A Global History of Australian Women's Liberation, 1968-1985

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This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. Chapter three draws on my article titled '"To feel their warmth, sisterhood and closeness" Australian feminist entanglements with Vietnamese and Chinese Communism, 1969-1979' forthcoming in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society.*

This dissertation is 74, 040 words long and does not exceed the prescribed work limit for the History Degree Committee.

A Global History of Australian Women's Liberation, 1968-1985

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This dissertation offers a global history of the Australian women's liberation movement. It begins in the 1950s and concludes in the mid-1980s, with most attention being given to the period 1968-1985. Throughout this period the Australian women's liberation movement changed the fabric of Australian society, successfully agitating for gender justice and transforming both the nation and the lives of individuals. The research focusses on two key cities of Australian feminist organising; Sydney and Melbourne but it also considers the women's peace camp at Pine Gap, near Mpartnwe/Alice Springs and a global feminist conference which took place in Australia's capital, Canberra. Its findings are drawn through close attention to periodicals from across Australia, the US, Britain and the Pacific. It combines twenty-two oral history interviews with archival research to reveal the dynamic and extensive ways that the Australian women's liberation movement was globally influenced.

Historians have recognised that feminist movements have been globally informed, but the global turn in the history of feminism has largely focussed on the late 19th and 20th century up until the 1950s, neglecting the women's liberation movements of the 1970s. A global approach is conducive to understanding the Australian women's liberation movement. This global frame reveals the work of those who have been marginalised in histories of feminism, such as communist women, migrants, women of colour including those from the Global South, and First Nations women. Through employing a global perspective, this dissertation foregrounds their direct involvement in women's movements, and their transformative contributions at the level of political thought. It dislodges white women as the central change makers in feminism and the Global North as the central site of feminist thought and action.

This dissertation examines the significant impact of communist women on Australian women's liberation. It reveals the importance of global communist networks on the movement for women's health from the 1950s. It also suggests that the Australian women's liberation movement was significantly informed by Vietnamese and Chinese communism. It traces this influence at the level of ideas and considers face-to-face visits. It contends that the lack of scholarship on communist women in the women's liberation movement is due to paradigms established during the Cold War, which suggested that communist women were not authentic

feminists. These paradigms continue to influence how the history of women's liberation is written today.

A further strand of research investigates the project of Australian state feminism.
Australian women's liberation is unusual for its willingness to work with the state after the election of the Whitlam government in 1972. A global perspective makes visible the shared realities faced by state feminists in both liberal democratic Australia and communist China and Vietnam; in all cases women's agency was limited by pressures of state participation. Through close scrutiny of a global feminist conference held in Canberra in 1975, state feminism in Australia emerges as entangled with nationalism. This thesis takes seriously the jokes and humour present at this conference as they reveal the emancipatory limits and exclusions of Australian state feminism.

This dissertation explores the Australian campaigns for reproductive justice, both for abortion rights and against forced sterilisation, and finds that the tools of global law were essential to these campaigns. Campaigners for abortion rights drew on official legal precedent from Britain and the United States to change Australian abortion law. Feminists also drew on the Bobigny Trial, which was key to the decriminalisation of abortion in France. Australian feminists translated the Bobigny Trial into English and invited the trial lawyer French-Tunisian Gisèle Halimi to visit. Australian feminists, including Aboriginal women, also drew on unofficial legal instruments. International people's tribunals offered a global forum where women could testify about reproductive injustices and where the meaning of crime was transformed beyond the states definition. While the core business of global history has been to trace successful connections and exchanges, this investigation of global law makes it clear that failures and divergences must also be traced.

The thesis turns to the network of global women's peace camps of the 1980s, including Pine Gap, which took place in November 1983 near Mpartnwe/Alice Springs. Placing these camps into conversation with Pacific and Indigenous women's anti-nuclear networks reveals how both space and time were remade at these feminist encampments. Space was remade through ideas of spiritual feminism which highlighted the shared experience of women across the world and the possibilities of global, cosmic transformation. Time too played a role at these peace camps. Here, women in the Global North understood First Nations women as 'traditional' and 'spiritual', as representing the past. Yet, this sense of time was explicitly upended by visits to

Europe from First Nations women who who had experienced nuclear testing. They were understood to speak not from the past, but from the nuclear future.

In sum, the thesis rejects a national framing for the Australian women's liberation movement and demonstrates the significant influence of transnational border crossings of all kinds, including exchanges of texts, visits, travels and migration patterns, as well as global political events, particularly the Cold War, on this movement for gender justice.

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List of Abbreviations

ABC: Australian Broadcasting Corporation

ACWF: All China Women's Federation

ALRA: Abortion Law Reform Association

ANU: Australian National University

ANZAC: Australia New Zealand Army Corp

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

CPA: Communist Party of Australia

CEA: Childbirth Education Association

FILEF: Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Emigranti e Famiglie [Federation of Italian Migrants and their families]

ICACS: International Campaign on Abortion, Contraception and Sterilisation

LWCHC: Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre

NSW: New South Wales

PCI: Partito Comunista Italiano [Communist Party of Italy]

PPWA: Pan-Pacific Women's Association

UAW: The Union of Australian Women

UFF: Union Femmes Françaises

UN: United Nations

VWU: Vietnamese Women's Union

WAAC: Women's Abortion Action Coalition

WEL: Women's Electoral Lobby

WICH: Women in Industry: Contraception and Health

WISFP: Women in Solidarity for Peace

WWFNFIP: Women Working For a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific

WUL: Women's Union for Liberation for South Vietnam

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Introduction

When historians tell the story of Australian women's liberation, they tell it like this. In the late 1960s women were paid less than men, laws prohibited women from opening their own bank account, or drinking in the same bar as men. Male power was paramount in the family and women and their children were vulnerable to abuse. Abortion was a crime while rape in marriage was not. Women lacked conceptual vocabulary to describe what they faced, there was no word for sexism, no word for domestic violence, let alone anywhere for women to go.[1] These private problems were not discussed publicly nor seen as the domain of politicians. But by the late 1960s, women became disgruntled with their subordination. Prosperity in the post-war period created a new, more educated middle class who challenged Australian social norms.[2] There was a large and vibrant movement against the war in Vietnam which many women were involved in. In this movement they faced significant and routine male chauvinism.[3] Biff Ward, who was involved in the women's liberation movement in Canberra and was 'right in the middle' of the anti-war movement, explained in an oral history interview how sexism structured this movement. At the meetings, 'it was nearly always men speaking. And people like me who were so keen[…]did a hell of a lot of what we would now call "shit work."'[4] Women like Ward were tasked with 'finding billets for hundreds of people[…]cleaning up after meetings[…]That's just how it was…until women's liberation arrived.'[5] After this, the history tells us that women turned away from global events, such as the Vietnam war, and began to organise together for their own rights and to transform their lives.

[1] Fred R. Shapiro, 'Historical Notes on the Vocabulary of the Women's Movement', *American Speech*, 60.1 (1985), 3–16, pp. 5-6; Jon Piccini, "Women Are a Colonised Sex": Elizabeth Reid, Human Rights and International Women's Year 1975', *Australian Historical Studies*, 49.3 (2018), 307–23 p.314.
[2] Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: New South, 2019), p.9.
[3] Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 220-221; Arrow, *The Seventies,* p. 36; Marian Sawer, *Sisters in Suits: Women and Public Policy in Australia* (Sydney: New South, 2019), p. 1; Susan Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas: Women's Liberation- Women's Studies- Around the World* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2014), pp. 25-26; Verity Burgmann, *Power, Profit and Protest: Australian Social Movements and Globalisation* (Allen & Unwin, 2003), p. 17; Jon Piccini, *Transnational Protest, Australia and the 1960s* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[4] Interview with Biff Ward, May 26, 2021, on Zoom.
[5] Ibid.

Australian feminists sought complete transformation. As the editors wrote in the first edition of *MeJane,* a Sydney women's liberation newspaper, 'Our changes will be total, they won't be immediate but we want to start now, changing life styles, changing the family and above all, changing ourselves.'[6] The great provocation of the movement was that the 'private' sphere - the family, intimate relationships and sex - rippled with politics and was reflective and generative of gender inequality.[7] Accordingly, the women's liberation movement brought the political problems of the private sphere into the public sphere, showed that the distinction between the two was false, and demanded that political representatives take them seriously.[8] Women exposed the violence and inequality often dwelling at the heart of family life. To address this they established women's refuges, often squatting buildings to do so.[9] Women sought sexual and reproductive freedom. They established women's health services, and fought for abortion rights and for free contraception and childcare.[10] They demanded equal pay and the right for women to work across all industries including in male dominated professions.[11] They created their own media, film, periodicals, radio and music in order to represent themselves on their own terms.[12] They came to understand women's social role and the

[6] 'Editorial', *Me Jane* No 1, March 1975, p. 2.
[7] Lake, *Getting Equal,* p. 214-230; Arrow, *The Seventies*, p. 41; An influential essay on this subject read widely in Australia was Carol Hanisch, 'The Personal is Political' in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation,* Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (No publisher: New York, 1970) 76-78.
[8] Arrow, *The Seventies,* p. 41.
[9] Zora Simic, 'From Battered Wives to Domestic Violence: The Transnational Circulation of Chiswick Women's Aid and Erin Pizzey's *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear* (1974)', *Australian Historical Studies* 51:2, 2020, 107-126; Arrow, *The Seventies,* pp. 45; Catherine Kevin, 'Creative Work: Feminist representations of gendered and domestic violence in 1970s Australia', in *Everyday Revolutions: Remaking Gender, Sexuality and Culture in 1970s Australia,* eds. Michelle Arrow and Angela Woollacott (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019), 199-222. Janet Ramsay, 'Policy Activism on a "Wicked Issue": The Building of Australian Feminist Policy on Domestic Violence in the 1970s', *Australian Feminist Studies* 22:53 (2007), 247-264; On the first women's refuge, Elsie, which began as a squat see: Anne Summers, 'Day two: Where it all began', *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign,* https://16daysblogathon.blog/2021/11/26/day-two-where-it-all-began/ [last accessed September 15th 2022].
[10] On abortion rights see, for example: Barbara Baird, 'Abortion and the Limits of the Personal Becoming Political', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95, 129-146; Barbara Baird and Suzanne Belton, 'Feminism on the Frontier: the History of Abortion law reform in 1973 in the Northern Territory', *Women's History Review* 28:1 (2019), 139-158. Karen Coleman, 'The Politics of Abortion in Australia: Freedom, Church and State', *Feminist Review* 29 (1988), 75-97; Lake, *Getting Equal,* 223-4; On campaigns for free childcare see Isobelle Barrett Mayering, *Feminism and the Making of a Child Right's Revolution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2022).
[11] On the Australian equal pay campaign see: Lake, *Getting Equal,* p.224; Katherine Keirs, 'Class, Gender and Cold War Politics: The Union of Australian Women and the Campaign for Equal Pay', 1950-1966', *Labour History* 117: (2019), 159-179; Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1995).
[12] Susan Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas: Women's Liberation - Women's Studies - Around the World,* pp. 73-85. On feminist book publishing in Australia see: Trish Luker, 'Women into Print: Feminist presses in Australia', in *Everyday Revolutions,* eds. Arrow and Woollacott,121-138. On music see: Kathy Sport, 'Below the Belt and Bleeding Fingertips: Feminist and Lesbian Music in the Late 1970s', *Australian Feminist Studies* 22:53 (2007) 343-360; on film making, see: Mary Tomsic, ' "We Will Invent Ourselves, The Age of The New Image is at Hand": Creating, Learning and Talking with Australian Feminist Filmmaking', *Australian Feminist Studies* 22:53 (2007), 287-306; Kath Kenny, 'Sisters in a Fashion: Martha Ansara and Elaine Welteroth', *Australian*

mechanisms of sexism by participating in consciousness raising groups, devouring feminist literature from the US and Britain, and writing their own.[13]

The conventional and well established story of Australian women's liberation continues with a distinctive focus on working in alliance with government. After an early flourishing of activity that was independent of the state, the Whitlam – Labor Government came to power in 1972, and brought through sweeping social-democratic reforms. Crucial to this vision was the development of state feminism in Australia.[14] Canberra feminist Elizabeth Reid was appointed, in a world first, as Advisor to a Prime Minister on Women's Affairs. This led many feminists to work for feminist change from within the state.[15] They become 'femocrats'—a portmanteau of feminist and bureaucrat—embraced as a badge of honour by some women.[16] The women's movement's 'fandango with the state,' as femocrat Sara Dowse called it, was hotly debated in the movement at the time.[17] However, the significant achievements of femocrats to make the state more woman-friendly, and to develop feminist infrastructure beyond the women's movement have been largely celebrated in the history of this movement.[18]

Feminist Studies 33:98 (2019), 548-562; On theatre see: Kath Kenny, *Staging a Revolution: When Betty Rocked the Pram* (Perth: Upswell Publishing, 2022); On radio see: Liz Fell and Caroline Wenzel eds., *The Coming Out Show: Twenty Years of Feminist ABC Radio* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1995). On art see: Catriona Moore and Catherine Speck, 'How the personal became (and remains) political in the visual arts', in *Everyday Revolutions: Remaking Gender, Sexuality and Culture in 1970s Australia,* eds. Michelle Arrow and Angela Woollacott, 85-102; Elizabeth Emery, 'Subversive Stitches: Needlework as activism in Australian feminist art of the 1970s', in *Everyday Revolutions* , eds. Arrow and Woollacott, 103-120.

[13] See for example, novels by Helen Garner, *Monkey Grip* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1977); Kerryn Higgs [Elizabeth Riley], *All that False Instruction* (Sydney and London: Angus & Robertson, 1975) and women's history by Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia* (Sydney: Penguin Books, 1975); Miriam Dixon, *The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia 1788-1975* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1976); Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1975) and Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon; *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work 1788-1974* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1975). See, Zora Simic, '"Unmistakably a book by a feminist": Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip* and its feminist contexts' in *Everyday Revolutions,* eds. Arrow and Woollacott, 139-162; Zora Simic, '"Women's Writing" and "Feminism": A History of Intimacy and Estrangement.' *Outskirts,* No. 28, (2013).

[14] McFerran, 'Interpretation of a Front Line State,' Lake, *Getting Equal,* 256-259; Sawer, *Sisters in Suits,* 10-18.

[15] Lake, *Getting Equal,* p. 254; On the history of WEL see Marian Sawer with Gail Radford, *Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008); Iola Matthews, *Winning for Women* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2019).

[16] Sawer, *Sisters in Suits;* Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996).

[17] Sara Dowse, 'The Women's Movements Fandango with the State: Some Thoughts on the Movement's Role in Public Policy since 1972', *The Australian Quarterly* 54:4 (1982), 324-345; Ludo McFerran, 'Interpretation of a Frontline State: Australian Women's Refuges and the State', in *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions,* ed. Sophie Watson (London: Verso, 1990), 191-206. Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators,* xv-xvi; Sawer, *Sisters in Suits,* p. 21-25.

[18] Lake, *Getting Equal,* 253-276; Sawer, *Sisters in Suits;* Angela Woollacott, 'Being a Woman's Adviser at the State Level: Deborah McCulloch and Don Dunstan in 1970s South Australia', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 97-113. Hester Eisenstein's *Inside Agitators* is more critical of the role of femocrats.

This history is dynamic and inspiring. It is by no means false. However, this dissertation will show, it is limited; it distorts as much as it clarifies. Histories of the women's liberation movement in Australia have not, to date, explored the profound ways that this movement was global, though global elements shimmer at the edges of the conventional history that I have recounted. Instead, historians have largely bound feminism to the nation, and constructed this as its primary theatre. On the rare occasions that Australian women's liberation has been considered through a global lens, it has been traced through movements that occurred simultaneously in the US and Britain.[19] While historians have recognised that feminist movements have been globally informed, they have largely focused on the late 19th and 20th century up until the 1950s. The women's liberation movements of the 1970s have been comparatively neglected in the global feminist turn.

As I will show, the Australian women's liberation movement was significantly influenced by international border crossings in distinct and surprising ways. The impact of these cannot be overstated: the movement would have been entirely different were it not for these varied global elements. Each of the five chapters showcases an important campaign or priority of the Australian women's movement and reveals how this was reliant on global tactics and texts, migrations, translations, visits, travels and the global political context of the Cold War. The first chapter, which begins in the 1950s, explores the importance of global communist networks on the movement for women's health including natural childbirth campaigns of the 1950s, to women's liberation health care centres which developed in the early 1970s, and initiatives of the mid-1970s where migrant women agitated for reproductive, sexual and industrial health on their own terms. The second chapter discusses the campaigns for reproductive justice, for abortion rights and later against forced sterilisation, which were key to the Australian feminist movement. While these campaigns have been situated nationally in scholarship, I find that feminists drew on the tools of global law to make change in Australia. Australian feminists paraded official legislation from the US, Britain and France, where abortion laws were more liberal, to pressure the government to change the law in Australia. But, from the mid-1970s, Australian feminists also drew on forms of grassroots justice, including unofficial, staged

[19] Rebecca Jennings and Liz Millward, '"A Fully Formed Blast from Abroad"? Australasian Lesbian Circuits of Mobility and the Transnational Exchange of Ideas in the 1960s and 1970s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25:3 (2016), 436-487; Rebecca Jennings, 'Creating Feminist Culture: Australian Rural Lesbian-Separatist Communities in the 1970s and 1980s', *Journal of Women's History* 30:2 (2018), 88-111; Simic, 'From Battered Wives to Domestic Violence.'

public trials and international tribunals. These were important in the campaign against forced sterilisation and in making the Australian reproductive justice movement more attentive to the concerns of women globally. The third chapter considers the entanglements of Australian women with Vietnamese and Chinese communism. It traces the influence of Maoism on the intellectual history of Australian feminism from the late 1960s. Beyond intellectual history, the chapter considers women's face to face visits, as Australian women visited and hosted women from Vietnam and China, across the years 1975-1979. This chapter discusses how women's perceptions of one another fared when they encountered each other in person. It also assesses the agency of state feminists in both liberal democratic and communist states. The fourth chapter continues the discussion of Australian state feminism. It explores the 'Women and Politics' Conference, a global feminist event held in Canberra for International Women's Year, 1975. An investigation of the role humour played at this conference reveals the entanglements of Australian state feminism with nationalism. At this conference, jokes did serious work to expose the emancipatory limits of state feminism. The fifth chapter considers the Australian feminist movement's evolution after the state feminist turn of the 1970s, and explores the global network of women's peace camps of the 1980s that developed in response to nuclear rearmament. This chapter discusses Pine Gap peace camp which took place in Alice Springs (or Mpartnwe as it is known in the language of the First Nations owners, the Arrernte people) as well as the global influence of the British women's peace camp, Greenham Common. These peace camps are placed into conversation with Pacific and Indigenous women's anti-nuclear networks, revealing how time and space were made and remade at these camps.

This thesis bridges two rich historiographic fields, global feminist history and the history of the Australian women's liberation movement. I introduce these below and discuss my interventions in these fields. I then present my methodology which combines twenty-two oral history interviews with extensive multi-sited archival research conducted using archives from Britain, the US, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

Global Feminist History

Since the early 1990s the project of global history has dislodged the primacy of the nation state as the container for historical enquiry.[20] This turn has challenged the very foundations of history, which, as a discipline was developed for the purpose of nation building. Scholars have

[20] Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2016).

traced the development of global history through three different strands of historiography. [21] Global history was developed by historians of the US, who sought to push against currents of American exceptionalism.[22] This was also consonant with the turn to new imperial histories in Britain, which sought to reconsider how Britain was connected with its colonies, not only in terms of the impact that the 'metropole' had on the 'colony' but also how the deep, uneven connections across the empire structured British life, in both public and private spheres.[23] This sought, as Dipesh Chakrabarty put it, to 'provincialize Europe,' revealing that it was only *a* centre, rather than *the* centre of the world.[24] These two turns to the global correlated with a third, namely transnational histories of settler colonies which sought to compare interconnections in the development of settler societies, for example between Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.[25] These comparative histories of settler colonies were generative. They revealed that similar treatment of First Nations people and the shared development of immigration restriction across the dominions resulted in the development of a 'global colour line,' meticulously traced by Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds.[26]

From the vantage point of 2022, we can also see how the end of the Cold War, a hugely significant global economic and ideological shift, also impacted the global historical turn. As historians sought to deal with the multifarious impacts of a world that was becoming increasingly globalised, they sought to historicise global connections and debate their meaning.[27] Historians asked whether globalisation was really such a novel phenomenon. Merry

[21] Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake, 'Introduction' in *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective,* eds. Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake (Canberra: ANU EPress, 2005), 5-21, p.7.
[22] Ian Tyrrell, 'American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History', *American Historical Review* 96:4 (1991), 1031-55.
[23] See, for example: Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Catherine Hall, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); James Thompson, 'Modern Britain and the New Imperial History', *History Compass* 5:2 (2007), 455-462. Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[24] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[25] See, for example: Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis (eds.), *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race and Class* (London: Sage Publications, 1995); Patricia Grimshaw, 'Settler anxieties, Indigenous peoples, and women's suffrage in the colonies of Australia, New Zealand and Hawai'i, 1888-1902' in *Globalizing Feminisms 1789-1945,* ed. Karen Offen (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 96- 111; Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw, David Phillips, and Shurlee Swain, *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous People in British Settler Colonies*, 1830–1910 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).
[26] Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[27] Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?,* pp. 90-114; Frederick Cooper, 'What is the concept of globalization good for? An African Historian's Perspective', *African Affairs* 100: 399 (2001), 189-213.

Wiesner-Hanks suggests that the vocabulary favoured by those who study the transnational such as 'imitation, borrowing, appropriation, reappropriation, acculturation…' reflect the imperative to trace the longer history of global connections.[28] These metaphors and others, used to describe and explore the globality of Australian women's liberation in this thesis, have their own history worth noting. As Shruti Kapila remarks, the metaphors that global historians use - namely 'exchange' and 'circulation' - reference capital.[29] Notable too is the role the internet played in the development of global history. In the 1990s and early 2000s, this technology was being rapidly, though unevenly globalised. Drawn from connecting technologies are the metaphors of 'web' or 'network' used in global history to reconceptualise the world beyond the nation state. There was considerable optimism in the power and potential of the internet to create a connected world, where global inequality and power would be decentred through communications technology.[30] This optimism is reflected too in the metaphor of 'web' favoured by global historians who sought to restore agency and complexity to histories of the lives of colonised peoples by tracing the connections across the 'peripheries' of empire, which did not always pass through its 'centre.'[31] 'Entanglements', which I put to use, holds within it the excesses and legacies of uneven global power relations. The influence of postcolonial studies on global history is palpable here, as the metaphor of 'entanglements' reveals the ways that connections were not discrete but knotty. These had a duration and reach far beyond the initial intention and could never be entirely controlled by those who held power.

Global history has revealed the interconnectedness of the world and drawn the connections between seemingly disparate places. However, the claims that global historians have tended to make have been sweeping and not particularly attentive to gender. As Judith Zinsser writes, global historians 'speak about the past in such general terms that even men disappear.'[32] Further, the projects of gender history and global history have been distinct. As global history has discussed connections and convergences, gender history has concerned itself with

[28] Merry Wiesner-Hanks, 'Crossing Borders in Transnational Gender History', *Journal of Global History* 6:3 (2011), 357-379, p. 358.
[29] Shruti Kapila, 'Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political' in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History,* eds. Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 253-274, p. 260.
[30] See, for example, Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
[31] See, for example, Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2012).
[32] Judith P. Zinsser, 'Women's History, World History, and the Construction of New Narratives', *Journal of Women's History* 12:3 (2000), 196–206; p. 198.

differences.[33] The focus of gender historians on difference is indebted to Black, women of colour and First Nations feminist thought. This mounted a challenge to the universalisation of white women's concerns as the concerns of all women, globally. In fact, Black feminist thought revealed the profound power differentials and differences between women, including white women's role in racist oppression. Intersectionality, rooted in histories of Black feminist theory, and in the work of Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, also describes how women's experience of gender is always modulated by other elements of identity such as race and class, which makes visible the differences between women.[34]

Remaking the space of feminism

Historians of feminism, however, have embraced the global turn. In particular three works by Karen Offen, Leila Rupp and Margaret McFadden published at the end of last century, broke this path and opened up entire worlds. In seeking to remake the space of feminism beyond the nation, this thesis is indebted to them. In Karen Offen's works *European Feminisms* 1700-1950 (2000) and her later edited volume, *Globalizing Feminisms* 1789-1945 (2010) Offen dates the history of feminism to the early years of the French Revolution of 1789. [35] It was this event that initially globalized feminism, as this 'upheaval gave birth, and wings, to *practical efforts* to embody as well as invoke principles of rights, liberty and equality in behalf of women as well as men.'[36] Feminist currents spread from France throughout the world. As Offen sees it, after the French revolution 'we see the first attempts to *organize* women and men on behalf of female emancipation within the context of national, and subsequently, transnational, citizenship.'[37] Offen takes a spatial approach which traces the method of organising and the spread of tactics outwards from France. Offen's *European Feminisms* was pathbreaking, expansive and as Francisca de Haan notes, it 'unusually and admirably' discussed the entirety of Europe, not just the West.[38] However, Offen's work maintains a model of an active feminist

[33] Merry Wiesner-Hanks, 'World History and the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality' *Journal of World History* 18:1 (2007), 53-66.
[34] Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review* 43:6 1991, 1241-1299. See also: Zora Simic, 'What can Feminist Historians *do* with Intersectionality', *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal* 24 (2018), 16-25.
[35] Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950:A Political History* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1999); Karen Offen (ed.) *Globalizing Feminisms 1789-1945* (London: Routledge, 2010).
[36] Karen Offen, 'Introduction' in *Globalizing Feminisms 1789-1945,* ed. Offen, p. xxx
[37] Ibid.
[38] Francisca de Haan, 'Eugénie Cotton, Pak Chong-ae, and Claudia Jones: Rethinking Transnational Feminism and International Politics', *Journal of Women's History* 25:4 (2013) 174-189; p. 177.

'core', France, with a passive, absorbent periphery; initially the rest of Europe and then the rest of the world.

Margaret McFadden's *Golden Cables of Sympathy* (1999) and Leila Rupp's *Worlds of Women* (1997) suggest a different feminist spatiality. They explore the development of international feminist organisations which agitated for women's suffrage and peace in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In these texts the space of feminism does not move from metropole to periphery. Rather, global feminism is a network which criss-crosses the world and conferences between women are generative 'hubs' or 'nucleii.' However, as McFadden puts it, 'the preorganisational matrix (or net, or web) made up of complex lines of international contact, association, friendship, argument, correspondence,' should not be underestimated, it was these that made these conferences possible.[39] Networks are important elements in this dissertation, they assist women to get beyond the nation. Global communist networks are traced in chapter one and the network Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific is considered in chapter five. This network was important for the way that it enabled First Nations women to travel to Europe and to visit Greenham Common but also to make links with other Pacific women based on shared experiences of nuclearity. Global gatherings of women are also important for the way they changed the movement in Australia; chapter four considers the 'Women and Politics' Conference, chapter five global women's peace encampments, while the global Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women held in Brussels in 1976, is shown to be important to the movement for reproductive justice in Australia in chapter three.

Contemporary global feminist historians have posed other ways of understanding the space of feminism, which like the network and the international conference, break with the nation. Kathryn Gleadle, drawing on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri, has suggested we might conceptualise feminism and understand its growth as a 'rhizome.'[40] Drawn from botany, this metaphor describes plants which do not have a root and branch structure, such as a potato. As the rhizome grows it 'assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extensions…to concretion into bulbs and tubers.'[41] There is no 'centre' of a potato plant, and similarly

[39] Margaret McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth Century Feminism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), p. 171.
[40] Kathryn Gleadle, 'The Imagined Communities of Women's History: Current Debates and Emerging Themes, a Rhizomatic approach', *Women's History Review* 22:4 (2013), 524-540.
[41] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guittari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2003 [1987]), p. 7.

conceptualising feminism as a rhizome enables us to do away with the notion that there is a centre of feminism; most often conceptualised explicitly or implicitly as the Euro-America of white educated women. The metaphor of the rhizome helps us to understand that roots/routes which cannot be seen might create growth in distant locations and at surprising times. Gleadle's rhizome is particularly useful because it considers failure. What is forecast to grow and watered with dedication does not always bear fruit, at least not in predictable ways. Some 'shoots will reach a black hole and wither,' she suggests.[42] This underpins my consideration of the failure of a text and of a 'people's tribunal' in chapter two. Lucy Delap has recently posed an alternative metaphor of the mosaic. Delap suggests that 'feminist coalitions were built from bits and pieces available.'[43] This is useful as I consider feminists whose identities expanded into other social movements, such as communism, or intersected with a multiplicity of identity categories such as First Nations, migrant or white. Delap also suggests that conceptualising feminism as a mosaic makes it clear that the view up close and from afar is different.[44] This is useful to this thesis, which zooms in and out, changes perspective and moves from broad global networks to the micro feelings of individuals to reveal how the global functioned.

Where though, do the mosaic and the rhizome end? Can new growth always be traced and fragments dusted off and added? Perhaps that is the beauty of these metaphors. But what does this mean for the finite historical project? Throughout this dissertation, I have come across a great many international border-crossings which could be traced and amplified. However, as Sebastian Conrad argues, historians of the global must not content ourselves simply with tracing connections, which are almost infinite.[45] Rather we might trace connections that are historically meaningful and develop a self-conscious awareness of why certain global moments are selected over others. To do this, I asked two questions of the elements of globality I encountered. I asked whether global connections impacted the broader movement deeply at the time or, if not, whether tracing a certain exchange would remake our understanding of the history of Australian women's liberation. While this second group of connections may have been a little more ephemeral or fleeting, these were selected as they transformed the story that is classically told within the national frame. Thus, I consider deeply five distinct vectors of the women's movement and their globality. I imagine these as rays of the sun or spotlights on a

[42] Gleadle, 'The Imagined Communities', p. 525.
[43] Lucy Delap, *Feminisms: A Global History* (London: Pelican, 2020), p. 20.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Conrad, *What is Global History?,* p. 68.

stage, which illuminate particular global pathways into and out of Australia. A lot remains in darkness, but it is my hope that the spotlights reveal the movement in a different light, anew.

Global sensibilities

As global feminist history has posed new understandings of the space of feminism, it has also discussed the ways that women forged a sensibility beyond the nation. Leila Rupp suggests that maternalist feminism, based on women's ability to bear children, but also on their role as nurturers, enabled them to forge an internationalist imagination.[46] Maternalism drew women together across the borders of nationality and could potentially, and at least rhetorically, incorporate women from all over the world. Historian Harriet Hyman Alonso has discussed the ways in which maternalism was often used to forge peace as a women's issue. Maternalist thought suggested women's capacity to mother gave them a particular natural interest in peace.[47] Maternalism was also linked to the movement for women's suffrage and political participation. As Mona Seigel's study of the women's movement and the 1919 Paris Peace Conference has shown, women active for the cause of peace shared the firm conviction that an enduring peace could not be built through the exclusion of half of humanity from politics; especially the half with the greater investment in peace.[48] Scholars have shown that maternalist feminism was a significant and durable strand of global feminism until the advent of the women's liberation movement.[49] Nonetheless, as Mrinalini Sinha has shown, it was also challenged by those who sought to make 'national self-determination into a feminist issue,' whose political aims often confronted the inherent goodness of peace and non-violence at all costs.[50] I also suggest that the advent of women's liberation in Australia did not necessarily spell a complete break with maternalist currents. Discussing movements for gender justice in the 1950s, I suggest that these currents were present in the UAW's agitation for natural childbirth, which was then taken up by the movement for maternal rights in Australia.

[46] Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women,* 84-86.
[47] Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), pp. 10-12, 263-4.
[48] Mona Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms: The Global Battle for Women's Rights After the First World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).
[49] Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue;* Michelle Chase, '"Hands off Korea!": Women's Internationalist Solidarity and Peace Activism in Early Cold War Cuba', *Journal of Women's History* 32: 3 (2020), 64-84, pp. 70-71.
[50] Mrinalini Sinha, 'Nation and Nationalism' in *The Routledge Global History of Feminism,* eds. Bonnie G. Smith and Nova Robinson, (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 350-364, p. 360.

However, while women in global feminist organisations of the early twentieth century were bound by a shared sense of motherhood, they were also unevenly bound through empire and imperialism. This too was often expressed through the language of family. Antoinette Burton's important work on agitation for women's suffrage across the British empire reveals how this, for British women, was entwined with imperialism. Using the case study of India, Burton shows how British women had a 'sense of responsibility for their colonial "sisters."'[51] British women agitated for women's suffrage in Britain out of a sense of imperial responsibility. Through suffrage, they would act as the allies of the empire and propose a 'new', feminised imperialism which would soften the brutal aspects of imperial power and be based in peace and uplift, rather than male violence.[52] British suffragists saw Indian women as 'lower on a scale of human development,' who suffered greater subjugation but were not conscious of this, and so were 'in need of salvation' by British women.[53] While Australia was also a British colony, it was a self-governing, white-settler dominion, distinctive to and higher in the imperial hierarchy when compared to colonies without home rule, like India.[54] While Indian women represented the past, white Australian women armed with suffrage across the country in 1902, self-consciously positioned themselves as modern, educated women when visiting Britain.[55] New work has discussed white Australian women's role in inspiring women in Britain in their own struggle for suffrage.[56] This work has broken with the national frame that dominated Australian suffrage histories, tracing the travels of Australian women to Britain and their relationships across the Tasman, with women in New Zealand.[57] It has drawn insights from older scholarship which pointed out that while white women got the franchise early, First Nations women could not vote until 1967.[58] Moreover, this work has shown that Australian women's modernity was still modulated by their dominion status. When agitating for suffrage in Britain, after white Australian women had been granted the vote, Vida Goldstein addressed

[51] Antoinette Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and 'Global Sisterhood' 1900-1915', *Journal of Women's History* 3:2 1991, 46-81, p. 47. See also, Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994)
[52] Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity', p. 48. Burton, *Burdens of History*.
[53] Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity', p. 48.
[54] Angela Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's international Activism in the 1920s-30s', *Gender & History* 10:3 (1998), 425-448, p. 438.
[55] Ibid. See also, Angela Woollacott, *To Try her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[56] James Keating, *Distant Sisters: Australian Women and the International Struggle for the Vote* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), Claire Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won The Vote and Inspired the World* (Sydney: Text Publishing, 2019).
[57] Ibid.
[58] See, for example, Grimshaw, 'Settler Anxieties, Indigenous Peoples, and Women's Suffrage', 553-72.

a packed Royal Albert Hall in March 1911 and referred to Australia as a 'baby nation.'[59] She asked women 'was it not an unthinkable proposition that England's granddaughters should have an equal voice with men, when England's own daughters should have no voice at all.'[60] Similarly, when Australian women marched for women's suffrage in Britain, in the International Coronation Procession during the hot summer of 1911, they marched under a painted banner designed by Dora Meeson Coates, which depicted Britannia in a white gown with sceptre and daughter Australia, bearing the shield of the newly federated states, her palm upturned as she admonishes Britain to give women the franchise and to 'Trust the women Mother as I have done.'[61] Despite marching in support of unenfranchised British women, Australian women maintained themselves as 'daughters' of empire, and Britain as the 'mother'.

This dissertation is inspired by discussions of uneven relationships between women due to empire and imperialism. While the story of Australia and empire is usually told through its role in the British Empire and through the dispossession of Australia's First Nations people, Australia had its own imperial interests in the Pacific which global feminist scholarship has been astute to.[62] Between the wars, Australian feminists forged a sensibility both as Dominion women, but also across the Pacific, but the power dynamics between women were uneven here, too. Fiona Paisley and Angela Woollacott's studies of the network of women, the Pan-Pacific Women's Association (PPWA), established in 1928, find Australian women engaged in a process of redefining Australia as a nation of the Asia-Pacific.[63] Australian women saw the PPWA based in Honolulu as a 'Geneva in the Pacific,' an alternative to the League of Nations.[64] Here, as Bessie Rishbieth, Perth suffrage activist and key PPWA member put it, 'Eastern and Western cultures…can be made to blend and harmonise.'[65] Historians have also discussed Australian women's use of networks made up of Dominion women, including the British Commonwealth League, to agitate on behalf of Aboriginal women's rights in London.[66]

[59] Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom,* p. 9.
[60] Ibid., p. 381-2.
[61] Ibid., p. 4-5.
[62] Antony Anghie, 'Race, Self-Determination and Australian Empire' *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 19:2 (2018) 423-459.
[63] Fiona Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women's Pan-Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009); Angela Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's Internationalist Action in the 1920s-30s', *Gender & History* 10.3 (1998), 425-448.
[64] Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific,* p. 16.
[65] Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth…'p. 433.
[66] Ibid., Marilyn Lake, 'Between Old Worlds and New: Feminist Citizenship, Nation and Race, the Destabilisation of Identity', in *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives,* eds. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (New York: New York University Press, 1994) pp. 277-294; Fiona Paisley, *Loving*

They have urged that Australian women's extension of internationalism to Asian women in the Pacific and their agitation for Aboriginal justice should be seen, at least in part, as politically progressive against the context of the white Australia policy and Indigenous subjugation. Marilyn Lake argues that Australian women's relationships with international organisations led them to become self-consciously aware of their own, and their nation's, racism which led to 'an active engagement with women from Pacific, Asian and African countries.'[67] As Woollacott puts it, women's agitation for Aboriginal rights in London did the important work of taking relations between White and First Nations people out of 'the obscurity of the nation's backblocks, and place[d] them firmly in the international spotlight.'[68] Yet the picture, historians find, is mixed. White Australian women agitated on behalf of Aboriginal women but saw themselves as both 'superior to and responsible for indigenous women.'[69] New work has highlighted that Australian women's suffrage was limited on the basis of race. Similarly, the PPWA appealed to white Australian women because they assumed they would be 'leading' the application of Western-style modernity to the region, an idea formed by histories of race, empire and colonisation which were present at these conferences, and which non-white women members contested.[70] It seems that white women in Australia, like those in Britain, saw themselves as superior to their 'less fortunate imperial sisters.'[71]

Beyond relationships between women, newer scholarship has begun to draw out Australia's national colonial and economic interests in the Pacific.[72] Due to the Mandate System administered through the League of Nations at the end of the First World War, both Nauru and Papua New Guinea were administered by Australia from 1918 until decolonisation, in 1968 and 1975 respectively.[73] As we shall see, in Chapters four and five, Pacific feminists drew Australian women's attention to the Australian Government's regional imperialism rendered

Protection? Australian Feminists and Aboriginal Women's Rights 1919-1939 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

[67] Lake, 'Between Old Worlds and New', p. 9

[68] Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth', p. 441.

[69] Ibid. Indigenous is not capitalised in the original.

[70] Paisley, *Glamour,* p. 16.

[71] Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth,' p. 438.

[72] For example, Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[73] Ibid., See also, on the relationship between Australia and Nauru, Katerina Teaiwa, 'Ruining Pacific Islands: Australia's Phosphate Imperialism', *Australian Historical Studies* 46:3 (2015), 374-391 and on Decolonisation and Papua New Guinea see Donald Denoon, *A Trial Separation: Australia and the Decolonisation of Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2012); Kirisitina Sailiata and Stephanie Nohelani Teves, 'The Pacific' in *The Routledge Global History of Feminism*, eds Smith and Robinson, 151-162; Zohl dé Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press 1994).

through conditional relationships of aid, the drive for resources, and military might. As chapter five will reveal, this history structured Pan-Pacific resistance. Pacific and First Nations feminists made links between histories of colonisation, nuclear testing in the Pacific, and the extraction of uranium from Aboriginal land in Australia as they visited Greenham Common and toured Europe.

Moreover, the discussion of the language of familial relations as an expression of imperial interests in the early twentieth century is useful as I consider the role 'sisterhood' played in the later movement. Sometimes Australian feminist actors describe themselves in ways that evidently draw on this longer imperial history, seeing themselves as 'daughters' of empire – this is especially apparent in chapter five. But the language of sisterhood is *everywhere* in the periodicals, meetings, letters and archives of the Australian women's liberation movement. It does not typically refer to Australian women's role in British colonial relationships. Rather, as Biff Ward described, it spoke to 'a feeling of personal elation and closeness to other women.'[74] Moreover, as women's liberation sought to challenge the primacy of women's romantic relationships with men and their role in the family, the idea of sisterhood was helpful as it spoke to the importance of friendships and romantic relationship between women.[75] The powerful notion of sisterhood did important spatial work in the women's liberation movement, suggesting a global community of women beyond the nation.[76] Australian feminist Jozefa Sobski suggested in an oral history interview that when women in Australia corresponded with women elsewhere, they forged a global consciousness through signing their letters 'in sisterhood.'[77]

However, as Black feminists have shown us, sisterhood presumed a common oppression between women which just wasn't there.[78] In this way, the sisterhood of the 1970s does resemble the earlier forms of sisterhood that characterised global feminist movements. In the women's liberation movement, the powerful language of family could once again gloss and 'mask' the power dynamics between women, particularly the role of white women in racist

[74] Biff Ward quoted in Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas,* p. 33.
[75] Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas,* pp. 25-41
[76] See, for example, Robin Morgan ed., *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984).
[77] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski, 2nd February 2021, on Zoom.
[78] See, for example, bell hooks, 'Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women', *Feminist Review* 23 (1986), 125-138; Hazel Carby, 'White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood', in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain,* ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1982), 212–35.

oppression. [79] The idea that women were united as sisters through a shared identity of woman also normalised the priorities and subjectivity of white, middle class women, and invisibilised the ways these were linked to a particular and specific identity. Instead, these were universalised as the priorities of all women.[80] It is interesting to note that the earliest historians of global feminism writing in the 1990s drew on work by Black and women of colour feminists that questioned racism, and the ways it was woven into ideas of sisterhood in the women's liberation movement. [81] Black feminism provided the intellectual framework so that historians could reveal the uneven nature of sisterhood in the global feminist movements of the late nineteenth century. In this dissertation, sisterhood is discussed directly in chapter three, as Australian women projected their hopes for global sisterhood onto Vietnamese and Chinese communist women. But women's negotiation of difference, particularly racial difference, runs throughout. I have found that women's ability to negotiate difference was uneven, but that feminists honed their ability to do this, and improved over time.

While the pioneering texts of global feminism were critical of white women's domination of international organisations, early global feminist history largely did not offer an alternate history of the international feminism which centred other places, other people, and other ideas of what liberation might look like. Newer scholarship on global feminism has begun to fill this lacuna, and particularly to challenge the notion that early feminist internationalism was a 'one way move from imperial centre to periphery and colony.'[82] The idea that feminism was first 'invented' by white, middle class, European women has been shown to be false.[83] Newer work by scholars such as Shobna Nijhawan, Sumita Mukherjee, Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel and Imaobong Umoren has considered the work of Black and women of colour feminists as international actors on their own terms.[84] This dissertation follows work which explores how

[79] hooks, 'Sisterhood', p. 127.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Antoinette Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and 'Global Sisterhood' 1900-1915', *Journal of Women's History* 3:2 (1991), 46-81, pp. 46-7.
[82] Ellen Carol DuBois and Katie Oliviero, 'Circling the Globe: International Feminism Reconsidered, 1920 to 1975', *Women's Studies International Forum* 32:1 (2009), 1–3, p. 1. This point is also made by Shobna Nijhawan, 'International Feminism From An Asian Center: The All-Asian Women's Conference (Lahore, 1931) as a Transnational Feminist Moment', *Journal of Women's History,* 29:3 (2017), 12-36, p. 12-13.
[83] Kathryn Gleadle and Zoë Thomas, 'Global Feminisms, c. 1870-1930: Vocabularies and Concepts- A Comparative Approach', *Women's History Review* 27:7 (2018),1209-1204; Lucy Delap, *Feminisms*, p. 20.
[84] Nijhawan, 'International Feminism from an Asian Center', 12-36; Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation: How Black Women Transformed Citizenship in the French Empire* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2020); Imaobong Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activists-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggle* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018); Sumita Mukherjee, 'The All Asian Women's Conference 1931: Indian women and their Leadership of pan-Asian Feminist

women in the Global South and women of colour in the Global North acted in international arenas, whether through already existing women's organisations, or by starting their own. It also considers how women worked across difference, between the North and the South, attending to the power dynamics that were at play between women.[85] Some work, though there is less of it, examines how women agitated for gender justice across the Global South.[86] I draw on this as I consider work by Aboriginal, migrant and women of colour feminists which extends beyond the critique of white women, to investigate the work these women did for gender justice in Australia on their own terms. Historians remind us that even amongst women who experienced similar 'double burdens' of race and gendered oppression, there were power dynamics and frictions which historians should be alert to, and interested in.[87] Solidarity between women in any direction cannot be taken for granted and must be forged through shared aims, rather than presumed through a shared identity.[88]

The approach of global feminist history has implications for the entire field of global history. Some scholars suggest that global history propagates myths of effortless connections, appropriations, frictionless fusions and flows between disparate places and people. This, they suggest, often comes at the expense of considering divergences, differences, inequalities, stoppages and power imbalances.[89] Historian of Africa Frederick Cooper argued in his consideration of the contemporary and historical world as 'globalised,' that while it might be salutary to get away from tendencies to analyse processes as if they took place entirely within the national frame, 'to adopt a language that implies that there is no container at all, except the

Organisation', *Women's History Review* 26:3 (2017), 363-381; Sumita Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[85] See, for example: Delap, *Feminisms: A Global History;* Negar Mottahedeh, *Whisper Tapes: Kate Millet in Iran* (Stanford, C.A: Stanford University Press, 2019); Sara Salem, 'On Transnational Feminist Solidarity: The case of Angela Davis in Egypt', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 23:3 (2018), 245-267; Lisa Levenstein, *They Didn't See Us Coming: The Hidden History of Feminism in the Nineties* (New York: Basic Books, 2020).

[86] See, for example: Nijhawan, 'International Feminisms'; Michelle Chase, '"Hands off Korea!"' Quinto Swan, 'Giving Berth: Fiji, Black Women's Internationalism and the Pacific Women's Conference of 1975', *Journal of Civil and Human Rights* 4:1 (2018), 37-63.

[87] Antoinette Burton, *Africa in the Indian Imagination* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016); Helen Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organisations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 8-9. Delap, *Feminisms,* pp. 49-57

[88] hooks, 'Sisterhood'.

[89] Frederick Cooper, 'What is the Concept of Globalization Good For?; Alecia Simmonds, Yves [Anne] Rees and Anna Clark, 'Testing the Boundaries: Reflections on Transnationalism in Australian History' in *Transnationalism, Nationalism and Australian History*, eds. Anna Clark, Yves [Anne] Rees and Alecia Simmonds (Sydney: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) 1-15; Christina Twomey, 'Is Australian History Over-determined by the Transnational Turn?', in *Transnationalism,* eds. Clark, Rees and Simmonds, 89-103; Kapila, 'Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political', p. 260.

planetary one, risks defining problems in misleading ways,' and flattening the 'economic and political relations,' and power differentials between nations.[90] But power and its differentials have always been key to global feminist history. Studies have been consistently alert to power dynamics between women, understood as inflected with differences in identity but also in political aims. The field was developed at least partly through currents of Black and women of colour feminist thought which problematised the universalising tendencies of the women's liberation movement.[91] This attention to power between women has only increased as the field has grown. In chapter two, I attend particularly to failure in my work. I discuss the failure of the trial transcript of the Bobigny Affair to translate into the Australian context, and the failure of the 1976 International Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women to change the meaning of crime as nation states saw it and reform social conditions so that crimes against women were no longer committed. I also discuss confusion between East Asian and Australian feminists in chapter three. I frame this as productive for the way it exposes women's differences.

Understanding the Cold War

My dissertation is indebted to scholarship that has recognised the exclusion of communist women from global histories of feminism. In 2010, Francisca de Haan, the leading historian of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), discussed the exclusion of global leftist and communist women from global feminist history. The WIDF, which was founded in Paris in 1945, had not previously been discussed by historians despite being the largest women's organisation in the world.[92] de Haan proposed that this was due to the 'Cold War paradigm' which continues to animate global feminist historiography.[93] In a pathbreaking paper she suggested that historians have accepted an idea of communism which closely resembles the perception of American state agencies at the very height of the Cold War.[94] As she shows through her case study of the WIDF, US state agencies characterised this

[90] Cooper, 'What is the Concept of Globalisation Good For?', p. 190.
[91] Antoinette Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity.'
[92] Francisca de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)', *Women's History Review*, 19:4 (2010), 547–73.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Francisca de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation' *Women's History Review* 19:4, (2010) 547-473, p. 555.

organisation as a 'communist front.'[95] As these agencies saw it, communist women were precluded from being feminists by nature of being communists. As other scholars have shown, communist feminists were, during the Cold War, considered victims of a system that was a priori *more* patriarchal than liberal capitalist democracies. These women were considered to be without agency, simply mouth pieces of party state ideology.[96] Or, communist women were seen as mobilising feminism as part of a deceptive agenda to lure women into the Communist Party, not because they truly believed in women's rights.[97] This initial Cold War binary has structured global feminist historiography, and has meant that before 2010 historians did not consider communist women as feminists.[98] Moreover, this ongoing Cold War paradigm has also neutralised Western women's organisations, so unlike communist women's organisations, they do not seem to be products of liberal democratic and capitalist societies, but politically even-handed, hegemonic and representative of an authentic, even 'pure' feminism.[99] As Kristen Ghodsee has shown, the continuation of these paradigms has resulted in some reiteration of Cold War stereotypes about communist women in historiography.[100] More typically, as de Haan suggests, this resulted in an 'overwhelming silence' about the role communist feminists played in the early Cold War.[101]

de Haan's historiographical paradigm shift has led to rich scholarship, and a sense of deep potential for new histories. Particularly there has been a foregrounding of the activism

[95] Ibid.; Francisca de Haan, 'Eugénie Cotton, Pak Chong-Ae and Claudia Jones: Rethinking Transnational Feminism and International Politics', *Journal of Women's History* 25:4 (2013), 174-189, pp. 180-181.
[96] Celia Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe: Disentangling Feminist Histories', *Past and Present* 218 (2013), 178-202, p.181. See also, for example: Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex* (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 12; Wang Zheng, *Finding Women in the State: A State Socialist Feminist Revolution in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1964* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).
[97] De Haan, 'Eugénie Cotton, Pak Chong-Ae and Claudia Jones', p. 176.
[98] Note the flourishing of scholarship since de Haan's pathbreaking paper of 2010. See, for example, Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe'; Celia Donert, 'From Communist Internationalism to Human Rights: Gender, Violence and International Law in the Women's International Democratic Federation Mission to North Korea, 1951', *Contemporary European History* 25:2 (2016), 313-333; Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'Cold War Internationalism, Nationalisms and the Yugoslav-Soviet Split: The Union of Italian Women and the Antifascist Women's Front of Yugoslavia', in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1980s to the Present,* eds. Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis and Krassimira Daskalova (London: Routledge, 2012), 59-73; Vera Mackie, 'From Hiroshima to Lausanne: The World Congress of Mothers and the *Hahaoya Taikai* in the 1950s', *Women's History Review* 25:4 (2016), 671-695; Elizabeth Armstrong, 'Before Bandung: The Anti-Imperialist Women's Movement in Asia and the Women's International Democratic Federation', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41:2 (2016), 305-330; Maria Fernanda Lanfranco Gonzalez, 'Between National and International: Women's Transnational Activism in Twentieth-Century Chile', *International Review of Social History* 67 (2022), 49-74; Suzy Kim, 'The Origins of Cold War Feminism during the Korean War', *Gender & History* 31:2 (2019), 460-479.
[99] de Haan, 'Eugénie Cotton, Pak Chong-Ae and Claudia Jones', p. 175.
[100] Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*. See also: Kristen Ghodsee, 'Pressuring the Politburo: The Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement and State Socialist Feminism' *Slavic Review* 73:3 (2014), 538-558, pp. 539-542.
[101] De Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms', p. 547.

undertaken for gender justice globally by women affiliated to the WIDF.[102] Further scholarship has considered women's agitations for gender justice under state socialism, and yielded interesting discussions of women's agency in state socialist countries.[103] Much less prominent have been questions of how Cold War-era liberal democracy shaped feminist organising in the Global North, and limited women's agency in different ways.[104] I consider this question in chapter three. There has also been very little attention given to how global communist networks impacted on women's liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s; I discuss this in chapter one.

Historians of state feminism in the Global North, have also maintained the Cold War binary identified by Francisca de Haan. In Amy Mazur and Dorothy McBride's important edited collection *Comparative State Feminism* (1995)*,* the authors compare institutionalised feminism in liberal democratic states of Western Europe, Australia and Scandinavia, though they do also consider Poland as a contrasting case.[105] As McBride and Mazur see it, for the state to make feminist change; those working within the state must be supported by a feminist movement acting independently of the state.[106] As Ghodsee discusses, this discredits all forms of state

[102] See, for example: Celia Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe', *Past and Present,* 218 (2013), 180-202; Celia Donert, 'From Communist Internationalism to Human Rights: Gender, Violence and International Law in the Women's International Democratic Federation Mission to North Korea, 1951', *Contemporary European History* 25:2 (2016), 313-333; Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'Cold War Internationalism, Nationalisms and the Yugoslav-Soviet Split: The Union of Italian Women and the Antifascist Women's Front of Yugoslavia' in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1980s to the Present,* eds. Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis and Krassimira Daskalova (London: Routledge, 2012), 59-73; Vera Mackie, 'From Hiroshima to Lausanne: the World Congress of Mothers and the *Hahaoya Taikai* in the 1950s', *Women's History Review* 25:4 (2016), 671-695; Elizabeth Armstrong, 'Before Bandung: The Anti-Imperialist Women's Movement in Asia and the Women's International Democratic Federation', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41:2 (2016), 305-330; Maria Fernanda Lanfranco Gonzalez, 'Between National and International: Women's Transnational Activism in Twentieth-Century Chile', *International Review of Social History* 67 (2022), 49-74; Michelle Chase, '"Hands off Korea!"'

[103] See, for example: Ghodsee, 'Pressuring the Politburo'; Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex* (Durham, N.C and London: Duke University Press, 2018); Zheng Wang, *Finding Women in the State: A Socialist Feminist Revolution in the People's Republic of China* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). For a discussion of agency under state socialism see, for example the debate between Nanette Funk and Kristen Ghodsee: Nanette Funk, 'A Very Tangled Knot: Official State Socialist Women's Organizations, Women's Agency and Feminism in Eastern European State Socialism', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21:4 (2014), 344-60; Kristen Ghodsee, 'Untangling the Knot: A Response to Nanette Funk', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 22:2 (2015), 248-258; Nanette Funk, '(K)not So: A Response to Kristen Ghodsee', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 22:3 (2015), 350-55.

[104] Kelly Coogan-Gehr, *The Geopolitics of the Cold War and Narratives of Inclusion: Excavating a Feminist Archive* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, M.A: Harvard University Press, 2008); Helen Laville, *Cold War Women.*

[105] Dorothy Mcbride and Amy Mazur, 'Introduction' in *Comparative State Feminism,* eds. Dorothy McBride and Amy Mazur, (London and New Delhi, Sage, 1995), 1-22, p. 13.

[106] Dorothy McBride and Amy Mazur, 'The Case for State Feminism' in *Comparative State Feminism,* eds. McBride and Mazur, 272-292, p. 290.

feminism under communism, whatever their achievements, because these were not independent of the state.[107] More relevant to my work, is the way that these Cold War binaries, which cast the communist state as *a priori* oppressive, rigid and patriarchal, have necessarily cast the liberal democratic state as low key, reformable and with operating considerable plasticity. While McBride and Mazur acknowledge that the liberal democratic state does not always work on behalf of women, the potential of the state to 'be defined as a site of social justice' is highlighted. [108] The state is cast as reformable through feminism which can 'turn the state into an activist on behalf of feminist goals.'[109]

The idea of a reformable state underpins most work that discusses state feminism in Australia. This scholarship largely celebrates Australian feminists early willingness to work with the state as part of the social democratic project of the Whitlam Government. [110] Within the women's liberation movement there was discussion of the complexities of working within the state and the compromises that came with accepting funding for feminist services which were first developed through the women's liberation movement, initially independent of the state.[111] This is mostly celebrated in the history that has been written, and Australia has been historicised as a global leader of state feminism.[112]

Newer scholarship has considered the importance of state-funded initiatives including the Women's Commissions, a series of public speak-outs beginning in 1973 where women discussed their experiences of oppression.[113] While this new work has been attentive to how differences of race and sexuality played out at these state funded feminist events, this is only

[107] Ghodsee, Pressuring the Politburo, pp. 539-540.
[108] McBride and Mazur, 'The Case for State Feminism', p. 290.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Marian Sawer, *Sisters in Suits;* Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators;* Lake, *Getting Equal,* pp. 253-276.
[111] Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators,* pp.170-203; Huggins, *Sister Girl,* pp. 88-94; Sophie Watson (ed.) *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions* (London and New York: Verso, 1990).
[112] Sawer, *Sisters in Suits;* Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp. 253-66; Angela Woollacott, 'Being a Woman's Adviser at the State Level: Deborah McCulloch and Don Dunstan in 1970s South Australia', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 97-113; Johanna Kantola and Judith Squires, 'From State Feminism to Market Feminism' *International Political Science Review* 33:2 (2012) 382-400, p. 391.
[113] Isobelle Barrett Mayering, 'Feminism in Sydney's Suburbs: "Speaking Out", Listening and "Sisterhood" at the 1975 Women's Commissions', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 61-80; Emma Torzillo and Heather Goodall, 'Memories of Entanglement: Conflicts Around Sexuality at the Sydney Women's Commission 1973', *Australian Feminist Studies* (2022), 2-20; See also Michelle Arrow on the importance of the Whitlam funded Royal Commission into Human Relationships in'"Everyone needs a holiday from work, why not mothers?" Motherhood, Feminism and Citizenship at the Australian Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 1974-1977', *Women's History Review* 25:2 (2016) 320-336, p. 320; Michelle Arrow, 'Making Domestic Violence Public in the Royal Commission on Human Relationships 1974-1977', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018) 81-96.

discussed in relation to how the feminist movement dealt with differences and conflict between women. The nature of the state as a bundle of interests which has historically impacted different women in distinct ways is neglected in this new work. For example, the ways the Australian state has acted as an oppressive force in the lives of Aboriginal women, lesbian women and migrant women is not grappled with. Instead, the state is constructed as a force that feminism could intervene in and reconstruct as benevolent, or it is absented as little more than a funder. There is some discussion of how the adoption of global neo-liberal policies negatively impacted state feminism in Australia and I draw on this in chapter three. [114] But I suggest that the way state feminism in liberal democratic Australia has been historicised is shaped by Cold War binaries. I work to destabilise these binaries and reveal the shared realities of state feminists in China, Vietnam and Australia. Through discussion of the 'Women and Politics' Conference in chapter four, I also consider how Australian state feminism was entangled with nationalism and how the project of creating a state that worked for women was, like other forms of nationalism, reliant on exclusions.[115]

New Methods

Much global feminist history has focused on women's organisations and international meetings, but scholarship developing in parallel has made use of the methods of individual or collective biography. It has focused on the global, unconventional and pathbreaking lives of specific individuals, friendships between two women, or a small group of women. Historian Penny Summerfield suggests that this 'turn to the personal' occurred in the discipline of history in the 1970s due to the impact of postcolonialism, feminism, psychoanalysis and post structuralist perspectives.[116] Writing a biography, collective or otherwise, enables historians to locate the global elements of individual women's lives.[117] The individual or a small group

[114] Marian Sawer, 'The Death of the Femocrat' in *Changing State Feminism,* eds. Joyce Outshoorn and Johanna Kantola (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 20-41; Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators,* 184-198; Johanna Kantola and Judith Squires, 'From State Feminism to Market Feminism' *International Political Science Review,* 33:4 (2012) 382-400, p. 391; Susan Harris Rimmer and Marian Sawer, 'Neoliberalism and Gender Equality Policy in Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 51:4, 2016, 742-758.

[115] See, on nationalism and its exclusions Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler, Nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities* (Cambridge, M.A. and London: Harvard University Press, 2020).

[116] Penny Summerfield, *Histories of the Self: Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 7-11.

[117] Francisca de Haan, 'Eugénie Cotton, Pak Chong-ae, and Claudia Jones', p. 183. For examples of recent biography and collective biography in global feminist history see: Bonnie S. Anderson, *The Rabbi's Atheist Daughter: Ernestine Rose, International Feminist Pioneer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Maria Fernanda Lanfranco Gonzalez's discussion of Olga Poblete in 'Between National and International'; Michelle

provides a neat frame to map how these changed over time. Methodologically, this can be done with greater ease, compared to a broader study of a large and sprawling movement for social change full of global elements, many of which were unimportant or dead ends. Using a biographical approach enables historians to consider how emotions shaped the public activism of women.[118] As Celia Donert also notes, the biographic approach maps how individual activists' 'political, emotional and moral attachments,' shaped international organisations along with global political interests.[119] Newly digitised archives and text searchable documents have been hugely beneficial in excavating the lives of lesser-known women.[120]

Work on Black women's internationalism told through biographies has enabled scholars to situate Black women as political protagonists, with their own galvanising and productive ideas.[121] This has broken with history that casts them in 'supporting roles as participants in revolutionary processes spearheaded by black men.'[122] It facilitates restoration of those who have been marginalised or represented flatly as foils to liberal women, white women or Black men.[123] Including these women as full people, which the turn to biography allows, poses broader questions about how history of feminism has been written: Why have these women not been included? However, there are also pitfalls to this method. It is difficult to escape the traditional uses of biography which seek to tell the stories of extraordinary individuals and figureheads. While in chapter one, I use a short biography to consider the life of Joyce Stevens, a communist feminist whose work was important to the women's liberation movement, her contribution is offset by attention being placed on collective women's health projects which were also entangled with communism. Pure biography would be an unsatisfactory approach

Staff, 'Encountering "the East": Travel and Internationalism in Bessie Rischbieth's Interwar Feminism', *Australian Historical Studies,* 53:1 2022, 97-118; Carole Boyce Davis, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Claudia Jones* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007); Kate Laing and Lucy Davies, 'Intersecting paths of the local and the international: Joyce Clague's Activist Journeys', *Women's History Review* 30:4 (2021) 574-593; Joseph-Gabriel, *Imagining Liberation;* Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists.*

[118] Malcolm Chase discusses the emotional qualities of Chartist biography in his 'Labour History's Biographical Turn', *History Workshop Journal* 92 (2021), 194-207, p. 196.

[119] Celia Donert, 'From Communist Internationalism to Human Rights: Gender, Violence and International Law in the Women's International Democratic Federation Mission to North Korea, 1951', *Contemporary European History* 25:2 (2016), 313-333, p. 327.

[120] James Keating, 'Say her name: Madge Donohue and the promise and problems of using Trove to write Australian suffrage histories', *History Australia* 18:4 (2021), 849-852; Lara Putnam, 'The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast', *American Historical Review* 121: 2 (2016), 377-402.

[121] Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel, *Imagining Liberation,* p. 19.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Imaobong D. Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists,* pp. 9-10.

for this study of the women's liberation movement, which sought to organise without hierarchy or formal leaders.[124]

The women whose stories are held in these pages were not just feminists; often their political philosophy was made up of other powerful ideas too, forming complex braids of thought and repertoires of action. My work rests on other scholarship that has attended to the imbrications of feminism with other ideas including maternalism, imperialism, temperance, pan-regional identities such as pan-Africanism and pan-Asianism, anti-fascism, suffrage, global communism, religion and spirituality, peace and anti-nuclearity. This dissertation uses the method of intellectual history to consider how ideas developed in context and were embraced by feminists across contexts. It discusses how global ideas were picked up, translated, read, discussed and acted on. As historians have traced the importance of global ritual and shared practices to support those who didn't travel to feel part of a global community, so ideas often played a similarly important role.[125]

Despite the significant contribution of scholars to trace feminisms' entanglements with other modes of political thought, the intellectual history of feminism has been understudied. As Hilda Smith noted in 2007 there was certainly no volume that 'could yet be termed a synthetic history of women's intellectual contributions,' and this remains the case.[126] Particularly, that is true of feminism of the late twentieth century and from beyond Anglo-America. Given the proliferation of feminist ideas in contemporary culture- including ideas about feminist history- this seems a significant oversight. Smith convincingly suggests that this is because intellectual history has traditionally emphasised 'links among ideas and great men over time,' and further because feminist historians and scholars 'seldom, if ever, isolate the mind as characteristic of, or even important to, being a woman.'[127] While feminist historians have not always framed their contributions as 'intellectual history,' they have discussed the importance of ideas in circulation.[128] Many historians of global feminism have considered the intense reading culture

[124] Susan Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas,* pp. 30-31.
[125] On global ritual and shared practices see, for example, James Keating's discussion of the Women's Christian Temperance Union global noontide prayer hour in *Distant Sisters,* p. 54; See also Marilyn Lake's discussion of South Sea Islander activist Faith Bandler's listening to music by John Paul Robeson in *Faith Bandler: Gentle Activist* (Crows Next, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002), pp. 19-20.
[126] Hilda L. Smith, 'Women Intellectuals and Intellectual History: their paradigmatic separation', *Women's History Review* 16:3 (2007), 353-368, p.356.
[127] Ibid., p. 354.
[128] For feminist history that does characterise itself as intellectual history, see, for example: Lucy Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge

of the women's movement, and how important books and bookshops were for developing a feminist consciousness.[129] Historians such as Kathy Davis and Maud Bracke have both considered how the classic text of the Boston Women's Health Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves,* was translated across contexts and how translation involves an element of 'betrayal' of the original meaning.[130] Sometimes these betrayals are a mistake or a misunderstanding of the original text, but as Davis' work shows, they are often conscious changes which increase the relevance of a text in a new context and so improves its reception. As Zhongli Yu's discussion of the translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* in China reveals, decisions to change the text in translation are often made to improve reception, but may also be necessary to get around state censors and enable a text's initial circulation.[131] Each of the forthcoming chapters has a strand of intellectual history woven through it; sometimes ideas are grounded in a specific book and sometimes untangled from a multitude of sources. I consider the circulation of ideas about natural childbirth in chapter one; the translation and reception of the trial transcript of the Bobigny Trial, a French abortion trial in Australia in chapter two; the entanglements of Maoist ideas, feminism and psychoanalysis in chapter three. In chapter four, I discuss the way that jokes and humour can be carriages for ideas and in the final chapter I consider radical and spiritual feminist currents, with particularly attention to the reception of Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: A metaethics of radical feminism* (1978) in Australia.

Australian Women's Liberation History

While historians have considered the global networks that Australian women were involved in up until the 1960s, it is curious that this global perspective has not been applied to histories of the women's liberation movement. I seek to address this omission. New scholarship on this movement is exploding, though the national frame continues to dominate. In Australia the first two monographs to consider this dynamic social movement were feminist historian Marilyn

University Press, 2007); Susan James, 'Feminisms,' in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 493-516.

[129] Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain, c. 1974–2000', *History Workshop Journal*, 81:1 (2016), 171–96; Lisia Bürgi and Kristina Schulz, 'Communicating Through Books, Spaces and Personal Exchange: Women's Bookshops as Cultural Translators (1970s-1990s) in *Translating Feminism: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Text, Place and Agency* eds. Maud Bracke, Julia C. Bullock, Penelope Morris and Kristina Schulz (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 91-115.

[130] Maud Bracke, '*Our Bodies: Ourselves*: The Transnational Connections of 1970s Italian and Roman Feminism' *Journal of Contemporary History* 50 (2015), 560-80. Kathy Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2007).

[131] Zhongli Yu, *Translating Feminism in China: Gender, Sexuality and Censorship* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

Lake's *Getting Equal* (1999) and Gisela Kaplan's *The Meagre Harvest* (1996). Both employ a national lens.[132] Lake's *Getting Equal* considers the history of Australian feminism from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries and places the women's liberation movement in the context of a long history of Australian gender justice. Lake paints a picture of Australian women's liberation which has become the historical orthodoxy.[133] While a national frame is employed, the global influences upon Australian feminism including books, pamphlets and political events are palpable in her account.[134]

Sociologist Gisela Kaplan's *The Meagre Harvest* traces Australian feminism in the years 1950-1990. Until this year, this was the only volume entirely dedicated to the political history of the Australian women's liberation movement.[135] Kaplan's work seeks to problematise the idea that this social movement transformed Australian society. She charts a rise and fall narrative of the women's liberation movement, though the hope she felt in the 1970s is recalled tentatively.[136] Throughout the work, Australian society and political movements are represented as embarrassingly backward, and this is shown by comparing them to movements in western Europe. Kaplan frames the women's liberation movement as a series of conflicts and exclusions regarding political differences, such as feminist responses to sex work and conflict and exclusions based on women's identities. She explores the lack of solidarity from the white women's movement shown toward migrant women, First Nations women and lesbian women. Kaplan is a sociologist, and while she uses some primary sources such as periodicals, these are minimal. As a result, she does not show how the relationships between different women changed over time, nor consider any activism undertaken by First Nations or migrant women beyond their critique of the white women's movement.

Very recent work has widened the scope of histories of the women's liberation movement in Australia considerably. Particularly, it has considered how the feminist movement intersected with other liberation movements, for example the movement for gay and lesbian liberation,

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[132] Gisela T. Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement, 1950s-1990s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996); Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal*.
[133] Sara Dowse, 'The Women's Movement's Fandango with the State', p. 324; Lake, *Getting Equal,* pp. 231-232, 258-259.
[134] For example Lake discusses the influence of Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* in Lake, *Getting Equal,* pp. 222-223; 227-229.
[135] In 2022 Isobelle Barrett Mayering published *Feminism and the Making of a Child Right's Revolution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2022).
[136] Kaplan, *Meagre Harvest*, pp. xi, 6.

men's liberation and children's liberation.[137] Other work has considered how this social movement remade the everyday lives of women and men in Australia, including its extension into the suburbs through popular magazines such as *Cleo* and books including Germaine Greer's best-sellet *Female Eunuch*.[138] As well as tracing the impact of feminist ideas on the everyday lives of women who were not feminists, this literature has also traced the quotidian practices of feminists; for example, their fashion, anti-sexist practices of feminist teachers and the role of women in male trades. New work has highlighted how this movement brought private concerns into the public domain, but also remade the private sphere. Scholarship has considered the impact of feminist campaigns - for childcare, abortion rights, equal pay - on women's lives but has left mostly implicit questions of how these campaigns drew on a range of global tactics and networks.[139]

Notably, race is not a category of analysis in this new work, and this contrasts with its powerful presence for historians of women's liberation movements in other contexts.[140] Moreover, the historical relationship between non-white and white women considerably shapes the cultural conversation about contemporary feminism in Australia, as it does elsewhere.[141] There has, however, been a significant and productive critique of Australian women's liberation by First

[137] On the relationship between lesbian liberation and women's liberation see: Sophie Robinson, 'Eggs, O'Wheels, hexagons, repairs: lesbian feminist Utopias in Australia, 1970s-1980s', *Women's History Review,* 31:1 (2022), 107-125; Jacqueline Baker, 'The Lavender Menace Comes to Melbourne: Feminism, Lesbianism, Place and Space in the 1970s', *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal* 27 (2021), 127-148; on gay liberation and women's liberation see: Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies,* On men and women's liberation see: Sophie Robinson, 'The Man Question: Men and Women's Liberation in 1970s Australia' *Outskirts Online Journal* 31 (2013) https://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-31/sophie-robinson [last accessed 9th August, 2022]; On women's and children's liberation see: Isobelle Barrett Mayering, *Feminism and the Making of a Child Rights Revolution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2022).

[138] See Chilla Bulbeck, *Living Feminism: The Impact of the Women's Movement on Three Generations of Australian Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Megan Le Masurier, 'My Other, My Self: *Cleo* Magazine and Feminism in 1970s Australia', *Australian Feminist Studies* 22:53 (2007), 191-211; Ann McGrath, '*The Female Eunuch* in the suburbs: Reflections on adolescence, autobiography, and history writing', *Journal of Popular Culture* 33:1 (1999), 177-190.

[139] On campaigns for abortion rights see: Barbara Baird, 'Abortion and the Limits of the Personal Becoming Political', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 129-146; Barbara Baird and Suzanne Belton, 'Feminism on the Frontier: The History of Abortion Law Reform in 1973 in the Northern Territory, Australia', *Women's History Review* 28:1 (2019), 139-158.

[140] See, for example, in the British context: Natalie Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968-1993* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan 2016); Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), especially pp.182-183; Therese Jonsson, *Innocent Subjects: Feminism and Whiteness* (London: Pluto Press, 2020); In the US context, see, for example: Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[141] For an Australian contribution see: Ruby Hamad, *White Tears, Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Colour* (London: Trapeze, 2020); See also, Rafia Zakaria, *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption* (London: Penguin, 2021); Koa Beck, *White Feminism: From the Suffragettes to Influencers and Who They Leave Behind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2021).

Nations and non-Anglo women.[142] Work by First Nations scholars discuss the way that the women's liberation movement fundamentally misunderstood Aboriginal women's experience. This experience as Bidjara Birri Gubba Juru historian Jackie Huggins suggests, was characterised by 'a series of multiple, simultaneous oppressions equally.'[143] The movement failed to recognise the 'full horror of racism in Australia,' including the damage done to Aboriginal men and the 'wall of silence' about the role white women played as oppressors of Aboriginal women since the colonisation of Australia.[144] This misunderstanding was manifest through white women asking Aboriginal women to organise apart from Aboriginal men.[145] Earlier scholarship has carefully challenged the implicit whiteness present in the women's liberation movement, where, as Adele Murdolo writes 'whiteness is both privileged and naturalised and thus rendered invisible,' resulting in a situation where the work the movement does is based on the needs and implicit subject position of white women.[146] Other women were accommodated, through invitations or tokenism, but not to the extent that white values were challenged.[147] Work published since 2005 has woven non-Anglo women's critique of exclusions with the parallel histories of Black, migrant, First Nations and women of colour organising, but more remains to be done.[148] My work considers the role of women of colour in the women's liberation movement in Australia, as global actors that stretches far beyond the way they are usually cast, as critics of the movement's racism. I explore, for example, First Nations women's networks across the Pacific against nuclear testing, networks between African-American and First Nations feminists, migrant women's organising for reproductive

[142] For critical work on the women's liberation movement by First Nations women see, for example: Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2000); Jackie Huggins, *Sister Girl: Writings of an Aboriginal Activist and Historian* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press: 1998), 25-37, 58-70; Larissa Behrendt, 'Aboriginal Women and the White Lies of the Feminist Movement: Implications for Aboriginal Women in Rights Discourse', *The Australian Feminist Law Journal* 1 (1993), 27-44; For critical work by non-Anglo women see: Adele Murdolo, 'Warmth and Unity with All Women?: Historicizing Racism in the Australian Women's Movement', *Feminist Review* 52:1 (1996), 69-86; Tikka Jan Wilson, 'Feminism and Institutionalized Racism: inclusion and Exclusion at an Australian Feminist Refuge', *Feminist Review* 52:1 (1996), 1-26; Ien Ang, '"I'm A Feminist but…": "Other" Women and Postnational Feminism' in *Transitions: New Australian Feminisms,* eds. Barbara Caine and Rosemary Pringle, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995) 57-73; Christina Ho, 'Diversifying Feminism: Migrant Women's Activism in Australia', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (2008), 777-784.

[143] Jackie Huggins, *Sister Girl: Writings of an Aboriginal Activist and Historian* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press: 1998), p. 35.

[144] Ibid., pp. 27, 28.

[145] Huggins, *Sister Girl,* pp. 25-36.

[146] Adele Murdolo, 'Safe Homes for Immigrant and Refugee Women: Narrating Alternative Histories of the Women's Refuge Movement in Australia', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 35:3 (2014), 126-153, p. 130.

[147] Ang, ' "I'm a Feminist…but"; Wilson, 'Feminism and Institutionalized Racism', pp. 9, 13; Huggins, *Sister Girl,* pp. 25-36.

[148] Murdolo, 'Safe Homes'; Ho, 'Diversifying Feminism.'

health, and well as the significant impact of ideas and people from the Global South on feminism of the Global North.

In the margins of almost all scholarship on women's liberation in Australia lies evidence of the global history of this movement, but the nation state almost always supersedes this. Historian Rebecca Jennings has applied a global perspective as she considers the 'circuits of mobility,' between Australia, New Zealand, the US and Western Europe through the women's liberation movement.[149] Jennings traces how borrowing of texts, tactics and inspiration as well as travels across the English-speaking world influenced women's liberation and lesbian culture in Australia, including in the development of women-only rural communities.[150] Jennings' work adds to our understandings of Australian feminism, and is particularly innovative for the way that it links the lesbian feminism of the later twentieth century with women's earlier travels in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. She reveals how an ongoing colonial sense that Britain was the 'centre' and Australia a 'periphery' continued to structure the travels of radical women in the late twentieth century. But perhaps it is not so surprising that Anglo-Australian women drew from British and American texts, given Australia's history as a British dominion, American cultural imperialism and shared English language. This resonates with Matthew Pratt Guterl's observation that sometimes transnational history acts 'like a transparency laid over a familiar map.'[151] Scholarship might map connections and circulations that were already highlighted as important in the national historiography. Jennings has, to be sure, brought what was at the margins of other feminist histories into the centre, and has done important additive work especially about the role of lesbian women in the movement. But this has not fundamentally reshaped the way women's liberation in Australia is conceptualised, or the way that history has been written.

Jennings' scholarship poses the question: what about the transnational links beyond the Anglo-American world? How, and in what ways, did these impact the Australian women's liberation movement? Do these connections have the potential to remake our understanding of the movement? It is these questions that I address in the forthcoming pages. To do this, I am reliant

[149] Rebecca Jennings and Liz Millward, '"A Fully Formed Blast from Abroad"? Australasian Lesbian Circuits of Mobility and the Transnational Exchange of Ideas in the 1960s and 1970s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25:3 (2016) 436-487.
[150] Ibid.; Rebecca Jennings, 'Creating Feminist Culture: Australian Rural Lesbian-Separatist Communities in the 1970s and 1980s', *Journal of Women's History* 30:2 (2018), 88-111.
[151] Matthew Pratt Guterl, 'Comment: The Futures of Transnational History', *The American Historical Review* 188:1 (2013), 130-139, p. 132.

on scholarship that discusses the impact of Southern theory and political ideas on the politics of the Global North.[152] This includes Jon Piccini's work which considers the transnationalism of Australian social movements in the long 1960s, including the student movement and the movement for Aboriginal rights, but which does not include the women's liberation movement.[153] I am also indebted to work which places women's liberation globally and spatially remakes this movement in other contexts, including work by Hannah Yoken, Maud Bracke and Lucy Delap.[154]

My approach

This dissertation considers two sites of Australian feminist activity Melbourne and Sydney. These are the two largest urban centres in Australia. In 1968, Sydney had a population of just over 2.6 million people, and Melbourne a population of 2.2 million.[155] Both are cities on Australia's east coast, Sydney was settled on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and Melbourne on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin nation. The local geographies and histories of these particular Australian cities were important in determining how and why certain elements of globality were taken up in them. After World War II, Melbourne hosted the largest number of Italian migrants. These migrants made their mark on the city, through businesses, restaurants, cafés and Italo-Australian organisations. This explains why Women in Industry Contraception and Health, a migrant women's health organisation I discuss in chapter one, developed in Melbourne. In Sydney, much of the women's liberation infrastructure developed initially in Glebe, though soon spread across the city. Glebe was close to the University of Sydney where there was a large and vocal anti-Vietnam war movement, which included many women disgruntled with the sexism they faced. Sydney University was the site of Kate Jennings' speech against misogyny in this movement, which will be discussed in chapter three. For the Black women's movement in Australia, Redfern, close to the centre of Sydney and also proximate to Sydney University, was an important site of Aboriginal activism. It was the location of many Aboriginal run services such as the Aboriginal Medical Service, the

[152] For example, Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London and New York: Verso, 2018); Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (Vintage: London, 2019); Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: Social Science and the Global Dynamics of Knowledge* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2020).
[153] Piccini, *Transnational Protest.*
[154]Delap, *Feminisms;* Yoken, 'Nordic Transnational Feminist Activism,' Maud Bracke, *Women and the Reinvention of the Political: Feminism in Italy 1968-1983* (London: Routledge, 2014).
[155] 'Sydney, Australia Metro Area Population 1950-2022' https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/206167/sydney/population; Melbourne, Australia Metro Area Population, 1950-2022 https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/206168/melbourne/population [accessed 1 October, 2022]

Aboriginal Legal Service and cultural institutions such as the Black Theatre. Women who worked across these Aboriginal services situated in Redfern became involved in the Black Women's Action Group.[156] First Nations academic Marcia Langton explained that *Koori-Bina* the Black women's news monthly was laid out in a room upstairs at the Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern.[157]

Melbourne and Sydney were the cities with the largest women's liberation movement during the period I study. As the movement for Aboriginal rights and Italian Australian migration transformed the urban landscapes of Sydney and Melbourne, so did women's liberation. This social movement changed and visibly remade these cities. Both were sites of considerable feminist infrastructure – including women's health centres, cafés, bookshops and women's refuges. There was a Women's Liberation House in both cities, organisational hubs where feminists held meetings on a wide variety of campaigns, met one another, read feminist literature and produced leaflets, posters and other ephemera. These spaces played an important role. As A. Finn Enke writes, in their study of space and the women's liberation movement, visible feminist spaces supported women to 'find the movement,' and provided those in the women's liberation movement with necessary space to host meetings, dances, parties and events.[158] During oral history interviews, women often described local feminist spaces in evocative detail. However, as this project is a global one, it focusses on what transcended the local and the national, how these rooted politics were disrupted and remade by global elements. Detailed discussion of local spaces provides rich material for future research and is addressed in the conclusion.[159]

The importance of particular spaces is most overtly discussed in chapters four and five, which take as their focus, not Sydney and Melbourne, but events which took place in Canberra and at Pine Gap, an American base near Alice Springs/Mpartnwe, respectively. Chapter four considers the 'Women and Politics' Conference which, in part, took place at Parliament House. This space of high politics was reworked by feminists, including by the presence of hundreds of women in a space historically dominated by men whose interests had largely determined the national political agenda. But those who felt that state feminism was based on exclusions made

[156] Oral history interview with Marcia Langton 28th February 2022, on Zoom.
[157] Oral history interview with Frances Peters-Little, 23rd February 2021, on Zoom.
[158] A. Finn Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space and Feminist Activism* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2007).
[159] Space and location will be discussed further in the conclusion.

this known through spatial interventions, through graffiti and the reworking of statues. In chapter five, the way that space was remade beyond the nation, through a network of women's peace camps and unifying ideas of global feminism is discussed. However, this was modulated by local politics as feminists sought to establish an anti-nuclear camp at Pine Gap military base which required negotiation with Aboriginal Traditional Owners.

Melbourne and Sydney are the two cities that have been most written about in feminist literature, and my intention was to include Perth, Western Australia as a third site, which has been under-represented in Australian histories of feminism. After some secondary research, I particularly wanted to include the Cockburn Sound Peace Camp, which took place in 1984 in Western Australia. I also hoped to discuss the 'one-woman run' Lesparr Library of Women's Liberation which held the largest collection of lesbian novels in Australia, originally operating from a private home.[160] I also wanted to explore the Perth Women's Radio show 'Out of the Gilded Cage.'[161] A leaflet in the National Library of Australia advertised an 'wimmin's isolation dance' held in Perth, featuring 'The Budgies', a Tasmanian women's band. The leaflet reads: 'They know what it feels like to be isolated from the mainland!'[162] I wondered how feminist radio broadcasting might be generated from, and assuaging of, feelings of isolation held by feminists living in the exceptionally remote city of Perth, two thousand kilometres from the next major city, Adelaide.[163] I undertook one interview via Zoom with a Perth feminist, Linley McGrath who had been involved in the movement for women's health and worked for the State Premier's department in Perth.[164] She was also an active participant in the movement for women's self defence. McGrath generously suggested others I might interview. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and Australia's particularly tight border controls meant that I was not able to get to archives in Perth for my doctoral research. I was only able to acquire limited photographs of archives, and little which were relevant to my global focus.

To tell the global history of Australian women's liberation, I drew most significantly on collections at Jessie Street National Women's Library, The State Library of New South Wales, Melbourne University Archives, The State Library of Victoria and the National Library of

[160] Alison Bartlett, ' "Tell it Slant": Women's Studies in Western Australia' *Outskirts* 31 (2014) 1-12, p. 3.
[161] Listed in *Feminist Recordings Collection*, Murdoch University LGBTQI & Women's Studies Collections, Gay and Lesbian Archives Western Australia (GALAWA), p. 101.
[162] 'Wimmin's isolation dance', Women for Survival: Ephemera material collected by the National Library of Australia, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
[163] Radio will be discussed further in the conclusion.
[164] Lynnley McGrath Oral History Interview 13th April 2021, on Zoom.

Australia, Canberra. Archives at the Jessie Street National Women's Library and the State Library of NSW which pertained to the women's liberation movement were, in the majority of cases, collected and deposited by members of this movement as part of an activist praxis. Those who collected and curated them held a belief generated from the women's liberation movement that the history of women should be excavated and written, in order to reshape the political present.[165] As feminist historian Gerda Lerner writes in her classic study *The Construction of Patriarchy* (1986), archives have been, from their establishment in the ancient world, structurally patriarchal and intentionally so. Women's contributions were delegitimized, marginalized first in archives and then in history too.[166] Feminist archives were created with a clear sense that women's, gender and feminist history matters. This spirit is present at the Jessie Street National Women's Library, which is run by feminist volunteers who are often self-taught archivists and librarians, and thus maintains the DIY ethos of the women's liberation movement. One volunteer, Sherri Hillario, described the library in an oral history interview as 'my feminist heaven.'[167] The establishment of feminist archives was a reparative intervention, and they continue to act against the historic marginalization of feminist, gender and women's histories within archives that don't have an explicitly feminist remit, such as state archives. The gathering of the 'First Ten Years of Women's Liberation' Collection for the State Library of NSW was begun by a collective of feminist activists in 1977. This was finally deposited to correct an impression that the collective felt young women had of 'second wave feminism' namely 'they think we didn't do anything.'[168]

Since the poststructuralist turn of the 1990s, scholars have made it clear that archives are not neutral, but are curated in a particular way with a particular purpose in mind. Archives are, as scholars Marika Cifor and Stacy Wood put it, 'steeped in power, organized around particular logics of inclusion and exclusion, silence and representation.'[169] Feminist archivists had already integrated that insight; they saw the exclusion of women and feminism in archives as

[165] Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Press, 1973); Krista Cowman, '"Carrying on a Long Tradition": Second-Wave Presentations of First-Wave Feminism in *Spare Rib,* c. 1972-80', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 17:3 (2010), 193-210; Keating, 'Piecing Together Suffrage Internationalism', p. 3.
[166] Gerda Lerner, *The Construction of Patriarchy* (Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1986), pp. 6–7, 57, 151, 200.
[167] Oral history interview with Sherri Hilario, 3rd January 2020, in person.
[168] Sue Wills, '"They Think We Didn't Do Anything"', *Australian Feminist Studies* 22:53 (2007), 167-171, p. 167.
[169] Marika Cifor and Stacy Wood, 'Critical Feminism in the Archives', *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1:2 (2017), 1-27, p. 15.

a manifestation of sexism or patriarchy. However, they did not necessarily see the act of archiving, ordering, classifying and discarding sources into archives as inherently political in itself. It was poststructuralist thinkers like Michel Foucault who would develop an understanding of archives as a 'system' invested with the power to 'establish statements as events and things.'[170]

The way that archival practices are political is clear when considering the First Ten Years of Sydney Women's Liberation Collection at the State Library of New South Wales. This is a large and significant archive, put together by members of the women's liberation movement. Naming the archive in this way suggests that this represents the complete Sydney women's movement for the first ten-year period. Yet the collection is so vast and pluriform that it is through the naming, ordering and archiving it as the First Ten Years Collection that coherence has been gained. Moreover, those who curated it have also attempted to shape the narrative that can be told from this material. For example, 'Only the chains have changed' which was given out at an anti-Vietnam war demonstration has been labelled in green pen 'First women's liberation leaflet in Australia.'[171] Through including this leaflet in this archive this statement is made 'true'; if it were not included here, it would simply be an individual opinion. Moreover, researcher access is restricted; only material in the public domain can be copied and women are not to be individually named in research. This reflects the women's liberation movement's ethical preference not to name individual women or to use only first names, to avoid the 'star system,' and out of a belief that women were acting on behalf of 'everywoman.'[172]

While archives can be curated in a particular way, they may spill over in excess of the narrative that their curators sought to produce. The meaning drawn from archives can never be totally controlled. Even when a particular narrative is constructed, archives can always be read against the grain, and their silences and exclusions can be made to matter as much as what is there. These insights are particularly helpful for understanding how archival silences and omissions mirror (or not) the exclusions and silences the women's liberation movement. Very little material is held about the Black women's movement in the First Ten Years Collection, or at the Jessie Street National Women's Library. This seems to chime with Aboriginal academic

[170] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), p.128.
[171] 'Only the Chains Have Changed', 1969, Box 8: Sydney Women's Liberation Group Papers ca. 1970-1980, First Ten Years of Women's Liberation Collection ca. 1969-ca. 1980, State Library of NSW
[172] Wills, '"They Think We Didn't Do Anything"', p. 170.

Marcia Langton's observation that the women's liberation movement in Australia 'mostly ignored' Indigenous women.[173] Similarly, while Communist Party member Joyce Stevens was part of the group that created the First Ten Years Collection, there is very little about the role of Communist Party women in this archive. These exclusions, however, do not mean that archives have nothing to tell us about what happened, or that we can understand the past without them. Archives are sites of great complexity and multiplicity; as well as raw material, they reflect the promise and desire of the depositors, cataloguers and researchers, in patterns of inclusion, exclusion, erasure, power and privilege.[174] From the First Ten Years Collection, I particularly drew on the papers of Women in Solidarity for Peace which organised the visit of Vietnamese women to Australia. From the Jessie Street National Women's Library, I used papers pertaining to the Pine Gap women's peace camp, an extensive and impeccably curated collection.

As well as movement material this dissertation also uses personal papers. These enabled me to get close to the emotional qualities of the women's liberation movement and access what Margaretta Jolly calls 'mood work,' – the complex, ambivalent feelings which feminists held, often privately, or which they shared only with close friends.[175] Correspondence and personal diaries allowed me to trace the ambivalent feelings experienced at the time that were often not expressed publicly, and which are not evident in movement publications or in recollections of the time, either written or in interviews. I drew on Daphne Gollan's diary to shape chapter three. This discussed her time in China and it was this source that initially alerted me to the role that the state played in controlling her experiences. This was not included in the written testimonies of tours to Vietnam and China, and was to be a key insight in chapter three. Using the papers of Joyce Stevens, which included her own life writings, revealed that she was both a communist and a feminist activist and that these were not contradictory. Finally, the personal papers of US Black feminist Florynce Kennedy held at the Schlesinger Library at the University of Harvard revealed how Indigenous-African American feminist networks were forged at the 'Women and Politics' conference and maintained through letters.

[173] Oral history interview with Marcia Langton, 28th February 2022, on Zoom.
[174] Marianne Dever, 'Archives and New Modes of Feminist Research', *Australian Feminist Studies* 32:91-92 (2017), 1-4.
[175] Jolly, *Sisterhood and After,* pp. 105-110.

I also studied a considerable number of women's liberation periodicals. From Sydney I used the *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter, Refractory Girl: A Women's Studies Journal, Mabel, Koori-Bina: A Black Women's Monthly, Girls' Own Newspaper, Womanspeak, MeJane,* from Melbourne I used *Vashti's Voice* and *the Melbourne Women's Liberation Newsletter. Scarlet Woman: A Socialist Feminist journal* and *Rouge* were produced by different collectives from across Australia, and I made use of these, too. These periodicals enabled me to identify which crossings were substantial and remade the women's liberation movement at the time. For example, the visits of women in both directions to Vietnam and China were written up by almost all the movement periodicals and both Sydney and Melbourne newsletters. So were the events of International Women's Year, including the 'Women and Politics' Conference and the resignation of Elizabeth Reid. Sometimes periodicals offered a unique angle on a global story or a glimpse of women's world making, such as the discussion in *Koori-Bina* of the International Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women from the perspective of Sue Chilly, a First Nations participant. I centralised these lesser known stories and by doing so broke with the orthodox story of women's liberation told through the national lens. I also used particular periodicals which had been produced by different organisations, including the Union of Australian women's periodical *Our Women,* and their newsletter; the reports and newsletter of Women in Industry: Contraception and Health (WICH) and the Leichhardt Women's Centre Newsletter *Speculum Speaks*. *Tribune,* the organ of the Australian Communist Party supported my understanding of the role of communist feminists in the movement.

To trace the global nature of the movement, I drew on many periodicals from beyond Australia, including the digitised *Broadsheet*, the periodical of the New Zealand women's liberation movement, and *Spare Rib*, the British women's liberation magazine as well as newsletters from Greenham Common and the International Abortion and Sterilization Campaign, the periodicals of the New York Red Stockings including *Notes from the First, Second and Third Years* from the US, and the newsletter and publications of Women for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, *Be Active for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific.* Some of these sources, namely *Broadsheet* and *Spare Rib* were at the time of researching available online and were fully digitized and text searchable. This enabled me to trace the global network Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, including Pacific and Aboriginal women's visits to Britain. The archives of this group are scattered because this group was Pan Pacific, so does not really fit neatly into one national archive, but text searchability of *Broadsheet* and *Spare*

Rib enabled me to trace the impact of this group. Digitised, searchable newspapers via Trove and Newspapers.com also enabled me to trace the global effect of the International Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women, 1976, the importance of Gisèle Halimi's visit to Australia in 1975, and the travels across Australia of the women's delegation from Vietnam.

Oral History

In this dissertation, I combine archival research with twenty-two oral history interviews. My interviewees were a diverse group. Over half were non-Anglo women, and of these, five were First Nations women. Long before oral history was a mode of research which sought to democratise history, it was a form of knowledge sharing in First Nations culture across Australia and the Pacific. As Māori scholar Nepia Mahuika writes, for First Nations people it remains a 'collective enterprise essential to cultural survival, naming the world, asserting power and belonging and narrating relationships across time and space to land, sea, sky, and each other.'[176] First nations oral history challenges, and has been marginalised, in the way oral history is usually historicised.[177] For example, there is often a separation of the historical *methodology*- seen as the domain of historians, and the oral *tradition* – seen as a manifestation of First Nations people's 'primitive' and 'ancient' culture, rather than a form of expertise. During my interview with Ualaroi Gamillaroi woman, Barbara Flick, the boundaries between oral *tradition* and oral *history* were considerably blurred as Flick recalled to me stories of her childhood and the racism her family experienced, usually the domain of oral history, but also Aboriginal creation stories. These two dimensions were imbricated and inseparable because the passing on of these ancient stories were a significant part of Flick's childhood, a source of strength which supported her politics and reminded her of the resilience of her family and longevity of Aboriginal lore in the face of the relatively recent development of white Australian law.

As a historical methodology, oral history developed as part of the turn to social history to get to the truth of the life of 'ordinary people.' One of the earliest oral history initiatives, the state-funded New Deal Federal Writers Project interviewed over 10,000 Americans about their

[176] Nepia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition: An Indigenous Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); For an example of a collection of oral history interviews which discuss the relationship between country and people see: Men and Women of Central Australia and the Central Land Council, *Every Hill Got A Story: We Grew Up in Country* (Richmond, Victoria: Hardie Grant Books, 2018).
[177] Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition,* pp. 16-39; Julie Cruickshank, 'Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues,' *The Canadian Historical Review*, 75:3 (1994), 403-418.

'everyday circumstances' in the late 1930s.[178] Oral history was a way of placing those who were missing from formal history on the record, in their own words. Historians employing this method felt they should 'ask the fellows who cut the hay,' as George Ewart Evans called his 1956 volume, a seminal text of British oral history, based on interviews with residents of a rural East Suffolk town.[179] This methodology was, from the beginning, concerned with the subjective experience of life as well as recovery of its hard facts. The New Deal Federal Writers Project included oral histories of former enslaved people which asked: '"What does it mean to be free?" And even more, "how does it *feel?*"'[180] Oral history as a method spread considerably throughout the 1960s, due to social movements which sought to democratize the present, and prioritised recovering histories of marginalised people. The spread of this methodology was also supported by developments in technology including the availability of portable cassette recorders in the mid-1960s.[181]

A significant concern of the women's liberation movement was the subjective experience of women's lives and the recovery of women's history. Given this, it seems inevitable that the methodology of feminist oral history would develop. Women's contributions, like those of working class people, were largely absent from the historical record and considered unimportant. So feminist oral historians sought to develop the field of women's history, with a particular focus on activist women such as suffragists. Oral history was a way to recover women's contribution on their own terms and was particularly suited to the recovery of everyday life. Sherna Gluck, who developed the field of feminist oral history, wrote in an essay in 1977 that through oral history, 'women are challenging what is "historically important" and we are affirming that our everyday lives are history.'[182] Many feminists were aware of the importance of oral history to the women's liberation movement and felt it was the ideal method to recover women's stories and revise social understandings about women.[183]

[178] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.4.
[179] George Ewart Evans, *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).
[180] Rebecca Sharpless, 'The History of Oral History', in *The History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology,* eds. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007) 9-33, p. 11.
[181] Sharpless, 'The History of Oral History', p. 13.
[182] Sherna Gluck, 'What's so special about women? Women's Oral History', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies 2:2* (1977) 3-17, p. 3.
[183] Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, 'Introduction', in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History,* eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 1-5, p. 2.

It soon became clear, however, that oral history interviews were full of gaps and errors and testimonies could not simply be mined for facts. Recollections couldn't be 'trusted' as true because they too were filtered through memory, floating between the past that was being recalled, the present, and all that had occurred in between.[184] Yet, this understanding that the expectation of realism was naïve did not undermine the methodology, rather, as Natalie Thomlinson writes: 'the subjective nature of memory [became oral history's] special asset rather than its Achilles' heel.'[185] Particularly, two Italian historians Luisa Passerini and Alessandro Portelli took historical errors and imaginative fabrications in oral history interviews seriously.[186] By doing this they found that these 'mistakes' were indicative of the interviewees' attitude, subjectivity, imagination and desire toward historical events. Hannah Yoken's research on the global history of the Scandinavian women's liberation movement records a woman's memory that a conference she attended had five-fold the number of participants that were actually there. Rather than seeing this as an indication that this woman's memory could not be trusted, or confronting her with the real number of people, Yoken interpreted this error as an indication of the intensity of her experience.[187] However, as Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson write, often the life story is the only evidence we have of an undocumented world and so it can remain objectively valid, but it also contains evidence of the subjective.[188] These historians and others suggest that we need not choose one path and destroy the possibilities of the other.

In a similar vein, Penny Summerfield and others have suggested that interviewees try to construct a life that is 'composed' during oral history interviews. They 'constitut[e] themselves as the subject of their story'[…]'calm and in control of [themselves].'[189] If an interviewee is composed, they recount a narrative which is coherent, psychically comfortable and satisfying, free of 'anger, self-contradiction, discomfort' and the narrative is well sustained.[190]

[184] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Memory in Oral History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991), p. vii.
[185] Natalie Thomlinson, 'Race and discomposure in oral histories with white feminist activists', *Oral History* 42: 1 (2014) 84-94, p. 85.
[186] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*; Luisa Passerini, 'Mythbiography in Oral History' in *The Myths We Live By,* eds. Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 49-61.
[187] Hannah Yoken, 'Nordic Transnational Feminist Activism: The New Women's Movements in Finland, Sweden and Denmark, 1960s-1990s', *unpublished PhD thesis*, University of Glasgow, 2021, pp. 217-218.
[188] Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (eds.), 'Introduction' in *The Myths We Live By* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990),1-23.
[189] Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', *Cultural and Social History* 1:1 (2004), 65-93, p. 69.
[190] Ibid, p. 70.

Summerfield's study of women involved in combat on the British home front during the Second World War, reveals that cultural representations have a relationship to composure. In the case of Summerfield's interviewees, a composed story was difficult because of a lack of cultural representations and understandings of women's role as combatants in World War Two. It was clear in my interviews that the 2020 film *Brazen Hussies*, a documentary about the women's liberation movement in Australia supported my interviewees composure.[191] Many of my interviewees were asked about their experiences for this film, and many recommended this film to me. They felt, on the whole, that this had been a wonderful depiction of their experience and had, in the words of Biff Ward, 'given us a name, instead of being the amorphous, vague 70s women's liberationists we've become the brazen hussies!' In line with Summerfield's theory Ward suggested that this naming was 'pretty amazing and quite useful, because now[…]we can talk about that period more coherently.'[192] However, as Alasdair Thomson found during his interviews with former Australian soldiers who fought in WWI, cultural outputs and national mythologies sometimes have a limiting impact on memories. After the release of the Peter Weir film *Gallipoli* (1981), interviewees described scenes from the film when asked about their wartime experience. [193] More deeply, Thomson found, composure is offered at a price. Through renewed cultural attention on ANZACs, individuals' critical memories of WWI as hellish and traumatic are acknowledged, and so there is an important reconciliation between individual memories and the public story of the ANZAC.[194] But these memories were then reworked into a nostalgic version of the diggers as heroes by public institutions such as war memorials.[195] From Thomson, I learnt to ask my interviewees what they felt had been left out of *Brazen Hussies.* Martha Ansara suggested: 'What isn't in there was the upheaval in everybody's lives and the misery of being in the women's movement.'[196] But this exclusion seemed to enable her to clearly articulate what was missing, rather than trigger discomposure. *Brazen Hussies* provided composure, but did not provide a complete script for the interviewees' feminist activism, or overwhelm their own memories, they recalled many stories that fell outside of this short documentary.

[191] *Brazen Hussies* dir. Catherine Dwyer, Madman Films, 2020
[192] Oral history interview with Biff Ward, 26th May 2021, on Zoom.
[193] Alistair Thomson, 'Anzac memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia', in *The Oral History Reader,* eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 244-254, p. 245.
[194] Ibid., pp. 252-253.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Oral history interview with Martha Ansara, 20th April 2021, on Zoom.

While historians have focused on the way that composure has structured the interviewees' response, it is also useful to consider how *interviewers* maintain composure (or not) during the interview. The more I read about oral history, the more interviewers' discomposure seemed evident. While interviewers did not describe their experiences as discomposure, it is clear that this occurred, and was a site of complex emotions long after the interview had ended. Joanna Bornat recalled in a discussion on reuse that she 'felt she had been a failure in not being able to deal with the emotions of woman…who then broke down.'[197] While oral historians are astute to looking for evidence of discomposure in the interviewee beyond what is being said directly, learning to consider how it is said, attending to long pauses, or facial expressions, self-criticism or contradiction, we might also consider evidence of discomposure of the interviewer. Perhaps long pauses occur on the tape, or the interviewer appears lost for words, or they seem to talk too much, explaining the question in several ways. We might also be astute to how interviewers recall their discomposure and what cannot be totally contained in these recollections. It is fascinating that as Bornat recalls her experience of discomposure, there is a small typographical error, she wonders 'what I might have learned about working-class community and culture in Colne Valley had I allowed her to stay *the her* [sic] story.'[198]

Feminism is a social movement that has been characterised by its success but also by its deep fissures which have played out according to philosophical differences, such as the differences between socialist feminism and radical/cultural feminism, controversies over issues such as sex work and pornography, generational differences between those involved in the women's liberation movement and feminists active in the 1990s, as well as differences between identities along the lines of class, race and sexuality. These deep divisions and fissures had likely been sources of difficulty for the women I interviewed. I wondered, and worried, whether interviewees would feel that aspects of my identity- particularly that I was a young, white woman - would necessarily preclude my ability to understand them or our ability to build reciprocity in the interview and as a result, I would lose composure. Jeska Rees, who interviewed British radical lesbian feminists, discussed her own loss of composure when asked 'Are you a lesbian?' and when subjected to extensive questioning about her life and motivations.[199] She narrates these as 'confronting experiences' which 'included questions

[197] Joanna Bornat, 'Secondary Analysis in Reflection: Some Experiences of Re-use from an Oral History Prespective', *Families, Relationships and Societies* 2:2 (2013) 309-17, p. 310.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Jeska Rees, '"Are you a lesbian?": Challenges in Recording and Analysing the Women's Liberation Movement in England', *History Workshop Journal* 69 (2010), 177-187, p. 184.

about my sexuality, for which I was unprepared.'[200] During the interview, she tried to rapidly calculate a response that she felt would be approved of by those she was interviewing. While interviewees' discomposure might manifest in an inability to sustain a narrative, I felt that my discomposure as an oral historian might result in an inability to hold the space, to listen deeply and to ask follow up questions. My concern with my interviewees' perception of me might cause me to shy away from challenging questions or veer off-topic. To mitigate against this, I offered interviewees the opportunity to see the questions that I would ask beforehand, and many interviewees requested these, though I also stressed that I might ask some follow up questions. This helped to build trust during my interviews and interviewees commented that they appreciated this approach. Particularly they seemed pleased and even relieved that my questions reflected an awareness of some of the fault lines and conflict in the women's liberation movement.

My approach was rooted in recent discussions of 'discomposure' in feminist theory. This recent work discusses white women's defensive response- often tears- at moments when they were confronted with their own racism.[201] While authors do not name it as such, discomposure is a useful concept to understand what is happening in these situations. White women's responses are often so extreme because their racist actions contradict their own life narrative and their sense that they have of being 'anti-racist.'[202] However, there were no situations where this happened during my interviews with women of colour or First Nations women. There was no conflict about racism, nor was my subjectivity as a white woman called into question. The women of colour, First Nations and migrant women I interviewed were all keen to place their stories on the record and often they expressed gratitude. While conflict about racism in the women's liberation movement often featured in interviews with all women, all those I interviewed offered histories far more expansive than this, introducing elements they felt had been ignored and were keen to discuss. Particularly, women of colour were keen to discuss their own activism which stretched far beyond criticisms of white feminists.

This made me reflect on the kind of advice I was reading and what kind of conditions it was creating in the interview. While the advice was often useful, I wondered if it created a version

[200] Ibid.
[201] Hamad, *White Tears, Brown Scars;* Beck, *White Feminism*, Jonsson, *Innocent Subjects;* Zakaria, *Against White Feminism*; Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (London: Penguin, 2019).
[202] DiAngelo, *White Fragility.*

of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls 'paranoid reading.'[203] This is a prevalent mode in contemporary queer and feminist theory and social justice activism. Paranoid reading 'seems to grow like a crystal in a hypersaturated solution, blotting out any possibilities of alternative ways of understanding.'[204] I realised that I was anxiously, perhaps even neurotically, anticipating conflict based on race and trying to mitigate against it. Trying, as Sedgwick puts it, to anticipate and eliminate the 'bad surprises,' that is, those that expose an alleged hidden, inner corruption. To mitigate against these, you play them through in your mind, first.[205] But, this is a position that one occupies in relation to an imagined other, rather than one who actually exists. I found it could be moved through by getting beyond the self and its imaginings, beyond theory into action. Through relationships and in dialogue with my interviewees, I learnt to simply ask the question and to let it rest, and to understand that I would be able to handle the answer, whatever it would be. I learnt to listen, as Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack might put it, through entering my interviews with 'receptivity to learn rather than prove pre-existing ideas…' and with my attention on the narrator rather than my own agenda.[206] There *were* surprises in the interviews, none that I would characterise as 'bad,' though of course I made mistakes. There were many surprises that were sad, such as recollections of miscarriages, illegal abortions, and regrets; and some that were joyful, as when women burst into protest song. All interviewees opened up their feminist worlds to me. All were interesting, enriching and life giving.

Due to the pressure of the Covid-19 pandemic, seventeen of my interviews took place via digital technology, while five were in person. Oral history theory has discussed the importance of developing a relationship and the way that visiting an interviewee's home can facilitate that. For example, in my interview with Australian Lynne Segal who was active in the British women's liberation movement, which took place in her living room in Highbury, she reflected on her house as an activist space and also used it as an example when discussing housing affordability in the 1970s. While she has discussed her house in her memoir, *Making Trouble,* our location seemed to generate further reflection.[207] This conviviality can be heightened if

[203] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You' in her *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 123-151.
[204] Ibid., p. 131.
[205] Ibid., pp. 130-133.
[206] Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, 'Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses' in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History,* eds. Gluck and Patai, 11-27, pp. 11-12.
[207] Lynne Segal, *Making Trouble: Life and Politics* (London: Verso, 2017).

food and drink is shared and Segal and I shared strawberries and a pot of special tea that she brewed. However, as Celia Hughes' account of flinching when, in the midst of recovery from an eating disorder, an interviewee presented her with a milky, tepid tea reveals how experiences of hospitality aren't always straightforward.[208] Nonetheless, a home environment can allow display of objects readied for the interview. This did occur in two of the four interviews that I conducted in person. However, remote digital formats did not put a stop to this. To offer just a few examples; Barbara Flick showed me her picture with Nelson Mandela, Devva Kasnitz showed me a hand-drawn poster from a demonstration to save a community radio station and Zohl dé Ishtar showed me a puppet she had made when working as a roving puppeteer, as well as her Akubra hat she wore every day while at Greenham Common Peace Camp, an intensely evocative object for her. Perhaps on Zoom, interviewees were more likely to reach for objects that were directly around them, though occasionally they did ask me to wait while they got up to find a something significant. Moreover, as Emily Peirson-Webber reflected on her own interviews with ex-miners during the pandemic, meeting digitally meant that her domestic space was visible as well as that of her interviewees and this seemed to improve the interpersonal dynamics between them.[209] I felt that this was true, too, though I noticed that I tidied up beforehand and wore more formal clothing than usual. I wanted to be taken seriously by my interviewees and I also hoped that this would convey my respect for them. However, like the journey to someone's house for an in-person interview, the ritual of tidying up and getting ready supported my transition from historian - where my thoughts were often sprawling and interior - to a more external self who was ready to relate to another in a different time zone.

The intimacy and 'communitas' I experienced with many of my interviewees was increased by the global challenges and tragedies that unfolded throughout my PhD.[210] When recording three of the in-person interviews in Australia in January to March 2019, we were living through the worst bushfires in living memory, with huge destruction of wildlife and Australia's bushland across New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria. Where we were in Sydney, smoke clouded the city for weeks and made its way into homes and public buildings. I arrived to my interview with Gabrielle Hewison to find her pushing wet towels into the gaps in the windows in an attempt to keep the smoke out. I got to Jane Bullen's house to find a large hand-painted banner

[208] Celia Hughes, 'Negotiating ungovernable spaces between the personal and the political: Oral history and the left in post-war Britain', *Memory Studies* 6:1 (2013), 70-90, p. 76.
[209] Emily Peirson-Webber, 'Mining Men: Reflections on Masculinity and Oral History During the Coronavirus Pandemic' *History Workshop Journal* 92 (2021), 242-250, p.244.
[210] 'Communitas' in the oral history interview discussed in Peirson-Webber, 'Mining Men', p. 244.

hanging from her balcony demanding the government act on climate change. These arrivals reminded me of our shared realities and the material conditions we were negotiating in the present, irrespective of our potential different perspectives on women's liberation history, or our positions on different sides of the Dictaphone. Soon after the bushfires abated, the Covid-19 pandemic started and I had to return to Britain. The conditions of the pandemic meant that my interviewees and I asked more personal questions of each other that we might ordinarily; we asked after each other's health and that of our families as we organised our interviews over email. Often interviewees began by speaking about their experiences of Covid, and this attention to our shared, global experience peeled back a layer of formality.

In my interview with Devva Kasnitz, key to the Melbourne group Women in Industry: Contraception and Health and now an anthropology and disability studies professor, I learnt the technique of revoicing. As Kasnitz has discussed in a recent article, this is her 'first-choice accommodation,' where 'for speech-impaired people their words are repeated (revoiced) to their listener by a trained third-party 'communication assistant.'[211] This is a technique she is responsible for developing and proliferating.[212] As she taught me, it is important that the revoicer does not paraphrase nor try to predict what the person will say, but rather that they repeat what they think they have heard: 'Your voice is mine, word for word…listen, repeat, forget.'[213] In the case of our oral history interview, Kasnitz trusted me to revoice, encouraged me even when I made errors, and I improved at this technique throughout our interview. Revoicing was a powerful method and had the potential to redistribute the burden of communication, which would usually and unfairly fall only on the person whose speech is deemed 'impaired.' Instead, through revoicing, I had to check that I had understood Kasnitz and be honest when I had struggled to do so, be corrected and keep trying. This technique revealed the flaws and difficulties I had comprehending, too.

As well as recording my own, I reused a long eight hour interview that Rosemary Block had undertaken with Julia Freebury, who had helped to found the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA), New South Wales (NSW).[214] Freebury passed away in 2014 and so this

[211] Devva Kasnitz, ' The Politics of Disability Performativity: An Autoethnography', *Current Anthropology* 61: (2020), S16-S25, p. S23.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid., S.22.
[214] Julia Freebury interviewed by Rosemary Block about her participation in ALRA, NSW, 1991. State Library of NSW.

was the only way that I was able to access an oral history interview which revealed her perspective on the formation of ALRA. I also reused an interview with Elizabeth Reid recorded in 1988; this offered a perspective on the 1975 'Women and Politics' Conference that was much more critical and emotionally raw, when compared with a later radio interview recorded for a short, public ABC broadcast in 2020.[215] Reuse is controversial amongst oral historians who suggest that data from oral history interviews is generated through intersubjective relationships with the interviewer and also shaped by the research aims of the initial project. Joanna Bornat discusses the ethics of reusing and reinterpreting interviews which were recorded for a very different purpose. In a project she was involved in, she sought to search interviews with the founders of geriatric medicine- undertaken to highlight their role as 'pioneers'- for evidence of cultural difference and possible racial prejudice.[216] She wondered whether the interviewees would have been happy to participate had they been aware that she and her team were seeking to 'problematise their worldviews.'[217] In my own reuse, a similar issue came up, where Freebury referred to African women using the term 'natives,' which sparked me to consider racial hierarchies present in the reproductive rights movement in Australia. Crucially, given the controversies of reuse, this was not my only piece of evidence for this, but I used it as evidence of a pattern. I did not use this to condemn Freebury, but rather sought to ask: How could someone agitating for abortion rights also hold views that were insensitive to race? Further, how did global conditions make this possible? There are important questions at the heart of Bornat's discussion that stretch far beyond the ethics of reuse into all facets of historical research: Are we applying an excessive presentism to our sources of whatever form? Are we condemning our actors using our own values, or advancing historical scholarship by seeking to understand how their own context shaped their lives?

I recorded each interview on a Dictaphone, and if the interview was digital, I also recorded on Zoom for peace of mind. To transcribe my interviews, I used Otter.ai, an online low cost AI software that transcribed the interviews for me, giving me access to a text searchable transcript. The transcript was riddled with errors, so I listened back to each interview and corrected these. Even if the transcript had been free from mistakes, it seems imperative that historians using

[215] Elizabeth Reid oral history interview with Mumtaz Afkhami, Foundation for Iranian Studies, April 14, 1988; Elizabeth Reid, 'The 1975 Women in Politics Conference', interview by Kim Huyhn, *Sunday Brunch*, ABC, September 27, 2020, [https://www.abc.net.au/radio/canberra/programs/sundaybrunch/the-1975-women-in-politics-conference/12708060, accessed 19 August, 2022] .
[216] Bornat, 'Secondary Analysis in Reflection', p. 311.
[217] Ibid.

transcription software listen back so that the quality of expression, long pauses and emotions that feature in the interview but do not register on the written transcript can be heard and included in the research. Even as AI improves and is able to produce technically 'perfect' transcripts, such listening is likely to remain important. To maintain vocal elements in my dissertation, I did not edit out crutch words such as 'you know,' because I felt it often indicated an attempt to relate between interviewer and interviewee, or 'umm', because it signalled a moment of reflection. Even if these were verbal tics, they were what Francis Good describes as 'the music of speech,' so I retained them.[218]

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation reveals that applying a global perspective significantly reshapes our understanding of Australian women's liberation. In the chapters that follow, I reveal the work of those who have been marginalised in histories of feminism, such as communist women, migrants, women of colour including those from the Global South, and First Nations women. The global frame reveals their contributions *beyond* their critique of the whiteness of the women's movement and it's racism, and foregrounds their direct involvement in women's movements and their significant contribution at the level of political thought.

Each chapter showcases an important campaign or key event of the Australian women's liberation movement, and reveals how global entanglements significantly informed these events, therefore shifting our understanding of the Australian women's liberation movement beyond the nation state. In each chapter I seek to make a theoretical contribution to another historical field such as legal history, or animate contested concepts such as 'the state' or 'space' and 'time.'

My first chapter explores the women's health movement and the significant, under-historicised impact of communist women on the women's liberation movement. It begins in the 1950s and explores how global communist networks made the Union of Australian Women's campaigns for natural, pain free childbirth possible. It discusses the considerable impact women in the Communist Party of Australia, particularly Joyce Stevens, played on later women's liberation

[218] Francis Good, 'Voice, Ear and Text: Words, meaning and transcription', in *The Oral History Reader (Third Edition),* eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2015), 458-469, p. 461.

campaigns for women's health including the opening of Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre in Sydney, in 1973. It then turns to a third health project, Women in Industry: Contraception and Health, which served the needs of migrant women in Melbourne and began in 1977. I bring into view the essential role the Italian Communist Party and its global networks played in the activism of migrant women. This chapter also asks why communist feminists have been excluded from women's liberation history and considers Francisca de Haan's argument that this is due to ongoing Cold War paradigms present in feminist history which foreclose the possibility that communist women were authentic feminists.

Chapter two explores feminist campaigns for reproductive rights, including for abortion and against forced sterilisation. This chapter explores the impact of global law on these campaigns. I consider how official global legal precedent, as well as unofficial legal instruments including people's tribunals, were used by the Australian women's liberation movement. This chapter explores how campaigners for abortion rights drew on official legal precedent from Britain and the United States to challenge Australian abortion law. It then traces the impact of the French Bobigny Trial, important in the decriminalisation of abortion in France, and the visit of Tunisian-French feminist Gisèle Halimi to Australia in 1975. This chapter explores how feminists were influenced by unofficial legal initiatives, including peoples' tribunals which used the ritual of law to reveal its injustices. This chapter traces Aboriginal women's participation in the International Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women, held in Brussels in 1976, where they discussed their experience of forced sterilisation in a global arena. While historians have been alert to tracing connections between places, they have been less adept at considering failures, which this chapter takes seriously. It finds that drawing on global legal precedent did not change Australian law, but it did change Australian women's understanding of reproductive justice.

Chapter three finds that the Australian women's liberation movement was deeply entangled with Vietnamese and Chinese communism across the years 1969-1979. The chapter reveals how Maoist ideas of 'speaking bitterness' impacted on women's liberation techniques of consciousness raising. It also traces Australian women's admiration of Chinese and Vietnamese women in the 1970s, and through oral history, captures their retrospective reflections on these sentiments. It explores Australian women's visits to Vietnam and China and vice-versa and is attuned to the moments of bafflement between women that occurred when they met in person. I frame these as moments of 'productive confusion.' Particularly this chapter is alert to the work East Asian communist women did to construct their societies as

gender equal in the eyes of Australian feminists. However, by drawing East Asian state feminists into conversation with Australian state feminists or 'femocrats', I consider their shared realities, I find that their agency was similarly limited by their relationship to the state.

My fourth chapter explores the global feminist conference 'Women and Politics' which took place in 1975. This was held in the nation's capital, Canberra, and was the major event for International Women's Year. It was organised by the Australian Advisory Committee which worked in coalition with the government. Seven hundred women from across Australia attended along with prolific international guests including US Black feminist Florynce Kennedy and May Hobbs, the cleaner activist from Britain. This chapter conceptualises this conference as a state-sponsored event which sought to incorporate women into the nation, by drawing on Australia's history of women's agitation for state reform and Australia's unique cultural heritage, including its humour. It finds that state feminism was entangled with nationalism. The conference was tied to the rituals of high politics, but it was also an event full of jokes and laughter. This chapter takes these jokes seriously and argues that they reveal the emancipatory limits of the state feminist project and the ongoing exclusions of particular women by the woman-friendly state.

The fifth and final chapter studies women's peace camps of the 1980s, which developed in response to nuclear rearmament. This includes Pine Gap women's peace camp which took place in November 1983, in Mpartwe/Alice Springs and how both space and time were remade at these feminist encampments. I suggest that this global network of camps created a space of feminism beyond the nation, a 'web' of women's peace camps connected through telegrams, mail and shared repertoires of tactics. Currents of spiritual feminism present at Pine Gap also remade space, and suggested that solutions to patriarchy might operate on a mystical and cosmic level. This chapter also considers time; it reveals that women's anti-nuclear activism was infused with a range of temporalities that sometimes clashed. These included a sense of urgency due to the possibility of nuclear war, but also the notion that First Nations women were 'traditional' and 'spiritual', representative of the past. This temporality was explicitly upended by visits to Europe from First Nations women who had experienced nuclear testing. They were understood to speak not from the past, but from the nuclear future.

Chapter 1

'The Most Important Women were Communists': Communist Women, the Australian Feminist Health Movement and the Cold War.

On the 2nd February, 2021, I conducted an oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski, via Zoom. Sobski was an important figure in the Sydney women's liberation movement; she was involved in Amazon Acres, a lesbian feminist land project.[1] She worked on the first women's liberation newspaper, *MeJane* and as an anti-sexist teacher. Through her work to challenge and eliminate sexism in education, she became a self-described 'femocrat,' a portmanteau of feminist and bureaucrat. Sobski was employed in the Ministry of Education as 'Professional Assistant (sexism).' She recalled, with a laugh, 'People used to say to me, "Are you promoting [sexism?] Or are you eliminating it?"'[2]

Sobski is a second-generation migrant, her parents were refugees from Poland and Ukraine. She grew up in poverty in Bonegilla Migrant Camp, on the Victorian side of the New South Wales - Victorian border, close to Wadonga and the Snowy Mountains hydroelectric scheme where many European migrants were employed. As a young woman, Sobski was particularly inspired by Father Meeker, a Czech priest committed to social justice. She recalled he was 'very influential in my life, in sort of teaching me about compassion for others, and caring for others.' It was with Father Meeker that she went to her first demonstration against the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. She went because 'you know, the Russians have invaded this country. These people want freedom. They want a democracy. They want to get out from under the Russian yoke, the communist yoke. And there were people that died in the streets, you know, like it was a true invasion, like the '56 Hungarian invasion,' so 'there I was marching along with my long blonde hair.'[3]

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[1] Amazon Acres is discussed in Rebecca Jennings, 'Creating Feminist Culture: Australian Rural Lesbian-Separatist Communities in the 1970s and 1980s', *Journal of Women's History* 30:2 (2018) 88-111; Rebecca Jennings, '"A Meeting of Different Tribes"? Travelling Women and Mobility between European and Australasian Women's Lands', *Women's History Review* 31:1, (2022) 88-106; Sophie Robinson, 'Eggs O'Wheels, Hexagons, Repairs: Lesbian Feminist Utopias in Australia 1970s-1980s', *Women's History Review* 31:1 (2022), 107-125; Sophie Robinson, 'The Lesbian Presence in Feminist, Gay and Queen Social Movements in Australia 1970s-1990s', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of NSW, 2018, see especially, pp. 144-154; Sand Hall (ed.), *Amazon Acres, You Beauty: Stories of Women's Lands* (Wollongong: Shall Publishing, 2016).
[2] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski 2nd February 2021, on Zoom.
[3] Ibid.

Despite her first demonstration being against Soviet aggression, Sobski stated unequivocally that in Sydney, 'The most important women in the women's liberation movement were communists. They were such wonderful women…I cannot stress enough how important they were in the role that they played...They were good comrades. They were good sisters-in-arms. I would be proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with them on any issue.'[4] Sobski's views on the importance of communist women in Sydney women's liberation were similarly reflected by other interviewees from a range of political backgrounds. Meredith Burgmann, a trade unionist active in the Builders Labourers Federation and in campaigns for equal pay who later became a member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, highlighted the essential role communist women played. Martha Ansara, a Syrian-American feminist film maker who was a member of the Australian Communist Party; and Devva Kasnitz and Rhonda Small, two women involved in Women in Industry: Contraception and Health (WICH), a peer-to-peer health organisation established in Melbourne in 1977 also discussed this.[5]

Seeking to investigate the findings of my oral history interviews, and indebted to recent work that considers the global influence of communist women on feminism in the earlier twentieth century, this chapter traces the profound influence of communist women on the women's liberation movement. This chapter suggests that the lack of scholarship discussing the significant role of communist feminists in the Australian women's liberation movement is due to the 'continuing Cold War paradigms' in feminist history, identified by Francisca de Haan in 2010.[6] As described in detail in the introduction, historians up until 2010, accepted the paradigms constructed during the Cold War in which communist women were precluded from being feminists due to their communism. This resulted in historical silence about the feminist negotiations of women living under communism and the role that women in communist parties played in feminism in liberal democracies.

As I bring de Haan's provocation to bear on the later Cold War, I find the impact of communist women on the Australian women's liberation movement was profound, particularly in the area

[4] Ibid.
[5] Oral history interview with Meredith Burgmann, 21st April 2021, on Zoom; oral history interview with Martha Ansara, 20th April 2021, on Zoom; Oral history interview with Devva Kasnitz 10th February 2021, on Zoom; oral history interview with Rhonda Small, 24th May 2021, on Zoom.
[6] Francisca de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation' *Women's History Review* 19:4, (2010) 547-473, p. 555.

of women's health. This chapter traces the influence of communist women on three different health projects. It begins in the 1950s and explores the work of the Union of Australian Women (UAW), the Australian branch of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). By situating the UAW globally, I trace the UAW's commitment to maternalist feminism, apparent in their promotion of methods of natural childbirth. The UAW's maternalism were later absorbed by the section of the women's movement who began to campaign for maternal reform from the 1960s onward.

In 1967 the Australian Communist Party (CPA) split into two parties, the Socialist Party of Australia maintained ties with the USSR, while the other new party cut ties with the USSR but kept the old name. It was women in the CPA that formed after the split- those who broke ties with the USSR- who were particularly influential on the Australian women's liberation movement. Joyce Stevens was mentioned over and over again in my interviews as an important figure and to explore this, the chapter takes a biographic turn. Particularly, I highlight Stevens' impact on the development of the feminist health service, Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre (LWCHC), established in 1973. This chapter finally turns to explore the crucial influence of Italian communism and its global networks on Women in Industry: Contraception and Health (WICH), a migrant women's reproductive, sexual and industrial health project based on Melbourne.

Who were the UAW?

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, often thought to be the doldrums of Australian feminism or the time between the 'two great waves', the Union of Australian Women were active for the cause of gender justice. They were formed in July 1950, out of the 'most radical' of the post-war housewives' associations: The New Housewives Association.[7] The UAW could be described as a maternalist feminist organisation meaning they, as Marilyn Lake put it, 'believed that motherhood entailed not just duties, but also rights,' for both them and their children.[8] Like maternalist feminist organisations before them, the UAW campaigned for the

[7] Barbara Curthoys and Audrey McDonald, *More than a Hat and Glove Brigade: The Story of the Union of Australian Women* (Sydney: Bookpress, 1996) pp. 1, 11.
[8] Marilyn Lake, 'Childbearers as Rights-bearers: Feminist Discourse on the Rights of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Mothers in Australia, 1920-50', *Women's History Review* 8:2 (1999), 347-363. See also Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999), especially, pp. 72-86.

state to intervene in rising prices, to increase child benefit and provide services and maternity care. At its foundation the UAW was made up of working-class women who largely worked in the home, though 'all women, housewives, mothers, single-women, working women…' could be members, as the *Melbourne Guardian* reported at the organisation's launch.[9] As Zora Simic discusses, the UAW's maternalist feminism had a particularly leftist bent. In the early years of the organisation, many members - though not all - were in the Australian Communist Party. The UAW used maternalist feminism to speak out for an end to atomic warfare during the 1950s, and increasingly to demand decolonisation in the 1960s. In their monthly periodical, *Our Women,* they repeatedly highlighted the impact of war on children. In this way they, like many maternalist feminist organisations before them, sought to show that standing for peace was the political position that all women—as mothers or, if they didn't have children, as nurturers– around the world should embrace.[10] Peace was framed as *intuitive,* it was simply a part of what it meant to be a loving mother.[11]

The UAW were the Australian arm of the global WIDF, established in Paris in November 1945.[12] As work by Francisca de Haan and others has revealed, the WIDF was the largest women's organisation in the world. [13] While certainly impressively large and influential, Celia Donert reminds us that 'staggeringly huge membership figures' were also 'a fundamental component of WIDF propaganda.'[14] This organisation stretched across divisions of first, second and third world and incorporated women from all three. The WIDF's membership was made up of women from colonised and colonising nations and leftists from both communist and liberal capitalist countries. As the case of the UAW indicates, the WIDF accepted existing affiliate organisations, rather than creating branches themselves, so their membership was

[9] *Melbourne Guardian* quoted in Suzanne Fabian and Morag Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies: The Union of Australian Women in Victoria 1950-1988* (Victoria: Hyland House, 2000), p. 17.
[10] On maternalist feminism see, for example: Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 84-86. Rupp explains that the maternalist feminism of the earliest international feminist organisations did not just embrace women as mothers, but as nurturers too, including of children and sometimes as food producers, p. 85.; Mona Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms: The Global Battle for Women's Rights After the First World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020); Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), especially, p. 10-12, 263-4; Ruth Roach Pierson (ed.), *Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2018); Michelle Chase, '"Hands off Korea!" Women's Internationalist Solidarity and Peace Activism in Early Cold War Cuba', *Journal of Women's History* 32:3 (2020), 64-88, pp. 70-71.
[11] Zora Simic, 'Butter Not Bombs: A Short History of the Union of Australian Women', *History Australia* 4:1 (2007), 07.1-07.15.
[12] De Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms', p. 548.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe', p. 188.

varied; by no means were all members communists. This organisation had four aims 'anti-fascism, lasting peace, women's rights and better conditions for children.'[15] The WIDF were, as Elizabeth Armstrong writes, 'the only transnational women's organisation that explicitly condemned colonialism.'[16] *Our Women* connected UAW members to the WIDF by publishing articles from the WIDF's magazine *Women of the Whole World,* as well as through reports from international congresses that UAW members attended. The UAW president, Freda Brown, who later went on to be the president of the WIDF, wrote a column for *Our Women,* which was part travelogue and part updating members on her political work.

Francisca de Haan's important intervention in 2010 led to a flourishing of history writing about the WIDF and its national affiliates, which sought to bring communist women into global histories of feminism. Work on the UAW by Marilyn Lake and Zora Simic predated de Haan's intervention. However, the ways that global and international networks informed the UAW is less considered by these scholars who largely situate the UAW within the history of feminism in Australia.[17] Simic writes, '[The UAW] establish[ed] themselves as the historical custodians of women's organisations in Australia.'[18] Particularly, both historians argue that the UAW should be seen as part of the strong Australian tradition of maternalist feminism. As Lake has shown, women's capacity to mother was framed as a great leveller of women by feminists, including across racial difference.[19] The UAW continued this tradition through their campaigns for Aboriginal women's rights. Both Lake and Simic are interested, as this chapter is, in the question of how the UAW interacted with the later women's liberation movement. Both historians find the UAW was largely distinct. Lake argues that the UAW 'operated very much in the tradition of polite deputation,' and their 'sartorial style' which used the trappings of domesticity to articulate political demands, 'denoted its respect for political convention and institutional ritual.'[20] The 'intemperate and brazen' women's liberation movement was a 'sharp break' from this kind of respectability politics.[21] Simic suggests that while the UAW had some understanding that the personal was political, their idea of peaceful motherhood was subsumed by women's liberation critiques of the family. She also shows that the UAW were particularly

[15] De Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms', p. 548.
[16] Elizabeth Armstrong, 'Before Bandung', p. 320.
[17] Zora Simic, 'Butter Not Bombs', p. 07.1; Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal,* the UAW is discussed briefly on page p. 214.
[18] Simic, 'Butter Not Bombs', p. 07.2.
[19] Marilyn Lake, 'Childbearers as Rights-bearers.'
[20] Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal,* p. 214.
[21] Ibid.

confronted by the women's liberation movement's frank discussion of sex and the idea that personal, intimate relationships were political and should be discussed publicly.[22] Simic frames the relationship of the UAW to the women's liberation movement as a 'severed connection.'[23]

I argue that considering the UAW's advocacy for natural childbirth across the pages of *Our Women* complicates this account of rupture; though I also suggest that the heirs to the UAW were not the women's liberation movement. Instead, it was the women who advocated for natural childbirth and maternity reform who absorbed the UAW's maternalist feminism in the late 1960s. To reveal the UAW's influence on these women requires an expansive definition of the women's movement that includes organisations like the Childbirth Education Association. Moreover, the UAW's advocacy for natural childbirth makes sense when this organisation is framed internationally.

Peaceful births, peaceful world

From 1953 until 1971, the UAW produced *Our Women,* a quarterly periodical. This offered a varied mix of short stories, reportage on WIDF events and congresses, recipes and household tips and updates on political campaigns.[24] Across its pages, the UAW promoted painless, drug-free, 'natural' childbirth from as early as 1953. In *Our Women* mothers were encouraged to attend education classes about babies' development and birth, informed that they should perform exercises designed to aid the birth throughout the pregnancy and master relaxation techniques 'for natural childbirth is only possible with perfect relaxation.'[25] According to these instructive articles, natural birth relied on an entire preparatory regime to be undertaken during pregnancy.[26] Testimony from successful natural childbirth complemented these explanatory reports. Mrs. Lal Davies discussed her 'first baby- a relaxation one.' She was full of praise for the method, suggesting that she learnt to breathe through the contractions.[27] Mrs Betty Hall suggested with gratitude that both birth classes and natural birth methods helped her to recover more rapidly from giving birth.[28] Natural childbirth was part of the UAW's commitment to maternalist feminism. In *Our Women,* women's natural role as peaceful givers of life was contrasted to nuclear war and destruction, seen as the domain of men. This is evident in reports

[22] Simic, 'Butter not Bombs', pp. 07.10-07.13.
[23] Ibid., p. 07.10.
[24] *Our Women* is discussed also by Simic, ibid., p. 07.02.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Dr Gwen Fong, 'The Way to Natural Childbirth', *Our Women,* August 1953, 7.
[27] Lal Davies, '"My First Baby- A Relaxation One"', *Our Women,* August 1953, 7.
[28] Betty Hall, 'Quicker Recovery', *Our Women,* August 1953, 7.

about WIDF campaigns against nuclear war under the headline, 'Act Now to Defend the Life We Create.'[29] In a short story in *Our Women*, Jill, a new mother, learns from her experience of birth that she will never let her son join the army because 'the will to live is stronger than any power to destroy.'[30] Natural, peaceful, painless childbirth is linked to the project of a peaceful world: '[Natural childbirth] should be the birth right of every baby, the right of every women to have her baby in well being and contentment…just as it is her right to bring up her child in a peaceful world.'[31]

In *Our Women* natural childbirth is celebrated as the birth method of the communist world. However, there are two different methods of natural birth with separate global histories that are influential in *Our Women*, though they are often elided. The first is the Grantly Dick-Read method, developed in 1930s Britain. It was Dick-Read who first coined the phrase 'natural childbirth.'[32] This terminology is used in *Our Women.*[33] Dick-Read's method was not all that scientific, but instead based in his Christian world view.[34] Present in Dick-Read's work is a temporal sense that middle class women must go back in time, slough off modernity and return to their natural selves. As Dick-Read saw it, this kind of natural, pre-modern woman was embodied by working class women and African women who enjoyed childbirth without pain.[35] The influence of Dick-Read can be seen in *Our Women* through discussion of Helen Herdman's short pamphlet of 1950 *Relaxation and Exercises for Natural Childbirth*.[36] Herdman – a British physical education teacher and gymnast - was influenced by Dick-Read. Dick-Read's method proposed a series of techniques to assuage panic during birth including education classes and deep breathing, yoga-like exercises were practiced throughout pregnancy and women were instructed to focus on the miracle of birth.

While the UAW's understanding of natural childbirth was reliant on Dick-Read, it ultimately celebrated this as the method of birth used in communist countries. This reveals the influence

[29] 'Act Now to Defend the Life We Create!', *Our Women,* March- May 1959, 2.
[30] Joan Clarke, 'The Miracle', *Our Women,* March 1953, 18.
[31] Dorothy Flood, 'More Facilities Needed for Training!' *Our Women,* August 1953, 7.
[32] Paula A. Michaels, 'Comrades in the Labor Room: The Lamaze Method of Childbirth Preparation and France's Cold War Home Front, 1951-1957', *American Historical Review,* October 2010, 1031-1060, p. 1039.
[33] Mary Thomas (ed.), *Post-war Mothers: Childbirth Letters to Grantly Dick-Read,* 1946-1956, (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 1997), p. ix.
[34] Michaels, 'Comrades in the Labor Room', p. 1039.
[35] Thomas (ed.), *Post-war Mothers,* p. 9.
[36] 'Childbirth Without Tears', *Our Women,* March-June, 1958, 5.

of the Lamaze technique, developed by a French doctor after he witnessed this method in the USSR in 1951. While it is not always named as the Lamaze method, articles suggest that natural childbirth was being 'practiced in France, the U.S.S.R and China.'[37] As Paula A. Michaels' international history of the Lamaze method makes clear, this technique is very similar to the Dick-Read method and is best known for its controlled, patterned breathing. It was invented by Ukrainian doctor I.Z. Vel'vovskii but named for the French physician who observed it.[38] While visiting the Soviet Union, Lamaze witnessed a thirty-five year old woman give birth 'without pain and with joy.'[39] She was, he recalled completely relaxed 'not one drop of sweat beaded on her brow, not one grimace appeared on her face.'[40] Returning to France, Lamaze promoted the technique at the maternity ward he ran. Communist administrators and nurses were important for the initial adoption of this technique at Lamaze's hospital, and revered it as 'a gift from the socialist fatherland, from Soviet science, guided by Stalin's genius.'[41] As Michaels discussed, the global dissemination of this technique was reliant on the Union Femmes Françaises (UFF), the French equivalent of the UAW, which was also affiliated to the WIDF. The UFF included women's testimony about pain free childbirth in their magazine *Heures Claires des Femmes Françaises,* the French equivalent of *Our Women.* [42]

In *Our Women* the idea that natural childbirth hailed from the communist world was complimented by eyewitness accounts of painless birth. UAW members visited the USSR and China; trips that were made possible by the WIDF. Here they saw first-hand what became known as the Lamaze method. Dorothy Flood travelled to the Soviet Union in 1953, after first representing the UAW at the International Conference in Defence of Children in Vienna. Flood 'had seen a woman in the last stages of labor, lying relaxed and peaceful.'[43] Flood had been assured by the director that 'the principles of natural childbirth were now carried out successfully in all hospitals in the USSR.'[44] Similarly, Alice Hughes discussed seeing 'painless childbirth in China.'[45] Hughes had represented the UAW at the WIDF Third World Congress of Women in Copenhagen and spent some time in China 'on the way home.' She admiringly

[37] 'Advance Natural Childbirth', *Our Women,* March-June, 1958, 5.
[38] Michaels, 'Comrades in the Labor Room', p. 1035. See also, Paula A. Michaels, *Lamaze: An International History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[39] Michaels, 'Comrades in the Labor Room', p. 1032.
[40] Ibid., p. 1032.
[41] Ibid., p. 1033.
[42] Ibid.,pp. 1045-6.
[43] Flood, 'More Facilities Needed for Training!'
[44] Ibid.
[45] 'I Saw Painless Childbirth in China', *Our Women,* March 1954, 5

described seeing the birth of 'two lovely, healthy babies…The atmosphere in the room was one of quiet, peace and calm throughout each birth. Not one tear was seen, nor one cry escaped the lips of the mother.'[46] She stressed the attentive, caring nature of the hospital staff who instructed the mother in the proper use of breathing, relaxation and physical effort and commented on the success of this technique across China. For the UAW, natural childbirth was ultra-modern and future focused. It revealed how communism might spectacularly transform nature itself, for the good of humanity. The work of environmental historians has shown that communist regimes undertook this on a macro scale; they sought to reroute rivers and increase harvest considerably and at speed, often with devastating results.[47] As the Lamaze method reveals, global communism and its networks also transformed individuals at the level of the body and informed as Celia Donert notes, everyday 'practices and lived experiences.'[48]

The Lamaze method was adopted by some UAW members with great success. Freda Brown, birthed her daughter, Lee Rhiannon, using these techniques after Dorothy Hewett passed on her knowledge directly to Brown from her travels in the Soviet Union.[49] However, *Our Women* also reported on women whose attempts to give birth naturally in Australian hospitals were thwarted by lack of trained staff and lack of funding in what was then a private health system. Dorothy Flood commented on the need for more facilities for natural birth to bring Australia into line with the USSR: 'In our overcrowded hospitals with their pitiful staff shortages and economy cuts such "luxuries" are not in the budget.'[50] The UAW braided women's desire for natural childbirth into bigger campaigns for maternal health including hospital funding. They also reported on natural childbirth methods in order to showcase the achievements of communist states, particularly their work to empower women as mothers.

However, Michaels shows us that the Lamaze method was not developed to honour and support mothers, or even with their birth experience in mind. The technique was initially developed

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[46] Ibid.
[47] See, for example: Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Doubravka Olšáková, *In the Name of the Great Work: Stalin's Plan for the Transformation of Nature and its Impact in Eastern Europe* (New York: Berghain Books, 2019); Stephen Brain, 'Stalin's Environmentalism', *The Russian Review* 69:1 (2010), 93-118.
[48] Celia Donert, 'From Communist Internationalism to Human Rights: Gender, Violence and International Law in the Women's International Democratic Federation Mission to North Korea, 1951', *Contemporary European History* 25:2 (2016), 313-333, p. 314.
[49] Lisa Milner, *Swimming Against the Tide: A Biography of Freda Brown* (Adelaide: Ginninderra Press, 2017), p. 72.
[50] 'The Way to Natural Childbirth' *Our Women,* August 1953, 7.

because of a lack of pain relief in the USSR combined with a climate of fiscal restriction after the Second World War.[51] Further, as Michaels writes, this method of natural childbirth made Soviet labour wards quiet places to work and women easier to manage by 'disciplin[ing] the labouring woman' out of 'screaming, crying and writhing.'[52] It was only through the translation of this technique globally, particularly by the global network of the WIDF and its affiliates, including the UFF and the UAW, that women's dignity and empowerment were written into, and considered an important part of, natural childbirth.

In Britain, New Zealand and the United States these methods of natural childbirth were absorbed by the later women's liberation movement. They were included as part of a programme to reclaim women's health from the control of male doctors and empower women with knowledge about their bodies, particularly in the area of sexual health. Natural childbirth methods were discussed in the Boston Women's Health Collective book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1970).[53] Natural childbirth seemed to fit so intuitively into the women's health movement that historians initially presumed that these techniques came from the women's liberation movement.[54] In Australia, however, as historian Kerreen Reiger has shown, there is a comparative lack of discussion of natural, pain free childbirth in the women's liberation movement, compared to movements elsewhere.[55] In the early years of the women's liberation movement, feminists in Australia focused on agitating for contraception and abortion.[56] The Australian movement were most concerned about having children against their will, rather than the conditions of birth. Women, Reiger suggests, were also concerned about how valorising natural birth essentialised women and were keen to discuss the harsh realities of motherhood, rather than to celebrate it.[57] Thus, the maternity reform movement was largely separate to the women's liberation movement in Australia. It is these women that are the custodians of an earlier maternalist feminism. They were the ones who continued the work the UAW had begun of agitating for maternal health and natural birth.

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[51] Michaels, 'Comrades in the Labor Room', p. 1035.
[52] Michaels, *Lamaze,* p. 82.
[53] Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 182-207. On page 183 the importance of being prepared for birth is discussed and is traced to the Lamaze and Dick-Read methods. Marjorie Karmel's book '*Thank You Dr. Lamaze!'* is cited as 'introducing the Lamaze method of childbirth to the United States' in this text, too.
[54] Michaels, *Lamaze,* p.3.
[55] Kerreen Reiger, '"Sort of Part of the Women's Movement. But Different": Mothers' Organisations and Australian Feminism', *Women's Studies International Forum,* 22: 6 (1999), 585-595, pp. 586-7.
[56] Ibid., p. 588.
[57] Ibid., p. 588-589.

In the early 1960s, a concerted campaign for childbirth reform in Australia began. Marcelle Frame, a physiotherapist established the Association for the Advancement of Painless Childbirth in Victoria in 1961, which later became the Childbirth Education Association (CEA).[58] Frame had travelled to France to study the Lamaze Method under Lamaze's associate Dr. Vellay. Frame returned to Melbourne excited about the possibilities of pain free childbirth. She agitated for natural childbirth on hospital wards and remained with women during their labours to offer support.[59] Besides the work of individuals like Frame, in Australia the Lamaze Method was also popularised by Erna Wright's *The New Childbirth* which was published in paperback in 1964. Wright, like Frame, studied with Dr. Vellay in Paris who, as she saw it, 'offered me his work with the most open-handed generosity.'[60] Wright remarked that Vellay did this knowing she represented the chance to make natural childbirth a possibility for British women through direct teaching. In Australia, Wright influenced natural childbirth methods by way of her book; this was a major text used by pregnant women in Australia and helped to further disseminate this method.[61] Notably, Reiger's history of the maternity reform movement in Australia does not discuss the global communist history of Lamaze.[62] However, including the UAW here reveals how earlier global communist networks informed the later campaign for natural childbirth. The UAW's earlier demands were largely absorbed indirectly by later childbirth campaigners. There was also some direct contact between the CEA and the UAW. In 1964, the UAW wrote a supportive article in favour of the CEA in *Our Women*. This article reminded women readers that 'Relaxation methods of birth are standard in all Soviet Hospitals,' and in France too.[63]

Communist Women

While the UAW had some limited impact on childbirth reformers' demand for natural childbirth, the clanging silence in Australia is not about the UAW, but about women involved more directly in the Australian Communist Party (CPA). During oral history interviews, Jozefa Sobski, Meredith Burgmann and Martha Ansara discussed the importance of these women to

[58] Kerreen Reiger, *Our Bodies, Our Babies: The Forgotten Women's Movement* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001) p. 43.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid. The Lamaze method is discussed on pp. 42-43.
[63] 'A Look at Easy Childbirth', *Our Women,* September-December, 1967, 18-19, p. 19.

the women's liberation movement in Sydney. Toward the end of our interview, Meredith Burgmann emphasized:

'The other thing I need to say about women's lib is that looking back, I can also see the very important guiding hand of the Communist Party of Australia. And that gave a little bit of, a bit of theory to what we were doing.'[64]

Martha Ansara, daughter of two Communist Party members active in the US and later herself a member, explained:

'I wasn't in the Communist Party right away[…]I went [to Newcastle] with Mavis [Robertson], and Joyce Stevens. And one of them said, Oh, you know, you should be in the Communist Party. And I thought, "Right!" Because when you looked around, here's the reason why… [W]ho shows up? Who does the work? Who when they speak has something sensible to say, who can provide a guide for how to build something? Tick, tick, tick. That was the people that I knew in the Communist Party[...]Who can relate to people? Who do people like to vote for?'[65]

The contribution of communist women to the women's liberation movement was made possible by the split in the Communist Party. In 1967 the Communist Party of Australia became two parties: those members who maintained an alliance with the USSR formed the Socialist Party of Australia, and those who broke ties with the USSR, kept the CPA name. The split was caused in part when the General Secretary Laurie Aarons spoke out against Soviet Repression at a celebration for the 70th anniversary of the Russian revolution in Moscow, stating: 'ideas require free contest, not confined in a framework of established dogmas that can become a rigid or even ossified edifice.'[66] This, unsurprisingly, garnered a 'frigid' reception.[67] The CPA soon cut ties and stopped receiving funds from the Soviet Union.[68] After this, the CPA embraced a non-dogmatic theory and politics.[69] There was a sense across the party that forces for change

[64] Oral history interview with Meredith Burgmann.
[65] Oral history interview with Martha Ansara.
[66] David McKnight, 'Breaking with Moscow, The Communist Party of Australia's New Road to Socialism', in *The Far Left in Australia Since 1945,* eds. Jon Piccini, Evan Smith, Matthew Worley (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 228-290, p. 246.1 [of ebook].
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., p. 246.1
[69] Ibid., pp. 253.8-269.3

extended beyond the proletariat and that the CPA might develop 'new' paths particular to the conditions in Australia where capitalism would end without a violent revolution.[70] As scholarship by David McKnight and Margaret Penson reveals, support for social movements including women's liberation became CPA policy.[71]

After the split, members of the UAW, including Freda Brown, became aligned with the Socialist Party of Australia which maintained allegiance to the USSR, defending the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia as 'solidarity action.'[72] As Bill Brown, the partner of Freda Brown discussed, this alliance was maintained because members thought that the USSR continued to offer a real, existing and workable socialist model.[73] Jozefa Sobski remarked that while unaffiliated, the UAW 'would have been, I think, mainly people that could have been in the Socialist Party.'[74] When I asked what the relationship between the UAW and women's liberation movement was like, Martha Ansara answered unequivocally: 'Bad.' She continued, 'there was a lot of trouble with the Socialist Party of Australia, and its offshoots. And those of us who wanted to do things a new way.'[75] According to Ansara, the UAW's hostility to the women's movement was 'a bit like if I hated Extinction Rebellion.' What she meant by that was the UAW felt the women's liberation movement lacked an understanding of the ways that things had always been done.

Ansara, like Marilyn Lake, stressed that the UAW organised in 'very traditional' ways. However, Ansara didn't mean that they operated as a 'polite deputation' as Lake put it, with respect for political convention. [76] Rather Ansara meant that they favoured a more controlled and hierarchical form of organising, which mirrored the USSR's model of democratic centralism. Ansara discussed trying to work with the UAW to form an Australia-Cuba friendship society: 'Now their way is you pick the executive ahead of time. And then you call the meeting, and then eventually you open it up.' But for members of the women's liberation movement, 'that's not the way we did things. You know, we all just come and you know,

[70] W. J. Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia: An Historical Outline 1890s-1980s,* (Haymarket, Sydney: Australian Labor Movement History Publications, 1986) p. 266.
[71] McKnight, 'Breaking with Moscow', p. 269.3; Margaret Penson, *Breaking the Chains: Communist Party Women and the Women's Liberation Movement* (Breaking the Chains Collective: Sydney, 1999), especially pp.11-12.
[72] W.J. Brown, *The Communist Movement…* p. 273.
[73] Ibid., pp. 261-287.
[74] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski.
[75] Oral history interview with Martha Ansara.
[76] Lake, *Getting Equal,* p. 214.

chaos!' While Ansara was a bit disparaging about non-hierarchical organising in our interview, there were sound reasons why women embraced flat structures. Often they did so in response to traditional organisations, which reflected the unequal division of power in society at large.[77] Ansara suggested that the women's liberation movement eventually learned that hierarchies were not necessarily bad, especially after the printing collective Words for Women published 'a real bestseller from the United States,' Jo Freeman's *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* in 1972. This was read widely in Australia and people began to reflect that organising along principles where, as Ansara put it, '[the person] who can stay longest at the meeting, would end up overturning everything else' was also 'diabolical.' She could see in hindsight that 'there [was] a lot of sense' in the way the UAW organised.[78]

While CPA women invested in the women's liberation movement, they were not reciprocally embraced by non-communist women. Given the heartache and difficulties of the split and CPA women's keenness to differentiate themselves from others who maintained an alliance with the USSR, a considerable anti-communist feeling remained. Joyce Stevens reflected in unpublished autobiographical writings that there was a broad lack of trust of communist women in the women's liberation movement. There were 'all sorts of things said and believed about CP[A] women in the women's movement, which in my experience have never been true…People believe that the communist women act as a bloc, by fractioning and coming into the women's movement with clearcut decisions. Yet to my knowledge we've never done that.'[79] According to Stevens, non-communist feminists felt that CPA women were being disingenuous when they denounced Stalin's crimes and broke with the USSR and that 'really we support it.'[80] Jozefa Sobski spoke vehemently against the idea but suggested it had some traction in the women's liberation movement. Some women thought 'Communist [Party of Australia] women were using the women's liberation movement as a 'front' to recruit. She remarked ' They [The Communist Party of Australia] had no women's front[…]A lot of people would have said they're controlled[...]that group [Sydney Women's Liberation] is controlled by the Communist Party, but they weren't. It wasn't about control at all…They weren't control freaks. They were good strategists and campaigners.'[81]

[77] Joyce Stevens, 'From There to Where?', *Scarlet Woman* 3 (1976), 10-13, p. 10.
[78] Oral history interview with Martha Ansara.
[79] Joyce Stevens, 'Autobiographical Writings', July 1980, p.85, in Box 3, Folder 1, Joyce Stevens Personal Papers, 1912-2003, MLMSS 7918.
[80] Ibid., p. 87. Stevens suggests that the smear that women in the CPA supported Stalinism was spread by Trotskyist groups in the women's liberation movement.
[81] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski.

The Life of Joyce Stevens

Against this Cold War characterisation of women in the Communist Party of Australia as controlling, victimising and inauthentic, who used feminism strategically to recruit to the Party, rather than because they believed in women's rights, this chapter turns to the life of Joyce Stevens. It uses her personal papers including notes, reflections and unpublished autobiographical writing of 1980 to reconstruct her life here. I take a a biographical approach, and specifically home in on her significant contribution to Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre. This personal narrative allows us to see how complex global political processes are distilled in the life of an individual.[82] More specifically, biography is useful here because it works to humanise communist women who, owing to the 'continuing Cold War paradigm' in feminist history, have often had their humanity and complexity stripped out.[83] Indeed, it is the biographical method that Joyce Stevens chose to employ when producing her own history of women active in the Communist Party of Australia, 1920-1945. Stevens uses a life story method as this allows women to 'talk back', and so I use it here.[84]

Particularly, I consider Stevens as she was mentioned over and over again in my oral history interviews, as an important presence in Sydney women's liberation. Meredith Burgmann said:

'…[T]hey were very important those women, particularly Joyce Stevens…it's interesting all those early women's libbers in Sydney also talk about the importance of Joyce Stevens…'[85]

Similarly Sobski suggested that:

'[Joyce Stevens] was the iconic figure for me.'[86]

[82] Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 13.
[83] De Haan, 'Continuing Cold War paradigms.'
[84] Biographies and oral histories form the section 'Talking Back' in Joyce Stevens, *Taking the Revolution Home: Work Among the Women in the Communist Party of Australia 1920-1945* (Melbourne: Sybylla Co-operative Press and Publications, 1987), , pp. 107-231.
[85] Oral history interview with Meredith Burgmann.
[86] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski.

Joyce Stevens was born in 1928 in the small country town of Cullen Bullen, in New South Wales. She wrote an unpublished autobiographical account in 1980. Here, she begins with a reference to Vivian Gornick's text about the inner lives of socialists, *The Romance of American Communism* (1977). Gornick's text begins 'Before I knew I was Jewish or a girl I knew that I was a member of the working class.'[87] Stevens reflected on this in the first paragraphs of her own life story. Though she was not Jewish, she suggested 'I was conscious of the fact that I was a member of the working class, but my mother also inculcated from a very early age that I was also a woman.'[88] Her father was a railway worker on 'rationed' work, where he worked 'two weeks on, two weeks off, just enough time to keep you off the dole.' They lived on 'rabbits and foxes,' which her father caught. She and her family moved around considerably; they lived in Toongai and Casino, towns in rural NSW. They lived in tents, tin sheds and then in rented properties in Sydney. She wrote of these early years that 'I suppose the fact we were very poor helped to influence me in the sense of class.'[89]

Her parents were political, Stevens' mother was a member of the Communist Party and her father was 'very staunch with the union' and a member of the Australian Labor Party.[90] Stevens recalled key memories from those early years that first shaped her political perspective: 'the thing about politics that I remember most was the unemployment.' As Stevens' family lived on the outskirts of town, they were privy to the large camp of unemployed 'swaggies,' who would often come to her family home looking for food. They would often tell her mother about the police harassment they faced, including the burning of swags. In response, her mother would protest at the police station on their behalf; 'Mum had a bike and she'd hop on…whenever she heard something she'd pedal furiously up to the station and have a great yike with them.'[91] Leftist meetings were influential on her politics. She recalled a meeting addressed by a man who was passing through on strike from the Lysaught's Company which produced corrugated iron, likely in 1938. He spoke about the brutal conditions he faced at work and Steven's recalled that: 'This profoundly affected me, that people had to work in jobs where your hair fell out and your skin was eroded by acid.'[92] Like many in the Communist Party, Stevens' politics was also shaped by international and global events; in her small country town

[87] Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism* (London and New York: Verso, 2020 [1977]), p. 3.
[88] Stevens, 'Autobiographical Writings', July 1980, p.1.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., p.3.
[91] Ibid., p. 5.
[92] Ibid., p. 4.

she watched a film about the Japanese invasion of China and attended a talk by a nurse who had gone to Spain and who talked about the Spanish Civil War. Afterward she and her family 'walk[ed] home… singing in the streets.'[93] It was via international events that Stevens also experienced the dogmatism of the Communist Party; her mother was expelled from the Communist Party for criticising the Russian invasion of Finland in 1939.[94]

Stevens credits two events in her life with developing her political consciousness and action, these are reflective of her internationalism, too. Her first 'blinding flash of light' was her visit to China in the 1950s, as a member of a Communist Party delegation. Like others around the world, inspired by the Chinese example, Australian communists attended a 'school' for political education in China.[95] Before going to China she felt she had no developed political philosophy and couldn't understand the relationship between theory and practice. She 'hated the people who made speeches quoting great big slabs of Marx and Engels.'[96] In China, Stevens found that 'integrating theory into practice finally made sense to me…I realised it wasn't just a matter of working along as best you could and then reading those books over there, hoping that some day the two will get together.'[97] China taught her that you had to understand the reality of your own country, and the political processes you were involved in, at the national level.

In China, Stevens took part in collective study, self-criticism and introspection. Reflecting in 1980, Stevens linked the process of Maoist self-criticism to the women's liberation technique of consciousness raising, suggesting it 'mirrored this,' and that 'the reason why women were able to talk in consciousness raising groups about things you'd never thought you'd be able to reveal to anyone was because you'd developed a spirit of trust.' In fact, as we shall see in chapter three, consciousness raising did not just mirror methods in China but was directly indebted to them. Stevens found these methods of analysis rewarding but she reflected that

[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., p. 16.
[95] On Australian Communist Party members visiting China see memoir of ex-Communist Keith McEwan's account of the first tour of Australian Communist Party members to China in 1951 in his *Once a Jolly Comrade* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1966), pp. 25-50. See also Jon Piccini, '"Light from the East": Travel to China and Australian Activism in the "Long Sixties"', *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 6:1 (2013), 1754-1328. On tours to China beyond Australia see: Anne Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic* (Oxford: Roman and Littlefield, 2013); Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London: Vintage, 2019).
[96] Stevens, 'Autobiographical Writings', July 1980, p. 42.
[97] Ibid.

some of the 'introspection led me up the garden path.' For her, as for the rest of the delegation, 'there was still a big gap…in my politics and political practice and that was the feminist insight.'[98]

This was Stevens' second 'blinding flash of light.'[99] In the late 1960s, Mavis Robertson and Joyce Stevens, good friends who were both members of the CPA, and both influential in the women's liberation movement, read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Stevens recalled: 'More than anything else it made me realise that so many of the things I'd always regarded as being personal idiosyncrasies of my own had to do with how I felt about the way I was treated as a woman, things I hadn't been able to understand. It wasn't that I didn't have any inadequacies, but they were different from the ones I'd imagined.' Feminism helped Stevens to understand 'how women felt about themselves, how bitter and twisted you could get feeling that you were overlooked because your husband was seen before you.'[100] Stevens described her feminist awakening in terms drawn from Chinese communism, as the 'great leap forward.'[101]

Stevens' life was profoundly changed, both personally and politically, by the women's liberation movement. She was influenced by feminists' understanding of the family, and moved into a cooperative in the Sydney suburb of Roseville with Mavis Robertson and others. This was based on the imperative that: 'We were women on our own with children, living in separate houses… struggling with what you do with children when you want to participate in another activity.'[102] Roseville co-op members decided that housework would be shared completely amongst the members of the collective. This lead to all kinds of teething problems, as it did in many feminist houses, both women only and mixed.[103] Stevens recalled 'I remember one of the blokes who hadn't done much housework [before] cleaned the bath with one of those foaming cleansers.' Robertson asked him "what are you going to do with all the soap powder on the floor when it dries?" He replied "I'm going to wait 'til it dries then vacuum it."'[104] Stevens suggested however, that despite the domestic challenges, this experience of communal

[98] Ibid., p. 46.
[99] Ibid., p. 66.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., p. 98.
[103] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski; Janet Wahlquist, 'Living Collectively', *Scarlet Woman* 3 (February 1976), 8-10.
[104] Stevens, 'Autobiographical Writings', p. 99.

living did make her 'lose the feeling that [I was] responsible for the house,' which 'was a relief after a lifetime of housekeeping.'[105]

Stevens also attempted to reform the gender politics of the Communist Party of Australia. She was particularly key in developing an awareness of sexism within the party, and a file in her personal papers titled 'Shit work in the revolutionary party' attests to this (see figure one). Here Stevens undertook an audit of the work that was done, analysing on a granular level, how the distribution of labour was gendered at Communist Party offices and the newspaper office which produced *Tribune.* She noted that everyone at *Tribune* is 'engaged in some technical work, that is everyone types,' but that the burden of this fell on women. She noted that some women who were 'active, creative, political organisers' became 'no more than technical workers,' and the same could not be said of male organisers.[106] Beyond practical reform of the party, Stevens also intervened in communist political thought. Particularly she intervened in claims that women's liberation should be deferred, because the oppression of women will be solved through communist revolution. Stevens characterised this perspective as 'pie in the sky when you die.' [107] She challenged this, suggesting that the women's movement revealed that sexism was 'formed and reinforced' by the family and sexual repression, which needed to be addressed now and would not be solved by a revolution.[108]

It was difficult, she recalled, to convince men in the Communist Party about the necessity for feminism, theoretically or practically. She discussed how difficult they found not being able to attend women's collective meetings. She recalled a time when a male comrade behaved in an angry and antagonistic way and accused women of sectarianism 'about the little sticker we had: "Better dead than wed."'[109] Historians have discussed the entryism of communists in the women's liberation movement.[110] They have also traced how feminists under state socialism worked for reform of the party state, often successfully implementing gender justice working behind the scenes in the state bureaucracy. [111] But Stevens contribution makes it clear that

[105] Ibid.
[106] Untitled document, in Folder: 'Shit Work in the Revolutionary Party', Box 1, Papers of Joyce Stevens, pp. 2-3.
[107] Joyce Stevens, 'Some Questions on the Future of the Women's Movement', *Scarlet Woman,* 5 (March 1977), 2-4, p. 4.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Stevens, 'Autobiographical Writings', p. 66.
[110] See for example: Neil Redfern, 'Women Hold Up Half the Sky: The Response of Maoists in Britain to the Challenge of Feminism', *Journal of Labor and Society* 22:2 (2019), 243-257.
[111] See for example: Wang Zheng, *Finding Women in the State.*

reforming communist parties to make them more gender just was also a priority of communist feminists in liberal capitalist societies.[112]

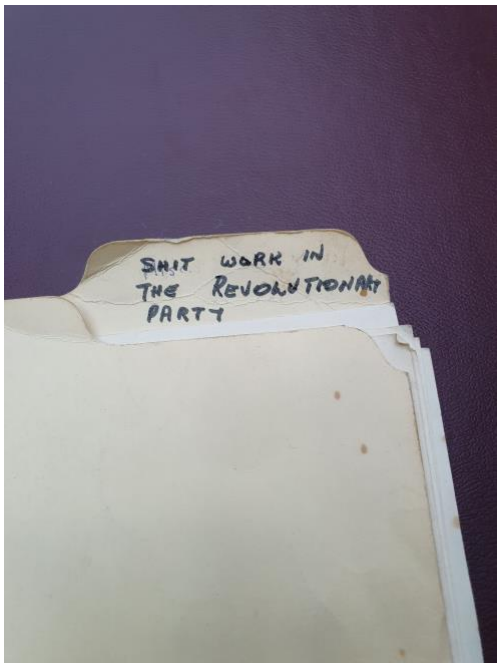


Figure 1: Folder titled 'Shit Work in the Revolutionary Party', Box 1, Papers of Joyce Stevens, State Library of New South Wales.

Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre

Stevens, along with other communist women, was essential to establishing Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre (LWCHC). While communist women are often accused of acting as entryists, and of taking over already established projects in a parasitical way, this was not the case with the LWCHC. This centre was born of the women's liberation movement, and particularly the Women's Commission of 1973, which was a generative event for women's liberation in Australia.[113] At the Women's Commission, which Stevens called a 'mass consciousness raising session,' women spoke about health injustices they had faced.[114] In the first edition of *Mabel,* a women's liberation newspaper, editors wrote that at the Women's Commission women 'talked of the difficulty of getting contraceptives – doctors told them they

[112] See also Penson, *Breaking the Chains.*
[113] Michelle Arrow, '"Everyone needs a holiday from work, why not mothers?" Motherhood, Feminism and Citizenship at the Australian Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 1974-1977', *Women's History Review,* 25:2 (2016), 320-336; Michelle Arrow, 'Making Family Violence Public in the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 1974-1977', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 81-96; Emma Torzillo and Heather Goodall, 'Memories of Entanglement: Conflicts Around Sexuality at the Sydney Women's Commission 1973', *Australian Feminist Studies* (2022), 1-20.
[114] Stevens, 'From There to Where?', p. 12.

were immoral and promiscuous.'[115] Doctors also refused to discuss 'pregnancy termination or menstruation and menopause.'[116] As Stevens put it, at the Women's Commission, 'women of all ages spoke of their distress at being made to feel dirty, shameful, unbalanced, neurotic, stupid and guilty.'[117] After the Women's Commission, Stevens helped to establish Control, an abortion referral service, which operated out of Women's Liberation House in Glebe from August of 1973.[118] Control provided women with information about where they could access abortion, contraception and pregnancy testing and successfully lobbied doctors to decrease the price they were charging for abortions.[119]

It was Control that initially got funding for LWCHC. They wrote to the Minister for Health, Doug Everingham in early July 1973 and explained their proposal: 'As a group of women who have become increasingly concerned by the lack of medical…facilities dealing exclusively with women's problems in a manner that is not degrading to women, we have decided to establish a women's community health clinic.'[120] They suggested they would 'rent a house in our area, Leichhardt, an inner Sydney suburb of mixed working-class and migrant peoples.' LCWHC would have a surgery staffed by doctors with a particular knowledge of 'obstetrics, gynaecology and specific women's diseases.'[121] Based on the success of the Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern, they suggested that two doctors should be permanently employed as this would build trust between patients and doctors more quickly than a larger staff of casually employed doctors.[122] As well as a 'consulting room where a bilingual social worker can give advice on pensions and benefits,' they also planned to 'conduct classes in self-help care, in order to 'break down the great wall of ignorance that women encounter when trying to discover the nature of their gynaecological complaints.'[123] In January of 1974, women were granted their first cheque of $33,000 from the Whitlam Government to cover the cost of rent, establishment costs and salaries. The group were astonished at the approval and the cheque,

[115] 'Women's Services Under Attack,' *Mabel* 1 (1975), 11.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Joyce Stevens, *Healing Women: A History of the Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre,* (Sydney: First Ten Years History Publishing Project, 1995), p. 25.
[118] Ibid., pp. 26-27.
[119] Ibid., p. 27.
[120] Lyndall Ryan (on behalf of the collective) to Minister for Health Dr. Doug Everingham, 5th July, 1973, p. 1, Folder 1: Records relating to the Leichhardt Women's Community Centre 1973-1974, Papers of Barbara Alysen, MLMSS 6638, SLNSW.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., p. 2.
[123] Ibid., p. 1.

but as Stevens wrote, they 'barely had time to recover' before the centre opened on International Women's Day, March 8th, 1974.[124]

At the centre's establishment there were formal structures and this is notable given the women's liberation movement's aspirations against hierarchy. The management committee was made up of equal numbers of Control members and staff members of LWCHC.[125] On 13th May, 1974, Joyce Stevens was elected as a member of the management committee, along with fellow communist feminist Betty Pybus. Pybus acted as a guarantor for the lease on the LWCHC building.[126] The LWCHC also had a chairwoman and a secretary who were responsible for the proper conduct of meetings and keeping records. Amongst those who worked at the centre there were also clearly-defined job roles based on expertise, though wages were the same, except for the doctor, who earned the most and the cleaner, who earned the least.[127] These were formal systems that women in the Communist Party would have been used to, and they brought skills developed through these methods of organising to the early LWCHC.

In late 1974, the hierarchical model of LWCHC was challenged by feminists who worked at the centre full time. Two workers Kath McLean and Robyn Clarke reflected on this process in socialist feminist periodical *Scarlet Woman.* McLean wrote that when she first started working there 'the staff had fairly defined roles. I answered phones all day and nearly went mad…politically, emotionally, and practically, we had to change.'[128] Workers gradually wrested more control from the management committee and skill sharing was implemented through a programme of weekly learning sessions. Women attempted to break down barriers based on role differentiation and by 1975 the descriptor 'health worker' rather than doctor or nurse was used to advertise vacant roles.[129] The cleaning was shared between workers, though this was contentious. McLean and Clarke reflected that while the collectivisation of Leichhardt

[124] Stevens, *Healing Women,* p. 27.
[125] 'Leichhardt Women's Community Heath Centre', Folder 1: Records relating to the Leichhardt Women's Community Centre 1973-1974, Papers of Barbara Alysen.
[126] Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre, Minutes of Management Committee Meeting, August 5th (1973?) p. 1 in Folder 1, Papers of Barbara Alysen.
[127] Stevens, *Healing Women,* p. 74.
[128] Kath McLean and Robyn Clarke, 'Working Full Time in a Collective', *Scarlet Woman* 3 (1976), 4-5, p. 4.
[129] Stevens, *Healing Women,* p. 75. On breaking down role differentiation see McLean and Clarke, 'Working Full Time…', p. 4.

was very rewarding, it was also difficult. They concluded: 'it's a lot harder than you think it's going to be, even when you knew it was going to be harder than it sounded.'[130]

As communist feminists are accused of entryism at the time and in the history, so they are also accused of establishing 'fronts'; organisations which are actually communist but seek legitimacy through aligning themselves with a more palatable, often less radical politics. But the LWCHC was a complex, grounded and well-connected organisation whose genealogy can be found in the women's liberation movement. It was underpinned by feminist philosophy and women's liberation ideas of health. The centre sought to intervene in a context where women's health was dominated by male doctors and experts, both in terms of medical care and knowledge. Acting against this, LWCHC sought to provide holistic health services by and for women where self-help, empowerment and knowledge played a key role in services and demystified the health system. [131] As Stevens wrote, the centre's early leaflets were inspired by The Boston Women's Health Collective text *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and Los Angeles Self-Help Clinic's book *Self-Help*.[132]Australian feminist Polly Borsallino supported the establishment of self-help groups at the centre, including self-examination groups, as she had worked at the LA self-help clinic.[133] Stevens reflected that self-help groups were the most innovative element in the Centre's programme. These were based on similar British and North American groups that coined the slogan 'happiness is knowing your own cervix.'[134]

In line with women's liberation understandings of health, LWCHC understood health as a result of social and political relations, not just a set of physical symptoms. This health service was focused on preventative methods of healing and those that got to the root cause of illness. Stevens' history of the centre *Healing Women*, explained: 'LWCHC recognises that though a woman may come to them because she feels sick, depressed or hungover unless they can give that woman some help to remove the cause of that illness, it will simply keep recurring.'[135] Like many others involved in the women's liberation movement, they were outspoken about the (over)medication of women through drugs, including tranquilisers, because of the way they suppressed and controlled women's emotions for a profit. As one woman wrote in *The*

[130] McLean and Clarke, 'Working Full Time…' p. 5.
[131] Stevens, *Healing Women,* p. 18.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid., p. 28.
[135] Ibid., p. 34.

Speculum Speaks, the LWCHC newsletter published from 1980, 'Everyone of us that swallows a pill to relieve the pain of boredom or the boredom of pain is allowing an unseen organisation, whose main priority is profit, to dictate our feelings.'[136] LWCHC's holistic approach meant that it was committed to offering women alternative forms of healing. Promotional material advertised acupuncture, massage, groups in assertiveness training and astrology.[137] Leaflets about herbal remedies were produced and *The Speculum Speaks* recommended alternative methods to drugs for overcoming compulsive behaviour including smoking and overeating.

In *Healing Women*, Stevens reflects on how LWCHC served the surrounding community, including the significant population of Italian migrants who had migrated to the area after the Second World War. By 1971, Italians were the largest non-Anglo group, with 289,476 Italian-born people living in Australia.[138] As the initial letter requesting funding reveals, women were conscious of the need to employ bi-lingual staff.[139] From its establishment, just over a third of the women using the LWCHC were of non-English speaking background- they were mostly Italian women, but there were also Turkish, Spanish and Yugoslav clients. Despite this, Stevens suggests that in the early years of operation, 'there was little thought given to the best ways of directing services to [migrant] women,' beyond bi-lingual workers.[140] As scholars have discussed, the women's liberation movement was based around a sense that all women had similar experiences and needs, because all experienced gendered oppression.[141] Perhaps this was particularly the case in health, as it operated at the level of the body and so the services provided by LWCHC were seen as universally applicable to women with language the only prohibitive barrier. That migrant women would need specialist services and had different health needs based on cultural difference, was not something that feminists were conscious of at the centre's establishment. But this changed quite quickly. By 1975, the centre employed an Italian speaking and a multilingual doctor and discussion groups with migrant women were started, including a Turkish women's group on family planning. LWCHC began specific research on

[136] 'Drugs and Madness', *The Speculum Speaks: Newsletter of the Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre* February 1983, p. 3, Q613.0424099/5, SLNSW.
[137] 'Groups', leaflet included with *The Speculum Speaks,* February 1983, SLNSW.
[138] Gianfranco Cresciani, *ASIO and Italian 'Persons of Interest': A History of Sydney's Federation of Italian Migrants and their Families* (Redland Bay, Queensland: Conor Court Publishing, 2017), p. 16.
[139] Ryan (on behalf of the collective) to Minister for Health Dr. Doug Everingham, 5th July, 1973.
[140] Stevens, *Healing Women,* p. 48.
[141] On this see, for example: Adele Murdolo, 'Safe Homes for Immigrant Women: Narrating Alternative Histories of the Women's Refuge Movement in Australia', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 35:3 (2014), 126-153, pp. 130-1.

the health needs and desires of migrant women, including their use of tranquilisers.[142] In 1979-1980, migrant workers at LWCHC began visiting migrant women in factories discussing their contraception, sexual and workplace health, a programme funded by the federal government.[143] This programme was likely influenced by Women in Industry: Contraception and Health. This was a Melbourne collective with significant ties to the Italian Communist Party, and to which this chapter now turns.

Women in Industry: Contraception and Health

Women in Industry: Contraception and Health was based in Melbourne and began in 1977. Rhonda Small, one of the founding members, explained, it was first called 'Action for Family Planning.' Small commented that the name 'sounds so arcane these days.'[144] In 1980, this organisation was renamed Women in Industry: Contraception and Health (WICH). This organisation piloted a programme of visits to migrant women in their workplaces, these were mostly factories including meat works and garment factories. These visits targeted Greek, Yugoslav, and Turkish women, but given the migration patterns into Australia, the largest group WICH served were Italian migrants especially in its early, formative years. WICH was based on an understanding that migrant women had specific needs in the area of contraceptive and sexual health. Adele Murdolo, Italian-Australian feminist and current CEO of the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (the organisation WICH eventually became) explained that this organisation developed in response to the disproportionate number of migrant women having abortions when methods of contraception they were using, particularly the withdrawal method, failed.[145] Rhonda Small and Devva Kasnitz, who were involved in the organisation in its earliest form, explained that migrant women were forced to resort to abortion because of inadequate bi-lingual information about reproductive health care. Migrant women saw doctors who were often rushed, did not speak their patients' languages, and were sometimes racist.[146]

This understanding of the position of migrant women came, in part, from the insights that Devva Kasnitz, an anthropologist, gathered. Interested in immigration and health, Kasnitz came to Australia from the University of Michigan on field work, seeking to work with

[142] Stevens, *Healing Women,* pp. 48-54.
[143] Ibid., p. 4
[144] Oral history interview with Rhonda Small.
[145] Informal discussion with Adele Murdolo October 29, 2020, on Zoom.
[146] Oral history inteview with Devva Kasnitz, Oral history interview with Rhonda Small.

migrants. Kasnitz spoke French and Spanish and thought 'I can learn Italian and Portuguese.'[147] She gathered insights formally, through working with the Brunswick Community Heath Service for three years. This served a surrounding community of mostly working class people in inner city Melbourne. This included Anglo-Australian, Italian, Greek and Turkish people and the service employed staff who spoke a range of community languages. Kasnitz put her skills to use as an anthropologist for the centre and completed a survey and report about the health needs of the community, going door to door with a team of interviewers and interpreters to complete a qualitative survey.[148] Kasnitz then analysed the data and found that 'migrants are far more dissatisfied by their medical care than are Australians. Language, but also a general lack of communication due to haste, were the major problems cited.'[149] The research also found 'the working class is at a disadvantage in their knowledge of family planning services.[150]

Kasnitz also gathered insights informally, through, as she put it during an oral history interview, 'total enmeshment' in the world of Italian migrants in Australia. She rented a room with a Sicilian family, two blocks from Brunswick Health Centre. Here Kasnitz lived with the grandparents whose youngest daughter was seventeen and had been married and left home two weeks before she arrived. Kasnitz moved both into 'her room and into her role in the family. I became the new, youngest, virginal daughter,' she remarked with characteristic humour.[151] She studied 'reproduction and immigration' for her dissertation and completed interviews with Italian women. But, as she notes in a recent article, her 'best data on the Sicilians' conception of female physiology came from kitchen table and bathroom conversations about whether or not it was a good idea for me to have a baby,' which many people had an opinion on because Kasnitz has a disability.[152]

Kasnitz worked with others including Rhonda Small, an Anglo-Australian feminist, to establish WICH. Small had been involved in the women's liberation health care movement. In an oral history interview, Small highlighted the differences between women's liberation healthcare and WICH. The women's liberation movement was 'definitely questioning a lot of the

[147] Oral history interview with Devva Kasnitz.
[148] Devva Kasnitz, *Health Consumers Survey: Report Number Two,* Brunswick Community Health Centre, March 1978, pp. 4-8. State Library of Victoria.
[149] Kasnitz, *Health Consumers Survey*, p. 32.
[150] Ibid p. 35.
[151] Oral history interview with Devva Kasnitz.
[152] Devva Kasnitz, 'The Politics of Disability Performativity: An Autoethnography', *Current Anthropology* 61:21(2020), S16-S25, p. S17.

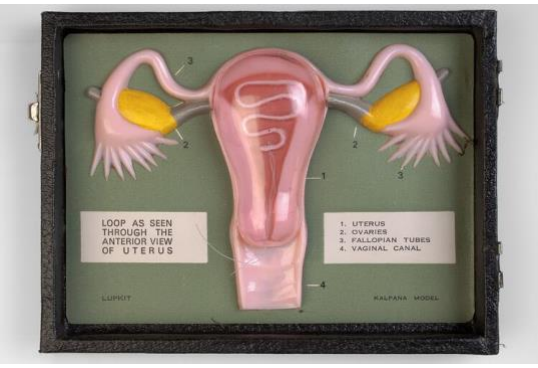
medicalisation of women's health' as well as providing services, 'whether it was contraception or access to the possibilities for a termination,' but it worked with women 'coming along to discover for themselves' at their building at Johnson Street, Collingwood.[153] WICH, however, 'reached out into the community in a way that was a bit different.' The Johnson Street Centre, like the LWCHC encouraged women to undertake self-exam with a hand mirror and speculum, but Small stressed that this was not in WICH's remit. This 'would not have been appropriate in a factory in the lunch hour, you know, mixed workforce.' Instead, WICH 'provid[ed] a service for migrant women that no one else was providing at that time.' There largely weren't health services that had bilingual staff and a lack of knowledge about the services that did exist amongst the migrant community and Anglo feminists, too. Instead of women coming to them, they went to women, 'where they were at,' in their workplaces.[154]

WICH visited women in factories and taught factory working women about different methods of contraception and sexual health during their lunch hour, in their own languages. This organisation worked with trade union shop stewards and delegates in order to access factory workplaces, though these relationships were not always easy and sometimes WICH faced hostility.[155] Each factory was visited four times, at weekly intervals. A WICH report explained the purpose: 'the program is designed to encourage a trusting relationship in which options for health care can be opened or explored. Trust is developed within a woman-to-woman approach.'[156] WICH's workshops were hands on. They included bilingual information leaflets which women could take with them. This was supported by 'verbal reinforcement and explanation for women who don't read. Slides, models and samples of contraceptives are used as additional resources.'[157] Both Rhonda Small and Kasnitz highlighted the humour that was often an important part of the visits. Small recalled: 'The factory visits, I mean, they were hilarious sometimes. Not that I always knew what was going on in terms of the language on the few that I went on. But the hilarity of diaphragms and condoms, you know, around the lunch table.'[158] Kasnitz spoke of going into factories armed with different condoms 'all different colours, sizes and flavours.' In her home office, surrounded by a range of specialist computer mice she recalled what she would tell women about contraception: 'It's like computer

[153] Oral history interview with Rhonda Small.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Oral history interview with Rhonda Small.
[156] 'The Factory Visits Program', p. 12.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Oral history interview with Rhonda Small.

mice. If you don't like one kind of computer mouse, throw it out and try another. If you don't like one form of contraception[…]try another one.'[159]

WICH often repurposed resources from multinational corporations. This included an A3 size flip chart with large simple drawings of contraceptives produced by US company Ortho, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson.[160] They used models of women's contraceptive organs which could be easily folded away (see figure two). These models were produced in India, and those that feature in the photographs below include an intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD) also known as a 'loop.' There are not many sources about this particular model, the 'Kalpana Lupkit,' though it does feature in a British science textbook from 1975. Here it is introduced as 'used by workers who travel round villages in India educating women about contraception.'[161] This hints at a complex, chequered global history. Between 1965-1967 there was a concerted campaign supported by aid organisations, including the World Bank and the Population Council, to get 29 million women in India to accept IUDs, often through coercive cash payments. This 'disastrous campaign' was rolled our quickly and relied on mobile units and camps.[162] WICH repurposed these models, but certainly did not encourage use of the IUD over other kinds of contraception. The models made in India would also have appealed to WICH because the women depicted were brown skinned, likely important for a programme based on the needs of migrant women.





[159] Oral history interview with Devva Kasnitz.
[160] Ortho Pharmaceuticals, Flip Chart, Family Planning Educational Aid, 1970s, Victoria Museums https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1452723, accessed 15 June 2022.
[161] Richard Gliddon (ed.), *The Perpetuation of Life: Revised Nuffield Biology Text 4* (London: Longman Group, 1975), p. 171
[162] Matthew Connelly, 'Population Control in India: Prologue to the Emergency Period', *Population and Development Review,* 32:4 (2006), 629-667, p. 652.

Figure 2: Museums Victoria Collection, 'Model of female reproductive system used for Women in Industry: Contraception and Health (WICH) workplace-based family planning sessions in the 1970s'[163]

In the early years of the LWCHC, migrant women's needs were presumed to be the same as white women, due to the privileging of gender over other categories of analysis, such as race, and the naturalising of white women's experience as the universal experience of women. [164] Other feminists saw migrant women as 'traditional' and it was assumed that 'their culture [was] oppressing them' and they were subject to a more intense form of patriarchy than white women.[165] Particularly, they were seen as ignorant about sex and methods of contraception. But by 1977 when WICH was established, migrant women were challenging these ideas directly. A group of self-identified Black and Third World women who worked in health services wrote in *Girls' Own,* a women's liberation newspaper*,* 'Our sexualities have been shaped quite differently to yours…We may not have the same inhibitions and misconceptions; for example that wimmin have orgasms, can and should enjoy sex, is not a new phenomena for us…However, in some of our cultures paramount importance is placed on a high standard of modesty and sexual privacy for both womin and men.'[166]

WICH was subject to criticism from some members of the women's liberation movement who felt that it was run by 'middle class professional health and social workers…with eager assistance of the drug companies.'[167] Bon Hull, a Victorian health activist, suggested that WICH promoted a hierarchy of reproductive subjects where 'migrant women [are kept] passively working, but not reproducing' while 'middle class women [are sent] home to breed.'[168] What Hull overlooked is the fact that WICH was set up to respond to reproductive injustice that migrant women faced, including over-reliance on abortion, and sought to offer women a greater range of options. A WICH report explained that 'through information exchange in [the workplace] women themselves are better able to consider alternatives, pursue

[163] Available online at https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1452726, accessed 5 September 2022.
[164] Adele Murdolo, 'Safe Homes for Immigrant Women', pp. 130-1.
[165] Ibid.; Adele Murdolo quoted in Zora Simic and Monica Dux, *The Great Feminist Denial* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008) p. 174.
[166] 'Health Centres', *Girls' Own* 10 (February-March, 1983), 15- 16, p. 16.
[167] Bon Hull, 'Depo-Provera What is it?', *Vashti: A Women's Liberation Magazine* 29 (Autumn 1981), 5-7, p. 7. In the source Hull refers to WICH as Action for Family Planning, its previous name.
[168] Ibid.

entitlements and act on issues on their own behalf.'[169] Alison Caddick and Rhonda Small sought to respond to this criticism. They wrote in an article that 'Migrant women use withdrawal methods not simply out of ignorance of other methods…Migrant women have a healthy suspicion of "modern technology contraceptives" and consistently ask about their side effects.'[170]

WICH understood that migrant women had different needs, and required different services, as distinct from white Australian women. Caddick and Small reflected that 'the specific nature of migrant women's exploitation needs to be represented and their particular concerns addressed.'[171] WICH knew of the need to 'communicate with migrant women not only in their own language but on non-professional grounds through women who would share women's class and cultural experiences.' WICH always sought to be a peer-to-peer organisation and to offer migrant women information about family planning in their own languages. Bilingual workers at the Brunswick Community Health Service initially trained migrant women to be peer-to-peer trainers.[172] By 1982, all WICH workers were from non-Anglo backgrounds.[173]

Besides being born from a burgeoning politics that we would now identify as intersectional, where gender was not privileged over other forms of identity, WICH also worked closely with the Federazione Italiana Lavortori Emigrati e Famiglie, (FILEF).[174] As historian Gianfranco Cresciani has noted, FILEF was established by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in Rome in 1972.[175] At this time, the PCI had gained a position of historic power, gaining 27.15% of the Italian vote, which would peak in 1976 at 34.4%.[176] Carlo Levi, a founder of FILEF, suggested this organisation was established so that Italians in the diaspora would be 'no longer 'things' or passive labour providers, but protagonists.'[177] As historian Luca Marin discusses, FILEF sought to be a 'voice' for left wing Italian immigrants in Australia. It did this through its fortnightly newspaper *Nuovo Paese* [*New Country*] launched in 1974 and through community

[169] 'The Factory Visits Program', *Women in Industry Contraception and Health 1989 Annual Report*, State Library of Victoria, 12-18, p. 12.
[170] Alison Caddick and Rhonda Small, 'W.I.C.H.: Women in Industry: Contraception and Health', *Scarlet Woman* 15 (Spring 1982), 9-12.
[171] Ibid., p.12.
[172] Oral history interview with Devva Kasnitz.
[173] Caddick and Small, 'W.I.C.H.', p. 12;
[174] On intersectionality see Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color' *Stanford Law Review* 43: 6 (1991), 1241-1299.
[175] Cresciani, *ASIO and Italian 'Persons of Interest',* p. 20.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

radio programs, migrant workers' conferences, theatre and childcare services.[178] FILEF cut against the public perception that Italians in Australia were 'ignorant peasants,' with little industrial knowledge, trade union experience or belief in solidarity who would, if it was economically necessary, undercut (white) Australian workers' wages and conditions as *crumiri* (strikebreakers.)[179] This stereotype was particularly applied to migrant women who were not seen as a powerful industrial force, despite the fact that they were often union members. While Italian migrants were screened by ASIO and the Italian police and were excluded from Australia if they were found to be leftists (or mafia). This was not entirely successful and FILEF was made up of leftist Italians often with links to the Communist Party.[180]

Small suggested that many of the Italians WICH worked with 'were all ex-communists or Members of the Communist Party in Italy and had come to Australia and were radicals…within the union movement and also establishing organisations here to, you know, support members of their community.'[181] The PCI and the Italian trade union movement was, as elsewhere, male dominated and without a consciousness that women's equality would only be achieved by addressing the relations of the private sphere in tandem with public participation in education, work and politics.[182] However, there were many ways that women could be involved in the PCI, including through the Unione Donne Italiane (UDI), the Italian affiliate of the WIDF, which boasted a million members in 1950.[183] *Noi donne,* the magazine of the UDI, was Italy's most widely read women's magazine at the time.[184] Moreover the Italian trade union movement was changing in the 1960s, as women pushed 'a new language and agenda,' including a developed understanding of women's double burden.[185] Reflective of women's new roles in the PCI, Devva Kasnitz became involved with FILEF through meeting a woman who worked as an organiser for the Italian Communist Party. They met while working at multicultural radio station, 3ZZ. This was a migrant run radio station which broadcast shows in multiple languages, including Italian. It shared a building with FILEF in Coburg, a working class suburb

[178] Luca Marin, Unpublished PhD thesis, *Migrant Activism in Australia: The Case of the Italian Federation of Migrant Workers and their Families [FILEF]* (Swinburne University of Technology, Victoria, Australia, 2016), p. iii.
[179] Cresciani, *ASIO and Italian 'Persons of Interest',* p. 16.
[180] Ibid., p.15.
[181] Oral history interview with Rhonda Small.
[182] Maud Bracke, *Women and the Reinvention of the Political: Feminism in Italy, 1968-1983* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), p. 35.
[183] Bonfiglioli, 'Cold War Internationalism, Nationalism and the Yugoslav-Soviet Split', pp. 61-62.
[184] Bracke, *Women and the Reinvention of the Political,* p. 35.
[185] Ibid., pp. 131-32.

of North Melbourne. They developed a friendship, eventually successfully campaigning with many others to save the community radio station in 1977.

Changes in the Italian left were also reflected in FILEF's membership. As historian Luca Marin writes, after 1968 the membership of FILEF included members of Italian far left groups including those involved in far left autonomous Marxist group *Lotta Continua* and Italian feminism, who were often critical of the sexism and hierarchy of the PCI. Chiara Caglieris who was involved in feminist activism it Italy and emigrated to Australia, described to Marin how FILEF changed:

'Many members of FILEF who were PCI members too were old emigrant. They had a different idea of society, a different opinion about male/female relations…So let's say there were two souls of FILEF, the most conservative and the most innovative part….But after all when it was time to vote, we voted PCI.'[186]

Claudio Marcello, president of the Sydney FILEF branch, recalled that some women in FILEF had 'direct contact with the Australian feminist movement.'[187] In Marcello's eyes this made FILEF distinct to other Italo-Australian organisations; these other organisations had a women's group but these 'focused on Italian traditions,' not feminism.[188] In 1975, FILEF worked with members of the women's liberation movement to publish an International Women's Year edition of their newspaper, *Nuovo Paese,* but the relationship between WICH and FILEF was FILEF's most sustained interaction with the Australian women's liberation movement. Through connections with FILEF, WICH developed relationships with more conservative Italian-Australian organisations. Kasnitz recalled bringing Italian communists around the table with members of the Italo-Australian establishment, including more conservative Italian organisations with ties to the Catholic Church, to discuss the issue of family planning. Getting organisations with such different political views into conversation was, she recalled, 'truly amazing.'[189]

[186] Chiara Caglieris quoted in Marin, *Migrant Activism in Australia,* p. 130.
[187] Ibid., p. 127.
[188] Ibid., p. 127.
[189] Oral history interview with Devva Kasnitz.

WICH's perspective, mirroring FILEF's, was one that foregrounded women's experiences as workers. From the beginning WICH were interested in how women's role as industrial workers impacted on their reproductive health. To better grasp the relationship between work and sexual and reproductive health, bilingual workers wrote reports after visits to each factory. These reports suggested that for some women, exhaustion, from the double burden of paid work and unpaid work in the home, meant an almost total lack of interest in sexual contact. One worker remarked 'Turning your back's the best contraception.'[190] Alison Caddick and Rhonda Small suggested that while contraception and sexual health might be some of the most important issues to the feminist movement, they may not be the priority for women who were suffering from workplace injuries and overwork. Caddick and Small noted that 'contraception cannot be considered in isolation. It must be linked not only to abortion and other women's health problems but also to occupational health.'[191]

As WICH continued into the 1980s, this industrial focus became key to the organisation. Factory workshops extended beyond contraceptive health, into workplace health and industrial relations. By 1985, this included sessions on safety at work and sexual harassment, developed in response to migrant women drawing WICH workers' attention to this.[192] By 1984, WICH had contact with five thousand women yearly. [193] By 1989, they were doing 390 workshops a year.[194] WICH relied on funding from the Victorian Government, and as will be discussed chapter three, there were lean times and funding crises. For Small and Kasnitz, WICH had a profound effect on their lives. They travelled together to Italy as Small sought to develop her skills in Italian because of the work she had done with this group. There they connected with Italian-Australian journalist and agitator Ignazio Salemi who had been deported from Australia because of his work for migrants in FILEF on behalf of the PCI.[195]

This chapter has pushed against the Cold War binary which considers communist women's commitment to gender justice as little more than propaganda. This history also troubles the binary between the 'Old' communist and the 'New' Left, which describes social movements-

[190] Caddick and Small, 'W.I.C.H.', p. 12.
[191] Caddick and Small, 'W.I.C.H.', p. 12.
[192] 'Stop Sexual Harrassment', *WICH Newsletter* 1 (January, 1985), 2, Political Ephemera relating to Women in Industry: Contraception and Health, 1984, 1985, 1989, Riley and ephemera Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.
[193] Letter from Annamalia Chimenton [Co-ordinator on behalf of WICH] to C.O.S.H.G, 30 May 1984, Political Ephemera relating to WICH, SLVic.
[194] 'The Factory Visits Program', p. 12.
[195] On Ignazio Salemi see: Marin, *Migrant Activism in Australia,* p. 80.

including the women's liberation movement- generated from the global moment of 1968, as privileging self-liberation and extending democracy. The role of communist women and global communist networks in the Australian women's liberation movement mounts a considerable challenge to this narrative. The work of Joyce Stevens, a Communist Party member and committed feminist cannot be contained by the binary of the Old/New Left, and the absorption of natural birth methods by the later women's movement also challenges this binary. Moreover, when Italy is brought into the frame, it becomes clear that the Old/New Left division does not apply here. As scholars have noted, the Italian Communist Party and their affiliate organisations including FILEF, 'responded actively to the challenge of new movements,' including women's liberation.[196] The PCI managed to gain organisational and electoral strength which peaked in the mid-1970s, the same time that the social movements associated with the New Left were gaining strength elsewhere.

The impact of communist feminists on the women's liberation movement has been revealed by considering three very different women's health projects, the movement for natural childbirth, the Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre and Women in Industry: Contraception and Health. Each of these organisations were connected to campaigns for reproductive justice which the next chapter discusses in detail. I turn now to Australian women's creative use of global law- including legal precedent as well as informal uses of the law such as public activist trials and international people's tribunals- in their campaigns for abortion rights and against forced sterilisation.

[196] See, for example: Sidney Tarrow, 'The Phantom at the Opera: Political Parties and Social Movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Italy', in *New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies* ed. Russell Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 251-273; Maria Antonietta Confalonieri, 'Parties and Movements in Italy: The Case of Feminism and the PCI', *Il Politico* 60:1 (1995), 127-158.

Chapter 2

'We're not guilty! It's your law that is guilty': Australian Feminist Campaigns for Reproductive Rights and the tools of Global Law, 1967-1985.

In the first edition of *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter* published in July 1969, the editors wrote: 'the group that all women's lib groups are engaged in is the abortion campaign. We are organising around the demand, abortion on demand.'[1] This chapter considers campaigns for women's reproductive rights. [2] It explores how Australian feminists made use of global law in the campaigns for free, safe legal abortion which began in the late 1960s and the campaign against forced sterilisation, taken up in earnest in the late 1970s.

Australian scholarship has typically considered abortion rights in the national context. Michelle Arrow and Barbara Baird have discussed abortion within the context of the women's liberation movement.[3] Marilyn Lake suggested that campaigning for abortion on demand was 'the real break with women's movements of the past,' because it 'centered the politics of sexuality.'[4] These scholars have shown that the women's liberation movement politicised women's lack of access to abortion as part of a pattern of gender injustice.[5] Scholars have recently become attuned to the way that race, as well as gender, played a role in the distribution and agitation of reproductive rights in Australia. Work by Baird and Erica Miller has historicised contemporary moral panics over 'Australia having too many abortions' through older concerns of white 'race suicide.'[6] Through these histories, abortions have come to be seen as one element of reproductive justice, among others. The historical withholding of abortion and its illegality should be understood as informed by powerful ideas of the duty of white women to reproduce a white nation.[7] Historians have considered Aboriginal women's criticism of abortion, and

[1] *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter,* July 1969, p.1.
[2] Abortion on demand is discussed as an aim of the women's liberation movement in Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1999), pp. 223-24.
[3] Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, The Political and the Making of Australian Society* (New South Wales: NewSouth Books, 2019); Barbara Baird, 'Abortion and the Limits of the Personal Becoming Political', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 129-146, especially pp. 135-36.
[4] Lake, *Getting Equal,* p. 223.
[5] Arrow, *The Seventies;* Baird, 'Abortion and the Limits of the Personal'.
[6] Barbara Baird, 'Maternity, Whiteness and National Identity: The Case of Abortion', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 21:50 (2006), 197-221, p. 199; Erica Miller, '"Too Many": Anxious White Nationalism and the Biopolitics of Abortion', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 30:83 (2015), 82-98; Karen Coleman, 'The Politics of Abortion in Australia: Freedom, Church and State', *Feminist Review* 29 (1988), 75-97.
[7] Erica Miller, '"Too Many", p. 82; Baird, 'Maternity, Whiteness and National Identity.'

mentioned their experiences of reproductive injustice.[8] Historians have mentioned, but not considered the contribution of Aboriginal or women of colour or migrant feminists to the reproductive justice movement. [9] I have done this in chapter one through the study of migrant women's organisation Women in Industry: Contraception and Health.

This chapter sets the Australian campaigns for reproductive justice globally. I explore how official legal precedent drawn from different national contexts, and unofficial legal instruments including people's tribunals, were used by the Australian women's liberation movement to further Australian women's reproductive rights. This chapter explores the ways that campaigners for abortion rights drew on official legal precedent from Britain and the United States to challenge Australian abortion law. Australian women were inspired by a French abortion trial, which took place at Bobigny and led to legislative change in France. The account of this trial was first translated into English by members of the Australian women's liberation movement and the defence lawyer in the trial, Tunisian-French feminist Gisèle Halimi visited Australia in 1975 for United Nations International Women's Year. Yet feminists were not just influenced by formal trials, but also by unofficial legal instruments, including peoples' tribunals. At the International Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women, held in 1976 in Brussels, Aboriginal women discussed their experience of forced sterilisation. Key to unofficial, staged activist trials was the use of the ritual of law to reveal its injustices.

The core business of global history has been the tracing of unencumbered flows and tracking of successful connections.[10] But, in reflections on the state of the field, historians have reflexively urged the consideration of failed, truncated exchanges as well.[11] Failure is key to understanding the reception of the Bobigny Trial in Australia and the 1976 International

[8] Baird, 'Maternity, Whiteness and National Identity,' p.201.
[9] Ibid; Gwendolyn Gray Jamieson mentions the Melbourne migrant women's group Women in Industry Contraception and Health in her *Reaching for Health: The Australian Women's Health Movement and Public Policy* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2012) pp. 29, 79-80.
[10] Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 64; David Washbrook, 'Problems in Global History', in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century,* ed. Maxine Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 21-31, p. 23.
[11] Frederick Cooper, 'What Is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian's Perspective', *African Affairs* 100:399 (2001), 189-213; Shruti Kapila, 'Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political', in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History,* ed. Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 253-274, p. 260; Alecia Simmonds, Anne Rees and Anna Clark, 'Testing the Boundaries: Reflections on Transnationalism in Australian History', in *Transnationalism, Nationalism and Australian History,* ed. Anna Clark, Anne Rees and Alecia Simmonds (Sydney: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) 1-15; Christina Twomey, 'Is Australian History Over-determined by the Transnational Turn?' in *Transnationalism,* ed. Rees, Clark, Simmonds, 89-103.

Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women in Brussels (the Brussels Tribunal). Neither the impact on Australia of the trial at Bobigny, nor the Brussels Tribunal was successful in the way that those involved intended. However, by looking beyond immediate and direct success a more complex picture emerges.

To consider how instruments of law circulated globally and were crucial to the Australian campaign for reproductive rights, this chapter considers two organisations that agitated for abortion rights: Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) and Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC). ALRA began in 1967 on the cusp of the women's liberation movement. It was based on the British organisation of the same name. It included humanists, those involved in campaigns for civil liberties and Christians seeking to liberalise the church. As Michelle Arrow convincingly argues, ALRA were philosophically distinct to the later women's liberation movement. They contended that the law should not interfere in people's private lives and in this way maintained the distinction between the personal and the political, which the women's liberation sought to do away with.[12] However, despite these philosophical differences, ALRA had a significant impact on the women's liberation movement and some members including Julia Freebury and Beatrice Faust identified as feminists, so I include this organisation here.[13] Faust was later a significant figure in the liberal feminist organisation Women's Electoral Lobby, for which abortion rights were key.[14] WAAC was established through the women's liberation movement in 1972. Operating in line with women's liberation principles, WAAC was a women only group, who believed that women's right to choose would be achieved through a mass movement of women taking direct action. Throughout the 1970s, there was conflict between the two organisations about how abortion rights should be gained.

The work done by Australian historians to date reveals what the landscape of abortion rights in Australia looked like in the late 1960s. As WAAC and ALRA were established abortions were illegal but available, though this was uneven. They were mostly safe, but not in every instance, and women did die.[15] As archival material and the oral history interviews I undertook

[12] Arrow, *The Seventies,* pp. 19-20.
[13] Julia Freebury, oral history interview with Rosemary Block, State Library of NSW, Oral History Collection, MLOH 73, tape 4, part 2, Monday 22nd July, 1991.
[14] Marian Sawer with Gail Radford, *Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), pp. 10-11.
[15] Jo Wainer (ed.), *Lost: Illegal Abortion Stories* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006). See especially the story of Carolyn Jamieson, the last woman to die of an illegal abortion in Australia, written by her mother Mollie Jamieson, pp. 207-214; Gideon Haigh, *The Racket: How Abortion Became Legal in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), Jamieson's death is discussed pp. 8-12.

revealed, abortions were often unpleasant and expensive and quite often women were sexually harassed by doctors.[16] The first issue of *MeJane,* a newspaper produced by the Sydney women's liberation movement described an illegal abortion clinic in Sydney's Eastern suburbs, as 'a one roomed flat. The room acts as both the waiting room with up to 16 people waiting their turn, as well as the couch for the necessary operation.' Waiting were 'mostly couples-who were terrified. A television set, blaring loudly [would] act as an alibi in case the place was busted,' everyone would tell the police they were watching television together.[17] Australian scholarship on abortion has mostly considered the national context. Work has highlighted the hyper-local way in which women traded knowledge about abortion, in terms of where to get one, or how to self-abort. This knowledge was sometimes literally passed over the back fence or through notes and whispers exchanged surreptitiously at women's workplaces.[18]

As historians have noted, women's access to abortion was uneven in terms of class.[19] The memoir of Zelda D'Aprano, a working class Jewish feminist from Melbourne, reveals this. D'Aprano discussed her illegal abortions, including one she endured without anaesthetic, and another where the doctor placed a towel over her face to prevent her from seeing him, so that she couldn't tell the police.[20] After the procedure she told her mother who 'sat down and cried…for she herself knew what this meant.' D'Aprano learnt of her mother's two abortions and concluded 'only women without money know of this experience…the wealthy are able to buy the best services.'[21]

Access to abortion was also unequal in terms of location. Before decriminalisation, women would travel to Victoria and NSW where abortion was made possible through considerable police corruption, which protected doctors from raids in exchange for money. This has been discussed by Gideon Haigh, and is also revealed in the memoir of Peggy Berman who worked as a receptionist at an illegal abortion clinic in Melbourne and had the job of paying off the police.[22] After the story of the abortion racket broke across the media and the 1970 Kaye Enquiry found widespread corruption in Victoria, abortion clinics began to be raided more

[16] Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1995) p. 41. Feminists discuss being sexually harassed and assaulted by doctors undertaking abortions in the film *Brazen Hussies* dir. Catherine Dwyer, Madman Films, 2020.
[17] 'The Latest on Abortion', *MeJane: A Women's Liberation Newspaper,* No. 1, March 1971*,* 3.
[18] Wainer (ed.), *Lost;* Haigh, *The Racket*, p. 46.
[19] Wainer, (ed.), *Lost,* pp. 5-8.
[20] Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda,* p. 42.
[21] Ibid., p. 43
[22] Peggy Berman with Kevin Childs, *Why Isn't She Dead!* (Melbourne: Gold Star Productions, 1972).

frequently. [23] Raids initially targeted clinics that would not pay off the police, and doctors who performed abortions were arrested.[24] Liberalisation of abortion law in some states ironically occurred in conjunction with crack-downs on abortion clinics in states where abortion remained a crime.[25]

Global Legal Precedent

ALRA sought to reform Australian abortion law through appealing to British legal precedent. The constitution of the organisation explicitly said as much.[26] While British law had no formal standing in Australia, activists used it as a tool to pressure the government into legislative change. ALRA members knew that in Britain, the Abortion Act of 1967 had been passed through extending precedent set by *R. vs Bourne*. In this test case from 1938, Dr. Aleck Bourne, a renowned London gynaecologist and birth control advocate, had performed an abortion on a fourteen year old girl who had been raped and consequently fallen pregnant.[27] In court, Bourne pleaded not guilty, arguing that he performed the abortion to preserve her life. Ultimately he was acquitted as the judge and jury interpreted the law to mean not preventing her death, but terminating a pregnancy where 'the probable consequence of the continuance of [the pregnancy] would be to make the woman a physical or mental wreck.'[28] The Bourne Trial extended the legal meaning of what it meant to 'preserve a life' and with this extended the criteria under which abortions could be performed. In Britain the 1967 Abortion Act relied on *R vs. Bourne* but took the concept of women's wellbeing further. An abortion was deemed lawful if continuing the pregnancy would involve greater risk of injury to the physical or mental health of a pregnant woman than a termination.[29] Victorian members of ALRA sought to use the Bourne Trial to change Australian law. The police explicitly spoke against the use of British legal precedent in Australia. Detective Superintendent Frank Holland of the Melbourne homicide department dismissed *R vs. Bourne*: 'To say that Bourne's case has any influence in Australia is nonsense. One judge can't make a decision affecting the rest of the world.' There would be 'no liberal shilly shallying.' [30]

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[23] Haigh, *The Racket,* p. 163.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 163-71. 'The Latest on Abortion', *Me Jane,* p.3.
[26] 'Constitution,' p.1 in Papers of Julia Freebury ca. 1970-1991, Box 1, State Library of NSW.
[27] Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.104.
[28] Haigh, *The Racket,* p. 36; Brooke, *Sexual Politics,* p. 104.
[29] Brooke, *Sexual Politics,* p. 174.
[30] Haigh, *The Racket,* p. 87.

In May 1969, Justice Menhennit liberalised state law in Victoria. He ruled that abortion would be lawful if necessary to protect the physical or mental health of the woman. Despite Frank Holland's claims, he drew on legal precedent set in Britain including British legal scholar Glanville Williams' discussion of abortion and the Bourne case.[31] But even after the change in the law, doctors in Victoria were broadly unwilling to do terminations. This was out of concern that they would make a decision based on their own judgement and if they faced arrest and trial, a court may deem their judgement 'incorrect' and thus find them guilty. Bertrum Wainer, a medical doctor, ALRA member and key player in abortion reform in Victoria knew, because of the role the Bourne case played in Britain, that a test case was necessary.[32] He held a press conference and claimed he had done an abortion to protect the health of the woman. He knew that if he was found not guilty, other doctors could perform abortions without fear. He repeated this tactic three times, each time selecting a woman whose reasons for terminating a pregnancy were 'less compelling' in the eyes of the law. [33] The final woman, in fact, had no medical need for an abortion, she 'simply could not mother again.'[34] Through these test cases, Wainer extended the meaning of 'protect the health or life of a woman' and so liberalised the circumstances under which abortions could be performed. The first time he turned himself in at Russell Street police headquarters a large crowd gathered. A liberal clergyman held a sign, appealing to British legal precedent, asking 'Reform in England, why not here?' This picture was reproduced in ALRA's material.[35]

ALRA members felt that the Menhennitt ruling in Victoria and the similar, subsequent Levine ruling in NSW in 1971 were significant steps toward abortion rights. But, they compared these to the 1967 British Abortion Act and found them less durable. This is because these were *rulings* of a judge rather than an Act of Parliament and in Australia, as in Britain, the parliament is the supreme legal authority. Julia Freebury recalled in an oral history interview with Rosemary Block, using the scrapbooks she had meticulously kept over the period as an aide-mémoire, '[The Levine ruling was] the most liberal one in the whole of Australia […] it was fragile. If there had been any bad abortion done at any of the clinics[…]And we had another court case, and we had a lot of wowzers on the court case, we could lose the Judge Levine

[31] Haigh, *The Racket,* p. 103.
[32] Ibid., p.95; Wainer, *Lost,* pp. 8-9.
[33] Wainer, *Lost,* pp. 14-15.
[34] Wainer, *Lost,* p. 15
[35] Folder 1, Box 1: Julia Freebury Papers re: Campaign to repeal abortion law in NSW including material from ALRA and other organisations ca. 1970-1981.

ruling and this was what we were afraid of.'[36] Freebury used global networks to put pressure to Australian law makers to bring the law into line with Britain: 'I wrote to London, so it cost me an airmail stamp […] I wrote to women's house in London which was on the Embankment […] I asked them if they would just type out a leaflet and hand it out, which they did.'[37] Freebury recalled 'I said to them "Look, tell women not to immigrate to Australia […] We're paying 27 and a half percent tax on the pill, women can't have abortions, we have this abortion squad […]."[38] British feminists titled the leaflet 'Facts about Australia that Australia House did not tell you,' and organised a picket of Australia House, the Australian embassy, on London's Strand. Here they handed the leaflet out to passers-by along with flowers.[39] The protest generated significant media in Australia, which ALRA members felt was an important part of transforming public opinion on abortion. This tactic was reciprocated when a restrictive amendment to the Abortion Act was attempted in Britain in 1975. In response, women in Australia, across Europe, in South Africa and the US demonstrated. *Right to Choose,* the periodical produced by the Women's Abortion Action Coalition (WAAC), reported that women picketed local British embassies in both Sydney and Perth.[40]

WAAC were less interested in drawing on the British 1967 Abortion Act, but looked instead to legal change that had occurred in North America, particularly in New York, where abortion rights had been granted through the Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Whether or not Roe passed due to the strength of the women's movement is still subject to scholarly debate.[41] However, WAAC certainly interpreted the change in US law as being about the actions of a mass movement of feminists engaged in 'militant campaigns.'[42] It was this understanding of how change was made that inspired WAAC to invite the North American abortion activist Jessica Starr to speak about how the right to abortion in the US was won. Starr visited New Zealand and then Australia in August 1974 and suggested that *Roe* was won 'not [due] to a miracle that is the result of this wonderful system, that we have this bill of rights, the

[36] Freebury, oral history interview with Rosemary Block, tape 4, part 2.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Freebury, oral history interview with Rosemary Block, tape 4, part 2.
[39] 'Migrants Warned', *The Canberra Times,* April 24, 1971, 9.
[40] Jo Pearsall, '25,000 March for Abortion Rights in Britain', *Right to Choose,* Issue 8, September-October 1975, 12.
[41] See, for example: Catharine Mackinnon, 'Privacy v Equality: Beyond Roe v. Wade (1983)', *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 93-102; Reva B. Siegel, 'Roe's Roots: The Women's Rights Claims That Engendered Roe', *Boston University Law Review* 90 (2010), 1875-1907.
[42] 'Review of History of US Feminism', *Abortion is a Woman's Right to Choose* 1 (1973), 7.

constitution' but was rather 'a result of building a massive, viable, visible campaign that changed public opinion and made itself into a political force that could force legislators…to change their positions on these laws.'[43] Starr's visit shored up WAAC women's understanding of how change should be made through 'continual activity of the abortion rights campaign in organising tribunals, conferences, demonstrations and speaking tours.'[44]

Feminist Blind Spots

Australian feminists' use of global legal precedent from the US and the UK reflects the blinkered globalism of the early movement. Feminists in Australia were situated within a global landscape where white women were encouraged to have babies while non-white women were not. They were not aware of how the demands for abortion across the English-speaking world were interwoven with global ideologies of population control. Nor were they aware of how abortion was imbricated with what historian Maud Bracke calls a 'hierarchised view of reproductive bodies.'[45] This blinkered globalism is revealed through discussion of reproductive rights in feminist periodicals. For example, Margaret Sanger is uncritically celebrated. Sanger was an advocate for birth control particularly active between the wars. She founded the American Birth Control League and later the Birth Control International Information Centre, but her advocacy was later entwined with forms of racialised eugenics.[46] The first edition of the WAAC Newspaper *Right to Choose,* compared the closure of the first US birth control conference organised by Sanger in 1921 by the authorities, to members of the clergy denouncing *Roe Vs. Wade* in 1973.[47] There is also a review of the biography of Margaret Sanger in *MeJane,* which frames Sanger as a life-long socialist feminist.[48] Beryl Henderson, an older Canberra feminist celebrated Sanger as she recalled her own life story.[49] Henderson was an important abortion rights activist whose work will be considered later in the chapter.

Sanger had a developed understanding of how gendered power played out in the intimate realm, and how women could take charge of their own lives through birth control.[50] As Alison

[43] Jessica Starr, 'Abortion in the US', *Right to Choose* 5 (1974), 4-5.
[44] 'Editorial', *Right to Choose* 5 (1974), 2.
[45] Maud Bracke, 'Family Planning, the Pill, and Reproductive Agency in Italy, 1945–1971: From "Conscious Procreation" to "a New Fundamental Right"?', European Review of History 29:1 (2022), 88-108, p. 89.
[46] Ellen Chesler, *Women of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).
[47] 'Women's Rights vs. Catholic Dogma', *Right to Choose* 1 (1973), 4-5,
[48] No author, 'A 'Woman Rebel's' Fight for Birth Control', *MeJane* 6 (1972), 11.
[49] Beryl Henderson, 'A Feminist Looks Back', *Me Jane,* 6, 1972, 8-9.
[50] Alison Bashford, *Global Population*: *History, Geopolitics and Life on Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 221-42

Bashford has shown, eugenic discourses were complex and advocating for eugenics was not necessarily a position incompatible with radical politics.[51] However, Sanger's legacy is certainly more complicated than the celebratory treatment offered by women's liberation and there is much contemporary debate about how she might be appropriately remembered and memorialised.[52] Later in life, Sanger sought to control demographics and did so through limiting 'unfit' people's ability to reproduce. For example, she endorsed the *Buck v. Bell* decision in 1927, in which the US supreme court ruled in favour of forced sterilisation for people with intellectual disabilities, which was disproportionately used on women of colour, particularly Black women.[53]

As well as forms of eugenics that predated the Second World War, Australian feminists were also entangled with neo-Malthusian eugenic ideas through Paul Ehrlich and his two million copy best-seller of 1968, *The Population Bomb*. As scholars discuss, after World War Two, ideas of global population management pivoted toward controlling the populations of the Third World, for fear that they would fall to communism if their material needs could not be met.[54] These population control initiatives can be distinguished from Nazi race science and the horrors of the Holocaust, but, despite these differences, measures to control 'overpopulation' played out racially at the level of the nation and around the world.[55] In *The Population Bomb,* Ehrlich painted a doomsday scenario of global overpopulation. The cover of the 1968 edition directly addresses the reader, capturing them in the scenario of Armageddon: 'While you are reading these words four people will have died from starvation. Most of them, children.' Ehrlich predicts that 'in the 1970s the world will undergo famines- hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death.'[56] Ehrlich advocates for what Michel Foucault would call biopolitics

[51] Ibid.
[52] See, for example: Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 'Opposition Claims About Margaret Sanger' April 2021, available online [https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer_public/cc/2e/cc2e84f2-126f-41a5-a24b-43e093c47b2c/210414-sanger-opposition-claims-p01.pdf, accessed 9 February 2022]; Imani Gandy, 'How False Narratives of Margaret Sanger are Being Used to Shame Black Women', *Rewire News Group,* 20 August 2015, available online [https://rewirenewsgroup.com/article/2015/08/20/false-narratives-margaret-sanger-used-shame-black-women/, accessed 9 February 2022].
[53] Chesler, *Women of Valor,* p. 485.
[54] Sara Weyder, 'Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Control', *Geschicte und Gessellschaft* [*History and Society]* 44 (2018), 135-161, p. 140; Maud Bracke 'Women's Rights, Family Planning and Population Control: The Emergence of Reproductive Rights in the United Nations (1960s-70s)', *The International History Review* 44:4 (2021), 1-21; Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 155-94.
[55] Connelly, *Fatal Misconception,* pp. 195-236.
[56] Ehrlich's cover discussed by Carole McCann, *Figuring the Population Bomb: Gender and Demography in the Mid-twentieth Century* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2016), p. 3.

- measures to administrate and regulate life - in this case to decrease the population.[57] Ehrlich's suggestions included sex education, abortion rights and birth control in the Global North, which would have appealed to feminists.[58] Though they would have been more sceptical of his 'system of incentives and penalties,' including taxes on children and essentials like nappies and cots.[59]

Ehrlich, however, firmly located the problem of global overpopulation in the Global South. He wrote that he had 'long understood the population explosion intellectually' but 'one hot stinking night in Delhi…' he witnessed 'people eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, screaming…the dust, noise, heat, and cooking fires gave the scene a hellish aspect.'[60] From then Ehrlich had known the 'feel of overpopulation.'[61] Ehrlich was much more authoritarian in his diagnosis of what should happen in the Global South, and suggested curbing food aid to nations like India which he declared 'out of balance.'[62] Ehrlich also advocated for the US to support forced sterilisation programs in India and did not shy away from coercion for a 'good cause.'[63] Rather than redistribute resources, Ehrlich saw population control as a short cut to reduce inequality, global and local unrest. Operating in the spirit of utilitarianism, he felt the ends justified the means.

Whilst abortion activists in ALRA did not advocate for forced sterilisation, they did align themselves with Ehrlich's group Zero Population Growth, because they felt this would advance the cause of abortion rights in Australia. Paul Ehrlich visited Australia in September of 1971 which Julia Freebury felt generated a lot of necessary publicity to the cause of abortion rights and was 'such a success.'[64] The publicity that Ehrlich generated was used to frame the abortion debate at Sydney Town Hall in 1971 where Germaine Greer spoke. Greer framed her intervention around 'abortion right or wrong' and 'then [ALRA] put women's rights, zero population growth because we had just had Paul Ehrlich.'[65] After Ehrlich's tour, Freebury

[57] Michel Foucault, ed. Michael Senellart and translated by Graham Burchell, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the collège De France 1978-1979,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008 [1988]).
[58] Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Balantine Books, 1971).
[59] Thomas Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment: Global Population Growth and the Birth of American Environmentalism* (New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Rutgers University Press, 2012), p. 147.
[60] Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb,* p. 1.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment,* p. 149.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Freebury, oral history interview with Rosemary Block, tape 3, part 1.
[65] Ibid.

wrote to Madeleine Simms, one of the co-ordinators of UK ALRA, who she frequently corresponded with, she stated: 'I have joined Zero Population growth- the group that came into being after Paul Ehrlich's visit.'[66]

There are also accounts in early women's liberation periodicals that uncritically celebrate family planning initiatives in the Global South as liberatory for women. Barbara Giles wrote a celebratory account for *Vashti's Voice* about the initiatives of the Indonesian Government and international federations such as the World Health Organization to control the Indonesian population in the face of 'a population that has reached danger point.'[67] Giles celebrated Indonesia's efforts, including family planning material which encouraged the spacing of children. She was also praiseful of indirect punitive measures for parents of large families such as the provision of rice rations enough to feed three children. On her return to Australia, Giles described Indonesia in a way that so uncannily resembles Ehrlich's *Population Bomb,* that it is not a stretch to presume she was a reader: 'Melbourne looks so empty to me now. Everywhere one goes in Java and Bali are people... And everywhere, children, smiling and curious and needing to be fed in a rural economy that is now not producing enough rice for the country's own needs. May their plans succeed!'[68] In a similar vein, Julia Freebury wrote to another of ALRA UK's coordinators, Dianne Munday, lamenting the lack of family planning clinics in Australia: 'In Canberra and Queensland there are no family planning clinics, in Sydney there is one.' Freebury contrasted this to the situation in Papua New Guinea which was, until 1975, a dominion of Australia. 'In New Guinea there are 48.' She emphasised 'forty eight clinics- these are attached to child health centres and hospitals. All these clinics are advertised all over the Territory and by large posters which the natives easily understand.'[69] Freebury and Giles seemed to have little understanding of why Indonesian and Papua New Guinean family planning initiatives were so comprehensive. Both saw Indonesian and Papua New Guinean state initiatives as evidence of support for a women's right to choose, rather than as coercion.

While Freebury and Giles were outspoken in their support, there was mostly silence around family planning initiatives in the Global South in the early women's liberation movement.

[66] Julia Freebury letter to Madeleine Simms, December 26, 1971, Folder 3, Box 1, Julia Freebury Papers re: Campaign to repeal abortion law in NSW including material from ALRA and other organisations ca. 1970-1981.
[67] Barbara Giles, 'Indonesia Family Planning', *Vashti's Voice* 6 (1974), 14.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Letter from Julia Freebury to Dianne Munday, 5th December, 1970, Folder 3, Box 1: Papers of Julia Freebury, SLNSW.

WAAC dedicated a page titled 'Around the World' in their periodical *Right to Choose,* but this was almost entirely dedicated to countries in Western Europe and North America, where feminist movements were also struggling for abortion rights. This lack of knowledge chimes with the way the contraceptive pill was initially celebrated by some women in Australia as liberating.[70] Demands to end the 27.5% tax on the pill, which treated this as a luxury rather than a necessity, captured feminists who marched to 'free the pill from the till.'[71] By the mid-1970s, the positive impact of the pill on women's lives was questioned by the women's liberation movement for its under-researched side effects and the way this made it more difficult for women to say no.[72] Feminist activist Zohl dé Ishtar explained in an oral history interview that 'she went to a Women's Liberation march which she vaguely remember[ed] was in part about…the right for the Pill.' But she soon realised that the pill led to 'a lot of pressure on young women to cough up every time with a boy, and so there was a lot of unwanted date sex.' While the pill had allegedly liberated women and 'suddenly, women were free', for many women 'there wasn't any freedom in it at all.'[73] However, the global history of the pill based on testing of women in Puerto Rico was not present in the imagination of Australian women until the very late 1970s.[74]

As scholars' and activists' work reveals, contraception, abortion and sterilisation were also distributed unevenly at the level of the nation, along racial lines.[75] As will be discussed, in Australia Aboriginal women were also sterilised without their consent, though this was illegal. In the early movement, however, white women who had been sterilised wrote of their experience, in positive terms, one woman describing it as 'sterilisation without tears.'[76]

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[70] Arrow, *The Seventies,* p. 17.
[71] *Support International Action Abortion on Request Children by Choice*, leaflet in Folder 1, Box 1: Papers of Julia Freebury, SLNSW includes the demand end the luxury tax on the pill. A photograph of women holding placards to 'free to pill from the till' at a Sydney International Women's Day demonstration of 1972 can be seen at Joyce Stevens, 'A History of International Women's Day in Words and Images' [http://www.isis.aust.com/iwd/stevens/70s80s.htm, accessed 27 August 2022], Lake, *Getting Equal,* p.224. Feminists' embrace and then questioning of the pill is discussed in Sandra Coney, '"Just take a pill every day"', *Right to Choose* 14 (1977), 4-5, p. 4. The article bears a note that it was reproduced from *Broadsheet,* the New Zealand women's liberation magazine.
[72] 'The Pill- New Evidence', *Right to Choose* 15 (1978), 8; Coney, '"Just take a pill every day"', p.4.
[73] Oral History Interview with Zohl dé Ishtar, 7th July 2020, on Zoom.
[74] Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and US Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2002).
[75] For example: Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color in the Reproductive Justice Movement* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003); Natalie Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England,* 1968-1993 (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) pp. 168-9; Stella Dadzie, Beverley Brian and Susanne Scafe, *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Verso, 2018 [1985]), pp. 100-107.
[76] 'My Body is Mine to Control', *MeJane,* 8 (1972), 5-6, p.6.

Another suggested to readers of *MeJane* that she can 'truly recommend this operation' over the pill and 'now feels that she can take on the whole world.'[77] The cheerful affect present in these early reports is reflective of a context where women in Australia lacked access to contraceptives and had only limited control over their bodies, irrespective of race. But it also seems naïve when compared to later women's movement material which brought global race politics into the frame, and found that contraception, abortion and sterilisation could be coercive, as well as empowering.

Gisèle Halimi and the Bobigny Affair

In the mid-1970s women began to reach beyond this blinkered globalism which looked only to the US and Britain. The legal precedent Australian feminists drew on reveals this shift. Women involved in ALRA, the Women's Electoral Lobby and WAAC were equally inspired by the French abortion trial at Bobigny, 1972 and the subsequent decriminalisation of abortion in France up to ten weeks of pregnancy in 1975. Michele Chavalier, a working class French woman, stood trial at Bobigny after she, along with three colleagues from her workplace, the Paris Metro, helped her daughter, Marie Claire to procure an illegal abortion. Marie Claire had been raped by a neighbour who then informed police of her abortion after he was arrested on a different matter.[78] While Marie Claire was tried in a juvenile court, Gisèle Halimi, a Tunisian-French feminist, acted as defence lawyer for those who stood trial at Bobigny for assisting Marie Claire. Halimi, along with Simone de Beauvoir, had formed the group *Choisir* [to choose] which sought to give French women free abortion and contraception.[79] Both WAAC and ALRA claimed, at different times, that *Choisir* was the French equivalent of their organisation.[80] Beryl Henderson of ALRA translated the proceedings of the trial into English, producing *Abortion: The Bobigny Affair,* while WAAC were organised Halimi to visit Australia during International Women's Year, 1975.

To understand why Gisèle Halimi made such an impact at the Bobigny Trial, and then on Australian women, we might consider her legal career. Halimi had witnessed law being used

[77] Ibid.
[78] Gisèle Halimi, trans. Rosemary Morgan, *Right to Choose* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977), pp. 61-2.
[79] Ibid., p. 44.
[80] Association Choisir, trans. Beryl Henderson, *Abortion: The Bobigny Affair: A Law on Trial* (Sydney: Wild & Woolley, 1973), p. *xiv*; Margot Moore, 'The Battle Goes On', *Scarlet Woman* 2 (1975), 29.

as a tool of injustice throughout her life. Her autobiography *Right to Choose* detailed her early life in Tunisia. It discussed how colonial law was used to repress the Tunisian independence movement of the 1950s and 'undermine the spirit of the people so that they are kept in constant terror'.[81] Colonial justice, Halimi explained, had 'very little in common with true justice.'[82] Halimi witnessed the show trials of the colonial regime during Tunisian decolonisation which 'revolted' her for their complete disregard of the rights of the defence with outcomes concluded before the trial had begun; the defining feature of the show trial.[83] It was while defending Tunisian independence fighters that Halimi became an abortion rights activist. She required an abortion during the trial, which she obtained illegally. The abortion was botched and Halimi had to return to court with a medical instrument she described as a 'probe,' still inside of her, instructed by the abortionist that it should remain this way for the duration of the trial. This caused her immense pain, infection and to faint in court. In the midst of this, Halimi had a 'strange thought.' She realised that as she was defending the accused she herself 'stood accused…By having an abortion I was breaking the law. But I was a barrister. In short, I was both the guilty party and the defence counsel…I felt myself at the centre of a conflict- the conflict which faces all women.'[84] Through this experience she realised 'when several types of oppression exist simultaneously, they become inseparable; one cannot "split up" the fight.'[85] She determined that this experience of injustice must generate legal reform. As well as witnessing the injustice of colonial law, Halimi was also involved in the extra-judicial 1966 Russell War Crimes Tribunal for Vietnam. This was an important people's tribunal and its influence on women's liberation will be explored later in the chapter.[86] Halimi took her experience of seeking justice within an unjust legal system and her experience of civil society initiatives beyond the courtroom, as well as her own experience of abortion into her defence of Marie Chevalier at the Bobigny trial.

As Simone de Beauvoir writes in her introduction to the trial transcript, the Bobigny Trial was extraordinary and 'bears no resemblance whatsoever to those [abortion trials] which proceeded

[81] Halimi, *Right to Choose,* p. 35.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Halimi, *Right to Choose,* p. 27. On the show trial see Kate Leader, 'The Trial's the Thing: Performance and Legitimacy in International Criminal Trials', *Theoretical Criminology* 24:2 (2020), 241-257, p.253.
[84] Halimi, *Right to Choose*, p. 39.
[85] Ibid.
[86] 'Testimony and Questioning of David Kenneth Tuck', in *Against the Crime of Silence: The International War Crimes Tribunal,* ed. John Duffett (Flanders, New Jersey: O'Hare Books, 1968), 403-25, Gisèle Halimi questions David Tuck across the pages 404-9.

it.'[87] What de Beauvoir meant was that at Bobigny, it was not Madame Chevalier who was on trial, but the law itself. Under Halimi's counsel, actresses and rich women stood up at the trial and admitted freely that they had abortions, interpolating the law and calling legal judgement upon themselves. By doing so they revealed that the law, an allegedly unbiased instrument, was practiced in a partial and unjust way, punishing poorer women, while they - richer women - had abortions with relative impunity. When summing up, Halimi remarked: 'It is always the same class that is arraigned, the class of women who are poor, economically and socially vulnerable, the class without money or connections…I have never had to defend the wife of a top public servant…or of a company director or the mistress of the same gentleman. And this is my question -has such a thing ever been known within these walls or elsewhere? You always convict the same people- the Mme Chevaliers.'[88] The international pathways open to wealthier women seeking termination of pregnancy were palpable as women discussed their abortions in Geneva. This was echoed in the demonstration outside the court as feminists and *Choisir* members chanted 'England for the rich, prison for the poor.'[89]

However, Halimi was not calling on the judge to distribute punishment more evenly, where richer women might be 'justly' punished for having an abortion. Nor was she solely interested in the acquittal of Madame Chevalier and her colleagues. Rather as she explained, she was interested in changing the law: 'we at *Choisir* decided to turn it into a trial to show up the law of 1920,' the law that made abortion a crime. The case of Marie Chevalier would be 'a big *political* trial.'[90] If Halimi had been only interested in acquittal, she would have likely advised the suspects to plead guilty and to perform remorse, which as scholars have noted has significant consequences for the harshness of judgement and length of sentence.[91] Remorse is also often the place where the legal trial 'touches' society beyond the court room. A suspect's (in)adequate performance of remorse is often what is picked up in the press and so this performance is judged twice, once by the court and then by the public.[92] However, by *not* showing remorse, and instead being unapologetic and defiant, women at the Bobigny trial showed the existing law to be out of step with the morals of the broader French community

[87] Simone de Beauvoir 'Introduction to the French Edition', in Choisir, *The Bobigny Affair,* ix-xiv, p. ix.
[88] Choisir, *The Bobigny Affair*, p. 126.
[89] Melissa Oliver- Powell, 'Beyond the Spectacle of Suffering: Agnés Varda's *L'une chante, l'autre pas* and Rewriting the Subject of Abortion in France', *Feminist Studies* 46:1 (2020), 14-42, p. 22.
[90] Halimi, *Right to Choose,* p. 83.
[91] Steven Tudor, Michael Proeve, Richard Weizman and Kate Rossmanith, 'Remorse: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives on How Law Makes Use of a Moral Emotion', in *Research Handbook on Law and Emotion,* ed. Susan Bandes, Jody Madeira, and Kathryn Temple, 131-143, p. 131.
[92] Ibid, pp. 140-143.

around abortion, which were being transformed by the women's movement. They sought to address 'the body of public opinion in the country, over the heads of judges'[93] Halimi felt this lack of remorse was key to the political nature of the trial and tantamount to the declaration: 'I'm not guilty! It's your law that is guilty.'[94]

Halimi also put the law on trial through clever use of expert witnesses. Expert witnesses are usually 'people who have specialised knowledge or skill, based on training, study or experience,' for example, scientists who might help the judge or jury interpret DNA evidence.[95] The testimony of expert witnesses is excepted from the rule that witnesses must limit their evidence to 'facts.' Expert witnesses are permitted to offer opinions.[96] During the Bobigny Trial, women called as expert witnesses spoke for decriminalising abortion based on their painful histories as abandoned children, or experiences of illegal abortion. In Halimi's eyes, it was these experiences, and the fact that these witnesses were women that made them 'experts' rather than deep knowledge of the trial. The judge remarked to one expert witness: 'I suppose you are another who knows nothing of the trial.' The witness replied:'[The trial] is the concern of all women.'[97] The use of ordinary women as expert witnesses in this trial was informed by the women's liberation movement's intervention which proposed that women were the experts on their own lives.[98] The trial at Bobigny offers an example of how the idea of the woman-as-expert enters the court room and how this new idea could be mobilised to put the law on trial.

The court lay down a confused verdict: Madame Chevalier and the woman who had performed the abortion were found guilty, while those who provided Madame Chevalier with information about abortion – working as accessories in the eyes of the law – were found not-guilty. While the trial had been a flashpoint, Halimi and *Choisir* kept the pressure on and published the proceedings. Halimi described this as 'an illegal act if ever there was one,' because French trials are very rarely transcribed, and it is illegal to reproduce transcripts. Journalist Claude Servan-Shrieber, who was an expert witness at Bobigny and member of *Choisir,* explained why the publishing of the trial was important: 'Until the trial at Bobigny, the French public

[93] Halimi, *Right to Choose,* p. 66.
[94] Anne Latreille, 'For the Women of France', *The Age* (Melbourne) Jun 12th, 1975.
[95] Suzanne Blackwell and Fred Seymour, 'Expert Evidence and Jurors Views on Expert Witnesses', *Psychiatry, Psychology and the Law* 22:5 (2015), 673-681, p. 673.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Choisir, *The Bobigny Affair*, p. 79.
[98]See, for example, Isobelle Barrett Meyering, 'Feminism in Sydney's Suburbs: "Speaking Out", Listening and "Sisterhood" at the 1975 Women's Commissions' *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95, (2018), 61-80, p. 62.

received no information at all about what was going on in the court rooms, no explanations whatsoever of the women's motives [for their abortions], of their feelings, of their situations. Only the sentences announcing women had been condemned. This type of news was aimed to frighten women who might be thinking of having an abortion.'[99] *Choisir* broke the censorship law and published the unabridged account of this trial. Servan-Shrieber explained 'without that book the French public cannot really know what happened, cannot really know what…Michele Chevalier told the judge…what the judge told [her]. But now the French people know the story.'[100] *Choisir,* whose ranks had swelled from 300 to 2000 members, set up a 'militant sales organisation,' and sold 10,000 copies of the trial transcript cheaply at metro stations.[101] Ultimately, the publication of the Bobigny Trial extended its impact way beyond the court room and 'enshrine[d] the collapse of the law of 1920,' and ultimately resulted in abortion being decriminalised up to ten weeks of pregnancy in 1975.[102] It was through this book that Australian feminists found Halimi.

The Bobigny Affair in Australia

ALRA member Julia Freebury, a bilingual French and English speaker, met Halimi in France when visiting and described her as 'this marvellous feminist lawyer…very smart.'[103] She brought the book back from France to Australia and wrote that 'there is no doubt that this court case and the fantastic publicity this book got all over France, helped enormoulsy [sic] in achieving reform of the law.'[104] The book was translated into English for the first time by Beryl Henderson, who undertook this 'long job' assisted by members of the women's liberation movement based in Canberra.[105] She received no renumeration for this but wished to 'serve the cause of justice.'[106] Henderson, who had been involved in British ALRA in the 1930s and then had founded Canberra ALRA, felt that the book was relevant to the Australian situation

[99] Claude Servan-Shreiber, 'International Struggle for Abortion Rights' Part 2 of 2, recording of meeting held March 10th, 1973, New York, Pacifica Radio Archives, North Hollywood, California online at https://archive.org/details/pacifica_radio_archives-BC1305B [last accessed 15th September, 2022].
[100] Ibid.
[101] Halimi, *Right to Choose,* 94.
[102] Halimi, *Right to Choose,* p. 70.
[103] Freebury, oral history interview with Rosemary Block, tape 6, side 1.
[104] Julia Freebury 'Who are the true reformers (Part 2)', *WEL Newsletter,* September 1975, 13-14, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', 1974-1978, in Box 17: Wild & Woolley Author and Book files, A-K, Pat Woolley, Personal and Business Papers, 1950-2002, State Library of New South Wales.
[105] Letter from Beryl Henderson to Wild and Woolley Publishers, November 3, 1974, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[106] Edna Ryan, 'Report to Contributors to the Bobigny Appeal' May 3, 1975 in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.

because 'the controversy about Australia's abortion laws is bound to flare up again…'[107] Further, International Women's Year had generated greater awareness of global feminisms in the Australian movement. Edna Ryan found the book 'a most dramatic story in its own right' and was complimentary about the 'magnificent preface' by Simone de Beauvoir.[108] After approaching larger publishing houses with no success, Edna Ryan, acting as agent for Beryl Henderson approached radical publishing house Wild and Woolley. This was established in 1973, by Michael Wilding who was involved in the left wing milieu of 1950s Sydney known as 'The Push' and Pat Woolley, who had come from an underground publishing background in Los Angeles.[109] Pat Woolley had started Tomato Press in Melbourne which 'had something of an underground feminist agenda.' Tomato Press had published WAAC's pamphlet 'A Woman's Guide to Abortion- How, Why, Where.' [110] Pat Woolley 'sat up reading *The Bobigny Affair* one night and found it so exciting that halfway through I realised I had to publish it.'[111]

To cover publishing costs Wild and Woolley and Beryl Henderson applied for a state-sponsored International Women's Year grant, but were unsuccessful. Edna Ryan suggested that this was because the 'IWY committee… [seemed] determined to play safe it and respectable.' [112] They also prioritised funding work by Australian authors. In response, Edna Ryan, a member of WEL, published an appeal for funds in the WEL and women's liberation newsletters. Ryan invited organisations involved in abortion in Australia including ALRA to contribute funds.[113] She specifically sought funds from Brisbane and Perth where the movement for abortion rights 'was more financial,' rather than based in grassroots activism.[114] She urged members of the women's liberation movement and WEL to contribute to these costs because 'Wild and Woolley cannot be expected to take all the financial risk.'[115] Ryan demonstrated what Lucy Delap calls 'feminist business *praxis'* which sought to 'fuse economic

[107] Letter from Beryl Henderson to Wild and Woolley Publishers, November 3, 1974, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[108] Beryl Henderson, 'The Bobigny Appeal' (marked 'for WEL and WL newsletters') in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[109] On The Push see: Anne Coombs, *Sex and Anarchy: the Life and Death of the Sydney Push* (Ringwood: Viking, 1996).
[110] Michael Wilding, *Wild and Woolley: A Publishing Memoir* (Sydney: Giramondo, 2011), p. 5.
[111] 'A Poignant "drama" of abortion', *The Sydney Morning Herald,* June 10, 1975.
[112] Letter to Pat Woolley from Edna Ryan January 8, 1975, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[113] Letter from Edna Ryan asking for contribution of funds toward publishing of *The Bobigny Affair,* January 1975 in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[114] Letter from Edna Ryan to Pat Woolley, January 1, 1975, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[115] Letter from Edna Ryan asking for contribution, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.

success with political commitment.'[116] Ryan invited women to become 'shareholders' and asked them to 'please send a contribution- from $5 to $500 will be welcome.'[117] These funds were gathered not to make profit from the book, but to cover half the essential costs which would be 'more than met' if 2000 copies were sold from the first edition of 3000. Ryan assured contributors that 'the venture will be an enormous success', 'the book would pay its way' and women's contributions would be refunded so 'that they may serve the women's movement yet again.' [118] Beryl Henderson and Edna Ryan were very pleased with the edition that Wild and Woolley produced. Ryan wrote to say that 'it is really a lovely book: the print, the paper, the cover, the blurb…So much better than the French original!'[119] Henderson wrote a letter of congratulations to the publisher: 'To have turned my ugly duckling into such a beautiful swan seems a miracle to me.'[120]

The launch of *Abortion: The Bobigny Affair* was released to coincide with Gisèle Halimi's tour to Australia, which would take place in June of 1975. She was invited as a speaker for WAAC's National Conference on Abortion and Contraception. WAAC organised this as their major activity of International Women's Year, supported by a national government grant of $2500.[121] Helen Jarvis commented in an oral history interview that organising Halimi to visit was 'one of the big things we did.'[122] Initially WAAC Sydney had approached Simone de Beauvoir, but after she declined, they approached Halimi.[123] Helen Jarvis remarked that WAAC had raised the funds which 'which doesn't sound so strange. I mean, it doesn't sound so, so unusual. But you didn't do that too often in those days. The world was more distant.'[124] The letters also attest to the difficulty of raising the necessary funds after Halimi 'demanded' a first class fare and questions about whether the groups should pay for Halimi's

[116] Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Business *Praxis* and *Spare Rib* magazine', *Women: A Cultural Review* 32:3-4 (2021), 248-271, p. 250.
[117] Letter from Edna Ryan to WEL and WL [Women's Liberation] Newsletters, undated, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Letter from Edna Ryan to Pat Woolley and Michael Wilding, June 7, 1975, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[120] Letter from Beryl Henderson to Wild and Woolley, June 8, 1975, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[121] Summary of Proceedings of Meeting of International Women's Year Committee 10th April, 1975, WNAC 41 Part 2, National Archives of Australia.
[122] Oral history interview with Helen Jarvis, 30th April, 2021, on Zoom.
[123] Letter from WAAC Sydney to WAAC Melbourne, February 6, 1975 in Folder 1: 'WAAC Melbourne Materials', in Box 15 of Women's Abortion Action Campaign Records 1970-1988, State Library of New South Wales.
[124] Oral history interview with Helen Jarvis.

accommodation or charge for the public meetings which she would address, to cover costs.[125] Letters between WAAC women in Sydney and Melbourne recounted the difficulty of organising an international tour during a conference: 'We are preparing an itinerary for GH when she is in Melbourne. It is going to be difficult to look after her properly when we are going to be so busy…What are you planning to do with her???' [126] When in Sydney Gisèle Halimi attended a dinner at the Hilton Hotel.[127] She stayed with Helen Jarvis who remembered her as 'an amazing woman, very elegant, a little older than me…'[128] Halimi addressed 350 people in Melbourne and in Sydney and 'Halimi's wit and experience added a great deal to the Conference.'[129] Halimi addressed audiences of Australian women about abortion as 'the first freedom, the first power.'[130] While in Australia she introduced the events of the trial at Bobigny. She suggested that '"it was a political trial", her eyes snapping' as she did so.[131] She explained to an Australian audience that at Bobigny, for the first time, women 'were the accusers.' She continued 'We aimed to speak to public opinion across the heads of the tribunal to explain the whole position of abortion. We decided to break the law. The women said, "You don't have to judge us. We decide what is best."'[132]

Women who had been involved in the translation of the Bobigny trial and Gisèle Halimi's visit thought that this story would resonate with the Australian women's movement and the broader public and perhaps generate a legal change, decriminalising abortion at the national level. Ultimately, however these aims failed. Australian women found it hard to relate their situation to that in *Abortion: The Bobigny Affair*. It was difficult for women to make the link between their own legal situation and the one in France. This is because by 1975, abortion in Australia had been partially decriminalised. Though there had been arrests of doctors who had operated on minors, abortion was widely available in metropolitan centres, including at feminist health services. [133] A write up of Halimi's visit in *Tribune,* the newspaper of the Australian Communist Party, found the situation in Australia distinct to France: 'In France all women were placed on trial in the Bobigny Trial.' But in Australia, the author writes, 'the law

[125] Ibid.
[126] Oral history interview with Helen Jarvis.
[127] Letter to Melbourne WAAC from Dominic Whelan, June 26, 1975 in Folder 1: 'WAAC Melbourne Materials.'
[128] Oral history interview with Helen Jarvis.
[129] WAAC 'National Conference Bulletin', May 1975, p.2 in Folder 1: 'WAAC Melbourne Materials'.
[130] 'First Freedom for Women' *Tribune,* 24 June, 1975.
[131] Latreille, 'For the Women of France'.
[132] Ibid.
[133] WAAC, 'Editorial and Liverpool Charges Dropped', *Right to Choose* 13 (Summer 1977), 2.

is more sophisticated. They go for abortionists…for whom it is harder to stir up sympathy,' as the public think 'they're just in it for the money.'[134]

Reflective of the lack of resonance with the public, the book was not a commercial success and struggled to break even. Ryan had written optimistically to Woolley on New Year's Day, 1975 that she hoped 'we will all finish up 1975 with a dividend from Bobigny!'[135] This, however, didn't happen. According to roughly scribbled calculations held in the Wild and Woolley archive, 2280 copies needed to be sold to break even.[136] By December 1975, sales had only just passed one thousand.[137] Ryan wrote to shareholders in May, 1975: 'Perhaps only a fool like me would have rushed in.'[138] Ryan informed them that 'the money the fund has collected will in fact be regarded as a subsidy towards publication.'[139] She assured them they could make their money back through distribution of the book. The commercial failure of *The Bobigny Affair* also reveals the way that feminists in Australia, as elsewhere, were reluctant to publicise books to maximise profits.[140] While *The Bobigny Affair* was launched during WAAC's conference, many WAAC members would likely have felt that the contribution individual women made to the women's liberation movement was limited, and that commercial success would necessarily undermine political goals. WAAC chose not to publicise *The Bobigny Affair* independently of their 1975 conference. Helen Jarvis felt the book would overshadow the conference as it was 'a rather more popular press item than a conference on abortion and contraception.'[141] According to Julia Freebury, this lack of publicity on the part of WAAC had significant and negative consequences for the book's distribution.[142]

Determining failure, however, depends on where we draw the line. As Zachari Manfredi reflects in his work on the impact of the Russell War Crimes Tribunal, how might our perspective change if we take a 'longer historical view' and consider a tribunal's legitimacy

[134] 'First Freedom for Women', *Tribune,* 24 June, 1975.
[135] Letter to Pat Woolley from Edna Ryan,1 January 1975, in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book'.
[136] Handwritten note [undated] in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[137] Letter from Beryl Henderson to Pat Wooley, 15 December, 1974 in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book'.
[137] Handwritten note [undated] in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book'.
[138] Edna Ryan, 'Report to contributors to the Bobigny Appeal' 3 May, 1975 in Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book'.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Delap, 'Feminist Business *Praxis*', pp. 251-252
[141] Helen Jarvis, 'Letter to the Editor', *WEL Newsletter,* October 1975, unpaginated copy of letter held in Folder 6: 'Australian Abortion Rights and Women's Health Organisations', Box 8, WAAC Records.
[142] Freebury 'Who are the true reformers'.

through its historical effects across time, rather than its discrete aims?[143] While *The Bobigny Affair* did not inspire activists to change Australian abortion law federally, the letters to Wild & Woolley reveal that this book did resonate with women seeking to change abortion law elsewhere. This shows the book had a 'long tail of value which exceeded beyond the financial,' which as Margaretta Jolly notes was often the case with 'failed' feminist publishing ventures.[144] The English translation of *The Bobigny Affair* resonated beyond Australia. Victoria Green from *Spare Rib,* the UK women's liberation magazine, wrote to Wild and Woolley to suggest that *Abortion: The Bobigny Affair* was 'a significant and important book' and 'we are convinced it would be useful in the current debate here about the 1967 Abortion Act.' *Spare Rib* suggested Compendium Bookshop, London 'would be interested in stocking it.'[145] The book also made an 'indelible impression' on Karen Levin who wrote from Israel, who were 'in the throes of changing the abortion law.' She requested two copies of this '"weighty" book for the promotion of abortion rights' and planned to 'circulate it among influential members of [the] government.'[146] Sandra Coney, a women's health activist from New Zealand, reflected in the feminist magazine *Broadsheet* that women in New Zealand could learn a lot from the Bobigny trial: 'Maybe we need some feminist lawyers like Gisèle Halimi [sic]. Maybe we need an organisation like *Choisir*, which is uncompromising in its beliefs but can still attract to its ranks persons of the calibre of those who gave testimony at Bobigny.'[147] Tracking *The Bobigny Affair's* echoes across space and time complicates this picture of failure.[148]

Law Beyond the State: National and International Women's Tribunals

Australian feminists drew on official legal precedent from France, Britain and the US as a tool to change Australian abortion law. But women also made use of unofficial legal instruments, such as feminist public trials and people's tribunals to challenge this too. Tribunals were held at both the national and international levels and used the ritual, framework and performance of a legal trial but had no legal standing in official law. Nonetheless, as scholarship on people's

[143] Zachary Manfredi, 'Sharpening the Vigilance of the World: Reconsidering the Russell Tribunal as Ritual', *Humanity* 9:1 (2018), 75-91, p. 79.
[144] Margaretta Jolly, 'Purpose, Power and Profit in Feminist Publishing: An Introduction' *Women: A Cultural Review* 32:3-4 (2021) 320-340, p. 328.
[145] Letter from Victoria Green to Wild and Woolley, 15 July 1976 Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[146] Letter from Karen Levin to Wild and Woolley, 10 May 1976. Folder 'Henderson: Abortion Book', Pat Woolley Papers.
[147] Sandra Coney, 'The Bobigny Trial', *Broadsheet* 35 (December 1975), 25-30 and continues on 40., p. 40.
[148] On work which considers how influences across space and time complicate the picture of failure see Eurydice Aroney in 'The 1975 French Sex Workers' Revolt: A Narrative of Influence', *Sexualities* 23:1-2 (2020), 64-80, p. 75 which problematises the alleged 'failure' of a French sex workers strike.

trials reveals, they were intellectually rich, politically meaningful.[149] They sought to pressure those in power to make the law more just, whilst simultaneously exposing the limits of legal justice.[150] Feminists particularly held tribunals to discuss injustices, including reproductive injustices, framed as crimes against women. The genealogy of women's tribunals can be traced to the 1966 Russell War Crimes Tribunal (The Russell Tribunal), an international 'people's tribunal' against war crimes in Vietnam. Historians generally attribute the Russell Tribunal to the work of philosophers Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, but members of the tribunal included Gisèle Halimi and lawyers, poets and trade unionists from around the world, as well as considerable input from Vietnamese experts.[151] The Russell Tribunal, in turn, emerged from the Nuremburg trials, held by the Allies after the Second World War. John Paul Sartre remarked that Nuremburg was 'quickly disbanded by its creators for fear that one day they might find themselves brought before it,' and tried for war crimes which nation states 'want to be free to commit.'[152] The Russell Tribunal sought to extend the work of Nuremburg intending to create a permanent people's tribunal, where 'those without power will sit in judgement over those who have it.'[153]

Feminists in WAAC attended a women's tribunal in New Zealand in September, 1975, particularly about reproductive injustice. The New Zealand Tribunal was likely inspired by women in the US reproductive rights movement who had been holding tribunals about abortion since 1972, particularly due to the influence of feminist attorneys, including Florynce Kennedy, in the campaign.[154] The New Zealand 'Tribunal against crimes against women' was specifically about reproductive injustices women faced in New Zealand, which had increased throughout 1975. Its aim, as *Right to Choose* reported, was to 'hear the individual testimonies

[149] Andrew Byrnes and Gabrielle Simm, 'International Peoples' Tribunals: Their Nature, Practice and Significance', in *Peoples' Tribunals and International Law,* ed. Andrew Byrnes and Gabrille Simm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 11-42.
[150] Ibid, Dianne Otto, 'Beyond Legal Justice: Some Personal Reflections on People's Tribunals, Listening and Responsibility' *London Review of International Law* 5:2 (2017), 225-249.
[151] John Duffett (ed.), *Against the Crime of Silence: The International War Crimes Tribunal* (Flanders, New Jersey: O'Hare Books, 1968), p. 17. On the presence of Vietnamese experts see Harish Mehta, 'North Vietnam's Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell: Peace Activism and the International War Crimes Tribunal', *Peace and Change* 37:1 (2012), 64-94.
[152] Others included African-American writer James Baldwin, Lazaro Cardenas the former President of Mexico, Amado Hernandez, the poet Laureate of the Philippines, and Mahmud Ali Kasuri of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Jean Paul Sartre, 'Answer and Commentary to DeGaulle's Letter Banning the Tribunal from France', in *Against the Crime…,* ed. Duffett, 29-36, p. 29. See also Bertrand Russell, 'Message from Bertrand Russell to the Tribunal' in *Against the Crime…,* ed. Duffett, 37-39, p. 39.
[153] Russell, 'Message'*,* p. 39.
[154] Katherine Parkin, 'The Women's National Abortion Action Coalition & the Abortion Tribunals, 1971-1972', *Journal of Family History* 47:4 (2022), 1-34, pp. 19-24. Women in the UK also organised a Tribunal in 1977, in response to attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act and invited WAAC women to contribute testimony.

of women who had or sought abortions,' but it also aimed to speak for the 'many thousands who endure compulsory pregnancy…'[155] Like Halimi and feminists involved in the Bobigny Trial, the women running this unofficial trial were similarly inspired by women's liberation's criticisms of experts. WAAC suggested that women who had 'actually had abortions or unwanted pregnancies' were the 'real experts' but despite this were 'rarely consulted in debates around abortion.'[156] As with other people's tribunals, this tribunal used a legal format to 'add weight and solemnity' to proceedings.[157] The performative elements of the tribunal also revealed how official law used performance, often hiding behind the pomp and ceremony of courts to commit injustice. In this way, as Gabrielle Simm reflects, these tribunals exposed the 'fragility of the legitimacy and authority of official courts.'[158] But, by giving testimony in this pseudo-legal context women also claimed for themselves a role in interpreting the law as people who stood accused by it. As one of the organisers remarked, the women who spoke out were, 'according to the law, criminals. But they are here to provide evidence which will show who are the real criminals.'[159] The tribunal revealed that the law, allegedly a tool of liberty, was in fact enacting injustice. The tribunal ended with women finding the government 'guilty of perpetrating crimes against women,' and demanded 'that the government repeal the abortion laws.'[160] Through the tribunal women sought to apply political pressure and 'strengthen the campaign for a woman's right to choose'.[161]

Inspired by the Russell Tribunal and other feminist uses of trial, Scandinavian feminists organised an International Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women (The Brussels Tribunal) which took place in the Palais des Congrés in Brussels in 1976. Australian women, along with those from forty other countries, were among the two thousand that attended the Brussels Tribunal and met under the slogan 'Sisterhood is Powerful! International Sisterhood is more powerful!'[162] The Brussels Tribunal was initially proposed at an international women-only feminist camp Femø, held in Denmark in August 1974, as it was each summer. As Hannah

[155] 'W.A.A.C. Goes to New Zealand, *Right to Choose* 9 (December 1975), 4.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Byrnes and Simm, 'International Peoples' Tribunals', p. 16.
[158] Gabrielle Simm, 'People's Tribunals, Women's Courts and International Crimes of Sexual Violence' in *Peoples' Tribunals…'* ed. Byrnes and Simm, 61-84, p. 66.
[159] W.A.A.C Goes to New Zealand', *Right to Choose.*
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Diana E.H. Russell and Nicole Van de Ven (eds.), *The Proceedings of the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women,* (Berkeley, C.A.: Russell Publications: 1990 [1976]), p.7 [available online at http://www.dianarussell.com/f/Crimes_Against_Women_Tribunal.pdf, accessed 2 September 2022].

Yoken notes, Femø welcomed international visitors, particularly those from other Nordic countries, and so the camp became 'a point of inception for further transnational feminist spaces,' most significantly the Brussels Tribunal.[163] Diana Russell, one of the organisers of the Brussels Tribunal, made the influence of the Russell Tribunal explicit: 'I believe some of us had assimilated [The Russell Tribunal] into our consciousness' and this 'helped spark the idea that oppressed peoples have the right to disassociate themselves from those definitions of crimes which have been developed by their oppressors to serve their own interests.'[164] The Brussels Tribunal was also explicitly organised as a counter to the United Nations 1975 International Women's Year Conference held in Mexico City. Organisers suggested it was a more authentic, grassroots event. It was 'not a conference of leaders,' but 'a conference in which the willingness to talk about having been a victim of sexist oppression was the best qualification going.'[165] Simone de Beauvoir in her opening address suggested that this Tribunal stood 'in contrast to Mexico City where women, directed by their political parties, by their nations, were only seeking to integrate woman into a male society.'[166]

In line with women's liberation methods of consciousness raising, the tribunal focused on women's testimonies. Diana Russell and Nicole Van de Ven remarked that through this method women 'come to see that these problems are not merely personal... We come to see that many of our problems are externally or socially induced, and…widely shared by other women.'[167] The format of testimony was thought to be 'much more powerful than the usual conference where so called experts and well-known people propound their views,' and more powerful than a debate between representatives from women's movements across contexts who would 'debate the causes of our oppression and the pros and cons of different strategies.'[168] Testimonies and 'shared personal experience was thought to be best at transcending national boundaries most easily.'[169] Women offered testimony on the crimes that had been committed against them, including lack of abortion rights, which was framed as 'forced motherhood', forced sterilisation or 'compulsory non-motherhood' and 'crimes against lesbians,' including the violence of compulsory heterosexuality.

[163] Ibid., pp. 204, 215.
[164] Ibid., p. 152.
[165] Russell and Van de Ven (eds.) *The Proceedings,* p. 9.
[166] Ibid., p. 5
[167] Ibid., p. 152.
[168] Ibid., p. 220.
[169] Kathleen Preston, 'Review of Diana E.H. Russell and Nicole Van de Ven *Report on The International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women*', *Humbolt Journal of Social Relations* 5:2 (1978), 144-47, p. 145.

The Brussels Tribunal sought to develop a feminist understanding of crime and to solve crimes against women through societal transformation. The Tribunal proposed crime to mean, not what was criminal under the law, but 'all man-made forms of women's oppression.'[170] Many of the discriminatory acts that the Brussels Tribunal identified as 'crimes' were not 'viewed as criminal acts by existing patriarchal governments.'[171] Simone de Beauvoir did not attend, but sent in an opening statement. She stated that for many of these crimes there was 'no legal recourse,' for example, compulsory heterosexuality was not recognised as a crime in the law.[172] However, women were not seeking a simple incorporative solution where the state's definition of crime would be extended. The Brussels Tribunal was not a 'carceral feminist' event.[173] Women suggested that solutions posed to 'eliminate crimes' by the state really did little more than 'scapegoat[…] the less powerful.'[174] In fact, feminists understood that states were complicit in crimes against women, testimonies by women globally, including from Korea, India, Iran, France and Chile revealed that police often sided with perpetrators of violence and committed acts of sexual and physical violence themselves.[175] Solutions posed to crimes were almost all external to the state. For example, a group organising against pornography suggested 'all women should work towards a sexual identity that is a total expression of herself, her needs.'[176] Women, including Margot St. James, a sex working woman from the US and leader in the sex worker rights group C.A.Y.O.T.E. (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), saw commercial sexual exchange as problematic but suggested that 'the government is the worst pimp of all!'[177] They proposed that the role of the law in the lives of women selling sex should be shrunk, not expanded and 'sexual acts in private between consenting adults shall be outside the purview of the criminal laws.'[178] Ultimately, women sought to 'mobiliz[e]…our energy to destroy those structures which are…criminal and serve to perpetuate our oppression.' Women 'look[ed] to indict the system.'[179]

[170] Ibid., p. 152.
[171] Kathleen Blumhagen, 'Review of Diana E.H. Russell and Nicole Van de Ven *Report on The International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women*', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 2:1 (1977), 131-136, p. 131.
[172] Russell and Van de Ven (eds.) *The Proceedings,* p. 5.
[173] Anna Terwiel, 'What is Carceral Feminism?' *Political Theory* 48:4 (2020), 421-442.
[174] Russell and Van de Ven (eds.) *The Proceedings,* p. 163.
[175] Ibid., pp. 110, 111, 116, 117.
[176] Ibid., p. 137.
[177] Ibid., p. 129.
[178] Ibid., p. 137.
[179] Ibid., p. 163.

The vast majority of those present were white and from the Global North, with the largest majority coming from Western Europe. As Chiara Bonfiglioli notes, there were no testimonies from women from the Eastern European socialist countries.[180] However, the Tribunal did attend to crimes committed against 'Third World Women,' as they were known in the movement at the time and in the proceedings. Women from South Africa, India, Iran, Chile were present, as well as those living in the Global North, but who were Indigenous or women of colour, though usually just one or two women represented a particular country or community. Pat Parker, the African-American poet and health activist was present, and testified to the murder of her sister, Shirley Jones by Jones' husband. Australian Aboriginal activist Sue Chilly and Yvonne Wanrow, a Sinixt First Nations American activist also took part in the Tribunal, along with a Vietnamese woman living in France, and an Arab woman living in England. Women who couldn't make it, including those from Mozambique and Korea, sent written testimony in their place which was read aloud.[181] US feminist Charlotte Bunch reflected that there was not a 'significant Third World presence' at the Tribunal because 'unlike U.N. conferences' there was 'no government money,' and 'women from poorer countries…do not usually have the resources to attend.'[182]

Sue Chilly, took Aboriginal women's stories of forced sterilisation to the Brussels Tribunal. Stopping forced sterilisation was a significant priority of the Aboriginal women's movement at the time, as Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton recalled in an oral history interview.[183] At the tribunal, Chilly laid out the reproductive injustices that Aboriginal women faced, including how 'Black women [were] sterilized by force, especially in the Northern Territory, because they are seen as unfit mothers.'[184] The archives attest to the occurrence of this, in the first edition of the WAAC newspaper *Right to Choose,* Shirley Smith, an Aboriginal health activist known as Mum Shirl, said that 'she knew of thirteen women, several of them only 23 years old being given hysterectomies and other types of sterilisation without their knowledge.'[185] While in other locations, such as India and Japan sterilisation without consent was not criminalised,

[180] Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'The First UN World Conference on Women (1975) as Cold War Encounter: Recovering Anti-Imperialist, Non-Aligned and Socialist Genealogies', *Filozofija I Društo* 27:3 (2016), 521- 541, p. 528.
[181] Russell and Van de Ven (eds.) *The Proceedings,* p. 9.
[182] Charlotte Bunch, 'New Introduction to the Reprint Edition' in *The Proceedings of the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women,* eds. Diana E.H. Russell and Nicole Van de Ven (Berkeley, C.A.: Russell Publications: 1990 [1976]), 198-202, p. 199.
[183] Oral history interview with Marcia Langton, 28th February 2022, on Zoom.
[184] Ibid., p. 68.
[185] 'Briefly….' *Right to Choose,* 1 (1973), p. 3.

it was in Australia.[186] Accounts suggest that these operations were done in a way that were technically legal but coercive, adhering to the letter, rather than the spirit of the law. Aboriginal women's consent was often gained through coercion and Aboriginal women's low levels of literacy in English were exploited. A non-Aboriginal health worker Janet Bacon reflected this in *Right to Choose:* 'Too often women who have had a number of children come with a story of an ill explained but essential operation done after the birth of the child…and it is too frequently discovered that a tubal ligation…has been performed. While it is possible that all these women have been told the technical names for the operation and have signed the necessary forms…they did not understand the significance or permanency of the operation.'[187] Therefore, like many crimes discussed at the Brussels Tribunal, Aboriginal women could not simply reform the law to change their circumstances, because forced sterilisation was already a crime and despite this, occurred anyway.

As Chilly's testimony made clear, sterilisation without consent was thought to be motivated by racism and a continuation of genocide against First Nations people in Australia. Bacon remarked, 'Some militant aborigines [sic] believe a policy of genocide is being practiced by some doctors in Australia. When you look at the number of tubal ligations being done on aboriginal [sic] women, and consider the difficulty many white women have had trying to get similar operations it is not difficult to believe them.'[188] Marcia Langton reflected that the sterilisation of Aboriginal women took place 'in particular parts of Australia, especially remote Australia, [where] there were individual, racist psychotic doctors who were sterilising Aboriginal women in some kind of personal eugenicist campaign […] We were hearing about it from particular places, like the Kimberley.'[189]

Forced sterilisation was different to abortion. To make abortion accessible required law reform, while an end of forced sterilisation which was already illegal, required cultural change. Abortion was also seen as a white women's issue and even as a tool that could be used, as

[186] On Japan see, for example: Astghik Hovhannisyan, 'Preventing the Birth of "Inferior Offspring": Eugenic Sterilizations in Postwar Japan', *Japan Forum* 33:2 (2020), 1-19; Tiana Norgren, 'Abortion before Birth Control: The Interest Group Politics behind Postwar Japanese Reproductive Policy', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 24:1(1998), 59-94. On India see, for example: Rebecca Jane Williams, 'Storming the Citadels of Poverty: Family Planning under the Emergency in India 1975-1977', *Journal of Asian Studies* 73:2 (2014), 471-492; Emma Tarlo, 'Body and Space in a Time of Crisis: Sterilization and Resettlement during the Emergency in Delhi', in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. Veena Das (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 242-70.
[187] Janet Bacon, 'Aboriginal Women', *Right to Choose* 5 (1974), p. 3.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Oral history interview with Marcia Langton.

sterilisation was, to restrict Aboriginal women's bodily autonomy. Marcia Langton discussed how difficult this made being involved in the movement for gender justice: 'Being a feminist back then in Australia, especially in the Aboriginal community, was highly contentious because people accused us of wanting to give Aboriginal women abortions.'[190] Sue Chilly similarly concluded her testimony at the Russell Tribunal. She reflected on the extent of racism that Aboriginal women faced and its entanglement with reproductive health, resulting in different needs to white feminists: 'It is in this context of oppression that the demands of the women's movement for…free abortion on demand…are irrelevant to Black women. It is not the male chauvinist who is the oppressor but the entire white society.'[191]

For Sue Chilly, as for many women, the Tribunal was disappointing. There was a tumultuous, conflict-riven atmosphere after the first day. There was controversy over the presence of men representing the media, the power of the organising committee, including accusations of inflexibility and authoritarianism, and the structure of the tribunal which privileged testimonies.[192] Chilly reported in the first edition of the newspaper of the Black Women's Action Collective, *Kooka ~ Bina* (later called *Koori Bina*) that the Tribunal did not offer any knowledge of the structure or strength of women's struggles in other countries.[193] This was because of the form papers took 'All papers presented were ten minutes of personal testimony' with 'no question time.' [194] Chilly suggested that 'all women wished to present their case of personal oppression and very few wished to listen to others' nor to 'develop a working analysis around the reasons for or the fight against their oppression.' In her eyes, this made the tribunal 'apolitical.'[195] This was echoed in other women's experiences of the tribunal, including by a Spanish woman who stated that there was an over reliance on 'mere anecdotes or factual descriptions.' Like Chilly she felt that 'theoretical analysis of the causes of crimes' and 'ways of combatting them' should be developed instead.[196]

Chilly's disappointment was particularly acute due to the racial dynamics of the tribunal. She felt that white women at the tribunal did not understand that 'for Black women it was not

[190] Ibid.
[191] Russell and Van de Ven (eds.), *The Proceedings,* p. 68.
[192] Ibid., pp. 164-190.
[193] 'Sue Chilly reports on women's conference in Brussels', *Kooka~Bina: A Black Australian News Monthly* 1:1 (1976), 9.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Russell and Van de Ven (eds.), *The Proceedings,* p. 169.

sexism, but racism that was the major threat.'[197] An unnamed Australian woman also suggested that this lack of racial understanding was reflected in the structure of the Brussels Tribunal; this grouped crimes by nations and so obscured the differences between women *within* nations. She gained this insight through listening to Chilly's testimony, stating: 'The Black woman representing Australia sees herself as having more in common with her Black sisters than with white Australian women.'[198] The lack of racial awareness is prevalent in the book of the proceedings of the Tribunal. Russell and Van de Ven write that Third World women from South Africa and Australia convincingly revealed that racism for them is the most vicious oppression. But they suggest that 'it does not follow that Third World Women should ignore sexism. Just because being lynched is worse than being raped, doesn't meant that if one is vulnerable to both, one should do nothing to try to stop rape.'[199] Despite this, Chilly suggested that the Brussels Tribunal helped her raise her experiences of forced sterilisation in Australia: 'I had been in the Black movement in Australia for six years and saying all the same things- but I had to go overseas to get people to notice them.'[200] She also remarked that the connections she made with other 'Third World women' at the event were also important.[201] Black women's alternative 'world making', that is the relationships and imaginary they developed with one another, through and beyond the white women's movement, is also evident in African-American poet Pat Parker's papers.[202] Parker's collected material from this event contains only the testimony of women of colour and Indigenous women from the Brussels Tribunal. Parker, like Chilly, found the Tribunal 'burdensome.'[203]

Beyond 1975: Reproductive rights in global perspective

The Brussels Tribunal was not without its legitimate critics, and if we evaluated it only through the aims on which it was founded, it too could be seen as a failure. After all, this did not lead to a feminist transformation of the meaning of crime, nor did it lead to a united, global feminist movement or to changes in social conditions that led to a radical decrease in crimes against

[197] 'Sue Chilly reports…'
[198] Ibid., p. 171.
[199] Ibid., p. 67.
[200] 'Genocide goes on, says activist', *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 16 April 1976.
[201] 'Sue Chilly reports…'
[202] 'World making' as a concept is taken from Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019). 'Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, 1976', Series IV, Subject Files, 1974-1989, Papers of Pat Parker, 1944-1998, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.
[203] Postcard from Diana Russell to Pat Parker. Russell writes to Parker 'I am sorry you found the Tribunal burdensome…' 'Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, 1976', Papers of Pat Parker.

women. Considering the Tribunal beyond the specificities of its aims, however, reveals that it played an important role in generating an anti-racist, global perspective in the Australian movement for reproductive justice. As Jocelyn Olcott suggests, UN International Women's Year was a moment where the homogeneity of the women's movement as the domain of white European, Antipodean and Anglo-American women opened up to 'an iconoclastic movement of seemingly boundless diversity.'[204] The role of offshoots like the Brussels Tribunal should not be underestimated, this also supported an increasingly global feminist perspective in white Australian women after 1975. Marcia Langton recalled that 'it was really after 1975' that Aboriginal feminists developed a feminist perspective. This was because of the Mexico City conference.[205]

This global perspective is reflected in WAAC's embrace of the demand 'no forced sterilisation,' in December 1975.[206] More specifically, the influence of the Brussels Tribunal can be felt on WAAC after they affiliated to the International Campaign on Abortion, Contraception and Sterilisation (ICACS). ICACS was a global campaign established by British women in 1978.[207] The archive of this organisation reveals that the Brussels Tribunal impacted on their perspective and strategy. For example, in 1984, ICACS sought to organise a women's international tribunal on reproductive rights in Amsterdam. They noted that 'after the meeting they will publish a report similar to the report on the International Tribunal Against Crimes Against Women.'[208] Further to this, ICACS used the slogan of the Brussels Tribunal 'Sisterhood is powerful- global sisterhood is more powerful' to advertise their international day of action, which WAAC participated in.[209]

Much of the material and perspective in the later editions of *Right to Choose* was drawn directly from the ICACS. There is an understanding in these later issues that the community of feminists extended beyond Western Europe and the English speaking world and that reproductive justice in one location looked different elsewhere. There was an attempt to make comparisons between

[204] Ibid., p. 229.
[205] Oral history interview with Marcia Langton.
[206] 'No Forced Sterilisation', *Right to Choose* 9 (1975), p.2.
[207] 'International Day of Action', leaflet, International Abortion, Contraception and Sterilisation Campaign, SA/NAC/E/2/4 in National Abortion Campaign Records, Wellcome Collection, online at [https://wellcomecollection.org/works/dcyt4cnz/items?canvas=2, accessed 3 September 2022].
[208] 'Women's International Tribunal & Meeting on Reproductive Rights, 1984,' leaflet, International Abortion, Contraception and Sterilisation Campaign.
[209] ICASC Co-ordination Group, *International Contraception Abortion & Sterilisation Campaign Information*, No. 3, 1980, p. 1. International Abortion, Contraception and Sterilisation Campaign.

women's lack of access to abortion in Australia, with the use of chemicals harmful to reproduction, including defoliants in Vietnam, and population control measures in the Global South.[210] There is no celebration of population control measures, nor did feminists misread these as state support for women's right to choose. This is a significant change when compared to the early movement material. Instead population control measures are framed as 'evidence of racist policies and imperialist domination,' and often reveal an understanding of the complicity of non-government organisations in this.[211] An article on population control in Bangladesh, for example, reveals women's understanding that sterilisation programmes were often linked to international aid and development funds, as does discussion of the injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera.[212] Lack of abortion in the Global North and forced sterilisation and population control initiatives in the Global South are seen as 'two sides of the same coin.'[213] Also present is the knowledge that women's relative reproductive freedom in the Global North, including access to hormonal contraceptives, was based in exploitation of women in the Global South. WAAC wrote, in the very last edition of *Right to Choose,* that 'As western feminists we must accept that the contraceptives we have…are the best of a large number of devices tried out, in guinea pig fashion, on third world women.'[214] In this way, we can see that the Brussels Tribunal and the global networks born from it, successfully encouraged Australian feminists to extend their sightlines to incorporate a global perspective into their campaigns for reproductive rights.

In the late 1970s, the field of feminist legal studies was born. Marking its beginning was US radical feminist and lawyer Catherine Mackinnon's book *Sexual Harassment of Working Women,* often called the first work of feminist jurisprudence.[215] This field revealed that law was not a neutral and objective tool of justice, but an instrument that both reflects and is fundamental to a society that subordinates women.[216] What this chapter has shown is how

[210] 'International Campaign: Contraception, Abortion, Sterilisation, Women Decide!' *Right to Choose* 18 (1979), 4; Jeanne Saint, 'Population Control in Bangladesh', *Right to Choose* 18 (1979), 5. The article bears a note that it was originally published in the British National Abortion Campaign's publication, 'Abortion Internationally'.
[211] 'International Campaign: Contraception, Abortion, Sterilisation, Women Decide!', *Right to Choose.*
[212] Saint, 'Population Control in Bangladesh', p.5; 'Depo Provera: Beware', *Right to Choose* 20 (1980), 1.
[213]'International Campaign: Contraception, Abortion, Sterilisation, Women Decide!', *Right to Choose.*
[214] 'Depo Provera: Beware', *Right to Choose.*
[215] Catharine Mackinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976);
[216] Ibid.; Catharine Mackinnon, 'Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence', *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 8:4 (1983), 635-658; Catharine Mackinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA and London: 1987); Chao-Ju Chen, 'Catharine A. Mackinnon and Equality Theory', in *Research Handbook on Feminist Jurisprudence,* ed. Robin West and Cynthia Grant Bowman (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2021), 44-65; Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*

Mackinnon's insight was present in the Australian movement for reproductive rights long before the publication of her pathbreaking book. Crucially, it has also revealed how women in Australia saw the law not just as an oppressive force, but an instrument that could be used to extend reproductive freedom. It has also uncovered how Australian feminists drew from a wide range of global sources, both official and unofficial. Unofficial legal instruments, such as 'peoples' tribunals' emulated by feminists, helped the development of an understanding of crime, beyond narrow and often unjust definitions of these present in national law. As historians, Australian feminist uses of global law enable us to trace how feminist campaigns for reproductive justice changed over time. We also see how the Australian movement for reproductive justice extended its sightlines beyond the Anglo-sphere and Western Europe to grapple with the impact of the lives of reproductive injustice in the Global South and First Nations women in Australia. The next chapter continues to consider the entanglements of Australian women with people and ideas from the Global South. It specifically considers the role that East Asian communism played in the women's liberation movement in Australia and how women's understandings of one another fared when they met face to face. While this chapter has considered how women made demands of the state from outside of it, and sought solutions beyond it, this next chapter discusses how Australian feminists sought reform of the state from within.

(Oxford: Polity Press, 1988); Larissa Behrendt, 'Aboriginal Women and the White Lies of the Feminist Movement: Implications for Aboriginal Women in Rights Discourse', *The Australian Feminist Law Journal* 1 (1993), 27-44.

Chapter 3

'To feel their warmth, sisterhood and closeness' Australian Feminist Entanglements with Vietnamese and Chinese Communism, 1969-1979.

In 1975, a delegation of Vietnamese women visited Australia at the invitation of the group Women in Solidarity for Peace (WISFP).[1] The poster advertising this event, likely pinned on women's centre noticeboards, featured a Vietnamese woman, smiling, a gun slung over her shoulder. She appears to be a member of a women's battalion, her comrade can be seen in the background (see figure three). This poster and the related papers of WISFP held in the State Library of NSW, led me to explore the entanglements of East Asian communist women and the Australian women's liberation movement that I trace in the first half of this chapter. While this poster advertised a specific visit of Vietnamese women in 1975, Vietnamese and Chinese women had influence across the Australian women's liberation movement. Socialist feminists saw Vietnam and China as tantalizing evidence of a women friendly communist utopia, while other feminists projected their desire for sisterhood onto Vietnamese and Chinese women.

The second half of this chapter asks how such projections fared when women encountered each other face to face in a series of visits. Across the years 1975-78, Australian feminists both visited and hosted women from China and Vietnam. Certainly, Australian women projected their desires onto Chinese and Vietnamese women, but in turn, Vietnamese and Chinese state feminists acted strategically as hosts, controlling guests' experiences to instill in them a perception of Vietnam and China as gender equal. During these visits women's expectations of each other were exposed and led to moments of bafflement that I describe as 'productive confusion.' However, while these moments revealed the liberatory limits of East Asian state feminism, this chapter concludes that East Asian communist state feminists were not exceptional; the pressures, limited agency and internal fixities they faced were comparable to those negotiated by Australian state feminists or 'femocrats.'[2]

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[1] This chapter three draws on my article titled '"To feel their warmth, sisterhood and closeness" Australian feminist entanglements with Vietnamese and Chinese Communism, 1969-1979' forthcoming in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society.*

[2] 'Femocrat' is an Australian term, a portmanteau of 'feminist' and 'bureaucrat.' On the use and history of this term, see Marian Sawer, *Sisters in Suits* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1990), pp. 22-3; Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State, (*St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), pp. xi-xii; Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 254-55.

This chapter contributes to histories of the women's liberation movement and negotiations of racial and political difference within it. In Australia, as elsewhere, archives and historiography of this important social movement attest to the overrepresentation of white women and the racist marginalization of Indigenous women, women of color, and those from the Global South.[3] However, when calcified this critique can unintentionally obscure moments where women did work across racial and national difference, albeit with imperfect results. Further, assessments of the women's liberation movement often centre the highly fraught relationships between white and non-white women within nation states in the Global North. Yet, this critique may unintentionally limit our historical understanding of the role women of colour played in the movement: their primary purpose is cast as correcting white women's racism. Taking a global perspective reveals the ways feminists formed relationships across national borders, and the complex ways that women from the Global South provided inspiration to the women's liberation movement of the Global North. This chapter is indebted to work which considers the entanglements of feminists with Maoism across the divisions of Global North and South.[4] It is also indebted to work which sees the role of women of colour as more than a corrective of white women's racism.[5]

[3] In Australia, see for example Pat O'Shane, 'Is There Any Relevance in the Women's Movement for Aboriginal Women?' *Refractory Girl* 12 (1976), 31–34; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talking Up to the White Woman* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000); Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies* (Sydney: New South, 2019), p.50. In the US see for example Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (New York: The Feminist Press at City University of New York,1982); Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (London: Penguin, 2019 [1981]); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (London: Penguin, 2019 [1984]). In the UK, see for example Natalie Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England 1968-1993* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Hazel Carby, '"White Women Listen!" Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood', in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain,* ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1982), 212–35.

[4] Quinn Slobodian, 'Guerilla Mothers and Distant Doubles: West German Feminists Look at China and Vietnam, 1968-1972', *Zeithistorische Forschungen* [Studies in Contemporary History] 12:1 (2015), 39-65; Christina van Houten, 'Simone de Beauvoir Abroad: Historicizing Maoism and the Women's Liberation Movement', *Comparative Literature Studies* 52:1 (2015), 112–29; Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism and Feminism During the Vietnam War Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.

[5] Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement;* Jennifer C. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019).



Figure 3: Mandy Martin, 'Vietnam Women's Visit' Australian War Memorial. Acc. No: ARTV07567 reproduced from https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C102642.

Victory to the Vietnamese women

As I discussed in the introduction, it is historical orthodoxy that the Australian women's liberation movement developed out of women's experiences of sexism in the movement against the Vietnam War.[6] Canberra feminist Biff Ward remarked that as women's movement began to grow, 'suddenly there was language' for what women were experiencing in this social movement. Other women began to speak up and 'tell […] stories' in a way that resonated with Ward.[7] Feminist poet Kate Jennings' famous 1970 'front lawn' speech was one such articulation. She wrote the speech 'at a boil.'[8] She stood on the Sydney University lawns and, fluorescent with rage, 'in a quavering and determined voice', with 'trembling hands' addressed her alleged male comrades as 'brothershits.'[9] In a style that resembled slam poetry she accused them of mocking women involved in the movement to end the Vietnam war, when they 'wouldn't laugh at…black panthers.' Jennings denounced leftist men for delegitimising

[6] See Sawer, *Sisters in Suits,* p. 1; Ann Curthoys, '"Shut Up You Bourgeois Bitch": Sexual Identity and Political Action in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement', in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, (eds.), Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 311-42; Gisella Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 27; Lake, *Getting Equal,* pp. 220-21, Arrow, *The Seventies,* p. 36.
[7] Oral history interview with Biff Ward, 26th May, 2021, on Zoom.
[8] Kate Jennings, *Trouble: Evolution of a Radical/Selected Writings 1970-2010* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2010), p. 4.
[9] Ibid., pp. 4, 7.

women's oppression: 'How many of you, who can see so clearly the suffering…in Vietnam… would get off your fat, piggy asses and protest against the killing…of women in your own country.' Jennings was referring particularly to women who had died from illegal abortions.[10]'Victory to the Vietnamese Women,' Jennings declared.[11] Sexism of men on the left was cause for concern across the early movement. A Sydney feminist Gael described the hostile crowd present at Jennings' speech as a 'sea of males…sniggering and calling out bed suggestions.'[12] Historians have concluded that women, fed up with the rampant, routine sexism present in the anti–Vietnam War movement began to organize autonomously around issues directly affecting them, including abortion and childcare, and to form women-only consciousness-raising groups.[13] After her front lawn speech, Kate Jennings reflected, 'we were busy.'[14]

However, to suggest that the flourishing of women's liberation in Australia and the proliferation of women-only organising was merely a reaction to sexist men is to miss the intellectual sophistication of the women's liberation movement, particularly the understanding of imperialism and how this mirrored women's oppression developed by socialist and communist feminists. Indeed, women-only organizing was inspired by the successful Vietnamese struggle against US imperialism. The 1969 leaflet, 'Only the Chains Have Changed,' written by a collective including Martha Ansara, a feminist of Syrian-Lebanese descent and later Australian Communist Party member, crystallises this: 'The women's liberation movement believes that women must fight against the forces of oppression for the right to determine their own lives, just as the Vietnamese are fighting for the right to govern their own country.'[15] Internationalist Helen Jarvis, who distributed the leaflet, explained: 'the main point of the leaflet was making the links between women's liberation and Vietnam.'[16] Jarvis suggested that through the antiwar movement, women had come to see that beyond economic oppression, there were other kinds of oppression too. Thus, the 'chains' in the title of the leaflet, which referred to the economic chains that Karl Marx and Friedreich Engels

[10] Ibid., p. 4.
[11] Ibid., p. 7.
[12] Gael, 'A woman on the front lawn,' *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, October- November (1970?): 2-3.
[13] Sawer, *Sisters in Suits,* p. 1; Lake, *Getting Equal,* pp. 220-21; Arrow, *The Seventies,* p. 36.
[14] Jennings, *Trouble*, p.7.
[15] 'Only the Chains Have Changed', 1969, Box 8: Sydney Women's Liberation Group Papers ca. 1970-1980, First Ten Years of Women's Liberation Collection ca. 1969-ca. 1980, State Library of NSW.
[16] Eva Cheng, 'Vietnam and the Women's Liberation Movement', *Green Left Weekly* 184 (April 26, 1995): [https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/vietnam-and-womens-liberation-movement , accessed August 22, 2022].

urged workers to cast off in their *Communist Manifesto*, had 'changed.'[17] Women, through their understanding of imperialism had realised, in Jarvis' words, that 'class oppression wasn't everything.'[18] As there was 'national oppression' that the Vietnamese faced, so 'there was also sexual oppression' faced by women in Australia and globally.[19]

The powerful narrative that the women's liberation movement developed in response to men's sexism also obscures feminists' continuing practical and ideological commitment to anti-imperialism in Vietnam. As we have seen in chapter one, communist feminists contributed significantly to the women's liberation movement, and many of these women continued to see Vietnam as a source of inspiration. Martha Ansara urged in the *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, 'We are fighting against our oppression…all over the world people are also trying to win their freedom… Probably the foreign struggle at the forefront of our minds is Vietnam.'[20] As anti-imperialist struggle inspired women's liberation, feminism in turn expanded socialist women's understanding of the war in Vietnam, especially after the My Lai massacre exposed the use of rape as a tool of war. Writing for feminist newspaper *MeJane* in 1972, feminist and member of the Communist Party of Australia, Mavis Robertson accused Australia of being 'part of the gang-bang' and that Vietnamese people's action against imperialism meant they, like the woman who had 'worn a short skirt,' were told they 'deserve to be raped.' Vietnam according to Robertson, had lessons for the women's movement. Just as Vietnamese people had 'learned self-defense,' feminists 'must know how to defend [themselves]' and 'be prepared to fight…collectively.'[21]

The revolution is a psychic process

Looking beyond the way socialist and communist feminists sought direct inspiration from women in Vietnam reveals a looser and less predictable enmeshment that spanned wider sections of the women's movement. When Australian feminists turned their gaze inward through the activity of consciousness raising, they were also tethered to women in East Asia, specifically to Maoist women in China, whether or not they were aware of it at the time. Consciousness raising has been historicised as the distinctive tactic of women's liberation, in

[17] Jon Piccini, *Transnational Protest, Australia and the 1960s* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 67.
[18] Cheng, 'Vietnam…'
[19] Ibid.
[20] Martha Ansara, 'Vietnam', *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, October/November (1970?), 10-11.
[21] Mavis Robertson, 'Our Country Is Part of the Gang-Bang', *MeJane,* October 1972, 10.

both Australia and elsewhere. At its peak it involved hundreds of thousands of feminists.[22] During consciousness raising, which took place in small groups, women shared their life experiences often in response to questions selected for discussion. Sydney's North Shore group, for example, discussed aging around the question 'How do you feel about…using hair colouring and makeup to disguise aging?'[23] Moving reports of women's experience of this feature regularly in the archives. Jewish-Australian socialist feminist Zelda D'Aprano wrote in glowing terms about this practice. 'It was an experience never to be forgotten…we spoke of our childhoods, our feelings towards parents, sisters and brothers, our experiences with men…our feelings of inadequacy and general non-being. What a revelation!' [24] Consciousness raising enabled women 'to understand each other's hearts and heads,' and to generate between group members 'an extremely warm and close feeling.' Women learnt to relate to one another differently 'free from condemnation, judgement and bitchiness.'[25] Another woman wrote passionately in the movement periodical *Womanspeak*: 'Tuesday nights became like a drug supply and once a week I scored.'[26]

The intellectual history of consciousness raising is usually attributed to the spread of Freudian psychoanalytic ideas after the Second World War.[27] Joy Damousi considers this specifically regarding Australia, concluding that this technique developed through a dissemination of psychoanalytic ideas beyond the therapy room including the notion that the transformation of the self was key to social change.[28] Therapeutic currents are certainly present in the Australian movement. Melbourne feminist Di Heath suggested that the most important element of consciousness raising was the way it 'provide[d] the context for the radical growth and change of the individual.'[29] Heath proposed that consciousness raising could be more radical than action, as it forced women to confront 'the real challenge of altering the way we see

[22] On the primacy of consciousness-raising in the Australian women's liberation movement, see for example Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest,* p. 34; Lake, *Getting Equal,* pp. 233–35; Elizabeth Reid, 'How the Personal Became Political: The Feminist Movement of the 1970s', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 9-30; Arrow, *The Seventies,* pp. 47–50.
[23] 'North Shore Women's Liberation Group', No date, Box 8, First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.
[24] Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2005), p. 225.
[25] Ibid.
[26] 'What Is C.R.', *Womanspeak* 2:2 (1976), p. 16.
[27] Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 276-304; Joy Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), 281-305; Arrow*, The Seventies,* p. 48.
[28] Joy Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes,* pp. 281-2.
[29] Di Heath, 'Consciousness Raising', in pamphlet *Women's Liberation and Consciousness Raising*, 9, Box 8, First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.

ourselves…of accepting the hard reality that the structures out there are also in our heads.'[30] Across key feminist texts widely read in Australia including Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) there was considerable discussion of psychoanalysis.[31] Feminists saw its liberatory potential as it offered a way to understand the interior self. However, women were, at the same time, very concerned about the legacy of Freudian psychoanalysis. They felt that psychotherapies often suggested women ought to 'adjust' to the conditions around them including 'racism and sexism,' and prioritised coping in society over action to change it.[32] Therefore, consciousness raising developed both through and against psychoanalytic culture.

To locate the history of consciousness raising solely in psychoanalysis would be to elide Maoist currents that informed this tactic and so fail to consider the impact of Southern politics and theory on the women's liberation movement. Quinn Slobodian and Christina Van Houten's argument, that consciousness raising developed from the Maoist tactic of speaking bitterness, can usefully shed light on practices in Australia.[33] This tactic was adopted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the land reforms of the 1940s and 1950s. It 'taught poor peasants to speak up about their experiences…using the language of class [and] exploitation.'[34] In China this tactic was initially associated with women because it rested on the much older grievance genre of the bridal lament.[35] CCP officials selected women as speakers as they were thought more likely to emote publicly.[36] As Van Houten considers, traces of Maoism are found in the work of the New York Redstockings group, who were foundational to the development of consciousness raising in women's liberation and were sympathetic to Maoism.[37] In her influential work on consciousness raising, Kathie Sarachild demanded that women must begin

[30] Heath, 'Consciousness Raising', p. 9.
[31] For a discussion of psychoanalysis in key feminist texts, see Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992 [1963]), pp. 105-19; Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015 [1970]), p. 72; Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: HarperCollins, 2009[1970]), p. 90; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016 [1970]), pp. 180-83.
[32] Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, p.72.
[33] Slobodian, *Guerilla Mothers,* p. 40; Van Houten, *Simone de Beauvoir Abroad,* pp. 120-22.
[34] Xin Huang, *The Gender Legacy of the Mao Era: Women's Life Stories in Contemporary China* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018), p. 70.
[35] Anne McLaren, 'The Grievance Rhetoric of Chinese Women: From Lamentation to Revolution', *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* 4 (2000) [http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue4/mclaren.html, accessed 22 August, 2022].
[36] Huang, *The Gender Legacy,* p. 70.
[37] Van Houten, *Simone de Beauvoir Abroad,* p. 123.

by 'recalling and sharing bitter experiences.'[38] Sarachild quoted Mao Zedong 'On Practice,' directly.[39] Redstockings' guides to CR were read widely across the Australian women's liberation movement.

Redstockings developed their work on CR through reading Mao's *Little Red Book* directly but also through China-watcher William Hinton's *Fanshen*. Published in 1966, *Fanshen* offered a journalistic account of a village transformed by communism. In the US, *Fanshen* sold two hundred thousand copies in paperback.[40] By including women's accounts of speaking bitterness, *Fanshen* was one of the first texts that considered Chinese women as more than 'the beneficiaries or victims of state policy.'[41] In her influential work, Sarachild included a block quotation from *Fanshen* in her guide to consciousness raising.[42] In the 1990s, Redstocking Carol Hanisch reflected on the impact of *Fanshen*: 'I'm sure when the peasant women of Long Bow held their speak bitterness meetings…they never dreamed that their method of struggle would help inspire women half way round the world.'[43] Hanisch suggested that in some cases CR had become 'psychological support' and had lost its political edge. But in others, she said, it was used radically, to plan and critique actions.[44] As translated through *Fanshen*, Maoism stressed that CR led to collective action, a contribution that psychoanalysis could not make alone.

While the influence of Maoism can be traced in Redstockings' texts, it was opaque enough that feminists who were sceptical of Maoism's potential to liberate women would not find this off-putting. Similarly, Hinton's indirect but important influence can be found in Australian women's liberation. When Sydney feminist Trudy Grey returned from a trip to China with her businessman father in 1973, she pointed to 'speak bitterness' sessions that were 'so successful

[38] Kathie Sarachild, 'A Program for Feminist "Consciousness Raising"', in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation,* eds. Shulumith Firestone and Anne Koedt (New York: n.p., 1970), 78-80, p. 79.
[39] Kathie Sarachild, 'Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon', in *Feminist Revolution,* eds. Redstockings (New York: Random House, 1978), 144-150, p. 146.
[40] Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 60.
[41] Gail Hershatter, 'The Gender of Memory: Rural Chinese Women and the 1950s', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28:1 (2002), 43-70, p. 43.
[42] Sarachild, 'Consciousness-Raising', p. 149.
[43] Carol Hanisch, 'A Women's Liberation Tribute to William Hinton and the Women of Long Bow', 1996, [http://www.carolhanisch.org/Speeches/HintonSpeech/HintonTribSpeech.html, accessed 22 August, 2022].
[44] Ibid.

in awakening women to revolutionise their own roles.'[45] Grey used North American social worker Ruth Sidel's firsthand account of her visit to China, *Women and Childcare in China*, as a basis for her understanding of these groups.[46] Sidel's text in turn drew on *Fanshen* along with other texts.[47] Melbourne feminist Karen Gillespie argued that 'Consciousness Raising, as we know it, derives from the Chinese Revolutionary practice of 'Speaking Pains to Recall Pains', a line taken from *Fanshen.*[48] Gillespie braided the psychoanalytic lexicon with Maoism, revealing its dual intellectual tradition: 'speaking about the bitterness we felt…that which has been unconscious often comes to mind.'[49] Gillespie suggested that her understanding of CR was drawn from British feminist Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate*.[50] Mitchell's text used *Fanshen* to elucidate women's position and she explicitly pointed to the Chinese roots of this technique.[51] Mitchell suggested that 'consciousness-raising is the reinterpretation of a Chinese revolutionary practice of 'speaking bitterness.'[52] CR, therefore, was a result of interaction of Maoism with 'psycho-therapeutic practices' and their shared interest in 'speaking the unspoken.'[53]

A sisterhood of militants

In women's liberation periodicals, coverage of women from Vietnam and China was distinct to how other women from the Global South were discussed. Often reportage implied that women across the world shared a similar experience of patriarchy but also that women in the South were 'behind' those in the Global North on the path to liberation. The specificities of context were often flattened by grouping articles together in issues dedicated to 'Third-World women.' But Vietnamese and Chinese women transcended this category.[54] Importantly, Vietnamese and Chinese women did not just feature in socialist feminist journals, such as *Scarlet Woman.* This suggests that it was not just socialist feminists who were intrigued by

[45] Trudy Grey, 'Liberation of Women in China: Some Personal Observations', *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter,* 1973, 4.
[46] Ibid., p. 4.
[47] Ruth Sidel, *Women and Child Care in China: A Firsthand Report* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) pp. 3, 194.
[48] Karen Gillespie quoted in 'Consciousness Raising Groups' [1972] at 'Women Working Together'[http://www.womenworkingtogether.com.au/13.%20Finding%20Our%20Voice%20-%20Women's%20Liberation.html#CR, accessed 22 August, 2022]. The original line is in William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966), p. 157.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 22.
[52] Ibid., p. 62.
[53] Ibid.
[54] See, for example, *Vashti's Voice* 3 (1973); *Refractory Girl* 12 (1976).

postwar Vietnam and communist China; others saw these as tantalising case studies in what women might achieve after their consciousness had been raised.

Writing in *Refractory Girl,* feminist Carmel Shute was particularly impressed that Maoist China, when compared to Soviet Russia, understood 'revolution [as] very much a psychic process.'[55] Shute's reflection was indebted to Charlotte Boney Cohen's account of women's position in China tellingly titled 'Experiment in Freedom,' featured in the North American radical feminist anthology *Sisterhood Is Powerful.*[56] Shute and Cohen again drew on Hinton's reportage and argued that China revealed that the greatest problem faced by women was 'psychological—the attitude of both men and women about women' and in this way was instructive to the situation faced by women in Australia.[57] Similarly, feminists concerned with breaking down rigid gender roles found Vietnam and China instructive. A woman who visited China reflected in *Vashti's Voice,* 'I had tended to feel that in a non-sexist society, role differentiation would… wither away.'[58] However, while visiting China she noticed that women and men's roles remained distinct but she concluded that these differences in gender roles did not reflect 'a set of values about women's subordinat[ion],' and so perhaps needn't be done away with entirely.[59] Similarly, Harry Van Moorst, who had visited Vietnam, was questioned about Vietnamese sex roles during an interview with *Vashti's Voice.* He noted that there was 'effort being made' to eradicate 'vestiges of patriarchy and sexist roles' in North Vietnam.[60] Van Moorst's contribution was reflective of a burgeoning women-only radical feminist politics, and he was 'apprehensive' about whether he should be writing for a women's paper at all.[61]

Australian feminists who looked to Vietnam and China were keen to emphasise East Asian women's autonomous organizing. They discussed the way that changes in women's consciousness had resulted in 'sisterhood' and 'the tremendous growth of women's organisations including the All China Women's Federation' and the Vietnamese Women's

[55] Carmel Shute, 'Women in China', *Refractory Girl,* Spring 1973, 26.
[56] Charlotte Boney Cohen, 'Experiment in Freedom: Women of China', in *Sisterhood is Powerful,* ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 385-421.
[57] Ibid., p. 396; Shute, 'Women in China', p. 26.
[58] 'Women in China', *Vashti's Voice* 2 (1972), 10-11.
[59] Ibid., p. 10.
[60] Harry Van Moorst, 'North Vietnam: A Visit', *Vashti's Voice* 3 (1973), 10.
[61] Van Moorst, 'North Vietnam', p. 10.

Union, who Australian women would later meet on their travels.[62] Coverage in feminist periodicals and the publicity material for Vietnamese women's 1975 visit to Australia, emphasised the role of Chinese and Vietnamese women's battalions and militant women as well as those engaged in work traditionally done by men.[63] The apparent space for autonomous women's struggle in these socialist countries would have appealed to feminists in the Communist Party who sought a model beyond the USSR. Indeed, Martha Ansara wrote to the Vietnamese Women's Union (VWU) in 1973, 'hoping to develop a closer relationship' with them. She suggested that 'although the sheer physical survival in the face of war is the preoccupation of all people there, the Women's Union is well aware of feminist issues…and highly sympathetic to the new women's movements in capitalist countries.'[64] Sydney feminist printing collective Words for Women, which reprinted a wide variety of feminist publications, were particularly captivated by 'Gold Flower's Story' from Jack Belden's *China Shakes the World* (1949).[65] In this story of women's militancy, Gold Flower, suffering an abusive marriage, turned to the Women's Association of the Communist Party for help. Women collectively confronted and beat her husband until 'he lay there motionless on the ground like a dead dog.'[66] Words for Women described this as '35 pages of one of the most inspiring stories we have ever read' and quickly reprinted it as a pamphlet.[67] This story of women's collective militancy against an abusive man would have appealed to socialist feminists as evidence that 'the Communist Party of China…actually encouraged women to carry out resolute struggle against male oppression.'[68] But it also would have appealed to other feminists who were at that time developing the concept of domestic violence and exploring collective solutions.

It is clear that Australian feminists saw what they wanted to see. For socialist feminists, and those active in the Communist Party of Australia, China and Vietnam were communist utopias with space for an autonomous women's movement. Other feminists misinterpreted Vietnamese and Chinese women's action through their own vision of women's liberation based on the concept of sisterhood, or the assumption that women all over the world were united in their

[62] Shute, 'Women in China', p.27; 'Letter to Us from Vo The Thi—of the Vietnam Women's Union', *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter,* February 1974, 7
[63] See, for example, Van Moorst, 'North Vietnam'; Schute, 'Women in China'; Robertson, 'Our Country Is Part of the Gang-Bang'; and promotional material for the Vietnamese women's tour in Box 8, First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.
[64] 'Letter to Us from Vo The Thi', p. 7.
[65] Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970 [1949]), pp. 276-307.
[66] Ibid., p. 302.
[67] 'Reports from the Groups', *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, December/January 1971-1972, 2.
[68] Ibid.

experience of oppression and so would organise without men and against patriarchy.[69] Both projections underplayed the role of the Vietnamese and Chinese state. In the case of both 'Gold Flower's Story' and the reply Ansara received from the VWU, it was the communist state, rather than autonomous women's organising, that East Asian communist women understood to be the fulcrum of liberation. In her letter of reply to Ansara, Vo Thi The of the VWU framed the struggle not in terms of women's oppression, but in terms of continuing anti-imperialism. The priority was to 'demand a ceasefire, put an end to their [US] acts of terrorism, tortures and persecution.'[70] Similarly, when Gold Flower was told to 'unite the women as iron,' that meant 'Producing grain for the…Nationalist troops' and 'Go[ing] home and mak[ing] your husbands participate in the 8th Route Army.'[71] It is worth noting that in both cases, women's struggle involved mobilising men for national goals, which was not discussed by feminists in Australia. However, the face-to-face visits sustained between Australian and East Asian communist women reveal that it was not only Australian feminists who projected their framework of sisterhood or a hoped for socialist feminist utopia. Vietnamese and Chinese women also sought to construct a particular image that their societies were gender equal in the eyes of Australian feminists. They deployed the figure of the militant woman to do this, a figure that would have appealed across the board to Australian feminists.

An 'emotional atmosphere of kissing and handshakes'

In March of International Women's Year, 1975, a delegation of four women from Vietnamese state feminist organisations arrived in Australia. Two members of the delegation represented the VWU, based in North Vietnam. Founded in 1930, the VWU was always aligned with 'the Communist Party in a communist state.'[72] Visitors were Mrs. Le Thu, an executive member of the central committee of the VWU in charge of educational affairs, and Nguyen Linh Quy, a journalist and interpreter.[73] The other two members, Ma Thi Chu, a former pharmacist, now a leader in the central committee of the National Liberation Front, and 'youthful interpreter' Nguyen Thi Tinh, were from the Women's Union for Liberation for South Vietnam (WUL).[74]

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[69] On the meaning, uses, and limits of sisterhood in the women's liberation movement see, for example: Carby, ' "White Women Listen"'; bell hooks, 'Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women', *Feminist Review* 23:1 (1986), 125-138, p. 127.
[70] 'Letter to Us from Vo The Thi', p. 7.
[71] Belden, *China Shakes the World,* p. 307.
[72] Sandra Taylor, *Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), p. 112.
[73] Beverley Dunnett, 'Vietnamese Women Speak of the Trials, Hopes and Needs of Their People', *Tribune,* April 8, 1975, 7.
[74] Christabel Hirst, 'Dramatic Change of Worth in Women', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), March

It is worth noting that the WUL was more heterogeneous than the VWU. It was still 'communist dominated,' but it included other patriotic groups united against American invaders. While the WUL still took direction from Hanoi, the pressures of war meant that it acted with greater independence.[75]

Vietnamese women were invited to Australia by Women in Solidarity for Peace (WISFP). This group was formed to organise the visit but 'aimed to become a permanent expression of the women's peace movement.'[76] Many members of WISFP were socialist feminists with links to the Communist Party. But this group included members of older maternalist feminist peace organisations such as the Union of Australian Women, and was also supported by the long-standing Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the liberal feminist Women's Electoral Lobby.[77] The influence of women's liberation was palpable in the group's decision to be women-only, and it was open to 'all interested women.'[78] It also gave 'preference to women media workers when interviews [were] arranged' with the guests. [79] The Vietnamese guests were interviewed on the feminist Coming Out… Ready or Not show, an initiative of the women's cooperative at ABC Radio.[80] Their tour was of interest to women across the women's movement.

Vietnamese women were invited to visit Australia to discuss 'the position of women and the role of feminism' in Vietnam, to 'show solidarity' and 'provide a comparison of our different struggles.'[81] The visit also sought to 'pay tribute to the magnificent part played by the Vietnamese women in the liberation of their country.'[82] The Vietnamese visitors were supposed to arrive for the Sydney International Women's Day demonstration, where they would observe the large lively crowds from the steps of St Mary's Cathedral, protected at all times by four men against possible right-wing violence.[83] The visitors arrived later in March,

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20, 1975, 29.
[75] Taylor, *Vietnamese Women at War*, p. 112.
[76] WISFP, 'A Project for International Women's Year'*;* and WISFP, 'Press Release: Women from Vietnam in Australia for International Women's Year', December 9, 1974, both in Folder WISFP, Box 8, The First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.
[77] WISFP, 'A Project…'
[78] WISFP, 'Press Release', March 3, 1975, in Folder WISFP, Box 8, First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.
[79] Ibid.
[80] 'Coming Out… Ready or Not Show', no 7., 1975, ABC Radio Archive, Ultimo, New South Wales, Australia.
[81] WISFP, *Women of Vietnam in Australia for International Women's Year*, leaflet in Folder WISFP, Box 8, First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.
[82] WISFP, 'A Project…'
[83] WISFP, 'Vietnam Women's Visit… Working Paper on Itinerary', in Folder WISFP, Box 8, First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.

however, due to visa delays 'owing to… some petty bureaucrat from Australia in Hanoi.'[84] When they finally arrived, they did so to a scene that would be replicated each time they touched down in cities around Australia. They were met by a large crowd carrying 'slogans, banners and red flags.'[85] Children and members of WISFP handed them bunches of flowers in an 'emotional atmosphere of kissing and handshakes.'[86] Visitors were taken to meet a wide range of groups, including trade unions. But WISFP prioritized organisations that had grown out of the women's liberation movement, and visitors were invited to speak about 'goals as Vietnamese women and how we will achieve them.'[87] At the overflowing women's centre hall in Melbourne the delegation addressed 'the largest crowd of women to ever attend a meeting there.'[88] This meeting 'began with a performance of the "Women & Work" show by the Women's Theatre Group.' At its conclusion 'the Vietnamese women jumped up and hugged the performers in delight.'[89] In Sydney, the guests visited the Leichhardt Women's Health Centre, where they sat barefoot on the floor and furiously took notes.[90]

When addressing Australian feminists, Vietnamese women stressed women's militancy during the Vietnam War. This is particularly noteworthy considering that the figure of the militant Vietnamese woman is often criticised as a white feminist fantasy. Woman of colour feminist and legal scholar Jo Corrillo made this critique in a poem titled 'And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You' in the classic anthology of writings of US women of colour, *This Bridge Called my Back* (1981).[91] Corrillo wrote 'our white sisters…love to own pictures of us…holding brown yellow black red children reading books from literacy campaigns, holding machine guns bombs bayonets knives…' She suggested that these representations of smiling militant women mask the ongoing exploitation of women of colour, whether in the Global South or North, including by white women: 'Our white sisters…should think again. No one smiles at the beginning of a day spent digging for souvenir chunks of uranium or cleaning up

[84] No Author, no title, *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, March 1975, p. 1. Source begins 'At the last general meeting it was announced…'
[85] 'Viet Women Speak', *Tribune,* April 8, 1975, 8.
[86] Ibid.
[87] WISFP, 'Vietnamese women's delegation itinerary', p.2, in Folder WISFP, Box 8, First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.
[88] 'Vietnamese Women - Courage, Humility, Strength and Humour', *Vashti's Voice* 11 (1975), 4-5, p.4.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Martha Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', *Scarlet Woman,* April 1975, 10.
[91] Jo Corrillo, 'And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures with You', in *This Bridge Called My Back,* eds. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga (New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1981), 63-64, p. 63-4.

after our white sisters.'[92] Vietnamese women, however, made use of this figure.[93] Nguyen Linh Quy discussed how she had shot down B52 bombers.[94] Ma Thi Chu stressed that in South Vietnam, although women faced substantial hardship including torture for dissent, 'they turned their tears into anger and joined the fight.'[95] She reported that many women stepped into the 'prestigious role of liberation fighter.'[96] Vietnamese women's strategic use of the woman militant is also present in the gift exchange that took place in Melbourne. Vietnamese guests presented their hosts with a 'statue of a woman firing up at bombers made from the metal of a US plane shot down by women.'[97] Melbourne women reciprocated with an album of photographs of demonstrations and street theatre inscribed 'To our heroic Vietnamese sisters in recognition of the courageous role played by the women of Vietnam in the struggle for liberation…in the hope that this will help to forge stronger bonds of understanding between us.'[98]

When Vietnamese women visited Australia, the woman militant was used as a metonym for how women's equality had been achieved. The Vietnamese delegation stressed that through women's role in combat and productive work traditionally done by men, women had gained the respect of their male comrades and 'risen up from being the slaves of slaves to the masters of society, the nation and themselves.' They had won their rights including 'birth control, abortion [and] equal pay.'[99] Responding to an invitation issued by the Vietnamese visitors in 1975, WISFP organised a reciprocal visit to Vietnam in 1976. Australian feminists were chosen to visit on the basis of their commitment to both 'the ongoing struggle of Vietnamese people' and 'the women's movement.'[100] They spent two 'hectic' weeks in Vietnam and were one of the first foreign delegations to visit the South since the end of the war. They visited schools, factories, agricultural collectives and hospitals across the country and met many women militants, including members of both the VWU and the WUL.[101] Elizabeth Windschuttle, who

[92] Corrillo, 'And When You Leave', p. 63.
[93] Wu discussed the use of the Vietnamese militant by a delegation of Vietnamese women to Canada in *Radicals on the Road,* p. 206.
[94] Lyn Hovey, 'Vietnam Women in Australia' *Scarlet Woman,* No. 1 April 1975, 6-7*,* p. 7.
[95] 'Vietnamese Women', *Vashti's Voice,* p. 4.
[96] Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', p. 10.
[97] 'Vietnamese Women', *Vashti's Voice,* p. 4.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Beverley Dunnett, 'In the Vanguard of the Revolution - Women in Vietnam - an Interview', *Tribune,* April 15, 1975, 7.
[100] Beverley Symons, *Women of Vietnam* (Sydney: Women in Solidarity for Peace, 1975), National Library of Australia, 2; see also: Di Crunden, 'What Did They Fight For?' *Vashti's Voice,* 14 (1976), 5.
[101] Symons, *Women of Vietnam*, pp. 2, 8.

visited Vietnam, concluded 'the experience of shooting down a B52…or taking control of a factory, has developed in Vietnamese women a self-sufficiency probably unequalled by women anywhere in the world.'[102] While the figure of the revolutionary woman would have appealed particularly to socialist feminists, Vietnamese women assured feminists that their militancy extended into the home, which would have appealed to those feminists who were grappling with male violence. Vietnamese women as visitors and as hosts stressed that war was the cause of equality and Australians asked whether women's rights would be eroded as the country returned to peace.[103] Vietnamese women assured Australian feminists that they would 'never return to the kitchen!'[104] The Vietnamese delegation emphasised that they had extended their militancy into the home when confronted with partners who, as Le Thu put it, 'still have a bit of feudalism in their heads.'[105] Visitors shared the VWU strategy against domestic violence: women handed out leaflets to raise awareness of a local perpetrator and then, if he was still recalcitrant to change, 'all our women hit him and scare him!' This garnered 'laughter and nods of approval' from the crowd.[106]

Visiting China

While Vietnamese state feminists stressed that it was women's militancy in the war that had ushered in women's equality, the Australian delegation that visited China in 1978 were told that it was women's militancy in the communist revolution that had transformed China into a gender equal society. Since the 1950s, other groups of Australian visitors, including hundreds of members of the Communist Party, had visited China, including Joyce Stevens, as discussed in chapter one. An Aboriginal Australian delegation visited in 1972.[107] Like many Black and Indigenous revolutionaries globally, this delegation were inspired by the way that Maoism seemed to address racial oppression, rather than subordinate it to class politics.[108] This mirrored feminist interest in East Asian communism. Both Maoism and Vietnamese communism seemed to directly address the oppression of women. In 1978, the first group primarily interested in 'how women's lives had changed with the huge changes in Chinese society,'

[102] Elizabeth Windschuttle, 'Women in the Vietnam War', *Refractory Girl*, September 1976, 4-10, p10.
[103] Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', pp. 8-9; Crunden, 'What Did They Fight For?', p. 5.
[104] Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', p. 9.
[105] 'Vietnamese Women-', p.4.
[106] Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', p. 9.
[107] Piccini, *Transnational Protest,* pp. 149-179.
[108] Glen Sean Coulthard, 'Once were Maoists: Third World Currents in Fourth World anti-colonialism, Vancouver, 1967-1975' in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies,* eds. Brendan Hokowhitu, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Steve Larkin, Chris Andersen (London: Routledge, 2022), 378-419; Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London: Vintage, 2019).

visited China.[109] This tour of sixteen—five men and ten women—included Daphne Gollan, a libertarian socialist working out of the Australian National University (ANU) and Susan Magarey; both were committed members of the women's liberation movement. Magarey had been inspired by Gollan's teaching while a student at the ANU, and it was Gollan who had first invited her to a women's liberation meeting.[110]

While travelling around China the group 'gathered answers to our questions everywhere we went,' but 'principally' from a three-hour meeting with Mrs. Wu of the Shanghai branch of the All China Women's Federation (ACWF). The ACWF was a state feminist organisation, established in 1949 and endorsed by the Chinese Communist Party. In its early years, a range of non-communist actors were involved, including members of the Young Women's Christian Association and the Women's Christian Temperance Union.[111] While women's ability to usher in reforms through the ACWF ought not be downplayed, this was certainly a state-feminist organisation 'situated inside the socialist state structure.'[112] The ACWF felt the effects of state power when it was dissolved during the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1972 for allegedly being 'bourgeois.'[113] Perhaps reflective of the ACWF's desire to control the narrative, Australian women were asked to submit their questions in advance; Susan Magarey's detailed notes reveal that these questions outlined the concerns of the Australian women's liberation movement. Magarey noted that Australian feminists were interested in 'the sexual division of labour…political, cultural and ideological equality of men and women, separate women's organisations and their relations with…organisations of power, relations between the sexes.' Magarey asked, 'are they problems for women in China?'[114] Mrs. Wu offered a 'long, beautifully constructed response to our list' and painted a vision of total equality for women across China that had been ushered in by the communist revolution. She suggested that prior to the ascendency of Mao, women had led 'bitter lives' of no education, no political status, economic dependency, and forced marriage. During the revolution, women had 'worked against their own oppression by joining…the armed struggle.' They had taken on traditional

[109] Susan Magarey, 'The Position of Women in China', in *Visiting China,* eds. John Reid and Anne Gollan, (Canberra: Waverley, 1979), 43-51, pp. 43-44.
[110] Susan Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas: Women's Liberation -Women's Studies- Around the World (*Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2014), p. xi-x.
[111] Delia Davin, 'Gendered Mao: Mao, Maoism and Women' in *A Critical Introduction to Mao,* ed. Timothy Cheek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 196-219, p. 208.
[112] Wang, *Finding Women in the State*, 53.
[113] Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's Revolutions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 2018), 244.
[114] Susan Magarey, 'Women's Discussion', June 25 1978, pp. 1-2, Box 12, Daphne Gollan Papers, SLNSW.

male roles, 'delivering grain to the front' and participated in the underground struggle. Now, Mrs. Wu remarked, 'women are masters in our country.'[115]

She must be listened to

Despite the state affiliations of these Vietnamese and Chinese women, Australian feminists recounted their testimony verbatim.[116] The truthfulness of East Asian gender equality was rarely questioned in the many articles written about these visits. Certainly, this was because feminists admired Vietnamese and Chinese women as Martha Ansara reflected in an oral history interview. When we spoke, she remarked that she had recently read an article about unwilling conscripts who fought on the North Vietnamese side, and she wondered why she had supported the Vietnamese communists so fervently. It was, she said, 'because they were doing such an amazing job. Because they were actually standing up…I certainly believed in the integrity of people, that, um, you know, were running these things.'[117] But women also venerated their accounts due to the position of women's testimony across the women's liberation movement. Consciousness raising was premised on the idea that when women spoke, they did so as experts on their lives, and so all accounts were necessarily true. Testimonies did not merely describe women's individual experiences but contributed to the complex picture of what it meant to be a woman.[118]

Guidance for consciousness raising groups speaks to the powerful position women's testimony occupied. Often the tone is strict, remarkably so considering the aversion to leaders and rules espoused by women's liberation.[119] In *Womanspeak,* Joy Wilson advised: 'Each woman in turn says what she has to say…totally without interruption while the others listen.'[120] Further, as Marie explained in a pamphlet about consciousness raising, 'when she is finished…she is NEVER "judged" or "advised" and through this process of speaking and listening in silence' women would, 'time and again recognise experiences [they] have had in other women's experiences.'[121] Australian women's emotional responses reveal that they considered the

[115] Magarey, 'The Position of Women in China', pp. 43-44.
[116] Jill, 'The Vietnamese Womens' [sic] Delegation', *Melbourne Women's Liberation Newsletter*, May 1975, 11-12. See also Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', pp. 8-11 and Windschuttle, 'Women in the Vietnam War', p. 10.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Isobelle Barrett Meyering, '"Speaking Out", Listening and "Sisterhood" at the 1975 Women's Commissions', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 61-80, p. 62.
[119] Sawer, *Sisters in Suits,* p. 5; Arrow, *The Seventies,* pp. 37-38.
[120] Joy Wilson, 'About CR' *Womanspeak* 2:3 (1976), 23.
[121] Marie, 'Consciousness Raising', in pamphlet *Women's Liberation and Consciousness Raising,* 2-3, Box 8, First Ten Years Collection, SLNSW.

testimonies Vietnamese and Chinese women offered to be completely authentic. On hearing these stories, audiences wept and offered standing ovations. Listeners reported being 'deeply moved by their courage.'[122] On her return, Beverley Symons said that feeling Vietnamese women's 'warmth, sisterhood and closeness to me… was a very beautiful experience.'[123] Biff Ward, reflecting almost fifty years later, said the Vietnamese visitors were 'undoubtedly Communist Party apparatchiks, every one of them' but 'what I remember is their warmth and intelligence' as they held Australian women's hands, looked in their eyes, and told their stories.[124]

State feminists and 'ordinary women like us'

Biff Ward reminds us that these Vietnamese and Chinese women were state feminists whose activism cannot be delinked from the Vietnamese and Chinese state. Considering these women in this way reveals their use of what Paul Hollander calls 'techniques of hospitality' that sought to control the experience of foreign visitors and thereby create a favorable impression.[125]As Julia Lovell and Hollander have explored, Vietnamese and Chinese Governments hoped that visitors would return home and practice 'people's diplomacy' by publishing books, providing material support, and giving speeches that defended these regimes.[126] And indeed, Australian women did this. [127]It is evident that women's testimonies of militancy and gender equality were a part of these 'techniques of hospitality,' especially when they were 'spontaneously' uttered by 'ordinary' women. While Australian women were in Vietnam and China, state feminists introduced them to other women who also stressed their ordinariness, introducing themselves as 'a middle-aged peasant woman' or 'a young mother.'[128] Women gave testimony on their own revolutionary activity and that of those around them. In Vietnam, for example: 'Ms Hanh…turned to a young woman…perhaps 18 or 19 years old' and reported that, with a rifle under one arm and a five month old baby tucked under the other, she had 'forced two colonels to surrender.'[129] When Vietnamese guests were interviewed on the feminist Coming

[122] 'Women of Vietnam', p. 4.
[123] Symons, 'Women of Vietnam', p. 13.
[124] Biff Ward, *The Third Chopstick: Tracks Through the Vietnam War* [ebook] (Blue Mountains NSW: Moshpit Publishing, 2022), p. 218.
[125] Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Tourists to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba 1928-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 17-20, pp. 347-99.
[126] Ibid., 348; Julia Lovell, 'The Use of Foreigners in Mao-Era China: "Techniques of Hospitality" and International Image Building in the People's Republic, 1949-1976', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (2015), 135-58.
[127] Susan Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas*, 241.
[128] Symons, 'Women of Vietnam', p. 6.
[129] Windschuttle, 'Women in the Vietnam War', p.6.

Out…ready or not radio show on the ABC, Nguyen Linh Quy, who had shot down bombers, stressed her ordinariness. In response to the request to 'tell us a little about your own life and…involvement?' she stated, 'I myself have nothing much to tell you. You know the history of Vietnamese women is great and heroic and I try to learn my best to be of some use, but I am very far from that.'[130] Similarly, in China, visitors were told that women doing manual labour were former housewives who now worked forty-hour weeks outside the home.[131] Visitors were also introduced to a peasant woman who shared with them her dreams of perfect- and perfectly ordinary- gender equality for her children: 'I would like my elder daughter to be a mechanic in the commune… and maybe my younger will become an ordinary peasant.'[132]

This is not to suggest that the women they met were lying, or that many 'ordinary' women did not do extraordinary things for the Maoist revolution or during the American war in Vietnam; they certainly did, and the VWU and the ACWF undoubtedly raised the status of women.[133] But historical research has revealed the tightly controlled nature of visitors' tours to Vietnam and China. This suggests that women were likely to have been asked to perform their extraordinary 'ordinariness' for this audience of foreigners.[134] Here, as elsewhere, the meaning of ordinariness should be interrogated, even if a recalcitrance to interrogation is embedded within this idea.[135] 'Ordinariness' in this context revealed the completeness of gender equality in China and Vietnam in the eyes of Australian visitors. Just as militant women represented the establishment of East Asian women's equality, 'ordinary' women represented equality becoming commonplace, stretching far beyond state feminist organisations to structure the lives of everyday women. The women Australian visitors met kept 'pointing out that they were not extraordinary, just ordinary women like us.'[136] Australian feminists left Vietnam with the impression that the stories of these brave, militant women 'could be repeated many times by

[130] 'Coming Out… Ready or Not Show',
[131] Chris, 'China Notes', 1978, Box 12, Daphne Gollan Papers, ca. 1918-2002, with the papers of Bob Gollan and Nick Origlass, SLNSW.
[132] Chris, 'China Notes', p. 67.
[133] On the role of women in the Vietnam war, see Taylor, *Vietnamese Women at War;* on women in the communist revolution in China, see Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2007), pp. 87-97; on the role of the VWU see Lan Anh Hoang, 'The Vietnam Women's Union and the Contradictions of a Socialist Gender Regime', *Asian Studies Review,* 44:2 (2020), 297-314, pp. 300-301; on the ACWF see Wang, '"State feminism"', Wang, *Finding Women in the State*; Davin, 'Gendered Mao', p. 208.
[134] Hollander, *Political Pilgrims;* Anne Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic* (Oxford: Roman and Littlefield, 2013); Lovell, 'The Use of Foreigners'.
[135] Claire Langhammer, '"Who the Hell Are Ordinary People?" Ordinariness as a Category of Historical Analysis',
Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 28 (2018), 175–95.
[136] Symons, 'Women of Vietnam,' p. 9.

other peasant women.'[137] When visiting Australia, Vietnamese women also keenly stressed the similarities between women. As Lyn Hovey reported, Vietnamese women 'kept stressing that their struggle is our struggle, their victory is our victory.'[138] Thi Tinh stressed to women in Melbourne, 'Women are the same all over the world. They are rising. Your struggle is the same as ours.'[139] Accordingly, Australian women reported feeling a 'great amount of sisterhood with Vietnamese women.'[140]

Red-carpet rides?

While the figure of the 'ordinary woman' was mobilised to prove the extent of gender equality, Australian women were subject to more generic 'techniques of hospitality' during these trips. Hollander and Lovell suggest that visitors to Vietnam and China were offered elite privileges that resembled the treatment of visiting heads of state.[141] Elizabeth Windschuttle's report confirms this: 'we were four civilians, but as guests of the Women's Union we were treated like important politicians.'[142] These visitors were unexpectedly offered six coveted seats on a plane to Saigon and were granted meetings with the heads of the main government departments, much to the envy of the Australian Embassy staff in Hanoi. As Hollander and Anne-Marie Brady explore, guests found it difficult not to feel indebted to such hospitality on a personal level.[143] However, beyond acts of kindness and flattery, these techniques also revealed to Australian women that the power and resources of the VWU were greater than they had imagined.[144]

The group that toured China were more aware than those who visited Vietnam of the possibility that this might be a tightly managed affair. In *Visiting China,* which the group published on their return, John Reid remarked, 'this must be a red-carpet ride' when faced with a pristine view from the train window. He was 'incredulous to the point of cynicism,' sure that were he able to 'peek over the horizon,' he would find 'pollution and chaos,' but later concluded that 'horizons were eventually crossed and there was no significant difference' between the China

[137] Ibid.
[138] Hovey 'Vietnam Women in Australia,' p. 7.
[139] 'Vietnamese Women'*, Vashti's Voice,* p. 5.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Hollander, *Political Pilgrims,* pp. 358-59; Lovell 'The Use of Foreigners', pp. 145-46.
[142] Windschuttle, 'Women in the Vietnam War', p.5.
[143] Hollander, *Political Pilgrims,* p. 352; Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China*.
[144] Windschuttle, 'Women in the Vietnam War.'

that foreigners were supposed to see, and that which they were not.[145] Yet the archive reveals that the tour *was* meticulously controlled. One group member, Chris, detailed the ordered routine in notes: at each site they would '[run] the gauntlet' of 'clapping, hand-shaking, smiling.' [146] Then they would be ushered typically into a large oblong room, where they would sit around a sizable table under 'greyish' portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, 'in that order,' and sip tea while they awaited instruction.[147] At one point Chris witnessed the spatial control visitors were subjected to, seeing a sign that read 'no foreigners beyond this point without special permit.'[148] Similarly, Daphne Gollan's diary recalled a rare, unscheduled moment at the hotel when she 'intended to sneak off for a walk but was found by staff and plied with towels, blankets and tea.'[149]

Susan Magarey's extensive notes on the discussion with the ACWF detailed some of the overt rhetorical propaganda used to establish a picture of women's equality. Mrs Wu, when discussing women's productivity, recalled a worker who had impossibly 'made 400,000 metres of cotton in 21 months without a single defect,' inspiring the other workers to even greater efforts.[150] When her account from 1979 was republished in 2014, Magarey offered reflections on this earlier visit. She recalled that her group's movement was restricted as they couldn't go anywhere without their guide.[151] She also noted that this visit to China took place before the introduction of the one-child policy and the subsequent 'social and reproductive disjunction' that was visible – and worrying – when Magarey visited in 1995.[152] However, more extreme examples of both spatial control and rhetorical propaganda were omitted from *Visiting China.* While the editors noted that 'the majority of people are directed, educated, propagandised and some are coerced,' they did not consider that *all* of what they were witnessing might be a piece of political theatre.[153] They still believed their firsthand impressions had the power to grant them an authentic understanding of the lives of Chinese people and culture. Perhaps overt propagandistic details were omitted because revealing the extent of control would have

[145] John Reid, 'Looking in China', in *Visiting China,* eds. John Reid and Anne Gollan (Canberra: Waverley, 1979), 23-26, p. 23.
[146] Chris, 'China Notes', 44.
[147] Ibid., 4.
[148] Ibid., 59.
[149] Daphne Gollan, Blue Notebook entry dated 28.6.78, Box 12, Daphne Gollan Papers, ca. 1918-2002, with the papers of Bob Gollan and Nick Origlass, SLNSW.
[150] Susan Magarey, 'Notes on Women's Discussion', Daphne Gollan Collection, Box 12, p. 7.
[151] Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas,* p. 232.
[152] Ibid., p. 233.
[153] John Reid and Anne Gollan, 'Preface', in *Visiting China,* eds. John Reid and Anne Gollan (Canberra: Waverley, 1979), p.v.

undermined both their own and their readers' faith in their impressions. Including these elements would have also undone the intention of 'strengthening and deepening of the friendly relations between Australia and China,' which contributors felt was of the 'greatest importance.'[154]

Productive confusion

There are moments in the reports of women's visits, however, where the weddedness of Chinese and Vietnamese state feminists to the state is revealed. Reports on the position of women in Vietnam point to the control the VWU had over women's reproductive decisions. Le Thu suggested that 'birth control is first and foremost to protect the health and care of women,' and shared an anecdote from her own experience to centre women in this strategy.[155] But she revealed that this was a top-down policy rather than one that came from the grassroots, stressing that 'the interests of the family were closely connected to the interests of the nation…The government does not approve of a woman not having any children.'[156] Others discussed the national need for children that informed the state's decision to withhold abortion from women who had only one child and the way that 'after six weeks the health clinics are reluctant to perform [abortions].'[157] This chimes with development studies scholar Lan Anh Hoang's assertion that whatever the VWU 'identified as women's rights must be compatible with and beneficial to the Party's priorities and goals.'[158] Similarly, the Australian delegation to China were left feeling that ultimately the aims of the ACWF could not be distinguished from those of the Chinese state. While Mrs. Wu explained that this organisation was a 'bridge between the women masses and the Party, passing on the women's demands to the Party… and implementing Party policy among the women masses,' the Australians asked what would happen if the women of China perceived their wishes and the Party's as being in conflict. Ultimately, the Australian visitors concluded that this 'could not, or not officially, even be contemplated.'[159] In both nations, there were moments when Australian feminists, perhaps unwillingly, perceived state feminist organisations as subordinate to the wishes of the Party.

In these moments, where the differing priorities of East Asian state feminists and Australian visitors were revealed, confusion resulted. Each report contains at least one moment of

[154] Ibid.
[155] Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', p. 9.
[156] Dunnett, 'In the Vanguard…'[page number]
[157] Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', p. 9. Please note that it is not clear in the sources whether six weeks refers to the period of gestation or following a positive pregnancy test.
[158] Hoang, 'The Vietnamese Women's Union', p. 300. See also Symons, 'Women of Vietnam,' pp. 4-5.
[159] Magarey, 'Notes on Women's Discussion', p. 43.

bafflement. Leonie Sandercock, a member of the 1978 tour to China, titled her reflection 'China: A Confused Response.' Sandercock was a socialist academic who taught students Chinese history, she went to China 'expecting to be impressed' but returned 'sceptical and disturbed' about the lack of 'sexual, intellectual, political and cultural freedom.' She found it challenging that questions about the status of women including abortion were met with 'stock responses.'[160] She wondered if her confusion, which she described as 'schizophrenic,' was just due to her own 'bourgeois individualist ideology' or whether the gender-equal socialism her hosts stressed relied on repression of the sexual instinct.[161] Martha Ansara found relating state feminist accounts of life under socialism to the problems of 'feminists in an advanced capitalist society' a 'bit…perplexing.'[162] Vietnamese and Chinese women were similarly surprised and confused by the priorities of the Australian feminists they met. In particular, Vietnamese women couldn't understand why feminists' relationships with men was so central to women's liberation.[163] Women's bafflement was frequently expressed through laughter, which was very often awkward. When the Vietnamese delegation was asked about lesbianism, they said they hadn't heard of it and couldn't understand what it was and broke into 'gales of laughter.'[164] After it was explained, the guests concluded 'We've just now learned a new thing from you!'[165] Similarly, when the Australian delegation asked the Chinese women of the ACWF what they thought about the fact that 'in Australia many women believe that their primary struggle is against patriarchy' rather than class, the answer was met with 'some—possibly uncomfortable—laughter, then silence.'[166]

It would be easy to marginalise these awkward moments when women were perplexed by one another. But Margaretta Jolly encourages us to follow these moments of feminist feeling, to be curious about what 'work' the 'mood' does.[167] I want to suggest that we animate these as moments of productive confusion. They are productive because they reveal the profound differences between women both in terms of identity, but also expose their differing priorities. While Australian feminists were able to project their desires for sisterhood or for an

[160] Leonie Sandercock, 'China: A Confused Response', in *Visiting China* eds. John Reid and Anne Gollan (Canberra: Waverley, 1979), 17-23, p.18.
[161] Ibid., p. 21.
[162] Kay, 'Women in Vietnam', p.11. Martha Ansara was previously named Martha Kay.
[163] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[164] Ibid., p. 10.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Magarey, 'Notes on Women's Discussion', p. 14.
[167] Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the British Women's Liberation Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 107, 109.

autonomous socialist feminist women's movement onto Vietnamese and Chinese women when encountering them textually or in photographs from afar, face-to-face meetings revealed the emancipatory limits of state feminism. And indeed, while Vietnamese and Chinese women strategically saw Australian feminists as important allies against imperialism, this became less possible when they were faced with how important sexual expression and the concept of patriarchy were to their feminism. As Clare Hemmings reminds us, women's liberation history is shot through with rise-and-fall narratives: stories of unity, sisterhood, and then necessary but traumatic fissuring.[168] Often these interventions are loud, taking the form of oppositional position papers and conflict at conferences. But these instances of awkward laughter and confusion reveal a more subtle and gentle undoing of sisterhood, even at its alleged height. These moments were often generative, they revealed the possibility, but not the inevitability, of feminist organising across difference. Lyn Hovey concluded that 'the importance of the visit for the women's movement lies in the necessity to hold a dialogue across social systems so that we can examine our priorities, experiences… and possibilities for united actions.'[169]

During oral history interviews with Biff Ward and Martha Ansara, it became clear that bafflement at the time became disbelief later. While Biff Ward recalled the warm experience of meeting Nguyen Linh Quy, she realised later that the way that East Asian communist states represented themselves was not an accurate reflection of what was happening. Ward, who had spent many subsequent years working with Vietnam War veterans, and visited Vietnam many times, contemplated that 'it's with hindsight, many years later, that you know, of course, they would have all been hand picked very carefully.' These visitors would have been selected as 'safe to go overseas.'[170] For Ansara, who also found Chinese women 'very heroic,' it was her career as a feminist film maker that made her realise that the representations of East Asian militants were an idealised fantasy. She explained: 'I'll tell you what, it took [making] one movie with a fifteen month old on one hand, and a camera on the other to know that those photographs of the woman guerilla with a gun and her baby on her shoulder was just bullshit. I was filming in the Goldfields…I had to hand this child over to whatever person was around to wheel her off into the desert so that she was out of microphone distance, crying. Not true, not true, they don't go round with a gun on one shoulder and a baby on the other.'[171]

[168] Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2011).
[169] Hovey, 'Vietnam Women in Australia', p. 7.
[170] Oral history interview with Biff Ward.
[171] Oral history interview with Martha Ansara.

Worlding the 'femocrat'

While differences between Australians involved in women's liberation and Chinese and Vietnamese state feminists were visible, both at the time and in hindsight, their shared experiences of working with state power holders should be brought to light, and set within the broader context of state feminism in the Cold War. As scholars have explored, under communism state feminism often developed from national liberation struggles where women played prominent parts and were subsequently embedded in the party state.[172] In liberal democracies, state feminism was influenced by the women's liberation movement, which initially sought change beyond the state. As Jill Vickers has shown, turns to state feminism in liberal democracies occurred at moments of national restructuring, and feminists took advantage of this.[173] Throughout the Cold War, as scholars suggest, state feminism supported UN-sponsored infrastructure such as the UN conferences on The Status of Women which in turn 'support[ed] the creation of women's machineries' at the national level.[174]

While the development of state feminism under communism and capitalism differed, the shared realities of state feminists across the Cold War divide have only recently been considered. This lag can be explained by Francisca de Haan's assertion of a 'continuing cold war paradigm' present in feminist history.[175] This paradigm obscured the similar priorities of women agitating for gender justice under communism and in the liberal democratic West. Cold War orthodoxy constructed communist states as monolithically totalitarian, de Haan argues, where state feminism could only ever be a ploy to consolidate state power.[176] According to this reasoning, it was only in the West that feminists could act as agents, working within the state or beyond it. Following de Haan, scholars have challenged this Cold War paradigm by insisting that communist women's activism was not entirely subordinate to party interests.[177] Rather, like

[172] Jill Vickers, 'Bringing Nations In: Some Methodological and Conceptual Issues in Connecting Feminisms with Nationhood and Nationalisms', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8:1 (2006), 84-109; Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era: The Case of Yugoslavia', *Aspasia* 8 (2014), 1-25; Wang, *Finding Women in the State.*
[173] Vickers, 'Bringing Nations In', p. 88.
[174] McBride Stetson and Mazur, *Comparative State Feminism,* 4; Ghodsee, 'Pressuring the Politburo', 539; Amrita Basu, 'Introduction', in *Women's Movements in the Global Era,* ed. Amrita Basu, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010), 1-21, p. 9.
[175] Francisca de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)', *Women's History Review* 19:4 (2010), 547–573.
[176] Ibid., pp. 556-57
[177] Wang, 'State Feminism?', pp. 519-51; Wang, *Finding Women in the State;* Ghodsee, 'Pressuring the Politburo', pp. 539-42; Raluca Maria Popa, 'Translating Equality between Women and Men across Cold War

women in the West, they had agency, as revealed by state feminists' often successful agitation to make communist states more woman-friendly. Yet there is another way to challenge this rigid paradigm without needing to defensively overemphasise the agency of Vietnamese and Chinese state feminists. We might turn instead to examine the agency of state feminists working under Western capitalism. Doing this mounts a challenge to the other side of the dyad, which casts the West as a space of benign, low-profile, democratic state bodies, where actors, even those working for the state, had agency. Wang Zheng's efforts to restore the agency of Chinese state feminists by comparing them to Australian femocrats, in order to 'find women in the state' presumes that femocrats *had* agency.[178] My argument, however, highlights a shared *lack* of agency among state feminists in Australia, China, and Vietnam.

In Australia, the first women's advisor to the prime minister, Elizabeth Reid, was appointed in 1973 under the social-democratic Whitlam Government, which came to power in 1972. Reid, like many femocrats who came after her, was a liberal feminist active in the Women's Electoral Lobby.[179] Her appointment as Women's Advisor to the Prime Minister was a world first. While historians have explored the 'quiet revolution' that Australian femocrats enacted, the ways they were at the behest of the state have been less explored.[180] However, this initial 'fandango with the state,' as femocrat Sara Dowse called it, caused concern among some members of the women's liberation movement. They were worried about what having an embedded women's advisor would mean for the women's liberation movement, which initially sought change beyond the state. The editors of the Sydney feminist newspaper *MeJane* wondered how Reid could advise on behalf of all Australian women, especially given that she (like all the candidates) was white, heterosexual, and middle class. Feminists were concerned about her

Divides: Women Activists from Hungary and Romania and the Creation of International Women's Year', in *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, eds. Shana Penn and Jill Massino (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 59-74, pp. 60-61, 73-74; Magdalena Grabowska, 'Bits of Freedom: Demystifying Women's Activism under State Socialism in Poland and Georgia', *Feminist Studies* 43:1 (2017), 141–68. See, for differing perspectives, the debate between Nanette Funk and Kristen Ghodsee: Funk, 'A Very Tangled Knot'; Kristen Ghodsee, 'Untangling the Knot: A Response to Nanette Funk', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 22:2 (2015), 248-258; Nanette Funk, '(K)not So: A Response to Kristen Ghodsee', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 22:3 (2015), 350-55.

[178] Wang, *Finding Women in the State,* p. 7.

[179] Lyndall Ryan, 'Feminism and the Federal Bureaucracy, 1972-1983', in *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions,* ed. Sophie Watson (London: Verso, 1990), 71-85; pp. 71-3.

[180] 'Quiet revolution' is taken from Sawer, *Sisters in Suits,* p. *xiv*. See also: Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp. 253-66; Sara Dowse, 'The Women's Movement's Fandango with the State: Some Thoughts on the Movement's Role in Policy since 1972', *Australian Quarterly* 54:4 (1982), 324-45; Angela Woollacott, 'Being a Woman's Adviser at the State Level: Deborah McCulloch and Don Dunstan in 1970s South Australia', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:95 (2018), 97-113.

high salary of $10,000, which was seen as a 'sell out,' in some circles.[181] Others asked, 'Should individuals personally benefit from the push for a movement of women on behalf of all women?'[182] How would she resolve conflicts of loyalty between the interests of the government and of women?[183] Would she be forced to compromise?

Compromise was a cause of concern for femocrats themselves, which they discussed in oral history interviews. Jane Bullen, a Canberra feminist who was involved in the Australian refuge movement, described her efforts to avoid compromising her feminist politics while working in the Commonwealth Public Service. She worked there for more than a decade in social policy areas, but said 'I always refused to go and work in the Office for Women's Affairs because I felt I would be too compromised. I didn't think [femocrats] were necessarily doing something bad, but I felt what they were doing was limited.' Bullen worked under the Fraser Government from 1977, she felt that femocrats' efforts were particularly limited, especially by a conservative government.[184]

Sometimes, however, compromise was a useful tool, especially as feminists became femocrats because they wanted to get things done beyond the 'small enclaves' of the women's movement.[185] Jozefa Sobski explained that when she came into the movement she had a 'fairly radical feminism […] I wouldn't have dreamed of joining Women's Electoral Lobby because they were a reformist group and we were revolutionaries, we were going to blow up the patriarchy.'[186] At that time, Sobski was a teacher and her 'work on sexism in education led me to get the job in the Ministry of Education.' Sobski was mentored by an older femocrat Joan Bielski, who was in a leadership of the NSW Ministry of Education. It was Bielski who taught Sobski 'about compromise.' She encouraged Sobski to 'decide what you're on about, you know, do you want to be this radical feminist revolutionary? Or do you want to be effective at getting change in the system, because the revolution isn't going to happen. So face that reality. So reform became the objective.'[187] Getting the balance between feminist principles and compromise right was a source of anguish for Elizabeth Reid. In 1975 Reid spoke candidly of

[181] Ryan, 'Feminism and the Federal Bureaucracy', p. 74.
[182] Ludo McFerran, 'Interpretation of a Frontline State: Australian Women's Refuges and the State', in *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions,* ed. Sophie Watson (London: Verso, 1990), 191- 207, p. 192.
[183] Sawer, *Sisters in Suits,* p. 21. Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators,* xv-xvi.
[184] Oral history interview with Jane Bullen, 11th December, 2019.
[185] Sara Dowse quoted in Ryan, 'Feminism and the Federal Bureaucracy', p. 81.
[186] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski, 2nd February 2021, on Zoom.
[187] Ibid.

the 'pressure […] duress and incredible, continual compromise' that she was under.[188] In 2005 she reflected that during her time as advisor to the Prime Minister she would 'get up every morning […] and say[…]do I look like a compromised woman, is it showing?'[189] The necessity of compromise suggests that femocrats' agency was certainly limited, even if the government was radical.

Even under a radical government, femocrats were subject to resentment from public servants in the 'unimaginative, patriarchal' bureaucracy.[190] Sobski described the hostility she received from others in the public service who didn't come from an activist background or get involved to make a difference, but sought to protect the status quo. 'They thought we were just these radical rat bags coming into the bureaucracy[…] "Who did we think we are?" And we were activists in the system…To actually, you know, instigate change, initiate change, stimulate change, stimulate debate, make a policy difference, make a difference in schools.' We weren't 'the strait laced gray cardigan brigade, we used to call them, [those] straight laced men.'[191] Femocrats were sometimes accused of 'meddling' and were sometimes blocked from auditing proposed government policies for their impact on women.[192]

More deeply however, the hierarchical nature of the state separated development of policy and projects from their implementation on the ground. This was quite different to the way campaigns developed in grassroots social movements, and this limited femocrats in terms of their power. Sobski explained: 'You can become deluded that you've done a great deal, when all you've done is change the words on a page somewhere […] If you get a policy through or if you get legislative reform you could, you can feel like, "Well we've done that, tick that box" when in fact, there is so much more to be done in implementation and implementation is not a straightforward thing.'[193] Sobski suggested that the conditions of the job could also compromise women. She suggested that for some femocrats, having a secure, well paid, prestigious job became the goal itself and took away from women's sense of purpose. This

[188] National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, 'Australian Delegation at the 1975 World Conference of International Women's Year', [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UinNIfzUglQ&t=37s, accessed 22 August, 2022].
[189] Emma Renwick 'The Life of Elizabeth', *ABC* Stateline, reproduced on Women's History Network [https://womenshistorynetwork.org/elizabeth-reid-womens-advisor-to-the-australian-government, accessed 22 August, 2022].
[190] Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators,* pp. 182-38; Sawer, *Sisters in Suits,* p. 4.
[191] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski.
[192] Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators,* pp. 170-183.
[193] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski.

enabled femocrats to be co-opted, and to sign off on decisions that did not align to their values. She explained how she got around this, 'I became a bit of a leaker at one stage in the bureaucracy because I felt like I couldn't be part of the decisions that were being made […] I told the broader movement or the union […] I felt like I had to forewarn people, and they had to learn to protect you.'[194]

Moreover, femocrats could quickly be stripped of power, even under a radical government. While the resignation of Elizabeth Reid will be discussed in the next chapter, Reid was downgraded from her position as Advisor to the Prime Minister to the bureaucracy after Whitlam decided she was a liability.[195] This, as she explained in an interview, was tantamount to a silencing: 'once I'm in the bureaucracy […] I become a bureaucrat not an advisor who can speak with the imprimatur of the Prime Minister.'[196] Working under conservative governments or those influenced by economic rationalism severely restricted femocrats' agency.[197] Sara Dowse resigned in 1977 after the Fraser Government rolled the Office for Women into the Department of Home Affairs. Dowse described this as being 'thrown in with war graves and museums.'[198] She further reflected on this in her semi-autobiographical novel *West Block*: 'With a Labor Government came equal pay… refuges, International Women's Year… but now, they were left with this bitterness.'[199] Unlike the bitterness that was present in consciousness-raising groups, this could only retrospectively be spoken.

The women's movement and the state

In Australia, unlike in Vietnam and China, there remained a women's movement that was autonomous from the state. As in other communist countries, Chinese and Vietnamese state-feminist organisations 'absorbed' all other women's organising.[200] This prohibition on

[194] Ibid.
[195] Ryan, 'Feminism and the Federal Bureaucracy', pp. 77-8.
[196] Kim Huynh, 'My 1975 Dismissal: Elizabeth Reid's Story' ABC Canberra, 27 September 2020 https://www.abc.net.au/canberra/programs/sundaybrunch/my-1975-dismissal/12708062 [accessed August 27th, 2022].
[197] Marian Sawer, 'Femocrats and Ecorats: Women's Policy Machinery in Australia, Canada and New Zealand', UNRISD Occasional Paper, No. 6, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva (2006), 1-34, p.8.
[198] Dowse quoted in Ibid., p. 5.
[199] Sara Dowse, *West Block: The Hidden World of Canberra's Mandarins* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1983), p. 232.
[200] Funk, 'A Very Tangled Knot', p. 346; Wang, *Finding Women in the State,* An Thuy Nguyen, 'The Vietnam Women's Movement for the Right to Live: A Non-communist Opposition Movement to the American War in Vietnam', *Critical Asian Studies* 51:1 (2018), 75-102; Celia Donert, 'From Communist Internationalism to Human Rights: Gender, Violence and International Law in the Women's International Democratic Federation Mission to North Korea, 1951', *Contemporary European History* 25:2 (2016), 313-333, p. 318.

organising external to the state is often regarded as a major difference between feminisms across the Cold War divide.[201] Indeed, unlike Chinese and Vietnamese state feminist organisations, Dowse and Reid believed that a women's movement external to the state could support the work of those 'working within the system' if the 'two counter-powers' could be coordinated.[202] However, the turn to state feminism in Australia significantly impacted the autonomous women's movement and if we consider this, the separation between the women's movement and the state in Australia appears less total.

As femocrats freed up money for women's liberation projects, women active outside of the bureaucracy were forced to narrow the utopian aims of women's liberation into streamlined and deliverable policy initiatives, squeezing, for example, an end to violence against women into a demand for women's refuges. In order to get funds, women had to submit to the terms dictated by the bureaucracy. This demanded a level of professionalism from grassroots feminists, for example writing grants and submissions often became a full time job for one worker.[203] Independent projects born from women's liberation such as refuges and childcare centres were beholden to the state for funding.[204] Often, as Jozefa Sobski explained, one of the conditions of funding was that projects were not critical of the government or the funding package they had been offered.[205] Services faced delays due to the bureaucracy. The Leichhardt Women's Health Service, discussed in chapter one, was federally funded, initially by the Whitlam Government and then by the Fraser Government up until 1981. [206] But the money was administered through the NSW Government annually and at the end of the financial year, health care provision ground to a standstill, while the centre waited for the next budget to be approved. [207] The rhyming couplets of the women's liberation health care song make the hoop-jumping demanded of women clear: 'why must we submit our bills/to bureaucratic dills' when 'the auditor will jump/ say no money in a lump.'[208]

Funded services faced instability as government priorities changed and particularly as the Australian state embraced economic rationalism. Women in Industry: Contraception and

[201] Funk, 'A Very Tangled Knot,' p. 346.
[202] National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, 'Australian delegation…'.
[203] 'Elizabeth Reid', *Vashti's Voice* 12, (1975), 1.
[204] McFerran, 'Interpretation of a Frontline State'.
[205] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski 2nd February 2021, on Zoom.
[206] Joyce Stevens, *Healing Women: A History of Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre* (Sydney: First Ten Years History Project), p. 97
[207] Ibid, p. 99
[208] 'Elizabeth Reid,' *Vashti's Voice*, p.1.

Health (WICH), discussed in chapter one, faced a funding crisis in 1984, under the Victorian Labor government. After WICH requested a funding increase from the Victorian Health Department, they were invited to a meeting, described in the WICH papers as a '2 hour long interrogation.'[209] During this discussion, the Health Department made hostile recommendations, all of which involved cost cutting measures. For example, they suggested that the '12 bilingual health workers could offer their services voluntarily.'[210] The Health Department 'implied that WICH was mismanaging its funds' and that the organisation 'had no financial accounting system.'[211] WICH knew that this was about cost-cutting but it was also an attempt to reprimand them for the structure of their organisation because 'they operated as a collective.'[212]

As we have seen, the Australian Labor Party was more open to feminist state reform and more willing to fund feminist projects. So we might ask why the Labor Government gave WICH such a hostile reception. Work by feminist political scientists Marian Sawer and Susan Harris Rimmer, sheds light on the WICH crisis and its context. Sawer and Rimmer argue that while it is usually thought that left parties are more 'favourably disposed to women's policy agencies' and more likely to fund feminist services than parties of the right, this was complicated by the embrace of neo-liberalism by both Australian Liberal and Labor Governments from the end of the 1970s.[213] This resulted in a 'blurring of patterns of partisan difference over gender equality,' where governments on both sides of politics 'give primacy to feminist agendas that are compatible with a market agenda.' It seems likely that this was the case here, though the organisation was ultimately funded and exists today as the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health.[214] But the crisis in WICH and other examples offered here are instructive. They suggest that as we continue to dismantle the Cold War paradigms in feminist history, the project of perceiving the agency of women in communist states should be balanced by consideration of how the agency of feminists who worked within the state was limited in liberal democracies, with far-reaching impacts for the broader women's movement.

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[209] 'Can WICH survive?? Health Commission Sabotages Migrant Women's Health,' n.d. [1984?], leaflet, in Political Ephemera relating to Women in Industry: Contraception and Health 1984, 1985, 1989, p.1. SLVic.
[210] Ibid., p.1
[211] Ibid., p.1.
[212] Ibid., p. 2.
[213] Susan Harris Rimmer and Marian Sawer, 'Neoliberalism and Gender Equality Policy in Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 51:4, 2016, 742-758, pp. 742, 745. See also, Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators,* pp. 184-197.
[214] See: Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Victoria [https://www.mcwh.com.au, accessed 7 September, 2022].

This chapter has considered the entanglements of Australian women's liberation with Vietnamese and Chinese communism across the decade 1969-1979. While it presents an empirical discussion of Australian women's encounters of Chinese and Vietnamese women- textually and in person- it is my hope that the findings speak to the broader debates in feminist thought. While much critique of the women's liberation movement necessarily focusses on women's refusal to work across differences, of both class and of race, here I have traced instances where Australian women, the majority of whom were white, did work across difference, albeit imperfectly. Through a global historical approach, I have dislodged the primacy of the nation-state as the framework that is used to discuss the ways that race and racism transpire in feminism. This global perspective has revealed that East Asian communist women provided ongoing inspiration in rich and complex ways to women in the Australian women's liberation movement. As women encountered one another in person, so moments of 'productive confusion' ensued, which fruitfully exposed East Asian and Australian feminists' contrasting priorities and perceptions of one another. Yet, these encounters also revealed the similarities between state feminists across world systems, who shared constraints on their agency and autonomy. The next chapter continues this discussion of state feminism in Australia and considers its entanglements with nationalism. It considers how the emancipatory limits of the woman-friendly state were revealed at a global feminist conference held in Australia's capital, Canberra, for United Nations International Women's Year, 1975.

Chapter 4

‘A Laugh a Minute’: Humour and Nationalism at a Global Feminist Conference, 1975.

For seven days between August 31st and September 6th 1975, seven hundred women from across Australia descended on Canberra, the nation’s capital, for the ‘Women and Politics’ Conference held at the Australian National University. ‘Women and Politics’ was organised by the National Advisory Committee for International Women’s Year which was convened by Advisor to the Prime Minister on Women’s Affairs, Elizabeth Reid. This conference, which included many prolific international guests was planned as a star-studded event for International Women’s Year, was funded by a $164,000 grant from the Whitlam-Labor Government.[1] ‘Women and Politics’ aimed to showcase the project of Australian state feminism. This project aimed to create a woman-friendly state, with feminist policy and legislation that benefitted women across Australia.

‘Women and Politics’ also sought to bring ‘ordinary women’ from across Australia into the project of feminist state reform. It was hoped that they would attend the conference and be inspired to get involved in politics at a local, state or federal level or beyond parliament as lobbyists or in trade unions, in the media, or in the bureaucracy as ‘femocrats.’ This aim was reflected in Gough Whitlam’s speech at the opening where he stated ‘women- whether they be conservative, liberal or radical- should be fully represented in the political power structure…not just because they are women, but because they are capable human beings…from who the world has much to gain.’[2] These inclusive aims are also reflected in the political diversity of participants; members of the Liberal-National Party and the Country Women’s Association rubbed shoulders with women from the women’s liberation movement, and the anti-abortion Right to Life association was invited to speak alongside the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL). Many women who were not affiliated to any political organisation attended and for many attendees the conference was their first introduction to feminism.[3] ‘Women and

[1] ‘Watch Out Media, We’re Moving’, *New Dawn*, September 5, 1975, 1.
[2] ‘Speech by the Prime Minister the Hon E.G Whitlam, Q.C., M.P., at the opening of the Women and Politics Conference, Canberra 31 August 1975’, Women and Politics Special Collection, Murdoch University Library, Perth.
[3] Elizabeth Reid, ‘The 1975 Women in Politics Conference’, interview by Kim Huyhn, *Sunday Brunch*, ABC, September 27, 2020, [https://www.abc.net.au/radio/canberra/programs/sundaybrunch/the-1975-women-in-politics-conference/12708060, accessed 19 August, 2022]; ‘Revised Conference Programme’, *New Dawn,* September 2, 1975, [n.p.].

Politics' took place just a month before Elizabeth Reid was forced to resign and two months before the dismissal of Gough Whitlam. This conference marks the zenith of optimism in the project of feminist state reform.

This conference has been considered by historian Michelle Arrow in her book, *The Seventies.* Arrow discusses the state feminism of the conference, its liveliness and the anti-racist interventions Aboriginal women engaged in.[4] However, Arrow doesn't consider its globality or its entanglements with nationalism, or the role humour played, which this chapter does. In this chapter, I suggest this conference was intimately tied to the Whitlam-Labour Government project of 'new nationalism' which sought to define Australia as culturally and politically independent from Britain, and the state as benevolent. The project of state feminism which sought to reform the state to serve Australian women's interests was a crucial part of this vision. While 'Women and Politics' was not jingoistic, it certainly was nationalist as it drew on Australia's history of women's agitation for state reform and Australia's unique cultural heritage, including its comedy and humour.

The nationalism of the 'Women and Politics' Conference was modulated by elements of globality. The programme included a star studded line up of international guests, and was influenced by the Mexico City UN Conference on the Status of Women, of June 1975. The choice of guests selected reflects this hope for a woman-friendly Australian state, as the National Advisory Committee selected women who had, 'contributed to social and political change' as Whitlam put it.[5] Guests included Meta Van Beek, the Dutch ombudswoman, and Rosemary Brown, a Black Canadian senator. It also included those who 'brought about significant social or political achievements from outside government,' for example through trade unions, or in development organisations.[6] Also present was May Hobbs, the British cleaner trade unionist. Hobbs maintained that were she in parliament, 'she would be out of reach of the people I am trying to help.'[7] Claire Slatter, a Fijian development activist was present as were women from the British and US women's liberation movements. The guest list included British feminist Juliet Mitchell, as well as US lesbian feminists Bertha Harris and

[4] Michelle Arrow, *The Seventies: The Personal, the Political and the Making of Modern Australia* (Sydney: New South Books, 2019), pp. 126-32
[5] 'A Message from the Prime Minister', *This Week in Canberra: Women and Politics Conference*, leaflet in Women and Politics Special Collection, Murdoch University Library, Perth.
[6] 'Speech by the Prime Minister…', Women and Politics Special Collection.
[7] May Hobbs, *Born to Struggle* (London: Quartet Books, 1973), quote from front matter.

Charlotte Bunch. From the US came Florynce Kennedy, an African American feminist activist who worked both in and outside the state. Kennedy had formed the Feminist Party and was a key figure in the campaign to get African American Shirley Chisholm selected by the Democratic Caucus as their candidate for President in the 1972 election.[8] But she was also active outside of formal politics as a lawyer, and through her lifelong work as an anti-racist Black feminist active in Black Power.[9] Kennedy made a huge impact on the conference, through her unique humour and significant leadership.

Despite being tied to the rituals of high politics, and the serious project of feminist state reform 'Women and Politics' was, as two conference attendees wrote, 'a laugh a minute.'[10] Jokes are centred in this chapter, I argue they did important political work at this conference and revealed the limits of Australian state feminism. Humour, while playful and appealing, challenged the notion that the state could be a benevolent force inclusive of all women. Jokes revealed that Whitlam's project of new nationalism relied, like all forms of nationalism, on exclusions.[11] Yet, while jokes revealed the limits of the woman-friendly state and pushed conference attendees toward a more inclusive feminist politics, these jokes were used by a hostile media as proof that the woman-friendly state had already gone too far. The jokes at 'Women and Politics' were used to force Elizabeth Reid to resign, beginning the process of dismantling Australian state feminism at the federal level.

'New Nationalism,' and the 'Women and Politics' Conference

The 'Women and Politics' Conference and International Women's Year more broadly, was deeply informed by the Whitlam Government's project of what historian Anne Pender calls

[8] Sherrie Randolph, *Florynce "Flo" Kennedy: Life of a Black Feminist Radical* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). On Kennedy and the Feminist Party see pp. 8-9, 188-91, 198-202; on the Shirley Chisholm campaign see pp. 186-7.
[9] On Kennedy's involvement in the campaign to defend Valerie Solanas see Ibid., pp. 143-52.
[10] A. Douglas Hull and Liz Windschuttle, 'Letter to the Editors', *New Dawn,* September 4, 1975.
[11] For example, Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler, Nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities* (Cambridge, M.A. and London: Harvard University Press, 2020); On the continuing exclusion of women from equality after decolonial nationalism see, for example: Kate Law, '"We wanted to be Free as a Nation, and We Wanted to be Free as Women": Decolonisation, Nationalism and Women's Liberation in Zimbabwe 1979-1985'; *Gender & History* 33:1 (2021) 249-268; Marie Aimée Hélie-Lucas, 'The Role of Women During the Algerian Liberation Struggle and After: Nationalism as a Concept and as a Practice towards both the Power of the Army and the Militarization of the People' in *Women and the Military System* (New York: St Martins Press, 1988), 171-89.

'new nationalism.'[12] Australian historians have usually seen nationalism as a force which seeks to mask Australia's racist past and present, and which has specifically gendered aspects.[13] But this association of nationalism with the right, means there has been less discussion with how nationalism animates the left of politics, though it certainly was present. Consider that when Whitlam was elected he embarked on a process of remaking Australia through reforming the state as a benevolent-power which served its people. Reforms were swiftly made, Whitlam withdrew troops from Vietnam, abolished university tuition fees and established Medibank; a free, national health service. Whitlam also sought to remake Australia through ridding Australia of 'the last relics of colonialism', including granting land rights to Aborigines.[14]

Culture was an important terrain for 'new nationalism.' Whitlam's 'new nationalism' encouraged the development of 'our symbols of [Australia's] own nationhood.' [15] In this way it resembled Tony Blair's 'cool Britannia' of the late 1990s. Scholars have highlighted the importance of culture to Blair's project of creating an outward looking and cosmopolitan Britain.[16] Blair's later project sought to define this against Labour statism, maintaining what cultural theorist Stuart Hall called the 'hustling entrepreneurial spirit' that developed under Margaret Thatcher.[17] This was unlike Whitlam, whose Labor Government oversaw cultural development through the state; he organised a competition to rewrite the Australian national anthem, which was at the time *God Save the Queen*.[18] He also developed the arts, including opening and funding the Australian Film, Television and Radio school.

While 'new nationalism' sought to remake the Australian state as one that served its people, building a woman-friendly state was key to this project, as demonstrated through the appointment of Elizabeth Reid, and the two million dollars the government set aside for

[12] Anne Pender, 'The Mythical Australia: Barry Humphries, Gough Whitlam and "New Nationalism"', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51:1 (2005), 67-78.
[13] See, for example: Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2004); Ann Curthoys, 'Mythologies', in *The Australian Legend and its Discontents,* ed. Richard Nile (St. Lucia: Queensland University Press, 2000), 11-41.
[14] Pender, 'The Mythical Australian', p. 69.
[15] Ibid.
[16] See, for example: Anamik Saha, 'Funky Days Are (Not) Back Again: Cool Britannia and the Rise and Fall of British South Asian Cultural Production', *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 17:1 (2020), 6-23, p. 10; Huw Beynon and Lou Kushnik, 'Cool Britannia or Cruel Britannia? Racism and New Labour', *Socialist Register* 39 (2003), 229-44.
[17] Stuart Hall, 'From Scarman to Stephen Lawrence', *History Workshop Journal* 48:1 (1999), 187-197, p. 191.
[18] Pender, 'The Mythical Australian', p. 70.

International Women's Year, to fund projects such as the 'Women and Politics' Conference. While historians of feminism in the Global North usually consider nationalism as linked to right wing women, global feminist thought can assist us in seeing how it animated the development of state feminism in Australia. Scholars such as Kumari Jayawardena conceptualised decolonial nationalism as important to the development of feminist consciousness in the Global South.[19] Black feminist thought similarly reveals that anti-colonial nationalism across the Global South informed Black and women of colour's activism for gender justice in the Global North.[20].

To promote International Women's Year, the Australian National Advisory Committee sought to 'reach the widest possible cross-section of women (and men) throughout Australian communities with a message presented in terms identifiable with their daily lives.' [21] They did so through employing Australian icons of comedy, reflective of Whitlam's 'new nationalism.'[22] The Advisory Committee employed Spectrum, an advertising company, to develop a radio campaign for them, where icons including Barry Humphries and Paul Hogan would address listeners. Humphries, as his most famous character, Edna Everage stated 'Hello listeners, it's super star housewife Dame Ada Average declaring International Women's Year officially open.'[23] While Edna Everage is a satire of a housewife that has been criticised for its sexism, Anne Pender animates Barry Humphries as a 'new nationalist' icon for the way he 'offered Australians a sense of their own vernacular.'[24] Sue Turnbull similarly writes that through the character of Everage, Humphries defamiliarised the 'vast suburban tundra' of Australia, so that the geographical setting of many audience members' lives, reappeared to them as interesting and uncanny, or as Edna Everage would put it, as 'spooky.' [25] Paul Hogan also featured in the campaign. Hogan occupied a special place in 'new nationalist' Australian culture, as the classic iteration of a particularly Australian form of masculinity, laconic and

[19] See, for example: Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (Verso: 2016 [1986]).
[20] See, for example: Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe, *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Verso, 2018 [1986]).
[21] 'Memo: Use of Available Research and Survey Material in Planning an Advertising/Publicity Campaign for IWY', n.d., Box 24, First Ten Years of Sydney Women's Liberation Collection ca. 1969-ca. 1980, State Library of NSW.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Spectrum Advertising Company, 'Proposal, Awareness Campaign for International Women's Year for Convenor Elizabeth Reid', 22 February 1975, Box 24, First Ten Years Collection.
[24] Pender, 'The Mythical Australian', p. 72.
[25] Sue Turnbull, 'Mapping the Vast Suburban Tundra: Australian Comedy from Dame Edna to Kath and Kim', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11:1 (2008), 15-32, p. 20.

ocker, an Australian English word meaning rough and uncultivated.[26] While most famous for the *Crocodile Dundee* films, the first released in 1986, his star rose through the Whitlam years. By 1975 he had famously left his job as a rigger on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and was appearing in sketch comedy and in a campaign for Winfield cigarettes for International Women's Year. Hogan addressed Australians over the airwaves riffing on his Winfield catchphrase 'Anyhow…have a Winfield' with: 'The better half's asked me to say a few words about International Women's Year…Good on yer loves. Good luck. Anyhow… it's about time.'[27]

Jokes often play a role in the project of nationalism; racist jokes, for example, can calcify and normalise the exclusions on which nationalism relies.[28] Jokes can also provide a 'cloak' for oppressive opinions. The teller can use the form to render themselves innocent, claiming 'but it's only a joke.'[29] Yet historically jokes have also pushed against nationalism's exclusions. As Chad Bryant finds in his discussion of Czech joke-telling under Nazi occupation, jokes were 'like a beetle, [they] gnawed away at the feeble foundations of that monstrous colossus.'[30] Jokes played a particular role in the promotion of International Women's Year and sought to bring particular groups into this project who were seen as excluded. This is revealed when we consider why Everage and Hogan's contributions were funny. These jokes 'worked' because of the alleged incongruity of a housewife and a laddish Australian male promoting a year linked to feminism. Indeed, these groups were often seen as excluded by the women's liberation movement and the Whitlam Government's project of state feminism, particularly by the media.[31] However, it is precisely men and housewives who the women's advisory committee sought to gain the support of and it was hoped that jokes would provide an unthreatening entry point. The promotion of International Women's Year through 'new nationalist' humour seems to have been effective in reaching target groups. Paul Murray reported for the *West Australian*

[26] Robert Crawford, 'Learning to Say G'day to the World: The Development of Australia's Marketable Image in the 1980s', *Consumption Markets & Culture* 13:1 (2010), 43-59.
[27] Spectrum Advertising Company, "Proposal…".
[28] For example, Raúl Pérez, *The Souls of White Jokes: How Racist Humor Fuels White Supremacy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022).
[29] The idea of the cloak is drawn from Robert J. Topinka, 'Politically Incorrect Participatory Media: Racist Nationalism on r/ImGoingToHellForThis', *New Media & Society* 20:5 (2018), 2050-2069.
[30] Josef Gruss quoted in Chad Bryant, 'The Language of Resistance? Czech Jokes and Joke-telling under Nazi Occupation, 1943-45', *Journal of Contemporary History* 41:1 (2006), 131-151, p. 135.
[31] Australian National Advisory Committee, *International Women's Year Report* (Canberra: The Government Printer of Australia, 1976), pp. 56-7, 63.

that 'over at the pub the blokes are saying that there must be something to this International Women's Year bit when 'Oges is…putting his seal of approval on the whole thing.'[32]

Global Statecraft and International Media

During International Women's Year, Whitlam's project of new nationalism was modulated by, and clashed with, elements of global politics. The choice of conference guests for the 'Women and Politics' Conference, made by the International Women's Year Advisory Committee, caught the attention of more conservative state actors at the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs. As historian Helen McCarthy discusses in the British context, senior civil servants and diplomats who operated behind closed doors, shaped the responses of individual nation states to International Women's Year.[33] In Australia Whitlam's 'new nationalist' vision did not permeate the entirety of government and bureaucracy. As I discussed in chapter three, many bureaucrats were surprised by, if not overtly hostile to, Whitlam's incorporation of feminists in the state.[34] Moreover, at Foreign Affairs, actors had their own understanding of Australia and how it should present itself as a nation on the global stage. Reflective of this, Elizabeth Reid received a cable from the ministry of Foreign Affairs sent via the Australian embassy while in Mexico for the UN Conference on the Status of Women, 1975. This queried the choice of guests selected for the 'Women and Politics' Conference. Foreign Affairs suggested 'the potential contribution a participant might make to the success of the conference' must be measured against 'other factors' to avoid any possible adverse effects on relations with countries concerned.[35] While Foreign Affairs reassured Reid that they did not seek to 'interfere with the kinds of meeting you are planning,' they had already sent the invitations to the United States and French Ambassadors, and sent a summary of recommendations they had gathered on to Reid. These included 'doubts' from the United States Ambassador, that the four US guests selected were not a 'particularly representative group,' because they worked beyond, rather than inside the political system, but that 'we might let them stand.'[36]

Advertising for International Women's Year used icons of Australian comedy, but at the 'Women and Politics' Conference, the committee drew on the press strategies employed during

[32] Paul Murray, 'Any'ow, It's About Time', *West Australian,* March 8, 1975.
[33] Helen McCarthy, 'The Diplomatic History of Global Women's Rights: The British Foreign Office and International Women's Year, 1975', *Journal of Contemporary History* 50:4 (2015), 833-853.
[34] Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996). 170-1.
[35] Inward Cablegram to Australian Embassy Mexico, 'IWY Conference: Women and Politics Canberra', June 3, 1975, File 81: Mexico Conference- cables 1975, Papers of Elizabeth Reid, National Library of Australia.
[36] Ibid.

the UN Conference in Mexico City. The 'Women and Politics' Conference had a media team who produced a daily newspaper for conference participants called *New Dawn.* This was much more professional and slick than the newspapers and periodicals produced by the women's liberation movement. This was similar to the Mexico City paper *Xilonen*, which was in turn influenced by the daily broadsheets The *Planet* and *Pan,* the first produced for attendees and media interested in the global population conference in Bucharest and the second for those at the global food conference in Rome.[37] *New Dawn* was, from a design perspective, heavily influenced by *Xilonen* and the broadsheets resemble one another (see figure four). *Xilonen* was developed as an avenue of communication between the official UN conference and the NGO Tribune, an adjacent meeting of grassroots feminists. The media team saw its role as fostering 'reasonable dialogue' between participants in both official and unofficial conferences.[38] As Jocelyn Olcott makes clear, those who produced *Xilonen* also sought to shape media coverage by influencing external media and wireless services.[39] The team that produced *New Dawn* similarly sought to control the narrative of the conference internally for participants, and to influence the external media. It included professional journalists such as Blanche D'Apulget and across the week sent out over fifty press releases to national newspapers about conference happenings.



[37] Jocelyn Olcott, *International Women's Year: The Greatest Consciousness Raising Event in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 101-2.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Figure 4: The front pages of the first issues of *Xilonen* and *New Dawn*

While *New Dawn*'s design was influenced by the Mexico City conference, it was made meaningful for participants by drawing on the national history of the Australian women's movement. As the first edition explains, the name *New Dawn* is 'named in honour' of Australia's first feminist magazine *The Dawn,* established in 1888 by Louisa Lawson, the mother of Australian bush poet Henry Lawson.[40] Krista Cowman notes that the British feminist magazine *Spare Rib* saw itself as 'carrying on a long tradition' of feminism. [41] *New Dawn* saw this as important too, and pointed out the continuities with feminism in the past. In particular, *New Dawn* specifically historicised Australian *state* feminism. *The Dawn* is excerpted in *New Dawn* to provide a history of how feminists in the past made the state less sexist, and drew on earlier attempts at state reform, particularly the campaign for women's suffrage. 'Women and Politics' Conference participants were reminded that the office of *The Dawn* was 'a focal point for the suffrage movement, where women came to sign petitions for their own franchise.'[42] Moreover, *The Dawn* was quoted strategically in *New Dawn* to reflect the values of the conference, which sought to include women from across the political spectrum, suggesting 'we wear no ready made suit of opinions, nor stand on any platform of women's rights which we have as yet seen erected.'[43]

The colours of green, white and purple that *New Dawn* favoured*,* were present across 'Women and Politics' Conference material, included on conference attendees' name badges, luggage tags and promotional material (see figure five). This colour scheme tied the conference to the Australian struggle for (white) women's suffrage. In fact, these colours were not part of the Australian suffrage movement but rather were the colours of the British Women's Social and Political Union, who used the colours on everything from teacups to pins.[44] However, they were adopted by Australian women in their support of British women's suffrage and they were used in Australia in post-suffrage feminist campaigns. Vida Goldstein, an Australian suffragist who corresponded with the Pankhursts and travelled to Britain to support women in their struggle for suffrage, used these in her campaign for the Australian senate in 1910. She slightly

[40] 'It's Been a Long Time', *New Dawn,* August 31, 1975, 2-3.
[41] Krista Cowman, '"Carrying On a Long Tradition": Second-Wave Presentations of First Wave Feminism in *Spare Rib* c. 1972-80', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 17:3 (2010), 193-210, pp. 193, 195.
[42] 'It's Been a Long Time', *New Dawn,* p. 2-3.
[43] 'It's Been a Long Time', *New Dawn,* p. 2.
[44] Lucy Delap, *Feminisms: A Global History* (London: Pelican, 2020), 148-150.

misinterpreted these colours, as green, lavender and purple.[45] Femocrats then adopted them in the 1970s, becoming, as Marian Sawer writes, 'colour entrepreneurs.' They used these colours as a source of group meaning, as a way to promote their work within the bureaucracy and to the public.[46] While Whitlam's new nationalist vision was certainly about Australia's independence from Britain, these colours could be freely adopted because they were, by this time, broadly symbolic of women's emancipation through state reforms. *New Dawn* reveals the link between state feminism and 'new nationalism.' This broadsheet shows that Whitlam's project of remaking Australia as a politically and culturally independent nation rested on retrieving actors, events and colours scattered across the past. These were then constructed as a specifically Australian cultural tradition.

Lamingtons and Openings

In his opening address to the conference, Whitlam drew on the Australian tradition of women's state reform. He drew on characters from history to animate the state feminist project and revealed its imbrication in his broader 'new nationalist' agenda. He suggested that one of the aims of the conference was to 'understand the lessons that the past can teach us…' about the project of 'increasing the participation of women in political activities.'[47] Whitlam schooled conference attendees on past feminist figures in Australian history including Edith Cowan, elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 1921, and Catherine Spence, one of Australia's greatest champions of the cause of proportional representation; these women were also included in a set of stamps produced for International Women's Year. Whitlam 'moved from the lessons and the fascination of the past…into the present,' during his speech.[48] He outlined what his government had already done for women through state reform including funding support services for women and children, including those such as refuges, that had developed from the women's liberation movement. He noted that his government had sought 'talented and qualified women,' appointing them as decision makers to Royal Commissions and legal bodies for the first time.[49] Whitlam sought to draw women into the new nationalist project of state feminism through the staid traditions and predictable rituals of parliamentary politics.

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[45] Marian Sawer, 'Wearing Your Politics on Your Sleeve: The Role of Political Colours in Social Movements', *Social Movement Studies* 6:1 (2007), 39-56, p.49.
[46] Ibid., p. 51.
[47] 'Speech by the Prime Minister…', Women and Politics Special Collection.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

But attendees also spontaneously engaged in rituals which drew specifically on Australian national traditions. These often humorously undermined the controlled rituals of the conference. Barbara Wawn, a trade union shop steward, and 'a working class woman all her life' from the suburbs of Melbourne, undertook a humorous and self-consciously Australian performance of welcoming guests with the gift of lamingtons, a typically Australian cake of sponge first covered in chocolate, then rolled in coconut. Wawn's welcome was written up in *New Dawn*, after she became something of a conference celebrity due to her 'outspoken, irrepressible, bawdy' humour. [50] Wawn recollected that she selected lamingtons after contemplating 'what she could give [the guests] that's typically Australian.'[51] In a quiet moment, she handed these to May Hobbs who 'she had so much in common with.' The lamingtons were accompanied by a note to 'share them round' with the other guests.[52] Wawn recalled the process of making lamingtons to *New Dawn*: 'I was going to make the lamingtons all last week but I was so bloody busy I made them an hour before I left for the plane, I stuck the fork in one of them and I dropped the bastard all over the floor. Bloody cake, chocolate and icing everywhere…I wrapped them in Alfoil [tinfoil] and when I got to the airport the scanner at the security check went BHHHRRRRRRRR. It was the Alfoil. I had to unwrap the lamingtons and show them.'[53] Wawn's retelling is self-consciously peppered with Australian cultural and comedic references. She selected lamingtons for their Australianness and she also 'bought three little tea cosies crocheted in Australian wool.'

Further, she discussed her own identity as a house wife in relation to the 'new nationalist' icon, Edna Everage, 'I've got the glasses and the hair for Edna Everage alright,' but 'I didn't have any bloody gladdies though,' referring to Everage's characteristic gladiolais. However, her identification with Everage is ironic, Everage is a housewife who aspires to suburban perfection, but it is clear from Wawn's lamington story – which almost ended in disaster – that she does not. Indeed, Wawn's lamington story resembles the Australian joke tradition of the yarn, a humorous narrative, packed with exaggeration and self-deprecation, historically told by men and associated with white, Australian masculinity.[54] Wawn concludes, in the tradition of

[50] Ibid.
[51] Elisabeth Wynhausen, 'The Great Lamington Hijack', *New Dawn,* September 5, 1975, 8.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Fran De Groen and Peter Kirkpatrick, 'Introduction: A Saucer of Vinegar', in *Serious Frolic: Essays on Australian Humour,* eds. Fran De Groen and Peter Kirkpatrick (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2009), xv-xxvii.

the yarn, where humour is often used as part of survival: 'Why be delicate?...Anyone in my generation who says they never had an…abortion is a bloody liar.'[55] Wawn's humour reveals the multifarious ways that specifically Australian cultural traditions helped her to buck the feminine expectations ascribed to working-class suburban women.

Humour was also used to contest new nationalism and state feminism throughout the conference. During the opening drinks reception at Old Parliament House, members of the women's liberation movement placed a sign, 'women in revolution not women in bureaucracy,' in the hands of the statue of King George V.[56] According to Elizabeth Reid, this statue was also 'covered in bras,' during the reception.[57] These jokes revealed that many women present at 'Women and Politics' were concerned that women's involvement in the state would mean abandoning feminist principles. Despite their presence at the conference, many women involved in the women's liberation movement continued to see the state as sexist, and reinforcing of masculine control, whether individual women gained footholds or not. Women did not have to look very far to find examples of this. The state's sexism was revealed by the invitations women received to join the Prime Minister and Margaret Whitlam at the conference opening, where the dress code was listed as 'lounge suit' (see figure five).[58] This reflected the expectation that those invited to meet the Prime Minister would necessarily be men, despite the name of the conference written in cursive on the invitation.[59]

In response to this, a group of women, which included some wives of men in the Labor Party, took the invitation seriously and went to the conference opening in drag. Women sported men's lounge suits, poking fun at the rigid gender roles which, the invitations revealed, were still expected of women who sought to work in politics or make change through the bureaucracy. While funny, there was a sharply serious edge to this protest. This humorous intervention revealed the quotidian sexual harassment and assault of women who entered politics by male politicians and bureaucrats. This was conveyed when one of the 'female suit and tie brigade' told *New Dawn* that the zipper on her fly had broken.[60] She joked darkly that she had borrowed the suit from an M.P., but wouldn't say which one, alleging that politicians were engaging in

[55] Wynhausen, 'The Great Lamington Hijack'.
[56] 'When the Host Suggests a Lounge Suit, This Is What Can Happen', *New Dawn,* September 2, 1975, 1.
[57] Reid, 'The 1975 Women in Politics Conference', interview by Kim Huyhn.
[58] 'When the Host Suggests…,' *New Dawn.*
[59] Invitation in scrap book of Marcelle Anderson, Women and Politics Special Collection, Murdoch University Library, Perth.
[60] 'When the Host Suggests…,' *New Dawn.*

sexual assault and rape of women in politics.[61] This joke removes the shine from the project of Australian state feminism, suggesting that it relied on women working within the state to endure men who were often sexist, and sometimes sexually violent.



Figure 5: Luggage tag, name badge and invitation to the opening from scrapbook of Marcelle Anderson, Women and Politics Special Collection, Murdoch University Archives, Perth.

Lesbian feminists present at the conference carried on the joke throughout the opening evening. They linked the gendered expectations of women in the bureaucracy and beyond with compulsory heterosexuality. As *New Dawn* described, they spray painted the toilets with

[61] Ibid.

‘“lesbians are lovely” in bold red and blue letters with the downward dribbles of paint still drying.’ [62] It is worth noting that *New Dawn* distanced themselves from the lesbian feminists who continued the frivolity of the evening in this way. They reported that these ‘radical lesbians’ were a ‘commando unit among a battalion of protesters.’ They also quoted from an anonymous conference participant who stated that ‘it would have been better if they had scrawled their graffiti in the men’s.’[63] Lesbians, it seems, were not so easily incorporated into the woman-friendly state. After the conference, Charlotte Bunch and Bertha Harris two lesbian feminist guests from the US, were interviewed for the women’s liberation periodical *Vashti’s Voice.* They felt that lesbians had suffered from erasure across the week. Bunch reported that, except for shocking and theatrical moments, it was as if ‘there ha[d] not been a lesbian there.’ She continued, ‘there has been no discussion of the issue of lesbian feminism’ including in the conference media, *New Dawn.*[64]

‘We want you to do something’

Whitlam’s new nationalism was also challenged by more serious forms of protest during the conference opening on Sunday evening. Whitlam’s new nationalism sought to resituate Australia in the world, away from Britain and into Asia, recognising the democratic, revolutionary government of Vietnam and establishing a relationship with China.[65] Protestors, however, suggested this project relied on Australia exploiting its smaller Pacific neighbours. During Whitlam’s address, a group of women protested Whitlam’s stance on East Timorese decolonisation, instigated by the effective abandonment of East Timor by the Portuguese following the 1974 revolution.[66] Whitlam, however, supported an annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, claiming that this was because he wanted to ‘see an act of genuine self-determination’ by the East Timorese.[67] In fact, historians now agree that Whitlam took this position because he feared an independent East Timor would be unviable as a state, potentially disruptive to the region, and to Australian trade relations.[68] Conference participants interrupted

[62] ‘Things You Need to Know’, *New Dawn,* September 3, 1975, 10.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Charlotte Bunch, Bertha Harris, Jill Matthews and Liz Fell, ‘What is Lesbian-Feminism?’, *Vashti’s Voice* 14 (1976), 6.
[65] See, for example, Stephen FitzGerald, *Comrade Ambassador: Whitlam’s Beijing Envoy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015); Michael Kirby ‘Whitlam as Internationalist: A Centenary Reflection’, *Melbourne University Law Review* 39:3 (2016), 850-894.
[66] Reid, ‘The 1975 Women in Politics Conference’, interview by Kim Huyhn.
[67] Paul M. Monk, ‘Secret Intelligence and Escape Clauses: Australia and the Indonesian Annexation of East Timor, 1963-76’, *Critical Asian Studies* 22:2 (2001), 181-208, p. 181.
[68] Michael E. Salla, ‘Australian Foreign Policy and East Timor’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49:2 (1995), 208-13.

Whitlam's speech holding signs in support of pro-independence party FRETILIN, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor.[69] Other signs read 'Whitlam don't betray Timor's Independence' and 'Don't make Timor another Vietnam.'[70] Later in the week, Claire Slatter, a development expert from Fiji, similarly challenged Australia's role in the region during her address about women and development. She suggested that Australia's aid to Fiji was imperialist. This was not based on 'humanitarian concern' but sought to develop Fiji into an 'Australian colony,' where the aid money that Fiji was given had strict conditions, and had to be spent on goods from Australia.[71]

As Michelle Arrow has noted, First Nations women, including Redfern activists Mum Shirl and Naomi Mayers, protested at the reception on the Sunday evening about how they had been treated by the Women's Advisory Committee throughout International Women's Year.[72] As the Prime Minister entered Parliament House, First Nations women carried signs saying 'Germaine Cops the lot, we get nothing!'[73] This was in reference to the $100,000 grant Germaine Greer had been allocated to make a film about sex and reproduction around the world. This project never came to fruition, though it was the subject of much media furore across the year, as well as this legitimate protest.[74] More deeply, Naomi Mayers criticised the Women's Advisory Committee for not representing the concerns of Aboriginal women. Mayers reported that when Aboriginal women applied to the committee for funding, they were referred to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, who Mayers stated, 'we already have big fights about funding with...'[75] These conflicts occurred because the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was not Aboriginal controlled and 'did not trust [us] to manage our own financial arrangements,' and did not prioritise the needs of Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women's action at 'Women and Politics' is an early example of criticism which we now describe as intersectional. Like Kimberlé Crenshaw's later work, Mayer's critique reveals that there were limits to who the state could incorporate.[76] The Women's Advisory Committee was based on

[69] Ibid.
[70] Photograph of protest at Elizabeth Reid, 'The 1975 Women in Politics Conference', interview by Kim Huyhn.
[71] 'Women and Development: Transcript of address by Claire Slatter and Discussion', in *The Women and Politics Conference,* Volume II, ed. Office for Women's Affairs: Department of Prime Minsiter and Cabinet, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1977) 242-246, p. 242.
[72] Arrow, *The Seventies,* p. 91.
[73] Photograph in Arrow, *The Seventies,* p. 74.
[74] Ibid., p. 91.
[75] Elisabeth Wynhausen, 'The Blacks Speak Out…' *New Dawn,* September 3, 1975, 1.
[76] Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989), 139-167, p. 140.

the needs of white women. Aboriginal women were excluded because they had different requirements which didn't fit into the category of (white) woman on which the committee rested. This is why their demands were passed to the Department for Aboriginal Affairs. But Aboriginal women did not fit into the category of 'Aboriginal' either, because this was based on the needs of Aboriginal men.

Aboriginal women's protest pointed out which women were included and who was excluded by the project of the woman-friendly state. However, it was Aboriginal women who were reported as 'divisive' by *New Dawn*, and women were urged across its pages to 'act co-operatively.'[77] Elizabeth Reid similarly recalled in an oral history interview in 1988, 'the conference began with complete divisiveness.'[78] *New Dawn* also suggested that 'it is an unfortunate reflection of the society we live in that for many people at the conference, the issue of racism has come close to eclipsing all other issues related to the theme of women and politics.'[79] In *New Dawn* the media coverage of the UN Mexico City conference was used to silence Aboriginal women's protest. The editor framed the media coverage in Mexico as a 'conflict between women in the Third World and others…between women representing different races, different cultures, different countries' which the 'media of the world were quick to point out.'[80] The lessons of Mexico, as the editor of *New Dawn* saw it, were that '[d]ivisiveness was non-productive' and 'conference participants must not play into [media] hands and thus into the hands of the people and institutions who maintain power as it is currently defined.'[81] The reporting implied that Aboriginal women were making an unnecessary and divisive fuss, which the Australian media would use to generate bad publicity. Joan Russell, a conference participant, similarly suggested in a letter published in *New Dawn* that she was 'still annoyed by the disturbance created on Sunday night.'[82] She urged readers to avoid the bad 'publicity arising from the Mexico conference.' She suggested that 'if dissident radical groups…hog and distort the publicity at the conference, then a serious blow will have been dealt to women who intend to return home and begin campaigning for political office.' Thus, women must 'guard their public image,' to 'give the cameras something more substantial than momentary sensationalism.'[83] Both Russell's letter and the intervention by the *New Dawn* editors revealed that Aboriginal women were right to be concerned that Australian state

[77] 'From the Editor', *New Dawn,* September 2, 1975, 7.
[78] Elizabeth Reid oral history interview with Mumtaz Afkhami, Foundation for Iranian Studies, April 14, 1988.
[79] Wynhausen, 'The Blacks Speak Out…'.
[80] 'From the Editor', *New Dawn.*
[81] Ibid.
[82] Joan Russell, 'Letter to the Editor', *New Dawn,* September 3, 1975, 8.
[83] Ibid.

feminism and the new nationalist project more broadly relied on the exclusion of Aboriginal women.

Flo Kennedy's humour

After the events of Sunday evening, tension between women across the conference was high, because fault lines of race and sexuality had been exposed through the opening of the conference and *New Dawn's* reporting.[84] Yet this changed across the week, due in part to the leadership and disarming humour of African American feminist Florynce Kennedy, who first addressed the conference on Monday. While Kennedy's address was interpreted by *New Dawn* as an 'off-the cuff- talk', humour scholar Kirsten Leng reveals that Kennedy was a seasoned performer.[85] During the Monday afternoon plenary, Kennedy 'had her audience…rocking in the aisles' as she explained her 'testicular theory of power,' which outlined how those without much power might seize it. Kennedy explained this through a joke about a woman visiting a dentist, she realised that the dentist was inflicting more pain than necessary and so grabbed him by the testicles.[86] She also told her 'Pentagonhorrea' joke.[87] These were two classic 'Kennedy neologisms.'[88] When read in the present, these jokes don't invoke hysterical laughter, perhaps because as Lauren Berlant and Sian Ngai remind us, 'what we find comedic…is sensitive to changing contexts…the funny is always tripping over the not funny.'[89] But, as Peter Bailey argues in his study of the Victorian music hall, understanding the success and humour of the music hall is 'inseparable from that of its singers,' their performance, delivery and expression.[90] In a similar way, Kennedy's repartee was an extension of her overall comedic performance. The laughter she generated crystalised around her visually striking and unique sense of fashion, and her delivery and performance, as much as the content of her jokes. These more ephemeral elements, which were so important for her comedy, cannot be captured through reporting in *New Dawn.*

[84] Chris Sitka, 'Why Elizabeth Reid Had To Resign', *Broadsheet: New Zealand's Feminist Magazine* 34, (November 1975), 12.
[85] Kirsten Leng, 'Pleasure and Pedagogy: The Role of Humor in Florynce Kennedy's Political Praxis', *Feminist Formations* 31:2 (2019), 205-28, pp. 217-18.
[86] Elizabeth Wynhausen, 'This May Be the Answer You've Been Seeking', *New Dawn,* September 2, 1975, 1, 3.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Leng, 'Pleasure and Pedagogy', pp. 217-218.
[89] Lauren Berlant and Sianne Ngai, 'Comedy Has Issues', *Critical Inquiry* 43:2 (2017), 223-249, p. 234.
[90] Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 129.

Kennedy also often used jokes strategically.[91] This was certainly the case at the 'Women and Politics' Conference. She used jokes to form a coalition out of a conference fragmented by racial tension. This recalls Gary Alan Fine and Christine Wood's argument, that often 'jokes arise at inflection points and reflect anxieties that come with alterations in the social order.'[92] Kennedy also used jokes to heal tension between women. It is also very likely that feminists at the conference were keen to harness the powers of comedy to dispel anxiety and to validate the 'illusion and reality of community' through 'explosive, uncontrolled laughter.'[93]

White feminists in the audience might also have been relieved because Kennedy encouraged women to identify the real enemies: right-wing politicians and the media.[94] Often Kennedy used her 'Pentagonhorrea' joke to criticise these enemies' misplaced priorities, specifically excessive spending by the defence department but also the disastrous effects of skewed fiscal priorities.[95] However, in the context of 'Women and Politics' used the idea of Pentagonhorrea to correct priorities that she saw were misplaced here. She suggested that women needed to 'eye the enemy but limit the horizontal hostility.'[96] Horizontal hostility was something that Kennedy was wary of for the duration of her activist life, as historian Rebecca Sheehan discusses through Kennedy's friendship with Germaine Greer. [97] Kennedy often called women's lateral hostility 'piranha-ism.' She suggested that 'we criticize each other instead of the oppressor because it's less dangerous.'[98] Kennedy's humour was used by *New Dawn* in its declarations that Aboriginal women had acted divisively. *New Dawn* suggested that Kennedy 'reiterat[ed] the need to locate the real enemies of the women's movement, not the people who had at least met it half way.'[99]

However, Kennedy's Black feminism and her later contributions to the conference, which also took the form of jokes, make it clear that what she actually meant was that white women would need to align themselves with Aboriginal women, on their terms, not the other way round. As

[91] Leng, 'Pleasure and Pedagogy', pp. 205-224; Randolph, *Florynce "Flo" Kennedy*.
[92] Garry Allen Fine and Christine Wood, 'Accounting for Jokes: Jocular Performance in a Critical Age', *Western Folklore* 69:3/4 (2010), 299-321, p. 302.
[93] Allen Fine and Wood, 'Accounting for Jokes', p. 299.
[94] Elizabeth Wynhausen, 'Flo Kennedy on Testicular Power', *New Dawn,* September 2, 1975, 3.
[95] Leng, 'Pleasure and Pedagogy', pp. 217-18.
[96] Wynhausen, 'Flo Kennedy on Testicular Power'.
[97] Rebecca Sheehan, 'Intersectional Feminist Friendship: Restoring Colour to the Second-Wave through the Letters of Florynce Kennedy and Germaine Greer', *Lilith*: *A Feminist History Journal* 25 (2019), 76-92.
[98] Gloria Steinem, 'The Verbal Karate of Florynce R. Kennedy, Esq.', *Ms. Magazine,* 19th August, 2011 [https://msmagazine.com/2011/08/19/the-verbal-karate-of-florynce-r-kennedy-esq, accessed 20 August, 2022].
[99] Wynhausen, 'Flo Kennedy on Testicular Power'.

Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton recalled in an oral history interview, 'She completely understood where we were coming from…our views were aligned on these matters.'[100] The day after her Monday evening address Kennedy met autonomously with a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander feminists. Here, Black women met to 'sing some of the women's songs she brought with her…and closed the meeting with a spirited rendering of the feminist prayer.'[101]

It is interesting to note that despite the conference sometimes bordering on the carnivalesque, Aboriginal women's contribution to the conference had thus far been reported in *New Dawn* only as serious and seriously disruptive. Florynce Kennedy brought lightness and humour to her meeting with Aboriginal women, and provided an opportunity for these women to sing, laugh and joke together. In this way, Florynce Kennedy's meeting with Aboriginal women points to the way that extending humour to others can be humanising. Following Kirsten Leng, it also reveals the way that denial of humour can be profoundly *de*humanising. [102] Charges of humourlessness are equivalent to the denial of an interior life.

After the conference, Kennedy received letters from Aboriginal women and these letters are funny and informal; they reveal the trust that developed during Kennedy's short visit. Margaret Briggs, the General Secretary of the National Council of Aboriginal and Island Women, wrote to Kennedy in December of 1975: 'we do hope that your able to sock it to 'em…they say you can't keep a good girl down (smile).' Briggs also tells Kennedy that if she wants any of the songs from the conference distributed in Australia she might send them on to her, 'All these Gubahs [white women] are mad on the songs you had.' Briggs includes a handwritten P.S. 'excuse the mess xmas party in progress. Were drinking a toast to you. We know your with us in spirit.'[103] Kennedy discusses her work with Aboriginal women in her autobiography *Colour Me Flo,* and includes a picture of her with these delegates, highlighting its significance for her, too.[104]

[100] Oral history interview with Marcia Langton, February 28, 2022, on Zoom.
[101] Wynhausen, 'The Blacks Speak Out…'.
[102] Kirsten Leng, 'Fumerism as Queer Feminist Activism: Humour and Rage in the Lesbian Avengers' Visibility Politics', *Gender and History* 32:1 (2020), 108-130, p. 110.
[103] Letter from Margaret Briggs to Florynce Kennedy, December 18, 1975, Folder 7: Correspondence, 1975, Papers of Florynce Kennedy, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. Spelling retained as it is in the original source.
[104] Florynce Kennedy, *Colour me Flo: My Hard Life and Good Times* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1976).

From this meeting with Kennedy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women declared Wednesday of the conference to be 'Black Day,' and included a Black Women's Speak Out. This made the exclusions that state feminism relied on clear. Kennedy introduced the Black Women's Speak Out and challenged white women's perceptions through employing humour. Following Freud, Kennedy's use of humour allowed for the expression of anxieties and hostilities that would cause social and individual psychic drama were they to be expressed in a more serious register.[105] Kennedy challenged white women's understanding that Aboriginal women had 'disrupted' the conference and instead suggested that their action outside Parliament House was 'dramatic, laudable, applaudable.'[106] It was, Kennedy said, 'a perfect example of putting pressure on a very vulnerable spot. There was…an elite gathering of people whom they felt had ignored their needs…' While these elite people were caught up with 'celebrating their own goodness,' they were blind to the limits of what they were doing.[107] Kennedy spoke against white women's ignorance, employing humour to do so. She used irony to suggest that this ignorance was often wilful: 'In Munich, which was ten miles from Dachau the good Germans never knew that there was a concentration camp…and here the people in the cities don't know there are unhappy Aboriginals [sic].'[108] She spoke against white women's belief that they were innocent of racism. This was tethered to a 'fantasy of powerlessness' that white women harboured as an oppressed group.[109]

While Kennedy suggested that there was less racism in the women's movement than elsewhere, it was still present and the degree of oppression that Aboriginal women faced must be recognised. She suggested that after the protest on Monday 'nobody can plead ignorance of [Aboriginal people's] unhappiness.'[110] This included those at the conference who were 'cupcakes and nervous Nellies who were upset by the stylistics of that occasion and the awkwardness (because it was slightly awkward).'[111] But, she continued 'if you feel you don't know everything you ought about the Queensland Act,' a piece of legislation which enshrined racism in law, 'and you know too much about the cricket then call the "jockocratic" sports

[105] Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relationship to the Unconscious* (London: Penguin, 2002 [1905]).
[106] 'Black Women in Society: Transcript of Address by Flo Kennedy and Discussion', *The Women and Politics Conference 1975,* vol. 2 (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1977), p. 199.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., p. 199.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

department of your radio and television stations.'[112] Moreover, she suggested that she had organised the Black Speak Out in order to educate white women suffering from 'ignorance, incompetence, impotence and innocence' and 'avoid a lot of round eyed questions and allow the Aboriginals to speak.'[113] She acknowledged the limits of her own contribution, stating that while it might be more 'pleasurable' for some people at the conference to hear Kennedy tell jokes, which she described as 'a bunch of clichés,' people, including herself, really 'needed to hear what they were going to hear.'[114]

Kennedy maintained that change required multiple fronts, including those working within the system, but that this did not mean that the protest should not have happened. For the state to make change, women needed to understand that the political system was 'made up of a predominance of pigs.' Those who weren't pigs were like 'paper cups' and that they needed to be 'filled with sticks, sand and concrete' by women outside the movement, to ensure that they weren't 'squashed flat' by those in the bureaucracy.[115] Kennedy suggested that it was not that Aboriginal women's struggle was a 'diversion' from the conference, nor that Aboriginal women needed white women's 'help,' but that state feminism in Australia 'required Aboriginal women' because politically they were 'more sophisticated,' and could provide the movement with 'conduct and negotiation ability,' in regard to the state.[116] Kennedy continued, suggesting that if Aboriginal women could be incorporated within the women's movement, including within state feminism, it would stop the '"pigocracy" from putting you in a position where Aboriginal women will legitimately kick your ass' because you have tried to get grants and project funding 'ahead of black people.'[117]

Following Kennedy's introduction, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women took the floor. The chair reminded people that 'we have this room for as long as we want…every Aboriginal woman is welcome to come down and say her piece…even if we are here until 9 o'clock in the morning.'[118] Aboriginal women from across Australia, both urban and rural, spoke of their experiences. In the official conference proceedings, they are not named, their contributions are listed only as 'comment.' What their testimony revealed was that the state was not benevolent

[112] Ibid., p. 200.
[113] Ibid., p. 199.
[114] Ibid., p. 203.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., p. 200.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., p. 202.

and easily reformable through the linked projects of state feminism and 'new nationalism', but that it had historically been, and remained, a violent and racist force. This was illustrated through a speaker who discussed the Queensland Act for Aborigines that controlled the movement of Aboriginal people, and forced them to carry passes with them. Others discussed historic discrimination at the hands of the state in housing, education, wages, and schooling and a lack of police protection. In this way they offered an alternative history to that which discussed positive state reform for women which was present at this conference and on which the project of 'new nationalism' relied.

Aboriginal women then talked about how limited the project of reforming the state to include women was for them. One of the speakers suggested that 'when I was listening at the conference on Monday, it came over very clearly to me that I was hearing you people talk about getting into Parliament but nobody seemed to realise that when you go into the House of Representatives…you won't see any of our men there.'[119] The speaker also suggested that 'the conference started… badly…because of all the racism that seemed to come out…I was beginning to think that if you women did get into Parliament you'd be more oppressive towards us than your men are.'[120] Moreover, the bureaucracy had also hindered Aboriginal women's activism. Women were not made aware of available funds, by either the Women's Advisory Committee or the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. One speaker who was administrator of the Aboriginal Medical Service outlined an alternative to the state. She suggested a programme of self-determination. Instead of going 'cap in hand…' to the Department for Aboriginal Affairs, the Medical Service had told the department that we are not 'going crawling to them for money anymore.'[121] Instead, they had begun gathering donations from the public. This had enabled the Medical Service to 'do[…] things that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs wouldn't approve of.'[122] This, the speaker suggested, was the way to ensure Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs, which did not seek to reform a state which this speaker and others saw as unreformable, but to exist beyond it.[123] In line with this programme of self-determination, Aboriginal women produced a list of demands which called on 'all women present at the

[119] Ibid., p. 201.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] See Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) p. 190-191.

International Women's Year conference in Canberra [to] support us in our fight.'[124] This included demands that non-Aboriginal women 'becom[e] aware of the problems faced by Aboriginal women in their own areas. Such problems as housing, hygiene and home economics.' Aboriginal women called on white women to understand the role the state played in Aboriginal women's lives and 'help […] to stop forced sterilisation of our Black women in the Northern territory while white women campaign for the right to abortion.'[125]

Through the efforts of Florynce Kennedy and Aboriginal women across the week, tension dissipated and the important work of building relationships across divisions of race began. This can be palpably felt across the pages of *New Dawn.* White women attended the Black Women's Speak Out in large numbers, and according to Florynce Kennedy 'there was standing room only at sessions condemning the problem of black women.'[126] Kennedy felt this 'demonstrate[d] the level of consciousness of women at this conference.'[127] A group of non-Aboriginal women wrote to *New Dawn* criticising it for its reporting of Aboriginal women's protests as 'disruptive' and suggested that in this instance *New Dawn* resembled the mainstream media. Responding to Aboriginal women's complaints about their exclusion from the woman-friendly state, feminists sought to take matters into their own hands, including supporting the development of Aboriginal women's global networks. Gill, who signed off, 'your white sister,' announced a collection of funds for Aboriginal women wishing to attend the South Pacific Regional conference in October, 1975. Gill suggested that non-Aboriginal delegates had to 'commit ourselves financially to our Aboriginie [sic] sisters request' and encouraged non-Aboriginal delegates to contribute personally $7.50 each, the suggested donation matched to the cost of the conference celebration dinner.[128]

The Pan-Pacific conference hinted at Aboriginal women's own international networks. During the Speak Out, a speaker suggested that Australian state bureaucracy blocked the development of Aboriginal women's international networks: 'there are a number of women around here who would have liked to have gone to Mexico City so we could have meetings with women like the Red Indian women from America…we could relate to them better than most women because

[124] 'Women and Politics Conference: Canberra, September 4 1975', in File 115: 'Women and Politics' Conference, 2 September, 1975, Papers of Elizabeth Reid, National Library of Australia.
[125] Ibid.
[126]Roslyn Noonan, 'Guests Comment – "It's Exciting!"', *New Dawn,* September 5, 1975, 8.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Gill, 'Letter to the Editors', *New Dawn,* September 4, 1975, 7.

[of] their tribal culture, everything is the same as ours.'[129] It was suggested that non-Aboriginal women could support them, by, for example,' supporting 'our request for legislation to create a national Aboriginal claims commission similar to the North American Indian Claims commission.' The 'Women and Politics' Conference also supported the establishment of international networks of Black solidarity which encompassed First Nations women and African-American women. Marcia Langton explained that these were important at the time because 'You know racism was so appalling. In those days, we stuck together and many of us still do, across you know, all kinds of ethnicities.'[130] The forging of these networks is present in the correspondence of Florynce Kennedy with Aboriginal women after the conference. Margaret Briggs invited Kennedy to the 1976 Aboriginal and Island Women's Conference and signs off 'with Black Unity and Love from Us All.'[131] Similarly, Marcia Briggs of the Aboriginal Prison Project writes to Kennedy. She begins, to refresh Kennedy's memory, 'I am one of the Aboriginal people that you met whilst…you were over here earlier on this year for the 'Women and Politics' Conference in Canberra.'[132] She informed Kennedy of her plans to travel to the US on a study tour. Briggs sought to better understand and improve the situation of Aboriginal people though understanding the situation of both First Nations Americans and African-Americans. As Briggs' letter makes clear, she sought to gather information on 'Land Rights legislation, any state and government departments that were set up to help Indian people.' She intended to survey the amount of First Nations Americans working in government departments, and to examine how welfare services, including medical, housing and legal services functioned. She also hoped that in the final weeks, she might work with Kennedy to 'do a four week study program on the Negro situation in New York.' This correspondence makes clear how important the Women and Politics conference was for Aboriginal women to develop global networks based on political Blackness. Kennedy was an essential link for these women, Marcia Briggs stated that she had 'no names or addresses of people…in New York.'[133]

Global networks of Aboriginal and Pacific women also began to be developed at the 'Women and Politics' conference. Claire Slatter compared Australia's imperialism in Fiji to the situation that the Aboriginal women raised at the conference, where a lot of money that 'goes into so-

[129] 'Black Women in Society: Transcript of Address by Flo Kennedy and Discussion', p. 201.
[130] Oral history interview with Marcia Langton, 28th February 2022, on Zoom.
[131] Letter from Margaret Briggs to Florynce Kennedy, December 18, 1975.
[132] Letter from Marcia Briggs to Florynce Kennedy [undated] Folder 7: Correspondence, 1975, Papers of Florynce Kennedy, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America.
[133] Ibid.

called Aboriginal development' was actually used to pay the salaries of government workers, who were almost always white.[134] The networks between First Nations Australians and Pacific women will be explored in the next chapter.

Aboriginal women seemed satisfied as the conference drew to a close. Marcia Langton stated in *New Dawn,* 'before the conference most black women had been ignored by International Women's Year. They had decided to come to the conference to make a platform for themselves. They were very pleased with the results and had two days of very good discussions.'[135] While *New Dawn* was perhaps overly committed to producing a narrative of unification, Langton's reflections are similar to others recorded at the time and afterwards. Aboriginal activist from Canberra Pat Eatock wrote that 'personal traumas aside, the Women and Politics Conference was a triumph of feminist sisterhood. Over 800 women of almost all political persuasions found that their female identity gave them more in common than an arbitrary division of party politics and ideology.'[136] Claire Slatter suggested that the conference was 'tremendous.' Particularly, she noted that 'Black women have been able to meet with white women and discuss together the problems of black women in the community.' She suggested that this had transformed things, 'from the original bitterness that existed' early in the week, 'there has grown a real attempt to bridge the gap between two oppressed groups in the community.'[137]

It was due to the work of First Nations and Black feminists that the conference contained within it the possibility of a more racially just women's movement and a racially just woman-friendly state that centred Aboriginal women's concerns. Yet, it is important not to mistake this potential future for what actually took place. Women's liberation periodicals did reprint Aboriginal women's demands directly after the conference, but there is no evidence in the periodicals that the movement substantially shifted its attention to the concerns of Aboriginal or to non-Anglo women in the years to come. As Aboriginal scholars have made clear, non-Aboriginal women did not, following the conference or at any other time, centre Aboriginal women's concerns.[138] Similarly, while policy machinery was developed in the late 1980s which

[134] Slatter, 'Women and Development', p. 242.
[135] Gordon Burgoyne, 'The Black Message Is: "Speak Out… Speak Out"', *New Dawn,* September 6, 1975, 6.
[136] Pat Eatock, 'There's a Snake in My Caravan', in *Different lives: Reflections on the Women's Movement and Visions of its Future,* ed. Jocelynne A. Scutt (Melbourne: Penguin Books: 1987) republished by the Women's History Network https://womenshistorynetwork.org/theres-a-snake-in-my-caravan-part-2/ [last accessed September 25, 2022].
[137] Noonan, 'Guests Comment – "It's Exciting!"', p. 8.
[138] Larissa Behrendt, 'Aboriginal Women and the White Lies of the Feminist Movement: Implications for Aboriginal Women in Rights Discourse', *The Australian Feminist Law Journal* 1 (1993), 34-44; Jackie

specifically sought to address Aboriginal women's concerns, Aboriginal women were never central to the Office for Women and in this way, the needs of white women were assumed to be the needs of all women. As Marcia Langton put it, there was a 'tendency to say, "Oh well, that's an Aboriginal issue. Let them deal with that." As if, you know, Aboriginal women are not women, you know.'[139] This is not to say that there were no moments of conviviality or coalition building in the women's movement in the proceeding years, there were, and these are important. But they were not central to the movement and ought not be overstated in its history.

Victory?

While women used humour, as well as more serious interventions, throughout the 'Women and Politics' Conference to show the limits of the woman-friendly state and relatedly Whitlam's new nationalism, newspaper reports of the conference used jokes as a weapon against feminists; ridiculing the very idea of women holding any state power at all. The media's discussion of the 'Women and Politics' Conference was in keeping with the general media mockery of Elizabeth Reid and International Women's Year.[140] For example, In March 1975 the counter-cultural magazine *Nation Review* ran a special International Women's Day issue, the front page read 'The Australian Woman '75: Lean and Nosy Like a Ferret.'[141] Similarly, the mainstream newspaper, *The Age* remarked on January 1st, '$2 million for the sheilas-surprisingly it's not a joke.'[142] Reid was continually belittled by the media's 'jokes' often about her perceived failure to conform to feminine norms. She would often be introduced as 'Ms. Liz, 33, wearing no bra, said in Canberra today.'[143] Specifically regarding the 'Women and Politics' Conference, *The Canberra Times* ran an editorial that mocked the participants fashion, suggesting that while women at the conference dressed like men 'hardly any had relinquished their identity to go without a handbag.'[144] Other media coverage focused on the exclusion of

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Huggins, *Sister Girl* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998), pp. 25-37; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), pp. 94-126.

[139] Oral History Interview with Marcia Langton.

[140] Australian National Advisory Committee, *International Women's Year Report,* pp. 38-68.

[141] *Nation Review*, March 7-13, 1975, front page.

[142] Australian National Advisory Committee, *International Women's Year Report,* p. 50; See also, Arrow, *The Seventies,* p. 42.

[143] Elizabeth Reid, 'My 1975 Dismissal', interview by Kim Huyhn, *Sunday Brunch,* ABC, September 27, 2020 [https://www.abc.net.au/canberra/programs/sundaybrunch/my-1975-dismissal/12708062, accessed 19 August, 2022].

[144] 'The Role of Women', *The Canberra Times,* September 2, 1975.

men, the expense, the filthy state of Parliament House after the reception, and described Elizabeth Reid as the 'high priestess' of the conference.[145]

Against the backdrop of a mocking media, Florynce Kennedy once again used her own characteristic humour to frame the media as the enemy and forge an action against them. *New Dawn* remarked that Kennedy on the media was as 'bawdy, hard-hitting and disconnectedly funny as Flo on every other topic.'[146] Kennedy told Australian women on the second last day of the conference, 'You've got to watch your newspapers,' because otherwise 'you're going to get it slipped to you back and front without any Vaseline.'[147] She discussed her own spectacular actions against the media, and sowed the seeds of action against *The Canberra Times.* Other international guests also inspired action as they compared the Australian media coverage of the 'Women and Politics' Conference to the situation in their home countries. Juliet Mitchell was 'horrified,' at the level of media scrutiny she was subject to.[148] Bertha Harris suggested that 'The American press would never have dared to report the…conference the way the Australian press has done.' In the US, Harris reported, 'lip service at least, is now paid to the movement.'[149] Kennedy was similarly incensed that 2CA radio played the song 'the nicest little parakeets in town,' throughout the week. She remarked that 'no one in the States would even dare try on this kind of sexist insult.'[150]

On the last day of the 'Women and Politics' Conference attendees ran with Kennedy's idea and staged a sit in at *The Canberra Times* office. Several hundred women, including Kennedy, May Hobbs, Meta Van Beek, Bertha Harris and Charlotte Bunch marched along Canberra's wide boulevards singing 'Solidarity Forever.'[151] Perhaps they sang the rewritten version from the feminist songbook Kennedy brought along with her: 'Too long we've typed the stencils, run the copying machine/Kept our mouths shut, done the shit work while the others make the scene.'[152] Women protested outside with signs demanding fair media coverage, and then marched into the office of the *Canberra Times*. These protestors refused to leave until they

[145] Gillian Appleton, 'On the Record: Who They Were, What They Said', *New Dawn,* September 6, 1975, 9.
[146] Elisabeth Wynhausen, 'Flo's Smorgsbord… With the Media Chopped Up and Minced', *New Dawn,* September 5, 1975, 4.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Appleton, 'On the Record', 9.
[149] Blanche D'Apulget, 'The Baddest Woman in our Society is the Lesbian', *New Dawn,* September 4, 1975, 6.
[150] Wynhausen, 'Flo's Smorgasbord…'.
[151] Wynhausen, 'Victory!' *New Dawn,* pp. 1, 9.
[152] Lyrics to 'Solidarity Forever' from The Feminist Songbook in File 110: 'Women and Politics' Conference, Canberra, 2 September 1975', Papers of Elizabeth Reid, National Library of Australia.

were promised a prominent space in the paper to write their own editorial. Women returned triumphantly still singing, while others, conveying the high emotions of the weeklong conference burst into tears.[153] This was declared by *New Dawn* a 'Victory!' 'One down the rest to go' read the headline of the final edition of the conference newspaper.[154] Protestors also proposed a government run newspaper where 'fifty-one percent of its staff would be women, at all levels of production and engagement.'[155]

Yet while women declared the protest against the *Canberra Times* a victory, this action, as Elizabeth Reid reflected, 'create[d] more photographs of outraged women and more making fun of them by the press.' These, combined with other photographs including 'the "lesbians are lovely" photographs, the women in suits photographs…' which were certainly intended as a humorous if critical joke, ultimately cost Reid her job.[156] These photos were used by the men around Whitlam to prove that Reid was 'causing [Whitlam] more harm than good.' And that '[He had] to get rid of her.' [157] As this chapter has explored, the jokes across the 'Women and Politics' Conference revealed the sexual and racial limits of the 'new nationalist' project of the woman-friendly state. They were used by Aboriginal women, lesbian-feminists and international guests to expose this and encourage those at the conference to go further with their politics, with some positive results. It is ironic, then, that these jokes were wilfully decontextualised and used as evidence to reveal that feminists who sought to reform the state had gone too far. These jokes were mobilised for the opposite purpose than the original tellers intended.

After Elizabeth Reid resigned and Gough Whitlam was dismissed, Sara Dowse who replaced her as Advisor to the Prime Minister, reflected on the Australian women's liberation movement for the international women's movement anthology *Sisterhood is Global* (1984), edited by US feminist Robin Morgan. Dowse, in conjunction with fellow 'femocrat' Patricia Giles, discussed how since 1975, women's services and state feminist measures had been 'systematically whittl[ed] back' by the conservative government.[158] 'Women had been fighting back,' they

[153] 'Victory!' *New Dawn,* p.1.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Blanche D'Apulget, 'Media- Plan Call for Government Paper' *New Dawn* September 6, 1975, 2.
[156] Reid, 'My 1975 Dismissal', interview by Kim Huyhn.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Sara Dowse and Patricia Giles, 'Australia: Women in a Warrior Society' in *Sisterhood is Global,* ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Anchor Books, 1984), 63-68 p. 67.

suggested, but 'most of the activity had been invisible.'[159] They suggested that this was now changing because of the spectacular yet sombre women's movement protests that had taken place on ANZAC day 1980 and 1981 to commemorate 'all women of all countries raped in all wars.'[160] These protests, unlike the project of Australian state feminism, 'brought into high relief the fundamental opposition between the women's movement and the patriarchal state.'[161] Dowse and Giles suggested that the broad implications of the ANZAC day movement could further be seen in the burgeoning movement against nuclear weapons, and against American bases in Australia, including at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs.[162] It is to the vibrant feminist movement against nuclear weapons and the global feminist peace camps of the 1980s that this dissertation now turns.

[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., p. 65.
[161] Ibid., p. 66.
[162] Ibid., p. 67.

Chapter 5

‘Like you we sit on the doorstep of the world’s end’: ‘Space’ and ‘Time’ at Global Women’s Peace Camps of the 1980s.

In the early 1980s, the possibility of global nuclear war increased substantially. In 1982, the Soviet Union deployed nuclear weapons and NATO stationed nuclear missiles in Europe. This nuclear rearmament ended the détente of the early Cold War, amplified tensions between the US and the USSR, and intensified the risk and public fear of global calamity.[1] Lee Rhiannon, who was a key organiser in the Australian women’s peace camp at Pine Gap, described 1983 as ‘the height of the threat of nuclear war’ which was ‘really really full on.’[2]

Against this backdrop, feminists in Australia and elsewhere in the Global North established peace camps. These camps were lively sites of women-only feminist activity, with a diverse range of participants, from communists to radical feminists to nuns, often located at military bases in the Global North. The most famous of these was British women’s peace camp Greenham Common, but other camps included La Ragnatella (Spider’s web) camp in Comiso, Sicily, a US peace camp at Seneca Falls and Pine Gap in Australia. Women’s peace camps were established in response to a global crisis, were hugely influential on one another and formed a global network. Using a global frame to consider these camps reveals that concepts of time and space were also present – and remade – at women’s peace camps.

I begin at Pine Gap, a two week camp which took place at a US military base twenty minutes’ drive from Alice Springs. Here, on the country of the Arrernte people, women camped in the forty degree heat in the ‘heart of the hot Australia desert.’ Women travelled to Pine Gap from all over Australia in creatively named affinity groups including ‘the Pine-O-cleans’, ‘Toxic Shock’ and the ‘Bourgeois Harpies for Peace.’[3] As historian Alison Bartlett’s scholarship on Pine Gap has shown, women participated in creative actions at Pine Gap including street

[1] Eckart Conze, Martin Klimke and Jeremy Varon, ‘Introduction: Between Accidental Armageddons and Winnable Wars’ in *Nuclear Threats and Nuclear Fears in the 1980*s, eds. Eckhart Conze, Martin Klimke and Jeremy Varon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1-25, pp. 1-2.
[2] Oral history interview with Lee Rhiannon, 28th April, 2021,on Zoom.
[3] Canberra Women for Survival, Folder 11: Canberra Women for Survival Pine Gap Handouts, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection, Jessie Street National Women’s Library.

theatre, staging mock funerals and breaking into the base to have tea on its lawn.[4] Many women who attended recalled pulling the gate to the base off its hinges. After it was quickly replaced they graffitied this new gate with 'Congratulations boys on a hasty erection!'[5]

Pine Gap reveals how this international network of women's peace camps intervened in space. I suggest that this global network of camps created a space of feminism beyond the nation, a 'web' of women's action across the world. As we shall see, currents of women-only radical feminism were also present at Pine Gap. This political philosophy considered patriarchy to be global and so collapsed racial, cultural and spatial difference between women. Spiritual feminist thought was also present, which suggested that solutions to planetary patriarchy might operate on a mystical and cosmic level, untethered to physical space.

As well as theorising the way space influenced women's peace camps, this chapter responds to calls that historians consider time.[6] Women's anti-nuclear activism was infused with a range of temporalities, including a sense of urgency due to the threat of nuclear war. I argue that temporalities also informed the representation of First Nations women and those from the Global South at women's peace camps. This is revealed as I travel to Greenham Common. This peace camp was established in 1983 in Berkshire where US cruise missiles were stationed from 1983 - 1991. At the 'height' of Greenham Common 'between 1983-1985' hundreds of women lived at Greenham and protests drew thousands more.'[7] Women camped around the nine mile perimeter fence of the military base in small encampments, each named after a colour and each with its own unique atmosphere. Zohl dé Ishtar an Australian feminist who lived at Green Gate humorously explained in an oral history interview: 'If you wanted to have blue hair, you lived at Blue Gate, if you wanted to be a separatist you lived at Green Gate, if you wanted to talk to the media and think that you were running the place, maybe you lived at Yellow Gate, you

[4]Alison Bartlett, 'Feminist Protest and Maternity at Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp, Australia 1983', *Women's Studies International Forum* 34:1 (2011), 31–38; Alison Bartlett, 'Feminist Protest and Cultural Production at the Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp, Australia 1983', *Women: A Cultural Review,* 24:2-3 (2013), 179-195; Alison Bartlett, 'Sites of Feminist Activism: *Remembering Pine Gap*', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies,* 30:3 (2016), 307-315.
[5] Oral history interview with Biff Ward, 26th May, 2021, on Zoom; Oral history interview with Lee Rhiannon.
[6] The call that historians, especially global historians, attend to time is made by Anna Clark, Anne Rees and Alecia Simmonds, *Transnationalism, Nationalism and Australian History* (Pelgrave Macmillan, 2017); Dan Edelstein, Stefanos Geroulanos and Natasha Wheatley, 'Chronocenosis: An Introduction to Power and Time, in *Power and Time: Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History*, eds. Edelstein, Geroulanos and Wheatley, (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2020), 1-49; Priya Satya, *Times Monster: History, Conscience and Britain's Empire* (London: Penguin, 2020).
[7] Catherine Eschle, 'Beyond Greenham Women? Gender Identities and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Peace Camps' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19:4 (2017), 471-90, p. 472.

know? If you wanted to go in and have fun every Friday night and go to the discos with the soldiers, maybe you lived at Violet Gate…'[8] Women engaged in creative actions including the December 1982 'Embrace the Base' action, where 30,000 women joined hands around the perimeter fence.[9] In 1991, US cruise missiles were removed and the peace camp ended in 2000. At Greenham, First Nations women were seen as 'traditional' and 'undeveloped,' representing a highly spiritual past. But I argue this sense of time was upended when First Nations Pacific and Australian women visited Greenham Common at the invitation of Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific. Having already survived nuclear testing carried out across the Pacific, including at Bikini Atoll and at Maralinga in Australia, these women spoke not from the past, but from the nuclear future.

Australian sovereignty and transnationalism

Pine Gap women's peace camp was a response to the global threat of nuclear escalation; women saw the continuation of the arms race as threatening to all life on earth. In a letter that was distributed to Alice Springs residents prior to the camp to de-escalate hostility, women suggested that they were camping at Pine Gap to 'ask[…] that people face their fears of nuclear war…we know that there are already enough nuclear weapons to destroy all life as we know it on this planet.'[10] However, organisers were attuned to the way this international crisis played out in Australia through its transnational relationship with the US. As they saw it, the presence of US bases spatially encroached on Australia and transformed it into a nuclear target. Organisers wrote that while Australians 'often do not consider ourselves front line participants in nuclear war,' it was US intervention, epitomised by Pine Gap, that entangled Australia, 'escalating [our] contribution to a global nuclear war.'[11] To reveal how Australian space was remade, organisers remapped Australia to alert readers to the network of American bases which

[8] Oral history interview with Zohl dé Ishtar, 7th July, 2020, on Zoom. See also Ann Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham*: *How the Peace Camp Began and the Cold War Ended* (South Glamorgan, Wales: Honno, 2006)p. 145.
[9] Embrace the Base discussed in Sasha Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1995), 101-102; Margaret L. Laware, 'Circling the Missiles and Staining them Red: Feminist Rhetorical Intervention and Strategies of Resistance at the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common', *Feminist Formations* 16:3 (2004), 18-41, p. 19.
[10] Alice Springs Women for Survival, 'Letter of Concern' in Women for Survival, *Pine Gap Camp Handbook,* 1983, p.11, Jessie Street National Women's Library.
[11] Canberra Women for Survival, 'Canberra Is a Nuclear Target', Folder 13: Canberra Women for Survival Canberra Handouts, 1983.

they saw as impeding Australian sovereignty and which enabled 'US military surveillance of S.E. Asia, U.S.S.R, China and the Pacific.'[12]

Critical of the ways in which the alliance between the US and Australia impeded Australia's sovereignty, organisers highlighted the role the Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] played in Australian politics. They wrote, 'the CIA directly controls these bases keeping the Australian Government and the people in the dark.'[13] The longer history of CIA and its involvement in Australian affairs was present in the mind of the organisers when they selected the date for the beginning of the camp. They began the camp on November 11th, which as well as being the Armistice of the First World War, marked the date eight years prior, when Gough Whitlam was dismissed as Prime Minister.[14] Women suggested that Whitlam's dismissal was the CIA's doing: 'November 11 is remembered by many Australians as the day…their democratically elected government was removed from power by a coup engineered by the CIA in collusion with Governor General Kerr and the LP [Liberal Party] of Australia.'[15] It is worth noting that the understanding of the Whitlam dismissal as a CIA coup was not unique to those protesting at Pine Gap. It was not a fringe conspiracy theory but was a prevalent view amongst the left, held by some investigative journalists and some Australian Labor Party politicians at the time.[16]

While Alice Springs women did write in the *Pine Gap Camp Handbook* that 'we feel there is nothing to choose between the Russian and the U.S. Governments- both are war like,' there is less criticism of the USSR in materials about Pine Gap.[17] This is not because Australian women organising the protest supported the Soviet Union, but rather because Pine Gap was a US base and it was this spatial encroachment that women were alert to. Lee Rhiannon suggested that this generated some criticism at the time because 'there was an idea in the peace movement that you had to criticise both the USSR and the US equally for their nuclear weapons.'[18] This, Rhiannon suggested, was particularly prevalent in the early Cold War and directed toward communists, but still had some currency in the later peace movement. As historian Nicholas

[12] Canberra Women for Survival, 'Why We Must Act', Folder 13: Canberra Women for Survival Canberra Handouts, 1983.
[13] Canberra Women for Survival, 'Canberra Is a Nuclear Target.'
[14] Women for Survival, '*Pine Gap Handbook'*, p. 4.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Frank Bongiorno, *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2015), p. 12. For example this is a view expressed by journalist John Pilger, *A Secret Country* (London: Vintage, 1989), pp. 185-239.
[17] Women for Survival, *Pine Gap Camp Handbook,* p. 11.
[18] Oral history interview with Lee Rhiannon.

Barnett has recently explored, this idea inspired women from Greenham to travel to Moscow to persuade the USSR to denuclearise.[19] Rhiannon had worked for the Union of Australian Women and was the daughter of Freda Brown, the president of the WIDF, both of which were considered communist fronts. So she continued to face the criticism that her politics were 'too anti-US.' Rhiannon recalled that 'at one point some women didn't want me to facilitate a session' and this was 'leftover from previous sharp divisions.'[20] Rhiannon explained that when it came to Pine Gap, 'I was very much working on the fact that, US has a base in Australia, we're in Australia. They're stepping up their nuclear armaments around the world.' Many women, saw it like Rhiannon did, whether they were communists or not because Pine Gap was encroaching on Australia. In fact, Rhiannon was protected by women who weren't communists and who weren't aware of the Cold War paradigm. She explained that once when it was suggested that she not be allowed to chair an event, they replied '"No, No! Lee's going to do it! She does a great job[…]We've nominated her."' Those Cold War divisions 'had no political meaning to them.' This, for Rhiannon, 'was quite refreshing.'[21]

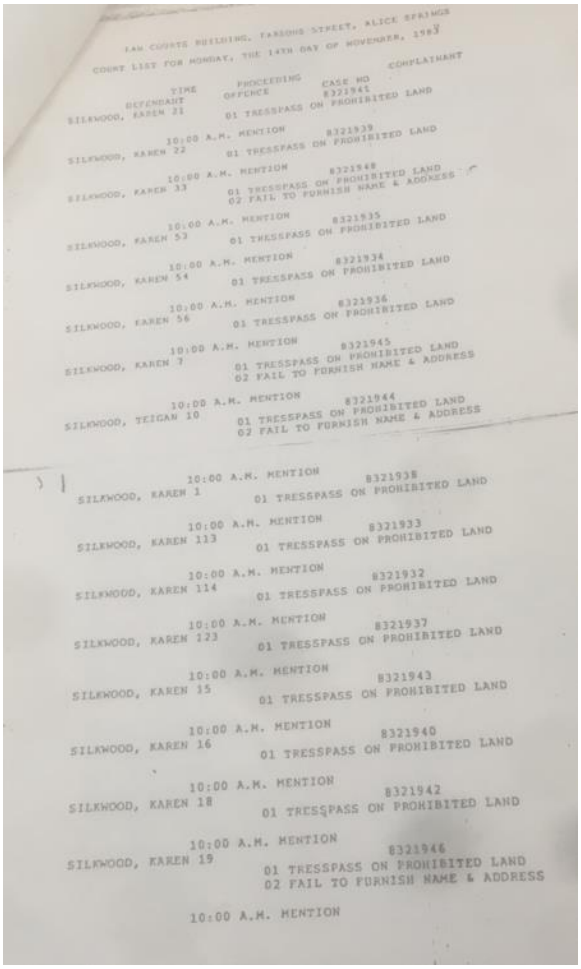
'Remember Karen Silkwood'

While organisers were critical of the way that Pine Gap threatened Australia's national sovereignty, their techniques of resistance to this was influenced by the US anti-nuclear movement. The space of feminism was remade beyond the nation at this peace camp, as is revealed through campers' embodiment of the figure of Karen Silkwood, a North American chemical technician. After Silkwood testified to the Atomic Energy Commission about health and safety in her workplace, she was killed in a car crash in unclear circumstances on November 13th, 1974. In the campers' eyes, Silkwood was most certainly murdered by the US Government.[22] On the anniversary of her death which fell during the camp, women held a symbolic funeral for her, a global tactic, likely borrowed from the US women's liberation movement.[23] Women explained that they 'tr[ied] to look straight'- meaning respectable and

[19] Nicholas Barnett, 'From Greenham Common to Red Square: Women for Life on Earth and Cross-Bloc Activism in the 1980s', *Contemporary British History* 36:3 (2022), 459-481, p. 461.
[20] Oral history interview with Lee Rhiannon
[21] Ibid.
[22] Wendy Poussard, *Outbreak of Peace: Poems and Notes from Pine Gap* (St Kilda, Victoria: Billabong Press, 1984), p. 30.
[23] For example, New York Radical Women staged a mock funeral for 'traditional womanhood' in 1968. Discussed by Say Burgin in 'Understanding Antiwar Activism as a Gendering Activity: A Look at the U.S.'s Anti-Vietnam War Movement', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13:6 (2012), 18–31. On the sharing of international tactics by feminists across time and space see Lucy Delap, *Global Feminisms* (London: Pelican, 2020), pp. 274-94.

serious - while they wore black clothes and black arm bands and carried flowers, and walked in solemn procession to the gates where they told Karen Silkwood's story.[24] After the symbolic funeral, they broke into the base and staged a tea party, an ironic re-enactment of the US Boston Tea Party. Women were arrested and when the police asked for their names, they all said 'Karen Silkwood.' In this way, as poet Wendy Poussard put it, they 'resurrect[ed]' Silkwood.[25] The court list for the following Monday provides an extraordinary account of this moment, where all women arrested were identified as Karen Silkwood and differentiated only by number (see figure six).[26] The record of graffiti done by women in the 'large holding cell' when held at the Alice Springs jail included 'Karen Silkwood No. 2084 is here arrested for peace.'[27] Poussard's recollection of a confrontation with a young police officer revealed the capaciousness of who could embody Karen Silkwood at the camp: Accusingly she said, 'we don't like what you're doing.' He agreed but remarked that without this job, 'the only one he knows… he'd be on the dole.' When she enquired about his name, he remarked 'Karen Silkwood.'[28]

[24] Poussard, *Outbreak of Peace*, p. 30.
[25] Ibid.
[26] 'Court List for Monday, 14th November 1983', Folder 10: Canberra Women for Survival Alice Springs Papers, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[27] 'Jail Graffiti', Folder 7: Cynthia Shannon's papers 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[28] Poussard, *Outbreak of Peace*, p.31.



LAW COURTS BUILDING, PARSONS STREET, ALICE SPRINGS

COURT LIST FOR MONDAY, THE 14TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1983

DEFENDANT	TIME	PROCEEDING	OFFENCE	CASE NO	COMPLAINANT
SILKWOOD, KAREN 21			01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321941	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 22	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321939	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 33	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND 02 FAIL TO FURNISH NAME & ADDRESS	8321948	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 53	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321935	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 54	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321934	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 56	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321936	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 7	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND 02 FAIL TO FURNISH NAME & ADDRESS	8321945	
SILKWOOD, TEIGAN 10	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND 02 FAIL TO FURNISH NAME & ADDRESS	8321944	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 1	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321938	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 113	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321933	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 114	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321932	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 123	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321937	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 15	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321943	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 16	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321940	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 18	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND	8321942	
SILKWOOD, KAREN 19	10:00 A.M.	MENTION	01 TRESSPASS ON PROHIBITED LAND 02 FAIL TO FURNISH NAME & ADDRESS	8321946	
	10:00 A.M.	MENTION			

Figure 6: Court List for Monday 14th November, 1983,
Canberra Women for Survival Collection, Jessie Street National Women's Library.

'A wheel of womyn's energy: from the common to the desert.'

The most significant influence on Pine Gap Peace Camp was Greenham Common. Women's liberation movement periodicals attest to the way that feminists were particularly aware and interested in the events unfolding at Greenham. British women's liberationist Bea Campbell, for example, addressed four hundred women in Sydney about 'women's resistance to the missile base' and their tactics of 'weaving webs of wool' and stringing the fence with 'teddy bears and photos.'[29] In an oral history interview, Lee Rhiannon discussed the influence of Greenham. A fellow organiser had shown Rhiannon a picture of the 'Embrace the Base' action of 1982, and said "Lee, we've gotta do this here!"'[30] Greenham women also corresponded with Australian feminists who were planning the Pine Gap camp. A week before, women from Green Gate sent an update about the rich, challenging life they were collectively living at

[29] *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, May 1983, n.p.
[30] Oral history interview with Lee Rhiannon.

Greenham and offered women 'strength and courage at Pine Gap… and Thank you.'[31] They also sent a life-size banner as part of a procession women organised at Pine Gap.[32] During the Pine Gap camp, Greenham women sent a handmade booklet carrying greetings and messages decorated with hand drawn spider's webs, witches snipping razor wire and butterflies.[33] This booklet included contributions from Australians living at the UK peace camp including Silver Moon and Zohl dé Ishtar, who sent 'sister energy to return the promise of a future…from Pine Gap to Greenham Common.' A woman called Ruth wrote 'Here I am an Aussie at Greenham C and I thought…wouldn't it be great if some women camped at Pine Gap and ya are.'[34] Support was sent from 'everyone at Blue Gate' as well as song lyrics to tunes sung at Greenham. A medicine wheel accompanied this. Women at Greenham had made this 'from the fence of Greenham Air Base' which they had transformed by weaving wool, badges and even attaching a kazoo through the chain links into a 'wheel of womyn's energy…reaching and webbing across the planet.'[35] The reception of the medicine wheel from Greenham was ritualised; women 'moved into peace symbol formation…and pass[ed] the medicine wheel from hand to hand' accompanied by singing.[36] Moreover, Pine Gap actions were based on the events unfolding at Greenham. On the 15th November, 1983, the day that cruise missiles were due to be deployed at Greenham Common, women staged a symbolic handing back of missiles to the US. At Pine Gap, women launched a cardboard missile into the base and let balloons out of it, before spontaneously ripping the gate to the base off its hinges.

At Pine Gap women wept for their 'elder sisters' at Greenham who like 'us sit on the doorstep of the world's end.'[37] While feminists involved in women's liberation would often refer to one another as 'sisters,' Pine Gap women referring to Greenham women as 'elder sisters' suggests significant inspiration was found in Greenham women. But this also has a longer history, which I discussed in the introduction. Australian women's consideration of themselves as 'younger sisters' to British feminists is evocative of earlier characterisations by feminists in familial and

[31] Letter from Greenham Common to Pine Gap Women, 5th November 1983, Folder 11: Canberra Women for Survival Greenham Common Papers, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[32] Women's Action Against Global Violence, 'Act Now', *Girls' Own Newspaper* 13 (November-December, 1983), 21.
[33] 'Greetings and Messages Sent on [sic] Beautiful Handmade Booklet Sent to Pine Gap Women from Greenham Common', Folder 11: Canberra Women for Survival Greenham Common Papers, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Telex from Alice Springs to Canberra, 17th November 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telexes, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[37] Poussard, *Outbreak of Peace*, p. 13.

hierarchical terms across the British Empire, where Britain was the mother, white Dominion women the daughters or younger sisters, followed by women of the colonies and First Nations women who were the pitied, unfortunate 'imperial sisters' in need of uplift by white women.[38] Particularly, it evokes an uneven sense that women in Britain were 'ahead' of women in Australia when it came to feminist action.

'Close the gap all our love'

Women at Pine Gap reached beyond the US and Britain to forge other international connections to remake the space of feminism beyond the nation. The evidence of one meeting to plan the camp attests to this. On large sheets of butcher's paper women listed their 'hopes' and 'fears' for the Pine Gap camp. While fears included 'police' and movement 'splits,' 'hopes' included building 'solidarity' and 'international peace networks,' as well as the more local 'communal cooking, fun and swimming.'[39] The *Pine Gap Handbook* stated similarly that 'There are women throughout the Pacific countries, in Japan, New Zealand, the US, Canada, throughout Europe, and in Latin and Central American Countries… who know that we women in Australia are gathering at Pine Gap…in November.'[40] During Pine Gap Peace Camp, women from New Zealand sent messages in Māori, sending 'Kia Kaha' strength and 'Aroha', love.[41] Lee Rhiannon suggested that the large archive of international telegrams received at Pine Gap were the result of the ground work that had been laid through these older networks of peace and communist internationalism, who sent solidaristic greetings as a tactic. Rhiannon suggested that 'when we… had our camp [at Pine Gap] we actually got greetings like from the Soviet Women's Committee, from women probably in South Africa. 'Mum actually helped organize that…' she remarked. Revealing Freda Brown's work to forge these global networks, Nancy McDonald for the Congress of Canadian Women, the Canadian affiliate to the WIDF, wrote to 'extend unqualified support,' to women at Pine Gap. She addressed her telegram to Freda Brown.[42]

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[38] Angela Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's international Activism in the 1920s-30s', *Gender & History* 10:3 (1998), 425-448, p. 438; Antoinette Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and "Global Sisterhood" 1900-1915', *Journal of Women's History* 3:2 1991, 46-81, p. 47. See also, Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
[39] 'Hopes' and 'Fears' held in Folder 6: Canberra Women For Survival Canberra Papers, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[40] Women for Survival, *Pine Gap Camp Handbook*, p. 14.
[41] Telegram From Women New Zealand, 15th November, 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telegrams Received, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[42] Telegram from Nancy McDonald for the Congress of Canadian Women, November 15th, 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telegrams Received, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.

Pine Gap took place in a moment of rapid technological development, not just in terms of nuclear weapons. Personal technologies such as the fax machine and the internet were about to collapse space and increase connectivity including for those involved in global feminist movements.[43] Archives attest that Telefaxes and interstate phone hook ups, which enabled groups across wide distances in Australia to communicate, were crucial to the success of Pine Gap.[44] However, oral history complicates this story, it shows that technologies, both new and older, were not evenly distributed. Lee Rhiannon suggested that the new fax machine and the older technology of the conference call were both too expensive for organisers to access. In order to use these, Rhiannon approached Ann Symonds, a sympathetic member of NSW parliament, for support 'because in those days, ringing inter-state, outside Sydney cost a lot of money,' and Rhiannon didn't have access to a fax. She continued, 'Ann was just super fantastic […] we used to go to Ann's office to organise a phone hook up with Women for Survival Groups around the country…I can't tell you how important that was.'[45]

However, at Pine Gap there was no infrastructure to receive faxes, and no phone on site. Thus women relied on the much older technology of the telegram. Telegrams were sent to Stuart Lodge homelessness support service, Alice Springs Post Office, the YWCA, and after women were arrested, directly to Alice Springs Prison. Just as women at Greenham organised to have a post-code created in order to connect globally and send and receive post, so women at Pine Gap encouraged supporters to send telegrams, which they received in huge numbers and from many different sources. These demonstrate the varied nature of the women's movement at the time.[46] The use of the telegram at Pine Gap recalls David Edgerton's argument that older technologies are not immediately ousted by the new, but older forms 'appear…reappear and

[43] Lisa Levenstein, 'A Social Movement for A Global Age: U.S. Feminisms and the Beijing Women's Conference of 1995', *The Journal of American History* 105:2 (2018), 336-365; Lisa Levenstein, 'Faxing Feminism: The Global Women's Movement and the 1995 controversy over Huairou', *Global Social Policy* 14:2 (2014), 228-243. On the transformation of Australian life by the fax machine and the VCR see Bongiorno, *The Eighties,* p. 210-11. On the impact of technologies on earlier transnational women's movements see, for example, Margaret McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth Century Feminism* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999).
[44] See: Canberra Women for Survival, Journal, Folder 1: Journal Minutes and Day Book, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[45] Oral History Interview with Lee Rhiannon.
[46] On women establishing a postcode at Greenham Common see Margaretta Jolly, '"We Are the Web": Letter Writing and the 1980s Women's Peace Movement', *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 26:1-2 (2003), 196-218. On women at Pine Gap inviting telegrams particularly after arrest see Canberra Women for Survival, Journal, p. 37, Folder 1: Canberra Women for Survival Journal Minutes and Daybook, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.

mix and match across the centuries.'[47] Technologies used are often, like the telegram at Pine Gap, those that best fit the situation. Through the form of the telegram, messages of 'solidarity and love' were received from friends, partners and housemates at Pine Gap. Virginia sent love to her 'Sydney roommates,' and Angela and Sandy wrote that they were 'with you singing for our lives all the songs from your songbook.'[48] Femocrats working in the bureaucracy, including Sara Dowse, sent correspondence. 'Dear Karen Silkwood,' Dowse wrote, 'you have done it and have lit a spark everywhere.'[49] Others arrived from organisations established through the women's liberation movement, including women's shelters, and feminist health services. The 'friends/residents/workers' of the North Adelaide Women's Emergency Shelter sent a message: 'you've shown us the power of women…to unite and fight…for peace and against male oppression.'[50] Three telegrams were received from pro-feminist men, including from the Men's Contact and Resource Centre, Adelaide, who sent a call to 'take the toys away from the boys.'[51] Some telegrams referenced the adoption of the identity of Karen Silkwood by Pine Gap feminists, 'Dear Karens,' begins a telegram from Women in Cane, South Australia, 'your actions – inspiring to all opposing the links Australia has to the nuclear threat.'[52] A group called the Ultraviolets put the agrammatical form of the telegram to good use, sending campers at Pine Gap the poetic note: 'spin the thread to weave the web to catch us all from falling dead Karen.'[53] The reading of these telegrams from supporters was ritualised at the camp. After one hundred and eleven women were arrested as Karen Silkwood, one hundred and eleven telegrams of support from all over the world were read, accompanied by singing peace songs from Germany, Italy, Greece and Africa.[54]

While global connections and communications technologies remade the space of feminism beyond the nation at Pine Gap, this was also buttressed by radical feminist currents. Highly

[47] David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. xii.
[48] Telegram from Virginia, 15th November, 1983; Telegram from Angela and Sandy, 16th November, 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telegrams Received, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[49]Letter from Sara Dowse, 16th November, 1983 in Folder 2: Canberra Women for Survival Letters Received, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[50] Telegram from Women's Emergency Shelter North Adelaide, 16th November, 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telegrams Received, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[51] Telegram from Men's Contact and Resource Centre, November 15th 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telegrams Received, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[52] Telegram from Women in Cane, November 14th, 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telegrams Received, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[53] Telegram marked 'Adelaide Rundle Street' November 17th, 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telegrams Received, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[54] Poussard, *Outbreak of Peace*, p. 36; Telex from Alice Springs to Canberra, 17th November, 1983, Folder 4: Canberra Women for Survival Telexes, 1983, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.

influential in Australia was the 1978 radical feminist text *Gyn/Ecology: A Metaethics of Radical Feminism* by Mary Daly, the North American theologian and feminist. Radical feminism, especially the work of Mary Daly, describes and proscribes a particularly intense form of patriarchy which extends planetarily. Daly's work does not shy away from discussions of intense violence, especially that rendered on the body, particularly women's genitals and reproductive organs and the planet. It is more interested in the *how* and *what* of patriarchy, how it works and what it does to women globally, to their psyches and their bodies, than the *why,* which is explained through the fundamental differences between men and women based in the 'reality' of the body. Women, by virtue of their capacity to reproduce, had an intimate, nurturant and essential relationship to the earth. Men, on the other hand, represented the 'death drive.'[55] This meant, as Daly put it, that 'no male led "revolution" will counteract the... destruction of natural resources.' [56] A range of oral history interviewees, including with practising feminist witch Spider Redgold, who was present at Pine Gap, and trade unionist and education activist Gail Shelston, spoke of the importance of this book. Shelston described the *Gyn/Ecology* as 'absolutely getting her through,' while in her role as the first Women's Officer of the NSW Teachers Federation.[57] Redgold referred to Daly as a 'feminist foremother.'[58] Australian cultural studies scholar and feminist Meghan Morris described *Gyn/Ecology* as 'probably the most important and influential single work to come out of the American women's movement since Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics.*'[59]

Radical feminist currents were present at Pine Gap, for example in Biff Ward's address to the demonstration. In her speech she suggested that nuclear weapons were the 'atomic ejaculation' of 'masculinist philosophy' which sets 'rationality, logic, science and control' represented in 'deadly phallic form through nuclear weapons' against 'the female principle: nature, Mother earth, her, us.' A creative and colourful rhetorician, Ward described nuclear weapons as the latest incarnation of the 'white male arse of the true ruling class, patriarchy,' which oppresses women everywhere.[60] Similarly, as Women's Action Against Global Violence explained: 'We

[55] Suzanna Danuta Walters, 'Caught in the Web: A Critique of Spiritual Feminism', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 80 (1985), 15-40.
[56] Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), p. 9.
[57] Interview with Gail Shelston, January 11th, 2020, in person. The NSW Teachers Federation is the trade union for teachers.
[58] Oral history interview with Gail Shelston; Oral history interview with Spider Redgold 6th May 2020, on Zoom.
[59] Meaghan Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée: Feminism, Reading, Postmodernism* (London:Verso, 1998), p. 28.
[60] Biff Ward, 'Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp, November 1983', Series 15: Pine Gap and Cockburn Sound Papers, Biff Ward Collection, Jessie Street National Women's Library.

have been faced with horrendous levels of violence since the recording of western history…white, western males have now escalated the capacity to destroy…their nuclear violence threatens extermination to every living being.'[61] Space is remade in radical feminism, for if all women are oppressed by patriarchy the world over, then patriarchy must operate at the level of the global, inattentive to national borders or differences between women. While radical feminism was clear that patriarchy operated differently across contexts, this suggested that patriarchy was the *major* oppression faced by women globally.[62] The patterns of patriarchy in each culture and across nations were more similar than not, and could be traced. Patriarchy was, according to Daly, the 'major world religion,' a truly planetary phenomenon.[63]

Spiritual Solutions and the Space of Feminism

Planetary patriarchy, then, required a planetary solution. At Pine Gap, as at other women's peace camps, there were strong currents of spiritual feminism, framed as a possible answer to this world-wide problem. As historian Ruth Lindley's work on Greenham Common makes clear, spiritual feminism was an important, and much maligned, element of the women's liberation movement.[64] Spiritual feminism sought, as Lindley put it, to 'break down the boundaries between the rational and spiritual realms, interpreting the end of patriarchy as a battle fought, not only in the physical infrastructure of male power, but through cosmic manipulation…which allowed…women to experience a new slice of freedom and power.'[65] At peace camps spiritual feminists engaged in a variety of actions including goddess worship, the reclamation of women's traditional crafts, such as weaving, developing women's culture, music, dance and ritual. Spiritual feminists conceptualised space beyond the physical. They proposed solutions to the problem of planetary patriarchy that were mystical and cosmic. Mary Daly suggested the 'spinning of cosmic tapestries,' that is, ecstatic and expansive action and thought which would release women's energetic power beyond the realm of the physical into the spiritual.[66]

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[61] Women's Action Against Global Violence, 'Act Now', p.13.
[62] See, for example, Robin Morgan, 'Introduction: Planetary Feminism The Politics of the 21st Century', in *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology,* ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Anchor Books, 1984) 1-37.
[63] Daly, *Gyn/Ecology,* p. 111.
[64] Ruth Lindley, *The Personal Is Political Is Spiritual: Feminism and Religion in Modern Britain,* unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2019, pp. 4-5.
[65] Ibid., p. 3.
[66] Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 285.

Developing and symbolic and aesthetic language was an important part of spiritual feminism. At peace camps, women's global connection was often spatially represented through the figure of the web, which was drawn and redrawn, referenced and re-referenced at these camps across the world. The web was included in the name of the peace camp in Comiso, Sicily, La Ragnatella or 'spider's web,' and at both Greenham and at Pine Gap the web features on posters and protest material.[67] The web shows the way women perceived global connectivity with one another and the way their connections combined delicacy with strength and ever expanding, dynamic, planetary connections between women, without hierarchy.[68] Indeed, this planetary web of women is conjured in the correspondence that Pine Gap women received from Greenham, 'let there be no top, no bottom a circle, a web, a network. Let us look to each other, to you, to me.'[69] Daly's call for women to spin the web was also linked to the reclamation of women's traditional craft and handiwork, an important part of spiritual feminism. Daly sought to reclaim spinning and discussed its powerful 'women centred qualities' and the way that patriarchy 'never ceased to fear and envy the gynaesthetic gift for Spinning' but had tried to reduce women's power to spin to 'the darning of socks.'[70]

The spiral too was an important symbol at the women's peace camp. This speaks to the way spiritual feminism conceptualised spatial solutions to planetary patriarchy. Many women at peace camps participated in spiral dances, where they held hands and '[went] round and round and round…' as Canberra feminist Jane Bullen explained.[71] Feminists in other contexts linked the spiral to the menstrual cycle and so felt that it was a symbol suited particularly to women and feminists, an expression and reclamation of a specific female aesthetic located in the body.[72] Bullen had participated in a spiral dance around Parliament House in Canberra to 'Close the Gap', which was directly inspired by Greenham Common women's 'Embrace the Base' action.[73] Bullen suggested that symbolically the 'spiral appealed because it wasn't confined or limited, always in motion, always developing…' Bullen also explained that the

[67] Branciforte, 'The Women's Peace Camp at Comiso', p. 330.
[68] Jolly, '"We Are the Web"':, pp. 200-201; Anna Feigenbaum, 'From Cyborg Feminism to Drone Feminism: Remembering Women's Anti-Nuclear Activism', *Feminist Theory* 16:3 (2015), 265-288, pp. 274-276.
[69] 'Greetings and Messages Sent on [sic] Beautiful Handmade Booklet Sent to Pine Gap Women from Greenham Common', Folder 11: Canberra Women for Survival Greenham Common Papers, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[70] Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 176. Gynaestheic denotes an aesthetic particular to women.
[71] Oral history interview with Jane Bullen, 11th December 2019, in person.
[72] Walters, *Caught in the Web*, p. 24.
[73] Perth Women for Survival, 'Spiral Dance to Close the Gap!!' Women for Survival Collection, National Library of Australia.

spiral represented 'an idea[…]that the change we wanted was really, really profound. Not necessarily encapsulated just by what might happen in government.' Bullen also thoughtfully explained that the spiral dance sought to operate on the non-physical, spiritual plane: 'I think the idea [was] that we would kind of…that by doing that we could exert some influence, that some vibes might, from our spiral dancing, might effect the parliament. I don't know that they did, but you never know [laughs].'[74] That women's actions sought to operate on a cosmic, energetic level was also reflected in publicity for the Canberra spiral dance. A leaflet reads: 'We will become a river that will flow together and become an ocean of women's energy. Believe it and it will work.'[75]

For Spider Redgold, a spiritual feminist and practising witch, the powerful release of women's energy at Pine Gap *did* result in spatial transformation that could be physically witnessed: 'We don't need to *believe* it, it works. We watched it at Pine Gap,' she explained. Redgold recalled occupying the road at Pine Gap at night during the camp and 'braving being run over by these giant […] big army trucks' and 'trying to meditate, try not to be too scared, not leaping out of the way…just sitting there, sitting there, sitting there,' so 'all the traffic had to wiggle through us.' Suddenly, the 'gate started to go *pah-chuck* [noise of the gate] and it just smashed onto every vehicle…just smash, smash, smash.' As Redgold saw it, that was a clear sign that 'if you align yourself with the universe, the universe responds to that alignment […] It happens in front of your eyes.'[76] Redgold said that witnessing the transformative power of women's spirituality 'absolutely' connected her with women all over the world. She recalled that women in South Australia where she was based held a 'Dark Moon weekend' and she later found out that 'peace camps in Italy and Boston and Texas […] did the same thing' at the same time. To her this wasn't a coincidence but 'really about […] evidence that we are actually tapping into something that exists, something ancient that exists. And it's there.'[77] For Redgold as for others, operating as feminists on an energetic and spiritual realm beyond the physical, was essential to challenge global patriarchy.

Other feminists such as Biff Ward and Jane Bullen were less unambiguously certain about the power of spiritual feminism, but it still played an important role in their politics. During an oral

[74] Oral history interview with Jane Bullen.
[75] Perth Women for Survival, 'Spiral Dance to Close the Gap!!'.
[76] Oral history interview with Spider Redgold.
[77] Oral history interview with Spider Redgold.

history interview, I asked Biff Ward why she felt that so many women who were initially socialist feminists became involved in spiritual feminism. Ward took her time to reply. She suggested that the question was interesting, and said that it was about 'understanding, turning away from and feeling good about turning away from patriarchy.'[78] Ward's answer was deceptively simple, but in fact, can be unpacked to better understand what was taking place when women who had been committed to materialist politics became immersed in the possibility of spiritual transformation. Radical feminism describes and proscribes a particularly intense form of patriarchy which extends planetarily. To confront this reality was to experience disenchantment, and sometimes deep unhappiness, which many women did across the movement. Spiritual feminism offered a 'reenchantment' of the world, through a sense that women were connected cosmically and that these cosmic connections could be conjured through a range of practices including women-only culture and spiritual rituals.[79]

Not everyone found this spiritual feminist perspective enchanting, and this was criticised in the movement at the time, as the cartoon reprinted in Sydney's *Girls' Own Newspaper* from the British feminist magazine *Spare Rib* demonstrated (see figure seven). Feminist Liz Ross put this in more scathing terms. She wrote of both Mary Daly and spiritual feminist currents: '*Gyn/Ecology* became the bible of lesbian separatism…with awful stories of women as victims of rape, mutilation and murder…and an exhortation to weave webs to solve the world's problems. What better way was there to derail women's fighting potential than by encouraging them to isolate themselves in a world of fairytale solutions?'[80] While Ross' critique came from within the movement, historians of feminism have also marginalised or maligned spiritual feminism as irrational and unimportant to the history of women's liberation.[81] As Michael Saler has discussed, historians more broadly are reluctant to consider the way non-rational elements such as a feeling of 'enchantment' might impact historical events and the lives of everyday people.[82] Rather than dismissing spiritual feminism, historians like Michael Saler and Ruth Lindley invite us to consider why many women felt compelled by the power of the mystical to

[78] Oral history interview with Biff Ward.
[79] My understanding of 'enchantment' is indebted to Michael Saler, *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Michael Saler, '"Clap if you Believe in Sherlock Holmes": Mass Culture and the Re-enchantment of Modernity, c. 1890-c. 1940', *The Historical Journal* 46:3 (2003), 599-622.
[80] Liz Ross quoted in Gisella Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement 1950s-1990s* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996), p. 112.
[81] Lindley, *The Personal Is Political Is Spiritual.*
[82] Saler, "Clap if You Believe in Sherlock Holmes", p. 605.

make huge, planetary change. Perhaps the question is not 'is this idea correct?' but rather 'why does it hold sway at a particular time?'



Figure 7: Cartoon by Ange Stewart-Park, *Girls' Own Newspaper,* November-December 1983.

While the impact spiritual feminism had on 'planetary patriarchy' cannot be assessed by conventional historical methods of cause and effect, spiritually-inspired actions certainly did have a material impact on the space where they took place. Redgold recalled that during the spiral dance at Parliament House in Canberra, some women strapped fairy liquid to their shins under their trousers. She explained 'Fairy liquid is pure superphosphate which makes the green [grass] grow a different colour and so as it dripped down their legs, there's just all these interchanging spirals on the lawn.'[83] Similarly, women also transformed the space of Pine Gap and Greenham Common through 'weaving and spinning' the chain link fence, including with symbols from the repertoire of spiritual feminism such as spiders' webs.[84] At Greenham this included threading the perimeter fence with a giant 4.5 mile long rainbow serpent that was sewn by over two thousand women. [85] Mary Daly herself described this particular action in the 1991 edition of *Gyn/Ecology* as an 'attempt to unweave the prevailing dis-order [of patriarchy].'[86] The use of the rainbow serpent at Greenham Common is important to understand how spiritual feminism made time as well as space and will be discussed below.

'Act Now or Die Later'

While 1980s women's peace camps remade the space of feminism, they also remade feminist time. Global historians have been adept at charting the remaking of space, and their geographic

[83] Oral history interview with Spider Redgold. Fairy liquid is dishwashing liquid.
[84] Jolly, 'We are the Web', p. 196; Bartlett, 'Feminist Protest and Cultural Production'.
[85] This took place in June 1983. Christina Welch, 'The Spirituality of, and at, Greenham Common Peace Camp', *Feminist Theology* 18:2 (2010), 230-248, p. 236.
[86] Mary Daly, 1991 edition of *Gyn/Ecology* quoted in Welch, 'The Spirituality of…', p. 236.

ambition has deftly revealed the porous nature of the nation and charted histories beyond the national. Yet, they have been less attuned to time, treating it as self-evident, rather than exploring the ways that temporalities are determined by power. Global historians have rarely considered the way 'political reorganization…can be understood as temporal reorganization.'[87] Specifically scholars argue that while Australian historians have been at the forefront of charting how space is remade, they argue that for the most part, chronological time remains undisturbed in the writing of Australian history; it begins with Indigenous pre-contact and concludes with the present.[88]

Pine Gap Peace Camp was deeply infused with clashing temporalities. Organisers of the camp carried with them a sense of urgency due to the intensification of nuclear weapons development. Laurie, a member of Sydney group Women's Action Against Global Violence wrote in *Girls' Own Newspaper*: 'while we have been faced with horrendous levels of violence since the recording of western history, men have now escalated their capacity to destroy to such a degree that hope for future life on earth is now very tentative.'[89] This sense that the world was teetering on the brink of an apocalypse also manifested through the dreams that women were having. As Margaretta Jolly has explored, British women in the peace movement often experienced dreams filled with the tropes of nuclear war. Women dreamt of bright light, walking with children through poisoned, wasted landscapes of 'sick fields and waters' and of death of marine life.[90] For Ann Pettitt, one of the founders of Greenham Common Peace Camp Greenham these dreams invaded not just her nights, but her days too. She described having to pull the car off the road while driving during a particularly intrusive and distracting daydream.[91] Lee Rhiannon recalled becoming very concerned about news flashes. She remembered being up in the middle of the night breastfeeding her new baby and worrying that she might see a news flash that nuclear war had broken out, and that everything had changed in a split second. It was this nightmare of annihilation that Laurie writing in *Girls' Own* urged women to act fast against. They must take urgent action, they must come to Pine Gap, they must 'Act Now or Die Later.'[92]

[87] Edelstein, Geroulanos and Wheatley, 'Chronocenosis: An Introduction to Power and Time', p.3.
[88] Clark, Rees and Simmonds, *Transnationalism, Nationalism and Australian History*, p. 3.
[89] Laurie, 'Act Now or Die Later…Pine Gap', *Girls' Own* 12 (August/September 1983), 21.
[90] Margaretta Jolly, 'Nuclear Nights: The Women's Peace Movement and the History of Dreaming', *Women: A Cultural Review* 12:1 (2006) 1-25, pp. 3-4.
[91] Ann Pettitt, *Walking to Greenham*.
[92] Laurie, 'Act Now or Die Later'.

There was a temporal logic to spiritual feminism too, as this sought to restore women's historical cultures of spirituality which had been extinguished by patriarchy. Jane Bullen explained that the idea was that 'there had in the past been goddesses rather than Gods in different cultures […] cultures had not always been patriarchal that they might have been matrilineal, or [they might have] worship[ped] goddesses, you know. They might have [had] women in a different place.'[93] Ruth Lindley discusses the idea of matriarchal pre-history at Greenham through a leaflet which circulated around the camp and stated 'in the beginning God was a woman. Do you remember?'[94] This is also present in the rhyming poem that women at Pine Gap received from women at Greenham Common, which also used rhetorical questions to ask 'Who are the witches? Where do they come from? Maybe your grandmother was one?'[95] Mary Daly too sought to recuperate a goddess tradition, 'for the purposes of feminist worship.'[96] Daly did this through a 'gynocentric method' of etymology which sought to recover the meanings of words which patriarchy had 'hidden, caricatured and stunned but never completely killed.'[97] This method also involved word play, including breaking up of words like 'A-Mazing' to recover (or, as Daly put it 're-cover') alternate, feminist meanings. Daly also reclaimed words such as 'crones,' 'old bats,' 'hags' and 'harpies' that had been used to insult women historically, suggesting that they spoke to traditions of women's spiritual power.[98] Daly saw these as 'clues' to suggest a matriarchal pre-history.[99] Daly's word play really spoke to Spider Redgold: 'She just took this stuff that we all knew, all the double-speak, double-think stuff and wrote it out there. And played with words and was completely outrageous and encouraged us all to be "horrendous hags." […] The alliteration and the poetry of what she wrote was fabulous.'[100] The sense of time embedded in spiritual feminism offered women hope. It suggested that patriarchy was a recent development, rather than the 'natural' order of things and so society might be organised differently in the future. It also constructed a past where women's spirituality flowed unencumbered and where women were treated with respect.

[93] Oral history interview with Jane Bullen.
[94] Lindley, *The Personal Is Political Is Spiritual,* p. 44.
[95] 'Greetings and Messages Sent on [sic] Beautiful Handmade Booklet Sent to Pine Gap Women from Greenham Common', Folder 11: Canberra Women for Survival Greenham Common Papers, Canberra Women for Survival Collection.
[96] Clare Monagle, 'Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology:* Mysticism, Difference and Feminist History*' Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44:2 (2019), 333-353, p. 334
[97] Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 34.
[98] Ibid, p. 15.
[99] Ibid., p. 34.
[100] Oral history interview with Spider Redgold.

Through uncovering this past, it forged a future; it suggested that the matriarchal order of the past may be restored.[101]

It is within this temporal context which sought to restore spiritual traditions that the deepest influence of Australia on Greenham Common can be seen. Somewhat surprisingly, this is the use of the symbol and story of the Rainbow Serpent. As Christina Welch points out, this figure in Aboriginal-Australian mythology is found on the cover of the *Chant Down Greenham Songbook* (see figure eight) and features in other movement material.[102] Certainly, snakes and dragons are present in Greenham material, drawn from Greek Mythology and Minoan Culture.[103] But this snake was also repeatedly and explicitly invoked as the Aboriginal Rainbow Serpent. For example, Anna Reading's song 'Prophet Heavy Heaven,' which she wrote while at Greenham refers to the Aboriginality of the serpent.[104] Reading recalls the transmission of the story of the Rainbow Serpent to Greenham Common women by an older Australian woman and resulted in 'the Rainbow Serpent image being woven into fences, drawn on songbooks and its story became sung.'[105] Reading, writing in remarkably celebratory terms, suggests that the naming of the Greenham gates in rainbow colours itself 'marked the cultural memory of an Australian aboriginal Rainbow Dragon Serpent.'[106] Similarly Chris Knight a British feminist who camped at Greenham Common, wrote in an undated Greenham newsletter that the rainbow 'dragon is stirring from her sleep' allowing 'Australian Aboriginals and the American Indians, together with traditional people and women everywhere [to have] the last word.'[107] The Rainbow Serpent is also referred to by Jez, a Greenham woman, who wrote to Pine Gap women and addressed them as 'the wonderful sisters Helping to save rainbow dreaming for us all.'[108]

[101] Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).
[102] Welch, 'The Spirituality of…', pp. 234, 239.
[103] Feigenbaum, 'From Cyborg Feminism to Drone Feminism', p. 276-278.
[104] Anna Reading and Tamar Katriel, 'Singing for My Life: Memory, Non-Violence and the Songs of Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp', in *Cultural Memories of Nonviolent Struggles: Powerful Times*, eds. Anna Reading and Tamar Katriel (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2015), 147-65, p. 149.
[105] Ibid., p. 157.
[106] Ibid., p. 149. Aboriginal is uncapitalized in the original.
[107] Chris Knight quoted in Welch, 'The Spirituality of…' pp. 234-5.
[108] Jez in Greetings and 'Messages Sent on [sic] Beautiful Handmade Booklet Sent to Pine Gap Women from Greenham Common', Folder 11: Canberra Women for Survival Greenham Common Papers.



Figure 8: Cover of *Chant Down Greenham Songbook* reproduced from The Danish Peace Academy http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/greenham.html.

The Rainbow Serpent at Greenham, therefore, served a metonymic purpose. It represented a culture with an ongoing, unbroken spiritual tradition. Women at Greenham used the Rainbow Serpent to retrieve their own lost object of spirituality which they felt had been destroyed by the patriarchy. The medicine wheel made from the Greenham Common perimeter fence and sent to women at Pine Gap served a similar purpose, this was a tradition borrowed from First Nations people in North America. As historian Joy Dixon reveals, spiritual feminists' use of 'Eastern mysticism' has a long tradition. In the late nineteenth century feminists sought to 'uncover' and 'rescue' forms of knowledge that, as they saw it, had been degraded by modernity.[109] This is not to deny that Greenham women's use of the Rainbow Serpent was likely a 'genuine attempt to develop modes of spirituality that embraced diversity and advocated respect for a variety of traditions.'[110] Yet what this amounted to was representing First Nations Australians aesthetically through decontextualized mythology and symbols. Representing Aboriginal women this way has been critiqued by Aboriginal feminists including academic Bronwyn Fredericks. Fredericks writes 'non-Aboriginal feminists attempt to accommodate Aboriginal women through asking us to attend events as guest speakers, to read

[109] Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 11-12.
[110] Dixon, *Divine Feminine,* p. 11.

poetry, to set up displays of artwork or to speak about Aboriginal spirituality. Such practices focus on cultural expression and the perceived exotic elements of Aboriginal culture - and some Aboriginal women call it the "pretty business…"'[111] What this amounts to, as Fredericks writes, is that non-Aboriginal feminists want 'us, but not our opinions.'[112]

There is a temporality to this as Aboriginal women are relegated to 'relics.' Or, in Chris Knight's words, 'are traditional.'[113] This use chimes with Māori anti-nuclear activist Hinewirangi Kohu's insight about the way that Indigenous Pacific culture is 'left…in the natural history section of the museums of the world, alongside the fossils and the dinosaurs,' and that as a result, 'to most people of the world, we…are not real.'[114] Further, the use of the Rainbow Serpent plays a particular role at this women-only peace camp, because it obscures the differences between women along the lines of race and indigeneity. Whether women knew it or not, using the Rainbow Serpent for this purpose allowed white women at Greenham to disavow and be innocent of the role non-Aboriginal women played in the colonisation and genocide enacted on Aboriginal people.[115]As Bidjara and Birri Gubba Juru historian Jackie Huggins and Goenpul professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson have explored, white women did play a significant part in colonisation, everyday racism and domination experienced by Aboriginal people.[116]

The representation of Aboriginality through aesthetics, as a 'relic' of an unbroken spiritual tradition, was not possible at Pine Gap. This was because the camp took place in a complex inter-cultural space where 'Aboriginal desert social and cultural practice encounter[ed]…the full force [of] modernity's excesses.'[117] Biff Ward, who moved to Alice Springs after she had 'fallen in love with the country', described it as 'an incredibly intense town, the racism and

[111] Bronwyn Fredericks, 'Reempowering Ourselves: Australian Aboriginal Women', *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35:3 (2010), 546-550, p. 546.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Knight quoted in Welch, 'The Spirituality of…' pp. 234-5.
[114] Hinewaringi Kohu, 'Foreword' in Zohl dé Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1994), vii.
[115] Jackie Huggins, *Sister Girl: The Writings of Aboriginal Activist and Historian Jackie Huggins* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998); Aileen Moreton Robinson, *Talking Up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000). My understanding of white women's strategies of 'innocensing' is indebted to Terese Jonsson, *Innocent Subjects: Feminism and Whiteness* (London: Pluto Press: 2020).
[116] Ibid.
[117] Mary Edmunds, 'The Northern Territory Intervention and Human Rights: An Anthropological Perspective', *Perspectives* 3 (2010), 4-27, p. 10; Kelham, 'War and Peace', p. 88.

sexism was just in your face all day, every day.'[118] The intensities of the present rested on the recent past which lived (and lives) on in the mind of many Aboriginal people. Ward explained 'There wasn't long since [Aboriginal] people ha[d] been murdered by […] poisoned flagons of wine left in laneways.'[119] Due to the space of Alice Springs and the work that Aboriginal women and women of colour had done to educate white women in the women's liberation movement, negotiations of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations was a significant part of the planning of the camp and the camp itself. Ward explained that there were two white women- Pam Ditton and Jenny Green - who had lived in the town a long time and worked in Aboriginal organisations.'[120] From the beginning Green and Ditton said 'we have to have complete liaison,' which they sought over a process of months. For Ward this was the 'first time I'd ever even heard of […] checking out who owns the land and getting permission. For all the rest of us, this was completely new.'[121] Biff Ward explained in an oral history interview that campers 'religiously observed the request' that they camp on the right side of the road only. This was because '[on] the other side there were big rock formations and a lot of trees […] that was men's sacred site.' Ward remarked that when some of the [Aboriginal] men came out and saw there was all these tiny tents on the right edge of the road […] they actually said 'you can go in a little way, [laughs].'

Compared to the use of the decontextualised Rainbow Serpent at Greenham, there was also significant discussion of the use of symbols by non-Aboriginal women, including the Aboriginal flag associated with the struggle for land rights. Women wrote, 'we particularly want your guidance on the use of the Aboriginal flag and colours, whether you consider white people should display them in support of Aboriginal struggle.[122] There was also genuine conviviality between white and Aboriginal women at Pine Gap. Aboriginal women - both local and non-local - led the initial demonstration and in Meg Kelham's words, 'the huge Aboriginal flag became the effective centrepiece of the protest's visual political message.'[123] Two unnamed Aboriginal women were quoted extensively – including in their own languages – in an article written by Jenny Green and they spoke of this march positively. One offered, 'I think it was a real peaceful march, I was real happy when there was no trouble. It was a real good

[118] Oral history interview with Biff Ward.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Alice Springs Women in Women for Survival, *Pine Gap Handbook*, p. 7.
[123] Kelham, 'War and Peace', p. 81.

march and everybody, the women really liked it…Anybody who missed out on the march, I think they really should have gone along and joined in with the march. There was no anger and no pushing people around…Some of the Aboriginal women of Alice Springs joined in the march for the good of the people here, for our children, for their children.'[124] Some white women noted that the connections formed with Aboriginal people at Pine Gap were the biggest 'positive achievement, personal and political,' of the two weeks.[125] The book of photographs commemorating women's actions at Pine Gap, celebrate the way that women worked across difference and this features many photographs of Aboriginal and white women together, marching, holding hands and sometimes embracing.

We must take caution not to romanticise or wholly celebrate the women's attempts at solidarity present at Pine Gap. It is worth considering that the Pine Gap camp was organised by a feminist movement that many Aboriginal women, including Frances Peters-Little, a Yuwaalaraay Gamilaraay historian and film maker, felt was 'very white and middle class.'[126] During an oral history interview, Peters-Little powerfully expressed the painful realities of this for Aboriginal women, 'white women had shit to work out, and until they work it out amongst themselves they can't really help anyone else because they're in pain. They're bleeding and they bring their blood, and smear it on us, and you know, we don't need that.'[127] In the oral history interviews I conducted, the emotional difficulties of working across the divide between white and First Nations women were palpable. Biff Ward recalled that 'there were a couple of meetings where Aboriginal women wanted to have more talk and […] some of [the talks] got really difficult and angry and ugly.'[128] Many women committed to a women-only politics were challenged by the presence of a male Aboriginal speaker at the demonstration. At the demonstration which had been led by Aboriginal women, speakers included Mum Shirl, an Aboriginal activist from Redfern, along with the unscheduled Shorty O'Neill, an Aboriginal anti-nuclear and land rights activist, who Mum Shirl had invited. According to poet Wendy Poussard, O' Neill was 'heard politely,' but he pushed some feminists' women-only politics to its limit.[129] Long meetings on the presence of men, including Shorty O'Neill but also camera operators and media, raged into the night, and as Jenny Green reflected, 'white women were

[124] Jenny Green, 'Central Australian Aboriginal Women and Pine Gap,' *Chain Reaction: The Magazine of Friends of the Earth* 36 1983, 14.
[125] Judith Rodriguez, 'Foreword' in Poussard, *Outbreak of Peace*, p. v.
[126] Oral history interview with Frances Peters-Little, 23 February, 2021. Zoom.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Oral history interview with Biff Ward.
[129] Poussard, *Outbreak of Peace,* p. 56.

confronted with the question of whether their views about the involvement of men in such actions were applicable to the Aboriginal community.'[130] But as Meg Kelham suggests, there was no singular Aboriginal perspective on the question of women-only spaces. While urban Aboriginal women felt that the women's movement was asking Aboriginal women to 'turn against men and see them as the enemy,' the participation of over one-hundred Pitjantjatjara women in the Pine Gap camp, including providing court support to the arrested women, speaks of a different perspective.[131] Nancy Lynch, who identified as an 'Arrerente woman from Mparntwe-Alice Springs,' suggested in a letter to Women's Action Against Global Violence that 'I'd like to see all the women's getting together…because we are all women's white and black, but we are all women coming together.'[132]

Other times, women's differences manifested as bafflement and so can perhaps also be understood through the framework of 'productive confusion,' proposed in chapter three. Biff Ward discussed the moment where '111 Karen Silkwood's got arrested. The Aboriginal women who…were back in town they were just, "Why would you get arrested?" You know, like, on purpose.' To Ward this represented a 'gulf of life experience.' With hindsight, it is interesting to consider the logo of the network organising the camp, Women for Survival (see figure nine). This featured an Aboriginal woman and a white woman considering the other coolly across an artist's impression of the nuclear landscape of Pine Gap. Likely this logo was intended to express solidarity between white and Aboriginal women, and was an attempt to include Aboriginal women in a movement which had often excluded them. However, this seems to represent 'the trouble between' Aboriginal and white Australian feminists - the lack of trust, anger and suspicion that Aboriginal women felt as well as the bafflement - as much, if not more, than it represents the moments of solidarity that organisers hoped for, and that were present, however fleetingly during the Pine Gap camp.[133]

[130] Green 'Central Australian Aboriginal Women and Pine Gap, p. 14.
[131] Kelham, 'War and Peace,' p. 87.
[132] Nancy Lynch quoted in Kelham, 'War and Peace', p. 86.
[133] The phrase the 'trouble between' is taken from Wini Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

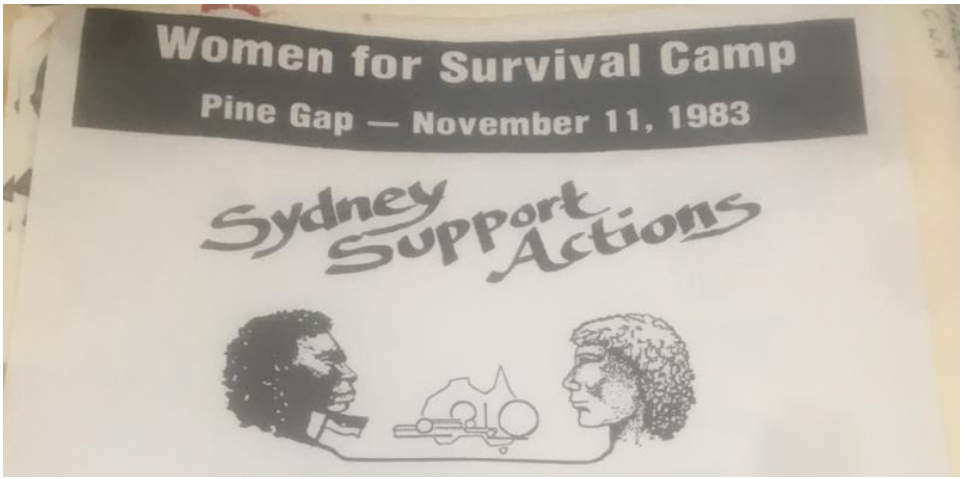


Figure 9: Women for Survival logo featured on 'Women for Survival' leaflet, Jessie Street National Women's Library, Sydney.

'I want you to see your future through me'

In Britain, the sense of time embedded in spiritual feminism which saw Aboriginal people as traditional and representative of the past, was upended by Pacific and Indigenous women who visited Greenham Common women's peace camp at the invitation of Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (WWFNFIP). This was an important network, working across England, Scotland and Wales in support of Indigenous Pacific, Māori and First Nations Australian women who were active around histories of nuclear testing and colonisation in Australia and the Pacific, its ongoing effects and extraction linked to nuclear weapons, such as uranium mining.

WWFNFIP was established at Greenham Common in 1984 by Irish-Australian feminist Zohl dé Ishtar. Before arriving at Greenham, dé Ishtar participated in the anti-nuclear World Bike Ride for Peace in 1982, where she along with a 'bunch of raggle taggle hippies on colourful bicycles' travelled from Australia through Europe, including to Hungary and the former Czechoslovakia at the 'height of the Cold War.'[134] dé Ishtar described arriving in Czechoslovakia 'under machine guns being trained on us […] and [being] treated like kings and queens.' As they toured across Europe they each 'had a story to tell,' carrying them 'on the back of our bikes.' The stories dé Ishtar carried were those of women in the Marshall Islands whose fertility had been affected by nuclear testing and who were giving birth to babies that looked like 'jellyfish.' dé Ishtar remarked that you don't 'hear [this] very much because what

[134] Oral history interview with Zohl dé Ishtar.

mother can bring herself to tell that story.'[135] These stories were originally spread by Marshallese anti-nuclear activists, particularly public health expert Darlene Keju who had direct experience of nuclear weapons testing. Keju brought these stories to global forums including the World Council of Churches.[136]

dé Ishtar lived at Greenham for six years and described it in very positive terms, 'every day' was a 'unique and magnificent adventure.' She lived at Green Gate, which she called 'the lesbian separatist gate,' and herself as 'more of a separatist than the separatists.'[137] While dé Ishtar did feel that Greenham was an important women-only space, and strongly identifies as a lesbian feminist, her sense that she was particularly separatist was not just because of her politics but also because she 'lived out the back […] right there in the trees.' dé Ishtar established WWFNFIP by calling 'not a meeting' but 'a party' on the 1st March 1984, for Bikini Day, the day commemorating the bombing of Bikini Atoll. This was, as dé Ishtar said, a 'big day for women, for First Nations Indigenous Peoples around the Pacific.' In commemoration women at Greenham 'made masks and […] a big banner.'[138] When dé Ishtar reflected on setting up the network she described it as 'so easy because Greenham was full of passionate women doing passionate things. You're not going to be able to stand in front of them and start talking about what was going on in the Pacific without them getting involved.' She also highlighted the global focus of Greenham, suggesting that it was never 'an English women's peace camp, it happened to be a peace camp in England.'[139] Australians like dé Ishtar had a significant impact on British feminists. Bridget Roberts, for example, affectionately described dé Ishtar as a 'mad Australian women who wouldn't shut up about Ebeye, Bikini…Belau,' test sites in the Pacific, as well as Maralinga.[140] Maralinga, on the country of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara people in remote South Australia, was a British nuclear test site between 1956-1963.[141] Roberts said that it was through dé Ishtar that she 'really first heard about the Pacific.'[142] In 1986, Roberts

[135] Ibid.
[136] Giff Johnson, *Don't Ever Whisper: Darlene Keju: Pacific Health Pioneer, Champion for Nuclear Survivors* (Charleston S.C.: CreateSpace, 2013); Darlene Keju 'Speech to World Council of Churches, Vancouver, 1983' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hxCGlA5oJQ [last accessed September 15th, 2022].
[137] Oral history interview with Zohl dé Ishtar.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Bridget Roberts, 'Foreword II', in Zohl dé Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific,* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1994), ix.
[141] See, for example: Chistobel Mattingley, *Maralinga's Long Shadow: Yvonne's Story* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2016); N.A.J. Taylor, 'The Visual Politics of Maralinga: Experiences, (Re)presentations, and Vulnerabilities', *Journal of the History of Biology* 54:1 (2021) 95-106.
[142] Roberts, 'Foreword II', ix.

and dé Ishtar travelled through the Pacific together and stayed for a month with Chailang Palacios, a Chamorro activist from the Northern Mariana Islands.[143]

WWFNFIP organised speaking tours of eighteen Indigenous Pacific and Aboriginal women who addressed women at Greenham and across England, Wales and Scotland about their experience of nuclear testing, from 1985. After staying with Palacios they invited her to Greenham in 1985. Palacios recalled in an oral history interview that she became an activist after she met Darlene Keju while studying at the University of Hawaii. Palacios continued, '[Darlene Keju was] so active and you know, our personalities "click." We have the same major, public health […] we were classmates.'[144] She also recalled finding out about Keju's personal experience of radiation exposure: 'We islanders are very affectionate[…]' and when Palacios was affectionately stroking Keju's arm and back she noticed something was wrong her skin. 'I said "Hey! What happened?" [Her skin] was all kind of very rough.' Keju told Palacios of her experience of nuclear testing, of swimming aged five and being covered in nuclear fall out. Keju told her, too, of babies born with congenital deformities due to nuclear testing. 'She said "Chailang, all the young women…where they put a Bravo, they became pregnant and when they deliver they look like a piece of meat."'[145] While a student, Palacios was employed by Keju and her husband, Giff Johnson, from the US, at the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, Honolulu. She suggested that dé Ishtar and Roberts found her because her name was listed as the Resource Centre contact.

Palacios and Titiwhai Harawira, a Māori activist were two of the first women to visit Greenham. Palacios described the dynamic between them. Harawira was 'feisty[…] Me when I talk […] I would be crying[…] She's like a fighter and I come with my tears.'[146] Palacios felt their different styles gave a 'good balance'. Palacios recalled visiting Greenham Common where it was 'so cold, deep snow in February. We were bundled up like six layers of clothes.' The air force military base was 'just like the movies,' with a huge, tall wire fence.[147] She remembered the dramatic moment when women cut the fence during the night: 'Women with their big pliers cutting and cutting it slowly… slowly.' Suddenly, the soldiers set big lights on

[143] dé Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific,* p. xviii; Oral history with Zohl dé Ishtar.
[144] Oral history interview with Chailang Palacios, January 3rd, 2022.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

the protestors and 'suddenly it was like day time.' These were 'modern experiences, sister, for an island woman.'[148]

Despite Palacios' sense of military modernity at Greenham, First Nations women from the Pacific and Australia disrupted the temporal logics of spiritual feminism which saw Aboriginal women as relics. These women had already experienced the apocalyptic consequences of nuclear testing, that for women at Greenham were the stuff of nightmares which propelled them to act. Titiwhai Harawira suggested 'The urgency we're talking about' is 'not a nuclear war tomorrow, but one we've had for forty years.'[149] This sense that impending apocalypse had already occurred was discussed in the WWFNFIP pamphlet *Pacific Paradise, Nuclear Nightmare*. Darlene Keju similarly stated: 'While the Western world is preparing for the possibility of nuclear war, people in the Pacific are already dying from it.'[150] Palacios also suggested that sometimes when she was addressing audiences across England and Scotland women were sceptical that nuclear testing had already taken place. 'We help them to open their eyes because they're in this cocoon you know, all comfort…They don't even know that their own superpower is putting all their nuclear waste in us.' Harawira suggested the challenge to women in Britain was to understand 'why haven't you known for forty years what's been happening?' Harawira suggested that perhaps British women didn't know because Pacific people were 'far from Europe and America, small in number and Black.'[151] Lijon Eknilang who visited Greenham Common in 1986, spoke from the future directly. Eknilang upended the sense that Pacific and Indigenous women represented the past. 'I have come to share my experience with you because I want you to see your future – what it is going to be – through me. I am living in a contaminated land, with contaminated water. But what is your future going to be if this city will fill with nuclear waste? Where are your children going to live and work? How can you live in the future?'[152] She stated that she didn't 'come all the way here for you to

[148] Ibid.
[149] Women Working For a Nuclear Free Independent Pacific, *Why Haven't You Known?* (Oxford: Green Line, 1987), p.37.
[150] Ibid., p. 5, quote is not attributed but is from article by Darlene Keju and Peta Joyce, 'Radioactive Paradise', *Broadsheet: New Zealand's Feminist Magazine,* April 1982, 10-12, p. 12.
[151] Frances Connelly, Joan Grant, Susie Cohn, Fran Willard (Members of Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific), *Pacific Paradise, Nuclear Nightmare* (London: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) Publications, 1987), p. 1.
[152] Ibid.

cry for me. I'll cry because it hurts me a lot. But I don't want to see the tears in your eyes. I want you to be strong…'[153]

While there is no evidence that women did respond with tears, Pacific women did make a significant impression on British women. It was reported in the WWFNFIP newsletter that one woman was so moved by the speeches that she gave Eknilang her diamond engagement ring as a contribution toward the campaign.[154] Similarly, Judy Norton, a British feminist, wrote in the *Cambridge Women's Liberation* newsletter that after seeing Chailang Palacios and Titiwhai Harawira, her 'consciousness was jolted just as sharply' as when she first understood the reality of the nuclear threat in Britain. [155] She noted that she had not been aware of what Pacific people faced and wondered why not, considering this is, 'an emergency of the most alarming proportions.' She also noted a temporal shift in her thinking that these women had inspired: 'Of course we must continue our fight against nuclear weapons in Europe, but in the full realization that the Pacific region already contains the world's largest military bases. For the Pacific people, nuclear war is already a reality, not just a future possibility.'[156]

As well as surviving nuclearity, and in this way representing the future, visitors also revealed that First Nations women were, in some ways, closer to achieving their aims in their campaigns for peace and against nuclearity than women in the Global North. Lorenza Pedro, who accompanied Lijohn Eknilang, discussed the way that the people of Belau had established the world's first Nuclear Free constitution in 1979, which they were now defending.[157] Similarly, Titiwhai Harawira discussed the way that in New Zealand, the government had adopted a Nuclear Free policy. This was largely because of the work of Māori activists who 'worked…fought…got arrested. We went to prison. We did every damn thing that people say is not acceptable.'[158] Beyond national anti-nuclear legislation, visitors articulated an anti-nuclear vision based on a strategic unity of First Nations people. As historian Tracey Banivanua-Mar has discussed, Pacific people saw nuclear testing in the region as an extension of colonisation and felt that decolonisation and relatedly denuclearisation could only be

[153] Lorenza Pedro and Lijohn Eknilang, 'Speeches by Lorena and Lijohn,' Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, Newsletter: *Be Active for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific,* 1986, p. 6.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Judy Norton, 'International Links- The Pacific' *Cambridge Women's Liberation Newsletter,* May 1985, (n.p.).
[156] Ibid.
[157] Lorenza Pedro in *Why Haven't You Known?* (Oxford: Green Line, 1987), 22-24.
[158] Titiwhai Harawira in *Why Haven't You Known,* 34-37, p. 36.

achieved through the strategic unity of Indigenous people. This was necessary because of regional histories of forced relocation. As Banivanua-Mar writes, this sought to imagine and create Pan-Pacific-First Nations communities beyond the myopic model of the nation state. As Banivanua-Mar writes, this decolonial vision represented 'identity, belief system and thought process,' but also created sovereign communities and seized land back in the context of specific nation states, with the support of other First Nations people.[159] Decolonisation through strategic unity spoke directly to the position of Indigenous populations who were minorities within independent settler colonies and whose sovereignty was (and remains) limited, as is the case with First Nations people in Australia and New Zealand. This vision also spoke to histories of Pacific territories, for example the Marianas Islands, Fiji and East Timor, which were sites of colonisation by both settler colonies and colonial powers, seen as useful links in the chain of empire, mined for resource extraction and used as military bases and for nuclear testing. As populations were subject to genocidal policies including forced relocation in Australia, New Zealand and across the Pacific, decolonisation in the Pacific required a supra-national quality.[160] Uniting a small, diverse and disparate population under the banner of an imagined national communities made up of small geographic territories was not possible, and so a more expansive vision was adopted in the movement against nuclear testing.[161] This 'united Pacific peoples in unprecedented number and contributed to the creation of a shared Pacific identity.'[162] This ultimately resulted the ratification by Pacific leaders of the Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty in 1985.[163]

This particular Pacific politics of anti-nuclearity, decolonisation and First Nations unity is present in the oral testimony, essays and reflections of Pacific women collected by dé Ishtar and Bridget Roberts when they toured the Pacific on behalf of WWFNFIP. As Hilda Halkyard-Harawira a Māori woman wrote, 'Our histories of colonisation match almost exactly those of our Indigenous brothers and sisters throughout the world. We too have suffered from the sham of the treaty process', 'have been subjected to genocide', 'have had to pay dearly for our hospitality.'[164] Moving from a similarity of oppression, to a similar terrain of struggle, Ualaroi

[159] Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 224.
[160] Ibid., pp. 22-24;
[161] Ibid., p.14.
[162] Steven Fisher, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 232.
[163] Anita Smith, 'Colonialism and The Bomb in the Pacific' in *A Fearsome Heritage: Diverse Legacies of The Cold War,* eds. John Schofield and Wayne Cocroft (London and New York: Routledge, 2016) 51- 67, pp.63-64.
[164] Hilda Halkyard-Hirawira quoted in dé Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific,* p.4.

Gamillaroi woman Karen Flick suggested 'Aboriginal people see a connection with the struggles of the Indigenous and oppressed groups in the Pacific.'[165] Similarly, Joan Wingfield told *Spare Rib* magazine that 'we are all going to work together…so we are fighting all together instead of separately.'[166] At Greenham Common, Pacific women passed their experience of working across difference which they forged through a specific Pacific and First Nations decolonial politics on to British women. This sometimes meant challenging them on their racism and the assumptions they made about First Nations women. dé Ishtar talked about travelling around Britain with Titiwhai Harawira in her red Corvette:

'Well, I thought I had dealt with a lot of my racism, but then I know as I sit here, there is a lifetime of racism to unpack. But wow, did I have a growing up and it was wonderful, painful and spectacular. I was surrounded by women who with their gentleness and forthrightness[…] depending on how you look at it […] just grew me up […] and gave me a place to be on this planet.'[167]

This chapter has considered the ways that space and time were present, made and remade, at the global women's peace camps of the 1980s. I have considered the way that women's peace camps reworked the spaces of feminism; as women agitated beyond national concerns and both sought and gifted global inspiration. The legacies of Pine Gap women's peace camp also played out spatially. As Lee Rhiannon and Biff Ward suggested, many women who went to Pine Gap remained in Alice Springs afterward, which is why it is now known, in Ward's words, as the 'lesbian capital' of Australia.[168] Pine Gap, said Rhiannon, had 'such a dramatic turn on [some women's] lives' that 'some women never went home.'[169] In my treatment of the global women's anti-nuclear movement, I have answered the call that historians think about time as well as space. This chapter has interrogated both the way that women active in women's peace camps in the Global North were propelled by a sense of urgency and the way that, in some spiritual feminist discourses, Indigenous women represented an unbroken spiritual past. It has considered the visits by Australian Aboriginal and Pacific women to Greenham Common, and

[165] Karen Flick quoted in dé Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific,* p. 8.
[166] Joan Wingfield interview with Joan Grant, 'Australian Apartheid: Nothing to Celebrate', *Spare Rib,* 191 (1988), 22-24, p. 24.
[167] Oral history interview with Zohl dé Ishtar.
[168] Oral history interview with Biff Ward.
[169] Oral history interview with Lee Rhiannon.

revealed that the sense and Indigenous women who asserted themselves as the future, in terms of nuclear experience and organising.

Conclusion

This dissertation of time present in spiritual feminism was directly upended by Pacific has provided a global history of the Australian women's liberation movement, across the years 1968-1985. It has mounted a challenge to the orthodox way that Australian feminism is usually historicised and shown that the national lens cannot adequately capture the history of this movement. The five chapters have explored the ways that global texts and tactics from elsewhere, as well as movements of people, through visits and migration patterns, were essential to making the Australian women's liberation movement the social movement that it was, with all its successes, rambunctious creativity, difficult and challenging moments, and surprises.

I opened with a recitation of the standard history of the Australian women's liberation movement, against which my thesis has spoken. To recap, historians of this important social movement have largely bound women's liberation to the nation, and constructed this as its primary theatre. This has highlighted the claims Australian feminists have made on the state, for example through law reform or through demands for funding for services. This conventional history also discusses how actors in the Australian women's liberation movement worked in alliance with government. It celebrates how feminists became 'femocrats' and significantly reformed the state from within to make it more woman-friendly. This story also suggests that while many members of the Australian women's liberation movement developed their politics and skills as activists in the movement against the Vietnam War, the key role that the anti-war movement played in the women's liberation movement was to make women aware of male chauvinism in the left. As women became feminists, they allegedly turned away from the global terrain and began to organise to remake the nation, their lives, themselves and their relationships. In the typical history, scholars are often critical of the whiteness of the movement, its race politics and racism. But the rich histories of women of colour feminists organising on their own terms often go untold, as these women are usually cast as correctors or critics of white women's racism.

The history I have written across the last two hundred pages tells a different story. It demonstrates how, when actors in the Australian women's liberation movement sought to make

claims on the state, these campaigns were infused with and connected to global events and politics. While the movement for women's health is usually seen as a movement which demanded funding for feminist health services from the Australian state, I demonstrated the importance of communist internationalism to this movement.[1] Women who were dedicated to communist politics, and members of transnational communist organisations had a significant impact on the later women's health movement, particularly on campaigns for natural childbirth. I also showed how migrant women with connections to the Italian Communist Party developed WICH, an organisation focused on the sexual health of migrant women. These women brought the politics of organised labour to this organisation and foregrounded women's experience as workers.

Similarly, as women sought to change reproductive policies such as abortion and forced sterilisation at the state and national level, I showed how these campaigns were reliant on transnational legal tools. Women paraded legislation from France, the US and Britain which decriminalised abortion, encouraging the Australian government to change their laws. Women also used unofficial legal instruments such as international people's tribunals which revealed the limits of justice under the law. While feminists did make claims on the state, they also fought directly on the global terrain as the feminist campaign against the world-wide threat of nuclear weapons in the 1980s shows in chapter five.

Australian feminists also sought to reform the state from within. Feminists who became femocrats have largely been seen as agents of change in the standard history. But within the movement, it was hotly debated whether women should work within the state, particularly around questions of whether individual women could represent the movement and maintain their agency, and whether the state could be reformed along feminist lines. By taking these intra-movement debates seriously and placing this movement globally, I have made visible the shared realities faced by state feminists in both liberal democratic Australia and communist China and Vietnam. While states were certainly different across liberal democratic and communist world systems, women's agency was similarly limited by pressures of state participation.

[1] The classic story of the Australian women's health movement is told in Gwendolyn Gray Jamieson, *Reaching for Health: The Australian Women's Health Movement and Public Policy* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2012) pp. 29, 79-80. See also, Joyce Stevens, *Healing Women: A History of the Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre* (Sydney: First Ten Years History Publishing Project, 1995).

Moreover, these celebratory histories of Australian state feminism have, wittingly or not, cast the liberal democratic state as reformable and low key. I question this idea of the state that is embedded in these histories. I reveal that feminist infrastructure funded by the state was subject to the conditions and bureaucracy of the state. I also found that state feminism in Australia was entangled with nationalism. While Whitlam's 'new nationalism' was non-jingoistic, it was still, like all forms of nationalism, based on exclusions.[2] The jokes at the 'Women and Politics' conference reveal which women were included in the idea of the woman-friendly state and reveal that lesbian and First Nations women were not included. Certainly Whitlam achieved much for women, but, I have asked, which women?

This dissertation has shown that the role the Vietnam War played in the Australian women's liberation movement was more long lasting and significant than how it is has been historicised. Women are usually thought to have discarded the cause of Vietnam in order to transform themselves. But I have shown, women maintained a conscious awareness of women's role in Vietnam, though this differed depending on the kind of feminists women were. Some Australian feminists saw Vietnamese women as 'sisters' based on the assumption that women all over the world shared a similar experience of patriarchy. For socialist feminists, Vietnam, like China, was seen as a woman-friendly communist utopia. Women certainly saw what they wanted to see in Vietnamese and Chinese women.

As I have shown, the reach of China extended beyond the imagination of socialist feminists. Maoism played a significant role in the women's liberation movement through the intellectual technique of consciousness raising, seen as *the* technique of women's liberation, understood and even criticised, as being ultimately about transformation of the individual self, its aims far from and perhaps even counterposed to global politics. But, even women's own individual transformation through CR was influenced by global politics: this technique was based on Maoist techniques of speaking bitterness.

[2] On nationalism and its exclusions see, for example: Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler, Nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities* (Cambridge, M.A. and London: Harvard University Press, 2020).

Placing the movement globally has highlighted the role of non-Anglo feminists in the women's liberation movement and intervened in the standard way that women of colour are cast in the history. Women of colour did criticise the racism, whiteness and race politics of the women's liberation movement, but that is not all they did. Across these pages I have highlighted the way that women of colour were active in their own communities on their own terms, for the cause of gender justice. Often, as we have seen, women of colour used global forums and transnational networks to extend their important feminist work.

Throughout the process of researching and writing this dissertation, I have come across a great many transnational connections which could be traced and amplified. Indeed, the methodology of global historians is often described as tracking connectedness and exchange. However, global historians must do more than bring ever more connections to light, which as Sebastian Conrad contends, are almost limitless.[3] As I discussed in the introduction, to assess whether evidence of a global exchange or connection was meaningful, I used two criteria. First, I assessed whether connections impacted the broader movement deeply at the time. I also asked whether tracing a certain exchange would remake our understanding of the history of Australian women's liberation. It is my hope that the method I employed to select global connections will be useful to other historians of global feminism, and to global historians more broadly. Considering the number of global exchanges, entanglements and connections, it is impossible to be completist about the project of global history. Self-conscious awareness of why certain global moments are selected over others seems paramount.

Even by my own criteria, there were many stories that fell beyond the confines of this thesis. Perhaps most obviously this research could be extended to take in other cities in Australia including, as I had initially intended, Perth, Western Australia. The small amount of archival material that I was able to access from the Murdoch University Archive in Perth reveals a vibrant movement, with a particularly rich culture of women's radio. Perth was host to the Lesparr Library, a lesbian-feminist lending library founded by Karin Hoffman, a German-born Australian feminist. From the collection of this library, I accessed a hand printed catalogue of feminist recordings decorated with drawings of women playing music. This catalogue detailed holdings for the complete recordings of 'Out of the Gilded Cage,' Perth's feminist radio show which aired on 6NR from 1976-1980. This catalogue lists many intriguing-sounding

[3] Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 68.

programmes produced by different women's liberation groups including 'Aboriginal and Italian Families In Australia' and 'Death- from a womin's understanding.'[4] There is a section titled 'womin/women in/from other places' including 'Iranian women,' recorded in 1977, two years before the Iranian revolution.[5]

Yuwaalaraay Gamilaraay historian and film maker Frances Peters-Little also discussed the importance of Radio Redfern to the local Aboriginal community during our interview. Peters-Little got her start in community radio through interning at the commercial broadcaster Triple M: 'It was very whiz bang and you know high rise of Bondi Junction, glitzy and glamoury […]and I thought "radio is really interesting but I don't think I'm into this sort of thing."'[6] Peters-Little became involved in establishing a community radio station in Sydney's Redfern suburb, an urban hub for the Aboriginal community. 'I loved it, I immediately loved it. I'd have thought, you know, I'm playing all these records. And I'm talking and talking which, you know, I like to. I knew that I was sharing information in the community with people who wanted to hear something alternative.'[7] Peters-Little, daughter of Yorta Yorta country musician Jimmy Little, 'enjoyed playing Aboriginal music and talking about Aboriginal issues.' She eventually hosted the Aboriginal Women's Programme, where she interviewed women live: 'I'd have a lot of women coming in, I wanted to get women in there that, you know, would be sort of not having a voice anywhere else in the community, women who, you know, had issues with domestic violence, or you know, women who had sexual abuse problems. You know, gay, lesbian you know, where that voice was very, sort of quiet and hidden.' Peters-Little recalled that at that time these things were not discussed openly, either in the Aboriginal community or by Aboriginal people in white Australian society, because of the endemic racism that Aboriginal people faced. Peters-Little explained: 'we can be attacked just on the mere physical appearance of being Aboriginal. So the last thing you want to do is bring more attention to yourself and your issues.' However, 'we ploughed on. It was really good that[…]it became more and more acceptable.'[8]

[4] *Feminist Recordings Collection*, p. 101, 103, Murdoch University LGBTQI & Women's Studies Collections, Gay and Lesbian Archives Western Australia (GALAWA).
[5] Ibid., p. 107
[6] Oral history interview with Frances Peters-Little, 23 February, 2021, on Zoom.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

As I described in the introduction, women often discussed specific feminist spaces and places in detail. While this project placed primary focus on crystalising the global history of Australian women's liberation and so did not centre the local, this suggests an interesting pathway for future research. As I mentioned in the introduction, Black feminists discussed the importance of Redfern for the Black feminist movement in Australia. Frances Peters-Little described the 'studio' Radio Redfern broadcast from: 'There was a squat in Redfern. And you know, I think a lot of it didn't have floorboards, or it didn't have walls. I mean it was a pretty derelict squat… And so we go into the squat and we'll broadcast out of that[…]And we had a lot of people coming in there, and we were central to it, amongst the Aboriginal Redfern community.' Glebe in Sydney, a location close to the university, was also an important site of feminist organising. Glebe was a working class community and many residents lived in public housing. As Jozefa Sobski discussed, it was because of this mixed geography that Bessie Guthrie, an older Glebe local, became involved in the women's liberation movement. Guthrie did the important work of alerting women in Australia to the dire conditions and abuse in children's welfare institutions, particularly girls' homes, of which one such institution, Bidura, was in Glebe.[9] Guthrie had been collecting evidence about the inhumanity of girls' homes, and her house had become a proto-refuge for girls who had escaped these institutions.[10]

Jozefa Sobski painted the 'totally eccentric, totally bohemian' scene of Gurthrie's house: 'It was more of a cat refuge than a women's refuge actually[…] There was this giant gaping hole in the front room where the tree had fallen and wrecked it […] All the alley cats in the area would gather in the house and she would feed them […] she had a name for every one of them.' Guthrie was a 'non-believer in housework' based on a study she had done in the 1930s about the amount of time women spent dusting and cleaning and concluded 'this was too big a proportion of one's life to spend on such a […]futile, repetitive activity.' It was in Bessie Guthrie's house where the Sydney women's liberation newspaper *MeJane* was laid up, but before the *MeJane* collective installed light boxes, Sobski stressed, 'we've got to clean up, we've got to paint this room and we painted and we cleaned up…but the cats remained.'[11]

[9] Isobelle Barret Meyering, *Feminism and the Making of a Child Rights Revolution: 1969-1979* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2022) pp. 55-56.
[10] Ibid., p. 55.
[11] Oral history interview with Jozefa Sobski, February 2, 2021, on Zoom.

Sometimes spatial transformations were more ephemeral, such as when women took over streets with dramatic street theatre. Lee Rhiannon, a key figure in Pine Gap peace camp, and the daughter of Freda Brown, the president of the WIDF recalled that women dressed in black would play dead under a billowing parachute to raise awareness of the nuclear threat. Women in Industry: Contraception and Health also visited and transformed Melbourne factories during the lunch break. Here, women spoke in their own languages about contraception, industrial and sexual health and so transformed factories into a site of multi-lingual socialising, laughter and empowering knowledge exchange, if only for an hour.

It also became clear during research that many women who were involved in the women's liberation movement in London were from Australia, this is a thread that could be picked up and followed in future research. Such women included Jewish-Australian feminist Lynne Segal, Marsha Rowe of *Spare Rib* Magazine and Carmen Callil who founded Virago Press, a feminist publisher, as well as Germaine Greer. I discussed this with Lynne Segal in our oral history interview. She suggested that when she moved to London in the late 1960s, she 'wouldn't have thought of going anywhere else.' Segal described the 'cultural cringe' that was present in Australia in the late 1960s, in her words 'what people call the "great Australian crawl" of thinking ourselves as sort of second-rate Europeans […] despite the fact that we were so close to Asia.'[12] I asked her why women from Australia were able to find success in the British women's liberation movement. She said that she and Marsha Rowe had 'wondered about that too' and expressed interest in the question. She mused over her answers but was not being satisfied with them, deeming them 'too speculative.'[13] Future research seems necessary. Perhaps Australian women understand less of the nuances and rigidities of the British class system. However, most of the women who came to Britain and who were active in the women's liberation movement were white. This meant that their misunderstanding or even open contempt for the British class system was perceived as confident, cheeky and charming, rather than rude or aggressive.[14] This research might draw on the extensive work that has been done on *Spare Rib* magazine and Virago Press and correspondence between Germaine Greer, Marsha Rowe and Carmen Callil held in the extensive Greer archive at the University of

[12] Oral history interview with Lynne Segal, October 7th 2019, in person.
[13] Ibid.
[14] See, for example: Elizabeth Kleinhenz, *Germaine: The Life of Germaine Greer* (Sydney: Penguin, 2018), pp. 293-324 [ebook].

Melbourne.[15] It also seems crucial to ask how Australian women narrated their own experiences of London; to do this historians might draw on oral history interviews with Carmen Callil and Marsha Rowe held at the British Library.

It is clear from this dissertation that International Women's Year, 1975, called by the United Nations, impacted significantly on the Australian women's liberation movement. During this year, three key global events that this dissertation has explored took place; The Australian women's liberation movement hosted the delegation from Vietnam, Gisèle Halimi visited from France to discuss her role in the Bobigny Trial, and the 'Women and Politics' Conference took place in Canberra. This reveals the impactful nature of the UN as a global body on Australian women's liberation. Future research might, in turn, trace the impact of Australia on the UN. As political scientists including Johanna Kantola, Judith Squires and Marian Sawer have suggested, Australia developed a global reputation 'as a pioneer in state feminism.'[16] Its woman- friendly state was used as a model by the UN to encourage member nations to develop feminist infrastructure at the governmental level.[17] Historians might do the work of tracing the intricacies of how this came about. Future research might ask how Australia's leading role in the development of state feminism intersected with other global events including the end of the Cold War and the rise of neo-liberalism.

Individual Australian feminists also made an impact at the level of the United Nations. Scholars have traced how the first 'femocrat', Women's Advisor to the Prime Minister Elizabeth Reid, proposed an understanding of sexism drawn from the women's liberation movement to the UN Conference on the Status of Women in Mexico, 1975.[18] At the UN, Reid also globalised the insight that government policy initiatives were not gender neutral and encouraged the

[15]On *Spare Rib* see, for example, Business of Women's Words, The *Spare Rib* map, https://www.bl.uk/spare-rib/map [last accessed October 1, 2022]; Melanie Waters, '"Yours in Struggle": Bad Feelings and Revolutionary Politics in Spare Rib' *Women: A Cultural Review* 27: 4 (2016), 446-465; Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Business *Praxis* and *Spare Rib* Magazine', *Women: A Cultural Review,* 32: 3-4 (2021), 248-271; Joanne Hollows, '*Spare Rib,* Second-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Consumption', *Feminist Media Studies* (2013) 13:2, 268-287; On Virago see, for example: Catherine Riley, *The Virago Story: Assessing the Impact of a Feminist Publishing Phenomenon* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018). Letters from Marsha Rowe to Germaine Greer held in: 'Early Years Academic, Performance, Writing and Personal Papers at 2014.0044', Letters to Carmen Callil to Greer held in Correspondence with Publishers 2014.0052, Germaine Greer special collection, University of Melbourne.

[16] Johanna Kantola and Judith Squires, 'From State Feminism to Market Feminism' *International Political Science Review,* 33:4 (2012) 382-400, p. 391.

[17] Sawer, 'The Death of the Femocrat', p. 21.

[18] Jocelyn Olcott, *International Women's Year: The Greatest Consciousness-Raising Event in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 123-4. Jon Piccini, '"Women are a colonised sex": Elizabeth Reid, Human Rights and International Women's Year 1975', *Australian Historical Studies* 49:2 (2018) 307-323.

development of feminist infrastructure at the national level.[19] But, after the events of International Women's Year and Elizabeth Reid's resignation, no history has been written about what she did next. In fact, Reid went to Iran at the invitation of Reza Shah's cousin, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi. Reid lived in Tehran to develop the UN Asian and Pacific Centre and was in Iran for the revolution of 1979. Scholarship which considers Reid's time in Iran could add to literature about encounters of feminists from the Global North with Iran at the time of the revolution.[20] This would offer a different perspective to scholarship which considers Germaine Greer and Kate Millett's brief encounters with Iran on the cusp of revolution, as Reid stayed for over two years. There is an oral history interview with Reid by the Foundation for Iranian Studies which I have used in regard to the 'Women and Politics' Conference, but her time in Iran is also covered. Reid's papers held at the National Library in Canberra also cover this period.[21]

It is clear too from my oral history interviews that there is research to be done on solidarity between the South African Anti-Apartheid movement, the movement for a free Zimbabwe and the Australian Aboriginal movement for land rights and justice. This would add an important late 20th century perspective to work that Worimi historian John Maynard has done, which reveals the Garveyite roots of the first Aboriginal Australian representative organisation.[22] During my interview with a Zimbabwean-Australian feminist and lifetime activist, we discussed the Aboriginal presence in the protests against the white South African rugby team, the Springboks which she participated in when they toured Australia: 'We invited the Aboriginal boys, my friends, to wear the Springbok jersey and the Springboks were so crazy that the jersey was being worn by a Black person.'[23] Similarly, Ualaroi Gamillaroi feminist and Aboriginal rights activist Barbara Flick recalled attending an anti-apartheid protest in London with 250,000 people. She described how she 'used to sleep on the steps of St. Giles in Fields because the cops couldn't get us there.'[24] She sang a riff from 'Rolihlahla Mandela' in her tuneful voice to convey the mood: 'Free Nelson Mandela/ Freedom is in your hands/ Always

[19] Sawer, 'The Death of the Femocrat', p. 21.
[20] Negar Mottahedeh, *Whisper Tapes: Kate Millett in Iran* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 2019); Nima Naghibi, *Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Western Feminism and Iran* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Rachel Buchanan, 'The Iran Album (1974): Some Sleeve Notes', *Archivaria* 85 (2018), 124-154.
[21] Elizabeth Reid oral history interview with Mumtaz Afkhami, Foundation for Iranian Studies, April 14, 1988.
[22] John Maynard, '"In the interests of our people": The Political Influence of Garveyism on the rise of Australian Aboriginal political activism', *Aboriginal History* 29 (2005), 1-22.
[23] Oral history Interview on February 10th, 2022, on Zoom. This source is kept anonymous.
[24] Oral history interview with Barbara Flick, June 23rd, 2022, on Zoom.

say away with slavery/ In this land of Africa.'[25] She also showed me the photo of her later meeting Nelson Mandela when he came to Australia. As I have shown in chapter five, Aboriginal people are often considered traditional, rather than modern, and rooted, rather than cosmopolitan. But work which considers the global pathways of their activism, such as *Indigenous London* (2016) by Coll Thrush, reveals how First Nations people reshaped the heart of empire. Thrush reveals that their presence in London was not strange, uncommon or improbable, it is just that the history has, until recently, been written that way.[26]

It is my hope that those involved in contemporary movements for gender justice might also make use of the history that I have written, though I am aware that I may need to continue my commitment to public history writing for the findings to reach them. Caution must be taken if we are to offer a history that is useful to the present. Recent work, including an issue of *Modern Intellectual History,* suggests that if this is done carelessly, we risk sacrificing both the past and the present.[27] We would sacrifice the past if we were to go looking for historical feminists based on our contemporary understanding of what constitutes 'a feminist.' This is because, as Quentin Skinner discussed recently, the way that concepts used to be understood differs greatly from our current way of thinking about and with them.[28] Moreover, as Faisal Devji argues, if we seek to do histories of the present, can the present ever be new? How might the present ever rupture with the past if our method of understanding it stresses the continuity between the two?[29]

Whether historians offer insights or not, contemporary feminist activism and theory *already* rests on a sense of feminist history. From my perspective and location, the movement is characterised by two deep fissures; the first is the debate over the authenticity of transgender women-as-women and the second is a debate about 'white feminism,' a feminism based on the subjectivity and priorities of white women, even as it renders this whiteness invisible. Both of these debates are based on understandings of feminist history which often lack nuance and are sometimes patently false. The idea that transwomen are not women is based on the idea that

[25] Ibid.
[26] Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2016).
[27] Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, 'Introduction: Whose Present? Whose History?' *Modern Intellectual History,* First View, (2022), pp. 1-12.
[28] Filip Biały, 'Freedom, silent power and the role of an historian in the digital age—Interview with Quentin Skinner', *History of European Ideas* (2022), 1-8, p. 4.
[29] Faisal Devji, 'Losing the Present to History', *Modern Intellectual History,* First View, (2022), pp. 1-9.

these women have historically been violent, particularly sexually violent, to cis-gendered women and tried to take over women's spaces and that cis and trans women's demands are, and have always been, incompatible. These ideas are being challenged by scholars such as D-M Withers, Rebecca Hickman, Fleur McInnes, and journalists such as Shon Faye.[30] This scholarship offers alternative histories which consider transgender women's experience in the British women's liberation movement, and trace an alternate genealogy of political thought generated from women's liberation that is trans inclusive. Similarly, contemporary theoretical work which warns against 'white feminism' often rests on a history of the women's liberation movement characterised by the exclusion of women of colour.[31] While this is certainly not incorrect, it is blinkered. These volumes do not explore the alternate history for gender justice by those who have been marginalised within feminism, which I have offered here. I have charted the activism for gender justice of women from the Global South, First Nations women, communist women, migrants and women of colour. I have shown the limits of histories which include women of colour only when they critique white women in Australia.

The alternative history of activism and conceptual understandings forged by women who have been marginalised within feminist movements and in the history of feminism can help us in the present. This is not because our understanding of political concepts such as 'gender', 'freedom' or 'solidarity' are exactly the same as those women who fill these pages, nor because they offer a perfect model, but precisely *because* their understanding is different to ours. We might ask whether their differing understanding of concepts and methods of action, including those that were previously discarded, might be more useful than our own and whether these may help us to make headway in some of the seemingly intractable debates in contemporary feminism.[32] At the very least, feminist history by way of its *dissimilarity* with our current forms of action and understanding, reveal to us that change is possible.

Finally, the existential planetary crises of climate change and ecological breakdown formed the backdrop to this thesis. My work was disrupted physically and emotionally by smoke from

[30] Fleur McInnes, forthcoming PhD dissertation, University of Oxford; D-M Withers, 'Laboratories of gender: Women's Liberation and the Transfeminist Present', *Radical Philosophy* 2:04 (2019), 3-8; Rebecca Hickman, 'What is "Trans History" Anyway?: Historiographical Theory and Practice in a Flourishing Field', *Midlands Historical Review* 5 (2021) 1-28, pp. 6-7; Shon Faye, *The Transgender Issue: An Argument for Justice* (London: Allen Lane, 2021), pp. 224-262.
[31] See for example, Ruby Hamad, *White Tears, Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Colour* (London: Trapeze, 2020); Rafia Zakaria, *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption* (London: Penguin, 2021).
[32] Biały, 'Interview with Quentin Skinner', 1-8.

long and devastating bush fires, extreme weather events including a highly damaging hail storm, very hot summers and a global pandemic. It is now clearer than ever that a just transition requires us to extend our sight lines beyond the nation state, and to consider our existence to be atmospherically and planetarily entangled. As First Nations Australian and Pacific feminists who had experienced the effects of nuclear testing had lessons to offer the feminist anti-nuclear movement, so First Nations women and those in the Global South have lessons to offer us now. It is those in the South that bear the brunt of devastating effects of human-made climate change, despite producing the least emissions. But as Pacific people told world leaders at UN Climate Change Conference, 2021 'We are not drowning, we are fighting.'[33] It is my hope that this global history of the Australian women's liberation movement might offer courage, confidence and examples to all those who know a global feminist perspective is imperative for our survival as a planetary community.

[33] 'World leaders told – "We Are Not Drowning, We Are Fighting"', November 1st, 2021, *Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme*, https://www.sprep.org/news/world-leaders-told-we-are-not-drowning-we-are-fighting [Accessed 1st October 2022].

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