

It is nothing less than a radical reworking of the existing interpretations of New Zealand colonial art to which a formidable amount of empirical evidence lends its support. Much of the material is highly relevant to the current postcolonial discourse, though that discourse would now, I suspect, seek to find increasing affinity between colonizer and colonized where Bell, rightly working within the terms of his central thesis, finds difference.

BERNARD SMITH

*University of Melbourne*

*The Vote, the Pill, and the Demon Drink: A History of Feminist Writing in New Zealand, 1869-1993.* By Charlotte Macdonald. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1993. 260 pp. NZ price: \$49.95.

THIS IS one of several publications which celebrated the centenary of the granting of woman suffrage to New Zealand women in 1893. The book is a collection of documents, beginning with the first public stirrings of feminism in New Zealand in the 1860s and finishing with an extract from a 1992 New Zealand parliamentary debate. Documents are grouped, and each chronological segment accompanied by an analytical commentary. Such divisions could be seen by some as arbitrary and artificial, but the commentator has been skilful in showing how one phase of feminism has merged, and is still merging, into the next. It is refreshing to see analysis of the 1970s and 1980s feminism in other than theoretical terms, although Macdonald admits to the problems faced when assessing the latest phase of any historical movement.

The documents present the public face of the women's movement rather than the private consciousness of feminists, and as such they chart practical demands for equality. The arguments vary as New Zealand moves into different phases of its history, but the underlying philosophy is the same: that women are entitled to have their demands met because equality with all, male and female, is their inalienable right. The style is rich and varied, and development of both protest and arguments devastatingly logical. New Zealand can be proud of the articulate and perceptive women who fought, and are still fighting for, their freedoms.

Four themes run through the documents and commentary: economic, political, legal and social. They show us how far women have come and how far they still have to travel.

Mary Taylor's 'Appeal to the Women of New Zealand' (1870) protested at the lack of training and employment opportunities which forced women to marry. The right of women to economic independence within marriage exercised the women of the 1880s and 1890s. Remuneration for women who are tied to child-rearing, and the concomitant one of eliminating penalties against working women because of the time out of the work force is still a concern. The first feminists asked for a living wage for women. Women have come a long way, but they still do not have economic equality in the work force: 'equal pay for equal work' is not 'equal pay for work of equal value'.

Mary Ann Muller asked for the vote in 1869, and when women gained it in 1893 they thought that it would give them strong political influence; that parliamentary membership could come in its own good time. Margaret Sievwright was soon disillusioned. She telegraphed Rose Scott in 1902 warning New South Wales' women against accepting the vote without candidature rights. This, she said, was 'the knife without the blade'. Women in both countries have now had the right of candidature for over 70 years, but many factors

operate to prevent more than a smattering of female members. A strong political voice still eludes women, and parliamentary representation, as later documents show, will be one of the battlefronts of the 1990s.

The documents give an encouraging picture of how legal injustices have been whittled away in such areas as divorce, guardianship of children, inheritance, recognition of the woman's contribution to marital property. But women still have to fight world-wide against attitudinal discrimination within the justice system, which influences judgments against them.

Mary Ann Muller began the protest against the habitual belittlement of women in 1869, but has the battle yet been won in joke culture and the modern media? Another sad and angry refrain runs through the collection: the woman's demand for protection against violence, both domestic and outside the family.

Some friends thought the title striking, but I did not find it satisfying. The vote and the pill each marked important points in the development of women's freedoms, but although temperance coloured the feminism of many 1880s and 1890s agitators, 'the demon drink' belongs on the sideline in a perspective of 140 years. The quality of the paper used is poor and the print for the documents is appallingly small. No doubt the publishers had financial limitations — publishers of feminist books often do — but this publication deserved better. Comparisons will show that the first nation in the world to enfranchise its women was, and is, a microcosm of the western world. Remote geographically, it has never been isolated ideologically. Print, visitors and migrants have always flowed into and out of it. It is a part of the mainstream of feminist apologetics and struggle.

This collection appears when new and younger writers like Susan Faludi and Naomi Wolf are emerging, reiterating basic principles and formulating (sometimes controversial) strategies for the continuing struggle. New Zealand will certainly move into this next stage in step with the rest of the world.

AUDREY OLDFIELD

*Miranda, New South Wales*

*Minding Children, Managing Men: Conflict and Compromise in the Lives of Postwar Pakeha Women.* By Helen May. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992. 371pp. NZ price: \$34.95.

WOMEN'S HISTORY is often concerned with the gap between societal prescriptions of women's role and behaviour and the actuality of women's experience. In *Minding Children, Managing Men* Helen May has used the life experiences of 24 women, and contemporary commentary from sources such as the *New Zealand Listener* and *The New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, to examine the articulation between prescription and reality in the decades following the Second World War. The lives of women who reached adulthood and reared children during the 1940s and 1950s are contrasted with the experiences of a 'transitional generation' of women who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s.

May argues that the privations engendered by the Depression and World War II led to a widespread desire for material possessions and economic security in the immediate postwar period. For women marriage and motherhood provided the only socially