

VOIR SECTION
FRANÇAISE

Spielberg's Whitewash of *The Color Purple*

HERIZONS

WOMEN'S NEWS AND FEMINIST VIEWS

The Icelandic Women's Movement erupts

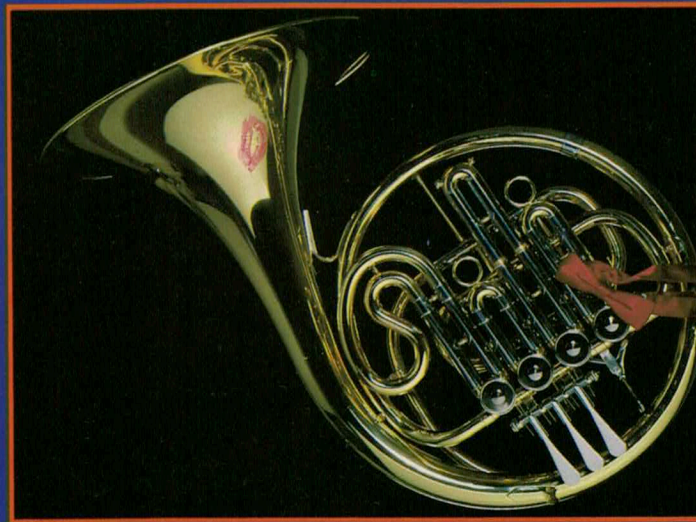
▶ Meet Maara Haas, Baba Podkova
and Burtzik the dog from
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▶ Street Prostitution:
A Rallying Point?

▶ Showbiz Quiz:
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Books and cassettes of **On Stage With Maara Haas** will be sold following the performance.



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Giving each other our blessings

DEBBIE HOLMBERG-SCHWARTZ



I participated in an incredibly energising event a couple of weeks ago. I attended a blessing for a friend of mine. What exactly is a blessing? Well, I've been told of several ways women

have blessed one another through the ages, although I'm not completely sure of the origin of the practice.

Some women hold blessings for friends who have recently become pregnant. Unlike traditional "showers", a blessing focuses on the woman instead of the event. At a blessing, guests bring personal gifts for the woman, support her with kind words and perhaps give her a massage. A blessing for a pregnant woman might center around the woman's health and emotional needs as she enters a new stage of her life. The idea is to validate a woman's thoughts and feelings, both negative and positive, while sharing in her joy.

When I first heard of blessings from a friend of mine in Toronto, I thought — What a wonderfully creative alternative to waiting around for your friend to get married, give birth, have a birthday or die before honouring her! Although my perceptions of why we hold celebrations for one another may seem rather flippant, they are not that far from the truth.

Life events that warrant ceremony in a patriarchal society almost always are based on maintaining the status quo, as in marriage or achieving a particular status economically, in the workplace or in education. Rarely do we honour an individual simply for the richness of her spirit.

The purpose of the blessing I attended was to do just that — honour and affirm my friend for the woman she is and to let her know through words and gifts how special she is to all of us.

I think all six of us who participated in her blessing felt slightly apprehensive about being together in such an intimate way, probably because we've grown accustomed to veiling our compliments to each other and meting them out carefully. One other friend and I arrived together late and rather breathless. We all sat together in a semi-circle with the friend we were about to honour.

We began with each of us reading aloud the messages we had written on our gift cards. Our

friend basked in the warmth of our words and opened her gifts. We joked about how we must all have been on the same wavelength when buying her presents since they were all, as one woman quipped, "either edible or water soluble" — chocolates, soap and bath salts.

I loved the way the room felt filled with female energy. It struck me then as I sat amongst women I cared for that blessings held tremendous potential for healing. One affirming act can do so much to restore a waning sense of self-worth in someone we love.

Further in the evening one of the women conducted a ritual. She lit a large "mother candle" which she explained to us had travelled with her to several celebrations. She then asked our friend to light three smaller candles from the mother candle — a yellow one — representing harmony between mind, body and spirit — an orange one — symbolising creativity — and a white one — symbolising spirituality. After the candles were lit, she led us through a "guided meditation". We closed our eyes and imagined we were covered by a heavy, dark garment — a cloak of our negativity. We then visualised the cloak lifting off our bodies and replaced by a sparkling translucent garment.

We spent the rest of the evening eating, drinking and discussing, ironically "horizontal violence" (a term Mary Daly uses in her book *Pure Lust* to describe the violence women commit against each other) and divisions amongst women. We reminded ourselves of the importance of solidarity and understanding. In fact the whole night was an affirmation of how much we needed the support of other women.

Our friend basked in the freedom to share her own fears and anger at trying to cope as a single mother.

Our friend expressed her gratitude for the evening and embraced each of us in turn before we left.

I am now, as you may have guessed, committed to the practice of blessings. As I write this editorial in the middle of another cold Manitoba winter, I am convinced that this is probably the most appropriate season to celebrate our individual worth. So many of us feel depleted at the end of the year and disappointed in ourselves for not meeting many of our goals and expectations.

There are of course a wealth of reasons to hold blessings. I think of all the women who have survived sexual abuse, battering, the death of a loved one, the death of a relationship and

many more painful experiences. There is good reason to bless women for surviving within the patriarchal structure.

The night following the blessing I had a revelatory dream in which a gunman was taking me hostage. I stood in terror as my assailant waved his gun at me, but in an instant he appeared to be frightened by me and his gun fell out of his hand. I caught the gun and aimed it at him and pulled the trigger — but the gun did not fire. The police officer rushed towards me and captured the attacker. I was horrified that I had intended to kill someone. The police officer took the gun from me, checked to see if there were any bullets in it and in amazement commented that it was indeed fully loaded. He could not understand why it did not fire, nor could I.

I walked home with my sister still feeling horrible that I came so close to killing even if it was in self defense. When I arrived home I was greeted by all of the older women in my family. My mother, my aunts, my mother-in-law and many others had gathered to hold a surprise party for me. I was delighted by the coincidence of their actions — Imagine — a party for me just after such a harrowing event. As I looked around the room I realised the women were all adorned with jewels. They wore crowns, necklaces and rings. The brilliance of their jewels filled the room with a golden light.

New directions



Some scoffed, while others just stared in disbelief. "Redesign a magazine on a COLLECTIVE basis?" "It's just not done." Well, we did it anyway. The new *Herizons'* design comes to you by the

skilled hands of our new Art Director, Erica Smith, and through the collaborative efforts of the entire staff. Bringing the production of the magazine under one roof gave us the opportunity to sit down and assess whether the design of *Herizons* was still reflecting our direction.

Essential to this changeover has been Erica, who has worked as a graphic artist for 16 years. She has also contributed her artwork and stories to *Herizons* on a regular basis. We're all thrilled that she's brought her skills and expertise under our roof.

Dear Herizons:

I was disappointed to read "The Cultural Fare of Expo 86" by Gail Buente, *Herizons* Jan./Feb. 86. I found this article to fall outside of the mandate of *HERizons* as stated on page 4, "...provide an alternative means of communication in a feminist perspective... to effect change and to unify women's strengths..." This article distinctly lacks a feminist perspective or rather any political analysis whatsoever. The author's implication is that although there has been political controversy over Expo, political considerations are outweighed by Expo's entertainment value.

Expo in my view is synonymous with B.C.'s Sacred Government.

The B.C. Sacred Government has consistently and systematically withdrawn funding and support for programmes aimed at assisting the disadvantaged in general, women specifically. This anti-people government in the last three years has dismantled the provincial child-abuse team, closed Vancouver Transition House; a shelter for battered women; withdrawn the Family Support Programme which assisted women and children, slashed funding for the post-partum counselling programme and chopped the Ministry of Human Resources by approximately one quarter, (whose services are critical to the welfare of women and their children). Furthermore this ruthless and oppressive government dismantled the Human Rights Commission, replacing it with a puppet group of Sacred supporters, refused to reappoint Carl Friedman (who had the courage to speak out against government activities) as ombudsman, and fired the Vancouver School Board for opposing government cuts in educational funding.

B.C. has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada. In B.C. big spending projects include highway construction and Expo.

This all affects women. As a political body women in B.C. and across Canada have voiced their abhorrence for a government that demonstrates such brazen disregard for human rights. *Herizons* could do much to educate all Canadians about these injustices by the B.C. government to which Expo 86 is a glaring monument.

Myra Lykowitz
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Friends:

I disagree with the awarding of the contract to run Vancouver's Transition House to the Salvation Army (*Herizons*, December 1985) because of my experience at the Salvation Army affiliated Grace maternity hospital in Vancouver. I have always admired the Salvation Army's social work and believed that in recent times their policy was to do social work without preaching. However after giving birth to my son at Grace this year I was visited by a Salvation Army Officer giving a Christian religious message even though I had stated on my hospital admission form that I was not a Christian.

I told the Officer I was not a Christian but that I admired the Salvation Army's social work. She replied that first and foremost they were a church and that having a baby often brought families to church. She was a very nice woman but I thought her visit and its message was inappropriate for my family during what for us was a very special, private time.

If we had been in a crisis time, such as one requiring the services of a Transition House, I think a Christian church's involvement would have been even more inappropriate.

Yours sincerely
Eve Petersen
Victoria, B.C.

Herizons:

The article "Collaboration in a broader sense" by Jill Pollack (Jan./Feb. 1986) has angered me deeply. I feel condescended to by both Pollack, and the two artists she so seriously discusses.

Statements by Pollack such as "They (the artists) have made undeniable the interactivity of human existence while not eradicating the individual", besides being grammatically awkward, are an insult to any reader of some intelligence and integrity. To maintain that art grounded in a superficial, funky approach to human nature and creativity can express anything but the artists' own lack of understanding is ridiculous. That the remains of pre-arranged meals, the express purpose of which is to produce "art", can embody or display the personalities of the people that prepared and consumed them is to reduce human nature

to a random arrangement of food bits and cutlery. To declare that photo cut-outs represent "a psychological and emotional state; one which is usually beneath the surface of social behaviour" is to mistake all too conscious posing for unconscious exposure.

I am very tired of a body of modern art criticism that aggrandises and mystifies nifty ideas and glib experimentation. I believe that art can be many things: a pathway by which we explore and name the deepest parts of ourselves, a joyous celebration of ourselves and our world, a biting or playful look at the ways in which we structure our lives. It can also be empty — as empty, as full of fear and evasion, as shallow as those that make it.

And I believe that any viewer can decide for herself whether the art she views is shadow or substance, empty or real. If the art itself expresses little, no volumes of words written or spoken about it can alchemise it into something meaningful.

I look forward to reading more art reviews in *Herizons*. I am eager to be engaged by art art that is worth the effort of understanding it.

Yours truly,
Monica Habicht
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Dear Herizons:

I was very concerned over a statement made by Salvation Army Captain Christine McMillan in the December issue of *Herizons*, page 13, concerning the Society of Transition Houses/B.C.-Yukon. In a brief line, it is stated that the new, provincially funded Salvation Army Transition House has been "working" with the Society of Transition Houses.

I am a Board member on the Society of Transition Houses/B.C.-Yukon. I write this letter because I feel very strongly about the summer closure of the Vancouver Transition House, and I write this letter from a personal point of view.

When the government awarded the contract for Transition House service to the Salvation Army, there was, and still is, a lot of concern regarding the type of service that would be offered, as well as worries that there would be underlying religious tones present in the house. This was an issue for

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The aim of this magazine is to provide an alternative means of communication with a feminist perspective in order to stimulate, to inform, to effect change, and to unify women's strengths, serving as a forum for women.

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many women involved with various services in Vancouver. There are still many other women who feel secure about the Salvation Army running a Transition House Service. I do not. Further, there are other issues involved as well.

Before the contract was given out in summer, the Society of Transition Houses set up a list of criteria that a new service would be expected to fulfill in order to be deemed appropriate. One very important criterion, in my view, was that a new Vancouver Transition House must give past staff a chance to reapply for their positions; the past staff was unionised and there should have been successorship status. The new positions were not even advertised when Salvation Army took over. Therefore, the Society of Transition Houses/B.C.-Yukon, has not yet stated any support, for or against, the Salvation Army run Transition House. The Salvation Army has applied to join the Society of Transition Houses, but the application has been tabled until the Labor Relations Board finishes dealing with the issue of past staff being able to apply for their previous positions, or to assume their old positions without even reapplying. There has been no working relationship, as such, between the society and the Salvation Army, nor has there been any denial of their service. It has been a silent relationship, and certainly, as women, we support the important work they are setting out to accomplish. But there are still issues to be resolved, and other points to remember.

The Society of Transition Houses/B.C.-Yukon, have sent a letter to Vancouver City Hall to state our support for a locally funded Transition House, such as the one presently occupied by a very dedicated, concerned group of Feminist women. These are women who kept Transition House open, after the government shut it down and left battered women in Vancouver with limited services. The occupiers know that the previous Transition House provided excellent and supportive service to battered women and their children. These women know that victims of abuse must have choices presented to them in a non biased and non partisan manner. Further, there is room and great need for more than one Transition House in Vancouver; it gives women more of a choice, and gives a major metropolitan city more beds for victims.

Although it is important to support services for battered women, we must be sure that the services offered are providing a wide range of choices, are making all resources available, including those that will give support for a woman that wants to separate, for women in violent lesbian relationships, and for women who just want a safe space and no intervention. We need women working at Transition Houses who do not see the bat-

tered woman as being in need of therapy; we do not need battered women being "assessed".

As a woman who has been working on battered women's issues, and with battered women, for 10 years, both in Boston, Oregon, and British Columbia, I feel clear on the issues. I do not deny the Salvation Army their right to operate a Transition House for battered women, but I think the fact that a previous service that did the job well, and operated for many years, has been discarded by the government in order that the issues surrounding both battered women and better staff salaries and working conditions, would be depoliticized and discarded. We must remain in contact with these issues.

**In Support of Choices for
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WESTERN REGION

READING — MARIA CAMPBELL

March 6, 1986 at 7:30 pm at Indian Metis Friendship Centre, 465 Alexander Ave., Winnipeg. The author of *Half Breed* and children's books will tour Manitoba in early March with readings in Portage, Brandon, Dauphin, Birtle and Thompson. For info. call MACSW (204) 453-4157.

CELEBRATE WOMEN'S STUDIES

Why? Because we will have a Joint Chair; new programs and courses; and a Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Women's Studies Assoc. (CWSA). When? **Thursday, March 6, 1986** at 7:30-10:00 P.M. Where? University of Winnipeg Faculty Club, 4th Floor, Wesley Hall. For info. call Vanaja Dhruvarajan 261-0866 (eve.) or Hilary Lips 786-9338 (days).

WOMEN AND THE ARTS/les femmes et les arts is hosting a spring conference at the YWCA on **March 14-15, 1986**.

Workshops, entertainment and more; daycare available. For info. call (204) 947-1390.

HELP YOURSELF TO HEALTH

is the Consumer Health Organization of Manitoba (CHOM) 7th Annual Convention on **March 15, 1986** at the Convention Centre, Winnipeg. The convention will feature speakers, workshops and commercial exhibits. For information: CHOM, 2685 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, Man. R2E 0C4 (204) 661-2193.

STOP, LOOK, LISTEN:

Women Communicating airs on Winnipeg Cable 13 every Friday at 5 p.m. Upcoming topics are The Voice of Women for Peace on **March 14**; Outside the Big City: Feminism in Small Communities on **April 11**.

Television for Learning: Canadian Literature Series presents readings. The following women writers are scheduled: **March 12** — Sharon Pollock; **April 2** — Anne Hebert; **April 16** — Suzanne Jacob; **April 23** — Gwendolyn MacEwen. The programs air on Wednesdays from 9-10 a.m. on CKND-TV and from 7:30-8:30 p.m. on Cable.

A MACSW INVITATION

To all former and current members. We are planning a gala reunion in conjunction with the 1986 Annual General Meeting the weekend of **April 26** in Winnipeg.

Let's get together and celebrate our past, present and future. For info. contact Char at (204) 453-3879 or write MACSW, 16-222 Osborne St., Winnipeg, Man. R3L 1Z3

MIDWIFERY IN THE AMERICAS

Women to Woman is a regional conference for the International Confederation of Midwives to be held in Vancouver, B.C. on **May 23-25, 1986** at the University of B.C. This three day event of presentations, panel discussions, films and plenary lectures is sponsored by the Midwives Assoc. of B.C. For registration info. write: Midwifery in the Americas, 801-750 Jervis St., Vancouver V6V 2A9.

EASTERN REGION

BUSINESS OWNERSHIP FOR WOMEN

Conference will be held in Thunder Bay, Ont., on **March 7, 8, & 9, 1986** to assist women with resources and information on this topic. For info. call Susan Lappacher at Confederation College, Ext. 400 (Out of towners call toll free 1-800-476-6110).

PRENATAL INFORMATION FAIR

Will provide the expectant and new parent with an abundance of information about birth and the childbearing year: Sunday, **March 16, 1986** from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Northern Branch of the Jewish Community Centre, 4588 Bathurst St., Willowdale, Ont. M2R 1W9. For info. contact (416) 636-1880, Ext. 235.

FEMINIST THERAPY

Quebec Conference will take place **April 4, 5 & 6, 1986**. This conference will address the needs of professionals, volunteers and the general public. For info. contact: Point d'appui, CP 1274, Rouyn, Quebec, J9X 6E4 (819) 762-8443.

YOUNG WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Will be held **April 25-26, 1986** at the Valhalla Inn, Thunder Bay for youth between the ages of 15 and 24. For info. call Lorri Yasnik at Decade Council (807) 345-3606.

WOMEN AND THERAPY (Part 2)

A major event for all who are involved with women's mental health. This conference will take place from **May 20-23, 1986** at Victoria College, University of Toronto with a view to improve counselling effectiveness and to find positive responses to social conditions and personal situations which influence the mental health of women. For information contact the sponsor — Professional

Development Associates, 3 Cameron Crescent, Toronto M4G 1Z7, or call Jane Stickney, Director, at (416) 486-6925.

NATIONAL

SEXTET

An upcoming radio drama anthology featuring original work by six of Canada's leading women writers. The series will run weekly on Stereo Theatre 7:05 p.m. from **March 16-April 20, 1986**: starting with *From the Belly of Old Woman* by Anne Cameron; *Unconscious* by Carol Bolt; *On the Immediate Level of Events Occurring in Meadows* by Audrey Thomas; *Woman on the Wire* by Margaret Hollingsworth; *Roundup* by Barbara Sapergia; and *Hunting the Lion* by Beverley Rosen (Simons).

UNITES STATES

WOMEN'S TRADE FAIR AND SEMINAR

In Fargo/Moorhead on **April 24-25, 1986**. Call Doris Jean Heroff at (218) 236-5434.

GREEN POLITICS

is the topic of a major conference to be held at UCLA in **April, 1986**. Write: Green Conference, UCLA, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

WOMEN'S THEATRE FESTIVAL

This national festival in Santa Cruz, CA 95061 is soliciting dramatic work written and directed by women with casts of at least 50 per cent women. Deadline is **May 1, 1986**.

TRAVEL

MAY DAY IN THE MORNING

Oxford and Glastonbury, England **April 27-May 6, 1986**. Traditional festival of Beltane, famous literary women, Avebury monuments, earth healing at Greenham, Avalon and Arthur. Children welcome.

WINE, WOMEN AND SONG

June/July 14 day tours get college credit (U. of Pennsylvania) for following the trail of two visionary women in France and the Rhineland: Joan of Arc and Hildegard of Bingen.

Write: Tours of Interest to Women, 1903 SE Ankeny, Portland, OR 97214.

STUDY WOMEN'S ISSUES

from a cross cultural perspective. Visit Italy, Greece, Kenya in **May, June or July 1986**. Write the International Women's Studies Institute, 1230 Grant Ave., Box 601, San Francisco, CA 94133 (415) 398-1441.

Challenging our strategies: porn debate continues

When Mariana Valverde set out to discover why she has a fundamental disagreement with other feminists about pornography, she discovered that more than her fear of state censorship stood between her and feminists who favour reforming pornography laws.

Valverde, who teaches Women's Studies at the University of Toronto, doesn't believe that laws are effective in controlling pornography. At a panel discussion on the politics of sexual issues at a Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) sponsored conference Challenging Our Images, Valverde told the audience of 200 that she set out to read the works of U.S. feminists Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon in search of a "deeper disagreement". She concluded that the difference in political outlooks on pornography stems from Dworkin and MacKinnon's views on sexuality, which Valverde calls conservative. Valverde continued to criticise Dworkin and MacKinnon for being unhealthily preoccupied with the sexual aspects of social domination, concluding that a philosophy based on the sexual means of oppression does a disservice to the women's movement.

Beside Valverde, sat Susan Cole, a Toronto feminist writer and editor who believes that the law is one way to combat pornography. Cole, in exploring the contradictions and conflicts we harbour as personal and political people drew chuckles from the audience when she introduced herself as a fan of Madonna's music, a Toronto Blue Jays fan and a radical feminist. Her philosophy stems from the belief that the politic of

feminism is not one of absolutes.

Cole says that although she is aware of the legal limitations in using the law to deal with pornography and also the ways in which the law can be used against women's interests, she doesn't think state censorship is the worst thing in the world. "But," she adds, "that doesn't mean I am for it."

At a panel called "Pornography: What do we want?" Cole acknowledged the complexities surrounding the pornography issue, such as whether or not state imposed laws can be effective, but noted that it wouldn't be the first time a male judicial system was lacking a feminist analysis. To civil libertarians who believe that there should be no limits on pornography, Cole believes it is wrong to simply say "Oh, you don't care about rape and violence;" likewise to pro-reformist feminists: "You want the police to come storming in..."

For Cole, the bottom line is

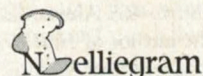
that women are hurt by pornography, and for that reason it should not be left alone as part of the symptomatic oppression of women. Presenting sexual subordination for sexual gratification is not an illusion or just a concept, Cole insists, but a reality of violence which makes inequality sexy.

"The next time you observe an erection, tell me it's a concept," Cole wryly challenged, "Tell me it's an idea."

Feminist and author Varda Burstyn doesn't trust the state to implement legal reforms on pornography because they do not have a feminist analysis on pornography. For this reason, among others, she has edited a book called *Feminists Against Censorship*. Unlike many civil libertarians, Burstyn does not have a fundamental opposition to controls and regulations on pornography; in fact she told the audience that "if you could have a censor board made up of lesbians, feminists, prostitutes, transsexuals and gay men, then I may go for it."

Gary Kinsmen, a gay activist and member of the RITES collective (a magazine for lesbian and gay liberation) condemned the recent Fraser Commission Report on Pornography and Prostitution set up by the former Liberal government as an attempt "to translate our everyday lives into a language of police practices and laws governing sexuality." State-appointed bodies, he said, are not a desirable way to fight what he calls "sexual rule" because they are only about "how state agencies can deal with social problems without fundamentally changing society."

— Penni Mitchell



LAST CALL FOR DALKON SHIELD CLAIMS — If you had a Dalkon Shield intrauterine device and you had difficulties with it, or if you know someone else in a similar situation, take note. A-H Robins, the manufacturer of the Dalkon Shield, has filed for bankruptcy, and you have only a short time to make any claims against the company. The time to file claims against A-H Robins has been extended recently to April 30th, 1986 — this will include all foreign and domestic claims.

The Food and Drug Administration banned the Dalkon Shield I.U.D. in 1974, but Robins did not notify North American users that they should have the I.U.D. removed until 1984. For more information on the shield or on filing a claim against A-H Robins, call Action Alert for Women at (415) 436-4500.

HER SAY

TIED FOOD AID — Following last year's devastating floods in Bangladesh, reports are coming through that women are being refused food under the relief programme unless they agree to be sterilised. Family planning workers are given targets, i.e. the number of women they can get to agree to sterilisation, before they are paid. Between July and October last year, Bangladesh Health Authorities performed 257,000 sterilisations and targets for 1987 — 88 are 700,000 — that is, 2,000 sterilisations per day.

Outwrite





Valerie Scott warns that Bill C-49 extends the exile of prostitutes.

photo by Nancy Farmer.

Street Prostitution: A rallying point?

Recently introduced anti-soliciting legislation provided the sole rallying point for prostitutes and feminists at Toronto's recent Challenging Our Images conference, as the two groups spent most of the weekend talking past each other.

Bill C-49 proposes to combat street hooking with \$500 fines and six-month jail sentences for anyone publicly "communicating" about the sale of sex. Speakers noted that the bill denies all women freedom of access and association, grants frightening powers of discretion to police and will have little effect beyond conferring a great many criminal records, making it more difficult for prostitutes to leave the business, should they want to.

Equally ominous, Bill C-49 extends the silence and exile of prostitutes: there will now be "no communication between society and us", commented Valerie Scott, a member of the Canadian Organisation for the Rights of Prostitutes (CORP).

In the shadow of C-49, the need for a strengthened liaison between feminists and sex-trade workers takes on new urgency. Yet participants failed to agree on questions as well as answers. In particular, the status of the prostitute resisted clear definition. The paradigms of prostitute as autonomous agent and prostitute as victim of exploitation clashed and were never clearly resolved.

Historically, prostitutes have resented the "poor victim"

approach used by many feminists to explain their existence. They were not disposed to deal gently with it at the conference. At one workshop, leaders Scott and fellow CORP member Peggy Miller challenged a room full of feminists to explain precisely what they had against prostitutes and prostitution. Laying aside coercion or violence, which no one endorses, the core issues of consent, power and exploitation surfaced. But every feminist attempt to explain why hooking involved exploitation was rejected by Miller, who insisted that she wields power in her exchanges with clients. Talk of a cultural setting saturated with male control and privilege did not impress her. To focus on social context, she felt, is to chase the views of "phantom theys and them", granting others too large a role in defining oneself.

Sexuality as social construct fared no better as a topic of discussion. Nor did the attempt to distinguish the prostitute as a person from the institution of prostitution: "It would take a pretty rough trick", Miller said, "to make me feel as objectified" as such talk does.

In short, even with the best will in the world, the workshop was doomed. Given the restrictions on the terms of the debate, no feminist analysis was possible. Without attention to context, all that remains are individual feelings of empowerment or lack of it, and both Scott and Miller feel in

control in their work.

The same problem stalked discussion of choice. The two prostitutes were interested in talking about what they felt to be the quality of their individual decision to hook; feminists wanted to discuss the cultural influences and implications of this decision, and no one seemed able to bridge personal experience and sociological theory.

Beset by such conceptual chasms, the conference turned scrappy toward the end. Sex-trade workers repeatedly asked to be left alone to attend to their internal matters. Reform the government, not us, they suggested; if prostitution were decriminalised, "we'd take care

of our own".

Feminists can support hookers by writing John Crosbie to protest Bill C-49, or by gathering women friends and joining hookers on the streets, making it difficult for police to say who's communicating illegally and who's not. Or try turning yourself in. As one hooker pointed out, police will have a problem if five thousand women show up to say "take me — I just communicated". Finally, Marie Arrington of Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP) advised being vocal in your support of prostitutes: "the girls need to hear it". And once in a while, she suggested, smile at them. ▽

Belliegram

BEWARE DEPO PROVERA — Upjohn Corporation has applied to the Health Protection Branch, Health and Welfare Canada for approval of Depo Provera as a contraceptive for unrestricted use by Canadian women. This three month injectable contraceptive has already been administered to mentally retarded women in Ontario institutions. An inquiry by Ontario's Department of Community Services was held after three women died of breast cancer.

Injection effects may last up to 18 months or more. U.S. studies have produced breast cancer in beagles and endometrial cancer in monkeys. Many women on the drug experience irregular bleeding, spotting, absence of periods entirely, occasional haemorrhaging, weight gain, headaches, depression and abdominal discomfort.

The Canadian Coalition on Depo Provera wants the Health Minister Jake Epp to hold public hearings to consider the drug's long term risks to various categories of women by seeking submissions from a wide cross section of consumers, relevant professionals and organisations.

In a recent *Globe & Mail* article Dr. Ian Henderson (director of the human prescription drug branch of H&W Canada) commented that the drug is both "safe and effective". Henderson suggested that the drug's ability to prevent menstruation is beneficial and said: "Our job at Health & Welfare after Depo is approved will be to educate women that the fact they have stopped menstruating is a natural side effect of the drug and that it is not unhealthy for their genitals to be in a dormant state. Their genitals will be just like they were when they were nine or 10 years old." (One hopes his genitals will remain in a dormant state.)

Meanwhile (the *Globe* reports) a spokesman from Upjohn is optimistic the drug will be approved in Canada quickly and without the opposition that occurred in the U.S. "Down there". He said "as soon as complaints about approval started coming in to senators and those in congress, they had to open up the process. Here, it is really just a matter between us and Health and Welfare." If you don't think so call Prime Minister Mulroney collect at 0-613-992-4211.

Unionwomen and
Northern Women

Sex debate heats up conference

The feminist sex debate has been raging in the U.S. for five years. In Canada the issues have been remarkably similar, though marked by a much more tolerant atmosphere.

Recently the public talk about sex has taken off, in a spate of conferences last fall in Eastern Canada, and most recently in Vancouver.

The Heat is On: Women on Art on Sex drew more than 250 women and men daily to Women in Focus, Vancouver's women's art gallery. It was organised by a group of Vancouver feminists (Sara Diamond, Pat Feindel, Karen Henry, Caffyn Kelley and Kellie Marlowe), and financed by Canada Council.

Unlike previous gatherings on the topic, this one dealt with one particular aspect of women and sexuality — the creation and perception of different types of sexual imagery. As local video artists and lesbian feminist activist Sara Diamond pointed out in her keynote address, the organisers saw the need for a conference on sexuality in general as well, but were leaving that for other women to take on. As it was, the narrower focus was probably wisely chosen, lending as it did a focus to what is a huge and largely uncharted issue for feminists.

Diamond's talk did an excellent job of setting the stage for two days of panel discussions that approached women on art on sex from a variety of political and cultural perspectives. She outlined the range of debates and positions within the feminist, gay, left, and arts communities. The diverse, frequently contradictory arguments summarised by Diamond for once put women's sexuality outside a context of right and wrong, and into a place where it could be examined and questioned respectfully.

Saturday's panels looked at

photo: Paula Levine



Sara Diamond: putting women's sexuality outside a context of right and wrong.

the political implications for women of sexual imagery. The first — "Coming Together or Coming Apart: The Social and Political Meanings of Sexual Images" — addressed the context in which we live. It was followed by "The Objecting Object: Women and the Art of Sex," which looked at some of the ways women have found of fighting back. Each of these panels incorporated three different approaches, loosely those of academic/critic, activist, and 'sex radical.'

Discussion and analysis was coupled with the presentation of feminist imagery. On Sunday, Toronto artists Lisa Steele and Kim Tomszak performed their piece *In the Dark*. In "Kiss and Tell," four artists and writers showed and read their work on sexuality and discussed the process of making it. Finally, video screenings on each evening gave Vancouver a chance to see a range of women's work dealing with sexuality.

The presentations, diverse though they were, fit together well, and did justice to the complexities of the issue. What emerged in part was a sense of the difficulty of eroticism and desire in what Vancouver graphic artist and writer Caffyn Kelley called "this culture which burns fright into the flesh."

This talk of our fears around sexuality was balanced by beginnings. By works which assert desire, and by the fact that we are *talking about it*.

The most obvious and distressing omission from all this analysis and discussion was

that of women of colour. The only woman of colour speaking at the entire conference was Toronto poet Himani Banerjee. Only three of the 15 videos dealt with people of colour at all, one only in passing, and the other two in the context of the larger gay movement. This was unforgivable.

Other criticisms of the conference from within the women's community were that there were no speakers, dealing with law reform and pornography and that men were allowed to attend. Speaking for the organisers, Diamond said these choices were deliberate. The censorship debate was not a focus of the panels because it has been well debated elsewhere, she said. Rather, the focus was to be a discussion of the creation of alternative imagery. The issue of censorship and pornography was expected to be raised at the conference anyway, and it was, though it appeared that few feminists who favour porn law reform were in attendance.

Men were allowed to the conference since many male artists are concerned with the creation of anti-sexist sexual imagery, and also that men are the primary viewers of the sexual imagery that exists.

It will probably take a while to assess the impact of *The Heat is On* on the sex debate as a whole. Immediate results were the formation of an anti-censorship group, and a resolution to support the BC Teacher's federation Women's Committee in the struggle for sex education.

Emma Kivisild



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National Action Committee : Power in diversity

Our diversity was not disputed but seen as a powerful lobbying tool when 200 women gathered recently in Winnipeg at the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) mid-year conference.

NAC has been an umbrella body since 1972. The numbers have increased to almost 300 groups, with a combined membership of about 4,000,000 women. New interest groups have unveiled

Erik Nielsen to court for the restriction put on them at the Penhold base. The court's decision will have ramifications for all women in military bases in Canada.

Lucie's presentation stunned and angered the delegates, who came from all the provinces. Six hundred dollars was collected in less than 10 minutes.

This show of solidarity with OSOMM was so overwhelming, it overlooked the feelings of

"We are Black women, we are Native women, we are Pakistani women, we are women of color. We have come here to be Canadian, whatever that means. Because of the historical background to racism, we are perpetually called immigrants."

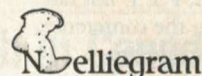
Glenda Sims' paper was a well-researched mosaic of history, economics, and politics. She pointed an accusing finger at the women's movement in Canada for neglecting the plight of women of color. She viewed the absence of Native women present as proof of such neglect.

The questions raised by the keynote speakers permeated most of the workshops. The "Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value" workshop was one of the largest workshops.

Madeleine Parent outlined the groundwork laid by the International Labor Organization (ILO), which

resulted in the 1970 Royal Commission Report. Laurell Ritchie reported on Ontario's delaying tactics despite rallies and press conferences by women. Laurell said Ontario's Pay Equity legislation should address the private sector, which has 80 per cent of the workforce.

— Nonqaba Msimang



POVERTY MAKES UNFIT PARENTS. New York's Legal Aid Society filed suit against the city charging that the city routinely places hundreds of children in foster care because their parents are homeless or living in sub-standard housing. The Legal Aid Society is trying to require the city to first make an effort to find housing before turning to foster care as an alternative.

HER SAY



Jon Leah Hopkin, addresses conference on the topic: Issues facing Visible Minority and Immigrant Women.

unique problems like those facing the Organization of Spouses of Military Members (OSOMM).

Lucie Richardson of OSOMM told the meeting that it all started with the door-to-door campaign for a dental plan. The base commander at C.F.B. Penhold, in Alberta classified the campaign as 'political.' Lucie was threatened with expulsion and some military members suggested that the women's action was tantamount to creating a "Nicaraguan" situation.

Lucie applauded the support from various women's groups and NAC in particular: "We have been denied freedom of speech, the right to a collective lobby and have had our civil rights violated. Your support has given us strength to continue the fight."

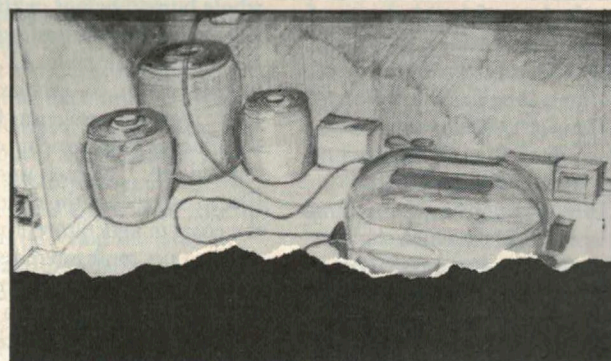
OSOMM has taken the Minister of Justice, John Crosbie and the Minister of Defence

staunch anti-militarists within the women's movement. Feelings of betrayal surfaced in the workshops. Solanges Vincent, a familiar figure in the Peace Movement didn't want to discuss her reaction.

"I'm not against support for the military wives, but all I can say is this meeting was a disappointment for me."

President Chaviva Hosek acknowledged NAC's diversity which contributes to Solanges Vincent's disillusion; "Different politics, ideologies don't magically agree with each other, but we regard this as creative tension. NAC's strength is our answer when confronted with the question, 'Who do you represent?' We proudly say women."

Another issue which was discussed frankly was immigrant and visible minority women. Glenda Simms, from Regina, in her keynote address, questioned the validity of the terms of reference.



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The feminisation of farming

Farm women are "invisible, unrecognised, and economically disadvantaged," according to Dianne Harkin, Ontario farmer and founder of Women in Support of Agriculture. Harkin addressed an audience of 300 at the second National Farm Women's Conference held in Charlottetown, P.E.I. last fall.

Throughout the conference, which had as its theme Agriculture in Crisis, delegates met in small groups to discuss farm survival, concrete action, and ways of strengthening women's position in the industry. Priorities were: improvements in credit policies, establishing a debt moratorium, education for farm women, forming a national farm women's network to increase political and social impact, and putting more women in positions of power.

Several of the speakers urged greater involvement in farm organisations. Quebec pork producer Lize Sarrazin referred to the Joan of Arc syndrome of sacrifice and self-denial common among women farmers. She described the efforts of Quebec women to gain recognition in the Union of Agricultural Producers (UPA), in which 97 per cent of the members are men, by forming the Provincial Women in Agriculture Committee, which she chairs. Sarrazin urged women to get representation within power groups to claim the recognition they deserve as essential contributors to the Canadian economy. "We must have the courage to speak up so that we can make a living from farming instead of just keeping farming alive."

Dianne Harkin stated that by fostering the attitude that "food is for people, not for profit," farmers have supported low food prices, resulting in a three per cent annual return on their investments and an annual income of \$13,000 — well below the poverty line. "No other industry produces

commodities that won't be paid for," Ms. Harkin said.

Marie Salway, a Manitoba health educator and columnist, emphasised the importance of hotlines for farmers in distress. "Coping with one crisis after another is like sitting on a time bomb, and stress diseases tell the story: high blood pressure and heart attacks, colitis and cancer, accidents and alcoholism, migraines and overweight, plus child and wife abuse, suicide, and marriage breakdown."

Delegates agreed that they must become empowered by involvement in decision-making forums such as local and regional farm organisations, women's groups, and politics. Among personal-action strategies compiled by the discussion groups were suggestions that farm women establish credit ratings in their own names, gain ownership rights of farm resources, take time for personal advancement through vocational and other educational training, and work to enhance women's decision-making roles on the farm.

"Farm women want to be whole human beings, with family, emotional, professional, social, and spiritual lives," said Suzanne Dion, co-ordinator of Farm Women's programs for the Quebec Department of Agriculture. "Women were the first to experience the effects of the crises in agriculture, they are the ones most interested in talking about the symptoms, and I believe they can also help to find a cure. Shared work, shared risks, and a shared search for solutions must go hand in hand with shared decision-making power."

For the delegates to the conference, the respect and recognition they are demanding for their work will help dispel the image of the "invisible" partner. As Wanda McMurdo, a P.E.I. farmer and chairperson of the conference said, "Farm women are no longer content to be silent bystanders. They want to be informed and they want to tell their story."

Jane E. Wilson



Harkin: supporting women

photo by Jane Wilson

Farm women's network emerges

The national farm women's organisation which many expected to result from the Farm Women's Conference did not materialise. Women stated many times that there are enough organisations, but stressed that they have to work more effectively and promote unity between the many regional and commodity groups. Instead, the more than 300 participants agreed to a loosely formed network through which they could share information and promote co-operation between farm groups.

Speaker after speaker during the three-day conference emphasised that women must get more involved, rather than do chores at home so the men can go to meetings. An important resource is being wasted when women stay in the background, they said.

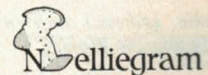
Some advocated gaining ownership of the means of production, either through individual ownership or legal partnerships, as the only way to gain power. Marketing techniques, new approaches to affecting policy-makers, and women's accomplishments in agriculture in the past were all discussed.

Regional differences between women were apparent. Eastern farm women, especially those from Quebec and Ontario, where they are involved in the women's committee of Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA), Concerned Farm Women, Women for the Survival of Agriculture and

Women for the Support of Agriculture, have been taking an active role in research and lobbying longer than have most of their western counterparts, and were ready for strong action immediately. Many of the western women, whose communities did not feel the effects of the agricultural crisis as soon as those in the east, were not ready to take on that role when they came to Charlottetown.

But after three days of reinforcement, support and down-to-earth advice on handling the stress in their lives, how to get involved and how to lobby, as well as discussion of the problems and possible solutions on political and personal levels, they went home confident that they could accomplish change. Some felt they still needed the support of a women's group until they gain the knowledge and communication skills they lack now, while others felt ready to take on the general farm organisations immediately.

Nancy Painter



HELMS HEXED BY THE VEXED — Conservative U.S. Senator Jesse Helms has been having a devilishly bad time ever since he lumped in the nation's witches with the likes of satan.

The North Carolina Republican's troubles all began when he proposed dropping religious exemptions for people who promote "Satanism or Witchcraft". That remark has conjured up a flood of phone calls and letters from witches offended at being lumped in with devil-worshippers. The witches bolstered their campaign by appealing to the spirits of the founding fathers, who, as they point out, built the nation on the principle of religious freedom.

Says one Helms staffer, no doubt weary from opening angry letters, "They seem to have a point."

HER SAY

Birth Control and abortion in Ireland

The biggest impediments to Irish women's equality facing Irish women involve laws against abortion, contraception and divorce.

Up until a few years ago, contraception in any form was illegal. It is now available with a prescription but filling the prescription is up to not only the doctor; but the pharmacist involved, so that in practice, contraception is not widely available.

Divorce is illegal but there are indications legislators may review the law because of an alarming increase in family breakdown and separation.

There is a total ban on abortion, a ban that was strengthened two years ago when, following a country-wide referendum, the constitution was amended to ensure abortion would never be legally allowed in the Republic. The consequences have been tragic.

In one case, a cancer-stricken woman with an unwanted pregnancy had her medication taken away because of the possibility that the fetus would be harmed. Neither mother nor unborn child survived. A sexual assault crisis centre in a Protestant hospital faces closure through court action by an anti-abortion group because it dispenses the morning-after pill. Women's health centres which provide a variety of services also face closure through court action by the same group because they refer women to England for abortions. And finally, 4,000 women travelled to England to obtain abortions last year and the abortion rate in the Dublin area among women between the ages of 25-34 is actually greater than the rate in five comparably sized English cities.

It was the abortion issue that rallied, mobilised — and finally broke — the Irish women's movement. The referendum campaign revealed the awesome influence of the church. The voices of pro-choice activists couldn't drown out the priests who hammered away at the issue from the pulpit week after week until referendum day,



photo: Nelle Oosterom

Statue of St. Brigid: symbol of women's strength

when a majority of the Republic voted in favour of amending the constitution.

"There will never be abortion in Ireland," Sheila, a worker at the Irish Women's Centre in Dublin, says with bitter resignation. Sitting at her desk in the centre's small library, Sheila explains that the referendum loss has disillusioned feminists.

As she speaks she picks up the phone and realises it has been disconnected. The heat and electricity will go in a little while, she says with a shrug. The mainly self-supporting centre, which also houses a bookstore, meeting rooms, and provides referral and counselling services, hasn't been able to pay the bills that month. With no government funding, the centre is short of funds just about every month. Yet somehow, through the support of women who in many cases are unemployed or living at poverty-level in this almost have-not country, the centre survives as if by magic, luck or pure will.

Nelle Oosterom

Nelliegram

NICARAGUAN DEBATE

Even in Nicaragua a study headed by Dr. Ligia Altamirano, a gynecologist, has revealed details of the extent of illegal abortions, and has sparked an unprecedented debate on the subject in this revolutionary and socialist, but strongly Catholic, country.

Clashes between women's organisations and some male

members of the ruling Sandinista junta over the necessity to confront issues such as abortion and wife beating have been reported. The National Women's Association has launched a campaign to reach a consensus among the country's women on changes in the abortion law and to push for improved access to sex education and contraception.

Globe and Mail

Banning the bomb in Canada

Although the Canadian government remains ambigious about the existence of nuclear weapons in and around its borders, Canada is very much a part of the nuclear arms buildup. Cruise missile testing, uranium mining, and construction and assembly of nuclear weapons components are all direct ways that Canada participates in the arms race; peace activists have protested them all with limited success. Now, there is another chance to ban the bombs in Canada.

It started out as a small campaign; most Canadians probably haven't even heard about the Canadian Forces Maritime Experimental and Test Ranges (CFMETR) on Vancouver Island, but U.S. nuclear submarines use the range, a 50-square mile area, to test and develop the latest in their anti-submarine warfare arsenal. The Nanoose Conversion Campaign, named after Nanoose Bay in the Georgia Strait where the weapons testing range is located, want to convert CFMETR to peaceful productive purposes, end all weapons systems testing in the

Georgia Strait, and stop Ottawa from renewing the Canada-U.S. agreement governing the use of the Nanoose range.

The Canada-U.S. agreement on CFMETR expires this April. Originally signed in 1965 to establish, maintain and share the use of the range with our own military, the agreement was renewed and expanded in 1976, for a 10-year term. According to the Campaign, the U.S. part of the operation is controlled by the U.S. Navy base in Keyport, Washington. To publicise their aims and increase public awareness of CFMETR, the Nanoose Conversion Campaign has held Nuclear Free Theatre at the peace camp, several demonstrations, and handed out leaflets to passers-by. To direct attention to the presence of submarines carrying nuclear weapons the Campaign organises protests when the nuclear submarines arrive, a tactic which has proven tremendously effective in raising public awareness of the presence of nuclear weapons in Canada.

Public events at Nanoose also included the People's Enquiry

The Nanoose Camp: stopping the arms race in Canada.

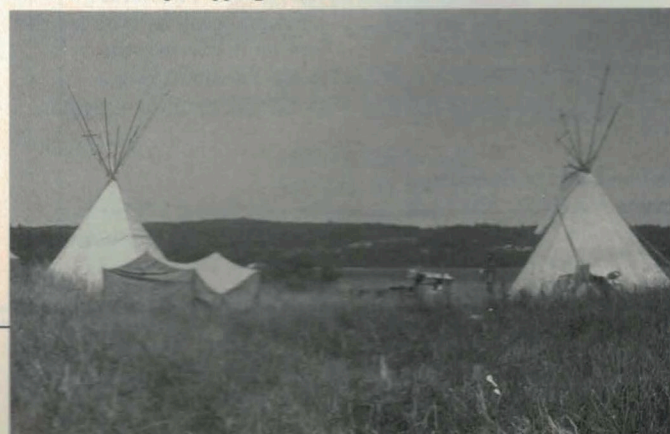


photo: Laurie MacBride

into CFMETR last January, which drew participation from such national notables as Dr. Rosalie Bertell, internationally known expert on low-level radiation, publisher Mel Hertig, Bishop Remi de Roo, and Major General Leonard Johnson (Ret.) of Generals for Peace and Disarmament.

Signs of optimism include two petition presentations in the House of Commons by NDP MP Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat—The Islands): one calls for the government to hold a public inquiry into renewal of the Nanosee agreement before it is renegotiated, and the other calls for support from the Parliament for the Campaign's three goals.

Supporters of the Conversion Campaign have been busy. Initial suggestions on how to convert the CFMETR to peaceful purposes include a maritime research station, shellfish mariculture, a search and rescue facility, and an alternative energy experimental station.

The action to be taken to support the Nanosee Conversion Campaign is not limited to Vancouver Island, or the House of Commons in Ottawa. Write to the government in Ottawa, specifically External Affairs Minister Joe Clark and Defence Minister Erik Nielson, and your own MP. Ask them to raise the issue in Question Period in the House, ask whether they support Jim Manly's Private Member's Bill. You can also use the opportunity to ask them to support the three goals of the Nanosee Conversion Campaign: an end to weapons testing at Nanosee; non-renewal of the Canada-U.S. agreement; and conversion of the naval base to peaceful economic purposes.

Edited by Penni Mitchell

(information provided by
Laurie MacBride, Nanosee
Conversion Campaign, 225 -
285 Prideaux St., Nanaimo,
B.C. V9R 2N2;

Bucks Break Barriers

"What better incentive is there than money!" asks Eileen Johnson, a machinist and instructor of the Pre-Trades training for Women at Red River Community College and an SDBer. So, over wine and cheese, the Same Damn Bunch, a group of Winnipeg women passionately interested in having fun and doing good things to promote the feminist cause, decided that something needed to be done to encourage more women to consider the technologies as career options. The Scholarship for Women entering Non-Traditional Occupations was born.

"Much has been done to help women enter trades and technology training at the community colleges. There were very few women in these courses in 1975. The good news is that 10 years later, there were 70," explains Chris Lane. "The bad news is that the total number of students in trades and technologies in 1985 was 1371. Of those, 1301 were men; only 70 were women."

Over the past year, money has been raised by SDB sponsored events such as the First Annual Canadian Women's Music and Cultural Festival and the sale of novelty items to create an ongoing scholarship. The first scholarship will be awarded in the Fall of 1986. It will be for a woman graduating from high school who is enrolled in a two year technology program at Red River Community College. The successful applicant will receive \$600 in the first year, and a subsequent \$600 in the second year. In 1987, a second scholarship will be awarded to a woman re-entering the workplace and taking a technology training program.

Beverly Suek

Beverly Suek is a Winnipeg human resource consultant and a member of the Same Damn Bunch.

Women's Centre open again

WINNIPEG — As we went to press last issue, the Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre received last minute operational funding. *HERizons* reported the centre's closing in our Jan./Feb. issue.

Now open until April 30, the centre will be setting up an advocacy program for battered women thanks to a \$21,000 grant from the Manitoba Department of Community Services. The Centre also received support from the United Way, and Secretary of State to finance groups for facilitation training, a course for low income women, and to keep its volunteer program afloat.

The bad news is that the centre must continually struggle to secure long-term funding, a situation workers at the centre call frustrating. Long term services such as counselling, are unavailable for that reason.

Nelliegram

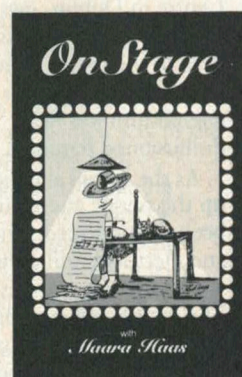
FISHING FOR THEMSELVES — Jobless women in France are making good out of a bad situation by starting up their own businesses.

Women of Europe reports that between 1981 and 1984, women accounted for between 18 and 20 per cent of the 142,000 unemployed people given help in founding a business. The help consists of a lump-sum payment equal to six months in unemployment benefits.

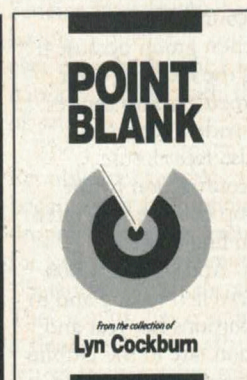
In 1982, 39 per cent of the female self-starters launched businesses in retailing, 35 per cent in services, 21 per cent in manufacturing and four per cent in the building industry. Whatever the field, the women-run businesses appear healthy, with more than 80 per cent of the enterprises still going after one year. That's despite the fact that women's grants average 14,900 francs to men's 21,600.

HER SAY

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TORONTO LESBIAN WINS

After almost nine months of lobbying, Toronto Library Board employee Karen Andrews recently won the right to dental and health insurance benefits for her female lover and her lover's two children. Andrews' union, CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) filed a grievance against her employer, the Library Board, stating that benefits should be extended to her household as they would be to any heterosexual family.

Although the present Family Law Reform Act does not consider cohabiting lesbian or gay couples and their children to be families, the publicity surrounding Andrews' case influenced CUMBA, Ontario's second largest benefits carrier, to move beyond present legislation and provide equal benefits. The union and Andrews are both pleased with the precedent setting decision. Local president Mary Cook says that many gay employees have come forward and applied for benefits since Andrews' success.

Andrews says conflict "arises between a sympathetic employer who might be progressive and government legislation and health plans which are not. I now have more rights as an employee than I do as a citizen, and that irks me."

Since Andrews filed for family coverage, the union has passed motions of support, both moral and financial, to end this kind of discrimination against lesbians and gay men. Cook says that their fight is now with the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) and with the Ontario Metropolitan Employee's Retirement Savings (OMERS), the two government regulated plans that affect CUPE's employees. In Andrews' case, it was the insurance company that chose to recognise her household as a family, not OHIP itself.

The recent change of government in Ontario has the union optimistic but determined: they will pursue their grievance to the Supreme Court, if necessary. Presently

with OMERS, if a woman were to designate her husband as her beneficiary, he would receive an ongoing pension after her death; if the same woman were to designate a female lover, that woman would receive a one time payment and nothing else.

Cook describes this as "not only a gay rights issue but a woman's one as well." As women get recognition for the validity of households without men in them, social benefits can correspond to a more realistic assessment of women's lives. The move to provide coverage to lesbian and gay households is a responsible distribution of benefits. Says Andrews, "It's very important for people to get sexual orientation into their contracts, and for those who have it, to keep it."

Ingrid MacDonald

PUTTING THE BRAKES ON PROFITS. Tax discount businesses will have to limit their share of tax refunds to five per cent from 15 per cent for tax returns over \$300 due to a new federal law. Manitobans alone gave up about \$2.5 million to rebates in return for immediate cash tax refunds.

Anti-Poverty groups have been pressuring the government to stop this gouging of the poor. Responding to the new legislation, NDP's David Orlikow said discounters "will still be permitted to charge interest rates of more than 60 per cent (annually), which is a criminal offence." The government's plan to spread the child tax credit out over the year with periodic payments is a welcome innovation, but this will not help those low-income people who receive other rebates.

Globe and Mail

FUNDAMENTALLY FIRED. Church organisations are finding support in law to control employees on religious

grounds. The Massachusetts Supreme Court found the *Christian Science Monitor* was within its rights as parts of a church in firing a reporter. She openly admitted she was a lesbian and refused to participate in a 'healing' ordered by the First Church of Christ.

Because the U.S. Constitution "prohibits civil courts from intervening in disputes concerning religious doctrine, discipline, faith, or internal organisation," the court maintained that the *Monitor* had not fired Madsen illegally.

But, as the "rights of religion are not beyond the reach of civil law," the court suggested that Madsen pursue a new hearing on other claims — including interference with her employment contract, defamation, invasion of privacy, and infliction of emotional distress.

off our backs

STILL FUNDAMENTALLY FIRED. Also recently, the US Supreme Court agreed to decide whether states may enforce job bias laws against church-affiliated schools. The court will resolve a sex bias dispute between a fundamentalist Christian school and a pregnant teacher the school had dismissed so she would stay home with her baby.

HER SAY

ANTI-WAR SPEECH COSTS. An Ottawa man who perched on top of a bus shelter near the National War Memorial last November 11 and delivered an anti-war speech to about 5,000 people during the Remembrance Day ceremony was fined \$250.

In his speech, Mr. Cormier said governments honour the war dead but do nothing to stop wars or the arms race. Provincial Court Judge Patrick White did not criticise the message, but said the ceremony was a solemn occasion which followed a certain order.

Globe & Mail



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NICOLE MORIN

Par une belle soirée, je suis allée rencontrer une Franco-Manitobaine hors de l'ordinaire: en plus de prononcer le mot féminisme sans rougir, elle travaille continuellement pour les femmes.

Je n'ai pas à vous la présenter puisqu'elle était déjà à cette revue, mais si vous n'étiez pas abonnée, la voici: RENNÉE LEGAL.

Il était une fois une jeune fille de la campagne qui, après ses années d'école, déménagea en ville à l'âge de dix-sept ans. Elle se trouva un emploi comme secrétaire municipale à la ville de St-Boniface où elle travaillait pendant quatre ans; et c'est de là que commence l'interview.

Je suis retournée aux études. Une très bonne expérience! C'est vraiment là où j'ai appris les matières que j'avais toujours voulu connaître: la sociologie, la psychologie, la linguistique, la politique... J'aborda avec une perspective féministe, chacun de mes cours: le mouvement des suffragettes, la conditions masculine et féminine dans la société, le langage sexiste, la valeur du travail des femmes au foyer, la pauvreté des femmes, la pornographie, l'avortement...

Je me suis toujours intéressée à la condition des femmes. En fait, je ne me souviens pas du jour où je suis "devenue" féministe. Il me semble que ça toujours été là. Et puis, ma mère a toujours été assez moderne. J'ai beaucoup appris d'elle, sans qu'elle ne s'en rende compte peut-être... Elle ne faisait jamais de bruit pour rien, mais nous a souvent laissé connaître ses pensées, même si "la norme" exigeait qu'une femme, ça ne se plaint jamais! Mon père aussi, de sa propre façon, a soutenu mes idées, même s'il ne venait pas toujours à bout de les comprendre, ces idées-là.

À l'école secondaire, on savait que je m'intéressais à la "libération" de la femme parce que j'en parlais assez souvent. Je voulais "pouvoir" que j'étais aussi capable que les gars. Mais les gens semblaient me respecter même si mes idées leur paraissaient un peu "différentes". par contre, mes idées étaient beaucoup moins acceptées au niveau universitaire... Les temps ont changé?

Je me souviens du premier livre féministe que j'ai lu. C'était "The Feminine Mystique" de Betty Friedan... Ça m'a ouvert les yeux encore plus! Je n'étais qu'adolescente, mais je pouvais comprendre ce que l'auteure expliquait — ça se voyait partout, la discrimination!

Aussi j'avais un prof à l'école qui nous parlait des stéréotypes existant dans notre société. Il



Renée et ses nièces / amies Danielle et Natalie.

était sage, mais je ne crois pas qu'il se serait considéré "féministe." C'est un mot trop abstrait pour bien des personnes. Plusieurs interprètent mal ce mot.

En quittant le secondaire, je savais pas vraiment ce que je voulais faire de ma vie... J'avais passé des tests pour choisir une carrière; les tests se contredisaient d'un à l'autre et ne correspondaient pas à mes attentes. Par contre, je ne savais pas quelles étaient véritablement mes attentes?! Je ne savais pas quoi faire... J'avais pas d'idées... C'était comme un gros "blank" pendant un certain temps. Je me suis simplement dit: "bon, je vais commencer en entreprenant ce que je sais bien faire: dactylographier!" J'allais me consacrer à Ça et voir ce qui m'arriverait.

C'est surtout en observant les femmes avec

qui je travaillais que j'ai eu de nouvelles idées... Ces femmes qui m'étaient devenues des modèles avaient des diplômes, elles occupaient des carrières beaucoup plus intéressantes et stimulantes que la mienne, et effectivement gagnaient des salaires beaucoup plus élevés que moi.

Dans le fin fond, je savais que je n'allais pas rester secrétaire. Je m'étais promis de retourner aux études, un jour. Heureusement mes collègues m'ont encouragée dans ce domaine là.

Mais au début je croyais ne pas pouvoir réussir aux études... Moi? Une fille de Ste-Geneviève? L'université c'est pour les super-intelligents!? J'ai découvert que l'université c'est pour n'importe quelle personne ordinaire qui veut s'appliquer et qui s'intéresse aux études. Ça exige énormément de travail, mais ça vaut la peine.

Quand j'ai quitté le foyer de mes parents, j'avais pris toute une autre voie! Comme une bonne p'tite fille, je m'étais financée à l'âge de dix-sept ans!! Mais en dedans, je savais que je divaguais... Ça n'allait pas marcher, le mariage, parce que mes idées étaient trop différentes, trop modernes comparativement à celles de mon chum. J'aime bien l'idée du mariage, mais les circonstances doivent être bonnes, agréables, justes... Aujourd'hui je ne suis toujours pas pressée...

Dans un mariage "typique", il y a beaucoup plus de bénéfices pour l'homme que pour la femme. La femme va souvent laisser tout tomber pour "s'occuper" de son mari et de ses enfants. Pas question que l'homme abandonne tous SES rêves! La femme en restant au foyer devient économiquement dépendante. Malheureusement son travail n'est pas valorisé, et si son mari la quitte, elle et ses enfants, elle est foutue. Les hommes ont le meilleur des deux mondes: une famille et une carrière (et des congés et des plans de pension et des promotions...) Et puis, la femme qui est battue par son mari aura de la difficulté à s'en sortir car elle

Beef and Bouquet

Les hommes d'affaires de St-Boniface ne sont peut-être pas au courant des capacités des femmes d'affaires d'ici; en effet, leur porte-parole a annoncé qu'il ne serait jamais question de les intégrer à leur Club... Méprise archaïque de notre pouvoir, chauvinisme à faire rougir les couleurs du folklore local!

est sans argent, sans emploi, sans confiance, sans formation... Combien de femmes restent dans un mariage malheureux parce qu'autrement elles ne pourraient pas faire vivre ses enfants! C'est un maudit cercle vicieux...

Les femmes ne devraient jamais dépendre de quelqu'un d'autre, économiquement parlant, en autant qu'il est possible bien sûr. Dans notre société, l'indépendance économique équivaut à la liberté. Et cette liberté m'a toujours été chère ET nécessaire.

C'est certain que les hommes sont confortables dans leur situations, beaucoup plus que le sont les femmes, sauf ceux qui sont mal à l'aise, pauvres, qui ont souffert de discrimination. Non, je ne dis pas que c'est "très facile" d'être un homme. On dit aux hommes dès qu'ils sont jeunes qu'ils n'ont pas le droit d'exprimer leurs émotions, de montrer de l'amour tendre, de communiquer leurs peines. Je comprends bien pourquoi certains d'entre eux sont alors violents, enragés, malheureux... Ça doit être difficile d'avoir à faire le "tough", le macho tout le temps! Le mouvement féministe travaille aussi en faveur des hommes: s'ils étaient égaux aux femmes, les hommes n'auraient pas à jouer des rôles stressants.

Néanmoins, vous pouvez comprendre pourquoi j'estime que les femmes sont placées en bas de l'échelle. Elles doivent toujours penser aux autres, s'oublier elle-même. Ça c'est plate! Qui abandonne ses activités pour "s'occuper" des autres? Qui doit toujours prêter oreille aux problèmes des enfants, du mari, du patron? Qui est victime du harcèlement sexuel dans les rues, au travail, partout!? Qui doit rester mince, belle, jeune, fraîche tout au long de sa vie pour plaire aux hommes? Qui gagne 60% du salaire des hommes? Qui décourage-t-on de poursuivre des études supérieures? Qui est non-représentée dans la Chambre des Communes? Qui est violée? Qui est accusée d'être anti-mâle à chaque fois qu'elle tente de revendiquer ses droits? Qui accomplit la plupart des tâches domestiques? Qui occupe les postes les moins valorisés, les moins rémunérés? Qui se prostitue pour plaire à l'homme, parce qu'elle est sans argent, parce qu'elle ne connaît pas d'autre mode de vie, parce qu'on lui a appris à s'identifier à un objet sexuel? Qui n'a pas droit à la prétrise? Qui est mutilée, exposée, et donc rendue vulnérable dans la littérature haineuse telle que la pornographie? Qui est tenue responsable de prendre des méthodes anticonceptionnelles, et si ces dernières ne fonctionnent pas, qui, souvent, se retrouve seule avec une grossesse non-désirée?

D'après un sondage exécuté cette année (1985) par les Nations-Unies, les femmes font 2/3 du travail dans le monde entier, gagnent 1/10 de ces revenus, et possèdent 1/100 des propriétés. John Lennon avait raison de dire que "Woman is the nigger of the world"!

C'est pour ces raisons que je dis que les hommes ne vivent pas aussi difficilement que les femmes. Encore, cela ne veut pas dire que

tous les hommes mènent une vie plus facile que toutes les femmes! Ben non! Soyons réaliste! Malheureusement les hommes, pour la plupart, ne connaissent pas les problèmes que vivent les femmes parce qu'ils ne les ont pas expérimentés personnellement. Mais ça se comprend jusqu'à un certain point... Nous les blancs, connaissons-nous la situation des Amérindien(ne)s, par exemple? Nous qui sommes en excellente santé, connaissons-nous la situation des handicapé(e)s? C'est vague pour nous, leur monde, non?

Ce qui m'attriste surtout, c'est cette interprétation négative et fausse que la société a du féminisme... Le mouvement des femmes aspire à l'égalité *et* pour les hommes *et* pour les femmes. C'est pas possible combien de femmes disent encore: "Je ne suis pas féministe, mais..."! J'adhère toujours au message: "Aux hommes leurs droits; rien de plus. Aux femmes leurs droits; rien de moins." Et je rêve au jour où les hommes et les femmes seront égaux et sauront s'entraider, s'entr'aimer... Et au jour où les riches et les pauvres partageront les biens dans le monde, à titre égal... où les handicapé(e)s, les âgé(e)s, les minoritaires auront aussi leur place dans la société. Mais le monde n'est pas parfait. Nous n'avons qu'à travailler ensemble... Ça va venir...

Georgie

de Jeanne D'Arc Jutras
Ed. de la Pleine Lune

Je reconnais avouer un parti-pris pour "Georgie", autobiographie romancée de Jeanne D'Arc Jutras. L'histoire m'a plu dès le début. D'abord, parce qu'elle est simple, vivante, se lisant d'un trait, comme répliques d'enfant n'ayant pas froid aux yeux; puis, parce que l'auteure l'a voulu comme elle est: un grand témoignage dans la recherche amoureuse différente, celle d'une lesbienne. Et, enfin, voilà, la volonté de devenir tout au long du récit mieux que fière, à la conquête de soi, à l'aise!

Vivre sa vie dans une sexualité saine même si elle est autre, bâtir son image dans l'acceptation de son orientation, aller jusqu'à revendiquer son allégeance, sa détermination: "j'me rends compte que la vrai problème c'est de vivre avec soi-même" ¹; s'affirmer ainsi puisque l'histoire rejoint son vécu de militante pour les droits des gais et lesbiennes en ayant participé à un hot-line de deux heures, visibilité de pionnière!

C'est à travers les dialogues de ses personnages, du franc-parler de son milieu à Montréal: "c'est une simonnac de zippée. Des zippées comme elle, c'est pas ça qui manque. De n'importe quel côté que tu t'tournes, on t'oblique à te ghettoiser même dans ton ghetto" ² qu'on

¹ Georgie, page 116

² id. page 142

découvre sa puissance dans les rapports humains: directs, chauds, la potentialité de sa

On suit *Georgie* à travers ses âges, de son enfance à la découverte joyeuse de la masturbation, ses premiers amours et sa quarantaine nous défile la vision de son entourage, parfois hypocrite; de son ami Paul, de toutes sortes d'états d'âmes. Madame Canelle aussi entre en jeu (Tome 2, Délira Canelle);

D'entrer avec *Georgie* dans sa vie son monde, ses émotions, sensibilité-voyante à nous dire qu'il faut se battre, comme elle le fait, comme elle se fait redemander de retourner au travail de caissière, nous laisse sur "crie, tourne, vibre, aime dans la liberté": FIN à poursuivre...

À consulter, Gay/Lesbian Almanac

A New Documentary on History, lesbian and Gay Men by Jonathan Ned Katz, Harpet Colophon Books, 1983, 764 pages.

Lettres d'amour de femmes, Reina HAMILTON aux éditions du Remue-Ménage, préface de Solange.



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There are 40,000 newspapers stacked in a room the size of a nursery. They block access to the coffee machine and to a bookcase full of feminist publications. At every table in an adjacent room one or two women are folding, labelling, bundling. Some are humming and chatting as they fold and label and bundle, but the work does not stop. You can recognize those who have been there for many hours by the smudges of black newsprint all the way up their arms.

The front page of each newspaper is dominated by a photograph featuring three lissom babies being dangled from the public gallery railing of a parliament — mute observers watching the lawmakers decide their future. The parliament is Iceland's Althing, the oldest democratic parliament on earth, and the babies are some of Iceland's luckiest tots, growing up with a political party that defends the interests of women and children.

The newspaper which is to be sent to one half of the women in Iceland who are over 20, is called *Kvennalistinn*, the Women's List, and it is unabashedly partisan. It contains articles on the ideology of the three year-old Kvennalist (variously translated as Women's List, Women's Party, Women's Slate) and reports from various sections of the country on the status of women in that area. There are also articles about health care, younger women, co-operatives, childcare, and housing.

In Iceland, a country of readers where publishing houses abound and the capital city, Reykjavik, has more daily newspapers per capita than almost anywhere else, the women of Iceland want to read too. They want to read about their party.

"It's the first such mailing we've done that's not been at election time," says Magdalena as she folds, labels and bundles. "And it's mostly for information — not just to have women join the party. Sometimes the press doesn't always regard our news, women's news, as worth reporting..." To ensure that news and analysis of women's issues does reach the public eye Magdalena also volunteers for the graphic design and paste-up of a monthly feminist magazine, *Vera*.

At another table a grey-haired woman in her 50s has taken some time out from the routine to explain to a foreign tourist that the building they are working in is the Women's House, the Kvennahusid. "Now women want to stand beside of man, not behind him," she says, making appropriate gestures to enhance her moderate mastery of English. The tourist, who speaks no Icelandic, understands the sentiment. "Soon we will buy a new house. We're working on that now, see..." and she points to some old-fashioned buildings that can be seen from the window. The present rented building houses the Women's Party headquarters, an office for an association of professional women, workspace for the magazine *Vera*, and for a working women's

group. This hive of movement activity chugging along in unison seems, at first view, to parallel its contemporaries in West Germany, Britain, even Canada. But the Icelandic women's movement has no parallel. In the area of contemporary women's rights, they have come farther, faster, than any other developed country.

In Iceland, the Women's Party sprang seemingly from nowhere as recently as 1982, to seat candidates on the municipal councils of two major towns. Less than a year later three Women's Party candidates were elected to the

Reckoning in Reykjavik

The Icelandic Women's Movement Takes Power

by
Jan de Grass

60-member national legislature. Not so long ago the women of Iceland overwhelmingly adopted the cause of peace, hauled it into public consciousness, and were primarily responsible for making Iceland a nuclear-free country. Though this political climate for women's issues did not blossom until as late as 1982 there were two monumental exceptions to that benchmark.

The first exception can be dated precisely. It was October 24, 1975 — the United Nations International Women's Year. On that day the entire female population of Iceland downed tools, and pots and pans, and typewriters, and even babies, and went out on strike. Reykjavik became the scene of the biggest outdoor meeting in its history as thousands of working women gathered to celebrate and to illustrate the importance of their position in the economy and social structure of the country.

"It must have sown a little seed," a Kvennalist member told me. "It began a wave of changing thought. Vigdis is a product of that year."

Vigdis is Vigdis Finnbogadóttir, Iceland's first woman president and she represents the second major exception to the 1982 blossoming. The Presidency of Iceland theoretically is granted only ceremonial and constitutional value. Legis-



photos by Jan DeGrass

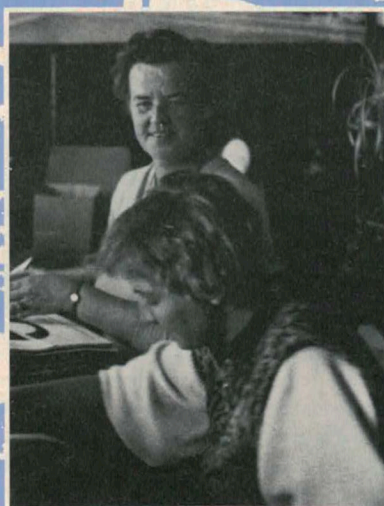


photo by Jan DeGrass

*From top left, clockwise:
Gudrun Agnarsdottir defends the need
for a separate party to look after the
interests of women and children.*

*Iceland's Kvinnahúsið, or Women's
House, brings feminist publishers,
politicians and professionals under one
roof.*

*After 40,000 copies of Kvinnahistinn are
mailed out, half the women in Iceland are
expected to read it.*

lative powers are vested jointly in the Presidency and the legislature, but the head of the party in power — the Prime Minister — wields the heavier club.

In practice, Vigdis' position is very strong. As a symbol of national identity and values that matter to women, she makes a strong case. Though largely a figurehead, the position is not an appointed one. She must be elected by the people on the basis of a platform, in her case one which included a commitment to national independence, pacifism and feminism. When she entered the 1980 race; there had never been a woman president before.

French-educated, and with a background in theatre management, Finnbogadóttir was the single mother of a seven year old girl at the time of the election, causing her opponents to lather furiously on the question of whether an unmarried woman could possibly cope with the large presidential residence by herself. During the election campaign when Finnbogadóttir announced that she was in favour of an egalitarian society and that she was "against troops and armies of any kind, anywhere", her opponents were enraged. The resultant backlash actually succeeded in turning many liberals in her favour.

Her victory in 1980 and for her second term in 1984, won her many admirers, not the least of which were the women of Iceland. Elisabet Thorgeirsdóttir, a single mother living in a fishing village in the western fjords was prompted to write poetry to her:

As I pick out
the worms from the cod
I egg you on to greater things...
As I wring out diapers
throw the dirty dishes into the sink
my mind salutes you
I clean up quickly
the mess around me
trying to harness the force
that is meant for you.
Remember
you are fighting our fight
that of hundreds of mothers
in hundreds of kitchens
a thousand years of daily labour
in a barren hostile country...

Ask any number of Canadians what they know of Iceland and, for the most part, unless they come from Gimli, Manitoba (noted for its many citizens of Icelandic origin) the country only seems to conjure up images of a land of ice and snow where polar bears scamper. To think of the people of that country is to think vaguely of cod fishermen and Vikings. Only some of these images are loosely based in truth.

There are no polar bears. If they float in on an iceberg from Greenland, ravenous, they are shot. The country is not barren, in spite of what Elisabet says in her poem, but it is hostile. The fertile valleys in which cattle and sheep graze have been wrested from volcanic ash and cinder. The hostility of capricious, active volcanoes could once again reduce pasture land to the gigantic



After 40,000 copies of *Kvennalistinn* are mailed out, half the women in Iceland are expected to read it.

lava fields of twisted basalt and tufa that covers most of the country.

The name "Ice" land is actually a corruption of "Is" land, because it is an island in the north Atlantic, just under the Arctic Circle. There is, indeed, some ice cap on the island, only 12 per cent, which meets the sea in fingers of continuously crunching and grinding glacier. And there is snow in winter time. But the mean average temperature of Iceland is identical to Stockholm, Sweden many miles further south, and the summers are cool and sunny. Fishing is the primary resource, totalling 77 per cent of the country's exports in the last decade and providing much of the industrial employment for women in the many canneries and fish processors.

It's not too far wrong to think of Vikings though. Iceland was settled by Norsepeople from present day Norway and Denmark in the 9th century A.D. who, along with the Celts, are the very foundation of the Icelandic people today and whose old Norse evolved into today's Icelandic language.

A Literary and Parliamentary Heritage

Those early Norse settlers left some remarkable legacies. Their literary tradition — heroic poetry and sagas — was rich, detailed and featured strong women characters. The *Laxdaela Saga* written by an unknown author in 1245 A.D. is typical of other sagas in that it is a lyrical account of daily life for the first settlers to the western fjords. Its main heroine is Gudrun whose rocky marriages are charted to the extreme. Though she is depicted as an intelligent, but conniving personality, the real heroines of sagas like the *Laxdaela* are the minor characters such as Aud, who avenges herself for being jilted by her husband. Without waiting for her brothers to do the fatal deed for her, she dons men's apparel and rides to her ex-husband's house by night to stab him. The reason he has divorced her is because she often "wore breeches with gores in the crotch like a man", apparently suitable grounds for divorce under Viking law.

Or, Unn the Deep-minded, who escaped

from Scotland where her people had been successful conquerors. After a Scottish uprising during which her son was killed, Unn considered her prospects dim in that country. The saga recounts how she had a ship built secretly in a forest which she loaded with valuables and all her surviving kinfolk and set sail for Iceland. "It is generally thought that it would be hard to find another example of a woman escaping from such hazards with so much wealth and such a large retinue" remarks the saga. "From this it can be seen what a paragon amongst women she was."

The Icelandic sagas were not the only legacy that the original settlers conferred on their successors. In the year 930 they established a parliament, the Althing, which met once a year on a windy, watery plain called Thingvellir in southwest Iceland. It was the highest court in the land, combining legislative and judiciary power for the early republic. Sections of the country were divided into "Things" and each of these areas elected its own representative to the Althing. Every June for hundreds of years, the elected reps would gather together friends and followers, family, pets, home and food, climb onto their stout ponies and trek to Thingvellir. For a few weeks every year the plain became a jolly campground where the Lawspeaker read the law, sentences were passed, business was transacted, poetry composed, stories told, competitions took place, foreign emissaries were courted, families were united and brides and grooms were selected.

Even today at Thingvellir tourguides are apt to point out one conspicuous lonely cliff overlooking the valley. It was the Ladies Rock where women would gather to watch the men play competitive games below. Though the Althing is now housed in a stone building in Reykjavik, Thingvellir is still a special place to all Icelanders. On the 19th of June every year, Icelandic women celebrate their own day — the day on which, 70 years ago, women got the right to vote. Last year many of them gathered at Thingvellir for that day.

That it is still a special place to Icelanders is reiterated by Salome Thorkelsdóttir, the elected Speaker of the Upper House in the contemporary Althing. One thousand and fifty-five years after the parliament's inception, Salome sits in regulation of its daily procedure. She is tall, elegant and reminds one strongly of Iona Campagnola, both in appearance and party line. She has been a member of parliament since 1979 representing a large outlying region of the capital called Reykjanes, almost 56,000 people. She is not a Women's Party member and points out that her party, the Independence Party, has always managed to find some women members, one of whom is presently the Minister of Culture and Education. (The Independence party in coalition with the Progressives, now form the majority.)

She admits though that she is "not happy about how slowly things go for us" and feels that the election of the *Kvennalist* candidates shook

photo by Jan DeGrass



photo by Jan DeGrass

Salome Thorkelsdottir, Iceland's Upper House Speaker says women politicians work hard and speak only when they have something to say.

things up. "Now men can see what happens when women are elected," she says with some pride. As the Speaker who keeps order in the chambers, she has some practical reasons why she'd like to see more women in the House: "Women don't talk as much as men, they really work," she says. "They speak up only when they have something to say."

There are two areas, Salome feels, in which her party and the Women's Party work in tandem; they are huge issues — peace and equal pay. Peace, and specifically Iceland's role in NATO, is a "sensitive" issue, according to Salome and to just about anyone else I talked to. The Independence Party officially views NATO

as a "peace-keeper".

"Everybody wants peace," says Salome, "but we want peace with freedom." The presence of the United States base at Keflavik, a scant 20 miles from Reykjavik, calls into question this NATO commitment and raises conjecture about whether nuclear weapons are present on the base. This allegation has been "neither confirmed nor denied" by Washington. The Americans from the base are very unobtrusive. Their weekly pass allows them to leave the base in civilian clothes only, camouflaging them among the foreign tourists. The women who walk through the streets of Reykjavik and other towns with peace petitions on clipboards or who

plaster shop windows with posters, are a lot more conspicuous — and seem to be effective.

Last May, Parliament passed a unanimous resolution in favour of "mutual and verifiable disarmament" and renewed a previous commitment to ban nuclear weapons from deployment in Iceland. This decision occasioned a lot of doublethink from politicians of all parties to make the contradiction sit comfortable with the NATO agreement. Although it made many women peace activists very happy, they did not let up on their peace campaign efforts but continued with the posters, television advertising, buttons and petitions.

The Workplace of Iceland

Equality of the sexes on the labour market is guaranteed by legislation in Iceland. But in practice, when jobs are performed by women, they are often downgraded in description and even the most ardent chauvinist recognises that discrepancies still exist in salaries for men and women.

Two thirds of all Icelandic women between 15 and 74 are actively employed outside of the home, with no noticeable variation in those figures according to marital status. Iceland's unemployment rate is an enviable two per cent. But true to form, the vast majority of workers in the unskilled and lower paid jobs are women. Fish processing (at which 15 per cent of the entire population works) is the fairest. Basic pay for men averages five per cent higher than women, though a survey noted that women have a two per cent edge over men when productivity bonuses are included in the figures. That's a lot

Day Out for Women

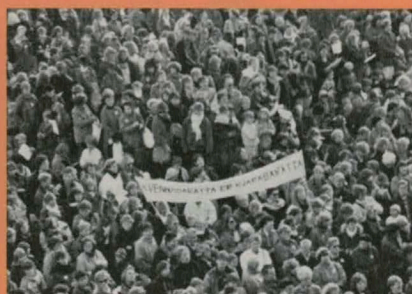
An estimated 18,000 - 25,000 women walked off the job to pack the downtown streets of Reykjavik, on October 24th last year, marking the end of the United Nations Decade of Women. In Iceland's second largest city, so many women turned out for the strike, to a local community hall that organisers had to move to a larger facility.

According to Gudrun Agnarsdottir, Women's Party Member of Parliament, Icelandic women walked out in as much force as they had ten years ago because: "The same issues were still there to be fought for as they were ten years ago". She cited such issues as equal pay ratios, education opportunities, and improved childcare. In the past decade women's consciousness had been raised to the pressing need for change but conditions in Iceland had not improved.

The event was advertised by newspaper and radio with ads paid for by contributions from women's organisations.

While the women walked out, men "desperately tried to maintain a skeleton service in businesses and offices" according to an Icelandic newspaper. Sectors staffed entirely by women such as primary schools and fish processing plants closed down entirely.

But some tension lay beneath the country's celebrations. Gudrun describes how on October 23rd an all-night session of parliament saw the Ministry of Transport introduce a Bill that would force striking Icelandair flight attendants, whose pay negotiations had broken down, back to work.



The three Women's Party members, one of whom had worked with Icelandair, spoke against the Bill and finally protested by departing the legislature. The Bill passed at 5 a.m. on the 24th. It was rushed, as is usually done in these cases, to Iceland's feminist President Vigdis Finnbogadottir, for her rubber stamp approval. In a move unprecedented in Iceland's parliamentary history, Finnbogadottir refused to sign, asking for "time to think things over". Shortly before the 24th Vigdis had declared that she would join Icelandic women by not showing up at her offices on that day.

According to Gudrun, the President was finally "bullied" into signing the back-to-work legislation, under threat of ministerial resignation. In a public statement she said she had asked for a postponement to the signing, because she felt: "What a pity it was to be signing laws of that kind on that particular...precious...day."

Commenting on Finnbogadottir's action, Gudrun Agnarsdottir said, "Most women understood her extreme difficulty. I think there was a wave of sympathy from all of us for her."

Icelandair's 160 flight attendants defied the return-to-work order, however, and instead attended a women's rally in the nation's capital, Reykjavik, chanting the slogan, "We dare, we can, we will."

Jan DeGrass, Nordic traveller and Vancouver freelance writer, produces corporate communications for credit unions by day and articles for women's magazines by night.

of cod to slit — as fast as possible. In clerical and office work there is an astonishing 30 per cent wage differential between men and women.

"All women work together on this one," says Salome, "we don't disagree." But Gudrun Agnarsdottir is from the Women's Party and she does disagree — slightly. Her party often has a different emphasis on the finer, crucial points, an outlook that defends the need for a separate party to look after the interests of women and children. Gudrun, a medical doctor with three children, has been a member of parliament for just two years — a short, action-packed time. Her Party, the Kvinnalíst, would like to see women's work re-evaluated on the job market. As it is often a continuation of work done in the home, why not acknowledge at least four years experience at home when hiring in the waged labour market, asks Gudrun.

The Kvinnalíst also has a proposal for maternity benefits, the likes of which make the Independence Party budget planners cringe and count costs: six months off work at full salary, with both parents eligible. Presently Icelandic women workers receive three months paid leave for child-bearing. There are exceptions to this rule which usually involve the efforts of trade unions. In Husavík, a northern, co-operative-oriented town, the Husavík trade union recently started granting mothers an extra month's work of pay at the end of the standard three months. On first announcement this gesture appeared laudable until a male trade union spokesman tarnished it somewhat by saying that the trade union hoped the bonus would encourage population growth.

Gudrun points out that the Women's Party has policy proposals for a host of other areas affecting women: child support, education, culture, and one area that is of concern to both parties: daycare. The Kvinnalíst is calling for more money to be allocated to schools to provide an uninterrupted school day compatible with working parents' schedules. The present school day is fragmented and the lack of co-ordinated daycare facilities force parents to make other arrangements. They would also like to see a considerably increased budget for daycare. At this time the state does not take primary responsibility for daycare centres, leaving it up to the local communities and to the parents to each pay a portion of the costs.

One of the reasons daycare is on top of the agenda for the Party is because Iceland has a proportionately large population of single mothers. Welfare is available but it is minimal and most women work outside of the home, mainly for the money, but also because it is expected that they work outside the home.

Free abortion is available after consultation with a social worker and a doctor. It is estimated that only seven out of every 1000 women in Iceland have used this service.

There is no readily apparent social stigma attached to unmarried mothers, nor to those mothers who live with a man who is not the father of their children. There appears to be no

sacred ethic around marriage either, but then historically, Icelanders have never regarded marriage as a solemn ecclesiastical event, but rather as a sort of civic, economic arrangement — an attitude that has caused centuries of Catholic and Lutheran converters to smite their prayer books in frustration.

Women are the Proletariat

The majority of the feminists who sat around the tables at the Kvinnahúsið, folding, labelling and bundling newspapers, had bundled a fair number of diapers, too. The three month school holiday had just begun and one mother of a 13 year-old lamented how her son came home tired every day after working on construction during the summer months from 8 am to 6 pm.

Other students, some very young, are engaged in manual labour projects all summer — the kind that constantly need attention in Iceland, like laying sod on the black volcanic cinders — a mini work force that keeps kids occupied and earning some wages. Some children go away in summer to rural areas to live and work on a farm, the Icelandic equivalent of summer camp.

These farms also act as prisons for female offenders. There is no jail for women in Iceland and the very few convicted women are usually well-known to the population. On the farm they can work, but must stay within its environs except for Saturday nights, when they are allowed out. One recent case involved a woman whose husband was drunk and violent. She poured boiling oil on him. There is a home for battered women in Reykjavík and its services are well used, especially during the winter months.

One conversation around the Kvinnahúsið tables revolved disapprovingly around a new private school that had opened for children of the

Akureyri, Iceland; Art in the park, sculptor and title unmarked.



photo by Jan DeGrass

elite. Iceland is not a very class-conscious society and on an island with a population of only 238,000 the sense of inter-dependent community is very strong. People from one small village don't like to hear the next small village regard itself as better simply because it is more prosperous. There are no beggars in Iceland, neither are there any millionaires, though the wage gap between rich and poor is increasing. "If there's a proletariat in Iceland, it's women," says Magdalena.

The forward thrust of feminism in Iceland right now is connected very strongly with electoral politics and there are some obvious historical reasons for this. However, it is significant Gudrun says, that the original objective of the Women's Party was contemplated mostly "as an action" to spotlight the low participation of women in local government. In 1982 several hundred women gathered to agree on the nature of the action, by proposing candidates for the municipal elections of Reykjavík and Akureyri. By autumn of that year when they had captured two seats on each city council, the "action" had garnered a new credibility.

A second large gathering of women were split on whether to maintain the momentum and run national candidates in the forthcoming election, or whether to wait four years to build grass roots support. There was good reason to wait: the election was only six weeks away! But by February of 1983 when 700 women turned out to a meeting which would discuss nominating candidates, the decision was made. With only six weeks to campaign, the Women's Party entered the race. "No one wanted to run," remembers Gudrun. "Everyone wanted to support someone else in running. I had the thumbscrews put on me, though my self-confidence was very fragile."

"It's been important for us to nurture confidence among all the women," she said. When the TV programs wanted to speak only to chairpersons or leaders, we had to tell them we didn't have any leaders. While campaigning everyone spoke before groups, whether they wanted to or not."

The Women's Party began their campaign in a brazen, proletarian fashion. Twenty women took a bus all over Iceland to visit town community centres, fishing villages, clubs and sewing circles; to speak and to listen to women's needs and problems in every part of the country. "The bus was decorated with all sorts of things...bras, and so on," remembers Gudrun. "Some people were shocked, the media ignored us, but on the whole we were tremendously successful."

By compacting so much activity into four short years the women's movement in Iceland has so far not encountered a serious right-wing backlash. There are some signs that opposition is beginning to form and that the hard part is just about to begin. "They have a thousand ways to neutralise you", says Gudrun. "You must be constantly aware, in order not to be neutralised by this system. It's a man's system. We must act to be here."

the new hero knows that
post-modernism defies
definition. the new hero
knows that imagination
is infinite and that
innocence is irretrievable.
ha. it is not, but the
new hero knows this.
the new hero creates
patterns of freedom,
patterns of venerable
probability. the
new hero bleeds
bleeds bleeds. the new
hero is here.
she is strong.

© Pat Steiner
Ottawa, Ontario

CHANT OF LIFE

Yes to this dream this small miracle sprout
growing clutching sucking beginning to look
like us. Some magical natural act turning
molecules minerals an egg the size of a grain
of sand DNA water blood fish and numinous life
into a perfectly tiny human mirror daughter/son.
O invisible waterangle floating in my salty
garden. Evolving your soft ivory ears eyelids
open for sound. Boom la boom two hearts beating
placenta pulsing whoosha whoosha it's spring
and you're signalling from the dark cloister
of eden. Dear one. Reptile-fish-bird-fetus-baby-
yin and yang. We are making and remaking history.
Beneath my navel your flowering body presses out.
Willed and remarkable. You grow so fast I'm like
a hot house tomato a greek olive some ripe summer
metaphor. And we wait. Our main occupation. And
you leap again. Naked and unnamed. Just inches
away. Full of life. Yes. Seafire rolling warm
and wet toward our laps. Some plum. Yes. Some
new self. Yes. Born you will be no more or less
a miraculous fruit. Offering more than we can
ever imagine. Yes to the sun and rain you'll
bring. Yes to this selfless creativity. Yes to
our love winning hands down. Yes to this tiny
unique living life. Our blood and fate mixed
and enfolding. Bonding. Imploding exploding. Yes.

© Mona Fertig
Tsawwassen, B.C.

215

it's 215 now they've moved her from 218
i walk in but must leave
when an lpn comes in wanting to take
a urine sample

in the hall leaning against the doorjamb
i hear the nurse tell gros mama
I'LL COME BACK LATER MRS WEIBE
TO WASH YOUR BOTTOM DO YOU UNDERSTAND
MRS WEIBE

as though it's she that's old & not
her body

the nurse comes out & tells me
i can go back in now
nah audrey voh yeht et met dei
gros mama asks

i tell her good & she warms my hands
in hers telling me i musn't stay long
because she doesn't want me to get caught
in the snow storm

i tell gros mama the line in armin weibe's book
about himmelfahrt being the day
when jesus goes to heaven & mennonites
go to winnipeg
& she laughs until she almost fuschlucks herself
en veib dann noch
yes but no relation

gros mama i say *gros mama*
but can't remember the low german word
for love

© Audrey Poetker
New Bothwell, Manitoba

INHERITANCE

I saw an expression
the other day
as my child
pushed away his plate
some trick of DNA
not family planning
an expression
unwillingly remembered
over years and miles
that shakes my belief
in positive conditioning

now I wonder what
other genetic messages
I can expect
from past owners
of that expression

© Eunice Brooks
Surrey, B.C.



photo: Marsha Arbour

*Artist Claire Kujundzic takes up space
with "Belly Woman".*



photo: Billy Horne

Claire Kujundzic has been a friend of mine for many years. Moving in the same Vancouver feminist art circles, we have worked together and watched each other work separately for years. It is a challenge for both of us to step back enough to do this interview.

I have always liked Claire's work. She is a good artist; her drawings are clear and elegant. The people in them are portrayed lightly, sometimes humourously, but with respect and dignity. In her printmaking and ceramic sculpture Claire has maintained this quality of

ing behind her, flies out into the room. Her face is serene, her eyes searching upward and outward. Her body is rough, recalling the earth, which she has not left behind her in her flight.

Elizabeth: I'd like to talk about your work in the context of the women's movement. But words like "feminism" have become vastly overused and everyone has their own personal definition. Perhaps you could explain a little of how you are a feminist, or what the word means to you.

Claire: How am I a feminist? What I'd say is

ceptable to me. And you can influence the things you do. For instance when I worked for the Health Department I was fortunate enough to work with someone else who had a lot of the same ideas about making V.D. and birth control information accessible, non-judgemental, and light in tone. Or when I was asked to work on informational slide shows for the carpenters' union I was aware that most of the members are men, and that in the trades, information is often communicated with the use of sexist humour. I managed to change the focus and show women in a more positive light.

Elizabeth: Much of your paid work has been for community and feminist organisations, hasn't it?

Claire: Yes, for example right now I'm doing some layout work for WAVAW (Women Against Violence Against Women) and *Room of One's Own*. I have a cover appearing on *Everywoman's Almanac* this year, and I've been contributing to that for the last four years.

Sometimes I get work from individuals; sometimes I work in graphic and printing shops. In the past year I've had four images on book covers, and I've been paid each time, so there are little bits of money that come in. And I sell my own work.

Elizabeth: That's a different process, because you do the art first, and sell it afterwards.

Claire: That's right. The work is completely my own. Sometimes people have asked if there's an overlap between them, or if one tends to affect the other, and I think that's happened sometimes. Any limitation in your life, or any conditions will affect what you do. For a long time I was living in a very small apartment where I had just a tiny bedroom and all my work was small. One day I was really distressed about some stuff that was happening in my life and I got a big huge piece of paper and put it on the wall and just drew my portrait facing me, and I realised that if I could work big more I would.

Elizabeth: You've done jobs on a volunteer basis because they're things you believe in and want to support.

Claire: Yes, I've been doing that for a long time. I've done posters for groups I've been involved with, like the Nicaragua Solidarity Committee. A lot of my work has appeared in things. People have asked to use it, or sometimes they haven't asked. That's volunteer work in a way. I'm happy it gets reproduced. I just like to get credited. A lot of times people use graphics and think that because they're already somewhere they're public. People aren't very informed about art work. There's a myth that it's fun. There are a lot of things about paid work that are hard. It's the same with my own work. There are long periods of time when I struggle with an image or a theme that I'm working on. I can't sell the pieces, but it's a process I have to work through. And I try to sell my work at realistic prices that ordinary people, or rather the average female wage earner can afford.

ing Her Own

while sharing her art with others

portraying real people that one can like and relate to.

Some of Claire's artwork is paid work — layout, posters, illustrations. Some of it is private. Her journal is full of line drawings and sketches and cartoons, light in style, but serious in content. Sometimes these drawings become the basis for more public work, meant to be displayed.

Claire is a warm person, active as a political feminist, active on the left. But she tries to make her understanding of issues a personal one, (not following a "correct line") and her commitment is a thoughtful one. She never falls into the trap of sterile intellectual political art, but rather her artwork expresses her thoughts and feelings about what she sees happening in the world around her. She sees her artwork as part of life, and a product of life as well. And not only has she made her art her work for most of her life, and even managed to earn something of a living doing one form of artwork or another, but in much of this work, even the commercial artwork, she managed to speak about women and their lives.

On the wall, a lithograph; two women sit on a couch, talking. One, distressed, turns away, barely able to keep back tears. The other has her arm around her, her face showing concern, searching for the right words of comfort.

In the kitchen stands a clay woman, solid, self-contained, perhaps four feet tall. Firmly mounted on a wooden base, she holds out her arms in a circle, hands touching. The circle of her arms forms the top of a vessel or bowl, an extension of her body, a holding place. She is a "belly woman", holding her own.

A clay woman, wings outspread, legs taper-

I'm woman identified. It used to be that I was male identified — that is a lot of the ways I felt I had value were from getting male approval. And I did it on their terms. Men's feelings were much more important than my own. At a certain time there was this turning point where I thought: I am worth more than this.

Elizabeth: So you would be comfortable being described as a feminist artist?

Claire: Oh, of course. For a long time I didn't want to be called a feminist because of the negative connotations. Then I thought, I'm always trying to qualify. "Are you left?" Well, it depends what you mean by left. "Are you a feminist?" Well, it depends what you mean by feminist. The answer is "Of course I'm a feminist."

Elizabeth: I know what you mean by trying to qualify. For me, that defensiveness comes from some people's assumptions that "feminist" (or any other political label) refers to someone who accepts a certain set of ideas and doesn't think for herself. In fact the reality is closer to the opposite of that. Would you use the word feminist to describe your artwork?

Claire: I would call it woman's work. What I work towards, what I want my images to reflect, is women, and men in so far as there are men in them, taking what's rightfully theirs without doing it at the expense of anyone else.

Elizabeth: How do you manage that in your commercial work?

Claire: Different things are appropriate to different situations. When I'm paid to do work I'm dealing with limitations. Sometimes in graphic shops I don't have a choice. But I've never had to work on anything that's unac-

BY SIMA ELIZABETH SHEFRIN

way a celebrates...
 way it was done was...
 me to squeeze the pimple...
 should be left alone to go its natural...
 was really that the idea of nautated me...
 enough to examine and fiddle with your own pimples...
 alone someone else's.

Then there was the garlic treatment.
 Hela and Raquel argued over it:
 I've been having pain in my ears,
 and Raquel said that Raquel raw
 garlic stuck in the ears was good.
 Hela said some herb was better. So
 I ended up with both in my ears.
 I felt like a walking vegetable
 garden. I said if any man bothered
 me on the way home, I'd point to
 my ears to scare them off.



Claire's journal is full of sketches, light in style but serious in content.

“I would call my art woman's work”

Elizabeth: You're going to Nicaragua soon to work for a year designing postage stamps. Could you talk about why you decided to take on this project?

Claire: I'm going because it will be an experience I've never had. I will have an opportunity to live in another culture for a year. I know I will learn a lot. I will live among people who have gone through the kind of struggle people on the left always talk about — “Revolution”. I will see the reality of that — not the idealistic picture of it.

I am going because I absolutely support the right to self determination, whether it's for an individual person, or in this case a country. It's just an incredible thing that's happening there — this little tiny country that's incredibly exploited, over a period of time had this revolution, and got rid of the Somosa dictatorship that was killing people over the years.

They're struggling to give people food, medical care, education, decent wages, under incredible odds. They're under attack from the United States, and they're trying to remain independent and autonomous. I think it's really hard but amazing and inspiring, and I'm going to get an opportunity to see that up close in all its different aspects.

As well, I like the opportunity to do a type of work I've never done before. I've never designed postage stamps.

This is a volunteer job. Bill, my partner, is coming with me and we've had to do a lot of fundraising in order to be able to go. There's been fantastic support from the community.

Elizabeth: There's so much misunderstanding about political artwork. At worst, when people hear the term they expect some sort of ugly propaganda image. But there are so many different ways of incorporating our values into our artwork. One way is, as you just described, working for little or no money for organisations or causes you want to support. That's what you'll be doing in Nicaragua. Another is in terms of content. If you portray women in a positive way in a context where someone else might portray them in a negative way, then you're doing feminist work. Thirdly your values come through in your personal pieces. Certainly none of this is “propaganda”.

Claire: No, it's not propaganda at all. In any of the work I take on, in my paid work or my own personal work, whether or not it's conscious or deliberate, I'm always asserting what I believe to be true, and continuing that as much as I can. My work is a process. It's a result of what I go through. And what I go through personally also ends up affecting my paid work. I didn't start out having a lot of preconceived thoughts to fit everything into. At some point I realised that things around us were not the way they appeared — sort of like the emperor's new clothes. A lot of things looked one way on the surface, and when you got underneath there was another reality. So I tried to figure out how that was. I went to different political community groups and organisations to get more information.

I found that I have to figure out on my own what's right and what's wrong in any situation.

And it's this process exactly that has formed a lot of my work. That picture of the woman turning and changing direction was done at a point when I was making some changes in my life, and I couldn't really articulate them. But I started doing that drawing over a few weeks at different times, and I realised later that it was at a time when I was making some changes.

Elizabeth: What kinds of changes?

Claire: For one thing I began to understand that to be with someone, it wouldn't matter if they were male or female. I loved a lot of women, and was close to them and started understanding why women become lesbians. I thought — well — it's not a big step from loving women and being close to being sexual.

I went to a workshop for lesbian women and women who are allies to lesbians. What was talked about in that workshop is that straight women often have what little power they have by keeping in line, and that attacks on lesbian women were one way to keep all women in line. The reason why it's important for straight women to clear up their homophobia is because when we see attacks on lesbian women, we see women being lesbians as an excuse for them to be under attack. In fact sexism is directed against all women and lesbians get it really obviously, so straight women know that they have to keep in line or they'll get it too. That's what keeps us apart — the fear of attack, the fear of association. I think you can take that information and apply it to other differences between people. It's fear and misinformation that keeps us apart.

Elizabeth: You've been involved in *Still Sane* for awhile now, haven't you? (Persimmon Blackbridge and Sheila Gilhooly's sculpture show about the three years Sheila spent in mental hospitals for being a lesbian. See *Horizons*, Vol. 2, No. 8, Dec. 1984 pp 24-28).

Claire: Yes. That began over a year ago when the exhibition was getting close to being shown. Some of us were realising how important that show was for people to see. So we got together and formed a committee with Persimmon to publicise the show, I did the poster and the invitation. Then this year I began participating on the Design Collective of the *Still Sane* Book Publishing Group. *It's another way of using my art skills as support.

Elizabeth: Tell me about some of the work you're doing now.

Claire: These clay belly women go back to December '83. I was at the art school and having a difficult time in the printmaking department where people had a lot of attitudes I didn't agree with. It seemed like there was no validation of personal experience. On the one hand personal artwork was what was expected, but on the other, when I did artwork that was really personal, people didn't seem comfortable with it.

One day I did an image of a woman breaking through a sharp jagged wall, about to step over the bottom edge of it. I did that image after seeing a film about Hiroshima and nuclear war. The world feels really unsafe to me right now, and being a female artist at the art school and doing the images I wanted felt dangerous too.

When I put that piece up in a critique there was no response or acknowledgement of it at all. The only remark that was made was that I should go into illustration because I seemed to want to say something to people — as though art didn't. I couldn't figure out how to fight it. The class was mostly men; some of them I liked and was getting along with quite well, but I felt really frustrated.

Then at Christmas I was going up to visit family on the bus and I did the image of a woman flying. Here I was, on this bus with these little ends of cardboard. I just scribbled it down. And I suddenly thought: "She just came out of a hole". So I did a series of cartoons of her climbing out of the hole, looking around her, landing after her flight. I felt really good about them.

I decided to do that cartoon in sculpture, and before I knew it I was spending all my time in the ceramics studio doing this series of holes. Some were round and looked almost like cakes, some square like boxes with bursting holes that you could look through to see the women inside. I did one — a hole with a woman in it kind of crouched in on herself and another woman outside kneeling down looking at her.

*(The *Still Sane* book is available from Press Gang Publishers).



“ absolutely support the right to self determination ”



"Holes were traps...the hole represents sexism".

I did one of a woman standing on the surface with a dog looking down at three openings with people in them. One of the people in the hole was a man.

Elizabeth: Why did you put the man in?

Claire: I was starting to realise that the holes were traps. I had originally felt really vulnerable and in this trap and I was working through that. The hole represents sexism. It wasn't just other women that were in that hole, but men were there too.

Later I started doing the image of women that were bowls or holes. I started having the women stand up and hold their arms in a big bowl-like shape. For me the holes were representative of a space and not being vulnerable, and being in charge instead.

Elizabeth: Those pieces were well received weren't they?

Claire: People had different responses. Lots of people liked it and for different reasons. Some people would come along and say: "Oh, wouldn't it be nice to have a plant in there?" And other people would say: "Oh, it looks like she's pregnant." And one or two people seemed to feel kind of threatened by it. They thought it made the woman look like a receptacle, like she was just waiting for someone to fill her up.

These pieces symbolised a lot of things. The circle of the arms is one of the oldest symbols in many cultures because the circle is so strong. The fact that things can go into that shape as well as come out of it signifies not only taking in and receiving and holding, but also giving life out at the same time. I like the allusion to pregnancy because that's the nurturing part of women. I deliberately decided to leave them empty so that it would be something people would think about, rather than put a more definite meaning on it. I called the pieces "Holding Her Own", and it just seems the perfect title. It feels like a real completion at the end of search, an investigation, coming to this settling place for now. I feel really good about that work.

And then I made the bird woman (the flying clay woman). And it felt like over a year and a half I had come full circle with that cartoon and the idea, and I'd also grown a lot stronger as a person and an artist by articulating some strong ideas. You know, what I felt for the first time was that this work was clearly feminist without any of the defensiveness I'd felt about being a feminist. ▽

Sima Elizabeth Shefrin is a Vancouver artist and art writer. She is interested in traditional women's artwork, and other art by ordinary people about their lives.

Quiz WOMEN IN THE MOVIES

Margaret Fulford has compiled this movie quiz. How much do *you* really know about women in the movies?

- 1 "How many sentences it would take to translate correctly her face in the snow..." said Renée Clair of this great actress of the silent screen. Her films include *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Broken Blossoms* (1919), and *Way Down East* (1920), and more recently she appeared in *A Wedding* (1978). Who is she?
- 2 Name the three actresses who play the rebellious secretaries in *Nine to Five* (1980).
- 3 Who twice, in 1927 and 1935, played Tolstoy's heroine Anna Karenina who after leaving her husband for her lover, is ostracised and kept from seeing her child?
- 4 Looking back on her life, she said, "I didn't want no husband because he'd've interfered with my hobby and my career." She once said, "It's not the men in my life, it's the life in my men that counts." (a) Who is she? (b) Name the 1933 movie, based on a play she wrote called *Diamond Lil*, which co-starred Cary Grant and in which she sang, "I like a man who takes his time."
- 5 What part did Margaret Hamilton play in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)?
- 6 In the 1984 film based on Henry James' novel *The Bostonians*, who plays a 19th century Boston feminist named Olive Chancellor?
- 7 Name the Italian actress who in *Open City* (1945) takes part in the Resistance and is shot by a German soldier. Her other films include *The Rose Tattoo* (1955).
- 8 In the 1972 movie *Sounder*, who portrays a black woman in Depression-era Louisiana who does domestic work to support her children while her husband is in prison?





- 9 In the 1973 version of Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play *A Doll's House*, who plays Nora, the oppressed wife who at first accepts, and then rebels against, her situation?
- 10 In *Rose Marie* (1936), who plays the singer from Montréal who falls in love with a mountie who is hunting her escaped-convict brother?
- 11 *Roxie Hart* (1942) begins, "This picture is dedicated to all the beautiful women in the world who have shot their husbands full of holes out of pique..." Who plays the chorus girl who, in order to become famous, pleads guilty to murdering a man? Her other films include *Flying Down to Rio* (1933), *The Gay Divorcee* (1934), and *Top Hat* (1935).
- 12 Who starred in the 1936 comedy *Theodora Goes Wild*, about a smalltown church organist with a secret life as the author of sex novels, who leaves home for the big city, where she becomes a women's rights advocate and is named in two divorce cases? Her other films include *Show Boat* (1936), *The Awful Truth* (1937), and *My Favourite Wife* (1940).
- 13 Name the actress who starred in *Swingshift* (1984) as a riveter in a World War II aircraft factory.
- 14 Name the actress, born in Toronto, who was called "America's Sweetheart" and whose films include *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1921) — in which she had the title role and also played the boy's mother — *Tess of the Storm Country* (1922), and *Coquette* (1929).
- 15 In *Some Like It Hot* (1959), who plays Sugar Kane, a singer in an all-girl band who tells Tony Curtis (who's disguised as a woman) "I'm tired of getting the fuzzy end of the lollipop"?
- 16 Name the American actress whose films include *Come and Get It* (1936), who was persecuted for her left-wing views and her non-conformism as a woman. Jessica Lange played her in a 1982 movie, and Sheila McLaughlin in another dramatisation of her life, *Committed* (1984).
- 17 Name the British actress who plays the wild, elderly aunt in the 1972 comedy *Travels with My Aunt*, and plays a teacher in the 1969 version of Muriel Spark's novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

- 18 Film critic Lotte Eisner called her the first modern movie actress, because of her natural style of acting. She appeared in both American and German films, such as G.W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box* (1929) and *The Diary of a Lost Girl* (1929). Her autobiography is called *Lulu in Hollywood*. Who is she?
- 19 Name the Depression-era child actress who starred in *Little Miss Marker* (1934), *Heidi* (1937), and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1938).
- 20 Name the actress who said the following lines: in *Of Human Bondage* (1934), in which she played a waitress, she says to Leslie Howard, "I disgust you? You're too fine!... You cad. You dirty swine! I never cared for you, not once... after you kissed me I always used to wipe my mouth! Wipe my mouth!"; in *Now Voyager* (1942), in which she plays a "spinster," she is asked, "Miss or Mrs.?" and replies "It's Aunt"; and in *The Corn Is Green* (1945), when asked "Haven't you ever been in love?", she says, "I've never talked to a man for more than five minutes in my life without wanting to box his ears."
- 21 Name the actress who in the 1936 film *A Woman Rebels*, set in Victorian England, plays Pamela Thislewaite, editor of a women's magazine and unwed mother. (She gets married in the end.) She also portrayed Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1968; played drunk scenes in *Desk Set*, *The Philadelphia Story*, and *State of the Union*; and in *Stage Door* (1937) said, "the calla lilies are in bloom again."



- 22 Name the cartoon character sex symbol which was created by Max Fleischer in 1915 (later with the voice of Mae Questel) and censored by the Hays Office in 1935.
- 23 In the following movies dealing with friendship or romantic love between women, who co-starred: (a) with Jane Fonda in *Julia* (1977)? (b) with Shirley MacLaine in *The Children's Hour* (1962)? (c) with Shirley MacLaine in *The Turning Point* (1977)? (d) with Isabelle Huppert in *Entre Nous (Coup de Foudre)* (1982)? (e) with Angela Winkler in *Sheer Madness* (1982)? (f) with Monique van de Ven in *A Woman Like Eve* (1979)? (g) with Louise Marleau in *La Femme de l'hôtel* (1984)? (h) with Annie Potts in *Heartaches* (1981)? (i) with Patrice Donnelly in *Personal Best* (1982)?
- 24 In the following movies with mothers and daughters in them, who plays: (a) Liv Ullmann's mother in *Autumn Sonata* (1978)? (b) Marmee in *Little Women* (1949)? (c) Shirley MacLaine's daughter in *Terms of Endearment* (1983)? (d) Charlotte Laurier's mother in *Les Bons débarras* (1979)? (e) Ann Blyth's mother in *Mildred Pierce* (1945)? (f) Lisa Lucas's mother in *An Unmarried Woman* (1978)? (g) Eleonora Brown's mother in *Two Women (La Ciociara)* (1961)?
- 25 Give the screen name of the actress whose real name is: (a) Frances Gumm (1922-1969) (b) Norma Jean Baker or Mortenson (1926-1962) (c) Betty Joan Perske (1924-)

END OF FIRST OF FOUR PART SERIES



ANSWERS

1. Lillian Gish 2. (a) Jane Fonda (b) Lily Tomlin (c) Dolly Parton
3. Greta Garbo 4. (a) Mae West (b) *She Done Him Wrong* 5. The Wicked Witch of the West 6. Vanessa Redgrave 7. Anna Magnani 8. Cicely Tyson 9. Jane Fonda 10. Jeanette MacDonald 11. Ginger Rogers 12. Irene Dunne 13. Goldie Hawn 14. Mary Pickford 15. Marilyn Monroe 16. Frances Farmer 17. Maggie Smith 18. Louise Brooks 19. Shirley Temple 20. Bette Davis 21. Katherine Hepburn 22. Betty Boop 23. (a) Vanessa Redgrave (b) Audrey Hepburn (c) Anne Bancroft (d) Miou Miou (e) Hanna Schygulla (f) Maria Schneider (g) Paule Baillargeon (h) Margot Kidder (i) Mariel Hemingway 24. (a) Ingrid Bergman (b) Mary Astor (c) Debra Winger (d) Marie Tifo (e) Joan Crawford (f) Jill Clayburgh (g) Sophia Loren 25. (a) Judy Garland (b) Marilyn Monroe (c) Lauren Bacall.

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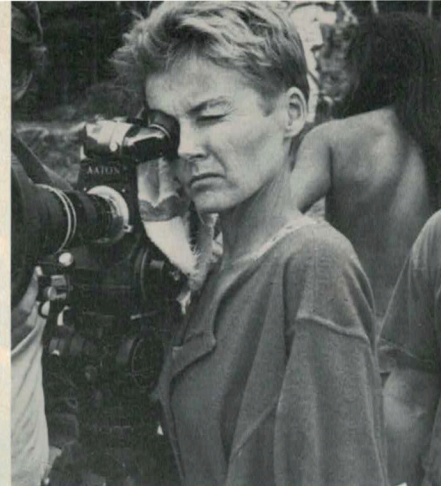
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Daughters of the Country



Producer/Director Norma Bailey



Norma Bailey and Gladys Taylor as N'Okom on location in Manigotagan, Manitoba.



Hazel King as "Ikwe"

A Profile of Gladys Taylor

by Tanya Lester

"I'm a grandmother no matter how you look at it," says Gladys Taylor, who plays N'Okom in the National Film Board mini-series *Daughters of the Country*. The film in which Taylor appears is called *Ikwe* (Ojibway for woman), and is one of the four mini-series segments to be aired next fall on CBC. N'Okom is Ikwe's grandmother.

Among Taylor's Ojibway people, her age brings with it a status. At 72, she is a wise woman, a medicinewoman and tribe elder, as well as a grandmother. Taylor explains that her role as grandmother also means she is always available to give advice to young women, and sometimes to men, when they are troubled. She agrees that this work is the equivalent to a psychiatrist in white society.

Having acted in six films, including the roles of both Louis Riel's mother and grandmother, Taylor utilises her acting career as a vehicle to expand her "mission work" field. It provides her with the opportunity to meet Indians across the West, hear their problems and offer guidance.

On the film locations at Hollow Water Indian Reserve and St. Boniface, Manitoba, Taylor said the white film crew members, too, came to her to discuss difficulties. They would leave, after hugging her with thanks for "making their day".

She shares a special bond with Hazel King, the 15 year old Ojibway woman who plays Ikwe, and has often helped her with the script to en-

hance the film's dialogue. It was taped in Cree and Ojibway and will be run with English subtitles.

In the film, written by Wendy Lill and directed by Norma Bailey, Ikwe marries a white fur trader but eventually returns to her people. Although set in the 1700s, the theme can easily be linked to the political controversies Native women face today.

But Taylor doesn't want to talk about these controversies and says she was treated with the highest respect by the film crew. "I've never known a stranger," she says when asked about discrimination.

Unlike many movies made over the past decades, *"Ikwe"*, as do all the contributions to the mini-series, brings Metis and Indian women to the forefront. But Taylor does not resent the backdrop roles her people have often been relegated to the past. Historically, she says, this is how Natives were viewed in a white-dominated society.

Playing N'Okom has strengthened Taylor's belief that Metis are Natives and "all that mat-

ters" is the "blood". To her, they are all Indians.

Taylor, like many Canadians her age, remembers the hard years of the Depression when she was raising her extended family of 12 children. Caring for children, besides those she birthed, is part of her sharing society. "I think that was the way in the first creations," she says.

In a society with clearly defined female and male roles, Taylor always waited on her husband and children at the dinner table before eating herself. But she is quick to point out that widowed Native women were capable of taking over male-defined work such as hunting, chopping wood and hauling water.

Taylor began her film career at a time when she no longer felt the will to live. Her mother died at 102 and was closely followed by Taylor's husband, so acting gave her a new focus on life. "I like meeting people," she says. "I can't do without people."

But there is another side to her life. Back in Curve Lake, Ontario, last fall, Taylor took special pride in teaching her brother's eldest daughter to carry on the work she now provides for her people. Grandmother and niece will be out in the bush gathering medicinal roots and herbs.

Tanya Lester is a Winnipeg writer and feminist, and a regular contributor to HERizons. She has published two books; Women Rights/Writes, and Dreams and Tricksters.

The Green R



There's more to the story of Baba Podkova than Burtzik the dog, planting corn in your front yard or gallstones in a pickle jar, though all of them have something to do with that fateful night in January of 1930 and the note on the pillow.

The whole of northend Winnipeg went in search of Baba — Burtzik the old, blind collie sniffing for clues — much good that was. You could put a raw steak or a sliver of turnip on his nose, he couldn't tell which was which.

How it turned out goes back to where it really began, which has to be the green-roses kerchief and hoity toity Anastasia, Baba Podkova's only child, who married upper-crust River Heights, the army bigshot Corporal General Reginald Fortescue Brown, Esquire.

Baba Podkova was happy enough to live with herself and the dog Burtzik, better company than Mr. Podkova, her cold-storage husband, an egg candler with cold-cement feet and the habit of spitting up phlegm in the kitchen sink.

When God in His mercy shortened her husband's miserable life with killing gallstones, she respectfully placed the gallstones in a pickle jar on the oak sideboard under the calendar picture of the crucifixion and went on living.

Late into the night Baba and Burtzik sat together, sharing the earphone plugged to the crystal radio set, holding their breath as the creaking door opened and closed on *The Shadow*.

The fly in the butter was Anastasia, who wanted her mother upper-crust, even wanted to change her name.

You simply have to move with the times, her daughter scolded.

You know Woyblansky, our garbage man? He changed his name to Mr. Webb and what do you think? He's running for Mayor. Why do you have to live alone in this rotten shanty? You could live like a lady in River Heights. Learn to play bridge, meet cultured people. You really

should think of getting yourself an English hat instead of that immigrant babushka. You look as if you just got off the boat from Europe. Neighbors are saying your daughter is neglecting you, leaving you here unprotected, all alone. Suppose a thief, an escaped convict, worse a strangler from Stony Mountain, was on the loose.

Baba Podkova usually closed the doors in her ears to anything Anastasia said, but she got to worrying about the thief who might break into the house one night and steal the gallstones in the pickle jar, the last remains of her suffering husband.

So the next fine day Baba packed her things and left her house in the care of a neighbour who promised to bank the boxstove with a shovel of coal once a day to keep the water pipes from bursting.

What little I learned of the time that Baba Podkova spent in her daughter's house, isn't good.

The River Heights bylaw stopped her from smoking garlic sausage in the back garage. When she hit the health inspector with the leg of a chair, her son-in-law, Corporal General Reginald Fortescue Brown, Esquire, threatened to drum her out of the district with a bloody show of artillery and the Union Jack in flying colours.

River Heights is different, all right. It's hard to believe that the people out there grow nothing but grass on their property, just to watch it grow and cut down till it grows again, but it's not a story that Baba Podkova could invent. Or could she?

Another thing: the colonel's hound, German Shepherd Somerset Wagstaffe Masfield Reginald Brown, retired from the British Intelligence Secret Service, would have nothing to do with a commoner civilian like Burtzik the dog.

From her daughter's side, life with Baba Podkova was even worse. Rattling around in the

oses Kerchief

by
Maara Haas

upper-crust mansion like a dried-out pumpkin seed in a pumpkin shell, Baba took up smoking Old Chum tobacco, rolling her own. Anastasia hid the Chanticleer papers for the cigarettes, but being Ukrainian, always resourceful, Baba tore out the onionskin papers from the first editions in the colonel's den, smoking her way through all of Dickens and Thackeray.

Introduced by her daughter as Mrs. Cove, Baba Podkova brought out the stones in the pickle jar: And this is my husband. How do you do.

Or she came to tea in her green-roses kerchief and black felt boots, acting like a dummy, pointing to herself: Me Ukrainian off da boat, whispering aside to a horrified guest, I'm a prisoner here.

Anastasia finally laid down the law. Tomorrow Baba would have to renounce her green-roses rag, she would have her hair cut and frizzled at the Tip Top Beauty Parlor, and be Canadian.

The rest you know, aside from the note her daughter found pinned to her pillow:

Dear Anastasia and Mr. Colonel.

I am not hiding my green-roses kerchief. I am not hiding anymore, who I am. I am going by foot to Czechoslovakia. Don't try to follow me.

And where to you think they found her? In the most expected place, of course. Clutching her ancient wicker suitcase containing the two-ton family Bible, three dozen hard-boiled eggs for the journey, there she was, on the steps of the old Saint Nicholas Church three blocks from home — the miracle of the green-roses kerchief blooming like a spring garden in the midst of the swirling winter snow.

Selection from Maara Haas' book *On Stage with Maara Haas* Lilith Publications, Inc., 1986; also available on cassette as read by the author: Send \$12.95 plus \$1 postage & handling for each copy of the book and/or cassette to Lilith Publications, Inc., 32 Lipton St., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 2G5.



Photo: Vienna Badiuk

Best known for her satirically humorous novel, "The Street Where I Live", Maara Haas has been dubbed Manitoba's Story Lady, the Godfather of North End Winnipeg, and Winnipeg's Mark Twain, a unique combination of "Groucho Marx, Colette and Cleopatra."

Maara is a graduate in Journalism from the University of Berkeley, California and is the recipient of an honorary doctorate from the Free Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kiev, for her work in translation.

For five months of the year, she serves as Artist in the Schools, sponsored by the Manitoba Arts Council and Manitoba Education. Under the sponsorship of the Bermuda Arts Council, she teaches creative writing in Bermuda each Fall.

Weaving A Heritage

SIMA ELIZABETH SHEFRIN

Salish Indian Women of British Columbia have been creating beautiful weavings for thousands of years. A special exhibit illustrating the long history of their work opened this year at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology. The weavers are women of the Musqueam Band, located in Vancouver, and they have been engaged in a project to relearn and recreate the traditional weaving forms of their people, an art which had disappeared for at least two generations.

The Salish people are a Northwest Coast tribe whose land includes southern British Columbia coastal areas as well as part of Washington State. Their traditional art forms are unique, and quite different from the well known totem poles of more northern tribes. Women wove baskets, tump lines, cedar bark clothing, rush mats, and beautiful blankets of mountain goat and dog hair, and sheep's wool. Many of the art forms of the men consisted of tools for the women to use in their work, such as the highly decorated spindle whorls, mat creasers and loom posts. When the first Europeans reached this coast, women were weaving fine large blankets, comparable in quality to the blankets of the Navaho women. But with the physical and cultural invasion by white society, the skill gradually died out.

In 1983 Wendy Grant and some other women from the Musqueam Reserve began researching traditional weaving in their area. Their research took them to the Museum of Anthropology, where Curator Betsy Johnson made the museum's Salish collection available for them to study. Impressed by the standard of their work, and their commitment to research, she organised, in conjunction with the Musqueam women, the current exhibition of their work. Unlike many museum exhibits, this one has been a cooperative effort between the weavers and the museum staff, with regular meetings, and decisions made on a mutual basis.

Betsy Johnson explains why she felt it was important to have the exhibit at the Anthropology Museum at this time.

"It seems really appropriate that we should have it here because we're within the traditional area that was used by the Musqueam band... To have it next year is important because it's Vancouver's Centennial Year, and I think it's really important to remind people that the history of Vancouver goes back

some thousands of years beyond the past hundred."

But the Musqueam exhibit is only a public presentation of a much more far reaching project. For over two years the weaving group has been working despite irregular funding. The weavers are all women, as they were in the past, although the Musqueam men have been interested and supportive. When I asked Wendy Grant if she had run into the not uncommon bias which dismisses fabric work as a lesser art form, she said she had encountered that attitude only among non-Indians.

The weaving project has a number of goals, but for Wendy the main one is revival of cultural pride. Even among the Musqueam people, many weren't aware of the importance of the weaving. Not surprisingly, even though women and men were of equal status in traditional Salish society, the accounts of early European explorers pay little attention to any kind of women's work.



Debbie Sparrow: reclaiming women's history.

Wendy stresses the need to understand the weaving in the context of its history.

"Just to talk about today is no use because without what we had before there'd be nothing to it... The old idea — I don't know how many people believe in it but I certainly do, especially after working with the women — I found it still had to be in their blood because the women we had working here were all Salish women and they started doing really fine work within a year. Our old women didn't know how to weave but they taught us other things, taught us an attitude, how to feel, how to behave while you're weaving, because it's a very spiritual part of who we were too."

Today the Musqueam women are trying to

build up a market for their work. The group spent two weeks demonstrating their work at the Folk Life Pavilion, part of the 1985 preview of Expo 86, and were pleased with the response and interest of the public. This year they will spend six months doing demonstrations at Expo, and they feel that the publicity is an opportunity to make the project a financial success.

At the same time, much of the weaving is not for sale. Many pieces are made for ceremonial use. Most are done as traditionally as possible, using hand spun wools and natural dyes, and woven on a two bar loom. But Wendy has a dream of making a blanket using completely traditional methods, mixing goat hair with wool, beating in white clay, dyeing over an open fire. She herself chooses not to make blankets for sale.

"I personally... like to make blankets that were worn, things that people had around them all the time. To me they were more real... The ones that were used, they're rough. A lot of times they didn't have any pattern on them, but when I weave I usually do these kinds of things. I can do the other kind but I don't get as much satisfaction out of it. Our women can do both really well."

The quality of the weaving is evident at the Museum of Anthropology exhibit, which stresses both the history of the craft, and the fact that it is a living art form. Included are 3,000 year old basketry fragments found on Musqueam land, historic blankets from the museum's collection, and photographs and statements by the contemporary weavers whose work is shown. In the centre of the gallery is a life sized representation of a woman working in the past, while in a nearby area spinning and weaving demonstrations are scheduled.

The feature piece is a large weaving done by Barbara Cayou, inspired by photographs of an old blanket now located in a museum in Scotland. Other pieces cover a range of styles, from a beautiful traditional looking goat hair blanket by Leila Stogan to an elegant coat by Robin Sparrow. The other weavers whose work is included are Mabel Dann, Edna Grant, Wendy Grant, Rita Lewis, Cynthia Louie, Yvonne Peters, Krista Point, Debbie Sparrow and Wanda Stogan. In their work these women have reclaimed another unwritten area of women's history, and their exhibit offers us a chance to learn about it ▽

Miami Vice and Me

LYN COCKBURN



I have a confession to make and I feel very nervous about it.

I don't like Miami Vice; I think it is an unforgivably boring show.

Whoever said that confession is good for the soul, said it before

the medium became the message. And the message, loud and clear, is that Miami Vice is the bee's pyjamas. It is almost impossible to pick up a newspaper or magazine these days without finding some mention of Miami Vice, its sexy stars, its fantastic ratings, its glamorous photography and its trendy music.

And most of my friends think it's the cat's knees, so it is no wonder that I'd rather announce hemorrhoids than admit I don't like the show.

I want you to know however, that I tried to like Miami Vice. Veraciously. I watched it, well sort of, for 10 straight weeks.

The first time, I caught myself reading a book 13 minutes after it started. It is with a mouthful of Mea Culpas that I own up to never having watched the show right through. I found myself wandering out for coffee, watering my plants, phoning a friend or writing a letter somewhere after the first quarter.

The last four times I tried to watch it, I was determined to see it through, so I bribed myself with three chocolate bars, two packages of cashews and a piece of New York cheesecake. I ate everything in the first 11 minutes and am ashamed to say that I ended up repotting my plants in the kitchen while Miami Vice burred on in the living room.

And I am now truly prejudiced against the show because, although all my houseplants are flourishing, it has taken me three weeks to work off the seven pounds I gained.

So, I have stopped attempting to watch the show, but I don't feel good about it. I feel guilty. How can I feel otherwise? First of all, most of my friends and countless reviewers are intent on convincing me that Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas are the two sexiest men on TV. How do you think this sort of thing makes me feel when I find them incredibly beige; neither one of them causes my hormones to so much as twitch.

For a while there, I was worried that my libido had gone into hibernation. Just in time I

remembered that Peter, the manager on Hotel, motivates my hormones to lurch about quite nicely, to the point where I'm willing to watch this snore level show, just to drool over him. Then there's Marcus on Cagney and Lacey and almost the entire male cast of Hill Street Blues. In fact, if I wrote a sentence or two about all the Hill Street men who provoke my hormones, I'd not have room left to tell you how bland I find Don and Philip.

Mercifully, I do have one friend who also dislikes Miami Vice. He feels guilty too, but has worked out a solution.

"Turn on your TV and then go into another room," is his advice. "That way, you get to hear it without having to concentrate and you can rave on to your friends about the music." That's all very well for him, but unfortunately, my friends already know I'm nearly tone deaf and can barely distinguish Bryan Adams from Neil Diamond. If I suddenly started carrying on about the music on Miami Vice, I wouldn't fool anyone.

I'm getting a little tired of feeling guilty

however, so I've come up with a solution of my own.

I've noticed that Miami Vice fans do not care about plot, conveniently, because the producers don't seem to either. I'm a fine one to talk, I admit, since I've confessed to never having viewed a complete show, but I can attest to the fact that there was no plot in the first 12 minutes of the 10 shows I did watch. And, as I'm already in the confessional, I might as well acknowledge that I once mistook a commercial for part of the show.

What Miami Vice fans do talk about is Don and Philip's sexiness, their clothes and the music.

I can't do anything about the fact that I find these two the epitome of bland or that I failed Music Appreciation in grade one, but I think I can make it in Now Clothing.

I've bought two pairs of pleated, peg-legged trousers and for the past three weeks, I've been wearing the sleeves of my jackets pushed up.

But that's it. That's as far as I'm prepared to go. ▽

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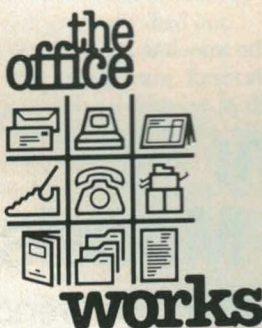
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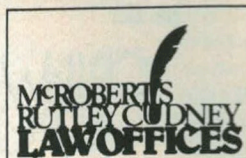
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Travel and Get Credit For It

GAIL BUENTE



own." (Maria Mitchell, 1873)

Over the century that has passed since Vas-sar professor Maria Mitchell wrote the words above in her diary, we have largely stopped thinking of travel as an educational experience. We go for relaxation, for entertainment, to unwind. Most of us aren't willing to expend the kind of effort and initiative it takes to pursue the educational opportunities travel presents. But it does make a holiday much more satisfying if we come back not only refreshed, but a little more knowledgeable than we were when we left.

And there is at least one easy, painless way to take advantage of the educational potential of travel.

Throughout the country, universities offer a variety of courses in many departments which include travel. Some are credit courses, and are only offered to students registered in a certain field of study. The majority, though, are continuing education courses offered to the community at large.

Thinking of a holiday in the south? Why limit your pleasure to lying in the sun — instead, register for McGill University's course on the flora and fauna of the Galapagos Islands. For three weeks you can explore exotic vegetation, birds, tortoises and iguanas. Another course offered through McGill tours three European cities — Bayreuth, Salzburg and Verona — each of which stages a major music festival.

At Dalhousie University in Halifax, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences offers several credit courses for students of language. There are one-term international programs at the Pushkin Institute or Leningrad University in the USSR and at Colegio de Espana in Spain, and also full-year programs at Tours and Aix-en-Provence in France or at a francophone university in Quebec.

Fine Arts students at most universities have opportunities for international travel. At New Brunswick's Mount Allison University, students

in the third year of Fine Arts take a field trip to Boston. At Emily Carr College of Art in Vancouver, students can sign up for a three week study tour of Mexican art in Mexico.

At Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, the Faculty of Education sponsors a number of Study Tour courses. These courses carry full credit toward a teaching certificate in Nova Scotia. They are held in July and August. The schedule for summer, 1986 includes studies of the educational systems of China, Scandinavia and Germany. The course offerings differ each year and in the past have visited Australia, New Zealand, USSR and Southeast Asia.

Some of the larger universities offer a wide range of travel studies. The University of British Columbia's Continuing Education brochure lists many non-credit courses such as Buddhist Art in Southeast Asia, a study of Children's Music Education in Hungary, and others.

One of the most extensive course rosters is the Travel Study Program at McGill University in Montreal. As well as the two courses already mentioned, their 1985 brochure lists a Renaissance Art tour of Florence, Rome and Venice, an archeological course on Prehistoric England and Wales, a study of Classical Greece, and others. For a brochure, contact: Travel Study Program, Centre for Continuing Education, McGill University, Redpath Library Bldg., 3461 McTavish Street, Montreal, Quebec, H3A 1Y1.

Courses vary considerably in length and price range. In general, they are reasonably priced, though not aimed at "shoestring travellers." A typical course will be three weeks long and cost in the range of \$3,000 to \$3,500.

Credit extension courses offered in the summer months by Simon Fraser University in Vancouver do not strictly include travel. But there are several Field Schools offered to students registered in the departments of Archeology, Marine Science, and Latin American Studies. These take place on Pender Island, Vancouver Island and in Mexico.

Both regular students and members of the community at large are offered travel opportunities through courses at Humber College in Toronto. Their winter catalogue listed "Southeast Asia with a Difference" and "East Africa and Egypt" for early 1986.

Humber is also one of two colleges in Canada — the other is the University of New Brunswick — which are connected with a program called Elderhostel. Elderhostel presents travel-oriented university courses for people over 60

— everything from computer courses in Alberta to folk music in Newfoundland. Courses are offered throughout the year, with a higher concentration in the summer months, at universities throughout Canada, the United States, Europe and Israel. For information about Elderhostel, write: University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, E3B 5A3, or the Department of Continuing Education, Humber College, 205 Humber College Blvd., Toronto, Ont. M9W 5L7.

The Centre for Continuing Education of Concordia University in Montreal organises a number of travel study courses, both credit and non-credit. Programs have been established in Kassel, Germany; Arezzo, Italy; San José, Costa Rica; Paris; and Platanos, Greece. For details, write: Centre for Continuing Education, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Montreal, Quebec, H3G 1M8. For further information on travel study, contact the university or community college nearest you.

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The Joys of Sex Toys

HEATHER RICHARDSON



It began with glances at discreet but intriguing ads in women's magazines that promised to "open new doors to sexual gratification." My curiosity grew when a woman friend — far bolder and more open

than I — began referring to her newly acquired vibrator. It became a curiosity difficult to contain when, in James Clavell's *Shogun*, I read of the "pleasure rooms" of Japanese brothels, filled with "pleasure instruments" for both men and women. And it became a hesitant but determined research project after a year of unsatisfactory sex life with my husband.

I wanted to discover what sex aids were, whether they were effective, and most importantly, how to coax my shy and conservative lover to overcome his notion that my interest in the matter constituted a major put-down.

Author and sex therapist Lonnie Barbach (*For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality*) has pointed out that many men feel needlessly threatened by vibrators and other devices to enhance women's sexual pleasure — even by the idea that a woman would masturbate. But where men overlook that a woman may have equal sexual desires and may need more than traditional intercourse to fulfill her, women too often make the mistake of remaining silent.

"Is your partner that fragile?" Barbach writes. "Do you have to remain the pure little girl for him to feel like the potent man? . . . You may be wasting years of sexual enjoyment for yourself while needlessly protecting him."

However we may cringe at such words, it's another matter entirely to act on them. And even if we have vague fantasies about "toys" that transcend black negligees and garter belts, neither the media nor our best friends' whispers give us reason to believe such items are normal, healthy or effective.

Add to that the fact that marketing for sex aids is so blatantly heterosexually-oriented; often focused on "penis pleasure" or how a woman can "please her man" — it's no wonder a feminist analysis of sex aids has been such a long time in coming.

In the past few years, the only mainstream magazines to broach the subject include two sarcastic articles in *Playboy* and a *Redbook* interview with psychiatrist Helen Singer Kaplan. One

Playboy article quotes a sex-toys saleswoman as confiding that her customers "come in like giggling girls and leave happy women." The other suggests the vibrator concept was born because a cavewoman sat crouched upon a massive boulder when an earthquake struck. If *Playboy* can't refrain from poking fun at sex aids, we can probably assume that Johnny Carson won't soon be doing a special on the tradition of Japanese ben-wa balls. And that even our most open-minded lovers will flinch at cartoons like the one depicting a woman who has just received a vibrator for Christmas: "Why, dear! You shouldn't have! Well, maybe on the other hand you *should* have."

Vibrators, of course, are the only sexual aid about which we can joke. Dr. Shirley Zussman, a New York City therapist and director of the Association of Male Sexual Dysfunction, puts it this way: "An increasing number of men and women know about vibrators. Whether they've become acceptable is a difficult question. Knowledge and information about (other sexual aids) is not available."

Sex aids range from ointments with exotic scents to condoms with exotic patterns. Also called sex toys, they include lingerie, vibrators, vibrator sleeves, prosthetic penis aids, dildos, clitoral stimulators (rings for the base of the penis) and erotic books. Myth has it that they are made only for those with sexual dysfunction, that users lose interest in partners and that such items benefit only one partner.

New York City sex counsellor Anne Berkman says, "They add a fun dimension. Women have been brought up not to ask for what we need in the sexual arena. . . . We're learning to enjoy them." She added that older people seeking a spark in their sex lives may be becoming "one of the most liberated groups" in this respect.

According to Richard Gorman, general manager of the soft-sell Lawrence Research Group in San Francisco, his company serves 150,000 customers. "So many people in this business have promised the moon and delivered schlock," he says. "We use almost a clinical tone in our catalogue." Gorman reports a 60/40 ratio of female to male customers. He suggests that women help male lovers adapt to the idea by introducing sex aids as "massage enhancers". Sex therapists also stress the importance of communicating openly.

"People who turn to a vibrator who have a sexual partner are in many cases very anxious to improve their sexual functioning," Dr. Zussman

asserts. "Many women who use it learn to have an orgasm which may then become easier to achieve without the vibrator."

"Allow him to hold it and use it to stimulate (you). Use it on him. Many men find it very pleasurable." Dr. Zussman adds, however, "All these things lose their psychological value if they become a repetitive part of love-making."

In my case, a careful advance-and-retreat approach toward my husband worked. Gently, I helped him realise that the fears on which his initial reaction was based, were unfounded. Perhaps it's the new communication we've enjoyed since then. Perhaps it's the occasional ventures into our new "funbox." But we've learned that centuries of Japanese weren't all wrong — that they certainly had something over Queen Victoria's dapper approach. And, it's okay to whisper about it.

Heather Richardson is a West Coast journalist.

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The Women's Bookstop

SHARON CHISVIN

The southern Ontario city of Hamilton may be best known across the country for its engaging ability to produce steel, but its world renowned university, expanding arts community and proximity to Toronto do ensure that its mind and morals do not stagnate in the machinery of the Industrial Revolution. It was not surprising then, that last March, while women worldwide were celebrating the achievements of the feminist movement on International Women's Day, Hamiltonian Renee Albrecht was able to celebrate a related achievement of her own. On that particular Friday in March, 1985, Renee opened her own small business — The Women's Bookstop — Hamilton's first bookstore for women. The timing of the opening was no coincidence.

Renee had long been active in various women's groups in the area, yet had consistently felt the need for a more unified focal point for these women and their issues of concern. At the same time, in the last couple of years she had been plagued by personal frustration, searching for a meaningful outlet for her abundant and restless energy. She was inspired to open the alternative bookstore after happening upon the Toronto Women's Bookstore the previous summer. As she later elaborated in an interview published in a local newspaper, "I thought it was a place full of secrets about all women and a place to find yourself". Renee returned to Hamilton and began to search for an appropriate storefront, later decided on a small white bungalow on the west end of one of the city's main thoroughfares.

Renee spent much of that first summer and the following autumn studying book catalogues and publication reviews, selecting and ordering materials for her proposed new bookstore. While her formal education and degree in psychology did not necessarily prepare her for this task, her many years as an avid reader and self-described "closet creative writer" meant that she was already familiar with most of the literature she was researching.

The two small rooms that now comprise the Women's Bookstop overflow with a painstakingly selected sample range of literature: books by women, for women and about women. The classics are duly represented by the likes of Jane Austen, while novels by internationally acclaimed writers like



Renee Albrecht of the Woman's Bookstop, Hamilton, Ont.

Margaret Drabble and Daphne du Maurier share shelf space with Canadian matriarchs of fiction: Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro. While the odd romance novel dots the shelves — the business must cater to "all women" Renee explains — most of the books are issue oriented, reflecting women's common concerns for such social causes as ecology, emancipation, freedom of expression and self-discovery. There are poetry and cookbooks, self-help books, books on sexuality and on being a single parent, and an entire section devoted to women and health. The Women's Bookstop also displays limited collections of bilingual literature, educational publications for children (such as the bilingual picture book that describes a child's visit to his father in prison), some records, and artistic greeting cards and buttons. Renee also will order any book upon request.

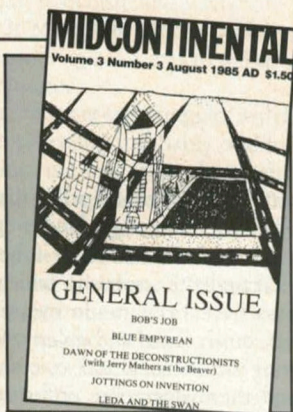
When Women's Bookstop opened a year ago, there were, as expected, many here who contended that this blue collar city and its women in particular, were neither ready, nor in need of such feminist enlightenment. But within a few months of opening, it was already evident that Renee had intuitively responded to some unspoken need within the women's community. Still, with characteristic modesty, she admits that she is surprised both by how busy she is and by the respect she has been granted from the established, and largely male, business community. "It's busier than I anticipated and growing, growing all the time," Renee acknowledges. Hamilton is not

a particularly political city, she ventures, yet "feminists are coming out of the closet."

To the advantage of these women of Hamilton, Renee's devotion to her business does not impede her from pursuing her previous commitment to other women's activities and concerns within the community at large. This past August, in sisterhood with four other local business women — writer and course facilitator Ellen Neil, advertising agent Lynne Tomlinson, vegetarian restaurant owner Kathy Walker, and certified reflexologist and Renee's sister Ivy Albrecht — Renee published a newsletter designed to serve the common interests of businesses and residents in the community. Entitled *The Edge*, this small business information bulletin is planned and compiled on Monday mornings around Renee's kitchen table, and distributed to 4,000 households within the Hamilton-Wentworth area. As Renee explains, "The *Edge* came out of a group of women in business for themselves trying to dispel the attitude that people in business can't be trusted, are greedy, and always out to make money." She notes that the early issues, with such informative articles as 'Is Going to Small Claims Court Expensive?' and 'The Business Woman and P.M.S.', have been extremely well received.

Renee also contributes a book review to each issue of *Women's View* magazine, a quarterly periodical that just began publishing in the city last fall, and has also sponsored feminist writers and lecturers at her Main Street store. She works closely with the city's Women's Centre in disseminating feminist literature and awareness, and, in December, co-hosted with the Center, an entertaining and enlightening women's Christmas party. Renee is also active in the local 'Business Women's Network,' created as a support group and transfer-of-information center for Hamilton's increasing number of self-employed business women.

For Renee Albrecht, a new year was ushered in with International Women's Day last March. It has proven more emotionally and intellectually rewarding than she ever dared anticipate, both for her and for the women of Hamilton she has unequivocally come to represent. After all, Renee explains, although it never was discussed too openly, she always knew that, "Steelworkers' wives read too." And indeed they do.



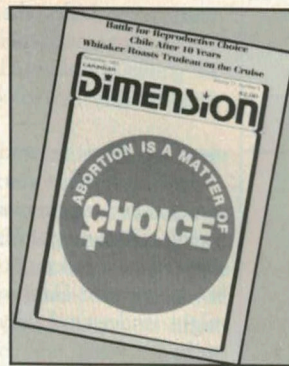
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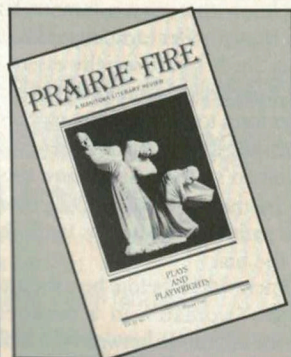
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B O O K S

Dancing in the Light

by Shirley MacLaine. Bantam Books
1985, \$19.95

Reviewed by JAN HERMISTON

Dear Anne,

I feel sad sometimes that our lives have taken such different directions. You married, bought a house, are expecting your first child. I'm single, have moved four times in the last year and I just started a new job.

Your Catholicism has never been an issue in our friendship. I accepted that you went to Mass once a week, that there was a crucifix in your home. I assume you accepted my atheism. We just never discussed religion. Anyway, we were very close friends for a few years. I remember that and my heart thanks you...

But I had itchy feet, I travelled, went away to university. I was searching for some understanding, some awareness of life that I couldn't find in our conservative, little hometown. Alone, I travelled to Europe, I worked out west, went to California, seeking something intangible, undefinable.

For my 27th birthday, I think I found it. My Mom gave me *Dancing in the Light*, Shirley MacLaine's latest book. You know Shirley, the American actress who wrote *Don't Fall Off the Mountain* years ago.

This book means so much to me, Anna. Finally I have gained an understanding of life and love and spirituality. Maybe it's boring for you to think about "religion"; it has always been part of your life. Shirley's ideas make me tingle with excited relief. She offers answers to many of the "why's" that have remained unanswered for years. She explains about the purpose of life — and it makes sense to me.

If you believe in an afterlife, do you accept that souls live forever? Reincarnation is not such a bizarre idea then, is it? And karma? If I hurt someone intentionally, at some point in my future, I too, will be hurt. Doesn't your bible say something like that too?

The spirituality that Shirley is explaining in her book is what she has discovered and experienced. It's not patriarchal or restricted by church ideology. It's spirituality that I can discover now, on my own. Most people seem to disregard or change certain "rules" of their religion anyway, to make life more convenient. I guess I'm starting from the beginning, trying to understand spiritual learning that comes from within myself. I've always been sceptical about centuries-old sexist doc-

trine, you know me and my feminism...

I'm worried that you will reject such unsubstantiated concepts as reincarnation and psychic phenomena. Maybe you're not interested in my thoughts and beliefs now, but if you read *Dancing in the Light*, you might understand why I accept Shirley's truth.

Shirley also writes about her Russian lover and her dancing career. Her relationship with her parents is a major focus of the book. She comes to understand her parents and why they argue incessantly.

Shirley's exciting life certainly doesn't parallel mine. But her search for truth and understanding has tremendous significance in my personal struggle to "figure out life".

Dancing in the Light made me laugh and cry. I've learned acceptance, tolerance and patience from Shirley. She's helped me to grow. I can feel it!

I hope you'll read the book someday. You're welcome to borrow my copy anytime. Just let me know.

With love and memories,
Jan

Femininity

by Susan Brownmiller, Linden Press/Simon and Schuster, 1984

Reviewed by CHARLYNN TOEWS

Susan Brownmiller's latest book *Femininity* is important because it reaffirms what some of us (especially those who prefer to think of feminism as being in the "second stage") would like to forget: all women play the femininity game to some extent. We are products of this sexist society, and although we as feminists are busy trying to change it, we needn't feel so guilty for surviving in it in the meantime.

Too many women feel compelled to explain or excuse their use or non-use of make-up, their particular style of clothes or hair, as if they as individuals created the society in which these adornments have been made meaningful. Dress codes, both official and covert, still exist and knowing the historical and societal sexism that caused them does not, unfortunately, make them go away. Most of us still have to appeal to non-feminists for scarce things such as jobs, apartments and respect. And those among them who would deny us these essentials due to our breaking the rules of the femininity game are not about to listen to even a carefully thought-out political statement before they shut the door in our faces.

Rather than merely accepting the rules of the game, we can understand them and then do our best to change them. The idea of femininity is both an intensely private and a most public and political concept. Brownmiller looks at various aspects of the game, combining historical studies and current research with her own personal reflections. In disclosing her "diary" of coming to terms with her own femininity, she is not always "politically correct", as few of us would be. For example, it is comforting to know that even a famous feminist like Susan Brownmiller campaigned hard with her mother for her first socially essential but physically unnecessary bra, and waited hopefully for her form to fill out to her mother's ample proportions. It is also comforting to share another woman's experience of how she broke the rules: by the 1950s Brownmiller had discarded the padding and by the 1960s she had discarded the bra.

Like women writers before her, she attempts to redefine "woman" in a manner that recognises the difference between the biological female (the woman created by nature) and the societal feminine (the woman created by man). These concepts are explored in our modern

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context, a complex tangle of femininity and feminism, liberalism and liberation, a society in which Marabelle Morgan, Helen Gurley Brown and Virginia Slims all tell us what it is to be feminine.

Along with her own struggles with femininity (such as feeling justifiably odd for putting colour into the hair on her head while taking colour out of the hair on her legs), Brownmiller recounts the struggle over dress reform a la Amelia Bloomer, and the bobbed hair controversy that Charlotte Perkins Gilman defended. Current research discloses some surprising biological facts, such as the fact that up to about a third of Western women have hair on their upper lip and chin and that more men than women have major and minor skin disorders, contrary to what current aesthetics and cosmetics ads would lead us to believe. She also examines past and present societal customs and notions of beauty, in chapters concentrating on hair, body, clothes, voice, ambition and more.

Although Brownmiller does not claim to untangle the complex issue in any definitive way, her basic conclusion is that while playing the femininity game is sometimes necessary, and is sometimes even fun, it can be harmful. This negative aspect stems from the accompanying "inhibition on speech and behaviour, the usurping of time, and a preoccupation with appearance that deflects the mind and depletes the storehouse of energy and purpose." In the final analysis, she can only encourage women to be more aware of their choices in being feminine, even if they are not yet completely free in making those choices.

Women of Influence: Canadian Women and Politics

by Penney Kome, Doubleday
Canada Limited, 1985.

Reviewed by PENNI MITCHELL

Penney Kome has a straightforward way of dealing with political events and the lives of those who work for social change. That's why her latest book, *Women of Influence: Canadian Women and Politics*, is such an easy-to-read history of events which have altered the lives of Canadian women during the last century.

Some of the more interesting chapters include "In These Times: 1980 - 1983" in which Kome documents the politics and persuasion of the Yvettes in Quebec, who organised to defeat the referendum on sovereignty-association. Equally interesting is a description of the contribution of Madeleine Parent, who began organising women textile workers in Quebec and has spent over 40 years working to improve the lives of women. The chapter on "Women in Wartime and Post-War Canada" includes information which might just as well be included in a feminist trivia game as in Kome's historical refer-

ence. (Q: What province enacted six weeks maternity leave in 1919? A: British Columbia; Q: What year was it when the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, which at one time had called for the exclusion of women from the workplace, finally passed a resolution calling for equal pay for equal work for men and women? A: 1914).

For a reader looking for the author's own analysis embedded in her work, Kome's somewhat detached observer status as a writer may be a slight disappointment. However, Kome the feminist is not detached from her subject matter. She is an optimist who forges women forming more and more coalitions as the conservative climate in Canada grows. She rejects the idea that the climate for social change will continue to deteriorate in Canada.

Fortunately, Kome's determined optimism about the direction of the contemporary women's movement has found its way onto the pages of *Women of Influence*, making this book a compelling, learning experience. ▽

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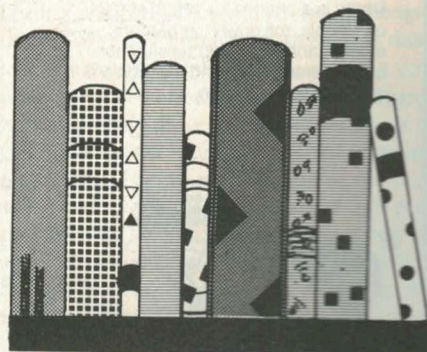
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NUANCE

Lilith Publications, 1985
Reviewed by ERICA SMITH

Nuance is the first-born of Lilith Publications, one of a sparse handful (four at last count) of feminist publishers in Canada, and was mid-wifed by Adena Franz's vision and hard work.

Some of the writers represented here are familiar to us through *Herizons*; in *Nuance* they continue the tradition of semantic subversion of the likes of Bersianik, Daly, Brossard, Warland and others.

When I began my first reading with the express purpose of reviewing the book, I looked for: 1. structure, 2. clarity and 3. accessibility; all of the things Creative Writing I had inculcated in me. Presently I realised that the standards too are set by the owners of language. For women writers this rigidity is a booby-trap we must either evade or smash. Because we've used our "mother tongue" (a misnomer if ever there was one!) all our lives, we never notice the distortions, the "telling it slant", in the trenchant words of Emily Dickinson.

If there is a central theme to this diversity of offerings, it is that the nuances of women's speech patterns can soar far beyond the boundaries of fixed form and correct grammar; they can reach out and connect us. With varying degrees of success, the writers of these poems, stories and articles make the attempt. But their responsibility to connect presupposes a receptive

audience. We readers have an equal responsibility to work at understanding, rather than dismissing or resisting the text. The backbone of *Nuance* is its poetry; deeply-felt, intensely personal declarations of women's perceptions, ways of seeing, moments of being, using female imagery of blood, fruit, seeds, mirrors.

Janick Belleau and Nicole Pribilski write in French; there is no translation included, alas. Some of Lyn Cockburn's articles have appeared before, but lose nothing of their biting asstringency and wit in the retelling. I felt Tanya Lester's stories needed a bit more focus: several promising themes (perhaps too many) for a short story are hinted at in "Merilee's Choice" but not developed. Milly Giesbrecht spins words into visual, almost tangible images, though much of it remained impenetrable to me. In "Stella Maris," Jorica Perry combines classic form with the pleasurable shock of the new. She calls to the Original "starlit woman of the skies" and the pale imitation of Mary the Virgin fades away. Marion East writes of her explorations of her relationships with women, with her daughter, and the psychic shrapnel of shattered lives. But the constant renewal and recreation of our Selves overcomes despair.

Luce Irigaray said: "If we don't invent a language for our body, there will be too few gestures to portray our history. We will weary of the same few gestures, and our desires will remain latent, and in limbo. Lulled to sleep, unsatisfied. And delivered over to the words of men." ▽

CLASSIFIEDS

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The Color Purple

Reviewed by BRIGITTE SUTHERLAND

When I first heard that Steven Spielberg was directing *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker's unique novel about the healing power of a community of black women, I thought it was a joke. Not the same whizkid director who gave us *Jaws*, *E.T.*, *Poltergeist*, and the unforgettable *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (ed), but crazed, goddess worshippers made up of foreign child exploiters with a soundtrack of piercing cries by a ditzy heroine: Save me! I could see Spielberg "born again," but hardly directing the womanist classic, *The Color Purple*.

Even before the movie opened in limited release, the prescreen hype began sending out warning labels for all those millions of women who had already read Walker's original story. "The movie is not about lesbians." Oh, really? Some newspapers and magazines quoted Whoopi Goldberg, who plays the principal character Celie, as saying: "It is not a black movie...It's not a women's movie either." I was quickly becoming a believer.

Still, a friend's invitation to a preview was hard to turn down. I went into the theatre knowing Celie's story intimately — how she had been raped by her father; torn from her children and beloved sister, Nettie; married off to Mr., who strikes and denigrates her. Yet, reading the novel, I had never, never experienced Celie as beaten. She was funny, resolute, indignant all the way along her written chronicle, bundled first into letters to God and later to her sister Nettie. Instead, Spielberg held out to me and expected me to embrace a victim in soft focus — shuffling and stooped. I was shocked. I felt detached from the movie and became emotionally numbed; a numbness from which even the overpowering musical score could not rouse me.

In an interview with the *Globe and Mail* film reviewer Jay Scott, Spielberg, just prior to the film's release, again warned that he was aiming for a lyrical look rather than remaining faithful to the graphic renderings of the original novel. For Spielberg, this lyricism meant toning down considerably how Celie evolves into a sexual, self-determined being. Where the novel, and Alice Walker's essays of the 70s, exclaim, "we are all lesbians," the movie buries much of the emotional and most of the physical relationship between Celie and Shug Avery, the blues singer who is also Mr.'s lover.

After Shug performs the "Sister's" lament in Celie's honour at Harpo's jukejoint, they go back to the house to play. Celie dresses in Shug's gown and is coached, in front of a mirror, to not hide her beautiful smile. They exchange quick kisses. Their arms move about one another. In keeping with the Spielberg tra-



Shug (Margaret Avery) and Celie (Whoopi Goldberg)

dition of retrograde movies, he tastefully pans to tinkling windchimes.

Spielberg said, "If the movie had been harder, less lyrical, it would have been too overwhelming, I was not going to have Celie discover her body the way it was written." In the novel, Shug coaxes Celie to examine her genitals in a mirror telling her how to derive pleasure and then smile. Spielberg explains this omission as a desire on his part to avoid lapsing, once again, into bad taste as he had in his *Indiana Jones in the Temple of Doom* when a man's heart was ceremoniously ripped out. Bad taste is what is left in my mouth as his decision tears the essence from Celie and Shug's relationship.

I wanted to see them do what I knew they would do together — snuggle, make love, talk of jealousy when Shug wants to sleep with Mr., describe the difference they experience in sex with Mr., and finally leave Mr. altogether to live in Memphis where, as Alice Walker has stated, they create "women's culture." Instead, Spielberg deems it more important to present us with frames of Mr.'s degenerating manhood. When Celie returns, changed, in control, how or why this happens remains cinematically a mystery. Although Celie's sexual abuse by men is well documented, even back lit, we are never allowed to view her healing at the hands of another woman.

Celie's healing also comes at the hands of a community of rural women. In the movie that community has been abbreviated to Sofia, married to Mr.'s son, Harpo, and Squeak, Harpo's lover. Sofia's strutting character is soon beaten into submission by the white town folk. Squeak is served up on the receiving end of Sofia's fist. Missing are Walker's life affirming connections amongst these women. There's Sofia's sister Odessa, a veritable Amazon, who in the face of her sister's persecution cares for the children while Sofia is in jail. The women constantly organize the care of each other's children depending on each woman's changing fortunes. For Spielberg, the kids seem to be props — crawling all over everyone.

Instead of exploring black women's extended families, Spielberg adds another male character. He gives Shug a father to give her "more of a life." Shug, a proud, raunchy, independent character now cringes, begs to be daddy preacher's good little girl again. Shug's character has never needed exoneration, just admiration.

Spielberg misses the principle symbol of that community; the sewing of quilts together; the constructing and reconstructing of community. After Celie tells Harpo to beat Sofia into submission, Celie and Sofia patch up their damaged relationship by sewing a quilt from curtains torn in her latest fight with Harpo. Celie, filled with murderous rage at Mr. for hiding Nettie's letters from her, stitches together pants at Shug's urging. And after 40 odd years, even Celie's relationship with Mr. is mended when he takes an interest in sewing shirts as they wait for Shug to return to them. Over sewing they gradually share their ideas of the world. In the film, Spielberg gives only Mr. the power to commit one redemptive act, by facilitating Nettie's return from Africa.

Spielberg also fails to translate into a powerful image much of Celie's connection to the rest of the world as experienced through the travelogues Nettie writes. The screenplay is desperate to keep the plot moving in America and thus struggles against the original story's visions of Africa. Like the rendering of exotic lands and people in the Indiana Jones adventure flicks, Africa and Nettie's involvement with its people become more of an exercise in highspeed edits. There's the 40s movie cliché of tribal drums accompanying Celie's contemplated murder of Mr. interspersed with flashes of her children's bloodletting ritual. Spielberg never finds a way to make visual the stirring both Celie and Nettie must have felt when Nettie exclaims in the novel, "I felt like I was seeing black for the first time. And Celie, there is something magical about it."

While the novel presented to us, as women and especially black women, an entire process for healing; the movie saves the most important parts of our struggle for off-screen. Seldom throughout the movie are we given an image of women fighting back. Yet, we are constantly bombarded with graphic renderings of men's violence.

Spielberg takes away our ability to revel in Celie's joy. In place of the careful process of healing at the hands of women, he "kabongs" us over the head with images that speak more to the structures of the film than to the empowerment of Celie and her sisters. Constantly I was noting, oh yes, he used that image of Celie and Nettie rhyming to their clapping hands at the beginning of the movie and then at the end. Oh yes, there's a field of pale purple flowers at the beginning and there they are again at the end. That's because the movie's called *The Color Purple*, don't you know. It's true, Spielberg didn't make a movie about lesbians, black women or black people. It's more about the need of a millionaire director to make a "grown-up" film and maybe even be touted as a feminist man. My feeling is if you want to experience *The Color Purple* deeply, read or reread Alice Walker's book because even though Celie gets "men off her eyeballs," Spielberg doesn't.



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