Housing, Home and Women's Identity

by

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Abstract

There are two central arguments around which this thesis is constructed. The first is that we cannot understand everyday life without exploring the ways in which space and social interaction are mutually constituted. This argument is explored in relation to women's experiences of the house and home. Women's identity formation, I argue, is tied up with the form of the built environment and cultural concepts of 'home.' Part one explores the theoretical and methodological context of this project and the reasons for using different approaches. These range from an interweaving of N.Z fiction and housing policy over time, socio-semiotic analysis of house and home advertising, to qualitative research involving individual and focus group interviews, all of which are underpinned by a feminist perspective. The two historically based chapters on fiction and policy, and advertising, demonstrate how the category 'woman' and women have been aligned with the house and home within the context of heterosexual relations. This relationship, I argue, is subject to contestation and change as women challenge roles associated with constructions of femininity and a spatially gendered division of labour. Part two draws on the interview material with chapters organised around the narratives emerging from individual and focus group material, Woman/Women Alone, The Good-Enough-Mother and Transitions. Within the context of this material I explore Iris Marion Young's concept of home as a critical value and the relevance of emotion theory. In conclusion, I assess the extent to which the diversity of theory, methodology and interview material address the central claims which underpin this project.

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To the women who agreed to be interviewed as individuals and as part of focus groups my thanks for their words, their time, and their interest in what I was trying to do.

To Mary

This completed work seems an antithesis
To your uncompleted life.
Starting together, we were snared
By the unexpected,
Tricked into tending familial bodies and psyches,
Confronting our own mortality.

You ran out of energy,
And we could see it happening.
You and me and Helen.
Our scholarly discussions
Gave way to silent companionship
Not without its own sweet smiles.

This work has been an antidote to absence,
Words the weapons with which to fight grief,
When so much feels so final.
With Lizzie we will scatter your ashes,
And turn the pages of many more books
While you look over our shoulders, confident of life's success.

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Introduction

The introduction to this thesis attempts to place myself in relation to the project of undertaking a PhD, as well as introducing the arguments and statements on which the work is based. In any written work there are always decisions to be made about what to include and what to leave out and in this introduction I attempt to relate the genesis, as well as defining the boundaries of this thesis. To this end I want to tell three different but related stories.

As far back as I can remember I have been aware of the relationships between space, place and social interaction. My childhood years were spent in Lowry Bay, an idyllic place of bush and sea and the freedom to explore both. Extended family were neighbours, a matriarchal 'organisation' of three sisters and their husbands as well as the parents of one of my uncles. This privileged setting – both in terms of class experience (although my own parents were working class) and environment – is unusual in Pakeha New Zealand and has provided a 'place' from which to question the ways in which social relations and space intersect. This childhood experience impacted upon the housing decisions I made with my husband as we moved around New Zealand with his career promotions, in that I tried to 'replicate' this social (in terms of community) and physical environment for my children; successfully from what they now tell me. In 1983 while working part-time as a nurse in a busy Coronary Care Unit, I embarked upon extra-mural university study, with the idea of completing a Diploma in Nursing, but instead was 'hooked' by Sociology. A 'sociological imagination' arrived suddenly during reading for a second year theoretical sociology paper, but as my earlier experiences illustrate, it seems I have always had a 'geographical imagination'.

As an undergraduate in the early 1990s I interviewed an elderly women as part of a Life History paper. J had lived in London, then Scotland during the Second World War, and talked about how she had managed, for example, the birth of her daughter

amid the bombing and air-raid sirens, the raising and selling of chickens on the black market to make extra money. Having transcribed the interview we were required to use a critical approach to historically and socially contexualise what we had been told. Searching through row after row of books about the war, I could find nothing about women's experience of home during those years, except for one small paperback of women's letters to a magazine editor. Like J, I came to the conclusion women's experience was more likely to be found in fictional accounts of war-time. While the absence of women's voices - in the context of everyday experience - came as a surprise to me, that fiction could tell their stories was not.

As a postgraduate student I explored the process of gentrification, interviewing twenty-two women about their experience of living in Mount Victoria, Wellington, New Zealand, an area undergoing gentrification. Not only did the women who had lived in the area for some time know the history of the area and often of their house/home, but so, too, did some of the more recent residents, including women who were renting at the time. I found the relationships which women had developed with their houses/homes fascinating. They talked of what worked and what did not, the strategies they had employed in creating certain relationships between space and inhabitants, and the ways in which an urban rather than suburban identity enabled some women to recreate their sense of who they were. Aside from the challenges to theoretical explanations of the gentrification process, I was struck by the ways in which women readily agreed to be interviewed and enjoyed talking about their housing decisions in relation to Mount Victoria, and their experiences of home. Of the women I approached only two did not want to be interviewed; one woman did not speak English and the other was busy with young children but agreed to be interviewed if "I was stuck." The interviewing was completed in three weeks.

More recently - over the past decade - I have been divorced, lived in rented accommodation with my daughter and her partner, and seven years ago bought an old cottage which accommodated teenage children and the 'family menagerie'. My children, as adults have returned – with and without partners – to live 'at home' and

more recently my cottage has been a temporary refuge for firstly my brother and later my sister, both of whom were experiencing personal and geographical dislocation. These more recent experiences made me acutely aware of the ways in which access to resources plays an important part in buying a house and creating home, and how our perceptions of what is home change over time. The ability to provide 'home' for oneself and for others demands considerable energy, an ability to re-order space (and not get upset about it!) as well as a multitude of social activities and interactions. While we live out these realities we seldom articulate what it is we are doing and how our lives are shaped in spatial as well as social ways.

This present context and well as these three stories, I hope, flesh out both the person and motivation behind this thesis which is underpinned by four central arguments.

1. We cannot understand social life without understanding the ways in which place and space are produced, experienced and challenged and/or changed.
2. Within the cultural context of New Zealand culture the house as a physical entity and home as a conceptual idea are intimately related to women's identity formation.
3. Meanings of house and home are not fixed, and in the same way identity formation is a process subject to change over time within a range of cultural possibilities.
4. There are multiple ways of exploring the above which provide both historical and contemporary contexts of experience.

Part One consists of chapters one to five, and focuses on abstract theoretical concepts as well as defining the ways in which house, home and identity are used in this project. The different methods I have used to explore my arguments are set out and I embark upon an historically contextualised exploration of women's fiction and house/home magazine advertising to show some of the ways in which woman/women have been constructed in relation to home.

Chapter one discusses the challenge to social theory to include place and /or space and introduces my claim that representations of space/place are intimately related to ideas about sex/gender.

Chapter Two connects some of the theoretical reading with the methods used to explore my central arguments. These methods, I claim, are underpinned by a feminist approach.

Chapter Three sets up the ways in which 'house', 'home' and 'identity' are conceptualised, drawing on further theoretical writing as well as some of the interview material.

Chapter Four explores New Zealand fiction to see how house/home and identity formation have been (re)presented. Alongside fiction I draw on Gael Ferguson's (among others) history of New Zealand housing policies.

Chapter Five takes this exploration of historical cultural context further by using a socio-semiotic analysis of house/home related magazine advertising.

Part Two contains the three substantive chapters based on the narratives arising from interview transcripts. The two final chapters re-engage with theory which is useful in unpacking and understanding women's experiences of house/home, before a concluding chapter sums up the ways in which the central arguments have been dealt with in relation to empirical and theoretical material. Throughout this section I continue to draw on fiction to provide a social (public) window which connects to interview material. These chapters are informed by and continue to build one Part One.

Chapter Six, explores the narrative of 'Woman Alone' detailing the different stories women told. These range from access to housing, making and acting on decisions about house building, to childhood experiences of violence.

Chapter Seven uses a variety of material – art, fiction, and other documents as well as interview material from individual and focus group situations – to set up the ways in which woman as a maternal being is associated both symbolically and in reality with house/home. I have called this chapter Narratives of The 'Good-Enough-Mother'.

Chapter Eight, *Transitions*, discusses some of the stories women told about transitions in their lives. Some of these arise from different experiences of moving house/home, for one woman a change in her sexual identity initiated movement, and a mother and daughter discuss their decision to buy a house together.

Chapters Nine engages with Iris Marion Young's concept of home as a critical value in relation to empirical as well as other theoretical material.

Chapter Ten explores relatively new theory on emotion, again in relation to both fictive and empirical material.

Chapter eleven is the concluding chapter which draws upon the material garnered through different theory and methods to assess the ways in which the central arguments have been addressed.

Biographical Details

This section provides the biographical details of women interviewed and it is intended to be used as a reference throughout the reading of the thesis, rather than bracketing details in each excerpt from interview material. The names of women interviewed have been changed to protect their identity.

Abby

Abby is in her mid-fifties and works as a volunteer in a community agency while on the Unemployment Benefit. She is divorced with adult children who live elsewhere in New Zealand. She was the only woman who preferred to be interviewed in my home rather than her own (which is some way out of the city of Christchurch towards one of the north-east beaches), stating hers did not represent how she saw herself, and she lacked the financial means to alter this situation.

Alexa

Alexa, in her mid forties, has recently found a house to rent in which she feels very comfortable and the equity from houses from two earlier marriages she has put into a business in which she is self-employed. She has adult children who do not play a large part in her life.

Belle

Belle, a friend of my daughter's, is a young woman in her thirties who along with women interviewed previously and friends and colleagues Sue and Helen, was asked what she thought about the pictures of pregnant women (chapter seven).

Dee

Dee is in her mid forties and has recently downsized her Beckenham housing which enabled her to buy a car. She is divorced with adult children who live elsewhere. She is a believer in Feng Shui principles which she incorporated into the changes made to her house as well as to the way in which she places furniture and other objects. She was in part-time employment at the time of the interview but oscillated between times of part-time work and receiving the Unemployment Benefit.

Delia

Delia, in her early fifties, works part time in the hospitality industry and lives in her own home in a northwest suburb. One of her adult children has recently left home and the other three are all living in other areas in Christchurch. She has been divorced for many years but is currently involved in another relationship which is problematic for her in a number of ways.

Ellen

Ellen, a woman in her forties, has recently bought an ownership flat on a busy road in a north-west suburb. She had previously been renting a flat in town since leaving her marital situation. One of her three children who had stayed in the family home with their father was staying at her flat. Ellen was on the Unemployment Benefit but was in the process of pursuing self-employment opportunities.

Heather

Heather is a young single woman in her early thirties who rents a moderately expensive house in an inner suburb from which she also carries out her work. She is self-employed and very eager to buy a house of her own, but finds banks unhelpful and without understanding of her particular business. In the time preceding the

interview Heather had been looking at houses to buy, but was also considering moving to Australia where her skills would be more appreciated and better paid. (Heather did move to Melbourne where she is enjoying life and is better off in terms of work and financial return.)

Iona

Iona is a woman friend of mine who was not interviewed individually but was a key member of one of the focus groups. She has an ability to initiate discussion and shared many of the demographic characteristics of the women in the focus group in which she was included. At the time of the focus group she had just moved house – downsized and moved to a less expensive area - in order to freehold. She worked full-time as a book-seller and had one of her six adult children (from two earlier marriages) living with her.

Jane

Jane had been widowed thirteen years earlier, had never remarried and worked full time. Three of her four adult children live in New Zealand and the eldest daughter lives in the U.S.A.

Jeanette

Jeanette, divorced for many years and the mother of two adult children, rents a Housing New Zealand house in a northwest suburb. Her youngest daughter had recently moved home with her boyfriend, but the stay was relatively short. Jeanette is contemplating moving as market rentals make it difficult for her to manage financially without having someone else come into the house and share costs. She works as a carer in a rest home.

Joan

Joan, in her early fifties, has just moved into a new house on a hill suburb with extensive views of the coastline. One of her adult children has helped her finance this house. She works full-time as a lecturer and consultant. She has been divorced for many years, and with the house-building made a choice not to move in with a male friend. She is concerned about the financial commitment she has made but finds the house suits her sense of spirituality.

Lily

Lily is in her early forties, divorced with three teenage children all of whom live with her. She owns a small brick house in the north-west of Christchurch. She had exchanged the Domestic Purposes Benefit for that of a student which necessitated substantial changes in her financial day-to-day management. Lily also agreed to keep a journal for two weeks documenting her use and emotive response to activities in specific rooms of the house.

Lucy

Lucy is in her late forties and in the past two years left her husband and the family home entering into a lesbian relationship. At the time of interviewing Lucy was renting a house in one of Christchurch's hill suburbs with an extensive view over the sea and city. Rebuilding of her partner's home was underway. She emphasized the evolving nature of this rebuilding, a concept she extended also to the garden. Lucy works full-time as a lecturer.

Melissa

Melissa, in her later twenties lives in Wellington and had recently bought a house in Upper Hutt for herself and two year old son. She was working part-time in a social welfare programme concerned with parenting skills, enrolled part-time at university and received the Domestic Purposes benefit. At the time of writing this thesis I learned that Melissa and her mother, Jane, had their respective houses on the market and were going to buy a house together. I followed this up with another interview with both Melissa and her mother.

Morag

Morag, a friend of Susan's, is in her early fifties and has taken three years to move from a comfortable house in an inner suburb to a converted church in a beach suburb. She lives with her husband and teenage son, and works full time in a childcare facility.

Penny

Penny is in her mid-thirties, divorced, with two teenage girls. She owns her own house in the northwest of Christchurch, which is an older house with a large section. She works part-time as an occupational therapy aide and is actively involved with the girls' activities. She has recently entered into a new relationship, but both Penny and her partner retained their separate living arrangements. (At the time of writing the thesis Penny had let her house and moved to Otago to do a degree in Occupational Therapy.)

Rona

Rona, in her mid-thirties, has recently separated from her husband and rents a house in the northwest of Christchurch with her three children aged ten through to seventeen. She is on the Domestic Purposes Benefit, but wants to find employment which fits in with the children's school hours and also eventually to buy a place of her own.

Sharon

Sharon is in her mid-thirties and married. She works part-time as a nurse educator in a clinical setting and has two young children, one at school the other at Play Centre. Two years ago the family bought their own home in a north-west area of Christchurch to which they have made some changes. Outside there are large trees and a garden of predominantly native shrubs.

Susan

Susan is in her early sixties and in a second marriage. She and her husband recently bought a new house in a beach suburb. Susan engaged me with stories of her past and of her family experiences, but our interview was interrupted by a friend (whose wife I later interviewed) who preceded to tell me how I should do my research. Excerpts from this discussion are used in this thesis.

Tanya

Tanya, in her early thirties, has recently separated from her husband and moved back to Christchurch from Wellington to where she has a network of friends and a familiar school sympathetic to the needs of her learning-delayed children. She is renting a

house in a northern suburb and works part time as a home help. She is on the Domestic Purposes benefit. This is the first time she has ever lived "on her own."

Tracey

Tracey is in her mid forties and, with her second husband, has just made a decision - reluctantly - to sell their large old house (wanted as part of an expanding business) in a suburb lying between the city and Cashmere. She has two teenage children at home and is very keen on craft-work. She works part-time for a market research business.

Family, Friends and Colleagues

Helen, Mary, Jane, Sue

My daughter Jane, and my colleagues and friends Helen, Mary and Sue have given me significant material that is different to that of women interviewed, in that they have offered responses to questions, or shared their experiences within the context of my doctoral work. They are familiar with my work and have been or are currently engaged in post-graduate study themselves, consequently bringing a critical and theoretically informed understanding to what they say.

Chapter One

Connecting the Spatial and the Social

1.1 Introduction

The central claim underpinning this thesis is that we cannot understand social life without understanding its spatiality. Life is simultaneously socially and spatially constituted in time and across different environments and cultures. Within the context of this claim I explore women's relationships with the places and spaces of home, and I argue that, in New Zealand, the social category (white Pakeha) 'woman' and the spatial (and social) dimensions of 'home' are to a large extent, mutually constituted. The everyday spatiality of house/home, the social construction and lived experience of place and space have implications for women's identity formation. This chapter highlights the challenge for sociologists to incorporate a spatial as well as social theoretical perspective when writing about everyday life which is experienced and enacted within definable places. The definable places and contestable spaces of house and home I argue are partially, if not completely, constructed through a prism of sexuality and gender.

1.2 Challenges to Social Theory

Life is simultaneously socially and spatially constituted in time and across different environments and cultures. Soja (1985:62) captures both the reality and complexity of this claim.

> To be alive is to participate in the social production of space, to shape and be shaped by a constantly evolving spatiality which constitutes and concretises social action and relationships. This has always been true, but has remained largely outside our conscious awareness, relatively untheorised, buried under multiple illusions ...

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Not only is the spatiality of social life under theorised, but in relation to home, it is so much taken for granted that we rarely articulate our relationship with the space itself unless it is problematic.[1] Intuitively we connect with Soja's words; space as an undefined concept remains comfortably part of our everyday existence, the spatial metaphors with which we structure our understanding of our lives are unproblematic, for example, Morag found it difficult to describe placement. She followed her initial statement with her niece's 'game' of saying what house she would like to live in.

> *As to how you get the sense of placement, how do you know it? I don't know entirely how that works. I feel it may be that you get a little more familiar as time goes by, that that familiarity makes you settle in and feel comfortable.*

> *I took a walk with a niece who was staying last summer; we'd just gone to the beach and were walking up the street – she's only now eleven – and I found it wonderful that every house she went by she told me if she would like to live in it or not, and then we talked about what she would live in and things like this. I found that a fun thing because I knew what she was doing, because I thought almost on a subconscious level I do this but she's articulating about it because she's – her language is of the moment ...*

The assumed transparency of space (spatial contexts and positionings) is not only a feature of everyday life but permeates much academic sociological endeavour. As Simonsen (1996:494) writes:

> The concept of space is mostly taken as given - each author assumes that his or her meaning is clear and uncontested, and an ardent debate is conducted regardless of the possible differences in underlying conceptions. Although it is a rule rather that the exception that conceptions about space differ, disagreements about definition seldom surface since everyone assumes we already know the meaning of the term.

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[1] Alternatively we often seek environmental solutions to social problems, but these are not articulated as spatial processes per se but as social or personal efforts to solve problems.

In this way the sexed and/or gendered production of, and living in, space is already assumed which is why, for example, academic writing about the family leaves the spatiality of family life unexplored, rarely is it problematic or contributory. So much is space under theorised in sociology that when I first read the interview transcripts I could not 'see' the spatial stories, the ways in which we talk about the intersection of the spatial, the personal and the social in everyday life.

Smith and Katz (1993) offer even more of a challenge to the unproblematic use of language blind to its own construction. They draw attention to the interpretation of spatial metaphors which they see as representing a struggle over the power to define social space. For example, they draw attention to the way in which the metaphor of the margins and/or marginalization has been used as a relational strategy in the analysis of power of different groups. About spatial metaphors they write:

> The appeal of [these] spatial metaphors lies precisely in the new
> meaning they impart, but it is increasingly evident that these metaphors
> depend overwhelmingly on a very specific and contested conception of
> space and that they embody often unintended consequences. At the very
> least it is necessary to devise more explicit translation rules, or certainly
> a critical awareness of the translations connecting material and
> metaphorical space (1993:68).

Many of the women interviewed used the metaphor of warmth to articulate what they saw as a difference between a house (physical structure) and home, but even the metaphor of warmth includes within it both physical and symbolic meanings. Tracey likened a Welsh story to her own experiences of settling in a new home and making the first meal together. " ... *the fire is the heart of the home, the cooking fire, warmth and food – another symbol*". The struggle to define spatial entities and/or practices is also related to having power to define and contest meanings. During an interview with Susan, a friend of hers came to visit and a discussion

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ensued as to how we might come to understand house and home. He was insistent upon me devising measurements, using scales, which he thought would provide 'true' data.

L: I think you have to measure to have your work mean something. I think you have to begin by putting some numerical –

Ann: I think we'll just to disagree about that.

L: But language itself, words are very ambiguous. Someone says well I like it, I like it a lot, or I love it. So what does that mean? Does the person who says I like it a lot like it less that the person who loves it? Scale number 6 or number 8 then you've got accuracy, you can make some judgements ... You're going to use words and words are ambiguous.

When I asked him later if he thought there was a difference between house and home his reply, to a large extent, negated his earlier claim.

Well, obviously, because there are two different words, that's why language is, why language is a precision tool.

While I disagreed with his premise that to understand relationships between people and space necessarily requires mathematical measurements, I also disagree with the second claim of language being a precision tool. Metaphors, stories, and narratives are part of the ways in which we use language to express **and** construct meaning. Language gives structure to our life experiences, but the ways in which we use words, metaphors, stories and even narratives is not fixed, but contextual.

I also found interesting L's insistence that we could know through seeing and measuring. His dismissal of my methodology, I think, is a pertinent example of what Stewart (1994:611) highlights of Lefebvre's (1991) theorising of relationships between power and specific forms of (spatial) knowledge.

... representations of space tend to be *savoirs* (knowledges), connected to

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formal or institutional apparatuses of power. These knowledges are technical and rational, and according to Lefebvre, one result of the increasing dominance of these representations is the creation of readable (and reproducible) spaces and the hegemony of a 'logic of visualisation' which has become a taken-for-granted way of knowing. Lefebvre condemns readability as the reduction of space to a surface that is 'transparent' and hence unproblematic.

By not converting my study to numerical precision I was *"piddling around."* However, I was *"not to take that wrongly"* because *"most university people do (piddle around). I was a university person for many a year."*[2] L's behaviour may typify the academy's difficulty with what is deemed to be inappropriate methods and/or language in which to frame and present research. Game (1996:44) suggests that:

> Fearing metaphor's capacity to shift the ground under their claims to truth and self-certainty, academics treat it not as the condition of language and knowledge but as an occasional and implicitly feminine adornment to the expression of pre-existing meaning.

However, being female has not made it easy - within language - to find ways to write about spatial-social interaction which effectively weaves the two together, a problem articulated by theorists in disciplines other than sociology which are concerned with the production, representation and meaning of space and the built environment.

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[2] I found it very interesting that when I interviewed L's wife (a friend of Susan's accessed through the snowball approach) when L did come into the room he was very quiet and unchallenging.

Hillier and Hanson (1984), Simonsen (1996), and Massey (1994) draw attention to the difficulties of trying to theorise relationships between the spatial and social praxis of everyday living without privileging one over the other. As Hillier and Hanson (1984:9), writing about architecture, state:

> By the assumption that what is to be sought is a relation between the 'social' subject (whether individual or group) and the 'spatial' object acting as distinct entities, space is de-socialised and at the same time as society is de-spatialised. This misrepresents the problem at a very deep level, since it makes unavailable the most fundamental fact of space: that through its ordering of space the man-made physical world is already a social behaviour. It constitutes (not merely represents) a form of order in itself: one which is created for social purposes, whether by design or accumulatively, and through which society is both constrained and recognisable. It must be the first task of theory to describe space as such a system.

Space, I feel, remains an elusive if not troublesome concept. While I agree with the above concept of spatial systems I tend to use the term 'space' to indicate the flux and flow of contestation. This is in contrast to place by which I indicate both a defined physical quality as well as other processes of social and object interaction. One of the tasks of this thesis is to demonstrate the ways in which production and meaning of places - the built environment in New Zealand - has produced certain spaces predicated on unstable assumptions about sex, sexuality and gender.

1.3 The Sex/Gender Connection

In the introduction of his book entitled *Built in New Zealand, The Houses we Live in*, William Toomath (1996:1), a practising architect, asks:

> ... if we detach ourselves on our own home ground to look and see our typical New Zealand houses with fresh eyes, as if we were in a foreign place, what might we learn about ourselves - about our values, traditions and social ways?

To achieve this detachment, he states, we need to "... cancel the familiarity of our houses, to defamiliarise their appearance, and come upon them anew, as with the eyes of a stranger" (ibid:2).[3] While this detachment in order to 'see' is a crucial aspect of sociology, I maintain that within each discipline's history of (privileging) 'seeing' there are blind spots, and deconstruction of Toomath's text shows how architectural discourse may hide issues of gender and ethnicity within the New Zealand context.

Firstly, existing pre-colonial Maori dwellings and organisation of space are not seen as part of New Zealand's architectural heritage, and secondly, Toomath's constant referral to "the common man" indicates the persistence of present-day masculinist bias. He claims:

> It is often stated that a nation's architecture provides a true picture of its culture at any particular time. My own version (with apologies to the Bible) is "By their buildings ye shall know them". And of all buildings the common man's house is the staple fruit of every culture(ibid:2).

What Smith and Katz (1993), and feminist geographers in particular, question is the relationship of socio-spatial theorising to the gendered positioning of writer/s. Gillian Rose (1993,1995) and Doreen Massey (1994) claim that ways of writing space are connected to cultural and sexed/gendered positions (within academia). Rose (in Bird et al, 1993:71), like Stewart (1994), draws on Lefebvre's expose of the transparency of space.

> When geographers gaze at a social space, the space economy, urban space and so on, their claim to know and to understand rests on a notion of space as completely transparent, unmediated and therefore utterly knowable. This is what Lefebvre calls the 'illusion of transparency', such that 'within the spatial realm the known and the spatial are one and

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[3] This detachment in order to 'see' more clearly is a quality of Janet Frame's writing on New Zealand life, some of which will be discussed in chapter four.

the same thing'.
... The penetrating gaze, the strong claim to knowledge, and transparent space are deeply bound together in geographical knowledges, and many feminists have argued that a particular masculinity structures this conflation.

If geographers - whose business space is - are only recently rediscovering ways of conceptualising and writing about space, it is hardly surprising that sociological inquiry has seen space as transparent, or as setting, and not constitutive of social selfhood, social interaction and power relations. In a later article Rose (1995:762) also claims that:

> Specific articulations of subjectivity mobilise specific organisations of space then, and such modes of spatialising the self are also deeply bound into ways of understanding the world. That is, the spatialities of subjectivities and the spatialities through which the material world is represented mediate one another: "We cannot separate out the geographies of what we know from the geography of what we are" (Woodhead, 1995).

While conceptualisation and organisation of space are constitutive of selfhood and social interaction, space is also conceptualised - or in Rose's terms mediated - by not only social or institutional positions, but also by the geographies of our bodies. An example of this is found in chapter two of Goffman's (1971) book *Relations in Public*.

Goffman's metaphorical naming of two of three 'public' territories - (personal space), the *sheath* and the *stall* - can be directly linked to representations of the male body, what Rose (1995) and Irigarary (1984) refer to as phallocentric self/knowledge. The "sheath", according to Goffman, is "the skin that covers the body and, at a little remove, the clothes that cover the skin." 'Sheath' has definite connotations of sexuality. 'Stall' Goffman describes as "[T]he well-bounded space to which an individual can lay temporary claim, possession being on an all or nothing basis." Possession - acts of possessing - also represent what we have come to see as a predominantly male experience. Metaphorically men

'possess' women's bodies, and historically, property possession has been the prerogative of white middle and upper class men in Western society, including New Zealand.

Irigaray, Rose states (1995:762), argues that "the structure of this self and his space is a kind of mirroring" and that "all dominant forms of Western knowledge are phallocentric: that is, meaning is structured round the presence of only one organising principle, the phallus." Both these constructs of Goffman's which I would designate as phallocentric concepts can be contrasted with Irigaray's concept of an envelope of space/time/identity.

> In order to make it possible to think through and live [sexual] difference, we must reconsider the whole problematic of space and time ... The transition to a new age requires a change in our perception and conception of space/time, the inhabiting of places and of containers, or envelopes of identity (Irigaray in Grosz 1995:121).

Irigaray's project is vitally concerned with the ways in which our embodied sexual experiences (of space) are consequently transposed into language and other representational systems. Simonsen (1996), too, argues for conceptualisations of space as difference, suggesting we interrogate differences between spaces as well as relationality - how difference exists through the context of 'other', and finally the different linguistic spaces of articulation. Sex/gender differences are a major source of different social-spatial experiences which are incorporated not only into the ways in which everyday spaces and places are ordered and organised, but are complicit in power relations arising from social and textual representations. Massey (1994:2) writes: "Lines of debate over the conceptualization of space and place are also tied up with gender, with the radical polarization into two genders which is essentially hegemonic in Western societies today, and with bundles of characteristics typically assigned to each."

Benhabib (1992:152) enlarges upon Massey's claim, linking the body, identity and knowledge of the everyday experiential world.

> The gender-sex system is the grid through which the self develops as embodied identity, and certain modes of being ... in one's body and of living the body. The self becomes an I in that it appropriates from the human community a mode of psychically, socially and symbolically experiencing its bodily identity. The gender-sex system is the grid through which societies and cultures reproduce embodied individuals.
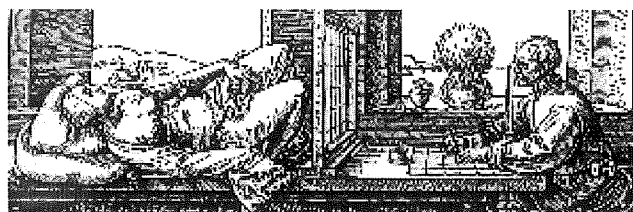
Figure 1: 'The Grid-locked Woman'[4]

An important aim of this thesis is the deconstruction of such systems to demonstrate the ways in which women's bodies have been aligned with specific products and women's experiences associated with the space and place of the house/home. This does not mean that behaviour or identity formation are fixed relative to space. Social-spatial interaction is fluid, contestable and subject to changes in both meaning and praxis. Having raised the challenges of incorporating a spatial imagination to existing social theory and claiming that the production and organisation of physical, metaphorical and textual space is a sexed and gendered project, the following chapter provides exploration and rationale of methodologies used within the research process that informs this thesis.

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[4] Etching by Albert Durer c1350 in Knappe (1965).

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Chapter Two

Theory and Multiple Methodologies

2.1 The Feminist Project

Underpinning this work is a feminist stance developed from my own subject position and experience. This has resulted in a depth of reading and writing and explores not only my own subjectivity in relation to life experiences but also that of other women. Feminist inquiry, like that of Sociology, focuses on disruption to that which has previously appeared unproblematic. This is a dynamic process aptly illustrated by recent challenges to white middle-class feminism which echo epistemological challenges to the positivistic ideal of objective truth (Alcoff 1988, Alway 1996, Baker 1998, Code 1991, Collins 1995, Curti 1998, Davies in Ellis and Flaherty 1992, hooks 1994, Smith in Sherman and Beck 1979). Dorothy Smith (1979:135) writing of a sociology for women identifies "the line of fault" as the:

> ... discovery of a point of rupture in my/our experience as woman/women within the social forms of consciousness – the culture or ideology of our society – in relation to the world known otherwise, the world directly felt, sensed, responded to, prior to its social expression.

Thus, in feminist research there is a direct relationship between women's experience and knowledge. This requires research methods in which women's voices are heard, as well as searching for interpretative frame-works that distort neither meaning nor experience. As Patricia Baker (1998:47) states, "[A] central tenet of feminist research is the documentation of women's voices faithfully and with respect for women's experiences," and she asks:

> [If] it is possible for a feminist researcher to document any woman's voice other than her own, how do we take into account, deal with, perform the "translation" of women's voices into written academic text? ... how do we "hear" and "write" women's voices and what happens when we try?

It may be that the requirements outlined above are irreconcilable with, or disruptive to, established patterns of sociological inquiry and theory development providing an answer to Joan Alway's questioning of why the "inner circle" of sociology theorists have "remained so uninterested in feminist theory (1996:210)." She believes that:

> Sociological theory impoverishes itself and the discipline as a whole to the degree that it continues to ignore this body of social thought. The epistemological, methodological, and substantive issues being explored and debated by feminist theorists are directly relevant to the concerns of sociological theorists. And the efforts of avoiding the shortcomings of "modernist" scientific thought offer valuable lessons and directions to a discipline founded on the belief that knowledge of the social world can improve that world. There is something for sociological theorists to learn from feminist theory (ibid).[5]

I agree with Alway, and it is perhaps the perceived disjuncture of feminist methodology from sociological theory development that is tested in this thesis; the ability of a variety of approaches, traditionally 'belonging' to other disciplines but suited to the ethics of feminist research, to indirectly enter the canon of sociological inquiry. However, the methodological eclecticism of this thesis results not only from the feminist approach underpinning this project, but

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[5] The challenges to epistemology are not only mounted by feminists and feminist theory. Indeed indigenous and working-class women critique feminist theory which replicates the very mistakes and assumptions of mainstream sociological enquiry, especially the claim to be speaking on behalf of women as a generic group. Tensions between the notions of equality and difference, and the ways in which class, ethnicity and sex/gender intersect experience, provide much of the bases of these challenges. The concept of equality has been discarded, it seems, in favour of equity.

also from the lack of mainstream sociological exploration of everyday social-spatial interaction.

When it came to thinking about who to interview and how to contact women I used one principle criterion; that the women would have experienced significant change in their housing/home situation within the two years up to the time of interview. Underlying this demand was the assumption that disruption – or to use Dorothy Smith's (1979) term "a point of rupture" in the world as we know it - rather than unproblematic continuity was more likely to result in some kind of reflective process enabling women to articulate their particular socio-spatial experiences. I also decided on a snowball approach, thinking it likely that the women themselves would know of other women who had experienced significant changes. In this way I contacted and interviewed twenty women of varying ages, class positions, and household relationships. Of the twenty women interviewed, thirteen had experienced dissolution of marital relationships although that had not necessarily occurred within the two year time frame. The high number of 'single' women I attribute to the snowball method, for in my own experience as a "woman on my own" the majority of my friends are also women "on their own." This is a narrative theme running through more than one interview, one which I will explore in depth later in this project.

The interviews were unstructured and it was an interesting and sometimes difficult task (for myself and the women interviewed) to articulate everyday experience as illustrated by Morag's experiences in the preceding chapter – and often because of my own 'insider status' the "you knows" received a nod instead of a request to elaborate.

Most of the women interviewed individually also participated in focus group discussions about their perceptions of (a) woman's/women's identity. The question of identity is related to arguments about essentialism, feminist

psychoanalytic frameworks for understanding female subjectivity, socialisation processes, and embodied experience.

While the embodied experience approach to understanding self, others and identity formation has been seen as one way of returning the body to feminist theorising, Kirby (1999) and Wilson (1999) suggest we also need to question how embodied theory maintains the split between nature/ biology and culture. Kirby (1999:20) questions the pervasiveness of cultural explanations of the body which privilege language, the claim that life experiences and individual subjectivity are constructed discursively. "Put simply, how can someone trained in the humanities, someone who subscribes to the view that language is a form of cultural mediation, hope to engage material from the sciences." And Wilson (1999:8) claims that "biology has not emerged as a site of curiosity or instruction for feminists interested in 'the body.' Instead, the feminist mainstreaming of 'the body' has followed old familiar refusals of biological detail."

There are two strands of theoretical thinking I engage with which I think go some way to return biology to social science; the first relates to emotion theory, and the second argues that language is both a biological and cultural construct, a premise explored further in section 2.3 of this chapter.

Emerging sociological theory of emotion, especially the relationship between emotion and knowledge, initiates rethinking the mind – body, culture-nature dichotomies, challenging established borders of objectivity and subjectivity, reason and emotion (Barbelet 1998, Bendelow and Williams 1998, Fricker 1991, Thoits 1989). This body of theory, I believe, is useful within the context of this project as well as one way of linking culture and biology. The final chapter of this work will outline current sociological and philosophical theories of emotions, claiming these emerging theories have useful explanatory power. Certainly the transcripts of focus group discussions demanded a return to re-

thinking the biology of the body without falling into the trap of essentialism, although women interviewed who did not appear to be influenced by feminist thought did use essentialist-based understandings of [a] woman's/women's experience.

The aim of focus group discussion was to use the dynamics of the group to stimulate conversational exchange around a central subject, the term 'woman.' Participants voiced both abstract ideas as well as the perceived realities of womanhood, most of which were illustrated by their own experiences. The ways in which women wove the abstract and real (experiences) together meant I had very little work to do to keep women focused.[6]

Focus group discussions were held at my home giving me an opportunity to offer reciprocal hospitality, and I found the power dynamics of researcher-researched paradoxically were reduced in this setting. Any power I had previously as researcher was negated by group dynamics, despite my ownership of the space provided. I felt I had provided a 'good' space in which women felt comfortable – a requisite of home according to a number of the women interviewed individually. While a time limit was placed on the discussion this was always exceeded and on two of the four occasions I had to eventually ask women to leave! It seems to me this is an indication of the few chances women have to engage in talking about their everyday experiences which impact upon their sense of who - or what – they are, and/or the activities of home-making.

The other factor in play was that there were at least two women in each focus group who knew each other, an outcome of the snowball methodology, and this,

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[6] See Carey (1994) and Morgan (1993) who offer advice to those running focus groups, emphasising the need for the researcher to maintain some form of control over the discussion.

I feel, was helpful in establishing conversation. Women agreed to maintain confidentiality in relation to what was said during the course of discussion.

With the focus group transcripts as with the transcripts of individual interviews arose the problem of reading, interpreting and placing them in this academically motivated work. I found myself with the first reading 'fitting' interview material into the words and works of others. With the second reading, almost three years later, I was able to more effectively distance the women's words from theoretical 'containers', but was still left with how to produce a framework, how to "perform the "translation" of women's voices into written academic text ..." (Baker 1996). I discovered differences between reading sections of the transcripts in relation to theory, and reading the text as a whole. In this sense the whole was larger than the sum of its parts and in some transcripts I could identify what I considered to be narrative structures, underpinned by contributing stories.

Reissman (1993:2) claims the methodology of exploring narratives and stories provides for individual agency, stating:

> Human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted and what they are supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives.

She also claims that the presence and/or position of the researcher cannot be discounted.

> To avoid the tendency to read a narrative simply for content, and the equally dangerous tendency to read it as evidence of a prior theory, I recommend beginning with the structure of the narrative. How is it organized? Why does an informant develop her tale this way in conversation with this listener? (ibid:61).

In answer to Reissman's questions I believe it was the topic of house/home at a particular time in participants' lives which stimulated the narratives. I draw

attention later in this work to the ways in which women constructed these narratives; some women telling stories of others' experiences, both as a form of self-protection and/or to give weight to their own experiences, and at times as a self-reflective process.

Although these narratives could not be said to be directly focused on house/home, both narratives and stories contained elements of the interconnections between social and-spatial dimensions of everyday living. However, it is a requirement of a doctoral thesis that the writer engages with theory and I think it is impossible not to bring theory to the interview process and equally difficult to try to maintain the ascendancy of women participants' voices over those of academia. What I would argue for is working with interview transcripts and theoretical material in an intertextual way which retains the feminist commitment to making women's voices heard (and seen) and this provides the basis for the organization of later chapters.

2.2 Autotheoretical Texts

For the years taken to produce this work, my friends Helen, Mary (deceased 10th May 2000), Sue, and my daughter Jane have shared and discussed their own experiences with me, and provided valuable insights into ways of seeing and writing about socio-spatial processes. These contributions did not fit under the heading of interview material, because of their theoretical bases, but neither was it anecdotal. I have called these contributions autotheoretical texts. Stacey Young (1997:69) writes that these texts:

> ... combine autobiography with theoretical reflection ... situating themselves within histories of oppressions and resistance. The effect is that the texts undermine the traditional autobiographical impulse to depict a life as unique and individual. Instead, they present the lives they chronicle as deeply enmeshed in other lives, and in history, in power relations that operate on multiple levels simultaneously.

The women's situation of experience within a theoretical context, whether definable as feminism or Marxism, was explicit, rather than implicit as in the case of some of the interview material.[7] Most often material arose in response to questions, but even spontaneous discussion was often linked back to my project and theory. To a large extent theoretical contexts had a direct bearing on the meaning of what was said. Young (ibid) states that the power of autotheoretical texts; "... lies, in part, in their insistence on situatedness and embodiedness. The writings' autobiographical nature clarifies the origins of their insights, and thus underscores the contingency of their claims (indeed of claims about social reality in general)."[8]

These discussions between myself and my daughter and friends have been invaluable in clarifying themes and interrelationships of socio-spatial phenomena and as such need to be included as part of the intertextual components of this thesis.

2.3 Questions about Real Estate – Beliefs and Practices of Salespeople and Advertising Discourses

Real estate salespeople are part of the large group of urban managers and/or gatekeepers[9] in the sense that they have the power to define housing and home in both material and symbolic terms, and can act as gatekeepers. As one salesperson stated he found sole parent women with children the "easiest" clients to deal with because they had no money and he had all the power; those with more resources and therefore more choice were "harder to please."

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[7] Lucy was an exception as she explicitly talked of her experiences within an emerging feminist consciousness, but at no time did I seek her help in providing a theoretical perspective which may have contributed to her framing of experience.

[8] A very effective example of autotheoretical writing can be found in Young (1997) in her chapter House and Home: Feminist variations on a Theme.

[9] Urban managers and/or gatekeepers in theoretical terms refers to those institutions and/or groups of individuals who control access to urban resources.

I had hoped the questionnaire devised for this group would illuminate beliefs about gender patterns and behaviours during the processes of buying a house. I had hoped to get back at least twenty questionnaires but received only five. I subsequently rang salespeople directly, accessing names from the *Realtor* - a weekly real estate advertising magazine – and had a better response, managing to interview five more people using the questionnaire as a guide. Three of these interviews took place at real estate offices; the other two were conducted in my study at home. The two women who came to my home were eager to establish themselves as good agents through whom to sell my house if I ever wanted to sell! I did gain additional material as a result of the face to face contact, but even so I did not pursue the target number of twenty because by the end of ten interviews I was not getting any new information.

All the salespeople claimed that housing was not about materiality but about emotion, and consequently it was very important to establish good rapport between themselves and their clients. One manager/salesperson, in fact, called himself a facilitator. He was there to provide clients with their "dream home". And when the dream ended he would be there to provide them with another one! He agreed with me when I suggested he was into myth-making. Given the professed focus on the needs of clients it is difficult to mount an argument that real estate salespeople wield much power as urban managers and gatekeepers without further work.

However, when taken in tandem with a discourse analysis of twelve *Realtor* magazines (over a period of three months) it was clear that the real estate industry maintains traditional ideas about the nuclear family, values privacy, and has a picture of young professional couples which is linked with a consumer lifestyle. While there is not a chapter per se dealing with this material, there are excerpts throughout the project where it is useful. As with many projects of this nature often the amount of data exceeds the final framing of the thesis argument. What was reinforced through the different results from the questionnaires and questionnaire/interviews, was the value of face to face interviewing, whereby those interviewed gave more than the required response of the questionnaire; they told stories of their experiences.

Narratives and Stories

While some theorists do not distinguish between narrative and story, using both interchangeably I find it helpful to distinguish between these. Denzin (1997:266) suggests that narrative is configured in a specific way. "Although the narrative advances by moving from scene to scene, multiple time-lines and experiential frames overlap with the same scene or performance context. A moral theory of self and society and of gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity is presumed." Reissman (1993:17) also picks up on the sequential aspect of narrative, stating that "one event causes another ... although the links may not always be chronological." [10]

Returning briefly to the challenges posed by Kirby (1999) and Wilson (1999), that we have segregated the biological from the cultural body and privileged the latter in terms of embodied experience, Fay (1996) suggests we **experience**, as well as relate, our lives within a narrative framework. This theory is given credence I think by psychological theories which indicate a language centre in the brain already 'programmed' to manage syntactical structuring, thus narrative form may well be a condition of living as well as a linguistic system. [11] Fay's claim echoes Kirby and Wilson's challenge to cultural constructionism.

> As intentional agents, we live within ongoing stories which we must constantly tell ourselves as a condition for being able to perform any

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[10] This claim is linked to the way in which I needed to read transcripts as a whole instead of semi-discrete pieces of text.

[11] See Steven Pinker (1994) who claims that language formation is an innate (human) biological capacity to communicate. He cites Darwin who defined language ability as "an instinctive tendency to acquire an art" (20), and Noam Chomsky whose experiments with young children led him to claim that "virtually every sentence that a person utters or understands is a brand-new combination of words, appearing for the first time in the history of the universe, therefore language cannot be a repertoire of responses; the brain must contain a recipe or programme that can build an unlimited set of sentences out of a finite list of words" (22). Children, Chomsky claims, develop complex grammars rapidly and without formal instruction, and "grow up to give consistent interpretations to novel sentence constructions that they have never before encountered" (ibid).

intentional acts whatsoever. This is the true insight of narrative realism which narrative constructionism overlooks" (191).

I interpret this statement as meaning story-telling arises out of an individual's experience, and while not denying societal and cultural influences on the individual and their story, this particular telling could not be told by another individual in the same way. This is not to claim that any one story is told in exactly the same way by an individual either; story-telling is affected by audience, memory or recall, and the changing contexts in which stories are told.

Somers and Gibson (1994:38) also argue that scholars are turning towards narrative understanding of social life, that "social life is itself *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*" (emphasis in the original). Stories, I maintain, are essential building blocks for living and/or constructing narratives. While, in chapter four, I refer to arguments that women do not always have the words in which to frame their experience, more often it is a power struggle over meanings – or the making meanings public - which becomes the battleground for individual and/or group self-definition.

Plummer (1995:20) uses the imagery of living stories which he sees as embedded in symbolic interactionism.

> Story-telling can be placed at the heart of our symbolic interactions. The focus here is neither on the solitary individual life ... nor on the text ... but on the interactions which emerge around story-telling. Stories can be seen as joint actions. ... People may be seen as engaged in fitting together lines of activity around stories: they are engaged in story actions.

This joint action and the relative power of those involved determines story creation as part of the lived experience, where and how they fit within overarching narratives. In this context story-telling is a purposeful action which serves to consolidate the narrative of which it is a part. For example, Tracey's organising narrative is one of home-making. This she associates with the quality

of interaction between family members in which she claims a central nurturing role. The following story has allegoric connections to the narrative identified. She talked about the loss of leaving a previous garden.

Tracey: I mean when you leave a child I suppose you probably expect somebody will look after it, but a garden will just disappear into its component parts, the weeds will take over. I mean, a garden is like an art work, like ... there's a word for it, like an assemblage of things ...

Ann: Collage?

Tracey: No. Installation; an installation where you've got like nets and big stones and things. Well, it's like an installation in that you take every component thing, you put it there but it has its own life and all the plants are alive and you have to tend them and weed them and water them and care for them and it's caring for something that makes you love it.

Plummer (1995) not only talks of autobiographical 'production' of texts, but describes those allied to this production as *"the coaxers, coachers and coercers."* As researcher I see myself in all the above positions and part of this process relates to the borders I tried to put around the stories of the women I interviewed. While the physical boundary of a specific house/home was in one sense very effective; for example, women could tell me stories about the characteristics of old villas, colour and furniture, show me what they displayed in their houses and even talk about activities carried out in certain rooms, the conceptual 'boundary' of 'home' was at all times permeable, part of larger narratives, for example - and most commonly - relationships with parents, partners, children, friends, neighbours, and the quality of these relationships.

What Fay and Plummer make clear is that story-telling is a joint action. Under different circumstances and with different people Tracey's narrative, for example, may consist of different stories; story-telling is a dynamic process as are the ways in which space is both a physical – or non-physical – entity expressed in terms of representational, or symbolic or structural metaphors. Massey (in Keith and Pile1993:154) argues that rather than:

> [S]eeing space as a moment in the intersection of configured social relations (rather than an absolute) means that it cannot be seen as static. There is not a choice between flow (time) and a flat surface of instantaneous relations (space). Space is not a 'flat' surface in that sense because the social relations which create it are themselves dynamic by their very nature.

Nevertheless, in producing a doctoral thesis, I am required to reduce the three dimensional magnitude of life onto the flat surface of the written page where it appears fixed. Novels, too fix the dynamism of life onto the page, but, as I claim in chapter ten, fictional characters have an emotional and social life with which readers can identify and/or recognize. However, while the focus here may appear to be on how experiences are reflected in writing, poststructuralist theory claims that language is as constructive of social life as it is of reflection. In this sense what we read and hear is also constitutive of social realties and experiences but this is not fixed. While I believe that language is both a cultural and biological phenomenon, I also think that before the advent of poststructuralist theory and the concept of deconstruction - and re-construction – we have underestimated the discursive power of language. While individuals tell of their experiences in individually unique ways, there are experiences in common which form identifiable discursive themes, themes which are themselves embedded in social and historical contexts.

Postructuralist theory questions the apparent transparency and 'innocence' of language in much the same way as geographers question the assumed transparency of space. Language is not merely a symbolic system of reflection, but is also constitutive of social realities, but Kirby (1999) drew attention to the major assumption of poststructuralist theory, that "all meaning and knowledge is discursively constituted through language and other signifying systems"(Gavey 1989:463), and questions this reliance on cultural explanations of human activities. However, if language is indeed part of our biological repertoire, as well as a culturally bound experience, it, like our bodies, is subject to

manipulation, intervention and change over time, neither are "fixed nor essential" (ibid). Language/texts are not just systems of (structural) representation but are actively constituted and subject to contestation and change, just as the stories we tell are mediated by when and to whom we are doing the telling, and what narrative they are part of.

What I seek in fiction are the ways in which writers express, in story and/or narrative form – women's taken-for-granted everyday experiences of the spaces/place of houses/home, and how these are maintained or challenged within the historical and social contexts in which both stories and authors are embedded.

2.5 Fiction and Her-storicity

The reasons for reading New Zealand fiction for discourses of house/home and [a] woman's/women's identity are threefold. The first relates to an absence of academic writing which interrogates the meaning of everyday lived spaces and the relevance of these to embodied experiences, social interactions and power relations. The second - and related - reason is that women's relegation to the privatised fictive sphere of written expression provides is a valuable source of material, especially given current poststructuralist challenges as to what constitutes 'truth'. If one of sociology's tenets is to illuminate ways to a 'better world," surely the same could be said of fiction. As Jane McRae (1995:188) claims:

> One of the pleasures and uses of fiction is the encouragement it can give to deeper reflection on the way we live. Such reflection may amuse, it may disturb, it may enlarge our view of life, even cause us to change our behaviour. But fictional literature has a special impact, even power, when it forces deliberation not only on the nature of humanity but also how we might be more humane.

I have used New Zealand fiction alongside Gael Ferguson's (1996) book on New Zealand housing policy as a means of placing contemporary experiences in their historical context.[12] Fictional accounts of women's relationships with and within house/home are grounded by historical and social contextualisation. The ability of myself as researcher to make links between fiction and the wider historical social context is also related to the degree to which fiction resonates with its contemporary 'real' world. There is a considerable difference between fiction which unselfconsciously portrays life in unquestioning acceptance, often complying with (timeless) conventions such as the romance or quest,[13] and that which reveals a self-conscious/feminist-conscious attempt to critique the taken-for-grantedness of sex/gender relations whether or not they follow romance or quest conventions.

The third undertaking is to identify what Gayle Greene (1991:20) calls a feminist metafiction, whereby a feminist consciousness is incorporated into language use and/or presentation of certain characters, relationships and situations:

> [A]llowing the woman writer a way of articulating her ambivalent relation to the tradition, a way of working both within and against the dominant discourse, feminist metafiction resolves a problem at the heart of feminist debate: can we "adapt traditionally male-dominated modes of writing and analyses to the articulation of female oppression and desire", or should we "rather reject tools that may simply re-inscribe our marginality and ... forge others of our own?" (Mary Jacobus).

Martin (1990:7) in her introduction to a collection of short stories by American woman writers echoes Green's words, claiming that:

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[12] For readers outside New Zealand this weaving of 'fact' and 'fiction' may be the only illustrative key to understanding interviewees' narratives and stories.

[13] In some interviews the 'romance quest' was an enduring narrative, which, I would claim rests on the normalisation and naturalisation of the norm of heterosexuality.

> [T]o articulate experience, to give language to otherwise inchoate perceptions, is always empowering and liberating ... The authors of these stories have claimed the power to name, define, and judge experiences for themselves, and to help their readers do likewise. Surely, one of the most effective - and pleasurable - ways to understand the issues facing us today is to make an empathetic leap of understanding through fiction; as the stories in this collection make abundantly clear, it is only through knowing one another that we can know ourselves. Thus, these stories can teach us much about women's lives, American lives, and life in general.

This is a point of departure from Virginia Woolf's authorial comment that "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex" (1929/1977:112). She states; "It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. It is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice; in any way to speak consciously as a woman." (ibid). However, this claim cannot be seen outside the context of the times in which Woolf herself wrote, which reflects what Ann Romines (1992:8) has to say when writing of women writers' experience in the U.S.A.

> ... when a writer turned to domestic life and its recurring rhythm as a primary subject, placing her central characters inside, not outside, this world, she found herself in a literary and psychic realm with few precedents and little terminology, a domestic realm that traditionally privileged privacy and unwritten texts.

To be published required marginalizing women's 'private' experiences in favour of public/civic characters and events and/or hiding the authors femaleness through male pseudonyms. As Romines states:

> Until recently, a woman writing fiction about housekeeping was likely to find her choice of subject matter excused as a cautious, diversionary "politico-economic strategy" ... or she might find the domestic aspect of her work separated from the rest and labelled as relatively trivial ... (ibid).

That New Zealand, with a relatively small population, can support a burgeoning 'women's' literature in the 1980s and 1990s draws attention to the changes in

society that have enabled these voices to become public, one of which is the increasing number of women publishers. What has been demonstrated through this metafiction is that women's *embodied* experiences of the world in which they live are different to those of men. By placing women's experiences at the centre there has emerged a body of literature which focuses on what de Beauvoir (1952) calls the immanent world of women, the cycles of everyday living and relationships in which women find themselves. This means identifying specific discourses which Gavey (1992:63) - borrowing from Holloway (1983) - describes as; "... an interrelated system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values ... that are a product of social factors, of powers and practices, rather than an individual's set of ideas."

Jane Darke (in Gilroy and Woods, 1994:11) argues that there is a distinctive relationship between women and their homes, but that to substantiate these ideas is "a long project that does not lend itself to conventional research methods." Darke (1994), Code (1991), Curti (1998), Duncombe and Marsden (1996) write about the ways in which the dichotomous division of knowledge into objective and subjective categories has been mapped onto sex/gender differences resulting in women having to claim the fictive domain in order to articulate women's subjective experiences of the 'private sphere'. I agree with Lidia Curti (1998:27) when she writes: "I wish to argue ... that fact and fiction are different but crucial aspects of the same reality. The debate within history studies suggests that there is more than one history, and that official histories exist in parallel with hidden ones."

Importantly, the 'fictional' accounts of women's experiences form an intertextual relationship with the other material and data used in this thesis. Belsey (1980:21) refers to intertextual elements of: "... intelligibility, the recognition of similarities and differences between a text and all the other texts we have read, a growing 'knowledge' which enables us to identify *a* story as *this* story, and indeed to know it as a story at all."

While I do not think that this particular document – a doctoral thesis - fits into the category of 'story,' it has elements of story-telling in that thesis production is a performance, an active engagement with knowledge creation.[14] Interrogating fictional accounts of women's lived, embodied experience of house/home and relationships within those spaces comprises an important methodological tool, especially when contextualised within New Zealand's particular history and culture.

Interview transcripts, fiction and theory are not the only means by which contextual relationships between women and home can be explored. Magazine material, real estate advertising, house and home advertising provide another signification system open to interpretation and analysis.

2.6 Socio-semiotics

The principal theoretical claim of socio-semiotic analysis is that connotation precedes denotation, that meaning precedes naming; signification systems depend on preconceived ideas of whatever it is they signify. Also important is the social context of **production** of connotative meaning. Gottdiener (1995:26) summarises these premises in the following way:

> The principal epistemological position of socio-semiotics is that connotation precedes denotation. Both the produced object world itself and our understanding of it derives from codified ideologies that are aspects of social practice and their socialization processes. The latter articulation constitutes the object of analysis for socio-semiotics.

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[14] Game and Metcalfe (1996) question the separation of literal and metaphoric writing and their relationship to knowledge, claiming that writing as an "imaginative, creative process is at odds with any understanding of knowledge as representation; as most sociologists see it, we are moving into the domain of fiction here, away from (social) science (88)."

Within the context of this project, interrogating the 'motivated relationship' between the advertisers and consumers and the ways in which household goods are aligned with potential consumers, both male and female, offers a view of the ways in which 'woman' and/or women are constructed as feminine and/or female. Socio-semiotic analysis is concerned with both production and consumption of signification systems, which, because it focuses on the interaction between social action and material culture, can also be seen as an effective vehicle for transmitting certain ideologies. For example, Mark Wigley (1995:347) claims that 'the house' as a system of representation cannot be separated from the spatiality of heterosexual practices, writing:

> The mechanisms that define the house cannot be divided into those that are spatial and those that are representational. The space in which the privatization of sexuality could occur is literally produced by transformations in representational systems and, equally, those systems are made possible by that space.

Teresa de Lauretis (1984:183) also makes links between the (female) subject's physical body and systems of representation; "the body in whom, the significate effect of the sign takes hold and is real-ized." She claims that; "... the significance of the sign could not take effect, that is to say, the sign would not be a sign, without the existence or the subject's experience of a social practice in which the subject is physically involved." Thus, ideas about the physicality of, sexed and gendered bodies exists prior to physical and social representations of house/home.

What I am analysing in chapter five, then, are the connotative meanings of interrelationships between 'woman'/women and house/home conveyed in (house/home-related) magazine advertising. The advertised product is relevant only in its relationship to these concepts, not as an object to be studied in its own right - if indeed such a thing is possible.

McCracken (1988:132) suggests that the power of consumer goods, to some extent derives from the power of their symbolic meaning, and that "... objects are unlike language insofar as they bear a "motivated" and "non-arbitrary" relationship to the things they signify." Writing of the seductive nature of the meanings of goods, McCracken states that:

> ... goods communicate their meaning *sotto voce*. This makes them an especially effective and stealthy means for the communication of certain potentially controversial political messages. Communicated through goods, these messages are largely hidden from the conscious awareness of the recipient. They do nevertheless enter into consciousness, there to take up residence and exert their influence (ibid:133).

In the advertising material of house/home and garden magazines emergent, but not discrete, themes were identified, constructed around the following sex/gender-based dichotomies which are complicit in the creation of woman as feminine and feminine woman as consumer, both of which are implicitly aligned with leisure.

1. Inside/female - Outside/male (and the associated passive and/or active representations).

2. Feminine/non-technological - Masculine/technological.

I draw on Cynthia Cockburn's (1997) article to show that what counts as 'technology' is narrowed to certain kinds of products in a way that discounts women's engagement with technology within a household context. The presentation of the a-technological, passive, and feminine woman/consumer excludes many ways in which women may choose to depict themselves as busy housewives and feminine and appears to assert women's dependence upon complementary male counterparts.

3. The Norm of Heterosexuality

'Doing' femininity and heterosexuality is a key element of much advertising which plays upon the creation of (heterosexual) desire and is hardly *sotto voce* as McCracken would have us believe. Relationships between heterosexuality and women's activities and/or roles and objects were easily (and somewhat derisively) detected by women in the focus group which commented on advertising material. Saegart (1981:20) reinforces this claim in another way.

> Inseparable from our profound associations of women, the domestic and suburban is our psychic, economic and cultural sense of home and of 'the home'. ... Indeed the home is so intimately tied to the definition of men's and women's roles that one might even say it exists as a cultural symbol, primarily through these roles.

In these few words Saegart alerts us to the complexity of relationships between women and the built environment, and it is this complexity I wish to capture using different theoretical perspectives (albeit underpinned by a feminist epistemology) and different methodologies. The issue of roles will be discussed later in this thesis, and as I demonstrate in chapter five the ways in which women are depicted in advertising material as female and/or feminine are only a part – and not necessarily a crucial part - of identity formation.

A further way to explore the complexity of house/home and identity formation is to interrogate perceived differences between 'house' and home,' and what is meant by identity. By interrogating the terms 'house' and 'home, I draw on socio-semiotic claims of the complex and sometimes intricate relationship between connotative and denotative meanings. I also make an attempt at defining what I mean by identity, something I see as a process rather than a collection of personal and social 'facts' about a person. In the context of writing, conceptualisations of identity as fluid or mobile is a difficult task given that one tends to fix identity on the page because of the information one holds at the time.

Chapter Three

House, Home, Identity

3.1 Introduction

While the above concepts may initially appear straightforward, all three require discussion and explanations for the ways in which they are used in this thesis. I cannot change the meanings of house or home within the context of presenting fictional accounts of women's experiences, but the following discussion can alert the reader to the complexity of relationships between the physical environment of housing and associated ideological, symbolic and practical conceptualisations of home. Rather more has been written about identity, especially by feminist theorists. I do not think that there can be a universally accepted definition of identity, nor can I 'fix' the identity of the individual women interviewed or written about. Section 3.2 of this chapter will raise some of the questions associated with theorising identity and establish the way in which identity will be conceptualised in this work.

3.2 House and Home

> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."
> "The question is," said Alice," whether you **can** make words mean so many different things."
> The question is," said Humpty Dumpty," which is to be master - that's all" (Carroll no date:142)

In writing about house and home (the extent to which one stands for the other) the ways in which they are differentiated is problematic. Using Game and Metcalfe's (1996) concepts of literal and metaphorical divisions, 'house' can be seen as literal representation of a physical structure. By contrast 'home' is an evocative metaphor, the meaning of which is assumed to be clear; but the multiplicity of

possible meanings denies clarity. I also believe that multiple connotative interpretations of 'home' are 'attached' to the seemingly denotative term 'house' built into the housing environment as Wigley (1992) claims. Ideas about social, sexual and work behaviour appropriate to men and women are incorporated into design and building processes.[15] Thus, housing comprises a symbolic system which can be 'read', understood and/or interpreted in culturally determined ways. Rakoff (1977:85) writes that:

> A house is a meaningful cultural object. People - builders who envision the end result, dwellers who inhabit and use its space, observers who seek to understand its cultural role - endow the house with meaning according to their culture's world view and ethos. As part of an ordered human world, houses are used to demarcate space, to express feeling, ways of thinking, and social processes, and to provide arenas for culturally defined activity as well as to provide physical shelter. Like other parts of the humanly-built environment, houses are not only mechanical constructions, though they are that too, nor are they mere responses to physical or environmental determinants ...

It is also **ideologically** 'neat' to conflate house and home through the concept of home (not house) ownership. Economic imperatives and power relations become 'naturalized', the shifting meanings and associated discourses of house and home become part of individual and national subjectivities which serve to reflect and maintain the desirability of ownership. Relatively high rates of home ownership in New Zealand,[16] I think, are a crucial factor in the ways that

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[15] Also implicated in these processes are planning and zoning practices identified by Hayden (1984). See also Domosh Mona (1996)who writes of the Woman's Building at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago 1893. She states that the building "did not function as correct architecture since its 'lessons' were different from those of its masculine neighbours" (321). The building's femininity, she claims, "alluded to its potential as a threat to standards of architecture, to Victorian aesthetic ideology, and to appropriate gender roles "(ibid). The Woman's Building made explicit the interconnections between architecture and gender, its story highlighting "how the changes that were occurring in the discourses of architecture and in its forms of professional legitimacy in the late nineteenth century were articulated through the language of gender"(ibid).

[16] According to the 1996 Census data 70.5% of houses were privately owned. See 1996 New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, Wellington: Statistics New Zealand.

conceptual and experiential meanings of 'home' are mapped onto the physical structure of the house.

Perversely perhaps, it is through interrogating how the linguistic separation, or combination, of house and home represents and structures our experience of the lived environment that allows us to uncover symbolic and ideological constructions and the ways in which these relate to sex, sexuality and gender. Rapoport (in Benjamin and Stea 1995:32) argues that the terms 'home', 'dwelling' (noun), and 'house' could be used in more clearly defined ways than has been present in past literature.

> There exists in the literature a series of attempts to identify more formally the given attributes or dimensions of home. While these are to be applauded, given the need to dismantle concepts and use polythetic sets ... these often suffer from the fact that *house* and *home* often mean the same thing, confusing the object and the feeling evoked.[17]

Rapoport begins to attend to difference between house and home, but I think this division between object and feeling is too simplistic and feeds into other hierarchical dichotomies based on sex, sexuality and gender. 'Housing' usually refers to material and economic relations, while home has referred social interaction based upon affective and kinship ties (Allen and Crow 1983, Finch and Haye 1994). In the latter context women's experiences are usually written in terms of aspatial social interaction (often as part of patriarchal and capitalist systems of power) and in the former as (explicitly spatial) differential access to housing. There are exceptions to this. McDowell (1983), Susan Saegart (1981), Game and Pringle (1979), Madigan, Munro and Smith (1990), Madigan and Munro (1996), and Matrix (1985) have identified relationships between the built environment and women's household experiences. However, in mainstream and

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[17] While Rapoport is referring to academic literature, nowhere is this critique clearer than in the Real Estate industry, which is concerned with housing but refers to homes not to houses despite all the

in even more avante-guard **social** theory there is little attention paid to relationships between space/place and patterns of social interaction except the framing of space/place as contextual.

The literature on place-making adds an important element to this discussion. Lavin and Agatstein (1984) refer to place-making (in the sense of place attachment) as the geographic and architectural context of behaviour, claiming:

> Place refers to a named and bounded physical space, with specific, concrete local qualities, to which social and personal meanings have become attached through recurrent use. A place must necessarily have physical qualities but these are not sufficient; the creation of a place requires that an individual or group endow it with meaning. Place must therefore be regarded as cognitive and emotional constructions of individuals and groups (52).

The concept of place-making critiques the simplicity of Rapoport's schema of house as object and home as subjective experience, although Lavin and Agatstein also implicitly connect **thinking** rather than **action** with creating sense of place. However, it is only through exploring connections between emotion, cognition, actions and environment that we can understand the complexity of house-home and identity formation. Creating home, within the context of place-making then is associated with the passage of time; time in which to experience self, others, change and/or add to possessions and become familiar with the locale and/or environment. Pred (1983) and Tuan (1980) use existentially powerful arguments whereby place is never solely an object but is 'object' for an individual's centre of meaning, intentions or values, a focus of emotion attachment or a "locality of felt significance" (Pred 1983:46). Relph (1976) by contrast focuses on the experience of the everyday and includes "home centres of existence, drudgery and essence". It is not clear exactly what Relph means by existence and essence which have a more

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salespeople interviewed stressing that buying a house was not about a house or money but about emotions.

encompassing and grander presence than does drudgery, and it is also unclear where the concept of 'drudgery' fits without reference to other theoretical or empirical work.

Feminist geographers have critiqued the idea of an existential 'utopia' which Rose (1993:56) claims signifies a feminization of place; "place is represented as Woman, in order that humanists can define their own masculinist rationality."[18] Rose argues that women's experience of 'home' or of 'place' in terms of geographic writing is marginalised, invisible;" [E]vacuated of any meaning on her own terms, womanly icons represent the values of others, including their sense of belonging to a place" (ibid:59). One of the central problems in writing of home and women's identities is to try to distinguish between home as a womanly icon and home as defined by women. If the male project of feminization of home/place has been successful then women may offer interpretations of home experience and identity that reflects androcentric constructions. Using an embodied approach to identity **may** in part counter these; but Grosz (1995:35) argues living spaces function to "mark the subject's body as deeply as any surgical incision, binding individuals to systems of signification in which they become signs to be read (by others and themselves)." Thus the question of authenticity becomes problematic, but so too is the requirement of authenticity.

An authentic sense of **place**, Pred argues, is unselfconscious, the taken-for granted everyday life. Given that the creation of a sense of place, also according to Pred, involves "an individual's centre of meaning, intentions or values, a focus of emotion attachment" and/or a "locality of felt significance" it is difficult to believe that all this takes place without some degree of self-consciousness, rather it may be that the ways in which we develop and maintain

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[18] See also Nead (1992) who explores artistic representations of utopias which, she claims, are based on an ideal female body "grounded in the containment and framing of the female sexual body" (15). She suggests that there is a tendency for these utopias to self-destruct, for " the female body constantly threatens to break free from it boundaries and to go beyond the protocols and contours of art" (ibid).

a sense of place remain largely unarticulated. Nor is it likely that this authentic sense of place is accomplished in isolation from others; in fact it may well be the social-spatial interactivity in certain places which affords significance.

Despite feminist critiques of sense of place literature, it does appear that as individuals and social beings we have certain needs that can be met by the creation of a place which enables positive experiences of self and/or significant others in everyday life.[19] 'Home' as metaphor conjures up a consistently positive place; in one sense an ideal to live up to as the following excerpts show.

Susan: A house is a new place that's empty, home is part of your identity, it is where there is a lot of things you cherish; a place where friends could come and relax.

Lucy: ... so then I thought maybe home is where the children are, where the family is ...

Dee: ... perhaps it's not properly a home unless there's things about it that are holding you down there - um - I don't mean holding you down in a negative sense but something that is holding you to it and you've got to have some sort of sentimental feeling to some aspect of it ...

Penny: A house is a shell that people shift into. I also think it's what you make it that is the difference between house and a home. I think a house is very sterile and often some people live very sterilely as well ... It's the people who live in a house that makes it a home.

Melissa: Flatting was never my home because it was someone else's place, but with Mum's it was just everybody's home. Also with flats you can't do what you want, you live within those limitations whereas because I own this place and it's even more of my home than my mother's place ever was.

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[19] See Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' (to be found in any text of human development) in which he creates a triangle of human needs, those at the bottom must be met in order to fulfil the next tier of needs. Needs such as food and shelter and safety must be met before needs of belonging and love and a positive self-concept can be met.

Delia: ... with a house it's just the house but when you put your personal things in it, your colour schemes, your ideas, your taste, that makes it your home. It may not be anyone else's cup of tea, but it's what you feel comfortable with.

Tracey: I think the houses you care for the most, that you do the most to, that's got something to do with building up love. The things that have happened there, the happy times you've had there. Peaceful times at night, you know, and the fire, everybody coming in and being cosy and comfortable and talking and so on ... eating together.

Melissa captures the relationship between ownership and autonomy,[20] whilst the other women bring elements of other family members (children), making friends comfortable, comfort and warmth, establishing an identity, décor and objects, and sentimental attachment over time to the constitution of home. Tracey talks about building up love which she sees as to do with relationships and togetherness as well as physical comfort. In relation to the 'house', Tracey's metaphor of "**building** up love," Penny's "shell" – in relation to the house - already have connotations of home. Alexa's differentiation is simple.

To me a house is just a building really that you live in and home conveys a particular quality of the living you do in the house.

What I would claim is that the particular quality of living Alexa refers to is only possible within this structure we call the house, that housing is replete with possible meanings of home; the house is built as a signifier of the range of activities and relationships that can – or should - be carried out within this space, those of place-making. I believe that the nature of the built environment of housing in New Zealand, predominantly that of single (nuclear family) dwellings plays a large part in how we perceive the ideal of home. One of the aims of this thesis is to

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[20] I interviewed Melissa and her mother Jane three years later when they had decided to sell their respective houses and buy together. What interested me was the process they had used, how they had articulated their spatial needs according to their relationship. In fact they had renegotiated their relationship, but later in the thesis I will draw more substantially on this interview.

ask how place-making is done, how is 'home' created and who carries out the activities women identified as being part of home.

Throughout this work I use the linguistic device of house/home to try to bring together the connotative meanings of these particular buildings with the activities and processes of home-making. The latter is not merely enabled by the house, but housing also provides the blueprint for human activity proscribed by sex/gender, age and socio-economic status. This discussion is aimed at providing the reader with some tools with which to tackle the apparently transparent meanings of house and home within fiction, advertising, and interview material as well as within academic writing. Relevant to this discussion is the high rate of ownership in New Zealand; the cultural and ideological desirability of ownership provides a generative context for merging meanings of house and home.

3.3 Identity/Subjectivity [21]

Identity formation, I believe, occurs interactively through four main sources:
(i) interaction with others
(ii) the material contexts of daily living
(iii) embodied experience
(iv) symbolic and discursive systems.

The experiences of class, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and other kinds of social divisions are marked by the variations of the above, enabling both the discernment of patterned processes of identity formation as well as recognition of individually unique experiences. Stevens (1989:21) suggests that a people's identity can be understood as "who they think they are, that it, how they see themselves, or as who they are regardless of their self-consciousness." Stevens

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[21] Throughout this project I use subjectivity and identity interchangeably. I think both words convey the process of acquiring a sense of self within the contexts below and those presented throughout this thesis.

posits identity as self-awareness as well as something "real and independent of what we might think." In this way there are a number of experiences both within and external to individuals as part of an identifiable group which are implicated in identity formation. While Stevens is talking about ethnic identity the same reasoning is useful for women as a group. For example, ideologies, Stevens claims, are a product of everyday experience.

The daily experiences that women do most of the work of childcare in our society is the basis of the ideology that women are **naturally** disposed to perform this task. The real social mechanisms which tie women to it are thus obscured by the visible forms that the experience takes (ibid).

Jane Darke's (1994) critique of Saunders' (1989) interpretation of survey data demonstrates the difficulties inherent in unpacking the relationship between conceptions of home and associated experiences. He asked the question "People often distinguish between 'house' and 'home.' What does the home mean to you?" (in Darke 1994:12-13). Saunders claimed that his data showed no gender differences in response to this question, and while Darke attributes this finding to the inadequacy of the survey method the question itself has more than one interpretation. "What does the home mean to you?" implies a positive (and symbolic) value accorded 'the home' which is not necessarily the same as one's material and embodied (and gendered) experience of the specific place of home. To conflate these meanings results in erroneous and misleading conclusions.

However, defining certain activities (which are related to identity formation) as ideology and/or choice and/or culturally constructed is a difficult task. What I do in this thesis is offer a number of different possibilities for identity formation. Questions surrounding identity have created dynamic and continuing debates. I have raised the difficulties of incorporating biology into theory which claims embodiedness (but not essentialism) as a site of identity, and questioned the sole use of culturally defined parameters of identity, such as discourse or semiotic context analysis. At the same time the culture of the society in which we grow

up is important, and in this work I have already claimed that the architectural form and historical-social context of housing in New Zealand is related to identity formation and predicated by sex/gender, age and ethnicity.

One of the main debates encountered by feminism is to do with identifying the bundle of characteristics which 'create' the category 'woman.' These characteristics can comprise of (embodied) appearances, behaviours and relationships which accrue labels of femininity; and/or experiences in common which are usually theorised in terms of power relations and have a more politically based purpose. This perception of solidarity has provided the impetus to explore and redress experiences of inequality and oppression, but while this project has had worthwhile results it seems to me that the arguments which cohere around difference may be more compelling.

I see two issues relating to difference; firstly that women's experiences are different to those of men. These differences arise out of biological differences, which within their social context, have very real implications for women. Secondly, that women's ethnic and/or class positions/experiences interact with their sex/gender position in (variable) ways which make problematic the notions of commonality. Spelman (1988:67) writing of De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* states that;

> [B]iology is not destiny in at least two senses, according to de Beauvoir. First, being female is not the same thing as being a "woman"; nor does it determine whether and how one will become a "woman." Second, women experience biological events differently, depending on how their bodies are otherwise employed and their beliefs about what are the proper things to do with or to their bodies.

Postmodern and Postructuralist theory emphasise differences and the fragmentary nature of experience and identity. However, this presentation of self and society as made up of a multiplicity of representations and experiences has been seen by some feminist theorists as unhelpful. Disappearance of the subject

woman/women into multiple and shifting identities makes structural and/or politically motivated change difficult.

Included in the stance based on difference is feminist psychoanalytic theory which 'subverts' Freudian conceptions of sexual difference and the identification of male/phallic as subject and female as lack. I have briefly explored this concept in chapter one where theorists claim the geography of our bodies defines what we know, and, to become an "I" requires appropriating psychic, social and symbolical experiences of the body. It is through these processes we learn what it means to be feminine and masculine, although neither of these 'identities' are fixed. Massey (1991:50), in her critique of Harvey's The Condition of Postmodernity, quotes his reaction to the photographic exhibition of Cindy Sherman.

> The photographs depict seemingly different women drawn from many walks of life. It takes a little while to realize, with a certain shock, that these are portraits of the same woman in different guises ... the parallel with Raban's insistence upon the plasticity of human personality though the malleability of appearances and surfaces is striking, as is the self-referential positioning of the authors to themselves as subjects (7).

Massey claims that Harvey's admission of being shocked is an unintended admission, for:

> ... that is exactly the effect they are supposed to have on the patriarchal viewer. Thus Owens comments that they 'reflect back at the viewer his own desire (and the spectator positioned by this work is invariably male) – specifically the masculine desire to fix the woman in a stable and stabilizing identity (51).

The 'privilege' of looking, according to Rose (1993), Mulvey, de Lauretis (1984), and Wigley (1992), arises out of the construction of male/phallus as subject and female as other – the looked at, as illustrated by Durer's etching in chapter one. Rose cites Mulvey's argument that this visual distancing is crucial to understanding cinematic space. "In particular, that separating distance

between spectator and image is produced not only by the inherent gap between the two, but also by the masculine desire to distinguish its self from what it sees as feminine lack" (ibid). In this way it is argued that women may come to perceive themselves as defined through male eyes. However, as Sherman's exhibition demonstrates, and as some of the women I interviewed in the focus group setting claimed, we need not take on male-defined identities. Marilyn Frye (1996:1004) argues that;

> ...if the category of women is constructed as a positive self-supporting category not constituted by universal relation to the absence-of-it but by self-reliant structures of differentiation and relation, the identity or subjectivity associated with it has no built-in exclusivity or closure against other identity categories, no analytically built-in hostility to multiple category memberships and subjectivities. Self-construction in one such category does not preclude self-constructive involvement in others as well.

While I agree with Frye in principle, I do not agree with the concept of multiple subjectivities and/or identities, and even if I did I can not conceive of an active negotiation of subjectivity/identity in encountering each new situation. Alcoff (1988:407) sums up the problems with theorising (a) woman's/women's identity.

> Briefly put, then, the cultural feminist response to Simone de Beauvoir's question, "Are there women?" is to answer yes and to define women by their activities and attributes in the present culture. The poststructuralist response is to answer no and attack the category and the concept of woman through problematizing subjectivity. Each response has serious limitations, and it is becoming increasingly obvious that transcending these limitations while retaining the theoretical framework from which they emerge is impossible.

Alcoff's claim echoes that of earlier feminist writing of how to tell and write women's experience in man-made language (Lakoff 1975, Spender 1980). In relation to this project I draw on all the theoretical positions outlined above but refer to identity as an ongoing process which I call identity formation. This is

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not to argue that we have a fixed identity which is 'added to' or 'subtracted from,' although I believe we have consistent personality traits - an outcome of genetic inheritance and social contexts - which influence the ways in which we act within a range of possibilities.

And while I agree that we have a number of identities to choose from in a range of different situations, the ways in which individual experience interacts with what is socially available will be an individual process as well as a social process. I have found Hanson and Pratt's (1995:19) discussion of spatial stories and gendered practices very useful.

> The attractions of mobility are perhaps most systematically articulated by Kathy Ferguson's (1993) use of the metaphor of mobile subjectivities; this metaphor accentuates movement without defining what it is that subjects move between, to, or from. Ferguson also presents the metaphor as a strategy to disrupt dualistic thinking and essentializing around any social categories:

I have chosen the term *mobile* rather than *multiple* to avoid the implication of movement from one to another stable resting places, and instead to problematize the contours of the resting one does.

Pratt and Hanson add that this conception of mobile subjectivity/identity must not underthematize the "resting places" of identities and the institutional apparatus that fixes identities (ibid:21). In the context of this project it is the "resting place" of house/home and its relationship to women's subjectivities/identities which is under investigation. What I find useful about the concept of mobility is its geographical referent, capturing the feeling of moving through space. A model, which because of its;

> ... reciprocal constitution of subjectivity and geography prompts us to think more fully about the creation of difference gendered and social identities in different places and to look at and listen carefully for the many different ways that these identities are inscribed (ibid:21).

To this statement I would add sexed to gendered for, as semiotic practice informs us, connotations precede denotation and so we must already have a schemata of sex and sexuality in order to 'create' gender. While it may be theoretically useful to separate biology from social practice by differentiating between sex and gender I do not think this is a useful practice through which to understand the fluidity of both social and individual identity formation. For this reason I write sex/gender to indicate jointly constructed and/or experiences of self and society. However I do make an attempt to use the terms 'woman' and women to indicate differences between social constructions of 'woman' from women's experience.[22]

The preceding discussion, then, has highlighted some of the ways in which feminist theorists have written about sexed/gendered identity and from which I have decided upon the concept of identity formation to indicate mobility as an implicitly spatial process. The task in the following chapters is to demonstrate the ways in which identity is constructed and contested in what we refer to as house and/or home in New Zealand, drawing attention to different media and historical contexts.

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[22] The women I refer to are those women interviewed, the women whose contributions have been called authotheoretical text, and fictional characterizations which challenge a social/cultural construction of female identity.

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Chapter Four

Historical and Fictional Contexts

4.1 Introduction

Lorraine Code (1991:59) draws attention to Dale Spender's work that argues there is gender bias in "the construction of meanings and in the apportioning of 'linguistic space.' Women writers, Code claims, find it difficult to express their reality. Women's absence as subject creates problems of representation.

> Women are excluded from processes of naming and of meaning-construction, and women's interests and experiences occupy but a small part of both everyday and institutional vocabularies. Linguistically, it is a man's world, where women's place is defined and maintained by 'man made language' in innumerable subtle ways. Hence women must learn to speak a language that does not, in effect, speak of 'their own' experiences.

Once women's experience begins to be named and given linguistic space - even literary acknowledgement - there is an opening for more writing. The proliferation of women's writing in the 1990's is built on the efforts of preceding women writers (not all of whom are acknowledged in this chapter). In their novels Janet Frame, Keri Hulme, and Beryl Fletcher have drawn attention to the uses and power of language. Their writing commands attending to the dual activities of creating a new linguistic space and challenging the production of places/spaces in New Zealand.

There appears to be a difference in the ways in which women's identity and the house/housing were written about in the 1960s and 1970s compared with later novels of the 1990s. Some critics suggest that there is, or can be, 'a woman's way of writing', but we need to unpack exactly what is meant by this.

Many authors - Weedons (1987), Moi (1985), Belsey (1980), Irigaray (1984/1993), Grosz (1995) and Rose 1995) - distinguish between the feminist projects of 'essentialist authorship', whereby it is claimed that texts are produced through specifically female **experience**. This is compared with the **context** of writing whereby; "The forms of gendered subjectivity offered by texts are also the product of the social discourses on gender in circulation at the time of writing" (Weedons 1987:149). I am not sure that the two can be so neatly distinguished in real life or when one reads as when one theorises. However, I do believe that much of the fiction referred to in this project offers both women's experiences of the minutiae of everyday life in relation to the house/home and the sex/gender relations which are both socially and spatially constituted.

The rise of the feminist movement in the 1970s in New Zealand[23] and the publication of Betty Freidan's book *The Feminine Mystique* could well have informed the books by Gray and the earlier Kidman and Duckworth novels in which the house/home is problematic within the context of women's relationships. For writers of later novels - and there seems to be a hiatus in the 1980s - there exists a 'platform' of feminist ideas, gains and practices to inform their writing. The shift in feminism from demands for equality (equal to whom?) to demanding recognition of differences arose through challenges to white middle-class feminism from women of different ethnicities and class positions. For example, bell hooks (1994), writing of 'home' in the U.S.A. rather than concentrating on the relative poverty of black southern homes, redefined those homes as places of strength and community, where black women could experience themselves in more positive ways than in places of employment, than in public spaces.

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[23] For comprehensive documentation of the Feminist movement in New Zealand see Dann (1985).

The later novels of the 1990s more strongly comprise what Green (1991) calls feminist metafiction, drawing on a multiplicity of available identities, activities and experiences, occurring not just from differences between people and/or groups of people, but within each individual and household. Instead of focusing on the ways in which social roles are lived out, the focus is on the struggle between different kinds of imposed, claimed and explored self-representations. For this reason I have left examples of contemporary New Zealand literature until part two of this thesis, where there is a certain resonance between contemporary fiction and contemporary voices. Certainly the proliferation of writing of the nineties bears a relationship to the claims of

Flax (1990) who writes:

> Writing provides an anticipatory experience of liberation. It is therapeutic, returning woman's repressed forbidden pleasure to her. It also helps create a collective, interpersonal space in which women can finally speak of and to themselves. "While not yet 'here', it is there by now - in this place that disrupts social order whose desire makes fiction exist. Not any old fiction." As men have always done, women will seize the means of representation for their own self-(re)presentation. Men have always "written from the body" - the "phallus'" role as primary signifier is not accidental or arbitrary. Juxtaposing feminine writing against phallocentric discourse allows the system of signification and its "signified" - the subject and its modes of consciousness - to be transformed. Such transformation is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for and aspect of revolution (173-174). [24]

I do not think women are at the moment of revolution unless it is a slow and erratic revolution, but certainly more and more experiences of women's everyday life - and the making of those lives - is being given voice. The role of this chapter is to make links between New Zealand's housing policies and

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[24] It would have been interesting to ask (older) women participating in the focus group discussions to read some of the novels I refer to in this chapter to see how they might engage and/or identify with representations of characters' experiences, to see if women's writing does indeed give voice to previously unvoiced experiences.

history; to show how the house (structure and metaphor) - its design and building, its predominantly suburban location - is based upon and incorporates ideas about women's identity which, as Kidman and Fletcher say (albeit in very different ways) structures not only power relations between men and women but the ways in which these can be represented in writing.[25]

4.2 Colonial Writing

New Zealand, it can be argued has a unique culture, arising out of the effects of British colonisation. The ways in which land was taken from the indigenous Maori population who owned land on a collective basis has been, and remains the source of major conflict in this country. British-based laws pertaining to ownership were enacted on the basis of securing individual title thus the place/s of home comes to have very different meanings for Maori and Pakeha.[26] It is claimed that early New Zealand writing and painting exhibited a nostalgia for "the mother country." New Zealand landscapes were depicted as a challenge, but in less harsh terms than its reality for early settlers; and British-based class and gender divisions – epitomised in the Wakefield Plan Settlements[27]- were

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[25] See Fairclough (1992) who writes, that in discourse analysis: " [T]he objective is to characterize the metaphors used ... and determine what factors (cultural ideological, etc.) determine the choice of metaphor. The effect of metaphors upon thinking and practice should also be considered" (237) (emphasis added).

[28] When I first began this project with the intent to include Maori perspectives of home/s and carried out one small focus group, it was clear from what the three women said that home had a different range of meanings than those attributed by Pakeha. The house they lived in was home, owned by two sisters and their articulation of control in relation to Maori men was forcibly apparent. Their roots were in the North Island, near Whakatane and this, too, was home, where they had reciprocal obligations of extended kinship ties. The need to travel between these homes, the hospitality expected and offered to kin travelling through Christchurch, alternative child rearing practices whereby informal - and formal - adoption meant any number of children present were sources of financial problems. These women, as sole parents, also had a different perspective on the roles of social welfare agencies in relation to concepts of 'home' than did the Pakeha women I later spoke with. These findings illustrated the difficulties of trying to do justice to the words of women from an ethnic group different to my own. I felt it was inappropriate for me, as a white middle-class woman, to represent and interpret the experiences of Maori women.

[27] The Wakefield plan aimed at reproducing class distinctions but in a less formalised way. Housing for different classes would be less geographically segregated and working-class people would be encouraged to earn money to buy their own property. Mount Victoria and Thorndon, Wellington, are areas which provide pertinent examples of this mix of housing.

upheld despite the difficulties relating to the problems of early settlement and interaction with Maori.

Nelle Scanlon's *Pencarrow* series traces the fortunes of an early Wellington family. The excerpts below draw attention to and romanticise the **ideal** of a classless society. The metaphor of New Zealand as a virgin country illustrates the connections between men's relationship with the (uninhabited) land and women.

> They were busy, those pioneering days. There were no unions to regulate their hours of toil. While the sun shone or the daylight lasted, men felled the trees, made roads, built shops and began the essentials of trading. They dug and ploughed and experimented with the soil and the seasons. They cleared pasture lands for the ever-increasing number of cattle and sheep (17-18).

> When Kate saw their temporary home, and the primitive conditions still prevailing, she bitterly repented their enterprise. And when the spring rains came seeping in through the roof of reeds, and they sat huddled under wet blankets all one night, she declared she would return by the first boat. But she did not. Summer came early, a calm gentle summer, and the magic of the virgin country, with the song of birds in the bush at their very door, brought promise of plenty for the years ahead if only she would have patience (17).

> In their summer evenings Matthew and Bessie sat on a log outside their cottage and looked out across the harbour towards Pencarrow head. He told her of his first adventures, of the building of this little home, two rooms with log walls, a mud chimney and a thatch of reeds. Of the Maori who stole his axe, and the trouble it led to, for the Maoris were mostly honest. ...If it rained and the roof leaked, Matthew sheltered his little wife with his own broad shoulders, and promised to mend it in the morning. He was young and terribly in love, and he refused to be dismayed by the inevitable troubles that beset the new colony (18).

Scanlon's writing does not fit into the category of feminist metafiction I outlined in chapter two, but it establishes house/home as a heterosexual project in which men and women have clearly defined roles in relation to the house/home and to each other. The historical romance plot of Scanlan's *Pencarrow* both resonates and contrasts with Jane Mander's 1938 novel *The Story of a New Zealand River*

which is set in the far north, and which quite consciously captures the interrelationship between domination of the land and women.

> To the east of her, a mile from the curve of the bay, and towering into the stars, a double-coned mountain stretched forth its velvety shadow to meet the tide ... The Maoris called it Pukekaro, the seabird's hill ...
> Immediately to the left of it there was another wonderful gap, like a colossal doorway, opening into a veiled vista beyond ... Tom Roland had told her that behind that gap, in the biggest kauri forest of the north, lay his dreams of wealth and future glory ...
> Then the front door opened, and Tom Roland looked out.
> "Alice, where are you?" he called. "Come to bed."
> She clenched her hands. She had been away from him for a month. She knew he had been thinking all the afternoon of this hour. She knew he would not consider the fact that she was tired to death. She knew he would simply feel injured because her vitality was not equal to his own. And she knew that if, later on, the children woke up and cried she would have to get up and look after them, and that he would blame her for the disturbance. In his eyes she would not be equal to her job.
> She gave one hopeless look, like that of a trapped creature, round the mountain, the bush and the river. Then she went in (18-19).

It has been suggested that Jane Campion's film *The Piano*, also set in the 1800s, was based on Mander's book. There are similarities between the respective heroines. Both women play the piano and music is central in their lives and to their sense of self. Ada, in *The Piano*, is mute but not through some physical accident; her silence is subversive, a metaphor for refusing to conform to her pioneering husband's perception of women's roles and behaviours. Neither women remain with their strongly masculine husbands, yet enter other more 'gentle' heterosexual relationships. In the novels by Mander and Scanlon, and in *The Piano*, the primitive, small and often dark dwellings act as 'physical' metaphors for the conjugal restrictions experienced by these early settler wives. Wigley (in Colomina 1996:337) captures this essence, writing of the relationship between dwellings and marriage.

> Marriage, understood as the domestication of a wild animal, is instituted to effect this control. As the mechanism of, rather than simply the scene for, this control, the house is involved in the production of gender

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division it appears merely to secure.

Interestingly, in both *The Piano* and *The Story of a New Zealand River* the powerful cultural ethos of male mate-ship, evident in the first excerpt from *Pencarrow*, was threatened, an outcome, I think, of female authorship. While some theorists claim that we should interact only with the text, I do not think we can separate text from the historical and social contexts within which writers live and write. For example, according to Jensen (1995:) Frank Sargeson's[28] homosexuality was expressed in his writing as "a sustained assault on heterosexual marriage"(69) long before he 'came out' as homosexual. Jensen makes the point that "material abundantly available in his fictional and non-fictional writing"(ibid) was available but hidden by cultural conditions which have not previously allowed discussion of homosexuality. The cultural conditions of male **mateship,** James and Saville-Smith (1989) claim, has been influential in creating a strongly gendered culture, a legacy of the pioneering *man's* world and two world wars.

Chapman (1973), writing about New Zealand fiction, argued that a difficulty for writers writing about the New Zealand experience was that there was an "absence of widely recognized psychological stereotypes" (75). He continues:

> Stereotypes are not wholly wrong but rather the highest common factor of general observation in a stable pattern. Where the pattern has not been stable for long enough nor been sufficiently stratified and geographically various to provide a variety of stereotypes, the consequence for the serious writer is that he cannot touch any of his characters lightly or make them begin to live by showing one or two exactly observed departures from the expected norm ...
> So each writer is driven to be his own sociologist, patiently observing the unrecognized majority pattern as well as the minor variations of which there will be all too few (ibid).

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[28] Frank Sargeson is a well known New Zealand author of predominantly short stories which were published in the early sixties.

Chapman exhibits both Anglocentrism, and gender blindness in his refusal to acknowledge stratification along sex/gender lines as well as positing 'the writer' as male.[29] His claim is representative of the thinking of a dominant group – Pakeha male - which cannot 'see' its own culture. Contrary to Chapman's claim, I believe cultural identities and behaviours **are** visible in past and present New Zealand fiction, whether writers write with or against – in simplistic terms - cultural norms; their historically contextualised positions affect the ways in which stories get told.

Dupuis and Thorns (1996) suggest that home ownership in this country can be seen as a rite of passage into adulthood. I suggest that the ideology of ownership has been predominantly a male rite of passage, a cultural residue of land/property acquisition. By contrast, yet related, is women's entrance into adulthood, differentially represented by marriage. These combined sexed/gendered 'rites of adult passagehood' have resulted in the perceived desirability of private (individual) ownership of land and subsequent housing policy and development based on heterosexual and nuclear family relations. [30] The experiences of Mander's Alice, Campion's Ada, and the women in Scanlan's Pencarrow series were that of being owned in the same sense as was property.

> During the period in which the colonial household was the dominant site
> of production and reproduction, Pakeha women had few legal rights.
> Married women were legally subordinate to their husbands ... Until the

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[29] Class stratification between large land owners, merchants and retailers and workers was a feature of New Zealand Pakeha relations, as was gendered class stratification whereby women came to New Zealand as wives of property and business owners or domestic servants. Chapman does not acknowledge ethnic stratification at all, perhaps because many of the novels and short stories written by Maori writers have emerged since the 1970s, although this does not mean that ethnic relations could not be critiqued through the lens of early New Zealand fiction.

[30] In the mid part of the 1900s The State Advances Corporation, through which much of New Zealand's housing policy was administered, provided finance for low income first home buyers. Capitalisation of the universal family benefit was also available. Tax rebates for those owning a first home and for those with dependents were yet another incentive for home ownership.

> 1884 Married Women's Property Act, Pakeha married women had
> virtually no right to own, control or dispose of property. Husbands
> owned all familial property ... Husbands also controlled the reproductive
> and sexual lives of their wives. The conjugal rights of husbands were,
> and remained until very recently, sacrosanct (James and Saville
> (1989:24).

The ways in which New Zealand housing developed and the concurrent gendered positions and roles - upheld in the legal system – I think, provide a major lens through which "to observe lines of stratification and geographically defined differences" which Chapman denies is present in early New Zealand fiction.

4.3 Women Outside

Robin Hyde, writing in the 1930s, and always critical of the restrictive and prescriptive behaviours and activities which she saw tied to heterosexual relations, made links between these and housing/home and women's activities as well as offering alternative identities. In Hyde's writing it is impossible to ignore class positions as impacting upon the ways in which women experienced their houses/homes; the intersection of class and gender well illustrated within the context of housing/home, perhaps here more than anywhere else.

> Rows and rows of grimy little streets and terraces, mostly very flat
> crawled listlessly from the shopping centre and the big concrete block of
> the hospital to the green garment's hem of the bay. Newtown in its half
> century of life had contrived to get itself very dirty: and it was static,
> nothing there would change. Always little houses, little shops, the
> tramway sheds, the Heddington Arms, with a tower on top and orange
> paper flowers showing through unwashed windows ... with sunlight
> rippling and fawning in oblong patches on their naked floors. Augusta's
> sticks of furniture never quite fitted the new place. There were days of
> paring and patching worn linoleum, and always another auction sale,
> where she bid in sixpences for odd chairs and tables ...

At the auctions Eliza was allowed to wander about, to see the restless unhappiness of old houses turned inside out, like the baby octopi fished up by swart Italians at Island Bay (Hyde 1938/1970:18-19).

While Augusta is responsible for creating home she has few resources, and the homes she creates are gradually eroded - physically and emotionally until she loses her "soft" femininity. Certainly Hyde's 'fiction' resembles her own experience; of this Boddy and Matthews (1991:5) write:

> After a time in Waripori St, Newtown, they moved to a box-like bungalow in Russell Terrace, Melrose. Behind were the pine-covered slopes of Newtown Park; below was the suburb of Berhampore, the hills beyond burned brown by the summer sun; to the south the sea, Island Bay, Cook Strait. But the wide views of sea and hills offered the family little escape from the claustrophobic poverty which encircled them during those years in a succession of dingy little bungalows, the "rows of grimy streets and terraces" of Newtown and Berhampore.

In *Wednesday's Children*, Wednesday repudiates the middle class respectable society which 'edged her off the earth'. While women in middle class households escape poverty, Hyde describes them as 'unreal and awful and pitiable,' their psychic selves damaged.

> She proposes an alternative empire to the one established in her own country, an island empire where the only inhabitants are women and children, and where men are permitted temporary citizenship at most, so that they never become rulers (Price in Williams and Leggott 1995:58).

Hyde, like Mander and Scanlan, wrote of early New Zealand experience where colonial imperialist class and gender and racial stereotypes had been thrown into different relief by a country very physically different to that of Britain. The curious blend which emerged and continues to be refashioned forms the peculiarity and uniqueness of New Zealand culture. In their different ways the three writers link the larger structural contexts of particular histories to women's place within the houses and homes of the developing colony. Scanlan uses the

romantic plot in relation to the land and men and women's conjugal relations while revealing the hardships of 'making do' in a new and undeveloped land. Mander exposes the ways in which women were caught between male acts of taming the land and domesticating 'their' women. Hyde, more so than the other two writers, exposes the restricting and impoverishing effect of spatial organisation which interrelates the wider constructs of economic and gender stratification with individual experience. Hyde's own childhood experience and later reality as an unwed mother trying to find shelter and work in the 1930s exposed her to the 'rules and regulations' of a society she found intolerable.[31] In 1937, two years before her death (suicide), Hyde wrote:

> I know now what I am looking for. It is a home in this world. I don't mean the four walls and a roof on top. Though even these I have never had, the attic at the asylum and the stilt-legged Maori cabin where I spent three weeks at Whangaroa consituting my nearest approach to habitations. As often as not, though, four walls and a roof get in the way, are the very point where one is fatally side-tracked from ever having a home in this world (in Boddy and Matthews 1991:3).

We have a legacy in this country of women writers who have both lived and written outside the cultural norms of the spatially defined boundaries of heterosexual relationships, of ethnically, classed and patriarchally imposed hierarchies. Two of these writers, Robin Hyde and Janet Frame, were labelled insane. Susan Ash, writing the afterword for the 1989 publication of Wednesday's Children, states;

> Women have traditionally been labelled mad when they create or insist on worlds outside the patriarchal norm. Discontent with male rules, women experience a sense of cultural schizophrenia, of fragmentation or split selves. Madness may be more than a symptom of women's condition; it may be a cure as well, a new state which liberates women from the past, evoking the chaos of the unconscious to address and heal

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[31] The experience of 'illegitimacy' is also the theme of Renee's book *Does This Make Sense to You?* (1995) and in chapter seven I contrast an excerpt from this book with part of a focus group discussion.

the divided self. Furthermore, artists, such as Hyde or Janet Frame have found they needed madness to survive economically, to 'break down' in order to be supported and cared for ... incarceration in a mental institute was a matter of economic as well as psychological survival (291).

Between Hyde and Frame were the Great Depression (1930s) and the Second World War. Postwar, successive New Zealand governments were hugely instrumental in the development of housing, employment conditions and in enshrining women's position in a 'new' "Cult of Domesticity" based on women's dependence on a male breadwinner. Frame, like Hyde, makes important - and explicit - links between structural contexts and individual experience, but where Hyde offers alternative visions, Frame resists a visionary role. Her skill - and that of other New Zealand women writers - lies in exposing the cultural and hegemonic norms of New Zealand society, often more poignant through the device of a naive narrator.[32] The 'split selves' Ash talks about arise from conflicting and contradictory expectations of women, embodied sexuality in the myth of the whore unconstrained by suburban housing, compared to the maternal and fulfilled suburban housewife - who is also a private and privatised sexual being. Those who live outside the norms, or outside the dominant culture, as did Frame and Hyde, struggle to make a living and to confront everyday life having to constantly redefine who they are.

Fiction, I think, revels in the contradictions experienced by individuals within a context of what C.Wright Mills (1959) called private troubles and public issues. The legacy of early writers, such as Jane Mander and Robin Hyde, who exposed the power relations arising from the ways in which the built environment and heterosexual relations were united, paved the way for further challenges from women writers. They were the vanguard for later writers (for example, Frame,

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[32] A naïve narrator – whether an authorial device or a fictional character - is one who appears not to know certain information that most would take for granted. Their presumed innocence has the effect of somehow 'enlarging' the situation.

Hulme, Fletcher, Kidman) who helped create – in Flax's (1970:173) words - "this place that disrupts social order." And as Flax pointed out this was not a feature of all fiction. As indicated earlier the differences between Scanlon's *Pencarrow* and the writing of Mander and Hyde bear testament to the ways in which fiction can maintain an 'accepted' social order as well as challenge and/or transform the social relations which adhere to certain constructions of the built environment.

Certainly, the post-war period saw an intense effort to build housing and establish traditional gender roles in family life. Women, however, had experienced being paid workers, maintaining farms and households and found they managed. Finding within themselves a range of new skills and coping abilities, a new independence, in effect, opened their eyes to the ways in which power relations embedded in institutions such as the state and family, are enacted and thus, can also be subverted.

4.4 Writing (Against) Suburban Domestication of Women Postwar

Ferguson (1994:60) throughout her history of housing policy and housing development in New Zealand illustrates the way in which suburban development was predicated upon prescribed roles for men and women. She writes:

> The emphasis on a suburban vision was [also] to dominate housing policy for many years ... Politicians and reformers saw the suburb as free from moral pollution, and the family home as more necessary than ever for the future of the country. An essential feature of this suburban vision was the wife and mother, who would ensure the health and training of the next generation.

She describes how successive governments enacted housing policy based on suburban development and tied access to state-assisted housing to the nuclear family in which the man of the house was in employment - the breadwinner.

The ethos of the Labour government in the immediate postwar years of the late 1940s - and indeed the urgency with which new houses were built - is perhaps summed up in this excerpt from a speech by Walter Nash.[33]

> But I am a conservatist in the sense that I look upon the family as the foundation of the nation. I believe that no nation can prosper or progress where people lack the conditions necessary for a 'home' and 'home life' in the best and fullest meaning of these words. It is by the toil of their hands, that men live, and by the strength of the family that the race will continue (Nash, cited in Cook, 1984).

And Dolores Hayden (1984:40), writing of the American experience, summed up the prescriptive nature of housing policies and initiatives in this way:

> ... for the last four decades most American space has been shaped around a simplistic prescription for satisfaction. American cities and American housing have been designed to satisfy a nation of predominantly white, young, nuclear families, with father as breadwinner, mother as housewife, and children reared to emulate these same limited roles. While prescriptive literature in the form of sermons, housekeeping guides, and etiquette manuals has always been available to describe and define the ideal middle-class Christian family in our society, our post-World War II cities mark the triumph of a prescriptive architecture of gender on a national scale.

I think much the same can be said about New Zealand; it was not as though sex/gender stratification did not already exist, but it was the mass production of housing, the separation of work in the city – which was predominantly manufacturing - from suburban house/home which consolidated women in domestic roles.

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[33] Sir Walter Nash was deputy Prime Minister to Peter Fraser of the Labour party from 1940 - 1949. On the return of the Labour party to power in 1957 he was Prime Minister until 1960.

In her novels Janet Frame exposes a 'reality' of lived experience, - social relations of gender - within a structural context of government housing policy, burgeoning consumerism and enshrined domesticity. In *Owls Do Cry* (1961) she uses irony in which the "suburb ", "revolving clothesline" and "free kindergarten," consumer goods - become ironic metaphors for the suburban family.[34]

> Toby turned the corner to where the Chalkins lived. Marry Fay Chalkin? Marry her and be a husband like the rest of the chaps around thirty, with a house built in the right style and the right things put inside it, the sort of things a girl would like, the new furniture that you can't sit on, the chairs with legs like an operating table, and the skinny mantelpiece that sits above a fraud fire ... Marry Fay Chalkin and squat on a quarter acre section, a government house perhaps, that exists in spawns or litters, alike of the same mother and father the government architect. In a suburb of revolving clotheslines[35] and a free kindergarten. With people people and no place alone ... (53-54).

Frame's character, Toby, with his illness, was unable to enter a working career mapped out as desirable for young men, and like his sister Daphne - indeed like Janet Frame herself - saw the prescribed nature of social life as murderous to creativity and intolerant of difference. Mercer (1994:34) writes, "[I]n *Owls Do Cry* Frame's major villain is "society", with its dogmatic decrees, judgements, tyrannical punishments, and bigoted insistence on the dominance of only one reality." Daphne and Toby are 'outcasts', unable to conform to the social and

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[34] Irony, according to Abrams (1985), comes from a Greek character the *eiron*, a dissembler, and critical use of irony 'hides' the real intent of the author; implicit meanings differs from what is expressed, and "carries an implicit compliment to the intelligence of the readers, who are invited to associate themselves with the author ... not taken in by the ostensible meaning" (92).

[35] A new Television Three programme, "Ground Force" involves a team of 'experts' landscaping and developing sections in one weekend to surprise at least one of the residents. In the programme (29/9/98) the revolving clothesline was removed for backyard renovations accompanied by Ginette McDonald's commentary:

> Now this is the good old Kiwi washing-line, there's one in nearly every backyard in the country. It's very large, but functional, but it's not attractive and it's got to go. So we say farewell to the end of an era, of the New Zealand backyard; it was very practical but not decorative.

spatial patterns of society. Daphne, refusing to consider a life bounded by work at the woollen mill followed by marriage and children, spends years in a mental institution but is later 'cured' by lobotomy, a theme Frame returns to in *Faces in the Water* (1980:216).

> After my mother had signed the paper giving consent to the operation, and everything was being arranged, Sister Bridge began to show kindness towards me.
> "With your personality changed," she said,"no one will dream you were what you were ... You've no idea what you'll be able to do. You'll be out of hospital in no time instead of spending your life here as otherwise you'll have to, my lady, and you'll get a good job in an office, and you'll never regret having had a lobotomy."
> Now that my personality had been condemned, like a slum dwelling, the planners were at work. The nurses were given permission to talk to me, and they and Sister Bridge, even Matron Glass, moved into my "changed" personality like immigrants to a new land staking their claim.

Frame's use of urban and migratory imagery indicates she saw the constructed **and** constructive connections between the spatial and social connections in everyday life. In *The Carpathians* (1988:24-25) Frame continues her ironic descriptive narrative of suburban dwellings, which, despite its difference, remind me of Hyde's description of the Beramphore suburb in Wellington.[36]

> Mattina walked to where she hoped the dairy might be, and as she walked she sidestepped the many cracks in the pavement, also the humps, and then the surprising number of snails also going somewhere; she noticed the neat uncomplicated shape of the houses, like dolls' houses built for people, and the confectionery-colouring of the wooden walls and the roofs of corrugated iron or tiles, and the front paths leading directly from the gate to the front door with a branch at the corner, leading presumably to the back door. And except for the car cemeteries on the front lawn of the end house on the corner of Gillespie street, all the lawns were neatly clipped and all the gardens had spring flowers, daffodils, narcissi, and many others that Mattina could not name; and

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[36] Frame uses irony, whereas Hyde's descriptions aim at realism, thus we, as readers, learn in different ways.

blossom trees, cherry and plum, and larger trees at Number Twenty-four Kowhai Street, with blossoms frilled and flounced like dolls' dresses caught up in the branches.

The apparent 'realism' of these kinds of descriptions, Ash (1995), writes; "ironically emphasises the discursive nature of its narrative representation" (126) and in doing so actually subverts its construction.

> The catalogue of domestic features seems to project a world, but the effect is the opposite: we are left with a word list, an exhibition of words (not worlds) which forces us to reflect on the process of selection and order that could have produced such an unlikely interaction (127).

This 'listing' is also used to effect in *Owls Do Cry* where Chicks/Teresa **does** fit into society as the good wife, the selfless mother, and the domestic consumer. She portrays what Hyde called the 'unreal and awful and pitiable,' where one can sense the damage to her psychic self, a loss of self. Chicks writes of her own repetitive litany of activities echoing her mother's chant that all is well when in reality it is not.

> By the way, when I first began this diary I said I would give a record of my inner life. I begin to wonder if I have said anything about my inner life. What if I have *no inner life*? I am morbid today. I had a letter from my mother in Waimaru. She says the same thing over and over in her letters: that everything is well, that everybody is happy: and she says it like a chant of denial, so that you can't help knowing nothing is well, and nobody is happy. Sometimes I wonder if we should go south to live. I don't know. I really don't know (Frame 1961:97).

> Well, it is over now and I can look at it calmly and with indifference. Shall I describe last night? Well, before they came I had the children put to bed and the baby given her bottle, and the sitting room arranged cosily and, I hope, tastefully, with the chairs and couches (our furniture is Swedish make) placed at what Tim and I consider the correct angle so as to make conversation easier and more intimate. I dusted the radiogram and blew fluff from the long-playing needle, and left the Fifth Symphony lying upon the cabinet. I could not help leaving a few of our more intellectual books lying around, carelessly, as if we used them every day, some of them half-open, or open at pages of difficult words ...

Tim had decided that we wouldn't have any drinks, only coffee, and that the cake had better be chocolate, with walnuts, for variety. I prepared to make a number of narrow slices of toast with a sardine, or a slice of tomato, lying upon each. Above all I wanted our evening to be a *natural* one, with none of the artificialities one finds - everyone at ease and happy (ibid:98).

Frame's books, perhaps the most chilling in their re-presentations of the ways in which women's identity formation and the house/home are mutually constituted, are effective in that while Frame critiques the conventions and gender stereotypes of society she does not posit alternatives. Unlike other novels I later refer to which fit into a feminist meta-fiction as defined by Greene (1991), Frame leaves readers to make up their own minds as to how they feel about the conventions that lead to certain social-spatial positions and identities for women (and men).

Kidman, in contrast, makes explicit the classed and social relations implicit in the development of suburban housing. In *A Breed of Women* (1979:179) Kidman echoes and develops Frame's depiction of suburban life through the experiences of the central character, Harriet.

There never seemed to be a quiet moment. From the beginning of her residence in suburbia, Harriet was keenly sought for committees. Genevieve was a plunket baby, and it followed that Harriet would be invited to go on the Plunket committee. Peter followed a year later so she was asked to be president.[37]

Fiona Kidman captures the ways in which suburban development in New Zealand was predicated on class, the expected roles and behaviour of men and

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[37] The Plunket Society was founded by Sir Truby King in 1907. It is a community-based organisation based on care of the new-born infant up until the age of two. Plunket nurses monitor the infant's development and offer advice to mothers/fathers caring for the infant. I will refer to this organisation in more depth in a later chapter.

women, or more precisely, how women would be fufilled in their roles as wives and mothers. Her images of the outdoor culture of suburbia also reflect Ferguson's (1994:34) discussion of how the heritage of the rural and/or wilderness culture became incorporated into suburban sections.

> The images and symbols of the new suburban life were as powerful as those of the old purely rural vision. Suburban land dealers reworked the images of nature and pioneer into a more ordered world of semi-rural bliss ... the idea of home as a haven, not from the difficulties of a pioneering life in the bush, but from the dangers and complexities thought to be inherent in town life.

While I believe that suburban sections may be part of the image of home as haven in relation to city life, I think the large sections were, and still are, a symbol of the (man) outdoors, of nature. Kidman, I think, illustrates how homogenous suburban developments can be, and I am reminded of the urban-living women interviewed for my M.A. thesis[38] who described the homogeneity of suburbs in a negative way. In the following excerpt I think Kidman develops a sense that the activities and homogeneity of suburban life are going to be problematic for Harriet.

> Genevieve was four when Harriet began to feel restless. The whole nature of Weyvile was changing. In place of the old shops faced with plate glass, two and three-storeyed concrete buildings had started to create new facades of their own. Suburbs were springing up at random around the outskirts of Weyville and the right and wrong sides of the tracks had been defined more positively than before. When Max and Harriet built their modest but attractive little ranch-style house, designed by Max, Cousin Alice indicated the areas where she thought the best buys could be found. They never had cause to doubt her advice for as long as they remained in Weyville. When the subdivision had first been opened in 1960, the city fathers had dubbed it Camelot. It was where the brightest and nicest people of Weyville made their homes. Max and

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[38] See Winstanley Ann (1995) Women stated that suburbs were "incestuous", too homogeneic, based upon class divisions, were something that represented life in the past, and "destructive of sensitivities."

Harriet qualified for a five percent loan, Max let the building of the house on a labour-only contract and was able to save enough money for ranch sliders and a patio immediately. They planted silver birches and silver-dollar gum trees around the section in the very first year, and before long they were flourishing and seemed to be taking over. The ice-pink glimmer of their sasanqua camellias shone from corners of the garden, and they drank wine as well as beer with their barbecues when the neighbours dropped over on Saturday nights (178).

Ferguson's excerpt draws on one of the available discourses which sets up suburbia in opposition to the city, Frame writes ironically of the 'good' mother and suburban housewife, while Kidman, in her ironical way, describes this apparent 'haven' in which these women were placed. Included in this discourse of difference was the geographically defined hierarchy afforded urban and suburban women.

In colonial times the presence of working-class women in the city was seen as a threat to the moral order based on what James and Saville claim is "[A] particular construction of femininity which emphasizes almost exclusively women's alleged nurturant and maternal capacities"(32). They write:

[D]esertion, destitution, and prostitution underpinned a burgeoning urban culture among the 'lower classes,' which threatened the sanctity of private property and the social leadership of the professional middle classes and landed gentry" (1989:28).

A 'sub-economy' of prostitution was a necessary part of life where women outnumbered men and exploitation of women's productive labour meant they had insufficient means of support. In New Zealand, as in many other parts of the world, prostitution was/is linked to structural factors, but has repeatedly been seen as an outcome of women's inherent and uncontrolled sexuality. This is in direct contrast to the suburban home according to Ferguson where women were "becoming increasingly sanctified as wives and mothers" (60).

While it is apparent, in the nineties, that more women are living in inner city areas, it seems that 'urban freedom' continues to be (implicitly) aligned with women's sexuality and/or sexed/gendered experiences. When Joan left her marriage and needed accommodation she first considered living in the city. I asked her why.

Because it was different, there was a buzz, it was 'old worlde' like that around the Arts' Centre, that's where I wanted to be, and it was, like, elegant and yet, the gardens, that atmosphere and I looked at that when I split up from O. However, that didn't eventuate; there was still this sort of "mother take care of my children" part of me that wanted to have a house and provide for them, because when I was young I always thought I'll always have a place for my children to come and visit. I thought to come into the inner city would be more my living, more for me, it wasn't for the family in the way that I saw it so much.

The spatial splitting and constraining of women, the often unarticulated dis-ease (labelled suburban neurosis) experienced by some women who remained at home in suburbia, often with children, is expressed in Kidman's description of the rifts which start to pull apart Harriet's suburban and married life.

> She resigned as president, but Genevieve was due to go to kindergarten and she was asked to go on that committee. So it went on. Harriet supposed she was happy enough in the suburbs. She was known to be a woman with a mind of her own and she took a secret pride in that.
>
> Sometimes when the children had been tucked up for the night she would see Max looking at her reflectively. She would wonder what he was thinking and then decide against asking him. She had nothing to hide from him, he knew her, she had never lied to him. He seemed to her a plain man in his needs, and she tried to provide for them. One night, however, he asked her, "Harriet, are you happy here?"
> ... "I don't know, I haven't really thought about it. Do I seem unhappy?"
> "No," said Max, thinking as he went along. "But I remember you in Wellington when I first met you. You've changed since then."
> "Of course I've changed, silly," said Harriet, "I didn't have you and the children then."
> "But you were going to do so many things with your life then. You were very excited. And you haven't done any of them."
> "I opted for something different."
> "Not quite," said Max. "Most of it's just happened. I think you thought

I'd share some of the things you wanted to do."
"And did you mean to?" Harriet sat watching him. Something was happening between them, but she didn't know what it was.
He shook his head. "I don't think so. I thought all of this would just follow the way it has, and that it's what you wanted anyway."
"Well then, are you trying to tell me it's not what I want? What are you trying to talk me into, Max?"
"I don't know."

The moment had passed and they were both backing away from it. However, Harriet never forgot what Max had said. He deceived me, and he knows it she thought. He was trying to be honest now, but it was a little late for honesty. He was a perpetrator of some great lie, like all the other men who lived in the suburbs of Weyville. True, he was vaguely aware of it without recognising exactly what he had done - but then, neither did Harriet. She told herself that she was happy; she was, she knew it. Then she began to have flashes of anger against Max, who had tried to provoke her into thinking she was behaving badly because she didn't exactly fit into the mould that all the other women did (180-181).

The postwar model of family living which Frame and Kidman expose was based on motherhood within the context of heterosexual relationships. This heterosexuality was tied to specific social and economic relations, as well as to state incentives to boost the population in the belief that an increase in the population and economic growth went hand in hand. Despite the geographical and ideological separation of urban and suburban women, the control of women's sexuality remained an issue in both contexts. Game and Pringle (1979), writing of the Australian (and New Zealand) experience stated:

It was in the immediate post-war period that woman's role as mother and homemaker became firmly established. Even the role of wife became somewhat secondary. At the same time there was pressure on her to be her husband's companion and exciting sexual partner. Hence, there was conflict between her different roles in the home (9).

Penny described this conflict in the following way.

I think the balance of a woman as a mother, as a worker, and a sexual person is like the lynch pin that the whole family revolves around. You have to be one thing to one person, then five minutes later "wham bam thank you Ma'am" your husband - Never mind that you're tired or been up all night with the eighteen months old baby. I don't think men actually can understand that if you say no, that you're actually tired, that you actually are! It's — women in those three roles, that's like a lynch pin, and once you become unstable the whole family unit becomes unstable.

The following excerpt from Alison Gray's Book *The Marriage Maze* (1979), written in the same year as Kidman's *A Breed of Women*, echoes the claims above, the difficulties of trying to reconcile the realities of child care, work, and sexual intimacy.

> I pulled a face angrily. "What am I supposed to do? I'm so damn tired I want to die. You work till all hours of the night, every night on Jeffrey's stupid house and when you come and want a screw it's too late. I've only got three hours left before I get up for Victoria." I sat straight up in righteous rage. "Several times I've sat up in bed reading, waiting for you to come to bed, and you never do. I'm just something you fit in after work or when it suits you."
> "If you'd make yourself more attractive I might notice you more."
> "Tony!" I screamed at him and stormed out of the room to pick up Victoria, her crying like music to my ears (65).

For Alison Gray and another New Zealand writer, Maurice Gee, it is important that their central characters are architects; both use the male architect character to foreground *spatially* influenced power relations between men and women. The acts of creating (architecture) and building are seen as an activity apart from women's experience of living in the houses.

> In each room I moved soundlessly over the thick carpet back towards the dining room, I could see the leaves, lit by well-placed spotlights, brushing against windows, and starlight on white walls. Tony had drawn the curtains in the dining room and there was a soft glow from the timbered ceilings and the lamps, pots and trays piled haphazardly on the table waiting for a home. I picked up my glass and walked past him into the living-room, where another skylight soared into the flame tree. It was a very beautiful house, elegant, extravagant, even excessive. I leaned in the doorway and contemplated the moon above the small glimpse of sea

that was our lot. Outside it was cool, calm, undemanding. My sort of country. Behind me and around me, touching my side, was Tony's land, his creation, his love with whom I must now share my life. A flame of jealousy exploded in me and I turned back to the unpacking.

"Do you want dinner?" Tony asked.

"Yes, I suppose so." I looked around vaguely ...

"When do you think we can get a clothes line?" I asked Tony. He stared at me in angry astonishment.

"You've got all this and you're worried about a clothes line?"

I was defensive. "I've got a lot of washing to do with two children in nappies and Vicky always filthy at play-centre" (Gray 1979:107).

The juxtaposition of outside - the beauty of the landscape and the feeling of belonging - and inside – the constraints of housing and marital relationships - echoes the experience of Alice in Jane Mander's *The Story of a New Zealand River*.

Irigaray (1992:141) claims that men's relationships with dwelling places is about building, building homes for themselves in "caves, huts, women, theory ... ". Claire Cooper Marcus (1995) and Iris Marion Young (1997) also write of the male activity of building. Marcus relates the findings of her interaction with architectural students; the men, remember boyhood experiences of building huts, while Young draws attention to the difference between building and preservation, the former carried out by men while preservation – home-making - is largely carried out by women. The excerpt above from *The Marriage Maze* and that below from Gee's *The Burning Boy* (1990), illustrate Irigaray's claim; it is apparent that, for Tom (the architect), the act of building is a self-definitional activity. Josie (his wife) links what she refers to as his "architectural thoughts" with his (extra-marital) sexuality, the two impinging on her sense of self.

His face is like a spring, she tells her friends, and new things come bubbling up all the time. There's no way he can put a cover on, he's too self-centred. 'It's a pretty muddy spring, too.' Sexual thoughts make his mouth swell and his eyes bulge. Power thoughts, pleasure in praise, anger, disappointment, kindness, love - she'll allow those last two,

although they're nastily adulterated - aesthetic imaginings, mathematical intuitions, balancing calculations, all show in various ways on his face. She's reconciled to him in a small way, by what she calls his architectural thoughts. She believes, and has warned him, that they're starting to grow weak, but there's a lack of evidence and she's forced to admit there's no reason why a selfish man, nasty person, inadequate individual, utter bastard, poor weak sod, people-eater, should not design beautiful houses. Josie finds his houses beautiful and knows from experience they're marvellous to live in. Her marriage is over, she understands, but she's not leaving this house for Tom Round or anyone. It's like a child, she thinks, and God knows I'm better at loving things than he is.[39]

She is not, in fact, better at loving the house. Tom loves it too, in all the obvious ways, but also in a way that lifts him and makes him soar. He goes beyond possessiveness and pleasure and reaches a condition of knowing ... But he loves. He loves his houses; and this one above all the rest. Believes he has reached the perfect marriage with himself when he designed it, and says (drunk again), 'That's my baby. Who needs kids?' (Gee 1990:117-118).

I found it interesting that when I asked women what their 'dream home' might be, they could not think of either an alternative structure, or different kinds of social arrangements. For most of the women their dream home was achieved through environmental change – a house by the beach/sea.

Alexa: ... it would either have to be elevated or situated in such a way that you wouldn't be able to see your neighbours, and a bit of water ...Lyttleton.[40] *To be able to see the water would be a real luxury.*

Penny: ... yes, I'd like to end up near the beach, near the sea, but as far as the home would look like, I sometimes think it would have to be new cos then I would know I'd keep it tidy. It would be tidy from the outside and people would expect it to be sort of tidy on the inside.

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[39] This sentence is reminiscent of Tracey's words in the first chapter whereby she claimed that the things we love the most are those we care for.
[40] The port town which serves Christchurch.

Thinking back to the ways in which Mander and Gray almost romanticise the scenery, and problematize the house within the contexts of heterosexual relationships, it appears possible that some Pakeha women, in New Zealand, have developed relationships with 'the land' that are different to that of men. The natural environment may be seen as enabling identity formation different to that available through suburban and/or urban situations.[41] These different situations may represent the divisions between nature and culture, and the ways in which nature – woman/women – are physically/geographically constrained. Wigley (1992), makes links between nature/body and culture, and argues that the construction of 'the house' as privatised space, is a male project.

> Without [such] vigilant control of the surface, the disorder of the body can infect ethical, aesthetic, political and juridical regimes. Order in general depends upon an ordering of the body, which is to say a detachment from it. It is this detachment which makes the individual subject possible. Architecture was used to effect it as the agent of a new kind of modesty and in so doing played an active part in the constitution of the private subject. It clothed the body in a way that redefined it, at once constructing the body as dangerous and containing that threat.
> This disciplining of the body is an extension of the traditional disciplining of the cultural artifact "woman," authorized by the claim that she is too much a part of the fluid bodily world to control herself. The privatization of sexuality, where sexuality is understood as feminine, is used to produce the individual subject as a male subject and subjectivity itself as masculine. This subject is specific to that privatisation. The new conditions of privacy mark a new subjectivity rather than simply modify a pre-existing one (345).

In both Gray's and Gee's books the male subjectivity is expressed and experienced through the act of creating and building; but while neither Tom nor Tony are constrained by the house, the women are, but for different reasons. Elizabeth feels imprisoned, Josie feels part of the space of the house. These two excerpts demonstrate the tensions experienced by women arising from the

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[41] When interviewing 'urban-living' women in Mount Victoria, some commented on the desirability of also having a house in the country or by the beach/sea.

socially and spatially constructed power relations between men and women. What I try to emphasise in the second section of this thesis are the contradictions women experience as they grapple with the changes arising from a disruption to their social and spatial living circumstances.

As Wigley claims, however, the development of single detached housing and the ideology of ownership, coupled with the ideology/reality of the traditional nuclear family, have contributed to the privatization of sexuality and family relations. Outcomes of this process relate to child abuse – often by sole parents in straightened financial situations – and 'domestic' violence both of which have only relatively recently been acknowledged as a public problem. In chapters six, seven and nine some of the narratives of women interviewed include stories about 'domestic violence.' In chapter nine I use Iris Young's concept of home as a critical value, part of which she states is about privacy, a concept different to that of 'private' but which, in the New Zealand context, I argue has been subsumed under the ideology of privately owned property.

Dominance of the ideology of home ownership, I suggest was never stronger than after the second world war.[42] Accompanying this was a concerted drive to return women to marriage, home-making and childbearing, for during the war women had learned and practised new skills, tasting an independence not previously experienced. This domestic ideology, however, was not just about family relations. The home building programme and increased production of consumer goods – as illustrated in Janet Frame's *Owls Do Cry* - were seen as integral to rebuilding the capitalist economy. Population growth and increased production were seen as mutually enhancing.

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[42] I asked my mother why, after the war, she and my father, built a house instead of buying an existing one. Her response was that it was never even considered, all their friends were building and the rehabilitation loan was based upon building a new home. Financial resourcing and peer experience were

In the following chapter a socio-semiotic analysis of post-war house/home advertising demonstrates the links made between women as consumers and heterosexual femininity (and masculinity) within the context of house/home. The place and space of house/home was defined in terms of the 'desirable' family, mother father and children.

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clearly strong imperatives for my parents as they probably were for other couples. It may be that the energy need for the building and of home and family helped returned soldiers to 'forget' the war.

Chapter Five

Consumption Matters

> To study material culture socio-semiotically means locating the
> processes of sign production and consumption within the context of exo-
> semiotic processes, and social practices that provide an interdependent,
> mutually reinforcing matrix of social relations and activities for the
> relatively autonomous operation of ideological interpretive codes
> (Gottdiener (1995:139).

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I suggested that the post war era was a time when women's
and men's roles were firmly established in relation to work and home and to the
gender division of labour within the house/home; and just as fiction acts as a form
of representation as well as a constructive entity, so, too does advertising. Like
New Zealand fiction, most of the house/home advertising of the 1990s avoids
depicting men and women in fixed roles. This I associate with the increasing
diversity of work and home experiences for both women and men, as well as the
increasing emphasis on a[n] (universal) individual consumer.

By taking a 'snapshot' view of advertising - the late 1940s, the mid-1960s and the
1990s[43] – we can see how advertising has or has not shifted, and how changing
perceptions and experiences of social-spatial interaction have been incorporated

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[43] This snapshot approach was in part dictated by the availability of particular magazines, rather than
doing an archival search of one magazine as Shaw and Brookes (1999) have done for their article
Constructing Homes, Gender and Advertising in Home and Building 1936 -1970. The Home and Building
magazines were purchased at the Riccarton market in Christchurch, as were the Australian House and
Garden magazines. The latter I recall were the magazines my aunts purchased in the sixties and which
were passed around the family and certainly bore some relation to the decorating of family homes as well
as influencing consumption decisions. The dual activities of purchasing new magazines and the ability to
put into practice some of the ideas within these magazines is most certainly class dependent, although the
recent existence of the Warehouse in New Zealand suburbs enables those with fewer resources to 'copy'
the (middle class) taste-makers.

into advertising. The emergence of an advertising industry, I claim, has also affected advertising. Rather than advertising focusing on direct relationships of consumers to products, competing companies often create advertisements which are as much about their own creative prowess as they are about 'selling' products. While there has been a change in much of the advertising in house/home magazines, television advertising, however, continues consistently to connect an amazing diversity of products to the desirability of heterosexual encounters.

This issue of desirability is a crucial one, for, in visual terms, women continue to be constructed as objects of male desire, a practice present day television advertising has in common with past house/home magazine advertising. I think it is the juxtaposition of real life changes – those associated with labour market and demographic changes – with a continued focus on (heterosexual) femininity and masculinity which brought forth the bemused criticism of women in the 'advertising' focus group. In a more academic way Victoria de Grazia (1996:7) writes:

> From the 1960s, if not earlier, feminist thinkers have recognized the importance of consumption to the question of what processes transform a female into a woman. Feminist inquiry has identified commercial culture as an especially totalizing and exploitative force, to which women are more vulnerable than men because of their subordinate social, economic and cultural position, and because of the patriarchal organization and the semiotics of mass consumption. By the same token, feminist researchers have long been aware of the conventional association of women with consumption, as a consequence of their role in the household division of labour and as reified objects in the commodity exchange system.

The house/home was/is the targeted place for a wide variety of products, but essential to both is the creation of 'a' consumer. 'Woman' as consumer has been marketed through the fashion and cosmetic industries on a far greater scale than have men, thus were/are 'ready made' consumers for the purchasing of products which promoted an ideal of a feminine woman home-maker. What is implicit in the

Home and Building advertising messages is a **relational** identity. This offers a sense of self gained through consumption acts on behalf of others; consumption acts which women themselves may define in different ways, for example, as work rather than leisure. Shaw and Brookes (1999:209) write: "In the advertisements, women are portrayed in relationship to either men or children, rarely as independent beings."

Perhaps because many women **had** been engaged in 'productive' labour during the war years, unimpeded by essentialist beliefs about what women were or were not capable of, there was a need to 'create' a more constrained ideal based around home, family and associated activities. Alexa put it this way.

When I look at the 1940s stuff, there was a real upsurge suddenly, in the woman being the dainty one, the image of health became pale and you know, manicured nails and stuff like that, it was all suddenly what was perceived as feminine - by men ... a vested interest in keeping women in their place ... the whole movement post war – shove the women back into the kitchen once the women had come out of it because the men had to get jobs.

O'Donnell (in Brookes et al, 1992:177) in her analysis of women's household experience and advertisements in the New Zealand magazines including the *Women's Weekly* 1935-1965, writes:

> Appliance advertisements also attempted to make women feel happy and secure in their domestic role and confirmed their status as wives and mothers. All of the advertisements emphasized traditional gender roles: men were portrayed as the money earners, while women were invariably shown in a domestic context. Not only was the role of wife and mother an important and valuable one, according to these advertisements, it was also the only one to which women could aspire. The attainment of the position as wife and mother would bring complete happiness, particularly if the home was well stocked with electric appliances.

Advertising from the selection of magazines which inform this project was based upon themes which relate to the claims of de Grazia, O'Donnell, and Shaw and Brookes. However, these organizing themes are not discrete, each informs the other,

and in this context it is important to think of them as providing some sort of constructed 'whole', albeit based upon the ways in which essentialist understandings of 'woman' have resulted in certain constructions of female appearance, roles and behaviour.

5.2 Inside/female - Outside/male.

Women inside and men outside is one way in which women are defined in clearly spatial terms, where meanings of sexed bodies and gendered activities are explicit. The advertisements of *Building Progress* magazines of 1948 present women in predominantly three rooms - the kitchen, laundry and bathroom.

While there is not a woman, per se, in the bathroom the shower curtain resembles a female form and the text which states the bathroom is "[M]oulded to the *chaste lines of functional beauty* ..." (emphasis added), refers to notions of female sexuality.
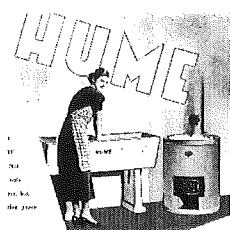
Figure 2: Laundry [44]   Figure 3: Kitchen [45]   Figure 4: Bathroom [46]
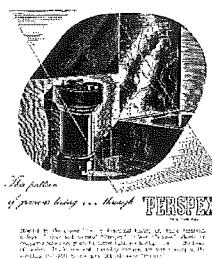
Women's inside roles are usually associated with work. The exception is when women are depicted with men; men, then are active and women femininely passive. By contrast women are never in active roles outside, and they are depicted as

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[44] *Building Progress* September 1948
[45] *Building Progress* September 1948
[46] *Building Progress* September 1948

passive and/or decorative.

Figure 5: Watching the Lawn Mower[47]

Women's work, in the advertisements so far, is confined to the inside, **unless** the work is defined as technically different and/or difficult. Tracey talked about her refusal to mow the lawns.

I make a point of never being able to start the motor-mower because if I can it's another job I'll end up doing because no-one else wants to do it.

Tracey's claim, or rather the success of her strategy, rests on a common construction of femininity whereby women are perceived as being unable to carry out certain activities, the effect of which is to construct women as technologically incompetent and men as technologically competent.

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[47] *Australian House and Garden* February 1965

5.3. A-Techno Woman and Techno Man

The advertisement below in which the curtain system, according to the advertising was "easily installed by any woman." implies that the easier technology is the more likely women would be able to 'master' it.

Figure 6: Curtain System[48]

Women, in contrast to men whose masculinity is perceived to be enhanced by their **active** use of technology, have to maintain femininity based on a degree of passivity and are rarely depicted as they would be if they were indeed cooking, washing dishes, or installing a curtain track. In the advertisements below the men, although inside, are actively working, and in the first two advertisements dressed appropriately. I would suggest that the two men dressed not in overalls but casually, may be the husband/partner of the seated women, a differentiation which establishes both heterosexuality and patterns of gender divisions of labour.

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[48] *Building Progress* March 1963

Fig 7: Installing wallboard [49]

8: Kitchen carpentry [50]

Fig 9: Renovations [51]

Technology is defined within the context of advertised products, whereas I would claim, as does Cockburn (1997:361), that technology has a far wider meaning than commonly portrayed.

> ... the household and housework do in fact constitute a sphere of technology, and that this is the case regardless of the degree of mechanization or automation of the tasks involved. Cooking with a wooden spoon or a microwave, sweeping with a broom or a vacuum cleaner, it is all doing, making and producing. And that is what technology is: that which pertains to the "practical and industrial arts" (Oxford Shorter English Dictionary).

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[49] *Building Progress* March 1963
[50] *Building Progress* March 1963
[51] *New Zealand House and Garden* March 1999

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I believe women incorporate technology (and physics) into many of their daily household activities but what they do is rarely articulated in these terms. Thinking and/or articulating these activities in terms of technology can result in a more positive re-evaluation of women's work. For example, in one focus group, women talked for fifteen minutes, if not longer, about doing the washing.

Tanya: I let the kids hang it out, but my husband! I went from no, don't hang it out, to being grateful he was hanging it out but I'd go and change it to my way because he'd hang it with the towels - you know - the ends with a peg there and then when you go to fold it ... but the children's, I don't change theirs.

Ann: I sometimes did that with Jane and Hugh when we flatted together because I always brought in the washing and folded it.

Tanya: Oh folding is huge! I won't let anyone else fold it, I'll go through and refold, because of creases. But it's interesting that somehow there's a sense of ... it's based on practicalities of course.

Morag: That's interesting, I've never met a woman that doesn't fold. I've met a lot of men who don't!

Delia: I never take washing off the line and leave it in the basket. And I don't iron. There's not a huge pile I iron to wear. Everything gets hung up and then I iron as I need to.

Morag: I just find the rituals though, very interesting. And sometimes my husband says, you really enjoy doing this, and I think not just now - I don't want anyone to sort of quantify it.[52]

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[52] It seems to me that the context of an all-women focus group is an important mechanism through which activities and feelings about activities can be articulated, where experiences are recognised and valued. Cockburn (1997:362) writes:

> The social construction of home and household as relatively non-technological is implicated in a wider pattern of meanings involving a relative devaluation of the domestic sphere. "Technology" is something ascribed high significance and relative importance. It is visible in, and confers visibility on, the spheres of production and destruction. As relatively "unimportant," the sphere of daily reproduction is sometimes hidden from view, partly because it is seen as non-technological, and its relative unimportance in turn renders its particular technologies relatively invisible.

The ways in which household technology is advertised does little to illustrate the ways in which women ascribe meaning to what they do, and the ways in which the same activities acquire different meanings in different historical and social contexts. Ken Dempsey (1997:38), debunking present day claims of egalitarian domesticity, states:

> "Feminine" tasks vary greatly in the demands they place on the performer. Some tasks have definite time boundaries, while others are open-ended. Some present the performer with greater opportunities to be creative and achieve affirmation while others are boring, and in the eyes of many people, demeaning ... Women's tasks confer little or no status. Insofar as men become involved in "feminine" tasks, they choose to help with those that have definite time boundaries, can be postponed and are creative and occasional rather than repetitious and boring.

The problem with Dempsey's definition of tasks as either creative or "repetitious and boring" means allocating certain tasks to one or other category when in reality household activities/tasks are not necessarily **always** experienced in that way. The final words of Morag above demonstrate resistance to this kind of quantification. While I acknowledge the need to reduce the double shift of women who have paid work and home commitments, a more creative way of approaching this problem may be to ask under what conditions are these activities enjoyable or distasteful (and how technology is implicated).[53] I also think Dempsey's use of the phrases "feminine" tasks" and "women's tasks" assumes and assigns a gendered division of labour in relation to the house/home, one which is represented also in generational terms. By this I mean that the kinds of work carried out as well as expectations as to who will carry it out are historically contingent. The advertisements of the 1940s and 1960s depict two generations in ways that make a socio-semiotic analysis most interesting. Women - inevitably slim, youthful and immaculate - were often accompanied by be-frilled daughters while men (or women) with sons were

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[53] See Christine Beckett (1997) who draws on her own experience to suggest strategies to manage a more equitable share of household tasks.

conspicuously absent.

5.4. Mothers and Daughters

Figure 10: Fenced In[54]

Figure 11: Doing Dishes[55]

Given the absence of sons the question arises as to whether daughters need socialising and/or coercing into 'doing' a particular kind of femininity that is associated with particular roles? It seems to me that the less desirable a given course of action or position in society is, the harder those who benefit from it must work to ensure the maintenance of such a system. This explanation is perhaps less sinister, but may be related to the ways in which the male gaze can position women and girls as objects of sexual interest. The women in the focus group had this to say.

Tracey: What a materialistic culture. What makes women happy is new appliances.

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[54] *Australian House and Garden* May 1965
[55] *Australian House and Garden* February 1965

Sharon: There's not many (advertisements) where there aren't people, I mean, they're all represented by people -

Lucy: They're all heterosexual –

Sharon: Usually couples –

Alexa: Perfect-looking couples, high heels –

Sharon: No children –

Lucy: And if there are they're all girls –

Sharon: With their bows –

Alexa: Little girls are much more attractive, little girls grow up to be big girls!

Lucy: Who are good-looking and love a kitchen –

Tracey: You have to train them up, to use kitchen appliances.

Both Alexa's and Tracey's comments connect with my claims above that girls need to be socialised into their role as housewives, and/or (potentially) represent a sexually defined femininity. There was a degree of cynicism in the women's talk, much of which originated with the following advertisements.

Tracey: "Has to have form as well as function" – well, all women have form and function. What function are they implying? Oh, more sex! Men's desire, women desire the sink! Well, it's saying just as men desire a beautiful woman so women desire a beautiful sink.

Sharon: But men aren't going to go out and buy the sink.

Tracey: But men pay for it. That's the one I want, you pay for it dear since you're the breadwinner, I'll just sit around stroking it!

Alexa: In my high heels and nail polish -

Sharon: I presume this is a bath but it looks like a bed to me!
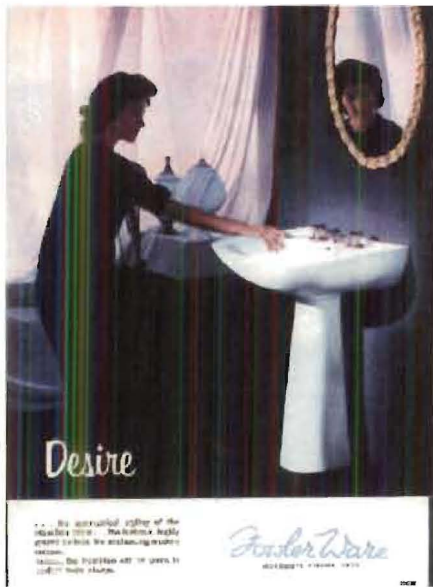
Porcelain now
has form as
well as function
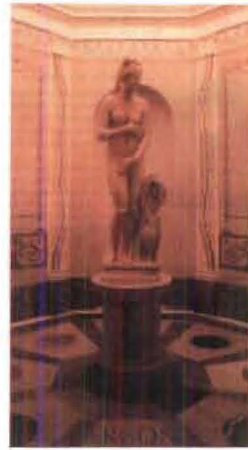
Figure 12: Desire[56]   Fig 13: Form and Function[57]

Although the women are aware of the artifice of advertising and the way in which sex/gender is used, this is not to say that the images portrayed through advertising are **not** incorporated into identity formation.[58] The mechanism of the gaze, as I have already stated, directs women to look at themselves as they would through male eyes. I do not think that the Fowler advertisement above refers to women's desire for a particular basin, but the woman, here, is the object of desire given her clothes, posture and the bath/bed. To be the object of desire, it could be argued, is the crux of heterosexual attraction, the advertisement 'works' by encouraging women to want to see themselves as objects of desire.[59] The basin is an adjunct to the primary message

[56] *Australian House and Garden* February 1965
[57] *Architecture N.Z.* Jan/Feb 1997
[58] As Dale Spender points out, awareness of the 'rules' of mixed sex conversations does not mean we can break those rules. (Video of talk at Otago University, 1988)
[59] Feminist writing which describes the ways in which women come to see themselves as objects of the gaze - to desire themselves as seen through the eyes of the (male) other (De Lauretis 1984, Falk 1994, Tseelon 1995, Wigley 1992) - is similar to the theoretical explanations of how advertising works on the human psyche - the creation of, and deferral of desire which has more to do with what one can be or become, a lifestyle to be experienced (Warde 1991, McCracken 1986).

which certainly, women may argue, is more important than the brand of basin one buys. These advertisements are also linked explicitly to the place and spaces of house/home, through defining who is present, what they look like and their relationship to other household members. As McCracken (1986:74) states:

> [A]dvertising works as a potential method of meaning transfer by bringing the consumer good and representation of the culturally constituted world together within the frame of a particular advertisement. The creative director of an advertising agency seeks to conjoin these two elements in such a way that the viewer/reader glimpses an essential similarity between them.

As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter it was easier for the focus group women to critique the older advertisements than those of the present day because the "culturally constituted world" has changed.
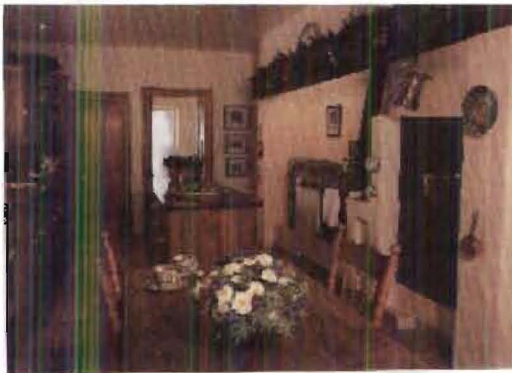
Figure 14: Large room [60]   15: Small people [61]

Those who live in the above house are only visually connected to it through the juxtaposition of pictures, their (small) presence is 'removed.' This device brings to

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[60] *New Zealand House and Garden* March 1999
[61] *New Zealand House and Garden* March 1999 These pictures replicate the proportional representation of rooms *vis a vis* people in the magazine.

mind the words of one of the real estate salespeople interviewed, who said that owners need to vacate the house when prospective buyers are brought through; the latter are then able to experience a "trial possession." In most contemporary advertising the empty houses suggest and/or offer a greater variety of experience, behaviours and 'lifestyles' than do the earlier advertisements which more explicitly align men, women and girl children with particular spaces of house/home. The text – if it is read - provides the clues as to who takes responsibility for the different consumption activities associated with the creation of particular rooms. I will demonstrate these claims in the 'kitchen' section of this chapter where I draw on texts from magazines of different time frames.

In spite of changes, within advertising connections between cultural expectations of femininity and heterosexually remain implicit and explicit, and an underlying assumption is that women need to be 'feminine' consumers to get – and keep – a man.

5.5 Femininity and Heterosexuality

Consumption as a means of self-definition, always entails someone else's definition of the desired self and/or self-representation, contrary to claims of consumption practices enabling particular individualities. Simone Du Beauvoir (1952:560) writes:

> Even if woman dresses in conformity with her status, a game is still being played: artifice, like art, belongs to the realm of the imaginary. ... once she is 'dressed', does not present *herself* to observation, she is, like the picture or statue, or the actor on the stage, an agent through which whom is suggested someone not there - i.e. the character she represents, but is not. It is this identification with something unreal, fixed, perfect as the hero of a novel, as a portrait or a bust, that gratifies her; she strives to identify herself with this figure and thus to seem to herself to be stabilized, justified in her splendour.

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This urge for stability connects with Massey's critique of Harvey being shocked by the different images of the same woman. Certainly what most house/home advertising prior to the 1990s offers is the stability of heterosexual partnership within the context of a place called home – this is the lifestyle offered by the products advertised. This cultural meaning, McCracken (1986:71) claims; "is drawn from the object and transferred to an individual consumer."

The following advertisements make explicit links between home-related products and enduring (monogamous) heterosexuality. In Fig.16 the dominant discourse is how long the linen lasts; "long-lasting," "never again will you settle for anything less," "it's lovely - it lasts." The happy couple in both advertisements infers that the creation of what is 'home' revolves around the construction of a lasting heterosexual relationship as much as around household products. It is the perceived (and desirable) enduring quality of the relationship which confers meaning to the product and vice versa.

Figure 16: Household Linen[62]

Figure 17: To Have and to Hold[63]

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[62] *Australian House and Garden* February 1965
[63] *Australian House and Garden* 1964

The man is the giver of the oven which is - "impressive to give," the woman the receiver whereby it is - "a thrill to receive". The "value to have and to hold," "[H]appiness to have and to hold... " echoes meanings implicit in the advertisement for "long-lasting" Irish linen. There was much laughter when women in the focus group read the text accompanying the 'To Have and to Hold' advertisement; the words "every time you pass it, open it, use it," "from boil down to gentle simmer" were seen as a sexually metaphorical double entendre. Relationships between advertising and sexuality are outlined by Jackson (1993:11);

> The way in which individuals come to experience sexuality in terms of maleness and femaleness is a structured process. The experience of pleasure and fulfilment is articulated differently for the two sexes. This difference, though it may be expressed in terms of complementarity, is structured by a power differential. Masculinity builds on aggressiveness, activity, a desire to control, and femininity on passivity, narcissism and receptiveness. The new expectations of fulfilment rested on a particular construction of sexuality which is extended through consumption.

A number of advertisements use women and mirrors, and one could claim that women looking in a mirror at themselves may be indicative of narcissism, but I would ask how is it that women appear to be narcissistic? I doubt it is a biologically acquired trait; it more likely relates to the argument I posited above whereby women become the object of their own gaze within a context of possible heterosexual (or homosexual) relations. In "Desire" and the following advertisement, for example, women are not actually looking at themselves.

In the advertisement below, while both are mirrored, the double image of the man is hidden by the camera angle. 'Both' women's attention is focused upon the single image of the man and, seeing this advertisement I was reminded instantly of Virginia Woolf's claim that; "Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (1929/1977:41). In this advertisement, at least, the heterosexual content is explicit.

Figure 18: Mirroring[64]

More recent advertising, which relies upon the conjoining of (frivolous) femininity and the house/home, 'clothes' the woman in the textiles of the house.
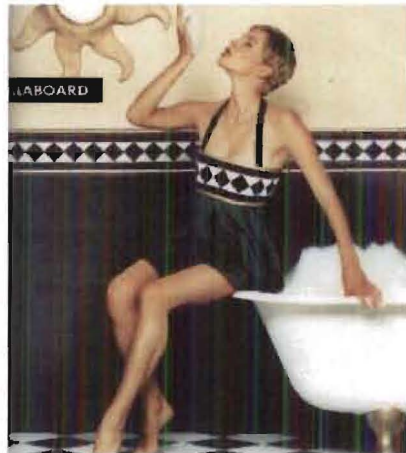
Fig 19: Material Femininity[65]

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[64] *Australian House and Garden* May 1964
[65] *New Zealand House and Garden* March 1999

Wigley (1992:368-9), reminding me of de Beauvoir's earlier claim, suggests that the materiality of the house functions as a mask.

> The textile is a mask which dissimulates rather than represents the structure. The material wall is not more than a prop, a contingent piece of "scaffolding", "foreign" to the production of the building, merely a supporting player, playing the role of support, supporting precisely because it does not play. As its origin is dissimulation, its essence is no longer construction but the masking of construction ... The social subject, like the body with which it is associated, is a production of decorative surface. The idea of the individual can only emerge within the institutions of domesticity established by the construction of the textured surface that is the house ... The highest art form is that which detaches itself from the primitive use of decorative masks but that which most successfully develops that practice by dissimulating even the mechanisms of dissimulation).

The above advertisement is precisely what Wigley describes. The material is but a textured surface, a prop to the institution of domesticity, whereby the woman is not only clothed by the house but is confined within. The mechanism of dissimulation is the gimmicky nature of the advertising, and it is in this sense that advertisement production (the advertising company) becomes part of the dissimulation process.

I referred earlier to the often tenuous relationship between the creative production of advertising and the advertised product; these relationships often remaining unacknowledged in theories of consumption. Gottdiener (1995), in the quote which begins this chapter, alerts us to the cultural and therefore collective base of consumption practices. Baudrillard, too, (in Poster, 1988:46) establishes the link between consumption and production stating:

> The truth about consumption is that it is *a function of production* and not a function of pleasure, and therefore like material production is not an

individual function but one that is *directly and totally* collective ... Although we experience pleasure for ourselves, when we consume we never do it on our own (the isolated consumer is the carefully maintained illusion of the *ideological* discourse on consumption). Consumers are mutually implicated, despite themselves, in a general system of exchange and in the production of coded values ...

The collective activities of production and consumption of house/home related products accounts for the repetition of themes and the linking of particular constructions of men and women which form discernible patterns in advertising.

Homeownership is a collective experience in many ways, and although I have pointed out that different class positions impact upon the quality and quantity of purchases, nearly all houses (in New Zealand) are designed around different functional areas. These are, in turn, associated with different members of the household at different times of the day or night. What I am arguing is that these patterns of representation are based upon the physical and social realities of the place and space of house/home and the ways in which these are, more or less, gendered, as well as based upon socio-economic resources.[66] These claims are also discernable in fictional writing, for example, Ann McCrae (1988:51-52) in *Awful Childhoods* describes Christine's fridge.

The fridge began clacking ... you had to shout to compete with Old Thunderer. One third of its bulk was taken up by its motor. A tiny freezer held one tray of ice cream or one small packet of frozen peas; but not both. Old Thunderer (obtained free through Trade and Exchange by Nick and repaired by him) dated back to the early fifties. Once, Chris had mused hopefully that in a few more years they might unload it for good money as an antique to MOTAT or a collector.

Women in the focus group identified some of the pressures which act upon women to update their kitchen appliances. Apart from the resources women need to access these

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[66] Quantitative research looking at the time each household member spends in each room and the activities carried out there would be an interesting adjunct to the qualitative approach I have taken. The Women's Affairs Department (Government) has released the preliminary findings of a time-use survey which, if completed earlier, may have been useful in the context of this project. Where possible I have referred to this preliminary data.

appliances there is also a range of emotions that go with the ways in which appliances work or do not work, and either increase or reduce work. In chapter ten I unravel some of the complexity associated with 'emotion work,' and outline how women learn through emotive experiences. In the excerpts below one can 'read in' the kinds of emotional responses to different products, as well as the practicalities, in the same way as we can in the above excerpt from *Awful Childhoods*.

Sharon: I'm thinking about the cleanliness of it all really, the cleanliness is amazing.

Alexa: Ah yes, but then, what went before was stuff that was really difficult to keep clean, very complicated, knobbly and dust-catching, fairly rudimentary, unaesthetic-looking stuff quite often. Until these new products came in nobody thought there might be something better, but once there was something better then suddenly they all became very desirable things.

Sharon: Kind of presenting the woman as, somehow you want to be more efficient, just want to be better at doing that same ... than somebody next door, you want to be the best.

Lucy: And now you're allowed to desire efficiency because you haven't got much time because you're out working or you're out partying, or flying off to the Mediterranean or something. In those days efficiency was a sort of status thing. But I'm sure women were delighted to have things that were really easy to clean.

Alexa: But it's the convenience of modern appliances and things, I mean, the immense excitement when somebody got something new like that and you'd 'oh and ah', and nowadays everybody's got all these amazing wonderful gadgets.

Sharon: I don't think it necessarily freed up women's time as it was supposed to and the free time ... you're to please the man who came home, and to make the children look beautiful and so efficiency didn't necessarily free up a woman and give her more time for herself, really. I don't know ... I wasn't there, I don't know.

However, it is not always easy to distinguish between consumption activities as ideological or motivated by purposeful and/or negotiated choices within wider societal contexts, and questions relating to second-hand 'consumption' seem not to

arise.[67] Despite this latter hiatus, consumer theory endorsing relationships between individual agency and/or the collective nature of both production and consumption provide a lens though which to understand how physical and social structures impact upon experiences of self and power relations.

This discussion returns us to the quote from de Grazia (1996) whereby she claims that women, "because of the patriarchal organization and the semiotics of mass consumption" are exploited by commercial culture, especially given their role in "the household division of labour and as reified objects in the commodity exchange system." One way in which to challenge both consumption theory and the representation of women in advertising is to broaden the meaning of 'consumption' whereby consumption also refers to the ways in which purchases are used and/or altered for use for or on behalf of others in the household, and to identify who carries out these activities. In this sense consumption refers not to leisure with which it is so often aligned - especially for women - but to work.

5.6 Consumption Work

There are three issues related to what I call consumption work. The first is the effect of physically separating the places of house/home and paid work. The second is the way in which money is implicated in assigning value to certain kinds of work, and the third is the way in which women's house/home consumption work can be tied into identity formation. This discussion will be followed by a vignette of 'the kitchen' which attempts to bring together the ideas contained in this chapter with the experiences of some of the women interviewed.

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[67] See Herrmann (1996) whose paper *Women's Exchange in the U.S. Garage Sale* focuses on the social processes of economic exchange by women engaging in neighbourhood garage sales. Herrmann argues that items are often sold at a price based on the perceived need of the buyer, or in some instances are given away.

The separation of house/home from the paid workplace has meant that house/home, especially in the context of life style – the focus of contemporary advertising - is seen as the site of leisure activities.[68] Consumption has been theorized more often as a leisure, rather than a work activity. "In a world where all values turned on production, consumption was also damned as "nonwork." (De Grazia 1996:16). Ahrentzen (in Altman & Lowe 1992) argues that "[B]ecause men did not associate home with work, they also failed to associate women with work" (119). Ahrentzen also regards money as crucial in defining what is work and what is not work.

> When money solely determines our notions about value, and when work is what one does outside the home, then women's labours are defined outside the system, subsequently devalued in a society dominated by market production (ibid).[69]

Just as men's identity formation is often closely associated with (paid), production-oriented occupations, Cross (1993) argues that women's identity formation is related to house/home in that consumption activities are 'self-production,' and entail work rather than leisure.

> ... because domestic consumption was for many women inextricably bound with labour rather than leisure, the anthropologist's claim that consumption is 'self-production' can best be applied to female homemakers. For men, consumption was inevitably more passive and ... bound to wage earning experience ... time and goods at home had hardly the same compensatory role for many women as they did for the working male provider. Homemakers largely accepted these obligations to shape the uses of goods and time for breadwinners and children; this was surely central to an emerging modern 'feminine mystique' ... Without considerable housework, domestic goods could not be endowed with social and personal meanings nor could home become an alternative to wage-earning routine. The division between male providers and female domestic consumers was the foundation of the harmonious balance of time and money, of acquiesence to discipline in

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[68] Refer to chapter four where Ferguson claims that the modern image of the suburban home was an escape from the city sphere of paid employment.

[69] See Waring (1988) who along with Cross and others, argues that the reproductive labour carried out in the house/home is vital to the maintenance of the productive sphere and a capitalist economic system.

wage and home work for a consumerist freedom (167-168).

'Self-production' does not necessarily arise directly from the act of purchasing but from the ways in which purchasers are instrumental in purchasing on behalf of others and transforming goods for further (often communal) consumption within the house/home. However, it appears that Cross defines women's consumption work – on behalf of others – as offering an identity 'true' to women's self-perception. The simplicity of this is echoed by Miles and Paddison (1998:1006-7) who write about the "consuming paradox."

> On the one hand, in terms of people's individual experience, consumption appears to have a powerful personal appeal in the sense that intuitively individuals feel that they fulfil themselves through what they consume ... On the other hand, they simply cannot escape the fact that consumption plays some form of an ideological role in actually **controlling** the character of everyday urban life. In effect, consumption is, at one and the same time, psycho-socially constraining **and** enabling.

It seems to me that the difference between Cross and Miles and Paddison is the way in which they define consumption. I agree with Cross in that activities of transformation of goods contributes to identity formation, but it seems this aspect of consumption needs to be **explicit** rather than implicit as it appears in the excerpt from Miles and Paddison, although I agree with their concept of consumption as controlling of everyday life. It is the transforming of goods that entails work – as does the purchasing in certain contexts – and it appears transformation processes are not explored, either theoretically or empirically in the ways in which consumption is written about in academia.

Miles' and Paddison's theorising is not dissimilar to the advertising which suggests possibilities for feminine fulfillment through house/home consumption, but which is clearly not representative of women's experiences and/or practices. Cross, while acknowledging that women's consumption activities - many of which are on behalf of others - may well be defined as work rather than leisure (although some

shopping does qualify as leisure) also suggests that that the work and consumption interrelationship – for women – is more likely to be incorporated into a female identity, suggesting that in a house/home context the formation of women's relational identity is inevitable.

Even if writing solely about the experience of purchasing as consumption, the ways in which women talk about their experiences makes it clear that different consumption activities are dependent upon financial resources, time, and the nature of involvement with others and these do not remain consistent. Women's responses to being asked how they felt about shopping for themselves varied.

Margaret: Good, sometimes a drag.

Delia: Moods change, sometimes enjoyable, some times a chore.

Enjoyment was sometimes curtailed by guilt.

Belle: I love it, especially if it's clothing but I always think about the money I've spent when it comes time to pay the mortgage repayments.

Sue: Guilty usually, particularly if it's for clothes. I have this thing about clothing my son first. Clothes are a necessity. I feel less guilty about buying (more expensive) collectables which are essential for me.

Individual consumption – on behalf of oneself – is not necessarily fulfilling. Weighing up resources, responsibilities and the needs of others affects individual consumption opportunities. While Roxanne and I agreed that there are more consumption opportunities (for those who are financially well-off) in the 1990s than previously, there are still constraints as circumstances change.

Roxanne: Well look, now not many people think twice before saying let's go and have something to eat, go out and have a cup of coffee and that's what I was saying to T (daughter who is almost due to have her first baby) yesterday. When you come to be on one wage there'll be no more let's just go and have lunch 'cause it cost her seven dollars for lunch.

Unlike shopping for oneself, all five women said they enjoyed shopping for others.

Belle: Partner – love it! He usually spends most of his money on maintenance of the house or toys like (motor) bikes etc, so it is quite nice to buy him personal items.

Sue: I like buying things for my son. Birthday presents for extended family can put pressure on the finances, as can present for birthday parties my son is invited to.

Delia: [I] like shopping for family and friends, particularly grandchildren.

Supermarket shopping, though, did not fall into this category.

Sue: A chore and a bore. I go in with a list and am out of there as fast as possible. It's a necessity which lessens its enjoyability.

Delia: can't always be bothered.

Belle: Hate it! Rat race of women bashing trolleys into each other and all wanting to get out within ten minutes.

How women carry out and experience consumption-related activities, which includes the ways in which goods are transformed, depends very much on the social and economic relations in which they are embedded. Lily, a sole parent of three teenagers, wrote in her diary:

Grocery shopping – this is not fun, only have $80 this week to fill the cupboards for the week. Maybe if I was not taxi-driving all these kids here and there and feeding them every weekend I could get ahead.

Women labelled supermarket shopping as work, not leisure, and most supermarket shopping required further transformative work. It seems to me that consumption-based theoretical writing in relation to the house/home is narrowly focused on what could be called life-style, which, in this context, I define as a stylistic way of living over definable periods of time during which individuals and/or households exercise choice or have the **perception** of exercising choice. This definition returns us to

the art of dissimulation articulated by Wigley and the question of agency versus constructionism.

I believe that contemporary advertising which more often leaves the spaces of the house/home empty of inhabitants builds on preceding depictions of the sex/gender allocation of spaces and activities within the house/home as often as it 'allows' for alternatives, for example, gay households. While consumption choices in the 1990s seem endless, what has been, or is available at any one time - house design, furniture and paint, garden accessories and household appliances – is limited. So, too, are activities and behaviours linked to sex/gender and the place we call home. While the preceding sections in this chapter have concentrated on the artifice of constructing 'woman,' the following kitchen vignette illustrates the interactive nature of history, social action and material culture and the ways in which we live out these connections in contemporary everyday experiences.

5.7 The Kitchen

Design developments postwar, it may be said, represent an inherited legacy of Victorian fastidiousness with cleanliness - moral and physical - which resulted in partitioning areas of the house according to their different functions; cooking and/or body smells were deemed offensive. For example, preparation of food and the associated smells of cooking were separated from the activity of dining; eating in the kitchen was seen as undesirable as Matrix argue (1985:87):

> Design guides describe the kitchen as the 'work centre' of the house - once the realm of the domestic servants in the more affluent Victorian houses, it is assumed to be the realm of the housewife. ... The guides recommend that the kitchen be a separate room designed to make cooking and serving food as efficient and convenient as possible, without the rest of the family and especially visitors being able to see, hear, or smell them.

Eating in the kitchen was seen as a working-class habit, therefore the different use of space would engineer (desirable) middle-class practices. The housewife's role was to manage the house and behaviours of inhabitants. Jon Craig, a Wellington architect interviewed for this project, articulated the legacy of the separation of spaces for one woman's experience.

... like M who came from a family background, did what Mum told her, got influenced by what all her Queen Margaret[70] friends told her. They had to have a separate dining-room, separate this, separate that, and they wonder why the houses won't bloody work. Because life's not like that, life's changing from Victorian times when we had servants but there's still huge numbers of women out there who cling to that. It's mainly the women - do what Mum does.

Jon Craig's comments refer to New Zealand's middle to upper class experience, and illustrate the changes in thinking needed once servants were no longer part of the social hierarchy and women were expected to carry out not only household managerial roles but the essential duties of cleaning and cooking. These expectations to some degree blurred class divisions. Craik (in Allan & Crow, 1989) argues that the management skills associated with 'keeping a kitchen' (for middle and upper classes) gave way to a view of the 'modern woman' along with a more stream-lined and efficient - and separate - kitchen. The kitchen below is described as "modern," and also demonstrates the expectation that only one person will be working in it.

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[70] Queen Margaret College is a girls' private school in Wellington, New Zealand.
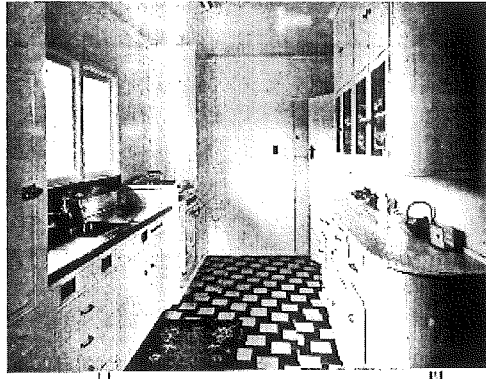
Figure 20: Your Kitchen[71]

While it is argued that changing fertility and employment patterns for women have lead to changes in the ways in which household space is interpreted and used, Ellen in her interview, identifies with earlier house/kitchen designs and the expectations that the wife/mother would be the only person to use the kitchen. While the first excerpt illustrates the way in which cooking is no longer seen as an activity that needs to be separated from the living areas of the house, when the kitchen remains a small space (as it often is in apartments and town houses) the overall effect is to lessen the isolation, but the work – and who does it – is not necessarily altered.

Well, the thing I like particularly here, I've got this extended table which can fit ten people around, but a little kitchen I might add and which might not cater that well for ten people, but, my friends can sit here on the chair and I talk to them, and I can actually cook a proper meal.

Ellen's previous experience of kitchens illustrates her perception that a kitchen need only be big enough for one person to work in. She described the different houses she had lived in.

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[71] *Building Progress* August 1948

We had .. you came in through a big hallway and the kitchen was there and that was a small kitchen, and I feel small kitchens are more useful for one person to work in ...

And another house -

... and then a huge kitchen which was canary yellow; it was awful, it was just revolting so that was the first thing I got painted and wall-papered and it made a big difference but it was still a big, big kitchen and no real use to anybody that way ...

Ellen's words recall those of Wigley (1992:340) whereby "[S]he is domesticated by internalizing the very spatial order that confines her" . It appears that Ellen throughout her married life was the only person to 'use' the kitchen. Matrix, writing about the relationship between the kitchen and the wife/mother, also articulate the experience of Ellen above:

> The kitchen is categorized as a space which does not change as the family develops. Preparing food is not a sociable activity in which everyone can participate, and the kitchen is designed to be used by one person -the wife and mother. ... she is assisted only by a range of consumer durables ... (87).

The responsibility for kitchen-related activities – purchasing, storing, preparing and cooking food – was also articulated by women.

Tracey: Tied up with being a woman is feeding and nurturing children ... make sure there's food in the house, make sure they eat.

Susan: We went together shopping and he would buy things on impulse and they would sit in the fridge and go soggy.

Ann: Are these kinds of activities associated with home-making?

Susan: Yes, seeing there's a good selection , good selection of food, reserves in the freezer and in the pantry.

It is interesting to note how advertising discourses in relation to kitchens has changed from the 1960s to the 1990s. In the 1964 *Australian House and Garden* a feature on kitchens identified the woman as the person in the kitchen. The feature entitled: "These Kitchens Do Everything" (40) has this opening:

> Do you love making sponges and pavlovas? How many lunches do you cut each day? How tall are you? What ages are your children? All these questions may seem personal and unnecessary, but every woman needs to answer them if she's to have the ideal kitchen she dreams about.

In this advertisement the kitchen is undeniably associated with women's family commitments. In contrast to this earlier advertising, present day advertising focuses more on style, materials and function, and targets a 'universal consumer.' In *New Zealand Home and Garden* Oct/Nov 1996 a kitchen feature entitled "Town and Country" states; "[S]treamlined or rustic, today's kitchens are stylish, functional places". One kitchen reflects "the client's desire for a French provincial-style kitchen ..." and two further kitchens belong to a man and woman respectively, the first designed by Michael Davies of Interface Architecture and the second was designed for a Wellington caterer Ruth Pretty who "was precise about the requirements of her home kitchen, which is also used as a venue for cooking classes and when catering ..." In contemporary advertising the "designer kitchen" is the focus, and the needs of specific people are related to their life style and occupation. This kind of advertising reflects the claims of consumer theory which sees advertising as the creation of desire for a particular lifestyle, something an individual can become if they have the right products associated with a particular style.

Jon Craig's response to a question about the possible impact of gender differences on design is that it is not always women who make the decisions about kitchen design, but implicit in his text is the expectation that they *should* know what is required.

Women are really interesting in terms of gender when you get to things like kitchens – they go all sort of hot and cold, they go into a sheer panic and you say what sort of oven are you going to get and they say oh I don't know; what size fridge do you need and do you want a dishwasher - and normally the woman has a major role in the kitchen, but it's not general, there are men who have absolute criteria and so it's a mixture.

While women may be expected to have a "major role in the kitchen," what Jon Craig introduces here, and what is also implicit in present day kitchen advertising is the presence of technology. However, women's involvement is restricted in subtle ways, and the panic Jon Craig talks about could result from the ways in which women are expected to be 'kitchen-literate' but 'a-technological.'

Figure 21: Hats and Gloves[72]

This could well arise from the ways in which, as Cockburn (1997:364)[73] claims, real women are not part of the design process. She writes:

> If the user has so far remained ineffectively a foreigner to the design team, how can they be sure she will use the product properly? A great deal of team consultation and effort goes into designing the "affordances," what actions the machine can perform and the controls

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[72] *Australian House and Garden* May 1959
[73] Cockburn (1997) makes the distinction between whiteware and brownware, the latter being more sophisticated and the realm of men's expertise and leisure, while whiteware belongs in the realm of women and is associated with work.

that activate them. They do their best to ensure that these are self-evident, "speak for themselves," encourage proper behaviour, make disobedience or error impossible. The men have to imagine for this purpose the most unintelligent and catastrophic-prone woman.

It is clear from the analysis of earlier advertisements (1948, 1964) - not so much present day house and garden magazine advertisements - that women's involvement was restricted to 'doing and using', but with limited knowledge about the technology incorporated into certain forms of mechanisation.

Despite social and demographic changes between the 1940s and 1990s, the changes in the ways house/home and associated products are advertised, the discourses identified remain, although they may take a different form. For example, a Gib Wallboard company who manufacture housing materials base their advertising (television and magazine) on their finding that women make most of the decisions about housing/home, tailoring their advertising to women. There are clearly similarities between the earlier doll's house advertisement and this information booklet cover.
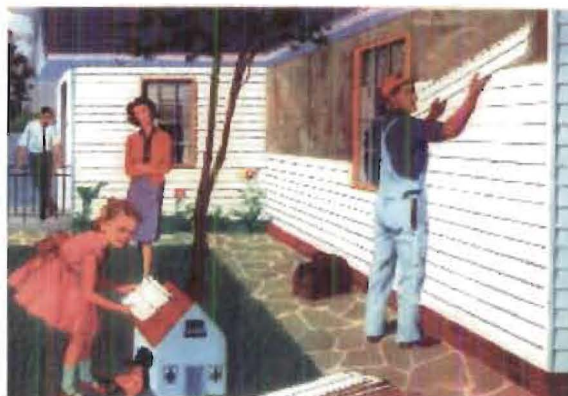
Figure 22: Doll's House 1[74]

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[74] Australian House and Garden February 1965

Figure 23: Doll's house 2[75]

As Gottdiener and Baudrillard stated, the effects and activities of consumption need to be seen within a context of historical, social and economic production. I have demonstrated how sex/gender is an integral part of such production, and while the women in the 'advertising' focus group were able to deconstruct the sexed/gendered nature of advertising this does not mean they are exempt from its contemporary effects. I have used Ellen's experience to show how the space of the kitchen may continue to be presented as woman's space, despite changes in design, size and relationship to other rooms.

At the same time I do not claim this is the experience of all women, nor even that of all the women interviewed. This socio-semiotic analysis of advertising has illustrated both construction of spatially constituted sex/gendered identities as well as women's resistance to those constructions. At the same time it must be

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[75] Gib Living Solutions Getting the home you really want (advertising brochure)

remembered that this chapter is not supposed to stand alone as some kind of discrete story/claim. Within the context of intertextuality, this is one contribution to the overall claim of this thesis – that women's identity formation is spatially constituted and experienced through the house/home.

I have also claimed in this and preceding chapters that, in New Zealand, the spatiality of house/home is a crucial ingredient in constructing heterosexuality as the norm. Given that houses/homes – and associated products – are ostensibly designed around the concept of the nuclear family – mum, dad and two kids – one of the dominant narratives of women interviewed was one of difference, of 'women alone.' The following section of the thesis marks the point of moving from a predominantly constructionist view of house/home as implicated in women's identity formation to the relating of women's own experiences and how these conform to, or disrupt prior understandings.

Part Two: Women's Narratives

This first three chapters in this second section of the thesis draw on material from interview transcripts, and as I have stated in part one, when many of these transcripts were read as a whole I could identify overarching - or dominant - narratives. The narratives I have identified are as follows: Woman/Women Alone, The 'Good-Enough-Mother', and Transitions. While these were **narratives** in common, the **experiences** and **stories** of women were tremendously varied. Variations were related to different life stages and trajectories, employment and socio-economic situations, and relationships. Many of the stories women (as individuals and as a group responding to others) told within the focus group discussions were related to the stories and narratives which were identified in individual interviews and I have used the focus group material as an adjunct.

In this sense there is an intertextual link between the stories and narratives, as there is between the different sections of this thesis. In each chapter I pull out individual stories which form these narratives; these stories illustrate the differences between women despite narratives in common. Alongside these stories are excerpts from contemporary fiction (that is, women's writing in and of the nineties) which correspond to the stories of women interviewed.

I stated earlier that I thought the writing of the nineties was more prolific and different to that of previous decades where the emphasis appeared to be on gender roles. I identified Scanlan as writing within a romantic genre, while other writers like Hyde, Frame and Kidman wrote against the ways in which space and gender fell into binary constructions, for example home/femininity and private/public. The stories of the women interviewed as well as the fiction which sits alongside these stories, indicates a move from thinking just in terms of roles. Both explore the active constitution of individual subjectivity within a changing world where the

hierarchical nature of binary oppositions lacks explanatory power. Bronwyn Davies (1992:69) writes of the process of finding new story lines, stating:

> It is the culture that has destructive narratives through which identity and desire are organised. The task becomes one of looking for and generating new story lines. It is also one of discovering what the "hooks" are in the images and metaphors of the old story lines that can draw individual women in against their better judgement. In this postmodern version of the relation between lived and imaginary narratives, imagined stories are a valuable resource because they may hold a key to disrupting and decentering old discourses and narratives, to unstitching and fraying the patterns of desire that are held within them.

The 'domestic' metaphor of "unstitching and fraying" is useful in the context of the kinds of changes experienced by fictional women as well as those of women interviewed. In both cases women articulate past contexts of present day experience, but at the same time, they disrupt and decentre earlier discourses through redefining the old and articulating new experiences.

However, the different stories, despite being in common narratives, still demand contextualisation. This I attempt to do by framing these within relevant theoretical and/or historical-social discussions. These discussions are, to some extent, contingent on part one of this thesis, and I would ask the reader to keep in mind the strong cultural imperatives for home ownership, suburban development and the ways in which this has been associated with the suburban nuclear family, based on the norm of heterosexuality with its attendant roles and power relations.

Throughout these stories I hope to retain women's sense of agency, recalling Reissman's words in chapter two, whereby she claimed that "human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded ... how events are plotted and what they are supposed to mean" (1993:2). The ways individuals construct narratives, Reissman suggested, enables them to, "claim identities and construct lives." While I treat these narratives in terms of discrete chapters they are,

nonetheless, interrelated, joined by the "points of disruption" in the relationships between women and their experiences of house/home.

Chapters nine and ten return to the task of theorising women's experiences and I engage with Iris Marion Young's concept of home as a critical value and recent theory on the sociology of emotions. In these discussions I revisit interview material and continue to use fiction to provide examples of how these theoretical perspectives are useful within the context of the stated aims of this thesis, before the final concluding chapter.

Chapter Six

'Woman/Women Alone'

6.1 Introduction

The 'woman/women alone' narrative demonstrates the kinds of connections women make between housing decisions, the ability to create home and their financial and/or relationship situations. Heather's stories arise from being outside the norm in her employment situation as well as 'outside' a heterosexual relationship which she appears to see as conferring financial and emotional support. Tanya and Delia talked of being 'on their own' with children, but Delia's experiences were in the past, and her present situation was one of re-negotiation of a heterosexual relationship. Tanya's experiences were in the present, an in-between time of leaving her marriage and renting a house before trying to find a place of her own. Joan's narrative tells of her decision-making processes and experiences in building a new house and the ways in which she eventually coped 'on her own'. Jeanette, after a childhood of witnessing her father's violence to her mother, left a controlling relationship and rented a Housing New Zealand house for over a decade, not without its own difficulties. As one can see, these narratives arise out very different circumstances; they demonstrate both structural – societal and institutional influences – and individual thought and/or action. Also underpinning these narratives and stories are experiences or expectations of heterosexual relationships, and the power relations within those relationships.

6.2 Heather

Heather's narrative of woman alone consisted of overlapping stories, one of trying to access housing within the context of her work, and the other in relation to being outside the norm of heterosexual partnership which characterized the situations of

most of her friends. Heather's first story cannot be seen without contextualising the broader structural constraints relating to gender and employment; these I outline as an introduction to Heather's story.

6.2.1 Access to Home-Ownership

There are a number of demographic factors identified in the New Zealand 1991 and 1996 census data that reflect and impact upon women's material position in terms of access to, and experience of housing in New Zealand. Despite the increase in women's participation in the paid workforce (51.6 percent of the total workforce), women's income remains less than that of men. There are two reasons for this; women are more likely to be in part time employment (18.5 percent compared to 8.5 percent of all those in paid employment), and while New Zealand has equal employment opportunity legislation we do not have pay equity.[76] Of those receiving an income below $10,000, 62.3 percent were females (37.7 percent were men), and of those earning over $40,000, 22.9 percent were women (77.1 percent were men). Thus women's ability to access finance for housing - on their own – is limited in comparison to men.

Heather's position as a single woman, her occupation as a self-employed aromatherapist (more often seen as 'outside' the norm), combined with the need to use her rented house as workplace[77] contributed to her difficulties in accumulating and/or accessing money to buy a house.

Ann: You said you'd dearly like to buy your own place?

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[76] The Pay Equity Act of 1990 brought in by the Labour Government was repealed in the same year by the incoming National Government.

[77] Heather used to flat with others but found it did not work out. She was working from home and needed to create a private, quiet, pleasant-smelling situation for clients. She was paying $170/week for this house.

Heather: I haven't been able to save any money; it's really hard, that's one of the big things; it's so hard when you're on your own, supporting yourself and you're working for yourself as I am; it makes it difficult to save up any money for a deposit, and the banks aren't great either; they really do, they don't – I think they view you as a liability, they give you a hard time ... it seems a shame – like I can't get a deposit together but I can manage to pay a rent on something like this and I could be paying a mortgage off, it just seems crazy ... I'm quite sceptical about how the banks approach things. They don't know what aromatherapy is, so you get a lot of - they haven't a clue what it is so it means nothing to them.[78] Like I went to have a financial planner go over the business plan with them, and like, my income increased over the three years that I've been working but so's my outgoings have increased more because I'm now living on my own... all the things I've done to promote my business and keep it together – all that means nothing to them, nothing at all, because ultimately they're coming from their point of view as a business and okay it might make a difference if you have something they can take as collateral but I don't have anything and I haven't got a partner to support me or guarantee anything. They don't care that you're reliable, that you pay your bills, that you work hard, whatever, none of that means anything. That's certainly my impression anyway (emphases added).

Marilyn Duckworth (1994) in her short novel *Fooling* also demonstrates how material and economic (work) conditions relating to home ownership can be connected to heterosexual partnerships. Neil is trying to convince Ros to sell her house and buy one with him.

> We could afford it - or something like it - between us.'
> 'How do you mean? Do you have money?
> 'No. But I have a good income, that's the important thing. And I'm a man, that helps.'
> Ros laughs rather unkindly unto her Hokey Pokey.
> 'What are you laughing at? It's true.'
> 'Oh, I know you're a man. But I don't accept that makes it easier to buy a house. I'm the one with the money - the asset anyway.'
> 'The kind of money you have is nothing. Income, that's the point. Men are better paid on the whole and they don't get pregnant. I've never been pregnant once and my bank manager knows it.'

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[78] In earlier conversations with Heather she had talked about the ways in which working within "the modality of the body" was often aligned with illicit sexuality, and it was difficult for her at times to make others see her particular skills as therapeutic rather than sexually oriented.

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'You said property was a hassle. You got rid of your house.'
'It is a hassle unless you know how to deal with the details.'

Duckworth incorporates into her novel the present day structural inequalities of women's position in the labour force, as well as a not-so-subtle depiction of perceived male superiority, both perhaps a legacy of history where home-ownership was seen as the prerogative of the 'family man' whose wages were presumably tailored accordingly. The question of sex/gender discrimination is a tricky one, and in Heather's case it is difficult to separate her occupation as one practised predominantly by women – an occupation 'outside' the norm - and her 'woman alone' status, as influencing banks' decisions, both are likely to be implicated in her situation.

However, even when financially well-resourced, I suggest that women can experience discriminatory – or other - problems in relation to sole ownership. For example, Ellen owned one property but to buy her ownership flat had to access further loan money, and had this to say of her experience.

... to get a loan I had to talk and discuss it with the manager who was about sixteen years younger than me and I find that very hard. In fact he switched from his role as manager, and gave me an older woman of about thirty something and I think we got on at a more sedate level than what I did with him. Just being separated, it was a vulnerable time. I didn't actually think of it at the time but when I look back it was.

The issue of vulnerability, I think, is a very real one for women dealing with male-dominated professions who are in some way gate-keepers, and I am reminded of the real estate sale-person who talked about having power over a single woman with children in the process of finding 'appropriate' housing.[79]

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[79] *Generally people who don't have choice are easy to sell to, the real estate person likes to be in control (male, 30-39 years, 6 months in real estate).*

Throughout her interview Heather continually added more stories to her narrative of being a woman on her own.

I think that, I feel, as a single woman you're definitely at a disadvantage. Definitely – in every way, because you just don't – it makes a huge difference as to how you cope within the community, and I – it's my choice so I'm happy with that choice, but I found, too, that unless you have that support – and I remember talking to my business adviser and the support that you miss is the emotional support; it's actually having someone there saying you're going to be all right, it'll work out.

While it is not clear here if Heather is referring to a perceived need to have a live-in partner it was a situation about which she clearly felt ambivalent. It appeared she would benefit from financial and emotional support, but she refused to be defined as someone who 'needed a man.'

6.2.2 Heather and Heterosexuality

It appeared that Heather saw coupledom as sapping of energy and interfering with women's friendships; the latter an observation I will revisit later in this chapter.

... as I often say to Helen – coupledom rules! And even amongst my friends who get into relationships, you know, I don't see them and their excuse - that's the way I see it, as an excuse – is that a partner takes up a lot of your time and energy, so they just, you know, you have to try so hard to keep in touch with your friends.

In *Fooling* Duckworth (1994:49), also touches on the difficulties articulated by Heather. After moving in with Neil, Ros is reminiscing about 'losing' her neighbour and other previous friends.

> She doesn't forget Josephine. She misses her. She has made other friends in her lifetime but they have a nasty habit of moving north as if they are on some kind of conveyor belt ... chasing 'real' life while Ros is left behind to chase it round the streets of Wellington. She misses Josie, the womble (Josie's unassuming husband), and even the little gooseberries. She has Neil of course, all of Neil - so she believes - in

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exchange for all of her.

There are several issues related to women's friendships. Like Heather, women concentrating on partnerships (in this case without children) may find it difficult to maintain contact with women friends. By contrast women's friendships may sustain heterosexual partnerships, providing alternative means of support, or as we shall see in Tanya's narrative later in this chapter, her husband saw a particular friendship contributing to the marriage break-down. However, Heather's narrative captured the unspoken expectations of heterosexual partnership. It may be that Heather's age – early thirties – was a factor, that she was 'running out of time.'

I remember last year going along to a party and I was the one single woman there ... but I remember I just got looked over by the other women, like it was so obvious they were just sizing me up like I was some kind of potential threat. And it wasn't spoken but it was there. I sensed it very strongly and it's so unfair, and especially if you're my age and a young, thin woman, they definitely think then that you're out there after some man, some poor helpless man, you know, that's going to fall victim to your feminine wiles and all that sort of rubbish, but they would never admit that if you had them on about it, they would never, they would rather die than admit it, but it's true, absolutely true. They can't – like if they knew – bring Heather around and they realise you're an attractive young woman and all of a sudden it's not all right, you know.

Heather's point about women not admitting to seeing her as a threat, I think, builds on my claim that even when we can 'see through' constructions of heterosexual romance, for example, in fiction, movies and in advertising, it does not mean we are immune to the social pressures of being in heterosexual relationships. While Dupuis and Thorns (1996, 1998) suggest that home-ownership may have existed as a rite of passage into adulthood in New Zealand, Heather's and Ros's (fictional) experience, demonstrates how some women, currently, may be **constructed** as dependent on a male partner to move into the home-ownership category.[80] At the

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[80] In fact partners, after marriage dissolution, are the 'major players' in the current housing market. When accessing back-dated issues of the *Realtor* I spoke with S at the Real Estate Institute who said she thought that the first home-buyers as a category were no longer the major buyers of housing. She identified the major group as those leaving relationships where the marital home was sold and two houses instead of

same time Heather's desire to own her own home – have private spaces where she could be creative with design and colour - reflects the dominant ideology of autonomous ownership, rather than communal ownership which may have been a financial alternative for Heather.[81] Finding a house 'on her own' was also a problem for Joan, a woman in her late fifties, despite having considerable financial resources and a secure occupation as a tenured lecturer.

6.3 Joan

Unlike Heather, ownership per se was not a problem for Joan, but the perceived interrelationship of heterosexual partnership and housing formed the reasoning behind allocating Joan's narrative to that of 'woman alone.' Even so, while I have given Joan's narrative this title it is about the process of coping with housing decisions and working things out. Joan's narrative was woven back and forwards between her fear of being alone and how she dealt with that.

... I had a little bit of money coming out of the business ... and I thought well that would be all right if I had a partner, we could share that, and I didn't so it was like this idea that "I need a partner, I want a partner" I don't need a partner, I want to be on my own, you know, and how to just take care of all that. And then I thought what

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one were required, an observation backed up by Roxanne, a real estate company franchise owner - in the real estate business for thirty years.

Well, I think originally it was always your quarter acre ... and everyone had to have one and normally you had one family one house and as the years have gone on we're now having what would have been one family living in one house we've now got two, because they've separated, gone on. I was just doing this thing on a person's house – I met them as a couple, they separated so I sold him a house and her a house ... he got engaged so I sold his fiancee's house, and I sold them a house – together – then they sold that house and bought another and now they're selling again. ... The other side of it was – I sold her a house, then I sold her house again when her mother came and when her mother died I sold that house, then she got engaged and I sold them a house and now she's in real estate so she buys and sells her own houses. But you see, that's the difference in housing from when I first went in it would have stopped there, so it's created a whole new market.

There is inequity, however, between women's and men's subsequent access to housing and housing finance, again related to differences in labour market positions, as well as to child care responsibilities, most of which fall to women.

[81] Even the Housing for Women Trust in Christchurch, in their latest venture, aims at getting women into home-ownership, as individuals, rather than as a collective. This reflects the strong (capitalist) ownership ideology which has existed in New Zealand and in other western countries, for example both the U.K and the U.S.A have rising rates of home ownership.

do I really want. So I looked around at houses and I didn't like the idea of buying in the town now. I started to think differently and I thought why do I want something that someone else has done, what's wrong with building something completely new. And then I went through the panic of – how can I do that on my own, you know, one woman on her own. And I went through that sort of process and how can I manage.

Joan talked about the relationships she developed with the architect and interior decorator and the way she struggled to retain her interpretation and control of her house/home.

What I found I had to know exactly what I was doing, if I left it over at any time it got too unknown, so I had to - that was the masculine part of me I suppose - I missed a partner so I had to do it myself, what's right for me – the logical thing, you know, rather than the intuitive thing. It was just that part of me ... why I saw it as some kind of weakness in me – once I used to take an assertive workshop – are you more comfortable saying yes or no! Where you imagine that you are the man or imagine you are the woman and when I was being the man I felt not strong ...

While Joan's experience of remaining in control is one experienced not just by women, the way in which she articulates this problem draws on essentialist binary oppositions. These she sees as incorporated within her and that different situations require male or female characteristics; an argument similar to Virginia Woolf's claim that when one writes one must be woman-man or man-woman. However, as a sociologist I infer from Joan's comments that she has not had to deal with the process of building and/or furnishing on her own so she was unpractised rather than lacked some kind of innate capability.

The findings of the questionnaires from, and interviews with, real estate salespeople identify sex/gender patterns of house buying decision-making. I asked who, in couple situations, looks for houses.

Women do the fieldwork, men look at a 'short list.' Buying a house is an emotional activity, men try to justify it logically (Male, 30-39 years, 5 years in real estate).

The woman, and if she likes it she brings her husband back - as long as the garage is okay (female, 30-39 years, 3 years in real estate).

Often the woman first, and if she's keen the partner views (male 40-49 years, 1 year in real estate).

Both – quite often the woman makes the initial inquiries (male, 40-49 years, 20 years in real estate).

This initial responsibility for looking for houses often, but not necessarily, spills over into decisions about buying. I asked the real estate salespeople if the person looking made the major decisions about buying.

Quite often, but this decision is normally shared to some degree (male, 40-49 years, 20 years in real estate).

Often this is the case. Men do have criteria which have to be met but it's more definite, for example double garage, good outdoor living, low maintenance (female, 40-49 years, 1 year in real estate).

This last statement, and the second statement above, recall the female-inside, male-outside claim made in relation to advertising material in chapter five.

Depends on age differences. If they're older, men still make the decisions. If the woman likes it she usually gets it. Women are usually able to get it without being obvious (female, 50-59 years, 5 years in real estate).

Again, Joan is an 'older woman' in her late fifties, so she would fit into the category of women deferring, or seeming to defer, to their husbands. This is why I suggest that Joan feels unpractised in this area, she had been used to the experience, and/or the **appearance** of shared decision-making.

Women do, but men think they do. Subtle! (female, 30-39 years, 3 years in real estate).

Men are mostly narrow-minded bigots right across the spheres of age, income etc. They like to dominate, exert their authority. I let them have their say and they feel they have contributed (male, 40-49 years, 10 years in real estate).[82]

The woman makes the decision, but needs to feel the man is going along with her, she 'sells' to the man. Men, if left to their own devices are pretty boring when it comes to houses – needs a woman's touch. You think you're dealing with logic when usually you're dealing with two emotional responses (male, 30-39 years, 5 years in real estate).

This last claim I will return to in chapter ten - that emotion and logic/reason are not separate events, and it is perhaps Joan's allocation of reason and emotion or intuition to sex/gender distinctions that creates for her the problems associated with decision-making.[83]

Delia's 'woman alone' narrative differs from Joan's. Delia does not ponder her ability to cope and/or make decisions; her narrative is one of exercising power. She is able to influence the design of her 'spec house'[84]as well as the behaviours of her children by refusing to accept her experiences of the gender division of labour in her previous house/home.

6.4 Delia

Delia's narrative, while clearly one of 'woman alone' consists of two dominant stories. The first (set in the past) relates to how she managed - on her own – with her four children. The second present-day story is one of ambivalence about being

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[82] This response came from the real estate salesperson/manager who called himself a facilitator. What I found interesting was that he only agreed to see me if he "liked the look of me," that he doesn't deal with people he doesn't like. To me he appeared as both bigoted and authoritative!

[83] The relationship between real estate agents' own sex/gender position (and/or their belief systems in relation to sex/gender issues) are likely to influence the ways in which they engage with clients, especially given that all the salespeople interviewed believed women and men sell houses in different ways.

[84] 'Spec'(ulation) houses are those built by a builder in the belief that they will be relatively easily sold for a quick profit.

'on her own,' but is also about resistance to the 'romance myth,' a resistance I suggest arises partly from her position as a mortgage-free home-owner.[85]

6.4.1 Structural decisions

After looking at ten to fifteen houses Delia saw *"this spec house."*

And I said now just leave the bare walls, just leave all the chipboard floors – just a couple of coats of lacquer on it, so that's what I did and I finished it off myself about ten years ago. And I asked if he could make the breakfast bar twice as wide with an overhang, because I've got four children and they can sit up there. I got the feel about it – a big kitchen, a fairly good-sized lounge so we weren't all on top of each other, a separate shower – I thought that'll be good for the boys, won't hold the bathroom up for my daughter and me.

Women interviewed both individually and in focus groups talked about a house "feeling right" or "working well." I suspect that both phrases are mutually inclusive. Delia, in contrast to Joan, though, had no hesitation in formulating what she wanted, although her decisions were based upon making the house work for five, whereas Joan had only herself to consider; she had more choices than did Delia, both financially and creatively. Delia's story of bringing up her four children 'on her own' was also one of empowerment, but empowerment that did not come without a struggle.

6.4.2 Mother Alone

As with some of the other women interviewed Delia's experience of parenting alone appeared to begin **within** the marital situation. In comparing her sons's adult behaviour with that of her husband, Delia provides a critique of the gender division

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[85] Delia in the marital property settlement got nine flats in Merivale (a high socio-economic area) which she sold to buy her house, but while she was mortgage-free she "hadn't much cash flow," especially when the twins were at secondary school, having "to buy two of everything at the same time."

of labour within the house/home and the generational differences reminiscent of those in the fiction of chapter four and the advertising of chapter five.

And the things that I, the ideals that I've placed into them, especially the boys, have paid off now in their marriages. Because I've been on my own for 23 years, and when they were all little I said to them, right! I'm on my own and it's not your fault, but we've all got to pull together. Now, we all sleep in sheets, we all eat off plates, we all wear undies, so we'll all do a bit of cooking and cleaning and things – And it's paid off now, 'cause there was that era of men, wasn't there, that just didn't do anything. And I was married to one, and he didn't even want to know what the children were doing and the kitchen and children and washing and mundane things were my department and he expected to be waited on with everything so I thought, no, I'm not going to be like that.

The ways in which Delia felt empowered to challenge previous sexed/gendered expectations also extended to her present day situation in trying to redefine expectations of co-habitation within a heterosexual relationship. While I suggest this redefinition arose partly from her housing and financial independence, the 'empty house' at times was something Delia found hard.

6.4.3. Ambivalence

This story is one of ambivalence about being on her own and/or being in a relationship.

... I would love to have someone coming home to me; I get sick of living by myself. ... I met this guy and we went out about 15 months and then I went to live with him and rented this (house) out, but it didn't really work because he had very different ideals about little! things like money. I'm very careful about money, I like to have the bills paid. ... I had a bad marriage where I was pushed aside and I really care for this guy and we still keep in touch on the phone. I know he cares for me and I care for him but I'm not prepared to live like that. He can't understand it; he thinks if you love someone you'll stay with them and I said no ... I hate living on my own, but it's better to live on your own and be lonely than to live in a situation that isn't suitable to you.

Because I was on my own all those years and then because I lived with this guy, now I'm back here on my own, I've done a lot of thinking about [this] - what do

I want in life, what are my ideas, my thoughts on everything, and I find I quite often sit and think well, you know, this is nice; I've got all the things around me that I have and like and I feel comfortable here, but it's like a jigsaw puzzle. There's one piece that's missing, but is that piece going to fit perfectly or is that piece going to be completely missing or if there's another piece that doesn't quite fit in properly. Then I think maybe, well, I've got all the things around here that I want, maybe the thing that I want isn't going to work completely and utterly, but maybe I can have a friend who'll come and visit me and that'll be part way there, whether it ends up in a couple of years as living together or whether it won't, but I'm going to, but I'm going to have the security of my own home and my own space, and I can be on my own, but if I want to be with him he can come over and we can cook a meal, watch T.V. go for a drive whatever, but I still come back to my environment.

It seems to me that Delia, within the **context** of housing/home articulates the desire to have a (complementary) male partner to share her life, but she is also resistant to sharing her space, especially with someone who does not share her respect for money.

Her ambivalence and the ways in which she articulates being on her own, I think, arise from the ways in which mutually defined housing and heterosexual relationships are deeply inscribed into our culture. In Fiona Kidman's novel (1997) *The House Within* - the title of which is significant[86], the house is a metaphor for Bethany's sexed and sexualised body as well as existing as a symbol of the power relations of heterosexuality. The final paragraph captures the same kind of ambivalence expressed by Delia, and although I have not included material that links Delia's sexuality with that of Kidman's Bethany, towards the end of her interview she made it quite clear that the relationship with N was as much about a sexual relationship as it was about companionship.

> That year, that summer when Anna went to live in the commune, was
> the first year Bethany found herself living alone. Alone, that is, in the

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[86] I make the assumption that the title of Kidman's book sets up at the very beginning the metaphorical linking of a woman's body (Bethany's) and the house/home. See also Vivienne Jepsen's (1994) novel *The House of Olaff Krull.*

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sense that there was no man living in her house. Her husband, Peter, had left her the previous winter. He said he felt trapped ... Now she rose each day, her eyes red and heavy, to the demands of two small sons. At the end of the day she read them stories and put them to bed on her own and couldn't think where the hours had gone. When their lights were turned out, the house was so quiet she could hear herself breathe. After a while, she thought, the pain wouldn't kill her ...

'I should make some wine' she said to Gerald, the man she had begun to see. It was his idea. She hadn't been looking for a man, but she liked the habit of sex ... Bethany thought she was falling in love with him but it was hard to tell whether it was just the desire to fill the odd empty places in her house (59-60).

Here, Kidman explicitly defines the 'woman alone' as the woman without a heterosexual partner, something Duckworth (1994) also draws attention to in *Fooling*. Like Delia, Ros is ambivalent about a relationship with Neil, his insistence that she should sell her house and buy one with him. "They are parked overlooking the sea and the suburb where Ros's house sits modestly decaying – if he is right – under its skirts" (43). The analogy between house and 'woman' is quite clear; both are liable to 'decay' without a man's presence.

I claimed earlier that Delia's financial independence was implicated in her choice to remain in her own (freehold) home and this claim was based upon the following answer to the question as to whether she had considered selling her house when she was living with N.

No. I thought no, I wouldn't burn my bridges. I've always been like that, looked after my affairs, made sure I've covered myself every way I can. ... for me, this is huge security for me, partly financial and because it is mortgage free, but partly too, because it's where I've been living for the last 23 years. It's mine and all the things around me and no-one can come in and say take that away or get rid of that, or that's silly over there, or why have you put the fridge over there and getting your hackles up a bit and saying 'no, it's all right where it is.'

I would suggest that Delia's ambivalence is a result of struggling with wanting to retain her financial independence and autonomy over her space, as well as having someone with whom to share her house. Delia's interview material and the excerpt

from Kidman's book resonate, too, with Beryl Fletcher's (1993) [87] *The Iron Mouth* in which she suggests that women find it difficult to define themselves outside of house/home related heterosexual relationships. She weaves this claim into her novel, linking women's inability to define self with their dependence on the male subject.

> So much has become clear to me in the past few months. The loss of identity that occurs when a woman becomes detached from a man through death or desertion. Of course, men suffer too. They lose the comfort of the domestic hearth. But do men lose their identity? I think not.
> **We don't have the right words**. Identity is far too superficial to describe the loss of this deeply held truth of the constructed female self; the hero serves as the gates and walls of Troy, the last bastion of protection. Of course this safety is more symbolic than real. The confusion that women feel over domestic violence is grounded on the erroneous belief that belonging to one man serves as a form of protection against the marauding savages outside the city wall. I thought modern women were free, especially women like us (248) (emphasis added).

While Delia sees herself as 'free' she remains ambivalent about remaining 'on her own.' Delia did mention being a victim of psychological violence and while I do not want to minimise her experience, Jeanette's narrative of woman alone is a direct consequence of her experiences of domestic violence and the stories which make up this narrative follow later in this chapter.

I have also suggested that there were similarities between the stories of Delia and Tanya despite the generational differences between them. Tanya's story is similar to Delia's second story in that it revolves around parenting alone, but it is also similar to Delia's last story in that it is a story in the process of construction, a story more of the present than the past. In both cases, though, we can see how the two

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[87] Fletcher draws attention to the lack of words available to describe women's experience in the same way as Romines (1992) in chapter two alluded to "unwritten texts."

women weave back and forth, reminding us of Plummer's claim that we "engage in fitting together lines of activity around stories," and Reissman's assertion of constructing relationships between past and present events "although the links may not always be chronological."[88]

6.5 Tanya

Tanya's stories revolve around motherhood and caring for two learning-delayed children, and while she thought of herself as 'on her own' her reasons for leaving her husband in Wellington and returning to Christchurch were not only related to difficulties within the marriage – some of which related to parenting issues – but the need to return to a supportive and familiar neighbourhood. Like Delia it appeared that she was doing most of the parenting inside the marriage.

He's a very loyal person and although it's a really positive thing for him, it's been a downfall for us because he was so loyal to his work, and he was loyal to his soccer team, and he was loyal to everything else and in being so damn loyal to everyone else, you know, I think we just took a back seat. You know, he always used to say well my job pays me and that's what keeps us alive and so, you know, they were his priorities.

Back in Christchurch with her two children Tanya described how she was feeling.

I'm much stronger ... before all this, I didn't even know whether I could do it or not because I've never ever been on my own before, let alone with two children. I never even flatted or anything like that so I think it was something I wanted to prove to myself also.[89] Hey! I can do it and like, you always imagine you marry for ever, but there's always that little thing at the back of your mind thinking

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[88] See also Janet Mancini Billson's (1998) book *The Keepers of the Culture* where she states that social scientists have had difficulty in piecing together narratives which are not chronologically ordered. In the context of this project I think that seeing the interview transcripts as a whole has enabled me to 'find' the narratives, instead of trying to find 'tidy' accounts of socio-spatial interaction which can be neatly fitted into existing theory.

[89] Related to Tanya's story is the cultural pattern of living in the parental home, then flatting which is seen as a transitory experience, followed by entry into the housing market, often with a partner.

well what if it goes wrong, what will I do, you know, and I know now I will do just fine.

Tanya knew she would 'do just fine' because of the support and friendship of neighbours, friends, and the school that had facilities for helping her children.

I made good decisions, I made a right decision and I have no doubts about that. My children are happy and we get on really well. I love being here – it's the area, I left, my friends are around me, the neighbours are – (here Tanya told a story about the kindness of neighbours) L and R have been – I can't – it's hard to think of them as my landlords, I think of them as my friends, they're really great and we're always passing things over the fences and we borrow this and get that and they often take the children down to ballet on a Saturday morning.

The point I want to make with Tanya's narrative is how she still defines herself as on her own despite living with her children and despite the support of and from her friends, neighbours and school. This, I think, results from the ideology of ownership within New Zealand which is historically and culturally based on a non-communal model, as well as heterosexuality as a defining characteristic of co-habitation. Here, I wish to briefly digress from the narrative theme with its contributory stories to discuss this issue which I see as related to the ways in which the 'woman alone' narrative is socially and spatially constructed.

6.5.1 Housing Form, Women's Friendships and Sexuality

Sophie Watson (1988:75) argues that the housing system in Australia – very similar to that in New Zealand – cannot accommodate changing household forms. More specifically, it is ill-suited to the increasing number of marriages ending in divorce, and the ways in which families are reconstituted in female-headed households and/or blended family situations. With models of communal housing[90] in mind, I asked Tanya, Delia, and other 'unpartnered' women whether living with

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[90] Previously the Housing for Women Trust had established two accommodation complexes – one ownership and the other was rental – based on communal interaction. See also Hayden (1984).

other women in similar situations would have eased the parenting and financial load. None were keen on the idea. Tanya stated:

I don't think you can put two lots of children in one house and be objective. I mean you could try to be but I think you always lean towards your own children. I wouldn't do that. I want my children to feel secure in their own environment, and to be happy. I mean, I don't know how it would feel having to compete with other children.

Part of what Tanya is expressing fits into the good-enough-mother narrative of the following chapter, but despite this I think women's lack of thinking of collective housing arrangements, relates to the way in which the built environment was produced by and maintains privatised families living within a capitalist economic system. Communal living is seen as living **outside** the political, economic and social norms. However, as Tanya's situation illustrated, many women live within an informal system of friendships, support and exchange.[91]

Friedman (in Weiss and Friedman 1995) and Rich (in Snitow et al 1983) write about the interaction between women's heterosexual relationships and friendships with women. Rich, for example, argues that the term 'lesbian' has a too narrow range of meaning, one that is based upon separating the erotic from friendship. She writes (1995:191-192):

> The assumption that most women are innately heterosexual stands as a theoretical and political stumbling block for many women. It retains a tenable assumption, partly because lesbian existence has been written out of history or catalogued under disease; partly because it has been treated as exceptional rather than intrinsic; partly because to acknowledge that for women heterosexuality may not be a "preference"

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[91] See Herrmann (1996) who claims that economic activity can be embedded in social systems. Taking the garage sale as an example, Herrmann claims that this activity - largely carried out by women – entails a generalised reciprocity, where things "tend to go where they are needed or wanted. Actual cash payments are often token; some items are given away." While Herrmann suggests that this activity arises out of women's socialisation and activities of home-making, but also provides weak ties that contribute to the development of community. Community in this sense is based upon friendships, kinship ties, and neighbourhood. See also Waring (1988) and Gibson–Graham (1996)

at all but something that has had to be imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force is an immense step to take if you consider yourself freely and "innately" heterosexual. Yet the failure to examine heterosexuality as an institution is like failing to admit that the economic system is called capitalism or the caste system of racism is maintained by a variety of forces, including both physical violence and false consciousness.

To Tanya's husband the institution of heterosexual marriage appeared to be threatened by one of Tanya's friendships.

Tanya: And the friend who'd found me this house, she and G (husband) do not see eye to eye. He holds her solely responsible for the breakdown of the marriage and that it's because of her own unhappy miserable life that she's just trying to live hers through me. The fact that she's just a really good friend never really entered into his mind, that she cared about my welfare and knew that I was really struggling.

Another construction of the incompatibility of women's friendships with the institution of marriage was indirectly articulated by Ellen. The women-centred talk she encountered when leaving her marriage was a new experience, one that she initially seemed to perceive as wrong, as decadent.

Ellen: We had this thing in common with being single and we used to talk and every night we would sit - every night we'd meet for weeks and talk and talk and talk and laugh and have lots of fun and I'd always come away feeling good about that and I thought well it can't be wrong to do that. I used to think it was terribly decadent to spend all night chatting with people, you know, just like that.

However, since moving to her ownership flat, Ellen sees herself as having *"moved on."* It may be relevant that Ellen, at this point, went on to talk of her friendship with a married friend whose situation Ellen could not previously understand but now accepts. My impression was that Ellen, at this stage of her life, was finding her single existence difficult, and she was the only person interviewed as an individual who did not come to the focus group discussions.

The close connections between housing form and associated heterosexual relationships is outlined by Hayden (1984:99) who argues that three models of

home have been translated into built form. The haven strategy, Hayden claims, "produced the programme for the detached, single-family suburban house," the industrial strategy produced the programme for high-rise mass housing, and the neighbourhood strategy "produced the programme for low-rise, multi-family housing treated aesthetically like a village."[92] Because, in New Zealand we have predominantly single detached suburban housing within a capitalist system that ignores the informal economy, it is difficult for many to imagine alternative social, economic and/or built environments.

There is a difference, though, between the sociability of the built forms identified by Hayden, and links between friends as community to which Friedman (1995: 199-200) brings a limited spatial perspective. Questioning "new communitarians" uncritical acceptance of family and/or neighbourhood models of community, Friedman claims that friendship ties form a community of choice which can be differentiated from communities arising from what is socially "assigned, ascribed, demanded or coercively imposed." The built environment in New Zealand, as well as legal requirements and regulations pertaining to finance, however, act against these communities being spatially organised in terms of friends living together, or at least makes this difficult. In chapter eight *Transitions*, I use the interview with Melissa and her mother to demonstrate how difficult the process of living together in a non-traditional household can be.[93]

One of the major reasons for women living 'on their own' is related to experiences of 'domestic' violence, an outcome, I have previously claimed, of the privatised nature of housing combined with power relations of heterosexual partnership in

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[92] Ellen's new housing situation was in an ownership flat which was one of six, and this kind of housing, apart from retirement 'villages' is perhaps the closest environment to the villages described by Hayden, but these are based not upon family – family defined as with children - but upon perceptions of (older) couples or single people who require less space.

[93] I am aware that mother and daughter relationships are not necessarily those of friendship but Melissa and her mother were at pains to articulate their desire **not** to buy into the mother-daughter roles.

which men assert their psychological and/or physical dominance. Jeanette tells of her experiences.

6.6 Jeanette

I want to explore, in some depth, Jeanette's narrative of woman alone, an important story of the effect of family violence, but at the same time Jeanette does not seem to be able to make links between male violence and institutionalised sex/gender power relations. I think there are issues here related to homelessness in the sense that homelessness can be defined as more than inappropriate housing situations, a claim I will enlarge upon later. While Jeanette was not homeless at the time of interviewing, and indeed felt secure in her Housing New Zealand house/home, at the time of writing this thesis Jeanette had left this house. The implementation of government policy of market rents[94] meant Jeanette was unable to finance the rent on her own, she would have had to share her house - something she could not do (the reasons for which will become clear) – and she has since moved around a number of rental situations.

6.6.1. Family Violence and Escape Attempts

I had a very close relationship with my mum, my father was an alcoholic and beat my mother up. When I was three years old I decided I wasn't having any boys. I was going to be a mother and have two girls and I was going to call them Daphne and Elsie. Daphne was my mother's name and Elsie was her best friend's name.

I asked Jeanette what if she had had boys.

I would have put them up for adoption! When I was 16 I had a glory box and collected things, by the time I was twenty I was getting baby clothes and I didn't have

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[94] For an in-depth look at the national government's housing reforms of the 1990s see Thorns (2000).

any blue things, little pink booties, lacy dresses with frills around the sleeves[95]*, the names – right up until I was pregnant. ... I was so rapt when I got my two girls. From the time I was two years old and used to see my father hitting my mother, I thought boys hit girls, I don't like that, and I used to see my mother with bruising. I mean, I blame him for my mother getting cancer, he left her on the ground on the driveway and we came home and helped her inside. I remember the day – I was only three – I had my piggybank and when I was grown up I was going to take it to the hospital and break it open and buy my baby girls. ... Well, girls, you can dress them up, you know, cute little lacy frocks.*

Jeanette's escape attempts revolved around a female world, and I am reminded of Hyde's book *Wednesday's Children,* where Wednesday creates an alternative empire "where the only inhabitants are women and children." It is not clear from Janette's transcript, nor from what she said in the focus group, that she has an understanding of the relationship between socio-cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity and how these may be incorporated into asymmetrical power relations. For example, in the following excerpt it could be argued that she sees the non-violence of her mother's second husband related to or exhibited through the provision of 'nice' jewelry, clothes and house.

... thinking back to my mother, that wasn't home really, it was a place of sadness, my mother being hit and my father yelling at us, you know ... it was a nice place to look at but a sad place to live in. When my mum met another man – I don't know how they met – he was twenty years older than her, but there was no arguments, no hitting, he never, ever hit my mother the whole time they were together ... that was a happy place so it was nice to be there. Even though he and I didn't really get on, but the fact that he was looking after my mum and my mother had beautiful jewellery, beautiful clothes, and a nice, nice house. Mum was happy therefore I was happy.

It may be that Jeanette associated male violence with the pressures arising from having children, the subsequent changes in financial and family responsibilities which her own husband found difficult to cope with. She states that;

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[95] Jeanette's frills of femininity echo Frame's "blossoms frilled and flounced" and the frilly dresses of the girls in the doll's house advertisements of chapter five.

When G and I were married we had a very, very nice life-style. Even now it would have been about $100,000/year and I had pretty clothes, loads of shoes, we used to go out partying and wining and dining and all that changed pretty drastically. It was no going out, but I would rather have that than have conditions put on me.

My husband had this amazing concept that his children were going to be perfect, they weren't going to cry at night, they weren't going to get sick, they were going to be perfect children. From the time she came home C never stopped crying; she was a demanding baby. H was different. They were so different. He had this woosey concept, he wasn't adjusting, he still wanted to go out partying, wining and dining. You can't do that so much on a single wage; he found it really hard I think.[96]

Jeanette would not put up with her husband's controlling strategies and inability to relate to the children, and left. She gave a simple, rather poignant example of her new-found freedom.

Well, when I was married I wouldn't dare put mince on the table, and when we separated the kids said why are we having mince for tea, the kids thought it was great! It depends on what sort of man you get I suppose. I mean some men might be grateful for what they get, others are more demanding – like the one I had!

Within Jeanette's own strategy of a female-only world, the lack of understanding or analysis of her situation within a broader social context of sex/gender relations did little to prevent one of her daughters replicating Jeanette's experience. H had returned home with her boyfriend who expected H to cook, clean and attend to his needs, H accepting this as 'woman's work.' This clearly upset Jeanette and she hoped H would find someone better. While Jeanette made the link between being male and expressing control and/or violence it seemed she thought it a masculine trait which some men 'had more of than did others.'

Jeanette's situation, I think, needs exploring in relation to concepts of homelessness. Because these women are still physically sheltered does this not

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[96] In the following chapter I discuss the seeming incompatibility of woman as mother and woman as object of heterosexual desire, and problems women faced when coupledom turned into a family with children.

mean they are homeless, or should homelessness incorporate situations which threaten the safety of women and/or children? I want to draw on literature which further contextualises Jeanette's experience, and I will return to this issue of safety in chapter nine, Home as a Critical Value: Conversations with Iris Marion Young.

6.6.2 Unsafe Housing – Homelessness?

Homelessness, in political and economic contexts, has commonly meant without adequate shelter, but as Dovey (1992) Golden (1992) and Tomas and Dittmar (1995) suggest this may be the end product of a process which encompasses a variety of psychological and/or embodied experiences alongside social and/or economic contexts, all of which are spatially bounded and impact differently upon women and men.[97]

Tomas and Dittmar (1995) found in their study that the house/home distinction, which focuses on house as shelter and home as warmth and love, is not something articulated by women in the absence of safety and security.

> ...when the safety and security *of* housing is not available, the psychologically meaningful 'home' survives, but is redefined in terms of a need *for* safety and security. The circularity of the women's understanding is expressed in terms of what she has not yet achieved in practice she appears to strive for in definition (506) (italics in original).

Tomas and Dittmar, I think, to some extent disaggregate housing from experiences of living in a relationship which is neither safe nor secure, but housing cannot be

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22 See also Ferguson (1994) who writes that definitions of homelessness for policy-making in 1987 included situations where there was no shelter or "where shelter was inadequate to meet the economic, physical, social or emotional needs of the person or household" (251). However, because of the difficulties of state provision of housing for those who fit these criteria, priority has been given to those without adequate shelter and/or who live in overcrowded conditions constituting a health hazard. State funding has also been available – on an ad hoc and inadequate basis – for Women's Refuges.

violent, people are violent. I suggested earlier in this thesis that people often try to provide social solutions to spatial/environmental problems, but in this case it appears that a social problem can be solved by environmental solutions. I also stated earlier in this work that 'domestic' violence (and child abuse) have only recently become a public issue, and within this context we need to seek both environmental and social solutions. This is more in line with my claim that 'home' exists as an ideal concept, and in this sense incorporates both physical and social attributes, as well as the psychological meanings identified by Tomas and Dittmar.

Like Jeanette and Rona, the women in Tomas and Dittmar's study had lived through experiences of family violence as children and as adults. I have argued that the house exists as a blue-print for privatised heterosexual partnership, most commonly based on the romance myth, as seen in some of the fiction and the advertising in chapter five. For the women Tomas and Dittmar talked with there was no relationship between their experience of housing and an ideal concept of heterosexual home. This was also Jeanette's experience, for when asked what the word 'home' meant to her, she stated:

Jeanette: Security, my property. When I'm going through bad times I just come home, lock the windows, bolt the door, and I feel safe here.

Ann: What do you feel safe from?

Jeanette: The outside. People can't come in unless I open the door and let them in, or they've got their own key ... When I first moved in here H was about five or six, I was in the bath and the housing inspector came in here, he knocked on the door, opened the door and walked in and I was in the bath. And he was a dirty old git. He was a revolting little man ...

In Jeanette's excerpt there are connotations of unsavoury sexual intent, and it is possible that the 'woman alone' is symbolic of homelessness about which Golden (1992:132) writes.

> A whole complex of attitudes about women in general also comes into
> play, for to the mystery of the outsider ... the homeless woman adds the

subtle aura of unsavoury sexuality and secret power that attaches itself to a woman who exists apart from a defined social context.

Women 'on their own' with children do exist apart from a defined social context, but even so I am not sure if certain tenure situations contribute to perceptions of women living outside the norm. Laws pertaining to landlords'[sic] rights of entry to rented properties require tenants to be notified of visits in advance, but it appears the Housing N.Z inspector saw his lack of prior notification and entry into the house as legitimate. Jeanette implied his entry was related to perceptions of her 'sexual availability' and was a violation of her rights.[98] If indeed Jeanette was 'categorised' as homeless, the situation that arose is explained by Golden (1992:25) who claims that our reactions to, and feelings about homeless women are different to what we experience in relation to homeless men.

> ... female homelessness means something different to society than does male homelessness: whereas a homeless man can be assigned comfortably to a variety of categories (hobo, tramp, bum, vagrant) and be relatively easily dismissed, a homeless woman creates discomfort because she cannot be categorised Women are so entirely defined in terms of whom they belong to that no category exists for a woman without family or home. Categories are thus 'created' - women as mad and as 'witches'.[99]

In chapter four we have seen how Hyde and Frame were labelled mad as they lived and wrote 'outside' the available sex/gender contexts of the time, and indeed, as Ash stated, 'madness' constituted a strategy for survival. In relation to women as witches, Golden writes that;

> [I]n whatever form she appears, the witch is connected to two themes: power and sex. Inhabiting a domain of female power and sexuality that

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[98] My own experience as a young 'unmarried mother' in the early 1970s was that men whom I met casually assumed I was sexually available, more or less in the same way as were prostitutes, but without the pay!

[99] See also Ehrenreich and English (1978) who trace the ways in which women, in western societies, have been labelled as witches in order to retain the male power of the church and the medical profession.

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has to remain outside society, she incarnates marginality in woman and like all marginal people fulfils a definite function for society just by not being in it (ibid:10).

Processes and experiences of homelessness offer, by their opposition to 'home,' a more precise understanding of how home, as ideal concept is constructed, and more importantly within the context of my thesis arguments, how women and home have been mutually constituted. As I stated in chapter three, the peculiar combination of internal and external factors which go to make up what is an ideal of home and what is identity place women in contradictory positions vis a vis home and self and can lead to experiences of homelessness that do not necessarily equate with lack of adequate shelter.

Social, economic and built environments are systems through which we experience our sex/gender identity formation and live out our everyday experiences. These systems do not act in isolation from each other but the ways in which they impact upon women's experience are not necessarily recognised or articulated by women.

What I have tried to do in this chapter is to foreground the words and narratives of women at different life stages with fairly minimal structural contextualisation. The narrative of 'woman alone' as I stated earlier is told though a variety of stories, for example access to housing, experiences of building and of parenting; at the same time it is also linked to other narratives. For some women the presence of children, being a good-enough-mother, was both a contributing story to the 'woman alone' narrative while also narratives in their own right, and it is to these I now turn.

Chapter Seven

The Good-Enough-Mother

7.1 Introduction

The narratives of good-enough-mother arise out of the personal experiences of women interviewed,[100] as well as historical and present day discourses relating to pregnancy, motherhood and childhood. The women interviewed placed a lot of importance on having and rearing children in relation to home and identity formation, especially within the context of focus group discussion. The issue of pregnancy is also a biological process, the effects of which, I think are probably under-theorised in the social sciences. The feeling of responsibility for another life, which for some women begins in pregnancy, is claimed by some to provide an ethic of care on which a just society could be modelled. At the same time women I interviewed were ambivalent about their experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and parenting. While de Beauvoir claims biology is not destiny, I suspect the biological and social experience of pregnancy and childbirth, is a transitional experience through which we come to understand ourselves and everyday life differently. Certainly the women in the focus group discussions talked about maturing, growing up, developing emotionally as a result of having children as well as home taking on a different meaning.

I begin this chapter by looking at symbolism associated with motherhood – by motherhood I include pregnancy and parenting. In particular I focus on the ways in which pregnancy and sexuality have been separated. I asked women to comment on two very different pictures of pregnant women, one of which challenges this

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[100] Focus group discussions were an important source of stories relating to this narrative which is not surprising given the topic of [a] woman's/women's identity. These stories often reiterated what women had talked about in individual interviews. Together they form the intertextual content of this chapter.

separation. Alongside this I provide a brief discourse analysis of the Plunket book, an icon of New Zealand's ongoing history. As often is the case the stories women told about their experiences raise more questions than they do answers. This chapter appears to focus more on identity than it does on house/home, but most importantly I make the connection between woman/womb as home, symbolism which is very powerful in connecting woman/women with the house/home.

7.2 Experiences of Pregnancy

House/home as symbol of maternity is one fairly common in literature, and indeed has been the inspiration of a number of organic architects who have tried to re-create this safe, enclosed encircling feeling in their designs (Clare Cooper in Proshansky et al 1976:441). There seems a natural and obvious connection between the home and womb; both (are supposed to) provide shelter, and a warm and safe environment. For example, recently (1999) there has been an advertisement on television for gib-board (lining for interior walls) which begins with a pregnant woman, her husband beside her, both clearly engaged in the ultrasound procedure through which they see the 'baby'. The advertisement then makes analogies between the warmth and comfort of the interior of the womb and the warmth and comfort for the child provided by the gib-lined interior of their house. Women, when asked what they thought about the analogy between womb and home, commented that both were nurturing, providing warmth and shelter, safety from the outside world.[101] Although the symbolism of womb and home is a comforting and realistic image, the passivity of images of the womb/home as shelter, I think, contributes to seeing woman as passive and/or inhabitable space, an image women may attribute to themselves. For example, women interviewed by McCollum

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[101] Interestingly - and related to the gib-board advertisement – Sue, responding to the womb-home analogy, made the point that *"both are vulnerable to 'home invasion', the former (house/home) by thugs, the latter by the technological advances of the medical profession."*

(1990:97) about their experiences of moving home also used the womb-home analogy.

> Enfolding, safe, cosy, strong, warm - these meanings seemed evocative of the "holding environment" conceptualised by Winnicott (1965) to represent the benign maternal presence that fosters integration in the infant.[102] An older mover made the connection directly: "The house I left was my womb. I sheltered in it," she mourned.

It is my belief that this 'pregnant passivity' denies the physical and mental activity and effort of women, both in bearing and rearing children, and creating home. Elizabeth Grosz (1995:92) argues that one's relation to space (and time) is **not** passive:

> ... space is not simply an empty receptacle, independent of its contents; rather the ways in which space is perceived and represented depend on the kinds of objects positioned "within" it, and more particularly, the kinds of relation the subject has to those objects.

This is not to say that all women identify with such images or experiences, but what I do claim is that 'woman' as maternal body is available as both image and discourse. McCollum (1990:97) writes:

> Consciously recognized or not, home can be a metaphor for mother, not only the real mother, but also for the mental representation of mother that slowly forms in the mind of the child, co-existing with the actual mother and then gradually substituting for her presence. Home can represent the internalized mother that adults carry within their minds throughout their lives.

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[102] The term "the good enough mother" is attributed to Winnicott - a paediatrician and child psychiatrist. Garner, in O'Daly and Reddy (1991:80) discusses Winnicott's theory of motherhood, stating that while the mother, in Winnicott's terms, has considerable power ... [Yet] his image of the mother is only certainly available to a woman who accommodates herself to marriage and the family within a traditional white, middle-class patriarchal structure ... he thinks women are biologically and psychologically suited for the role of mother.

Psychoanalytic theory takes the above claim a step further. While the maternal image may remain with children, male children are faced with a (psycho-social) need to separate from the mother in order to create their male identity.[103] It is the consequent activity of building based on nostalgia Irigaray (1992), Grosz (1995) and Rose (1993) claim, which leads to male representations of woman/women's bodies, representations which women **may** acquire as their own. Irigaray (1984/1992:11) writes;

> ... morphologically she has two mouths and two pairs of lips. But she can act on this morphology only if she preserves her relation to *spatiality* and to the *fetal*. Although she needs these dimensions to create a space for herself (as well as maintain a receptive space for the other), they are traditionally taken from her to constitute man's nostalgia and everything he constructs in memory of this first and ultimate dwelling place.

Men, according to Irigaray, remain unconsciously nostalgic for the comfort of womb space, and at the same time the cultural need for separation induces fear which:

> ... mobilises a particular mode of spatiality, a space of territory, position, containment, distancing. He wants to 'master her, to reduce her little by little to nothing, but constructing for himself all kinds of new enclosures, new homes, new houses, directions, dimensions, foods, in order to break the bond with her' (Irigaray 1993:34). And this is a process of dwelling (Rose in Duncan 1996:70).

I think these claims are certainly those underpinning Gee's book *The Burning Boy* and those of Gray's *The Marriage Maze*: In chapter ten I also refer to Keri Hulme's book *the bone people* in which Kerewin tears down her tower dwelling to rebuild a home signifying something other than 'traditional' heterosexual and maternal love.

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[103] In fact it was women's responsibility to ensure their son's separation in case they 'made' them homosexual!

But certainly for centuries women have been presented with images of motherhood, and even pregnancy which are not of their making or understanding.

Figure 24: Virgin and Child[104]   Figure 25: Madonna and Child[105]

The 'virgin' Mary never appears other than delighted with her infant, but we do not see pictures of her with a toddler or pre-pubescent child teenager. The dominant image in these paintings is one of serenity, a contented mother and happy babe; not always the experience of women interviewed!

The religious myth of the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception also denies women's (hetero) sexuality, thus contributing to discourses of women as carriers of the moral fabric of society. This concept is at odds with the claim that women's nature makes them problematic sexual creatures (Wigley 1992, Wilson 1991). The following pictures illustrate the contradictory discourses associated with women's reproductive bodies; those of motherhood and sexuality – often constructed as incompatible - and these bodies' relationship and/or challenges to privatised heterosexuality.

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[104] *Virgin and Child* by Dieric Bouts (c1460) in *The Art Book* (1996) Phaidon Press
[105] *The HolyFamily with Mary Magdalene* by Palma Vecchio (c1520) in *The Art Book* (1996)

Figure 26: Pregnancy [106]

Figure 27: Urban Bodies

Women's responses to the first picture were as follows:

A picture of its time. No joy or happiness. The woman doesn't seem in control.

The period picture shows the days where a woman's purpose in life was to carry out the duties for their husband and giving birth was probably the most important.[107]

The second picture is disruptive in several ways. Longhurst (in Ainley 1998) states that the pregnant body signifies the sexual act; these women, then, are publicising a 'private' act in which women are implicated as sexual beings. Longhurst explored the ways in which women who were in the last stages of pregnancy experienced their body within the context of Centre Place shopping mall (Hamilton).[108] She found that the built environment – the tavern, cinema, even the toilets - did not have seating to accommodate the pregnant body, and women were aware of representations of femaleness which emphasized thinness.[109] Most of the women Longhurst spoke to did not like their pregnant body shape. She writes: "These constructions of the pregnant body as ugly, alien and not sexy or sexual help to

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[106] The Arnolfi Marriage by Jan van Eyck (1434) in *The Art Book* (1996) Phaidon Press.

[107] For centuries in western culture the importance of a male heir was paramount given women could not inherit property or title.

[108] Hamilton is a large city by New Zealand standards situated just south of Auckland.

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explain why it is so often considered to be private and in need of concealment. It is a body marked by a sexual act and sexual acts … are usually confined to the private realm" (28).

Contrary to Longhurst's findings, these women appear to be celebrating their bodies as both pregnant **and** sexual **and** attractive. The ways in which obesity is aligned with the pregnant body, and the prevalence of media discourses which present the ideal of slender femininity are also destabilized; this destabilization recalls Massey's critique of Harvey's desire to fix the photographic images exhibited by Cindy Sherman (chapter three).

The urban setting – in the middle of Lambton Quay, a busy part of downtown Wellington[110] – disrupts the spatial separation between female as private/suburban and male as public/urban. When Longhurst argues that "relations between bodies and cities [are] constitutive and mutually defining" (20) we need to consider that representations of space and identity formation are not fixed. In the above photo the women's display and enjoyment of the pregnant body contests boundaries between private (suburban) and public (urban). Women here are claiming urban space as female, as sexual beings, and potentially as mothers. Neither are they accompanied by partners or husbands. Kate compared the first and last pictures in this way.

I love the last picture which is in complete contrast to the religious puritanism of centuries past. I couldn't expose my pregnant body publicly as these women have. They're not afraid of their sexuality, their changing body shape. They make no attempt to hide their non-virginal state which I think is the focus of the first picture. This woman must hide her pregnant state behind layers of material. The veil seems to be symbolic of a nun's habit suggesting purity and chastity. I

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[109] The women interviewed by Longhurst also commented that their pregnant bodies were, at times, 'public property.' I can imagine that it is mainly - if not only – women who 'appropriate' the pregnant body in this way as a way of acknowledging and/or establishing shared experiences.
[110] Wellington is the capital city, metropolitan and busy.

assume the equally dourly clad man is her husband. Their surroundings and the amount of material swathed around the woman suggest they are comfortably off. In contrast, apart from the winner, Mrs Henman, one would have no idea as to the marital status, sexual preference or socio-economic status of the other women. Interestingly they're all white. I think the second picture is great – I just wish I had the guts to expose my body that way! (emphasis added).

Interviewees' responses to this second picture were positive, unlike many of the responses the Wellington newspaper received.[111]

I don't think I would have done it way back then *– not sure even about today – but good on them. I always admire people who have the guts to do **way out things** (emphasis added).*

The 90s picture shows the "9's women" are proud of their bodies, more independent, game to do anything as well as bringing fun into being pregnant.

The last picture is great, it challenges our socialized responses to the pregnant body – and who should wear a bikini! **Mind you, I wouldn't be so brave** *(emphasis added).*

The emphasised sections illustrate that even though women see this particular representation of pregnant bodies as positive they do not see themselves as able to display their pregnant bodies in the same way, demonstrating strong cultural imperatives to the ways in which we both experience and display bodies.

In a similar way theorising which argues for the separation of reproductivity from child care, the sex-gender distinction which separates biology and social experiences, I think may produce a sense of split selves that Ash talked about in relation to madness and women writers who do not conform to the norms of (patriarchal) society. For example, O'Daly and Reddy (1991:4) present the ability to give birth to a child and caring for a child as separate but related activities.

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[111] My sister living in Wellington who saw the photo and read the letters which followed informed me most responses were castigating the publication of the photo and few were condoning.

> Rather than seeing motherhood as biologically predetermined and central to all women's lives, we, like Rich, see motherhood as a potential relationship rooted in female physicality; but we also see it as a choice essentially *separate* from biology, drawing a distinction here between the ability to give birth and the decision to care for children. Although giving birth is indeed a part of mothering, it is care-giving that defines the act of mothering, and care-giving is a choice open to both those who give birth and those who do not.

I think the way in which O'Daly and Reddy talk of "the ability to give birth" does little to draw our attention to the time factor (nine months) associated with pregnancy. Not only do women experience their body in different ways over this period of time, and as we have seen, are subject to others' interpretation of their bodies, but I cannot imagine that the experience of pregnancy is exempt from future expectations of self and situations in regard to relationships and housing/home.

Contrasting with O'Daly and Reddy, Finzi (in Bock and James 1992:140) argues that through defining sexuality as different to maternity we also take away the desire to mother from subjective sexuality.

> Women have not actually thought of their desire for motherhood as the expression of two factors, psychological and biological. They have placed maternity in the realm of autobiography without realizing that this is not the only sphere in which it belongs.

I am mindful here of Kirby's and Wilson's challenges to return biology to the social sciences, and in one sense the term 'mother' incorporates the biological status of pregnancy and giving birth, but from there we run into the social and semantic difficulties of defining processes of child care. For example, if we forego the 'labels' of 'mother' and 'father' in favour of 'parent' or 'caregiver' do we lose an inherent part of what it is to mother which incorporates the physicality of pregnancy and childbirth? Do women, as many feminist theorists (and writers of some 'New Age' books) claim, practice an ethic of care arising from the 'total' experience of mothering which could form the basis of an ethical society? Do

fathers need to learn how to 'mother' or has fathering a special quality, or should the focus be on parenting? These are difficult questions which currently are the subject of a nation-wide debate arising from the dwindling contribution of fathers to social and financial responsibilities associated with childcare.

While I will outline some of the feelings and experiences of women interviewed in relation to having children, it is relevant here to turn to the discourse analysis of the Plunket book and related literature. These sources reveal how social contexts - and the voices of 'experts' – affect the ways in which women were constructed as parents and as keepers of the moral fabric of society. These constructions, as I will demonstrate, remain an available discourse used by politicians and others who have a financial and/or ideological stake in halting the 'breakdown' of the traditional nuclear family and/or reducing the amount of internal debt arising from benefits paid to solo parents.

7.3 The Importance of Mother

Women's experiences in relation to housing, home, relationships and childcare cannot be separated from the dominant discourses of historical periods. The dual requirements of population growth and 're-domestication' of women after the Second World War were aided by the theory of maternal deprivation;[112] later theoretical understandings of the need for secure attachment in children was extended to care-giver/s. However, the mother was seen as the central person in relation to the care of children which accounts for Iona's perception.

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[112] It was argued, by 'experts' that an infant deprived of maternal love and care would not develop into a 'normal' adult.

I remember thinking - I was engaged - I am inevitably going to end up at home looking after the children whether I've got the aptitude or not.

A dominant discourse informing Iona's expectations was to be found in Plunket, mentioned by Fiona Kidman in *A Breed of Women*. The Plunket Society was founded to promote healthy mothers and babies, and the nurses' advice bore the voice of authority. The only families exempt from 'Plunketisation' were Maori families which, for some reason, came under the umbrella of the public health system. Racism aside, it is worth quoting from the (my) Plunket book (1975).

Best Wishes to you and continuing good health to your baby. From the beginning he is a separate person, growing and learning with astonishing speed. He was completely dependent on his mother for everything before he was born and he is hardly less so now. You will be the centre and focus of his life for months and years to come.

Planning the Day: Ask the Plunket nurse to help you to work out a plan for the day which will enable you to care for your baby and manage the household chores. Feed baby three or four hourly during the day but arrange the last feed at night and the first in the morning to suit all concerned.

Advice to Fathers

Help your wife adhere to her daily plan. Be punctual for meals. Get to know your baby and enjoy him. Changing napkins, tucking him down, bathing him at the weekends, and bringing him to his mother to be fed in the evening or early morning provide opportunities for you to lend a helping hand and learn about your baby.
Your cooperation with the family shopping, the washing up and other household tasks will encourage your wife and lighten her work.
When Baby is settled and his mother has regained her strength, try to arrange for a baby sitter occasionally so that you can take your wife out for an evening's entertainment.

There are a number of points to be taken from this text; first the power of the medical profession to determine childcare practices, the authority with which the mother is constructed as the person of primary importance both to the child and the household; the father's role as helper; and finally the construction of the child as

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male. This is a very pertinent example of how male was/is equated with human and female as other.

I also stated that not only were mothers responsible for the physical well-being of their infants, in their role of mother they were also the moral guardians of society. The following excerpts from the text of the Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents (1954) provide clear examples of this responsibility and women's culpability when children go astray.

> Absent Mothers ... and Fathers
>
> Many persons have expressed the opinion that sexual immorality among young persons arises, in part, from the fact that mothers are frequently absent from their homes at times when their children need their care and guidance (35).

These "thoughtless" mothers were placed into three categories; those who worked for wages, and while some needed to work "many of them work in order to provide a higher standard of living than can be enjoyed on the wages earned by their husbands, or because they prefer the company at an office, shop, or factory to the routine of domestic duties " (36). The second category were those mothers who "extend their social, and even their public, activities beyond the hour at which they should be home to welcome their children on return from school" (ibid). The third category were those who "give their children money to go to the pictures, while they themselves go to golf, or to a football match, or pay a visit to friends" (ibid). Instructions to fathers were minimal.

> When dealing with this kind of thoughtlessness it should be pointed out that fathers are not free from blame. As breadwinners they have necessarily to be away from home throughout the day, but they have opportunities in the evenings and at weekends to identify themselves with their children's interests and activities (ibid).

The ways in which employment practices and separation of paid employment and house/home impact upon women's and men's perceived roles and activities in the

house/home has been an ongoing source of, mostly feminist, debate. There are claims of substantial changes both in theory relating to child development, and in parenting roles of and activities for men and women. However, many problems associated with paid employment, relationships and caring for children within the context of the institution of nuclear households (whether of one or two parents), to a large extent remain unchanged.

I do not think we can under-estimate the effects of the times in which we live for women's experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and caring for children. The Plunket book sends a clear message that children are the concern of married heterosexual couples. The difference between the following excerpts demonstrate the importance of social and economic contexts. The first comes out of a focus group discussion and the second from Renee's book (1995) *Does This Make Sense to You?* The women Delia and Morag refer to are married women of the nineties in contrast to the young women of the sixties of whom Renee writes.

Delia: When my first grandchild was born she looked just like the father, my son, just like him. It was 1pm the next day and I was sitting there holding it and I was thinking I can't believe I'm a grandmother, then I wafted away from that and for a while - and everyone was yakking - and I drifted away and I thought it was my baby, I thought it was my son.

Morag: Thought it was your son ...

Delia: I did, too, and I remember coming to and thinking oh help! It was a really funny sensation that went through me. Like my son is thirty yet my mind went back thirty years ago, even though it was a girl she looked just like him; also the feeling I was taking in, I'm a grandmother.

Morag: So it was a powerful, emotive kind of trigger? But your point about maybe having children is probably the aspect if you're going to define woman as the impact that puts your feet on the ground. You are no longer just you and there's no way you can put things off any more. Looking back it makes you mature the fastest ... I had a lovely experience with my niece who's just had a baby; I was visiting and I could suddenly remember seeing my sister when she had D - suddenly put me very much in perspective as to where I stood. And I think this is a very important part of growing and that suddenly you see yourself as part of generations. And my mother was there

as well and I just sort of looked at the four generations and the fact that they were all born in the same month, too, and it was a very special moment for me; that I'm a part of that but they're the linking of my sister to the daughter and for my mother I thought it was really quite wonderful. I mean, for her, what's the effect on her because she would remember my sister and myself and we were all present in that room. All women sharing this new female child.

Renee (1995:117) is talking about the experience of young women in a maternity home for 'wayward' - unmarried - pregnant women in the 1960s.

> I was fascinated by Camille even as I loathed and despised and was frightened of her. She hated the lot of us but she pretended that everything was for our own good. We were half-starved because then we would have small babies and small babies were easier on first-time mothers. She worked us for ten, twelve and in Freddie's (Fredericka) case, fourteen hours a day and justified that on the grounds that exercise was good for pregnant women.
> How did she get away with it? Why didn't we rebel? There were a number of reasons. We put up with it because we knew the time was finite, that there was a definite end to our incarceration. Our families and friends had put us there and there was nowhere else for us to go. There were the files.
> But why didn't we refuse to be work-horses?. Why did we allow ourselves to be treated like filth, lepers, pariahs? When I think of us all dressed in the same faded ugly smocks, tired to the bone, humiliated, starved, treated worse than cattle, I'm sure that deep down we shared our family's disgust and outrage at our behaviour and that we saw the Home experience as part of the retribution we deserved for such disgusting carryings-on.[113]

The contrast between the above two excerpts reveals how definitions of women's sexual and reproductive capabilities can be socially constructed and experienced. While mothering was traditionally seen as a woman's ultimate role in life and her path to fulfillment, there were very clear rules about the ways in which this fulfillment was to be accomplished, and her experience of her body cannot be separated from these socially and discursively constructed and sanctioned

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[113] The use of the word 'Home' in this context has negative connotations when thinking back to the ways in which women interviewed conceptualised home. Another reading of this is that 'Home' becomes something different throughout the process of pregnancy and childbirth.

contexts.[114] One question for me which arises out of this discussion is how different meanings and experiences of house/of home might be based around different sets of social relations, for example, matrilineal kinship relations? In chapter eight 'Transitions' I relate Melissa's (daughter) and Jane's (mother) experience of trying to set up house/home. For many of the women interviewed however, self and 'home' were 'cemented' into place by the arrival of a child/children.

These preceding discussions provide an historical and contextual framework from which to explore women's narratives of the 'good-enough-mother'. As with the 'Woman alone' narrative, there are a number of stories, some of which are to do with the actual space and organisation of housing, and others pertaining to identity formation. While most of these narratives are closely associated with parenting on one's own, these are not narratives necessarily unique to those particular women. Women, in different economic, social and subject positions, though, tell different stories.

7.4 Changing Home

The above excerpts from fiction and interview material, as well as previous theoretical discussion, illustrate how having children results in multiple kinds of changes. For some women the change in themselves and the meaning of home

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[114] My daughter was born in 1970 and at times I had been under considerable pressure from extended family to "put her up for adoption." "Good girls" did not get pregnant and if they did they did not keep their babies. The Domestic Purposes benefit of 1972 at least gave 'solo parents' (whether 'single or separated/divorced) some financial resources. However, in 1991 the National Government reduced these benefits in line with unemployment benefits. The ideological aim of this was to decrease the divorce rate (which it did, temporarily) as well as decreasing the state's internal debt. In 1996 the same government sent out a Code of Social Responsibility to all New Zealanders in which was a clear agenda to 'police' the parenting abilities of women on the D.P.B, in other words, to create conditions under which a benefit would continue to be paid. This, the government claimed was motivated by fiscal responsibility, and it was clearly an attempt to re-impose the ideology of the traditional nuclear family as the most desirable form of family. The methodology behind this project, luckily, was 'fatally flawed' and neither did the government have a mandate to control individual lives to the extent the code intimated.

were almost inseparable. Sharon had been talking about returning home after being in London, and how it took a week for the familiarity of home to be re-established.

Ann: I always felt like that when I came home after having the babies, I felt as though it was different, and because you've got another child it felt as though the whole place was suddenly different.

Sharon: I didn't feel like that with G (second child), but I did with H, maybe because he was the first baby, but I remember walking in the house and thinking, oh this is really weird, and I actually felt like a totally different person. I thought something's wrong with me 'cause I looked around and I thought it just didn't feel the same, but of course it isn't the same, you've had this enormous experience and you've got another family member, so it's not the same. Like you're dying to get home and you think oh, this is it? This is reality? There's no going back.

However, once children are present it appears their presence is either implicitly incorporated into meanings of home, or as Lucy demonstrates their presence comes to represent what home is.

Lucy: ... so then I thought maybe home is where the children are, where the family is ... Well, that's the closest I can say, that, I didn't invite them here [rented house] - and some of that was the trauma of immediate space but the other thing was the deconstructing all the social roles that went with the home and making it very clear I'm a different person; I've moved on and they're old enough to accept that. But for all that, when I go into the next phase, um, I don't know if I'll ever pick up the mother role but boy am I waiting to pick up the grandmother role. Yeah, I'm perfectly prepared to build a whole home around that one! Um, yeah, so there are some values associated with that.

Lucy's words echo those of Delia and Morag when they were talking about their experiences of births in the family, feeling part of an ongoing community.

Lucy: That's the point - and I ended up with it being family centred and that's it – I don't think I got any further than that. But, yeah, the valley was where I was with the marriage was very clearly home and no two ways about it, but when I thought about why it had to centre round the children and the bringing up of them and once they started moving out so did I and that's as close as I can get and the fact that they are not here keeps this a house maybe, but then, as I say, I look forward to where I'm aiming to be in a home again, where my daughters can come in, my grandchildren ...

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Delia's experience of home was also constructed around the needs of her children. In the previous chapter I related the ways in which she took responsibility for changes to the internal structure to meet family needs so that the house 'worked'. I asked Delia what she meant.

Delia: with four children ... I've been in houses where they haven't had space, but yes, it worked well, one kid doing homework, another doing something different. Yeah, it worked well with all this space and you can shut the door and go away from it. But you don't actually consciously think. I'd say to my husband – like he came and looked at the place – and I said to him, it's really good. [115]

In one sense it seems from these brief excerpts that women continue to construct their house/home and their own activities around the needs of children, but what I found was a different narrative of the 'good-enough-mother' to that of the Plunket discourse. While women of previous generations may have been seen as good-enough mothers if they did everything for their husband/partners and children, an alternative discourse argues this is irresponsible. The 'good-enough-mother' of the nineties (and 2000) must instil in her children and partner/s a more collaborative sharing of household tasks.

Delia: What I used to do when they got old enough, on a Wednesday night in the middle of the week everyone can have whatever they like if you cook your own and clean up your own mess, and once a week everyone would have a turn at making me a meal, and I'd stay right out of the kitchen – terrible messes and things but they all had to clean up, and their cleaning up wasn't like my cleaning up, but you can't say anything because they're learning ... I've heard mothers say, oh, trying to teach him to make his bed, well I'll just go in and say that's hopeless and I'll just go in and do it myself, how can they learn? They'll say oh stuff it then, I'm not going to do it then! We had some very different meals – all thrown on the plate and hanging over the edge.

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[115] Both Delia and Ellen had their husbands look over their new houses even though they were separated and financially independent. This supports the material gleaned from real estate salespeople that women (especially older women) tend to include partners in decisions about housing.

One parent families and/or women's return to the paid workplace, I am sure have contributed to this re-framing of stories relating to the new 'good-enough-mother' narrative. And while participating in paid employment outside the home has offered women another contribution to identity formation, Delia also stated that it was because she had made her children accountable for sharing, she had not "got lost" in household/child care.

Then you read about some people who say they get lost, get married and all the household chores and the children ... and you hear women say I just feel as though I've lost my identity, I'm just this mother-house person, and you hear women say I'm not a me any more, I'm not Delia or Ann, I'm a mother, to be there and do those things. I never experienced that myself, but then maybe it was because I was on my own and I related to them about everything and we shared (Delia).

In chapter four the fiction of Hyde, Gray and Kidman and the claims of Game and Pringle (1979) and Ferguson (1997) drew attention to the competing roles of wife and mother in which they implied difficulties with identity formation. Lucy refers to losing herself in "all the roles" and Tanya, below, expresses a desire to not **look** like a mother.

Yes I do [see myself as a mother], but I don't want to look like a mother. I get dressed up to go out with friends and I say to them - do I look like a mother? Oh well, get rid of the blazer! I don't like to look like anything specific, I just want to look like me, my personality.

At the same time feminist discourses eschewing issues of equality would have impacted upon the issue of women's (and men's) household and parenting responsibilities. In the following focus group excerpt Penny draws attention to generational changes, her claims drawing on feminist discourses of equality, but without the assertion that men need to take responsibility for themselves she places the onus on **women** for teaching partners and children.

*Penny: **The onus has always been put on women**, but I think some men, allow, are quite happy to accept equality and clean the loo. I also think it depends if the woman allows herself to slip into that role of being dumped on, and thinking they can do the*

*job better than their male husband or partner ... And I think some pressure can be put on women from society, from their parents or from their **mother, aunts or grandmothers** – I would never do it like that in my day, that sort of thing ...(emphasis added).*

Ann: Do you think there is a difference in that kind of thing because more women are working now?

Penny: Yes, I think women expect a lot more from their men-folk and they get it too, and they get it by saying hey, 'I'm working full-time, I'm doing part-time study, I would really appreciate ...' but I think it depends on how they approach the subject.

Ann: I mean ... as long as you ask things will be done but everything needs to be spelled out, and I guess that's what I mean, that you still take responsibility because you have to ask.

Penny: Yes, you're thinking about it and that's not good enough. It's like teaching children to see if they've got washing in their bedroom; if they want it washed they have to put it out in the laundry. Like I don't go looking for my children's washing at all. And if at the end of the week ...! And I think men have to be taught the same.

Ann: To take responsibility?

*Penny: Yes. And I think **it comes from their mothers first**. I mean, regardless of what happens in the future I still **think it's the mother's role that determines how good men are going to be in the future** and there's not enough importance put on it. Dare I say it, and I'll really upset all the feminists – that's just an observation, that I think men should know how to cook by the time they're ten because they're going to be future men and why not know how to cook! ... I haven't got sons, I've only got daughters and I often think if I had a son would I treat him differently? 'Cause my children cook one night a week (emphasis added).*

While Delia and Penny both see that the 'good-enough-mother' is a teacher of both children and male partners, taking on responsibility to teach male partners was clearly a problem for other women interviewed within the focus group context. Women stated that partners' contributions in caring for children and/or engaged in home-making activities were interpreted as 'help' (as in the ubiquitous Plunket book) rather than shared responsibility.

Sharon: He does a lot of things but I still do the organising.

Abbey: If he's doing something at home he's doing it for you.

Sharon: "Just tell me what to do and I'll do it." But sometimes you want someone to take over that role and actually make the decisions. What needs to be done.

Abbey: Multi-tasking – she goes to play golf, came home a bit late and they were all waiting for her to get tea. "Excuse me", she said. His response - "But I'm looking after the children."

Sharon: But do we not perpetuate that? As parents we still have roles.

Jeanette: When I was married I was told in no uncertain terms that he was the breadwinner; the house was mine, the lawns, the gardens; he didn't want to come home to do that.

Abbey: You only have to read Women's Weeklies from 20 years ago to see you were supposed to have the house set, new lipstick on!

Sharon: Has that gone? As women we do it to each other. And I think, well, I'm a parent, she's a parent, what's the problem? You know! My generation still does it. It's not as blatant. It's that we have to be this perfect mother, this perfect mother figure, wife figure, we have to be seen to be doing everything quite well, in control. I think it's better but still quite strong.

I will attend to Sharon's perceptions and experiences of being the 'good-enough-mother' later in this chapter, but the above discussion draws attention to the competing discourses of being a mother and/or parenting and the difficulties associated with sharing household and parenting responsibilities.

Sharon, Jeanette and Abbey talked about roles resonating with the fiction of chapter four and images presented in chapter five, but to see women's (and men's) activities solely in terms of carrying out roles is to deny agency and different ways of claiming parenthood and its diverse practices. I acknowledge that Delia's, Penny's and Lily's (below) experiences and efforts arise from being the sole parent, and that the definition of the 'good-enough-mother' as employing an effective collaborative approach to household tasks is more important in one-parent households, especially where the parent may also be in paid employment and/or studying.

While these are observable structural influences, I still think these issues are more complex. Alison Jaggar (in Garry and Pearsall 1996) draws attention to the relational formation of identity, and women, while agreeing with the **concept** of equality, may have difficulty relinquishing sets of roles and activities that they actively prize as contributing to identity formation.[116] In chapter nine I engage with Iris Young's concept of the home as critical value in which she distinguishes between the repetitive tasks of household maintenance and other activities which are related to preservation and continuity. Like Delia, these entries in Lily's diary demonstrate Young's claim that some household activities (repetitive chores) can be shared while there are other activities – in Lily's case - interaction with children which can be treasured and a source of pride. Fed up with the housework, especially that created by her children's friends she had tried to organise a 'family conference'.

Sunday. Lunchtime – Time for round table to discuss these issues openly without anger. Visitors kept arriving – no opportunity. Finally 5pm had opportunity to have that round-table, wonder how long it will last???

Monday. This is amazing, the round-table worked, I get up to find washing done, dishes stacked away, bench cleaned, lounge tidy, cat and pets fed. I feel wonderful. Even their beds are made ... Long may it last!! Today the sun is shining, I look around my small house and smile, this is mine, it may be small but it's home, our home and I'm proud of my achievements.

Thursday. I have to be thankful that the kids get on so well together. I don't ever have to contend with them fighting or giving me lip. I say I'm lucky but luck be buggered, it is the way I have brought them up. T (ex-husband) was never around so the discipline and upbringing was done by me. I must pat myself on the back because that is why we get on so well together.

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[116] See Bowlby, Gregory, McKie (1997:345):

> While the surveys suggest that there is a small increase in men's involvement in both parenting and household chores, the responsibility for these and for the less easily identified activities of caring is still expected to be, and usually is, women's. Moreover, women are not always happy to allow this responsibility to pass to men, since this can undermine their own security in their home-making expertise.

It was interesting that within Lily's narrative of good-enough-mother were stories of both positive and problematic experiences. The following story illustrates the contradictions I raised earlier in this chapter (7.2) between women as sexual beings and women as mothers, as well as Lily's desire not to have a 'double standard' in relation to her and her children.

7.5 Lily's Diary

From the following diary entries it appears that Lily found it difficult to integrate her experiences of being a parent and a sexual being. Lily had a man in her life after what she termed as twelve years of celibacy following dissolution of her marriage. At the same time one cannot divorce Lily's experience from her Catholic upbringing and her experience with her husband who was interested in sex only for procreation. Lily shared her experience with other women in one of the focus group discussions.

My man didn't want to touch me after I had a hysterectomy. I did have thirteen pregnancies to get three children. I nearly lost my life three times. I was only thirty-six – Catholic ex-husband who wouldn't have anything to do with contraception – in fact sex was for procreating, that was the only time it was all right. Our sex life was just sick, terrible, and when it came to having the hysterectomy he wanted the doctor to state it was a matter of life and death so he could reconcile that was all right. The doctor said, don't worry love, I'm taking away the cradle but I'm leaving the play-pen. I laughed and laughed and said why don't you tell my husband that, he doesn't know what a play-pen is.

Lily, now in her mid forties, was very candid in her diary entries which interweave her thoughts about herself as mother and as a sexual person in a new relationship.

Sunday: Bed-time 10:30 pm My new lover rings and tried to talk me into coming out to see him. Oh dear, it's too late, I have school tomorrow but not until 1pm. Kids may hear me. What will I do? I am stressed to the max, weekend hasn't given me any space. Twisting my arm. Damn, I give in. Why do I have to feel guilty, or that this is wrong, thoughts like what would the kids think if I told them? I won't yet, this is very new for me. I'm scared, what of I'm not sure. Butterflies in the stomach ... all these

thoughts going through my head as I push the car out of the garage, start it up and off ... got home at 5:30am – Oh my God, this is ridiculous, I feel like a naughty teenager trying to sneak unheard into my own house, the door squeaks, cat miaows, take off the shoes, floorboard squeaks, heart beating at a 100 miles per hour, the quieter I creep the noisier I seem to be. Phew, at last, I'm safely in my own big bed. I feel wonderful ... Last thoughts, thank God the kids did not wake up.

Saturday: I can't believe I have a whole night to myself without guilt, fear, anxiety and concern about the kids could be so amazing!!! No cares, no responsibilities. It definitely makes a difference being relaxed, a great de-stressor, I could get quite used to this and be able to stay all night, have breakfast together etc., without having to sneak out of bed to get home in the early hours of the morning put a whole new slant on the experience.

Penny, too, made a somewhat cryptic reference to sexual practices in relation to motherhood.

I think society – what you buy (in relation to the house) helps your children to think about you as a person and so you seem the identity which you want your own children to have. I don't think you're going to get it from sleeping with all and sundry while your children are growing up, because you just become property.

I am not sure what Penny means exactly, but she implies the existence of rules about how women 'on their own' with children experience their sexuality, and a relationship between owning property and owning women's bodies.

I think the feelings expressed by Lucy, Penny and others arise from complex and contradictory issues, one being the 'incompatibility' of mother with sexual being, unless defined by live-in husband/partner. As Game and Pringle (1979) pointed out, and as exposed in Gray's novel (*The Marriage Maze*), the roles of 'moral' mother and exciting sexual companion are roles in conflict, but in the absence of a 'husband' it appears that a woman 'on her own' with children should be definitely sexually inactive. This theme of a-sexual mother is captured in the following excerpt from *Dead Sea Scrolls* by Charlotte Randall (1995).

The psychiatrist told Alma Williams she had to give Bill up. For the sake of the children. She'd told him how uncontrollable they were, how

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they swore and smoked and how the girls wouldn't be seen dead in dresses unless they were of embroidered cheesecloth and bought from the Witches Coven, a place which also sold paraphernalia for smoking drugs.

"I can't give him up," she said.

"You have to choose," said the psychiatrist.

"I can't," she cried.

When she came home and she saw their sullen faces turned blindly to the television, she almost cried for the cruelty of it. But she knew of no other way to win them back, so the next time Bill rang she said no, she couldn't meet him, and then she cried for hours, loathing the power of children who would make her forsake everything and then leave her (96-97).

I would not argue that it is the power of children, or even the power of the medical profession per se, to impose certain behaviours upon women, but the conventions we are socialised into - the myth of the a-sexual mother - as well as the socio-sexual identities we claim for ourselves are constructed within the context of supposedly stable sexual relations associated with the house/home.

What the excerpts from novels, the Plunket book and interview material demonstrate is the tenacity **and** fragility of constructions of women's sexuality. Feeling uncomfortable, guilty, or 'property' appears a response to ways in which women's sexuality is constrained by the combined forces of house/home, heterosexual marriage and the separation of mother from sexual being. Life stage, too, was an important ingredient in the kinds of stories women told. Tanya, in contrast to Lily had young children at primary school and both with learning delays. This situation, combined with her recent separation and return to Christchurch from Wellington meant she focused almost exclusively on the needs of her children and her capabilities as a mother. Her narrative, however, was made up of different and quite complex stories which I hope to unravel in the following section.

7.6 Tanya

Tanya's stories arise from the desire to give her children the material as well as emotional advantages she saw were lacking in her own experience of childhood. Tanya *"loathed living with the stigma of living in a state house."* The house Tanya had with her husband was *"an absolutely delightful house, a lovely two-storeyed big colonial place."* Although she said they were in awe of this place it remained a house because it was not home. *"What makes a home is the warmth and the emotion and the love, your neighbours."* Even though Tanya had reached her goal of a house far removed from the state house of her childhood, this did not compensate for what she saw was lacking.

Unlike her mother Tanya had always worked in paid employment, but this was always fitted around meeting the perceived needs of the children.

I've always worked. I've needed to work to feel like I'm making some sort of contribution. I was never going to be like my mother. Even when I was a child I always knew that I wasn't going to grow up and live like that. Driven!

Tanya felt very responsible for her children, a responsibility I will return to in chapter ten, but she linked her responsibilities with the battles fought on her and the children's behalf.

Tanya: To get back to mothering – once you, when you are responsible for children then, that actually demands you behave in a certain way and from that you get a feeling of what you're doing is right, and your own esteem grows as well in relation to that.

Ann: From what you've said it doesn't sound as though you had that (self-esteem) as a child.

Tanya: Not, I didn't. I didn't have it as a child, but something inside me knew I was different from the kind of situation I was growing up in, whether it is something that is innate in me I have no idea because my brother didn't fare as well – he is in and out of drug and alcohol rehabs and, um, yeah, we were born of the same parents, neither

of us had a particularly delightful upbringing, yet I knew I was better, had more to offer than what I was being brought up in ... that I wasn't going to live a life like my mother.

Given this context, suggestions that her children's learning delay problems could be attributed to her either as a result of certain behaviours in pregnancy or related to the family's class position were problematic for Tanya. Over and over again Tanya had to establish herself as a 'good' (enough) mother.

When we were having investigations as to why the children are like they are and every time you get asked the question about foetal alcohol, and every time, every time I'm infuriated, every time. I think can't you just look at me and see that I'm better than that, yeah, it's always associated with something that you've done wrong and I've done – I couldn't have been a better pregnant mother, I drank x amount of milk a day, I didn't eat any trash, I didn't drink at all, I did nothing wrong, you know, through either pregnancy and right from the minute the kids were born they had all the right visual stimuli, they had me singing to them, reading to them, reading them books in the womb, I read every book on what was to be done, I did it all ... and it's always put down to what did you do wrong, I had to put up with that for just so long, I got tired of it.

When the family moved to Wellington Tanya was looking for a school with the resources to help her children. She described her meeting with the deputy principal of the school.

When I said to her I was looking for a particular sort of school, my daughter has learning delays etc and I explained to her and she said, "Oh well, this is a higher socio-economic area and therefore we don't have children here with any sorts of problems" I just about flipped over backwards.

When the children began school she made a special effort to buy them clothes that expressed belonging to the same socio-economic group as the other children attending the school in Wellington.

If you know the area, it's a relatively affluent area and – because the children had difficulties it always seems to be associated with coming from not a terrific background, therefore I was going out of my way making sure they had all the right clothes, that they didn't look any different to anyone else ... and I found I had to shop

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Ruff & Tumble to buy the right gears so they were in the same gears as anyone else so they weren't different again, so they weren't just learning delayed with different clothes.

It is hardly surprising that Tanya, at the time of interviewing, was feeling the stigma of being on a benefit given her past experience and her determination to fit in part-time work around her children's activities.

Sometimes, in effect, when people say "are you on a benefit?" I feel a bit scuzzy about it.

Rona, too, found it difficult being on a benefit.

Rona: ... for me it hurts my pride, you don't like admitting ... if I was working full-time I'd have to pay it back and it's hard at the moment, S has got school certificate and M's at Tech.[117]

Both women, it seemed, felt stigmatised being on a benefit, and it would be interesting to explore how this process occurs. Certainly the media are culpable, but the narrative of the 'good-enough-mother' includes other kinds of judgements, often made by other women. These judgements are related to the claims I made in 7.3 about the discourses of 'good-enough-mother' changing from mothers who did 'everything' to mothers who instilled a cooperative strategy in the household. Sharon's narrative critiques this concept of cooperation within the more structural context of the Play Centre her youngest child attends.[118]

As I said in the introduction, much of the material in this chapter relates more to identity formation than house/home **and** identity formation, and this is certainly true of the following story. Sharon's story, however, in linking the competing

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[117] These experiences provide a critique of the political ideology behind the Code of Social Responsibility I referred to earlier.

[118] The Play Centre organisation is different to that of the state-funded kindergarten. Parents are responsible for the running of the Play Centre and have a much more interactive relationship with the everyday running of the centres.

discourses of 'good-enough-mother' draws attention to the ways in which these affect the juggling of time and other family/household commitments impact upon the dual processes of maintaining house/home and identity formation.

7.7 Sharon

While Sharon stated she was happy not working in paid employment after having her second child, she was finding that expectations of what was involved in being a mother within a 'voluntary' organisation problematic.

Just talking with other people I think there's a lot of "mum talk" out there ... like at Play Centre I think you pick it up quite well there 'cause you've got active mothers involved in the education of their child ... if you went somewhere private you perhaps wouldn't exchange those ideas, and you get a lot of people talking about things, you start to get to know people really well and they come out with all this stuff, and you think, my goodness, where did all this come from? But actually there's a lot of common themes ... but people are very unwilling to express that because they feel like they're going to be judged. I think the judgement on women is actually from other women. We're all in the same boat.

Ann: A lot of women have to go out to work, it's a reality.

Sharon: ... It's quite interesting because – there's been quite a lot of pressure at Play Centre for mothers who aren't working to place expectations on mothers who are to do the same things. And it's kind of like – well – for example, we've had quite a lot of demands for mother help lately because there's been quite a lot of pregnancies and you don't have to do mother help for the last and first three months after the baby's born so that cuts the numbers down a bit. Like at the moment I've been doing one parent help a week, plus there's an on-call, plus there's a clean-up ... there was a lot of feedback from mothers saying they felt really stressed because if they're working ... they thought how can we make this easier. I was trying to say - I was actually doing a survey for everyone and that's where I got this stuff ... and I said you don't have to take part but I get the feeling that everybody's not very happy about things but no-one's actually saying anything ... so I talked to most of the mothers and they were all saying, not all of us have parents who can take our babies when we mother help, not all of us have got the luxury of not working, and there was lots of stuff like this coming through. And there's probably about six and they've been there a while, and they're really nice people but they just can't get it through their thick skulls that not everyone has that same time availability, and it's not even just that. Like there's one person there who's lovely and she puts a lot of time into Play Centre and that's her life and that's okay 'cause that's how she wants it to be, but not everyone wants it

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to be that way. I think Play Centre is great but I don't want to live there, I don't want it to be that much of my life. I want to be involved with H's school things, too.

Sharon was adamant that a collective should work on ideas of equity rather than equality, and for everyone to have the same responsibilities was counter-productive.

It's like the old boys' network somehow! Like when G started it was, well, we did this and so we have to make these young women do this as well, and what's the sense of it. It's a bit like that horizontal violence in nursing; you almost have it with mothers to some degree and maybe it is because, maybe mothers are an oppressed group as well, or they are to some degree, but well some of them are more, and certainly that's the way it would be in some relationships, but it – I just felt really angry because there are people who do their best and that's all you can ask of people really. It is interesting. I think that women have a higher expectation of other women than they used to. I think that generally people were more supportive in the past and not so critical.

Sharon's story of the 'good-enough-mother', then, is a more structural account of perceptions of mothers' responsibilities within a child-focused organisation. However, it cannot be forgotten that Play Centre evolved during the time of clear divisions between gender roles where women did not work in the paid workforce, and that now there are both fathers – although the minority - and mothers involved in Play Centre. The fact that many women have their children later in life than in previous generations also means that grandparents are likely to be older and may not be in a position to mind children, either for health reasons or living arrangements which may be too small or 'communal' (rest homes). While I claimed that the "supermom" expectations had altered within the context of some families, this discourse is one which is still circulating in other social contexts and may well impact upon women's self-perception.

Within the context of feminist theories that fluctuate between ideas of equality and difference, Sharon's experience illustrates the way in which we cannot assume that all women's experiences of motherhood are the same. What we get from Sharon's other women's accounts in this chapter, is the notion of change; change between

and within generations as historical, social and economic contexts intersect with personal experience. Following a critique of the symbolism and realities of separating maternity from sexuality, I have demonstrated that pregnancy and motherhood - or parenthood - provide, for some women, major transitions in the experience of house/home and identity formation. However, there are other transitions in life which, through their disruption of the taken-for-granted nature of experience and house/home, further illustrate my claim that concepts of space and place need to be incorporated into social analyses and that woman/women's identity formation is closely linked to the spaces and places of house/home.

Chapter 8

Transitions

8.1 Introduction

The '*Transition*' narrative is hardly surprising given my criterion of disruption to women's house/home situation within the two years up to the time of interview. All these stories are about moving house/home, but they are very different from each other. Sharon tells two stories; in the first she relates some of the unconscious processes which link past and present experiences of home. According to Claire Cooper Marcus (1995) and Bachelard (1958) the memories of childhood impact upon our perceptions of the present. Marcus[119] claims that memories – often unconscious memories - of childhood homes are implicated in contemporary experiences; the more stories she listened to the more it became clear that "people consciously and unconsciously 'use' their home environment to express something about themselves" (1995:10). In her second story Sharon talks of her reactions to the changes a new neighbour was making to what had been the home of a close friend.

Although Morag and Ellen's stories both focus on moving house, their emphasis differs. Morag moved within the city of Christchurch while Ellen had moved between cities/towns. Morag's story is complex in that while she articulates her experience as an internal existential process, she also reveals the powerfulness of the discourse of house/home as a private place/space. Ellen focuses more on external realities. Through moving from one town to another (as her husband was

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[119] Marcus used a form of psychodrama for her clients; she asked her clients to 'talk to their house' rather than to her. Marcus was convinced that many of the present traumas of our lives result from past and present socio-spatial interaction. Her book, *House as Mirror of Self* (1995) is based upon case studies of clients who approached her.

transferred from one branch of the bank to another) her social networks and friendships were disrupted, whereas for Morag her social networks remained intact.

Lucy's narrative of transition I have called 'Evolving Self, Evolving Home'. Leaving a heterosexual marriage and entering into a lesbian relationship is intimately connected to recreating the ways in which she thinks about house/home and the processes of building and creating home. Similarly, Melissa, Jacob (aged four) and Jane (Melissa's mother) are trying to find a house/home for the three of them. With this anticipated change the two women discuss their re-negotiating of roles and (financial and family) responsibilities.

8.2 Sharon: Recreating Home Memories

Sharon's short story illustrates the kinds of past and present socio-spatial interaction Marcus found in her case studies.

It's funny how you remember though, and how things date then come back. The colour that I chose (for the bathroom), the first thing when I saw it (on the wall), this is the colour of our kitchen at Halswell. That was my first memory, and I was two when I left that house and I still remember the kitchen; I can't remember anything else, I can't remember the bedrooms or anything, but I have an impression of the kitchen. I could tell you where the table was, and the windows and the colour of the walls. And I immediately thought of that second birthday – and that was just the colour of the walls. And I liked the colour but it wasn't something I had anticipated for the bathroom and I just looked at it and was kind of stunned, and I think I felt like kind of happy and kind of ambivalent. I wasn't really sure about how I felt about it because it was one of my earliest memories of my father, you see, and because it was such a strong and very clear memory it brought up quite a few feelings – all that from a colour on a wall.

The ways in which women talk about how a house "works" reveals an awareness of socio-spatial interaction which is not based only on spatial attributes, but also on things like colour, display of objects and the ways in which certain rooms are used to portray family and individual identity. Women's identity formation, I have claimed is closely associated with house/home and Sharon's short story

demonstrates one way in which this occurs. If women make most of the decisions in relation to interior decorating - and I claim they do – this serves as a structured connection between themselves and house/home. This latter claim is based upon the semiotic analysis of advertising and the ways in which women are constructed as being concerned with the inside while men are 'outside' creatures, a finding replicated in the interviews with real estate salespeople.[120]

Sharon's second story illustrates her response to some of the processes which personalize space through articulating how two women with a different relationship to the same house go about creating home.

8.2.1 Sharon: Usurping Friendship Spaces?

Marcus (1995:10) stated: "we have all had the experience of visiting friends in their home and becoming aware of some facet of their values made manifest by the environment - be it the books on their shelves, art (or the lack of it) ... the degree to which the house is open or closed ... " Sharon tells of her experience of associating people with the spaces/places in which they live. I think this story also conveys the importance of women's friendship networks arising from propinquity, something Ellen talked about when flatting close to other women who were in a similar position to her own, and which Tanya claimed as relevant to home. *"I think your home ... whether it's a homely home can have a lot to do with your neighbours."* In the following story Sharon weaves the structural elements of the house and garden with identity formation and developing friendships.

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[120] Dupuis and Thorns (1996) carried out a study on the meanings of home for older people, and of the fifty-three people interviewed 75 percent were women, not surprising given women's longevity compared to men's. Within the text thirty-one quotes from respondents contained 83 percent from women and 19 percent from men. This, I suggest, reflects women's closer links with home, but within the historical context of a strong 'cult of domesticity' whereby women were unlikely to be in paid employment and would have spent far more time at home than did their breadwinner husbands.

It's interesting talking to the woman across the road who's just moved in. I've got a friend, one of my best friends who'd been living across the road – well, that's how I got to see the house we're in … and it was great 'cause we could swap the kids, they're all about the same age, and it was wonderful because the thing was we didn't have to get in the car … but like sometimes it'd be 4:30 and you'd never dream of going anywhere at 4:30 with children but sometimes you could ring D up, or she'd ring you, and say C wants to come and play is that all right? And you could do it for half an hour because you didn't have to get in the car and there's no issue and if there's a disaster – like if one of the kids got really tired or grumpy you could ring up and say he's really tired, could …Anyway, they sold their house and, um, they were doing their utmost to make it okay for the people who moved in … I went and said hello to this woman who moved in who's nice, but very different from D (friend), just different people.

Ann: Where's she from?

Sharon: Somewhere central in the North Island. But she lived in the country and she had an enormous house by the sound of it. I'm not sure why she's bought this house, but anyway it's interesting to talk to her 'cause she's actually redoing the inside of her house like the old one, same colours because she said it doesn't feel like home. And she said these curtains have got to go, and I'm thinking they're fine … wait 'til you see my curtains, you know, and she said, "No I just can't stand them they've got to go" and Millers[121] were there, and there were all these things going on.

And, um, she's ripping out all these things D planted in the garden … and apparently she's taking all the flowers out, she's not – she doesn't like flowers – and D said I wish I had known … And like, it's interesting, D was kind of upset 'cause that was her home and she feels – I haven't told her half the things … And when we go there it's quite interesting to walk into the same house where you've known someone else and you think this is really weird, 'cause it doesn't feel comfortable to me, maybe that's because I don't feel totally comfortable with her yet, 'cause I don't know her that well, or maybe it's because I've been used to seeing a different inside. I mean they haven't repainted yet but they're going to, it's just a different feeling. And that's not – does that feeling just come from a furniture change? I don't think so.

What Sharon describes is similar to the findings of Finch and Hayes (1994) in their study *Inheritance, Death and the Concept of Home*. They found that within the British context "a home is so strongly identified with, and symbolises its creator, that it does die with the person who created it and cannot be occupied by someone

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[121] Millers is a large furnishing firm in Christchurch who offer a curtain call out service.

else as their home"(429), unless the inheritor is "someone who already lives there and had a part in creating it" (ibid:431). Finch and Hayes' findings are similar to what Sharon said, and both are examples of how disruption to the taken-for-granted creation of home enables examination of the complex processes of creating and re-creating home.

As in Sharon's interview, other women interviewed appeared to be articulating many of their experiences for the first time. Their stories were not rehearsed in the way that people who have lived in one place for a long time in enduring relationships can relate their joint housing/home histories in a relatively fluid way. During the interview process women were both narrator and audience in the sense that they commented on their own articulated insights. Because Morag's story, which follows, is one in which she tries to articulate the **inner** processes of moving house, the dual activities of narrator and commentator are easily recognised. I have emphasised these sections of text as examples of a process which, I think, brings together the agency of women's voices as well as the context and my 'spatial' framing of the interview (Reissman 1993 in chapter two).

8.3. Morag: Transferring Self

Morag, her husband and teenage son bought a church in a beach suburb in the greater Christchurch area as a place to go for weekends. Over a period of time they made this dwelling their permanent residence. This transition was made slowly, on a personal level as well in relation to the dwelling which had to be transformed from a church (a public building) into a private home.

And part of us making it a home was bringing stuff into it, I imagine, that's how we basically turned it into a home. In the beginning that transformation was quite slow, too, because we moved ourselves slowly in, over a period of three years until the final move.

Morag's sub-conscious adjustment seemed to take a lot longer.

*It took me much longer than that to let go the house I had lived in, not consciously; I think I didn't want to leave the house, it had a sweetness, a good feeling about it, and after we left I dreamed about that house for a long time, years, a good couple of years in a succession of dreams. **Fascinating**. It took quite a while to sort that out in the subconscious before I said I had given it up – although it still appears every so often. I mean in ways that aren't so significant as they were in the beginning, but I talk with other women and they, this is something that led you into this research, this sort of nesty quality that I think women get, maybe some men, but it's mostly women who talk about it anyway, that you have to – once you're in and nested it takes a while before you want to get up and move again unless you went in with the intention of doing the house up and selling it or something like that. I don't know if men have the same sort of thing, they're a bit more fluid about it. Definitely when I left the other house I realised how attached I had been for whatever reason, but I think it has something to do with placing yourself (emphasis added).*

Morag's referral to placing herself fits into Lavin and Agatstein's (1984) discussion of place-making in that the houses/homes in which we live are meaningful, named and bounded places to which we become attached through recurrent use, activities and behaviours. The familiarity with which we continue routines, work, relationships within house/home, however, is rarely articulated unless space or social relations are problematic in some way. Along with the process of transferring self, for Morag the transformation of a public building into a private dwelling raised issues of private property and entitlement to privacy. I will discuss these issues further in chapter nine, but the next story told by Morag shows how we tend to connect the two in that private property **should** entitle the owners to privacy.

8.3.1 Morag: Transformations

This story, chronologically organised, describes an unusual situation, one outside the norm of most housing experiences, and I am reminded of Simonsen's (1996)

arguments for delineating concepts of space – space as material environment, or social spatiality or space as difference. While I agree that we can apply these conceptualisations of space to some situations, in others it does not seem feasible. The transformation of church to house contains all the elements of space Simonsen identifies as important, but to find the **point** at which one can be differentiated from the other/s is problematic. Morag's story is an interesting one because while it **is** about space as difference, she weaves this together with the materiality of the church which needs to be **physically** 'made into' a house and the change required in personal and public socio-spatial perception and behaviour.

... the sign went up for an open day at this number and we had no idea it was a church ... I remember actually walking along the path and I walked to the front door and I said "Mm I could be quite happy here." I remember that feeling came over me. And L (husband) loved it, he said let's buy it, but I wasn't really ready to plummet into turning something into a house ... And so we lived there for about three years at weekends, so on weekends we packed the bags and came out and slowly – we're still evolving – we suddenly didn't do it in six months then it's all done.

It's been four years and in that time we've transplanted ourselves from the city out to a church. But interesting – after a while you don't see it as a church any more.

This was not always the perception of passers-by and several times Morag found people had just walked inside.

*I mean they just came in, didn't knock or anything and I herded them out like chickens. I felt quite invaded in terms of territory. **Strange**, I felt invaded actually by what they had done ... after all these years – initially it was quite public; people would sort of come by, and I would be planting a tree out the front and they'd say they needed to use the toilet...(emphasis added).*

*You have to define the space or the territory ...There was a little old lady who just said it looked nice ... I got the feeling that she wanted me to say would you like to look around, but it's not a show! And a man one day came to the door and quoted things out of the bible and looked skyward and then he suggested I might like to join his church. I asked him to leave after a while because he got too intense. **You see, that is interesting** – if I think about the instances of people who felt they could come up and ask ... (emphasis added).*

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Because one of the reasons for interviewing Morag **was** related to her 'different' house as well as the time frame of moving, given the above comments I felt very self-conscious accepting her invitation to look around! Instead of a 'lounge' the main body of the church/house was what Morag called "a giant playroom for adults." They had created a mezzanine floor while the 'back regions' were converted into bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom. However it was the **outside** which was important in both Morag's re-placement of self and re-constructing the church as private dwelling.

For me it took a long time ... it had to do with creating garden around it. In the beginning it was simply - get some trees to grow. After we moved in and there was a little more input into doing more of the garden – which is still ongoing – I found myself thinking, oh yes, it's all happening now. I had been working on the idea of quick-growing sort of native trees was the way to provide a buffer from the street. Now I'm slowly getting more areas done I think oh yes, this is the thing to do, for me ... In those early stages of trying to get a transition there was that sense of just waiting, waiting for the garden to help me.

It has been argued that activities carried out by men and women in the suburban garden are an extension of the gender division of work inside the home, with women attending to the aesthetic/decorative elements while men concerned themselves with the more utilitarian tasks of growing vegetables and mowing lawns. This appears reasonable within the context of the advertising shown in chapter five, but for Morag and several other women their gardening activities contributed to their sense of identity and creativity, and provided a means of connecting them to places and people.[122] In chapter two Tracey referred to the garden as an installation that is cared for and nurtured but has its own life. Susan stated that her identity was expressed in the garden rather than in the house (chapter nine), and Lucy had taken cuttings from the garden she had left when her marriage ended, cuttings which were given a temporary home in the garden of her rented house. "*In the garden there are bits and pieces from my old home and there are*

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[122] Those women for whom the garden was important their marital/partnership status appeared irrelevant.

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bits and piece from this place, too, that are going in the new garden, so the garden is evolving as well."

I think the analogy of outside replicating inside in relation to gender divisions of labour is too simplistic, as is the outside-inside division in the advertising of chapter five. The ways in which women develop and attach meanings to their gardens remains largely untheorised, and while I have drawn attention to this issue here, I do not extend my discussion, although I think it is an area worthy of more exploration. For some women (Tracey, Lucy, Morag) leaving a garden they had created and cared for elicited a sense of loss, but for Ellen her loss had more to do with losing friendships as she followed her husband around the country.

8.4 Ellen: Cities and Small Towns

Moving house, especially from one geographical area to another, has different outcomes for women, men and children, but this is rarely written about or discussed, except perhaps in magazines where the emphasis is on useful tips when buying or selling houses. The overarching narrative of Ellen's interview, I felt, was about loneliness and vulnerability, much of which was related to stories about moving; stories not only related to her own experiences.[123]

Well, we shifted from Christchurch. My children were born in Wellington; actually that was probably the most steady time for my children. P talks about it now and she's seventeen and she remembers Wellington, not actually remembering what we

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[123] Ellen told a story about her elderly aunt's moves around the small town of Alexandra in which she emphasised her uncle's alcoholism, variations of the warmth of different houses, and the loneliness her aunt experienced moving away from the house which fronted a busy street. This story was similar to her own experience of living in a cul-de-sac (which she saw as suiting the privacy needs of couples) compared to the open situation of her townhouse.

did but she liked the feel of it, so her childhood – it wasn't exciting and full of events but it was a very stable, settled time.[124]

And then we went from Christchurch to Kaikoura[125] *and that was when all of us really learned about the real world, lonely. It's very different. Like, in Kaikoura, your home is Kaikoura and the people of Kaikoura are your family and you'd hear, well, I used to go into the supermarket and you'd hear conversation you'd sort of hear around the dinner table and it was really different. I just couldn't – I found it really hard to get used to and of course they all looked at newcomers, like – what, where are they going to slot in, what group will they get along with, where are they going to fit into this community which is really so different from the city and any other community. And the men, the guys, spent a lot of time, those who socialized widely spent a lot of time drinking in hotels. Yeah, it was interesting, hard for the bank manager's wife. But in the end we got to know such a lot of people and we're still friends with them up there.*

Audrey McCollum's (1990) book *The Trauma of Moving* is the only comprehensive writing about the experience of moving house I have come across. McCollum interviewed a number of couples about their experiences of decision-making, what was left behind and what was gained. She asked women and men to articulate the processes by which they tried to re-establish home. Moving, for men, was considerably less traumatic as work situations combated loneliness and often their partners' efforts in re-establishing home made it appear as though life went on as usual. For women, however, moving resulted in considerable distress, inability to find work, make friends, grieving for places and people left behind; the kinds of experiences captured in some of the interviews for this project.

Ann: I think these small towns are very different.

N: Yes, but once you get in and you feel quite good about it - but the thing is if you've never really lived there all your life you're never really one of them. It's the same in Christchurch to a degree. And you go to Wellington and everyone's transferred all over the place and you're part of the place straight away ... I found once I had been

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[124] Bachelard writes of the poetics of space, having a place from which to dream. This image conjures up continuity, staying in one place within a set of stable social relations, and indeed this was Bachelard's experience.

[125] Kaikoura is a sea-side town with a small population of approximately 5,000 compared with Wellington (approximately 450,000) and Christchurch (approximately 350,000).

in Wellington for longer, like 12 years, that when new people came in and I wanted to make friends with them I wouldn't know how to go about it ... I used to ask mothers that worked forty hour weeks and things like that and they just said they didn't have time to get friendly with people.

In Ellen's narrative it seemed that making friends was an important part of her life. These friendships it appears insulated her from the loneliness of being "the bank manager's wife," although it is not clear whether this term refers only to her husband's occupation or to the characteristic behaviours of her husband (or both). For me, Ellen's story raises questions about the relationships between heterosexual exclusivity and mental health. The degree to which women when moving – like Tanya and Ellen - are dependent upon their husband's presence, time and support may place 'excessive' demands upon the relationship. Being able to make new friends quickly may enable women to cope with the joint requirements of moving and maintaining the kind of interaction with partners which appears to make moving house/home unproblematic. Coates (1996:285) cites Heilbrun's conception of:

> ... societies of consolation, meaning that women have always provided
> each other with a space where we can share our everyday experiences
> and problems as women living under patriarchy. The research evidence
> is that women do talk to each other about our lives and our problems.

Marital relationships appear to take precedence over other sets of relationships, including women's friendships (unless women define these as lesbian relationships).[126] Hoagland (1995:282) writes:

> We tend to seek meaning by subordinating ourselves to a higher order or
> system because we seek the semblance of security in something
> constructed outside of us in which we can participate. Heterosexualism
> is such a system. In another context Marilyn Frye writes of the "mortal

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[126] With more women opting for career advancement, moving may be precipitated by women, but I doubt there are many partners who do not find subsequent employment opportunities, and the preliminary findings of the Time-Use Survey (2000) commissioned by the Department of Women's Affairs found that the increase in men's contribution to household duties was minimal.

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dread of being outside the field of vision of the arrogant eye:"
We fear that if we are not in that web of meaning there will be no
meaning, our work will be meaningless, our lives of no value, our
accomplishments empty, our identities illusory.

Hoagland's analysis seems to fit Ellen's experience and her air of vulnerability, with her stories related to both the 'Woman/Women Alone' and 'Transition' narratives. And nearly all her stories were told, somewhat hesitatingly, after relating others' experiences before embarking on her own. This is in stark contrast to Lucy's narrative which, by its title, suggests uncertainty but in fact was not.

8.5 Lucy: Evolving Self, Evolving Home

Lucy's interview in which she described her transition from being married and living in the family home to renting while she and her new woman partner re-built her partner's house forms a narrative of evolution. This consisted of stories about the processes of moving out of the heterosexual **system,** into a lesbian relationship necessitating a redefinition of life, of work, and of identity, and of house/home.

When I moved to here I made absolutely no effort to have the children here and I have been almost as clear as I can that the husband doesn't come here. This is my space ... When I come in here and I say hello little house I don't call it home.

Lucy's words remind me of Sharon Koea's (1992) book *Staying Home and Being Rotten*. Both use the house as a metaphor for a woman's body. In Koea's novel Rosie is treated very much as a sexual object by both Ben and James - the male protagonists - but is able to feel a cohesive sense of self in her cottage. She either denies the men access, or when they do enter she is reflective about how she feels about their presence - mostly negative.

> She does not let James come to her cottage. He had invaded the other
> house which she had sold and the cottage was difficult to find. "Not a
> place that's very easy to describe," she would say, "It's difficult to say
> how to get there." The road to it, she thought now, had been puzzling
> and saddening (1992:60).

In Koea's novel, the house, then the cottage, clearly represent Rosie (and her body); the imagery refers to both. Rosie is simultaneously the dweller and the dwelled in, who tries to re-present her own (rather than male-defined) space. For many of the fictional women as well as the 'real women,' the ways in which they identify with home are clearly related to links between their perceptions of sexual identity and issues of house and home. I do not claim that the spaces of house/home and women's embodied experiences are always subordinated to men or that home is always experienced as a negative space. What I do claim is that the privatised social relations of housing are implicitly related to the construction of a narrowly defined heterosexuality and work against the formation of different socio-spatial sexual identities.

The ways in which Lucy talks about the changes to her (lesbian) partner's house and her new sexual identity illustrate how closely the construction of house/home and self can be interwoven. Lucy showed me the plans and then we talked.

Lucy: It really is a house evolving. What we're trying to do is just let the house evolve and the design that has ended up is one that fits, we think it fits the property.

Ann: It looks as though it has been designed from scratch.

Lucy: Yes, it seems like a natural evolution for it rather than tearing it down and starting from scratch, even though that's almost what we're doing.

Ann: Do you see yourself as expressing your identity in this house?

Lucy: I don't think that anything I've been is what I'm going to be. Because it's still evolving I can't say I'm going to express my identity this way or that 'cause I actually don't know what it is because the space I've been in did not express my identity really. I'm putting a lot more thought into it, and again we'll go with the feel. Like we did this wonderful walk at the weekend – I mean we're still sussing out each other, and the only thing we've seen of each other has been the past, you know, how we furnished our homes in the past, so this is quite tricky and what are we going to live with in the future. Anyway, this place at S Bay is wonderful, totally idiosyncratic. The shower is built around this enormous tree trunk, in there was a slab of wood and it wasn't finished properly, it wasn't square, and I said, that's what I like, and she said,

Really! ... so we're still at that stage, and as I said I need to wait and let it evolve with the house and that will become the environment I'll feel comfortable with.

Ann: Does this give you a sense of freedom?

Lucy: Yes, yes. It's going to be fun working it out, but there were a lot of fears, I think, for both of us, we wondered how we would marry the two different styles.

Ann: How is this a different process from when you were married and created a home?

Lucy: Everything about this is different. My immediate response is that the roles were coming forward and the expectations – Oh do I have to do the garden and redecorate to my taste, be responsible for cleaning it ... I don't have any expectations this time, it's a whole different thing.

Ann: Do you think that it's partly from where you're at as well or because it's not a heterosexual relationship which is more clearly defined in terms of roles?

Lucy: My husband was incredibly conservative and traditional and wouldn't move outside the roles. That was part of the frustration. And A certainly is the opposite, she won't wear any of the roles or expectations. I wouldn't let anyone role-bind me again!

Ann: So –

Lucy: I was moving out of the roles already ... I was constrained and wasn't reflecting me so I was on the way out to find me regardless, and I would have gone down that journey. Stuff the roles and expectations![127]

Ann: I think we do it to ourselves, too.

Lucy: You're right, there is personal responsibility. It's very scary without those roles, when they're deconstructed.

Ann: I'm sure a lot of people find that scary.

Lucy: Oh enormously. It's incredibly liberating, and the other thing that's come out of it is that I have no sense of being beholden to anyone and that is an amazing sensation. I am not responsible to a soul, except to work, but in my private life no-one holds me to account for anything, it's wonderful ... There's an issue there –

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[127] Lucy's words illustrate an awareness of "social mechanisms" which tie women to particular activities because they are carried out on a daily basis, and "visibly obscure" the ideological construction of roles and attendant activities. See reference to Rob Steven's (1989) ideas about identity in chapter three.

paternalistic society and the construction of woman and all that jazz. I've become quite an ardent feminist out of it all ... I couldn't believe how constructed I was by those roles. It's been an interesting two years deconstructing them.

Ann: I think it's an ongoing process.

Lucy: I was hoping to finish it some time, but no, you're right! There's no guarantee, that even in homosexual relationships - I don't know enough about them, but there seems to be less expectations and roles because of the gender base so I don't have any sense of loss from going from this to that.

Lucy's experience also appears to illustrate the claims of Hoagland when she cites Frye's claim that being outside the "web of meaning" of a heterosexist system we have to reconstruct ourselves and negotiate new forms of socio-spatial interaction. I would not say that Lucy experiences her life, work or self as meaningless; her narrative of evolution implies that while she has been (and perhaps still is) fearful, she feels strongly empowered by the transitions in her life.

At the same time Lucy found it disconcerting that work colleagues did not acknowledge her changing situation; they were *"making it all invisible."* She found this strange given that she worked in a female-dominated area of teaching and colleagues knew both Lucy and her female partner. Lucy's experience, I think, demonstrates how she and her partner have had to find different ways of talking about and organizing the space and place of house/home because they were no longer in the taken-for-granted place/space of housing built on an assumption of heterosexism.

8.6 Further Discussion – What do the Theorists Say?

Johnson and Valentine (1995:103) write:

> The home can [therefore] be a site of tension for women who identify as lesbians – a place where the ideal of home as a place of security, freedom and control meets the reality of the home as site where heterosexual family relations act on and restrict the performance of a lesbian identity. Rather than being 'where above all one feels "in place"

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(Eyles 1984:425), 'at home' is where many lesbians feel 'out of place' and that they don't actually belong or fit in ... This lack of ontological security can also be accompanied by a lack of actual physical security. Research shows that whilst lesbians experience less abuse from strangers than gay men, they are at the receiving end of more domestic violence perpetrated by family members 'disgusted' by their sexuality.
At the same time, lesbian house/homes can provide a 'sanctuary' from the 'public' world of heterosexuality. The 'home', particularly for those who are wary about the personal and employment consequences of being 'outed', can therefore take on a vital role as a lesbian social venue and meeting place. (ibid:108).

It is not only the sense of home which differs for lesbian women, but for many lesbian couples 'performing homosexuality' means non-engagement with the gender roles which have produced household inequality, something Lucy articulated. Dunne (1994:185), who interviewed lesbian couples about how they negotiated household tasks, found they described their relationships as [more] equal.[128] Respondents were:

[T]alking about a range of features which were often constructed as the converse of heterosexual relationships. They believed that within lesbian relationships they could exercise greater self-determination and experience relative freedom from domination.

This appears to be Lucy's experience, and while one could argue that housing form is not necessarily implicated in these perceived differences, the meaning systems attached to the house/home for Lucy are clearly different to her marital experiences. Her insistence that the house she was renting at the time of interview was a place where "*the husband can not come,*" were all implicated in the undoing of socially prescriptive roles associated with "doing heterosexuality." Smailes (1994:153 in Gilroy and Woods) writes:

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[128] This conclusion is based upon data from women who had previously been in heterosexual relationships.

> Housing is for heterosexuals. There is an assumption of heterosexuality throughout housing policy … within this lesbians are either invisible or seen as the problem, rather than having a problem. Sexuality may not be an issue to most housing providers but housing is certainly an issue for lesbians.

For some of the women in Dunne's study being set adrift from socio-spatial role prescription enabled creative development of relationships, for others it was difficult. This claim echoes that of Hoagland, and Lucy's experience which encapsulates both fear and the creativity of evolving both house/home and self. To some extent the following experiences of Melissa and Judy are similar in that they also involve a transformation of the meanings of house/home, in both the physicality of the house and in social relations.

8.7 Melissa and Jane: Changing the Place of Kinship Relations

When I first interviewed Melissa she and her son Jacob had been in the house she had bought for approximately one year, after initially living with her mother. She described a house as a body without the living parts; that home provided a capacity for living. I asked her how she saw ownership in these contexts. "*Flatting was never my home because it was always someone else's. With Mum, it was everyone's home.*" Melissa had an awkward relationship with Jacob's father, a young man who suffered residual effects of a prior serious head injury, and whom Melissa felt was not managing parenting responsibilities.[129]

Two years after the initial interview I was informed that Melissa and her mother were going to buy a house together. I contacted both women and they agreed to a joint interview. The reasons for their decision were largely financial, as well as for mutual enjoyment of each other's company and benefits for Jacob (now four). I

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[129] Jacob's father has weekend access and he often returns with behaviour problems after these visits.

was interested in the **process** of decision-making and how they articulated relationships between themselves and the spaces/place of the new house/home. The process had begun a year before the interview.

Ann: How did you come to think of buying a house together?

Melissa: It was seeded a few, maybe even a year ago, and we said maybe we should live together and then we'd go off the idea.

Jane: For me, for both of us it was something else happening in our lives. It was a good thing for me in that between now and sixty-five I'll be retiring; so I'm thinking I've got to maintain this house inside and out all by myself ... and because I'm living on my own I never stay at home, I'm always out ... I spend a lot of time around here (Melissa's place), I enjoy being with Melissa and Jacob. So I was thinking, can we get together and it works for both of us ... I'm sitting there thinking everyone's in their own little separate units, there's too many people like that, and I don't want to be like that.

I asked Jane how people had reacted to the idea.

Jane: I never had one negative reaction, and I was surprised at that, because – go and live with your daughter, and you've got a different life-style to her, and who's going to have the upper say, and whose house is it. No, nobody said a negative thing, I was waiting for – don't do that , you'll be sorry.

Melissa: I kept saying to her, I mean, what do people say about it. I always thought that I'd be harder to live with, that it would be harder for Mum to live with me than the other way around.

Jane: And then I actually think it would be harder for Melissa perhaps because of the mother kind of thing, so I said to myself, if we do this I have to get out of this mother image, it's just two people who have a mutual liking, respect and affection kind of thing and so I can't interfere, even if I don't particularly like something.

Melissa: I don't think there'll ever be the mother-daughter thing. What will work is that we're both open to communication; this happened since I had Jacob actually. We've had, we keep going through this process.

Ann: So how did you approach it, Melissa?

Melissa: There were lots of things. Basically, first up I guess, the motivation is financial.

Jane: It's good that I'm coming in for Jacob though he's not really the reason. I've had four children! It's also been quite interesting going through the exercise ... we had thought the access thing was going to come into this. We really need to get the mix right, that the status really has to be equal. Like the bedrooms –

Melissa: Same size (laughter), we have to be able to say you're not being put over there, it can't be –

Jane: So it has to be pretty equal so it's not one person going to have a dominance over the other.

There are several issues related to the words above, one of which relates to class position. Access to space – in this sense a house big enough to meet Melissa's and Jane's demands – requires financial resources. Jane was going to be contributing more financially (and earning more) than Melissa, but importantly this difference was not to impinge on their interaction. They were also having legal difficulties in sorting out the issue of financial equity. This was an outcome, I think, of how their arrangement is very different to most joint households.

Secondly, although Jane has indicated that Jacob will be better off with two adults concerned with his care and well-being, she still sees Jacob as Melissa's responsibility. This situation contains both a belief in the benefits of a 'collective' for the child, yet retains an individual view of parental responsibility. Jane's approach appears similar to that of Lucy when she talked about fashioning a community for grandchildren. However, it seems to me that Jane and Melissa, and Lucy, are closer to a concept of matrilineal collectivity than is usually found in Pakeha New Zealand families. O'Daly and Reddy (1993:7) write:

> The idea of mothering as a collective responsibility is a revolutionary one in Western society, as it runs precisely counter to capitalist, patriarchal prescriptions for motherhood; it is not however a new idea as it has historically been familiar in African and African-American cultures.

The last issue is one of equality which is seen as enacted through the apportioning of bedroom space. Most suburban housing is built around a 'master' bedroom for a heterosexual couple and two smaller bedrooms for children.[130] There is an implicit hierarchy which is both spatially and linguistically constructed which acts against – or makes more difficult – the setting up of different sets of social relations such as those of Melissa and Jane.

Moore (in McCarmant & Durrett 1998), who argues for collective approaches to housing, scathingly suggests that housing in developed countries; "[s]eems set up to crowd together unrelated and hermetic nuclear families whose only link with each other is that they have been brought together by some mindless casting to play bits in an incomprehensible urban drama." I think Moore's words are somewhat acerbic; while I agree with the prescriptiveness of suburban housing, there are instances of families living close by[131] and as excerpts from Toni's interview showed, neighbours were very supportive and caring and became part of what turned a house into a home. In all instances the degree and kind of social interaction depends upon the creation (and/or maintenance) or breaking down of socio-spatial boundaries. Creating boundaries, however, within the house/home was something Melissa and Jane talked about, they had an expectation they would need their own space at times.

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[130] The intersection of spatial and personal privacy and the private nature of (hetero)sexuality is captured in the following anecdote, a conversation I had with a friend.
Katya and her husband and teenage daughter live in a relatively small three-bedroomed house which has one living area. Shifting house or extending the space they have is not a viable option. Dean (husband) is concerned about their teenage daughter, Jenny, entertaining friends and boyfriend in her bedroom where they sit – or lie – on the bed. Katya, meantime, sleeps in the spare room because of insomnia and Dean's snoring. One solution to the space problem was for Katya and Dean to move out of the 'master bedroom' and have a smaller bedroom each so their daughter could have the larger bedroom which could furnish a couch or chairs and become a bedsit, a semi-private space for Jenny and her friends. Katya thought that while this provided a realistic solution Dean would never move out of the 'marital bed.' Katya also stated that she could never tell friends and family about their changed spatial arrangements because people would think their marriage was over.
[131] My own experience was of living next door to extended family – three sisters' households.

Jane: And Melissa, she has the ability – if she gets upset she says. Well, it's better that she does say and I know what she's feeling.

Melissa: And you don't react to me.

Jane: If she's sort of like that – PMT or something – I'll just walk away and leave you. That's why I needed some kind of space that if we're bothering each other we can just separate and allow that person a bit of space. I mean that's one of the important things, that we're not stuck in one room and being sort of hostile to one another.

It seems to me that these kinds of considerations are not necessarily acknowledged or articulated in heterosexual relationships. The institution of heterosexual marriage and the ideology of suburban housing are based on the underlying assumption that people want to be together, spatially as well in other ways. I asked Melissa and Jane if they felt they were talking about space in a way that would be different in a heterosexual relationship.

Jane: I think it's different in a marriage kind of relationship because you're actually going into the same bedroom, whereas, the way I'm looking at it, we're using the facilities of one house to lead individual lives. We don't have to live like a married couple, I've got my own things and she's got hers, and with the generation difference –

Melissa: I don't know. I think it would still apply in a relationship because you'd need to have your own space and individual and combined lives, except that there's a sexual intimacy. You need those houses where there's a place to go, little nook somewhere so you don't think, oh, I can't get away. I suppose even with families, not just relationships but with kids as well.[132]

Ann: You've both had your own space for a while –

Jane: The worst thing would be that we behave too much like mother and daughter, that Melissa would expect me to take over all the responsibility of washing and

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[132] Melissa is right, although Sharon doesn't think more space would necessarily achieve room only for oneself. She said; "*I also feel like I need space, physical space rather than time ... You may have heard mothers sometimes say you get all touched out. Physically touched out ... But having a bigger space wouldn't mean they wouldn't necessarily mean that they wouldn't want to touch you.*"

cooking and cleaning, while she has a child-life again, and I know she wouldn't do that ... If I felt that my life would stop and I was just here to support Melissa's life I'd say no, this just wasn't going to work.

What Jane expresses here is quite different, for example, to what was expressed by Ellen and most of the women McCollum interviewed, where it was assumed that women will not only move house, but carry out the house/home-related activities which **do** facilitate the working life of male partners. That is not to say that the negotiations and changes in the relationship between Melissa and Jane are straightforward.

Melissa: I am really conscious of my responsibility.

Jane: I did find it – when I was staying here[133] *- just a little bit frustrating, because I'd start to do a job and she'd say, "Mum, that's not your job so don't do it."*

Melissa: But that was different because that was my house if you know what I mean –

Jane: I was allowed to clean the bathroom –

Melissa: I hate that job!

Jane: But that was a little bit frustrating because I had nothing else to do and I wanted to do it and I couldn't because it was impinging on Melissa's –

Melissa: I think it came to the point where I just had to say to her, look, if you want to do that then you have to take responsibility, 'cause I would feel guilty, so I would come to the point and say, "look, it's your choice."

Jane: I think sometimes Melissa would feel –

Melissa: No, my concept wasn't your concept so it actually felt as though I was being undermined in a way. She would come and do, and I felt undermined.

Jane: Taking over and it was her life, and I was coming over too far, but when I go over to America to stay with my other daughter she will let me do anything . She'll say she's never had this and I can do whatever I want, cook tea, do the dishes –

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[133] Jane spent some time at Melissa's house to 'test' their compatibility.

Melissa: I think it's different circumstances too, because I get really caught up in my D.P.B status and I need to be able to do everything. But I think I'm starting to learn it's in all our interests to see that everyone gets what they want.

Melissa's feelings about receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit are similar to those expressed by Tanya and Rona in the previous chapter. The pressure Melissa puts on herself to "do everything" also fits into the good-enough-mother narrative. In chapter ten I will explore the concept of guilt and the ways in which guilt and/or shame are culturally constructed as well as how these emotions are tied up with the social relations within house/home. At this point I want to suggest that the ways in which Melissa and Jane are talking about the issues of guilt and responsibility are an outcome of both construction of sexed/gendered identity formation and deconstruction of sex/gender roles and expectations.

The issue of responsibility expressed by Melissa is different to the talk from focus groups (chapter seven) where women wished their male partners would sometimes take responsibility for tasks and/or childcare, rather than offer woman-directed help. Jane could define her work in Melissa's house as help, but she does not. She knows what needs to be done without direction and both women take on the responsibility. I think what Melissa is arguing in this instance is a complex issue: She is, in fact, directing her mother not to see any work she does as help. 'Helping' implies that responsibility for the task remains with one person. Jane does not appear to understand what Melissa means because she is already talking about responsibility and not help.

I think it is because women feel/experience and exercise responsibility for household tasks and childcare - the latter because being a parent **demands** responsibility (although I think it is also **felt**) – when two women share a house/home there is an issue of how to negotiate the exercising of felt responsibilities. Melissa and Jane have already made it clear that they do not want a mother-child relationship in which household tasks are assumed to be the mother's responsibility. Melissa admits she needs to learn how to let go some of her

responsibilities which have arisen in response to the perceived stigma of being on the Domestic Purposes Benefit. It is my contention that this issue of feeling, taking and exercising responsibility is closely related to identity formation.

This was apparent in one of the focus group discussions. Women talked about the transition of being responsible for children to the time when they are not, and the pleasures and/or difficulties sometimes associated with that change. For example, Iona talked about getting part-time librarian work within the context of taking responsibility for children.

Iona: There was such a relief at retaining intellectual ability – breastfeeding the sixth child! But I always thought, I am a person. I did consciously make that choice, this child is mine and I'm responsible for it. Basically, the question in life is what I do with those children. No-one else is responsible for those children but me. I do resent it a little bit that I have had to wait this long and I haven't got the same energy.

Delia: Then there's the women who do everything for their children and they're happy doing it, that's their life, but then it's devastating when those children go and there's nobody to do it for any more.

Tanya: I get inside weary, not on my outside.

Delia: I've learned a lot about myself since the children have gone. I'm much more aware of myself and what my goals are, and my feelings, things that I perceive. But that's relative to the household when it's busy and they're all asking you things; you're not thinking so much about yourself and when you go to bed you just crash. Yeah, I feel I've grown a lot probably in the last ten years. That's a good feeling isn't it ...

In Doris Lessing's autobiography (1995:410) there is poignant moment in which she talks frankly about leaving the sons of her first marriage.

> I pictured myself in a home of my own, but this formula did not merely mean a flat or a house, rather a feeling of myself solidly based somewhere, it didn't matter where, nor was this base money, or respectability, but that I should have earned an identity that would justify my leaving them.

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However, responsibility for family does not necessarily 'go away' but it does change within different contexts. When Melissa said in the first interview that her mother's home was **not** her home because it was everyone's home, she was aware that living with her mother in the future would require her to modify her perceptions.

Melissa: That was another thing I was going to mention – when I take on my mother, Jane, as sharing my living space I'm actually taking on the family and that is not something I had really thought about until A (brother) decided to come back and I'm thinking so what is my responsibility to them –

Jane: Melissa had to think about that because S and T (Melissa's sister and her husband) are going to come home and will be staying for two months so they are also going to be living with Melissa for that period of time.

Ann: I've got that, my brother and son are being 'recycled' around family members!

Jane: I remember with my mother; we were a large family, but where our mother was that was always a central point. Now when she died there was fragmentation, but when she was alive that was always the central point, the family home while it's still there, the pivotal bit I suppose.

Jane's words echo those of Penny in chapter four when she said:

I think the balance of a woman as a mother, a worker, and a sexual person is like the lynchpin that the whole family revolves around ... women in those three roles, that's like the lynchpin and once you become unstable the whole family unit becomes unstable.

It was important to Jane that her children (four) and their families could feel that the house she and Melissa bought was available to them. While the women did not want to be in a mother-daughter relationship it was also necessary to acknowledge Jane **was** a mother with perceived responsibilities in relation to what that meant to her.

Jane: I really do like my children.

Melissa: You came from the point of view that I could be myself in the relationship and I could make mistakes and not have to worry about how you were going to cope with it.

Jane: It's a taking responsibility thing again, isn't it? [134]

Melissa: And I think that's a sort of mother thing - letting go. I used to lie awake at nights worrying terribly.

I found this interview with Melissa and Jane illustrated how we might think creatively about the intersection of space and social relationships. There had clearly been a change in Melissa's thinking from when I first interviewed her, and I need to acknowledge how interviews carried out at one time provide only minimally contextualised snap-shots of women's life experiences. Change is a consistent part of our lives as these past three chapters have demonstrated. The process of living within and creating narratives requires us to constantly re-frame, add to and subtract from, the events and experiences which fashion our stories.

In the methodological chapter I drew attention to the way in which I read the transcripts differently once a year or so had passed since my first reading of them. This new reading resulted in the narrative chapters rather than women's voices herded into theory I had already absorbed. However, there **is** a need to think about how we might theorise these narratives and the very different stories within them. I want to turn now to Iris Marion Young's concept of home as a critical value. I engage in conversation with Young, discussing the components of what she claims comprise home as a critical value in relation to the interview material.

Also within the time frame of producing this work there has emerged a body of both psychological (in which the social is acknowledged) and sociological theory about emotions. This is the focus of chapter ten and once again I draw on interview excerpts to interrogate the usefulness of this theoretical body in relation to

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[134] This issue of responsibility is discussed in more depth in chapter ten.

understanding the complex relationship between woman/women and house/home. These final chapters evaluate different theoretical explanations which I think could be useful in further studies of the taken-for-granted everyday life.

Chapter Nine

Home as a Critical Value: Conversations with Iris Marion Young

9.1 Introduction

Iris Marion Young (1997) argues for home as a critical value whereby societies can be judged. Home, she claims, should provide for individual safety, individuation, privacy, and these precepts should be available to everyone. "Everyone needs a place where they can go to be safe … it is not too much to ask that everyone can have a home in which they can feel physically safe and secure" (161). She argues that people without a home are deprived of individual existence and processes of individuation; that "[H]ome is an extension of the person's body, the space that he or she takes up, and performs the basic activities of life" (ibid). Her concept of privacy is defined as "the autonomy and control a person has to allow or not allow access to her person, information about her, and the things that are meaningfully associated with her person" (ibid:162).

To some extent Young's concept of home as a critical value resonates with my claim in chapter three that home has positive connotations, an 'ideal place' where individuals and relationships can flourish, for example, the ways in which Lucy sees her evolving home as providing community for grandchildren, and the ways in which Tracey defined home as the place of "*building up love … the happy times … peaceful times at night and the fire, everybody coming in and being cosy and comfortable and talking* … The concept of 'home' resembles that of 'community' whereby Edward Robbins (1998) argues that 'community,' as "reference to some social grouping [gives] a sense that community is always somehow positive in its connotation (39)." Home as an ideal concept and home as a critical value are both

positive constructions, but as we have seen from the fiction and interview material this is not always translated into experience.

Further to this discussion I want to refer to the chapter Privacy Rights and Family Law in Michael Sandel's (1996) *Democracy's Discontent*. Interrogating changes in constitutional law (in the U.S.A.) as enacted though specific cases Sandel identifies a shift from privacy rights accorded the family to those accorded individuals. He argues that:

> So close is the connection between privacy rights and the voluntarist conception of the self that commentators frequently assimilate the values of privacy and autonomy: Privacy rights are said to be grounded in notions of individual autonomy, because the human dignity protected by constitutional guarantees would be seriously diminished if people were not free to choose and adopt a lifestyle which allows expression of their uniqueness and individuality (92).

He suggests that; "[T]he new privacy protects a person's independence in making certain kinds of important decisions, whereas the old privacy protects a person's interests in avoiding disclosure of personal matters" (93).

These are important issues and while the arguments produced by both Young and Sandel arise within the context of American society, these arguments are equally relevant in the New Zealand context. I want to begin by examining the concepts of private and privacy and their association with autonomy and the implications for both historical and contemporary experiences. I will then go on to discuss the remaining concepts Young claims contribute to home as a critical value. The three concepts - safety, privacy and individuation – are, in a sense, inseparable; they form a matrix of socio-spatial interaction which requires grounding in empirical work in order to see just how this interrelationship has been or could be enacted.

The other focus of Young's chapter House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme entails separating those household activities which comprise repetitious

tasks from those of preservation and continuity. These latter activities are implicated in the construction of home as a critical value and, I will argue, relates to women enabling processes of individuation of other family members.

9.2 Private, Privacy and Safety – Revisiting Experiences

In New Zealand, as in the U.S.A. there have been shifts in the ways in which debates around private property and the association of ownership with autonomy have impacted upon the family and the rights of individuals. I think that the **privatisation** of house/home ownership[135] along with perceived autonomy often hierarchical in nature, has threatened (and continues to threaten) the safety of predominantly women and children. As I have shown in previous chapters Pakeha New Zealanders have inherited and built upon strong cultural, political and ideological imperatives to own a house/home and the land on which it sits. I have also argued that this has been predominantly the prerogative of men and as a consequence women and children have also been perceived as property. This stems from history, for married women up until the late 1800s were excluded from owning property. Margaret Wilson (in Du Plessis1992:268) writes:

> It has been argued that the reform of married women's property law was the most important of all law reforms won by feminists in England in the nineteenth century. This is not an exaggerated claim, because in the common law, property and personal status have always been closely linked. Once a woman married she not only lost all her property, but her independence, separate identity, and self-respect. She was in effect the chattel of the husband. The consequences of this flowed outside the marriage because it was argued that there was no need to educate women, or to allow them to participate in public [civic] life, because their natural role was that of wife.

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[135] I do not intend to enter into a discussion of different tenure experiences here, but I do want to acknowledge that tenure can be implicated in women's experiences of rights to privacy within a context of private property owned by others. I do not claim that tenure per se defines experiences, but that the intersection of tenure relations, and issues related to privacy and private property can impact upon experience as in Jeanette's story in chapter six.

There are two issues for women arising from this historical context. The first is their differential access to resources which enables property ownership and which I have illustrated in Heather's story in chapter six. The second is that the ideology of men's ownership of women and children as property has not disappeared from our cultural psyche.

Rona: It was hard finding a place to rent. It is hard that way but it was a very unhappy marriage and what went on in those four walls, you'd rather be anywhere else.

Ann: It was only your space when he wasn't there?

Rona: I still had this surveillance thing, being watched, I still couldn't do what I wanted to do. Mum and Dad felt uncomfortable. The kids couldn't have their friends around. He always gave them a hard time whereas now ... it's like a communal meeting house. It was one of the tests – how others feel at home.

Abbey's husband used to check the tops of doorways for dust and Delia said:

... my husband was a workaholic and he'd be working from dawn to dark, day in and day out, and he expected me to do the same. If he came inside at nine o'clock I should be standing there, ironing or doing something.

Duncan (1994) makes an analogy between Foucault's description of the panopticon and women's self-surveillance for "possible 'transgressions' against patriarchal ideals of femininity" (50). The panopticon is "a prison structure that places a guard tower at its centre and positions prisoners in a circle around that centre" (50). While the guards can see the prisoners the prisoners cannot see the guards. Duncan states that according to Foucault (1979) this has the effect of inducing "in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (ibid). She argues that the panopticon functions effectively through private self-monitoring. "Women internalize the gaze and turn it against themselves although their surveillance of themselves seems to originate elsewhere"

(ibid). Certainly this is the mechanism **articulated** by Rona and which is implicit in Abbey's and Delia's experience.

Lyn Richards (1990) and Ian Winter (1994) whose books arose from empirical work, detail (in different ways) the different meaning systems of private and privacy that women and men hold for their housing/home environment. As I indicated above, ownership was often equated with control, autonomy and privacy, and this appears to be a predominantly male discourse. When Lyn Richards explored what men and women meant by claiming ownership she found that men saw ownership in terms of 'I' in comparison with women who saw ownership in terms of 'ours' or 'we.' In one focus group discussion Iona revealed her invisibility as subject within the home.

At a seminar for marriage strengthening we were asked to express on paper how you see home and your marriage relationship, and mine was in sort of abstract, nice bits, patchy and big. And what did my husband draw? A house, a garden and two children. Boy did that show me a thing or two, I just wasn't in it. A house and two children, that was marriage. Painful (Iona).

Dupuis and Thorns (1998) implicitly question the power relations within the home in relation to exercising autonomy. In their study of elderly widows and widowers they state:

> The majority of women respondents commented on the sense of
> autonomy within the home they experienced after their husband's death
> which they had not felt before. For most, their husbands had been head
> of the household and living alone gave them the chance to experience
> control within the home, perhaps for the first time in their lives (37).

These claims also bring to mind Jeanette's story in chapter six when she described her ex-husband as controlling. The men's abuse of power was the precipitating factor for Jeanette, Rona, Delia, Abbey and Iona in terminating their marital relationships.

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McMaster and Swain (1989:50) claim that 'doing masculinity' means being in control and the privately owned house is the domain of this control. They write; "As men we can invoke our rights to **privacy** in order to maintain our control over the household. The phrase 'a man's home is his castle' implies ideas of ownership not just of property but also of family members" (emphasis added) They argue throughout the book that "the ideology of masculinity is most apparent where it is translated into relationships that exist within the **private** sphere of the household" (8) (emphasis added).

The way in which 'private' and 'privacy' are used here illustrates both the "old privacy" whereby the family home is exempt from outside control or intervention, and the "new privacy" which is accorded to the individual, in this case to the male of the household. Research from "Hitting Home" (1995)[136] suggests that; "If there is any one message from this research, it is that we, individually and as a society, have to be responsible for changing our expectations of 'what it is to be a man' in order to reduce the abuse of women" (151). One way in which this has occurred is through (women) making 'domestic' violence a public issue; what happens in the family is no longer exempt from public and judiciary censure.

The real and theoretical separation of the everyday life into private and public worlds I suggest contributes to the confusion surrounding issues of private and privacy. The perception of home as the private sphere, I think adds to the notion of autonomy, the freedom to 'be yourself' which is opposed to control of the individual when in the public world of paid employment. It is telling, I think, how Sandel's application of the "new privacy" which he claims constructs men and women as autonomous individuals within the family **and** in the event of marital dissolution (and which he claims disadvantages women) leads to the observation that:

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[136] See Leibrich, Paulin, Ransom, Department of Justice (1995) *Hitting Home: men speak about the abuse of women partners.* This research was based upon **men's** experiences, rather than women's.

> As men and women find that greater benefits derive from holding a job, family life will diminish in relative importance to the world of work, and people will invest less in the family than in their individual lives and careers. That careers have come to matter more and families less in modern life may explain why the law now makes it easier to divorce a spouse than to fire an employee (115).

The complexity of these issues - the ways in which changes are critiqued or vindicated - is also captured in Tony Fahey's (1995) reading of what he calls "rather contradictory literature."

> The private/public dichotomy as used in sociology had a shifting, ambiguous meaning, coupled with a general lack of effort to explore or resolve that ambiguity. Family privacy is sometimes seen as a means of social control, sometimes as a bulwark of political liberty, and sometimes simply as a desirable feature of social life (687-688).

I would suggest that all these views are valid within different historical and social contexts. While Fahey refers to the public-private dichotomy in the past tense I believe it is still 'alive and well' as the discourse analysis of *Realtor* publications demonstrated. I identified ten dominant discourses in relation to housing advertising one of which was a discourse conflating private and privacy. The house/home was described as "a private haven," "your sanctuary," "peaceful and private," "a private setting," "a private hideaway," "a hidden treasure," a place of "privacy and seclusion." It would be interesting to explore the origins of this real estate discourse for as Fahey argues (in the present tense!); "there are numerous public/private dualisms in social life, they are not 'objective,' externally observable givens but subjective constructs shaped by the contexts in which they emerge" (688). In the *Realtor* publications there was no alternative 'public' discourse in relation to house/home, thus denying the need of many women (and probably men) to be (publicly) **visible** within the territory of their house/home. Ellen, for example, had two stories about being publicly visible.

My auntie – she's a tough old bird really – she had a husband she had to mollycoddle all his life – he drank – and she lived right on the main street of Alexandra and she liked the window and she liked looking out and it was like she was really part of Alexandra, and in fact she was Alexandra really.

And Ellen liked the busy-ness of being close to the road in her new ownership flat, that:

[P]eople walk past and look in ... if you live in a busy road no-one's going to be climbing through your windows, and at night, well, there's street lights. And there's always something happening – when I walk out the door there's three lots of retired people here and they're close and will keep an eye on things and we have little chats.

A discourse related to Ellen's stories is that of 'Home Invasion,' a discourse coined by politicians and the media which has resulted in stiffer penalties for those committing certain kinds of crimes. This discourse, paradoxically, reinforces the idea of the house/home as a place/space that should not be subject to 'outsiders'. By implication, crime committed by those who live **within** the home is less violent than those who enter unlawfully . The editorial response of the *Listener* (July 31 1999:5) to this discourse, and to letters received on the topic, stated:

> Any suggestion that the location of the act [rape, assault] might somehow distinguish between the utterly vile or the not-quite-so-utterly-vile-but-still-really-vile is not only redundant, but also comes close to equating real estate with flesh and blood.
> As the letter writer said, there is an implication that "good women are those who are elderly, chaste, and/or safe at home". These women need to be protected and their attackers sentenced more harshly than those who attack and rape women in dark alleys, bars and places where good women don't go. In this debate, the terms 'sanctity of the home' is almost always upheld.[137]

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[137] Even the term 'sanctity of the home' is open to interpretation. Does this refer to the idea of 'sanctuary' from the public domain as in the *Realtor* advertising, or does it refer to the sanctity of women as (virginal) maternal beings? Elizabeth Wilson (1992), too, writes of the ways in which women in urban space were seen as morally corrupt through being constructed as sexually promiscuous.

The separation of life into public and private spheres, when added to the power relations already embedded in the sex/gender hierarchies of house/home reveals how important it is to ground Iris Young's concept of individual/family privacy and safety. This, and previous chapters have provided evidence of the socio-spatial hierarchies which, I claim, exist to privilege male control and domination, although hierarchy is perhaps the wrong word, for being constituted as (dominant) subject, as 'I', does not necessarily imply that a more relational identity is less desirable.

Melissa and Jane in their talk about negotiation of space, however, exposed the hierarchy explicit but usually unnoticed in the design and apportioning of space within most New Zealand houses/homes. We really do not know the degree to which this spatial coding contributes to power relations, the perception of continuing hierarchies and the exercise of (physical and/or emotional) violence.

It is useful here, to return to Grosz's argument that we need to understand how bodies are inscribed spatially. Women's bodies are 'available' within the context of house/home in ways that men's are not; available as sexual bodies (the crux of Wigley's argument), and as nurturing bodies especially in relation to childbearing and rearing, and as working bodies. The erroneous fusing of 'private' property and privacy has, by implication, constructed the house/home as the site of autonomous control, while ignoring the issue of privacy for individuals within the house/home to define the control over their persons, information and things that are meaningful to them. The very high incidence of violence and abuse of women and children in New Zealand houses/homes is one consequence of this. [138]

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[138] The publication "*All About Women*" (1993:168) states that; "For the year ended June 1992, the police reported attending 21,093 domestic disputes, a 7.7 percent increase on the previous year and a nineteen percent increase on the figures recorded in 1981. As with reported sex offences, reported incidents of violence in this form are recognised as being only a small proportion of the total, with the majority of offences never being formally reported or actioned."

Historically, women's challenge to the negative implications of private and privacy issues has been marginalised through the ways in which subjectivity has been mapped **latterly** onto meanings of the built environment rather than seeing the built environment as an outcome of predominantly male **subject**ivity. It is not men who initially identified the anomie experienced by suburban housewives, nor men who identified and challenged violence in the house/home setting. Clearly there exist identifiable patterns of behaviour arising from the relationship between the built environment and the social relations of 'coupledom' and family. Surely we must interrogate the ways in which the built environment is both subjectively and physically produced and experienced differently by women, men and children. As Hillier and Hanson (1984:1) claim, it is the " ... ordering of space that is the purpose of building, not the physical object itself" which produces certain patterns of social interaction, and I agree with their argument that:

> In this sense, buildings are not what they seem. They appear to be
> physical artefacts, like any other, and to follow the same type of logic.
> But this is illusory insofar as they are purposeful, buildings are not just
> objects, but transformations of space.

However, in most literature about 'domestic' violence the 'setting' of 'the household', the house as private property is contextual, not constitutive. I would argue that alongside the changes of 'doing masculinity and femininity' we also need to understand the relationship between the house/home as a particular kind of space, the site of competing discourses about what is private and individual and/or collective rights to/of privacy. While we might hold abstract ethical values of what house/home could or should be, how that is translated into individual and collective experience is far from straightforward.

I also claim that Young's concept of individuation may have diverse meanings and outcomes for different members of the household. For some women their own processes of individuation may be 'put on hold', subsumed by others' needs. Paradoxically this attention to others provides the source of what some women

might claim as their own individuation process. This also raises the interesting question of 'authenticity' which I will deal with in chapter ten.

9.3 Individuation

Within the context of home as a critical value individuation according to Young has the following attributes.

> However minimal, home is an extension of the person's body, the space that he or she takes up, and performs the basic activities of life – eating, sleeping, bathing, making love ... moreover, people's experiences entail having some space of their own in which they array around them the things that belong to them, that reflect their particular identity back to them in a material mirror (162).

To some extent I have already written about some of the basic activities of life in Consumption Work in chapter five. What I foreground in this section is (1) how women create the time which enables others' daily living activities, and (2) how they make distinctions between houses that are 'lived in' compared to those which appear sterile, and (3) how women enable the display and maintenance of items that provide a material mirror for themselves and for others.

Young is careful to differentiate between the tasks of housework and other sustaining activities related to home as a critical value. She does not see housework as the stuff of individuation referring to de Beauvoir's concept of the immanent world of women, a cyclical, repetitive world of housework which symbolises time with no future and no goals.

> The activities of sustaining life, however, according to de Beauvoir, cannot be expressions of individuality. They are anonymous and general ... thus if a person's existence consists entirely or largely of activities of sustaining life, then she or he cannot be an individual subject ... as in Irigaray's account. For de Beauvoir man's subjectivity draws on the material support of women's work, and this work deprives her of a subjectivity of her own (1997:148).

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The lack of subjectivity associated with repetitious (house) work is captured by Morag.

I actually pretend that someone else has done mine sometimes. That sounds quite bizarre but I've had a rush of doing – it might not even be a lot, but I'll sort of walk through – I think it's a bit fanciful – and just go, well it's all done now, as if I wasn't part of it, and I'll just enjoy it.

Throughout this project I have included excerpts from individual and focus group interviews which describe how responsibility for the running of the household has in some instances, for different periods of time, deprived women of subjectively defined selves (chapter seven). However, this is not as simple as it appears, for women also define themselves and create identity **around** these activities. Not all tasks associated with household maintenance (including emotion work which I will analyse in the following chapter) are consistently defined as work.

9.3.1 Time and Household Maintenance

I **would** argue, however, that the **time** women spend in the 'immanent world' enables others' individuation experiences. Housework carried out predominantly by women creates time opportunities for others to carry out different kinds of activities. Preliminary findings from a time use survey carried out by Statistics New Zealand (2000) for the Ministry of Women's Affairs found that women spend around twice as long as men in activities such as meal preparation and other household work, and nearly three times as long looking after other people in the home.[139]

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[139] For example, studies exploring gender patterns of leisure participation show that men have more access to leisure activities, both in terms of time and other resources (travel, money). See the Hillary Commission Report on Leisure (1991). See also the time use survey carried out by Statistics New Zealand

Lily's diary is an illustrative document of what is claimed above.[140] Her home was not a place where she could make love (see chapter seven), and her work commitments, children's activities, and the frequency with which her children's friends inhabited the house/home impacted upon her own experiences of daily living, as the following excerpts show.

Saturday: Time to get up, Oh God do I have to!! I cannot face the extra bodies, mess, noise etc, my bedroom is my haven, the only place I get a little of my own space. Now I face the music.

Sunday: Doorbell! 8am, who is that? Guess what, the lads back after an all-nighter (not mine). Eat, make toasties, wake my boys and fall asleep. Four teenagers shut in a pokey room, stinking fumes, teenage smells, no windows open.

Tuesday: I hate 8am starts at tech; definitely struggle to get out of bed. This time I'm up with M and A (son and daughter). No-one really communicates. It's a case of all getting on with dressing, showering, making own lunches, getting the washing on for D to hang out when he gets up before school starts.

Wednesday: Sorry I had to wake D to remind him about orthodontist appointment. A's turn to cook tonight so get out her ham steaks ... Maybe I go to bed early some nights just so I can have my own time to think, dream, or read. No-one needs help with homework, boys on the Net so no phone calls tonight.

Thursday: Bother, a couple of colleagues turned up for some help with study. Well, it forced me to spend a few hours on it which I probably would not have done had I been left alone. It also means I had to push myself out of this bedroom and forget about myself. Great, no problem, but now I'm exhausted. I'll give tea a miss and climb into bed.[141]

Saturday: Once again a beautiful meal. The kids love Mum and Dad so we have had a great many laughs tonight. The worst part of the evening is I had my back turned and the wok had oil in it (very hot), the flames nearly reached the kitchen curtains - the new range-hood was on so flames shot up past it. Bugger! Damn! Besides the

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(2000) for the Ministry of Women's Affairs which found that overall men spend an extra ten minutes a day on organised sport or exercise than women.

[140] It is important to remember that Lily is the sole parent in the house/home, but she also claimed that she more or less 'parented alone' while still in the marriage. Delia, Penny, Jeanette, and Penny at times also articulated this experience.

[141] Lily has a chronic illness which recurs from time to time requiring her to rest.

drama of putting it out I have not long finished spring-cleaning. I cleaned every ceiling, wall, cupboard, appliances, not an area missed out. Now the black smoke has coated everything, what a bloody mess ... now I'll have to clean it all again, yuk! what an effort. I know the next time all the teenagers turn up again to stay I'll put a rag in their hands, hopefully that will work. I've told the boys that they will be helping.

However, we also need to revisit Lily's other extract from chapter seven.

This is amazing, the round-table worked, I get up to find washing done, dishes stacked away, bench cleaned, lounge tidy, cats and pets fed. I feel wonderful. Even their beds are made ... I look around my small house and smile; this is mine ... it's our home and I'm proud of my achievements. I have to be thankful that the kids get on so well together ... I say I'm lucky but luck be buggered, it is the way I have brought them up ... the discipline and upbringing was done by me. I must pat myself on the back ...

Lily delegates household tasks, but this is not done consistently over time. What the juxtaposition of excerpts shows is how Lily can experience a sense of self when she is not bogged down with household activities. This discussion is related to my claim in the Good-Enough-Mother chapter that the circumstances in which women 'teach' their children cooperative sharing of tasks enables the space-time for women to have a sense of self. Simultaneously, considerable effort and time is put into this 'teaching' and may well be considered part of women's identity formation in a positive way as both Lily and Delia have articulated. These processes change over time and Lily's experiences are very different to Tanya's, for example, whose children are a lot younger and have learning delay problems requiring her to do more on their behalf.

9.3.2 Lived-in-ability and Display

The ways in which women made connections between the appearance of the inside of houses and occupants was interesting. Sharon, for example, related her experiences of first visiting the family home of her husband-to-be.

I can remember looking at J's (husband) family home when they were in a big old house and from my standards of a home, it was big and I knew they were relatively well off, and when I walked in there it didn't actually feel like that ... it didn't actually feel like the values of the people that were within it, how it was portrayed was not what I anticipated. I'm not sure what I expected. It was kind of, it was messy and six children, it was wonderfully messy and I don't know why I didn't expect that ... I kind of anticipated this organised rigidity about the place and it wasn't, it was very relaxed ... lots of people - a kind of hustle and bustle, but there was a calmness about it as well. I would have felt quite differently had I walked into a spotless leather couch, with cushions all matching, in the right place. Whereas I walked in and there were holes in the couch and it was not what I expected. I don't know what I expected and I don't know whether it was associated with wealth.

I think Sharon's last question is the crux of her observations which I suggest are based on perceived class differences. (Her father was a painter, paper-hanger, her husband's father was a doctor.) Jon Craig, a Wellington architect I interviewed, also talked about differences between the material properties of a house which conferred status on the owner, and the lived-in house.

Jon: Well, I've seen people trying to make statements to show people what they can do – in terms of grandeur, size, materiality – and have lost the plot really in terms of the way they want to live. I've seen that happen in thirty years of practice. It may be just straight size – just completely over the top – it may be exquisite and expensive materials to produce position or social commentary on background, rather than coming from the real essence ...

Ann: And keeping a new place immaculate –

Jon: I've seen clients like that and I get so angry with that! I tell them the best thing we can do when we move in is to just go round and kick a few walls, bend a few things, just get it to be lived in; and this terror of just one tiny piece of paint not right, this terror that people have, whereas get on and enjoy the machine, enjoy it is the criteria.

Penny made explicit links between the inside of the house and the people who live in it. The analogy between the house and the people in it relates to Clare Cooper Marcus's (1996:10) statement in chapter seven; "we have all had the experience of visiting friends in their home and becoming aware of some facet of their values made manifest by the environment - be it the books on their shelves, art (**or the**

lack of it) ... the degree to which the house is open or closed ..." (emphasis added).

Penny: I think a house is very sterile and often people live very sterilely as well . Like everything is – well, pictures are x amount of inches from the ground, and curtains have to be just right. Magazines have to be sitting on a table, so perfectly. And no – nothing cluttery. And I've friends like that and I just can't cope with it, whereas a home is – washing all over the place. The freedom to be yourself I think ... You don't see any normal living everyday things around the place. And I find these sorts of people, - well in my experience they are very bland, very predictable. You just can't get them out of a routine, they follow it exactly and their house is just the same ... I mean I could never ring one friend up and say, let's go to the movies and do it now, she would never be able to cope because she hasn't done the washing, it hasn't been brought in and folded and she wanted to vacuum today and dear-oh-me!

For Penny, as well as for other women, the difference between a pristine interior and the clutter of everyday living which somehow made the people more accessible was one of the differences between a house and a home. Penny, Jon and Sharon capture, I think, the images that we have from contemporary house and garden magazines, the association of wealth with image, and the absence of inhabitants which is supposed to offer the reader (or viewer) a potential life-style. This kind of marketing was expressed also within a context of selling/buying houses when a real estate salesperson stated that when prospective buyers go through a house the owners should not be present because; "seeing it for the first time is a trial possession."

Rona, too made a briefer but similar analogy between house and home.

Rona: To me a home is ... when the kids were younger if you came in you walked over toys and whatever was on the floor. It was clean underneath, that's a home. A house is where you're house proud, everything's got its place, you don't touch anything.

Sharon had another similar story.

This one (married) friend I'm talking about – if you're eating a biscuit and there's crumbs on the floor she'd quickly get the dust-buster out. And if she had a dinner

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party at night – I mean we would leave the dishes until the next day, but she wouldn't. Her house is absolutely pristine. I'm not joking, it's perfect, and when I say perfect it's not my perfect home but it's perfect in that you wouldn't be able to find dust anywhere ... And we tease her about it sometimes and she laughs because she knows the way she is. Borderline compulsive stuff really.

In this sense self is subsumed to the needs of the house which represents status and/or the 'good-enough-housewife' rather than enabling individuation of inhabitants through making available the evidence of daily life and/or display of personal items.

For Delia, the way in which you furnish your house and/or display objects is a personal process, and once again connected with differences between house and home.

With a house it's just the house but when you put your personal things in it, your colour schemes, your ideas, your taste, that makes it your home. It may not be anyone else's cup of tea, but it's what you feel comfortable with.

Tracey's choice of what she displayed in her house - and why - was clearly articulated.

It's full of plants 'cause I like looking after them, there's a patchwork that I've done – it's not my best stuff actually. And the skulls are part of my skull collection, 'cause they're such beautiful and interesting things and some people find them a bit creepy, but I find them utterly lovely. They reflect the animal ... you can see the power of the animal, it's a carnivore, the muscles, it's all streamlined, big eyes, big teeth ...

It seems to me that there are two mechanisms at work which account for what we display and why. The first is where items are selected and/or displayed because the individual likes them and from this initial interaction a more meaningful relationship between objects and individuals may ensue. This is what Tracey articulates. The second mechanism is where items are displayed because they already have some meaning through social connection to others. Susan's activities exhibit this second mechanism.

I think ... there's an identity for everyone who lives there ... I think most of the bits and pieces around belong to L (husband), but he might just have them in boxes if it wasn't for me. I put them around ... I can't say I've consciously projected my identity in this house, if you look around this room (lounge) there's a lot of wild-life things. They represent L and it was my idea to put them around. That was the only time I consciously put things around the house. I think perhaps the garden is my identity in that I just like particular combinations of plants.

In both cases it is necessary to have inhabitants tell the stories associated with the how and why of objects displayed in order to understand what kind of process is being enacted. For example, Penny's description includes both processes.

Penny: I've got some really expensive china and I bought it 'cause I love it, but I've also got things like pottery cows sitting on my mantelpiece and pot plants everywhere, and photographs of family all over the place and books shoved all over the place.

The items Jeanette displayed arose from her social interaction with family.

Jeanette: I like to have things around that my kids were involved with, and my mum – that's her and my step-dad in that photo up there.

It seems to me that it is largely women who enact self-object relationships in the home, for themselves and for other family members, contributing to what could be called relational identity formation. There are, however, problems with these claims. Taking the above examples of Susan and Jeanette, does the display of objects relating to other family members' identities preclude her self-expression, or does she experience a sense of self (identity) through her **actions**? Photos of family I think represent the theme of continuity which Young sees as an important part of home-making. Her claim that; "[T]raditionally women are the primary preservers of family as well as individual histories" is replicated in Janet Mancini Billson's (1995) book *Keepers of the Culture* in which she interviewed women of different ethnic origins throughout North America.

Stern, Dietz and Kaloff (1993:340), in their study on value orientations, gender, and environmental concern, found that; "Women tend to see a world of inherent

interconnections, whereas men tend to see a world of clearly separate subjects and objects, with events abstracted from their context." There is a danger here, though, of taking women's activities for granted, the ways in which taking responsibility for other's individuation are seen as implicitly and/or unquestioningly the domain of women. There are a number of explanations for the ways in which women attend to the needs of others. Socialisation theory would argue that girls are socialised into feminine gender roles that are partially based upon caring for others as the socio-semiotic analysis of advertising demonstrated. A feminist psychoanalytic explanation would focus on the ways in which psycho-social development for boys is based upon separation from the mother while girls do not experience the same degree of separation, the creation of male as subject (A) and women as not subject (not-A). Both these explanations constitute women as relational beings, yet I would argue that we are all relational beings, for even the A-subject cannot exist in the absence of those who cannot be assigned that category.

Young claims that there is "world-making meaning in domestic work" (1997:152), with the "activities of endowing things with living meaning, arranging them in space in order to facilitate the life activities of those to whom they belong, and preserving them, along with their meaning" (151). She takes issue with the way in which de Beauvoir collapses "the activities that consist in preserving the living meanings of past history into her category of immanence"(152). At a seminar at Canterbury University (1996) in which she presented the material of her chapter House and Home, Young mentioned that some feminists' responses to her material had been negative; they claimed that in redefining some of women's activities she was undervaluing women's 'work'. After interviewing a number of women, I agree with Young that there are different kinds of activities engaged in by women that they would not necessarily define as work, even while these activities may take a certain amount of emotional and/or physical energy. And I think it is largely these kinds of activities that women tend to incorporate into identity formation. This following excerpt from Heather illustrates how changing contexts impact upon the ways in which we define activities as work or not work.

I never thought I was a home-maker, but I realise that I am, it was a part of me that had never been explored because I had always lived in grubby little flats that you'd never wanted to do anything with, and when I moved in here I realised how much I – I made the garden which wasn't here and how much I enjoyed that ... and I've really got into cleaning, you know, washing curtains and walls and floors and things. When I was in another flat I would never have thought about doing that, but now I want to do it, I like cleaning and doing things my way and you recognise all those things ... and that real creative energy of yours comes out.

Accepting Young's claim that individuation is a necessary component of home as a critical value I suggest that women are the primary agents through which other family members have more opportunity for the processes of individuation and as a consequence women may experience some loss of self. At the same time the other-directed activities in which they are engaged may offer a sense of self.

There is a difference, however, between an unreflective assuming of roles which require service to others and a choice based on reflective ethically-based choices. Lucy's description of her earlier roles (associated with her marriage and 'traditional' husband) in which she felt she could die and no-one would know who she was is an example of the former and Iona's claim that she was a person with intellectual ability but had taken responsibility for her children and could now, once they had all left home, engage in activities which reflected her (albeit with less energy) is an example of the latter.

However, whether a conscious self-reflective choice or the outcome of societal roles or most likely a blend of these, women do appear to establish particular socio-spatial relationships which may include the ongoing (re-)creation of a meaningful environment in which others can thrive. For some women who have entered into relationships and/or had children to some extent they 'put themselves on hold' waiting until later in life for opportunities to express what they perceive as their (changing) identity.

Defining home-related activities as work was seen as necessary in early feminist theorising to make what women do in the house/home visible and valued, but women may not experience and/or describe their activities as **work.** This does not mean to say that women do not have knowledge of and/or value their activities, but attributing what women do as a process or outcome of work may lead to perceptions of imposition rather than of choice and exercising agency. It seems to me we need more creative ways to describe what women do; the binary categories of work and leisure are not sufficient either, especially given the ways in which they have been mapped onto spatial divisions of work and home.

Tied closely to the activities undertaken by women in relation to others' individuation (as well as their own) is the concept of 'emotion work'. While I do not agree entirely with the term emotion **work,** it is used by Hochschild (1979), Duncombe and Marsden (in Bendelow and Williams, 1998) to convey both the time and energy expended in creating and maintaining relationships and harmony within the home.

In the following chapter I unpack some of the complexity of emotion theory. Individuals experience emotions as part of their personality and their biology, but at the same time these experiences are embedded within cultural and social contexts. Home is often referred to as the affective domain where there is freedom to express emotions, a freedom it is argued that is unavailable in the realm of paid employment. At the same time the binary opposition of emotion and logic are clearly sexed/gendered constructions, women are emotional, men are logical. I have found it necessary to engage with the complex issue of emotion and emotion theory given the context of this thesis in which I claim house/home and women's identity formation are mutually constructed.

Chapter Ten

The Hidden Dimension – the Relevance of Emotion in Theory Construction and Empirical Analysis

10.1 Introduction

Throughout the individual and focus group interviews women often talked in terms of "feeling." While Thoits (1989) argues that emotions can be distinguished from feelings, affects, moods and sentiments, she makes the point that the general term 'feeling' includes both physical and cognitive elements and concludes that "emotions can be viewed as culturally delineating types of feelings ..." (318). When we talk about emotional experiences we use the word "feel". Describing either actions or thoughts does not convey the relationship between the two in those situations which evoke emotional engagement or response. There is little writing on the **sociology** of emotions, the reasons for which I will allude to further on in this chapter, but it needs to be stated here that engaging in this body of theory crosses the divides of psychology and sociology because it is about individuals in social/cultural contexts and neither can be separated from the other. The study of emotions does not fit neatly within either discipline and given the lack of academic writing, especially in sociology, this chapter is certainly cross-disciplinary. Given this brief introduction I think it is possible to recognise the physical and cognitive elements of the emotional experiences women talk about below, while at the same time acknowledging that these experiences are contexualised within certain social situations which are not necessarily unique to each individual.

Sharon talked about the relationship between time and space within a context of part-time work and caring for two young children.

I also feel like I need that space, physical space rather than time. But that's just me. I don't like to be crowded (emphasis added).

Ellen was talking about moving away from the friends she first made when she separated from her husband.

*I think that if you've had friendships with people and you find you're **not feeling good** about your friendship then there's something wrong (emphasis added).*

Ann: Is it the same with marriages?

*Ellen: I suppose it is, but I never knew that, you see. Well, I did know but I didn't know how to do anything about it; I didn't have the willpower then. And when you get into that way of thinking the **guilt** doesn't come into it does it? I mean, well, it doesn't because a lot of people would **feel guilty** (emphasis added).*

Morag talking about housework discussed the relationship between order and disorder.

*I find when I'm sometimes in other people's homes **I get the feeling** that it's not really lived in if it's all too ordered, you know, it seems like you'd spend all your time ordering. I've **given up worrying** about housework to a degree ... it's not in my interests to keep imposing the order and what's the point if it's all just going to become the focus, not used again. It's taken me a number of years to realise you go through the routines of doing things but you don't get stressed; that's possibly what it is (emphasis added).*

And Toni talked about her response to her husband smacking their children.

*... and on the odd occasions when he did smack them I remember **feeling awful** ... and I was just **enraged** and thought how dare you smack my child, and I had to step back from myself and think what am I thinking here, but he could have smacked me and it would have **felt the same** ... I couldn't believe it, everything was killing me, it could have been me for **all the feelings, emotions** that were racing through my blood as she cried ...(emphasis added).*

When interviewing real estate agents about processes of selling homes I was repeatedly told that buying a house was about emotion not houses. *"There is an emotional response to the style of the place." "You think you're dealing with logic when usually you're dealing with two emotional responses"* (from both men and women). They also claimed that women were more effective in selling 'homes'

because they could relate to women buyers on an emotional level. *"Sometimes women sell by their emotional attachment." "Women are more imaginative, men just deal in facts." "Women are more emotional, they sell a house with a 'feel', they take their own response into it, it's an emotional business. Men don't really sell from the heart, men deal in black and white."*

Given the real estate agents' claims and the ways in which women commonly talk in terms of 'I feel," it is important to examine this concept of 'emotion' and the ways in which it is mapped onto the binary oppositions of private-public space and sex/gender. At the same time I want to unpack the concept of emotional experience drawing upon the existing (minimal) body of theoretical literature. I will outline theoretical understandings of emotion, exploring the relationship between culture and emotional experience, the claim that emotion and reason/rationality cannot be separated, and that we learn and acquire knowledge through emotional experience. Within the context of these discussions both the content of interview material and its articulation come under scrutiny, as does the production of this thesis. I make no claims of generalisability, but argue that emotion theory has much to offer in understanding identity formation within the context of socio-spatial interaction in the house/home as well as offering a critique of the production of what counts as academic knowledge.

10.2 Binary Oppositions

When we map the concepts of 'private' and 'public' onto the spatial divisions of house/home and paid employment we are saying something about the right to express emotions. The house/home is often referred to as the affective sphere – where emotions can be freely expressed, while the public workplace is supposedly the place of logic and reason. At the same time the binary oppositions of women as emotional and men as logical intersect these prior divisions. In this way it is often seen as acceptable for women to express emotion in the work-place and not acceptable for men to be emotionally expressive at home, despite the prior

conceptual divisions of private and public life. Jaggar (1996:178) argues that; "in contemporary western culture, emotionally inexpressive women are suspect as not being real women, whereas men who express their emotions are freely suspected of being homosexual or in some way deviant from the masculine ideal."

Barbalet (1998) critiques the relegation of emotional life to different spheres, arguing that emotional experiences are as much part of the 'public' world as they are the home world. It is not that we do not **experience** emotions in the workplace but that there are social rules about what emotions are felt and how and when we display these. Thoits (1989) refers to arguments that industrialization and new market conditions in the mid 1800s caused the home to be reconciled as an emotional haven (for men) from a heartless competitive world. Consequently, anger control (in women) became crucial for harmonious marriage and family life. At the same time, as shown in the previous chapter the private nature of home and its alignment as expressive domain has been implicated in the incidence of male abuse of women and children. Leibrich, Paulin and Ransom (1995:116) argue that "job related stress which leads to domestic abuse is explained as displaced anger: a build up of frustration at work, unfulfilled ambitions, an inability to direct anger at the source of the frustration and so taking it out on the person at home."

The binary oppositions, and mapping together of home - work, private – public, emotion – reason, female - male are powerful cultural constructs which impact upon women and men's expectations of each other, especially within the place of house/home. These personal and household experiences are tied to society-based systems of reward and punishment which result in a certain conformity. Internalised conformity which is part of identity formation, I argue, has the power to allay painful and unpleasant emotions of guilt and shame, as some of the excerpts in the previous four chapters have demonstrated. As Jaggar (1996:172) states:

> The emotions that we experience reflect prevailing forms of social life.

> For instance, one could not feel or even be betrayed in the absence of
> social norms about fidelity: it is inconceivable that betrayal or indeed
> any distinctly human emotions could be experienced by a solitary
> individual in some hypothetical presocial state of nature.

Fricker (1991:15) endorses this claim. She states that; "[E]ven when emotions are understood as mere sensations they are nonetheless both causally and intentionally linked to the external world; they depend upon that world both for their existence and for their definition." These claims of Jaggar and Fricker are borne out when reading the excerpts in the introduction to this chapter none of which would make sense outside a socio-spatial and socially relational context. At the same time emotional experience is personal and individual involving cognitive and physical processes that are intimately related to human agency, not merely to passive or involuntary reactions to the world.

> Rather, they are ways in which we engage actively and even construct
> the world. They have both "mental" and "physical" aspects, each of
> which conditions the other; in some respects they are chosen, but in
> others they are involuntary; they presuppose language and a social order.
> Thus, *they* can be attributed only to what are sometimes called "whole
> persons," engaged in the ongoing activity of social life (Jaggar in Garry
> and Pearsall 1998:172).

To illustrate the ways in which emotional theory collapses many of the binary oppositions we adhere to either subjectively and/or theoretically I want to return to one of the advertisements of chapter five and the ways in which fiction and advertising 'works', and question the ways in which 'academic' knowledge is constructed.

10.3 Re-visitations and Academia

Figure 28: Happiness to Have and to Hold

The caption above the picture of this advertisement read "Happiness to Have and to Hold." In chapter five I referred to McCracken (1986, 1988) who argued that successful advertising transfers the desire for an object to individual desire, the desire to become someone different through the acquisition of the advertised object. I want to take this claim a step further. While I agree with McCracken's proposition, I want to draw attention to the emotion of happiness. In the image above "**happiness**" is the emotion being 'sold' (as well as the **desire** for happiness). Visually, heterosexual 'happiness' is a much larger experience than owning this particular stove.

On one hand the naming of an individually experienced emotion in the context of this advertisement collapses the division between (private) individual subjectivity and the wider (public) forces of production and consumption as well as the institution of marital heterosexism. On the other hand it also reinforces the spatial and social contexts of individual emotional experience.

Fiction, I argue, works in a similar way. We cannot but engage with the emotional experiences of fictional characters; without responding and/or reacting to the emotional meaning attached to characterisation processes what we read would be

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bereft of meaning and interest. Emotional experiences provide the impetus for the movement of stories, for beginnings, for problems and for resolutions. Take this closing section of Barbara Else's (1997) *Gingerbread Husbands.*

The 'heroine', Sophie, experiences moving into a new and unknown house, an absent husband (Russell), and insistent advances of an ageing admirer (Matthew), through a continual haze of migraine. Sophie's relationships with her close friend, Mary-Jane, and her mother, are unhelpful in that their own heterosexual desires and liaisons, prevent them, initially, from helping Sophie to untangle her own befuddled existence. The house, part of which is secretly inhabited by sycophants of Sophie's absent husband, seems to represent not only the separate and 'secret' world of men and their work, but also the confinement of women in relation to that order. The book moves toward a stormy (literally) and chaotic climax;

> Russell smiled and shrugged at the crowd ... he turned to Sophie: 'Darling.' She ducked backwards and found she was against the banisters by the foot of the stairs. 'I haven't been fair, love, I know it. Another chance, Love. Please'.
> 'Darling,' said Matthew.
> 'Sweetheart,' Russell countered.
> A surge of warmth began to pulse in her once more. Russell, broad-shouldered, thick red hair, the firm intelligent jaw. And Matthew behind him, firm intelligent forehead, broad-bellied, long strong thighs.
> So? Wouldn't it be easier to drift, and smile, and sigh?
> 'This is a terrific house,' Russell said. 'We can sell it for a fortune ... Sophie eased around the newel post and backwards, up a couple of steps ... she reached over the balustrade, took the chamberpot from Matthew and handed him back the fern ...
> 'Ignore him, Soph, he's after your share of the marital property.'
> She was nearly at the landing, aware of the ring of faces in the front hall, eyes fixed on her as she raised the chamber pot.
> 'What share? What property?' she asked. 'You're the lawyer who screwed up my finances. How much do you owe, Russell, and who to? What's the Choi-Berundi Institute?
> 'Sophie,' his charm, full flood ... 'Sweetheart, this isn't like you.'
> 'High bloody time it was, then' Sophie said.
>
> She hurled the chamber pot at the rose-coloured window ... The chamber pot bounced back, landed beside Sophie, rolled down to the hall and fell,

like magic, into three separate pieces. The rose-coloured window trembled and broke. One tinted segment at a time toppled, tumbled, slid onto the porch roof; some clattered into the hall ...
Mother's lips twitched. Good old Baba Yaga, she was on Sophie's side. She'd burnt the bridges back to safety now ...   A pinch of anarchy, that's all. A *soupcon* of subversion.

The wind pounced through the front door and broken window. The lashes or air smelt fresh and beckoning.
Yes, trust the future, Soph, it's all you've got.

The rose-coloured window is a metaphor for the rose-coloured spectacles through which we attempt to live out the mythic constructions of a romantic and heterosexual existence.[142] It is relevant, too, that Else (like other authors cited in this thesis) uses the house as a problematic metaphor in which men and women try to reconcile the inherent contradictions of economics and sexuality, issues of dependency complicated even further by family, friends and children. Implicit in this excerpt is the emotional turmoil experienced by Sophie which is simultaneously an individual and social phenomenon.

The difference – and this is not immense – between the fictive and interview texts is that the emotive nature of decision-making is less obvious in interview texts. Even when constructing the chapters around narrative themes I have not drawn attention to the emotive nature of experience. Partly this arises because social and cultural denigration of (women's) emotional (non)sense requires interviewees to try to tell 'true'[143] stories, and secondly a 'sensitive' interviewer tries not to rekindle what may have been painful emotive experiences – the research ethic of doing no harm.

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[142] Else's use of kitchen-based metaphors, text written as a recipe, is also deliberate, claiming a woman's space to define reality.
[143] As I was writing this chapter I overheard a conversation in the café in which a young woman said she was going to tell her companion a 'story'. Before commencing she altered the meaning of what she was about to say by quickly adding "it's not a story, this is true."

This particular 'denial' of emotive experience, I think, also arises out of the ever-present argument about what constitutes academic knowledge, especially in the context of doctoral requirements. At the same time by including fictional accounts of social experience and the emotive world of advertising I attempt to deconstruct the perceived divide between emotion and knowledge in a way that elides my own subjectivity both outside and inside academia.

That the social and personal nature of emotional experience has not been widely studied is hardly surprising given academia's reluctance to engage in what appears to be illogical, subjective and bodily experienced phenomena. However, it is this bodily experience which reconnects biology with the social and meets the challenges from Kirby and Wilson that most social theory, even that which claims to be 'embodied' does not deal with the biology of the body. This is not to say that theory concerned with emotion is unproblematic, for most social psychology theory focuses on the two aspects of emotional experience – the cognitive and the physical. Psychology, too, has its empirical roots in positivist experimentation which at worst de-contextualises personal experience, and at best, attempts to simulate 'real' experiences. In trying to understand the 'whole', exploration has tended to focus on the parts, and in dividing emotional experience into two elements encourages exactly the kind of binary thinking which tends to be placed in hierarchical order, and from there can be allocated – or mapped onto-other binary divisions. To separate the cognitive and physical elements, once more, engages the mind-body split which has dominated epistemological claims, especially in academia. Jaggar (1998:170) writes:

> Cognitivist accounts of emotion are not without their own problems. A serious difficulty with many is that they end up replicating within the structure of emotion the very problem they are trying to solve – namely, that of an artificial split between emotion and thought – because most cognitive accounts explain emotion as having two "components": an affective or feeling component and a cognition that supposedly interprets or identifies the feelings. Such accounts, therefore, unwittingly perpetuate the positivist distinction between the shared public, objective world of verifiable calculations, observations and facts, and the

individual private, subjective world of idiosyncratic feelings and sensations. This sharp distinction breaks any conceptual links between our feelings and the "external" world: if feelings are still conceived as blind or raw or undifferentiated, then we can give no sense to the notion of feelings fitting or failing to fit our perceptual judgements, that is, being appropriate or inappropriate. When intentionality is viewed as intellectual cognition and moved to the centre of our picture of emotion, the affective elements are pushed to the periphery and become shadowy conceptual danglers whose relevance to emotion is obscure or even negligible.

The linguistic devices of "I think" and "I feel" are presumably to distinguish between a cognitive event and a physical event, but I would argue that the former also involves a 'feeling' aspect and vice versa.[144]

When coming across "I feel ..." in interviews and transcripts there is an implicit engagement with the emotions with which stories are told, something you hear (in the tone of voice or in hesitancies) and see (in body language) which is not always present in the text.[145] The emotive process is thus underplayed, or remains invisible within processes of learning and decision-making, in much the same way as objective scientific positivist explanations of the social world presumed to deal only with so-called facts. Alison Jaggar argues that instead of repressing emotion in epistemology; "it is necessary to rethink the relation between knowledge and emotion and construct a conceptual model that demonstrates the mutually constitutive rather than oppositional relation between reason and emotion" (177).

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[144] Without further examination of texts by both women and men I could not claim unequivocally that women tend to use "I feel" to convey their experiences while men tend to use "I think." If these differences exist they may well convey the expectation that women are more emotive while men are more 'rational'. Whether it is the sex/gender of the person talking or the words themselves, I would suggest 'I think' appears to convey more authority than does 'I feel'. To validate this would require further lexicographical empirical work with texts where women and men are talking about the same experience and/or event.

[145] This is not to say that tone, cadence, emphasis, pauses, along with the non-verbal components of communication cannot be indicated in transcripts, but this would be of benefit only in a detailed analysis of researcher – interviewee communication which is not the major aim of this project. I would suggest also that within the context of conversation/interviewing it would be impossible to attend to what was being said if one had to indicate every facial expression or other components of non-verbal information.

The construction of an appropriate conceptual model, though, is not easy. Whether in everyday social interaction and/or in the construction of academic knowledge one cannot act or write solely in terms of individual experience. At the same time there are problems in defining emotional experiences in terms of cultural phenomena. Both Thoits (1989) and Lyon (1998, in Bendelow and Williams) draw attention to the difficulties of including a socio-cultural context with the personal and embodied experience of individuals and/or groups. Lyon (1998:52) argues that if one 'chooses' a cultural constructionist view:

> [T]he body, self and affect are seen in terms of how they are mediated by their appropriate cultural conceptions compared with an expanded understanding of the body in society through a consideration of the agency of the body. ... Emotion has a central role in bodily agency, for by its very nature it links the somatic and the communicative aspects of being and thus encompasses both social and cultural domains. The body is the means by which we experience and actively comprehend the world and act within it.

The theorists whose work I have called on so far are all concerned with revising the split between emotion and reason, and with trying to reconcile the physical and cognitive aspect of emotional experience within cultural contexts without privileging one element over another. While this is no easy task, implicit in these endeavours is the insistence that emotional experiences are learning experiences, ways in which we learn about ourselves and the world in which we live. Further to this claim Jaggar coins the term "outlaw emotions," a concept I have found useful within the context of this project and the interview material.

10.4 Outlaw Emotions

Without entering the realms of essentialism or ideology, yet retaining the explanatory power of emotional (physical and cognitive) learning, Alison Jaggar's concept of 'outlaw emotions' is a term created for those emotions which "enable us to perceive the world differently than we would from its portrayal in conventional descriptions" (181). She suggests that:

> They may provide the first indications that something is wrong with the way alleged facts have been constructed, with accepted understandings of how things are. Conventionally unexpected or inappropriate emotions may precede our conscious recognition that accepted descriptions and justifications often conceal as much as reveal the prevailing state of affairs. Only when we reflect on our initially puzzling irritability, revulsion, anger, or fear, may we bring to consciousness our "gut-level" awareness that we are in a situation of coercion, cruelty, injustice, or danger. Thus, conventionally inexplicable emotions, particularly though not exclusively, those experienced by women, may lead us to make subversive observations that challenge dominant conceptions of the status quo. They may help us to realize that what are taken generally to be facts have been constructed in a way that obscures the reality of subordinated people, especially women's reality.

The excerpt from *Gingerbread Husbands* – and other fiction in previous chapters - illustrates the processes Jaggar describes. In chapter four Game and Pringle (1979) talked about the conflicts set up by the different roles of mother and home-maker and "exciting sexual partner" which Kidman (1979) illustrated in her novel *The Marriage Maze*. Penny, too, commented on her perception of the woman as a lynchpin around which the whole family revolves and if she becomes "unstable" then the "whole family unit becomes unstable." Stability, in this sense depends upon women's ability to reconcile or manage the conflicting demands made upon her. That this is not always possible was illustrated by Frame and Hyde's experiences of "madness;" and Adrienne Rich draws attention to the sexual and intellectual confusion felt by women 'trapped' in socially defined and separated situations of eroticism and friendship. Indeed the above excerpt from *Gingerbread Husbands*, Sophie's migrainic haze appears an apt metaphor for the role conflict as

described by Game and Pringle and the state of intellectual and sexual confusion Rich talks about. At the same time the discomfort produced by outlaw emotions leads to action.

Ellen, in one of the first excerpts in this chapter talks about feeling guilty that her marriage was not as she felt it should be, but then found a different way of thinking which alleviated her guilt and enabled her to act. The emotional turmoil Tanya experienced when her husband smacked their daughter could be due to outlaw emotions arising from identifying with her daughter rather than with her husband, breaking the rules of mutually constructed parental discipline. Morag reacts against others' houses/homes as (too) ordered but still struggles with the notion that women **should** keep a tidy house which she finds difficult. In the end she decides not to get stressed about it.

Jaggar's claims have a certain resonance with those of Toril Moi (1985:1-2) whereby she claims that:

> Though metafiction – fiction that includes within itself commentary on its own narrative conventions – is more often associated with postmodern writers than with feminist fiction, it is a powerful tool of feminist critique, for to draw attention to the structures of fiction is also to draw attention to the conventiality of the codes that govern human behaviours, to reveal how such codes have been constructed and how they can, therefore, be changed.

As I have argued earlier, much of women's contemporary fiction tells stories of outlaw emotions, changes in perceiving how the world should be organised, for example Beryl Fletcher's *The Iron Mouth* where she claims women do not have the words for the situations and relationships in which they find themselves. Keri Hulme's (1983) book *The Bone People* is a book based upon outlaw emotions, (as well as a different way of writing which I will not elaborate on here, but which illuminates the process of writing in the way Moi describes). Interaction between the triangle of woman, man and child never 'fits' the ideological constructs of

relationships between men, women and children and house/home. Hulme denies the characters any conventions of the nuclear family, any experience of heterosexual and romantic love. All three characters, Joe, Simon and Kerewin are 'damaged' by their past life experiences, but these characters show that "other ways of making security and meaning in this world may be possible" (Smith 1995:140).

> However, we do not need to assume, simply because Hulme has denied her three characters the bonds of a nuclear family, that love has failed. On the contrary, it is one of the relentless forces in the novel, one which gradually alleviates their narcissistic wounds. Joe's bitterness and violence, Kerewin's indifference and Simon's autism are relieved, but only because all three are asked to participate in the formation of an identity larger and more compelling than their own. This identity is to be found in the new community which stabilises and redirects subjects ... But the route to healing seems interminable, and a striking characteristic of *the bone people* is the way it refuses love its conventional expressions and resolutions. Hulme disrupts the binary thinking which is encapsulated in hierarchically organised sexualities and activities (ibid:141).

The house in which (the character) Kerewin Holmes lives is constructed as a tower; "a home befitting the eccentricity of a Holmes. I am still myself, iron lady, cool and virgin." This house, this tower which surely symbolises Kerewin's relationship to a phallocentric world, is destroyed; "[All] the rest of the wood and furnishings she sent splintering and crashing downwards in a frenzy of destruction" (316). Hulme, like Shoagh Keoa in *Staying Home and Being Rotten*, Maurice Gee in *The Burning Boy*, and Kidman in *The House Within* uses the house/home as metaphor for Kerewin's existence.

> Uprooted again. Truly Kerewin te Kaihau ... but I seek always for homes I find then I lose. And I am not a traveler at heart, just a casual gipsy wandering out from my base and back. No more, because no base ... and nowhere to go, no-one to trust. No family to help and salve and save (411).

The concept of 'home' is clearly an important organising metaphor throughout the book. Following physical, psychological and spiritual devastation the new merging of place and self in a concept of 'home' forms the finale of this novel. Kerewin is architect, builder and dweller, thereby disrupting the sexed/gendered spatial and social dichotomies Irigaray (in Rose, 1995) claims exist (chapter one).

> I had spent many nights happily drawing and redrawing those plans. I had decided on a shell-shape, a regular spiral of rooms expanding around the decapitated tower ... privacy, apartness, but all connected and all part of the whole. When finished it will be studio and hall, church and guesthouse, whatever I choose, but above all else, HOME. Home in a larger sense than I've ever used the term before (434).

Kerewin's search for 'home' – in a physical (material and embodied) and metaphysical sense – parallels the 'real' experience of the writers Frame and Hyde whose only escapes from convention were 'madness' and suicide.

The taken-for-granted physical and ideal concepts of house/home make it appear as though this space/place has little bearing on the social construction of emotions apart from its opposition as affective domain compared to the 'reasoned' place of paid employment and this, I suggest, is not insignificant. However, identity formation, I think, is both consciously and unconsciously place-based; women, men, and children develop self-identity related to an ideal concept of home, which includes either the reality or possibility of harmonious social relations. Freund (in Bendalow and Williams 1998:170) states that:

> While place does not [necessarily] equal physical location ... actors in encounters move through and use socially-produced space in particular ways, assume postures and gestures *vis-à-vis* each other that are in keeping with their respective places, or use their bodies to show resistance to how they are placed.

While Freund in the above quote is referring to place in terms of social status, these words capture the ways in which bodies and social interaction are invariably spatial. He refers to the work of Goffman who introduced a sensitivity to space

within sociological analysis suggesting that space is a 'master'[146] metaphor, which can be used to:

> [L]ook at mind, body and society relationships and at the use of space for organizing information about self and others. The organization of biopsychosocial and physical space is utilized by individuals as a way of sustaining a performance, or, in other ways, to establish boundaries and to regulate the flow of information (170).

These boundaries around personal space and access to information about one's person are central to Young's concept of privacy in the previous chapter. Many of the women interviewed in this project clearly used space as a way of defining and/or redefining themselves, often as an outcome of 'outlaw emotions'. In defining her temporary accommodation as "little house" Lucy denied home as where she was mother, she discouraged her daughters' visits and was very clear that her husband should not come there. In a sense, the opposite of outlaw emotions is what Hochschild (1998), Duncombe and Marsden (1998) and Habgood (1999) refer to as 'emotion work' whereby women and men 'work' on others and themselves to remain within the parameters/perimeters of culturally prescribed existence.

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[146] 'Master' could be replaced with 'central organizing metaphor' which would get away from the use of sexist language.

10.5 Emotion Work and Authenticity

Emotion work is defined as "the emotional effort made by individuals – both men and women – to 'manage' their feelings to bring them into line with the societal 'feeling rules' which prescribe how they 'ought' to feel in particular social situations" (Duncombe and Marsden 1998:212). The social situations identified by these writers is also a spatial situation, and in the context of space as a central organising metaphor, the emotion work carried out in the house/home is spatially, as well as socially constructed and experienced. In other words, space matters.

Emotion work has also been described as 'work' women carry out on behalf of others, for example, the way in which Susan put her husband's things around the living room, and the ways in which Lily coped with her children's friends' frequent visits to their house. Women, research has found, do 'more' and different emotion work than do men. According to Duncombe and Marsden (1998:213), Hochschild claims that:

> ... in relationships women measure themselves by whether they are 'giving enough' and they 'try to interact ... in ways which will foster the other persons' development', but that this behaviour is virtually obligatory: in other words, women continually 'act' on behalf of others but they do not 'act from their true centre' and their behaviour is therefore 'inauthentic' ...

Ruth Habgood's (1999:132-133) work on 'emotional housework' found most of the emotion work activities identified by women she interviewed as oriented towards others – "... activities and efforts which are involved with 'planning', 'monitoring', 'taking action to promote' and 'taking responsibility for' the following sets of objectives."

1) Dealing with servicing other peoples' immediate feelings
2) Regulating the expression of emotion

3) Building and servicing a sense of individuality and self-worth in others

4) An individual's emotional needs, experiences, well-being and development

5) Creating, maintaining, sustaining relationships with others

6) Facilitating sociability and connections to/relationship among others

7) Facilitating, planning for an individual's sociability and connections to/integration into wider group life

8) The creation and maintenance of group life itself – 'doing' family, 'doing' ethnicity, creating a common life and a sense of belonging, servicing collective needs

Habgood's findings are similar to my own; women as agents concerned with the well-being of others is represented in a number of excerpts from interview material, especially in chapters six, seven, and nine Woman/Women Alone, The Good-Enough-Mother, and Home as a Critical Value: Conversations with Iris Marion Young. I have intimated that women see themselves as taking responsibility for creating home, for teaching children and their partners collaborative ways of dealing with household chores. They also equated the responsibility for children as one way of achieving emotional growth which the saw as lacking in male partners. The following is an excerpt from a focus group discussion.

Abby: You take a different point of view when you're responsible and you know it's your responsibility. For me, parenthood equates with responsibility. With joy and loving as well.

Sharon: I wonder if women take that on because they've carried the child?

Abby: Men seem to walk away much more light-heartedly than women do.

Dee: I think that's because men don't mature emotionally the same … with each week, each month women have to keep up with that for at least twenty years – women tootle off and leave men behind. You adapt, continually change to meet changing needs; you have to keep going.

Ann: Isn't that parenting both have to do?

Penny: I think men are socialised into being 'the father,' 'the husband,' it's a role to them whereas some women realise abuse, some don't, they keep moving emotionally.

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Sharon: My husband is out nine hours a day so I don't know how he would manage to keep up emotionally. He's just not there! He tries, he'd give up his job tomorrow to be a house-husband if I could support him. We've talked about this quite seriously, he knows he's missing out on some things he doesn't want to miss out on.

Penny: Still need to change to meet emotional needs of kids and wife. Still gets bogged down with work and they see the wife moving emotionally ahead and they don't know how to keep up and I think that frightens them.

And Penny, in her interview talking about woman as lynchpin in the household, added:

Emotional growth – I mean you don't stay as day one, your baby's born, you grow your whole life right 'til the children leave school, right through when they start having children, whereas men, as they don't get pregnant, they have no idea of the bodily changes and things that you're experiencing, they expect you to carry on how it was[147] ... and they don't emotionally change a great deal ... I think having a child is probably the one chance men ever get to coming back to their emotional core, to be able to grow and be a normal human being and you love them – let's have a game of cards, whatever it is, you know, that real emotional core and I think maybe only 2-3 percent of men take it up, get so much from it and that I think is a shame.[148]

Seidler (1998 in Bendelow and Williams) claims that men in heterosexual relationships leave the responsibility for emotional 'work' to their partners and therefore do not develop the skills for dealing with their emotions. He argues that the restricting codes of masculinity and the related binary oppositions between rational/male and emotional/female restrict men's ability to make connections between their emotional and learning experiences. Penny's reference to the body within this context of emotional experience is interesting for Seidler argues that men's relationship to their bodies is also related to male identity; "within the rationalist terms of modernity the body is not 'part of' who I am as a rational self. ... It is an instrument that I use, and a matter of testing male identity against its

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[147] This claim relates back to the introduction of chapter six where I claimed that the biological component of pregnancy is probably under-theorised in the social sciences.
[148] It must also be acknowledged that the majority of women interviewed were either separated or divorced, and that their experiences may be different – or **articulated** differently - to women who remain in relationships.

limits often arises" (206). In this sense I could argue that this refusal to feel in terms of the body contributes to the denial of emotional learning given that emotions are both a cognitive and biologically experienced phenomena.

The issue of responsibility and its relationship to emotional development is an interesting one. Philosophy texts describe the relationship of guilt to responsibility as: "duties not performed and obligations not fulfilled" (Taylor 1985:88). Taylor claims that the agent thinks of the situation primarily in terms of how it concerns the other. It could be argued that duties and obligations, like guilt are culturally dependent activities and experiences; and I suggested earlier that conformity to societal expectations can allay feelings of guilt and/or shame. Within this cultural context, Duncombe and Marsden question the relationship of emotion work and authenticity within heterosexual partnerships. They found that:

> ... the way that women's and men's emotion work - on and for themselves, and on and for others – tends to be done in the context of gender inequalities of power and resources, in response to different ideological feeling rules with different goals, and is undertaken with the broadly different emotional skills, propensities and capacities which individuals have developed in early childhood ... yet our research has suggested that [such] individual variations can be seen (1998:224).

These claims are borne out by the words of both the women in the focus group and Seidler's discussion, but to make generalisable claims that these differences between men's and women's experiences are absolute is erroneous, for Duncombe and Marsden conclude by stating that:

> It seems to us that in the end - lacking any independent guide to truly 'authentic' emotional behaviour – we have to accept that some individuals may derive their *sense* of authenticity from 'core selves' and 'core identities' which various commentators might want to criticize as deeply inauthentic – although at the most fundamental level they can do so only on ideological or essentialist grounds (italics in original).

I have raised the question of relationships between roles and individual behaviour and if we can actually make judgements whether individuals are 'living out a role',

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expressing their femininity of masculinity, or expressing or developing what could be called a 'core' (but mobile) identity. Another way of exploring these issues is through suspending the idea of culture and engaging, instead, with more philosophical arguments which bear relevance to Iris Marion Young's concept of home as a critical value.

10.6 The Mythical Individual

Thoits (1989) quotes Denzin (1984:50) who states that; "It is through emotionality, imagination, sympathy, fellow-feeling, and revealed self-feelings that persons come to know themselves and one another." For example, Morag's concept of order evolved through her emotional responses to orderly environments and a value judgement about the relationship between order and use. Fricker (1991) argues that perceptions of the world around us and ourselves within it also requires value judgements. This brings us back to Iris Marion Young's claim of home as a **critical value** whereby there exists some kind of ethical or value-based judgement about how we rationalise our own behaviour and that of others within certain contextual situations.

Weeks (1995:65), exploring the relationship between autonomy and authenticity argues, that we need to separate "morality from the carapace of artificially constructed ethical codes." This entails "recognition of the central responsibility of the autonomous subject." He quotes Bauman (1993:77) who states; "[T]he profoundly moral nature of the individual precedes the social." While Weeks draws attention to the individualistic nature of this statement, he argues; " ...that if the individual can realize his or her freedom only with and through others, then the balance between our personal autonomy and our responsibility to others becomes the central issue" (65). He claims that "[T]here is no individual goal or essence to be realized except though out involvement with others. That is the burden and the challenge of individual freedom and responsibility" (ibid). The kinds of relationships individuals develop between themselves and others, though, is

undoubtedly mediated in some way by the social, spatial and cultural contexts of human interaction. The exercising of freedom and responsibility is clearly different for men and women.

Young's concept of home as a critical value is based upon the working out of individual responsibilities and activities in relation to others in the house/home. The activities associated with preservation and continuity can be interpreted as an ethical working out of the relationship between individual freedom and responsibility and hence are related, if not necessary, to home as a critical value. This also resonates with Sandel's (1996) discussion of the (illusory) bracketing of autonomy and privacy. By the processes of achieving the balance that Weeks talks about, one can understand the necessity for Young's separation of household chores as a collective responsibility, rather than one which impinges on one individual in the household more than another.

Within these philosophical contexts, the question of authenticity as raised by Duncombe and Marsden becomes problematic, as does the requirement to determine authenticity, especially within the context of Duncombe and Marsden's claims of individual variations in the exercising of 'emotional work'. For example, it is difficult to judge whether women claim certain responsibilities, not necessarily as guilt-avoidance tactics, but as ethical decisions based more on a hierarchy of perceived responsibilities.

Helen[149] redefined her home not as a broken home because her husband was no longer present but whole because no-one was broken by her husband's physical and/or psychological violence. The responsibility for her own and her children's safety was a far more powerful requirement than that of providing an 'unbroken'

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[149] Helen is a friend and colleague whose comments have been included throughout this project as autotheoretical text.

home with two parents. In one sense Helen's actions could be seen as an outcome of outlaw emotions in that she rebels against the cultural expectations of mother, father and children living together, but in another way Helen is conforming to the expectation that women are responsible for their children. The question of authenticity appears irrelevant.

To create 'home' as an ideal space/place in situations such as Helen, Jeanette and Rona experienced takes precedence over the physical and economic deprivation which often accompanies women-headed households. This not to say that in making these kinds of decisions women do not experience guilt, but since guilt is a socio-cultural dependent emotion it can be reconstructed and experienced differently as historical and social contexts change.

10.7 Concluding Comments

In this chapter I have exposed the culturally constructed binary oppositions related to home/work, emotion/logic and male/female to a critique based upon the existing body of emotion theory. While definitions and experiences of emotions are culturally produced and experienced, emotions are also personal physical and cognitive experiences through which we learn about ourselves and others. Emotional experience has the power to change perceptions of self and society and to provide the impetus for the re-negotiation of everyday socio-spatial experience. I have argued that we cannot separate the cognitive and physical components of emotional experiences and in denying this division we are able to re-connect the biology of the body with social theory in a way that extends the exercising of individual agency. At the same time I attempt to show how the production of this thesis is also an emotional process, one in which I have expressed my own subjectivity through including the emotive texts of fiction and advertising. This chapter, I feel, provides some closure to the preceding discussions of theory, method and women's experiences, but I need to evaluate how the thesis as a whole has dealt with the questions and statements on which this work is based.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusion

Bachelard (1958) claimed that the relationship between place and personality is so intimate that to understand oneself a topoanalysis – the exploration of self-identity through place – might yield more fruitful insight than psychoanalysis. There are many dimensions to meanings ascribed to place: symbolic, emotional, cultural, political and biological. People have not only intellectual, imaginary, and symbolic conceptions of place, but also personal and social associations with place-based networks of interaction and affiliation ... [W]hen the fundamental values associated with any of these levels of experience are threatened, then protest about the meaning of place may erupt. Whether all these values are **consistently** articulated in legal of behavioural terms does not seem to be the crucial point. In fact, they are often not brought to consciousness until they are threatened: normally they are part of the fabric of everyday life and its taken-for-granted routines (Buttimer 1980:167).

The major thesis of this work is that conceptualisations of 'space' and 'place' need to be incorporated into sociology as active rather than passive, or contextual elements. I have used the lens of house (place) / home (ideal concept) in relation to women's activities to demonstrate how the house/home and women's identity formation are mutually constituted. Housing, as material environment (in the New Zealand context of high rates of home-ownership) is symbolically linked with concepts of home which are mapped onto the 'house' creating a special kind of place which carries cultural meaning. Included in these meanings are perceptions of what it means to be male or female, as individuals, and/or as part of a family. The socio-spatial construction of both house/home and women's identity cannot, in fact, be separated.

Simonsen (1996) argues that we need to see space in terms of the material environment, secondly, as something socially constructed and experienced, and

lastly she argues for conceptualisations of space as difference. While I agree with these conceptualisations of space, in the context of this thesis I have argued it is often difficult to separate these concepts. For example, in writing about the house as material environment, we are drawn to the economic and physical attributes of housing as shelter. In material terms women have been, and continue to be, disproportionately denied access to resources associated with housing through labour-market positioning and, for some women as sole parents, through their dependence upon state benefits. Also, given the claim that 'home' as an ideal concept is mapped onto the 'house' means that some women experience/d 'homelessness' in the sense that they were/are adequately physically sheltered but not in safe or enabling environments. Golden (1992) pointed out that homeless women are seen as different to homeless men in that women are usually seen in relation to whom they 'belong to'.

The development of suburban housing in the New Zealand postwar context was predicated upon the nuclear family, in which women 'belonged' to husbands and/or family, and where prescriptive gender roles provided the basis for socio-spatial interaction; women stayed at home, men went to work. Lucy, especially, drew attention to the way in which she "lost herself" in all the roles with her "traditional" husband, and how she was establishing a lesbian identity/relationship and a housing situation she referred to as "evolving," both in terms of structure and within the context of relationship formation. And Delia, living 'on her own' with four children told how she challenged the sex/gender division of labour in the marital house/home, by establishing a co-operative approach to household tasks.

The socio-spatial world has been divided physically and theoretically into private and public spheres, a dichotomy based upon a range of socio-spatially and sexed/gendered defined behaviours and activities. Janet frame, Fiona Kidman, Alison Gray, and Maurice Gee are some of the authors whose ironic and descriptive writing of the and about the 1950s to the early to mid 1980s, draw our attention to the experiences of women and men in suburbia and the ways in which

women's lives were expected to revolve around caring for husbands and children. These expectations were enshrined in the New Zealand Plunket society mentioned by both Frame and Kidman in their fiction. In particular I drew attention to the ways in which Gee (1990) and Gray (1979) used male architects as protagonists, a device which illustrated Rose's (1995) and Irigaray's (1993) claim that men are builders – of houses, of theory – constructions which provide for them a nostalgic return to the womb/mother. These claims are built on by Wigley's (1992) assertion that the house – as cultural symbol – is produced by men in order to house and contain/constrain women's sexuality. Material from Lily's diary (chapter seven) illustrated the tensions between women as sexual beings and as wives/mothers within the (heterosexual) socio-spatial organisation of housing.

While I used a deconstructionist critical approach to reading literature which requires socially and historically situating authors' texts, I still had to put a 'spatial' imagination to work in order to make links between the spatial and the social. This imagination was also required when reading interview transcripts which initially appeared to lack 'spatial talk'. Interacting with the 'spatial imagination was a committed feminist stance which impacted upon how material was gathered and interpreted, where I had to concentrate on the words of women. At all times I was concerned with the balance between the socio-spatial structures and institutions in New Zealand culture and women's agency.

Systems of language and housing, I argue, may not reflect or construct women's reality. Because men and women often use the same words when talking about house/home we assume a common meaning but this is not so. Meanings arise from different experiences within a common space and it is only by carrying out empirical work - preferably qualitative – we can come to understand women's ambivalent experiences of housing, home and familial relationships. As a sociologist I have had to try to weave the spatial and social in a way that gives credence to both concepts, yet does not necessarily privilege one over the other. While this has been a difficult task at time, I think the women's stories relate the

complexity of everyday life, and often their responses or flows of conversation were peppered with words that indicated their own processing of what they were saying. The material from the interview with Melissa and Jane in particular, illustrated the kinds of connections we need to make between the power relations embedded in both spatial and social structures.

In much the same way as I argue that fiction – when read for certain historical and socially situated discourses – provides a valuable source of information so, too, does an historically-based semiotic analysis of house/home magazines provide a window on the ways in which different activities and interests of men and women were/are spatially constructed and/or constrained. This analysis links with findings from the real estate sales peoples' interviews and/or questionnaires suggest that the stereotypical association of women with inside (kitchens), and men with outside maintenance has not changed considerably over the years. Nor have the binary oppositions of home/emotion/female and house/logical/male which infuse sales peoples' beliefs about the ways in which house are 'sold' as well as the perceived requirements of clients. Some contemporary advertising, however, presents a different view; uninhabited rooms and houses offer individuals a potential life-style that can be similar to, or different from, those of the past. Interestingly, women in the focus group who commented on the advertising images could not deconstruct the contemporary advertising in the same way as they could the earlier (1940s and 1960s) material.

Advertising analysis, the use of fiction, and interview material have provided an intertextual 'story' of the relationships between house and home and women's identity formation. As I stated in the introduction, this particular presentation has emerged from my own past and present experience, an abiding interest in New Zealand literature - what we can learn about ourselves and our culture – in much the same way as sociology is about asking the kinds of questions which enable us to engage with the 'underbelly' of social interaction. Choosing the everyday, taken-for-granted experiences of women, in hindsight, though, has not lent itself to

conventional investigation, especially given my single criterion of housing disruption in the two years up to the time of interviewing. In this sense my work can be critiqued in terms of lacking a stronger demographic focus, and it would have been easier, for example, to interview the women in my street. This kind of grounding, though, would not necessarily have assisted the project of how to write about socio-spatial interaction in abstract as well as specific terms. We **live** our everyday life rather than talking it. This living, I claim, is structured in narrative form, we live within a series of narratively arranged experiences about which we construct and tell stories, and it is the stories we tell to ourselves and others which provide the information about everyday life.

Most of the interview material I found cohered around narratives arising out of past and present experiences as well as projected futures, and the stories relating to these over-arching narratives were as diverse as the women themselves. Some were related to the historical contextualisation of housing and social relations touched on in part one: others required engaging with different kinds of social/spatial theory, and I found Iris Marion Young's (philosophical) concept of home as a critical value a useful concept against which to explore the reality of women's experiences.

As Heather's narrative illustrated, women (disproportionately to men) have reduced access to resources through labour market positioning, discrimination, or by the need to include a partner's income, as well as through positions of sole parenting dependent on state benefits (Tanya, Rona). Home ownership in New Zealand is the dominant ideology and reality, but with this come problems relating to issues of private property, autonomy and privacy. While autonomy often refers to individual rights, Young's concept of privacy is based upon the ethical concern of the rights of individuals to control access to their bodies and information about them. In the context of home ownership and the autonomy conferred upon the owner, this has not always been achievable, resulting in 'domestic' violence enacted predominantly against women and children. 'Privacy', when seen as the right of autonomy for one group and not another, lacks the ethical dimensions of Young's claim that privacy

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in the home should be available to all inhabitants. I cited studies that found that while men referred to ownership in terms of 'I', women used 'we'. Delia, Abbey, Lily, Rona, and especially Jeanette, told stories about experiencing controlling and/or abusive behaviour from male partners.

Rights to privacy and being able to express oneself are also part of the individuation process Young describes. I have argued that women are the major instigators of processes and activities which enable others' individuation more than their own. In this context, the ways in which women see themselves as relational beings may lead to identity formation based upon care and concern for others, informed by a hierarchy of values which reflect social and personal beliefs and expectations. I have argued that we cannot judge whether this sense of identity is 'authentic', because, while we could argue some women may exhibit a 'false consciousness', this perception may be more related to theoretical arguments about essentialism versus social constructionism than to women's **articulated** subjectivity. At the same time, older women, such as Iona and Delia, were able to realise their own potential once their (adult) children had left home.

Whatever the experiences of women in the house/home, I have argued that an ideal concept of home – perhaps home positioned as a critical value, perhaps as community in the way Lucy depicted her new home as a community where children and grandchildren could come – is mapped onto the house which represents a place in which to experience and accomplish many of life's tasks which contribute to identity formation.

The final theoretical perspective to shed light on the nature of house/home and women's identity formation is that which explores the individual and social experience of emotions. The home – as proposed site of emotional experience – has been seen in opposition to 'house' and/or to places of paid employment. I have argued that emotional experience is not relegated to one or other sphere, but

acknowledge that are 'feeling rules' which are culturally generated and to come extent mapped onto socio-spatial psyches.

However, the ways in which emotional experience includes both cognitive and physical elements and is essential learning (about ourselves and our social world) necessitates crossing the divides of body-culture, logic-emotion, male-female, and their acquired hierarchical ordering. Once these binary oppositions are demobilised, and the relationship between emotions, the body and learning are established in a different way to theories which claim an embodied approach but which, in reality, rarely endorse agency unless it is challenging cultural norms.

So, too, can we mount epistemological challenges to claims of knowledge based on positivist and/or objective data. For me, this is exciting. I think a sociological study of emotional life within a range of situations offers great learning potential as we return a certain 'wholeness' to the people interviewed. While I would not equate emotions with values, emotions arise out of a set of values and if we disclaim objective, value-free research then we are also disclaiming our own emotional stake in whatever project we are embarked upon.

I have taken issue with the concept of 'emotion work' used by some theorists in much the same way as Young did not label preservation and continuity activities carried out by women in the house/home as work in the repetitive sense epitomised by house-cleaning for example. Like Young, I would claim that while these experiences and activities need to be recognised and valued, to label them as 'work' may imply imposition rather than agency.

While I am well aware ther is much more I could say about the material gathered, garnished and present in this work, the main premise to reiterate is that social and spatial worlds are intimately connected. We cannot write about social relationships, family life –with or without children - and the resultant power relations, without understanding the ways in which the built environment is constructed and

maintained, that the power relations which permeate sex/gender experiences are literally built into the housing we inhabit. The spaces and places in which we live, work, visit, pass by, think about and respond to on a daily basis contribute to the ways in which we learn about ourselves and about each other, yet this learning is rarely articulated in spatial terms.

I have approached this project by engaging with an eclectic collection of theory and methods, initiated by my first reading of Darke's (1994) claim that while we make intuitive connections between women and home we cannot rely on one particular theory or method to explore this perceived relationship. By maintaining a commitment to weaving together social and spatial everyday experience, I have found this eclectic approach useful in providing both historical and contemporary contexts for interview material. Cross-disciplinary theory and methods, while posing a challenge for audiences whose expertise does not extend to different disciplines, I think, offers more scope for answering the kinds of questions arising from a sociological imagination. Developing a more acute consciousness about the relatedness of space/place and social interaction could well lead to more imaginative solutions to the enactment of power which subjects the needs of one individual to another, one group to another.

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