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Abstract
Feminism in Australia is a political movement and a published discourse. Its activities range from Equal Employment Opportunity practices in the public service to ‘cultural’ production in such forms as academic literature and documentary film-making. For most immigrant women of non-English speaking background, the cultural arena of feminism is foreign, in many more ways than one. Feminism represents, to speak perhaps too stereo typically, a middle class ‘Anglo’ culture, far removed from everyday experience. And this despite well-meaning concern on the part of many feminists for those groups suffering compound oppressions of class and ethnicity, as well as gender. Symbolically, an almost cult concern is shown for the plight of the migrant woman outworker, and with considerable real justification. Yet this concern is from a singular cultural perspective: middle class libertarian liberalism, quite alien to the immediate needs and aspirations of its subjects.
ETHNICITY MEETS GENDER MEETS CLASS IN AUSTRALIA

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Feminism in Australia is a political movement and a published discourse. Its activities range from Equal Employment Opportunity practices in the public service to 'cultural' production in such forms as academic literature and documentary film-making. For most immigrant women of non-English speaking background, the cultural arena of feminism is foreign, in many more ways than one. Feminism represents, to speak perhaps too stereotypically, a middle class 'Anglo' culture, far removed from everyday experience. And this despite well-meaning concern on the part of many feminists for those groups suffering compound oppressions of class and ethnicity, as well as gender. Symbolically, an almost cult concern is shown for the plight of the migrant woman outworker, and with considerable real justification. Yet this concern is from a singular cultural perspective: middle class libertarian liberalism, quite alien to the immediate needs and aspirations of its subjects.

Indeed, many non-English speaking background migrant women have gone through revolutionary transitions much greater, and frequently demanding much more personal courage and determination, than the careers and life-projects of the leaders of the EEO industry or the feminist film makers on their government grants. Whilst not speaking feminism, the language of criticism and re-assertion of power, the practical struggles of many immigrant women are akin in critical spirit and outcome to feminism itself. Rather contradictorily, perhaps, this often involves a dramatic self-transformation, assuming some elements of the radically new culture of industrialism, whilst retaining what is powerful and positively human in traditional women's culture. And, as often as not it also involves failure, isolation and oppression, as racism meets sexism and class immobility with a peculiar vengeance.

In recent years, the cultural gap between the feminist movement and non-English speaking background immigrant women in Australia has closed somewhat but their encounters are still problematic. To cite one instance, Franca Arena, a Labor member of the New South Wales Legislative Council (or Upper House) and Australia's first woman parliamentarian of non-English speaking immigrant background, has set up an 'Ethnic Women's Network' which meets regularly in Sydney's Parliament House and which has developed
significant political clout. Franca's stated goal for the network is to provide an arena for women of non-English speaking background to meet with the members - and the procedures - of government on its own turf in order to demystify that institution. It has proved to be a very successful exercise in constructing a constituency, in giving women of non-English speaking background direct access to government Ministers and heads of Governmental authorities, and in giving them entry into the magical mystery tour of the state. Yet the exercise is fraught with contradictions and tensions, primarily because, for many of these women, participating in such an experience is more significant for their being brought into the mainstream than as an expression of their 'ethnic' difference. The 'privileged' nature of this encounter is reinforced at every meeting when the grey suited men, guarding Parliament from the likes of ordinary people, especially 'accented' women, delay the participants unnecessarily with the etiquette of protecting the institution.

The positions held by the women in these gatherings and the shifts they are undergoing in their lives, are neither clear-cut nor parallel. They are emblematic however, of the as yet unspoken divide between non-English speaking background immigrant women and mainstream 'Anglo' feminists. For example, one of the first meetings of the group was addressed by a key feminist activist now working within state structures in the service of her sisters. At great length, and in passionate terms, she described how important it was for her to defy patriarchal bonds, to break out of the straight jacket of Catholicism into which she had been socialised through an education at the hands of nuns, to leave behind traditional Irish values of family and womanhood and to choose to be a single independent person. And this to an audience of non-English speaking women which included Muslim women in Purdah who had come along to this meeting to ask for support to change their work practices in order to allow them their traditional prayer sessions; and mothers who wanted their children to be taught their mother tongue and cultural traditions within the state school system.

On the other hand, there have been sessions where middle-class women activists from South American background have bemoaned that Australian women's organizations are politically backward and that Australian political life is generally suffocated by macho 'Anglo' ockerism, epitomised by the array of government ministers invited to address the meetings. The 'Anglo' femocrats who turn up, accompanying these men, sit quietly at the back and groan at the sight - with these men who will never learn and with these women who are 'unreal'. They know they have no voice to speak - to preach to the non-English speaking background women in such a setting,
but they are secure in their power back in the offices, as minders of ministers and minions of the state.

This chapter attempts to address those most difficult social questions, those that arise when class, gender and ethnicity meet. Of course, class, gender and ethnicity are always meeting, but they only appear as a 'problem' for groups where the process of intersection portends inequality and marginalisation. This is precisely what makes this topic so difficult. It is really about huge historical and social questions which mainstream social analysis conveniently ignores. For example, the points at which middle class culture meets male culture meets 'Anglo' culture, social science implicitly considers normal or natural or an irrelevant backdrop. Furthermore, if we are really concerned with social relations and not cultural pathology, any discussion of immigrant women throws into question the enormous complexity of the relationships of a whole finely stratified or segmented society. The woman question is simultaneously the man question. The 'ethnicity' question is simultaneously the dominant culture question. And the question of each fine permutation of class simultaneously implicates the unholy synergy of class relations.

So we have, on the one hand, a feminism which is culturally distant from those of its subjects whose lives are peculiarly difficult, and on the other, a series of fundamental social questions which are enormous in their scope and complexity. It is hardly surprising, then, that the literature in this area is fragmentary and as yet poorly developed. The following is one early contribution, a high speed chase through some of the issues. The first section discusses the social background; post-war migration to Australia and the place of women immigrants in Australian society. The second discusses the concepts of ethnicity, class and gender, then the process of decentring or fragmentation of everyday life and identity which accompanies the migration process with a peculiar intensity. Finally, taking up the question of political ways forward, the role of the state is analysed, both in the context of women's rights issues and the development of multiculturalism, which are certainly not always complementary and simply progressive moves.

**Women and Post-War Immigration**

Australia's post-war immigration, in world-historical terms, has been quite extraordinary. Only Israel has experienced more immigration over the same period relative to the size of the existing population, but in quite an unusual set of historical circumstances. In sheer statistical terms, the post-war Australian experience even
exceeds the great tide of immigration to the USA in the early years of the twentieth century. More than three million immigrants have arrived since the migration program began in earnest in 1947. The population has increased from under eight million to over sixteen million. One person in three is an immigrant or the child of an immigrant. During the post-war boom, Australia had the highest rates of population and workforce growth of any OECD country, with immigrants filling 61.2% of the additional jobs between 1947 and 1972.

Labour market position is one starting point for situating immigrant women in a sociological context. In 1947 only 12 percent of the Australian workforce had been born overseas, 70 percent of whom were of British origin. 22 percent of the workforce were women. By 1976, 26 percent of the workforce were born overseas, representing an immigrant population only forty percent of whom were British-born. 36 percent of the workforce is now women. In other words, there has been a significant shift in the labour force, with substantial relative increases in the participation of women, immigrants and non-English speakers. Perhaps the most dramatic change is the increased number of married women in the workforce, from 15 percent of the female workforce in 1947 to 61 percent in 1979.1

Over the decades, the composition of this immigrant population has become increasingly diversified. When the mass immigration program began, there was a strong emphasis on British immigration. Arthur Calwell, the Labour politician who was Australia's first Minister of Immigration, gave the assurance that for every foreign migrant there will be ten people from the United Kingdom: Or at least, those foreigners who were allowed in were to be 'assimilable types' such as the Dutch. However, the racist direction of immigration policy and the project of assimilating those who were different was to prove unworkable in the long term. In fact, even in the short term, the immigration quota of one percent population increase per annum could only be met by bringing in refugees from war-torn Central and Eastern Europe. Recruitment was soon to extend to Southern Europe, and by time of the European economic 'miracle' of the late sixties and early seventies, when European sources of immigration were running dry, to Turkey and the Middle East. By the 1980s, the net had spread even further afield with substantial immigration from South East Asia and Central and South America.

By the 1980s, 25.8 percent of Australian women aged 20-64 had been born overseas. Splitting this figure by origins, 11.4 percent of
Australian women were born in non-English speaking countries other than Australia: 2.3 percent in Northwest Europe, 1.5 percent in Eastern Europe, 7.7 percent in the Mediterranean region, and 3.0 percent in Third World countries, particularly South East Asia and Central and South America.2

How do those various groups, as defined by immigrant, or non-immigrant background and gender, fare in Australian society? Employment is a central marker of social class and social status. Several key writers have thus taken the labour market as a base-point from which to measure the experience of different groups. Collins divides the Australian labour market into four major segments. The first consists of Australian-born and Anglophone male migrants who earn the highest pay and who are employed in the tertiary sector or in skilled jobs in the manufacturing sector. They have clearly defined career structures and are disproportionately represented in power structures, such as the trade unions and politics. The second segment, of non-Anglophone migrant males, is located mainly in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in manufacturing and construction. This is the 'factory fodder' of industry, frequently poorly paid, in exhausting and dirty jobs and with very low participation in power structures and little hope of career advancement. The third segment is Australian-born or Anglophone immigrant women, who are paid less than first or second segment men and tend to work in traditional areas of women's employment in the tertiary sector. In a fourth segment, women immigrants from non-Anglophone countries are concentrated in the parts of the manufacturing sector hardest hit by economic restructuring. Their pay is lowest and working conditions poorest, frequently being involved in piecework or outwork.3 To this categorisation De Lepervanche adds fifth and sixth segments of Aboriginal men and women respectively, many of whom are marginalised to permanently unemployed, fringe dweller status.4

These generalisations are only the beginning of an analysis of the place of immigrant women. Indeed, whilst containing a basic element of truth, they are crude over-simplifications. Within Collin's third segment, there is considerable differentiation according to background. Mediterranean women hold jobs of much lower status and which pay more poorly than Northwest Europeans, East Europeans and South East Asian Women.5 This is very much linked to class background in the country of origin and level of education. Mediterranean women work in the worst jobs in the industrial workforce, and are those most vulnerable in the current economic restructuring. They suffer severe occupational health and safety problems such as repetitive strain injuries, low levels of
English language proficiency, and lack of support from male and 'Anglo'-dominated unions.6

Even this subdivision of a labour market segment is confounded by complexity, however, as each cultural subgroup of immigrant women is by no means homogeneous in class terms. Reworking 1981 census statistics, Evans concludes that between 9 and 14 percent of employed Australian women of all backgrounds own their own businesses with women of Third World and Mediterranean origin being more likely to be entrepreneurs than other groups.7 This reflects significant class differentiation within even a seriously disadvantaged subgroup such as Mediterranean women, and some genuine and impressive stories of upward social mobility. It also reflects official statistics in which outworkers are categorised as self-employed. Self-employment, furthermore, includes family-run shops and milk bars in which working conditions and rates of return are sometimes as bad as the worst of industrial jobs. And, as Collins points out, the proportion self-employed in immigrant groups has dropped dramatically in the structural economic re-adjustments of the post-war decades, as supermarkets, for example, eclipse the corner store.8 There is evidence, however, of growth in some forms of 'self-employment' such as outwork in the clothing industry. This leaves us with complex and contradictory subdifferentiation which does not deny the general thrust of overall descriptions of labour market segmentation, but which serves as a warning against simplistic arguments about any necessary outcomes in the overlay of gender, class and ethnicity.

The matter is complicated still further by generational differences. Contrary to conventional wisdoms about the relation of labour migration to the self-perpetuating phenomenon of social class, there is evidence of significant intergenerational mobility. The above discussion was about first generation workers. What happens to second generation children?

Neo-conservative critics of multiculturalism have recently began to argue that specialist education and welfare servicing is unnecessary because people of non-English speaking background are doing well. The first generation, it is admitted, pays a price and is relatively immobile, but this is supposedly compensated by significant second generation upward mobility, primarily the result of education. Williams argues that a strong family and cultural 'preference' for education produces high levels of participation in education on the part of non-English speaking background children.9 Birrell speaks of family support and ethnic valuing of education which produces
upward mobility. 'They have been competing with Australians who have generally lacked the same intensity of parented support or protection from distracting influences, notably peer youth culture.'\textsuperscript{10} In the same vein, Bullivant writes of the 'migrant drive' and the 'ethnic work ethic'. The 'Anglo' working class are by comparison, 'the new self-deprived'.\textsuperscript{11} And indeed, those groups which in a first generation fare so badly on the labour market, seem to be catching up through the education system in the second. Southern European background students, for example, achieve greater representation in higher education than the Australian norm.

But this inter-generational differentiation must itself be finely differentiated. Relative educational advantage or disadvantage is distributed unevenly between ethnic groups, with some more recently arrived groups faring particularly badly. Generalisation about the educational performance of ethnic groups also ignores the fact that they are themselves deeply divided socio-economically and by school performance: even if one small stratum appears to be succeeding the majority is not. Moreover, by comparison with aspirations that accompany the personal or family ambition and 'self-selection' in the migration process, the results are poor. And these mobility problems are in all probability temporary as the post-war boom becomes a distant memory and the welfare state is rolled back.\textsuperscript{12}

Situating non-English speaking background girls into this already contradictory and multifaceted situation, there is considerable evidence that their odds of success through education are longer than their male counterparts. Whilst retention-rates are higher in the secondary school than those of their English speaking background peers, their aspirations and performance are lower than both their male non-English speaking background counterparts and their female peers in general. In some cases, schooling for a girl is valued highly but only because it enhances her prestige and manageability, rather than because it lays a foundation for career choices and alternative futures. Girls are also placed in a particularly difficult context of culture clash in which wildly contradictory pressures all collide: their parents' high educational expectations; their exposure to the liberal culture of romance, self-determination and official non-sexist norms; the traditional role-model of a 'good' mother and wife; and mainstream sexism and racism which make the traditional role seem a comfortable and familiar retreat.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{When Ethnicity Meets Gender and Class}

Class, gender and ethnicity overlay each other in social reality in an
extraordinarily complex profusion of ways. Having described some of these in the Australian context, we will now take one step back to discuss the key terms of theory and analysis. In recent decades, the litany of concepts class-gender-ethnicity has emerged as a way of accounting for lines of social inequality. It is just no longer fashionable to say that class is, in the last analysis, all. Nor does it seem that society can be reduced, in essence, to two fundamental classes. Yet, despite the fashionable, comfortable and unquestionable good sense behind the litany, it is too glib. It is just a reassurance of good faith, in deference to new types of politics. The real and nagging demands for recognition of these new politics have translated themselves into a new and often poorly thought-through conventional wisdom: that class, gender and ethnicity (or race) are the key lines of social inequality, the big three, and each oppression compounds the other, formula-like. I want to argue, instead, that the three categories do not sit together as descriptions of social realities which are comparable or even of the same order.

'Culture' or 'ethnicity' is perhaps the most difficult and problematic of the three, partly because it is such a vague term. 'Culture', for example, varies in meaning from cultural anthropology's holism (a whole way of life, including material artefacts, kinship structures and the social arrangements of subsistence) to the much narrower connotations of 'high' or 'folk' culture. The culture of 'multiculturalism', loosely synonymous with ethnicity in social policy and social analysis in Australia, is firmly within the narrower connotation of folk culture. In this respect it is frequently a politically and ideologically skewed term and in many important respects of limited use. Certainly ethnicity is a powerful social reality, and racism, misreading surface appearances as social causes, even more powerful. Yet the concept of ethnicity - culture as delimited in the multiculturalism of state policy - is still deeply problematic.

The salespeople of the multicultural industry often use fruit salad, not even with a quiver of self-mockery or a sense of fatuousness, as a metaphor for Australian society. Australia is a cultural-linguistic fruit salad bowl, with the bowl as the pluralist, open, liberal democratic state, and folk cultures with their 'community' languages floating freely about like little slices of fruit, happy to be ingredients in the great cuisine of modernity, yet maintaining their distinctive flavours in tolerant harmony.

The metaphor is not just fatuous, it is ironically symbolic of the fact that food is one of the main elements of the construction 'ethnicity'. In schools and the media, for example, the iconography of the
multicultural is exotic food, clothing and dance. Difference is the message but only those colourful manifestations of difference that we can celebrate and appreciate for their colour. But, however much their middle class clients might enjoy eating out at ethnic restaurants in the cosmopolitan city, 'ethnic' restaurants frequently involve working conditions for family members which are far from attractive. Despite the appearance of difference, the structural reality of food in industrial society is as a commodity in a money economy. Behind the food there is another world.

To stay with food for a moment, a woman of rural Lebanese immigrant background walks into a shop and buys Lebanese bread just one in the colourful cacophony of breads. The multicultural city is in action. But the woman works in a factory for a wage (abstract labour and not direct subsistence). She has separate realms of work and domesticity, the week and the weekend (rather than the work and the familiar being integrated in traditional rural forms of farming). She is housed in suburbia for which she has to pay rent or a mortgage (and not subsist on land). She has to be a consumer, bank, and negotiate the welfare and education systems - all forms of culture (in the other broad anthropological sense) essential to social reproduction but totally new and alien to her. Even if she were to work in a family restaurant, maintaining some remnants of traditional work forms, the transition through migration into the world of full-blown commodity exchange is dramatic. There is not much multicultural about this. The culture of multiculturalism is not even all that relevant.

The fetish for difference not only often leads to a superficial and apolitical reading of culture, it is also unreflectively conservative. Preserving communities or folk cultures for posterity as museum-pieces is not simply positive - as if we have to maintain a sort of cultural national estate. In fact one of the great ironies for the liberalism that champions ethnic preservation and cultural pluralism, is the illiberal, indeed frequently racist and sexist identifications which as much as anything else give cultures an air of folk primordiality. Communities certainly resist assimilation and articulate their grievances through ethnic identifications and this is frequently progressive. But minority identifications are a two edged sword, particularly for women. 'Be careful who you marry. Good girls traditionally behave in particular ways. They don't marry loose Australians'. In any event, the battle to preserve ethnicity, very much an interest for certain generations of immigrants and particularly for male 'community leaders', may well be a losing one. Communities and cultures are mixed, contradictory and conflict-ridden things. They are certainly not clearly defined and socially
self-isolating. Apart from the question of whether preservation is a good thing or not, it may not even always be possible.

Behind the trivialised and conservative view of culture is a dual hidden agenda of assimilation/marginalisation. If we talk less about survival strategies and more about the colourful manifestations of pluralism, we can conveniently neglect some of the elementary issues of social welfare. So, for example, a smattering of 'community' languages is presented in schools in a poorly funded and fragmentary way as a token of our multiculturalism, without taking effective pedagogy as measured in social outcomes, very seriously. Behind the colourful differences and despite the ideological facade of multiculturalism, immigrants are assimilated, ruthlessly but inevitably, into the system: wages-housing-welfare-law. But it is often a marginalised assimilation with relative lack of power and economic autonomy.

The domain of multiculturalism is not only the traditional and the exotic. It is also, in commonsense parlance, the domain of non-English speaking immigrants, or the 'ethnics' in current pejorative usage. Surely Elton John, Kentucky Fried and Eyewitness News are not culture for the purposes of multiculturalism. The multicultural-pluralist reading of Australian society reconstructs the dominant group as 'Anglo-celtic', an extraordinary cultural hybrid. At this point, however, relations of dominance are conceived to be matters of intercultural misunderstanding rather than structural relations, with the dominant culture distinguishing itself through Yorkshire pudding and Irish ditties, or perhaps meat pies and beer advertising jingles.

None of this discussion is intended to give the impression that ethnicity is not important. Ethnicity is one of the great social issues of our time. The discussion is only to unravel some aspects of its politics and usages. In short, multiculturalism is used to construct a happy ideology of pluralism to the neglect of wider structural relations. The powerful reality of ethnicity, however, is that in spite of the modernist theories and social policies of the melting pot or assimilation, there has been a visible and enduring effect of mass migration. Differences have survived the move, more or less and for better or for worse. But industrialism limits the space inhabited by these differences, to the weekend more than the week, to leisure more than work, to the domestic more than the public arena. Theories of social structure tend to ignore this, presumably irrelevant, space. Theories of ethnicity tend to neglect the way in which social structure defines and delimits this space. And then there is racism, which links structure and culture/ethnicity, reconstructing
the appearances of difference, both cultural and phenotypical, as a root cause of structural inequality.

Western industrial society, as social structure, is constructed around wage labour and commodity production. The history of modern times has been one of the relentless generalisation of the commodity form across the globe and into everyday life. This massive internationalising and universalising trend has produced imperialism in its first and blindly brutal phases when it conquered indigenous peoples and appropriated the resources of the so-called 'New World'; later colonisation and labour migration from diverse sources to consolidate its progress; and the internationalisation of labour, capital and commodities. These are not just matters of structure, but profoundly matters of culture, which have tended to make everyday life experience and expectations fundamentally uniform: around the structure and culture of the commodity form.

But concomitant with this structural/cultural universalisation, the integration of a growing proportion of the human population into the material life, relations of class and desires of capitalism, has been the dramatic a juxtaposition of differences. Not only have workers of diverse background been thrown together and an immense profusion of colourfully and culturally different commodities been put on the market in metropolitan industrial societies, but states have had to consider servicing the plurality and re-think some of the fundamental tenets of assimilating nationalism. 'Multiculturalism' is the response on the part of the liberal democratic state to manage and service a diverse population. The use of ethnicity as a political bargaining tool is also new. In essence, the goal is still structural incorporation, but in a more sophisticated form so that difference comfortably and respectably inhabits the private and the social relations of the commodity are enhanced rather than confounded by the necessary logistics of labour immigration.

The liberalism of multiculturalism is a very contradictory thing. It is born, not of traditionalisms which are characteristically illiberal in the definition of their boundaries, but of the cosmopolitanism and individualism uniquely characteristic of late industrial societies. Difference is fine. All that matters is the smooth reproduction of the commodity form. Ethnic politics is even more complex: a rallying point against racism and the structural marginalisation of minority groups; reconstructed by the liberalism of the state as its own rhetorical mission; then against both the initial radical impulse and the state's liberal management, it becomes a means of conserving supposedly primordial cultures, including their racism and sexism.
The late industrial state and the culture of the commodity are equally liberal when it comes to issues of gender. Certainly, the nuclear family and the 'family wage' are structures of unequal gender differentiation new to capitalism. But in the spread of the commodity even these are destroyed. More traditional domestic functions are commodified; the family wage is cut; and women increasingly enter the workforce. In the high culture of this liberalism are the Equal Employment Opportunity apparatchiki and the professional 'Anglo'-feminists. Yet when this liberalism meets ethnicity and multiculturalism, it finds itself in cultural conflict with traditions which pay little respect to individual autonomy, economic independence and gender equality. The same culture of liberalism, on the other hand, is the basis of competitive individualism, the fragmentation of community and alienation in everyday life. The liberal state in late industrial society, in order words, might in some cases and in a totally contradictory and hypocritical way, be on the way to becoming non-sexist as an integral part of the process of extending the culture of the commodity.

Behind the double tendency of late industrialism to increasing diversity alongside structural homogenisation, is the development of a relativist philosophical framework around notions of the individual and difference. In everyday terms, this philosophy translates into the following terms: 'We are all unique individuals. We are all different. Our differences are our own business and they are of equal value. You do your thing and I'll do mine. Anything is possible in a world of differences. You can choose what you want to be. You can have your own culture. You, the individual, should control your own destiny. You know what is right for you. Explore, experiment, discover for yourself what you can be. Negotiate your rights. Look after yourself.' This is one of the most powerful messages of the contemporary world. We are all formally equal in our differences. Radical doubt and the self are all we are left with. A sense of decentred existence comes from the rapidity of change, the juxtaposition of differences, the maelstrom of modernity.

The 're-evaluation of all received values', to use Nietsche's words, is a fundamental cultural phenomenon of our time. It is a world of contradiction, in which there are both structures that bind and radically open options. In pre-industrial societies, disintegrating remnants of which many of Australia's immigrants left, one was born into fairly well-defined and durable social relations, of work, womenhood or manhood. Now all this appears open. How does one choose? What is the centre for judgment and decision-making? This is the phenomenon of decentring.
Decentring is doubly difficult for immigrants from traditional rural backgrounds. Despite the happy multicultural ideology of diversity, tolerance, and cultural maintenance, dramatically new structures of everyday life put pressure on traditional ways of seeing the world and behaving in it. For men, there is often a loss of self-esteem as their families become more independent and they are reduced to child-like statues in menial factory work. There is also a loss of authority because they are unfamiliar with the new ways of their adopted homeland. The psychological effect can be devastating, with profound implications for their wives, who often have to cope with this as well as their own adjustment, and care for their children at the same time.

For women, there is the double burden of paid work and domestic work, in conditions that do not fulfil former ideals of motherhood. Financial independence is both liberating and perplexing, opening options which destroy identifications that seemed natural and inevitable in childhood. Yet these same options of freedom involve breaking with deep senses of community, and in the case of women, family relations of care and responsibility.

For second generation immigrants, the problem is even more serious. The parents can retreat into the absolute moral maxims of their past. They can explain their pain in relation to some 'knowable' loss. The past serves as an explanatory centre, from which perspective they can lament their children's waywardness. For the next generation this retreat is not so easy. With the rhetoric of gender-role equality that is preached at school but hardly realized in reality, contesting gender roles at home can appear futile to girls, given the likely cost of being cut adrift and alienated from their families. They become caught in the intersection of a double racism - between being stereotyped as ethnic and morally backward by the dominant group, and their parents' hostility, to 'Anglo-Australian' cultural and moral 'looseness.' Will they become victims of assimilation or acquiescent dupes of traditionalism? The conservative option is often taken as an attempt to ground their lives in a decentred world. This is simultaneously an affirmation of what is positive in traditional female roles, including deep senses of care and community, and a recognition of what is personally fragmenting and alienating in the world of choice and liberal individualism. In many ways, too, the dominant culture of liberal modernity, including much career feminism, is characteristically male and unattractive: an indifference to feelings and care, a competitive hardness, on exhausting self-centredness, a blind aggressiveness.
So, the class-gender-ethnicity equation is not a simple one of compound oppressions with a clear solution in the form of liberation. Affirmation of ethnicity is a two-edged sword: a resistance to racism and domination yet itself potentially conservative and racist. The ethic of liberal feminism is also a two-edged sword, liberatory yet belonging to the fragmented, individualistic, self-serving culture of industrialism. The structures of social class and the world-historical process of the generalisation of the commodity, on the other hand, delimit the politics of gender and ethnicity and at the same time remain indifferent to their outcomes so long as these do not threaten the system of wage labour and commodity consumption.

Women, Ethnicity and the State

Two critical and reforming sets of politics have had a significant impact on the state in the past few decades: the politics of gender and the politics of ethnicity. Yet the two as argued so far in this chapter, are by no means always compatible. Indeed, the two have mostly been distant and reserved about each other's objectives. The impact of the women's movement on the state, however far it still has to go, has been significant. Women have achieved equal rights in matters of divorce. They have gained equal pay, formally if not in practice. There is anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation. There is paid maternity leave. Institutionalised preschool childcare is increasingly available. But the cultural aspirations to economic and personal independence behind these developments are characteristically more those of middle-class, English speaking career women than non-English speaking immigrant women. Or, at least, these women are not so strongly in a position either within the home or in the broader context of their relative social marginalisation, to avail themselves of the benefits of these changes.

We need to keep in mind that in the new country the cultural and social distance created by the lack of English and familiarity with Australian traditions and institutions, and the dislocation from homeland culture as a result of migration, can come together to produce a situation of cultural segmentation for some groups of non-English speaking background women, leaving them outside of any dynamic cultural movement around feminist issues. The state therefore for many non-English speaking background women is a fore-runner of feminist concerns in that it provides them with rights and access to support for which their cultural background experience does not prepare them. These seem to be there by magic and not linked into the consciousness of the men and women of that
group who have to negotiate receipt of these rights or live in the world where others take them for granted. The multicultural movement, on the other hand, developed in such a way that the fundamental welfare needs of non-English speaking background women were neglected and a mostly male and conservative ethnic community leadership was systematically incorporated. This needs to be explained in historical terms.

The ideology of assimilation lasted in official rhetoric until the late 1960s, even if the terminology had shifted cosmetically towards 'integration' through the decade. By the early 1970s, however, assimilation was beginning not to work. Many immigrants were obviously staying culturally different. Specialist welfare and education needs were emerging as the settlement and welfare 'problem' became statistically bigger. There was a growing feeling that a more sophisticated approach would be needed to stem the tide of return migration, principally to the 'economic miracle' in Europe. Finally, there was the emergence of 'ethnic' organisations and, possibly, a 'migrant vote'.

Al Grassby, Labor Minister for Immigration from 1972 to 1974 is frequently credited, and with considerable justification, as being one of the founding fathers of this multiculturalism. But there is also important discontinuity which this historical conventional wisdom ignores. Grassby's concern was not with difference, pluralism and cultural diversity. It was for a unified 'family of the nation', rid of forms of social injustice such as those suffered by many immigrants. In fact, Grassby very rarely used the term 'multicultural' as Minister for Immigration. The fundamental welfare reformist orientation of Labor was to 'disadvantage' and lines of socio-economic division. Indeed, 'migrants' (a word to lose favour in the era of Fraser/Galbally multiculturalism) were to be understood as a subset of the general class of those disadvantaged socio-economically and discriminated against. Symptomatic of this policy stance was the break-up of the Department of Immigration into the various 'mainstream' departments of labour, welfare, education, and so on. The problems of migrants were considered, at root, to be general matters of social welfare and social justice.

Losing the elections of 1972 and 1974, certain members of the Liberal Party began to consider that a decisive 'migrant vote' could be possibly mobilised. Fraser, Mackellar and MacPhee were particularly important in re-orienting Liberal policy. Their efforts eventually came to fruition in the conservative government of the late 1970s. The landmark in this process was the Galbally report of 1978 which became the basis of multicultural policy until the mid-
1980s. Galbally multiculturalism, in sharp contrast to Grassby's 'family of the nation', was a clear, determined and extremely cost-effective element in the neo-conservative pruning and reconstruction of the welfare state. It was based on real cutbacks in government funding. In fact, it produced a reduction in overall government expenditure as its recommendation (which was accepted) that tax rebates for overseas dependants be abolished, more than paid for the programs it set in motion. Galbally multiculturalism involved shifting migrant services from the general rhetoric of social welfare to marginal 'ethnic specific' services. This in part involved constructing 'ethnic' communities as self-help welfare agencies and giving them minimal financial support. It gave power to frequently conservative and male dominated 'community' leaderships. 'Ethnic Schools' and 'Grants-in-Aid' were typical of this approach.

Thus the shift in the language for reading cultural difference and formulating settlement and welfare policy was from a unified 'family of the nation' to multiculturalism; from disadvantage to difference; from concern with general socio-economic issues in which migrants were included (a Laborist view of reform) to the paradigm of cultural difference in which cultural dissonance is the main problem; from a social theory of class as the primary social division to a social theory of multiple social divisions, none of which have priority. Ethnic groups in the new multiculturalism were implicitly viewed, not as class-divided, but as homogeneous. 'Leaders' of ethnic groups could thus be viewed as 'representative', and, at the same time, potentially vocal pressure groups could be incorporated into the spirit of the state and given some responsibility for their own 'community's' welfare provision.

This is not to say that there has not been significant progress: English language learning programs for children and adults; 'ethnic' radio and television; a telephone interpreter service; specialist welfare services; a policy-oriented Office of Multicultural Affairs in the Prime Minister's Department. This is the history that in Australia has produced a dilemma for feminists and progressives in general. Surely respect for the other, the underdog, the minority, is in itself a progressive thing. Surely multiculturalism and its apparent call for ethnic maintenance must be progressive. After all, it is concerned with self-determination, tolerance and celebration instead of denial of difference. So onto the bandwagon the state has created they all hop. At the very least their welfare brief is enlarged. But then it gets complicated. When you let 'them' speak, they say things that make you uncomfortable.
Two sites in which this is most clear at the moment are the Equal Employment Opportunity and education. The question of participation in employment is a vexing one for the state given that women are half the voting constituency and even in its own institutions they are grossly under-represented at all the different levels. It has tried to respond to the demands of the organised women's movement through its EEO structure. Mainstream western industrialism, as it incorporates ethnic minorities or women into its structures, for example, has to accommodate and service a level of difference. Movement to a 'merit' principle of employment and promotion partly enshrines this accommodation. Commonsense working conceptions of merit of the past have not sat purely upon the needs of industrialism, but have also included prejudices about skin colour or gender. The dominant form of white, male merit is buffeted by questions and struggles which prove the irrelevance, injustice and unnecessariness of sexist and racist prejudices to the essential structures of industrialism. Critically, these struggles gain cogency (but also remain limited) because the merit criterion is itself culturally specific and structurally enduring. In other words, one can be black or a woman and just as meritorious in terms of systems needs and social effectiveness. The commonsense alliance of white, male and merit comes under fire without fundamental criticism of the deeper cultural specificity of merit to industrialism. So, the working conception of merit changes as unnecessary prejudices are removed, but merit itself remains the constant, fundamental, structural requirement of industrialism: those aptitudes and capacities that its sycophantic or critical operatives require to be effective. This has involved limited transformation of the concept of merit. Merit now should not prejudice differences. It is about essential systems-requirements and not visible cultural or physical differences which are, in fact, irrelevant to employment. Skin colour and gender should not now prejudice one's merit for employment.

But in every moment of respect for difference, even in moments of celebration of difference and plurality, there is also a moment of cultural incorporation. The cultures of peasant agrarian villagers or of domestic womanhood, for example, have no merit in terms of significant job promotion or intervention into mainstream power structures. Merit becomes an ideal, perhaps even a form of liberation or a basis for cultural self-transformation, often not in any articulate or explicit way, but through developing expectations and struggling to learn the logistics of social effectiveness. Becoming meritorious is part of a process of cultural incorporation.

Intervention through education is another critical area where
ethnicity meets the politics of gender. Here we have mandatory state policies on multiculturalism and non-sexism. But they do not sit easily together for all the reasons outlined above. In education, the non-sexist policy to date has concerned itself mostly with addressing girls about their options and taking affirmative action to enlarge the choices made available to them. But, and this is of particular significance to girls of non-English speaking background whose families still value traditional gender roles and aspirations, without addressing the boys directly and focusing on their behaviour and choices, the lives of the girls can simply be made much more difficult.

The question of focus is also a problem for multiculturalism. The main response has been that if students' backgrounds are brought within the discourse of the school, and if each group is immersed in the details of each other's difference, then tolerance and understanding will emerge. The teachers are trained for this exercise via suspect methods, as the following illustrates.

A simulation game about Greek marriage, devised and led by an 'Anglo'-Australian man was held at a training conference on multicultural education for teachers and departmental consultants. Variations of this approach can be found in the films, background papers and teaching materials that have been created to represent 'the migrants'. The game went like this: It was announced by the group leader that Greeks have arranged marriages - that this was one feature of their culture and that the participants would play a game that would simulate that experience. The players were asked to choose their roles, whether to be male or female, young or old, their status and so on. They were then supplied with rules with which to arrange the dowries and the marriage. The intention of the game was to absorb tolerance by an immersion in Greekness: to understand by feeling what it is like to be Greek.

Everyone played the game with much gusto and hilarity. But for all concerned it was a misleading experience. First, the statement that Greeks have arranged marriages is de-facto racist. Arranged marriages have nothing to do the 'Greekness' per se. People of Maltese, Italian, Vietnamese and even English background (if one remembers the marriage machinations of royalty with their feudal lags) are, or have been, involved in them. Second, the players were allowed to choose their gender, status and age. Maybe there are miracles that can be achieved in our contemporary world, but choosing to be male or female in a traditional Greek society was pretty well impossible. That very element of choice distorted the experience and allowed for the fun. Third, arranged marriages
cannot be understood at the phenomenal level of their detail. In traditional peasant societies that were subsistent and based on kin working units, bringing any new person into the fold, with whom you would now share the means of subsistence, was the whole group's concern. Arranged marriage was thus structurally necessary for the reproduction and survival of that system. With it, of course, developed all sorts of customs and mores, in particular the necessity of virginity and its relationship to the exchange contract. Now, in the process of migration out of the structures that supported these practices, symbols and mores, to a society that is based on independent income earning units and the culture of choice and self-satisfaction through romance, it is difficult for the original cultural practice to continue. The children can chose because they can support themselves. Indeed they have to be formally independent and mobile.

Simulating the cultural practice in an ossified way without locating it in historical context leads seemingly to two pedagogical options. The first is to try and teach the children their parents' traditional values and practices and encourage them to reproduce them as valuable cultural forms. Or, in contrast, you can assert that in the land of the brave and free, the child can choose to do anything. They can chose to be free like every one else in Australia and make their own decisions. One approach is ethnic maintenance. The other is assimilation. Of course, neither is an unproblematic 'solution'. It is not just a question of determination or determining. The two processes are constantly in relation. But multiculturalism has not seen its way out of this dilemma yet. And such is the confusion still that one fears the project might be abandoned before anyone has had a chance to reflect and modify their approach.

There is another way. It involves, not immersion in difference and familiarity with phenomena, but the necessity to know the processes involved in one's becoming when their origins are so diverse. It is a peculiarly contemporary issue because of the way that pluralism is generalised in all our experiences. It is not enough to know the phenomena, nor is it enough to have an understanding of some driving structural imperative. They are not dislocated in the lives of many people. The issues of gender and ethnicity emerged out of modernist struggles against patriarchy and imperialisms of all kinds. But in some cases it appears that the difference that was spawned and defended denies the modernist emancipatory direction that gave it birth. So the state, which now imposes the modernist social democratic victories, has also had to cater for difference. It condones separatist Muslim schools that steer their girls in a very traditional direction and Greek cultural associations whose main aim
is to ensure intermarriage. We are left with a paradox, a paradox that cannot be approached by mainstream feminists simply asking women of non-English speaking background to join in their game, nor by viewing the state only within the logic of the dominant social arrangements.

This chapter has attempted to portray the complex relationship of feminism to the politics of ethnic self-assertion. Rather than simply assume that counter-hegemonic politics are necessarily complementary, it has shown some important ways in which they profoundly contradict each other's intentions. These contradictions manifest themselves in real tensions and divisions, cracks which are often papered over by the nice sounding class - gender - ethnicity litany. On the one hand, mainstream institutional feminism is rooted fundamentally in that liberal, libertarian culture of individual freedom unique to late industrial societies. On the other hand, whilst the politics of ethnicity involves many fatally regressive and quiescent elements, non-English speaking background women also frequently live in a uniquely women's culture which is itself counter-cultural to the dominant ethos of conventional success in late industrial society. Dialogue between the mainstream feminist movement and non-English speaking background women would fruitfully open much feminism to critical scrutiny for its own cultural and historical role and at the same time open the lives of many non-English speaking background women to the positive things in the culture of liberal industrialism, without losing the profound sense of the social they have brought from cultural settings not so far down the track of industrialism. The solution to the complexity and contradiction is not *vive la difference*. It is critical dialogue and the forging of a new culture, beyond nostalgic traditionalisms and beyond the liberal modernity of the culture of the commodity.


4. DELEPERVANCHE, Marie, 'Women and the State in Australia', *Mimeo*, Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, 1985, p.18.

5. EVANS, pp. 16-17.


7. EVANS, pp. 38-40.

8. COLLINS, p. 15.


14. WILLIAMS, Raymond, *Keywords*, Fontana, 1976, pp. 76-82.

15. DELEPERVANCHE, p. 23.