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# HERIZONS

WOMEN'S NEWS AND FEMINIST VIEWS

## The Parachute Club's Lauri Conger

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Player  
with  
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ON CULTURE



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## HERIZONS

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# R.E.A.L. Problems

P E N N I M I T C H E L L



Walk into a room full of feminists today and inevitably the conversation will be rife with rumours about R.E.A.L. Women, how they secured a million dollars from the federal government, or how the

Women's Program at Secretary of State is going to close down because of R.E.A.L. Women's lobbying efforts.

The same fears are echoed in the feminist press, where each edition of news puts front-page reports of rumoured grants squarely in the realm of the plausible. In turn, the rumour mill and networking circuits quickly turn our fears into the possible, and before you know it, the mere existence of a group of women opposed to feminism is one of the biggest threats we face today.

Much of the blame for this great escalation in fear lies within the rumour mill itself. A sympathetic civil servant hears about a meeting R.E.A.L. Women had with some members of parliament, including the minister of her department, and because of her worst fears, she tells feminists in the community that their funding may be jeopardised.

To better understand the argument, consider the comments made by Norma Scarborough, President of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL), who was reflecting the view of many feminists when she said that R.E.A.L. Women represent "a real threat to the gains we have made and to our future progress." In a commentary in *Pro-Choice News*, she argued that "It is their co-thinkers in the U.S. after all, who have been able to successfully prevent the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment."

Accepting this threat without challenging it doesn't empower us to develop our own way to deal with R.E.A.L. Women and taunts us into declaring our opposition to them, just because they have done so to the feminist movement. It also puts us in the dangerous position of being seen as being against homemakers. This is exactly the kind of affirmation R.E.A.L. Women needs in order to claim a legitimate representation of women's interests. What we need to do is to speak up about the homemakers in the feminist movement, and the gains feminists have fought for, as homemakers and as women.

The conclusion of this argument also needs to be scrutinized; the success of the right wing in the U.S. does not forecast the inevitability of a R.E.A.L. Women coup in Canada. Our country does not appear to be sliding as far to the right as the U.S. (witness recent provincial and territorial election outcomes), and Canadian women, unlike their U.S. sisters, have already secured their entrenched rights in their Constitution.

However, the fact that so many feminists seem to think that holding views in opposition to us is, in itself, a threat to our stronghold on the women's liberation movement, does weaken the sense of entitlement that has always empowered us. And although it is natural to want to defend our gains, we should not feel compelled to deny that many of us are radicals or lesbians just because R.E.A.L. Women finds these labels objectionable. Haven't we always known that the process of transforming a patriarchal world into an egalitarian one *is* a radical act? And haven't we always maintained that lesbians are everywhere, including in the feminist movement? Rather than responding defensively to R.E.A.L. Women's attacks, we could remind ourselves that it's been nearly 20 years since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and ask what took R.E.A.L. Women so long to discover that our goals are radical ones?

The us-versus-them trap is a dangerous one. If R.E.A.L. Women is continually branded by us as an all-powerful force, we risk immobilising ourselves and deferring a measure of our legitimacy to them. In the abortion debate, the victory of the pro-lifers occurred the moment feminist consciousness began to accept that there were two sides to the debate. Similarly, if we begin to accept that there are two sides to every issue on our agenda, our own power will begin to erode as our expectations quietly shift. Within the climate of fear surrounding R.E.A.L. Women lies the danger of getting sidetracked into battling paper tigers. This might cause us to forget to test the waters of the real powers that be, particularly funding sources in the government, and the Women's Program at Secretary of State. If the political will exists to give support to organisations like R.E.A.L. women whose aims are clearly not to gain equal rights for women, the perfect opportunity to do so would be now, when so many feminists are expecting the worst.

If this begins to happen, it won't be all of a sudden. The interference will be slow, sys-

tematic and, probably undertaken with the belief that a compromise is the only resolution possible. And worst of all, we could find ourselves already convinced that such a compromise will be for the good of the movement.

It might go something like this: A women's health clinic applies to the Secretary of State Women's Program to fund a workshop series on women's health issues around technology; one of the workshops is on freestanding abortion clinics and is scheduled to be presented by a representative of the local coalition for reproductive choice. Knowing that the Women's Program has a standing policy of not funding projects which deal directly with either side of the abortion issue, the regional office tells the health clinic that its application has a better chance of being approved in Ottawa if the workshop on abortion is removed. They also suggest that the presence of a coalition representative on a panel on the ethics of reproductive technologies could be enough to have the application rejected, even though she won't be speaking about abortion. The Women's Program regional staff workers are afraid of R.E.A.L. Women too, and they don't have the power to award funding themselves, or to comment publicly on government policies, so they do what they feel is in the best interests of the applicant.

The brochure is already being designed. The health clinic is anxious to have its application approved and time is running out. The women on the health clinic board understand that the reason the clause on abortion-related funding exists is so that Secretary of State doesn't feel obliged to fund the pro-lifers either; it sounds fair. They know the decision is theirs to make, technically, but with the R.E.A.L. Women lobby strong in Ottawa, maybe their application would be rejected if they included the choice coalition person in their project.

After much debate at the board level, they accept the advice from the local office and pull all references to the choice coalition from the project description and the application goes through for approval in Ottawa.

Self-censorship is so effective because there is no one to blame. And while government bureaucrats sympathetic to feminist organisations may tell us in confidence of rumours of R.E.A.L. Women's effects on funding policies, the mandate of the Women's Program is still to support women's organisations who work toward the improvement of the status of wom-

*cont'd on page 7*



## T-shirts hot items

Help! My newly pregnant 23 yr. old daughter came home for the week-end and made off with my new Herizons sweatshirt. She says she's going to wear it every day until the baby is born — including the six weeks we will spend in Europe. I find I can't wait 'til (I become a grandmother) in November and get my beloved sweatshirt back. Please send me another one — size extra large. I enclose my cheque for \$20.

Thanks  
Joyce Bush  
Wanham, Alberta

P.S. I'm glad I have only one daughter, this could get expensive.

## Avoid Political Allegiance

Renewing *Herizons* is a small birthday present to myself, but please, dear friends, be careful about your direction. Issues of concern to women discussed in an intelligent manner encouraging of positive action is much better than allegiance to a political view at all costs. That makes you blind, blind, blind and vulnerable to the narrow conservatism and allegiance to male-dominated capitalism and silly sociology other women's magazines follow. Yes, you too could sink to having articles called "Are you insecure enough yet to take this quiz after sixty-five pages of nearly naked young women's bodies advertizing happiness through materialism and sex?"

It particularly grieves me that you take occasional, and quite boringly ignorant stabs at Christianity. Be more open! If you interview a magnificent woman like Dr. Rosalie Bertell, could you not ask her about her faith? It would be most inspiring to many Canadian women. And your attack on the United Church was an un-informed excess against a powerful ally.

Love you anyways  
Tanya

## Breathing space for teens

I've just finished reading an article from your magazine *Herizons*, Arbitrating Adolescence by Eunice Brooks. This article really hit home base for me as I also have two sons aged 19 and 21. I too was finding it very hard to let go. I couldn't face the fact that my sons no longer needed me twenty four hours a day. An opportunity came up

for me to take on a full time position with a company and after much thought and to the relief of my sons I am sure I went to work. The job got me out of the house and provided me with some new interests and at the same time gave the boys some breathing space and room to mature and grow. It's just been this year that I've come to accept that I have my life and some new interests that don't always revolve around my family, and my sons are moving each in their own direction with their lives. I have finally accepted that my sons are very capable of taking care of themselves. Both my sons have grown up to be responsible, caring young men with whom I can enjoy a quiet conversation over dinner, or a nice afternoon drive just to talk. We have come from a need to be there for each other as mother and son to wanting to be there for each other as friends; and until I read your article I hadn't really realised that this transformation had taken place. Your article has brought about a new realisation for me and for this I thank you.

Wanda Berry

## Anti-moslem letter called racist

I was disturbed to see the racist letter of Cari Gross of Calgary, Alberta in the April/May issue of *Herizons*. I was also sorry that your otherwise excellent magazine would accept to print such a thing. Would you also print a letter from a Nazi making a similarly sweeping condemnation of Jewish religion and culture?

I have a word to say about those "non-Moslem cultures and religious" that she claims have so much more to offer women. Take a look at the old Testament, sacred to both Christians and Jews. How does Eve's story go down? I could name numerous other examples from the same source. Remember that Jewish males have a regular ritual prayer of thanks to God for not having made them women. Israeli society is as macho-militaristic as any in the world. Remember that the Christian religion has the blood of millions of women on its hands, murdered as witches over history. Remember that Hindu women get to be burned alive at their husband's funerals. And on and on.

This kind of cultural hatred leaves no room at all for sisterhood. Moslem women, like women who struggle within their own

cultural context everywhere, are only put on the defensive, or worse, when their whole world is wiped away by an ugly smug generalization of this sort.

As for her naive statement "I'm very grateful to be here in Canada where I can be free and liberate myself by my own hard work", I know lots of women who have worked very hard over many years and have not been able to free and liberate themselves.

Leila Belanger  
Montreal, Quebec

## On the right track

Thank you to Heidi Muench for sharing her story and insights in, "What Survivors Can Tell Therapists." (April/May 1986) Physicians and therapists who strive for a feminist approach have much to learn from testimonials such as this. It also confirms that we're on the right track.

Sincerely,  
Chantal Perrot, MD  
Toronto, Ontario

## Activating News

Just a note to go with my cheque for a two-year subscription to your magazine.

I've thoroughly enjoyed the issues I've received so far. Not only do they contain information not usually found elsewhere, but also important, uplifting news of women in action throughout Canada. I've shared the magazine with other women in our union at work and it has resulted in letterwriting to politicians and a greater awareness of what is really going on.

Thanks again for your great work and best wishes for the future!

Sincerely,  
Deborah McDougall  
Kelowna, B.C.

## Pass it along

I'm a University of Manitoba grad with a new practice on the west coast. Have been reading a girlfriend's *Herizons* for a year and enjoy it a lot.

I'll leave my copy in my waiting room when I'm done with it. I'm sure you'll get new Victoria subscribers as a result!

Sincerely,  
Allison Ferg, M.D.  
Victoria, B.C.



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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.

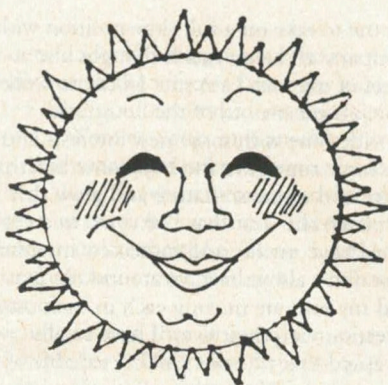
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July 1986

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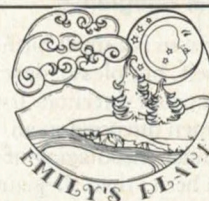


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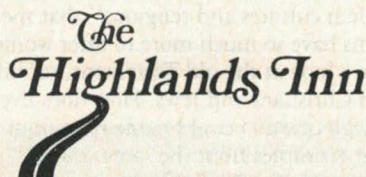


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cont'd from page 4

en in Canada and promote the equal participation of women in society. R.E.A.L. Women, on their own, can't change that.

So, while the courts and governments are rarely feminist in their interpretation of equality rights, it would be a paralyzing delusion to equate the failure of patriarchal systems with the success of R.E.A.L. Women. Although they have been accused of representing the interests of men, or likened to fascist dictators, R.E.A.L. Women is not our enemy, even though the group may fuel its fires by claiming we are theirs.

There is no debate on whether we should be kept out of the workforce, be unilaterally decreed heterosexual, married and mothers if we don't want to be. Feminists are too strong and too confident in their goals to stoop to debate whether or not women are oppressed. If we listen to the discontent in the lives of R.E.A.L. Women, we can see that many of them are expressing the same responses articulated by the early women's liberation movement — a lack of validation, a perceived lack of control over their lives, a lack of self-determination. Whether it be the working conditions of our paid employment or the right to spend time working at home with children, we are all real women demanding to have more control over our lives. ▼

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## WESTERN REGION

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**WEST WORD 2** Summer school / retreat for women offers two week courses in poetry, fiction and playwriting (as well there is a writing retreat option). The location is the University of Victoria from **August 17 - 31, 1986**. Course fee is \$425 includes room and board (Retreat fee is \$375). For information write to West Word, West Coast Women and Words, #210 - 640 W. Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1G4.

**CHALLENGES TO NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT** will be the theme of an international conference on this emerging public issue on **September 12 - 14, 1986** at the University of Winnipeg. For information: Nuclear Waste Issues Conference c/U.W.S.A. Office, 515 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9 (204) 786-9112.

**SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON IMMIGRANT WOMEN** will be held on **November 6 - 8, 1986** in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The theme of the conference is "Immigrant Women in Action: Forward Looking Strategies for the 1990s." The Conference Planning Committee invites suggestions of names of individuals who can serve as workshop resource people. For further information please write or telephone: Conference Planning Committee, c/o Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba, 290 Garry Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 1H3 (204) 943-8612.

## EASTERN REGION

**2nd INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH ISSUES** to be held on **November 6 - 8, 1986** at Dalhousie University in Halifax. Sponsored by the International Council on Women's Health Issues, the theme of the conference is "The Impact of Culture, Society and Public Policy on the Health and Care of Women." For information write Phyllis Noerager Stern, School of Nursing, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3J5.

**ATLANTIC WOMEN AND HOUSING CONFERENCE** is the theme of a conference scheduled for **November 6 - 9, 1986** at the Memramcook Institute, Moncton, New Brunswick. The organisers, the Nova Scotia Associ-

ation of Social Workers, are seeking financial support and plan to hold pre-conferences in each province to lay the groundwork for November's conference where the housing needs of Atlantic Canadian women will be addressed. Write to: The Organising Committee, Atlantic Women and Housing Conference, 1094 Tower Road, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 2Y5.

**COMING TOGETHER AGAIN: A WOMEN'S SEXUALITY CONFERENCE** on **November 6 - 9, 1986**. Toronto, Ontario. This national weekend conference for women features: 3 dynamic keynote speakers, 35 stimulating workshops and an eclectic evening theatre performance. The conference is aimed at affirming and strengthening our sexuality in a feminist context, exploring the commonalities and differences of our sexual/affective preferences and moving us towards a sexual expression consistent with our feminism. For registration information write to: Side By Side: Canadian Feminist Resources, Box 85, 275 King Street E., Toronto, Ontario, M5A 1K2, (416) 626-5465.

**10th CRIAW CONFERENCE** with the theme "Feminist Research: Retrospect and Prospect" will be held at the University of Moncton from **November 7 - 9, 1986**. Topics presented include the tools, politics, and young women's involvement in the women's movement; women and development; reproduction and the new technologies and many more. For information, write: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Isabelle McKee-Allain, Département de sociologie, Centre universitaire de Moncton, NB E1A 3E9.

## INTERNATIONAL

**WOMEN'S PERMACULTURE DESIGN COURSE** is being offered **September 6 - 21, 1986** at Heathcote Women's Community and Conference Centre, Freeland, Maryland. The course provides two weeks of intensive design training in theory and practice using ecology as the basis for designing a sustainable human system of food production, technology, economics, and community development. For tuition, scholarships, registration information contact: Cynthia Edwards, Heathcote Centre, Women's PDC, 21300 Heathcote, Road, Freeland, Md 21053 (301) 343-0280.

**WOMYN AND WITCHCRAFT:** Toward a definition of Dianic Wicca (Part 1). A conference to be held **September 19 - 21, 1986** for womyn who define themselves as Dianic and/or lesbian witches. The purpose of this landmark gathering at a state park in southwest

Wisconsin is to initiate discussion on the philosophy and theology of Dianic Witchcraft. Bunk lodging with bathrooms and showers, handicapped accessible, vegetarian meals — registration fee \$100 U.S.; scholarship or work-study available. Canoeing, hiking trails, Indian mounds nearby. To contribute ideas and to attend write: Conference Coordinating Committee, TCG, Box 6021, Madison, WI 53716.

**WOMEN AND FARMING:** Changing Roles, Changing Structures. A conference to be held at the University of Wisconsin in Madison on **October 16 - 18, 1987**. For more information, write Eugene A. Wilkening, 308-G Agriculture Hall, Dept. of Rural Sociology, University of Wisconsin, WI. 53706.

**THIRD INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY CONGRESS ON WOMEN** will be held at Trinity College, University of Dublin, Dublin, Ireland from **July 6 - 10, 1987**. This congress is held every three years and the theme for the 1987 congress is "Women's Worlds: Visions and Revisions." This all-embracing theme was chosen in order to enable researchers, theoreticians, and practitioners in the sciences, medicine and health-care, the humanities and the creative arts, in development, government and politics, in education, business and industry, to expand and deepen their knowledge and understanding of women's worlds: reinterpreting our past, examining our experience of the present, creating our visions of the future.

For further information contact the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, 44 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4, Ireland.

## SUBMISSIONS

**THE JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION INQUIRY** is planning a special issue devoted to feminist perspectives on communication, mass communication, popular culture. Manuscripts and book reviews should be typed, double spaced, APA style, no more than 25 pages, incl. references. Submit three copies to: The Editors (Feminism Issue), Journal of Communication Inquiry, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242. Deadline: **October, 1, 1986**.

**FIREWEED SPECIAL ISSUE ON CLASS.** Please send material, ideas and suggestions for this special class issue of *Fireweed* to Cy-Thea Sand c/o 417 - 675 East Fifth Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 4P1.

**CORRECTION** In April/May issue (Vol. 4, No. 3) Herizons printed a Call for Submissions for ORAL HISTORY of Canadian working class lesbians. This was out of date information, please disregard.



## Sisters seek equity in the brotherhood

At the 1984 Canadian Labour Congress in Montreal, the biggest labour organisation in Canada finally put into practice what it had been preaching to management for years. A constitutional change implemented an affirmative action program designed to assure a minimum of six of the 14 C.L.C. executive positions would be filled by women. The use of affirmative action to assure female representation was the only option the C.L.C. brass had. Systemic discrimination, male networking and the "slate" system (of having delegates ratify an executive chosen slate) had firmly entrenched the "old boys club" in the executive seats. While none were willing to lose their position to make way for a sister, all acutely felt the hypocrisy of a house of labour which proclaimed equality yet had only a token woman at the helm. Six new executive positions were created for women, bringing the female representation in line with the actual proportion of women in unionised employment.

It was quite a sales job in 1984. A women's caucus was held to enlist the movement's sisters in strong solidarity for implementation of affirmative action. The slate of "old boys" preached a new found conviction on the issue of equality and spouted glowing endorsements of their sister's achievements. Shoved to the background was the knowledge that, if women were truly equal in the labour movement, affirmative action would never have been needed at all.

The constitutional amendment passed with overwhelming support in the early part of the 1984

convention and many of us looked forward to the next women's caucus to nominate and endorse the women we wished to represent us. It was then we discovered just how far the old boys were prepared to allow equality and where they found it necessary to draw the line. The women's caucus was never held, the men had chosen our six representatives long before the convention even began.

Two years have passed. Dennis McDermott retired this year from his position as President of the C.L.C. to become Canada's ambassador to Ireland, a Tory patronage plum which left a good many of us wondering just how far we had been sold out since 1984.

As predicted as early as last November, Shirley Carr was elected President of the C.L.C. by acclamation. Her election should be considered a victory for women and a progressive step towards total equality within the labour movement, yet many still have doubts. Rumours abounded at the 1984 convention that Carr was spiriting an underground movement to defeat the affirmative action constitutional change, and her politics are routinely described as minimally feminist. She raised the ire of women activists when, after her election as President, Carr said by way of introducing her husband: "He says he married me young so he could make me the way he wanted. I told him the first 25 years were his, the next 25 years were mine and I'm on mine now." Carr's remark of the first 25 years (including the traditional child raising years), made some question whether Carr supports women's struggles for the right to child



photo: Murray Mosher

**Feminist trade unionists within the C.L.C. have adopted a wait and see attitude towards President Shirley Carr.**

care to enable them to participate in the union movement.

Nonetheless, Carr is a powerful person and not without influence on the future of women in unions. She prides herself on being a coal miner's daughter who got to where she is today by hard work and by having a strong belief in the labour movement.

Carr likes to think of herself as "tough," a description borne out in her addresses. Her speeches constantly challenge her opponents on a one-on-one basis: "You'd better listen Brian Mulroney, you'd better sit up and listen" she threatens from the podium. To her credit, Carr chaired her first convention with ease, not a small task, keeping order with 3,000 delegates. Behind the scenes, Carr was instrumental in resolving a "union within a union" dispute by demanding that the participants sit down with her staff and negotiate before the dispute disrupted the convention. Many have high hopes over Carr's election

and are willing to give her a chance, despite her apparent lack of a strong feminist politic.

However the same games were played at this convention as in 1984 with respect to the six "women only" executive positions. Once again a women's caucus was held to discuss items of concern to women. Once more the subject of just who would represent us was not raised. It is interesting, however, that the delegates at the caucus were questioned as to whether this was their first C.L.C. convention. Well over half the women signified that it was, encouraging news, no doubt, to the six incumbents seeking re-election. These delegates would, most likely, have no knowledge about the circumstances which led to their election in 1984 and would vote for them without question on the basis that they were incumbents. For the most part, feminist unionists have managed to insist upon the right to choose their own representatives in their provincial federations of labour. Once burned by the C.L.C.'s manoeuvres in 1984, they were determined the old boys at the provincial level wouldn't be so lucky in the power game. The C.L.C., however, appears to be a formidable nut to crack.

The lack of real democracy within the C.L.C. has been one of the most efficient ways women have been excluded from power. Kathy Maddison of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (O.P.E.I.U.) ran against the "slate of six" executive candidates who were presented for ratification at the conference, and lost.

While many union men have grown adept at spouting equality, the sad fact is that the



labour movement is just like any other area of society when it comes to sexism. The struggles we have convincing men of our worth are no different here than anywhere else, it just appears to the outsider to be so. Union slogans such as "An injury to one is an injury to all" and much publicised fights for benefits such as paid maternity leave and equal pay for work of equal value suggest to the rest of society that the labour movement is a bastion of equality. In some ways that's

correct, but these programs were initially fought for tooth and nail by female unionists and only became publicly known after male leaders toppled to the pressure and endorsed them as their own.

"I've been involved in the labour movement since 1967 and I've never had a problem with babysitting," was the comment one male delegate made when the issue of child care at union functions was raised in after-hours conversation. When asked what sort of arrangements he had

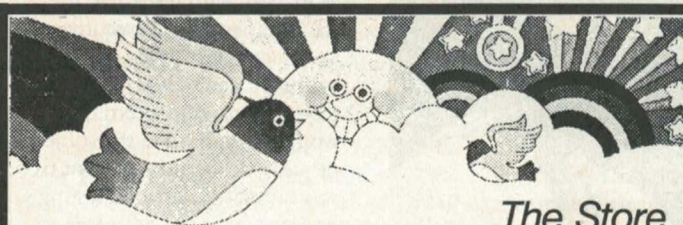
found so satisfactory, he replied, "I just never allowed my wife to work!" "Babies at a caucus meeting?" was expressed with horror by a male union leader when he was told a delegate would attend with his children. When the delegate pointed out, however, that there was no child care arranged for any after-hours meetings, the union leader merely shrugged, grimaced and walked away. Child care arrangements which allow women, single parents and families where both parents are unionists to attend union functions is a recently acquired right, and many years were spent in angry debate before it was obtained. Union leaders still neglect to take parents into consideration when planning their supplementary meetings and often arrange them after childcare hours or at such a late hour as to intrude into any sensible bedtime for the children.

Sexist remarks, jokes, and a lack of understanding of women's problems are now barely tolerated and will eventually be eliminated through union education. A harder task we must deal with within the labour movement is one which all women, no matter what the occasion, face when speaking with men. It's the politics of speaking and evidence has been documented to support the fact that men simply do not listen to women. Men interrupt, men over-talk and men ignore a woman speaker. This became glaringly evident when the Women's

Issues resolutions came to the floor at the C.L.C. The level of noise began to rise with the first resolution and continued. Early on in the segment, Carr called for order, but to little avail. Finally it became unbearable. It was apparent to many women present that each female speaker was being completely ignored by the male delegates and hundreds of private little conversations had sprung up all over the hall. Lynn Bue from the Letter Carriers Union of Canada, Local 15 (Edmonton) tolerated the hub-bub for as long as possible, then rose to the microphone. To a round of applause she pointed out the sexism evident in having the highest level of noise in the hall during women's issues and when women were speaking. Bue requested that Carr again call for order and Carr quickly obliged her. Women, however, should not have to fight within their own movement with their fellow unionists simply to be heard.

To its credit, the C.L.C. is changing, pushed ahead by women who have demanded some very basic rights within an organisation committed to fairness. Many of the provincial federations of labour have advanced even further than the major body, due to being smaller and more easily influenced by active women. The trade labour movement shall, one day, be equal... even if, like the rest of society, we must drag it kicking and screaming to that goal.

—Marg Bail



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## Ethnocentrism colours historians' views

During the 1853 Crimean War Florence Nightingale's name became legend but another woman who also had made nursing her life quickly faded from history after the war. The story of Mary Seacole, a black Jamaican whom Nightingale rejected as a volunteer but who devoted herself to 'the cause', has only recently been rescued from obscurity.

This need to include black women in the writing of feminist history became the focus of the International Conference on Women's History held recently in Amsterdam.



"Too often white women claim to have written women's history and too often black women have unmasked this as being white women's history," Gerda Bijloo, a representative of the black women's group at Nijmegen/Amsterdam told a packed room at the conference's opening session.

Bijloo charged the conference organisers with ignoring the history of black women in the western world and marginalising the racial issues.

"This conference claims to deal with women's history," she said. "In order to get a complete picture this logically should include a picture of black women in the western world as well. Both white and black women have the responsibility to abolish the racism that divides us."

But she added that as long as white women remain unaware of their racism and systematically deny the racial oppression that touches all women's lives, international women's solidarity will be nothing more than an empty cry.

Bijloo also criticised conference organisers for excluding representatives of African and Asian countries from giving reports at the

opening session.

"We are pleased to see that a lot of women from abroad have contributed to the opening program. Within the context of international solidarity among women we find this very important. However, I see two continents missing — Africa and Asia."

Bijloo urged conference delegates to integrate discussions of race and "not only in the section 'third world' which is hidden between 'early modern history' and 'sexuality'" as it was noted on the blackboard at the front of the room.

More than 150 papers were given by women from more than 40 countries including Zambia, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Iceland, Yugoslavia and Egypt. The conference was conducted in English although some women presented papers and answered questions via translators.

Fatima Aloo, a Tanzanian journalist, told delegates that black women resented white women who got research funding, used black women as subjects and then "hit it big."

Willy Jansen, an anthropologist from the Catholic University of Nijmegen who is researching 'orientalism' in the study of Arabic women, defended white women's ability to research and write about black women. "I agree that it's more difficult for white women to study black women and the only way to deal with this is to stand open to criticism. But I'm convinced that black women can benefit from us too."

Jansen mentioned a women's group she worked with in Egypt. She had written about their activities because they couldn't — they'd been incarcerated.

The conference's opening session also revealed the strikingly different circumstances in which feminist history is currently being written. Cecilia Salinas of the Centre for Women's Studies in Santiago, Chile, said the discussion of women's

oppression in her country was inseparable from its wider political context but it could not be openly discussed.

"To talk about women in Chile is to talk about the conditions of suffering in my country. In an academic gathering such as this, my presentation could not have a political point of view," she said.

Gretel Amman said the study of women's history in Spain only began after the death of Franco's dictatorship but the conditions for study and research are still difficult. Two feminist historians, after working several years on women's history at a Spanish university have recently had their jobs threatened; there are no publishers of women's history; and communication between feminists within Spain and with the rest of Europe remains an ongoing problem.

— Julie Wheelwright



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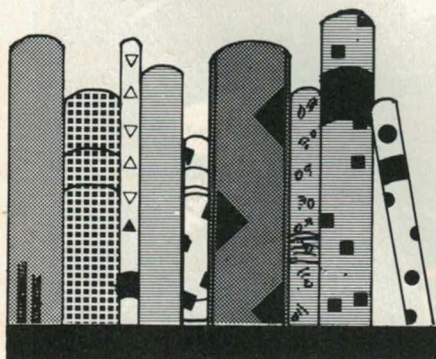
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photo: Pamela Harris



Nellie McClung Theatre invents political slogans and curious contraceptive devices that are inserted in men's penises. Making jabs at U.S. and Canadian politicians has become their trademark.

## Nellie McClung is alive and well in Manitoba

The South African prosecutor ranted and raved at the accused women. His colleague reminded them that they were biting the hand that feeds them. Stephen Lewis and Ronald Reagan extolled the virtues of constructive engagement. The accused were not daunted. Voices cracked with emotion, they soared in song, "Izokunyathela iAfrica," (Africa will crush you).

That was the grand finale of the Nellie McClung Theatre performance at Winnipeg's Gas Station Theatre in May. "Women of South Africa" was part of a pot-pouri of 15 skits, which satirized the economy, politics, social issues, you name it. Making jabs at U.S. and Canadian politicians has become the Theatre's trademark. With the help of a papiermaché nose and gymnastics around the eyes, the different performers brought Mulroney to life.

The disturbing final curtain had been preceded by vintage fare such as "Who Killed This Woman?" where society washes its hands of the abortion issue. The evergreen "Picnic" explored the macho bully boys, whose antics spill over to boardrooms and military barracks.

The Nellie McClung Theatre not only monitors world events for their acts, but also learns

from their sisters abroad. The Australian folk singer, Judy Small inspired two skits, the curtain-raiser which was "Walking Forward" and the hilarious "I.P.D." (intra penis device), a long awaited male contraceptive.

Paula Fletcher's solo in "What Have Women Done" compensated for the Theatre's weak point, namely music. Her steely eyes seemed to go back in time, as she chronicled women's contribution to the labour movement, notably the 1919 Inco strike and the tug-of-war with Eaton's.

Another notable performance was that of Dawn Teasdale, who went about the stage as if the audience didn't exist, as the prosecutor in "Women of South Africa." The skit, "It's a Gas," professed doom when the acid rain falls, but warned, "If it's raining acid, you should remain quite placid, but don't put white sugar in your tea."

Canada's love affair with sports was mirrored in the brash "Wide Wide World of Sports," with Michelle Van Hove putting up her best act as the second sports commentator.

Veteran performer Moira Masson was not affected by the self-righteous cooing of Margaret Titheridge and Sunni Matthews, in the Theatre's classic, "Ladies Against

Women." She was quite detached in her interview with the antique if not unstable souls.

Loa Henry, who also wrote "The Iron Admirals," based "Ladies Against Women" on a San Francisco women's theatre group of the same name. They take their impromptu act to demonstrations all over the United States.

The theatre group inevitably pokes fun at the triple entente (Reagan, Mulroney and Thatcher), but when it comes to the serious issues of Nicaragua and South Africa, their faces become clouded and their eyes darken like pools of black ink. "Interlude of Bullets and Tears," taken from Filipino poems, was such an act.

Although an amateur theatre, there's still room for improvement, to smooth out the rough edges. Props are appropriately absent because the group relies heavily on the flexible use of their black outfits.

The Theatre has come a long way and it is going places, because it is about the world: the economy, unemployment, Libya, acid rain, abortion, nuclear disaster, women's liberation, the whole gamut. Catch them next time they are in the neighbourhood.

— Nonqaba Msimang



# Judgements

**HELD IN CONTEMPT** Fines of \$50,000 per day were set by U.S. District Court Judge Robert Carter against the U.S. Catholic Conference and the National Conference of Bishops while they were in contempt of court. Both groups had refused to comply with the court's request to hand over documents pertaining to their tax-exempt status after being challenged by pro-abortion groups. This is believed the first such finding of contempt against a major religious organisation.

Globe and Mail

## WOMAN NOT GUILTY

Victoria Savoyard of Minaki, Ontario has been acquitted of manslaughter by an Ontario Supreme Court jury of six men and six women. The accused had stabbed her common-law husband in self-defence during the last in a long history of beatings. The defence lawyer used medical evidence of "battered wife syndrome" and the court heard testimony of injuries she sustained over the past 10 years at the hands of the now deceased.

The Times-News

## ANTI-WOMAN BIAS IN NEW YORK COURTS:

If you're a woman wanting a fair trial, you'd better not go to New York.

That's one message coming out of a 23 member panel that, after studying the state judicial system for two years, has decided that bias against women is so widespread that "they are often denied equal justice."

Panelists say female lawyers are "routinely" insulted by male judges and attorneys, while the credibility of female witnesses is attacked by judges because women are viewed by judges as too emotional and untrustworthy. The study also found some judges did not have an accurate image of family violence and blamed the women involved for their plight, while others did not recognise a woman's

contribution to a marriage and therefore split property unequally in divorce cases.

The panel, The New York Task Force on Women in the Courts, urged Sol Wachtler, Chief Justice of the State Court of Appeals, to name a special assistant to monitor discrimination against women and to set up a training program to help reduce bias in judges. It also called on the legislature to enact laws to better protect women in child custody and family violence cases.

Concluded the 313-page report: "More was found in this examination of gender bias in the courts than bruised feelings resulting from rude or callous behavior. Women uniquely, disproportionately and with unacceptable frequency must endure a climate of condescension, indifference and hostility."

Her Say

## THE NATIONAL U.S. LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD

has ruled that registered nurses alone cannot form a bargaining unit. The board ruled that all bargaining units must include all professional employees at a hospital, from pharmacists to social workers, saying that the interests of registered nurses aren't sufficiently distinct from other hospital professionals to warrant a separate bargaining unit.

Her Say

## FETAL MURDER LAW

**PASSED** Last year two incidents of fetal death by violence shocked Minnesota. In one, a woman was the victim of a drunk driver and in the other, a victim of a violent boyfriend who beat her. In neither case could the perpetrator be punished for the fetal death, because no law applied.

In response, two bills were introduced in the last legislative session. One, was straightforward in declaring it a felony to injure a pregnant woman to the extent that she

miscarries. This bill while supported by many died in the Senate.

Instead, anti-abortionists eagerly backed the Jude bill as a measure giving the fetus legal status. Minnesota's Democratic Farm Labor Party-controlled Senate by a 59-7 vote joined its Independent Republican-controlled House in passing a bill that creates crimes of murder, manslaughter and assault of an unborn fetus, with penalties the same as those for commission of such crimes against a person. Under the new law, life imprisonment would be the penalty for the murder of a fetus.

Minnesota Women's Newspaper and off our backs

## KIDNAPPING AMNESTY

Colorado has passed a law which grants amnesty to parents who have kidnapped their children, provided they return them unharmed by December 1. Such an amnesty has never been tried in any other state, the *Denver Post* reports.

The bill, which initially granted full amnesty, was amended to apply only to kidnapping and not to harm that might come to the child or anyone else as a result.

off our backs



## CHAUVINIST PIG —

Christopher Morgan, a ranger at Skylark Girl Scout Camp in California, has filed a \$1.5 million law suit against the Girl Scouts. According to Morgan, he was sexually harassed by lesbian counselors who called him a "fat male chauvinist pig" and fondled each other in his presence. Morgan is asking

\$500,000 for discrimination, \$500,000 for slander, \$500,000 for intentional infliction of emotional duress, and \$25,000 for overtime and medical expenses.

Morgan does not claim he saw the women have sex or even talk about it, though he does say he saw them stroking and kissing each other and sunbathing nude.

Santa Clara County Council spokeswoman Nancy Fox told reporters that it is illegal to ask job applicants their sexual preference, and that lesbians are as welcome as heterosexual women to serve as Girl Scout staff and volunteers.

lesbian inciter

## MARRIAGE LICENSE TAX OVERTURNED

The Illinois Supreme Court has overturned a marriage license tax used to help victims of battering. According to the court, the \$25 surcharge is unconstitutional because it singles out marriage as a "special object of taxation" in order to support a general welfare program.

The marriage license tax, which began at \$10 in 1981, was raised to \$25 in 1984. State officials say the money levied went to assist some 10,000 battered women and their children in 39 shelters throughout Illinois. The *Chicago Tribune* reports that representatives of Governor James Thompson and state Senate President Philip Rock have pledged to find new sources of revenue for the programs involved.

— off our backs

## MARRIAGE AGE LOWERED

The Women's Liberation Movement of Mauritius has protested strongly at the unanimous vote in Parliament to once again allow parents to "marry off" their daughters before they have the legal right to say "no." Both the government and opposition voted in this scandalous law. The Women's Movement is fighting for its repeal.

Connexions



## Texts distort reality

If school children in B.C. had only their readers as mirrors of their society, they would enter Grade Eight convinced that most women are homemakers or farmers, most men are farmers, fishermen or hunters, and that Canada is a unilingual country. These were just a few of the findings discovered by Patricia Swenson, a B.C. counsellor who is conducting her thesis on the portrayal of families in stories read by elementary school children.

Swenson studied curriculum textbooks for Grades 1 to 7 in the two series authorised for use in B.C. (and some other provinces): Language Patterns (Holt, Rinehart and Winston Canada Ltd.) and Reading 720 (Ginn and Company Educational Publishers). Both are Canadian branch plants of American publishers. In these books only 33 per cent of women's work was even specified, and the only employment roles offered were as homemakers and farmers.

On the plus side her research determined that there were equal numbers of boys and girls in the stories, and that the average family consisted of 3.4 persons (3.3 statistically). The proportion of single parent families resembled Canadian reality, as did the fact that it is most common to have two parents.

Most disturbing was the generic anglicised family. As well as a vague lack of specifics, there was almost no ethnic content (with the exception of the 8 per cent of stories depicting native families). "We are a multicultural country within a bilingual framework, a reality not demonstrated in these readers." There are no families with two cultures, for example, and yet Canada abounds with such relationships.

"As for women's occupations, I think it is important that we have a variety, a wide range rather than a high frequency of any one occupation. And, the stories should reflect modern

realities, such as women in science and technology."

Though her study has prompted widespread attention, Swenson is not predicting any changes in current curricula. At a federal-provincial conference held during the first week of March, 1986, federal Cultural Minister Marcel Masse was unable to get agreement on his specific proposals to the provinces. Most provincial ministers were cool to his idea that they use provincial legislation to adopt 'buy Canadian' rules for schools.

To achieve a more realistic portrayal of Canadian life, female input is essential. As Swenson points out: "There is a bargaining tool here. We spend so much money on these books, we should have a say in the content."

— C. Heather Allen

## All that glitters is not...

(VANCOUVER) Expo 86, with its glittering lights and festive colours opened in May, but not all Vancouver residents are enthusiastic.

Residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, a low income neighbourhood adjacent to the Expo site, are facing difficulties compounded by Expo. Many residents reported that people who are barely able to afford to live are in trouble, since neighbourhood rents and food prices have increased.

Although Expo hired 15,000 seasonal workers, and paid them anywhere from \$4 to \$13 per hour, Jean Swanson, of an organisation called End Legislated Poverty, says that Expo-created employment will only last as long as the fair itself. And the jobs that are created are low paying. "This doesn't do women any good, it just pushes down wages in general," says Swanson.

— Marianne van Loon

## EXPO housing crisis

Over 600 long term residents have been evicted from rooming houses and hotels to make space for high spending tourists. Women make up approximately 20 per cent of the downtown eastside Vancouver population, and after their forced eviction it continues to be difficult to find safe accommodation for them.

In a recent *Kinesis* article, a survey by the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre found that more than half the women they interviewed were between the ages of 35 and 60; over 80 per cent were single and over half lived alone. Many had been forced to move from one to six times during the past year due to unacceptable living conditions. Some of the

women, now in their 70s and 80s, worked in factories and canneries during the war. Sue Harris of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association says the women she sees, despite their independent and feisty nature, are traumatised because they feel their privacy has been invaded and they have lost the little they could call their own.

Long before EXPO became a reality, the government was asked by local residents and social service groups to protect the people of the downtown eastside with rent and tenant protection. Instead the politicians made decisions that have hurt people and their neighbourhood all in the name of profit and urban renewal. Many of these people, who on their limited income are stuck in tiny, sometimes windowless rooms, were involved in the citizens' group Create a Real Available Beach (CRAB). For over three years they fought for a recreational park space on the waterfront which was to have been specially landscaped to protect the elderly, women and kids. Now this 3.63 hectare park has been slotted to become a 1,500 car parking lot for EXPO tourists.

— Yvette Parr



## Belliegram

**BRANDEIS WOMEN FIGHT BACK** — When a mangled Barbie doll appeared on the door of an office shared by Brandeis University's Women's Coalition and Rape Awareness Group, Brandeis women were quick to organise a Take Back the Night march in response. Over one hundred women walked through campus and told stories as male supporters carried candles in silent support.

At the time the doll appeared, Brandeis students were battling over a coming referendum on whether to grant fraternities official status as campus organisations. The

Women's Coalition had argued against such action on the basis of fraternities' exclusion of women and the increasing revelation of connections between fraternities and rape. A cut-and-paste note signed "the Death Fraternity" was attached to the doll. (The doll itself had been dismembered. It had a black eye, a rope around its neck, and blood smeared between its spread legs.)

The bid to grant official status to fraternities or other organisations not "open to all members of the Brandeis community" was defeated by a seventy-two per cent vote.

sojourner



## Ontario may ban sex-orientation discrimination

The Ontario Legislature's Justice Committee has passed amendments to the Ontario Human Rights Code to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

If passed by the Legislature, the motion would extend basic

human rights to Ontario lesbians and gay men, a move which is supported by broad public opinion in the province.

Originally introduced as a private member's bill in 1985 by Evelyn Gigantes, NDP MPP for Ottawa Centre, the bill would make Ontario the second province after Quebec to list sexual orientation as a prohibitive ground for discrimination. The Yukon is currently debating similar measures.

## Speaking of Words

(KOOTENAY, B.C.) — The second Kootenay Women and Words conference, held recently in Nelson, B.C. at the former David Thompson University Centre campus, was an enormous and gratifying success, both for its participants, and for its organisers.

Funds for the conference had been delayed because of the federal government's imposed freeze on "discretionary" funding, imposed February 6. The organisers had applied for approximately \$10,000 from the Secretary of State, and had been assured several times that it was on its way, and to go ahead and begin organising the conference.

A wide variety of workshops was available covering all areas of working with words, from theatre to journalism, and from politics to poetry. Of particular interest to many women was the political panel held Sunday morning, titled, "Being Heard: Women in Electoral Politics,"

featuring six Kootenay women.

Among workshops which received high praise from the women attending them, was one entitled "Electronic Desktop Publishing" given by Penny Graham and Susan Oliver of Revelstoke, B.C. They are presently the only women in Canada producing a high quality community newspaper out of their homes using a Macintosh computer and a laser printer. They work part time with small children underfoot, and confidently predict that they are out in front of a coming publishing revolution.

—Luanne Armstrong

## Our Mistake

Judy Wasylycia-Leis was incorrectly identified in our June issue as the Manitoba MLA for Burrows. In fact, Ms. Wasylycia-Leis represents the riding of St. John's. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused.

## elliegram

A recent report published in *International Family Planning Perspectives* found that research for more effective and less harmful methods of contraception slowed down worldwide between 1980 and 1983. The report cites a number of reasons: governments with dropping birth rates are reluctant to commit funds; pharmaceutical manufacturers believe major breakthroughs will be long in coming and may involve them

in expensive litigation if problems develop; the most revolutionary methods (e.g., the Norplant implant, which lasts for five years) do not make the most money; more Americans are abandoning birth control and resorting to sterilization; and governments do not see fertility control as a major health issue. Predictably, ongoing research involves contraceptive methods exclusively for women.

## Choice Update

### Teen pregnancy rate drops

The rate of teenage pregnancy in Canada is dropping, in large part because of sex education in schools and public birth control clinics, a study has found.

Conducted by Planned Parenthood Ontario, the study found that every dollar spent on prevention saves \$10 in social services and health that would have to be spent to deal with the aftermath of unwanted conception.

Between 1976 and 1981 the Canadian teenage rate of pregnancy declined 11 per cent, to 43.4 from 48.6 for every 1,000 girls in Canada. Canada's rate is now less than half the U.S. rate, the study shows. Teenage pregnancy is still a cause for concern however, as the report predicts that one in six girls who was 15 years old in 1981 will be pregnant before the age of 20.

The study documented that \$25 million was saved from the drop in the teen pregnancy rate. Maureen Leyland says that an estimated \$41.4 million would have been spent on abortions, births, general welfare and family benefit payments for one year only to adolescent sole-support mothers.

Less than 46 per cent of Grade 9 and 10 students are enrolled in a health course with some content on human sexuality, the study reports. Some men who wrote into other newspapers however, suggested that since abortion is legal in several imperialist countries, Sandinistas should not legalise it. Gaspar Calderon, wrote in *El Nueva Diario*, a newspaper that was established in Managua after the 1979 revolution by staff members of *La Presa* who disagreed with that paper's counterrevolutionary line, that the idea that it is the right of women to control their own bodies comes from the capitalist world. Women

quickly wrote in to the paper, pointing out the right-wing terrorist attacks on abortion clinics in the U.S., and reporting how President Ronald Reagan has drastically cut funding for abortion and other family planning services.

The Catholic church, one of the principal voices of the counter-revolution in Nicaragua, is predictably against abortion. However, as women continue to increase their voice in revolutionary Nicaragua, they will no doubt continue to become more outspoken about the obstacles holding them back from full participation in society. Changing the current prohibitive abortion law, a carryover from the right-wing days of Anastasio Somoza, will hopefully be one of those changes.

## Nicaraguan abortion debate

A public debate on abortion in Nicaragua shows a striking similarity to the debate in Canada, as women's reproductive rights are discussed in terms of their liberation.

Abortion is illegal in Nicaragua, unless approved by a three-doctor ethics committee and the woman's husband or parents give permission. Those with money go to private clinics; most working-class women are driven to back-alley abortionists.

In November 1985, *Barricada*, the newspaper of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, (FSLN) ran a series of reports on the hundreds of women dying each year from illegal botched abortions. Several articles stated that abortion is a fundamental right of women to control their own bodies.

—Socialist Voice



# Pornography Update

## Study links porn and rape

Doctor Larry Baron of Yale University told the American Association for the Advancement of Science that the incidence of pornography sales was high in states with high rape rates. Western states had the highest incidence of reported rapes, with 42.9 rapes per 100,000 population — the safest states were in the northeast, with 23.3 per 100,000.

Other factors linked to a state's higher rape rate included: a high proportion of residents living in cities, a large percentage of divorced men (which Baron said might produce a climate of antagonism against women), and a high "legitimate violence index", which is based on readership of gun and military magazines, ratings for violent tv shows, corporal punishment in schools, and ratio of executions to homicide arrests.

## 7-Eleven porn-free

The Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women is encouraging those

concerned about the marketing of pornography to show support for 7-Eleven stores' recent change in policy regarding the discontinuation of the sale of *Penthouse*, *Playboy* and *Forum* magazines.

The Action Committee says that by shopping at 7-Eleven instead of other convenience stores that still sell pornography, consumers can pass on the message that they support moves to establish porn-free convenience stores.

## Swedish liberals campaign against porn

(SWEDEN) Liberals who once campaigned against censorship of pornography in the name of sexual freedom are demanding that controls be reimposed on the grounds that it is dangerous and degrading. Hans Nestius, chairman of the Swedish Sex Education Association reports that rather than sexual freedom, "the sex capitalists moved in and what we got was pornography which was cold, mechanical, violent and degrading." Pornography has become a multi-million



dollar industry in Sweden since a law restricting it was repealed in 1971. Nestius was involved in getting rid of the old law. An existing law banning excessively violent films and videos will be extended to include sexual violence, if the reforms proceed.

## Hustler guilty in boy's death

A federal jury in Houston, Texas found *Hustler* guilty of contributing to the hanging death of a 14 year old boy. The magazine containing an article entitled "Orgasm of Death" about auto erotic asphyxia was found beside the boy's body and described the manner of his death. His mother was awarded \$102,000.

## Playmates abused

Former Playboy playmate Miki Garcia told the U.S. Commission on Pornography that Hugh Hefner's security force helped cover up the discovery of an international call-girl ring in which playmates were involved. Garcia, who was head of Playmate Promotions from 1976 to 1982, said she knew of rapes, mental and physical abuse of the women, attempted murder, suicide and prostitution.

## Nelliegram

**SWEDES DEFEND STUDY ACCUSING VDT's:** Swedish scientists are steadfastly defending their studies on possible health hazards of video display terminals (VDT's), despite criticism by businesses and some back-pedaling from some Swedish officials. The researchers' study showed that when pregnant mice were exposed to pulsating magnetic fields, similar to those produced by VDT's, the animal's fetuses suffered rare abnormalities at almost five times the rate produced by unexposed mice.

The Swedish National Board of Occupational Safety and Health released those findings earlier this year but downplayed them slightly shortly afterward.

David Eisen, director of Research and Information for the Newspaper Guild, which has followed the controversy closely, said the Swedish study is "The first anywhere to investigate the effects of VDT-specific radiation on reproduction. While not conclusive, its results sound a serious warning signal."

—HER SAY

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We are demonstrating our concern for those in South Africa who are suffering under apartheid and wish to extend our support to those opposing it by encouraging Herizons readers to refuse to purchase or consume any products manufactured, processed or grown in the Republic of South Africa. We also encourage readers to boycott companies with a direct financial interest in this repressive regime.

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Surf Maid  
Wolseley Pride  
York apricots, grapefruit  
Fortune peaches, pears  
and fruit cocktail  
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Loblaws No Name apricots,  
pears, peaches, fruit cocktail  
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and apricots  
Palanda pears  
Four Star Fruit cocktail  
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fruit cocktail  
Kon Tiki orange and grapefruit  
sections  
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## Jams and Marmalades

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Twinfish  
Winray

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# Les femmes et la Paix

N I C O L E M O R I N

## Quelle paix nous voulons!



Saviez-vous qu'un des mocassins de Louis-Riel est conservé comme trophée de guerre en Ontario dans un musée de régiment?

Voici quelques réflexions à partir de la rencontre avec Solanges Vincent, conférencière militante active de lon-

gineuse et analyste — pacifiste et analyste — militante active de longue date.

Pour parler de la paix, interrogeons-nous sur la guerre : y-a-t'il des alternatives possibles entre le bulletin de nouvelles nous alimentant entre un bombardement en Orient, un déraillement de train ou la dernière inquiétude sur le nucléaire? 50 millions par année de victimes des famines!

A la lueur de travaux anthropologiques il faut mentionner la participation des femmes dans la guerre au niveau de rôles très variés: les femmes n'ont pas seulement été victimes ou butins de la guerre, mais en plus d'être la réserve militaire de dernière instance, on retrouve des rituels féminins (chez les Crow), service militaire (Inca), pouvoir décisionnel sur le déclenchement ou la cessation des combats (Yoruba); trafficantes d'esclaves, chefs souverains, espionnes, les guerrières les plus célèbres sont sans doute les femmes-soldats du Dahomey au 18-19e siècles.<sup>2</sup> Donc, le système militariste n'est pas né d'hier!

Le début et la fin des activités militaires coïncidant avec des intérêts commerciaux précis, peut-on continuer maintenant d'être indifférente à l'accès des femmes dans nos armées sous l'oppression continue des 150 guerres conventionnelles que l'on a connu depuis 1945? Sur cette quarantaine d'années, 60 millions de victimes des guerres depuis 1945 et de guerres économiques produisent le pillage du Tiers-Monde. Quelle Paix nous voulons? Le génocide en Indonésie pourrait se rétablir par le partage des ressources. Solanges Vincent, pacifiste de Montréal, nous explique les liens entre le sexisme, le racisme et le militarisme: à son passage chez nous le 8 février dernier, il existe "une très grande confusion entre savoir se défendre et savoir aimer; l'espoir à l'ère nucléaire de la justice réside à rechercher les causes de l'escalade dans la production du matériel militaire: la stratégie de la loi du plus

fort pour l'arme absolu. Le scénario des guerres froides justifie la dominance dans l'atmosphère, 75 % des missions sont militaires. Par exemple, le milliard et demi de dollars pulvérisé par le Challenger." Pour un F-18, il en coûte 62 millions, à Bagotville, les missiles Cruise à Cold Lake, les armes chimiques à Suffield en Alberta, le plan Energie-Nucléaire-Canada de Pinawa, d'ici, fournitures militaires? Et à quel prix? Où vont nos paiements en impôts?

La résolution gouvernementale du Manitoba du 30 mai 1985 nous dit que nous sommes la première zone libre d'armement nucléaire au Canada. Que fait-on au niveau municipal pour comprendre la question à savoir si les informations lors d'une guerre sont justes? Il y a encore des gens qui pensent que ce qui se passe en U.R.S.S. ne nous concerne pas et pourtant dans une société libre et égalitaire, si nous sommes mal représentés ou mal informés à ce niveau que fait-on de nous donner des recommandations depuis la catastrophe de Kiev? Car à mon avis nous ne pouvons rejeter l'hypothèse de notre air, de notre eau contaminés par le nucléaire. Les départements de santé sont-ils assez renseignés sur notre passé médical telles que malformations congénitales dues à des essais nucléaires, blessures de guerre; comment se portent les enfants des enfants d'Hiroshima, les

citoyens et citoyennes de Three Miles Island?

parallèle à tracer dans notre proximité politique avec nos voisins; je ne suis pas naïve quand j'entends les déclarations de M. Mulroney d'appui intégral dans toutes les interventions des U.S.A. Qu'on se rappelle son obéissance inconditionnelle une fois les faits accomplis devant l'horreur des bombardements de Tripoli.

Solanges Vincent nous révèle les propagandes des super-puissances qui tentent de nous faire croire que la paix sera acquise au prix de la supériorité des armes. Ce n'est pas la paix qui est assurée mais la terreur, et la domination. 800 à 900 milliards ont été dépensés pour des fins destructives en 1985, ce qui nous a empêchés d'affecter les ressources ainsi gaspillées à la solution des problèmes de la faim, de la maladie et des effroyables inégalités dans le monde, afin d'accroître le contrôle des super-puissances sur les ressources humaines et naturelles de la planète : Eau/air/sol. In God and in Gold we trust, ce Dieu de la belle argent blanche priorise le racisme par l'intimidation nucléaire, l'installation de bases militaires dans un chantage de la menace de la bombe. Les Philippines en sont l'un des exemples.

Sous couvert d'encourager les nouvelles technologies, nous devons prendre conscience de la dimension nationale du débat: À qui profite

Solanges Vincent, auteur "The human costs of the war economy" 1986, Westmount Initiative For Peace, Avril 1986.





tous les budgets de guerre? Le Canada vend des armes aux dictatures militaires, autant en services secrets de ces dictatures que le scapitaux nécessaires; les grues pour les sous-marins Trident, quand on pense au manque de fonds pour créer de nouveaux emplois, les conditions de chômage par rapport aux filets de sécurité qui dans notre pays ne suffisent plus à répondre au bien-être des citoyens. Et les femmes particulièrement touchées en période de récession, il est grand temps de réagir pour la défense de ses droits: droit à un travail, à une qualité de l'environnement, à la gestion rationnelle de nos

naître l'imminence d'un besoin de changement pour la survie: "Je sais l'effet, je refuse pour ma survie, je suis l'experte". La lutte sera longue contre tous les intérêts en place de cette incroyable machine qui gobe des argents de plus en plus considérables pour la domination par les armes. D'autres concentrations d'énergie alternative peuvent nous assurer une longévité de l'espèce: l'énergie solaire, celle du vent, biomasse; question de priorité! Vouloir disposer d'une nouvelle politique d'autonomie énergétique a de quoi ne pas plaire au complexe militaro-industriel de certains hommes

oactivité. Si l'information officielle ne parle pas des mouvements pour la Paix, comment la population — de ce que nous ne savons pas — peut prendre conscience des effets nocifs après plusieurs années? Nous sommes avec notre vision capitaliste préoccupés de notre niveau de vie, nos réacteurs ne sont pas meilleurs, nos ressources sont communes, une seule planète quelle qu'en soit la ville où nous nous soucions des radiations, de notre survie. ▼

1. *The Holistic Health Lifebook*, Published by And/Or Press, Berkeley, California 1981. p. 344-8
2. *Victimes ou Protagonistes: Les femmes et la guerre*, Deirdre Meintel, p. 179-85, Anthropologie et Sociétés 1983, vol. 7 no. 1
3. *Une question de priorité*, par Hélène Lajambe, Québec Science Vol. 18 no. 8 Avril 1980.

INDEX: Les fleurs d'Hiroshima, Edita Morris (The Flowers of Hiroshima) René Julliard 1961 Paris.

Contactez le CCWD Comité de coordination de Winnipeg pour le désarmement, 745 Westminster, Winnipeg, tel: 786-8938. Contact: Janine Gibson-Grant.

NOTE: La photo pour le mois de juin étut de Claire Beaugrand-Champagne.

**Abstract:** The human race had the power to destroy itself and the responsibility to see that it didn't destroy itself, and could continue on this planet. It wasn't until the Energy Crisis, with people's tensions getting directed to the big power companies, and getting annoyed with the power companies on all sorts of counts, that people began to pay attention to dangers of building up more and more nuclear plants. For our children, and our children's children and for generations of people that we are incapable of thinking about imaginatively, plutonium in large quantities — loose, free, leaking, wandering around — will be there. Now, this is the moment at which we've got to stop and say no!

*Nuclear Morality*  
Margaret Mead.  
Talk in June 1976.

ressources par la prise de connaissance de la réalité. C'est au détriment des autres pays que le développement, la justice et la paix et de nos attitudes d'indifférence que se forment le fossé toujours plus grand entre l'escalade des budgets de guerre et les coupures dans les budgets sociaux. Les orphelins d'El Salvador sont de ma famille universelle. On ne peut dissocier l'avenir de notre survie planétaire sans l'étroite organisation de la participation des femmes aux luttes de libération des pays exploités afin de ne pas tomber dans le piège de la "DÉFENSE" un secteur clé de l'économie de Brian Mulroney. Cercle vicieux, la pauvreté et le chômage chez nos voisins/voisins américains entraînent une augmentation du recrutement des Noirs, hommes et femmes, dans l'armée, ce qui renforce encore la militarisation de la société. Que feront nos immigrants, nos Amérindiens dans un plan de recrutement: si la Vie vous intéresse!? Nos jeunes, dans une promesse de planète saine? La domination des pays riches sur les pays pauvres... et dans notre pays, nous fomentons nos propres victimes par la propagande des nouveaux habits tous neufs de l'armée canadienne.

Nous sommes à l'heure du choix où il faut admettre cette réalité: la moitié de l'humanité ne vit que dans la pauvreté à moins que nous intervenions à la transformation de notre planète; une stratégie de répartition globale de la variété de nos ressources humaines et planifiée en fonction de l'éducation de notre environnement pour gérer nos biens dans un système d'égalité, de justice et de paix. Est-ce rêver en couleur?

Solanges Vincent nous assure que cette unité serait possible en cherchant des alternatives communautaires. Les mouvements pour la paix comprennent 75 % des femmes, prêtes à recon-

face à la démilitarisation. Rappelons-nous toutefois notre force des lobbies, groupes de pressions des citoyennes/ens puissants et d'exiger non seulement une gestion rationnelle mais un partage équitable, mieux équilibré de nos rapports de force envers les autres nations, leur coopération pour une qualité de vie, un désarmement mutuellement vérifié et légitime; une architecture plus douce dans la construction de centres communitaires plutôt que de bases de lancement de missiles; assainir nos eaux, la fragilité de notre environnement dans le développement de biens et services utiles, un petit coin de jardin au lieu d'un champ de tir miné! Belle pomme d'Or à titre de révérence, y'a qu'un Dieu qui demeure en France. Adieu mes amis, la guerre est finie, belle pomme d'Or, je te jette dehors. (Chanson enfantine)

Solanges Vincent a participé à la dernière conférence sur "Mythes et Réalités à l'ère nucléaire", je vous fais part de ses commentaires. Qualifiant la conférence tenue à Montréal en avril dernier, de particulière dans le sens où le coût d'entrée y est de \$300.00, pour pays riches à dire, la volonté très marquée de ne pas parler du rapprochement entre justice et paix. Comme les nouvelles ne parlent que de la catastrophe de Kiev, ce n'est pas la première situation de réacteurs nucléaires en feu: en Angleterre, aux États-Unis, en Alabama. Même sur Three Miles Island nous n'avons jamais eu les bonnes informations sur le nuage radioactif. Tous les scientifiques savent l'importance et la gravité et des conséquences à long terme; les médias nous portent à croire qu'il faut continuer dans le nucléaire, c'est de la propagande. Rien n'est "fool-proof" dans l'installation, la conception du nucléaire: à la suite d'un autre accident américain, on a changé le nom du réacteur Windscale suite à l'échappement de radi-

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# Alethea Lahofer

A T H O R O U G H L Y M O D E R N P O E T

**T**here's something wrong with how a neatly-typed resume categorises and sums up a chaotic and vibrant life. Her xerox-reduced page details education and experience, poetry readings and body-building from September 1974 to July of last year, but necessarily leaves out the arguments with the gym owner that her fallopian tubes have nothing to do with boxing ability, the pain and joy of quitting high school not once but twice, and the spirited 14-year-old who read aloud "The Massacre of Poetry by Definition" in critical defiance of a local writers' group.

Alethea Lahofer was part-owner and manager of a restaurant and drove a Mercedes-Benz when she was 19, has studied computers, German and Spanish, has received classical voice training and directed a church choir, and trained in competitive team swimming, body-building and boxing. She has travelled in Europe, Mexico, and the far East. All in all, ideal training for a poet.

Her poetry, as might be expected, deals with many themes, but particularly with love relationships and isolation, the nuclear threat and global solidarity. A thoroughly modern poet, she also writes about sexually-transmitted diseases, uses a computer to transcribe her handwritten first drafts, and sports a post-punk look.

*I have nothing to wear and I mean it,  
here's what I wrote when the sky was moonlit  
here's a hat, I remember, a real favourite  
and oh yes the black skirt with the dangerous slit*

*I wore on a date with Wolfgang Schmidt  
His hand groped upward but he was a twit  
Don't forget this belt, labeled exquisite  
a tasteful white blouse, a prerequisite  
a fake leather jacket, a counterfeit  
and this cocktail dress, a sure party hit  
a pure wool sweater, a real tight knit  
and more in the laundry loaded with grit...*

Like Lillian Allen (the Toronto-based dub poet), Alethea experienced mainstream poetry and poets as too elitist and constricting, and found a ready audience as a performing poet. Although Alethea used to call herself a performance artist, she is now concentrating less on multi-media visuals and more on the words and silences of her poetry. Not only are audiences "too frightened, curious or uneducated" to en-

joy such an onslaught of the senses, her Mercedes-Benz days are over and such productions can be extremely costly.

## Alarm Clocks

*tac-tic-tac-tic  
the hour hand has  
crossed its fingers  
childishly adding  
"hope to die"  
all of this behind our back  
tacks  
tac-tic-tac-tic...*

Alethea is also changing her performance style. She was aware of her reputation as an "aggressive, shocking" performer, but succeeded in frightening even herself when she recently viewed some of her videos of past performances of "Destructo-Girl" (a hard-hitting attack on our society's evils). She recalls audiences were stunned, silent, wide-eyed, slack-jawed. "People just wanted to go home after my performances, wouldn't want to go out for coffee afterwards to laugh and talk. I mean, I don't want to ruin their evening."

Her more recent act balances aggression and vulnerability, tonal and atonal sounds, classical and computer-generated music, the avant-garde and the conventional. The tension and release ("It's like sex") makes it alive, makes the poetry and performance a creative act. Thus the name of her recent act: "A High Wire Act is a Question of Balance."

Winnipeg audiences responded positively last fall to the new show, with its more structured and varied format and its humorous and sometimes silly pieces. Destructo Girl II, received thunderous applause, perhaps because of the tension that builds up without release throughout the entire performance.

Alethea believes part of the shock value of Destructo Girl is the "One hundred per cent aggression coming from a woman. It's not as expected, or as acceptable, in a female performer." She has interesting views on feminism. Rather than defining herself as a woman (or a Canadian or white, etc.), she defines herself primarily as energy. "The womb is not the point." When she has come up against sex discrimination, she says she has fought it on an individual basis, on behalf of herself and others. She proved herself capable, as an individual, to do the training demanded in an all-male boxing club before they admitted her as a member. She picketed a local business for its sex- and



Photo: Larry Glaufer

Winnipeg poet Alethea Lahofer's resume doesn't mention her views on the link between fallopian tubes and boxing ability.

sexual-orientation discrimination in hiring practices, both for herself and for "our future daughters". She defies anyone to "go in there and inspect my genitals" as a basis for limiting her opportunities.

Women can fight as individuals, but they need the backing of other women. "There has been no important change for women since we got the vote. Women and women's organisations have got to unite on an issue if we want to succeed. For example, on equal pay — if we can all agree on that, if we have solidarity, we can make an important change. United we stand, divided we fall." It is both trivial and

*cont'd on page 23*

B Y C H A R L Y N N T O E W S



A  
Ukrainian Feminist  
makes

# CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

An Interview with Myrna Kostash

by  
Betsy Warland

**M**yrna Kostash's books include *Her Own Woman*, *All of Baba's Children* and *Long Way From Home*. Her writing has been anthologised in *Women Against Censorship*, *Still Ain't Satisfied* and *Getting Here*. She is involved in the National Film Board's Northwest Women's Media Project and is on the National Council of the Writer's Union of Canada. She has recently helped organise a Status of Women Writers Committee for the Writer's Union.

**WARLAND:** I was really curious with what you did in *All of Baba's Children*, your feminist perspective was so naturally involved along with your other perspectives.

**KOSTASH:** I'm pleased to hear that because at the time, I felt like it might seem tacked on.

**WARLAND:** No, it doesn't feel that way.

**KOSTASH:** Oh really? Because in those days, even now, the materials that are available for a feminist analysis are very skimpy. Nobody has gone into the history of ethnic people from the women's experience...I found that when I was writing these parts of the book, I had to make this great leap and imagine what it was like because it was never documented or recorded.

**WARLAND:** You wrote that book how many years ago?

**KOSTASH:** Ten years ago. I came back to Alberta to research and write it.

**WARLAND:** Why do you think feminists haven't investigated ethnic history, immigration and women's experience more?

**KOSTASH:** Well, the obvious reason to me is the same reason the American blacks and women of colour have generally complained about the ethnocentric bias of the American women's movement — and we're no different here. The movement tends to be directed by Anglo middle-class women. Now the other



*On being a feminist Ukrainian: "It's like a whole bunch of relatives — you're stuck with them. You feel differently about them (some of them you can't stand) but with all of them there is this sense of kinship."*

*Kostash on her farm near Two Hills, Alberta where she gets back to her roots and harvests her heritage*



thing is that ethnic women who do identify themselves as feminists often never leave their communities, so the benefit of their experience and analysis doesn't accrue to the broad women's movement. They continue to fight within their own communities and we don't hear from them.

**WARLAND:** You were one of the speakers at the Second Wreath Conference which brought feminist Ukrainians together for the second time in 100 years last fall in Edmonton — how did the conference affect you personally?

**KOSTASH:** You know, as I was writing my paper I found myself asking these questions: "Why hasn't the women's movement been more informed by an ethnic politic? And why haven't ethnic women joined the movement? Why haven't the two struggles cross-fertilised?" For the first time I wondered whether the strategy of autonomous organisation and women-only organisation and the ideology of herstory worked against politicising ethnic women. Women whose initial politicisation has been around their ethnicity see that a) they have to work with men and b) that herstory, although it's a corrective to male history, is by the same token exclusive of it and if you're going to understand yourself, say as a Ukrainian, then herstory is an incomplete account. That kind of splitting of our politics is very difficult to deal with. Non-ethnic feminists have not been able to appreciate how an ethnic politic could inform feminism. Eventually, I want to think this out more. It's very painful. I find no more sympathy for the Ukrainian question among feminists then I do anywhere else.

**WARLAND:** It strikes me — it seems like a crazy thought but — in listening to you I realise it's possible that non-ethnic feminists experience some absence because we don't have a sense of our ethnic heritage.

**KOSTASH:** It's a blank space?

**WARLAND:** Yes. So we gravitate toward feminism with a certain intensity and ownership that could almost be a replacement for that.

**KOSTASH:** Oh, gravitate toward feminism as a kind of ethnicity.

**WARLAND:** There's a fierce ownership about it —

**KOSTASH:** And in that sense, having a specific culture and the necessity to recover ritual which ethnic women already have. That's very interesting. I think you should pursue that! (laughter) To tell the truth, I haven't been all that politically active as an ethnic but those of my friends who are, express feelings of being betrayed...we're at I.W.D., W.A.V.A.W., you name it, but where are the non-Ukrainians when it comes to questions like the Ukrainian Famine?

**WARLAND:** It's true, there's an ignorance operating for most of us and indifference too but there's also a real feeling of being on the outside of the experience and not knowing how to connect.



Kostash awaits the day when a history of the Cossacks is written by a feminist

**KOSTASH:** I was aware of that during the Second Wreath. Initially I was disappointed that we were basically there alone but then I thought — how could you be there? How could you speak for our experience? You could only be there as observers, as witnesses — well, that might have been a beginning, to show some sort of interest. Now the other women who were there were Jewish and they were invited and it didn't seem strange. Historically Ukrainians and Jews have shared the same lands so there's a reason to be talking to each other. The other thing about ethnicity, and I use the word deliberately, is as I see it a non-exclusive identification. If I call myself ethnic as compared to Ukrainian-Canadian, I begin to allow the possibility of alliances with other women. But, I am often criticised by my Ukrainian-Canadian sisters who say ethnicity is empty of specific content — you still have to come to terms with which particular ethnicity you are. I use the term as a political term rather than a sociological or anthropological term.

**WARLAND:** How do you see your ethnicity and feminism informing one another?

**KOSTASH:** I see those two things, as well as a number of others, as components of my identity and politics which stand in resistance to male Anglo-American middle class culture. The more one is aware of specific experiences of ethnicity, the more informed one's feminism is and certainly this acts as a kind of corrective to anglo chauvinism or ethnocentrism. I was a feminist before I was a conscious Ukrainian-Canadian...I resisted ethnic identity because I saw it as inimical to feminism. Once I made contact with ethnic women who were feminists, that made it possible.

**WARLAND:** Say more.

**KOSTASH:** Well, my work was cut out for me! (laughter) About seven or eight years ago we formed a left wing/socialist-feminist group here. We women found ourselves very unhappy, we had grievances with the men in the group and began to meet on our own. We felt we were patronised in the larger group; we didn't have the confidence to speak, to challenge. When we think about that now,

Betsy, we die laughing. We can't believe we're the same women who felt that way because we've gone ahead and organised our own conference, our own newspapers, and we don't put up with any bullshit...we can't believe that at one time we were afraid to speak at meetings!

**WARLAND:** So you're still working with the larger group?

**KOSTASH:** Oh yeah — it's the reason I stay in Edmonton because it's a place where I can live on the left as a feminist and a Ukrainian and I can't imagine those three things coming together anywhere else.

**WARLAND:** What comes to my mind is the word tribe. When you go back to the Ukrainian community and deal with your feminism within that context — you know the parameters of the dynamics you're confronting: it's not the whole world! Also you have the advantage of bonds with other women who aren't feminists and with men who are sexist — you have bonds which you can call upon.

**KOSTASH:** You know what it feels like? It's like a whole bunch of relatives — you're stuck with them, you do feel differently about them (some of them you can't stand) but with all of them there is this sense of kinship. It feels fantastic. The other thing that feminism has done for my ethnicity is, of course, provided me with a means to critique the history and ideology as it has been propagated by men in the community. I would dearly love to have a feminist do a history of the Cossacks — the great Ukrainian warriors. I have a feeling that not only did they rape women but I'm sure they enslaved them and this is not my idea of the kind of Ukrainian to emulate!

**WARLAND:** I guess that is again an advantage you have — the images you are calling into to question and examining are more specific. They're not images from mass culture or pop culture which to me, often seem too overwhelming to confront.

**KOSTASH:** This is true of ethnic artifacts too, "women's domestic culture." I have very ambivalent feelings about it, all that work is symptomatic of women's marginalisation.

**WARLAND:** Tiny world —

**KOSTASH:** Exactly! Good for them that they managed to express themselves on a little egg! (laughter) But I want huge canvasses!

**WARLAND:** So tell me what you're working on now.

**KOSTASH:** Although I've written numerous articles, essays and speeches on feminist subjects, until this film project about teenage girls I hadn't been able to think of what to do next as a feminist, you know? It all seemed so enormous or something. Someone pointed out to me that this film project rounds out my triad of interests — that it makes perfect sense I'm doing it now. My first book was about my parents' generation (ethnicity), my second about

*cont'd on page 26*



# Women in Music Crossword Puzzle by Margaret Fulford

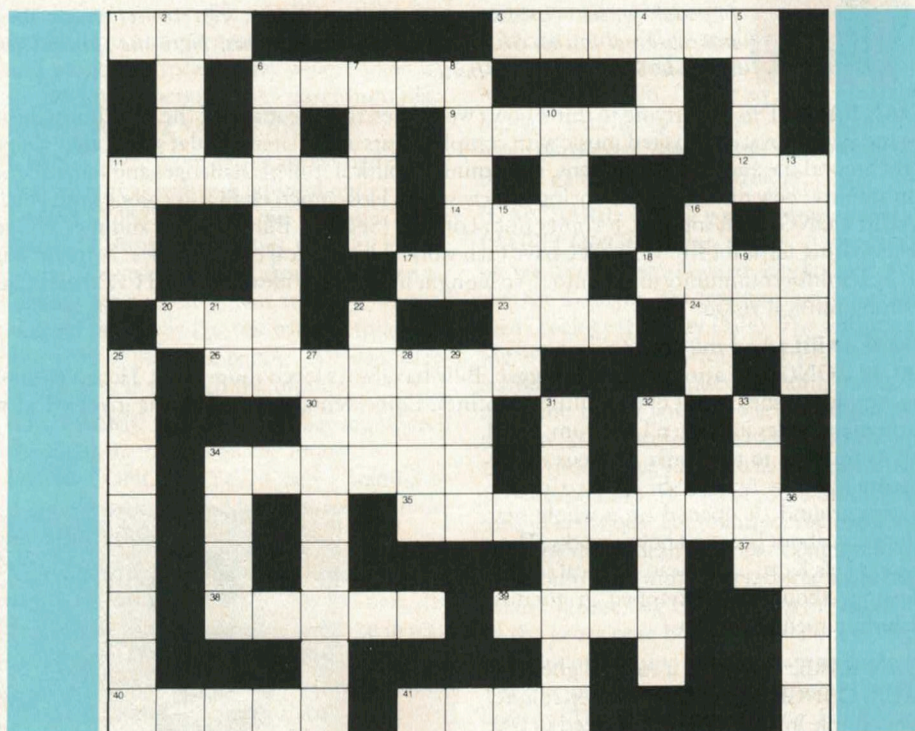
## ACROSS

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Benatar is invincible
3. Connie \_\_\_\_\_ is going down to the moonlight grocery
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Lenya played Jenny in *The Threepenny Opera*
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Wynette sings "D-I-V-O-R-C-E"
11. B.C. author of "Testimony" and "Shadows on a Dime"
12. Albertan "queen of cow punk", \_\_\_\_\_ lang
14. Jazz singer \_\_\_\_\_ Fitzgerald is famous for her scatting
17. The Parachute Club says women are not welcome to the boys' \_\_\_\_\_
18. Janis Joplin sang Big \_\_\_\_\_ Thornton's song "Ball and Chain"
20. Joan Armatrading is steppin' \_\_\_\_\_
23. Donna Summer' song, "\_\_\_\_\_ Girls"
24. Blues singer Koko Taylor says never trust a \_\_\_\_\_
26. \_\_\_\_\_ is a material girl who's into the groove
30. Duke Ellington's vocalist \_\_\_\_\_ Anderson sang "Stormy Weather"
34. \_\_\_\_\_ Easton sings "(She's in Love With) Her Radio"
35. Jazz pianist, composer, and big band leader Lil Hardin \_\_\_\_\_
37. Billie Holiday's song, "Ain't Nobody's Business if I \_\_\_\_\_"
38. Acadian folk singer Butler or French singer Pilaf
39. Greenwich Village's Suzanne \_\_\_\_\_ sings "Marlene on the Wall"
40. "Empress of the Blues" Bessie or rock star Patti
41. English classical pianist Myra \_\_\_\_\_

## DOWN

2. "Snowbird" singer \_\_\_\_\_ Murray
4. Doris \_\_\_\_\_ says whatever will be will be
5. A cappella group Sweet Honey in the \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Lynn sings "Don't Come Home a' Drinking" (With Lovin' On Your Mind)"

7. \_\_\_\_\_ Turner asks what love's got to do with it
8. English composer Smyth, jazz singer Waters, or singing comedienne Merman
10. The peaches and the toast were named for Australian opera star Nellie \_\_\_\_\_
11. Cyndi Lauper says girls just want to have \_\_\_\_\_
13. "Donnez-moi de l'oxygène," says \_\_\_\_\_ Dufresne
15. Montrealer \_\_\_\_\_ urges women to let it go
16. Alberta Hunter sang "Remember My \_\_\_\_\_"
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Rainey sang the Prove It On Me Blues
21. Egyptian singer \_\_\_\_\_ Kalthum
22. Kate and Anna McGarrigle sing "\_\_\_\_\_ Over and Over"
25. The \_\_\_\_\_ sang "Stop! In the Name of Love"
27. Marlene \_\_\_\_\_ was always falling in love again
28. German punk rocker \_\_\_\_\_ Hagen
29. Holly \_\_\_\_\_ says women have got to fight back
31. Aretha Franklin and the Eurythmics say \_\_\_\_\_ are doin' it for themselves
32. \_\_\_\_\_ Anderson was the first black singer to perform at the Metropolitan Opera
33. 19th century Swedish soprano Jenny \_\_\_\_\_
34. \_\_\_\_\_ sings "Why Can't We Live Together"
36. The \_\_\_\_\_, an all-women band that had the beat



cont'd from page 20

harmful to put down other women: "It's no good saying, 'Oh, they're anti-choice, we have nothing in common.' Some women I know put down feminists, saying they're rude at cocktail parties. If all women supported women, the problem would dissolve. And women as individuals MUST simply refuse to be discriminated against. If her sisters are behind her, she'll have the strength."

Her ideal is a world of tolerance and support: "I have a kind of Gandhi, not a Rocky II approach." She worries about the fear and guilt the powerful mass-media induces in women, especially impressionable teen-aged girls. Her solution is a One-Planet-One-People, global solidarity movement. Rather flippantly, she suggests a Folklorama Island where people can go once a year, free of charge, "to get their

ethno-cultural fix," after which they return to their homes as residents of Earth only. And, as residents of the same community, would feel "It's not another country starving, it's us."

### Barb-Wired Hearts

*we are floundering  
we are poisoned  
with man-made fears*

*we stumble  
cough and choke  
on words like love and trust...*

Alethea's plans include a cross-Canada tour of alternative art spaces this summer, a music project, and the completion of her second book of poetry. And all will be done, no doubt, with her uncompromising demand for tolerance in our world. ▼

## CUT

*The leading man  
was so charming  
that I felt like an extra,  
a bit player  
in my own life  
movie.  
And the money was bad,  
the union pays more  
for speaking parts.*

© Nona Willard  
Regina, Saskatchewan



# A KEY PLAYER W

BY JOAN BARIL

# Lauri

**L**auri Conger is a member of the popular band, the Parachute Club. Her early classical training in piano and dance, amplified by almost continuous study, has keyed her into a whole range of artistic expressions — mime, theatre, film, popular music, composing, singing, writing, electronics music and international music. She plays several instruments. Here she speaks with Thunder Bay writer Joan Baril.

**JOAN BARIL:** I've been trying to think how I would describe the music of the Parachute Club. To me it is innovative, layered music, with complex beats and a large circular sound that wraps right around the audience. In content, it's feminist, political, full of challenges and ideas about community, new directions, advancing to new states. How much of all this comes from you?

**LAURI CONGER:** A lot of it. It comes from Lorraine (Segato), Billy (Bryans) and me. We've been sharing ideas for five years. We have each worked in political communities. Lorraine was in the feminist community in Toronto. I've brought in women's ideas too. And I've always had a strong musical vision.

**JOAN BARIL:** And the beats?

**LAURI CONGER:** Latin American. Reggae. Billy has always loved those beats. He is a natural teacher. He pushes us out of our cultural confines. Coincidentally, I was getting involved with Latin piano styles just when I met him. He'd tell us to listen to the Fania All Stars or Tio Puente, who is one of the finest timbale players around. It opened up a whole new education about beat and how it works. Then there is Fela Kuti, an African political singer. He sings about people trapped in ghettos, including mental ghettos.

**JOAN BARIL:** Are we in a cultural ghetto?

**LAURI CONGER:** Yes, American pop culture. For example in music we have learned to take a beat and make it ONE, two three four; ONE, two three, four. An African musician once told me that you can tell a culture by the way they place the ONE. They might go, two, three, four, ONE; two, three, four, ONE. In Latin music I've learned to *feel* where the ONE is supposed to be because it may turn up in different places.

**JOAN BARIL:** Aren't you surprised by how much South American music there is?

**LAURI CONGER:** Yes. We know rumba, cha-cha, the flutes, but there is so much more. I've just finished a Latin percussion course with Memo Acevedo which opened my ears to Brazilian beat. It would take years to learn it all. It's amazing the way the piano sits in the middle and how the drumming is a conversation just in the way you and I are having a conversation here. So, in the band when I add in a beat, it must respond to one played by Billy who is the main drummer.

**L**auri Conger: "The root word of politics is people. We want to relate to people through the music."





# WITH A VISION

## Lauri Conger



photo: Keith Markey

**JOAN BARIL:** You are still studying?

**LAURI CONGER:** Of course. Lately I've been listening to the Bawls from India. They are street singers, a people who have their own music. It has a simple instrumental background and passionate vocals. They believe there is a spirit within a person. They travel from place to place and sing songs of the spirit.

**JOAN BARIL:** Your music always had a mystical current as well as a political one.

**LAURI CONGER:** Yes, we are on a spirit search. I think that comes through in the words. We make no bones about it. And we are looking for a social impact too. We want to connect politically but not with rhetoric. The root word of politics is people. We want to relate to people through the music.

**JOAN BARIL:** Do you remember your speech the night the band won the Juno?

**LAURI CONGER:** Yes. I said I wanted to thank the political and feminist communities for their support.

**JOAN BARIL:** It was such a surprise to me. I shot right up in my chair. But the next day none of the papers reported it, not even in your hometown. (Thunder Bay, Ontario).

**LAURI CONGER:** Yes, I know. Still I think it is important to acknowledge the support the various communities give us.

**JOAN BARIL:** Do you ever get ticked off when groups who are close to musically illiterate win awards?

**LAURI CONGER:** Not so much now. I believe if you are continuing with what you really want to do and stretching, then you will get heard.

**T**he Parachute

*Club's music resonates with a strong mystical current and a lyrical social conscience.*

**JOAN BARIL:** Where does your music come from? Do you ever get blocked?

**LAURI CONGER:** I really believe that music comes from as open a mind as you can develop. It seems I am always reading and taking in different things and the music is automatically coming through. I never say, "Where is the music?" Everything is related — the books the seven of us share, the films we see, my visits to the art gallery, my new learnings...

**JOAN BARIL:** I think you are very unusual.

**LAURI CONGER:** I don't know. A lot of people seem compartmentalised, blocked off. You can get so angry. My first feminist book was *Gyn/Ecology* (by Mary Daly). The restructuring of language restructured my mind. I learned that every phrase is important. But at the same time I got angry at the muting of women, at the waste. You can't live in anger all the time but you have to have it. It's a part of our expression. In a sense you're finding all sorts of emotions. For example, the band was asked by the African National Congress to do a demonstration with other musicians and take a stand against apartheid. During the assembly all the issues were brought out. I know there was a lot of emotion, a lot of hate and anger. Yet the march was the most musical I'd ever been on. The chants were amazing, FREE Mandala, FREE Mandala, over and over. In fact it was the funkiest march. There were cowbells and clappers and sticks and drums, wonderful music and dancing.

**JOAN BARIL:** You still dance, don't you?

**LAURI CONGER:** I dance a lot. I'm going to study dance with an African woman who has agreed to take me on. She has a six-woman dance troupe. African culture is so intertwined with drumming. The drum beats are the names of the dances and there are dance steps which go with each beat.

You know the more we hear African music the more we understand it and the more we are going to enjoy it. Of course it's been there for centuries, those beats and those drums and I'm just discovering it. It hasn't been accepted by North American culture except as a novelty.

**JOAN BARIL:** The background for a National Geographic film.





**LAURI CONGER:** Exactly. Another find is Haitian music. I love the names of the songs. "Work Song," "Harvest Song," "Birth Song"...

**JOAN BARIL:** Birth Song? That's the first time I've ever heard a song about birth.

**LAURI CONGER:** Women's experience just doesn't show up in Western music. There are no birth songs.

**JOAN BARIL:** Or housework songs.

**LAURI CONGER:** This music acknowledges women. If they are pounding corn there is a song. And when a woman gave birth they sang to her. They had beats to play at puberty...

**JOAN BARIL:** We don't have a puberty rite...

**LAURI CONGER:** A puberty wrong. In our culture it's just a biological stage and we flip by it without acknowledgement, without the validation that is so important and would help a person have a sense of self at a younger age. So the states of life are a mystery and it ends up that you have to deal with it later. A lot of soul searching goes on when you get into your 20s and 30s.

**JOAN BARIL:** Is it living in Toronto that gives you access to so many different cultures?

**LAURI CONGER:** Many Canadian cities do, much more than in the U.S. Here in Toronto there is West Indian culture and we have musical ideas from all the Caribbean, particularly Trinidad and Tobago. They have beats I can live with. I can internalise them.

Another source of openness is film. Women such as Margarethe von Trotta are making wondrous films. And I love Studio D. I went to "If You Love This Planet" twice. I also saw a wonderful film, "Beyond the Walls" which takes place in a prison and shows Arabs and Israelis pitted against each other, each with a stake in the Angst between them.

**JOAN BARIL:** You've worked on the score of a film.

**LAURI CONGER:** It's a political documentary called "Dark Lullabies" about children of the Holocaust. It was another education for me. I cried as I was writing the music. I worked in New York glued to a video monitor and I had to deal with images that were terrible. I brought in a soprano saxophone and also some Japanese flutes for very low sounds and Julie Masi from the group to do the vocals. I used the grand piano and the rest was electronic.

**JOAN BARIL:** When did you start learning electronic music? And why are you interested in it?

**LAURI CONGER:** To me the computer synthesisers bridge the classical and popular cultures. I take a classical approach with electronics. I want to know the fundamentals of the sound and how to apply it. I like it because it can give an added identity to the music. It allows me other kinds of depths I can't get with acoustic instruments.

**JOAN BARIL:** That layered sound...

**LAURI CONGER:** Yes. When I'm playing "Rise Up" (from the group's first album, "Parachute Club"), the feeling that comes through in the opening swell can only come through with electronics. Now you could do it in other ways, with acoustics perhaps. But I believe the spirit of the music comes through better. The electronics create depths, colours for people to see in their heads, different emotions.

I first started to study electronics when I was 17. I joined a course in Toronto and I hated it. I thought it was awful music. I was such a piano purist at the time! Later I studied at the Toronto Conservatory.

**JOAN BARIL:** You studied at McGill too, didn't you?

**LAURI CONGER:** And at the same time I studied mime in Montreal. But I was always going back to Thunder Bay. I got involved in theatre there and worked in bands with Ken Hamm and Rodney Brown. The Thunder Bay people endured my early song writing and singing. I played in benefits and at the Summer Solstice Folk Festival, played in bars. Then when I was in Toronto I joined a band called Mama Quilla, a woman's band.

**JOAN BARIL:** Did you help form Parachute Club or did you join in later?

**LAURI CONGER:** Billy, Lorraine and I were together from the beginning. Our first performance was at a disco place called "Heaven," It was September 9, 1982, my birthday.

**JOAN BARIL:** Such a short time ago. You've done amazingly well in four years.

**LAURI CONGER:** Yes, it was the 20 years before that which went so much more slowly!

**JOAN BARIL:** How did you think up the name Parachute Club?

**LAURI CONGER:** The first performance was for the Festival of Festivals. Originally Mama Quilla had been asked to play but the band was no longer together. So the three of us got together. I rented a synthesiser. It was my first public performance on synth but I had been practising for hours and hours for months. So we had to have a name and quick.

I go to art galleries a lot. I focus in on the pictures and the colours and that gives me a sound. I had picked up an African post card, a picture of an African musician doing beats on his drum and three monkeys coming out of the corner on parachutes with pretty funny grins on their faces. So parachute was an idea that stuck and a word we wanted. We went through "The Parachutes", the "Monkeys", which had already been used of course and ended up with "Parachute Club".

**JOAN BARIL:** You're in another band as well?

**LAURI CONGER:** Bratty and the Baby Sitters. We play in clubs. There are no keyboards and I play percussion and sing. The whole emphasis has to be on blending. It's a good study.

**JOAN BARIL:** With two bands on the go does your voice ever give out?

**LAURI CONGER:** My throat never gets tired. A lot of singers strain their voices. Few great pop voices can go on after five years. They blow their vocal cords. Three of us in the group have had voice lessons from Gloria Ferrer. I'm having better and better endurance with training. There are wonderful vocal exercises. She teaches us to articulate emotion and give an identity to each song.

**JOAN BARIL:** I've never heard you sing a dead phrase, an empty phrase. Even the expression on your face fits.

**LAURI CONGER:** It's an ongoing study. Gloria has helped us get out that emotion so that we're not afraid to put out that energy. I used to be more passive with my singing. I got away with it and I didn't know any better. It's a real workout to let those words fly.

**JOAN BARIL:** What is music? Do you see colours when you play?

**LAURI CONGER:** It's a way of communicating...

When I play, I play the emotion. I sometimes see colours because colours, especially those in art, can give me a sound. But usually I'm looking for the emotion, trying to articulate it completely.

There are lots of things music can do. I think people are wanting to have a greater awareness of the whole world. It's amazing that women are getting together world wide. Music can be part of this. ▼

The Parachute Club's third album will be out at the end of July.

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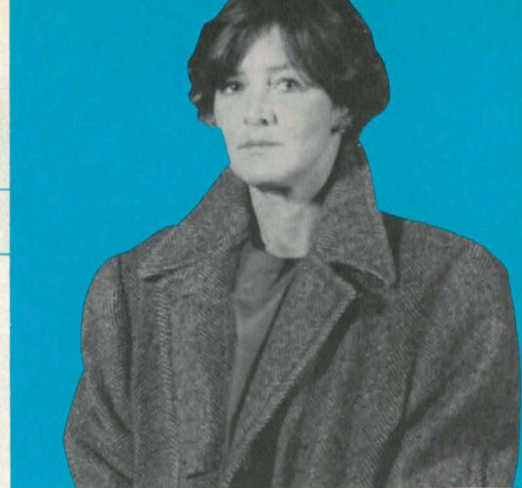
*cont'd from page 22*

my generation (the 60s, the new left) and this new film project is about the women after me. It began two years ago when I began research for a film proposal on girls who worked in the fast food industry. I sat down with these girls to ask them what it was like to work at McDonalds but you know how it goes — you get into all sorts of other subjects: how they spend their money, their relationship with their parents, their future ambitions, all of that. I found myself saying "I want to know more about these women, this is very interesting." Plus I was aware of the fact that I didn't know that generation. I don't have children and my friends are raising young ones. I was beginning to hear myself sound like my parents used to sound: "Oh — turn *that* down," and "What disgusting music, you can't hear a word they're saying," and "Is *that* a boy or a girl?" Right? And I didn't want to turn out to be an old fart — I'm too young for that — I wanted to find out what's going on and it's been wonderful! I think one of the reasons the research has been so much fun is that this is not a subject where there is a "correct" line...it's about what their experiences are and there's no "correct" or "incorrect" about that. I felt like an explorer going to find out what's going on out there — and, remarkably, they talked to me!



# Learning to Navigate

## THE WORK OF PAULETTE JILES



It is an end of summer evening in Nelson, B.C. We are gathered at the small apartment of Paulette Jiles, winner of the Governor-General's award for her book of poetry, *Celestial Navigation*.

We are all women, writers, sharing a common struggle to stay awake and keep writing. Tonight, we share a sense of our strength as well; an appreciation of ourselves. The room resounds with our ribaldry.

Jiles reads from her new series of poems about Frank and Jesse James, who carried out their outlaw raids not far from where she was raised in "Missourah." We are hearing one of the most deeply rooted of masculine romantic myths, the outlaw hero, being turned inside out. I am struck by her poems about Frank James, living under an assumed name. Without his name, without the myth, he is rootless, desperate, a person who doesn't exist.

Jiles and I have spent the afternoon talking. Part of the time, we spent discussing horses, a shared passion. She admires the women she meets in the rodeo world; barrel racers, tough women, women of action. She is interested, she says, in writing about these kind of characters, who live life on their own terms. Women have become good at connecting, weaving, communicating, she says. Now we have to learn to act, and act intelligently. Jiles talks briefly about her interest in the picaresque novel. She explains that it is a form that got its start with Don Quixote. The hero is usually poor, often on the run from the law, and after a long journey and many privations, triumphs because of her strength and ability. For years, women have been expected to write relationship novels, she says, and now publishers rarely look at other kinds of writing from women.

Jiles always wanted to be a writer. Born in Missouri, in 1943, much of her early life was spent adjusting to a family constantly uprooted, following the fortunes of her father's job as an insurance salesman. In Kansas City, she first experienced a Creative Writing class. The teacher laughed at what Jiles called "my bunny poems" but it was her first acquaintance with the world of writing, and she persisted.

Later she attended Central Missouri State, and the University of Mexico, graduating with a degree in Spanish. She also spent her summers working on a dude ranch in California, where she rode the toughest horses on the

ranch, and was attracted to the mythos of the West. Writing was still important, but so was her commitment to her relationship of that time, and in 1968, she and her boyfriend moved north to Toronto to avoid the draft. She found a job freelancing for CBC radio; in 1971, her relationship broke up and her first book of poetry, *Waterloo Express*, was published. She was depressed, she says, for two years, by the break up, but stayed in Toronto to make a living.

Then, in 1973, an opportunity came to go to northern Canada, and do radio work with native communities. Other jobs followed, and Jiles spent 10 years in different parts of the North, doing both radio and print journalism. She went after stories by airplane, skidoo, and dog sled, slept on the floor of overcrowded log cabins, and learned to cope with -40°F weather. One chapter in *Celestial Navigation* deals with these experiences. In *Winter Night*, she evokes the feeling of the small overcrowded, overheated log cabins. She writes:

The cabin is dipped in darkness, tie-dyed.  
Only the red from the woodstove grate, and reflections

on tin plates escape. Sirius picks at the window.  
Diapers wave at half-mast, desperately clean. The children watch

the insides of their eyes...

She was still writing but rarely sent things out to be published. She considered the amount of money poets get paid an insult. Finally, at the request of Margaret Atwood, she compiled the results of that 10 years of persistence into a manuscript, and sent it off. Atwood sent it to Dennis Lee, who took it to McClelland and Stewart. *Celestial Navigation* has so far won three awards, and critical acclaim.

Jiles came to the Kootenays in B.C. to visit some friends, and was struck by the climate. No more -40°F temperatures. Now she lives and writes in Nelson, and feels supported by the strong group of women writers there, who are becoming adept at surviving in one of the most economically depressed areas in Canada. Jiles teaches occasionally for the Kootenay School of Writing, goes on Canada Council tours, and finds time to ride her quarter horse mare through the hills around Nelson. She is still pursuing her fascination with the picaresque, and with dynamic, active women characters.

Jiles uproots masculine romantic myths and nourishes a culture built on dynamic, active women characters like those in her books.

She is also working on a *Survival Guide for Women Writers*, and a proposal for a women's school of writing in Nelson.

"The writer acts and takes responsibility for her actions. It takes action and work to survive in the world," she says, "and a lot of courage to take responsibility for one's own writing."

Jiles advises women writers to look for their audience. For years, in this country, male academics have been writing for other male academics, and publishers often won't look at writing from women that is different than what they're accustomed to. Jiles' advice for women interested in writing active picaresque novels is to go to publishers of westerns, or sci-fi to get a hearing.

Now that she has the time to write, Jiles' own career is blossoming. Her series of poems on Frank and Jesse James is being considered for publication by Talonbooks; she has just completed a radio play for CBC, and is doing a series of readings.

Her poems are ironic, oblique, and powerful. They reflect her clear sense of what it means to be an independent woman in this world. They are often fierce, but there are moments of peace as well. In the final poem in the book, titled "Turning Forty," she writes:

...I feel like a land above some treeline  
infinitely detailed, stripped by gale force  
winds of anything that gets in the way. I  
have everything I need except the sun, and  
it comes without warning. I seem to be  
growing through latitudes and in gales, my  
single carbide light remains and holds.  
Whatever I now possess is true, and what-  
ever I do not have is too bad. This is a  
new time, and it too, has come without  
warning.

Driving home, I think about the word, *integrity*. This is the word for a woman who has survived on her own terms, in her own time, not a myth, or a hero, but with some qualities of both. ▽

B Y L U A N N E A R M S T R O N G



# Quiz

## WOMEN IN THE MOVIES

Take a break and enjoy the final instalment of Margaret Fulford's trivia quiz.

### From Page to Screen

- 1 (a) Name the 1931 movie, starring Boris Karloff, which was based on a novel by the daughter of women's rights advocate Mary Wollstonecraft. (b) Name the novelist (born in 1797).
- 2 Who plays the tomboy/writer Jo of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (a) in the 1933 version? (b) in the 1949 version?
- 3 Name the 1961 film, based on a play by Lorraine Hansberry, about the Youngers, a Black family living in Chicago. (The title is drawn from a poem by Langston Hughes.)
- 4 (a) Name the 1973 movie, based on a novel by Anne Hébert, in which a woman in 19th century Québec conspires with her lover to murder her violent husband. (b) Who plays the woman, Elisabeth?



### Common Subjects:

What do the movies or characters in each list have in common? (For example, the answers might — but don't include "incest", "lawyers", "bank robbers", or "they all play the saxophone.")

- 5 Bette Davis in *All This and Heaven Too* (1940), Deborah Kerr in *The King and I* (1956), Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music* (1965)
- 6 Bette Davis in *The Petrified Forest* (1936). Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce* (1945), Ida Lupino in *The Bigamist* (1953), Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), Eileen Brennan in *The Last Picture Show* (1971), Ellen Burstyn in *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1975)
- 7 *Way Down East* (1920), *The Scarlet Letter* (1926), *A Woman Rebels* (1936), *Not Wanted* (1949), *Tess* (1980), *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1980).
- 8 *The Awful Truth* (1937), *Wanda* (1970), *Hester Street* (1975), *Interiors* (1978), *An Unmarried Woman* (1978), *Shoot the Moon* (1982), *Smash Palace* (1983).





9 *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928), *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1969), *Violette Nozière* (1978), *Marianne and Juliane* (*Die Bleierne Zeit*) (1981), *A Question of Silence* (*De Stille Rond Christine M.*) (1982), *Scrubbers* (1983), *Anne Devlin* (1984).

10 *The Girls* (1968) is about three actresses in a production of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* who gradually come to see their own lives through the feminist eyes of the characters they play. Name the Swedish director and actress who directed it and whose other films include *Night Games*, *Dr. Glas*, *Loving Couples* and *Scrubbers*.

11 What is the name of the women's unit of the National Film Board of Canada, whose documentaries include *Not A Love Story* (1981), *If You Love This Planet* (1982), and *Behind the Veil* (1984)?

12 Name the 1985 comedy, directed by Susan Seidelman, about a suburban housewife named Roberta who is drawn to the wilder lifestyle of a woman named Susan.

13 Name the German director who used to act in films and co-directed with Volker Schlöndorff, and is now an independent director with the following films to her credit: *The Second Awakening of Christa Klages*, *Sisters of the Balance of Happiness*, *Marianne and Juliane* and *Sheer Madness*.

### Biopics:

14 What famous sisters were portrayed by Olivia de Havilland, Nancy Coleman, and Ida Lupino in *Devotion* (1946)?

15 Name the spy who was portrayed by Magda Sonja in 1927, Greta Garbo in 1931, and Jeanne Moreau in 1965.

16 Betty Hutton portrayed the real-life Canadian entertainer Texas Guinan in *Incendiary Blonde*; in the same vein, who played (a) Carole Lombard in *Gable and Lombard* (1976)? (b) Loretta Lynn in *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980)? (c) Billie Holiday in *Lady Sings the Blues* (1973)? (d) Joan Crawford in *Mommie Dearest* (1981)? (e) Patsy Cline in *Sweet Dreams* (1985)?

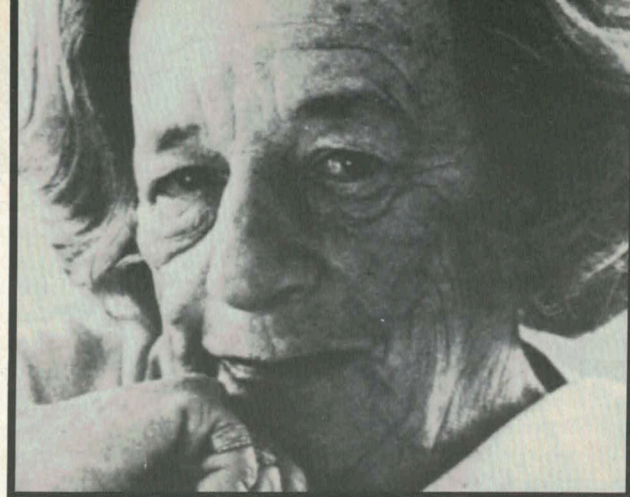
### Name The Movie In Which...

17 For what film did Black American actress Hattie McDaniel win an Academy Award?

18 In what 1940 comedy, directed by Howard Hawks, does Rosalind Russell play the dynamic newspaper reporter Hildy Johnson (Cary Grant plays her boss and ex-husband)?

19 Name the 1939 comedy, based on a play by Clare Booth Luce, which has an all-woman cast and is about a good wife (Norma Shearer) who comes to realise women cannot be trusted when Joan Crawford goes after her husband. Other inhabitants of the "feminine jungle" include Rosalind Russell, Joan Fontaine, and Paulette Goddard.

20 Name the German film — directed by Leontine Sagan in 1931, based on a play by Christa Winsloe, and with



an all-woman cast — about love between a student and her teacher in an authoritarian boarding school.

21 In what 1973 movie does Tatum O'Neal play a Depression-era, cigarette-smoking, ten-year-old thief named Addie Prey?

22 In what 1930 film does Marlene Dietrich, dressed in a tuxedo, kiss a woman on the lips?

23 Name the 1952 romantic comedy, directed by John Ford, in which Maureen O'Hara, when her brother won't hand over her dowry, refuses to sleep with the ex-prizefighter (John Wayne) she has just married, saying, "I'll wear your ring, and I'll cook, and I'll wash and keep the land, but that is all. Until I have my dowry safe with me, I'm no married woman. I'm the servant I've always been — without anything of my own."

24 Name the 1934 film, based on a novel by Dashiell Hammett, in which Myrna Loy plays Nora Charles who, when asked, "Is your husband working on a case?" replies, "Yes, a case of scotch."

25 In what 1949 movie does Katharine Hepburn play a lawyer defending a woman (Judy Holliday) whom her husband (Spencer Tracy) is prosecuting (for attempting to murder her adulterous husband)?

### ANSWERS:

#### FROM PAGE TO SCREEN

1. (a) *Frankenstein* (b) Mary Shelley 2. (a) Katharine Hepburn (b) June Allyson 3. (a) *A Raisin in the Sun* 4. (a) *Kamouraska* (b) Geneviève Bujold.

#### COMMON SUBJECTS

5. Governesses 6. Waitresses 7. Unwed mothers 8. Divorce 9. Women in prison.

#### WOMEN DIRECTORS

10. Mai Zetterling 11. Studio D 12. *Desperately Seeking Susan* 13. Margarethe von Trotta

#### BIOPICS

14. The Brontë sisters 15. Mata Hari 16. (a) Jill Clayburgh (b) Sissy Spacek (c) Diana Ross (d) Faye Dunaway (e) Jessica Lange

#### NAME THE MOVIE IN WHICH

17. *Gone With the Wind* 18. *His Girl Friday* 19. *The Women* 20. *Maedchen in Uniform* 21. *Paper Moon* 22. *Morocco* 23. *The Quiet Man* 24. *The Thin Man* 25. *Adam's Rib*

You may have noticed the April / May segment of Movie Quiz was a little tougher than usual to get through. Question 2b) Who had the title role in *A Jest of God*; omitted Joanne Woodward from the answers. In question 19, four actresses were named when in fact Catherine the Great was the only answer.





photo: Tom Fijal

Women and Modern Dance

# Breaking with Tradition

by Michelle Beauchamp

Fifty years ago, a woman named Martha Graham did a very extraordinary thing. She began a new art form.

It was in New York, in the early 1930s, that contemporary, or modern dance was born. Martha Graham and Isadora Duncan were the two main leaders of the movement, followed closely by Merce Cunningham and Doris Humphrey. They took dance out of the rigid, high brow ballet studio, and into a format that allowed the dancers more freedom in both movement and expression. They made dance accessible.

During those 50 years, modern dance has become a viable alternative to ballet. It is always new, always exciting, and quite often brings a message to the audience that simply cannot be found in traditional ballets. It has given women in particular a new way of expressing their thoughts, fears, hopes and dreams. Because the majority of these innovators were women, it has been their art, their field, their passion.

Women have been involved in modern dance from the start, but the ratio of male to female choreographers remains unbalanced in favour of men. Ruth Cansfield, a Winnipeg born and trained dancer, and resident choreographer with Contemporary Dancers Canada (CDC) in Winnipeg, describes some of the challenges faced by choreographers:

"It's pretty scary stuff, because what you're

doing when you choreograph is exposing how you feel about life."

It is that much harder for women when most of the role models are men, Cansfield observes. But she concludes, "It should be just as natural for a woman to want to choreograph."

So, while the men often take the role of overseeing, or managing the dance through the choreography, it is the women who are given

the task of interpreting, and expressing the result. Rachel Browne, Founding Artistic Director of CDC says that, "Women thought of themselves as emotional beings, at least in North America, and therefore they were the ones who were more drawn towards dance as a means of expression."

Another reason for the high proportion of women dancers according to Montreal-based independent dancer Margie Gillis, is socially defined sex roles. "Dance is not a big money-maker, so it's very hard for (a man) to take that risk, whereas I think it's a lot easier for women to do that. The pressure has not been on them, historically, to be the provider, where it still is for a lot of men."

Societal values are slowly changing in that respect and the turnabout is having an effect on modern dance in two ways: first, there is a growing number of male dancers, secondly,

**Y**ou can't have art without revolution

Margie Gillis,  
Independent Dancer



photo: Nick Procylo



more female dancers are beginning to choreograph. As women become more assertive and aggressive in other areas of society, their influence in dance is also increasing.

The most notable result is that the issues and ideas expressed in choreography have more of a feminist perspective to them.

"I don't think you can have art without revolution," says Gillis, "I don't think you can choreograph without making social comment. Modern dance has really always been a woman's field, women do belong here. This is their workplace, their dream place, their imagination place."

Ruth Cansfield adds that "there is a need for female choreography, female perspective in every company, in every way. Because men are

## Suburban tango — performed by the women of the Contemporary Dancers (opposite)

different than women — socially, physically, emotionally, if you have just men choreographing, you just get one point of view. And to balance things out, it's good to have the female point of view too." Due to the choreographic

Rachel Browne is also aware of the change in women's participation. When she began choreographing more than 20 years ago, she started as "a means for my own creative needs." But as time progressed, she realised that her dancing could become a way to express her feminist stance. "It wasn't a conscious thing," she recalls, "I didn't decide to do this so I could express my feminist feelings, but I guess what came out was me as a woman and how I felt... I was reacting to the world around me." Browne adds, "I am very much in favour of as many female choreographers evolving as possible... In almost every area, women have experienced always, suppression and self-doubt and all kinds of unfairness. Any way that can be found to overcome that, I'm in favour of. Modern dance is one area."

Margie Gillis feels that because modern dance has always been a "political beast," it is a natural step for women choreographers to use dance as a way of speaking out against oppression. "I think that it's a celebration for other women in other fields, what we're able to do in modern dance... Certainly, it has affected the way women move their bodies. On the street, in day to day life, it's the idea that one can move one's body in a freer manner, and certainly it comes from how we act, what our social values are as choreographers. And yes, we do have a great deal of influence. We just don't see it immediately all the time."

and adventure. "A lot of people say that my choreography is really raw, really gutsy... But those are things I like to express. Life isn't all wonderful and pretty, and dance isn't all wonderful and pretty. I feel it's a responsibility to expose things, other elements, those feelings we have."

Rachel Browne has recently made several dances about the nuclear threat, an issue she is very concerned about. "I do use dance as a means to express some of the things that I feel very deeply. Sometimes dances can be used in a very therapeutic kind of way by choreographers, by women. Sometimes a person is not consciously doing it, but that's the effect it emanates... Dance can make certain statements about the world around us..."

Margie Gillis is noted for using dance as a means of speaking out against the wrong that she sees, but as well, she uses it as a means of celebrating the beautiful aspects of life. Her ideas come from "the people that are around me, the things that affect me — certainly my personal experiences, as well as the experiences of the people around me. Things that you're not able to say, you can say in your dance, wanting to celebrate the beauty in someone's life, wanting to make comment on injustices, all those types of things. My inspiration is human, just the struggle of being human."

As the field of modern dance continues to mature, the women involved in it and their choreography are maturing as well. It has become a cause for celebration, and a celebration with a cause. The freedom that women have enjoyed in this area is unparalleled. As Margie Gillis notes, "Socially, it's an incredibly wonderful thing that we have not had a great deal of the problems that women have in male dominated fields... It's nice not to have to start from the bottom and change attitudes."

Ruth Cansfield notes that modern dance is "focussing a lot more on developing issues — not so much pretty pictures and costumes. It's more of an educational, informative art right now. It doesn't have to be obscure to be that way, it can be quite clear... and being a woman, you have different issues that you want to release."

The liberating effect of modern dance may not be felt immediately but it is definitely

**D**ance isn't all  
wonderful and  
pretty Ruth Cansfield (left)  
resident choreographer



photo: Nick Procylo

changes that are occurring in modern dance right now, Cansfield thinks that women may find that this is the time to step in. Choreography she says, "is very cyclical... when it goes back to a simpler state, that's when women will feel like it's a starting point, somewhere to grow from."

Ruth Cansfield's dances tend to express themes of violence and anger, as in her "100% Unsweetened From Concentrate." It portrayed a woman who was caught in a relationship that had gone beyond her control. It is a disturbing and unrelenting stare at the emotions she had to deal with. Cansfield enjoys dealing with fear

there, and it is definitely growing. It is exciting to see the changes that are taking place in this art form. It is also exciting to know that there are some very strong women in Canadian modern dance who are working hard to help other women realise the dream of total freedom and equality. ▼



# Sisterfire and Other Hot Summer Sounds

by Connie Smith

## Secrets

Linda Tillery

Redwood Records (1985)

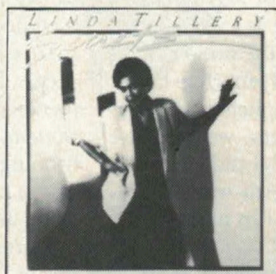
In the olden days, Linda Tillery was one of the reigning queens of San Francisco soul. As the lead vocalist for The Loading Zone, her contemporaries were Lydia Pense and Janis Joplin.

Her first solo album, *Linda Tillery*, was released in 1977 on the all-woman label Olivia Records. And in one glorious moment, she merged gospel and rhythm and blues with women's music. *Secrets*, released last year on Holly Near's Redwood Records is a continuation of the musical high Linda Tillery has been on most of her life. *Secrets* is not only funky, soulful, inspirational dance music. It is a record that makes you want to strut.

Teresa Trull, (*The Ways a Woman Can Be, Let It Be Known, Unexpected*), and Ray Obiedo wrote four of the songs on this album, including "Special Kind of Love" which under Linda's care ranks right up there with the best of Patti LaBelle and Valerie Simpson. And Linda's own "I'm So Thankful" makes me feel the same way.

One extra attraction on an album which is already full is Linda's version of the Peggy Lee hit "Fever", although I don't recall Lee singing *Pocahontas loved Sacajawea/they had a very mad affair*.

Other talented people involved in this project include Vicki Randall (the first person to sing Diane Lindsay's "Sweet Darlin' Woman"), Claytoven Richardson, and jazz composer and pianist Mary Watkins.



## Sisterfire

Various Artists

Roadwork Inc./Redwood Records (1985)

There is something about live recordings of women's festivals that makes me very sad. It's probably the fact that I wasn't there. The Sisterfire Festival began in 1982 in Washington, D.C. as an offshoot of Roadwork, Inc., a political and cultural organisation active in promoting women's culture. Both organisations are committed to "multi-racial, multi-ethnic cross cultural diversity," and this translates into a festival which salutes "all women, working people, minorities and the poor."

The 1985 Sisterfire Festival recorded here includes Sweet Honey in the Rock, Argentinian poet and former political prisoner Alicia Partnoy, Holly Near, D.C. street singer (since the 1940's) Flora Molton, Cris Williamson, Mexican singer Amparo Ochoa, Ronnie Gilbert, Jane Sapp, and a singing family from South Carolina, the Moving Star Hall Singers.

This is a wonderful album, beginning with the uplifting "This Little Light of Mine" performed by all the artists, followed by Jane Sapp's gospel version of "Go Tell It On The Mountain." I was equally moved by Alicia Partnoy's poem "Song of the Exiled—for Sisterfire," the medley by Sweet Honey, and Cris Williamson's "Native Dancer."

The album ends with a woman remarking from the stage, "Sisterfire is a symbol of our future. Let's hold on to it." As a member of at least four 'disadvantaged' groups (but who's counting), I felt honoured here.



## Folksinger

Phranc

Rhino (U.S.A. 1985), Stiff (U.K. 1986)

After listening to Phranc's debut album several times, this is what I can tell you about her: she wants to live with Martina Navratilova, nobody is going to make her shave her legs, she wants to be "strong, strong, like an Amazon," and she's "always been one of the dudes, with my flat top hair and my combat boots." She doesn't think all female hairdressers are dumb and she wouldn't be a gym teacher because she doesn't want to "waste her life away on the sidelines or in the bleachers," although she admits to having a crush on her gym teacher because "no one has muscles like you do."

Phranc also likes to throw stones, first at Thomas Noguchi, the former Chief Coroner of the county of Los Angeles, (to which I ask why bother), and at Janet Cook, the first black woman to win a Pulitzer Prize. (Cook had her prize taken away from her after it was discovered that the story she had written about a young junkie was actually a composite of several children she had met.) Phranc sings "liar, liar, pants on fire." Again, aren't there bigger and better targets?

On a more positive note, she doesn't like female mudwrestling, people who park in handicapped parking spots who aren't handicapped, and she's not going to kill herself.

So far, Phranc has had an interview and a positive album review in England's *New Music Express* (they called her an average Jewish American lesbian), and her photograph is featured in the April issue of Andy Warhol's Interview Magazine.

Phranc (her real name is Suzie), has a sweet voice, but considering the simplicity of her material, this sudden popularity amazes me, especially when there is a preponderance of extremely talented lesbian singer-songwriters who are actually saying something.

Recently Phranc performed at the Comedy Store in Los Angeles on a line-up that featured only comics. One wonders who the joke was on.



## Spiritsong

Mary Watkins

Redwood Records (1985)

Mary Watkins was one of the first women to graduate from Howard University with a degree in composition. When she arrived at Olivia Records a dozen years later, she had already become a seasoned pianist, arranger and composer. (Mary played keyboards and wrote the powerful "Don't Pray for Me" on Linda Tillery's first album.)

Mary's first album, *Something Moving*, released in 1978 was a strong collection of jazz influenced rhythm and blues. Her second album, *Winds of Change*, recorded on the Palo Alto label, was a superior live recording of her monumental jazz symphony. Her third album, *Spiritsong*, recently released on Redwood Records, completes the package.

*Spiritsong* is Mary and her piano. This is an album of beautiful, moving, chill-rendering piano solos performed by a great woman with great feeling in her heart and in her fingertips. (The opening number "Coming Home" is exceptional).

Someone should make movies to this music.



## Sweet Petunias (Independent Women's Blues, Volume 4)

Various Artists

Rosetta Records (1986)

Six years ago Rosetta Reitz made history. She released *Mean Mothers* (Independent Women's Blues, Volume 1) on her own New York-based label Rosetta Records, putting to rest the myth that women's blues was of the down-trodden variety. *Mean Mothers* became the album Alice Walker listened to while writing *The Color Purple*.

Since that time, Rosetta has unearthed an entire recording history of jazz and blues women. Her Foremothers Series is now up to volume 6, (Ida Cox, Valaida Snow, International Sweethearts of Rhythm, Georgia White, Lil Green and Ethel Waters), and *Sweet Petunias* is number four in a collection called Independent Women's Blues.

According to Rosetta, "the meaning of the word petunia was common knowledge in the blues. It meant sex," and in the language of flowers (florigraphy) petunia means never despair of me.

With those two definitions in mind, Rosetta has compiled 16 tough and sexy songs, beginning in 1929 with Mary Dixon singing "All Around Mama," (she's had a lot of variety), and ending with a 1956 recording of Ella Johnson's "Well Do It," a challenge to "promises made but rarely kept."

Other artists include Etta Jones, June Richmond, Helen Humes, Big Mama Thornton, Bertha Chippie Hill, and Victoria Spivey.

As usual Rosetta's liner notes are a revelation. Her in depth coverage of the life and times of these women is as exciting as the music.



## Out of Bounds (1982) Possibilities (1984)

Ova

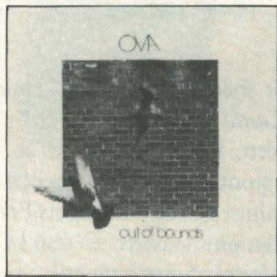
Stroppy Cow Records (U.K.)

I didn't find Ova's album *Out of Bounds* particularly gripping. Granted, some of the songs are almost 10 years old, and one does gain perspective as time goes by, but I'm not certain I would have enjoyed the songs even then.

The masturbation song "Auto Erotic Blues" has its moments, and I can appreciate its political import, but there are some things I take for granted. "Nuclear Madness," written in 1980, shows the influence of punk music on the British folk duo, but the lyrics remind me of bad graffiti. The words sound nice, but what do they really mean? Also, I find myself at philosophical odds with the song "Self Defense," (*One day I'm going to kill a man in self defense/Sometimes I can't wait to kill a man in self defense*). I am no stranger to the horror of night time, but singing about killing does not empower me.

Ova is Rosemary Schonfeldt and Jana Runnalls. They are assisted on this album by a group of women called Amazon Voices, and by jazz drummer Josephina Cupido (the Guest Stars) and bass player Alison Rayner.

At the time of the second recording, *Possibilities*, in 1984, Ova had grown into a collective of four: Rosemary, Jana, sound engineer Livvy Elliot, and administrator Jenny Gibbs. *Possibilities* is more interesting musically; the women have been influenced by reggae and African music and they experiment with different drums, synthesizers and digital delay. However it is still not enough.



## Then Came the Children

Rosalie Sorrels with

Bruce Carver, Live

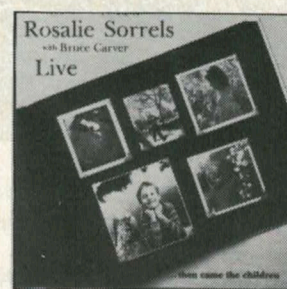
Aural Tradition Records (1986)

Aural Tradition Records is the recording arm of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival, and this particular album was recorded live at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre on February 26, 1984.

*Then Came the Children* is slow moving, deliberate and quiet, with Sorrels introducing most of the songs. Her stage conversation is very personal and definitely on the female theme: dating, back seat necking, homes for unwed mothers, back room abortions, early marriages, and her own five children.

The high point for me was Rosalie's own "Mother's Day Song," a humorous and realistic look at all the things she would accomplish now that her children had grown. On the other end of the scale is Malvina Reynold's "Rosie Jane," a song I've never been able to appreciate. It could be interpreted as having a pro choice theme, but if this is the case, Sorrels' victim is a stupid girl who keeps getting pregnant, and the last time she wasn't sure who the father was because she was drunk.

*Then Came the Children* is an extremely sensitive portrayal of one woman's life. It's also a bit depressing.



## Woman Talk: Caribbean Dub Poetry

Various Artists

Heartbeat Records/Rounder Records (1986)

When rap music resurfaced in North America with the founding of Sugar Hill Records by Sylvia Robinson, the absence of recorded women was glaring. Likewise was the situation with dub poetry, rap's Caribbean sister.

Lillian Allen did much to popularise the form in this country and there were rumours of other female dub poets in London, New York, and Jamaica. But with the exception of one recorded by Louise Bennett and a couple of cuts by Sister Breeze and Lillian Allen, recordings are slim.

*Women Talk*, produced by Matubaruka, is a follow-up to an earlier dub poetry anthology, *Word Soun' 'Ave Power*, which featured Sister Breeze among Jamaica's leading male poets. This album leads with two cuts from Breeze, along with Louise Bennett, Afusa, Anita Stewart, Elaine Thomas and Cheryl Bryon.

Admittedly I don't understand all of the poems because my ears are not accustomed to the speech patterns. But that will change the more I listen. Meanwhile I am content to know that the ground has finally been broken.

## Scrapbook

Meg Christian

Olivia Records (1986)

As a public figure, Meg Christian is a controversy and a delight. As a member of the ground-breaking Olivia Records, we followed with interest her journey from lead singer of lesbian music to follower of Guruyami Chidvilasananda. As an artist she hid nothing from us and her music is truly memorable.

Meg left Olivia Records last year to travel with her guru. This year, Olivia released a compilation of some of Meg's best work.

*Scrapbook* really is Meg Christian's greatest hits: "Face the Music," "Valentine Song," "Ode to a Gym Teacher," "Southern Home," "Sweet Darlin' Woman," "The Road I Took." They're all here. It's a perfect tribute to Meg's years at Olivia and her contributions to women's music.



# Beach Blanket Mysteries & Other Summer Thrills

Why is it murder mysteries always (and most exclusively) get reviewed in the "summer reading" section? Because for the duration of the book and the season, you're allowed to put your brain on hold. Naturally, we'd all rather be lounging about with Firestone's dialectic or sipping gin while browsing through *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* but hey, toss them aside 'till fall. For any residual guilt, there is a series of murder/suspense novels from Pluto Press which should be just the ticket. Billed as "Crime with a political edge", the Pluto Crime line is comprised of a dozen novels focussing on, among other issues, the IRA, the Communist Party in post-Franco Spain, chemical waste dumps in Britain, Upton Sinclair's run for governor of California and Yuppie teenage drug addicts. The series has four women authors and women characters are generally strong and well drawn. Look for *Morbid Symptoms* by Gillian Slovo, *Murder in the Central Committee* by Manuel Vanequez Montalban, *Not a Through Street* by Ernest Larsen and *Widows* by Ariel Dorfman (Pluto Press, \$5.95 — \$8.95).

—Martha Elliott

When I especially like something, I like to have all of it. I have every Patsy Cline album, the entire Whiteoaks of Jalna series and every Ruth Rendell mystery (24). Rendell is a British writer who publishes almost two books a year, alternating between a "psychological thriller" and one involving her detective, Chief Inspector Wexford. In *An Unkindness of Ravens* (Arrow, 1985, \$4.95), Rendell pits Wexford against a feminist group, ARRIA — Action for the Radical Reform of Intersexual Attitudes (seriously). Rule 8 of the ARRIA constitution requires the carrying of an offensive weapon. Rule 10 states that all women wishing to reproduce should "ensure impregnation in a rape or near-rape construct." We learn that a splinter group (led by a lesbian with "no make-up, hair cropped in a crew cut") really wanted all the members to kill a man to prove their feminism. Imagine what happens when men get stabbed for harassing young women and a man suspected of raping his daughter turns up murdered. Imagine our frustration at a truly offensive subplot in which a woman hates the desperately-wanted baby she is carrying when she discovers it's a girl. Imagine our surprise when, "happily for Jenny" it turns out to be a boy. Imagine our disgust when we learn that the daughter made up the rape by her father, having just finished studying Freud's seduction theory. While this novel is a major disappointment (and offensive to boot), look instead for *The Tree of Hands*, *A Judgement in Stone*, *One Across, Two Down*, and *The Lake of Darkness* (Arrow, \$4.95). These are four of Rendell's best psychological thrillers and as the review cliché goes, real page turners guaranteed to raise the hair on the back of your neck.

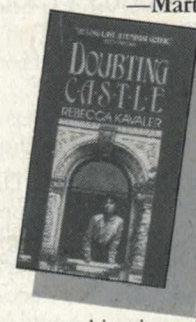
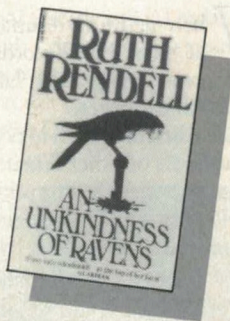
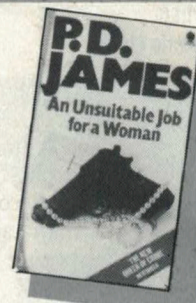
—Martha Elliott

One reads murder mysteries for the same reason one watches soap operas or eats an entire jar of beer nuts at one sitting. Fortunately, all three can be easily rationalised. "Soap operas are popular culture addressing many issues of concern to women", "Nuts are good for you", and "The genre has many outstanding examples of women writers and characters". P.D. James introduces Cordelia Gray in *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (Sphere, \$3.95) both of whom largely prove the latter maxim. James generally focusses on the whodunnit though certainly not to the exclusion of whodunnit. Cordelia is a private detective; young without being perky, intelligent without being perky, confident without being perky. Cordelia inherits her partner's agency and her first real case alone involves investigating the apparent suicide of a prominent scientist's son. James' only weakness lies in stereotyping the other characters, especially women. Nurse Ratchet types, plump matrons living in the past and rigid spinsters with unnatural attachments abound. To her credit, James writes with care and confidence about her settings and the dialogue rings true. While there are a few loose ends tied up rather quickly and carelessly, the story is well crafted and James happily avoids such cheesy tactics as the sudden coincidence or the late but always opportune arrival of a twin. Cordelia also gets to meet James's other protagonist, the enigmatic Adam Dalgliesh and she reappears in a later novel, *The Skull Beneath the Skin*.

—Martha Elliott

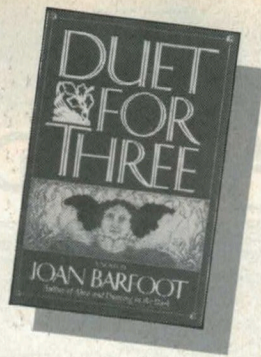
For sheer oddity value, *Doubling Castle* by Rebecca Kavalier (Fawcett, \$4.50, 1984) rates at least 8 out of 10. "At long last, a feminist gothic" trumpets Betty Friedan on the cover. Certainly the notion of rewriting an essentially escapist novel from a feminist perspective is an innovative one and Kavalier comes very close to making it work. It is the late 1800s and Ada Traherne is three months short of earning her medical degree. Unfortunately for her, Ada's fiancé, also a medical student, decides he cannot marry a woman with equal education and brains. He ensures they are caught in a compromising situation, resulting in Ada's expulsion from medical school. With no degree and the ensuing scandal on her head, Ada is forced to leave town and search out her father who is employed as house doctor to an eccentric but (of course) wealthy couple. They live, not surprisingly, in an enormous castle, Kirkewode, complete with towers, gargoyles and secret passages. Ada arrives to find her father infatuated with the stunning Rose Deventer while caring for the unseen Mad Jack Deventer. When her father dies rather mysteriously, Ada teams up with the handsome but sensitive business manager to discover the real truth behind Rose's deadly beauty and Mad Jack's unmentionable illness. The novel has all you'd expect from a gothic romance — a sense of foreboding, pathetic fallacy, a mad woman locked away and a tidy ending.

—Martha Elliott





The fact that *Winnipeg Free Press* reviewer David Williamson chided Joan Barfoot for her negative (one might argue realistic) portrayal of men in her latest book may be the best incentive one could give to read *Duet for Three*. (Duet for Three, MacMillan of Canada, 1985)



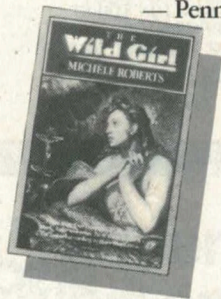
But there are so many other reasons to praise Barfoot's work. *Duet for Three* is an insightful account of the lives of two compelling women: Aggie, a spunky and vibrant woman who lives with her daughter June and spends her days finding ways to avert her daughter's attempts to put her in a nursing home; and June, the pragmatic daughter and school teacher, who feels love, but mainly resentment toward her aging mother's increased dependence on her. As the story unfolds, the grievances accumulated over a lifetime between the two women are slowly revealed.

The inevitable bridging between Aggie and June's lives is forthcoming in the third generation; June's daughter Frances, an international journalist and independent woman who appears to have inherited her grandmother's feisty spirit, is the denouement. She represents what women's lives can be if they are liberated from the physical and cultural confines that have limited the lives of the two eldest women.

*Duet for Three* is a welcome addition to a slowly growing body of literature about the experience of aging, and one that elicits often unexpected empathy from its readers. Great reading for the beach.

— Penni Mitchell

I'm a clearance bin junkie and a good thing it is too. For were I not addicted to spending uncounted hours sifting through a jumble of paperback bargains, I never would have discovered *The Wild Girl* by Michèle Roberts. (Methuen London Ltd., 1984). A fictionalized account of the gospel according to Mary Magdalene, this book is as intriguing as the sensuous Tintoretto portrait on its cover.



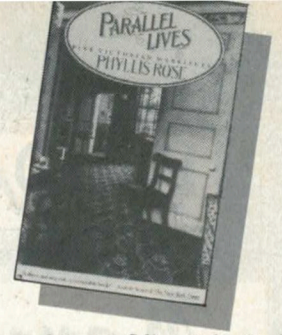
Having detested since early adolescence the woman demeaning doctrines and bible passages preached at me during interminable church sermons, I was gratified by Roberts' debunking of patriarchal Christianity. Her version declares homophobia a blasphemy, male superiority a deadly lie forged out of cowardice and greed, spirit and body inextricably linked, the sanctity of Goddess rituals unquestionable, and the sexuality of Jesus an open fact.

Besides revolutionizing the gospels, Roberts provides engaging reading throughout her recreation of the events of Mary Magdalene's life. The women Mary encounters are so much more powerful and vital than the plaster idols and cardboard harlots of the four officially sanctioned gospels. My favourite is Salome, a midwife and keeper of the old rituals whose knowledge at first terrifies Mary, but who later initiates her into the mysteries of loss, grief and rebirth.

Although not enough to make me reconsider my non christian lifestyle, *The Wild Girl* is heartening in its depiction of a woman-respecting Christianity. Roberts may retain miracles I would rather do without and may sometimes sacrifice literary niceties to the dictates of her message, but her vision is immeasurably more nourishing than the dry teachings I choked on in my youth. Christian or not, *The Wild Girl* sustains the spirit.

— Heidi Muench

Phyllis Rose broadens our historically tunneled vision of Victorian England in *Parallel Lives* (Random House, 1983) with her stories on the relationships of five famous couples.



Harriet Taylor along with John Stuart Mill, Thomas Carlyle and his eventual wife Jane Welsh; Effie Gray and the perfidious John Ruskin; Charles Dickens and wife Catherine Hogarth; and George Eliot, who lived 'in sin' with George Henry Lewes for years, are the subjects of this fascinating biographical history.

Rose's book could accurately be described as a soap opera with a sociological bent. Her research and storytelling abilities form the basis of a fascinating, rich historical study of the institution of marriage through the lives she chose to document. For instance, at least two of the couples' marriages were never consummated, yet Harriet Taylor seems to have defined the social constructs of marriage by having an open relationship with John Stuart Mill for years.

Charles Dickens, the famed novelist and liberal thinker experienced what today would be the classic mid-life crisis syndrome. He left his wife Catherine, (who, after she raised his 10 children, he found boring), to find happiness with a younger woman. Such familiar scenarios lay to rest the notion of the Victorian marriage as being fundamentally different from relationships between men and women today, but Rose is careful not to make the generalisation that marriage is unchanged either. She notes, for instance that the feminists of the time were not leading supporters of contraception, as abstinence had given many women a legitimate excuse for not having unpleasant sex with their husbands. In spite of the non-sexual components to some individual lives, the book is about sexuality and the constraints of sexual oppression. In all, it is a provocative read. A definite must for the feminist with a taste for highbrow gossip.

— Penni Mitchell

In *A Half Step Behind: Japanese Women of the '80's*, (Dodd, Mead & Company; New York, 1985) Jane Condon, since 1981 the Japan stringer for *Life* and *People* magazines, analyses Japanese society from a perspective pointedly ignored by most North American journalists eager to expound on the dazzling economic success of post war Japan. By focussing on the experiences of Japanese women from diverse backgrounds and classes, Condon provides us with a rarely voiced vision of what many business experts and economists would have us believe is a technological utopia.

Condon also offers us a general historical analysis of women in Japanese society, explanations of the present social and economic structure of Japan, and her own reactions to both Japanese society as a whole and to the women she interviewed. Condon thus becomes an interpreter and guide and makes accessible this complex culture.

The women Condon has interviewed range in age from 18 to 81, and display great differences in upbringing, attitudes and goals. The thread that connects their individual life stories is the effect upon their lives of the unabashedly misogynist Confucian view of women still adhered to at all social levels in Japan.

Nevertheless, in their accounts their humour, anger, quiet endurance, unbreakable determination and ingenuity are evident. The generosity of these women and Condon's skillful weaving of their tales into an engrossing tapestry of feeling and experience result in a work that cannot help but expand our often blinkered vision of Japan to include the hidden but essential heart and substructure of the Japanese economic miracle: the women on whom all depend.

— Heidi Muench



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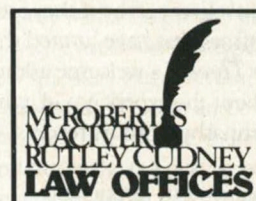
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# This time, mom, take me

GAIL BUENTE



I can still remember the first time I tasted shrimp. I was about 10 years old and travelling with my family. We were in a restaurant which for some reason struck me as an unbelievably sophisticated establishment.

I felt that I must order something appropriate to the occasion; the situation made it somehow imperative that I exhibit my worldliness. Shrimp cocktail! The words leaped out at me from the menu. It sounded so grownup — almost wicked. I watched my mother's approving face as I gave my order to the waiter. I had arrived. This simple act of ordering shrimp had, in my mind, catapulted me into the world of adults. There was another bonus too; shrimp tasted good!

Away from home, children can play grownup in a way that's just not possible in familiar surroundings. It's a perfect opportunity for them to cross over into your world and feel closer to you. It's this that makes travel a valuable experience for children.

The other side of this coin is that you also get to cross over into their world. When you're travelling, it's OK to act like a kid.

When my daughter was about five years old, I wanted to take her to visit her grandparents. They live in a retirement complex with very little to interest children. Feeling a bit guilty, I promised her, as a concession, a stop at Disneyland on our way home. My view of Disneyland was a rational one. It was nothing but a waste of money, I thought, but if it would make her happy, I was willing to go there. It turned out to be the high point of the trip, not only for her, but for me as well. I threw out my rationality and allowed myself to play with my daughter, be silly, and look at the world through her eyes. Yes, it was expensive. But now, 10 years later, it's the part of the trip we both remember best.

Travel blurs the distinctions between us and our children and lets us act outside our usual roles. To make the most of a trip with children, use this breakdown of roles to its greatest advantage. They should be allowed to do adult things they can't do at home, and you should be able to relax and let out the kid in you. With some advance planning, you should be able to minimize your tour-director duties and share in a rewarding experience.

Get the child or children involved right from the early stages in decision-making and preparing for a trip. They'll enjoy it much more if they see it as their trip, not just yours. Encourage them to write for brochures describing your destination, or to get a book about it from the library. Let them take an equal part in planning the itinerary.

Make sure they know where they'll be going, how far away it is, and how long it takes to get there. Point out the destination on a map, and explain how far it is in a way they'll understand. For younger children, compare the distance to somewhere they go often. "It's a little farther than Aunt Daphne's house, but not in the same direction." Then, as you travel, they can trace the route on the map with felt pen, so they can see where they've been and what lies ahead.

Discuss with the kids what methods of transportation are available to you, and if possible, let them help decide what method to take. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Airplanes are fast, but they frighten some children or make them feel sick. Driving allows you to carry much more baggage, but riding for hours in a car does get boring and, again, some children suffer from motion sickness. The train, if it goes to your destination, offers the advantage

of relative independence for children. They like being able to walk around and go to the dining car alone.

If you are not travelling by car, the children should each be responsible for their own backpack or suitcase. They should decide, with some help, what to pack. Remind them, of course, that they will be carrying it, and should therefore pack light. Younger children will want to take along all their toys, but toys have to be kept to a minimum of favourites, and a few activities to do on the train, plane or bus.

Some airlines and railways provide activity toys for kids, and it's worth finding out in advance if this is the case. Also, if you're travelling on a flight with a movie, you should find out if it is suitable for your child's age group. One good way to combat travel boredom is to tuck away a few surprises before you go. You can even giftwrap them if you aren't crossing any borders. The old standbys are still best — crayons, books of paper cutouts, small games or craft toys. Take along at least one game that you and your child can play together. My own favourites are Mastermind and Uno. Games that 'bleep' are not appreciated by fellow travellers.

Keeping a trip log or diary is another way you and your children can share the fun of travelling. If you can afford to get your child a cheap camera, they will feel all the more like a grownup traveller, and they'll really look at the things around them.

Sending postcards is an important link with home, and a way of dealing with separation from family and friends. Kids should be allowed to send as many as they want. Write address labels before you leave and they'll be able to send their postcards without asking for your help.

Another remedy for homesickness is carrying along pictures of friends or pets and using them to initiate conversation. "What do you think Fluffy is doing right now?" This kind of conversation reassures young children that everything is going on as usual back home, and it's also a way to teach them concepts about time zones and distance.

Be sure the children know each day where you'll be going and what you'll be doing. If there are choices to be made, they should help make them. Have your trip well thought out, but always be ready to change to accommodate their needs too. Spontaneity is the reward for good planning. ▼

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# Tears, Idle Tears

LYN COCKBURN



I have long known that men have a larger muscle mass than women; that their voices are deeper and that they grow hair on their faces. In fact, ever since puberty, I've been aware that there are irrefutable physical differences between men and women.

It's only been lately however, that I've come to understand there's a difference between male and female tear ducts.

Oh, I was vaguely aware that on the average, men cry less than women. Although, you can't use my friend Steve as a yardstick. He continually embarrasses his wife by crying during sad movies and sometimes during comedies. "I enjoy it; it's good for me," he snuffles unapologetically as Kathy pretends she's his nurse, not his wife.

I can sense you'd like me to get back to the point.

O.K.

My discovery of the differences between men's and women's tear ducts resulted from two funerals recently reported in my local paper. Both of the deceased were important people, so the paper ran pictures. The first caption reads, "Wife cries uncontrollably at husband's funeral." The second reads, "Husband weeps at wife's funeral." I couldn't see any difference between what the husband and wife were doing, but with the keen instinct of the true researcher, I instantly knew I was on to something big here.

So, I went to the library and looked through the newspapers of seven major North American cities over the past five years.

And it's true. Women cry; men weep.

I want you to know that no man has cried since 1980 in Toronto, Los Angeles, Vancouver, Chicago, Montreal, Detroit or New York. They may be doing it in small towns in Saskatchewan or Alabama, but they're not doing it in big cities. They're not bursting into tears or sobbing either. What they're doing instead, is wiping away a tear or suffering from a catch in their voices. Women, on the other hand, are bursting into tears and sobbing at an alarming rate in all our major cities.

And if you don't believe everything you read, turn on your TV. Not long ago for example, there was a touching little clip about the

first American civilian selected to go into space. The announcer informed viewers that, upon hearing she'd been selected, she burst into tears. And since we all saw her brush away a tear and take a deep breath to get rid of the catch in her voice, we must assume that there is a difference in the function of the male and female tear ducts. Otherwise, men who brush away tears or take deep breaths might mistakenly be accused of bursting into tears, right?

You think I'm wandering off the point again, don't you?

O.K.

Back to the library. Now, I'm willing to admit that men may have been sobbing and crying six years ago, but after four hours of pouring over microfiche, my eyes felt funny and I was beginning to worry that all this female sobbing might be catching. So, I'm prepared to run the risk that other academics may judge my study too short.

However, in spite of this one possible drawback, I'm hoping the medical profession will be sufficiently impressed by my findings to look into the matter. It is surely important to find out if women's tear ducts are constantly overreacting or if men's are malfunctioning.

And I want to know what's happened to all those unshed male tears in the last five years. The media admits that men often have tears in their eyes, but it seems that it's mainly women who let them out.

Are male tears dripping down the insides of their eyeballs? That question kept me awake last night. Men in general seem to acquire bags under their eyes earlier than women do. Is this because all that bottled up water is accumulating and puffing things up? Or is it rising? If so, it's dangerous. For example, if you don't have good drainage in an African violet pot, pretty soon you've got root rot. Flowers won't form and the leaves drop off. You don't have to be a brilliant researcher to wonder if holding back tears causes follicle rot and eventual baldness.

Whatever the import, my study conclusively proves that men's and women's tear ducts do not function in the same way. Women's tear ducts cause them to cry, sob and burst into tears — at the slightest provocation, I might add. Men's tear ducts cause them to do the more elegant weeping, the more sophisticated brushing away of a tear, the brave blinking back of tears and the heroic catch in the voice.

Because I'm an honest academic with no axe to grind, I do admit to one puzzling discovery.

It seems that when men and women are overcome by emotion while in each other's presence, then women weep. They do not cry. For example, there's a headline in a Los Angeles newspaper of February 11, 1983 which states, "Brother and sister weep happy tears during family reunion" and another in a Toronto paper of July 25, 1984, "Parents weep at daughter's bedside." Most confusing.

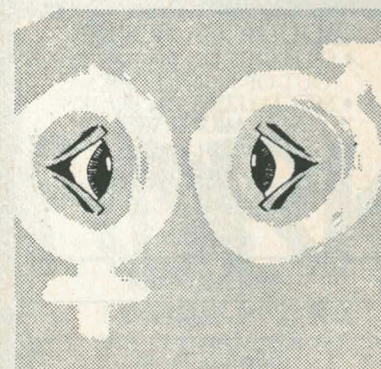
So, like any good researcher, I endeavoured to clear up this conundrum.

I took my friend Steve to a sad movie (you can't always count on him to bring out his handkerchief during a comedy). I waited until he was well into whatever it is he does, then I leaned over and whispered, "Are you crying or weeping?"

"Oh shut up," he said rudely. "You're spoiling my fun." ▼

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# Put Your Best Foot Forward

VERONICA M. HOLTBY

In any normal day we expect our feet to perform willingly as we walk, stand, scurry, sweat through aerobics, then sometimes we even jam them into pointed shoes for a soirée. No wonder they feel bruised at the end of the day. They are.

Here's something to consider. Your feet don't stand alone. According to foot massage experts called reflexologists or zone therapists, our feet are a very sensitive terminal for the network of nerves that runs vital messages throughout our bodies. Bruised and aching feet relay their pain along the nerves to organs. Even more importantly, the reverse is true. Organs, tired, stressed, or worn down, send their messages along the nerves to the feet in the form of aches and pains. The work of the reflexologist is to soothe them, knowing as she goes that the messages of calm and relaxation her fingers are sending will be circulated through the body, neutralising daily tensions and eventually tensions stored deep inside.

Tensions are a part of the stress response. Un-

released, they can create ideal conditions for disease, but stress is not necessarily something that we can or even should avoid. We need it to drive ourselves, at least some of the time. Major health problems arise when we stay geared up for action or for self-protection instead of taking the time to neutralise the response.

Foot massage became formally recognised in the early 1900s when Dr. William Fitzgerald stumbled onto the realisation that, by massaging parts of the extremities of his patients, an anaesthetic effect was produced in the patient's body. Sometimes too, when patients clenched their fists against pain, they actually succeeded in reducing the intensity of their pain. By combining careful observation of his patients with study of ancient Chinese energy maps, Fitzgerald defined 10 zones running parallel lengthwise down the body, from head to 10 fingers, and from head to 10 toes. All the organs that fell within one of these zones seemed to be in circuit so that, for example, if he massaged one part of the hand, he could send an analgesic order down to a lung. Pain relief was the original purpose of his massages but soon people discovered that, with repeated massages, ailing organs were sometimes slowly rejuvenated.

Dr. Fitzgerald's therapist, Eunice D. Ing-ham, carried the discoveries even further. After a great deal of experience she realised that though the ears, hands, and the feet all have nerve centres that reflect all the organs in the body, the feet were definitely the most sensitive to manipulation. Then she set about organising the method called Foot Reflexology, a systematic massage from toe to heel for the purpose of the improvement of health. Her books — *Stories the Feet Can Tell*, and *Stories the Feet Have Told* — are still available and often used by students of reflexology.

A visit to a reflexologist is a treat. To be honest, the first time I went to one I had to get over some of the Western phobias about feet; however the threshold of shyness was a short and amusing barrier well worth breaking through. The process is systematic massage from toe to heel starting with the left foot. If you have a stomach raging with anxieties, she will pay special attention to the ball of your foot. A crashing tension headache and her skilled fingers will give more attention to working from the top of your big toe which reflects the top of your head, down the big toe, reflexes

for the glands in your head and neck, to the base of the toe which carries the pain from the neck. If she is very experienced she will know even before you tell her in words or by wincing when she touches certain areas on your foot, where your trouble spots are, as her sensitive fingers discover deposits of what feel like tiny crystals, or pockets of fluid.

The causes of your aches and pains aren't so much her concern. They are probably innumerable — simple foot neglect, worry, foods you have eaten that don't agree with you, allergies, a troubled gall bladder — at first this really doesn't matter. (Unless you are very ill of course. But then you would surely be seeing your doctor.) What matters to her is the relaxation or de-stressing process that can keep tensions from mounting up and becoming unwieldy.

Though reflexology has its own legitimate occidental roots in the discoveries of Dr. Fitzgerald and others, it shares a Chinese health premise, one that sees vitality flowing through the body in the form of energy. This vitality keeps everything in working order until the flow becomes thwarted by tensions blocking the channels for this energy. Then the health of the person weakens. Practitioners using Chinese therapies focus on the release of blockages paying attention to the spine as the central housing unit of the nerves, and to the feet as the major terminal for the circuits. Keep the spine flexible, which is the purpose of the flowing exercises of Tai Chi, and massage your feet and those of your family, daily, and you may enjoy greater health.

Ideally, to test this theory, you should visit a reflexologist on a weekly basis for awhile. But until you find one, or have the time to visit one, you can try a simpler form at home. Each day, preferable in the evening so you can relax afterwards, give yourself a foot massage working from the toes down to the heel, and up over the ankles of each foot. If possible, work with others, family members or friends, exchanging massages. Apparently, this is wonderful for babies too, who seem to enjoy it. After even a week, you should be able to notice some effect. Are you more relaxed? Do your feet feel more comfortable? How does it affect your relationships—especially those with whom you exchange massages?

As you tune into your feet, you may find the cause of wear and tear on your body as well as some well-deserved relief. ▼

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## Giving you Credit

CAROL McLEOD

Applying for a loan can be as painless as brushing your teeth or as traumatic as having a cavity filled. It all depends on knowing what to expect.

From the moment you meet the loan officer, you will be judged on the basis of what is usually known as the three c's — character, capacity and collateral. Character in banking circles is assessed by your attitude toward your past financial commitments; capacity by your ability to hold a job and to maintain a steady income; and collateral by your assets — whether you own a house, furniture, life insurance or bonds, all on which banks judge your ability to handle money.

It helps when you talk with the loan officer if you know exactly what security you are prepared to lodge — cash, stock certificates or a lien on your car — and also how much money you can afford to repay each month. As a general rule, mortgage payments should not exceed 30 per cent of your gross salary while total loan payments should not exceed 40 per cent.

If you can handle a \$225 payment comfortably over five years, consider whether it might not be better to pay \$266 over four years and save \$750 in interest. If you are a seasonal worker and depend on U.I.C. for part of the year, make sure you base your payment on your minimum monthly income.

If it is the first time you have applied for a loan — and unless you are putting up security equal to the amount of the loan — you will probably be asked to have someone with an established and satisfactory credit history cosign the note, thus becoming responsible for the amount outstanding if you should be unable to make the payments.

If the loan is repaid as agreed, future loans will most likely be granted without a cosigner — unless you are married. With matrimonial property laws in effect in most Canadian provinces, spouses can be required to cosign each other's loans to safeguard the lender in case a future divorce should weaken your financial position and thus jeopardise your ability to repay.

Discrimination in lending on the basis of age, sex, or marital status by federally chartered banks has been forbidden in Canada since Parliament enacted human rights legislation in 1977. Yet borrowing, especially for unemployed married women, can be extremely difficult. It stands to reason that no one will lend to a person with insufficient income to

service the debt, but there are steps that people on limited incomes can take to establish a credit history that will help them obtain a loan at a later date.

First of all, apply for a credit card in your own name and ensure that all payments are made promptly.

Maintaining a personal chequing account and regularly paying household bills out of it will also help establish a credit rating.

If you apply for a loan and need a cosigner, you will be better off than you would have been 15 years ago. In 1970 the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada reported that lending practices prevalent at the time placed "women in a dependent role that (failed) to respect their rights and freedoms."

Single women were often refused credit on the grounds they might marry, have children and renege on their financial commitments. The few single women who did obtain credit usually found that if they married, credit transactions ceased to be reported in their own names and were filed under those of their husbands.

Well-focused attacks by women's rights organisations and protests by the growing number of working women combined to bring about important changes. In the mid 70s the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations drew up credit opportunity guidelines that have since been introduced in many other provinces.

Although the major banks adopted the new standards, mortgages and business loans still cause some lenders concern over women's ability to repay. Others are stubbornly reluctant to take into account 100 per cent of a wife's salary when a couple applies for a mortgage. With business loans — especially those in non-traditional areas as farming and law — loan officers may question a woman's ability to succeed and thus to make payments. In marginal applications, such prejudice is difficult to pin down and almost impossible to prove.

If your application is turned down, make sure you find out why. According to an information officer with the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women, "every-one who is refused credit or service by a bank should ask for a copy of the institution's policy on the matter at hand." If there is enough evidence to suggest that the refusal is discriminatory, you should make a full written report to the nearest office of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. ▼

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# Health Clubs and the Ordinary Woman

FRANCES ROONEY



photo: Lauren Williams

Last August, after five years of trying to get up the courage to do so, and even after a couple of trips as far as the front door, I joined a health club. I am one of those people who loved swimming as a little kid

and who, for a variety of reasons, including fear, hadn't been in a pool for, as far as I can figure out, about 30 years. Every three or four years I'd buy a bathing suit and promise myself that this suit wouldn't sit in a drawer until it didn't fit anymore. This one I'd use. This one would be the one.

And then, finally finally, I went out one Saturday to buy jeans and found myself walking instead into this club and saying to the first person I saw, "I want to join."

Ten days later I bravely pounded my way into the near-empty locker room, peeled off my clothes, showered, poured my quivering self into my suit and slithered toward the pool where three men and a woman were behaving as if swimming was an ordinary, fun thing to do. I wanted desperately to go home. Instead, I plopped in. When I reached the other end, puffing but undeterred, the door from the women's locker room opened. A woman I found myself thinking of as Lady Olympica strode in, heaved her towel at the bench, drove in the water without a hint of hesitation and pounded her way toward me. I finished my second length and fled, trying to reassure myself that it was enough to have got there at all, that I didn't have to conquer all my intimidation the first day.

The woman who had been in the pool when I first got there, left too. When she got out of the water she turned out to be older and bigger than I am. If she can come here, I thought to myself, so can I. It takes a lot more courage for someone like her or like me to do what we were doing than it does for someone like Our Lady.

Now, I always go home feeling wonderful. And often surprised. First, and probably more obvious, are the predictable health benefits. Just thinking about swimming makes me breathe more deeply. I haven't slept this well since I was a kid. My stress level has plummeted. Despite the arthritis in my spine and hips, not only am I off all medication, I'm more flex-

ible and comfortable than I've been in probably a decade. I never really believed in endorphins, those natural uppers that exercise releases. Now, when I get low, I go for a swim and let them do their thing. It works every time.

And that's just the beginning. Each time I go swimming I do marvelous new things. Sometimes I swim more lengths than last time, and my distance is growing at a rate that I can hardly believe. Other times I just feel where I am and what I'm doing — the caress of the water everywhere, the rhythm of the stretch/relax/move/breathe, the sound. For the first few eons (or at least the first two weeks), each length, each stroke took concentration, effort. Now. Almost every time, after the first six or seven lengths, I cross that line into being a water creature, into feeling as if I'm where I belong and could keep going forever.

The biggest surprise is that I come away feeling better and better about how my body looks, as well as about how it feels. In our anti-physical world where a woman's body is supposed to resemble nothing so much as a little boy's, that's no small accomplishment, especially for someone with as many lumps and bumps and curves as I have — however delicious I may always (secretively) have found them to be.

To me, the most attractive bodies are the bodies at peace. They are the bodies that look lived-in, well-used and cared for. And loved. Hard as it is to believe, size and shape just don't matter. Not to the women who smile at each other, just to the ones who inspect each other. For a time I watched their enviable comfort. Then one day I saw myself in the mirror and recognised that mine too is one of those bodies if I will let it be. I stood, dripping and gleaming, staring at a beautiful naked stranger who was me.

I told my friend the jock what I'd done, and that there were real people like me at the club as well as mini Jane Fondas. "Of course there are, silly," she said. "Ordinary people go to health clubs, they're not all super stars." I was properly abashed. A couple of minutes later, though, she added, "I'm really impressed with you. I've been trying to get up my nerve to join that place for years. Can you take guests?" So we went, and she jumped into the pool and swam two miles. She climbed out with a look of complete happiness on her face, the likes of which I've rarely seen on anybody over the age of four.

"Will you bring me again?"

"Sure. Why don't you join?"

Blush. "I don't have the nerve. Not yet."

We do things in our own time. If the time hadn't been right, I wouldn't have been able to tell myself to stop thinking about joining the club and just do it. I would have gone home with a pair of jeans. Instead, I went home with a whole new and delightful and healthy facet to my life. I feel like the kid who's been let into the candy store. ▼

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# Witches on Celluloid

by Muriel Draaisma



The Burning of Witches. (Woodcut, 1555)

*"Women are returning to the Craft. Many speak of coming home. We remember the Goddess and we recognise her power in nature, in all living things. We return to what we know, to an ancient healing tradition of positive magic that awakens the divine spark in each of us."*

— *Remember the Witches*, 1985

When feminist filmmaker Laurie Meeker looks through the lens of her 16 mm camera, a clear picture comes into focus: a close-up view of women that is not distorted, hateful or degrading.

Meeker, a former Vancouver resident, has dedicated herself to reconstructing women's place in history. She is considered a bright light among feminist filmmakers today. Her best work so far is *Remember the Witches*, a 22-minute documentary which weaves glimpses of women during the witch-burning years with current examples of women as healers, midwives and priestesses who worship the Goddess.

When Meeker focuses on modern day witches, the audience sees a score of women dance around a blazing bonfire on a popular Vancouver beach. They exchange smiles, glances, good feelings. Their faces, joyous and optimistic, reflect the fire's glow as they skip in time to a steady drum beat.

Earlier, the women feast on fresh fruit in a room lit by burning candles. An eerie sound fills the air as the flames flicker above a small altar. The women gather around the table, then begin to share ripe watermelon. Relaxed and content, the group conveys an aura of peace.

These moving pictures are *Remember the Witches'* final and most powerful scenes. The lively colour footage illuminates what Meeker's documentary is all about — women reclaiming the rituals of witchcraft and calling this ancient religion their own.

Before the film moves into the 20th century, however, it draws attention to the brutal killing of an estimated 9,000,000 witches, mostly women, in medieval times. Black and white woodcuts depict the grisly horror of women tortured, hanged and burned alive.

An invisible female narrator asks: "Who

were these women and why were they persecuted?"

The audience is told that witches, contrary to popular stereotypes, were not old evil women, menacing cackling hags or dried up spinsters on brooms. Instead, they were wise women who practised the craft of healing and birthing outside the existing church and state tenets.

Medieval authorities — clergymen, medical doctors and lawyers — called witchcraft a woman's crime and used the witch hunts as a means of solidifying their control of society.

"... since women are feebler in both mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come more under the spell of witchcraft than men..." a booming male voice reads from the *Malleus Maleficarum*, a 15th century handbook of the Inquisition.



Laurie Meeker: a close-up view of women's history.

"Women are naturally more impressionable, and more ready to receive the influence of a disembodied spirit; but the natural reason is she is more carnal than a man..."

The audience is asked to accept Meeker's claim that attitudes towards women in medieval times continue to resurface in contemporary Western culture. The hatred that led to the witch trials is, according to Meeker, the same hatred that fuels the multi-billion dollar pornography industry and keeps women in subservient positions in the church and medical profession.

Meeker underlines her point by juxtaposing a medieval woodcut of a woman tied to a tree

with a modern pornographic image of a woman bound and gagged. Her message is spelled out; nothing is left to the viewer's imagination.

In an interview after the screening of her film, Meeker explained her approach to filmmaking: "I subscribe to the school of thought that says documentary is propaganda. If I were to cater to the unconverted, I would have to worry about not offending anyone and would have to water down my feminism."

"Then it would be just like television," she says.

*Remember the Witches* served as Meeker's thesis for her Masters of Fine Arts degree in film production at the University of B.C. Similar in format to her two previous films, the 38 minute *Night Without Fear* and the six minute *Foot-binding*, it presents a radical feminist analysis in a didactic fashion.

There is no doubt Meeker's work is important. Her view of the world should be communicated and should reach the eyes and ears of everyone who has heard all about men, not women, in history.

But perhaps her message could better be conveyed through an appeal to the imagination, since viewers can be easily turned off by a black and white ideology and clearly drawn lines. Subtlety and persuasion, especially in today's political climate, would make her feminist statements more palatable.

Meeker's films challenge historical assumptions, at the same time as they subvert traditional film conventions. She avoids the talking-head style of interview and says she allows a female voice to present what she considers a subjective reality as opposed to the traditionally styled objective truth.

"I'm attempting to break out of traditional documentary forms. Realistic documentary is too simplistic in its form, it focuses on a particular individual and lets that person shape the whole film," Meeker says.

"Feminist film theory says we must interrogate conventional forms and work feminism through those forms. I abandoned the patriarchal use of a male narrator, the voice of authority, and let a woman's discourse flow through the film."

*cont'd on next page*



cont'd from page 44

As a result of this unique approach, *Remember the Witches* has a noticeable absence of real people talking and arguing in front of the camera. The voices of a healer, midwife and priestess are heard, but the women are faceless and nameless and thus not witches with whom the audience can identify.

Still, Meeker, has received much praise for her work. Brenda Ingratta, distribution coordinator for Vancouver's Women in Focus, a women's art and media centre, says of Meeker: "I think she has a lot of integrity in what she tries to do, the way she presents her material and the topics she chooses. The respect she has for film as a form of communication is really admirable. I think we're going to be seeing a lot of Meeker's work."

John Newton, University of B.C. film studies professor, says Meeker is a skilled technician who has practically "handmade" her films. Her expertise, he says, is particularly evident in *Remember the Witches'* opening scene, which combines the ominous sound of bells with images from Carl Dreyer's 1928 classic, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*.

When Meeker looks through the lens of her camera again, she plans to focus on the myth of Pandora. Meeker says Pandora was an earth goddess who gave gifts from her urn to the common people, according to the first myth.

Meeker wants to recapture the original version. ▼

To view Meeker's film history of witches, contact the film's distributor: Women in Focus, 456 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. (604) 872-2250.

## Poetry

Yi yi yi ya yi  
my heart is broke  
we all said  
our hearts were broke  
and I wassa  
covered in crumbs  
hadn't ever seen  
starfish  
hadn't ever peed under a hummingbird  
flying next to an arbutus tree  
and then hear stomping  
not bambi twinkle walking  
damn grass crashing  
of the deers  
come out into the clearing  
just to watch me there squatting  
hadn't seen such things  
hadn't been such things  
until my back grew barnacles  
and the crumbs were identified as  
pale brown snails  
spiralling down past the smallness  
of any human pore.  
so this is where I used to live,  
and Hell I have to go.

© Sue Dymant

## B O O K S

### Darkness

*Darkness*, by Bharati Mukherjee; New York: Penguin Books. Paper, \$6.95.

Reviewed by MADELINE COOPSAMMY

In *Darkness*, a brilliant and ironic collection of short stories, Bharati Mukherjee explores agonising moments in the lives of immigrants from the sub-continent of India, many of them, "well-bred post-colonials like myself, adrift in the new world, wondering if they would ever belong."

With an eye for finely-chiselled detail, and an ear for the variety of speech rhythms of her characters, Mukherjee succeeds in opening up for her readers the world of the Asian immigrant, in re-creating something of the pain and exhilaration of being Asian in North America. In her introduction, the author bitterly states that her 14-year stay in Canada led her to the discovery that the country "is hostile to its citizens who had been born in hot, moist continents like Asia." That hostility is relentlessly catalogued in the stories, in the physical and psychological brutalising of Asian immigrants by members of the white majority society. In "The World According to Hsu," a university professor's wife is terrified of moving from Montreal, "where it was thought charming that her French was just slightly short of fluent," to live in Toronto, where Asian women who drive big cars can be beaten up and

their groceries thrown into the street. "In Toronto, she was not Canadian, not even Indian. She was something called, after the imported idiom of London, a Paki. And for Pakis, Toronto was hell."

Cleverly, the writer shows us the other side of the coin, the half-articulated fears of the white Canadian for the non-white newcomers in their midst. In "Isolated Incidents," Ann, a white Canadian girl from Westmount, having once dreamt of joining CUSO, tries to convince people who are fighting deportations, who have been violently attacked in the Toronto subway that Human Rights cannot solve their problems.

These stories are about belonging, about rejection of a subtle or violent kind, about new conquistadors to the new world, about legal and illegal immigrants, about women like the author herself, who learns that the symbols of the old culture have little or no meaning in the new, and the stories celebrate the writer's passing from the "aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration."

Though some of the stories in this book may have special meaning to non-white immigrant women, most readers will find the stories entertaining and written with consummate literary skill. Two of them have won Canadian Journalism Awards and "Angela" has been selected for including in "The Best American Short Stories, 1985." ▼

### ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 23

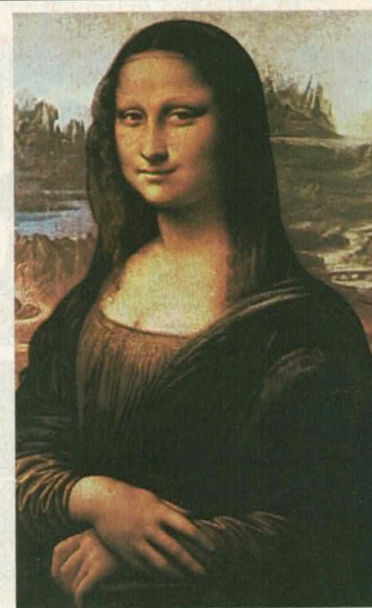
#### ACROSS

1. Pat, 3. Kaldor, 6. Lotte, 9. Tammy, 11. Ferron, 12. k.d., 14. Ella, 17. Club, 18. Mama, 20. Out, 23. Bad, 24. Man, 26. Madonna, 30. Ivie, 34. Sheena, 35. Armstrong, 37. Do, 38. Edith, 39. Vega, 40. Smith, 41. Hess.

#### DOWN

2. Anne, 4. Day, 5. Rock, 6. Loretta, 7. Tina, 8. Ethel, 10. Melba, 11. Fun, 13. Diane, 15. Luba, 16. Name, 21. Um, 22. Love, 23. Supremes, 27. Dietrich, 28. Nina, 29. Near, 31. Sisters, 32. Marian, 33. Lind, 36. GoGos.

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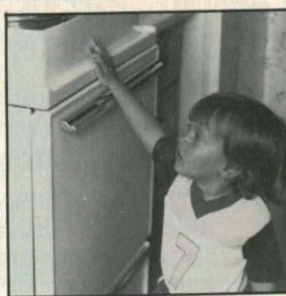
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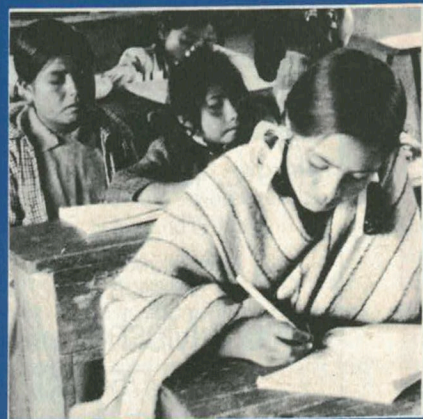
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