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Like the women who form the subject of Patricia Grimshaw's illuminating study, my mother shared with her husband a vocation inspired by the commandment of the Upper Room, to "Go ye forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Matthew 28: 19). She did not see herself as a "missionary wife"; rather, she was a missionary. Sierra Leone, where she worked, was not the Pacific Islands, and the 1920s and 1930s were not the 1830s and 1840s; but she had much in common with those whose paths of duty took them to Hawaii. My reading of this important book is inevitably influenced by what I know of her experience. For her, as for them, missionary work overseas was a career uniquely open to talent, regardless of sex, at a time when, for most women, the choice between career on one hand, and marriage and children on the other, was mutually exclusive. The mission field offered an opportunity, on the face of it, for complete personal fulfillment in a satisfying career, while at the same time exemplifying, in dark places, the virtues of Christian family life.

Like her nineteenth-century Hawaiian counterparts, my mother's main work was teaching, though, unlike them, and greatly to the benefit of her health, she chose not to be left behind in the bush travels on foot that formed a large part of the missionary experience. She was perhaps more fortunate than her predecessors in being able to contrive the postponement of her first pregnancy through the first five years of marriage, but like them she found that having young children inhibited her vocational fulfillment. In a colony founded by freed slaves, as in a society torn by abolitionism, the problems of conscience raised by the use of local domestic labor were resolved in the light of the influence it guaranteed over those who became members of the missionary household. It also gave women missionaries freedom to pursue their calling and enabled them to overcome any fears they may have had for the spiritual safety of their own children in the hands of local people.

Missionaries of both sexes have usually found that Christianization has been a social, political, and economic process before it can become,

for the majority, a spiritual experience. Grimshaw quotes Laura Judd, of Hawaii, "I do not *know* that I have been the means of saving *one* soul." Judd might have been replying to the adolescent question I should not have asked my father, "How many people do you reckon you've actually converted, then?" It was the process of cultural transformation that facilitated the institutionalization of Christianity; and in this process, the role of missionaries as settlers was as vital as their evangelical function. And as settlers, the role of women as wives and mothers was as important as their role as teachers, if not more so; to perceive this was to experience frustration.

The psychological displacements that resulted in my personal interest as a historian in settler, as opposed to missionary, communities and in the role of white women within them, in Fiji rather than Africa, are not for me to interpret. Suffice it to say that my 1968 thesis, published in revised form sixteen years later as *Adventurous Spirits* (St. Lucia, 1984) included, I believe, the first serious attempt to assess the historical importance of white women in the Pacific Islands.

My argument was that, in coming to the islands, women were conscious of a cultural responsibility. They were therefore critical of the single men who preceded them for allowing, as they saw it, their standards to drop, for cohabiting with island women, and for their tendency, after a few years, to tolerate and sometimes to respect the authority of a chiefly society and to adopt many of its norms. I was at pains to demonstrate the existence of double standards that enabled men to consider Fijians racially inferior while serving their chiefs and maintaining sexual relations with Fijian women. But I argued that the arrival of white women, some of whom were of an independent and outspoken disposition, in significant numbers made men ashamed of their double standards and made them, and settler society as a whole, more *consistently* racist. The arrival of white women thus led to the transformation of a number of individual settlers into a settler *society,* with a conscious collective identity, and so to a deterioration in race relations at a political level.

Every year for fifteen years I encouraged students to find fault with this interpretation, and it is an indication of the male dominance of Australian university life in the 1970s and my own failings as a teacher that I was rarely taken seriously. I had nearly given up hope of the matter being properly discussed when Claudia Knapman's *White Women in Fiji* was published (Sydney, 1986), beginning what has become a fruitful vein of writing on the subject from a feminist perspective.

In contrast to Knapman's book, which seeks to correct a perceived stereotype, *Paths of Duty* addresses the problem of a historiographical

vacuum. It does not encourage us to see its subjects as unsung heroines, but it explains and analyzes their tragedy, largely in terms of personal conflict between the various "paths of duty"--as Christian brides, prudent helpmeets, devoted missionaries, and the foundations of family fortunes--that unfolded themselves as the process of cultural transformation proceeded. Like all women who have partnered exercises in cultural transformation, the missionary wives were crucial not only to the attempt to Christianize the Hawaiian Islands but to the nature of that attempt. Left to themselves, male missionaries would undoubtedly have failed as abjectly as their precursors in Tahiti. Women alone might have failed just as convincingly since, as Grimshaw has shown us, their sexual appetites were no less well developed. It was the nuclear family, cultural product of the industrial society that had developed on both sides of the Atlantic, that was a guarantee of successful cultural transplantation, if not of successful evangelism.

Paths of Duty demonstrates that the missionary wives were essential to the success of the mission. It is ironic that they were, at the same time, the unconscious creators of the major obstacle to their own self-realization: "The defeat of this female mission endeavor was effected in part by patriarchal notions of male dominance; yet nowhere were such ideas embedded more usefully than in many mission women's consciousnesses themselves" (p. 194). The wives were, she points out, victims of "intense ethnocentricity, amounting in late twentieth-century evaluations to racism" (p. 194). It was the women's "cultural *rigidity*" combined with a division of labor--a division reflecting the reductionist thinking characteristic of industrial society--that placed men in a position of advantage and defeated the women's hopes of genuine partnership in the evangelical enterprise.

Convinced that spiritual conversion was dependent upon a cultural transition and fearful, in the meantime, of the influence of Hawaiian society upon their own children, missionary women first sought to isolate their children from its corrupting influence. They were consistent in their support of the Great Mahele through which land tenure was individualized, the universal goal of white-settler communities throughout the Pacific. The purpose may have been to transform Hawaiians into preindustrial peasants and artisans, but by enabling their children to acquire Hawaiian land, missionaries facilitated the transformation of the next generation into plantation owners and employers of an imported industrial work force that marginalized the Hawaiian population that had been the objects of these women's youthful sense of vocation.

Missionaries and their families achieved an identity of interest with

secular white society in Hawaii that was unusual. Like their settler counterparts in Fiji they understood their own history as a story of social Darwinism at work, with the establishment and dominance of Western industrial culture as the inevitable product of the historical evolutionary process. It was an interpretation that has only recently become questionable in Hawaii, along with the rest of the industrial, wealthy, northern world to which it belongs; but in Fiji, the aspirations of the white-settler community of the nineteenth century, and the part women played in it, rapidly reached a historical dead end. Fiji was not to become a white man's country, nor a white woman's either.

Now, as the military glue that has so far held together the political structures created by industrial society begins to melt, in both East and West, and as regionalism, often based on a renewal of cultural ties with land, sweeps the world from Bougainville to Azerbaijan, Hawaii rather than Fiji seems historically exceptional, and the tragedy that Patricia Grimshaw analyzes becomes more complete. Indeed, it may be that because women's history in the Pacific has been a reflection of the rise of feminism in the industrial world it has taken a false lead.

Where, then, will the mainstream of "contact history" run, and women's history in the Pacific as part of it? As indigenous women's history fast becomes a major field in the Pacific, crosscurrents may well develop into whirlpools. Bonnie Maywald, for example, an Adelaide postgraduate student, has shown that in Tonga the role played by indigenous women in the conversion process was one of positive initiative rather than of reception and reaction. She reveals the "convert the chiefs and the people will follow" theory as the product of male bias in historical perception. It is likely that the twentieth-century process whereby Christianity became, throughout the Pacific, a central expression of indigenous rather than imported culture has been largely the work of indigenous women.

If women can be credited with the incorporation of Christianity into the fabric of island society, then they have, ironically, accomplished the mission that inspired and ultimately frustrated generations of missionary women. They have succeeded, however, at the cost of the cultural hegemony of industrial society that male missionaries often thought they saw, and took to mean, that they had succeeded. The feminist perspective of Pat Grimshaw and her predecessors has been a valuable means of redressing the historical balance and in reaching an understanding of the tragedy of nineteenth-century white women in the islands. When it comes to an attempt to appreciate the importance of indigenous women in this century, an eco-feminist perspective may prove equally instructive.