

Historical contributions cited include in Chapter 3, "Homes Fit for Heroines: Housing in the Twenties," an interesting history of the work of the Women's Housing Sub-committee in Britain. It also refers to alternative cooperative housekeeping arrangements which challenged traditional ideas of domestic work. In Chapter 4, "Women and Public Space," mention is made of the wide-ranging recommendations of the Greater London Council's Women's Committee, Woman and Planning Working Group for planning policies that discriminate in favour of women and for more involvement of women in the planning process and the monitoring of its effectiveness. A unique trace of the physical design of house plans and their rationale over time is presented in Chapter 5, "House Design and Women's Roles."

Chapter 8, "Private Kitchens, Public Cooking," discusses a little known experiment during World War Two in which cafeterias, known as British Restaurants, were run by local authorities on a non-profit making basis to meet working-class needs due to the immense disruption of daily life, much of which profoundly affected women. These restaurants took the burden from women, served women, recognized the value of normally unpaid women's work, and were part of a series of proposals for "socializing aspects of domestic work." After the war though, there was sharp debate in Britain about the future of the restaurants closely linked with discussions of women's roles. In the end scarce building materials and labour were devoted to meet the needs of the acute shortage of housing and the restaurants gradually disappeared.

The availability of role models and the sense of alternative roles is also important in promoting women in any field of endeavour. Reference is made to a "personal sense of unease about how architects are supposed to work." (p.102) There are few histories of women architects; *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective*, by Susana Torre, editor (1977), being one notable exception. In many fields women are seeking out alternative roles, such as those in the business community as presented by Liz Roman Gallese in *Women Like Us* (1985). Many women like myself, who have been trained as architects, have pursued non-traditional roles but are still actively involved in influencing the quality of the built environment, through applied research, programming and evaluation or policy and standards setting efforts. There are many possible ways to influence housing and buildings other than being a traditional design architect. Housing design is a complex process involving many negotiations and decisions outside the sphere of control by the architect per se.

Examples such as those presented by Matrix, open up further role alternatives. Chapter 7 documents the work and experience in developing alternative strategies for designing buildings. Specifically, Matrix operates collectively and in an egalitarian manner. Women are involved in all stages of the evolution of a building—from recognizing the need for the building through financing and organizing the project, designing and building it, and finally, using it. A unique aspect of most of the buildings cited is that these were "women-centred" buildings in which women were to be the primary users. Finally, this chapter explores the questions raised by the roles and relationships between client, architect and builder.

However, many of the design issues raised by Matrix are not limited to concerns for women only. In Chapter 4, "Women and Public Space," admission is made that many of the issues being raised could be applied to working class men, particularly to immigrants and migrants, who are also "restricted in their use of the built environment—by low incomes and by what are considered 'proper' places for them to be" (p. 39). Many of the problems cited for women are also problems for other groups, such as the young, the elderly, the handicapped—these issues are not just feminist issues, but issues of human diversity and equality of opportunity. Nor is restructuring the architectural design process to a more participatory experience exclusively feminist. Alternative tools, roles and processes are being used to help user groups understand the problems and tradeoffs inherent in design for replanning offices, hospitals, houses, and other kinds of buildings.

In this context, the issues raised by Matrix are pertinent. The examples they document fill gaps in the history of women's contributions and they raise some provocative questions about alternative roles for women in influencing the built environment.

Pleasantine Drake

The Unheralded Majority, Contemporary Women as Mothers. Lydia O'Donnell, *Lexington Books, D. C. Heath and Company, 125 Spring Street, Lexington, Massachusetts 02173, 1985, pp. 170.*

Lydia O'Donnell has an agenda that will make many feminists uncomfortable. She argues that our emphasis on the costs and sacrifices women bear because of their involvement in child rearing, are reflections of our disdain for women's commitments to traditional roles as mothers,

homemakers and community volunteers. She challenges us to accept that reality of what she calls the "new synthesis." Rather than victims of oppression, contemporary mothers "look on their time as child rearers as productive, valuable, and more often than not, immensely personally rewarding..." (p. 8). The new synthesis incorporates the strengths of the women's movement while rejecting its oversights and weaknesses.

The book is written about a group of women in "the middle" or mainstream of U.S. life. The women were from two small communities near Boston: one predominantly lower middle-class; one middle to upper-middle class. A total of 74 women comprise the sample for the study on which the book is based. Their average age was 37, and each had at least one child under twelve. Equal proportions (42%) were employed part-time or were full-time homemakers with the remainder (16%) employed full-time. In a chapter in which she describes the methods of the study, O'Donnell states that the women in her study have many similarities to women from small communities across the country and that in fact, they do represent mainstream women. After the rationale and methods of the study, the book is organized into three major sections: the context of mothering, the place and meaning of motherhood, and employment and mothering as a link between families and communities.

The context of mothering. The histories of women in this study show the power of socialization toward motherhood. All not only expected to become mothers but had a strong sense of appropriate family timing. Finish your education; wait a year or two; marry and have children within the first two or three years of marriage. Despite these powerful expectations, women found it difficult to incorporate children into their lives. Yet tradeoffs were not regretted, nor did women feel they had taken the wrong path. Career demands and constraints on personal lifestyles were not seen as sufficient reasons to avoid having children.

Motherhood and employment. No plans to integrate paid work into their domestic lives. That is how O'Donnell describes the way in which women were socialized toward employment. These attitudes took two contemporary scenarios. The first was "motherhood supplants employment." Work until your first child is born and then retire from the work force. The second was "employment as contingency." Employment was something to which one returned after the children were school age or if financial hardships required it.

Despite these expectations, the majority of women did incorporate employment into their lives as homemakers and mothers. And almost all expected to be employed full-time within the next five to ten years.

Expectations had changed. Yet mothers moulded their employment schedules, their choice of jobs and their hours of work around their family responsibilities. Having a small amount of "quality time" with their children was not enough. Not only were children seen as benefiting from mothers' presence, but mothers emphasized the importance to them of being with their children when they were young. Most women felt full-time employment interfered with family life and women professionals were dealt with harshly. Being there for children was the value around which their lives were organized.

Yet mothering was not a life-long job. For many, employment would become more central later in life. The opportunity to alternate the jobs of employment and mothering was seen as a bonus, even if career advancement had to be partially sacrificed. Their views of the husband's career paths were different. Men had less flexibility in their work, they were the major breadwinners and thus were exempted from organizing their lives around family demands.

Linking families and communities. Not all of the work of mothering is done at home. Virtually all women said that mothering brought closer ties to extended families. Mothers are still the kin-keepers, making the effort to keep children and husbands in touch with extended kin. Exchanges of support with neighbors also became important and were maintained by mothers who had the time to build neighborhood networks. Mothers provided their families access to the community services and links to neighbors and kin. Women also provided links to the community as volunteers in many activities related to child rearing. Volunteering was usually done when children were small and was done both by full-time homemakers and part-time employees. O'Donnell argues that the importance of volunteer work in community building is often unrecognized.

O'Donnell's book seems aimed at convincing a group of women who are not part of the "unheralded majority" that we have misunderstood the priorities in their lives. The development of the rationale, the careful explanation of sample and methods, and the extensive references suggest that the audience for the book is academic women. There is a plea in the last chapter for a greater appreciation

for the choices women have made to be with their families and of the work entailed to keep a family going. O'Donnell sees their choices as "reasoned, realistic and well-tempered." Throughout the book she makes the point that priorities change throughout the life-course of individual women and that women in her study were in the mothering-as-central stage. She does not address the question of whether there are also parallel life-courses. As women in her sample are disdainful of those who seem to put careers first, so many "career" women see homemakers as oppressed. I would like to see the parallel study of mothers who continue their full-time employment careers to see whether there is a similar stage for them.

My criticisms of O'Donnell's book are few. The book is well written and well argued. For me it is an important book in that it forced me to reexamine my assumptions about women's preferred roles. Priorities in women's lives can and do change. My courses in family and individual development will henceforth include several models of women's life course.

Norah Keating
University of Alberta

Women, Power, and Economic Change: The Nandi of Kenya. Regina Smith Oboler, *California: Stanford University Press, 1985. Pp. 348.*

Regina Oboler's *Women, Power, and Economic Change* examines the status of women among the Nandi peoples of Western Kenya. Oboler is particularly interested in the impact of socio-economic change on the sexual division of labour and sexual stratification. The Nandi are appropriate for this problematic as they adopted cash crop production on a large scale during the colonial period, and have become tightly integrated into Kenya's cash economy since independence. Originally a semi-pastoral patrilineal people, good soil and familiarity with agriculture made the Nandi particularly well-placed to adopt cash crop production during the colonial period. Gradually the Nandi economy developed around the three mainstays of today's prosperous semi-commercial agriculture: maize, dairy farming and tea. In the 1950s these activities expanded dramatically when Africans were finally permitted to own dairy cattle and to obtain private title to land. As in most of colonial Africa, by and large African men rather than women benefitted from these changes. Regina Oboler asks the question why.

In concordance with much of the recent literature on the status of African women (Hafkin and Bay, 1976), Oboler agrees that Western gender stereotypes of colonial officials buttressed the position of Nandi men. Colonial officials, especially agriculture experts, directed technical assistance to men and ignored women's contribution to agriculture. Men, as "heads" of households, were offered land ownership. As in the West, African women were expected to remain in the private domain; politics and money were a male concern. Not surprisingly, a precolonial institution permitting Nandi women to publicly humiliate a man (much like the Igbo tradition of "sitting on a man") withered away during the colonial period. Colonial officials disapproved of such "barbaric" practices. The missionaries also provided ammunition for Nandi men, who readily adopted the patriarchal paternalism of the church as the ideals of Christian family life and community property legitimated greater control over women and formerly female dominated activities.

Oboler does not simply blame Western gender stereotypes and the penetration of capitalism for the decline in Nandi women's status. She leaves no doubt that traditional patriarchal institutions among the Nandi were equally important factors. Long-standing Nandi traditions facilitated the growth of Nandi male power as well. Nandi society has always defined women's rights to property through men, whether a husband or father. Precolonial Nandi society gave women control over a few limited resources, such as the vegetable garden, chickens, and milk from the afternoon or evening milking, but refused them control over the primary means of production, (i.e. cattle). Even property assigned to women was supposed to be used for household consumption under the watchful eye of one's husband. Nandi ideology stated clearly that "men are considered superior to women physically, intellectually and morally" (p. 58).

Men are believed to be more intelligent than women. Women are thought particularly to be incapable of foresight and to lack the ability to make and carry through sensible and realistic plans. For this reason it is generally agreed that husbands should administer the family estate (p. 60).

This has become part of everyday knowledge today and "It is commonly claimed that if a woman tried to manage property, she would very likely make a mess of it" (p. 60). These sexual stereotypes have been reinforced by colonial gender stereotypes, but they existed in Nandi culture long before the advent of colonialism and certainly contributed to the growth of male control over property among the Nandi.