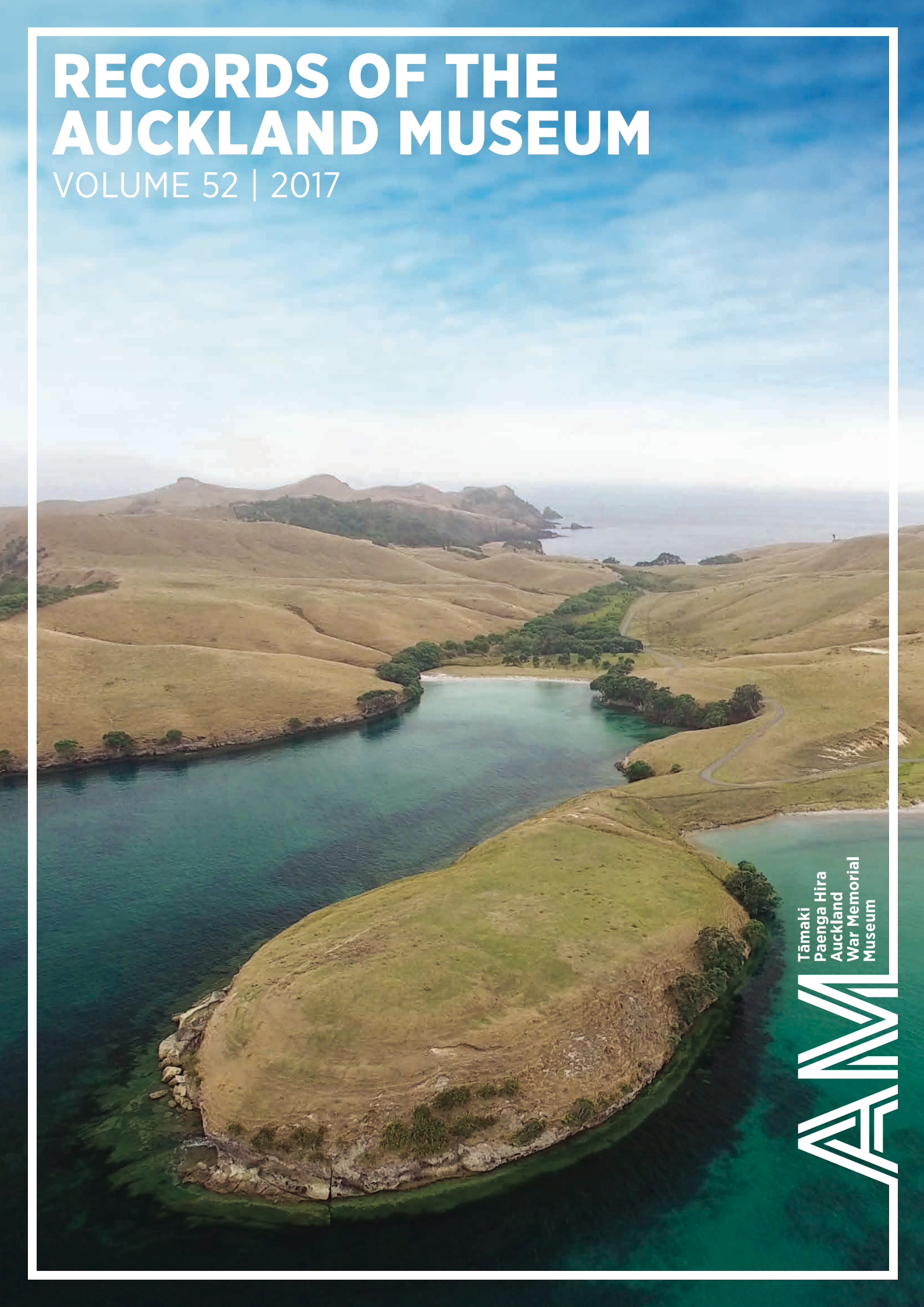


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“Children First” – The Motherhood of Man Movement and single motherhood in 1940s and 1950s New Zealand

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Abstract

In New Zealand, moral and religious influences have long painted single mothers as unscrupulous threats to the sexual and societal status quo. In the 1950s, a formative era for the development of women’s reproductive and sexual rights, organisations like the Motherhood of Man began to confront this long-standing image of single mothers as fallen women in need of redemption. The Motherhood of Man Movement challenged the fear-based sexual education model, which gave little practical knowledge about how to avoid pregnancy, and instead attempted to provide care for single mothers in need, without the often-oppressive philosophy of church-run homes. Inadvertently, the Movement also highlighted New Zealand’s ill equipped adoption policies through its own misdemeanours. A 1953 incident allegedly saw the President of the Motherhood of Man Movement abuse her authority as a caregiver, coerce women to give up their babies and on-sell these babies to desperate adoptive parents, and avoid proper adoption procedures all together. Not only did this spark public outrage, but it also contributed to the introduction of the *Adoption Act* of 1955 which tightened adoption laws in New Zealand. This particular issue in the Motherhood of Man’s history provides an opportunity to explore the developments and shortcomings of this formative era, which gave reformers a basis to construct better models for the care of single mothers in future decades.

Keywords

maternity home, adoption, babies, single mothers, Motherhood of Man Movement.

INTRODUCTION

The Motherhood of Man Movement (MOMM) was an organisation that cared for single mothers and their babies in Auckland, during the mid-20th century. MOMM established a network of support for single mothers, providing a full-spectrum of options, without the oft-moralistic intent of church-run homes. This article seeks to investigate MOMM’s approach to single mothers, and how, at times, the organisation both strayed from and reinforced expectations of New Zealand the 1940s and 1950s. Through enquiring into the four branches of the Movement’s activities, we can examine how attitudes towards single mothers were slowly changing; all while the conservative nature of post-war New Zealand resisted that change. Four major branches formed MOMM’s work with single mothers: the Hostess System, which acted as an in-home boarding programme with volunteer families; their adoption agency which helped to find families for adoptive babies; a day nursery which offered day care for the children of single mothers, so that they could work; and Fairleigh Hospital, a private maternity hospital run by the Movement.

The alleged crimes of Mr and Mrs Bovaird, the Treasurer and President of the Movement until 1953, played a major part in the organisation’s history. The legal proceedings brought MOMM’s legitimacy under great scrutiny, but ultimately strengthened the Movement’s systems and approach, in order to further support single mothers. The actions of the Bovairds not only solidified MOMM’s approach to the care they were providing, but it also prompted the government to do so. Following the investigation of the Bovairds, the 1955 Adoption Bill gained greater focus, with newfound emphasis on why better regulation and restrictions were needed.

NEW ZEALAND IN WARTIME

In 1942, whilst much of New Zealand’s population were off fighting for King and Country in the Second World War, the home front faced a challenge of its own – ‘the serious problem of unmarried mothers’ (MS 91/41, B-2: President’s Annual Report, 1955).¹ Wartime not

1 The Motherhood of Man Movement Records (MS 91/41) are part of the Auckland War Memorial Museum’s manuscript collection.

only disrupted family dynamics, with husbands and fathers being shipped overseas, it also saw an influx of American soldiers to New Zealand's main centres. The presence of foreign soldiers, and the lack of potential domestic suitors, sparked a panic about loosening moral standards, typified by the single mother. However, according to British historians, Thane and Evans (2012: 54) there was little substance to this moral panic, rather 'the War brought into the open the reality of sexual practice and the experience of unmarried motherhood that had previously been secret'. With little reproductive freedom, limited access to contraception, especially for single women, and the strong stigmas around unmarried sex, ex-nuptial pregnancy was a 'normative condition' and 'a risk faced by virtually every sexually active woman' according to Australian historian Swain (1995: 5). Margaret Sparrow (2010: 43) supports this observation, and points out that abortions were even trickier, with many women self-aborting, or opting for back-street methods that were so dangerous that they often ended in tragedy or imprisonment. Rather than bring to light any unusual sexual activity, the wartime panic did more to unveil the established lack of support available to single mothers, and it was in this context that the Motherhood of Man Movement arose.

The societal disruptions of the Second World War led to the reinforcement of conventional gender roles and family structures. Historian Jock Phillips (1996: 265) explained that with the end of the Second World War, New Zealanders were 'keen' to 'settle down in comfortable domestic life.' Encouraged by the nation's increasing affluence, many couples were able to marry and purchase a home with ease, laying the foundations for the traditional "nuclear family" ideal (*ibid.*). Discussing Britain, Thane and Evans (2012: 85) assert that in the post-war years, the work of psychologists, such as John Bowlby, 'reinforced the view that the two-parent family was the bedrock of a stable society and any deviation should be condemned.' This ideal family image, however, had no place for single mothers and their children, and as a consequence, single mothers were often perceived as "undermining the family" by their very existence' (*ibid.*: 5).

THE MOTHERHOOD OF MAN MOVEMENT

Established in 1942, the Movement's grounding as an interdenominational organisation made it comparatively unique. The majority of other homes for single mothers based their understanding of sex and single parenthood within the moral construct of the Christian faith, with a focus on sin and redemption. The Motherhood of Man, on the other hand, seeded their philosophy in caring for pregnant women and babies in need, rather than any particular dogma, as epitomised by founder May Harvey's motto, "Children First". The Movement focussed more on rehabilitating unwed mothers and helping them through an oft-traumatic period of their lives by providing accommodation, health care and a place to both have their baby and decide if they wanted

to raise them, or put them up for adoption. It was this philosophy that gave them a major point of difference.

By assuming a less judgemental position, the Movement stood in stark contrast to their oft-religious counterparts, which according to Harvey took it upon themselves to punish the unmarried mothers in their care for their "moral wrong doings" (MS 91/41, B-6: article by May Harvey, 1945). Whilst Harvey had an obvious propaganda bias when discussing the organisations she was competing with, historian Bronwyn Dalley (1998: 216-217) confirms her claim. Dalley asserts that the motivation behind the establishment of many of these homes had been the 'perception of single mothers as fallen women in need of moral uplift', as well as the desire to aid their babies who would be 'disadvantaged by their illegitimate status'.

Morally corrective ideology was most prominent in church-run homes, such as the Anglican St Mary's home in Auckland, established in 1884, to the extent that the Anglican Church issued a statement in 2005, published in the *New Zealand Herald* (4 March, 2005), apologising to women who stayed in the St Mary's home. Joanne Richdale (2004: 135, 162) explained that the Anglican-run women's homes in Auckland were considerably concerned with moral reform, and had a 'hardening of attitude', particularly as they moved into the twentieth century. According to the *New Zealand Herald* 2005 article, women staying at St Mary's were subjected to harsh examinations, as they were weekly 'forced to strip [and] lie on beds where... they would be examined by a doctor who would "thump" their breasts and touch them inappropriately'. When it came to the birth, women were given no option to keep their children, with all information regarding their baby withheld (*ibid.*). One particular woman was 'slapped for crying during labour and refused pain relief' (*ibid.*). This lack of compassion and refusal of pain relief was seen as means to reform their "fallen" ways and correct their moral compasses.

Feminist writer Sue Kedgley (1996: 186), quoting Anne Else, gives a similar example of the Essex Home in Christchurch, where the unmarried mothers in their care would be submitted to a comparable level of abuse. Kedgley explains that nurses in this Home often hit women while they were in labour, shouting at them 'you got yourself into this situation, you can pay for it now, you've made your bed, you lie in it' (*ibid.*).

A major exception to this moralistic approach was the Salvation Army's Bethany homes. Whilst the Bethany homes were similarly motivated by Christian values, they chose to focus more on embracing the caring and acceptance side of Christianity, rather than moralistic reformation and redemption. Much like the Bethany homes, the Motherhood of Man attempted to divorce themselves from the traditionally negative reputation of homes for single mothers, and partnered with Bethany to participate in some of their more progressive initiatives, such as their antenatal classes, and school for single mothers.

In opposition to the traditional view that unwed mothers were 'sex delinquents' in need of reformation,

MOMM demonstrated a much more practical approach to the subject (Dalley 1998: 217). The Movement suggested that many younger women were often under-educated in the sexual realm, and were thus ill informed about potential sexual consequences. Sexual education was a controversial topic in the 1950s, often thought to encourage teenagers to engage in sexual activity, rather than equip them with knowledge. Historian Claire Gooder (2010: 38) asserts that in this era, the 'purpose of sex education was largely to provide moral guidance.' UK historian Julian Carter (2001: 228) supports this, arguing that sex education aimed to reinforce strict gendered paradigms and social norms, rather than actually providing sexual knowledge. In the MOMM Annual Report for 1955, President Warren Freer discussed the matter, asserting that most women who sought help from the Movement were generally 'good girls from good homes' and were simply in need of help (MS 91/41, B-2: President's Annual Report, 1955). Freer goes on to declare that 'after all, it must be remembered that "bad girls" don't have babies; they are either too well versed in birth control methods or resort to other means to terminate a pregnancy' (*ibid.*).

The fear and shame surrounding unwanted or "illegitimate" pregnancies was capitalised upon in early forms of sex education (Gooder 2010: 42). The 'moral rather than physical focus' of sex education perpetuated negative stigmas towards those who had sexual experiences out of the prescribed norms (*ibid.*: 38). However, relying on fear rather than actual knowledge often proved to be counterproductive. The Movement's founder, May Harvey, a supporter of sex education, tackled the topic herself in 1945. Harvey affirmed that a lack of knowledge was often the reason young girls accidentally fell pregnant (MS 91/41, B-6: article by May Harvey, 1945). She asserted that the 'prudish omission' of sexual education in high schools does nothing to protect girls, whereas knowledge 'arms them against error' and makes them 'strong to fulfil their destinies' (*ibid.*). Harvey's opinion was representative of the 'shifting moral climate', as generational attitudes towards sex after the Second World War slowly began to question the 'conventions and traditions, which governed the behaviour of previous generations' (Gooder 2010: 46). Whilst the opinions of the few began to shift, strict sexual morality remained a major aspect of New Zealand society for years to come, at least in public discourses. However, the progressive and practical opinions demonstrated by the Motherhood of Man reflected the spirit with which this organisation was built upon.

Fundraising

The Motherhood of Man received financial support through three main sources: Government grants from the proceeds of national raffles; donations from individuals and large companies, namely Dominion Breweries and the Auckland Savings Bank; and fundraising efforts by the Movement itself. Charity auctions were a major aspect of the Movement's efforts; associations such as the Auckland Rotary Club, or the Junior Chamber of Commerce often assisted these (MS 91/41, B-2:

President's Annual Report, 1953). The success of these auctions ebbed and flowed with the social perception of the Movement. Immediately after the Bovaird incident for example, which will be discussed below, public interest in fundraisers was at a particular low point (*ibid.*). Fairleigh Hospital did produce some revenue, yet this was not always reliable and fluctuated, whereas the Day Nursery mostly ran at a loss (*ibid.*).

The hostess system

A major point of difference between the Motherhood of Man Movement and church-run homes with similar intent was the way in which they provided accommodation for the women. The Movement attempted to place women who were in need of help within the homes of voluntary "hostesses", enabling them to live amongst a family for the extent of their pregnancy, rather than in strict dormitory like conditions. The intention behind the "hostess system" was to situate women in a more "normalised" environment, a private family home, where they could be 'absorbed into the family life' (MS 91/41, B-6: MOMM to Dept Social Services, 1953). The Movement's ideology strayed away from the 'old idea of placing expectant mothers of good family or background in institutions where they have to be prepared to rub shoulders with professionals of the street' (*ibid.*). Through the hostess system, the pregnant women provided the hostesses with 'an extra pair of hands' in return for food and board (*ibid.*). MOMM's intention was that whilst the women were expected to clean and perform domestic duties, this was far from the "labour as punishment" ideology. Rather, this was a way for the single mothers to help out their hostesses, pay their keep and learn about what it takes to care for a child (*ibid.*). The idea was that the hostess system would give single mothers an opportunity to "trial run" family life, providing a greater perspective on whether they would be feasibly able to keep their child, or whether adoption was a better choice.

The major benefit of the hostess system, beyond the more normative environment, was the privacy that it allowed the women. The Movement enabled single mothers to live close to normal lives through their pregnancy, whilst far away from the prying eyes of family and friends. After the reorganisation of the Movement in 1953, Welfare Officers were appointed by MOMM to 'keep in regular touch with girls at private homes' (MS 91/41, B-2: Management Committee Report, 1953). These officers, who were more commonly referred to as "supervisors", provided a means of carefully monitoring the care of the pregnant women within the family who were hosting them (*ibid.*). The intention of this monitoring was to ensure that both parties were happy with the living arrangements, with the objective to safeguard the women from any potential exploitation (*ibid.*). However, it is hard to know how successful this safeguard was, as the women under hostess care came to MOMM because they were often in a difficult position, and this made them more vulnerable to manipulation. Whilst objective data on

this is scarce, the Movement's Annual Report for 1955 inadvertently highlights the positive nature of the hostess system: they received several complaints from the community chastising the Movement for 'treating the girls too well' (MS 91/41, B-2: President's Annual Report, 1955). As expected, this was taken by MOMM not as a negative thing, but rather as something to be celebrated. Clearly, the Movement's positive attitude toward single mothers challenged the social norm, but in doing so provided care and support towards pregnant women in the community who needed it most.

While the Motherhood of Man did try to distance their efforts from the moralistic attitudes of religious-based homes, some aspects of MOMM's care were still congruent with the social stigmas that restricted single mothers. The hostess system, designed to give single mothers a "normative" experience, nevertheless acted on the expectation that single mothers should be kept out of sight and hidden from wider society. Even May Harvey's motto, "Children First", indicated that the welfare of the children took priority over that of the women. While the Motherhood of Man worked to offer a better option for single mothers in need of help, they still functioned within a society that deemed single motherhood to be the paradigm of social and sexual transgression, and inadvertently reflected this.

The day nursery

The Day Nursery was an early extension of the Movement's work. Opened in 1946, it was an immensely popular facility that catered for the children of 'deserted wives, widows, or working mothers' (*ibid.*). The nursery focussed on creating a 'home from home' during the day for children whose parents were in difficulty (*ibid.*; MS 91/41, B-2: President's Annual Report, 1958). Many of the parents were struggling financially, with minimal income available; therefore the nursery frequently ran at a financial loss. The Movement, however, realised that it was able to 'meet a demand which could not otherwise be met', and thus saw it as their responsibility to continue the service (*ibid.*; *ibid.*).

The Day Nursery was sporadically the subject of social contention, as some members of the wider community saw it as encouraging mothers to work, which was regarded as highly inappropriate. However, the Movement were consistent in their response that the nursery was solely for mothers who needed to work in order to survive. The nursery continued to be a popular port of help for parents all through the 1950s, taking care of many children who otherwise may have found their way into state care.

Fairleigh Maternity Hospital

Fairleigh Hospital was the second major arm of the Motherhood of Man Movement. By establishing their own private hospital, the organisation expanded their ability to care for unwed mothers, whilst also offering maternity services for married women at a cost, during a time when there was a dire shortage of maternity beds in Auckland (Bryder 2014: 71). Historian Bryder explains

that this lack of maternity beds was the result of a boost in the number of women opting to give birth in hospital, combined with major shortage of nurses (*ibid.*). In 1951, she asserts, National Women's Hospital had 135 beds available, with another 33 beds that were sitting idle because there were not enough staff to service them (*ibid.*). 'The hospital had the facilities', she explains, 'doctors were keen to train there and women wanted to have their babies there, but to function it needed nurses' (*ibid.*). Smaller hospitals, such as Fairleigh, were therefore kept busy by the influx of expecting mothers.

Opening on the 27th of October 1953, the hospital had room for 11 maternity cases, as well as live-in facilities for five staff (MS 91/41, B-2: President's Annual Report, 1953). Five rooms were also specifically allocated for single mothers who were not suitable for, or did not feel comfortable with being placed within the "hostess system" of housing, thus resided in the hospital accommodation through their pregnancy instead (*ibid.*). The hospital's initial years were a success – by 1954, it was already able to pay for its own running costs and had 117 unmarried mothers through its doors, as well as 61 private patients (MS 91/41, B-2: President's Annual Report, 1954). Due to the demand for maternity beds, the Movement was able to charge private fees that were 'considerably above those of other private hospitals in the locality' (*ibid.*). Despite these high fees, Fairleigh remained a popular choice, reinforcing the Movement's claims of 'excellent service' and 'high standards' (*ibid.*).

Adoption

The perception of adoption in New Zealand underwent a substantial change after the Second World War, with adoption rates rising dramatically (Dalley 1998: 224). The reason for this rise was linked to many changes in the social climate, but certainly correlates with the 'great prosperity and improved standards of living' in post-war New Zealand (*ibid.*). In her piece on closed stranger adoption, feminist writer Anne Else explains that before the Second World War, adoption and single pregnancy did not hold the automatic link that they did in the decades to come (1991: 48). Having to go through with motherhood was utilised as 'punishment for the mother's sins – and a warning to other women who might be tempted to stray' (*ibid.*). As the focus turned away from punishing mothers, and towards the value of the child's life, as well as the growing social emphasis on the family unit in the 1950s, adoption became a feasible solution to both single motherhood and childless couples. Else asserts that by the 1950s, adoption became a 'major industry' in New Zealand (*ibid.*).

As the popularity of adoption grew, so too did the pressure on unwed mothers who were encouraged to give up their children. In Australia, Swain (1995: 11) asserts that 'adoption became almost mandatory' and was promoted as an 'ideal solution.' For many women, adoption acted as a safeguard against the judgment that accompanied single motherhood, yet in exchange, they faced a 'mental exile' (*ibid.*). As long as their pregnancy remained a secret, and their child unacknowledged, their social reputation could

remain intact (*ibid.*). However in this silence, women were the key holders to their own mental prisons.

Whilst the Domestic Purposes Benefit was not introduced until 1973, unwed mothers could still receive some monetary support in the form of an emergency benefit and non-monetary support through the Child Welfare Branch. A means tested benefit was also introduced in 1968, although this proved difficult to acquire for single mothers, with more consideration given to widows and deserted wives. The child's welfare, however, was the main focus of social worker's efforts, whereas the mother at this point was not entitled to any kind of benefit (Dalley 1998: 217). Dalley explains that the 'welfare division aimed to keep mother and child together', so social workers would often assist by helping them to find work, accommodation and information about potential maintenance from the child's father (*ibid.*: 217-9). However, options were enormously limited for women who found themselves single and pregnant. One child welfare officer commented that the 'unmarried or unsupported' had 'few alternatives but to release her child for adoption, that was the greatest tragedy' (*ibid.*: 224). Dalley explains that 'administering this option became a central part of child welfare work in the post-war years' (*ibid.*).

Since its establishment, the Movement has swayed between being unwaveringly supportive of unmarried mothers keeping their babies, and encouraging adoption as a "better for everybody" situation. Their emphasis on adoption grew in the early 1950s, as the Movement became an adoption bureau themselves. Thus, the potential of adoption fees combined with the new demand for adoptive children soon trumped their earlier focus of mothers keeping their babies. The Movement's Annual Report for 1954 tells that adoption was the most common choice for women who came into their care: 'The girls are wise to arrange for the adoption of their children, [but] we must at all times assist those who wish to retain their child' (MS 91/41, B-2: President's Annual Report, 1954). The report continued, 'this has always been the Movement's policy, and should not be altered, although some of the mothers who keep their children make a tragic mistake, and I am certain, regret their decision' (*ibid.*). Despite the good intentions of the Movement, this kind of attitude would have applied inadvertent pressure on single mothers to "do the right thing" and adopt out their baby. The reality of continuing support for single mothers in the 1950s was grim, as there was little government assistance, and employment prospects with a child in tow were scarce. Unless one had supportive family or friends, adoption was often seen as one of the only feasible options.

THE BOVAIRDS

The Motherhood of Man's benevolent image was seriously put to question in 1953, as two of the Movement's most prominent members were accused of fraud, discriminatory crimes and abuses of power against the women in their care. Mrs and Mr Bovaird, MOMM's

president and treasurer respectively since 1946, were accused of a plethora of crimes and dishonest deeds, bringing the Movement's activities under the spotlight of their supporters as well as the general public. As President of the Movement, Mrs Bovaird's role was wide reaching, providing her with control of the nursery, the process of caring for the women who sought the help of the Movement, as well as the entire adoption process.

An Auditor's Report and the MOMM Financial Committee revealed a detailed account of the Bovaird's financial activities. Alongside their questionable mishandling of money, enquiries revealed that the Movement had been charging in excess of the national norm for adoptions; with the extra money being paid directly into Mrs Bovaird's personal account (MS 91/41, B-1: Financial Committee Report, 1953). These actions were in themselves 'legally doubtful', but 'charging in excess of the actual cost of confinement is ... nothing other than baby farming and illegal' (*ibid.*). Mrs Bovaird's monetary focus and uncharitable attitude within this not-for-profit organisation absolutely conflicted with the Movement's core ideologies, and it was this realisation that saw the Movement stripped down to its roots and reorganised.

Whilst the Bovaird's financial deceit was in itself a grave concern, Mrs Bovaird's maltreatment and abuse of power was much more unsettling. Complaints to several government agencies revealed that Mrs Bovaird had been 'declining assistance to unmarried girls who wished to keep their children', and one such woman attempted suicide when Mrs Bovaird refused to help her (*ibid.*). Women whose babies were still born or died before they could be adopted were expected to pay for their own confinement, as well as cover funeral costs for their child (*ibid.*). The Financial Committee deemed Mrs Bovaird's actions towards these already grieving women as 'reprehensible', asserting that 'this attitude completely destroys any claims Mrs Bovaird may make of always placing the welfare of the girls first and foremost' (*ibid.*).

Further investigations by the Finance Committee found that Mrs Bovaird often gave preference to adoptive parents who were wealthy and more likely to make donations. Donors were often able to obtain infants without delay, whilst those unlikely to donate were discouraged from adopting and placed on lengthy waiting lists (*ibid.*). In addition, she had kept no files of adoption applications, and the records of past adoptions were incomplete, unreliable, and sporadic (MS 91/41, B-2: President's Annual Report, 1953). To make matters worse, there was no complete record of the women under the Movement's care, nor where or with whom they had been placed (*ibid.*). This made it 'extremely difficult' for the remaining members of the committee to locate and monitor the care of the existing women within their hostess system (*ibid.*). The lack of records resulted in instances of 'girls literally arriving on the doorstep in advanced stages of labour' and the Movement being unaware that such women were coming, let alone any knowledge of who they were or where their confinement had been booked (MS 91/41, B-3: Management Committee Report, c.1953/4).

The Bovaird's misdeeds resulted in a phone call to the police and a court date. Both Mr and Mrs Bovaird were expelled from the organisation, and although a police investigation ensued, they were ultimately cleared of charges due to a lack of evidence. Whilst the reality of the Bovaird's actions were abundantly clear to both the Movement and the Police, they could not prove them in court without bringing in a number of women who were under the Movement's care as witnesses (*ibid.*). As these women 'came to the Movement under the most confidential circumstances', this was not considered a feasible or fair option (*ibid.*). The consequences for the Bovairds seem relatively mild, comparatively the outcomes for the Movement was more dire. They were under a great deal of media scrutiny and many of their donors questioned the integrity of the cause, putting the Movement under a great financial strain. A letter was mass delivered to their support base explaining the situation, the reorganisation of the Movement and its procedures, and assured its donors that MOMM's presence in the community would continue, and this time with more transparency (MS 91/41, B-3: Generic Donation Letter, 1953).

1955 ADOPTION ACT

The 1955 Adoption Bill was in motion years before the Bovaird incident came to light, however, the incident highlighted that the adoption legislation desperately needed to be revised and regulated. The Act worked on placing more control in the hands of government agencies, such as Child Welfare, so that adoption procedures around New Zealand were strictly regulated and uniform. This also meant bringing Maori and Pakeha adoptions under the same system. The Act enabled Maori couples to adopt non-Maori children, a right that had been taken away almost fifty years earlier. By enforcing tighter restrictions around who could adopt, and broadening the information that Child Welfare had access to, such as the residence of the child, they could better ensure the state of the child's welfare (Adoption Act 1955: iii). Similarly, the Act made information about adoptions strictly confidential, so to protect the privacy and security of all involved.

Dalley (1998: 266) asserts that one of the major changes from the Act was the introduction of a two-step adoption system. This would see an interim court order issued after the adoptive parents and their homes had been inspected, and a final order that would take place after the child had lived there for six months, formalising the adoption (*ibid.*). It also clarified issues around consent from birth parents. The Act ruled that birth mothers had to wait for ten days after their child's birth until they could give up legal custody, and that this would not formally go through until the final adoption order was processed (*ibid.*). Through placing the regulatory powers of adoption in the hands of governmental representatives, the Act took away a lot of the freedoms that adoption agencies had been taking, a matter made clear in the case of the Motherhood of Man Movement.

CONCLUSION

The shifting realisation that single mothers did not only come from the lower ranks of society, but also emerged as the "girl next door", challenged 1950s perceptions about the cause of extramarital pregnancy. Coming out of the wartime effort, focus turned to creating solid family dynamics and reclaiming the stability that had been lost during the turbulent war years. With greater financial grounding and an emphasis on the nuclear family, the demand for adoptive babies rose dramatically. With this also came the intense encouragement, and often times coercion, of single mothers to give up their children. The manipulative tag line that adoption was "better for everybody" solved both the social problem of a childless couple and a single mother.

However, with the rate of adoption booming, organisations like MOMM came under the close scrutiny of both the public and government agencies. After the tumultuous Bovaird years, this focus revealed that the Movement had made great efforts to act as a supportive and compassionate organisation that gave single mothers an opportunity to review their options and situation. This support was so great, in fact, that they experienced a pushback from the public through fears that they were encouraging illegitimacy through rehabilitation.

The increase in adoption numbers, and the revelation that the Motherhood of Man had been mishandling cases, led to a tightening of government controls regarding New Zealand's adoption procedures. The 1955 Adoption Act helped to accelerate the professional status of welfare agencies and increase their presence within benevolent organisations. This presence would only increase in the coming decades, as social policy began to adapt more to meet the needs of single mothers and their children.

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