

# Mother knows best



The breastfeeding breaks are to be provided in addition to the standard paid rest breaks and unpaid meal breaks.

The rest and meal breaks can also be used as breastfeeding breaks if this is agreed to by both employer and employee.

## Making arrangements

This shouldn't be costly or complicated.

In most cases it will involve no more than simply making available private space when required and providing access to a refrigerator.

It is appreciated that circumstances will differ according to the operational environment and the employer's resources. All that is required is that arrangements are made that are reasonable and practicable in the circumstances.

## Compliance

Employers may be liable to a penalty imposed by the Employment Relations Authority if they do not make reasonable and practicable arrangements for breastfeeding employees who wish to breastfeed during working hours.

The Authority will also have the power to order employers to comply with their obligations.

## Getting help

The Department of Labour is developing a Code of Practice for employers and this will be available in July 2009.

*Reproduced from the Department of Labour website:  
<http://www.ers.dol.govt.nz/parentalleave/infantfeeding.html>*

From 1 April 2009, all employers will be required to provide facilities and unpaid breaks for employees who wish to breastfeed their infants during working hours.

These provisions come into force as a result of the Employment Relations (Breaks, Infant Feeding, and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2008, passed in September 2008.

The Amendment aims to promote and protect the breast feeding of infants by ensuring that suitable rest breaks and facilities are made available to nursing mothers.

It is anticipated that these provisions will make it easier for nursing mothers to return to either part or full time work.

## Entitlements

Employers are required to provide facilities and breaks for employees who wish to breastfeed (including expressing breast milk), as far as is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances.

The breaks are unpaid unless the employee and employer agree otherwise.

## OTHER CHANGES IN THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS (BREAKS, INFANT FEEDING AND OTHER MATTERS) AMENDMENT ACT 2008

From 1 April 2009, all employers will be also required to provide employees with paid rest breaks and unpaid meal breaks.

The Amendment aims to improve health and safety in workplaces and increase productivity by establishing a minimal standard across all industries.

## Rest and meal breaks — what you're entitled to

Employees will be entitled to the following paid rest breaks and unpaid meal breaks:

☞ one paid 10-minute rest break if their work period is between two and four hours;

☞ one paid 10-minute rest break and one unpaid 30-minute meal break if their work period is between four and six hours;

☞ two paid 10-minute rest breaks and one unpaid 30-minute meal break if their work period is between six and eight hours.

If more than an eight hour period is worked, these requirements automatically extend to cover the additional hours on the same basis.

## Timing of rest and meal breaks

The timing of rest and meal breaks is flexible and can follow any arrangement agreed between employer and employee.

If an agreement can't be reached, the rest and meal breaks should be spread evenly throughout the work period, where reasonable and practicable.

## Additional rest and meal breaks

The Amendment's provisions will establish minimal standards that apply across all industries.

Employers and employees are free to agree to additional entitlements to rest and meal breaks — either paid or unpaid.

The new provisions will not affect existing agreements that provide for additional paid or unpaid rest breaks and meal breaks.

## Legislative exemptions

Where an employee is required to take a rest break under another enactment, that enactment applies instead of the entitlements to rest and meal breaks under the Act. This would include, for example, the Land Transport Rule: Work Time and Logbooks 2007 made under the Land Transport Act 1998.

## Compliance

Employers may be liable to a penalty imposed by the Employment Relations Authority if they do not comply with minimal standards for paid rest breaks and unpaid meal breaks.

The Authority will also have the power to order employers to comply with their obligations.

*Reproduced from the Department of Labour website:  
<http://www.ers.dol.govt.nz/relationships/breaks.html>*

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# TOO feminist?

by Grumpy Shepherdson

This is a phrase that caught me rather by surprise when uttered by one of my brightest female students. She was referring to arguments made about representations of male violence from the feminist writer Jane Caputi (1988). She was expressing her disagreement with Caputi's arguments because they were 'too... feminist, a bit... much.'

When I probed further about why Caputi's work was 'too feminist' there was a bit of an uncomfortable silence from which the response came forth

'Well, she just goes on a bit, it's all a bit out there really.'

Unfortunately it seems that this student was not alone in her feeling that this kind of feminist argument is 'a bit much,' as other female students expressed similar opinions about Caputi's work. (Very briefly: Caputi's work discusses the idea that male sexual murderers are seen as macabre 'heroes' who are celebrated by society, and that this influences police investigations into rape and sexual murder, which in turn perpetuates stereotypes of victims and leads to social control of women to 'behave... or else'.)

So what exactly is it about feminism and feminist arguments that elicit this uncomfortable response, from young women in particular? Why is it that feminism seemingly alienates itself from generation 'Y'?

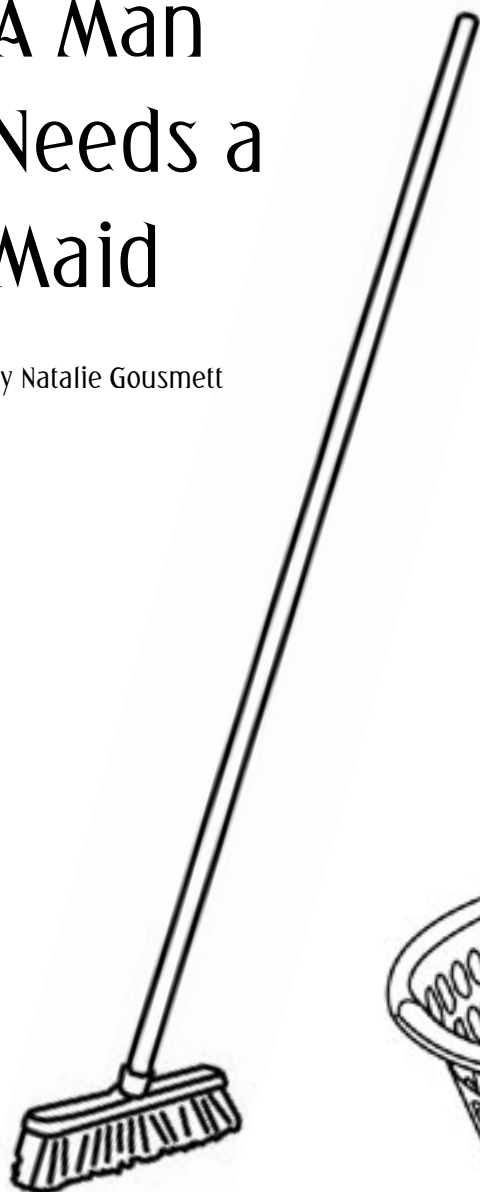
I would hesitate to suggest that it is basically because feminism just isn't sexy. Feminists alas do not have a positive image mainly because of stereotypes about what women should be like and how they should behave. (The old 'what we look like is more important than what we do' issue, which by the way hasn't changed much from where I'm standing). So sticking up for ourselves and others, having an opinion, refusing to put up with harassment and abuse, and heaven forbid working towards equality and respect are just not (apparently) acceptable feminine qualities. Why not? Is it because young women's lives have not yet been impacted on by sexism (as they see it)? Because young men run a mile from feminists (or do they)? Or do young women see feminism as irrelevant in their lives so far? There is an insidious idea that pops up in all manner of places that speaks of feminism in the past tense, implying that the 'war is won', equality has been achieved, so let's just move on and stop harping on about outdated political ideals that (allegedly) mean women can't wear lipstick and high heels.

Well I for one certainly do not agree that feminism is irrelevant in contemporary society but perhaps that is my age (37). As a teenager I remember the 'vicarage rape case' in Britain, in which a 19 year old girl was brutally raped by two burglars. The judge in passing sentence gave the offenders longer prison sentences for burglary than he did for the rape stating that the victim didn't appear to be too upset by what had happened – equality? Yeah right! In New Zealand what about the police officers accused of raping Louise Nicolas – equality? The outcome of this case said to New Zealand society that it is perfectly acceptable for groups of police officers to arrive at vulnerable teenagers flats and engage in group sex by force if necessary, and that this kind of behaviour is fine for those men who are paid to uphold the law in this country. That I find truly frightening and I can only applaud the courage of women who try to fight for justice like Louise did. Unfortunately because of the way society judges women like these, justice is rarely attained and rape remains globally one of the most under reported crimes – equality?

So clearly feminism still has a place in society and needs to be embraced by young women. Be strident, opinionated, and difficult – its normal and its okay! Stand up for your rights and have an opinion – its fun, empowering and sexy! I refuse to water down feminism to make it more palatable to those in society who see it as a 'bit much', to make it less of a challenge for those who feel uncomfortable at the thought of asking for dignity, equality and respect. Ask, demand, and ask why not – after all, what have you got to lose - your self respect?

# A Man Needs a Maid

by Natalie Gousmett

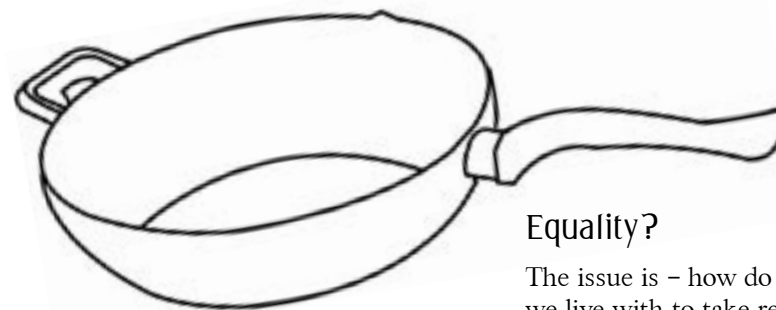


Was Neil Young right when he sang his very heartfelt song – ‘A man needs a maid?’ I would like to be able to say that of course a man doesn’t need a maid or ‘just someone to keep the house clean.’ But I am beginning to wonder – are men and women equally capable of cleaning, washing, cooking and running a household?

Well, of course they are capable; there is no gene that makes women better at domestic chores. But many men grow up to take very little responsibility for such chores. As a feminist, I always vowed that in any flatting situation or relationship things would be equal in every way. But now I see it is not that simple. I know I am one of many, many of my supposedly liberated sisters fighting the ongoing battle to keep the kitchen clean, the hairs out of the drain and the washing pile under control... without having to do it all myself!



SOURCES: (1 and 2) UK 2000 Time Use Survey, Office for National Statistics; (3) Focusing on Women, 2005, Statistics New Zealand; (4) Gender and unpaid work : findings from the Time Use Survey; (5) Hochschild, A. The Second Shift, 2003. Penguin Books.



## Equality?

The issue is – how do we get the men we live with to take responsibility for what is highly important, undervalued and certainly very unglamorous work? I like to think that my partner and I have an equal relationship but I am so tired of harping on about doing the washing, cleaning the bathroom or organising the phone bill – before I have to ask or remind him! He is happy to do something when I ask him and I know he wants to be helpful but its not about ‘helping’ me – it is something we should both have equal responsibility for. I don’t want to have to think of everything that needs doing first, then ask, then remind, then thank him. I hope this doesn’t sound familiar to you but for many of my family and friends I know this is the case.

I believe this issue is a very tricky one to tackle because through their upbringing, the media, their peers and indeed the would-be-martyrs in all of us, men are not taught to take responsibility for this work. This is deeply ingrained in many men. How easy it would be to put our feet down (or, as the case may be, up) and just walk away, leaving them to run the house. But we cannot; as Evelyn Cunningham said ‘women are the only oppressed group in our society that lives in intimate association with their oppressors.’ These are our partners, brothers, sons and friends and most of them we are stuck with!

## The stats

Women still do the majority of the household chores, despite their increased participation in the labour market. In the UK women spend nearly 3 hours a day on average on housework (excluding shopping and childcare) compared to the one hour 40 minutes spent by men<sup>1</sup>. Women also spend more time than men looking after children<sup>2</sup>. In NZ women are more likely than men to contribute to all types of unpaid work<sup>3</sup>, this includes household work, childcare, caring for other dependents and unpaid work outside the home. A statistic that I think sums up the situation quite nicely is ‘of the total hours spent on unpaid work in NZ over a year, \$2.7 billion are done by women and \$1.5 billion by men.’<sup>4</sup>

I don’t think you need a bar graph to see this is a clear inequality. This is a huge feminist issue that has been the subject of many feminist articles, books and discussions. Many of us are well aware of the second shift worked by women – the hours of unpaid work done by women after completing a full day of paid work<sup>5</sup>. But I am not about to detail theories on the second shift or super woman syndrome, or attempt to present analysis of this issue as that has been done before; I want to write about this issue from a personal perspective.

## Top 5 tips for passing on the maid uniform:

Unfortunately I don't have the answer for what is a huge social and feminist issue but I find humour can help. So, here are some not so serious suggestions you may be driven to....

1. Make a secret separate washing basket for all his clothes and watch his face when he realises that the magic fairies haven't ensured he had clean underwear for work.
2. Leave unexpectedly for the weekend and take his wallet so he can't buy takeaways.
3. Pile all his mess on his side of the bed or on top of his beloved computer/car/whatever he loves on a daily basis (yes I have tried this and it does work!).
4. When the toothpaste or toilet paper runs out buy some more for yourself but keep it hidden for your own use – see how long it takes him to work it out.
5. Or I suppose you could try talking about it with him, try to get him to see it from your perspective and work out ways that you can ensure you both contribute to the relationship equally...of course this is not nearly as much fun and often all five tactics are needed in conjunction with each other to get a result!

**I am woman! I am invincible!**  
**I am pooped!**  
(Author Unknown)



It is not just about this being frustrating though. This overwork that women are subject to is running us into the ground. If we are not breaking our backs doing the work we are keeping ourselves awake thinking about it. However much I might joke about it, this is a serious issue. It is about our health, about being valued and about recognition that women's unpaid work keeps the world running. So all you men out there give your partner, mum, sister, flatmate a break and sort yourself out. Housework will not go away and this is your responsibility also.

Good luck with whichever battles you have the energy to fight.

For more reading try:

Hochschild, A. *The Second Shift*, 2003. Penguin Books.

Mainardi, P *The Politics of Housework* in R Morgan (Ed.) *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, 1970. Vintage Books.

Waring, M. *Counting for Nothing: What men value and what women are worth*, 1988. Allen and Unwin.

# I'm not your mother!

## a conversation about how we use our time and the value of unpaid work

by Jenn Jones

**"You're not a real feminist," he said.**

"Look at how much housework you do - the cooking, the cleaning, washing clothes. Second-wave feminists didn't fight the good fight for you to be a doormat. If you were a real feminist, you would assert yourself more."

So I looked at myself, my life, and wondered, where did my assertiveness go? Where did my bulshy second nature, my 'wash your own dirty socks' attitude go? Was it pushed down by the desire to live a 'normal' life (whatever that is), or by an overwhelming necessity (read: compulsion) to make sure things were clean and food was on the table? Could it be that in the hustle and bustle of life I got worn down into routine, or tricked into domestication where my core role and purpose in life is to not only choose what we eat, but buy it, cook it, and wash the dishes we ate off? When did I start believing that domestic servitude equals domestic bliss?

**"You're wrong," I said to him.**

"I am a feminist. The real problem is that you and your mates pay lip service to women's rights and equality and feminism, but continue to expect women to do these chores. I do the cooking, the cleaning, and the washing out of necessity. If I didn't do it, it wouldn't get done. Maybe I have a lower tolerance for dirt, but that doesn't excuse your laziness."

I turned on my heels and left, angry and frustrated. Angry that I needed to defend myself and my feminist beliefs, and frustrated that yet again the blame was being placed on me and my sisters for the failings of society to take responsibility for the change that needed to occur. It's a fact that women do far more unpaid work than men, as well as many working in paid employment full time. And mothers spend even more time than fathers in unpaid work. If you want to get factual, on average women perform 34.5 hours of unpaid work per week which includes housework, child care, food preparation, cleaning clothes for the household, or volunteer work for non-profit organisations. Men on average do 20.3 hours per week. 64% of all unpaid work in New Zealand is performed and completed by women.

Why should women have to keep asking for help with housework? We shouldn't have to shoulder the responsibility, and then be seen as nagging (and feel like it too) when it doesn't happen. Some are lucky and have a partner who is supportive, who takes part in home life and does chores around the house. But is that the result of good role modelling from parents or friends? And how does one measure what "equality" within housework would be?

Equally contradictory is that I want to live in a world where there is equality in housework, but I don't want to be judged as un-feminist if I do decide to wash my partner's socks, or cook his dinner. I think it's the imbalance of work done, not what the work is, which is unfair.

**Equality at home is not just one woman's battle, it's a collective task.**

One where men and women need to recognise that housework is not women's work, and hopefully where the phrase "I'm not your mother," when used by women to explain why they refuse to do the housework, becomes redundant.

# BOOK CLUB RECOMMENDATIONS

## "I KNEW A WOMAN"

BY CORTNEY DAVIS

I Knew a Woman is a beautiful account of experiences of women's bodies, from a writer who is both a poet and a medical professional. Cortney Davis looks at the relationship between women, their bodies, and their medical practitioners; engaging the reader with her sensitive style.

The author shares her own experiences in intimate detail, using personal stories to remind the reader of the vulnerability of the female body, and also of the incredible power it possesses.

She delves into the lives of four women, composites of patients in her practice, and accompanies each of them on a journey – partly medical, largely personal.

The main characters range from a perpetually pregnant junkie to an older woman battling cancer; from a homeless, battered and pregnant 15 year-old to a woman whose past is controlling her sexual relations.

Davis highlights problems existing for females in a medical world that is dominated by men; the male position of power reinforced through inaccessible jargon, procedures, and economic factors. What emerges is a portrait of a system that, on the whole, doesn't seem to want to understand the needs of women.

I read the book when I was unwell, which was both a great way to pass a day in bed, and a reminder that many of us have shared experiences of health and our bodies. This would be a great book to share in a book club or discussion group – my flatmates and I had great talks after we had read the book.

As a woman, this book made me more aware of my body, raising issues that my experiences and education had not. It is a book that addresses the potential for the female body to be exploited, yet also its extraordinary power to protect itself and to reproduce.

Review by Perrine

## "THE VANISHING ACT OF ESME LENNOX"

BY MAGGIE O'FARRELL

Although one of the blurbs on the cover described this book as 'unputdownable' I was still surprised that I devoured it in about three hours or so. This is a fictional account of the lives of two sisters. One told through a voice distracted by Alzheimer's and the other as seen from the confines of an asylum. Weaving it all together is the granddaughter with her complicated, perhaps even scandalous love life.

The tale begins in India, when the sisters are wee sprogs delighting in the life of a colonial family, and spans approximately eight decades. Subtle observations and commentary throughout provides insight into the life of women across generations. Expectations, assumptions, judgments and restrictions placed upon the sisters sharply contrast with the fierce independence of the granddaughter and the freedom she experiences in modern times.

The plot is simple and in fact in real-time the book only covers about a week. But the author, by adding new layers and building depth into the story skillfully hooks the reader with tantalising tidbits and revelations which she deploys matter-of-factly, making them all the more unexpected and enjoyable. I know I was left wanting to read the book again to make sure I didn't miss anything. The characters are believable so the reader connects with them easily, freeing up the author to write about more interesting events. The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox is a light read but it left me thinking about the characters and the decisions they made long afterwards.

Review by Karin Brown

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# One woman and her quest for the perfect shoe...

by Jenn Jones

I haven't bought new shoes in months, years probably. I think it's safe to say I have thrashed my entire collection of shoes, my running shoes, my no sweat trainers, and worst of all my work shoes. I wear them until I can poke my finger through the sole into the shoe, and there is more shoe polish than leather left. I just don't see the point in throwing them out unless I really have to – I mean, shoes are ridiculously pricey these days. Particularly if you don't want to buy (a) sweat shop labour shoes, or, (b) shoes that rub and hurt and give you blisters and then break a week down the track. (Number One Shoe Warehouse – I'm looking at YOU right now!)

I set off on my quest to find new shoes. I thought I should start with work shoes, seeing as they are the ones I spend most of my week in. I should preface this with an explanation of my job – I'm a lawyer. Therefore my shoes must be respectable, probably black, and should say "trust me". I only finished uni recently, and the skate-shoe-wearing student in me is screaming in horror at the thought of what this might entail. So, my main criterion for any shoe is comfort. Plus, a good sole. I walk a lot, so those are key factors in the shoe-choosing process. Of course, they have to be pretty too. But I'm the kind of gal who hates bows and patent leather and diamantes and frilly bits. You know what I'm talking about – basically every shoe in fashion this season. Why can I not find a simple, flat, round-toed comfy shoe???

I have seriously tried every shoe shop within a lunch time walk of Lambton Quay.

One time I even missioned to Cuba Mall, but again, no luck. One thing that has really started to bug me is: the shoes that come close to fitting my criteria often have just one thing wrong – the heel. If I wanted to buy a plain pretty high heeled shoe I could have bought something from every shop. But I don't want a heel. I value my ankles and toes and calf muscles and Achilles' tendons. I like to run, walk, skip, whatever, with ease. I do not wear high heels.

I have friends that swear by their heels – they make them feel sexy, they make them feel more powerful, or they like to feel taller next to their male colleagues. Some think it gives them an edge in the workplace, makes them look sharp and professional. But the pain and embarrassment of learning to walk in them, plus the constant danger of Wellington's brick footpaths are just too much for me to bear. Moreover, I don't need a shoe to feel empowered; to me this is a false construct of a capitalist patriarchal world that watches too much TV. The women on Boston Legal may wear stilettos and have great legs, but most of them end up shagging a partner and losing their chances of promotion. And I don't think I've ever seen Shirley Shmidt, the only female partner, wear heels.

A high heel will not smash the glass ceiling for me, so I don't bother. So for now, I'm off to find a practical working shoe. A shoe that respects my ankles, and that I get respect in whilst wearing. And one that I can wear day in and day out, pain and patriarchy free.

# On the Death of Friendships


by Karin Brown

I recently experienced the death of a friendship. Being friends with her was always, well, work. Life seemed to revolve around her somehow. She is an only child from a financially comfortable family. We bonded over the fact that we had English-speaking backgrounds living in small rural Switzerland. I attended public school with the locals and she went to an international school. We were always very different, but these differences didn't seem to matter when we were young.

Friendship felt like work because of our different expectations of life I suppose. She had an ability to badger people in a charming kind of way. I, on the other hand, am one of those furiously non-committal people who always waits to hear what others have selected from the menu before I make my own decision. Without my own

clear preferences it seemed easier to go with what she wanted. As a result of her knack for self-benefit and her intelligence, her hard working habits and willingness to take risks, she has done very well for herself and survived in the very male-dominated and tumultuous IT sales world. I admire her for that. When I was a newly graduated and unemployed social worker she landed a job with a great salary and eye-popping benefits. She timed the interview for the same time of my graduation. Smart.

Few of my other friends could understand how she and I were friends. Maggie said, you're so different to her. She's family, I responded. That's what friends do, isn't it. Accommodate. Did I mention we became friends at 10 years old? Our mothers vaguely knew each other and once they recognised they had daughters of the same age they orchestrated a meeting. 'Bring your Barbies' her mother probably suggested and she turned up with a couple of Barbies; Ken, a Barbie Ferrari, and the much coveted Barbie Horse. I was intimidated by her nonchalance about 'having' things. My modest collections seemed suddenly less interesting. I worried she wouldn't want to be friends with me. We stayed friends and did typical teenage things together. As we got older and we moved in different circles, she remained my 'other friend,' the one I would commiserate with when we were sick of being foreigners. We loved each other like sisters.



We both moved away. The friendship drifted and shifted. Our longstanding knowledge of each other meant we sought emotional refuge in each other. Long phone calls, occasional visits kept us believing that our friendship was still natural. Now I am not so sure it was.

However, our affection certainly was. I always felt she was demanding but I certainly didn't hold it against her. Maybe she felt I was a pushover; she didn't hold that against me. I know I disagreed with some of her choices but of course I assumed she disagreed with some of mine. I moved again, even further away. Contact became less frequent, our lives diverged more radically, I had children, and her relationship dissolved suddenly and unfairly. She sought refuge, the unconditional support that friendship should provide. Except I didn't. More cynical with life, my opinions were in sharp contrast to her expectations. I was judgemental; harsh and decidedly un-accommodating. There it was. For the first time our different

expectations of friendship reached an impasse and numerous emails later it was clear that we were breaking up. I sought reconciliation which never came. Two years later there was a final and ragged disconnect. Twenty years made no difference and our friendship sank like a stone. Something in me died, she stated matter-of-factly. That's when it died in me too.

20 years of friendship ended unceremoniously. Was it irreparable hurt, or did we just stop fooling ourselves? Did I presume ongoing familiarity and inside knowledge when she wasn't how she used to be, and neither was I? Did she forget that I could disagree and still care for her? Everything is perishable, Eric told me. She felt judged by you, Sharon said. She was always like this, Cathy said. None of it made me feel better. I grieved for her and mourned the death of our friendship like a real fatality. I felt abandoned, perhaps as she did. I felt misunderstood and denied the right to defend my position or even to make amends.

I, perhaps rather bluntly, held a mirror up to her face and in doing so, saw myself reflected. I did judge her and she is right to be pissed off. I held back honesty for a long time, something that I realise now does nobody any good. Part of me has no regrets about my behaviour and I am angry at her stubbornness. But I am also a sore loser and I hate it when people don't like me. I still miss the friendship and her exuberance and crazy ideas. But that's the thing about death. A hole left behind in our hearts

and minds. We have the memories, but we feel robbed of the potential moments that were yet to come, and in a messy and uneven way we grieve for those too.

The funny thing is that for those of us who move around the world our relationships never develop normally. Modern technology like Facebook enables tenuous and thin connections with people who ordinarily would have been lost to us. But this recent experience means I am obsessed with trying to reconnect with people who haven't heard from me in a decade. Do they still like me, I wonder? The bite-size interactions feed perfectly into my insecurities. Of course people will approve me as a friend. I mean, it's not like they really have to talk to me once they've done that. I see the changed faces and remember the people for who they were 10 years ago, with no knowledge of who they are now and no opportunity to resolve the past into the present.

Long-distance, long-term friendships are incredibly stunted. It's so easy to maintain an image of another person that expired long ago, like that canned fruit in the back of my cupboard. Open the cupboard and it looks full but once I clear out the expired stuff I might find myself eating creamed rice for dinner. Why force those old friendships instead of focussing on my current ones, Lisa asked me. It seems like sensible advice, but, for now, I think I might just search for one more ex-boyfriend at the back of the cupboard...

My daughter, Jessica (12yrs) summed it up beautifully in a little story she made up about my life with her Dad. The beginning, the middle and the ending was spot on with symbolism and thoughts.

I have expanded on the theme.

## *Thorn in my side* by Jillian Taylor

One day when I was out walking in a forest (couldn't see the wood for the trees); I stumbled and fell into a gorse bush. I felt this stabbing in my right side and I knew immediately that a thorn had stabbed me.

Not being able to reach it, I said to myself, "I will get it out later, when I have someone who can help me". And I forgot about it.

By the time I got home, I realised that the Thorn didn't feel so bad; it masked the pain that I felt deep inside, it distracted me from having to think about all the worries in my life. So I grew to enjoy this Thorn.

So I thought only about the Thorn and gradually it worked its way deeper and deeper into my body. Sometimes it would hit a muscle and I would become paralysed for awhile, but with physical therapy I would recover. Sometimes it would hit an artery, momentarily stopping the blood from travelling to my brain, and I would have times of wondering if I was going insane.

But, I would tell myself that, "one day, the Thorn will settle, it will be happy;" I was providing a great nesting ground, supporting it.

So for many years the Thorn travelled through my body, for a time resting and enjoying the comfort and warmth. But my Thorn was restless; it would take off again, hitting another tender spot. This went on for 15 years. What I didn't know was that my Thorn was sick and slowly poisoning all of my body.

Six months ago my Thorn hit a major nerve, this time crippling me.  
A critical moment, enough was enough; it was time to start extracting the Thorn.  
Cut it out, squeeze all the puss out.  
I knew this was going to hurt, like any surgical procedure.  
The healing and rehabilitation may take many years, but it will be worth it.  
My Quality of life will improve.  
The Quality of life of those near and dear to me will improve.

So I have arrived Home.

I would like to thank all who have helped me to extract the Thorn in my Side

May we all live in peace, may we all live in harmony, may we all live a free and enlightened life.

Namaste

Fighters,

by Madison (13yrs)

Can a star leave its constellation?

Can a swan leave its flock?

Can a woman leave her expectations behind?

Yes and they did

Never again will they struggle to be heard

Never again will their hard work go unnoticed

It was time to step away from the ironing board

To pull out the sword

And to start a new time

A time where they were happy

Never again will they have to be told that their feeble mind wasn't strong enough

Or so they thought

Honored but not forgotten

Untrue

Right now we forget those who fought,

Our grandmothers and mothers fought for all we have now

And we're going to let advertising throw that all away

Pain and suffering

Going down the drain

Who will be there to make it all alright again?

No one

Because

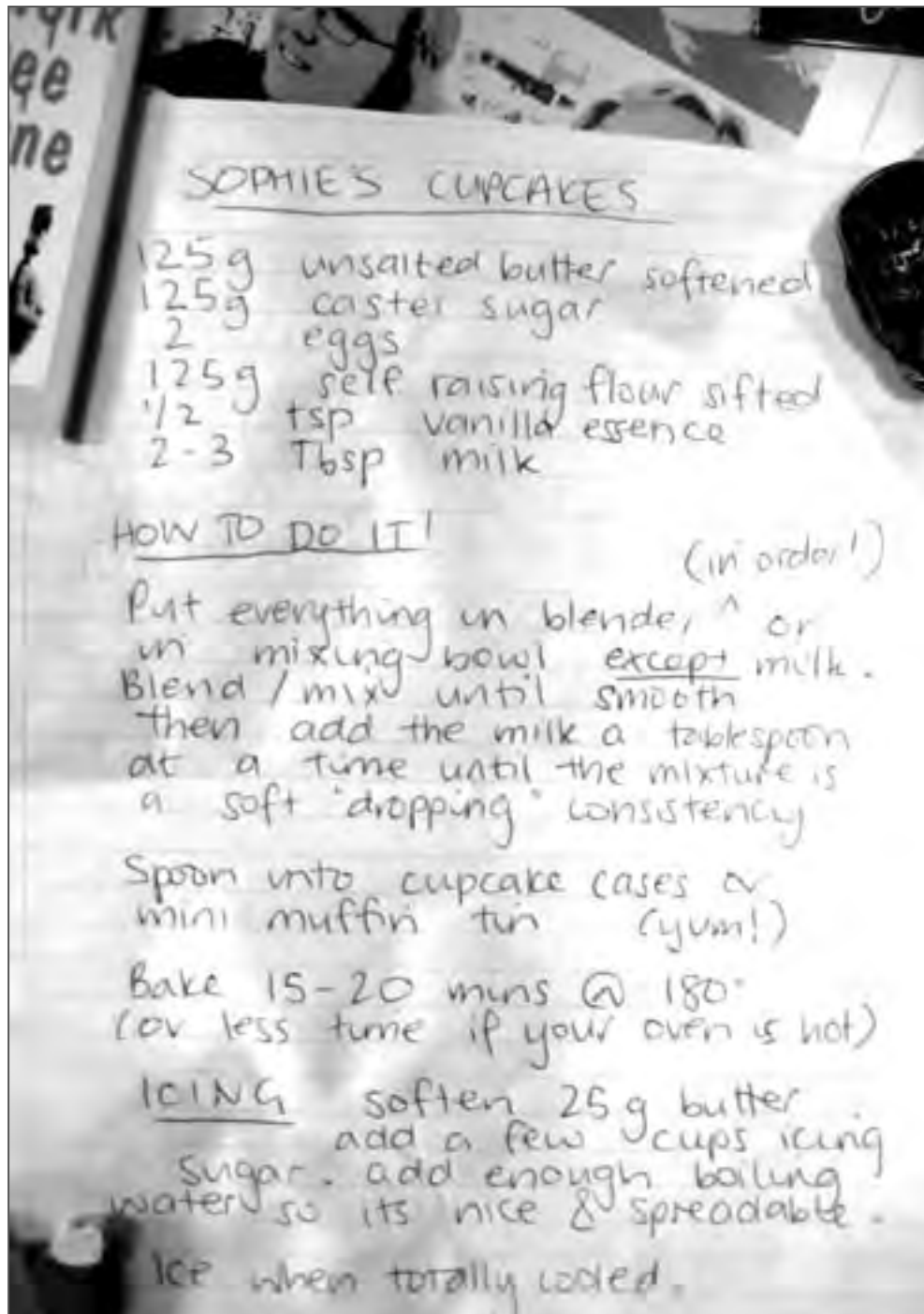
The flower cannot die with pride

Then to be revived again

So

Now it's

Our turn.



# Up the Duff

by Carolyn

I got up the duff by accident when I was 21, single and in my last year at uni. It was the result of an alcohol-fuelled one night stand with a friend of mine after a mutual friend's 21st.

When my pregnancy test came back positive my initial reaction was that it was the end of the world. The dread was crushing. I felt like there was a big icy stone inside me, not a tiny bunch of dividing cells that were forming themselves into a little person. What the hell was I going to do?

Luckily after speaking to my parents (and after they got over the after the initial shock) my mum and I worked out that I would finish my last exams about two weeks before the baby was due. It was cutting it fine but considering there was an excellent chance I would finish my degree before the baby was born, it wasn't the end of the world. One day I would be able to get a good job and support myself and the baby. And after a few days of my maternal instincts kicking in (even though I previously didn't really like babies or children), I realised that I wanted the little bunch of cells inside me. I knew could do it.

However I was in the minority when it came to belief in myself. I was branded by most people with the old-fashioned 'unwed mother' stereotype. People I used to hang out with went cold and gave me funny looks and I soon lost touch with a lot of 'friends'. I got all sorts of comments from people, not all to my face.

I would never get a good job and no man was going to want to 'take me on'. Obviously I was a slut. Nice girls don't have sex. Did you know that? Seriously, nothing makes you madder than other people looking down their noses at you and talking about you behind your back when they are having sex too, its just that they were fortunate enough not to get pregnant and have their private lives made public. For the record, I did use a condom. It has always made me furious having to say that to people, in my defence, given it's none of their business. I didn't know that I had signed my rights to privacy away when I got pregnant without being in a relationship.

The father's life went on as normal. All fingers were pointed at me and I suffered all the consequences. Isn't it funny how when two people make a stupid mistake the male is a stud who got unlucky and the female is a silly slapper with ambitions of becoming a drain on society? Thankfully, the people that mattered most were supportive of me, and that's how I got through a year at uni being single and pregnant -- even though there were a few times I just wanted to pack it in and go home. Eventually I sat my final exams eight and a half months pregnant and went home with my parents, back to The Naki.

Thank god I was living with my parents for a start because the first six weeks or so were very hard yakka. I had NO idea how hard it was going to be. But over time, as my son got older and I got used to being a mum, it got easier. When James was seven months old I met a man. It was a bit of a whirlwind romance and I impulsively moved in with him. I thought he was 'the one,' and that everything was going to be back on track now that I wasn't going to be a single mum anymore. I wouldn't have to get a full-time job and do it all on my own because I had a man to look after us. I was so dumb back then -- and I felt pressure to create a family unit for myself so I wouldn't be a 'solo mum' anymore. But it turned out he was a sexist alcoholic and after the second time he pushed me around - humiliatingly at a party in front of a lot of other people - I left. It had lasted five months. I was really depressed for a while after that. I felt like a loser. Reality set in and I realised I needed to get a job, harden up and stand on my own two feet instead of depending on my parents or a man.



I started working full-time at a gas company when James was only about 15 months old. The job was an entry level one that didn't pay that well but it was a 'foot in the door'. I moved out of home, and it was very hard financially paying rent and full-time childcare. But I enjoyed my work, James was flourishing at the childcare centre and I knew that I had to keep working so that eventually the sacrifice would pay off, even though the guilt I felt at leaving him all day was constant and hard to bear at times. After a year I was promoted and from there things started to get gradually easier although there were lots of times when I felt like I was working myself into the ground but never getting anywhere. I had to live in some shitholes and I was always driving a rust-heap while most people I worked with were getting married and had mortgages and decent cars.

When James was four I met another man. I thought he was good for us because he loved James and we did have a lot of good times. But even though the relationship lasted three years, he was a very traditional, sexist, domineering type who had a gradually worsening drinking problem. He spent all his time trying to wear me down and I spent all mine fighting against him to have some equality in the relationship. Then he started to get violent when he drank. The third time he was violent to me in front of my son, who defended me by hitting him with his light sabre, I finally gave in and let go of the relationship. I've been single for about a year since then. Looking back on that relationship I know I was insane to stay in it and I feel incredibly guilty for putting my son in that situation. But there were lots of positives to it too for both of us, and that's what made it hard to accept that it was wrong. Anyway, we all make mistakes and I've moved on.

Even in today's modern society I still come up against the 'solo mum' stereotype a lot. When people first realise I am a single parent I still get mixed reactions. People are always surprised when I say I work, and men get that look of fear in their eyes like they are being hunted. I get really mad when I regularly read letters to the editor in the local paper which point the finger at 'solo mums' and the breakdown of the family unit for today's problems in society. Apparently we are all lazy with no brains, perfectly happy to live off the taxpayer and never bothering to discipline our children, fostering a generation of criminals and gang members. Funny how the blame is laid at the feet of single mothers and not the absentee fathers. Being a solo parent doesn't make you a bad parent and I am so sick of the way society never gives us credit for such an incredibly hard job, whether you're working or not. My decision to work was a choice, but when is society going to acknowledge solo parenting as a valued and respected role?

I have just resigned from my job working on an oil and gas project for an Australian company, and am about to start a new job for an electricity company. My current job is full of sexist engineers from Australia who often talk to my chest and can't quite get their heads around the fact that I do more than type and make coffee, and are offended when I use the same swear words they do (that's a whole other story), so I am glad to be moving on. My son is a funny, intelligent, well adjusted eight year old who is great company and in my eyes, the most gorgeous creature that ever lived. I also just bought my first house on my own, which I am really stoked about. It's been a really hard slog at times to get to where I am at the moment because I feel I have had to work twice as hard as those with partners, but being able to build a successful career and buy my own house as a thirty year old single mum makes it all worthwhile.

# Pretty please with a cherry on top

Ever heard of Cherry Gemstone? Just ask anyone who knows this twenty-something year old Wellington musician, and you'll be given a myriad of tales. From urban legends of serenading young men at all hours of the morning, to tales of gravity-defying dance moves and an amazing dress sense, you'll find that no two descriptions are the same for this very special musician. But what Cherry is really known and admired for is her work as the front person, singer and guitarist of grunge-rock trio Cherry's Gemstones.

Cherry's musical career kicked off at the age of eight she says, when she was cast as the role of Princess Petunia in her school play. "I had to play this ugly princess called Princess Petunia", laughs Cherry. "All I can really remember is that she blew her nose a lot and sung this song called 'tell yourself you're beautiful'".

Now, all grown up making and performing music full time, Cherry could be seen as somewhat of a female role model in a male dominated rock scene. "Certainly there are more women in the punk scene and fewer women in rock", says Cherry. "We're pretty fucking lucky that a whole lot of women have done a lot of work in the

years preceding mine. So yeah, it is male dominated which is real sad but you know, I don't really believe in being in a scene. I'm not really a 'scenester' myself. Music is so much more to me than that. Like art, it's about life and self expression ... Plus, because I scream [...] onstage the boys are all probably a bit scared of me!"

She used that energy when she took part in the Twin Peaks project, an ambient David Lynch soundtracked styled sonic rock n roll collective comprising of Wellington rock n roll royalty. The group performed in Wellington a few times in 2005 and used a range of unusual instruments (digereedoo) in what otherwise would have been a 'classic' male rock set up. Hence the quiet respect this Wellington musician receives in her hometown. "I think men try and control your instruments and your gear, even guys you know really well", explains Cherry.

Cherry is an educated and well spoken woman with a lot to say about her existence in the world. "Its empowering performing, sometimes as a woman, people don't really expect as much from you. Then, when you start screaming and rocking out they're just like 'whoa! I didn't know chicks could play that hard', that you can show them up sometimes. I mean, you can just feel the female energy onstage when we perform! That's one of our new lines in our songs actually, 'feel the female energy'," she laughs.

She notes that there are now a lot more female musicians in the male dominated Welly music scene, "sisters doing it for themselves", she muses. "It is hard sometimes to be accepted as a band regardless of whether you are male or female. You need to have the knack of showing people how great you really are. Promote your music and believe in what you are doing to survive. At the end of the day you have to continue to create the music that comes from your soul." Cherry also believes that being a female musician

in the industry is tough work, but her advice to all those aspiring female musos is "just be yourself. As long as you are head-strong yet keep your heart and work in well with others you can get through any struggles you face. Yes it is hard being a Woman, but that never stopped me!"

Another area this musician sources inspiration and energy from is her alterego, Cherry Gemstone. She landed the nickname after a cameo role in a friend's short film, cast as the tart with a heart, 'Momma Cherry.' "After the film, people started to call me my character's name," she explains. "When I formed the band I thought 'well why not take it further. Plus I liked the name Cherry Gemstones much better than my real name, both as a stage name and as a new persona. I liked the name Cherry!" Cherry says the alias helps her differentiate from her '9-5 persona,' allowing freedom to create something truly original. "[With a moniker], you can cut off from yourself, get quite intertwined and totally connected to this stage persona", she explains.

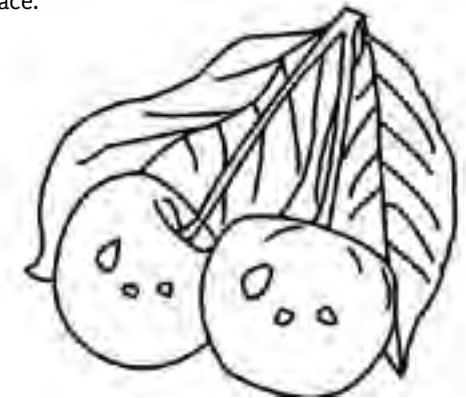
She admits that she isn't entirely role-playing the whole time. "Cherry Gemstone isn't totally different from my other persona - she's the persona the public see, the star", she explains. "But everyone has this other side of them, their personal side, but you almost need to keep some of that sanctity for yourself, for family. I'm kind of like, Cherry's auntie, her partner, her close friend."

Being a musician has had its ups and downs. 2006 was an "amazing" year for Cherry, doing a nationwide tour and opening for New Zealand music month at the Wellington Town Hall with Dejavoodoo and The Bleeders. But the touring was starting to take its toll: "I didn't think I could do it any more, as it was a lot of steam and whistle for no financial reward and one finds it hard creating a continuous dream for its audience." Cherry took a few months out to write songs, and work on

some personal projects like raising money for Women's Refuge. She explained "It was awesome raising money for Women's Refuge. I believe that every one has the right to live free of violence whether it is physical or emotional. It would be ideal if the world was like that. Unfortunately the reality is far from that. It was truly a gift to be able to give my time to raising funds and awareness for Women's Refuge. Kia Kaha, stand strong to all of those hurt and abused."

By the end of 2006 Cherry was ready to get back into the scene again and now Cherry's Gemstones is in full throttle, with a new lineup, a new single and video clip "Triangle Bone Thing", and has done another nationwide tour with Melbourne based Popolice and There She Goes Again.

However, the other side of Cherry knows that if the music-star thing doesn't work out, it won't be without a good fight. She plans to focus solely on the Gemstones for a few more years, after which she plans to tour the world a few times before retiring around 40 years old to start her film career. Or, combine music and film somehow. Either way, she wants to be still singing and writing songs when she is 90. "[Music] is built into you; you get a rush when you play good music, and it can be quite spiritual", she explains. Cherry lovers: watch this space.



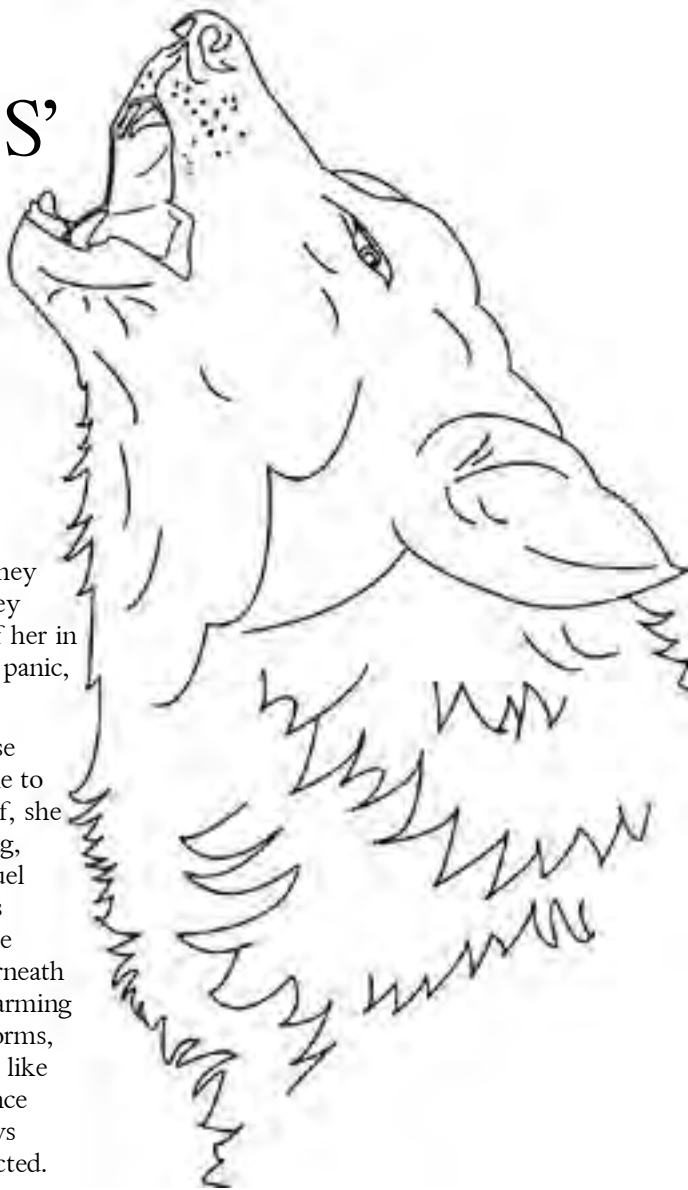
By Rachel Service and Jenn Jones

# LIVING IN THE WOLVES' LAIR

by Tanya Newman

Are men like dogs? Can they smell fear? If they can they would sense it coming off her in waves. Waves of frenzied panic, tainting the air.

All men, or just him? Rose felt sure HE would be able to sniff her out. HE is a wolf, she thought - powerful, strong, calculating, hiding the cruel glint in his eye behind his puppyish exterior. But she knows what HE is. Underneath his easy smile and the charming show he effortlessly performs, HE is cold, sharp, lethal - like jagged glass. His conscience clear, while she will always carry the wounds he inflicted. Each flashback penetrates deeper, the harm he committed so much greater than that night.



He haunts her, orchestrating her dreams and poisoning her mind. Rose rebukes herself daily - if only she had seen through his disguise. But HE is a hunter and she had been his prey. His plaything. Like a helpless, cornered cat, clamped between his jaws - shaken, eaten or released at his will. Reliant on his mercy, she accepted shaking in the hope he would lose interest and spare her life. But what life is this?

All men, or just him? Only last week Rose had secretly plucked a shiny purple pamphlet from a cafe counter that declared, "1:4 young women in Aotearoa New Zealand have experienced rape and/or sexual abuse by the age of 18." Could that be true? The idea appalled, terrified, and excited Rose. It would mean she was not alone, but it would also mean there were others like HIM out there. Wolves who had hurt others like HE had hurt her. More wolves who may choose her as their prey, hunt her, and trap her in their jaws. Rose's brain swam with the statistical sentence and another that read, "the vast majority of rape and sexual abuse is perpetrated by men against women." Rose wondered how she could tell which men were wolves and which were not. She had already been wrong once. Her fear of HIM grew to be fear of HIS kind. Men. Half the human population, impossible to avoid.

Are men like dogs? Can they smell fear? Waves of panic washed over Rose the moment she glimpsed the familiar brown coat. She fought against it, battling her instinct, which told her to make herself small. Rose straightened up from behind a woman and her children, waiting for their bus, in whose shelter she had hidden. She worked at projecting her most confident self. This self was smaller than it had been eight months ago, but it was all she had. Rose pictured this self as the bright green catseye marble she won from the bully-boys when she was nine. Inexpensive, but a precious treasure because it was won from them. Now, holding the marble in her mind's eye, she scanned the people waiting for buses, searching for the coat where she had last seen it. She needed to know. Was it HIM? Had HE seen her? There. The wearer was turned away from her, the coat worn in the same casual, well-fitted, confident way. HIM, she thought, panic rising to a crescendo. Wanting to flee, Rose found herself rooted to the spot. "Move," she told her feet helplessly. "Move!" But her need for certainty overrode her desire to escape. If only she could catch a glimpse of his face. Rose willed the man to turn around. He turned, locked eyes with hers, and gave her his charming, easy smile. She almost smiled back. Her body shook with the relief of his unfamiliar face, but then she caught the glint in the man's eye.

Wolf, Rose thought. Clutching the green marble in her mind's eye, she turned and walked away.

# UK zines a-plenty!

by Natalie Gousmett

## Knockback

I found Knockback to be a witty and satirical take-off of other women's magazines and general popular culture. I may have found it lacking in depth of analysis but it certainly made me laugh. For example, the strapline for issue 1 was 'not for silly bitches on a diet' so you can get the gist that they just go out there and say what they want to say, perhaps without thinking who they might offend. Marie Berry says 'the whole KB ethos is 'if it's not funny, don't do it'. Well, they want to have fun and be funny, that is their aim. I have only read issue 1 and I imagine there will be some growth in the further two issues that have been published so take a look for yourself and see what you think of KB now.

## Uplift!

Uplift! had some interesting and more meaty articles on current feminist issues such as reclaim the night marches and the radical nature of craft. But for me Uplift! took more of a middle ground by being a little less robust than Subtext. In this way I think Uplift! (or at least issue 1 of Uplift!) is more accessible for the new-feminist or non-feminist taking a taster into these politics. There has still only been one issue of Uplift! printed but it has moved more into a web-zine with the intention of more printed issues when time and money allows. There is a growing archive of interesting and topical web articles on the Uplift! site which may be a more accessible option for those of you reading from NZ.

## Subtext

Subtext really packed the most punch with robust analysis and a really wide range of perspectives and topics. It also has the most content in terms of numbers and length of articles. They have recently published issue 5 and I have taken to ordering the new issue every time as it meets what I want out of a feminist zine the most of these three.

I got in contact with some of the women running these zines to get some background and despite their apparent differences I also found a lot of commonalities...

## Getting started

All three started out of their own perception of necessity. Gill from Subtext explained, 'I did it in retaliation to the lack of magazines out there that were interesting for me. Women's magazines are rubbish so I thought, let's just do it.'

Sarah Charms found starting Uplift! a natural progression for her from doing a BA course in 'Visual Communications' and the other zines that she was involved in at that time - 'I was getting more interested in the medium of Magazines. When it came to my final year, and creating my final major, making my own ideal women's magazine was just an obvious step and something I'd been itching to do.'

## Being a feminist magazine

Interestingly, Sarah from Uplift! chose not to brand her zine as feminist because there was a chance that it may scare off those women not 'out' as feminists. Marie Berry of Knockback pointed out that they didn't even call themselves feminist until 'G3 coined it at us' (the Guardian article previously mentioned). Subtext does openly identify as feminist. Despite these differences all three zines show a strong desire to provide an alternative to the 'mainstream women's magazines' and challenge the mainstream depiction of what a woman is or should be.

Sarah Charms says we need feminist magazines because 'At the moment...there is not even a chink of feminist light in any other mainstream women's glossy in this country'. How true!

## Challenges

Many of the challenges faced by the UK zines echo those I know Muse faced when

starting up and continues to face - money and time. Finding funding to print is a massive issue and brings in the dilemmas of whether to accept advertising, whether to charge for your zine and who and where to ask for money. Time is also a huge issue, and trying to find women with enough time and energy to work on the zine, alongside their already busy lives is a constant issue. Gill from Subtext also discussed the challenge of ensuring that the zine is diverse and reflects a wide range of perspectives.

Despite all the hardwork it sounds as if it is all worth it. Gill says the support from Subtext readers is fantastic and it seems there are enough feminist readers to appreciate and support each of these zines.

I may disagree with some of the perspectives in these zines but on the whole I was just stoked to find some alternative discussion and options for summer reading outside of the sickening women's glossies. I am glad they are all doing what they are doing and that they come from different feminist places. In this way new-feminist, longtime-feminists and even anti-feminists may get reading, thinking and discussing.

How fantastic that in a time when feminism is said by many to be dying, that we can have a growing choice of feminist magazines with different styles and perspectives. Let's hope there is more to come.

I would recommend checking them out to see what you think for yourself:

You can find them at:

<http://www.knockback.co.uk/>

<http://www.myspace.com/knockback>

[http://www.myspace.com/Uplift\\_magazine](http://www.myspace.com/Uplift_magazine)

<http://www.upliftmagazine.com/uplift/>

<http://www.subtextmagazine.co.uk/>

Last summer I was working for 3 months in Jersey (a very small British Isle near France) and I found myself looking for stimulating reading material to fill in the summer days at the beach. The most recent issue of Muse had made its way to me but I wanted more. I did some research into what I could get my hands on from the UK and was very excited to find a Guardian e-article discussing the 6 UK feminist magazines that had launched between January and July 2007.

I got online and managed to order myself a copy of Knockback, Uplift! and Subtext. As each one arrived I eagerly unwrapped and read from cover to cover. All three came from different places on the UK feminist spectrum and it was refreshing to get some feminist discussion back in my isolated life on an island. Some of my initial perceptions are below...

# A Woman I Dig: Sinead O'Connor

By Melody Nixon

I dig Sinead O'Connor. She's a bit notorious these days - disrespecting the pope, getting booed off stage, and giving shitty concerts - but she still has a fiery kick-ass spirit that shines through all her work. The journey that Sinead's been on is an astounding one, full of the most incredible self-determination, and very much a "journey" (as clichéd and overused as that term is).

I get such a strong sense from Sinead's music that this is one woman with a deeply rooted sense of self-belief. She's a "front-liner" as Moon Tiger author Penelope Lively might say. That is, someone who really is living to the extent of herself either because she has to, to be fulfilled, or just is that way. Full of conviction. Kind of exactly in the same way Scarlett Johansson is not, in that Johansson seems to end before her work begins. I don't get a sense that Johansson 'the artist' is driving her own career, but rather that she is being driven and sculptured by those around her. Not that I have anything against Ms Scarlett and her external locus of control - she just forms a great point of comparison with the "strong, independent pagan woman" O'Connor.

As she tells it in her song Daddy I'm Fine Ms O'Connor, who later in life came to identify as a Rastafarian, knew at a really young age she was going to be a musician and a cause célèbre: "And I knew I wanted to be a big star / And I told my poor worried father / Said I ain't gonna go to school no more." Born in Dublin, Sinead ran into trouble pretty quickly when the effects of a physically abusive mother took their toll and she started shoplifting and skipping school. At 15 she was put into a reform home, which perhaps contributed to her strong desire for non-

conformity. She eventually escaped school and cruised into Dublin's nightlife district of Temple bar, finding work as a waitress in a pub which still draws on her fame. In 2000 I went there and saw everyone kicking around outside the spot on Temple bar. Her name was still being murmured by tour guides and drunken Irish folk.

Sinead formed a band in Dublin but when her mother was killed tragically she skipped town, moving to London and signing on with a record label. At age 20 she became pregnant to her session drummer but defied pressure from her record company to get an abortion, and produced her first album 7 months pregnant and ready to make her mark as a female rock vocalist. As she says in Daddy I'm Fine she "Wasn't born for no marrying" - rather she's gonna make her "own living singing."

Cut to the next shot and Sinead's in North America, age 23 and onstage getting "sexy underneath the lights" with her "black leather boots" and her "boobs upright." The sheer power of her stage presence and lyrics during this era was totally absorbing. In the following years various tracks of hers made their mark internationally. In true keeping with her unconventional values however, O'Connor defied fame as she had once defied her record company, and even went on to boycott a Grammy award she was granted for the best "alternative" music performance of the year. She's an artist of pure class.

But it's the key line of Daddy I'm Fine, from the album Faith and Courage, that really got me to start paying attention to Sinead. It's one you'll have to listen to the song itself to get. It's the kind of phrase that makes you ask: Wow! Is it OK for women to actually say that? Sure guys say it all the time, but us? And that's the kind of response a woman as gutsy as Sinead O'Connor invokes. Her great tribute to world of women, as I see it, is that she lets us all know that it's OK for women to freely express their sexuality in front of others. That a smart, self-assured woman full of conviction is a great thing, a wonderful thing. To paraphrase the words of that other strong-willed woman writer Penelope Lively, Sinead seems to have 'embraced being a woman, and found it an asset, not a hindrance.' To be honest, there's little else I would ask of a female role-model in this world, whatever their brand of womanhood, feminist or not.



Opportunity to provide support

We are a small group of young women, living in Wellington, who have come together to create this free feminist zine. As a magazine, we wish to provide a space for women's voices, a forum for discussion, which enthusiastically encourages action, in a format that is easily accessible. We all work on Muse in our own time but really need assistance to get copies printed and available.

## Donations

If you can provide a donation to support the printing and the cost of materials for Muse then please do so using the following options;

- Fill out this form and send a cheque to Muse Magazine, PO Box 11731, Manners St, Wellington

- Make a direct credit into the bank account below and provide your name/organisation

For more information email: [muse@riseup.net](mailto:muse@riseup.net)

We are happy to follow up any correspondence or queries with a phone call.

Thank you!

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