

A Defense of the Late Nineteenth Century White Suffrage Activists of Australia, New Zealand and Colorado

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This paper addresses the history of late nineteenth century women's suffrage and the history of the women involved in the struggle for female enfranchisement of Australia, New Zealand, and Colorado, which have recently been the target of fervent postcolonial criticism. The paper will attempt to defend the efforts of white suffragists by deconstructing the groundlessness and, occasionally, the falseness of postcolonial criticism.

Oscillating between dismissal or ignorant non-recognition and florid praise, the history of women's suffrage[1] and that of the women involved in the struggle for female enfranchisement have been, more recently, the target of fervent postcolonial criticism. This paper will argue whether this target was an appropriate one or not.

New Zealand, the state of Colorado in the American West and the colony of South Australia were the first states in the world that granted women the right to vote. In September 1893 the

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legislature of New Zealand was the first one which enfranchised women. Two months later a referendum in the state of Colorado similarly gave women the right to suffrage and in December 1894 a majority of men in both Houses of Legislature of South Australia passed an Act entitling women to vote and stand for Parliament.

These three states had several features in common in the late nineteenth century. They were all white settler states where men, regardless of their race, had been enfranchised (in 1859 in the case of South Australia and in the 1860s in the cases of Colorado and New Zealand). In the 1880s and 1890s in all of these three states the question of women's suffrage emerged and the struggle of the suffragists, through their organizations, led, in the mid-1890s, to the enfranchisement of all women, regardless of their race.

Recent articles on white colonist women's endeavor for suffrage brought into question the problem of the "silences" [2] of these white suffragists with respect to the Aboriginal women's right to vote and the implications of the vote for these women and their lives. The accusations brought about by these studies refer to the "solid wall of silence"[3] maintained by the white activists for women's suffrage over the Aboriginal women's difficult life conditions and their stringent needs. It was argued that the white suffragists not only were totally ignorant about the Aboriginal women's rights and needs, but even made use of a racist discourse in their attempt to gain suffrage for themselves. However, there are flaws in this argumentation and many of the accusations are groundless and the pieces of evidence given are often decontextualized.

In my paper I will first make an analysis of the suffragists' endeavor for women's vote (dealing both with white women's[4] and Aboriginal women's[5] fight for women's enfranchisement) and then I will present and discuss the arguments and accusations of the postcolonial critique of white suffragists. In the last part of my paper I will try to give reasons and explanations for the white women's conduct and discourse with respect to the Aboriginal women and men. I will also argue that there was one factor, of an overwhelming importance, that has not been taken seriously into consideration by the postcolonial critics: the specific time-period of these debates over women's enfranchisement.

Women's fight for suffrage in New Zealand, Colorado and South Australia

The history of New Zealand, the state of Colorado in the American West and South Australia and the history of women's endeavor for suffrage

in these three states are very complex and they obviously have specific occurrences. But they also share many features; that is why it is important for my argumentation to treat them together.

These states, as already mentioned in the introduction, were territories recently occupied and colonized by white settlers, where the main industries were farming and mining. The settlers have taken the land from the indigenous peoples in these areas, respectively from the Maoris, the Native Americans and the Aborigines. Men were predominant in these populations and all adult men, regardless of their race, were entitled to vote.[6] In all these newly formed states representative legislation and political parties were defining the political system, taking a modern form, and liberalism was a strong force, pressing for state intervention in social issues.[7] So the settlers were struggling to bring European civilization in these newly formed states, to "re-build" somehow the societies they were coming from. It is therefore almost natural and definitely not amazing that the women in these states were doing the same thing as their "sisters" from the Continent were doing, namely they were also fighting and campaigning for women's suffrage. What is amazing is that their campaigns were successful and that they became, in the mid-1890s, among the first women in the world which were considered citizens and were allowed to cast their votes at the ballot. Why and how were these women successful in convincing such a great number of women to join their efforts for suffrage? What particular circumstances occurred here so that they made women's short but sustained campaign for female suffrage an almost unexpected success, when no state in Europe had granted women the right to vote? Moreover, how was it possible, at such an early time, for indigenous women to be included, along with white women, in the franchise? I will try to give some answers to these questions by describing and analyzing women's fight for suffrage.

It was not through individual women's endeavors that the suffrage was obtained, but through the activities and the campaigns of women's organizations, both national and international. By far, the largest and most influential women's organization of the late nineteenth century in all these three states (and also in other countries) was Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.). The W.C.T.U. was an organization of American origin, which was founded in Ohio in 1873 and spread extremely fast through the Mid-Western states and outside the United States, southwards to the Australian colonies. Initially, the first goal of the W.C.T.U., as its very name suggests, was to prohibit the use of alcohol, but later, Frances Willard, the world leader of the movement, advocated a "Do Everything" policy. This is why all social conditions which led

to this situation should be taken into consideration. Therefore the W.C.T.U., as argued by Ruth Bordin and Ian Tyrell cited in Patricia Grimshaw's article "Women's Suffrage in New Zealand Revisited", pleaded not only for the alteration of the law regarding marriage, women's education and professional rights, but also for equal payment, labour laws, protective legislation, peace and conciliation instead of war[8]. This is the platform and these are the goals of the W.C.T.U. at the moment of its export outside the United States and import in the states of New Zealand and Australia.

The W.C.T.U. was brought to New Zealand in 1885, by the American "missionary" for the world W.C.T.U., Mary Clement Leavitt and, by the end of the year, more than 10 branches of the Union were formed.[9] But the W.C.T.U., even at the time of its appearance in New Zealand, was not exclusively concerned with temperance, for there was also a feminist side of the W.C.T.U. At a talk given in Christchurch, during her stay in New Zealand, Mary Clement Leavitt argued that the Union not only had always been in favour of the women's suffrage, but it was also making a constant effort to obtain it, because women's vote would contribute to solving the alcohol problem. [10]

Kate Sheppard was the most prominent figure in the suffrage movement in New Zealand, for she became, in 1887, the superintendent of the Union's Franchise and Legislation Department. Her method of organization of the suffrage campaign was made public in February 1892, through its publication in The Prohibitionist, the W.C.T.U.'s page, under the title "Hints to District Franchise Superintendents"[11]. In these "hints", members of the W.C.T.U. were urged to write letters to the press, to set and attend public meetings, to distribute leaflets, to advice other organizations to place women's suffrage on their agenda, to inform members of the Parliament on this issue. The W.C.T.U. members were also suggested to collect signatures for petitions and to ask members of the Parliament or other influential men, who had already proved in favor of women's suffrage, to speak on this matter in public meetings.

In Australia, the women's movement functioned through women's clubs, literary associations, temperance societies and suffrage leagues. In 1890, in all important cities of Australia suffrage organizations had been founded or were about to be founded. The first suffrage society in Melbourne was set up in June 1884 by the radical secularists Henrietta Dugdale and Annette Bear(-Crawford) and in May 1888 the "woman's club" appeared. Victoria was the first colony that had a suffrage organization before having a temperance one. In Sydney, in May 1889 the "Dawn's Club" was formed, as a social reform club for women, and the Club launched two

other organizations, the Women's Literary Society in 1890, and the Womanhood Suffrage League in 1891. In South Australia women were admitted to university in 1880 and this led to a larger involvement of women in the political and industrial protest conducted through such organizations as Social Purity Society (1883), Women's Suffrage League (1888) and Working Women's Trade Union (1890).[12]

All these newly founded women's organizations shared the same concerns and there was a consensus about the ends to be achieved and the means for their achievement. Moreover, all the suffragists believed that without women's franchise there can be no democratic government:

> Advocates of women's suffrage argued that until women had a share in making the laws they obey, and in imposing the taxes they pay, there would be little possibility of ameliorating their subordinate position. Withholding women's franchise, they claimed, made a mockery of democratic government.[13]

On the same line of thinking, in an article entitled "Frances Willard and the Feminism of Fear", Suzanne M. Marilley"[14] suggests that a duality functioned as the motor of New Zealand suffragists' argumentation for gathering such a great number of women supporters. It was argued that while the national suffragists advocated that equal rights was nonsense if all adult women were excluded from suffrage, Frances Willard considered the suffrage the only means through which women would gain "home protection" meaning, physical security for them and their children. So women's suffrage was seen as a twofold means for improving women's lives, acting both at the level of the "liberalism of rights" and the "liberalism of fear". However, there is a certain hierarchy between these two levels, because Frances Willard "designed and promoted a new and radical vision of the role of women in politics and society that put security, not rights, first"[15].

What is more, even if suffragists "proved" that women's suffrage was essential in the claim for equal rights and therefore equal rights was an empty concept, a concept without a real basis, and even a nonsense if women were not entitled to vote, it did not seem enough to convince male politicians to grant women the right to vote. This argumentation was carried out by women's organizations worldwide, but it did not trouble men from fiercely denying equal rights to women, although "equal rights" was the politic claim of the time in most of these countries. What, then, made it possible for women to successfully advocate the right to vote in New Zealand, Australia and Colorado? One of the possible answers is given by Patricia Grimshaw[16] who argues that the men in these newly formed states were trying to find an identity for themselves, one different

from that of the men in the cultures they came (and separated!) from:

> The answer […] lies in an exploration of the intersection of women's rights with the processes by which men in these communities were seeking to establish an identity for themselves in some ways in contra-distinction from the men in the metropolitan cultures from which they have separated – yet, in some ways, also in collusion with those men of metropolitan cultures against a non-Anglo-British or Anglo-American world. […] [T]here was the specific political culture, aspects of which were conducive to women's rights.[17]

Grimshaw also points out that men in these societies appeared to pride themselves with their democratic character and they often boasted about their support for women's suffrage. Men's attempt to create an identity for themselves different form the one shared with the men from the cultures they left, and their desire for equal rights, and therefore for democracy, as a means to differentiate themselves from these men, could be seen as the reason for including men of other races, namely the indigenous men from the lands they colonized, in the universal male suffrage. The same reason might also be valid for the inclusion of indigenous women in the suffrage, when women's suffrage was granted.

As mentioned by Margaret Lovell-Smith in the "Introduction" to her collection of the suffragists' articles "The Woman Question"[18], the white suffragists in New Zealand did not often make specific references to Maori women during their fight for suffrage. However, since all the Maori men had been granted suffrage at that time, it might be argued that it was taken for granted by the white suffragists that Maori women would also be included in the provision of women's franchise. And they really were.

But why were Maori women almost invisible in white suffragists discourses? Why haven't they been included on the agendas of white women's organizations? Did these Maori women also fight for suffrage? And if they did, were the white suffragists aware of Maori women's endeavors? The articles concerned with these aspects seem to provide contradictory answers to these questions, for most of the recent articles, sharing a postcolonial perspective, tend to accuse white suffragists of ignorance towards indigenous women and even of racism.

In an extremely well documented article[19], Angela Ballara presents a brief history of the complex Maori women's movement in the 1890s and underlies the reasons of this movement's "invisibility". The two major bans that hindered Maori women's endeavors for suffrage from being widely known to white women's organiza-

tions of that time and afterwards were language and location:

> The apparent invisibility of Maori women's organizations in the 1890s is easily explained. Few Maori academics have studied women's activities, and Maori language skills among the Pateha [European, English] academics have been relatively rare. Maori language is essential for this topic. At this period political activity in Maori society was almost completely separate from European society in both locality and language. Maori communities were mainly rural, or located in separate neighbourhoods from those of Pateha in small towns and provincial centres.[20]

Apart from the natural dissimilarities between the Maori and white women's movements of the 1890s, these two women's movements had some common interests – moral reform of society and temperance. Even so, Ballara argues that there were very few women in the movement who challenged the existing pattern of male domination in society and in the family. The only reason for women's desired involvement in politics was the positive influence of "the special womanly qualities developed and utilized in the home to bear on politics, leading to their purification and to increase political attention to the social needs of women and children"[21], and not the removal of women from their assigned sphere, namely the home and the family. Maori women were also worried about their men's excess of alcohol, but their different status within the family and the different social and economic problems they were confronted with made the concerns of their movement quite different from white women's movement. The domination of their society by colonial authority and legislature was far more important for Maori women's movement. Their main concerns were the stealing and damaging of their property by the white colonists through imposing their own legislation, the alteration and depreciation of their lives through the intrusion of colonists. This is why Maori women's major goal was to find solutions to the economic and political problems of their people. Moreover, as Ballara suggests, there was a culturally different attitude towards women in the Maori society that made their concerns develop from a different perspective and with a different platform from the one that pushed white women to action:

> The pattern of uninterrupted male domination in the Pateha nineteenth century world was quite dissimilar from the status of women in Maori society, both before and after contact with Europeans, and in the later nineteenth century. […] Maori society embraced a world view determined by whakapapa;

> people reckoned their kinship to eachother, including their seniority or inferiority, by descent from former common ancestors. Descent from bilateral senior lines conferred senior status which was, by definition, not confined to males. In a society which recognized the pre-eminent rank and status of *some* women, *all* women could not be regarded as inferior to *all* men.[22]

The authority of these women of high rank and power, "wahine rangatira", is proved by their participation in the political debates and decision-making of their people, affecting both, men and women. As a proof of this authority held by Maori women, Ballara mentions that at least five women of high rank signed the Treaty of Waitangi[23] and other women protested at that time that there had not been more women involved in the negotiations before the signing of the treaty.

Another aspect in which Maori women's status differed from white women's status was the ownership of property. Maori women, both before and after the colonization, owned land and resources, as individuals, just like men. Inheritance was bilateral and gifts of land and resources were often made by parents to their daughters on their marriage. The land remained the property of women, not of their husbands, and decision about the way to handle and deal with the land belonged to the women.[24] And even if the colonial legislatures attempted for several times to restrict Maori women's right to own property, they were confronted not only with complex property problems, but also with Maori's fierce protest. So, again, the two women's movements agendas had different priorities.

The first Maori women's attempt (that it is known about) to bring women's suffrage before the Kotahitanga parliament (Maori Parliament) was during a session in 1893. In this session Meri Mangakahia presented a motion requesting for women the right to vote; she supported her request by pointing out the fact that since Queen Victoria was a woman, an appeal by Maori women to her might prove more successful if women were counted among the Kotahitanga members.[25] Even though the motion was supported by some of the Kotahitanga members on the basis that many women owned land (in spite of the fact that the power was restricted only to men) and also that women had been collecting money for the Kotahitanga movement, there was no debate on it in 1893.

In 1894 the issue of women's suffrage and representation was again brought up before the Kotahitanga parliament. Not even at this second attempt did women obtain everything they wanted, but a bill was passed authorizing them to set up their own committees.[26] Finally, in the 1897 session of the Kotahitanga parliament

women were granted the right to vote, but not to stand freely as candidates for political offices on the same footing as men.

Another very important difference between Maori and white women's pleas for franchise lies, as Angela Ballara argues, in Maori women's request to stand freely as candidates for parliamentarian elections: "Maori women suffragists [...] asked for Maori women to have the right to be included among the electors of the members of the parliament. Further, they asked that Maori women be eligible to stand as candidates, an aspiration beyond the demands of many of their Pakeha contemporaries."[27]

The situation of the indigenous people in South Australia and Colorado was not significantly different from Maori's situation, although some articles argue that the indigenous people from New Zealand had a better situation than the indigenous people in the other two colonial states.

With or without the support or the intentional endeavor of the white suffragists in New Zealand, Colorado and South Australia, the indigenous women in all these three states were granted suffrage along with their white "sisters". Why, then, are the white suffragists accused for their "silences" and their ignorance with respect to indigenous women?

A post-postcolonial critique

Several recent scholarly articles[28] dealt with white suffragists' endeavor for women's franchise in the late nineteenth century in the states of New Zealand, Australia and Colorado, pointing out not only the ignorance, but also the racism in their discourses. Maybe one of the most accusatory articles in this respect is Patricia Grimshaw's "Reading the Silences: Suffrage Activists and Race in Nineteenth-Century Settler Societies". I will present and discuss the main arguments that Grimshaw brings up to support her accusations and I will try to reveal the unwarranted harshness and the contradictions that I think that exist in her article. In order for me not to be accused of subjectivity or decontextualization, I will use extensive quotations from Grimshaw's article.

Patricia Grimshaw's criticism is based on white suffragists' internalized belief that placed "white humanity at the top of a pyramid of achievement"[29], non-white peoples falling below western standards of humanity. This racist view prevented white suffragists from a fair and equal treatment towards the Aboriginal women in their countries and, moreover, made them blind and insensitive to their "sisters"' misfortunes and misery.

However true and justified some of Grimshaw's arguments might be, most of her ac-

cusations are not only far too aggressive, but also groundless, contradictory and even false. The first and main contradiction in Grimshaw's argumentation on white women's unfairness towards Aboriginal women is obvious even from the first paragraph, where she admits that there was no legal provision against Aboriginal women's right to vote:

> [I]n the discussions which white activists for women's suffrage promoted over the five or so years of their brief but energetic campaign in the late 1880s and the early 1890s, they maintained a solid wall of silence about the implications of the vote for Aboriginal women. […] Since the 1894 Act had no race bar, Aboriginal women received the vote along with white women.[30]

If what Grimshaw intended was to criticize white women's disinterest in Aboriginal women's difficult life conditions and the implications and benefits that the women's vote might bring along, then her criticism is, up to a point, grounded, but I am not sure how pertinent it might be, from the vantage point of the particular time period. But this is a different issue, and even if the same women were to be accused, it should be done from a different perspective, since *all* women's suffrage was the goal and it was successfully achieved.

There are several lines in Grimshaw's article where she makes groundless accusations about the suffrage activists and their organizations. One of these is targeted at the Women's Christian Temperance Union which, as Grimshaw argues, "had a *precise* [my emphasis] agenda on race"[31]. No details are provided in this respect, the particular provisions included in this "precise" agenda on race are not mentioned, Grimshaw probably considering that either the evidence is not important, or it is so obvious that the reader can imagine for her/himself. In her diatribe against the W.C.T.U., Grimshaw also attacks one of the most prominent and fervent activists who led the Union in the late nineteenth century, Frances Willard. From "a remarkable woman", as she is described in a previous article[32], in the more recent article Frances Willard is ironically described as "a middle-class woman" and as an "utopian socialist" who, in her endeavors for women's suffrage uses "weapons", not "means":

> The Woman's Christian Temperance Union […] was led by able and articulate middle-class women. Under *one such woman* [my emphasis], the utopian socialist Frances Willard, it quickly moved to combine an agenda about abusive male drinking patterns, violence against women and the need of women for full participation in all society's concerns. *A*

> *vital weapon* [my emphasis] Willard perceived for this campaign was political representation.[33]

A more direct accusation also against the W.C.T.U. is that the activists did not include Aboriginal women on their agenda, that they were totally ignorant about their needs and struggles and, moreover, that this ignorance and apparent blindness was not a simple unintended omission, but a purposely done one. However, by mentioning that there already was an organization dealing with Aborigines, Grimshaw's accusation becomes groundless and unwarranted:

> When the South Australian WCTU held its first annual general meeting in 1889 women's suffrage was central on the agenda. And their plans about Aboriginal women? The gathered members briefly considered commencing 'A Department for Work Among Aborigines', but then as quickly rejected the idea: the Salvation Army, someone said, was already interesting themselves in Aborigines.[34]

In the same diatribe targeted on the Union's exclusion of the Aborigens and ignorance about them, Grimshaw brings up other groundless and even false arguments to support her point: "There were Maori women eager to join the WCTU, and numerous branches soon commenced operations. […]They *clearly* [my emphasis] already knew of the WCTU's activities. The white WCTU had not known, however, about Maori women's political activities."[35] On what evidence is Grimshaw underpinning her knowledge of the fact that while the Maori women knew about the activities of the white suffragists, the latter did not know about Maori women's political endeavors? Why is this fact so "clear" and undeniable? On the contrary, I might say, based on the following evidence, the white activists knew, at least partially, about Maori women's activities, as pointed out by Margaret Lovell-Smith: "There were Maori branches of the W.C.T.U. […] they were most often mentioned in 'The White Ribbon'[36] in reports of the W.C.T.U.'s 'Work Among the Maoris'".[37] Moreover, even if it is true that the white suffragists did not know anything about Maori women's activities (which is not likely to have happened, there is one explanation for this "ignorance", an explanation that can function as extenuating circumstances for the white women. Maori language is an important explanatory factor, as pointed out above, in the apparent invisibility of Maori women's political activities. Since all the Maori activities functioned almost exclusively in Maori language and they were reported in Maori language newspapers, it was difficult, almost impossible, for white women to have had knowledge about them. That, of course, if we do not expect the white suffragists to have studied the

Maori language, which is not, considering the time period, a realist request.

It is not only through arguments and facts, grounded or not, that Grimshaw is trying to accuse and discredit the white suffragists who won the vote and their battle for it, but also through an ironical and aggressive discourse about them and their activities. Even if it is true that white activists found a means for supporting their activities in Maori women's enfranchisement, I think it is too strong and aggressive word to characterize the inclusion of Maori women in the W.C.T.U. as "unashamedly":

> The granting of the vote to Maori women along with settler women in 1893 stimulated white activists to a new realization that Maori women were now potential allies in a common reform agenda. The WCTU, so neglectful of Maori women before, now *unashamedly* [my emphasis] set up to help them register to vote and to mobilize them into the WCTU.[38]

Another important accusation that Grimshaw makes is based on the so-called racist discourse used by the white suffragists in their struggle for women's franchise. It was pointed out that the white women are guilty of racist approaches and comparisons, for the Aboriginal men had been enfranchised and the white women were still excluded from the vote. Again, her entire argumentation seems groundless, since she accuses the suffragists at the same time of complete silence about the political rights of the non-white men and of an angrily racist discourse: "[I]n some respects suffrage activists maintained other silences about race that had a different significance. These were the silences they maintained about the existing political rights of non-white men."[39] But, she argues further that "numbers of suffragists felt [...] angered that white men legislators would perceive the political rights of freedmen superceding their own"[40] and that "[t]heir vociferous protests denigrating the suitability of citizenship for freedmen became blatantly racist"[41]. Thus, nothing that the white suffragists would have done or said seems to satisfy Grimshaw's desire for fairness, since she is distressed by both, the silence about and the inclusion of the race in the suffragists' discourse. However, even if it is true that the white suffragists did make some racist comparisons, it is important to point out the context in which these comparisons were made. And Grimshaw is indeed aware of the context, but she seems to understand and interpret it rather differently, continuing to accuse the protagonists. Among the women accused of racist discourses were the two former abolitionists (a fact that is in itself enough to consider them anything but racists!) Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. When some African American men proved to be

against women's suffrage, Stanton spoke against them, as she would have spoken (and did speak, as any other suffragist, in numerous times during the fight for suffrage) against any man, white or not. The fact that she "raged", as Grimshaw puts it, in not much of an objective way, against men who were opposing to the women's enfranchisement, even if they were non-white, does not necessarily prove her racism, for those opposing the suffrage were, above all, men, regardless of their race.

Another proof of Grimshaw's evidence's poor historical truth is revealed in her attempt to prove the racism of the white suffragists in Colorado where, again, the target is Susan B. Anthony. She uses what I would call *historical gossip*, pretending that the former abolitionist, now a leading suffragist, asked, when told about the project for a new campaign for a referendum, after the first one proved to be against women's enfranchisement, whether "all those Mexicans [who voted against women's suffrage] [were] dead"[42]. However, Grimshaw herself acknowledges the poor historical truth of this fact, since she mentions another, more moderately, version of Anthony's reply, according to which the suffragist asked only whether the Mexicans had been converted.[43] The biggest difference between the two versions of Anthony's reply is obvious and, since there is no evidence that she would have given the first answer, there is also no basis for accusing her of racism.

Conclusion

The contradictions in Grimshaw's accusations targeted on white women go deeper than the surface analysis that I tried to do here. Her arguments are subverted by the mere fact that Aboriginal women *were* included in the vote and each accusation that she makes seems to be contradicted not only by the reality, but also by her own arguments, as pointed out above.

Issues of class, race and sexual orientation emerged to dismantle and reshape the category "woman" or "women" only late, considering the "age" of women's movement, in the feminist discourse, feminists having been talking about women's issues as a whole. The debate over the "Woman question" stands as a proof for the way in which the feminists' discourse (even if many of them did not use this label for themselves) of the first and second wave was speaking about "all women". I think that the same thing happened in the early stages of women's struggle for suffrage, the white activists were talking about *all* women, regardless of their race, and the fact that indeed, *all* women had been enfranchised, with no race bar, is the necessary and sufficient proof in this respect. The problem of Aboriginal

women was not seen, by most of the white suffragists in these colonial states, as a different problem from that of white women. "All adult persons", as the provision of the law stated, really meant all women and men, regardless of their race.

The nature of these arguments and critiques with regard to the white suffragists activities and discourses presents the 1880s and 1890s women's struggle as being reinterpreted and rewritten (or revisited, to use the fashionable term) from a contemporary postcolonial perspective, distasteful of any racist or essentialist manifestations. Whatever welcomed these approaches might be, they certainly misunderstand and misread the conceptions and the images of the world at that time. I do not mean that a more race-inclusive white suffragists' discourse is not desirable and that such a discourse would not have had positive outcomes for the non-white peoples, but to accuse all white suffragists of the late nineteenth century settler societies of racism and blindness is, in my opinion, far too much for the period under consideration.

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Notes

[1] Although, in the writings of the time it is referred to as "woman's suffrage", I will use "women's suffrage" throughout my paper, as this is how it is used in more recent studies.

[2] Patricia Grimshaw, "Reading the Silences: Suffrage Activists and Race in Nineteenth-Century Settler Societies" in Patricia Grimshaw, Katie Holmes and Marilyn Lake (eds), *Women's Rights and Human Rights – International Historical Perspectives*, Palgrave, London, 2001, pp. 31-48.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 31.

[4] In order to do that, I use both recent studies and writings of the suffragists of the late 19th century, as published by Margaret Lovell-Smith in the collection *The Woman Question – Writings by the Women who Won the Vote*, New Women's Press, Auckland, 1992.

[5] For the Aboriginal women's fight for suffrage I use Angela Ballara's article "Wahine Rangatira: Maori Women of Rank and Their Role in the Women's Kotahitanga Movement of the 1890s", published in *New Zealand Journal of History*, 27/2, Oct. 1993.

[6] Patricia Grimshaw, "Women's Suffrage in New Zealand Revisited: Writing From the Margins" in Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (eds), *Suffrage & Beyond – International Feminist Perspectives*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1999, p. 29.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 29.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[9] Margaret Lovell-Smith, *The Woman Question – Writings by the Women who Won the Vote*, p. 12.

[10] *Ibid*., p. 12.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[12] Kay Saunders & Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia – Domination and Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace, Sydney, 1992, p. 326.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

[14] Suzanne M. Marilley, "Frances Willard and the Feminism of Fear", Feminist Studies, 19/1, Spring 1993 cited in Grimshaw, 1999, pp. 35-36.

[15] Grimshaw, p. 36.

[16] *Ibid*., pp. 37-38.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[18] Lovell-Smith, 1992, p. 14.

[19] Angela Ballara, "Wahine Rangatira: Maori Women of Rank and Their Role in the Women's Kotahitanga Movement of the 1890s",

New Zealand Journal of History, 27/2, Oct. 1993, pp. 127-139.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 128.

[22] *Ibid*., pp. 129-130.

[23] The Treaty of Waitangi was signed on the 6th of February 1840 by Captain William Hobson, several English residents and approximately forty-five Maori chiefs. The Treaty lays the foundation for the way Maori and other New Zealanders share responsibility for their country and it is considered the founding document of the nation of New Zealand.

[24] Ballara, pp. 133-134.

[25] *Ibid*., p 133.

[26] *Ibid*., p.136.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[28] See, for example, Patricia Grimshaw's more recent article "Reading the Silences: Suffrage Activists and Race in Nineteenth-Century Settler Societies", but also Patricia Grimshaw's "Women's Suffrage in New Zealand Revisited: Writing From the Margins" and Kay Saunders & Raymond Evans' study *Gender Relations in Australia – Domination and Negotiation*, pp. 25-41.

[29] Grimshaw, 2001, p. 34.

[30] *Ibid*., p. 31.

[31] *Ibid*., p. 34

[32] Grimshaw,1999, p. 35.

[33] Grimshaw, 2001, p. 34.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[35] *Ibid*., p. 42.

[36] *The White Ribbon* was the "official organ" of the W.C.T.U. and claimed to be, after *Daybreak* ceased publication, "the only real Women's Paper in the Colony. It is owned by Women, managed by Women, and, if successful, the profits will go to women's work", *The White Ribbon*, May 1896, p. 7, cited in Margaret Lovell-Smith, *The Woman Question – Writings by the Women who Won the Vote*, p. 18.

[37] Lovell-Smith, p. 12.

[38] Grimshaw, 2001, p. 42.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 36.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 37.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 37.

[42] *Ibid*., p. 39.

[43] *Ibid*., p. 39.