
Divva

A Quarterly Journal of South Asian Women



Diva *A Quarterly Journal of South Asian Women*

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1. Living on the Edge REETA KOHLI	5
2. Wife Assault 1 NAINI CLOUTIER	13
3. Wife Assault 2 MILA ASTORGA-GARCIA	17
4. He Is Not the Only One COURTESY: BARBARA SCHLIEFER COMM. CLINIC	19
5. Still Cold NILA OSTAPOWICZ	20
6. Using the Oppressor's Language: SYLVIA HULL	21
7. In Support of "Satanic Verses"	31
8. "Are Foreigner's Criminal?" SCHWARZ AND JUHLER	32
9. A Critique PETERSEN AND MEHDI	34
10. A Female Physician's Perspective BOOMA BHAYANA	36
11. You Better Know Your Place MARLENE NOURBESE PHILIP	40
12. Recovering Our Past DOLORES CHEW	46
13. The Crown (short stories) 	50
14. The One Beside Me MARIAM KHAN DURRANI	55
15. How Strong? MAY YEE	56
16. Poems CHRISTINE DONALD	58

TITLE: **Wife Assault**
Designed by *Sandra Jenson*.

Article
Toronto, Canada



**LIVING
ON
THE
EDGE**

by

REETA KOLHI

Don't argue, don't question
Don't disgrace, don't complain

I didn't.
Why then did he beat me?
Don't tell anybody.....
I didn't
He will change.....

He didn't.
Slut, whore, whore, slut
A miscarriage, black eyes, bruises.
You deserve it, you caused it.

Did I?
Days, months, years.....
Unending...
Too long...
Too long...

"In the beginning he use to apologise after he beat me. As time went by there were no apologies or promises to change.... Only silence. He used 'silence' to torture me. I used to pray that he would hit me so at least the sound of a slap would break the silence".

"At 55 with 35 years of beatings and denigrations, I find I am lost somewhere in (the) 3 decades of stories and excuses I made up to hide the violence. Will I find myself... will I be wholesome again?"

"I didn't think it could ever happen to me. Shock, rage, despair, and sheer helplessness paralyzed me".

Written above are not the imaginings of the author or the ingenuous mark of penship. They are but some glimpses of the painful realities of women who have been rendered voiceless by violence perpetuated by men; unbridled brutality that society sanctions against women.

I would be part of the 'silent conspiracy' if I was to say that it did not happen, above all I would be a liar to say that it could not happen to you or me. After all, at least three out of ten Canadian women are battered by their male partners regardless of age, class or race; 1 out of 10 being an accepted conservative statistic.

Wife battering has been rampant globally since the history of Man. It has been endured,

minimized, condoned and above all denied until the last fifteen years. With the birth of the women's movement, not only did women make advances into hitherto exclusive male domains, but the battered wife emerged from the family closet into the public eye. Since her emergence, the patriarchy has attempted to diffuse and minimize the abuse of women by offering various naive and misguided explanations of battering. The following are some commonly held misconceptions that not only prevent a batterer from taking responsibility for his violence but also society from being held accountable for allowing violence against women:

- that wife abuse is uniquely the problem of contemporary society;
- that wife abuse is the result of social phenomena such as drug addiction, alcoholism, underemployment, the stresses and strains of immigration etc;
- that men beat their wives because they feel insecure, intimidated or inadequate;
- that women provoke the abuse which being masochistic they enjoy;
- some cultures condone violence, especially wife abuse;
- that wife abuse is merely a single, isolated occurrence and not a serious one at that;
- that wife abuse does not affect children;
- that it happens only amongst those from a less privileged socio-economic class;
- that wife assault is a family matter;
- that forced sex within marriage is not rape etc. etc.

The above are nothing but lame excuses and perhaps no different from armchair views held by men historically to keep women in line as devalued second class beings who deserved to be beaten and even silenced by death.

Today men beat women for the same reasons as they did throughout history i.e. "as a function of the domination they exercise over women as a sex-class, a domination that is inherent in the very structure of societies that men have created in their own image". It's men's right, privilege, and above all, their duty to batter women. Religious, social and legal antecedents from the now obsolete 'Rule of Thumb' bear this out.

It is true, that some very significant inroads have been made by women around many issues affecting women. But it is equally true that women's oppression, in its most brutal and direct form is still pervasive. If our history is to be anything but a "history of oppression, an oppression that has both been sustained and punctuated by force and violence" then social and economic inequalities between men and women, fundamental to violence against women, need to be challenged.

The patriarchy has kept women oppressed for centuries. Are we to let the oppressive grasp of patriarchy go unchallenged? Do we want only an illusive sense of freedom? Or are we going to join forces in solidarity to gain what is rightfully ours - freedom from violence in society and in our homes.

Definition

For the purpose of this article Wife Assault is defined as 'the physical, psychological or sexual abuse directed by a man against his female partner in an attempt to control her behaviour or intimidate her. It may include only one episode with significant physical or emotional damage, but more often involves repeated, escalating incidents which result in physical injury or symptoms, emotional or psychological sequelae which interfere with her well being and that of her family.

Battering may take any or a combination of the following forms of abuse.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Attacking self-esteem by

name calling - slut, whore etc.
degrading acts - eating cigerrettes, licking kitchen floor etc.
denial of her ideas and feelings etc

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Inducing fear by

threats of swindle
threats of violence to woman & children, other family members, threat of deportation, disrupting & controlling eating, sleeping habits etc., playing with weapons, speeding through red lights etc. to frighten woman, destroying property, cherished belongings, hitting pets etc.

ECONOMICAL ABUSE

Controlling access to money, work etc

PHYSICAL ABUSE

pushing, pinching, spitting, kicking, pulling hair, biting, choking, burning, clubbing, slashing, throwing acid or boiling water, shouting

SEXUAL ABUSE

physical attacks on breasts/genitals, forced sexual activities, accompanied by physical violence or threats of physical violence etc.

It's important to note 2 facts:

1. 70% of female homicides occur in the family context.
2. A woman seeks help after the occurrence of approximately 37 episodes of abuse.

South Asian Context

Before embarking on some of the peculiarities of South Asian assaulted women in Canada, it must necessarily be emphasized at the outset that in spite of enormous social and cultural differences from their Canadian counterparts there are some fundamental similarities. Commonly shared by all women is the underlying relationship between oppressor and oppressed; dominator and dominated, powerful and powerless..... exploitation and class struggle, founded along economic and sexual lines further reinforced by social and religious traditions. Sexual and physical abuse of children, rape, incest, sexual harassment and battering are fears that South Asian women - whether from the highest or lowest class, literate or illiterate, from nuclear or extended families, working class or housewives - share with other Canadian women. Elevated economic status and education levels offer no guarantee of protection from violence.

Socialization of South Asian Women

South Asian women generally bring with them the doctrination of a feudalistic society and a highly patriarchal family system. Coming from an extremely high context culture South Asian women come from a position of vulnerability and helplessness, being at the lowest end of the hierarchical power structure with the eldest male holding unquestionable power. Allegiance to the family and the clan is paramount. IZZAT (pride/worth) of the family and clan has to remain untarnished at any cost. Essentially plain male ego and an attribute solely male, women's lives and actions effect IZZAT the most. A woman can only have IZZAT through her husband or her father. Any actions of the woman threatening the male pride of the family can warrant not only violence but total ostracization from the clan and community.

Morality, religion and mythology put the remaining touches to South Asian women's oppression by focussing sharply on the women's role as the central symbol of culture - the core of civilization. "If she rebels, the society may be overthrown and therefore she is kept in place, if necessary by brutality".

One has but to look at the way Goddesses are portrayed, particularly Sita of the famous Epic Ramayana and the influence of this portrayal in keeping South Asian women resigned to their fate. Like Sita, women are to be the epitome of womanhood, chastity and purity, remaining always loyal to their husbands - PATRIVRATA - regardless if victims of undeserved injustices. Clearly a message to even modern day South Asian women - Be chaste, loyal or else.... women are even today disbelieved and discredited. Is it any wonder that South Asian women because of their conditioning and socialization exude an incredible sense of resignation to their fate. On the one hand they are glorified and on the other the dire consequences of challenging their oppression leaves them totally powerless and with no hope other than living with a view to reincarnation in a happier situation; so strong is their belief that there is no other alternative to their wretched existence.

The Koran's message of "Virtuous women are obedient and careful, scold those who you

fear may be rebellious, leave them alone in their beds and beat them" - speaks for rightful violence against Muslim women.

Girl Children Vs Male Children

One has only to look at simple realities of the birth of girl children - 'another's wealth: PARAYI-AMANAT' - being bemoaned; weaned earlier; differentially treated from boy children; only to be given away in marriage with a dowry - that girls and later women are regarded as a burden with no economic value. It does not come as a surprise that mothers do not want daughters - which mother would, knowing what life is like for a woman. Many women in India abort female fetus's identified so through amniocentesis. For only a male child would bring them some status in the family and thereby some respite. Regarded as men's property, a dispensable property at that is evident by dowry deaths; at the mercy of the uncontrollable function of their wombs to produce sons; where blessings of SATI-SAVITRI RAHO (be Sati and chaste), still pervade in spite of the abolition of the practice of SATI (the burning of widows on their husbands funeral pyre); where widowhood and divorce put the 'untouchable' stamp; where every facet of women's lives has a pervasive fundamental belief that women are not as good as men, and that their happiness lies in accepting this difference and domination by men - South Asian women's helplessness, resignation to violence and acceptance of it as their fate is not beyond comprehension. For many, marriage marks the beginning of a violence that will end as it began - with fire: Hindu marriages are solemnized by 7 circles around fire and many a woman today are dying in Dowry Deaths. Following is an excerpt from "Mother Tongue" that highlights the plight of one such short lived bride.

"Her parents gave her away in the hope that she would find joy and respect. But the dowry wasn't enough for her husband and his family. They tormented her. If she were to return home - it would be in shame, so she stayed. She stayed to be another statistic of a fiery death, an accident in the kitchen, a dowry death!" As many as 18,000 dowry deaths were reported in a recent issue of the Toronto Star.

Role of In-Laws

One of the rare occasions when women are allowed any sense of power is when they become mother-in-laws. Even then still being economically dependent on the family, often women in the household are kept alienated from each other. Many South Asian women seek refuge in shelter's because of abuse endured not only from their husbands but also from their in-laws. In cases of physical and emotional abuse from in-laws, South Asian women often report that their husbands have either not believed them or have failed to protect them from the abuse. It would

seem that the husbands join - in the abuse. It would seem that the husbands were willing to sacrifice their wives to maintain the respect of his elder parents. Given that housing priority is only given to women physically abused by their partners, it becomes extremely problematic for shelters to house women who have been battered by the in-laws. The latter is in essence, the husband's condonation of the abuse. It is imperative that the Canadian legal system regard the abuse of South Asian women in the same light as abuse from their husbands, so that they can access services available to women battered by their partners.

Conclusions

South Asian women in Canada as new immigrants bring with them their deep-rooted socialization, as well as their aspirations for a better life. For many, Canada instead of being a land of milk and honey; turns out to be one hostile environment that is enough to drive many South Asian assaulted women back to their abusive partners. Those born in Canada have their own legacy of ethnoculturalism. Neither of them are immune to violence from their spouses. For many an assaulted South Asian women, its extremely difficult to leave an abusive home for the many reasons recounted above. Once they do access services - mainstream, police, settlement agencies and shelters - they often encounter classic racism, sexism and lack of cultural sensitivity.

Many women do not want to involve the police because they have had little to do with police in South Asia. And the police are generally perceived as hostile and oppressive; besides being racist. With regard to settlement agencies many a woman reports that they were pressured towards reconciliation, tolerance and modification of their behaviour to prevent an onslaught of abuse. Settlement agencies per se rarely focus on settlement issues and rarely have sufficient personnel to deal with wife assault cases. Both settlement agencies and shelters necessarily need to work in partnership from the pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis phase. On the other hand, it is imperative that shelters not only have various ethnic women on their staff teams but that the responsibility of meeting the needs of assaulted immigrant women not fall on the various ethnic workers alone thus creating the 'ethnic-worker syndrome'.

Linguistic and cultural insensitivity in services accessed by South Asian assaulted women often leave a woman as isolated as she was in her violent home. Like one woman said: "I am doomed if I stay and I am doomed if I return".

In spite of laws, wife battering continues to be a social problem. If women are to live free of violence, it is imperative that in addition to legislation, social inequalities which keep women dependent on men for basic survival must be addressed. In particular the lack of cultural-linguistic sensitivity and the systematic racism in services accessed by South Asian assaulted women must be challenged. South Asian women in their turn need to question their rigid adherence to traditions that keep them trapped in oppression. Lastly, Canadian society and the South Asian community must take responsibility for the violence against women, whose lives bear testimony to 'living on the edge'.

Sources

Mary Metzger, *"A Social History of Battered Women"*.

Geetangali Singh, *"Abused Wives in India"*.

Ontario Medical Association Journal

Education Wife Assault - Hand outs

"Mother Tongues" - A Company of Siren's Production

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*[Following two articles express views of two settlement workers of two community organizations. **Diya** does not necessarily agree with the views or terminology used. **Diya** values the work done by settlement agencies regarding issues of wife assault while recognizing that some of the agencies do minimize wife assault in counselling women. Naini Cloutier is a settlement worker with the Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre.]*

Family Violence in the South Asian Community

by

NAINI CLOUTIER

The South Asian culture, an abused woman is caught in a web of traditions and expectations, which prevent her from making changes in her life. The common rationale used to chastise a woman for actions considered inappropriate is, for example: "You cannot travel alone; after all you are a woman".

Main role that a woman in South Asian culture has is that of a nurturer. She is expected to be warm, loving, pious, modest, responsible, forgiving.... She is the centre of the family and, is expected to sacrifice herself for the family. Sita, a legendary figure in Hindu mythology, is worshipped for her devotion to her husband Ram, the king of Ajodhya. When he was exiled from his kingdom Sita followed him to live in the forests. This is so pervasive in the culture that in Bengal, India, often, a young girl is called "Mother" in anticipation of her designated role.

It is hard for a South Asian woman to free herself socially or psychologically from these accretions. So when she finds herself in an abusive situation, she feels obliged and is pressured to continue living in it. She thinks: "I will be nothing without my husband. If I leave - or even tell someone, I will be looked down upon by my community - I will not have performed my duty as a wife. Maybe it is my fate to live in this situation". There is pressure on her to continue living with the abuse not only from her husband and his family but also from her own family. "Think of your family's honour. What will happen to your children? Don't you care?" they all say.

Burdened with guilt, traditions and social disapproval, an abused woman finds it difficult to take any steps to alleviate her situation. Another reason for her staying in an abusive situation

is her inexperience in making decisions; after all, she has never done so - before her marriage her father "knew what was best for her, after her marriage her husband made the decisions and before she dies her sons will tell her what to do.

Even when South Asians live abroad for an extended period, the situation of women does not change, as is obvious to me from my experiences as a settlement worker at Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre (RIWC). My clients tell me of horrific forms of psychological and physical abuse they have suffered from their husbands. These include:

- husband beats her in front of his family, sometimes, they, too, join him.
- husband has affairs with other women or belittles her in front of children and friends.
- he prevents her from communicating with her family.
- he will not give her enough to eat or drink.

My experience has been that abused South Asian women usually do not easily discuss their abusive situation, perhaps because seeking outside help is seen as threatening to the family unit. The first contacts are, often, made in the following manner.

- for information or to get assistance in filling out forms about housing, health insurance, unemployment insurance, etc.
- relatives or friends contact us on their behalf.
- if a woman does discuss her abusive situation at the first contact, she will call us anonymously or if she gives her name, will ask us not to call home.
- in some situations the police or shelter workers contact us. But it is only after several meetings that women take us into confidence.

The following case study illustrates how an abused woman's visit to our office for a settlement need can be her first step to obtaining help. (name and some information has been changed for confidentiality.)

"Beatings started early in our marriage. I am afraid to do anything against my husband's wishes. Now even his family has joined him in abusing me". Veena was crying as she said this to me. This incident occurred after several meetings with her. Initially she and her husband had come to me to get forms filled to obtain housing. Veena is 35 years old, has three children and has a university education from India. After the first meeting, she often called me to get help with employment training courses. When she did tell me about her abusive situation, she was worried about confidentiality; she felt that by telling someone outside the family she had caused disrespect to her family. It took many hours of supportive counselling before Veena felt comfortable discussing her situation. I advised her of the options and resources available to her and discussed her rights as a person. Also I helped Veena find a job and daycare. This made it possible for her to gain some control over her life. Because of repeated abuse, Veena had grown very helpless. As she needed extensive counselling to resolve personal conflicts and for making decisions, I referred the case to Pam Gil, our family counsellor.

At RIWC we found a strong correlation between decision-making and the age group that an abused woman belonged to.

Group A - Women who have decided to continue living in the abusive situation. They usually request counselling for themselves and their husbands (who might or might not agree to it.)

Group B - It comprises of women who take a step to leave the abusive situation, usually at the crisis stage, but return to it subsequently. At the crisis stage, women require a lot of supportive counselling and assistance with finding immediate shelter, and daycare, and in

dealing with police, lawyers, physicians, psychiatrists, and children's aid societies.

Group C - Women who have taken the final step to leave the abusive situation. They require all the above mentioned settlement services.

ABUSED WOMEN

AGE	GROUP A		GROUP B		GROUP C	
	<i>% in abusive situation</i>		<i>% returning to one</i>		<i>% divorced or separated</i>	
	86-87	87-88	86-87	87-88	86-87	87-88
20-30	25	14	16	21	59	65
30-40	30	20	30	60	40	20
40-50	70	71	20	-	10	29

As can be seen from our statistics, younger women are more likely to leave abusive situations than older women. There are greater pressures on older women to submit to their situation - often they have more than two children to take care of. Also having lived in the abusive situation they are less inclined to take the first step towards obtaining help. Certain fluctuations are present in the data in the transition from 1986-87 to 1987-88. At present we cannot explain this, but will be remapping data in the near future.

Whatever our personal opinions be, we respect decisions made by a woman so that she feels confident in making decisions in the future. We feel that it is very important for women to build their self-confidence, so we encourage them to join skills training programs, such as, computer training, job re-entry programs, etc. To help abused women cope with the stress of their abusive situation and in joining a program, we assist them with all their settlement needs, such as: daycare, housing and finances. We also have a support network, which was developed by our former family counsellor, Wahida Valiente. Abused women participating in family counselling are linked to provide support to each other. This program along with the counsellor's compassion lessened isolation, increased involvement and enhanced self-esteem.

Despite problems, my clients show incredible resilience. I am amazed by their strength of spirit. They come to us in a state of shock, numbed by abuse - as if they have lost the ability to laugh. They are shattered because their family is broken. A few months later, the same women have wiped away their tears and are beginning to make a life for themselves. Some have joined English as a Second Language classes, or job-oriented courses while others are working. In fact, some of the women are even ready to help others in similar situations. Some of the qualities, i.e. sense of responsibility, patience, and belief in fate that led them to accept their abusive situation, now helps them to come to terms with their new life.

Advocacy-in-Action Project on Family Violence

by

Mila Astorga-Garcia

Family violence is just as much a phenomenon among ethnic families as it is in non-ethnic white families. Just like the issue of sexual assault, in general, it is a difficult topic to discuss among ethnic families. Not because it does not exist as frequently or as brutally as in the experience of non-ethnic white families. Neither is it because it is not a concern among ethnic families.

On the contrary, family violence is just as much a dreaded and traumatic experience for both ethnic and non-ethnic white families. The difference lies in the fact that ethnic families tend to be more secretive about this phenomenon, as it is the general view among them that it is not proper nor desirable to display the family's dirty linen to others; that violence is just as much a private matter as the family's finances, except that violence is a much more sensitive and embarrassing matter, so that its occurrence is kept a much more closely guarded secret.

Victims of violence in ethnic families, especially women and children, are greatly deterred by cultural reasons to speak up and seek help. Most ethnic families come from cultures where women and children are traditionally expected to be passive in the face of male authority - whether this authority finds expression in civilized or violent means. Victims of violence are expected to suffer in silence, and to take their suffering, no matter how painful and dehumanizing, as a matter of fact or procedure. This is because victims are made to feel that they are at fault for deserving such treatment, one way or another.

Even if victims of family violence muster the courage to speak up and seek help, they are in most cases prevailed upon by conservative family members - whether through persuasion or coercion - not to proceed with their plans, lest a scandal is created, or lest any semblance of family harmony is eroded. In traditional ethnic cultures, it matters what people in the community

have to say about an individual or his family - unlike in developed urban societies where nuclear-based families look upon their problems or their image as their own concern, and not any other family's much less the whole community's business.

Victims of family violence in ethnic families do suffer from the stigma placed upon them - as it is unfortunately both a myth and a reality that violence, being a learned behaviour, could result in similarly violent behavioural manifestations on victims who never get the chance to be helped, that many end up as perpetrators of violence in their own families. It must be mentioned, however, that there are those victims who manage to acquire the awareness, determination and strength to fight violence in all its forms.

Family violence, whether in ethnic or non-ethnic white families, is a concern of Scarborough Women's Centre. The Centre is a non-profit charitable organization which is funded through government grants and private fund-raising. We provide information and referral services as well as programs to Scarborough women. For family violence victims seeking our help, we listen to their concerns and assist them in finding the resources available to suit their needs.

The Centre is also involved in advocacy work for women. We are now in the final process of building the Scarborough Women's Action Network (S.W.A.N.). With the participation of around 75 Scarborough women from different life situations, backgrounds and interests, we identified gaps services that serve as barriers to women's participation in the community during the forum "Your Concerns Are Ours", held at the Centre last April 27th. This was followed by another meeting, "Finding Positive Solutions", held May 18th, which discussed various ways by which women can work together on common concerns. In both these meetings, a lot of women expressed the need and energy to participate in an network that will advocate for women's issues in a collaborative way. Our final meeting to firmly set up the structure and mechanism by which our action network can effectively meet the advocacy needs of Scarborough women will be held on Wednesday, June 15th, 1-3p.m. and you all are most welcome to be part of it.

Based on the results of our first meeting and a survey conducted in conjunction with it, one service gap clearly identified was the lack of emergency shelters in Scarborough. Women specifically indicated the need to establish another women's shelter in the city, to help the only existing shelter in the city, Emily Stowe, cope with the great demand for a temporary haven for women and children who are victims of family violence and sexual assault.

Another relevant service gap identified was language and culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive services for immigrant and ethnic families.

The Centre also works with other groups on advocacy around sexual assault issues, whether in family or public situations. On the initiative of Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), the Centre co-sponsored with women's groups the Stopping Rape 11 Conference on April 16th this year. Our contribution focused on the issue of sexual assault as experienced by immigrant women.

The Centre is also very much involved in Women of Many Cultures Planning Committee - an inter-agency group in Scarborough concerned with the delivery of services to women of diverse cultural backgrounds. The Committee is presently chaired by Lynda Kosowan, executive director of the Centre. Women of Many Cultures has sponsored three forums attended by an average of 70 women of diverse backgrounds, including new immigrants and refugees. It has published a report, "Sharing Our Concerns", which summarizes the issues and recommendations made by the women around education and employment related concerns. A fourth forum, "Solving Our Problems", will be held in the fall of this year - on October 29th, at the Centre.

This forum will focus on advocacy for the women's concerns and will significantly introduce, for the first time, family law and how to use legal avenues in dealing with family related problems, among them, violence.

(This article was presented at the panel discussion of the Family Violence Workshop held June 4, 1988.)

IN VISIBLE COLOURS

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HE IS NOT THE ONLY ONE:

Tell-Tale signs of a wife batterer

1. Jealousy - often imagines wife is having affairs.
2. Tries to isolate wife.
3. Tries to control wife.
4. Jekyll and Hyde type personality.
5. May have problems with the law.
6. Explosive temper, flies into rage without provocation.
7. Tells wife it is all her fault, projects own thoughts onto wife.
8. Verbal assault (insults, put-downs, slanderous names, in addition to physical assaults)
9. Comes from family where violence was condoned.
10. Maybe more violent when wife is pregnant, or shortly after giving birth.
11. Denies the beating, or their severity, seems not to remember.
12. Will do whatever it takes to drive the wife away, then whatever it takes to get her back, grab the kids, apologize profusely, send her flowers, cry real tears, promise her anything (and they will know exactly what she wants to hear). "I'll go to church with you....I'll get counseling.....I'll stop drinking.....I'll never hit you again etc etc".
13. The pattern is repeated, wants the wife to return, whatever it takes to drive her away, followed by whatever it takes to get her back.

courtesy: Barbara Schlifer Commerative Clinic

Still Cold

by

Nila Ostapowicz

Winter comes without hesitation
in this country of our exile.
Chilling more, than just our bones and bodies.
Dreams are scarce fruit
in an alien climate,
she'll ban buds on branches
Barren fruit.
How shall we adapt to this existence?
Waiting, waiting...
At Home it is still spring,
Warmth births new streams flowing in mountains,
mountains defining sea
water and rock, earth forming new creations
Ancient Valleys nurturing their children
Touching sun
And you, you, always the impetuous one
Have returned home already.
And I still cold, am waiting.

In memory of Anna Maria Espinoza

[Anna Maria Espinoza was a shelter workers who was heavily committed to the issues of assaulted immigrant women. Anna Maria passed away from a hit and run accident last month. This poem is written in dedication to her devotion to issues effecting immigrant assaulted women.]

Using the Oppressor's Language:

A STUDY OF WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

by

SYLVIA HULL

This paper explores the implications of Dorothy Smith's theoretical paper "Using the Oppressor's Language" (1979:10-18) for research and writing in the social sciences which focus on issues of women and development, with particular although not exclusive reference to South Asia. The concern here is less with the 'what' or the content of what is said, than with the manner of speaking. Social science discourse is predominantly built around abstract conceptual models and related logical categories which seek to impose explanatory patterns on data. Smith's contention is that such a mode of speaking, the externalized, objectified language of academic texts, readily becomes part of the apparatus of ruling. Instead of providing us with tools to understand our lived experience, it comes to function as an ideology. The method of speaking itself becomes a means NOT to know and NOT to see the lived reality, in this case of women who experience oppression.

Smith begins from an exploration of the discourse of capitalism, and the language usage which is integral to methods of domination through which the ruling apparatuses of capitalism work. This method of speaking reflects the method of organizing relations between people, so that their powers and creative energies can be exploited by the organizations. The very organizations which our labour produces are used to crush us. Our work becomes separated from us, used for purposes which are not ours (ibid:12). Smith argues that an external and objectified language is integral to this process of expropriation. Through such language organizations become 'people', legal persons, entities which have needs and purposes and take actions, and in terms of which people are only means or objects. As she puts it "It is a language and method of speaking that begins and ends in the texts so that the living and lived everyday worlds of people disappear from view" (ibid). Corporations such as Safeway or ITT which appear to do things, do not exist in any particular place, although they make an appearance in many local places. They are divorced from the locality, presenting themselves as 'rule by nobody'. The very methods of speaking, the language of abstractions and categories, serves to neutralize and disguise the oppression of people, the manner in which they are used, and their powers expropriated.

Smith goes on to argue that this method of speaking is exactly how members of the intelligentsia, social scientists included, are trained to speak, over many years of professional apprenticeship. We learn to relate to each other in terms of texts, and to orient our discourse to abstract models of systems, held together by concepts and categories, of which instances can be found in the real world. Relations between people in their everyday lives tend to become replaced by relations between conceptual categories in abstract systems which do not exist in any particular place. In effect, this is the language through which the apparatus of ruling works. We do it to ourselves.

In her earlier work on "The Ideological Practice of Sociology" (1974:39-54) Smith lays out in some detail how this fundamentally ideological method of speaking and working comes about in sociology. Drawing upon Karl Marx's discussion in The German Ideology of the three "tricks" which prove "the hegemony of the spirit in history", Smith presents her own version of the three sociological tricks (ibid:46). First of all data are gathered as answers given to particular questions by particular people, but then these answers are detached from the speakers and the situations in which they speak. They are codified and analyzed in terms of the abstract categories of our theoretical models which impose patterns upon the data. Concepts such as culture, culture of poverty, 'norms of purdah', ethnicity, class, gender, apathy, job skills, management models etc. come into play at this stage. The third stage in the creation of ideology occurs when these abstract categories are reimposed on the original situation in which the data were gathered as explanations for that lived experience. Relations between categories in the abstract social system models substitute for the on-going relations between people which underlie the original data. In the end we can no longer tell whether the patterns we 'discover' in the data are the ones originally there, or merely those which we have imposed ourselves. In theoretical debates it is the abstract concept which appear as the 'entities' which do things rather than the people themselves. People disappear, except as instances of concepts. Such modes of talking exactly mirror the oppressor's language, the language of the ruling bureaucratic apparatuses of capitalism. We break our data up into the bits and pieces which correspond to our concepts, while the processes which produce the lived reality we are trying to describe disappear from view.

Theories of ethnicity, race, class, and gender, and the relations between them, which play a central role in the study of women and development in the third world, provide particularly powerful illustrations of these methods of speaking, and how profoundly they can hamper our search for knowledge of underlying processes.¹ Typical research in this field might interview women of colour working as domestics in foreign countries. The unity of their lived experience then becomes broken down into component variables, with appropriate indicators: Race (Genetic features, colour, degree of blackness, passibility as non black) Ethnicity (Place of origin of self and father, religion, language spoken in the home, place of origin of spouse) Gender location (vital statistics - usually omitted by sociologists although they might be crucial in women getting jobs age, marital status, co-habiting arrangements, number of children, location in family life cycle) Class (occupation, income, education, occupation of father and spouse). All these dismembered bits are then fed into a computer for processing through a multiple correlation program. The output is then analyzed in minute detail to figure out how these supposedly independent variables might be interrelated.

1. I am deeply indebted to a draft paper by Roxana Ng "Ethnicity, Gender, Class and Canadian State Formation" (February 1988) for the ideas raised in this section. Ng kindly allowed me to read it before it was ready for publication.

This leads to debates about the relative primacy of class or gender or ethnicity determinants of social position.

The problem, as Ng sees it, is that the very language in which such theories are expressed, and the methods of research which they generate, precludes the possibility of finding out the actual lived relationships involved. The underlying experienced reality to which such concepts refer are not entities which can be observed and measured by means of indicators. They are processes which refer to on-going struggles between women and men for control over their productive and reproductive lives. Ethnicity, for example, is a process not an attribute of individuals. In the context of Canada, the members of the 391 "First Nations" came to emerge as Native Indians only through processes of colonization which "destroyed, re-organized, fragmented and homogenized the myriad tribal groups across the land (NG 1988:7). Colonial policies of dividing and ruling subjugated peoples created the ethnic-classes which now dominate the politics of newly independent countries. Sexist policies inherent in development projects which treat only men as farmers and potential recipients of credit and training in new agricultural techniques, create the gender-classes in which men control cash cropping while women are reduced from independent subsistence farmers to virtual beggars, pleading for money to buy food from men.

The lived experience of race, ethnicity, gender and class emerge through these processes of struggle; through the actual activities of people and how they organize their relations. The conceptualization of such processes in the discourse of texts as entities which can be entered as variables in abstract models, causes people to disappear. The active agency appears as the bits and pieces in the model, as if it were they, and not people, who do things. Smith likens this kind of theorizing to commodity fetishism in classical economics (1974:47). Relationships between people take on the appearance of relations between things or commodities in the marketplace. Commodities appear as 'agents' rather than people. In social science theorizing, concepts take the place of commodities, but the result is the same. People as active agents in the social construction of their world are replaced by abstract systems in terms of which people only function as means or objects.

In her article on "Using the Oppressor's Language", Smith gives a series of examples of this objectification process at work. We see Levi Strauss's anthropological description of a shaman "treating" a sick woman. The woman does not know why she feels her pain. What the shaman does is impose an explanation, interpreting her pain in terms of his own conceptual schema. Strauss then takes up this conceptual model and analyses it as a symbol system. The woman and her pain disappear. Smith draws attention to the politics of this account; the fact that the patient is a woman and the shaman a man, and that he has the power to treat her experienced misery as a "problem of understanding". Her pain becomes peripheral to what is being talked about.

In our own society, we see the concept of "apathy" being used to explain why women do not participate in union meetings, and why women on the executive never seem to do anything for other women. In terms of the oppressor's language, the abstract, bureaucratic language of organizations, unions are democratic organizations and hence if they do not function democratically it is a problem of individual motivation. Again the lived experience of the women themselves disappears. Their reality, that meetings are held at times and in places which make it difficult for women to attend, and that when they do speak at meetings, they are generally not heard, and what they have to say not taken seriously, does not get talked about. Women's actual experiences, how the organization actually works in relation to them, are not part of the

conceptual model imposed on them as explanations.

A third example used by Smith is that of "battered wife". In terms of the oppressor's language it appears as an entity, a type of wife, a bundle of instance, of which we can collect samples for analysis. But "battered wife" is not an entity. It is a process in which women are trapped in the kinds of relations in which they experience violence. We lose sight of these processes once we conceptualize "battered wives" as entities. As Smith expresses it, we no longer see what is happening to these women" in the real world where their reality is an actual part of what others are doing, and the social relations which put the world together as it is". (1979:15).

This, then, is the oppressor's language, method of speaking in which actual people relating to each other in actual situations, disappears from the discourse. This is replaced by an abstracted, neutralized conceptual mode of speaking in which relations between concepts in the text becomes what is talked about.

The remainder of this paper draws on examples from my own research on women and development in India. I hope to share my own slowly increasing sensitivity to how the oppressor's language is used in such research, and how deeply it can distort our understanding of the processes through which the lived reality of women is actually put together. Two main examples; the concept of management skills and related notions of incompetence; and the concept of *purdah* as a syndrome of cultural norms and related notions of disinterest and apathy, both draw from more extensive research papers focusing on the social construction of women's reality. Those aspects which relate to use of the oppressor's language are separated out for attention here. Only the skeletal outlines of empirical data can be presented here. Readers who are interested in a fuller account are directed to the main papers. The third example concerns the oppressive use of concepts of "the capitalist system" and "modes of production", drawn from the immediate experience of a discussion between academics at a Learned Societies meeting devoted to South Asia studies. The irony and incongruity of encountering radical Marxist thought as oppressive language or an oppressive method of speaking, was the strongest impetus to writing this present paper.

The model of management skills:

This model of management skills, as an aspect of traditional management theory emerged in the late seventies, primarily as a tool to explain or account for the relatively limited number and relative poor performance of women in management, compared with men (see Hale 1987:489-513). It was essentially conceptualized as a cultural problem, with women as poorly adapted to the masculine culture of bureaucratic organizations. Women it seems, are less driven to achieve, more likely to fear success, less self confident, less assertive, less likely to show initiative or to take risks, less decisive, more in need of support and approval, less adept at stress control, less skilled in leadership and followership techniques, and in wielding authority over others, less able to delegate authority, and less committed to long term careers in management. The ideal manager, in contrast, has predominantly masculine traits which are the opposite in every respect to the weaknesses of women.

This very negative conception of women as managers was not intentionally sexist. Those who developed and used this model were themselves frequently female managers, committed to helping and to training other women to enter management roles in greater numbers and to becoming more competent. They saw the problems as rooted in the early childhood socialization of women, and their chronic lack of exposure to team sports and other avenues for experiencing leadership at an early age. Proposed solutions were seen in the long-term goals of less sexist

education for girls, and in the short-run in-training programs and special help from male mentors in business.

This theoretical model perfectly predicted my field data on the disastrous pattern of incompetent management displayed by women who managed the nutrition program and child development scheme which I studied in rural North India. The programs had only minimally achieved their development objectives. Women managers seemed unable to get their projects started in many villages, or to keep them running. Ineffectual authority over subordinate teaching staff was the norm. Their staff were often openly disobedient, neglecting their duties, stealing food, being absent for long periods without leave, flaunting loose sexual behaviour, failing to open and operate their classes on a regular basis. The senior project director admitted of her own volition, that to her knowledge at least one-third of her staff were not performing their duties up to par. Yet nothing seemed to be done about it. There was little obvious discipline or punishment for offenders and little initiative for change. If managers wanted to be certain that something got done, they did it themselves rather than trusting to subordinates.

What can we do with this account? The language of the prevailing models of female management seems to fit these data virtually in their entirety. Women managers in the field and male managers who criticized them offered compatible explanations themselves - they were household ladies, inexperienced, incompetent, they did not have the knowledge, the skills, the energy, the courage to take on the job. Above all, the people in the field stressed apathy as the all-pervasive explanation for what went wrong. Women, they declared, were not interested in doing better. Supervisors blamed staff for not being interested in doing better work; staff blamed supervisors for not being interested in their work or ready to help them. Both blamed village women for not being interested in the programs offered, and so not turning up to classes. The explanation seemed all tied up. But it wasn't.

It was Smith's notion of 'apathy' as the supreme example of using the oppressor's language, which acted as a flag, a kind of warning signal that something is wrong here. People are not generally apathetic about their careers, the ways in which they earn their living. These women were no exception. They wanted their jobs, wanted to go on working, wanted to improve their educational qualifications so that they might get promoted. If they had given up trying in this particular context, apathy was not the cause.

Something important is missing from the explanation presented so far. Where are the people? We are supposed to be discussing women working in relationships with large numbers of other people who are organizing themselves to provide agricultural and social development projects. But we are not. What is actually being discussed is relations between elements in a model of female personality sub-systems. What women managers do becomes merely instances of the model. This is using the oppressor's language. What we do not see is precisely what we need to be looking for - the relations between people as active agents, negotiating and managing their social world. When we actually look at these relations, the entire model of apathy and inadequate personality sub-systems disappears. What we see is the authority of female managers being systematically undermined by senior male colleagues. Female managers did act decisively to fire staff who worked badly, and to punish others, to order them to be transferred to undesirable jobs, to have their pay cut, etc. But the actions they took were overruled by senior males who used their superior authority to reinstate dismissed workers, to authorize their pay and to reverse transfer orders. Women managers were left with no authority at all. They were not consulted by superiors about their projects, and when they gave advice or suggestions, they tended to be ignored. Men could take for granted the bureaucratic backing for their authority;

women could not. As de-fact powerless people, women in managerial positions had to continually placate male superiors, knit sweaters for them, make tea and supplicate them just to survive at all. They behaved in all the ways described in the model, but as survival tactics not personality defects. In the oppressive language of abstractions women became the causes of their own failure as managers while the actions and the relationships which produced it remained hidden.

The Culture of Purdah Model:

This deeply entrenched model of female value systems provides an anthropological tool for explaining and accounting for the extreme pattern of veiled and secluded domesticity which characterizes the lives of South Asian women, especially in rural areas. A syndrome of values constitute components of this mode. The patterns vary widely by region and sub-group, but generally include notions of symbolic shelter and separation of women from men, concerns of modesty, honour, family status, respectability, and the primacy of the domestic realm and family responsibilities for women (see Papanek and Minault 1982). Debates focus on relations between this syndrome of values and the smooth functioning of extended family systems, and the harmonious functioning of male village politics, undisrupted by the influx of wives from outside the village; and more recently a focus on the barriers which this very traditional culture places on the participation of women in modernization. This model can fully account for the evidence of limited participation of women in employment and politics outside the home, with the exception of western educated women who presumably have broken out of this mould. The explanation seems all tied up. But it isn't.

Something important is missing; the dimension of women and men actively negotiating their social world with reference to these values. In my own study of women involved in rural development projects, all the predictions derived from the purdah model failed (see Hale 1988:276-298). In principle women should have been reluctant to take jobs outside the home, which violate purdah values, and only do so if they were desperate, or part of the western educated elites; and they should have been subject to widespread social disapproval, especially from other women. None of this proved to be the case. Women wanted the jobs so badly they fought over them. In the face of continual setbacks and low worker morale, they still wanted to go on working, rather than go back into the life of purdah restrictions. Village housewives overwhelmingly supported women who had found jobs, and many were jealous.

These data suggest that if the majority of village women do conform to the restrictions of purdah, it is less because they believe in such values, than because they do not have options. Glimpses of what these barriers might be came from discussions with housewives. Many had been deprived of formal education, so that they could not get jobs which accorded with their family status. They also faced opposition from male family members and feared threats and intimidation from men in the street. All the women who worked outside their home feared the humiliation of being labelled as prostitutes or sexually loose women. Their fears were actually far more exaggerated than the reality of what actually happened to women outside the home. But there was strong evidence that men generally believed in purdah values to a far greater extent than did women, and were very willing to label them as loose, immoral women who neglected their families, and were incompetent workers anyway. Compounding these barriers was the fact that there were few jobs available for rural women anyway, so most housewives had no option but to accept their dependence on men.

It is in these relationships, and in the on-going struggles between women and men for control

over their productive and reproductive lives, that the patterns of purdah emerge. But when the discussion is couched in terms of cultural norms these active relations disappear from view. We end up discussing relations between elements in the model rather than relations between people. It is as if 'culture' is the active agent rather than people. It becomes an element in the Oppressor's language, such that people appear only as means or objects in the functioning of a system which is set over and above them and which appears to operate independently of their own actions. The true relations of power disappear. We are back to 'rule by nobody'.

The Mode of Production Model

This last example draws on my experience of discussions which took place during a session of the Canadian Asian Studies Association meetings in June, 1988 at Windsor. This discussion illustrated both how all-pervasive and powerful this oppressor's language can be, and yet at the same time how difficult it is to recognize. The panel concerned the Status of Women in South Asia. Fauzia Rafiq gave a powerful and impassioned account of the appalling treatment of women in Pakistan under President Zia's "Islamization" program. The legalization of "Shariat" law, based on verses from the Koran, now means that the murder of a woman counts for only half the penalty or 'blood money' required for the murder of a man; two women are required to give testimony in any law court, or any financial transaction, on the grounds that a woman's witness counts for only half that of a man. Worst of all, a woman who has been raped requires no less than four male witnesses, all of impeccable character, before she can press charges in court. Otherwise she herself can be sentenced to public flogging for engaging in unlawful sex. The paper was delivered with stunning force by Rafiq, who stated from the outset that she could not be "objective" about such atrocities.

In the ensuing discussion, the experiences she described became objectified, abstracted, and neutralized. A sociologist in the audience offered a reinterpretation of the paper in terms of the 'mode of production' debate. Laws against women can be understood in terms of the needs of the world capitalist system to maintain a reserve army of cheap female labour at home, and to ensure the cheap reproduction of the male labour force, etc. The main discussant followed this with an analysis of how the Islamization policy functions to provide legitimacy for the military regime, and how it is in the interests of i) the class of males who run the 'putting-out' system of labour, who benefit from controlling the cheap labour of women in the home and, ii) the class of educated, professional males who wish to reduce the competition of females in the job market.

The original concern with women's pain, the experience of being raped with those who violate her not only immune from punishment, but able to have her publicly flogged for even mentioning what they had done to her, was excluded from the debate. The predominantly male audience translated the issues of rape, religion, and male abuse of women, into a discussion of a system of production model and its categories of analysis. Rafiq was effectively silenced. She tried to respond to her oppressors at the end, to argue that they were trivializing and dismissing what she had said. But the discussion period was already over and people were leaving the room.

I do not think that either of the discussants would have seen themselves as using the oppressor's language, least of all as part of the apparatus of ruling, for they are both critical Marxist theorists. But they used the language and methods of oppression nonetheless. One learns from their discourse that sexism exists or persists because it is functional for capitalism. Such discourse is also functional for exonerating Pakistani men from blame or culpability in the oppression of women. Thy system produces it, not the sexist men themselves. At the same time the struggles of women to express and to deal with the immediate experience of their own

oppression can be trivialized as a form of false consciousness. The concerns of dominant males with their own class oppression takes precedence. In effect such Marxist functionalism constitutes an ideology of dominant males vis-a-vis women, a means not to know and not to see the lived reality of women.

The current debate on "Feminist Marxism or Marxist Feminist" (Armstrong et al. 1985) reflects these same processes of objectification, abstraction, and neutralization applied to the situation of women in North America. We learn from the essay by the Armstrongs that the privatization of women in the home, in effect the Western version of the purdah system, is functional for capitalism. Capitalism is based on free wage labour which requires the separation of a public, commodity production unit from a private subsistence unit. Hence the subordination of women is a necessary condition for the capitalist system. The position of women as a reserve army of labour which is therefore cheap, is also necessary for the system to function. This is the exact logical equivalent of the argument of businessmen that we cannot afford a policy of pay equity because higher wage bills would weaken our competitive position in world markets (Breckenridge 1985). Women who fight for pay equity appear to be threatening the very economic system which feeds them. The ensuing debate then focuses on the relative utility of concepts of class and gender and the relative primacy of such entities as determinants of social structures. It is a sophisticated version of what Smith refers to as the "Is Jackie Kennedy Onassis oppressed?" debate (1979:14). In the arguments in defence of abstract models and categories we lose sight of the processes, the actual activities of people in their relations with each other, through which the lived reality is socially constructed. This is the oppressor's language; only it is worse when it is spoken by feminists and by Marxists who are on our side.

I should perhaps make it clear here that I am as likely to be guilty of using the oppressor's language as anyone else. I too was thoroughly well trained in the application of structural function models and Marxist functional models in my sociological apprenticeship. It comes almost as second nature to speak in such terms, and a constant struggle to catch oneself doing it.

How can we escape from using the oppressor's language and the oppressor's method of speaking? Smith argues that there is another way of speaking and writing, a way of looking at the world as it begins from where we are, rather than from outside ourselves. We can use abstractions, and we need them to analyze the relations which shape our everyday experience. But we cannot begin with them and remain in them, and return to them, setting them over us to judge us (1979:17). Above all, we have to recognize that there is no capitalist system which operates independently of what we ourselves are doing. There is no externalised structure, no other enterprise than our own, no 'entity' out there which does not come from us. What gets done, we do.

From this perspective it is what men do to women in their everyday relations in Pakistan, and how they justify it to themselves, and how they support each other when they do it, and how women individually and together respond to it, that produces and perpetuates the reality which we objectify as Islamization. Equally, it is what people do to each other in their everyday relations which creates what we refer to as purdah, or the privatization of women in the home, or women's incompetence as managers. As we have seen above, it is not 'apathy' or 'purdah' or 'lack of management skills' which produced the empty classrooms, the homebound housewives and the non functioning child development and nutrition programs. These logical categories are not entities which function in particular systems and for which we can gather instances. They are processes which involve the active struggles of women and men in given

situations for control over the means of living and reproducing their lives. We need to speak directly of these processes in the social construction of our everyday reality, and to eschew the language of abstract entities and categories in terms of which what people do disappears.

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(Courtesy Women and Language)

BENEATH THE CRESCENT

by

Saheban~

**A passionate and uninhibited account of the
oppression of Pakistani women written by a
Muslim woman born and raised in Pakistan.**

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IN SUPPORT OF
"SATANIC VERSES"

Editorial Committee of Diva support author Salman Rushdie's right to express his opinion in "Satanic Verses" and believes that branding it as "hate literature" might not be a fair categorization.

Moreover, it is felt that religious fanaticism displayed by some Muslim leaders of Muslim majority countries cannot be supported.

It also expresses its reservations regarding some groups in Western countries who tend to use this fanaticism of some Muslim politicians to reach the racist conclusions that all Muslims are fanatics.

The committee noted with indignation the decision taken by some major bookstores in Canada not to carry "Satanic Verses". The committee finds this action limiting the right of access of a writer who becomes controversial.

Are Foreigners Criminal?

by

F. SCHWARZ & H. JUHLER

[Diva publishes the following article in the Forum as an example of racism in scholastic work that received government funding from a so-called 'egalitarian' Scandinavian country and was published in book form by an established publishing house in 1986.

The very premise of the study is so offensively racist that it was thought appropriate for it to be followed by its own critique.

The article is based on "Er udlaendinge Kriminelle?" ("Are Foreigners Criminal?"; Shultz, 198).]

For a number of years Denmark has been a country of immigration for foreign citizens. This has caused discussions as to whether foreign citizens take advantage of the social system or whether they have a stronger criminal tendency than other people or whether they differ in other ways from the "local" Danish population.

In spite of the overheated discussions about potential criminal tendencies in foreigners, the subject has not been studied thoroughly enough for a sober discussion to be based on it. Because of that it was very exciting for us to have the opportunity to become the first persons to make a thorough empirical investigation of the criminal tendencies of foreigners in Denmark.

Our investigation is related to the year of 1983. Because of the Danish foreign legislation we found it relevant to divide the investigation group into three sub groups, namely:

Danes, foreign citizens with permanent residence permits in Denmark and tourists.

We obtained information about the registered criminality in 1983 concerning these groups, we defined the registered criminality as registered settlements for violating the Danish civil penal code and the special law of euphorized dopes. (This law deals with the "lesser" drug crimes.)

These pieces of information showed a difference in the pattern of criminal behaviour in the three groups i.e. The Danes, the foreign inhabitants and the tourists.

Following is a brief summing up of the results of the investigation.

We did not study the criminal tendencies of the foreign female inhabitants because we do not have exact information on the female population.

Out of 30,683 convicted people (men & women) 977 were foreign inhabitants and 649 were tourists.

Relatively speaking, foreign inhabitants had a somewhat higher criminal frequency than that of the Danish population. This was the case in almost all age groups.

With regard to the male foreign inhabitants it was obvious that the group showed both the largest number of registered criminals in the age 15 and 19. By way of comparison it may be noted that the Danish male group had their criminality-Peak in the age between 20 and 24.

As we focused on the number of sentences per criminal individual we learned that when compared with Danish numbers the permanent foreign inhabitants and tourists had somewhat fewer sentences per criminal individual.

In the investigation we used the term "count sentence". A count sentence is defined as one criminal act which have a consequence of a penalty. (3 thefts which bring one sentence is equivalent to 3 counts). Furthermore the criminality was divided into 4 groups: **crime of violence, crime of property, sexual crime, other crimes i.e. other provisions in the penal code and the code of euphorized dopes.**

As regard to the settled sentences we found that there were differences in the criminal pattern of the male Danes, the foreign inhabitants and tourists.

It is particularly in the categories of sexual crimes and other crimes that both the foreign male inhabitants and the male tourists have a relatively larger number of counts compared to the Danish male population. It must be emphasized that we do refer to a statistic average because some types of crimes have a "tendency" to be violated more often than others. It may be mentioned that homicide normally covers one separate count whereas a settled sentence about theft typically covers several counts. These matters are not taken into consideration in this investigation.

The crime that had the highest frequency within all population groups was the crime of property. It must be added that the crime of property occurred more often in the Danish criminal pattern than that of the foreign inhabitants. This might have influenced the registration of activity counts. The foreign male inhabitants had an average of 2 counts per criminal individual, whereas the Danish male inhabitants had an average of 4 counts per criminal individual.

By estimating and combining different types of criminals we were able to conclude that the foreign inhabitants had, comparatively speaking larger part of almost all the different kinds of crimes. The tourists also had a large part of registered counts in certain types of crimes. Regardless, the most substantial part of the registered criminality was committed by Danes.

One has to be extremely cautious to draw extensive conclusions from this isolated investigation because the study is based on a small number of people.

We warn against conclusions claiming that a rise in number of foreign inhabitants will entail an equivalent rise in number of criminal foreign inhabitants.

The criminal factors are multifarious and the picture may be changed completely by complicated psychological and sociological mechanism.

Are Foreigners Criminal?

A Critique

by

ETTIE TRIER PETERSEN & RUBYA MEHDI

F. Schwarz and J. Juhler, two lawyers, have done a study on criminality among foreigners. We strongly feel that a study that has such open racist implications should not go unchecked. Our comment is based on their Danish publication "Er udlaendinge kriminelle?" (Are Foreigners Criminal?) It is hard to make a thorough criticism on the small article here, as it gives only a few points from their book.

It is notable that the authors mention a discussion that lacks sober material on the subject; we would like to add that the issue had been taken up as a political issue especially by the right wing. Criminality of foreigners is stated, among other reasons, as being the reason for closing the borders on refugees and other foreigners who want to enter the country - and even for expelling those foreigners who live here legally. The victims of this allegation have been immigrants from the developing countries. It is also worth mentioning that there has been theoretical discussions in Scandinavian criminology as to whether it is feasible to consider nationality or ethnicity as a criminal factor.

We welcome the authors' remark about being "cautious to draw extensive conclusions" from their material. But in spite of this warning the authors themselves set out to draw the conclusion that foreigners are more criminal than the Danes.

The first question we ask is this: what is the purpose of such a research? The sole reason that nobody has yet studied the subject thoroughly cannot be a good foundation for doing research, especially not when such work would provide so-called concrete grounds for establishing that foreigners are criminal. All scientists are responsible for their choice of research, not only for results, but also the primary choice of subject. In his/her choice of subject as well as methods, perception of society, and presentation of results, the scientist makes a political decision. If you choose to research into criminality within a special group of people, you very easily put a stigma on that group; and the smaller the group the easier to put the stigma. In most cases the stigmatizing effect occurs, regardless of what result one draws from such studies.

Secondly, we want to say something about the quality of this research. The work is based

completely on official statistics. All conclusions are drawn from simple statistics without any surveys of the objective situation. This leads the authors to one-sided quantitative analyses, completely ignoring the qualitative aspect. One tends to ask again: what is the purpose? In the actual case it is worth mentioning that foreign inhabitants in Denmark only constitute a small percentage of all inhabitants (approx. 2%) which makes it difficult to draw any conclusions what so ever on a statistical basis.

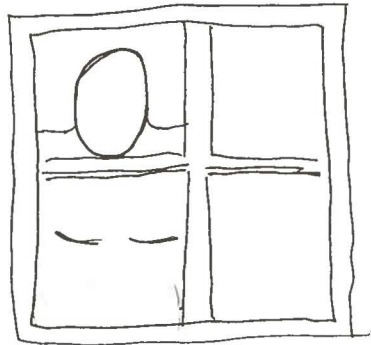
Thirdly, to divide the group of criminals according to their nationality is not a good classification, in the sense that instead of looking for the causes of criminality in the social set-up, the authors have tried to find the reasons for criminality in the ethnic national backgrounds of people. Furthermore, they are foreign inhabitants from a heterogeneous group of people, coming from different parts of the world, and the conditions under which they live in Denmark differ just as much.

The authors wrote a chapter on criminal factors that should be taken into account when doing a criminological research, but they themselves do not take these factors into account. They are aware that sex, age, place of living, social status, education, unemployment etc. are factors that are recognized as vital to the question of who is committing crimes in a society. Still they make a statistical comparison, only dividing according to sex and age groups and in some instances continents and countries. Doing so, they even notice that the absolute numbers are very small and too small to draw any conclusions from (they do not make use of testing statistical significance).

In the book, the authors compare the figures of sentenced violation of the penal law, and conclude that the number of foreigners who are penalized is lower than their share of population (p. 81) which can be looked at as a positive result, but not very enlightening. The authors repeatedly give warnings when talking of different nationalities. They give an example in the introduction: if a population consists of 4 people and one of them commits a crime, 25% of the population is criminal. This example is illustrative of their results.

One should be aware that during a period of 15 years (1970-85), approximately 25,500 foreign citizens have obtained Danish citizenship. The reason for mentioning this is that one condition for obtaining Danish citizenship is a clean criminal record, ie. when you naturalize lawful foreign citizens they will count as lawful not in the number of foreigners, but in the group of Danish citizens. But to the authors of "Er udlaendinge kriminelle?" these Danish citizens remain "foreigners".

We feel that one should be aware of the dangers when researching into criminality among foreigners and should feel obliged to take in all relevant information i.e. the social and economic situations of immigrants. Moreover, unbiased and objective statistics (considering factors like the attitude of the police towards immigrants etc. about foreigners should be evolved, so that the misuse of statistics is reduced - and the goal of an investigation on the subject could be constructive. When you put forward mere numbers, even with reservations, you provide options for others to misuse the "scientific" data.



A FEMALE PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

by

BOOMA BHAYANA

"Last night I heard the screaming
Loud voices behind the wall
Another sleepless night for me
It won't do no good to call
The police
Always come too late - if they come at all

An when they arrive
They say they can't interfere
With domestic affairs
Between a man and his wife
And as they walk out the door
The tears well up in her eyes

Last night I heard the screaming
Then a silence that chilled my soul
I prayed that I was dreaming
When I saw the ambulance on the road

And the policeman said
I'm here to keep the peace

While the crowd dispersed
I think we could all use some sleep..."

Tracy Chapman - Fast Car Album

The saddest thing about family violence is that it escalates. This is not only the impression of feminist workers in the field or shelter workers. This is the result of statistical study of victims of wife abuse.

Women who report wife abuse to health professionals, social work professionals and the law have often borne up to 14 beatings before seeking outside help. Over time the frequency and severity of the beatings increases. Seventy percent of female homicides in Canada are the result of family violence. If we consider wife abuse as a "disease" then the natural course of the untreated illness is severe violence and often death. There is a frightening note of truth to Tracy Chapman's haunting verses.

One of the most frustrating issues that professionals who deal with women who are victims of wife abuse must come to terms with is that women repeatedly return to the abusive situation even in the face of the blaring evidence of dire consequences.

This sort of "repetition compulsion" may often be misconstrued in a variety of ways. The victim may be accused of being masochistic or, worse yet, stupid. In all it becomes easy to blame the victim and make her an adversary.

As with all things it is always most beneficial to interpret things from an experiential rather than an academic point of view. It does not suffice to say "If I were I wouldn't put up with the bum". Rather it is imperative that we find out what it is like to be her in her situation.

Eurasian culture is inherently based on collectivism. There is a belief that the whole is greater than any of its parts. Individuals are seen in the context of the groups to which they belong - families, clans, castes, etc. The first value for the individual, therefore is to uphold the sanctity and respectability of the group.

There are exceptions to this in the realm of mysticism and spiritualism where the advancement of the individual becomes important as in Hindu tradition and the mystical tradition of the Sufis. This, however is an endeavour reserved for a certain segment of one's life when worldly duties have been fulfilled.

North American culture, on the other hand, is based on individualism. The whole is a sum of its parts and is only as good as its parts.

I realize that this is a broad generalization but it helps us to understand some cultural tenets

about wife abuse.

Kant teaches us that we all have an inbred hierarchy of values. Decisions that are "moral" do not sacrifice a higher value for a lower one. Those for whom self preservation is the higher value stealing a loaf of bread is acceptable to avoid starvation. For others in whom the ethic against stealing is higher it would be nobler to starve first.

In the same way when one is taught that a women's role is in the context of family as a wife and mother the higher value becomes maintaining the wholeness of the family. Self advancement and even self preservation are lower values.

On the other hand where self preservation is the greater good the collectivist ideal is easily sacrificed to the higher value.

"FEMIN-ISM" is the advocacy for and empowerment of women who have traditionally been disempowered by social structures which make them bear the burden of maintaining the collectivist ideal. It can be likened to "IDEAL-ISM" where the ideal is upheld or "SOCIAL-ISM" where the societal good is upheld.

"FEMIN-ISM" has become a dirty word and is likened often instead to "RAC-ISM", "SPECIE-ISM" or "SEXISM" where one's race, species or sex is felt to have supremacy over others.

"FEMIN-ISM" deals with the equilibrium of power but, hopefully, (in its more pure sense) does not hope to take one form of a disequilibrium state and turn it into another.

Feminist tenets teach women to leave abusive situations while cultural tenets often teach them to forbear their lot. Feminist tenets are individualist in that they teach women that it is nobler to leave a dysfunctional family situation rather than have oneself become dysfunctional or die. Cultural tenets are collectivist in that the family unit is the first and foremost ideal that must be upheld even at the expense of one's life.

A reconciliation between these tenets may not be reached but understanding them may help prevent us from blaming the victim. Understanding may also help us empower the woman within HER context.

As a physician I see wife abuse as a preventable illness and the source of preventable mortality. As such anything that can prevent the inevitable silence after the screams is a worthwhile form of treatment.

WRITING AND ARTWORK

DONE BY SOUTH ASIAN CHILDREN

WELCOME FOR THE FIFTH ISSUE OF Diva

IS IT NOT A CRIME?

In South Asia, as in most developing countries, wife assault is not perceived as a crime, but rather an issue between husband and wife.

The main reason for this perception is the status which women hold in society; a woman is considered to be a subsidiary of man. He has the right, religiously and culturally to discipline his wife. No one will consider wife battering as wrong and so the husband need not feel hesitant to assault his wife.

The picture of a battered woman that emerges in South Asian countries is a woman who has little choice but to live in a violent home. She has no where to go if she wanted to start anew; she is made to feel guilty by being made to feel responsible for provoking the man; and she has little or no support in the system to draw strength from.

This lack of choice coupled with the harsh realities of living in violent situations dehumanizes the person of a woman and forces her to live in passivity vis a vis the man.

You Better Know Your Place

or

Managing the Unmanageable

by

MARLENE NOURBESE PHILIPS

I use the term unmanageable to refer to those groups of people who have been traditionally exploited and oppressed by Western European powers - women, Africans, peoples of colour and aboriginal peoples. I refer to these peoples or groups as unmanageable because European thought has traditionally designated these groups as not only inferior, but also, paradoxically, as threats - threats to their order and to their systems and traditions of knowledge. Together these groups constitute the threat of the other - that embodiment of everything which the white male perceived himself not to be: where he was male the other was female; where he was rational, the other was irrational; where he was controlled in emotions, the other was uncontrolled - a slave to her emotions; where he was white and therefore the repository of all that was good, the other was black and the repository of all that was evil. If left unchecked these qualities could well undermine the social order, Western European thought suggests, and for this reason these groups are considered potentially, if not actually, unmanageable. At all times they require to be managed.

Historically, dealing with the unmanageable has run the gamut from the actual destruction of peoples where necessary - genocidal practices in the Americas for instance - to management - putting the unmanageable into a preordained place within society so that they can be more easily controlled. Usually where the labour of the unmanageable is required systems of management proliferate.

A classic example of how management works to control that which is different may be seen in the early responses of European artists to the plastic arts of Africa and Oceania. Prior to contact

with the art of these areas, European art was at an impasse; contact with African and Oceanic art was indispensable to the revitalizing of European art traditions. Also, contact between the European artist and these areas of the world were very much a part of the colonial conquest by Europe, and many of the works of art from Africa and Oceania were acquired by Western museums as a result of colonial wars of conquest.

European artists found works, primarily sculpted figures, which were integrally related to a living culture: they, however, failed to understand these cultures or how the art produced was integrated into the culture as a whole. The discomfort on the part of the European artist with the essentially spiritual and ritualistic function of the sculptures led to the invention of the concept of primitivism which then became a conceptual tool to manage those cultures and its peoples. Not only were these cultures deprived of their art, they were also, in some cases, culturally destroyed and exploited. In this attempt to primitivize Africa and Oceania, Western art also lost the opportunity to incorporate into its practice the ritual/spiritual function so integral to art from these areas. The result is the rampant commodification of art which exists in the West today.

In working on the poems that comprise the manuscript, *She Tries Her Tongue**, I came up hard - to use a Jamaican expression I 'bucked up' - against the weight of Eurocentric traditions and became aware that even poetry and the way it was brought to and taught in the Caribbean was a way of management. I was, in fact, working in a language that traditionally had been yet another tool of oppression, a language which has at best omitted the reality and experience of the managed - the African in the New World, and at worst discoursed on her non-being. The challenge for me was to use that language, albeit the language of my oppression, but the only language I had, to subvert the inner and hidden discourse - the discourse of my non-being.

How does a writer who belongs to one of those traditionally managed groups begin to write from her place in a language she has made her own; how does she discover or uncover a place and language of empowerment? These were some of the questions that faced me. The power I sought was not the same power which the white European male/father uses to manage, control and destroy the other, but a power directed at controlling our words, our reality and our experience.

'You better know your place'. In the Caribbean this expression was often used to remind children of their position in society, or to chastise someone who had been perceived to have stepped out of his or her social position. In "*She Tries...*" I refused to know my place - that place set apart for the managed peoples of the world - the hewers of wood and drawers of water. I set out to be unmanageable. I intended to define my own place and space, and in so doing I had to take the war right to the heartland of the white father/manager - Western Europe with its tawdry record vis-a-vis the Black peoples of this world. In so doing I would naturally come up against the role of language and the issues relating to that. I was also to discover that I could not challenge the language without challenging the canon that surrounded the poetic genre. Following is a quotation from notes which I made as I worked on the poem, "Discourse on the Logic of Language", which contains many of the themes and issues already mentioned.

* Winner of the 1988 Casa de las Americas prize for poetry.

To take the poem one step further and re-embed it, re-encrust it within its context to put it back in the mire of its origins. So in *Discourse on the Logic of Language*, the poem is sculpted out of the colonial experience - exploitation of peoples, destruction of mother tongues - to become 'a work of art' - objective and, according to the canon of Literature, universal. The next step, for me, is to deuniversalize it - make it specific and particular once again. Elliot talked of the objective correlative - the arousal in the reader of the exact emotion the poet felt as he/she wrote. This assumes the existence of certain universal values that would or could promote the reader to share with the writer his/her emotions. This assumption is never articulated and the so-called universal values were really a cover for imperialistic modes of thought; and ways of acting upon the world. The patterns of culture, the images, the forms of thinking, the Literature that were imposed around the world on different peoples were very specific to a very specific culture (Western/European), and a very specific class within that culture - they were however propounded as universal. So the little Black girl in the West Indies was supposed to conjure up the same feeling that Elliot had when he wrote of fogs and cats and Prufrock.

In *Discourse*, by cramping the space traditionally given the poem itself, by forcing it to share its space with something else - an extended image about women, words, language and silence; with the edicts that established the parameters of silence for the African in the New World, by giving more space to descriptions of the physiology of speech, the scientific legacy of racism we have inherited, and by questioning the tongue as organ and concept, poetry is put in its place - both in terms of it taking a less elevated position - moving from centre stage and page and putting it back where it belongs - and locating it in a particular historical sequence of events (each reading of such a poem could become a mini drama). The canon of objectivity and universality is shifted - I hope permanently disturbed.*

"*She Tries....*" was the result of my refusal to know my place. Since completing that manuscript I have become aware of certain shifts. As a writer, I had been aware for some time of a reader over my right shoulder: he is white, Oxford-educated and male. Over my left shoulder - in the shadows - is an old wizened and 'wizened' Black woman. I have succeeded in pushing the reader to the right further into the shadows, and she, the reader over my left shoulder has emerged more clearly from the shadows into the light.

One of the unexpected results of being unmanageable in my writing life has been that many of the poems in "*She Tries*" have become unreadable in the traditional sense: in my being unmanageable, the poems themselves have become unmanageable. One aspect of allowing the poetry to become unmanageable arises from my giving in to the urge to interrupt the text. One can hazard many reasons for this urge. It may arise from a need to reflect a historical reality: the African in the New World represented a massive interruption of several texts - the text of a more ancient world that had continued uninterrupted for millennia; and the text of the aboriginal world of the Americas and the Caribbean.

* Notes from Working Journal (*Ms. She Tries her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* - a work in progress)

It has been suggested to me that this urge to interrupt the text is probably the result of what some describe as the Caliban/Prospero relationship: wanting to be both in the space of power long dominated by the white European father *and* return to our lost paradise.

Whatever the reason, the urge to interrupt the text is a powerful one and I have acted upon it time and again in both poetry and fiction. The result is that the poem no longer reads as it ought to; it becomes unreadable both because of this interruption and because so many things happen on the page or pages as the notes from my working journal above reveal. However, in making the poem unreadable, it becomes a more accurate description and expression of what our experience as managed peoples in the Caribbean has been. The African's encounter with the New World was catastrophic and chaotic: how does one and how ought one to manage such an experience? How does one make readable what has been an unreadable experience.

So, the form of the poem becomes not only a more true reflection of the experience out of which it came, but also as important as the content. The poem as a whole, therefore, becomes a more accurate mirror of the circumstances which underpin it.

Another unexpected result of the attempt to allow oneself to be unmanageable within and without the text was the eruption of the body into the text - tongue, lips, brain, penis - the body was insistently present throughout "*She Tries...*".

When the African came to the New World she brought with her nothing but her body and all the memory and history which that body could contain. The text of her history and memory was inscribed upon and within the body which would become the repository of all the tools necessary for spiritual and cultural survival. At their most unmanageable the slave removed her body from control of the white master, either by suicide or by maroonage - running away, where the terrain allowed, to highlands, there to survive with others as whole not as chattels. Body, text, history and memory - the body with its remembered and forgotten texts is of supreme importance in both the larger History and the little histories of the Caribbean. I believe this to be one the reasons why the body erupted so forcibly and with such violence in the text of "*She Tries...*".

There is, as well, a second reason and this has to do with the fact that for the Black woman a double managing is a t work. Historically for her there was the management of the overseer's whip or gun; there was also the penis, symbol of potential or real management in male/female relations. Today the overseer's whip has, in some instances, been replaced by more subtle practices of racism. The penis, however, continues to be the symbol of control and management, used to cow and control women. For the female, the ultimate weapon and method of management is rape; this knowledge and the consequential fear is I believe, latent in all female bodies.

In the poem "Universal Grammar", I appended an excerpt from *Mother's Recipes on How to Make a Language Yours, or How Not to Get Raped*:

*Slip mouth over the syllable; moisten with tongue the word.
Suck Slide Play Caress Blow - Love it, but if the word
gags, does not nourish, bit it off - at its source-
Spit it out
Start again*

I was suggesting in this excerpt from the imaginary "*Mother's Recipes..*" the link between linguistic rape and physical rape, but more than that the potential for unmanageability even when

faced, as a woman, with that ultimate weapon of control - rape. "Mother's Recipes..." was an attempt to place woman's body centre stage again - as actor and not as the acted upon.

Working through the poems contained in "She Tries..." resulted in an epistemological break for me; my relationship with Western European traditions, particularly as they relate to literature, and systems of knowledge has been irrevocably ruptured. The understanding of how the underpinning of knowledge is often nothing but power - power of the white European male to define his knowledge as absolute - was a painful but liberating experience. An excellent example of this exercise of power may be seen in how the roots of classical Greek civilization which are embedded in Afro-Asiatic civilizations have been erased over the centuries. Where this erasure was not possible, the African sources of Greek civilization, most notably Egypt, was Europeanized and Egyptians made to appear light-skinned and a part of Mediterranean rather than African culture. The rupture to which I have referred above has resulted in my becoming an epistemological orphan. How to construct a replacement for the old epistemological order is a task which is both challenging and difficult, but which is essential.

Although the establishment of Black women's studies departments at institutions of higher learning have gone some way to correct the imbalance in our systems of education and knowledge, the hegemony of European thought, civilization and systems of knowledge continues. To avoid continued support of these structures as a writer, requires leaps of the imagination, which reality often continues to surpass; it calls for trusting the memory-text of the body in which I include mind; it calls for a confidence which allows the writer to recognize the collective unconscious through which many memories and histories surface. Often as a poet and writer I have had instances where I have written about an event believing it to be entirely imaginary, only to realize later, upon reading a text - historical, anthropological or otherwise - that the 'imaginary' event is, in fact, true.

All of this, however, brings me back to language and power, for as Noam Chomsky, the linguist, has noted, language is nothing but a dialect with an army. Someone at some point in time established the linguistic rules which govern us today, that the noun should agree with the verb for instance, and that person had the power to enforce that rule. This is not to say that we should ignore those rules, in some instances they are useful, but understanding that the foundation of much European thought and knowledge systems is power, enables us all to be more unmanageable. For those of us who use the demotic languages of the Caribbean - dialect - to express our reality in writing or in speech, an understanding of the underpinnings of power enables us to challenge what has been until very recently the linguistic hegemony of Western Europe in the Caribbean. Ours is a language,

honed, fashioned, and sharpened by history, by social circumstances; a language nurtured and cherished on the streets of Port of Spain, San Fernando, and Boissiere village; in the look she dey and leh we go in the mouths of the calypsonians - Jean and Dinah Mama look a boo boo - the cuss buds, the limers, the hos (whores) and jackabats, the market women-they have all been the custodians and lovers of this strange wonderful you tink it easy jive ass kick ass massa day done Chagaramus is we own transcendental ole mass pretty mass pan sweet language

(Journal excerpt)

We, the managed, historically the object and focus of much management activity, often think

of ourselves as marginalized in relation to the larger culture - Western European or America. Often, however, the words we use to describe ourselves collude in our management. To think of ourselves as marginal or marginalized is to put us forever at the edge and not centre stage. The word margin, however, has another meaning which I prefer to think of when it is used as a descriptive term for managed peoples - it also means frontier. And when we think of ourselves as being on the frontier, this immediately changes our perspective. Our position is no longer in relation to the managers, but we now face outwards, away from them to the undiscovered space place up ahead which we are about to uncover - spaces in which we can empower ourselves.

From margin to frontier - a deceptively simple act requiring no movement or change, to substitute one word for another. It is an important and liberating first step, this substitution of words and meanings, but in order to make the authentic leap from margin to frontier, demands nothing less than a profound revolution in thinking and metamorphosis in consciousness. It is no accident that the theme of metamorphosis features so vividly in the manuscript, *She Tries Her Tongue; Her Silence Softly Breaks*, beginning with the title which is actually a line of Ovid's describing the goddess Io who, having just returned to human form, after a period of time as a cow, tries for the first time her human tongue.

As women writers we attempt, each in her own way, to write and rewrite our experiences; in my case it often is the Caribbean experience in its myriad forms. In this act of writing we are being unmanageable, for the managers have not traditionally thought of us as thinkers, or writers, or keepers of memory and history. By far the majority of Caribbean women remain hewers of wood and drawers of water; women who, like my mother, grew strong out of a severe lack of choice. These women, by being in their own way unmanageable, have allowed us to stand on their backs to get to where we are today. In changing the margin to frontier, we continue the long tradition of unmanageability which has permeated our experiences here in the New World and, I hope, hasten the demise of all managers and systems of management.

The Woman's Common



The Woman's Common

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A club for women.....in Toronto

Oral history is often considered a marginal source by traditional historians -- a non-serious source, and feminist oral history is therefore further marginalized. But for a feminist reclamation of women's history, oral sources are critical.

I first developed an interest in oral history many years ago when I decided to study the role of women in a sharecropper's uprising in North Bengal just prior to the British departure from the Indian sub-continent in 1946. The only in-depth study the Tebhaga Movement, as it was called, had of course dealt with women's participation but peripherally. From my limited knowledge of peasant organization, and structure of families in rural Bengal I knew there was more to it. So I decided to find out what existed. Source material of the printed sort was negligible and since many of the participants and activists in the movement were still alive I thought of soliciting their views. Around the same time I was introduced to the wealth of local life history projects all over Britain and saw the immense potential for such material in reconstructing and recovering the past.

Importance of recovering our past

What I wish to share today are some of my thoughts on Oral History as a tool or means of recovering women's past and the significance of this for women's consciousness. In his exhaustive study *Orientalism*, Edward Said demonstrates how Orientalism as a discipline led to and reflected control of and power over the Orient by Europeans -- crudely put, knowledge meant power; knowledge meant possession and domination.

Recovering our Past:

ORAL HISTORY OF WOMEN

by
DOLORES
CHEW

I see very great parallels between Orientalism and the control over female experience by men. Male knowledge of female experience has resulted in power and dominance; the ability to subordinate, to subsume and belittle female experience, even the extreme of denying that experience, a veritable 'orphaning' of women from our legitimate heritage and consequently successfully maintaining women as **non-entities**. 'Historical amnesia' is a phrase so fittingly apt to describe these circumstances. Georgina Taylor in her oral history research of Saskatchewan CCF (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation) uses it.

So do women have no history?

As a historian I am very aware of how interpretations of history change and reflect ideology -- conscious and subconscious. So when I see women not reflected in history I know it is not because women do not live, not because women do not work, not because women do not have a history, but rather that history has been denied. However what is missing is traditional recorded history. The same problem exists for all subaltern classes in society and women whether of the elites or of the subordinate classes from subaltern groups. Even writing that one would expect to be more sensitive because of a progressive outlook of another, often peripheralizes and marginalizes women's contribution. Hers is always secondary in a masculine perception.

Therefore the feminist historian has a duty to recover, retrieve, interpret with feminist perception and reinstate to the rightful place the history of women.

Oral history fills a knowledge and information gap

Neglecting Oral History is like proverbially being blind to what is lying below one's nose! Oral history and oral tradition overlap. I would like to deal with several different applications of oral history -- either in situations where they have been used or could be used.

1. Epical

In a recent study of the nineteenth century Rani of Jhansi, Lebra-Chapman (*The Rani of Jhansi: A Study of Female Heroism in India*. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1986) uses traditional folk ballads and poetry celebrating the legend of the Rani who valiantly opposed the British. The significance of Lebra's study is the reconstruction she has achieved and in so doing has recovered the Rani from simplistic chivalry and glory and presented her remarkable capabilities, her ability to survive in an exclusively male world of British administrators and Indian princes, the intelligence she repeatedly displayed in beating men at their masculine games. What she has been eulogized for traditionally has been a masculine image -- the Rani on her horse in battle in male uniform; the Rani charging into battle with sword swinging. In other words she compared very favourably with men. Yet Lebra-Chapman dismisses this image and the traditional history-book portrait of a dutiful wife and mother valiantly defending her state for a deceased husband and adopted child is replaced by a woman asserting what she believes are her rightful prerogatives. A strong woman.

2. Popular Movement;

These studies, because of their origins and the particular interests of the researchers quite commonly adopt life history or oral history approaches to reconstruct and recover women's history. A trend was established probably beginning with the Chinese Revolution and later other revolutionary movements as well -- Vietnam, Guinea-Bissau and Nicaragua to mention just a few. One of the most recent and perhaps because of its uniqueness a very valuable contribution to women's history is Muthoni Likimani's study of *Women and Mau Mau in Kenya* (Macmillan, 1985). Here we have a movement that has been studied very extensively but with scant attention paid to the role of women. They were scattered footnotes but denied serious treatment as actors with their own purpose. Yet as Likimani demonstrates with the life histories in her book there was a decisive role women played. Once again oral methodology has reclaimed a segment of women's past.

3. Daily Struggles

Besides the more prominent situations in which women are active at elite and popular levels there are the daily struggles and the classic study of one such woman's struggle for survival for her family and herself is Domitila Barrios de Changara's *Let Me Speak!* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1978).

In recovering the history of women long since dead (as in Jhansi), popular oral tradition is valuable to reconstruct experiences and attitudes. In relatively recent studies, life histories and conversations/interviews form the major component.

Differences between traditional and feminist historians

One of the unique qualities of the feminist historian is the sensitivity she/he brings to the subject. For example, in my current research I am examining gender subordination in nineteenth century Bengal. This is a period popularly referred to as the Renaissance because of a surge in westernization and rationalism. Social reform grew in rapid popularity at this time and major issues of concern were those related to women -- women's education, widow remarriage, raising the age of marriage, etc. However I became aware that despite these voices, concerns for women were only yardsticks to prove or disprove tradition and modernity. The fact that the sati debate raged in the nineteenth century in Bengal (simply put, sati is the self-immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre) and is again raging in the closing decades of the twentieth century in India due to a revival of the illegal practice proves how unreal the social reform of the renaissance was! The distance between male theory and practice was and is great. Therefore a feminist historian would question whether this indeed was an era of social and cultural progress.

From sensitivity we move to consciousness. Life history approaches have been used by non-feminist historians, particularly for social history. The innovation of the feminist approach is the differing emphasis in the uniqueness of women's experience.

Problems

Naturally there are problems related to oral history. While oral history is exciting it is hard work and requires patience, stamina and staying power.

1) The problem of credibility. In order to be considered seriously by historians there is the need to footnote with location, etc. to authenticate facts. This becomes a serious problem for the oral historian and more so for the feminist historian because there are always lurking critics waiting to pounce and disprove feminist scholarship for being more radical than serious etc.

2) Subjectivity is another problem, but one I feel is not limited to oral history. The most personal administrative report reflects an ideology and hence is not objective. As well the subjective view of an individual has validity in that it reflects a consciousness. History is not just fact but interpretation as well.

3) There is a danger in relying solely on oral sources without back-up. Where ever possible efforts should be made to place things in perspective and sources to corroborate and verify should be sought.

Conclusions

I will conclude by saying that because oral history links experience and consciousness and interprets and constructs a social world it is a particularly suited tool in reclaiming our collective past as women.

[This paper was presented at a session of the 3rd International Feminist Book Fair, Montreal, June 1988]

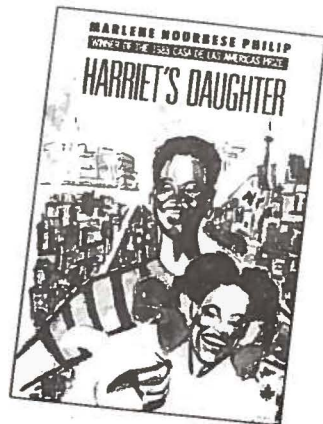
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The Women's Press

HARRIET'S DAUGHTER

by Marlene Nourbese Philip

A humorous and perceptive tale of adolescence, *Harriet's Daughter* explores the friendship of two young black girls and throws into sharp relief the wider issues of culture and identity relevant to teenagers of all races and colours. 120 pages \$7.95 pb





THE CROWN

by

Fauzia Rafiq

One person that would figure most prominently in her autobiography would be herself. Extremely boring for the public out there, Jenine was sure. She sympathised with the public out there but at the same time she really didn't give a fuck about the public out there. What she did give a fuck about, was twofold; the money that she might (or might not) get, and the Crown.

She didn't like the Crown at all, in fact, she suspected that she hated Him. Her hatred began with a letter she received in mid-seventies, which informed her that the custody of her two children was given over to her husband. She appealed against it but lost because the Crown said "It appears from the factual evidence that the mother deserted her minor children, without providing them with alternate care...." and so, her children remained with her partner and all she could do was to leave the province.

Now, the only thing she approved about the Crown was his name which was very easy and kind of mysterious. It might be hard to understand, but the Crown was not one man. To Jenine, it was a collective name for her ex-husband, her natural mother who she never met, the children's aid society, the judge, her ex-husband's lawyer, the room where the case was heard, the person

who typed the court order informing her about the custody of her children, the person who asked everyone present to stand up, the copy of the bible on which everyone swore.

Jenine always developed a relationship with words. Take for example, the word "autobiography". She initially did object to it on the basis for it to be too "long and educated" suggesting that "My Story" should be used instead. But the journalist, who in her own view had discovered Jenine out of the non-entity of the welfare flock, thought it would be "a simplification of the concept". Jenine just laughed softly and complied.

The journalist, full of compassion, judged this to be a sign of Jenine's submissive nature where Jenine obviously failed to change the projected role-model of a woman.

But if she had known Jenine better, she would have understood that that soft laughter was in fact a perfect gesture for "you ass-hole". And that after determining that Jenine would just close herself up and never trust the other person, dealing with them in the manner that she thought appropriate for ass-holes, especially when she had something to take out of them.

It was rarely Jenine's problem to determine her superiority (or inferiority) in relation to other people. It was usually a matter of "I like this person, eh. Want to see them" or "I don't like this person. Don't want to see them". And if she didn't like them but had to see them, she would. But then she would talk very little and tried to pass the time using her harmlessly soft laughter, which said "you ass-hole" most peacefully, almost lovingly.

She was having to use the laughter too often these days. With the numerous social workers, counsellors and now this journalist. The reason she was getting so much attention from social service agencies as well as the media, was an incidental thing.

One day, the journalist was chatting away with a fiend of hers who worked in a social service agency. She heard about Jenine and the fact that Jenine had lost custody of her children. The journalist who was fighting a constant battle of survival in this multi-national newspaper chain, felt that writing this story might help to strengthen her position in the fight since feminist kind of stories were becoming an in-thing in the mainstream.

She met Jenine with the social worker and wrote a column on her regarding the unjust laws of custody. The response from her superiors was encouraging. They felt that it was one of the subjects that can help take attention away from the proposed refugee bill. The journalist got the impression they were willing to pay for a series of biographical articles on Jenine's life that could be turned into a book - if those were promising enough.

When Jenine heard this proposal she thought 'oh, fuck! 300 for 10, it is 3,000 bucks!' Of course she had no idea what Margaret Trudeau could have gotten in terms of money in this situation and that is why she half expected the journalist to ask her "What would you do with this kind of money."

But she was glad the journalist didn't ask her that. Jenine would not want her to know that she would take \$3,000, go back to her province and face the Crown again. This was something she wouldn't want to tell anyone. Anyone at all. Because going back to her province and facing the Crown had become the secret purpose of her life. Sometimes she felt as if it was an obsession. She didn't know the meaning of obsession and she didn't care. All she knew was that the Crown was the constant in her life, the continuity, the motive and the purpose.

"I am going to turn the tape recorder on," the journalist said, "if it starts to bother you, just let me know. We will turn it off." The journalist was not only an ass-hole she was a fucking patronizing ass-hole, Jenine observed and then nodded most amicably.

"Here we go" patronizing shit. "Jenine how long did you stay with your husband?"

"6 years"

"And were you happy with him?"

"O' yea - "

"You were?"

"Yea"

"So, why did you leave him?"

"He didn't treat my children well."

"Oh! - " then she recovered." Is he the natural father of your children?"

"O' yea"

"So, why did he not treat them well?"

"Don' know"

"Now - let me ask this question in another manner - . What did he do to them?"

"He didn't treat them as people - "

"Now" the journalist successfully controlled her impulses. "What did he do to them?"

"He treated them as if they weren't there, as if they were piece of furniture of sumthin'"

The journalist concentrated on her long shocking pink nail of the first finger of her right hand. It was not enough. She moved over to the shocking pink nail of the second finger. "Now, Jenine" she moved to the third finger. "People want to know what happened to you to feel sympathy. What you have told me so far doesn't tell them anything. Anything at all. They want to know the hard facts - hard facts Jenine". She left her nails and looked at Jenine. Her eyes were cold as ice. Jenine, through her experience, identified coldness of eyes with an extreme form of insult and dismissal. And she positively hated it. What she also hated with equal positivity was the fact that whichever way she tried she could never insult and dismiss another person so effortlessly and at such and intimate level. Her eyes simply didn't do that. She felt, it was because she was on welfare for too long. If she had a discussion with someone regarding the link between these two, she knew she couldn't tell how but she knew it had something to do with it.

"So - lets have it, Jenine" The journalist took Jenine's blank eyes as a definite sign of victory. So, this time, her words were even more sharply clipped than usual.

"I picked this guy up in the bar a few nights back - . He was tipsy and was after my cunt kind of singlemindedly. I was tipsy but I was not after his penis. I would have enjoyed knowing him. But his singlemindedness about my cunt didn't let me do that. So, I just said I wanted to pee and slipped out from the back door." Then Jenine laughed softly. "Must've been waiting for it to arrive for at least half an hour."

The journalist appeared a little confused overshadowing the coldness in her eyes. "What - What does this have to do - to do with your interview?"

"Just that I don' want to have this fucking interview" Jenine said softly.

"You mean - "

"Yea," Jenine said and walked right out of her housing unit leaving the journalist, the tape, the pen, the notebook and the possibility of \$3,000 all behind her.

She kept on walking till she found herself in front of the tavern a few blocks away from her apartment building. She was going right through the door when she realized she only had three quarters in her donated imitation leather purse.

"We startin' early tonight, eh?" The owner of the tavern had seen her before she could turn back.

"How you doin' Stan?"

"Survivin'".

"I will be back. Forgot sumthin'"

"What could you be forgettin', chickadee? If it is money, don' worry. I can make you your favorite on the house." He picked up a bottle of Russian Vodka. She needed one for sure. She needed one. "We can barter - a bloody Ceaser for-" He laughed his dirtiest laughter.

Jenine felt frozen in her tracks. She remembered when she had moved in her building and had first come to the tavern. The bastard had offered her a free drink which she had accepted in good faith till he came around the bar and grabbed her crotch putting his middle finger exactly where her cunt was. She felt a gush of anger and humiliation with the suddenness of it. And just walked out leaving her vodka on the counter. He had laughed the same dirty laugh.

"Thanks, Stan" she said casually and walked out of the tavern.

Her eyes were burning and she could feel the tension swelling in them. "I'm about to cry" she informed herself matter-of-factly and looked around. She was looking for a dense jungle. A jungle where she could go and where she could scream and bang her head into the huge and un-moving trunks of the trees and where she could cleanse her body and mind of the slime. Her tiny tears washing her mind and body inch by inch, slowly and thoroughly. Washing the slime of the coldness of a women's eyes, of dirtiness of a man's laughter. Strangely, both the things were expertly combined in her husband that she lived with, for six years.

She needed the jungle.

This was a busy road full of people, cars, plazas. Where would she find a jungle? She panicked. And started to run towards the back of the big plaza where she knew there was an empty piece of land. She reached there in a flash, or at least that's how she felt. Her eyes were swollen, burning and dry. Even dangerous. Not enough time. A safe place.

There was a sick tree with dried branches and dead leaves. She went there, stood under it and looked around. She found herself vulnerable as if on-stage. The damn thing was barren and open from all sides making her conspicuous than ever. She felt angry at the city.

And that's when her mother in her spoke - "You blew it Jenine? You blew it again." She said as if she knew all the time that Jenine would. This was the wise woman in her that she called her mother and she came to speak with her only when she had done something that the 'wise' considered 'wrong'. Her mother arrived to put her down as if people were not enough to do that. Jenine sometimes wanted to see her natural mother, not out of love or anything like that. Just to give this woman in her, a face and a voice. Presently her mother used Jenine's voice, but with a shrill, calculated and cold tone.

"So what do you expect? You want me to take shit from that bitch?"

"You take shit anyways Jenine. Why can't you take it when its payin' you 3,000 dollars?"

"I don't need 3000 fuckin' dollars"

"You don't eh? That's a joke. You need that to go face the Crown, to get your children back."

"But, - but" Mother knew Jenine was vulnerable on this point.

"Yea - Jenine. Just a little shit and you could have gotten your children back"

"I - I can't tell her what happened. She'll secretly pity me and gloat over it - she might fuckin' masturbate on it and have an orgasm."

"Mind your language, Jenine"

"You mind bloody yours".

"Don't be rude. You know you have blown it again. Why can't you tell her, eh? What? That your husband raped you in front of your 7-year old son and 4-year old daughter? You fool, you could make millions with this story."

"Yea - millions, millions. To tell that fuckin' bitch that he locked all four of us in the living room and stood there with his cold eyes and said to the children 'Do you know that your mother is a whore?' And that he grabbed my dress and said 'Tell this whore I am payin'?"

"Why not? And tell her how you kicked him in his stomach and how he tore your dress apart and slapped your hanging breasts. You have huge breasts Jenine, don't you think"

"Leave me alone, you ass hole".

"And then tell her how he slapped you against the wall, pinned you there with his knee and tore off your discoloured undy - "

"Shut up"

"And said to your son" here is the cunt of the whore. That's where you came out from - you son of a bitch" And Tommy was scared and he started to cry - "Come" your husband shouted. Tommy came nearer and your husband suddenly removed his knee, bent down and pulled your legs from under you. You landed on your buttocks but before you could do anything at all he jerked you flat on the floor and pulled your legs straight up to show Tommy where he came from." The voice stopped for a moment. "You okay Jenine? You are shaking, poor child. Sit down - Sit."

Jenine sat hugging her knees knotted in a ball, trembling feverishly.

"That's good" her mother's voice expressed her rare satisfaction with Jenine's actions.

"And then he asked him if he wanted to go back in there, and Tommy shook his head in negative, sobbing and crying.

"You can go in Tommy boy, its large enough" And he grabbed Tommy's skinny hand and shoved it up - "

Jenine started to whimper with closed eyes. She was trying to stop her mother.

Her mother stopped, looked down at her. She smiled her bitter and cynical smile. "Okay, I will make it very short. So then, he raped you and then he withdrew his penis when he was about to ejaculate "I don't want to come in that dirt" He said, and left the house." Mother paused to enhance the drama of the moment.

"You left Jenine, you left them. Scared shit, insecure, crying and sobbing. You never heard them" Her voice became louder, now she was shouting "You left them Jenine, you deserted your children, you left them on their own" She was exhausted "Ah, what kind of a woman are you Jenine? And then you turn around and blame the Crown for refusing you the custody of your children. He did the right thing you know, the crown. The law says that if a woman deserts her children she cannot win the custody case. And that's what He did. And you will never get them back ever again and you know it - " Her mother turned around, furious, and walked away deserting her. As she had done 23 years ago when Jenine was 2 and a half months old.

Why did you do that, mother? Were you raped in front of me, too? But I won't remember. Not at all. Come back, mother. Don't desert me. I am insecure, sobbin' and cryin' -

"You need a Vodka". her mother said from afar.

Jenine got up, walked to her apartment, went in and stayed there for three days bundled up in a small shivering ball, waiting for the welfare cheque to arrive.

She needed a Vodka.

Poem
Toronto, Canada

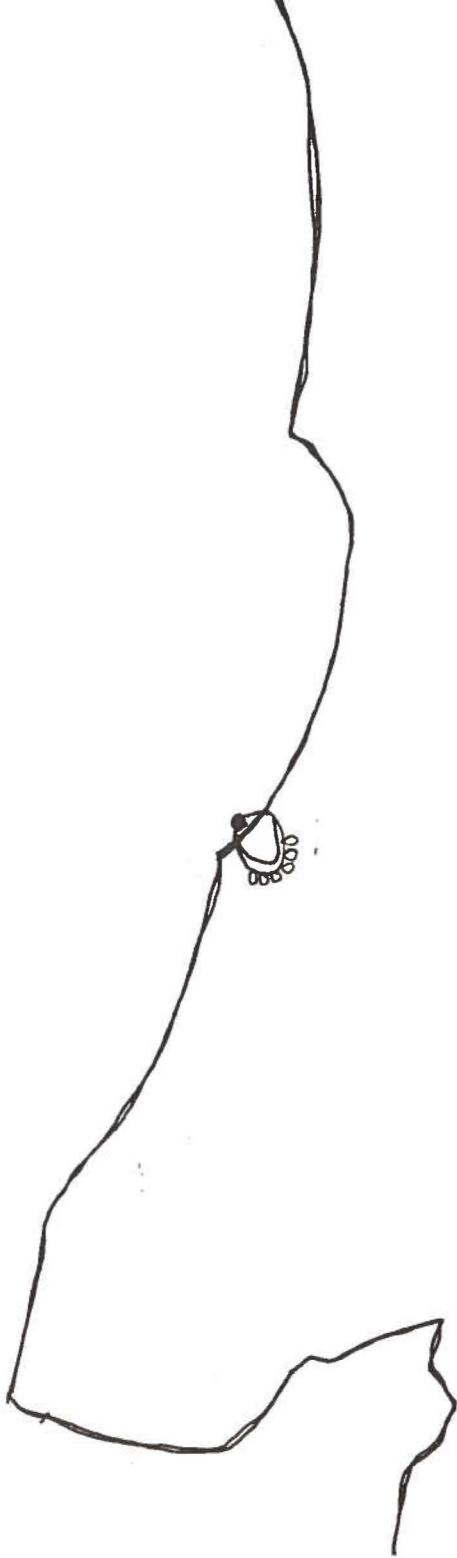
the one beside me

by

MARIAM KHAN DURRANI

When I am in my bed,
I turn the lamp on
I see my shadow
doing as I am
somehow it's prettier than I am
it's black
outlined with white
It's got curly yet plain hair
It's legs are positioned
the way mine are
It's thinking,
staring at the wall
doing as I am
beside me,

Maybe it's as kind as me
maybe it's my nightmare
or a harmless shadow
which is moving.
But I wouldn't like it
if it wasn't friendly,
it's up to me
to know
if the one beside me
is a friend
or a moving creature.



How Strong?

by

MAY YEE

"You are so strong"
he tells me

Yes, but I have no power.
Because I am one of the powerless
I have had to be strong.

the powerful are flabby
weak of will, never been tested
they don't have to be strong
they can run away (but I have nowhere to go)

sister,
we are so strong
hearts hardened to rock
sodden by waves of tears
all that heaviness we've had to bear
has made us strong
on a diet of deaths
bore so much pain like so much nothingness

strong enough to ask for nothing
strong enough to accept
more pain, another death
--but when will we be powerful
enough to fight back?

sister,
the burden you carry is so heavy
your eyes so heavy too with the knowledge of it
the knowledge of so much pain so much nothingness
so, don't cast your eyes down
in submission, hiding that knowledge
(strong enough to hide your bitterness)
look into my eyes looking at yours

yes, "so strong"
rock Mother saint
holding everyone's sorrow (as though our own were not enough)
and having to hold all our own too
because no one is strong enough (as strong as we)
to hold it for us
but, when will we stop having to
be so strong?
(when will they stop demanding
we carry the burden?)

"You are so strong", he says
and I want to answer,
but we want the power
to choose our own strength
I am so tired of having to
be so strong
(of not knowing what else to be)

being so strong
is too much heaviness
means so much
loneliness.....

(Beijing, June 1988)

Limericks

by

Christine Donald

1

To join our unprejudiced staff
We elected to hire a giraffe,
But her unabashed pride
In her neck and her hide
We felt was a bit of a gaff.

2

There once was a callous pig
Who said, "As I rootle and dig,
If I kill all the bugs
And the worms and the slugs,
I don't care. I rejoice". Callous pig!

3

A beaver, briefly caught in a jab,
Thought to herself, "What a drudge I am.
My work, though delicious,
Is most repetitious;
I build one dam then I start on another, dam".

4

When I was ten

When I was ten,
I would lie in bed
and imagine not-being,
that state so near
the perfection I lacked.
Now when I sit quietly,
always that undertow.

5

My Mind

My mind is working
overtime - but
on minimum wage.

6

Muriel's Bathtub

In the tub
under the skylight
a fat woman can
bathe her body
in the pouring sun
or wait to watch
the stars pick out
silver droplets
on her moon-splashed belly.

7

You say you haven't

You say you haven't seen me
for so long, or can't
remember what I'm like.

Ask your skin;raise the question
in the crevices of your body;ask
the major contracting muscles
what my name is,lover.

8

When you come

When you come to see me,
let it be a serious decision
because it's a long way
and you have commitments at home
to rearrange;
or when you come,
come lightly, because
the weekend is free and the sun
is shining;
or come dutifully
because you feel I need
to see you;
but woman
when you come,
come like a lover.



Wife Assault