

Kate







## Welcome to Kate magazine 2014!

*Kate* is a publication put out every year since 2007 by the University of Auckland Women's Rights Officers. In a society that continues to be dominated by male perspectives, *Kate* exists to specifically highlight women's experiences, opinions, and interests. As your WROs this year, it's been our privilege to put together the magazine you're reading.

*Kate* was first published in 2007 and was preceded by other feminist magazines: *Marte Nostro* (1903-1904), *The Womenspace Journals* (1980s), *Six Degrees* (1996) and *Platform* (2000-2004). *Kate* takes its name from Kate Sheppard, the famous New Zealand suffragette; Kate Edger, the first woman to gain a university degree in New Zealand; and Kate Sutton, the eighth female AUSA president.

Making *Kate* has been a rollercoaster. At the start we didn't know entirely what we were getting ourselves into and we're still not sure we do now. But hey. The magazine exists! And that's largely thanks to the overwhelming amount of submissions and support we have received. We had such a range of high quality and diverse submissions it reminded us how 32 pages once a year is in no way sufficient to express the depth and breadth of women's experiences. Yet at the same time, it's reassuring to see so many people show enthusiasm for and recognise the importance of having a platform for women's voices on campus. Our contributors for *Kate* 2014 are all women (apart from one co-authored piece), and we are very proud to have produced something to fill the void of women-centric student publications, if only momentarily. We owe all of those who submitted work to us many thanks, and we hope you enjoy the many fine pieces in these pages.

Love,  
Your Women's Rights Officers,

Isabeau Woodson and Tessa Morgan.

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**Apologies to all those who submitted whose work we couldn't include because of space constraints.**

**The views expressed in these pages are entirely those of their authors.**







# contents

4 - Newsworthy	Inadvertent Colonisation? - 18
5 - Diary of the Tumblr Feminist	'Mom-in-Chief': The Other Obama - 19
6 - 7 - Hipsterview Kate Edition	Health - 20 - 21
8 - Teenage Feminism and Rookie Magazine	Mooning over Ladies' Liberation - 22 - 23
9 - Sports	Nymphomaniac Review - 23
10 - Trigger Warnings	The Body of Dance - 24 - 25
11 - Born this Way?	Women in NZ Politics - 26 - 27
12 - 13 - From the Rubble	Cover Girl - 28
14 - Senior MANagement	Frozen Review - 29
15 - Who is the evildest of them all?	Mako Mori Test - 29
16 - 17 - The Gendered Nature of Respect	Q&A with Maureen Molloy - 30





# NEWSWORTHY

- ANTONIA VERSTAPPEN -

## EEO commissioner calls for targets over unacceptable pay gap

Dr Jackie Blue, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, is calling for targets to reduce the 17.1 percent gender pay gap in the public sector. The pay gap between men and women has narrowed 5.2 percent from 18 to 12.8 percent since 1989; however, in the public sector this gap has only reduced by 2.8 percent.

A Human Rights Commission report recently identified the Ministry of Defence as being the worst offenders when it comes to paying men and women differently, where men are earning approximately 42 percent more than women. The Ministry of Education has a 35 percent pay gap.

The report has found that while women make up 60 percent of the public service, only 42 percent of senior public service managers are women, and 31 percent (9 out of 29) of public sector chief executives

are women.

This trend is even more extreme for the tertiary education sector. Only 17 percent of polytech chief executives are women, and only one of eight (13 percent) of New Zealand's universities has a female vice-chancellor. Instead, women dominate lower-paying jobs in the tertiary education sector.

To fix this issue, Jackie Blue is calling for targets in the public sector: "targets focus the mind and mean that conversations happen".

The sign for Womenspace has changed from "Females Only" to "Women Only" to better represent the inclusivity of the space.



Gillian Robespierre's directorial debut, *Obvious Child*, wins over critics and feminists alike by finally giving us the abortion film we always wanted: an honest one.



After being snubbed by Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential Issue, Laverne Cox, an iconic activist for transgender rights, ends up back on top with her own cover.

Whole world freaks out at the sight of Rihanna's boobs!







## DIARY OF A TAG-ALONG: THE TUMBLR FEMINIST

Kate Edition

### MONDAY

Slept in till 10 am after staying up til 4 am reblogging change.org petitions. Changin' the world, 'yo. At 10:30 am, V in hand, I check my dashboard. Lotta other reblogs. I have to keep up, or my activist credentials will fall behind. Also, given my level of introvert behaviour, I think I may have another mental illness to add to my sidebar. I'm very oppressed, ya'll.

Didn't go into uni today. Tumblr needed me.

### TUESDAY

Slept in till 11 am after staying up til 5 am writing my post-modern take on Miley Cyrus' gender performativity. Also the new Sherlock came out, so I watched it and made alot[sic] of gifs! Benedict Cumberbatch is such a hottie! A girl like me though could never have him! I'm too oppressed.

I think I might be gay. Added it to my sidebar.

Went into Uni today after seeing on FACEBOOK (sometimes I'm not on tumblr, lol!), to protest someone's posters that were misogynistic. I got invited to Shadows, but I don't drink alcohol because I'm gluten-free. So much dietary oppression in the movement!

I wrote about it on my blog.

### WEDNESDAY

I didn't sleep in today! Attended my favourite Sociology lecture, which is not so much my favourite after my lecturer told me that lovers of vanilla ice cream cake are not oppressed, despite me using my lived experience to counteract him. Damn these straight cis white men!

Hid in the Arts study room after and went on Tumblr using my MacBook Pro. Edited my sidebar. I'm feeling very identity fluid at the moment. Sadly, this is dismissed as being 'unable to make up my mind'. What fluidists!

### THURSDAY

Someone accused me of appropriating identities today! I was totally shocked and wrote a blog post saying that fluidism is obviously a thing, given the hostility of the wider oppression community.

I made a change.org petition to end this! I submitted it to Upworthy—hopefully they pick it up!

I also reblogged all the horrible agreeing posts and spammed TOTALLY ADORBS shibe memes. That dog is sooooo cute.

### FRIDAY

Slept in till 1pm after fighting horrible people over the concept of fluidism all night! This activism really takes a lot out of me. I also made a complaint about my lecturer, denying my lived experience of discrimination about loving Vanilla Ice Cream Cake.

Today has been a very frustrating week! AND someone just posted a takedown of me! Aghh! So many feels right now.



## POST-GRAD PROFILE

Hannah Rossiter

My research is about butch transwomen and how they negotiate their position within the trans community. It's looking at social inclusion and exclusion within the trans community. Butch transwomen are seen as an oxymoron. The majority of discourse around it is that being a transwoman, you must be hyper feminine. That you need to be seen as 'passing' and have to meet gender norms—this is something that dominates most of the discourse around how transwomen are supposed to be.

I chose my area of study because there is very little research on how those in the trans community interact with each other. I wanted something a bit different to do and thought it was an area that really needs more discussion and research. There aren't many academic resources available for this, mainly because no one has actually sat down and thought about it before—I think because academic discussion about being a transwoman is something a lot of people haven't really seen as viable.

I have more challenges being a transwoman, as opposed to being a woman in academia. I'm the only transwoman in the Sociology Department—that isn't to say there isn't a variety of gender identities there, but I am the only openly transwoman doing a Masters. Most of the other Masters students are OK about me being trans, but it's just one of those things that no-one really discusses. It isn't something within most of their frames of reference. If they don't have to say anything they won't; they aren't being transphobic or anything but it just isn't something they talk about.



# HIPSTERVIEW

Kate Edition

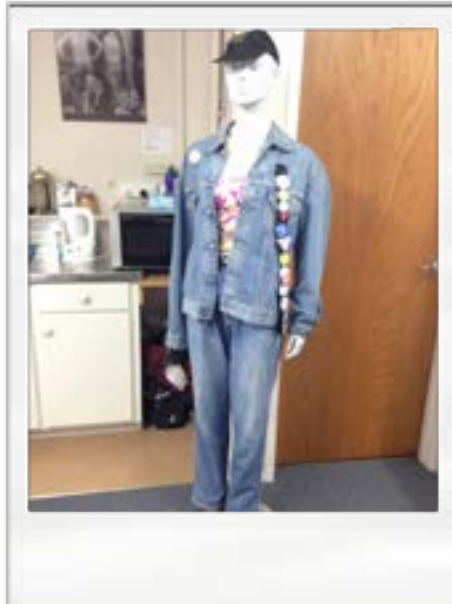
- HANNAH SMITH AND BERNARD VELLA

Our trip to the Charlotte Museum Trust began as a reminder of what a failure we are as journalists. Thinking our weekly cafe review in Craccum qualified us as professional investigative journalists was probably at best, ambitious, and at worst, our biggest mistake. It turns out professional journalists should confirm locations prior to leaving. Or at least check Google maps, so they don't end up in Ponsonby, when they should be in New Lynn. These places were all the same in Hannah's head (bless her Rotorua origins).



Lezbehonest, it does look like a cheap sex motel

Three buses later, we had arrived. Thank-Ellen. Bernard initially thought that the Museum looked like a cheap sex motel (rude). However on the inside it was not. It was a down-to-earth museum, with a collection of personal items that struck a different chord than any of the pretentious pieces seen in the Auckland Art Gallery.



There were many artefacts of lesbian history in the museum—pottery fragments from Crete, lesbian playing cards, tiny sculptures and collections of 70s campaign badges.

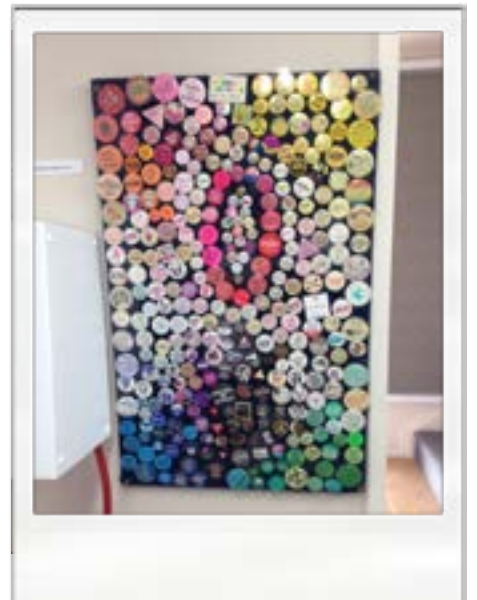
The Charlotte Museum Trust was formed in 2000 by a group of women in response to the need to preserve artefacts of lesbian history. It seems unfortunate that a place so rich in cultural history is virtually unheard of on campus. The women running this museum are struggling to keep this history from being forgotten, and it's not hard to see why: their collection is a remarkable memorial to the efforts made by lesbians in New Zealand. Maureen Jaggard was our 'guide' through the museum, more than willing to take time out of her day to try and educate us on New Zealand lesbian history. Might not be as flashy as the pride parade, but what it lacks for in sparkle, it makes up in quality.

One of the larger pieces on display was a patchwork quilt made of protest shirts from the 70s, some of which

were really quite hilarious (maybe just the hippo one), and Maureen had even designed one of them.

On a more serious note, however, the t-shirts were pretty personally engaging—thinking about who would have worn a t-shirt saying, 'Don't Tell Me What To Do With my Body', and a hippo graphic was much better than any Judith Butler reading on performativity. The badges were a personal fave of ours, their slogans ever so catchy: 'mother nature is a lesbian', 'viva la vulva', 'macho slut'—and the way they were artistically arranged to represent a rainbow tutu #vulva was also excellent. We had a great idea for our own orange and black t-shirt about lesbians lesbianing, but thought it may be more suited to a museum of modern art #edgy.

We couldn't help but wonder why a little double bladed axe (Labrys) was on everything; it was seen on badges, t-shirts and books alike. Seriously what was the significance of an axe? We get the vulvas, but the axe? Maybe we are just uncultured #BitchesGotsToLearn.





# LESBIANING IN NEW (GREY)LYNN.

## HIPSTerview

Luckily, there was a blurb explaining the significance of this iconography on one of the info walls. Apparently this was a symbol of a few Greek/Roman goddesses, especially the ones that displayed Amazonian qualities—strength, bravery, independence, butch. The Labrys became symbolic of these qualities, and its similarities to the butterfly – a common symbol associated with regeneration and the vulva – made it a perf icon for lesbianism.



The museum does not suffer too much from the lack of intersectional feminism its 60s and 70s artefacts might suggest. A large portion of the museum is in fact dedicated to pre-colonial gender identities in New Zealand—apparently the Brits weren't so fond of many of these? #whoknew? #DoYouEvenGenderBend?

Having just learned about pre-colonial Maori sexualities in Law 121, Bernard was obviously pretty qualified to speak on the matter, just like any vocal first year law student.



Maureen took us for a little adventure up the stairs at the back, at the top of which we were greeted with the Charlotte Trust's own little art gallery. They display many pieces of art at any given time, all of which are available for public viewing. The pieces themselves are predominantly photographs and paintings. Many/all of these works feature vulvas. This is largely in response to the phallic imagery so prevalent in mainstream art. #whereyourvulvasataucklandartgallery #vulvaenvy.

Perhaps our impromptu journey to Ponsonby was not entirely without warrant; the trust had moved to New Lynn from their original location in Grey Lynn—where they still hold their annual Lesbian Heritage walk through Ponsonby. From the corner of Ponsonby Road and Collingwood Street, you walk through the city, visiting lesbian sites of historic significance. Turns out there are many more sites of queer history in the city than Family Bar, although the coffee

in Saint Kevin's Arcade was good enough to warrant many trips before we knew it as a site of lesbian interest. Trust us when we say the coffee is good—we are very practised in writing about it.

We would recommend the Charlotte Museum Trust to anyone who wishes to broaden their knowledge of New Zealand lesbian history, or even to those who just want to do something different on their day off. If Bernard didn't have to rush back for tennis we could have easily spent longer there browsing through the collection of books and magazines.

Overall we award the CMT 6/7 custom-made Ellen DeGeneres blazers.



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# 'LITERALLY THE BEST THING EVER':



## TEENAGE FEMINISM AND ROOKIE MAGAZINE



- Emma Blackett

"The world worries for teenage girls today," writes *Guardian* journalist, Eva Wiseman, "all the porny influences, the sexting, the surgery—all the saturated pink." In feminist academic circles, this worry is sometimes, darkly, dubbed 'postfeminism': a state in which feminist empowerment ideals have been stripped of all their radicalism; a state in which the ideal girl is commercially independent and competitive, thin, white, bald but-for-the-head, and aggressively (hetero)sexual. This neoliberal princess disavows the 'feminist' as a bygone woman: an angry, butch, man-hating stereotype. She died in the late '80s, apparently, and so much the better for us.

This dystopian picture overlooks the extent to which young women are still learning and talking about feminism. One example of such a forum is *Rookie Magazine*, an online publication started in 2011 by then 15-year-old Tavi Gevinson. She sought to create a platform for giving teenage voices the respect they deserve. *Rookie* has since gained mass media attention, a sizeable readership, and attracted submissions from writers and artists from many walks of life. It blends once-adolescent voices of the somewhat accomplished with many now-adolescent voices that might otherwise be unheard.

They discuss and promote the usefulness of feminist ideas for making good of the often painful, awkward, generally angst-ridden process of being a teenage girl. Feminism is used to find solidarity and political grievance in these 'bad' feelings, turning them into a source of empowerment. Critically—and for online spaces, almost exceptionally so—interviews and comment discussions are very loving, supportive, and sensitive to the experiences of others. Differences of sexuality, ethnicity, gender identity, nationality, and cultural taste are accepted unquestioningly. Because feminism is introduced via this 'friend-zone,' it seems to be far more welcoming to readers than more traditional points of access to feminism.

In a recent interview, Gevinson asked Lorde about her take on feminism:

*Even now, I find a lot of feminist reading quite confusing—often there's a set of rules, and people will be like, "Oh, this person isn't a true feminist because they don't embody this one thing," and, I don't know, often there is a lot of grey area that can be hard to navigate. It's just something that I'd assumed was natural for a long time.*

Many formal feminisms are prescriptive. They are also adult-focused and very intellectual—perhaps unnecessarily so. Moreover, they're framed so that they seem irrelevant to young women, or to talk down to them. So many feminist concerns about the state of the world are packaged as fear for the myriad of ways young girls are broken by the violence of harmful images and hurtful words. This has its place, but its dominance disempowers young women, and does nothing to advocate the usefulness of feminism for our lives. Despite often being alienated by the feminist canon, *Rookie* overcomes this by championing a youthful, friendly approach to feminism. Many an adult feminist could learn from their approach. It also proves that dour critics of 'postfeminism' are missing something when they assume, unquestioningly, that all girls kowtow to their impossibly restrictive casting in mainstream media.

Rookie Magazine is available in print and online at:

[www.rookiemag.com](http://www.rookiemag.com)



# SPORTS

## The National Women's Soccer League A Feminist's Guide

- SOPHIE SILLS

### WHAT IT IS?

The 1990s saw a boom for women's soccer as the USA's Mia Hamm surpassed all players from all genders to score the most international goals in the history of soccer. Since then, the US women's soccer team has clung to its powerhouse status by developing players in their college systems, and through attempts to establish professional leagues.

Most recently, we have the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), the third attempt to actually pay top-level women for a job they've been paying mediocre men to do for years. Currently in its second season, all fingers are crossed for its success.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Just like other soccer leagues! That's the beauty of women's sports; it turns out you can actually run them without needing any extra-special 'womanness' considerations, like time off for housework. With the lack of professional women's leagues across the world, you may be forgiven for guessing otherwise.

### WHY SHOULD YOU WATCH?

All of the games are streamed live on the league's YouTube channel, NWSL soccer. For those of us who have lives to lead instead of watching three hours of football in the afternoon, there are highlight videos. But even that can be a stretch when you don't like soccer. Or sports at all.

But there are a number of great feminist reasons to watch:

♥ **Abby Wambach.** She's the current world leader in goal-scoring. Tune in to watch her score more goals and beat more flashy soccer men's egos into the dirt.

♥ **Strong women.** It's great to watch strong women doing strong things on camera for the whole world to see, as it gives a range of ideas about how one can balance the crushing expectations of feminine gender roles.

♥ **No homophobia.** That may be a stretch, but some of the key players, including team captains and national team members, identify with their rainbow side, with some even actively working towards equality in sport.

♥ **The wage gap.** If not enough people watch, the respective countries will stop shelling out funding for their players to play there, making the wage gap in sports even worse. Watching is practically a vote for gender pay equality.

On the other hand, there are many great feminist reasons not to watch:

♥ **Male referees.** This is a problem not only for representation, but for game play. Men have a history of refereeing as if women are fragile and must be protected by their whistles.

♥ **Male commentators.** Although women often join them in the booth, the league consistently gets away with hiring men to discuss a women's sport. On the other hand, women continue not to feature in commentary boxes at men's games.

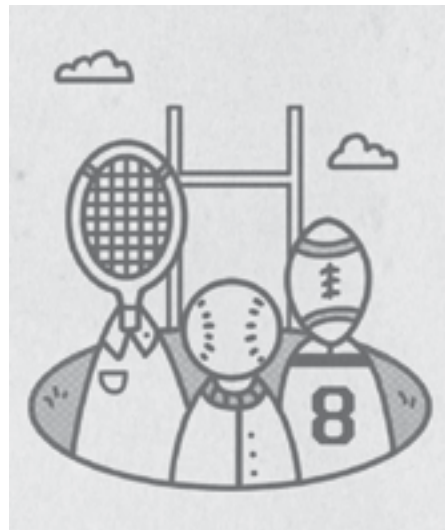
♥ **Comparisons to men's soccer.** You won't sit through a single match without commentators, both male and female, comparing the team to their male counterparts down the road at the bigger stadium with more fans.

♥ **General support of violence.** Yes, strong women are great. But as a society we overvalue violence and violent strengths.

♥ **Racism.** As entertaining as it is to listen to commentators struggle to keep their racism to themselves, it's also not really that entertaining at all. They slip up in the usual ways, such as focusing on the Japanese players' ethnicities but not those of the international white folks like the English or Welsh. And, as per usual, representation is skewed.

♥ **Ableism.** As with a lot of sport these days, there is a focus on able-bodied players. Instead, find the Paralympic YouTube channel and watch IPC swimming champs reruns. Swimming races are shorter, easier to understand, and have gold medals at the end.

So there you have it, feminists. It may not be *Orange is the New Black*, but the NWSL is a good start for professional women's sports in America. There are a lot of problems, some of which are common to women's sports and some to sport as a whole. But there are a lot of great parts too, parts to really sink your feminist teeth into. The choice is yours.



### AFFIRMING: Chelsea Wiggill

The Williams sisters are fantastic tennis players; they are world renowned and the best in their chosen field. Their skill and prowess on the court is not what people talk about, however. To the public, they are presented as celebrity sex symbols. Both sisters are constantly in magazines with titles like "Serena flaunts beach bod", and references to their curves are not uncommon. Indeed, even their compulsory uniform is short and skin-tight most of the time. Not only does this take away from their credibility within the sporting world, it perpetuates the stigma in society surrounding women; that they are there purely to look at. This does not just happen to the Williams sisters, it happens to female sport stars everywhere.

Being a woman in the realm of sports is no easy feat—your pay is worse than male athletes, and arguably it is more competitive as there are fewer spots up for grabs. This does not justify your posing in a sexualised manner for magazines or advertisements, however; all that does is undermine your reputation and condone people looking at you only for your body and not your skill. As a female sports star, I would want people watching me for my skill and ability, not my looks.

This House Would, as  
a female sports star,  
not pose in an overly  
sexualised manner  
for magazines and  
adverts.



### NEGATING: Kayla Grant

It's a sad reality that a lot of men have an unfortunate perception of female sports players – a perception which leads to jokes about 'butch' female rowers, or taunts about 'lesbian' basketball and rugby players. But these are also the type of men who are likely to view sexualised images of female sports stars, and have all those stereotypes challenged.

Sports have always been seen as a masculine pursuit. Posing in sexualised pictures changes this perception. It shows that women can be attractive and feminine as well as successful and athletic.

But in a broader sense, these images are incredibly important for changing the way society thinks about women and sex. Although women are constantly told to act and dress in a way which is attractive to men, they are also told they should never be assertive with their sexuality, or seek out sex. Sexualised pictures of sports stars challenge ideals of attractive yet passive females; it's empowering that high-profile, successful women can be depicted in a way which highlights their agency to make decisions about their sexuality.





- PAIGE WILSON

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥



# BORN THIS WAY ?

- ASH SHIELDS

My story isn't a "born this way" one, and that doesn't make it any less valid. But in any case, I can look back and pick out things that possibly should have been something I should've noticed years ago.

I had a flashback to hanging out with my group of friends for one of the first times. I was there early, before a party. Well. Less a party, more everyone there, drinking. I was forced into a skirt and makeup—forced is a harsh word, and it probably looked harsh to the girl who walked in during, with the handcuffs and all, but it wasn't, like, bad. I struggled a lot, because even though back then I would say things like, "I'm secure enough in my masculinity and/or sexuality to not worry about being gay or whatever", I really wasn't that secure at all.

Flash forward a year. I'm at the same friend's house with her and her boyfriend, we're all drunk. She decides to put him in a skirt, I (possibly) volunteer to do it too. It's hazy.

*"At that stage, the concept of being trans was such a big and terrifying thing – I have a vivid memory of, at some stage, thinking to myself "oh god, I hope that's not me"*

Sometime around then we had a physics lesson on... something. It involved mirrors and reflecting images. I and a female classmate volunteer for a demonstration. She stands at one point, and somehow (I was pretty good with physics, but that was four years ago now) her lower half is reflected onto a mirror in front of me. Someone takes a photo, I'm striking a pose. It looks like I'm in a school skirt and stockings. I laugh; everyone does.

Flash forward maybe another year or so. It's around Easter. We're all down south at my friend's bach. It's cold—either Easter fell late or winter came early, or it wasn't really around Easter at all. I end

up entirely crossdressed—that's what I thought of it as at the time—with my hair curled (I look like a 50s housewife), makeup done, the whole lot. I'm really pleased with how I look – I think I look really good. The others agree. I'm still not questioning gender whatsoever.

Maybe a year later, maybe the same year. Cultural day at school. I wear my friend's jeans—we had swapped the first time we hung out, and I remembered them being much more comfortable than mine. Morning of cultural day she brought me a pair of her jeans (upon my asking) and I got changed in a public bathroom—the men's stall, though I wouldn't have considered anything otherwise then. I got compliments on my calves—perhaps it was then I realised how much I liked my legs, perhaps I already knew. This was three or four years ago.

Then, I think, I was questioning gender. Maybe. I know there was some sort of motivation for wearing those jeans,

some link to it being cultural day. I may have just conflated it with sexuality. I was comfortably identifying as pansexual.

Today, it's a day after my five months on Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) mark. Sometimes I think I really should have figured this out earlier – I remember being massively uncomfortable with the thought that I was straight, a guy attracted to girls. I had some fledgling of a queer identity, and probably knew something was up without realising it.

It wasn't till I found out about non-binary gender identities—that is, gender that doesn't conform to the male/female binary, genders that include people who identify as both, neither, sometimes one,



sometimes the other, a seemingly infinite and open array of identities—that I really started to question my own. I consciously realised I wasn't comfortable being thought of as entirely male. I identified with the term genderqueer—an umbrella term for these identities, but also an identity in itself. At that stage, the concept of being trans was such a big and terrifying thing—I have a vivid memory of, at some stage, thinking to myself "oh god, I hope that's not me, that's way too much to deal with." Being able to question myself through this nonbinary identity was crucial. The community felt safe and accepting.


I went through stages of fluidity—from "not entirely male" to "not male but not totally female" to the now very comfortable "mostly female but some days devoid of gender entirely". I'm infinitely happier with who I am. I can only offer a little advice: find or form a community, either online or off, because having people to support you is the most important thing, especially when those you'd usually turn to might not be so comforting. Use selfies to your benefit, and put them online. You'll get more compliments than you'd probably expect, and the confidence in and validation of your own image is wonderful. Eventually you'll reach a point where the odd looks and harsh words on the street have no impact on you, but until then, keep pushing on.





# FROM THE RUBBLE

Renate Wack reflects on her memories of post-war Germany and the changing status of women.



I was born a few years after the war and therefore I did not consciously experience the most horrendous problems of the post-war years. I was lucky to have both of my parents and we had a roof over our head. In our city of Hamburg that was by no means the rule. Hamburg had been razed so thoroughly that people who had lived there all of their lives could not find or recognise the places where they had grown up. People squatted wherever they could find

women by hand and with hand tools. Another vivid image I have is of women carrying long poles topped with photographs and the names of the people they were looking for. When trains and trucks arrived with ex-soldiers or released prisoners of war, they raised their photos hoping that someone might recognize their loved one and have information. I also remember the litany of Red Cross announcements playing on our radio all day and evening, reading out the names and 'last seen' information of

“The hardship these women endured is legendary and it all but erased the myth of the ‘weak gender’ – at least in women’s minds.”

a roof and four or even three walls: bombed-out houses, empty factory halls, bunkers, cellars, sheds, stables. People like us who were fortunate to live in an intact house or apartment had to take in others sent by the housing authority. So our family of four shared our three bedroom apartment with another family of five. I remember people visiting each other a lot and talking incessantly about their war experiences, often repeating the same stories. We children were not supposed to hear the gruesome details, but there was no privacy due to the overcrowding.

The rebuild of Hamburg was—amazingly—largely concluded by 1955, but in the years prior I remember seeing lots of ruins everywhere. In the early years I saw lots of people, mostly women and older children, working and searching in the ruins all the time. They were also collecting anything else that they could use or trade on the black market: cups, pots, clothing, furniture. It’s estimated that in West Germany 400 million cubic meters of rubble were dealt with after the war and much of that was initially done by

people who were looking for each other. These things were the backdrop of my early years. There were hardly any men around when I was young, as all the able-bodied ones had been drafted during the war. Towards the end of the fighting even young boys like my brothers—then barely 16 and 17 years old—had been thrown in as Hitler’s ‘last reserve’. The men I saw during my early childhood were either old, missing limbs, or otherwise wounded in ways that had made them useless as soldiers.

During the war and post-war years women had been in charge of the survival of their families, which were often quite sizeable as Hitler’s policies promoted having large families. The hardship these women endured is legendary; it all but erased the myth of the ‘weak gender’—at least in women’s minds. Nevertheless, when men began to return they were given preference in the still limited labour market and old ideologies resurfaced. While the idyllic image of ‘mother tending home and children’ was still ingrained in people’s minds, the realities were very different and as the German economy



recovered work opportunities for women opened up.

These were initially in fields considered 'feminine', such as secretarial, nursing, kindergartens, and teaching. I remember that working mothers were judged to be lesser mothers and their 'key-chain-children' were regarded with equal parts pity and scorn. Similarly, unmarried women continued to have lesser status. To escape the stigma,

### The Secret Library

It's hidden deep you know  
That secret space within my mind  
That place where no one goes  
And none can find.  
It's where thoughts spark  
And ideas flow  
The rhythms in the dark  
Where secrets glow  
I write stories in my head  
And talk to made up names-  
Of people long now dead  
With strange and secret games  
Shelves and shelves of dreams  
Each waiting at my call  
And I with infinite means  
Control it all  
Indeed at times myself I cannot find  
This secret library inside my mind

-FABIENNE GILLAIN

many women got married to much older men and war invalids. The relics in people's heads were more difficult to remove than the ruins. Eventually though, economic necessity began to assist in the deconstruction of misogynistic myths. The economic boom that began in the fifties, named the "Wirtschaftswunder" (economic miracle), required a well-trained and sizeable workforce. Government funding for education increased and previously private and expensive preparatory schools as well as

universities became accessible to all, including girls—in whose education parents had traditionally been reluctant to invest. These developments, and later the Sixties movements which questioned all moral precepts of the past, resulted in major changes for women.

I was definitely a beneficiary of the opportunities that opened up for women after the war, and of the general sense of recovery and hope. It may not be by chance that every position I held involved major restructuring and even creating a new service; for example, I opened and led a new forensic hospital in New York City for many years. I wonder if I would have dared to take on such tasks without those early experiences. On the other hand, the discrepancy between the fast external change and inertia with regard to old notions and ideologies became starkly evident. The older people wanted nothing but to forget the past – an 'inability to grieve' Alexander Mitscherlich called it. But we, the younger generation, attributed the lack of critical discourse and discussion of the past to unwillingness rather than inability. This led to serious rifts within families, as well as within society at large and became a major driving force behind the German student movement in the Sixties. While I was part of that movement, I didn't feel that ideology was the source of solutions. My way of trying to understand and deal with the past and its narrow-minded ideologies became to live in other countries, to learn about other cultures and to study individual and societal ways of dealing with loss and disaster. ■



# SENIOR M A N A G E M E N T

## WHY ARE WOMEN STILL BLOCKED FROM GETTING TO THE TOP?

- PRUDENCE WILSON -

A few months ago I came across a painfully uninformed newspaper article purporting that “there is no glass ceiling”. Although I was concerned by the content being reported, I didn’t think that one neo-liberal woman on some kind of anti-feminist crusade would even be given the time of day. How sorely mistaken I was. Neo-liberal, individualistic discourse claiming that ‘women are as successful as they want to be’ is not as uncommon as I thought. The recent publication of Sheryl Sandberg’s book *Lean In* adds to the frighteningly high number of texts that suggest women have the power to desegregate senior management in the corporate world if they, well, lean in. Not only does this put a lot of pressure on us women, but it also gives us a false sense of reality. The mechanisms operating within society that continue to reproduce a vertical gender gap cannot be deconstructed by women having more ambition or trying a little harder. Believe me, we’ve been trying. There are so many social, cultural and structural forces at play that perpetuate gender inequality in senior management, keeping women clustered at the lower rungs of the corporate hierarchy.

Pervading social ideologies regarding reproduction and motherhood are a major barrier restricting women’s ability to climb the managerial ladder. Although, of course, some women do ‘opt-out’ of work to start families, many women feel forced by social pressures to leave paid employment when they have children. It’s not surprising considering only eleven percent of the population agrees with mothers of pre-schoolers working. Women’s reproductive capacities and purportedly more caring natures continue to result in their social configuration as primary parent. Keep in mind that society’s image of a ‘good mother’ is still a self-sacrificial one. Indeed, the social pressure for women to prioritise their children invariably results in requests for more flexible hours, reduced work experience and often resignation. Employers decode this as reduced company loyalty, meaning, along with the work experience they forgo, women are less likely to be promoted than men. While men may offer symbolic support to their wives, they have continued to prioritise their own corporate success over a dual childcare set up. The only ‘choices’ women have left (to have no children or to take on a double or even triple load) don’t seem like equal ‘choices’ to me. Widely held cultural schema about what it is that men and women should do and do well are not only restricted to ideology around parenting.

Gender stereotypes that posit men as more competent, mathematically apt, and naturally better leaders are also strong cultural barriers restricting women. Human capital theory’s hypothesis that the vertical gender gap exists because of men and women’s different choices of what to study and

where to work fails to consider the power of culture in constraining and shaping those ‘choices’. Culture can explain women’s reluctance to study maths and science, which are gateways to senior management positions. Despite limited evidence of a real skill discrepancy, studies have shown that most college

“A frightening cycle exists whereby because society thinks men are more competent and better leaders more men are appointed to senior management positions and that reconfirms the stereotype that men are better leaders.”

students still regard men as better at maths than women (Nosek et al. 2001). Gender stereotypes about women’s mathematic ability influences female attitudes towards, participation in, and performance in courses involving maths and science. Women are also less likely to receive external encouragement and support in those fields. Furthermore, the stereotype that men are naturally better leaders restricts women’s promotional opportunities. The socially valued image of a good manager is male. In fact, surveys prove that people perceive men as more competent than women (Lucas, 2003). This is despite women actually ranking higher in emotional intelligence, which tests many of the skills required in a good leader. The stereotype is perpetuated by experience. A frightening cycle exists whereby because society thinks men are more competent and better leaders more men are appointed to senior management positions and that reconfirms the stereotype that men are better leaders.

But men are not the only ones who think this. The self-fulfilling effects of gender status beliefs encoded in gender stereotypes also limit women’s ability to advance. We live in a society that affirms male accomplishments as better than female and therefore men are more likely to back themselves in work situations, while women, who have come to believe in their essential inferiority, engage in criticism of their own performances. Moreover, studies have shown that people act according to the way they believe other people perceive them. Ridgeway (2001) found that in mixed-sex work situations women were less active participants compared with men and were more likely to concede to the men’s opinions rather than fight for their own. However, in same-sex work situations women were active participants who voiced their opinions powerfully and were not afraid to challenge their co-workers. Status beliefs are a major restriction on women’s ability to advance, but arguments that

women can break the glass ceiling if they just stop thinking that way are problematic. Changing social and cultural ideology is not something that women can ‘just do’. And even if they did have that power, the structural barriers to women’s advancement wouldn’t be going anywhere.

Although women are legislatively protected from direct discrimination in the workplace, indirect discrimination that manifests in informal network systems and job recruitment material continues to reproduce the vertical gender gap. Sociological investigations have found that women receive less unofficial support from superiors relative to men. Employers view women as ‘risky investments’ because of the belief that they will leave to have children. Company superiors put their efforts into helping men’s unofficial professional development, rather than helping women. Moreover, men are more likely to hire men, and therefore women are once again restricted from obtaining senior roles.

Women are underrepresented in senior management; that much we know is true. Less than 0.5 percent of the 4,012 highest paid managers in the United States are women and fewer than five percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are women. The ‘new’ discourse claiming that women have the potential to break through the glass ceiling if they change some of the things they have been doing frightens me, and I hope by now it frightens you as well. The neo-liberal argument that women can be as successful as they want to be is a ridiculous statement in a society where women A. are expected to metamorphose into men; B. bear the brunt of workplace bullying when they do; and C. are still required to carry out their social responsibility of reproduction while D. being subject to social stigma and pressure regarding their role as mothers; and E. live in a society that values masculinity over femininity, which means F. women have to work a lot harder than men to even be considered for the same senior role. I could go through the entire alphabet. The point being that maybe we do need to question the glass ceiling, not its existence, but its efficacy as a metaphor. Glass can smash quite easily, but the social and cultural ideological barriers restricting women from senior management cannot. ■



# Who is the Evilest of them all?

## 5. Asaji

Though this queen lacks the pure evil of others on the list she definitely makes up for it in sheer madness. Asaji is the Lady Macbeth of Akira Kurosawa's Shakespearean adaptation. Of all the portrayals of this mad queen I find Asaji the most compelling. She is paranoid, ambitious, and a master manipulator. With her dramatic Noh make-up, mysterious motivations and crazy eyes, Asaji is deeply unsettling. You can't help but take some pity on her by the end, but having said that you also can't help but be scared shitless of her.



## 4. Cersei

The Lady of Casterly Rock sure is controversial. Evil and loyal, beautiful and cruel, seductress and incestuous, victimizer and victim, she is hella complicated. Love or hate her, you have agree that she tells it like it is: "Everywhere in the world, they hurt little girls," she tells Oberyn. This is a girl who has been hurt, and with all of the horrors the world has dealt her she deals them right back. She's got depth; this may not win her the award of fan favourite like her lover/brother Jamie, but it sure does win her a place on my list. Screw the war of the five kings, I want to watch the war of the queens!

## 2. Akasha a.k.a. Queen of the Damned

Once a human queen until she was made into the first vampire, Akasha is evil right down to her blood. She's all about sexy/kinda gross exchanges of bodily fluids and killing! More specifically, killing men! She plans to kill 90% of the menz and create a new Eden of women, where she is worshipped as the goddess she damn well is. It doesn't exactly work out for her, but I still retain hope that her evil vampire soul is kickin' out there somewhere. P.S. and she's played by Aaliyah in the movie, extra badass points!

## 3. The Evil Queen

I didn't feel comfortable making this list without mentioning at least one classic Disney villainess! Disney has got a thing for wicked queens. So here is the most quintessential of them all, a queen simply known as THE EVIL QUEEN. Likes include: haute couture fashion, apples, talking to herself, girl's hearts. Dislikes: Snow White, not being hot, incompetent huntsmen. I'd date her! Her animated self is the best version but Charlize Theron in 'Snow White and the Huntsman' totally pulls it off.



## 1. The Queen Alien

The baddest of the bad, this is the Queen to surpass all Queens. She doesn't care about power, riches or beauty; all she gives a shit about is survival. She's a perfect organism, with her structural perfection matched only by her hostility. She is the only one of her species able to make babies and all of that egg laying only makes her tougher; at 20ft tall she is twice the size of her drone children. She even gives honorary Queen Ripley a run for her money with her ass kicking! All hail (and run far, far away from) the evilest queen of all.



# The Gendered Nature of



- GLORIA FRASER

Catching the bus to Uni has, over my three years of study, become an almost daily annoyance for me, and not for the reasons most would think. Though I do spend a large proportion of my time disgruntled with the Auckland public transport system, watching bus after bus full to the brim with passengers sail past my stop, as I wait at Morningside shops in the morning I am often (surprisingly) reminded of my identity as a woman. Today as the bus finally arrived to pick everyone up, the man waiting in front of me stood back, gesturing for me to get onto the bus first. Though it was a relatively insignificant event, I hesitated, eyeing him up, wondering if he was letting me onto the bus first because he does that for everyone, or because he wanted to make a heroic display of traditional chivalry. Was he simply being kind, or was he stepping back in an act of benevolent sexism?

Benevolent sexism is one of two dimensions of sexism outlined by ambivalent sexism theory, which proposes that it would be a mistake to suggest that sexism reflects, in all cases, animosity towards women. Instead, sexism is thought of as a multidimensional construct made up of both hostile and benevolent sexism.

Hostile sexism refers to negative

attitudes directed toward women who are seen as stepping outside of their traditional gender roles. Benevolent sexism, in contrast, is an ideology where women are viewed as weak but wonderful; those who conform to their gender roles are seen as deserving of the love, care and adoration of men, due to their nurturing and gentle natures.

## Lesbian

Labelled  
Short hair  
They stare  
At me

Stereotype  
I do not fit  
So it just  
Can't be

Been with a woman?

No

So why can't you see  
You've just got to wait  
For that man  
They tell me

-SUVISHKA SINGH

It is important to point out that benevolent sexism is endorsed by both men and women. Men are motivated to endorse sexist ideologies as they help to maintain a patriarchal system, from which

men reap significant rewards.

For women benevolent sexism is also attractive, not only because it promises material benefits (benevolent sexism seen in action may, for example, include men paying while on dates), but because it offers protection from the threat of hostile sexism. In the same way, both men and women can act on these views. Women who come to expect men to pay on all dates are perpetuating the idea that they somehow deserve this by virtue of their gender.

Many common excuses for instances of sexism can be criticised in light of the ideology of benevolent sexism, including the argument that someone "couldn't possibly be labelled a sexist", because they "love and respect their mum/girlfriend/sister/friend so much". Ambivalent sexism allows individuals to subtype women, and treat different 'categories' of women in different ways. This dichotomy (crudely referred to as the division between 'saints' and 'sluts') splits women up into groups that are and are not deserving of their care and respect. Here, someone's mother may represent what a woman 'should' be like, while a peer at a party, drinking and wearing a short dress, may represent an individual not worthy of positive treatment.



## “Was he simply being kind, or was he stepping back in an act of benevolent sexism?”

The concept of benevolent sexism can also be used to illustrate why ‘innocent compliments’ can often be sexist. The tendency of mainstream media to constantly comment on the appearance of women in entirely irrelevant situations (e.g. in portrayals of women politicians) at an overwhelmingly higher rate than that of men is an example of sexism, even when a woman’s appearance is being complimented, rather than criticised. Reporting on a woman’s looks rather than her skill set or accomplishments perpetuates the idea that this is all that women are, and should be, defined by, which has negative consequences regardless of whether the comments are positive. The same principle applies to catcalling; even though some catcalls may be framed as ‘compliments’, the fact that strangers feel entitled to comment on a woman’s appearance – and that often this creates feelings of being unsafe – means that catcalling is without doubt a prominent example of everyday sexism.

Instances of benevolent sexism can be seen as harmless. It does seem strange that someone volunteering to carry something heavy, or offering their jacket in cold weather would have drastic negative repercussions. Research shows, however, that benevolent sexism is an incredibly insidious ideology. This is not because a man opening a door for a woman has direct negative consequences; rather, the ideology behind that act predicts a wide range of attitudes that are deeply harmful to women. Benevolent sexism is, for example, consistently linked with hostile sexism, complementing and justifying a misogynistic ideology that sees women as inferior to men. Independent of hostile sexism, those who endorse benevolent sexism are more likely to accept rape myths and to oppose both elective and traumatic abortion than those who do not endorse benevolent sexism, even though this is an ideology that typically views women as wonderful (though

weak). It must also be noted that many are taught to be chivalrous, or especially respectful towards women and so act in ‘benevolently sexist’ ways without actually endorsing benevolent sexism. Regardless, chivalrous acts enforce the idea that women are fragile and require more assistance, care, and protection—perpetuating benevolent sexism, even if the individual in question does not intend to do so. Arguments such as this are often subject to significant criticism. “There’s just no pleasing women”, some will say—damned if you do offer to hold open the door, damned if you don’t. I, however, suggest a simple solution: to treat everyone with respect, regardless of who they are. There are ways to decide who gets to walk through the door first, or who gets a seat on the bus, without referring to narrow and stereotyped ideas of gender.

As for me and my daily struggle at Morningside shops, where I don’t want to accept benevolently sexist favours, but find it impossible to tell if others are standing back because they do this for everyone, I’ve been playing it safe and hopping onto the bus last, if possible. This also gives me a chance to challenge others’ ideas of who is deserving of their place at the front of the line. Many men, especially, appear extremely uncomfortable with me stepping back for them, and try to convince me to go on first. It may be naively optimistic, but I hope that in these short interactions people are given food for thought, and are made to question the origins of the gendered version of respect that so many of us have been taught. ■





# Inadvertent Colonisation?

## The Relationship between Mana Wahine and Pakeha Feminism

- JENNIFER DONNELLY

In 2007, corrections officer Josie Bullock took a complaint to the Human Rights Review Tribunal over the 'sexist' nature of inmates' graduation ceremonies, after she refused to take a place behind men at the ceremony. The ensuing debate in the media framed this 'sexism' as a requirement of Maori protocol, but in this case "only the Pākehā point of view was looked at and that point of view focused exclusively on the issue of gender equality as perceived by Europeans". At its core, the ceremony was a Pākehā graduation ceremony, in which Māori were merely participants. And Bullock's exclusion from speaking at the ceremony was more related to her being unqualified for the position than it was to her gender, due to her lack of whakapapa and inability to speak te reo. The controversy over Bullock, however, does highlight some of the tensions between Pākehā feminism and the mana wahine movement.

Mana wahine represents the interface between being a woman and being Māori. Broadly, mana wahine can be described as: a modern project, a discourse, analysis and critique developed by Māori women, yet it is also an exploration of whakapapa and tikanga projected back onto the Māori past to create māramatanga—insights into the mana of Māori women, yesterday, today and tomorrow. Due to the imposition of gendered and patriarchal laws during colonisation, Māori society itself became patriarchal. It was in the interests of Māori men to comply with a gendering process that granted them gender superiority and status when the social

environment had eroded their own. Thus, mana wahine was an essential development to respond to colonisation on both a theoretical and practical level; a reclamation of self-determination through discourse and through politics. The purpose of mana wahine is not to create an oppressive female force, but to find the pre-colonial equilibrium whereby mana tāne and mana wahine were complementary.

Even within the mana wahine movement there are significant differences because of iwi affiliation. Evidence of diversity within Māori women's experiences is found through different iwi treatment of whaikōrero. For example, wāhine from Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Kahungunu can whaikōrero. A pan-tribal approach could not possibly be representative of the true diversity of mana wahine. There are many complexities of Māori culture that must also inform the development of Māori feminist theory; the oral traditions of te ao Māori must be accounted for.

It might be difficult for Pākehā women to understand the importance of karanga because there is no equivalent in European society. Given that Māori women maintain power during the pōwhiri and whaikōrero, Bullock "demonstrated a lack of respect for Māori women's ability as locally informed actors to strategically use the conventions of their culture" (Curchin, 2011). With regard to Pākehā women claiming to defend the rights of their Māori counterparts, feeling the need to speak on behalf of a group that is more than capable of speaking for itself could be viewed as a neo-colonial action. As the tikanga of women sitting behind men at pōwhiri exists to protect female child-rearing capabilities,

the practice can be attributed to the sanctity of women in Māori culture, as opposed to a desire to subjugate them.

Yet, the commonalities between mana wahine and Pākehā feminism should be embraced and built upon for their mutual benefit. Both movements aim to criticise the disembodied, masculine and hegemonic dialogue of white cultures. Where Pākehā women need to come to the fore is through continued support of mana wahine. Pākehā women continue to be marginalised, meaning that the double marginalisation that Māori women face can be debilitating to effecting change. The question remains whether Pākehā support that does not unconsciously colonise and patronise mana wahine is achievable. Early mana wahine activists sensed the colonial nature of Pākehā feminism, and sought to distinguish themselves from their Pākehā counterparts. The conflict continues to influence the development of Māori feminist theories, though Māori-Pākehā feminist dialogue has been common in the sphere of marae speaking rights. Pākehā women must remember that "Māori women's analyses of the role and status of Māori women in pre-European Māori society, differ markedly from those undertaken by Pākehā male anthropologists and the Pākehā women whose reconstructionist work is based on theirs" (Irwin, 1992).

While Pākehā support of mana wahine continues to run the risk of re-colonisation, the commonalities of both movements ultimately provide an impetus to work together, rather than against each other. ■



Donna Awatere (left) and Mona Papali'i (right) protesting outside the United Women's Conference in 1979.





## 'MOM-IN-CHIEF': THE OTHER OBAMA

Michelle Obama is married to arguably the most recognisable man in the world, and yet it's her popularity ratings which continue to be the brightest point of her husband's otherwise fairly disappointing administration. Many at this point would quip (as the cliché goes), "behind every great man is a great woman". This assessment, however, fails to capture the breadth of Michelle Obama's achievements in her highly influential role as the first lady of the United States (entertainingly acronymed as FLOTUS). While another article might outline the relationship between the role of the first lady and democracy, I want to focus on how traditional gender norms and rigid notions of femininity limit how she behaves and, therefore, her ability to enact meaningful change.

Modern first ladies have come to be expected to have an interest in politics and the presidency, which the *Wall Street Journal* has summarised as the "evolving" role from "smiling wife to equal and visible partner—complete with appearance, schedule, entourage and opinion". Despite this, perceptions that the un-elected first lady is encroaching on the masculine territory of her husband's office continue to be a source of anxiety in the media. Hillary Clinton suffered from significant backlash for being active in her husband's administration, especially in directing his healthcare reform (which provided many of the foundations for Obamacare). Initial media reports on Michelle Obama in the lead-up to the 2008 election cast her in the same mould as a 'transgressive' first lady, on the basis that she would be "overly assertive and a liability to her husband" because she had a Harvard law degree and was very successful in her own professional career, independently of her husband.

But these assessments also took on a distinctly racial form, as the not-so-inventive media set about slotting Obama into the easily comprehensible popular culture stereotype of the 'angry black woman'. Such a frame was readily employed both in the wake of Obama's comments that "for the first time in my adult life, I am proud of my country ... because it feels like hope is making a comeback", as well as in regard to the 'terrorist' fist-bump that she gave Barack at the announcement

of his successful selection as the Democratic candidate. Making statements informed by the historic experience of African-Americans, as well as celebratory gestures associated with that culture, was for a vocal few apparently 'un-American'. But then, Fox News doesn't really get the twenty-first century.

"gender stereotypes can often be advantageous in the case of first ladies, if they link their public policy to commitments strongly associated with the private, domestic sphere."

In response to this there were attempts made to 'soften' Michelle's image, leading to a notable positive shift in the journalistic coverage of her. Once in the White House, she self-consciously styled herself as 'mom-in-chief'. By presenting herself as a mother first and using—rather than straightforwardly conforming to—gender-stereotypes, Obama has been able to develop her own political agenda. Obama's projects, from creating a vegetable garden at the White House, and supporting military families, have expanded in scale to a nation-wide campaign against obesity, called the 'Let's Move!' programme—which has been allocated over one billion dollars in government spending. She's also influenced international relations, most notably through her endorsement of the "#Bring Back Our Girls" campaign for the Nigerian schoolgirls captured by Boko Haram. From this, it's possible to conclude that gender stereotypes can often be advantageous in the case of first ladies, if they link their public policy to commitments strongly associated with the private, domestic sphere. Such stereotypes have served to shield Obama effectively from harsh criticism from the American news media, which tend to enforce traditional gender norms, especially in relation to the presidency.

On the other hand, such conformity could be seen as cop-out. The areas that Obama is able to speak on remain specifically within the ambit of 'women's issues'. Washington Post columnist Dana Milbank has quipped that Obama "assaulted independent women by showing off the White House Christmas decorations", assuming the unthreatening role of passive wife. Indeed, it's important to recognise the gendered limitations first

ladies face, as they are themselves influenced by the gender ideologies that are prescribed, at least in part, by their enactment of this 'highly gendered position of national prominence' (Parry-Giles and Blair, 2002). But it would be wrong to assume that Obama is nothing more than the stereotypes she employs.

Rather, scholars like Mellisa Buis Michaux have argued we should see Michelle Obama as acting "in the spirit of... reconstructive feminism that seeks a restructuring of market and family work that can unite women (and men) across race and class boundaries". By leveraging her status as 'mom-in-chief' she has been able to speak candidly about race and racial inequality in an attempt to bring together disparate white and African-American concerns. Lending her celebrity status to her 'Let's Move!' campaign has fostered a national dialogue about healthy eating and exercise, but also about the racial and class barriers involved in both activities. Consequently, "what began as a campaign emphasising vegetables has expanded to include critiques not just of parenting or school nutrition but also inequality and the relationship between inequality and the entire food distribution system" (Michaux, 2013).

While the role of the first lady remains specifically feminine in the public imagination, what Michelle Obama shows us is that such popular conceptions can in fact be employed to challenge connections between femininity and the first lady and by association challenge the patriarchal sanctity of the presidency of the United States. At the same time as she employs gendered stereotypes, then, she has also been redefining the 'acceptability' of the political functions of first lady as 'mom-in-chief'. If Bill Clinton becomes the first man (FMOTUS?) after 2016, these already weakening gender boundaries will be tested even further. ■

- TESSA MORGAN



# The 'M' Word

- TOBY WOODSON

Last week I found myself engaged in a conversation about menopause with a friend via Skype. We were actually discussing his girlfriend's monthly migraines and before too long we found ourselves swapping tales of how hormones bring mayhem to our moods, bodies, and minds (Yes, men have hormones too). During the course of conversation, however, I found myself gently breaking the news to David that it sounded like he was describing peri-menopause. You'd have thought I was declaring the Gulf of Mexico orange. I had uttered the feared 'M' word—menopause.

This got me thinking that no woman on the plus side of forty wants to hear the 'M' word. Unfortunately, like it or not, all women over forty will, at some stage, enter into peri-menopause (the stage of a woman's life shortly before the occurrence of the menopause). The problem, I've found, is no-one wants to talk about it. Plus, many women go into denial and won't acknowledge that anything is even happening to them—and so we suffer in silence. My and David's conversation isn't the first one I've had about peri-menopausal symptoms. I've discovered from the women I've talked to a complete lack of understanding of what is happening to one's body.

Actually, the word menopause is a tad confusing. Menopause is the situation that occurs when your periods have completely stopped for a year or longer. The time leading up to this event, which most people refer to as menopause, is actually peri-menopause, which lasts on average between two and eight years

—sometimes longer.

So what are the symptoms of peri-menopause? Oestrogen and progesterone levels begin to decrease and may trigger many unpleasant side-effects, which include the following:

hot flashes  
mood swings  
vaginal dryness  
depression and anxiety  
aches and pains  
night sweats  
sleeping difficulties  
irregular periods  
decreased libido  
bladder issues  
skin dryness  
decreased enjoyment of life

Yeah, looking at that list, it's no wonder we really don't want to talk about peri-menopause. It's all very disagreeable, scary, and to some degree embarrassing. That said, unless we realize what is going on with our bodies, we may endanger our personal relationships or even unwittingly mis-diagnose an illness. As a young woman, my only knowledge of peri-menopause came from suffering through my mother's. The only support she received from the medical community was to double up on the Premarin (oestrogen medication) she was already taking after a hysterectomy. Not particularly helpful advice from her doctor, and she certainly suffered from a number of the above symptoms. Worse, I think she felt like it was the beginning of dying, of no longer being desirable, feeling alone and very frightened.

You see, in general, Western society regards menopausal women as 'dried up old prunes' to be thrown out on the trash heap of life. So, for many women menopause is terrifying and to be avoided. It indicates the end of fertility, and for some women this means the end of sexuality as well.

So what can we do? Well, for starters we can all start talking about peri-menopause with each other and recognize it's nothing to be ashamed of. We talk about our periods don't we? We might also look to other cultures. Some fascinating studies have shown that overall, Japanese women suffer far fewer peri-menopausal symptoms than their Western sisters. In fact, hot flashes are so rare that there were no words in Japanese to describe them until recently. Researchers think this may be due to their diets—high in soy proteins, high in vegetables and low in bad cholesterol and saturated fats. That said, these diet traits have been passed down through generations and it's not the same for a forty-year-old Western woman to start loading up on soy products in the hopes of reducing peri-menopausal symptoms.

More interesting to me though, is the fact that in Japan aging is not seen as a terrible time or the end of life for men or women. I can get on board with this idea! We can stop seeing peri-menopause and menopause as a phase of loss—mourning the loss of periods, reproduction, and our looks. And instead, we could start revering older women for our wisdom and maturity. Let's make aging a time of gain rather than loss. A few grey hairs, a wrinkle or two, shouldn't be regarded as the end of our lives. We need to embrace aging and see it as a time in life where woman can still thrive. Let's start talking about menopause and aging—instead of dreading this journey we are all on.



## Top 10 Tips From A Health Nurse

1. Stop it with the panty liners! These guys are not meant for daily use. Wearing them all the time can lead to bacterial infections and genital acne. You should only be wearing them if you're menstruating, and even then there are also more comfortable options like Diva Cups; check them out at [www.divacup.com](http://www.divacup.com).

2. Soap is not always your friend! I know this is a statement which doesn't really go with most people's idea of cleanliness but as regards genitals it is the truth. Soap strips off your body's natural protection and messes with your pH balance which can lead to discomfort and irritation.

3. Go pantyless! Wearing underwear and tight clothes like jeans and leggings all day means at night you need to let your genitals breathe. Wearing underwear all the time means you are constantly moist down there; this ain't good! Your genitals need a chance to dry out a bit. Going sans underwear at night is a great way to let yourself have a refreshing break down there.

4. Get your shot! The Gardasil vaccine helps protect you against 4 types of human papillomavirus, otherwise known as HPV. This is bad because HPV causes 75% of cervical cancer cases. The vaccine also helps protect you against 90% of genital warts cases. If you are under 20 years old the Gardasil vaccine is free!

5. Surprisingly, don't smoke! I'm sure you know this already but smoking is super bad. It seriously increases your risk of cervical cancer by messing with your immune system. Smoking also can affect things like your sex life. It restricts the blood vessels, meaning during arousal your labia, clitoris and vagina won't swell up with blood, which equals less sensation and stimulation.

6. Sex should always be slippery! Help a vagina out and get yourself some lube. Dry sex ~shudder~ is never ever a good idea. Not only is it painful as hell, it also leads to urinary tract infections and increases your risk of STIs because of vaginal tearing. Go get yourself some water based lube, and not only will it make sex way more fun, but it will help keep you healthy.

7. When removing hair beware! There is a lot of debate around pubic removal. Ultimately, do whatever you want with your bush but there are still some facts you need to know to avoid getting yourself into a hairy situation. Waxing and shaving can often lead to ingrown hairs and infected follicles; this means you might be more susceptible to contracting STIs through heightened exposure to bodily fluids. Instead of going full bald the health nurse suggests trimming your hair closely with scissors to get a similar aesthetic in a less risky way.

8. Most discharge is good! A lot of women feel shame and embarrassment over vaginal discharges, leading to over-washing and the wearing of pantyliners, which can then lead to infections and discomfort. Most discharges are totally normal and healthy. They are a product of your vagina self-cleaning and maintaining its pH balance. Normal discharges will look clear, cloudy, white or yellow and at times can contain flecks of white and be thin and stringy.

9. How to spot bad discharge! Your vagina will often send you signs when something is wrong. Keep an eye out for white clumpy discharge, bad odor, soreness and/or itching. These can be symptoms of thrush, bacterial vaginosis or trichomoniasis and you will need to go to the doctor to get some medicine prescribed. Always take the time to check out what your vagina is up to and listen to what it is trying to tell you.

10. Don't feel embarrassed or ashamed! We know this isn't always an easy thing to do in a society that all too often tells us our bodies are something to hide. Instead, it is important to take the time to embrace and learn about our bodies and realise we have nothing to be ashamed of. Make an appointment with the health nurse if you have any questions or concerns—they know their stuff and are there to help, not judge.



**A**bortion is widespread practice, yet many are still left in the dark about how to procure one and what to expect from the process. This article seeks to demystify a common medical procedure.

First, the pregnancy will need to be confirmed. Make an appointment with your GP or local Family Planning Clinic. At this appointment they can refer you to an abortion clinic, if you are living in the Auckland region this will be either:

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Auckland Medical Aid Centre (AMAC)  
www.amac.org.nz  
ph (09) 638 6040  
Dominion Road, Auckland.  
OR  
Epsom Day Unit  
ph (09) 631 0740  
Greenlane Auckland

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As part of the referral process the doctor will take a scan confirming you are pregnant, a blood-test, and cervical swabs. The results from these will then be sent on to the clinic of your choice.

#### AT THE CLINIC

The first visit will be an assessment where you confirm your termination decision and are seen by a nurse and two doctors. Your second visit, which is typically scheduled on the following day, will be when the termination procedure takes place.

When visiting the clinic, be sure to bring your photo ID. If you were not born in New Zealand, bring your passport to show your citizenship or residency permit. At the Epsom Day Unit abortion services are free for New Zealand citizens, permanent residents and those holding work permits of two years or more. Unfortunately, if you are not eligible for free healthcare the procedures will cost between \$1300 and \$1350.

You are allowed to bring a support person with you. You will then be shown into your room where you will be offered access to a free counselling service. The most important aspect of the process is that the decision to continue or terminate a pregnancy is entirely your choice. There are trained counsellors who can help you explore your feelings about how to proceed with a pregnancy. There is also post-termination counselling available.

#### ASSESSMENT

First, a nurse will record your height, weight and blood pressure and ask a few questions about your social circumstances. They will then inform you about your termination options

and discuss your preference for either a medical or surgical procedure.

Next, you will see a doctor who will advise you what method of termination is best for you and further explain the process. They will also discuss with you contraception options and arrange for you to begin them. New Zealand law requires you to be seen by two doctors in order to terminate a pregnancy. Because of this, you will then be seen by a second doctor who will answer any further questions you may have. If at some point during this process you recognise you need more time to make a definitive decision on how to proceed with the pregnancy, you can go home to think further or visit the counselling services. There are two methods offered for termination of pregnancy:

#### MEDICAL TERMINATION

This requires the taking of oral medication to induce termination. This option is safely available for up to 9 weeks. The process is made up of two visits to the clinic, two days apart where you will be given two different medications. The medicine on the first day (Mifegyne) prepares your womb and lowers hormone levels. After 36-48 hours you will return to the clinic and take the next round of medicine (Misoprostol), which will induce the termination. You will then be sent home. Heavy bleeding and cramping will usually begin to occur around 6 hours after the second dose of medication. Make sure you take some pain medication for relief. The peak of cramps and bleeding will be the time of passing the pregnancy tissues, which can be done into the toilet. It is important to have a support person with you when having a medical termination. Make sure there is someone nearby giving you assistance if needed and making you lots of tea.

#### SURGICAL TERMINATION

This option is safely available for up to 13 weeks and involves a plastic tube being inserted into the cervix and the removal of pregnancy tissue by suction. You are given pain medication before the procedure, which will make you more comfortable and relax the cervix. One hour after you take the medication, the nurse will take you into the procedure room and help you get situated. Similar to having a routine cervical smear, the doctor will put a speculum into your vagina and a local anaesthetic will be applied to numb your cervix, which will then gently be opened and the suction tube inserted. The pregnancy tissue will then be removed by the doctor. The procedure usually only takes about 10 minutes and you should be able to head home 30 minutes afterwards. You will need to have someone to drive you home after the procedure. Cramps are normal for a few days afterwards, as is light bleeding.

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#### Useful resources:

www.abortionconversation.com  
<http://www.abortion.gen.nz/>  
<http://www.familyplanning.org.nz/>

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## A guide to reclaiming your menstruality

- PHOEBE BALLE

**M**enstruation gets a pretty bad rap. Often referred to as 'the curse,' menstruation has been pathologised and stigmatised in traditional and contemporary societies. The association of menstruation with uncleanness and bitchiness is a patriarchal narrative perpetuated by our euphemistic language and distancing practices.

It is the patriarchal interpretations of traditional practices, rather than the practices themselves that result in the stigmatisation of menstruation. For example, in New Guinea Mae Enga tribes believe that men who touch menstrual blood or menstruating women will suffer anything from vomiting to death, resulting in women being 'exiled' during their periods. Serving as a Western example, Freud argues that periods inspire two contradictory feelings in men: of wanting to have sex with their ladies but feeling repulsed by the blood; and thus he concludes women ought to be isolated while menstruating. Hmmm.Thanks bro.

But why worry about the way periods have been interpreted in the past? Because the same patriarchal mentality informs beliefs and behaviours today. In 2011, Alasdair Thompson, the head of the Employers and Manufacturers Association, implied that the gap between women's and men's pay was due to women's monthly 'sick problems' rather than because of workplace discrimination. If menstruation was honoured for the incredible process that it is, Thompson would never have (wrongly) assumed that his sexist rhetoric would be acceptable.

In light of this, how do we begin to see menstruation as something to be honoured? Well, the first step is to uncover the empowering counter-narrative that celebrates instead of stigmatises menstruation; that speaks of the mana associated with it, the sacred gift of life that it represents,

its nutritiousness. My article serves as a guide to encourage you to reclaiming your menstruality in three easy steps: RESPECT your monthly egg-timer, use empowering menstrual language, and ladies, buy a mooncup.

### ♥ Appreciate your body's wisdom

After reading Clarissa Pinkola Estes's book *Women who Run with Wolves*, which touches on the way periods have been a vehicle by which women could enjoy some alone time, I've made a conscious effort to reclaim my menstruality by appreciating and celebrating my body's wisdom. That doesn't mean I have a period party once a month (though they can be fun). Most of the time, I can't snuggle up with a book for a day. But seeing my periods as something sacred, as a messenger for the perfectly reasonably desire for some quietude means that I am more sensitive to my own needs when I have my period; more aware of how I am feeling; more comfortable having a cry if I feel like it. No, this doesn't mean that I'm weak. It's the way in which society has branded self-care as weakness, the way it has pinned gender inequalities on menstruation, the way it has transformed the body into something to be controlled. Take strength in breaking the stigma, in listening to your body and being gentle with yourself.

When I look at what menstrual blood actually is, I see two things; as a gardener, I see a rich organic resource, and as a human being, I see the earthy, natural cycle without which I, or you for that matter, would not exist. But both these perceptions are rare in the mainstream. Society encourages us to distance ourselves from our 'unpleasant' monthly bleeding, evident in the way we speak about periods. We are 'riding the rag, 'having a bitchy witchy week,'

or, my personal favourite 'the communists are in the funhouse'. Using euphemisms trivialises the menstrual process and perpetuates its stigmatised status as something unpleasant. So we come to my next recommendation.

### ♥ Use positive menstrual language

By using menstrual language that celebrates rather than stigmatises periods, we begin to normalise the counter-narrative of menstruation as something to honour. If this overwhelms you, just start with neutral language: "I have my period." Once you build menstrual confidence though, you can expand your repertoire and get creative! A few suggestions to start you off:

**Calling vision for my people:** A Native American expression which reflects the belief that a menstruating woman is at the height of her power. Women retreated into Moon Lodges where they celebrated the life-giving potential of menstrual blood and had time to focus inwardly, a time of visioning for themselves and their tribe or people.

**BUD (Bleeding Uterus Day!):** We have ANZAC day to honour the men who spilled blood (their own and others) on the killing fields, but where is the honouring of women who spill blood every month to keep the body prepped for reproduction?

**My uterus is shedding its lining:** For us biologically minded women.

Another way in which society encourages distance between women and our periods is in the practicalities of how we deal with our bleeding. The whole system, from buying the packet of pads or tampons, to insertion to disposal, is problematic



for multiple reasons. Firstly, periods become centred around sterilisation. It's hard not to feel unclean looking at a bloodied sanitary pad where your dark red-brown uterus lining taints the once pure white (artificially bleached) cotton. This emphasis on sanitisation (while necessary to some extent) perpetuates the perception of menstrual blood as gross and dirty. Secondly, the ease of disposal stops us thinking about the impact of the 10,000 non-decomposable pads or tampons we will use in a lifetime. Flip-top sanitary bins in public toilets allows us to dispose of any evidence of our period within seconds. Thirdly, the economic implications: \$60-100 a year for pads and tampons is another black mark on the period, as a burden for women. And finally, the system builds in dependency as few alternatives abound (though I did use socks and moss once when I got my period while tramping; I kid you not). Women are in need of a new way of interacting with their periods on a hands-on level. And so my third recommendation.

## ♥ Get a mooncup

Introducing the mooncup, the holy grail of menstruation (Ok, not quite; there's no drinking involved necessarily, but they are saintly in design and performance!). It's a silicon or rubber cup that is inserted into the vagina during your period. I have found that using a mooncup has given me an appreciation of the wonders of the menstrual process. Whereas tampons or pads absorb blood, the cup creates a seal against the wall of the vagina and catches blood. When I empty my cup, I can actually see the volume of blood I produce (only a few tablespoons per period), see its consistency and colour, feel its warmth. It becomes a useable resource; I wouldn't put a tampon in the compost, but now when at home I just add all those yummy nutrients to my grateful compost. Sterilisation takes a back row; you only need to sterilise the cup once before and once after your period by boiling for two minutes (I boil with a dash of apple cider vinegar which has anti-fungal properties). During your period, a quick wipe with toilet paper or wash with cold water does the trick. Whats more, mooncups are cheap. Lucy at Green Girls Stuff (<http://greengirlstuff.co.nz/>) sells imported mooncups within NZ for \$40, free postage! Since I would spend \$8.00 or so per period on tampons, my mooncup paid for itself by the fifth period. They are easy. Mooncups have three times the capacity of tampons, so I often go a whole day without thinking about it.

When travelling overseas, mine was a goddess-send. It spared me from many an awkward "I-don't-speak-Japanese-but-urgently-need-to-buy-tampons-ermahgerd-charades-it-is!" scenario. Lastly, if you aren't already convinced, they are good for you. Mooncups collect rather than absorb menstrual fluid, keeping your vagina moisture levels au naturel. The smooth soft surface of the cup leaves no fibres behind, meaning that there is no risk of toxic shock and the risk of yeast infections is greatly reduced. AND they are good for the environment. Cotton production is one of the world's biggest users of insecticides and the bleaching process involves many unfriendly chemicals. Mooncups are reusable and will last for 10 years or more. In these many ways, mooncups serve to break the imposed boundaries between a woman and her period.

So my friends, the next time you get your period, try to appreciate your body's wisdom. In day-to-day interactions, put in a good word for your period and take the plunge: get a mooncup today. Embrace the counter-narrative that reshapes periods from a womanly burden to an overt signal from our bodies to enter a period of greater sensitivity to our own needs, to a period of self-reflection and rest. Let your period liberate you. ■

# A shot in the dark: NYMPHOMANIAC - RUTH CROWE

**\*\* SPOILER ALERT \*\***

Nymphomaniac is, according to its promotional material, the "most talked about movie of the year", and this is perhaps the only statement can be made about the latest Lars von Trier output that stands uncontested in critical circles. Is he a misogynist, a misanthrope, a sadistic fetishist and a truly nihilistic auteur, or does he sensitively expose the bleak realities of the gendered human condition?

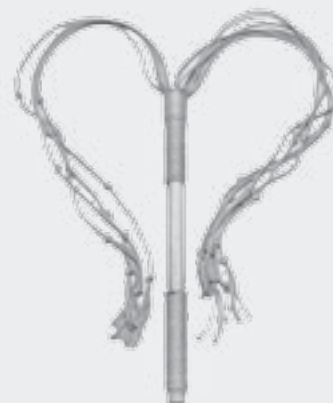
Here is a director who has based his career on taking great pains to 'humanise', expose and, in warped ways, glorify the female experience. Breaking the Waves, Dogville, and Dancer in the Dark all centre on exposing their audiences uncompromisingly to the suffering and injustice of their female protagonists. But in trying to demythologise the feminine, does he just end up remythologising it? And where does he stand when compared to a director like Quentin Tarantino, who clearly takes fetishistic delight in sensationalising the brutalisation and revenge fantasies of women? The key to this problem is von Trier's ever-running discourse of self-critique throughout his films, which feels most prevalent in Nymphomaniac. The third in von Trier's 'Depression' trilogy, following Antichrist and Melancholia, it is safe to say that the four hour epic is his magnum opus. Where his previous female characters in the trilogy come to tragic ends, Nymphomaniac's Joe finally finds empowerment and redemption through her own means.

With its starkly European and often clinical aesthetics, Nymphomaniac lacks the dreamlike, fantastical beauty of the previous two films, and perhaps this is von Trier's way of atoning for the darkly romanticised fairy-tale-esque stories that were Antichrist and Melancholia. Antichrist dealt with the implications and repercussions of thousands of years of oppression against women, and Melancholia explored existentialism and depression numbly and with nihilistic resignation. Nymphomaniac, on the other hand, paints a portrait of a woman's life conflicted by responsibility, be it as a mother, partner, or to her own ideologies, and her desire for self-satisfaction and fulfilment. Even the protagonist's male name, 'Joe', suggests a woman with sexual urges and an appetite usually perceived as 'masculine'. Von Trier makes a point of painting Joe as humanly and forgivingly as possible, finally

asserting through Stellan Skarsgard's pitch-perfect Steligman that the reason she is adamant that she is a bad person is her gender. Yet, this part of the film comes across as preachy, like a catch-all disclaimer that makes sure no one can accuse the director of misogyny. And this is where von Trier's extreme self-reflexivity and distrust of his audience can feel jolting and distancing; considering the rest of the film until then seemed less like a gendered discussion of a woman's life and more like a portrait of the universal human search for fulfilment, it felt flat and contrived.

Yet it is through Skarsgard's character, as though the Scandinavian actor's voice of reason and deep insight represents the Danish von Trier himself, that we realise that the film is essentially a self-flagellation exercise for the director. Von Trier's film demonstrates an acute awareness of and response to past criticisms, which include accusations of misogyny and fetishisation of female suffering. He pokes fun at the melodramatic intensity of his past films—most memorably in the scene where Joe's infant son, left alone by his mother, who is out desperately searching for sexual fulfilment, walks through an open door and out onto a snowy balcony. Those familiar with the opening scene from Antichrist will see the deliberate resemblance, even down to the over-the-top playing of an aria by Handel.

Von Trier is a director with striking vision, yet his capacity for self-loathing means he acknowledges the limitations of his own voice. Just as Joe asserts her own freedom through her unhesitant readiness to shoot Steligman (despite previously 'not allowing' herself to become a murderer), von Trier makes the point that it is ultimately not his place to speak for women. When Joe discovers her own self-worth, it is then that she is able to free herself; the act of empowerment comes from no man. We are not allowed the final pleasure of seeing her victoriously shoot Steligman, as the screens cuts to black non-diegetically before she does so, and we are granted the impotence of sound without image. Female experience is more complex, nuanced, and sacred than can be put to screen, it seems, and we are punished along with von Trier for being the very sadistic voyeurs we indict. ■





# Body of Dance

- ISABELLA WILSON



Up until recently, I can't remember a time when I haven't danced. During my childhood, Saturday mornings meant going to ballet class decked out in my pink leotard, tights, leather ballet shoes, and the occasional pair of fairy wings. I prioritised dance class over just about everything: homework, social plans, even normal dinner times. I fell in love with movement.

When I was 11, I took my first contemporary class, and was so excited to discover that I could roll on the floor, use my torso, and improvise in a way that felt natural to my body. It was liberating, and I couldn't wait to do more. During high school I trained up to 20 hours a week, with my heart set on getting into a full-time contemporary dance school. In 2011, I auditioned for the New Zealand School of Dance and out of the hundreds of dancers who auditioned, I was offered one of 16 places in the contemporary stream.

To put it mildly, I was completely over the moon. All the late nights and weekends spent practicing in the studio had paid off. I was living my dream.

In October 2013, three weeks before graduation, I landed badly from a dive roll and severely fractured my collarbone. The whole experience was totally surreal: being carted off to the hospital in an ambulance, being told I wasn't going to be able to perform in the graduation season. I had what is known as a 'comminuted' fracture, meaning that my collarbone was broken into several pieces. What that really meant for me was surgery, where they pieced my collarbone back together and inserted a metal plate with pins to hold it in place, and months of rehabilitation. Essentially, a dancer's worst nightmare.

Dancing isn't just something I do. It is an intrinsic component of my identity. So having that involuntarily taken away was incredibly confronting and has forced me to have to discover who I am without it, the thing I have always defined myself by.

Being immersed in the 'normal world' for the past six months has given me a remarkable amount of perspective. Something I have had to seriously come to terms with is that I have a negative body image, which has been drilled into me for years. What I have realised is this negative body image stems from a specifically idealised construction of the body which is very different to that which exists in contemporary society as a whole.



Isabella in motion.

Photo Credit: Stephen ACourt

Throughout my years of training, I have been taught to constantly critique my physical flaws (such as my uneven hip rotation) and to constantly strive for improvement. In the dance world, this is the norm. I think a large part of what drives this mentality is the highly competitive nature of the dance industry itself. There are so few full-time, professional dance jobs globally, so there is always the pressure to be better, to stand out, and to look better than everyone else. We are always told not to compare ourselves to others, and yet this seems to be an inherently human act. Being surrounded by slender, muscular, attractive people all day, standing in skin-tight dancewear in mirrored rooms, your perception of normality becomes warped.

Sarah Foster-Sproull, an incredible Kiwi dancer/choreographer/teacher and basically just an absolute legend, said this regarding the use of mirrors in class last year: "That [the reflection] is not who you are." It is simply a reflection which should be used to check alignment. The majority of my teachers have emphasised the importance of "working with what you have" and stress individuality, artistry and creativity above technical and physical perfection. In theory, I understand this. But in reality, being placed in that environment, under so much pressure to attain an impossible level of physical perfection, the mirrors tell us we are unattractive and overweight.





The ideal dancer's physique is problematic because it is genetically exclusive. Desirable features such as external hip rotation, foot arch height, leg length and bust size are pretty much unalterable. Sure, you can work on your turnout range, increase your flexibility, build muscle and lose body fat. But there are certain aspects of one's own body composition that are physically impossible to transcend, and very few people are actually born with all of the ideal features. I was motivated to write this because it is only now that I am somewhat removed from the dance world, that I can truly appreciate how damaging this mentality is.

It's a complex issue, because this mentality is something we are taught from people who genuinely want to see us succeed. At some point during their training, most dancers experience a 'fat chat' of some description. Teachers do this because they know what it takes to have a career as a dancer, and they want to support you in the way they know how. These chats range from subtle corrections in class to 'lengthen' (when you really know that the reason you look 'short' is because you ate a massive breakfast), to more blatant one-on-one interviews, where you are commonly advised to watch what you eat and frequent the gym. Dancers endlessly seek feedback as a means of improving, and so the psychological impact these seemingly minor comments can have is not to be undervalued. Having been indoctrinated with a perception of what is aesthetically ideal in the dance world, the comments reinforce these ideas, and I know myself and many of my peers have too often engaged in unhealthy discussion of how we feel unattractive, and therefore inadequate.

Photo Credit: Stephen A'Court



Photo Credit: Dance Portfolio



There is a fine line between constructive self-critique, such as adjusting your form—e.g. an arabesque line to be directly behind you—and negative self-critique: “I’m not engaging my core muscles correctly”, becomes “my stomach is fat.” My issues with body image from being a dancer have negatively affected my sense of self-confidence and self-worth. Because I have never had the ideal dancer's physique, I have somehow made a mental connection that my not being good enough in that context means that I'm not good enough in other contexts too. When you lay it out like that, this mind-set is clearly fallacious. But given the circumstances under which it was produced, it's understandable to see why it is pervasive.

I want to challenge the notions that have made women and dancers feel their self-worth is inherently tied to physical appearance. We need to foster an environment where physical appearance is not the determining factor of a person's worth. Dance is a physical art form: technique is important, and having a body which enables you to achieve that technique comes with that. However, variation is human, exciting and infinitely more interesting.

Dancers: you are humans first. The height of your leg in *développé* is not a measure of your identity. You are artists as well as athletes. Keep questioning, and keep creating. ■





# WOMEN IN NEW ZE



## JACINDA ARDERN

- SPOKESPERSON FOR CHILDREN,  
POLICE, CORRECTIONS, ARTS,  
CULTURE AND HERITAGE  
- LABOUR PARTY

### 1) WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A POLITICIAN?

I can't remember deciding, I don't think! I joined Labour as a volunteer and I think that's pretty much how I thought I would try and make my contribution. I do remember though the first moment when I thought it would be an amazing job to have. I was about 17 or 18 and I was sitting in the back part of Harry Duynhoven's office in New Plymouth when an elderly gentleman came to see him for assistance.

He was caring for his grandson, and didn't have the money to cover the cost of his schools books, and his health was poor. I remember thinking what a privileged job it was to be able to help someone like that, but I don't really think I saw it as an attainable one. I mean, I was from Morrinsville!

### 2) IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MEDIA TREAT MALE AND FEMALE POLITICIANS DIFFERENTLY?

I would have been in parliament for probably less than a year when I recall a journalist asked me about my marital status. She then stopped, and said "I probably wouldn't ask a male politician that" and quickly moved on. I think mostly the differences in the way we are treated, are the ones that you would guess. The *Herald* headline during the 2011 campaign in Auckland Central probably sums it up: "The Battle of the Babes."

### 3) WHAT WOULD YOUR PARTY DO TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN TERTIARY EDUCATION, AS WELL AS STUDENTS MORE WIDELY?

Firstly, I think we need to stop treating tertiary education in such a utilitarian way. Our universities are places for critical thought, analysis, they are eco-systems where creative ideas and innovation emerge. They shouldn't simply be seen as factories, which older or second chance learners shouldn't bother with. And yet that is what has been happening over the last few years. Changes to the student loan system have been unfair, and cuts to adult education are narrow minded. We have to reinstate the idea of lifelong learning, bring back adult and community education, reinstate the training incentive allowance (which is particularly beneficial to our sole parents) and treat our universities for what they should be.

### 4) HOW DOES YOUR PARTY HELP ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

Where to start! Labour is grounded in principles of fairness and justice. That means issues like getting rid of the gender pay gap are high on our agenda, but so is lifting wages generally. When unemployment goes up, and wages stagnate, it is often women who bear the brunt of that—especially those in the service industry. Lifting the minimum wage, and supporting the living wage, will all make a difference to giving women better economic security. But I also think we need to do more to give women choices. Not everyone wants kids, but for those who do, juggling care and work is really tough. We want women to have 26 weeks paid parental leave, and for those who aren't eligible for this, who are often our most vulnerable women, we want to introduce a Best Start payment that will give them extra support for a whole year. And of course, in amongst all of that, we want to see women better represented in positions of power and in decision-making roles. That's why we're starting by making sure Labour's team represents New Zealand with 50% women.

### 5) WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING WOMEN TODAY?

Economic security.

### 6) WHO IS YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE POLITICIAN AND WHY?

That is so hard! Helen Clark will always be a favourite. She is a true legacy politician, the kind of person that left behind ideas and changes to the political landscape that will endure. That's a really hard thing to do. That's probably why I love Kirk and Savage so much too.

## JAN LOGIE

- SPOKESPERSON FOR WOMEN,  
HUMAN RIGHTS, RAINBOW ISSUES,  
ETHNIC AFFAIRS  
- GREEN PARTY



### 1) WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A POLITICIAN?

I really care about people and the environment and I think the world could be a much better place if we did things differently. I think you can make change in lots of ways but we urgently need to change some of the systems that government controls, which is why I decided to become a politician.

### 2) IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MEDIA TREAT MALE AND FEMALE POLITICIANS DIFFERENTLY?

The clearest example to me of how the media treat female and male politicians differently is the amount of times that female politicians' clothes are commented on. We felt this very clearly when Anne Tolley and Judith Collins attacked Metiria Turei's choice of clothing instead of responding to our challenge to them about tackling child poverty and it was a huge media story. We also see the media ask female politicians different questions to what they will ask men, such as when Hekia Parata was asked "are you a bitch to work for?" by the host of the Nation. That is not the sort of question I have ever heard a male politician be asked.

### 3) WHAT WOULD YOUR PARTY DO TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN TERTIARY EDUCATION, AS WELL AS STUDENTS MORE WIDELY?

As a Party, we know that students and young people have so much to contribute to creating a better, stronger New Zealand. Women need to be well represented in tertiary education to achieve that vision. To help students, and especially women students, we would remove barriers to participating in tertiary education, including financial, cultural or social barriers. We know one of the most significant barriers to participation is the lack of financial support while studying, which is why we would ensure students are paid a realistic allowance while studying full time and address the high levels of student debt. We would also work with stakeholders to facilitate affordable and accessible childcare facilities on campus. We will also bring back the Training Incentive Allowance for courses over level 4 and ensure people receiving income support help are able to complete courses.

### 4) HOW DOES YOUR PARTY HELP ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

The Green Party is the leading party in Parliament that advances the cause of Women's Rights. This cause is fundamental to our kaupapa. The issues that the Greens have been campaigning on for a long time, and will continue to be:

- Safer lives free from violence
- Adequate funding for sexual violence support services
- Pay equality
- Extended parental leave

We have the highest proportion of female MPs in our caucus and a party structure that guarantees good representation.

### 5) WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING WOMEN TODAY?

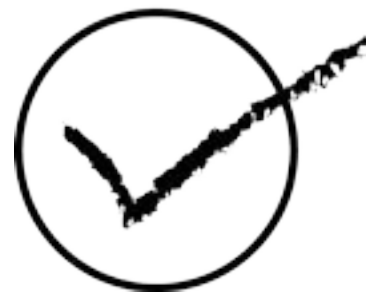
While inequality is at the heart of it all, I think there are two particularly important manifestations of it that we need to get a handle on urgently. The first is pay equity, which is an issue which affects all women and we can all see that it is fundamentally unfair. Having less money can also reduce our ability to seek safety. The second issue is violence against women, sexual and domestic. While not all women may have experienced violence directly, while we still live in a society that has such gross levels of violence against mainly women and children, we are living in a society that does not support women.

### 6) WHO IS YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE POLITICIAN AND WHY?

I'm usually far more inspired by activists and artists and academics than I am politicians but last year the Tamil politicians I met in Sri Lanka, who were so bravely speaking out in a climate of persecution, and US Senator Wendy Davis's remarkable ten hour plus speech last year to prevent the passage of a bill to restrict access to abortion services, were pretty inspirational.



# A LAND POLITICS



## 1) WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A POLITICIAN?

In 2005 I campaigned and won the then Aoraki seat fuelled by my desire to ensure that my neighbours, my hometown and its wider community had a strong voice which was heard by the policy and law makers in Wellington. I had a strong desire to 'be part of' the conversations on policy that would bring about change for the better for New Zealanders.

## 2) IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MEDIA TREAT MALE AND FEMALE POLITICIANS DIFFERENTLY?

Hillary Clinton once said, "If I want to knock a story off the front page, I just change my hairstyle." A key role of any politician is to get a message across, but unfortunately sometimes that message is drowned out by the drum of distraction. Sometimes using gender as a distraction is deliberate, sometimes just careless. But, it is always unacceptable.

## 3) WHAT WOULD YOUR PARTY DO TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN TERTIARY EDUCATION, AS WELL AS STUDENTS MORE WIDELY?

We know girls achieve well at school and tertiary level, and outperform boys. National is focused on raising achievement for all, and creating opportunities for young adults to stay engaged in higher learning and go on to lead successful careers. That's why we introduced schemes like youth guarantee, and maintain one of the most generous student support systems in the world with our student loan scheme, so both women and men can go on to further education with the support they need. We believe tertiary education is a passport to higher skills, higher wages, higher productivity, and higher growth for our economy. We want to help all students get the qualifications they need to succeed, and to play their part in growing a



**JO GOODHEW**

- MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS,  
MINISTER FOR THE COMMUNITY  
AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR, MINISTER  
FOR SENIOR CITIZENS  
- NATIONAL PARTY

more productive economy—one of our four priorities this term.

## 4) HOW DOES YOUR PARTY HELP ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

As Minister of Women's Affairs, my three priorities are the areas which can provide the greatest benefits for women and consequential benefits for New Zealand. These areas are:

- Achieving greater economic independence;
- Increasing the number of women in leadership roles; and
- Achieving increased safety from violence for women.

## 5) WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING WOMEN TODAY?

Many factors prevent women achieving their potential. That is the biggest issue.

## 6) WHO IS YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE POLITICIAN AND WHY?

Although New Zealand women had famously won the right to vote in 1893, many people don't realise that women were not allowed to stand for Parliament until 1919. In 1933, the Labour Party's Elizabeth McCombs became the first woman to achieve this feat. I'm grateful for her determination and bravery. Despite being from different political parties, I'd like to think that we have a few things in common. Unsurprisingly, John Key. I've been working with him for nearly nine years now. I appreciate his style of leadership, which allows those around him to develop and shine. His pragmatism allows him to find solutions, while his communication style helps him connect with New Zealanders.



**HON. TARIANA TURIA**

- MINISTER FOR WHĀNAU ORA AND  
DISABILITY ISSUES, ASSOCIATE  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND  
TERTIARY EDUCATION  
- CO-LEADER MAORI PARTY

## 1) WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A POLITICIAN?

My life has been driven by a desire to improve outcomes for our whānau, hapū and iwi. I had been actively involved in establishing health, education, employment and social service organisations to support whānau in achieving their aspirations. Going to parliament seemed an important step in being able to continue this work, on behalf of our people.

## 2) IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MEDIA TREAT MALE AND FEMALE POLITICIANS DIFFERENTLY?

To be honest, our key concern has been with the unbalanced treatment of tangata whenua across newspaper and television reporting. When the United Nations Special Rapporteur visited Aotearoa in 2005, he noted the "systematic negative description of Maori in media coverage" as of special concern. Amongst his findings he reported:

- programmes portray Maori as unfairly having benefits which are denied to others.
- Some of the most prominent media often highlight potential or actual Maori control over significant resources as a threat to non-Maori.

## 3) WHAT WOULD YOUR PARTY DO TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN TERTIARY EDUCATION, AS WELL AS STUDENTS MORE WIDELY?

We were instrumental in supporting the reinstatement of the Training Incentive Allowance and were responsible for the establishment of a Māori Centre of Research Excellence, funded for \$12.45 million over three years. This is a key initiative to invest in research beneficial to whānau, hapū and iwi. Other policy targets include:

- We will support equal outcomes for Māori and Pasifika students to achieve in study
- We support a student loan scheme that is interest free
- We support a five year repayment holiday to enable graduates to get back on their feet again in the workforce
- We support a tiered approach to Student Loan Repayments by 4% of wages after 40k and 8% after 60k to help decrease student debt repayments
- We will support a Māori voice in all Tertiary Education Governance and Management arrangements, including advocacy for partnerships between Māori and tertiary institutions through He Kai Kei Aku Ringa.

## 4) HOW DOES YOUR PARTY HELP ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

Our constant focus is to ensure that whānau have every opportunity to improve their circumstances and achieve equitable outcomes with any other New Zealander. We believe in collective rights and in the context of tangata whenua, that is definitely through the implementation of Whānau Ora.

## 5) WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING WOMEN TODAY?

I believe advancing whānau wellbeing is the biggest issue facing many Māori. It is that notion that we must do all that we can to achieve sustained intergenerational wellness. For Māori women, that focus will include a focus on the protection and preservation of whakapapa, tikanga, tapu, mauri and mana. These approaches emphasise the safety of women and children; they focus on supporting whānau to be self-managing, living healthy lifestyles, participating fully in society, to be economically secure; to be cohesive, resilient and nurturing.

## 6) WHO IS YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE POLITICIAN AND WHY?

There are two women who played a pivotal role in shaping New Zealand politics. The first was my aunt, Iriaka Ratana, first elected in 1949; and the second Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan, first elected in 1967. Both of these women were very strong leaders and were always prepared to take up issues that mattered most to Māori.





## TRACEY MARTIN

- SPOKESPERSON WOMENS AFFAIRS,  
YOUTHS AFFAIRS, EDUCATION  
- DEPUTY NZ FIRST PARTY LEADER

### 1) WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A POLITICIAN?

I didn't really. I decided to stand up and campaign for the policies that I believed would benefit my country. After 15 years at home as a stay-at-home mother of three (married) I see this job as merely an extension of my volunteer community work on PTAs, fundraising committees and Boards of Trustees.

### 2) IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MEDIA TREAT MALE AND FEMALE POLITICIANS DIFFERENTLY?

Women in the economic development, finance, primary industries roles are still less common than in education, health and social services. Also the recent jacket saga would show you that we haven't moved far from 'how she presents herself' is how one should view her intelligence.

### 3) WHAT WOULD YOUR PARTY DO TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN TERTIARY EDUCATION, AS WELL AS STUDENTS MORE WIDELY?

I am currently working with my staff on fleshing out our 2014 policies around this and other issues. One new policy position for New Zealand First would be to provide a one year repayment holiday for New Zealand based borrowers, which would be attached to the loan not the borrower. This would in the main assist women and young families once they leave tertiary education. For a young couple this could mean that when they have their first child, while they might still be working, they could take a year repayment holiday to readjust their finances. And by attaching the holiday to the loan not the person, then should a woman return to education with another loan once her children have got a bit older—common in women's forties—and then subsequently her marriage breaks down, she can get another loan repayment holiday to readjust her finances.

### 4) HOW DOES YOUR PARTY HELP ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

In every policy area we put our minds to, we work on producing at least one policy that we believe assists women to live their lives recognised as equals.

### 5) WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING WOMEN TODAY?

Same as it has always been—equality.

### 6) WHO IS YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE POLITICIAN AND WHY?

My Mum.

# COVER-GIRL

- ROYA ALKAMIL

The model on the latest issue of *Vogue* rolls her eyes at me. One hand on jutting hip, the other clinging to the bag slung over her shoulder, the cover-girl has a question for me. Happy? she asks. I turn away from the magazine, queasy. I was caught by the photo because of the accessory its subject was wearing. An accessory casually slung around her neck, traipsing low to the ground. An accessory for Winter. For What's Hot Now. A piece of cloth which, depending on how it's worn, has come to mean so much more than just fashion. A scarf.

Hijab: Arabic for 'cover'. My mother—Pakeha, non-Muslim and proud of it—prefers 'headwrap'. This term refers to both the hijab itself, and any woman who wears it. Went to Mt Roskill today, she'll say with deadpan humour, saw a couple of headwraps. Friends of yours?

It's been a little while since my conversion to Islam, which happened in Year 12 and almost three years later, is still progressing. I grew up in a secular home, with parents who loved and valued my person, if not my soul. My father, who is spiritual but not religious, told my siblings and me that when we died we'd go to heaven. My mother told us we'd become fertiliser. Guess which one's the romantic?

Why a girl growing up in a Western society, raised with secular values and destined to be as world-weary as her mother—i.e., a girl like myself—came to enter the world's most controversial religion is a question I still struggle to answer well. But this story isn't about my decision to become a Muslim. It isn't even about a little piece of fabric—no more than two feet by four—that has come to symbolise my faith and segregate those who debate its worth. It's the story of how what we wear, and why we wear it, and says more than *Vogue*'s 'Look Hot this Winter' issue would have us believe. It's about you, the walking model of what you revere.

So, why do we—women, men, Muslim or non-Muslim—dress the way we do? What's the underlying motive? Ignoring the obvious—um, to clothe ourselves—opens up a plethora of reasons. We dress to meet our society's definition of appropriate conduct. We dress to look good. We dress to feel good. We dress to get noticed—or not. We dress to impress our friends, partners, peers—even ourselves. That three-second reflection in the shop window as you walk past. Covert self-checking via your Smartphone camera. With dressing, there's always an audience. What's a catwalk without the rows of seats beside it?

But here's my point: we choose who gets to fill up those seats. We select our audiences. Whenever we put worth in someone's opinion of us, we're giving them authority over us. To make a value judgment about us; a judgment which in itself becomes valuable.

To me, hijab says this: forget appearances. It's a symbol of the great spiritual struggle we all face, to see past the material to the eternal; from the body to the soul. As a Muslim, my chosen audience is my Creator. It's God's judgment of me that I give ultimate worth to. This isn't to say I don't put any value in my physical appearance (I look in store windows too, you know). I still like to like what I'm wearing. It just means I choose to follow some guidelines to help me choose. And yes, I do value other people's opinions, but their views aren't my primary concern. They don't get the best seat at my catwalk. I wore a blue scarf this morning because I know my friend likes that one best, but the fact that I'm wearing a scarf at all is the true indicator of whose pleasure I put first.

If you see Islam's modesty requirements the way I saw them for most of my life—as rags of bondage, tied on women by men who couldn't stand the idea of another guy looking at their 'asset'—then it's difficult to see how choice of audience is relevant, especially in cases of oppression, which undeniably do occur in some societies.

But can't a high-heel be a tool for domination too? Or bikini-bottoms, or nudity itself?

Is oppression in the garment, or the fact that its wearer has no choice in wearing it?

The freedom I feel when I wear hijab—freedom from what others think of me, from the crippling need to please others by undermining my dignity—isn't actually because I'm wearing a 'headwrap'.

It's because I tied that headwrap myself. It's because I'm happy to please my audience. It's not that I cover, it's why I cover.



Artwork: Mandy Chan



# FROZEN REVIEW

**\*WARNING: SPOILERS\***

Disney's 2013 film *Frozen* has been popular not only for its box office profits and singalongs but also for sparking feminist debate. Co-directed and written by Jennifer Lee, it's the first Walt Disney Animated feature film to be directed by a woman. *Frozen* is a vague adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale *The Snow Queen*. In short, the film is about a princess, Anna, who sets off on a mission to find her pissed-off sister Elsa, who has accidentally frozen their kingdom, causing everyone to think she's an evil witch. I watched *Frozen* for the first time long after the initial hype and found it charming, albeit a little underwhelming. Feminist themes aside, I thought the story often made no sense: like, why did Elsa and Anna's parents do the exact opposite of the troll king's advice?! And what exactly was Elsa's plan living in that super cold castle in the middle of nowhere?! I mean WTF was she gonna eat up there?? But other than the plot holes, I found the film beautifully animated and refreshingly feminist. The latter observation, however, has been hotly debated on many the feminist blogosphere.

Fans of the film applaud how the central plot is about the relationship between two women, which depressingly is something rarely seen in mainstream cinema. The storylines of Disney heroines often revolve around a man who helps them, and ultimately through their romantic relationship with him they find happiness. Instead, the happily ever after in *Frozen* is about the true love between sisters, somewhat of a Bechdel test triumph. However, despite the coolness of seeing women talking to each other in a film, critics of *Frozen* have made some valid points. A big one is that, though you have two female leads, they are the only female characters in the film. The rest of *Frozen's* characters are pretty much all dudes. This is an interesting decision on the part of Disney when you look at the original story *Frozen* is based on. In *The Snow Queen*, the majority of characters



are women, and badass women too. Gerda goes on the mission to save her friend all by herself with the help of no man, unlike her film counterpart Anna, who has to be repeatedly helped by Kristoff and Olaf. There are about seven female characters from *The Snow Queen* that were left out of *Frozen*, only to be replaced by men. So even though the screenplay was written by a woman, the demands of the entertainment industry still overwhelmingly control what we see on screen. Thanks Disney.

Despite the obvious issues with *Frozen* I still enjoyed it a lot. It's a telling sign of the state of our society when all it takes is one lady relationship to get me all giddy, but I can't help it. I'm stoked to see a thoughtful story about friendship between women that features no jealousy or sexual rivalry. Though I may be taking the scraps Disney has thrown, I'm not overlooking *Frozen's* shortcomings. Part of me can't help but feel it is too little too late, but the other part hopes *Frozen* will inspire filmmakers to do better and better.

## The Mako Mori Test

- ISABEAU WOODSON

- ♥ It has to have at least two women in it
- ♥ who talk to each other
- ♥ about something besides a man

The Bechdel test is well known in feminist circles. It has even entered the mainstream in Sweden—with some cinemas ranking films according to whether or not they pass the test. Starting as a joke in Alison Bechdel's comic *Dykes To Watch Out For*, the test has received some serious cred by simply pointing out obvious gender imbalance. However, it is important not to consider it the be-all-and-end-all of whether or not a film is feminist. Problems with this frame of thought became apparent with the release of Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim*, which has a super kickass female action star but also failed the Bechdel test miserably. How does that work, you may ask? Well, because sexism and the meaningful representation of women can be complicated. In *Pacific Rim* there is only one female lead—in fact, I'm pretty sure she's the only woman who even has a speaking role. This woman is Mako Mori. She is widely acclaimed for being all-around awesome, played by the equally awesome Rinko Kikuchi. Mako Mori is unsexualized, smart and strong and her motivation and story arc do not revolve around a male hero. She also has spawned an alternative to the Bechdel Test, the Mako Mori Test. The test is passed if the movie has:

- ♥ At least one female character
- ♥ who gets her own narrative arc
- ♥ that is not about supporting a man's story.

Mako is also triumphant as an Asian character, who not only leads a blockbuster Hollywood film but also escapes racist stereotypes. Though I do wish she had had some kind of relationship in the film with someone other than a dude, it was nice to see her most important connection being with her adoptive father instead of a love interest. And get this, her adoptive father isn't white! He is played by African-British actor Idris Elba. This leads to another important variant of the Bechdel Test, the Bechdel Test for People of Colour, which to pass a film must have:

- ♥ Two non-white people who
- ♥ talk to each other about
- ♥ something other than a white person.

Though the film passes the above tests with flying colours it's still important to think about how miserably it fails the Bechdel Test. All the writers had to do was include a scene or two of Mako talking to another woman about anything other than a guy; like they could've been talking about how bad the food in the cafeteria was and that would have done the trick, but they didn't. The same can be said vice versa, however. Many films that pass the Bechdel test are still super sexist and racist. Though the Bechdel test and the tests inspired by it are a fantastic way of calling out sexism and racism in film, we still need to critically analyze what we are watching and understand that equality isn't as simple as a three point test.







## with Professor Maureen Molloy ♥ Head of the Women's Studies Department

### ♥ To what extent have you noticed changes in the feminist movement on campus?

When I started here in the early 1980s it was just getting going here, driven as much by staff as by students. And when we got the Women's Studies Department established in 1993, the first years were divided demographically. There were a lot of older women coming back to do degrees as well as younger women. Then the feminist movement on campus kind of dropped off. A couple of things contributed to this. First, the funding got much tighter at the university, so there was more emphasis on careers and traditional disciplines. The other side of that was that there were more and more women being appointed. So what first started as women being under-represented in the university and in the curriculum changed dramatically over ten years, particularly within the Arts and to a certain extent in the other Faculties also. It was a kind of turn down, like a sense that it had all happened. But there has been a real change within the last 3-4 years, where I have seen change, particularly in the number of young women and enthusiasm for women and gender issues. It's nice to see that it is growing again, because there are lots of issues involved that haven't gone away.

### ♥ Where do you think Women Studies is headed?

Feminist scholarship is really strong and there is some wonderful stuff that is being written, so I think that has been a real success—feminism in academia. We can't fit it all into a little pink box anymore; it's a huge literature. I think there are over 150 journals now which are solely gender and feminist studies focused. In New Zealand we are headed to becoming gender studies, although not this year, but next year. I still think there is a strong interest in Women's Studies and we can tell that by the amount of women-focused courses within the departments: Sociology has eight and History has five and Anthropology has five or six, and these subjects all have big enrolments. So there is a big demand for gender issues that is being sustained by student enrolments. The question is whether that is going to translate into a strong gender studies programme and how we make that work—and the challenge over the next four years is how we draw together those students who have migrated out to the traditional disciplines and see if it becomes a real gender studies programme.

### ♥ What new courses will the University be offering for students interested in women's issues in the coming years?

The big exciting news is that next year we will be putting on a stage II theory course that we haven't been able to offer for the last few years, so I'm really pleased about that. It will be called 'Thinking Gender' and it will span the breadth of the different gender issues. I will be convening it, but it will have lecturers from all around the university. That's a big step—we will get that in place and if students are attracted to that course then we are half-way to rebuilding a strong gender programme. What we are hoping to do, another year ahead, is also to rebuild the graduate programme, because that became very difficult to sustain. Then we could hopefully start running a BA Honours programme and Masters programme in gender studies.

### ♥ What are some reasons you would recommend people doing women's studies?

There are things you need to know. Part of it is that there is really exciting, interesting scholarship. Once you are turned onto that scholarship you never see the world in the same way. With the stage I course, when I redesigned it I was thinking if I had a daughter—which I don't, I have four sons—what would I want her to know about being a young woman. There are some really important things that we deal with within that course that don't get dealt with in that concentrated way. Things like the impact of differing child rearing, like what are the myths around that. We do things on differing money control; what are the situations where women would have control over income and expenditure and where wouldn't they—as well as what are the early signs of relationships turning to violence. We are gendered before we are born now, people know when their fetuses are three months old whether they are going to be boys or girls, and it shapes our entire life, and we kind of take it for granted. And young women often take it for granted because there is so much opportunity now. They are getting better marks than young men, they are better focused as school. They grow up faster. But it is still the case that being male or female impacts on your life from right the way through, from your salary to when you get a job and what your chances are of living in poverty in your old age. It is really important that young women and young men know these things, but the way things work out it is mainly women who take our courses, so that is mostly what we are focused on.

### ♥ What drew you to feminist studies when you entered University?

A certain amount of cantankerousness [laughs]. I guess when I went to university, I started in 1967 and there was virtually no feminist literature. *The Female Eunuch* was published by Germaine Greer in 1969, which is the year I got married for the first time. I really don't know if I would have gotten married if I had read the book beforehand! But anyway, that book just completely blew my mind. It just completely turned me around. I dropped out of school for health reasons anyway, and when I went back I got interested in how to think about women. I was told by various professors that that was a waste of time and one of them said to me, "you are a bright girl and this is a passing phase and you will never get a job if you focus on women's issues". Oh my God. I thought, this isn't the end of my life, I'm sure I can afford to write one essay on women's issues. Part of it was also how I was raised. My dad was a chef and worked a lot when I was a kid and my mum had gone to nursing school and married secretly during the war, but was turfed out of nursing school six months before graduation because it was illegal for nursing students to be married. And so she had really pushed hard for me to get an education, because if she had continued she would have been able to support the family when dad didn't have work. So there was a really big push from home.

### ♥ What does the term feminism mean to you and do you think it is still relevant?

I definitely think it is still relevant. Feminism means being aware of gender-based injustice, whether that's minor things like whether there's nothing written about women and major things like salary differences and violence against women. I think probably as I have gotten older it means more to me because I am much more aware about those kinds of issues than I was starting out. I hadn't come from a violent household and I hadn't known anybody who had. I remember being really shocked for the first time when a friend of mine told me that her boyfriend had hit her. But those are still huge issues for women. You read in the paper almost everyday about women being bashed by their husbands and women murdered by their partners. There are still really deep-rooted gender-based issues that haven't gone away. They affect many people's lives and as long as that is the case then there will always be a need for feminism!









# WOMEN'S FEST



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