{141} "A WOMAN" DSC 27 February 1871, p.3.
CONCLUSION

Kathleen Canning maintains that women's embodied experiences have proven to be "a compelling means of contesting dominant discourses, of appropriating discursive space, and of altering discourses that excluded or sought to define them". While some of the marginal positions women have traditionally occupied offer potential sites for resistance and challenge to dominant forms of subjectivity, marginality alone does not necessarily correspond with or lead to resistant ontologies and epistemologies which subvert and contest dominant ways of being and knowing. In analysing aspects of the subjectivities and social practices of three nineteenth century advocates of women's rights, this study has argued that it is in the complex interplay of their discursive practices that Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis can be identified as ex-centric subjects with subversive subjectivities.

In making strategic use of their positioning within and on the margins of multiple and competing discourses, each of these women developed resistant discursive strategies which were in tension with dominant nineteenth century understandings of women. These strategies are evident in their assumptions regarding the natures of 'woman' and 'man', in their understandings of themselves as women, in their analyses of women's collective situation, in their critiques of accepted knowledges, and in the appeals to authority on which their knowledge claims were based. Resistant discursive strategies have also been located in their strategic invocations of various aspects of their prescribed identities and in their constructions of alternate identities, and in aspects of their daily social practices. In utilising such discursive strategies, each of these women made use of and modified hegemonic nineteenth century understandings of what it meant to be a woman. Through their writings and social practices they constructed politicised positions from which other women could resist dominant understandings and prescriptions of womanhood.

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1 Canning (1994) p.397.
A central theme of this study has been an exploration of how hegemonic nineteenth century discourses constructed the female subject within a framework of oppositional difference to the male subject. While Woman was considered to be morally superior to Man, aspiring to all that was pure and noble, she was also ruled by emotionality and in need of protection from her "shadow side". On the basis of such constructions of Woman's essential nature, women were considered to be unreliable as a source of knowledge and to be destined, by both God and Nature, to a quiescent subjunctive social position. While hegemonic social practices reinforced these dominant understandings of woman's nature and role in the social order, discursive spaces, both on the margins and within the operation of these discourses, offered potential sites from which they could be resisted and contested. Within the liberal humanist tradition of nineteenth century thought, for example, the human subject was conceptualised as a unique, stable, reasoning and coherent individual. Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each made recourse to aspects of this conceptualisation of the human subject to assert themselves as active, speaking subjects, capable of producing reliable knowledge.

Mary Taylor fully endorsed this model of the human subject and rejected assumptions of any essential differences between the natures and capabilities of 'woman' and 'man'. In maintaining that women should be accorded equal opportunities with men in all aspects of social and political life, and that both sexes be judged by common standards, she drew heavily on liberal, humanist, and individualist discourses from which to construct speaking positions and to claim legitimacy for her advocacy of women's rights.

Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis, on the other hand, accepted that there were essential differences between the natures of 'woman' and 'man' and that these were ordained by both God and Nature. Both maintained that 'woman' and 'man' had been created as complementary equals in God's eyes and that women's degraded social position was an outcome of unjust forms of social organisation rather than a result of any inferiority on the part of women. As such, it represented both a gross distortion of God's divine plan and was going against the 'natural order'. While

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2See Chapter 8.
each maintained that 'woman' and 'man' were complementary equals, Ellen Ellis also maintained that 'woman' possessed an innate moral superiority and, within God's divine plan, was accorded the special role of being the moral teacher of 'man'.

While an analysis of how these three women were positioned within various discourses provides insights into the availability of multiple and competing subject positions from which they could construct understandings of women's situation, I have argued that this is not sufficient to identify the ways in which particular historical individuals may have contested dominant discourses. Rather, I have argued that consideration needs to be given to the investments particular subject positions offered an individual at a given moment and to the social relations which construct various knowledge claims. Hence, an analysis of the discursive practices of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis has been offered as a means of exploring the subversiveness of their subjectivities as nineteenth century advocates of women's rights.

On the basis of Nancy Hartsock's analysis of the epistemological features of Enlightenment thought and of "marked" subjectivities, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis can each be identified as "marked" subjects. An analysis of aspects of the identities, social interactions and the views each held on various aspects of the 'woman question' has shown how they were both constructed by, and critical of, dominant nineteenth century discourses. A closer consideration of features of their epistemologies has shown how they were, to use Hartsock's phrase, "separated off and opposed to [dominant culture], yet also contained within it". Drawing on the conceptual tools offered by liberal, humanist, and individualist discourses, each utilised the concepts of 'reason', 'objectivity', 'truth', 'justice', and 'the rights of the individual' in the knowledge claims they constructed. They also made recourse to the status and authority of reasoned debate, observation, and of experience to legitimate their knowledge claims. In contrast to Enlightenment epistemologies, however, they did not utilise a disembodied understanding of reason. Rather, in varying contexts, each maintained that the faculty of reason was influenced by, and could not totally transcend, material circumstances, partisan interests, and an individual's subjective

3 Hartsock (1990) p.29.
engagement with the world. Since women's overt embodiment was, within dominant discourses, seen as inhibiting their access to 'reason', in the political connections each of these women made between knowledge, subjectivity, and power, they exposed and challenged the systematic domination inherent in nineteenth-century epistemologies.

Of the three, Mary Taylor was the most proficient in making use of logical reasoned debate to challenge dominant assumptions and prescriptions regarding women's place in society. Her articles in the Victoria Magazine clearly demonstrate a strong investment in the authority of knowledge claims made through reasoned debate. While drawing on such authority to legitimise her own arguments, however, she simultaneously exposed how reasoned judgement was not neutral and did not necessarily enable an individual to transcend partisan interests. This was most clearly evident in her discussion of the issue of so-called "redundant women" in which she illustrated how the way in which this issue was constructed as a problem, along with the questions posed and the solutions offered, belied certain preconceived assumptions which prevented engagement in an objective analysis of the issues. In effect, the critique she offered in responding to this issue was of methods of social inquiry as much as of the knowledge claims made within conservative discourses. This example illustrates how Mary Taylor upheld dominant notions of the authority of reason while simultaneously contesting the notion of reason as a neutral faculty which enabled an individual to transcend private prejudices and political interests.

An awareness of the partiality of reasoned judgement and of the knowledge claims made by particular individuals or groups was also evident in the contributions Mary Colclough made to the ongoing debates regarding the efficacy of denominational schools. For example, in typically pragmatic fashion, she made the observation that "with regard to school books, it is doubtless that histories written by Protestants would not suit the views of Roman Catholics, and vice versa". Underlying this simple matter-of-fact statement, was an understanding that knowledge, as well as the recording of history, was not neutral but informed by particular political interests. Mary Colclough considered that different understandings of the world were inevitable,

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4 See Chapter 9.
5 POLLY PLUM DSC 5 March 1869, p.5.
and, like Mary Taylor, also challenged the authority of history and of Scripture as objective sources of knowledge in her emphasis that the Bible needed to be understood as a product of the period in which it was written.

In considering how these women utilised concepts such as 'reason', 'objectivity', and 'truth', and drew on various discourses to legitimate the authority of their knowledge claims, this study has encountered certain methodological tensions. These tensions have, to a large extent, been an inevitable outcome of using analytic tools associated with a feminist poststructuralism to consider the views, identities and social practices of historical individuals positioned within the liberal tradition of Enlightenment thought. Such tensions have highlighted the need to focus on the operation of discourses in terms of the discursive strategies that were available to the subjects of this study and the contexts in which these were employed.

Poststructuralist analysis critically exposes essentialist constructions of male and female subjects, and looks sceptically at appeals to the truth and authority of reasoned judgement. It also considers invocations of identities as 'fictive totalities'. For the three subjects of this study, however, such concepts offered powerful positions from which to speak and claim legitimacy as reasoning human beings capable of producing knowledge. Nineteenth century liberal theory, with its focus on humanitarianism, justice, and the rights of the individual, enabled Mary Taylor to conclude her questioning of the progress, freedom, and civilisation of society by proposing that "we prosper only as we have honesty and wisdom of our own".6 While poststructuralist analysis contests the assumption that the individual is the final authority of knowledge claims, it was precisely such an assumption which afforded nineteenth century advocates of women's rights discursive positions from which to exercise agency and assert themselves as knowing individuals. These discourses also enabled Mary Colclough to justify her demands for social change on the basis of what was best for children, to claim that it was a matter of natural justice for girls to be educated on the same basis as boys, and to exhort wives to act in accordance with the dictates of their conscience.7

6 Taylor (1867a) p.305.
7 See, for example, "Education" DSC 31 January 1870, p.3., review of lecture NZH 27 June 1871, p.2., and "Social Topics" DSC 28 October 1869, p.6.
Similarly, such discourses enabled Ellen Ellis to assume positions from which to assert that once women were accorded the "subtle potency of recognised being", both sexes could work together for the good of all society.

Discourses associated with capitalist relations of production which constructed workers as free individuals who sold their labour power also offered discursive positions from which these women could legitimate their views. Given that Mary Taylor maintained that it was woman's first duty to attend to her economic independence, such discourses held many investments for her in terms of the positions they offered from which to construct understandings of the value of women's contributions and status in society. They also provided positions which enabled her to construct the current conventions of marriage as an institutionalised relationship of economic dependence. Mary Colclough, on the other hand, tended to draw on economic arguments to support some of her views, particularly those associated with effective and efficient systems of teaching and the need to increase women's independence through enlarging their opportunities for remunerative employment. Many of the proposals she made in terms of systems of teaching, conditions for teachers, and employment opportunities for discharged female prisoners, for example, were not only consistent with the demands of capitalism, but also made good economic sense.

While the positions available to these particular women need to be understood in terms of their positioning within a multiplicity of discourses, this study has argued that consideration also needs to be given to processes of signification and resignification in the operation of discourses. Given that possibilities for agency and for subversion have been located within the operation of such discursive processes, attention shifts from an individual subject's positioning within various discursive fields to consideration of the range of possible meanings and political implications that may be opened once an individual assumes a particular subject position. For example, the economic rationales used by Mary Taylor and Mary Colclough increased the authority of their advocacy of women's rights and changes in the status of women. This enhanced the potential attractiveness of arguments for women's rights within a developing industrialised, competitive society.
Above all else, however, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis sought to effect change in public attitudes toward women and in the material situations of particular groups of women. Toward this end, each challenged the prescribed boundaries of nineteenth century respectability by entering public spaces to voice their understandings and analyses of women's collective situation and to offer alternative visions of the social relations between the sexes. Mary Taylor wrote persistently of the need for women to gain economic independence and to be afforded perfect equality with men. She identified women's collusion with a system which expected that women be the dependent subordinates of men as at the heart of the 'woman question' and, refusing to enter such a contract herself, focused many of her concerns on the situation of single women. Her own life embodied the determined independence of spirit she considered to be necessary for all women to develop. In exposing 'femininity' as an historically contingent social construct, and in urging women to reject social conventions of womanhood on the basis that they were debasing and designed to keep them in a subordinate and dependent position, Mary Taylor's critique of the existing social relations between the sexes was far-reaching in its implications.

In contrast, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis accepted and drew on a number of dominant assumptions regarding woman's essential nature and role in the social order. Rather than this detracting from the revolutionary potential of their analyses of women's collective social position and the visions they offered for the reordering of the relations between the sexes, this study has shown that their respective investments in aspects of dominant assumptions regarding 'true womanhood' served to intensify the potential subversiveness of many of their arguments for change.

For the most part, the analyses and arguments offered by Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were based on commonly accepted assumptions about marriage as being the natural and desired state for women. They also accepted that Woman possessed an inward pre.sentiment of the world and that women were endowed with special moral duties. Because these assumptions were consistent with hegemonic nineteenth century understandings of women's nature and role, their writing was both consistent with the assumptions of many readers and simultaneously challenged hegemonic discourses. The large numbers of responses to the articles, lectures, and letters written by "Polly Plum" and, to a
lesser extent, to the letters written by "A WOMAN", suggest that the views they articulated elicited responses from individuals who shared some of their assumptions about 'woman' but contested aspects of their arguments for social reform. In a similar fashion, Mary Colclough's eloquence of speech and attendance to many of the outward manifestations of respectable womanhood attracted attendance at her public lectures and facilitated the attention she received as a public figure in the early 1870s. Given that there was an element of notoriety associated with a woman standing on a public platform and assuming a political stance, many individuals who attended her public lectures and who may have had similar personal investments in the status accorded to outward manifestations of respectable womanhood, were offered positions which resisted and challenged dominant understandings of what it meant to be a woman. Newspaper reviews of Mary Colclough's lectures, for example, suggest that while the reviewer may have been critical of aspects of the content of the lectures, the lectures themselves were generally well attended and enthusiastically received by those present.

While the complexity of Ellen Ellis' analysis of women's social position was denied widespread circulation because most of the copies of her novel were destroyed, her actions within the local community afforded many opportunities for others to encounter arguments and social practices which challenged dominant understandings regarding forms of social organisation current at the time. Unlike Mary Taylor and Mary Colclough, Ellen Ellis defied social codes which forbade social contact with Māori and incorporated her observations of ngā wāhine Māori in her analysis of women's degraded social position. In taking a public stand in support of Māori grievances over confiscation of their land, she also defied social codes which denied legitimacy to the rights of tangata whenua and to the capability of women to form and voice opinions on such issues. The controversial stand she took on the Contagious Diseases legislation also posed fundamental challenges to many aspects of women's participation in political matters and was in sharp resistance to hegemonic views of appropriate concerns for women. Her persistence in publicly assuming positions which disrupted notions of legitimate concerns and actions for women, and her privileging of her identity and authority to speak and act as a woman in such actions, mark her social practices as subversive.
Although similarities in the discursive practices employed by each of these women has been a focus of attention, important differences have also been identified. In considering the subjectivities of Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis within the context of their advocacy of women's rights, for example, this study has noted that one very significant area in which Mary Taylor stood apart from Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis was with regard to her relative lack of personal investment in religious discourses. The religious beliefs of Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were a dominant feature of their understandings of themselves as women, their arguments for change in the status of women, and their identities as advocates of women's rights. In contrast, Mary Taylor's subjectivity was dominated by a sense of revolt against aspects of current social arrangements rather than by a sense of disjunction between what God had intended and what man had imposed. She did, however, have strong views on the association between women and morality and stressed personal standards of honesty and integrity in her revisioning of the relationships between the sexes.

Motivated by differing understandings of what personal changes within the psyches of individuals were needed to facilitate respect and honesty in the social relations between and amongst each sex, each of these three women had a clear understanding of the need for women to be treated as legitimate individuals in their own right. In "The Subjection of Woman", Mill argued for the legal subordination of one sex to the other to be replaced by "a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other". Mary Taylor shared this vision of relations between the sexes, maintaining that because there were no essential differences between the natures of 'woman' and 'man', there should be no differences between the opportunities afforded to each sex in terms of education, employment, and participation in social and political life. In contrast, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis each believed that there were essential differences between the natures of 'woman' and 'man' and that these amounted to 'woman' being superior to 'man' in some respects, and inferior in others. Hence, "perfect equality" with "no power or privilege on the one side" was both an impossibility and was undesirable as a principle because it contradicted and interfered with the laws of God and Nature. For Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis,

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Mill (1869) p.1.
therefore, the guiding principle needed to be equal opportunity for women to develop their full capabilities, rather than setting a common standard to which both sexes should aspire.

Analysing the contributions each of these three women made to debates on the 'woman question' has necessitated a reconceptualisation of the form and nature of the 'women's movement' in nineteenth century New Zealand. Rosalind Delmar has noted a tendency within feminist historiography for characteristics of the modern women's movement, such as commitment to autonomy and separatism, to be taken as definitional of feminism and looked for in past experiences. While acknowledging that "[t]he way feminism's past is understood and interpreted...informs and is informed by the ways in which feminism is understood and interpreted in the present", Delmar identifies problems associated with an overstrict identification of feminism with the women's movement. This research has allowed for a fluid understanding of feminism by conceptualising the women's movement in New Zealand for the period 1845 to 1885 as operating through a continuum of discursive practices which sought to improve the position of women and girls and focusing on a range of possible relationships between such ideologies and actions. This conceptualisation of the women's movement is consistent with research methodologies which challenge traditional approaches to history. For example, the self-representations of historical individuals and their discursive practices can be treated as important and legitimate texts for analysis.

In 1885 the women's movement in New Zealand underwent major changes in both form and structure as a result of the formation of the W.C.T.U. While generally associated with its suffrage campaign, the W.C.T.U. was established with the aims of promoting temperance, social reform, and social purity through Christian values. As the "institutional expression of evangelical womanhood", its early campaigns focused on the abolition of alcohol and tobacco, providing assistance to unmarried working women and abandoned wives, and setting up childcare and Bible class groups. In its first year, Unions were established throughout the length of the country, in Invercargill, Dunedin, Oamaru, Christchurch, Rangiora, Wellington, Napier and Auckland. Although

9 See Chapter 5.
membership numbers were not overwhelming, remaining at around 600 between 1885 - 1895 and peaking at around 7700 in the late 1920s,\textsuperscript{12} the Unions were known for their involvement in every aspect of social reform. The organisation linked New Zealand women directly to an international women's movement and, in seeking "to give political expression to uniquely female values",\textsuperscript{13} provided many opportunities for women to organise and speak on the basis of their identities as women.

The successful establishment of branches of the W.C.T.U. throughout the country has been attributed to the fact that an awareness of women's rights already existed in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{14} Many of the key issues taken up by the W.C.T.U. in its early years of organisation were extensions of the concerns of earlier advocates of women's rights. During the fifteen years prior to the establishment of the W.C.T.U., for example, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis had been significant voices in publicly advocating for temperance, the abolition of the liquor trade, the provision of women's refuges, assistance to the wives and children of drunkards and to female ex-prisoners, and opposition to the Contagious Diseases legislation. During the period mid-1871 to 1876, Mary Colclough had lectured on women's rights in Auckland, Thames, Otahuhu, Coromandel, Tuakau, Hamilton, Ngāruawāhia and in Melbourne. Reviews of many of these lectures appeared in the newspapers throughout the Provinces and were frequently the subject of critical editorial comment. Between 1868 and 1873, Mary Colclough's articles and letters to the Auckland newspapers generated considerable public debate on many aspects of the 'woman question' and Ellen Ellis' letters under the pen-name "A WOMAN" also stimulated responses from local residents. Although Ellen Ellis' efforts to organise women in opposition to the Contagious Diseases legislation were met with condemnation in some quarters, the numbers of women who attended these meetings, and the subsequent petitions and deputations to the Auckland City Council suggest that in the 1870s there were significant changes within public attitudes on these issues. By the mid-1880s there was a significant level of acceptance for women to organise for social change, albeit under the banner of Christian values. It is significant that, for the most part, the activities of the various departments of the W.C.T.U. focused on community based benevolence rather than the political


\textsuperscript{13} Bunkle (1980) p.59.

rhetoric of women's rights. Many of the arguments put forward by prominent speakers in this organisation appear relatively conservative when compared with the progressive rhetoric used by Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis.

Given their passionate commitment to the women's movement and their determined advocacy of the rights of women at a time when such actions frequently met with hostile criticism and ridicule, there is a sad irony in the fact that Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis were not involved in the upsurge of organised activity which accompanied the establishment of the W.C.T.U. in New Zealand. Having returned to England in 1860, Mary Taylor was far removed from the New Zealand scene by this time. While she remained active as a mentor for young women, she had ceased contributing articles to the Victoria Magazine. Mary Colclough did not live to see collective organisation around the issues to which she had been committed for so many years. She suffered ill health for many years and did not recover from an accident which occurred while she was on holiday in Picton and died on 7th March 1885 at the age of forty-nine. There can be little doubt that Ellen Ellis would have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in her local branch of the W.C.T.U. However, despite her high public profile in 1882 while organising local opposition to the Contagious Diseases legislation, she appears to have retreated from public life by the mid 1880s. Following the publication of Everything Is Possible To Will in 1882, her son and her relatives in England, deeply resentful at what they considered to be a very unflattering portrayal of her husband, ceased all contact with her. Her husband's health had been deteriorating for several years and Oliver Ellis died on 12 March 1883. While Ellen Ellis may have continued to take an active role in educating and assisting her "less fortunate sisters", it would appear that her final years were spent alone. She died in Auckland from "asphyxia due to bronchitis" on 17 April 1895, at the age of sixty-six.

In February 1871, Mary Colclough claimed that the movement for women's rights was "only a little behind" in the colonies as compared with

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15 For a report of this accident, see CP 24 January 1885, p.2. Her death notice appeared in CP 13 March 1885, p.2. The New Zealand Herald printed a brief account of the accident suffered by "Polly Plum", noting that "[h]er death will be regretted by many who knew her in the olden times". [NZH 10 March 1885, p.5.]

Britain and the United States. She attributed this in part to there being fewer opportunities for "enlightenment" in the colonies. While John Stuart Mill maintained that women could not be expected to devote themselves to the emancipation of women "until men in considerable numbers are prepared to join with them in the undertaking", each of the women in this study, while agreeing that men had to change as much as women, showed no signs of being prepared to wait for men to join the cause before taking action themselves. While we cannot directly assess their impact on the development of political activism regarding women's rights, it is important to recognise that their writings and social practices provided a context for more organised political activity in the mid 1880s. Their most significant contribution to debate on the 'woman question' in New Zealand was their construction of political positions which other women and men could use to resist constraints on women and advocate social change.

Mary Taylor was prepared to cross to the other side of the world to increase her opportunities to engage in a wider variety of fields of remunerative employment. As an educated, self-employed single woman in Wellington in the mid-1840s and 1850s, she challenged conventional expectations about single women and about women's capacities and abilities to live independently.

Mary Colclough's "chequered life" placed her in a position to see the lives of many different groups of women. Her own personal circumstances, along with her many years of experience as a teacher in both rural and urban schools, her prison and temperance work, and her public lecturing, intensified her analysis of the disabilities and injustices of many aspects of women's position in society. Her articles and letters to the newspapers, her public lecturing, her teaching and the practical assistance she gave to women in need provided a context within which others could arrive at different understandings about women's legal rights and their needs as individuals. Her contributions to the newspapers generated a great deal of public interest and debate, and she only discontinued her

17 POLLY PLUM DSC 21 February 1871, p.3.
18 POLLY PLUM NZH 14 August 1871, p.3.
19 Mill (1869) p.294.
20 See article "Examinations in Public Schools", DSC 23 January 1871, p.3.
correspondence on women's rights when she was convinced that all possible arguments had been exhausted and the debate had "degenerated into tiresome reiteration". Her public lectures were generally very well attended and always received appreciative applause. Interest was so high in her lecture on "Female Education" that a group of women subscribed for a special ferry service to transport women from the North Shore to enable them to attend. Although she lectured on a variety of topics, a reviewer for the New Zealand Herald noted that it was "hardly possible for Mrs. Colclough to lecture without bringing into prominence the rights of women". Through access to her views in the newspapers, attendance at her lectures, or injunctions to send donations for the establishment of a refuge for women or some other project she had instigated, many women and men were challenged to reflect on Mary Colclough's advocacy of women's rights.

Ellen Ellis' views on unjust forms of social relations and the need for women to become educated were powerful motivations in making changes in her own personal situation and in effecting changes in the lives of other women. Her own attempts to "find her own way up the ladder of learning" began with teaching herself how to communicate her ideas effectively in written form. Not only did she research church doctrine to defend herself in the stand she took against the amalgamation of her local church, she also attended the 1860 Kohimarama Conference and spoke with local Māori and European settlers to increase her understanding of the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi and Māori land grievances. She became fully informed on the workings of Contagious Diseases legislation to enable her to share this knowledge.

21 "POLLY PLUM" DSC 2 October 1871, p.3. Mary Colclough continued to correspond regularly under her own name on a variety of issues surrounding the needs of female prisoners and destitute women.

22 The review of her first lecture on women's rights attracted "a very large and attentive audience" and was "frequently interrupted by warm tokens of approbation" and this was followed by a "good attendance" when she redelivered this lecture at Thames, despite inclement weather. [See reviews of lectures, NZH 27 June 1871, p.2.; DSC 27 June 1871, p.2.; NZH 12 July 1871, p.3.]

23 See editorial note advertising lecture, DSC 31 July 1871, p.2. Attendance was not as high as expected due to the inclement weather. Her lecture on "Marriage" drew an audience of around 150, the majority being women, while the Theatre Royal at Coromandel, which held about 100, proved too small a venue and subsequently many people were unable to hear her speak. [See reviews of lectures, DSC 1 August 1871, p.3., NZH 1 August 1871, p.2.; DSC 21 October 1871, p.2., 3 April 1872, p.2.]

24 See review of lecture, NZH 29 June 1872, p.3.

25 Ellis (1882) p.16.
with other women. Her address to the ladies' prayer meeting in Auckland in August 1882 represented a significant event for Ellen Ellis personally and for political struggles for women's rights in New Zealand. In calling attention to the provisions of the Contagious Diseases Prevention Act, and in stating that prayer was all very well but "to do any good, women must act", Ellen Ellis was not simply drawing attention to the need for women to become informed about and active in political matters. She was claiming a speaking position based on her identity as a woman, and urging other women to action on the basis of their identities as Christian women. This discursive strategy was the basis of W.C.T.U. activity in the mid to late 1880s and provided women with authoritative speaking positions on a variety of different social issues in the decades that followed.

All three of the women whose lives and writing have been the focus of this study positioned themselves as public advocates of social change. Mary Colclough, however, had the highest public profile as an advocate of women's rights. Her "firm and unflinching" commitment to this cause was continually met with abuse, derision and insulting slurs to her personal character. Like Ellen Ellis, she was convinced of her calling as a missionary in God's work. In their persistent advocacy on behalf of many nameless disempowered women who had suffered the abuses of unjust forms of social organisation, Mary Taylor, Mary Colclough and Ellen Ellis have provided a powerful legacy for contemporary feminists in New Zealand who, as discursive strategists, are also committed to changing unjust forms of social organisation.

See report of ladies' meeting, NZH 11 August 1882, p.5.
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APPENDIX I

"A WOMAN"

Between July 1870 and February 1871,1 Ellen Ellis wrote to the Daily Southern Cross and the New Zealand Herald under the pen-name "A WOMAN". This can be substantiated through biographical references contained in these letters which correspond with details of Ellen Ellis' own life, and through an analysis of the tone and content of these letters which corresponds with the style of writing, topical matter, and analysis contained in Ellen Ellis' novel Everything Is Possible To Will.

In a letter titled "Moral Training - A Mother's Work", "A WOMAN" states that she is one of seventeen children and that she is 'the worst of the branch'.2 In an earlier letter, "A WOMAN" states that she had owned the title 'incorrigible dunce' for many years.3 Ellen Colebrook was the second eldest of seventeen children and, in reference to herself, said '[a]s the dunce of the family, I was the black sheep amid a bevy of fair daughters.'4 At the age of thirteen, her school teachers informed her parents that 'it was simply picking their pockets to keep such a dunce at school' and she was taunted by her brothers and sisters with the dunce label.5 In her novel, her fictionalised counterpart Zee is referred to by her school teacher as an 'incorrigible dunce'.6

"A WOMAN" also wrote that her father's influence in the family was 'unbounded', that he was possessed of 'unwearied industry, unswerving

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1 It is possible that Ellen Ellis' use of this pen-name was not restricted to these dates. See, for example, the letter written under this pen-name in reference to the possible closure of the Auckland Young Women's Institute [NZH 15 August 1882, p.3.], the tone and content of which is thoroughly consistent with the views expressed by Ellen Ellis at this time in her involvement with protests against the Contagious Diseases legislation and in her novel.

2 "A WOMAN" DSC 3 November 1870, p.3.

3 "A WOMAN" NZH 27 October 1870, p.3.


5 Ibid., p.14.

6 Ellis (1882) p.6.
integrity, unwavering love', that he had 'a singularly happy temperament', a 'broad unsectarian piety' and that he quietly lived his religion. Ellen Ellis' father, William Colebrook, was known for his deep religious beliefs and his strict adherence to the biblical commandment to devote the sabbath to religious observance. Ellen Ellis' brother, John Colebrook, described his father as 'attractive and loveable', as having 'great humour and a hearty laugh', being 'warmly regarded for his many acts of generosity and kindness', 'respected for the honesty and uprightness of his character' and for the 'undoubted love all his children bore him'.

In various letters, "A WOMAN" revealed that she was married to a drunkard, that she had known what debt was, and that she was a strong supporter of the teachings of Rev. Samuel Edger. Ellen Colebrook married Oliver Sydney Ellis, a property speculator, who was an habitual drinker. In mid-1865, when his business was facing bankruptcy, Ellen temporarily took over responsibility for his financial affairs. Although she proved to be an efficient debt collector, on one occasion she had to barricade her home to prevent creditors repossessing the furniture and serving her husband with a summons for debt. In the late 1860s, Ellen and Oliver Ellis began attending the sermons of Rev. Edger. The personal encouragement and support Ellen Ellis received from Rev. Edger contributed to significant changes in her life. In direct response to a challenge made by Rev. Edger, Oliver Ellis took the pledge of abstinence and joined the Good Templars. Rev. Edger gave a great deal of encouragement and advice to Ellen Ellis in her efforts to learn how to express her ideas clearly and forcefully in written form. She named him directly in her novel, stating 'from whom she has received almost every thought that has made life precious, and well

7 "A WOMAN" DSC 3 November 1870, p.3.
9 John Colebrook, from a speech given at a family reunion in 1901 and later quoted by Morley Colebrook at a family reunion in 1932. [Colebrook (1980) p.15.]
10 See, for example, letters by "A WOMAN" DSC 13 October 1870, p.2., 24 January 1871, p.2.
11 "A WOMAN" DSC 2 February 1871, p.3.
12 "A WOMAN" DSC 13 October 1870, p.2.
worth the living; to whom she would lovingly dedicate this book if certain that he would esteem it a compliment.\textsuperscript{14}

In October 1870, "A WOMAN" wrote that while she hoped that the 'acrimony of "bitter personal experience"' would not mar her work, her purpose for writing was to 'change the tone of public opinion, as to the right of women tamely to submit in silence to indignities heaped upon them by bad men.'\textsuperscript{15} The timing of her correspondence to the Auckland newspapers suggests that these letters were Ellen Ellis' earliest written attempts to challenge public opinion with regard to women's situation. These contributions culminated in the publication of her novel in 1882, of which her stated intention was to make her own 'bitter experience' useful to other women and to prove how, both in public and private life, women 'are crippled by their enforced ignorance and degraded social position...in their God-given work to bless mankind.'\textsuperscript{16}

Along with these biographical consistencies between "A WOMAN" and Ellen Ellis, there are clear parallels in the tone and content of the letters written by "A WOMAN" and that presented in Ellen Ellis' novel. For example, "A WOMAN" insisted that orthodoxy was not religion, that 'mere lip religion' was useless, and that '[i]t is what we are, not what we teach, [that] carries conviction.'\textsuperscript{17} In her novel, Ellen Ellis wrote that sectarian jealousies were childish and decried the kind of religion that amounted to 'a kind of top-dressing, to be put on and off at will'. She also stated that 'what the teacher is is of more importance than what he can impart.'\textsuperscript{18} In the context of asserting that no one needed protection of the law more than the wives and drunken, dissolute and idle men, "A WOMAN" wrote that '[w]oman is on a par with the negro. She is property and her owner is unthankful.'\textsuperscript{19} In Everything Is Possible To Will Ellen Ellis elaborated on this theme,

\textsuperscript{15} "A WOMAN" NZH 27 October 1870, p.3.
\textsuperscript{16} Ellis (1882) p.iii,iv.
\textsuperscript{17} "A WOMAN" DSC 13 October 1870, p.2., 3 November 1870, p.3.
\textsuperscript{18} Ellis (1882) p.vii,43,131.
\textsuperscript{19} "A WOMAN" DSC 3 October 1870, p.3.
writing that, upon marriage, a woman became the possession of her husband. She added:

England owns no slaves? The drunkard's wife and little one's are the slaves, legally, of the vilest slave-holder that ever owned human cattle, or disgraced his kind. They are his, body and soul; there is no limit to his power, so long as he spares life - bare life.

Whereas "A WOMAN" declared 'give me influence, I care not who owns authority', Ellen Ellis wrote 'what matter whose hand holds the sceptre, if the rule be right?' In criticising the custom of cultivating morality in women and looking at man as either perfect or past hope, "A WOMAN" commented that 'such one-sided policy is not without bitter fruits.' In her novel, Ellen Ellis illustrates the 'bitter pills' that Zee is forced to swallow as a result of her powerlessness over her husband's extravagant, selfish and irresponsible behaviours.

A persistent theme within the letters by "A WOMAN" was concern with the natures of "true women" and "true men". In a letter titled "On Woman", she declared that 'a true woman never can deny her nature, no matter what her surroundings' and that there need be 'no fear of any trespass where nature has assigned a real difference.' While she exhorted girls to be 'true women', her main concern was for men to show their 'honourable natures', to be 'men of true metal' and to be 'industrious honest-hearted true men'. While Everything Is Possible To Will was written especially for women to make them think about what was meant by 'strength of will', a great deal of emphasis is placed on the need for men to discipline their wills and work toward their own salvation.

20 Ellis (1882) pp.46-47.
21 Ibid., p.124. See also pp.221-23.
22 "A WOMAN" NZH 27 October 1870, p.3., Ellis (1882) p.52.
23 "A WOMAN" DSC 3 November 1870, p.3.
24 See, for example, Ellis (1882) Ch. XII.
25 "A WOMAN" NZH 29 September 1870, p.3. This letter appeared in a slightly modified form in DSC 3 October 1870, p.3.
26 "A WOMAN" DSC 3 January 1871, p.3.
27 See letters by "A WOMAN", DSC 2 February 1871, p.3., 8 February 1871, p.3., 17 January 1871, p.3.
28 See "Preface" in Ellis (1882).
While correspondents to the newspapers were required to enclose their name and address, this final confirmation of Ellen Ellis' identity as "A WOMAN" cannot be made because such records are no longer extant. However, as this discussion has shown, biographical details along with an analysis of the content of these letters clearly supports the claim that Ellen Ellis contributed to the debate on the "woman question" under the pen-name "A WOMAN".
**APPENDIX II**

Total European Population for the Colony and the Auckland Province, and Proportions of the Sexes, 1858-1886.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>FEMALES PER 100 MALES</th>
<th>TOTAL POPULATION</th>
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<td>59413</td>
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<td>Dec 1861</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Apr 1881</td>
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<td>578482</td>
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*Source: Census 1871, No. II; 1896, Part I, Table IV, Table V, Table VI.*
APPENDIX III

"COLONIAL FERN LEAVES"

Of all the social bores one meets in print I now insist,
The worst is she who sets herself up for a moralist.
Of course she is immaculate, and with her virtuous pen
She tries to call attention to us wretched brutes of men.
We're stubborn, heartless, and we lead objectionable lives;
And are a burden and a grief unto our charming wives,
We don't deserve to have such faithful creatures pet and love us.
The female satirist declares they are a cut above us.
I've noticed in the SOUTHERN CROSS with grief and great concern
That we are catching it from a colonial "Fanny Fern,
Who signs herself as "Polly Plum" and jerks her mighty pen
To walk into the follies and shortcomings of the men;
She talks about the sorrow of our dear beloved Queen,
Who for so many lingering years all in the dumps has been,
And though the British public think 'tis time she were more jolly,
Her sadness so prolonged is not a problem unto Polly,
Who says Prince Albert was a man you don't see every day,
And, as a husband, always had a fascinating way.
For two-and-twenty years he met his spouse with daily smile,
And in paying her attention his time he would beguile,
And Polly says no wonder that his memory she cherishes
When the best and sweetest husband ever dreamed about thus perishes.
And cruel Polly lashes out at me (my name's John Smith),
And like a doughty Amazon, she wires into me forthwith,
When my infant son was born she says I didn't stay at home,
But to my club so selfishly of an evening I would roam.
She hints I never fed my infant son and heir with pap,
Nor dandied with a father's joy the brat upon my lap,
I kept away from him t'escape that dreadful lingering curse
Embodied in the person of a fussy monthly nurse.
And Polly hints that if I were to leave the hocks tomorrow,
My wife would not evince a corresponding queenly sorrow.
She throws Prince Albert in my teeth, who she says all his life
Was meek, and mild, and never had a shindy with his wife;
But let me now inquire of this colonial fern-leaf Polly
What reason did he ever have to be otherwise than jolly?
Can it be wondered at now that a far from wealthy Prince
Should for a mighty Queen a life of gratitude evince,
Who raised him from obscurity and offered him her hand,
And brought him into notice in that highly-favoured land?
Did ever he come home to dine upon a washing-day
To nothing but cold mutton, or a bread-and-cheese display?
Did he, my clever Polly, ever hungry homeward run
And hear the dismal tidings that the dinner wasn't done?
Or ever have to put up with bad cooks (domestic hags)
Who burnt a joint to cinders and convert it into rags?
Or, when dressing for an evening party, have his feelings hurt
By finding he was dreadful short of buttons to his shirt?

When the infant Alfred squall'd at night, does Polly now presume
To say the illustrious German walked him up and down the room?
Had he no private chamber where he'd quietly retire
When Albert Edward woke up and annoyed his sleepy sire?
I've read the "Memoirs" also, and like Polly waded in,
But nowhere does it ever say that he was short of tin,
And like a poor mechanic who is forced to earn his grub
While his amiable spouse is busy washing at the tub.

We do not read Victoria ever used to go to roam
Or if she couldn't have her way began to sulk and pout.
Put me, John Smith, into his shoes, and give me lots of money,
With a great Queen for a consort, I would be as mild as honey.
I'd never wish to go out of an evening to my club,
Or quarrel with my dinner when I had the best of grub.
To play a game of billiards do you think I fain'dt to roam,
With a Thurston table, cues, and balls awaiting me at home?
With other females why should I the time wish to beguile,
While lovely maids of honour on the Royal boss would smile!
With heaps of nurses, should I spurn my matrimonial fruits,
Or come home tight, and go to bed all in my regal boots!
Oh, bless you, not a bit of it, my moralising Polly,
I'd be the best of husbands then, so kind and always jolly.
But often you would feel like me, so cross, and have the blues
Were you transferred from ladies' kid to my plebeian shoes.
So, Polly Plum, give over now these hard thrusts at the men,
Nor poke your fun at us, my dear, with your satiric pen,
And let us have no more attempts to write like Fanny Fern,
Your moralising, to my mind, is not so good as 'hern.'
And desiccate, in other words, dry up, my dear, forthwith,
And allow me, Polly, to remain - Yours faithfully, JOHN SMITH.

Daily Southern Cross 2 September 1869, p.5.

["Colonial Fern Leaves" was written by "JOHN SMITH" in response to "Polly Plum's" article "A Good Husband" DSC 1 September 1869, p.5.]
## APPENDIX IV

### MARY TAYLOR - PUBLICATIONS

**ARTICLES:**

[*] denotes article reprinted in *The First Duty of Women*.

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<th>Month</th>
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<td>1870</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>&quot;What Am I To Do?&quot;</td>
<td>XV, 215-226.</td>
<td>&quot;T&quot; [*]</td>
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<td>1870</td>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>&quot;Feminine Profitable Labour&quot;</td>
<td>XV, 555-563.</td>
<td>&quot;T&quot;</td>
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<td>1871</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>&quot;The Revolt and the Revolters&quot;</td>
<td>XVII, 193-204.</td>
<td>&quot;M. Taylor&quot;</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>&quot;Plain Sewing&quot;</td>
<td>XIX, 385-393.</td>
<td>&quot;M. Taylor&quot;</td>
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<td>1873</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;A Tale&quot;</td>
<td>XXI, 395-416.</td>
<td>&quot;T&quot;</td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;A Servant Girl's History&quot;</td>
<td>XXVII, 503-512.</td>
<td>&quot;M.T.&quot;</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Once More the Woman Question!&quot;</td>
<td>XXIX, 209-218.</td>
<td>&quot;M.T.&quot;</td>
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**BOOKS:**

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Swiss Notes by Five Ladies (Co-written by Mary Taylor, Grace Hirst, Fanny Middleton Richardson, Minnie Nielson, Marion Ross)</td>
<td>Leeds; Inchbold &amp; Beck.</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>Miss Miles or A Tale of Yorkshire Life 60 Years Ago</td>
<td>London; Remington &amp; Co.</td>
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APPENDIX V

MARY COLCLOUGH - ARTICLES

"On Writing Novels" DSC 16 December 1868, p.4.
"Women's Work" DSC 24 December 1868, p.5.
"Pattern Women" DSC 29 December 1868, p.4.
"Brave and Great Men" DSC 15 January 1869, p.4.
"Appearances" DSC 22 January 1869, p.4.
"Novels" DSC 28 January 1869, p.5.
"Children" DSC 29 January 1869, p.5.
"Trousseau" DSC 1 February 1869, p.7.
"The Pride of Humility" DSC 3 February 1869, p.4.
"Music" DSC 10 March 1869, p.4.
"Shopping" DSC 26 March 1869, p.4.
"Public Men" DSC 24 June 1869, p.5.
"A Woman's Sphere" DSC 14 July 1869, p.4.
"A Lady" DSC 18 July 1869, p.5.
"Injustice of Society to Women" DSC 20 July 1869, p.5.
"What Have Women To Do With Politics?" DSC 4 August 1869, p.5.
"A Good Husband" DSC 1 September 1869, p.5.
"Childhood" DSC 2 September 1869, p.4.
"Legal Position of Woman" DSC 15 September 1869, p.6.
"A Governess" DSC 21 September 1869, p.5.
"Useless Women"  DSC 30 September 1869, p.5.

SOCIAL TOPICS SERIES:
#1 "Going a-Courting"  DSC 15 October 1869, p.3.
#2 "The School for Wives"  DSC 18 October 1869, p.4.
#3 (title illegible)  DSC 28 October 1869, p.6.
#4 "Early Married Days"  DSC 4 November 1869, p.4.
#5 "The Rising Generation"  DSC 18 November 1869, p.7.
#6 "Coming Out"  DSC 30 November 1869, p.7.

"True Women"  DSC 23 November 1869, p.3.
(untitled)  DSC 27 November 1869, p.4.
(untitled)  DSC 31 January 1870, p.3.
"Sisterhoods"  DSC 30 March 1870, p.4.
"Lords of the Creation"  DSC 4 May 1870, p.7.
"Woman and Her Master"  DSC 16 May 1870, p.7., 10 June 1870, p.4.
"The Education of Girls"  DSC 21 June 1870, p.4.
"Domestic Work"  DSC 1 July 1870, p.4.
"Home Sweet Home"  DSC 8 August 1870, p.4.
"To the Girls"  DSC 6 September 1870, p.5.
"What Can She Do?"  DSC 24 October 1870, p.3.
"Pleasure"  DSC 29 October 1870, p.2.
"The Thieves of Society"  DSC 19 November 1870, p.3.
"License the Teachers"  DSC 26 November 1870, p.5.
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<td>&quot;Examinations in Public Schools&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 23 January 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;Woman's Sole Profession&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 16 February 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;Women as Wives&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 24 February 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;The Law and the Bible&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 27 February 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;Concerning Boys&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 6 March 1871, p.5.</td>
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<td>&quot;Drink&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 31 March 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;Hen-Pecked Husbands&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 12 April 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;American Schools&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 28 April 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;Good Housewives&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 8 May 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;A Word For Men&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 11 May 1871, p.3.</td>
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<td>&quot;The Opposition to Woman's Rights&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 31 May 1871, p.3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;The Marriage Law Reformed&quot;</td>
<td>DSC 28 June 1871, p.3.</td>
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