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Problems in Writing Women's History in the Pacific

Historians have every reason to be duly humble about the fruits of their labors. History writing is an extraordinarily difficult task, based on painstaking, laborious, and time-consuming archival research, without which academic studies can claim little legitimacy, while it demands, as well, an engagement in contextual reading, the boundaries of which may be very wide. Sources offering evidence of past life are unevenly available in terms of time, place, and characters, and disparate in the bargain. When we construct some focused narrative of our own making from the confusion of possibilities gained from theory and empirical research, we offer problematic coherence to situations, placing closures on other potential avenues of discovery in order to communicate a central interpretation of distinction and force. But the critical academic reader will, of course, wish other paths had been explored, and see the inclusive, rather than exclusive, possibilities of the subject.

At the 1989 Berkshire women's history conference at Rutgers University, I attended a roundtable discussion of *Family Fortunes* by the British historians Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, a study that explores the construction of femininity and masculinity among the middle class of early nineteenth-century England.¹ The book, a substantial one, was the outcome of eleven years' research by two experienced academics, and could only be described as a major achievement. The criticism offered was many-sided. One panelist said that it was impossible to understand the making of the middle class without considering at the same time the making of the working class; another said that one could not understand the making of the middle class or the working class without a context of developing attitudes on race derived from empire building; another thought what was needed was a view from outside England looking in, as well as inside England looking out; and so on. The truth is, that unless the historian selects, shapes, and takes control of a central narrative, a book may never be finished (as countless are not) *or* may never find a publisher (if it is), or may be unreadable. Yet we writers know that others will fill the spaces we vacated, subject our work to rigorous evaluation, and thereby, very often, contest our most meticulously developed theses.

Increasingly, of course, devotees of postmodernism view the historian's offering as simply one authorial voice among multiple voices, part

of the play that is history, with the interest of a study lying not in some positivist contribution to knowledge but in the artifice and positionality writers bring to it. Feminist historians, however, have had an ambivalence towards postmodernism, given their conviction that history is deficient without the acknowledgment of the presence of women and that women's history itself can be written in more clarifying and constructive ways. I share that conviction, and find it worthwhile responding to the reviewers of my book as part of an ongoing dialogue through which, despite the problematic craft of history, some more valuable interaction of present authors and past events may become possible. This exercise, meanwhile, has pushed me to an exposure of my reaction to sources, actors, and debates such as postmodernists would have historians make an integral component of the crafting of histories as a usual practice.

My writing of *Paths of Duty* had its genesis during the first visit I made, in the Christmas vacation of 1980-1981, to the archive of the American missionaries in Hawaii, held in the exquisitely housed and efficiently run Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library in Honolulu. I was seeking sources for work on the earliest white women to live among Polynesian peoples in the Pacific. This particular group of white women interested me immediately. The American mission women had been dedicated writers and their descendants, enthusiastic collectors. The material was rich and very extensive for women who, after all, had no official appointment to the mission (except for a few single women), and whose papers therefore had been obtained from relatives back home, not from collections of the metropolitan mission body, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, who kept the men's communications.

The subject excited me because it brought together a cluster of scholarly interests that could be explored in fresh terrain. I had recently begun teaching American history at the University of Melbourne, and like most women's historians in the West, I was deeply impressed by the lively, energetic, and innovatory feminist writing that had emerged in the United States in the 1970s. Studies of white middle-class women in the nineteenth century, including Nancy Cott's own *Bonds of Womanhood*,² were prominent among these pioneering texts. Somewhat unexpectedly, the self-representations of these mission wives soon pointed to a close connection between the new scholarship on antebellum women in the American Northeast. This was surprising, because when mission wives were not totally ignored in Pacific history, they tended to be treated as oddities, misfits, absurdities, or a comic element occasionally

trundled out for light relief, not as serious subjects for analysis. The archive offered me the opportunity to follow through the life cycle from youth to old age a considerable number of women reformers whose formative period had been that of early Northeastern industrialization and "the Second Great Awakening," and whose migration to Hawaii was motivated by a uniquely feminine project on behalf of Hawaiian girls and women. So often, I realized, American studies picked up such reformers at some point of time when they came into prominence briefly in records, but historians less often had the opportunity for a longitudinal study. At the same time, the American women's frontier environment pointed up, even intensified, aspects of American culture in ways potentially useful for understanding American women's history more broadly.

Prior scholarly and personal interests also prepared me to be particularly engaged by the possibilities of these subjects. A New Zealander by origin, my first extended research was on the women's movement in nineteenth-century New Zealand, where women obtained the vote in 1893.³ The major New Zealand activists were members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. While the work of the American mission women predated that of the New Zealand suffragists, there appeared in the Hawaiian story a similar intersection of evangelical Christianity, with its impetus to moral reform, with a self-consciousness about women's social status. This seemed an intriguing comparative opportunity. It was also my New Zealand background that had stimulated an awareness of early intercultural encounters of Europeans and Polynesians, given the importance of the Maori political movement there and the Maori's various interpretations of history. Influenced strongly by the New Left, feminist historians in my adopted country of Australia were inclined to models of history emphasizing conflict and oppression rather than consensus and progress, and they made issues of race and class central to their revisionist historical interpretations. The intellectual context to which I was attached entertained some skepticism of reformers' declared philanthropic objects and a sense of the multiple ways by which a colonial presence can oppress an indigenous population. Such influences offset the generally positive interpretation of white middle-class women shaped within the woman-centered analysis of American feminist history.⁴

In *Paths of Duty* I attempted to develop, by an ethnographic methodology of detailed description, a portrayal of the American mission wives that juxtaposed what I saw as both the positive and the negative aspects of their experiences-- that is, some with which I could empathize, cer-

tain of which I found unfortunate--without constantly offering an explicit evaluation allotting praise or blame. I did believe that the American women were among those, as Catherine Bateson suggests, "at the meeting place between cultures, or during times of transition, . . . who end up with the worst of both worlds." Yet one needed to stay aware of the alienation they were unleashing within the Hawaiian community. I attempted to sustain two narratives. One was centered on a group of essentially well-meaning and self-sacrificial women who left their homeland armed with a set of ambitions and expectations about meaningful work and gender relationships that were thwarted or denied in a painful exile. The other narrative centered on the outcomes of the women's deliberate positioning of themselves within an alien culture with a stated aim of changing the culture of others. In the first narrative I showed the American wives trapped within a *mentalité* by which they experienced their evangelical goal in altruistic terms. In the second narrative I denied a privileging of the American wives' intentions over the outcomes for Hawaiians.

The reviewers have raised significant and interesting issues in their comments on *Paths of Duty*. Of the specific points, an important one is Nancy Cott's suggestion that as a reader she wanted "a firmer picture of Hawaiians' experience on the receiving end." This criticism was foreshadowed by her fellow reviewer, Claudia Knapman, who thought the book was "likely to be criticized by some for failing to address Hawaiian women, except as the objects of American women's endeavors." Knapman continues: "SO little has been done about any women in the Pacific that this type of criticism is more political--conforming to prevailing ideological positions--than substantive." Cott's critique deserves, however, some extended discussion. Her own first monograph, *Bonds of Womanhood*, said little about the privileges uniformly shared by her white middle-class subjects on the basis of race, or indeed class; but attitudes have changed since her significant early work and, as Cott points out, historical scholarship has moved on.

A frequently cited feminist historians' quip is that, in relation to the analytical concepts of gender, class, and race, white women appear to have more gender, working-class women more class, and black women more race. American feminists in the later 1980s have become painfully aware that their depiction of women's worlds in the nineteenth century prioritized and valorized one segment of women over those others for whom sources were far fewer and with whose lifestyles they less readily identified.⁵ This imbalance was tellingly exposed in the lawsuit involving Sears Roebuck and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commis-

sion (EEOC) in 1985 to 1986, when Rosalind Rosenberg's testimony for the company, based on considerable recent feminist scholarship, placed women historically as consistently asserting family concerns over work advancement. Unfortunately for the EEOC, this argument proved decidedly more persuasive than Alice Kessler-Harris's case for the commission, when Kessler-Harris, in the absence of a rich store of secondary sources, had to rely on published primary sources to demonstrate working women's readiness to embrace nontraditional work when opportunities were offered them. Added to this realization of the skewed nature of women's history as it had developed, African American women were complaining insistently that their experiences were thinly explored by white feminists, whether as waged workers or not. Feminist historians, they believed, saw black women as exceptional to mainstream America rather than integral to its central historical culture and its transformations.⁶

Without question I believed the impact of the mission women's activities should inform an evaluation of their project. The challenge posed by Cott is, however, whether I should have pursued this in more detail, to attempt a description of the Hawaiians' responses, which she suggests as the correct position for aware modern feminist historians.

Far more than I pursued in this study, I was certainly concerned with Hawaiians' responses to the American intrusion, and read a good deal of early ethnographic sources, as well as anthropological studies, dealing with models of precontact Hawaiian society and nonmissionary accounts of Hawaiians after the first European intrusion in the late 1770s. Apart from the missionaries' own writing there were, however, few accounts about Hawaiians, let alone by Hawaiians, for the main period of my study, 1820 to the 1850s. As for the chroniclers themselves, their total lack of any respect for, and therefore recording of, specific details of Hawaiian lives was astounding. Prior to exposure to the American archive, I had read my way through the mission records of British and Irish Congregationalists, Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics operating in various other parts of the Pacific. Never had I encountered anything approaching the total dismissal of an indigenous culture that emerged in the Americans' papers. Admittedly, the American mission was established some forty years after Europeans commenced living in Hawaii. When the missionaries arrived Hawaiians had already begun adapting to alien ways including abandoning their traditional religion, and since some foreign settlement was in place, the mission could relate to outsiders rather than face a totally Hawaiian social environment. But essentially the silence resulted from American

rigidity. The wishes of successive reviewers that I had included more information on what the Americans learned from Native Hawaiians were vain hopes indeed. The missionaries despised Hawaiian customary ways, condemned their hesitant transitions to American forms, and found the only potential saints among the (numerous) dead. Their references to Hawaiians was hence unsubstantive and distanced. Cott refers to Gutierrez's study of the Spanish Franciscan friars in New Mexico, who utilized Pueblo cosmology to give their Catholic worldview validity. Roman Catholic missionaries characteristically adopted such practices, although there is no evidence, of course, that practitioners of indigenous religions caused friars to alter *their* cosmology. All missionaries were not alike. All Protestant missionaries were not alike. What would have been possible for a historian, if one was working from mission accounts in (Maori) New Zealand, Tahiti, or Tonga, was made virtually impossible by the Americans' stunning ethnocentrism. Despite their capacity to inspire sympathy in other areas, towards Hawaiian culture they were dogmatic and judgmental, which did not augur well for interpretations of Hawaiian adaptive strategies. If I wished to sustain academic conventions of evidence--and I was too dutiful a historian not to do so --I could make little headway on the Native Hawaiian responses unless I used more than a fair amount of "historical imagination." The subject's discipline restrained me from the free-flowing and impressionistic account (interesting, no doubt, but problematic) that I might have constructed if I had been bolder.

But if I were to write the study again, I would still be restrained by another factor about which I felt uneasy when I undertook the primary research, but which has become more politically explicit in the meantime. That is the right of white historians to construct the histories of once-colonized peoples in postcolonial worlds. Cott's reference to the vogue for "multiculturalism" in the United States is not one favored by the oppressed indigenous Maori, Aboriginal, and Native Hawaiian populations of settler societies such as New Zealand, Australia, and Hawaii. As descendants of the original inhabitants, Aborigines, Native Hawaiians, and the Maori expect to take priority over later migrants, whether of European origin or not. Among their political claims is the right to define their own past, a privilege that white historians and anthropologists have previously, and sometimes arrogantly, assumed.⁷

In this case, the history of the response of Native Hawaiian women to mission wives, and to Christianity, goes to the heart of their present-day sense of identity. It is also a painfully contested arena. Among Native Hawaiians themselves, women (as John Young points out in the Tongan

study) clearly played a pivotal role in the conversion process: the church became of the utmost importance to many of them, and current Native Hawaiian Christians place the female missionaries among their pantheon of saints. Other Native Hawaiian women--Hawaiian nationalist activists--are more inclined to vilify the American missionaries, women and men alike. Historians cannot ignore the fact that their work may be used politically, even if this was far from their intention and even if they feel themselves far removed from those circles. Would one intervene constructively in this charged situation by portraying nineteenth-century Hawaiian women as dupes, fools, and victims; as pragmatists, warily assessing their best interests; as spiritual beings matching metaphysical needs with valid choices? At the August 1991 conference of the Pacific Branch of the American Historical Association in Hawaii, the Native Hawaiian nationalist Lilikala Kame'Eleihiwa of the University of Hawaii commended *Paths of Duty* for informing Native Hawaiians of the very peculiar character of the American mission women without intrusive commentary on the history of Native Hawaiians.⁸ White historians, like white anthropologists, will no doubt continue to engage in the task of explaining "others" for Western readers, but they can no longer expect to be loved for it by their protégés and they are increasingly confronted with the political consequences of their endeavors. It would seem to me a distinct deficiency if certain negative outcomes for indigenous peoples were not part of an evaluation of a missionary study. Given that, however, it seems legitimate to focus on one particular human element in an intercultural encounter, and not necessarily pursue another evenhandedly; that is, for a white historian to write of white people's lives, without presuming to describe the identity formation of preliterate indigenous peoples.

I turn now to a second significant point raised by Claudia Knapman: that the discussion of the American wives should have been couched more fully in a comparative framework of gender relations. The mission women, she argues, are far too often discussed in isolation "without being located sufficiently in relation to the parallel views of the male missionaries. In some respects this reinforces a stereotypical view of white women and denotes a tendency to assign responsibility for failure to their peculiar idiosyncrasies." The absence of sufficient detail on the men, she concludes, resulted in my having dealt somewhat harshly with the American women, when a comparative framework might have shown them in a more favorable light. Cott also felt that gender comparisons ought to have been further pursued.

This criticism emerges in part from an ongoing dispute over whether

gender, or the relative positions of men and women, ought to be the appropriate focus for feminist history, rather than women themselves. Feminists initially asserted the legitimacy of posing women as a category of analysis as an essential for the recovery of women from historical invisibility and as part of a political act to restore a sense of past identity to women in the present. In the eighties Joan Scott, among others, has urged the notion that gender should be a basic analytical tool in any study of the past and that it opens up important possibilities for integrating women's experiences into mainstream history. Otherwise, women's history might remain in a ghetto.⁹ I would not in the slightest deny the force of this argument, and do not respond to this somewhat polarized debate in any partisan fashion: both "gender" and "women" may appropriately be the basis of a study. If feminist historians had not first explored women's lives, however, I do not think gender history would now have seemed feasible; and studies focusing on women can be illuminating in themselves and assist the integrationist project. When I read for *Paths of Duty* I was alert to the comparative aspect of the mission women's, as opposed to the men's, role in the enterprise of proselytization, and certainly here an evenhanded analysis would have been possible if I had chosen to do so. I wanted, however, to make the mission women my focus, but tried at the same time, to some extent, to evaluate them implicitly in a relational sense.

Knapman, however, has another point of reference for her criticism other than the gender history/women's history debate. She signals this when she writes that my inadequate attention to the male missionaries minimizes the extent to which the American women's "effort to convert Hawaiians was motivated by compassion," that is, "the genuine desire of the American women to 'help' Hawaiian women." To understand her comment, we need to recall a debate about the relative impact of white women and white men on British imperial frontiers to which Knapman herself has made a notable contribution with her monograph *White Women in Fiji, 1835-1930: The Ruin of Empire?*¹⁰ Knapman's exploration of the lives of European women in Fiji challenged the suggestion embedded in British colonial history that white colonial women were the chief architects of racism. This was a hypothesis first articulated about British India, although arguably it was one more evocatively described by novelists such as Somerset Maugham, Rudyard Kipling, and E. M. Forster than by historians. This was the basis of the perception in John Young's early work, where he argued that racism did not emerge in Fiji from the attitudes of male settlers or from the Fijian hierarchy, but from the first appearance of an influential number of Euro-

pean women. With the advent of white women, interracial conviviality ceased, and the white mistress of the household now defined the boundaries of social contact on racist lines.

Knapman, as did feminist historians of other parts of Britain's erstwhile far-flung empire, set out to rescue women from their role as scapegoats for the loss of an empire. First, she looked at the variety of behaviors of white women, which defied facile categorization. Then she posed an alternative view about sexuality and race. White men in many colonial situations drew an exaggerated portrait of white female purity, she suggested, making unthinkable sexual relationships between white women and indigenous men. White men could then conveniently blame white women for being racist. Knapman's work has been widely reviewed alongside a study published at the same time by Helen Callaway of European women in colonial Nigeria, *Gender, Culture, and Empire*,¹¹ where another intriguing hypothesis was proposed. Within systems of thought about gender, wrote Callaway, men have often been equated with the civilizer, the truly human, and hence the worthy sex, in contrast to women who have appeared closer to nature, the animal, and "the wild": less civilized, less important, perhaps even potentially destabilizing of established cultural norms. The frontier of the British Empire, however, saw a reversal of such ideas. The empire was the site of adventure, courage, and feats of endurance by men, who were here associated with nature and "the wild." Women intruded into this heroic world, taming the enterprising male, confining him to domesticity with all its dreary suburban banality, including snobbish distinctions based on class and race. White women received the blame for racism as part of a range of hostile attitudes dealt out by free-wheeling men reacting against the piercing of the fragile bubble of their heroic myth. (In the writing of Pacific history, and the fate of mission wives at the writers' hands, one might suggest that the fact that such women sharply questioned the sexual encounters of supposedly free-wheeling, happy white males with indigenous Pacific women seemed to do the wives no good in the eyes of workaholic, sedentary, aging, and usually married male historians who enjoyed, vicariously, the Pacific exploits of their uninhibited historical brothers.)

In this context of imperial history, treating the Americans in Hawaii intersected, therefore, with a major debate outside of American history but important in Pacific and British history. It is true that I did not address this debate explicitly, but since both Knapman and Young make this fundamental to their reviews, I will restate a response which I made subsequently in a journal little known outside Australia.¹² (Per-

haps most academic journals are little known, and even then more often bought than read!)

At first sight the mission women do, in fact, appear to fit the earlier interpretation of Young and others of the relationship between gender and racism. The missionaries expected initially to mix freely with Hawaiians, took Hawaiian children into their homes, and relied on Hawaiian servants and nurses. Once the American young evinced strong attraction for Hawaiians, however, began speaking Hawaiian and imitating their ways--pagan and obscene ways in mission eyes--the American women, disciples of new ideologies of moral motherhood, reacted strongly. They shut their children off from contact with the surrounding people, reducing drastically their own capacity to teach Hawaiians yet leaving their husbands free to move unimpeded about their outer-directed tasks. It was not the reputed fear of sexual liaisons between husbands and Hawaiian women, but the fear of sexual liaisons between American and Hawaiian youth that sparked off this policy of exclusion. Given the importance of the mission as a whole to the modern history of Hawaii, the mission wives could readily be scapegoated as those responsible for an early social construction of race that weighted the scales heavily against a respectful and sympathetic reading of indigenous Hawaiian culture and society that might have resulted in a less unequal outcome in terms of power.

But the complexity of the intercultural and intracultural relations of Americans and Hawaiians, and of American men and American women, militates against a schematic rendering of the gender and race debate. My own study discovered the situation in which American women and Native Hawaiians found themselves as involved, complex, and resistant to ready formulas. I felt, in the first place, a decided reluctance to brand the Americans unambiguously as racist. Viewed from late twentieth-century society, racist the missionaries undoubtedly were. Yet in terms of their own society--when arguably, all white Americans and Europeans were racists in some sense--these were people who upheld strongly the essential dignity and equality of every human soul in the eyes of God. To characterize the mission as ethnocentric leaves out the element of unequal power with which the American actions were imbued. On the other hand, the use of the term "racist" leaves the historian grasping for a word to use for Southern plantation owners who beat their slaves and sold slaves down the river. Certainly the mission members allocated superior and inferior evaluations to American and Hawaiian cultural characteristics. But they did not suggest that Hawaiians should occupy inferior roles in the new Hawaii or

that there was any overarching biological or genetic explanation that justified continuing American dominance.

In terms of gender, the interesting issues relied on an understanding of the dichotomy of gender that existed within the mission group itself. Such questions in abolitionist circles are, of course, a source of considerable historical interest within American history. The questions do not become negligible because these particular abolitionist women were thrust into a situation where intercultural issues appear of dominant importance. The American wives arrived in Hawaii believing themselves to be in an advantaged position in their own society and that there was an essential equality, described spiritually and enacted within their marriage contract, between their husbands and themselves.

Yet in practice the wives' experience of the mission was one of disadvantage. In theory both partners were welcome to be active in the mission. In practice the women discovered that, even on a distant, exotic frontier, their responsibilities to their menfolk--keeping their homes, caring for their children--took precedence over their responsibilities to God. Work they could, but they worked with an enormous burden from which their husbands were free. And their active mission work had to be kept within sharp boundaries, addressed only to Native Hawaiian women and children. Any attempt to teach the men or to usurp the mission male leadership role, even in the husband's absence, was to merit a severe reprimand from the mission hierarchy. Men taught men, preached to all Hawaiians, and treated with the Hawaiian political hierarchy and with the male Europeans, such as traders and officials. Wives taught women and children, could lead only women in prayer and train them in European styles of work. They could translate a man's sermon but not deliver a sermon. They could find ways to pressure a chief, or indeed, a mission male, in informal conversation but not in formal forums, and if successful, they needed to attribute the success to a man.

Any notion that the context of shared biological characteristics might promote a sense of natural sisterhood, that gender identity might overcome ethnicity, was slow to emerge in the Hawaiian situation, despite the fact that the American women had arrived buoyed up by such an expectation. The early experiences of the American mission women extinguished their enthusiastic hopes about a global sisterhood or any chance that issues of shared gender would overcome barriers created by ethnicity. To begin with, the Americans soon realized the enormity of the gulf that existed between high-born Hawaiian women and women of nonchiefly rank. Women as well as men of the chiefly class wielded

enormous power; rank superseded gender in terms of power, status, and authority despite the fact that certain symbolic representations of gender referred to all women. But in the second place, and more seriously, the Americans could scarcely discover the Hawaiian women to be feminine at all, judged by the only standard they knew. Hawaiian women's behavior in terms of sexuality, childbirth and childrearing, and notions of work baffled the Americans. To be genuinely human meant to be a gendered human being. To recover their full humanity, Hawaiian women had to be reconstituted in terms of gender. And so the American wives struggled to recreate Hawaiian women in their own image, to make them into sisters whom the Americans could embrace.

The complexities of gender and race in this human situation militate against easy and superficial generalizations. Nevertheless, in relation to the initial proposition about the influence of women in frontier situations, one might perhaps make some observations. I would suggest from this case study that the American mission women shared the ethnocentric perceptions and attitudes of the men in their own group, but there was a difference in approach and outcome based on the prevailing gender division of labor. It would be nonsense to suggest that these American women could be seen as the major architects of racist structures in Hawaii, when it was the mission men who carried out the functions imbued with the greater overt public power, alongside other American and European men. By the end of the nineteenth century one would see racism as having emerged, as it did elsewhere, from a competitive drive for Hawaiian land and resources, a struggle in which white men were the chief actors, mission men and their sons (albeit with the best of intentions) among them.

The American women had been essential agents in the social transformations that emerged in the new Hawaii. They were not nonentities; they were not victims; they were not heroines. They contributed significantly to a shift in the balance of power in Hawaii, which undermined the likelihood, eventually, of autonomy for Native Hawaiians. Knapman's study, I believe, underplays this factor in Fiji.¹³ But I would argue, nevertheless, that because of the work and channels of influence assigned to the American woman, their presence was less destructive; and in one important aspect, it had constructive elements. The Hawaiian people who survived the onslaught of Western diseases were subjected to increasing pressure from Europeans, a fact for which mission women were not personally responsible. Native Hawaiians now needed avenues for understanding Western ways if they were to withstand physical or cultural annihilation.

It was the American mission wives who pressed that Hawaiian women, along with the men, should gain entry into understanding the necessary skills to be competent in Western social forms and to recognize hazards implicit in the darker side of European behavior. Through the education they offered Hawaiian women in the formal skills of reading and writing, and in the avenues for leadership among their own sex, the Americans ensured, at least, that Native Hawaiian women were not heavily disadvantaged vis-à-vis Native Hawaiian men in negotiating the new world that was emerging. Those high-born women who sustained prominence in the new Hawaii did so after a thorough apprenticeship in the American women's system.

The American women impressed upon Native Hawaiian women the negative character of certain Western practices that they had grafted so readily onto their traditional styles of behavior. Hawaiian women's initial ready entry into sexual encounters with transitory European males often brought havoc in its wake. Venereal diseases, the sores of which flourished in the tropics, took a dreadful toll on the health of Hawaiian women and often resulted in heart-breaking sterility. Children of such unions were left unprovided for when the European male deserted, as so often happened. What might appear good, clean, egalitarian fun to American and European men, and to subsequent American and European historians, was in fact behavior that had destructive implications for Native Hawaiian women. It was reasonable that mission wives should have perceived the situation in these terms. This was true, also, for the Americans' campaign against female and male use of imported drugs, alcohol, and nicotine. Alcohol brought distressing domestic violence and a multiplicity of accidents. Smoking put lives at risk, as houses built of combustible materials burned down when fires were left alight at night, so that occupants could light their pipes if they awoke. Small babies could crawl from their mothers' arms at night to fall into such fires and be horribly burned. A later, distant generation of academics might describe the Americans who opposed these practices as strait-laced. One could argue that the American mission wives assisted at least some Native Hawaiians of their own sex to deal with life-threatening situations, the introduction of which the mission wives could not be held responsible for.

Embedded in the intercultural experience of American mission women was a dichotomy based on sex, on a gender division of labor, which led to a division in the social construction of race and the practices that flowed from it. Simply because of prevailing formulations of femininity and female roles within the American group, the women,

while undoubtedly "racist" judged by the standards of today, nevertheless played a less destructive part in this drama than the men.

For my next project I plan to write a comparative study of the place of indigenous women in the creation of colonial discourses in settler societies of the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand. I am grateful to the reviewers for their close attention to my work, and, as I set about fresh research, carry their interesting comments with me.

NOTES

1. L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

2. N. Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

3. P. Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University press, 1972, rev. ed. 1987).

4. See P. Grimshaw, "Writing about Women in New Societies: Americans in Hawaii, Anglo-Australians in Colonial Victoria," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 2 (December 1990); P. Grimshaw, "Writing the History of Australian Women," in *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, ed. K. Offen, R. Pierson, and J. Rendall (London: Macmillan, 1991).

5. See N. Hewitt, "Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1980s," *Social History*, no. 10 (October 1985).

6. For example, E. Higginbotham, "Beyond the Sound of Silence: Afro-American Women's History," *Gender and History* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989). For discussion of the Sears Roebuck case, see R. Milkman, "Women's History and the Sears Case," *Feminist Studies* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1986); "Women's History Goes on Trial," *Signs* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1986).

7. For example, C. Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes': Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review*, no. 3 (1988); Haunani-Kay Trask, "Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle," *The Contemporary Pacific* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1991). Two ethnographic descriptions of Hawaiian women by white scholars have appeared recently: J. Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender, and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); C. Ralston, "Changes in the Lives of Ordinary Women in Early Post-contact Hawaii," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. M. Jolly and M. MacIntyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

8. Lilikala Kame'Eleihiwa, "Foreign Diseases and Calvinist Missionaries: Allies of American Colonialism in Hawaii" (paper presented 15 August 1991 at 84th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Pacific Coast Branch, Kona Coast, Hawaii), comment made in discussion period.

9. J. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); cf. J. Bennett, "Feminism and History," *Gender and History* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1989).

10. C. Knapman, *White Women in Fiji, 1835-1930: The Ruin of Empire?* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986). For John Young's position, see his "Evanescent Ascendancy: The Planter Community in Fiji," in *Pacific Island Portraits*, ed. J. Davidson and D. Scarr (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970).

11. H. Callaway, *Gender, Culture, and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

12. P. Grimshaw, "Gender, Race, and American Frontiers: The Hawaiian Case," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 7, no. 1 (July 1988).

13. P. Grimshaw, Review of *Gender, Culture, and Empire*, by H. Callaway, and *White Women in Fiji, 1835-1930*, by C. Knapman, *Gender and History* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989). For further discussion, see J. Haggis, "Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender: Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, nos. 1/2 (1990); and other articles in that journal's special issue on "Western Women and Imperialism," vol. 13, no. 4 (1990).