

VOIR SECTION  
FRANÇAISE!

JULY/AUGUST 1985, VOL. 3, NO. 5 \$2.50

# HERizons

A WOMEN'S NEWS MAGAZINE

## ACTIVE IN THE ARTS

### TERILYN RYAN

Country and western  
singer, songwriter,  
and single mother

### GAIL SINGER

Filmmaker

### BETSY WARLAND

Poet

### LIBBY OUGHTON

Publisher

### PLUS...

Astrology

Theatre

Sci-fi

Terilyn Ryan and son Larkin

SPECIAL ISSUE



# HERizons

JULY/AUGUST ■ 1985

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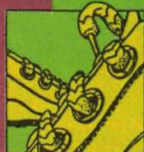
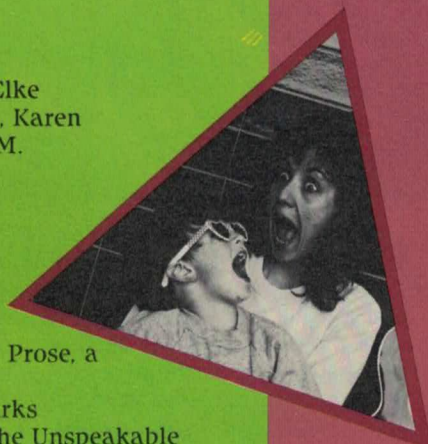
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## Another Year of Publishing Pleasure!

Well, we did it. In spite of all odds, letter-writing campaigns and anti-abortion crusades to have *HERizons* shut down; after almost a month of near agony in bureaucratic paperwork limbo, we finally received the news from Ottawa that the federal government-sponsored portion of our budget would be renewed this fiscal year!

Our success over the last year has been dramatic: quadrupled subscriptions and a growing national distribution. The decision to continue *HERizons* funding under the L.E.A.D. program (Local Employment Assistance Development) keeps us on the steady path to self-sufficiency. This issue is appropriately called "Active in the Arts" and features some well-known, some lesser known, as well as some new faces in Canadian culture.

Next month, you'll notice some changes in *HERizons*. A new logo and a few design changes will be just a few of the ways we'll be marking our First Anniversary as a national magazine. Because of increasing costs and to help consolidate our advertising revenues, you'll be seeing us 8 times next year instead of 10. The issues will alternate between combined issues and single month issues: September, October/November, December, January/February, March, April/May, June, July/August and so on.

The support and encouragement which have been so generously sent by readers over the last months have sustained us through some very tough times. Thanks to you *HERizons* continues to grow in many ways. Another good omen has been the response to our latest national subscription campaign; we've grown by 1,000 readers in the last month!

An exciting year of feminist views and women's news awaits. Next month, Betty Jane Wylie writes about why good grieving is so important. Our Eastern Region editor, Mary Louise Adams, talks about getting our lives in order in the fall, and we have a fascinating feature story on the Dr. Donna Smyth libel trial in Nova Scotia. Curious? Stay tuned.

This coming year we're also going to have a special section for women in business who can advertise for super-cheap rates in *HERizons* by sending us their business cards. Find out more details next month, when we'll print copy deadlines for advertising, along with ad rates.

Our strength, our success, and our sustenance comes from our readers, who continue to make up an integral part of our community, our ideas and our direction.

Thank-you.

PM

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Luanne Armstrong	Lois Anderson
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Ginni Gunn	Eileen Burnett

**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.**

*HERizons* magazine is located at 200 - 478 River Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3L 0C8. Phone (204) 477-1730. *HERizons* is published 8 times per year. Subscriptions \$17 per year for individuals; \$30 for businesses and institutions; outside Canada add \$5.00. *HERizons* is a member of the Canadian Periodical Publishers Association and is listed in the Alternative Press Index. Submissions are welcome. Editing rights reserved and submission does not guarantee publication. A self-addressed, stamped envelope will ensure submissions are returned to author. Views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect *HERizons* policy. Second Class Mail Registration No. 5899.





# letters

Dear Editors:

I have enjoyed reading *Herizons* for the past six months. It is a magazine that seems, to me, to be without all of the dogmatic pretensions that so many "small" magazines seem to believe are necessary to the maintenance of a unique "character." I have seen that *Herizons'* feminist interests are as varied as mine and that no subject is too small or too large to tackle.

**Thank you,  
Grace Rostig**

Dear Editors:

I was most distressed to read, in the *Toronto Star*, about *HERizons* Magazine being censored by the St. James-Assiniboia board. Unfortunately, it appears the women on that particular board have their own interpretation of what equal rights should mean. However, perhaps the narrow view they have displayed and the publicity that view has generated will work in *HERizons* favor.

**Best wishes,  
Kathleen Misener**

Dear *Herizons*,

I am a seismic worker in Northern Alberta and live a very nomadic life. I was delighted to find a copy of *HERizon's* in Al's News in Grande Prairie, as my lifestyle usually forces me into a cultural-blackout throughout the winter months.

This is just the second issue of *HERizons* I've seen since leaving an urban lifestyle two years ago, and I am encouraged to find you still publishing. *Herizons* fills a vital gap in the Canadian media and I find the very existence of a Canadian feminist periodical to be very comforting to me, especially when I find you in the smaller centres. Congratulations on your outreach efforts and I look forward to seeing *HERizons* networking with women throughout the Northern centres.

**In Solidarity  
Madeline McDonald  
Alberta**

To the wonderful women of *Herizons*:

I would like to have a subscription to your great magazine. Up to now I have always borrowed an issue. I find each time that I have greater and greater difficulty in returning the issue — I want to re-read, file & KEEP.

And of course the other part is that I want to support the continuation of the magazine and the energy of the women who are involved.

The attack on *Herizons* by the pro-life, anti-choice groups is frightening. I admire the ways you have chosen to deal with their threats.

You're Right On Track!

**In sisterhood,  
Judy Moynihan**

Editors:

I really like this magazine and feel it's just getting better and better. You deal with a wide range of topics all of which I have found very pertinent. I especially appreciated the article on 'Real Women and Feminists.' by Penni Mitchell and Charlyn Toews. I have also found it very distressing that not all women are feminists and don't always know how to integrate that feeling of betrayal with my belief that women have to learn to appreciate each other and listen to and learn from each other. Thank you for expressing that conflict in such a caring and open way.

**Phyllis L. Nickel**

Dear Women:

Just a note to say that I really enjoy your mag. I began reading it because the Carleton University Women's Centre got it. I like it so much that I subscribed. Now I send my old copies to my mother.

As two Catholic women we really are glad to see you standing up to the

anti-choice women who believe no Catholic women should read your mag.

**In sisterhood & choice,  
Judith Pfeifer**

Dear *HERizons*,

I've been appreciating your magazine even more, living out here in Cape Breton, than I did while living in Winnipeg.

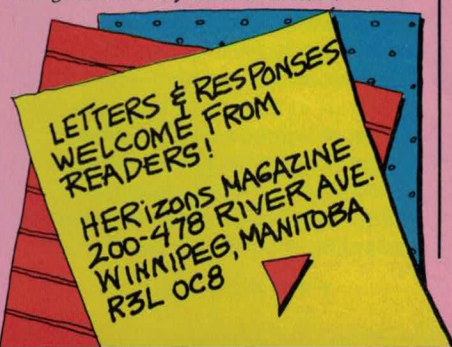
Partly this is because of my relative isolation here from the women's movement, and partly it's the magazine itself (herself?) which I think is improving by leaps and bounds, especially with your recent theme issues, and your 'going national'. The writing in most articles seems sharper, more exciting and concise. And it looks like the typos are going extinct!

Many of the articles left me wanting more of the same. More about our feminist Elders. More of the sort of refreshing nondogmatic views expressed by Gert Beadle, as well as interviewers as perceptive as Joan Baril. More articles in French, to help us anglaises repave our often bumpy, potholed knowledge of that language. More about rural women's experiences, as described in Luanne Armstrong's article about women living in a small community in B.C.; this reflected the predicament of many 'newcomer' women in these parts.

Finally, Julia Van Gorder's piece on buying a computer was so brightly written, it converted me; now I fantasize enthusiastically about hooking up an expandable IBM PC clone to our windmill and churning out novels at the speed of light by the light of a kerosene lamp, and hoping for a change that the everlasting Cape Breton wind doesn't die down.

One thing I would particularly like to see in upcoming issues is writings from the leading edge of the feminist movement — that is, articles and fiction by and about lesbians.

**All the best,  
Claudia Frei  
Cape North, N.S.**





Dear Herizons.

We would like to respond to the letter from Marguerite Smith (March issue) in which she describes her reaction to the article by Nora D. Randall on *Still Sane*, the sculpture series by Persimmon Blackbridge and Sheila Gilhooly which documents the three years Sheila spent in psychiatric institutions for being a lesbian. Specifically, Smith objects to what she sees as "sensationalist" and violent images in the show.

Smith compares our work to cut-up and stabbed mannequins she has seen displayed in art galleries. We agree that this kind of image, whether in "art" or in pornography, gives the message that women are playthings, that violence is fun. Feminists who use these images are treading a fine line. Many people who see them are likely to be shocked and titillated rather than shocked and appalled and moved to action. But the figures in *Still Sane* are not the slick, stereotypically pretty mannequins with plastic blood Smith refers to. The body is strong, very much that of a real, individual woman feeling real pain, and fighting back. She is portrayed as neither a plaything nor a victim. And while the media fragments women's bodies to sexualize and depersonalize them, the impulse here is towards integration and wholeness, not away from it.

Ultimately, *Still Sane* tells the story of a woman's defiance and survival. Those of us who are incest survivors, battered wives, prisoners and mental patients need to speak of violence. We are silenced by this society. We are isolated, taught to be ashamed, lied about by our oppressors, patronized by experts; meanwhile, the violence we have experienced continues. When we speak out, however painful it is for others to hear, we are breaking down this fabric of shame, isolation and lies. We are making it a little harder for the violence to continue.

*Still Sane* did, and was intended to, evoke strong reactions in those who saw it. As Nora D. Randall pointed out in her article, the effect of seeing experiences which are hidden and denied by our society is shocking and unsettling. But the response from people who saw the show (including many ex-inmates) was overwhelmingly positive. This encouraged us to make the work available to a larger audience. A book based on *Still Sane* will be published by Press Gang in the fall of 1985, and

will include colour and black & white reproductions of the artwork as well as articles which examine the political issues raised by the show. Press Gang is currently engaged in raising funds to cover the costs of the book's production: to make a donation, or for more information, write them at 603 Powell Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1H2.

**In sisterhood,  
The Still Sane Book Collective**

Dear Editors:

I want to let you know that I have received my first issue of your magazine. I specially enjoyed the story by Sybil Shack.

At last someone realizes that old women still can be active intellectually, even if our bodies are old and slow.

I enjoy reading everything.

**Sincerely,  
Emma Parizeau  
Montreal**

Sisters —

I write because of the loud cheer that my ancient heart wishes to direct to Sybil Shack for her March-published article *Old Women are Feminists Too*.

While on the subject of cheers, another cheer from me to Jessikah, for her letter protesting the tone and content of the HERIZONS review of the recently published workbook on lesbianism and feminism, *Stepping Out of Line*.

Perhaps what I am feeling is the need to remove the barriers that separate us, as women, rather than continue to be kept apart with barriers like age, lifestyles, various snobberies, and all other divisive factors.

So I am "raising my voice as an older woman", and, as Sybil Shack suggested am prepared to "yell louder".

When I returned to Manitoba about four years ago, I anticipated that my interest and enthusiasm would meet with acceptance and warmth from younger feminists in this province, as my peripheral involvement in another province had been. This proved to be an erroneous assumption. The rejecting factor I concluded to be my age.

I am delighted that Sybil Shack voiced the issue of some feminists excluding old women from their vision, because we may not currently be caught up in the media-dramatic

focus of this day.

Written with appreciation to those feminists who create HERIZONS for all of us to read, and in the hope that, in the future, no woman will feel excluded because she is growing old.

**With gratitude and love,  
Ruth Hughes**

Dear friends,

I would like to comment on the article "How Safe are Vaccinations?" by Edda Goldman in the latest Herizons.

It is correct that vaccines given to children, particularly pertussis (whooping cough) can cause serious complications. Doctors have failed to inform parents adequately about the risks of immunization. You do a service to women with children by mentioning severe reactions that contra-indicate the giving of any more doses.

No mother should accept a denial that there are any problems. The actual risks are somewhat hard to pin down. The figures that I use are as follows, for pertussis vaccine: death, one per million doses, permanent brain damage, 1 per 310,000; encephalopathy (coma) 1 in 110,000; convulsions, 1 in 1750; high fever, 1 in 300.

In my opinion, it is immunization that has caused the very rapid drops in cases of pertussis, diphtheria, polio and tetanus in Canada since the 1920's.

My research shows that about 15% of children who receive measles vaccine get fever; the risk of encephalitis is about one in a million. The disease itself causes encephalitis in one per thousand, and of these 10 to 30% die and 50% are brain damaged.

Polio vaccine causes paralysis in the recipient in one case per 4 to 9 million; in addition, one case among household contacts per 2-5 million.

My research has convinced me that most of the routine immunizations now recommended have benefits that outweigh the risks.

Compulsory vaccination programs exist in Ontario and New Brunswick and I believe Manitoba has now followed suit. Vancouver has compulsory vaccination for school attendance, but parents may refuse if they wish: the child will then be excluded from school during an epidemic, which seems quite reasonable. The other provinces find that immunization rates are so high



on a voluntary basis that compulsion is unnecessary.

Parents considering whether or not to immunize their children should consider the welfare, first of the child, then of the whole community. They should insist that their doctor give clear cut assessment of the risks and benefits. Informed consent should be the cornerstone of all public health programs; only then can we all work together to rid our land of epidemic disease.

yours,  
**K. Emmott, M.D.**

*The editors regret that this letter had to be edited for length.*

Dear HERizons,

Debra Pilon's review of *A Passage to India* (May 1985), while critical of the way the movie portrays white women, ignores the racist portrayal of Indians. She even writes: "The country's charms are lovingly reflected in...the film. Care is taken, too, to craft complex male characters whose actions and reactions are mirror images of the trying times in which they live."

*Complex?* Professor Godbole is portrayed so stereotypically that the Hindu teacher serves as simply a target for racist laughter. He is played by the English actor Alec Guinness, reminiscent of Al Jolson in "blackface" and the succession of white Charlie Chans. And then there is the naive and bumbling Dr. Aziz (Victor Banerjee), with his grovelling, eager-to-please attitude towards the British.

What is a feminist magazine doing printing tunnel-vision criticism which spots sexism but can't (or won't) see other forms of oppression?

**Margaret Fulford**  
**Montreal**

Dear HERizons,

I send you strong wishes for survival in what you accurately describe as "a time when the political climate for social change appears headed for an ice age" (Apr./85 editorial). I deplore the recent vicious attacks on *HERizons* from bigots, reactionaries and cowards. Yet it is cause for pride that you have managed to flush out into the open several of the historic oppressors of women. When bullies are forced to show their true colours in debate, I

believe they lose a lot of their power.

I most specifically want to go on record as thanking you and supporting you because of your courageous defense of lesbian rights over the past year. I applauded your editorial in the Aug./84 issue, when you publicly criticized the Manitoba government for offering to women a "negotiated settlement" which sells out on the issue of lesbian rights. You have since published some important human rights statements on our behalf, such as the article spelling out the hate, harassment and discrimination faced by teenage lesbians in high schools (Jan-Feb/85), the article documenting the three years that a woman spent in a mental hospital for being a lesbian (Dec./84), a review of new lesbian love poems (Mar./85) and ongoing announcements of lesbian activities both near and far. And throughout the last six months of anti-*HERizons* attacks by church and state, you have coolly maintained your public position in defense of our right to be (Wpg. *Free Press* report Apr. 4/85, p. 1). In our present climate, that takes an awful lot of guts.

Within this context of ongoing support of your venture and of applause for your militance, courage and overall accomplishments, I need also to express my disappointment and anger at your cover story in the April/85 issue, "The Charter of Rights: Our Just Desserts".

I have been aware that many feminist lobbyists have sold us out by failing to include freedom of sexual orientation as one of their demands. But I am stunned to read in *HERizons* a call for celebration of that fact, via an article praising the "new charter of rights" which does not once mention the word LESBIAN!

This is precisely why lesbians must

demand that political women stop selling us down the tube as they have over the "new charter". If all lesbians withdrew our energy from all feminist projects which did not give full backing to freedom of sexual orientation we'd soon get some action. Your article boasts that Canadian women have succeeded where American ERA supporters have not. Shame on you, "sisters"! The main difference in campaigns is that the strength of American separatists has prohibited the more timid and privileged ERA supporters from selling out lesbians. Separatist-oriented women in Canada are only now beginning to get our shit together to similarly empower ourselves.

The goal of taking over the patriarchal parliamentary system is a very shortsighted and disempowering campaign. For what the women's movement has always been about is taking back control over our *selves* — our *lives* — and first and last, that means taking back control over our *bodies*. Freedom of sexual preference and freedom of reproductive choice stand as two demands that are essential to any true victories coming from that struggle. Neither will be won until both are won. And when this finally happens, we will no longer be living under the patriarchy!

**Isabel Andrews,**  
**Co-editor, VOICES**  
**for Lesbian Survival,**  
**co-organizer, the Lesbian Archives**  
**and Resource Centre**

*The editors regret that the above letter had to be edited for length.*

Dear Editors:

Thank you for your time, and for the magazine. I particularly enjoyed Lyn Cockburn's column, "Closet Commies" in the March issue. It made me laugh, especially because a rather large percentage of people here in Alberta seem to be afflicted with a kind of political colour blindness that makes them envision anyone who even votes N.D.P. as flaming red. I find it rather a hoot (or maybe a melancholy bleat), since I suppose most self-respecting socialists would class me a wishy-washy pastel shade. Sincerely, through rose-coloured glasses,

**Alice Major**  
**Edmonton, Alberta**



Dear friends:

Iahl sarson may have had something to communicate in her very long letter to *Herizons*, but, after a couple of paragraphs who would want to read it? Expecting a reader to decipher all the misspelt words for more than two paragraphs is ridiculous.

The nutrient value of her alphabet soup is in question from the first taste.

If she wants to communicate, why does she cripple her message with barriers? I am thankful *Herizons* is out of touch with her thinking as I prefer relative clarity to confusion.

*Herizons* is a magazine with a lot of personality and I look forward to each issue as I do the visit of a friend.

It is natural that parts of our nature don't always agree, but I like her.

I feel a special alliance when she comes under attack in the media from those who would destroy her entirely because they don't care for parts of her personality.

The written words in *Herizons* provide a type of food for thought and a channel for awareness I find in very few other areas. This I appreciate.

**Sincerely yours,  
Linda Tustin**

Dear Readers:

My apology.

I wrote a small piece on Incest Survivors for the May edition of *HERizons*. A rather glaring oversight on my part was my neglect in mentioning that the February "Counselling the Sexual Abuse Survivor" conference in Winnipeg was sponsored by Klinik, Inc., a community health centre. Klinik is staffed by extremely committed workers, both paid and volunteer, and it was through the efforts of these people that the conference, a major ground-breaking event, took place. I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to the organizers, the staff and the volunteers at Klinik for failing to give them the recognition they so deeply deserve, and to thank them for the wisdom, courage and support they have offered me in my 2½ years there as a volunteer.

**Very truly,  
Beth Follett**

*The following letters were forwarded to Herizons from the filmmakers. Due to space requirements, we are unable to print all of them in their entirety.*

Editors:

We are cultural workers who have known and worked with Janis Cole and Holly Dale for several years, but the Cole and Dale of the letter which appeared in your May issue are completely unrecognizable to us. The letter from Kehoe and Fraser contains errors of fact, confusion between oppressors and victims, and unfounded assumptions of the filmmaker's opportunism.

Let's leave faces, egos and 'horizontal attacks' on the cutting room floor and focus on the issues the film raises — violence on the streets, a living work and wage for women, the increasing sexual exploitation of children, the political and social systems which promote prostitution, as well as questions like men dressing as women to make money on the street. Some trust and an open mind between the women working on these issues can achieve more positive results for the prostitutes than arguing about the correct or only way in which to proceed.

**Susan G. Cole  
Jane Farrow  
Lynne Fernie  
Darlene Lawson  
Lorraine Segato  
Aerlyn Weissman**

To The Editor.

There are many points I don't agree with in the letter from Calgary women in your May issue. I would like to answer a few of them.

It is stated in paragraph two of the letter: "This film does not help feminists working on the issue". First, it was not solely or even partly made for the benefit of the feminist movement. Janis and Holly made this film to give the average citizen, who may never have had a chance to witness such a scene, a chance to catch it as it happens. They were not using this privilege to solve one of the world's oldest problems, but to give a serious, and sometimes humorous look at what is happening now.

**Tiggy  
Prostitute on Davie Street**

Dear Editor:

After the filmmakers spent several months on Davie Street, we the prostitutes gave them our full time and co-operation to make the film a realization. This is time that they put in not even knowing if a film would result from their work. I have re-read the press book that Janis and Holly gave me and noticed many times where they mention meeting us at an ASP meeting. But the real making of the film was between prostitutes and filmmakers. Maybe if ASP had given the commitment that the prostitutes had, the film would show their words, (and less of ours). Considering that ASP is a support group for us, I wonder why they find our words unworthy in the first place.

I feel that by working with Janis and Holly, we worked with two very talented and caring people who showed exactly what our life is about, and the fact that our friendship has remained constant since the making of the film more than shows me their sincerity.

**Severely yours,  
Michelle  
Prostitute on Davie St.**

To Whom it may concern,

I was in the film *Hookers...* on Davie. I am a working mother, bringing up a nine year old boy.

I think the film's focus was right on target. Prostitutes spoke out about themselves; women, transsexuals, transvestites and gays were all included because that is what you will find the streets full of, not only in Vancouver but many other cities where street prostitution exists as well. Janis and Holly were trying to include every aspect and everyone's point of view, but even if the film was 2 days long, you can't cover absolutely everything.

The hostility on the streets was not caused by the film, it has always been there. No one film can be expected to make a dramatic change to the way society thinks, but even if some people with age old ideas change or open up, that is a start.

**Yours truly,  
Bev  
Prostitute on Davie St.**



**PRAIRIE REGION****WOMEN AND THE CITY:  
THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE —**

Will take place during the **August 14-17, 1985** conference as a special day-long session of the Canadian Urban Studies Conference in Winnipeg. Subjects to include the impact of changing residential patterns on women, theoretical approaches to women and environments, women as urban actors, transportation and women and a discussion of future directions in research on women and the city. Organizers are Beth Moore-Milroy (City of Ottawa) and Caroline Andrew (Dept. of Political Science, Université d'Ottawa). For info.: Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Ave., Winnipeg R3B 2E9.

**CANADIAN WOMEN'S MUSIC  
AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL —**

Holds its second annual celebration of women's contributions to Canadian music and culture in Kildonan Park, Winnipeg on the weekend of **August 30, 31 and September 1**. An impressive line-up of performers is being confirmed at present. For information contact the Festival office at (204) 477-5478 or write: CWM&CF, 3D-161 Stafford St., Winnipeg R3M 2W9.

**EASTERN REGION****MY FUTURE/MY CHALLENGES —**

A Conference for young women, ages 14 - 24 is being planned in participation of the International Year of the Youth by the Women's Studies Collective at the University of Ottawa. The conference is to be held at the University of Ottawa during the last weekend of **September, 1985** — contact Heather Brechin of the Collective for details.

**COMING TOGETHER: A WOMEN'S  
SEXUALITY CONFERENCE —**

Is currently being organized to take place in Toronto in **October, 1985**. We welcome workshop proposals which reflect the diversity of ideas and experiences of women's sexuality to Natalie Zlodre, Side by Side: Feminist Resources, 382 Dovercourt Road, Apt. 33, Toronto, Ontario M6J 2E6.

**bulletins****INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON THE STATUS OF GIRLS —**

Is planned for **October 29-31, 1985** at the Montreal Sheraton Centre. For more information write to Bureau de la Conférence, 6161 St-Denis, 4ième étage, bureau 4.06, Montréal H2S 2R5 (514) 274-3581.

**NATIONAL FARM WOMEN'S  
CONFERENCE —**

Farm Women: Networking For Action: is the theme of the Second National Farm Women's Conference slated to be held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, **November 21-24, 1985**. Wanda MacMurdo, Planning Committee Chairperson, explains: "It's time for farm women from all parts of Canada to assemble to demonstrate our motivation and find new and creative ways to better our situation within the farming industry. This Conference will bring together women from the grass roots of Canadian farming and women's agricultural organizations." To contact the planning committee for the program of the conference and other details write: Wanda MacMurdo, P.O. Box 984, Charlottetown, P.E.I. C1A 4A2.

**NATIONAL REGION****HETROMANIA —**

A satire which explores the dynamics between heterosexual and lesbian women. The video is set in a women's public washroom; a place where ALL women go and interact. However, there are rules and guidelines even here, as four women come together with all their judgements and stereotypes.

This work has been chosen as part of the **Canadian Mosaic** exhibit touring Japan in June, July and November. Invitations have been received by producers Jackie Hegadorn and Tova Wagman to attend the showings. To have the opportunity to represent, women and video, and to have a dialogue with women of Japan would be extremely beneficial to the presentation of this work. They are seeking funds for

plane fare and per diem expenses to ensure the video is shown with aware and honest support and analysis. Women's groups and readers can contribute to: Jackie Hegadorn, 14847 Buena Vista Avenue, White Rock, B.C. V4B 1X3.

**PELVIC INFLAMMATORY  
DISEASE (PID) —**

Two women who both have PID which is disabling want to hear from any woman who has been cured of chronic PID or from any practitioner who has treated this disease with any success. We'd also like to hear from women who've had a hysterectomy for PID; we wonder if the infection actually was cured and the pain relieved. We will share this information with other PID victims we're in touch with across the continent. Thanks. Write to: Maureen Moore, 2045 Trafalgar Street, Vancouver V6K 3S5 (604) 734-9206 or Ann Miller, 45 Montrose Avenue, East Greenwich, Rhode Island, U.S.A. (401) 885-3054.

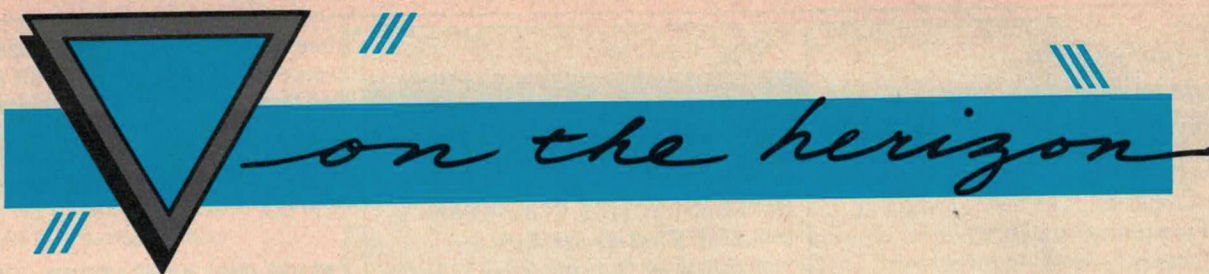
**SUBMISSIONS****HEAR YE PHOTOGRAPHERS —**

(Amateurs and Professionals)! Do you have any photographs of women in their middle years, 40 - 60? We are producing a "book about menopause" and need black and white photographs of women alone or in groups, in private or public settings. There will be a cash reward for photographs chosen. Write name on back of each print and photographs will be returned. Submit by **Sept. 30, 1985** to: Montréal Health Press, Inc./Les Presses de la santé de Montréal, Inc., P.O. Box 1000, Station La Cité, Montréal H2W 2N1 c/o Judith Crawley (514) 272-5441.

**IN CELEBRATION OF  
CANADIAN WOMEN —**

Poetry and Short Stories by and about Canadian Women will be edited by Greta Hofmann Nemiroff and published by Fitzhenry and Whiteside early in 1986. Deadline for this thematically organized anthology is **October 1, 1985**. For further information, please contact Greta Hofmann Nemiroff, The New School, Dawson College, 485 McGill St., Montreal H2Y 2H4.





According to Peggy Nash, Director of Communications for the Canadian Air Line Employees Association (CALEA), the issue at stake in the recent Air Canada strike was "the right for women to work at full-time jobs at a decent rate of pay."

Although an agreement was ratified at the beginning of June by 83 per cent of the union's members, Air Canada originally wanted the right to lay off full-time workers before part-time workers, and wanted to lower the starting rate of \$5.75 per hour for new employees. Also at stake was job security, and CALEA feared that passenger agents would be replaced by automated computers, much the same as has happened in the banking industry. Air Canada, says CALEA, wanted to introduce a system of automated self-service ticket and reservation machines. Sixty-six per cent of the airline's ticket agents are women.

In spite of Air Canada's attempts to restructure the work force at Air Canada, Employment Minister Flora McDonald has cited Air Canada as a

## Air Canada strikes women the hardest

**Debra Pilon**

"model of equality" for women. But women represent only 3 per cent of upper management at Air Canada, and 7 per cent at middle management. Characteristically, women are overrepresented in clerical and service occupations, at 75 per cent.

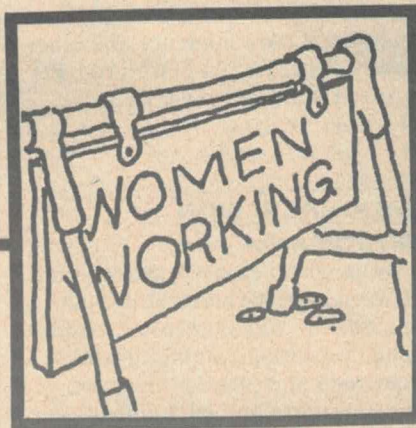
Nash said during negotiations that: "Air Canada's actions with regard to the erosion of women's jobs flies in the face of both the Wallace Commission (a federal commission on part-time work) and the Abella report (on employment equity)."

She also accused the company of

systematic discrimination and at one time said "they're hitting us hardest because we're women and because we're vulnerable to technological change."

Prior to the strike, just over 80 per cent of passenger agents were full-time, with almost all working at the maximum pay level of \$27,000 annually. More than 40 per cent of CALEA's members contribute more than 40 per cent to their total household income, a statistic the union says refutes the myth that part-time workers and women just work for "pin money."

When 43 Regina and Saskatoon CALEA members' jobs were cut last year, during an Air Canada "reorganisation," an Air Canada internal report said that "prime wage earners will follow the work to Winnipeg," where 21 new jobs were created. A list of the employees losing their jobs was attached, which speculated on which employees would "terminate." Married females were most frequently the ones expected to give up their jobs by the company.



A MANITOBA COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH JUDGE has upheld a Human Rights Adjudicator's ruling that Knit-Rite Mills discriminated against a garment worker because of her sex.

Irene McDonald, who worked as a cutter for 10 years with Knit-Rite, had complained to the Human Rights Commission that when the Company introduced a new classification and wage scale system, she was placed in a lower classification and paid a lower rate of pay than her male co-workers even though she had done substantially the same work and was more experienced than some of them. She also complained that by being placed in the lower classification, she was subject to layoff while men in the higher classification were retained.

In December of 1983, Adjudicator

Jack London had found that when the Company introduced its new classification system, it based classifications on rates of pay existing at the time but historically, the Company had differential wage rates for men and women. London concluded that McDonald's classification was discriminatory because it was based on a systemic practice of differential treatment.

Knit-Rite appealed the decision on the grounds that there was not sufficient evidence to support the Board's conclusion of sex

discrimination. However, Mr. Justice Scollin dismissed the appeal concluding the evidence justified London's conclusions.

Justice Scollin also dismissed the Company's argument that they should not be held responsible for the violation because they did not deliberately set out to use sex as the basis for the classification. Justice Scollin commented that, although the Company had no general corporate policy to discriminate against women, intent to discriminate is irrelevant in view of what the employer actually did.

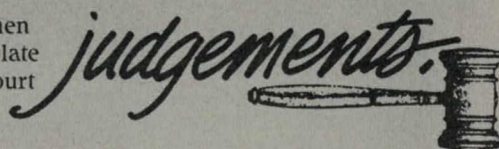
The amount of compensation for lost wages arising from the misclassification in 1981 and McDonald's subsequent layoff remains to be argued.



A federal appeals court in San Francisco ruled April 16th that a state law requiring employees to grant pregnancy disability leave to women and later rehire them does *not* violate federal civil rights law. A lower court had ruled that the law discriminated against men.

★ ★ ★

Two men convicted of the Christmas Day bombings of a Florida abortion clinic and two doctors' offices were sentenced May 31st to 10 years each in federal prison, while the wife of one man and the fiancée of the other were put on five years' probation. The men had faced possible terms of 65 years each. Joseph Scheidler, who heads the "Pro-Life Action League," hailed the sentences and said the case had helped the anti-abortion movement. Said Scheidler: "I don't approve of violence, but I know there have to be strong acts like this to advance the cause."



Officials of a local of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union in Wilmington, California announced May 28th that the union has decided to let spouses of its members work on the docks, after all. Eight wives of union members will now be registered as marine clerks, while 24 others, along with the husband of one member, will be longshore workers on the docks. The union announcement was prompted by several wives' marital status discrimination suit, which the women have now dropped in exchange for the registration agreement.

The European court of human rights ruled May 28th that the British government is guilty of sex discrimination because it lets men who are legally settled bring their wives into the country but does not let female residents bring in their husbands. A spokesperson for the British government announced it would agree to the court's decision, which could affect as many as two thousand couples a year.

★ ★ ★

A California woman passed over for upper-level promotions in favor of men with years' less experience last week won one million dollars in a sex-discrimination suit against her former employer, Sears Roebuck and Company. The jury awarded Tina Stegeman \$50,000 (dollars) more than her suit requested, making the award a reported record-setter among sex-bias suits in California.

HerSay

## Ministers' conference of little substance

Penni Mitchell

If the recent status of women ministers' conference in Winnipeg is any indication, Canadian women are going to make only marginal gains in the coming years in their quest for economic, political and social equality.

All three women ministers who made closing remarks at the conference (Muriel Smith — Manitoba; Margaret Joe — Yukon; Leone Bagnall — Prince Edward Island) expressed some disappointment that the conference managed to accomplish so little, while the four male ministers (including federal minister Walter McLean) defined the conference's success in terms of discussion, continuing work and long term aims.



Muriel Smith, co-chairing the conference with Walter McLean, stopped short of accusing some participants of stalling when she said that: "Some provinces

still seem to be at the stage of discussion and semantics."

Smith also made strong connections between the everyday discrimination and poverty faced by women and the lack of substance that resulted from the conference, and chided the contradictory actions of participants whose governments have adopted the United Nations declaration on equality, but who appear unwilling to translate some of those principles into action.

Smith had hoped to win support for a seven-point accord on women's equality which she presented to participants, but she could not find unanimous support among her provincial counterparts. The statements in the accord were:

1) A co-ordinated national effort and commitment is required to achieve economic equality for women;

2) Economic equality for women is beneficial to Canada, as well as to women;

3) Women's issues are economic issues;

4) Economic decisions must take into consideration impact on women;

5) Gender disparity should be approached in the same manner as regional disparity;

6) Costs and benefits of economic development must be distributed fairly;

7) Government has a responsibility and a clear mandate from the conclusions of the federal government's Abella Report to intervene to ensure women's economic equality.

Smith also sought, unsuccessfully, agreement from the status of women ministers that the means test which is given to women at some crisis shelters, should be abolished. Her third agenda item, agreement that Canada needs a national effort to ensure adequate child care services, also failed to win unanimous support.

## MIDCONTINENTAL

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## Enshrining women's past:

Frances Rooney

The Canadian Women's Movement Archives sits at the heart of Toronto's women's community. As women's lives seldom fit "traditional" definitions, so this archive fits none of the stereotypes (archives: a place where public records and historical documents are kept). It isn't dark or dusty. It isn't hot, it isn't stuffy. There's not a "Silence Please" sign to be seen; you don't have to sign your life away to get at the material. The staff doesn't say to you, as two staff at the National Archives once said to me, "We don't have time to help you today, there are people here working on *important* projects." And it most definitely is not a shrine to the past of man.

The purpose of this archives is similar to that of others: research and preservation. However, that and a remarkably well-catalogued collection are about as far as any resemblance goes. The documents here are of feminist organisations, often small and

short-lived. And unlike other archives where only the most 'qualified' people are granted access, top priority at the Women's Movement Archives is to be accessible to all women.

Light, airy and open, the place is alive with activity. Most archivists might consider it a little rowdy: it's a place of daily feminist lives as much as a place for the preservation of feminist records. The last time that I was there to work, women were gathering to leaflet federal politicians.

Finally, the collection at this archives is anything but traditional. In addition to the usual periodicals, minutes of meetings, correspondence and journals, the archives collects posters, buttons, graffiti, tee-shirts, flyers, women's oral histories, banners and signs — including a scratch-

ed and blood red spray-painted sign from the Toronto Morgentaler Clinic.

Its material comes from Newfoundland, B.C. and the Yukon. It is in several languages, and it goes back to the early days of the present women's movement.

The women at the archives are seeking to rediscover and rebuild the continuity in women's lives so that we may all learn from the experience of our predecessors: so that we won't have to reinvent the wheel. It's a dynamic and demanding mandate that has so far meant two main tasks: to encourage women's groups to keep records and to preserve and make those records easily available to other women. Neither task is easy. Most of us, including the usually volunteer staff of the archives, have so many

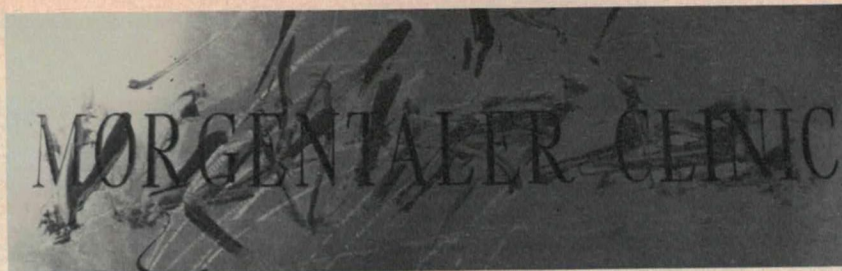


Photo by Frances Rooney

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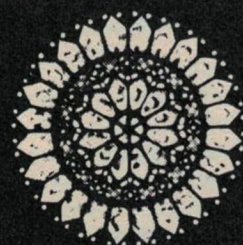
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demands made on our everyday lives that we have little time or energy to look to those of the past, however useful they may be to the future.

That the archives have only officially existed for less than two years seems almost unbelievable. Their flyer rather deceptively states,

From 1972 to 1977, the feminist newspaper called *The Other Woman* received and actively collected much information on a growing women's movement in Canada. After the demise of the newspaper the material became part of an ongoing archival collection, maintained through consultation with other archives.

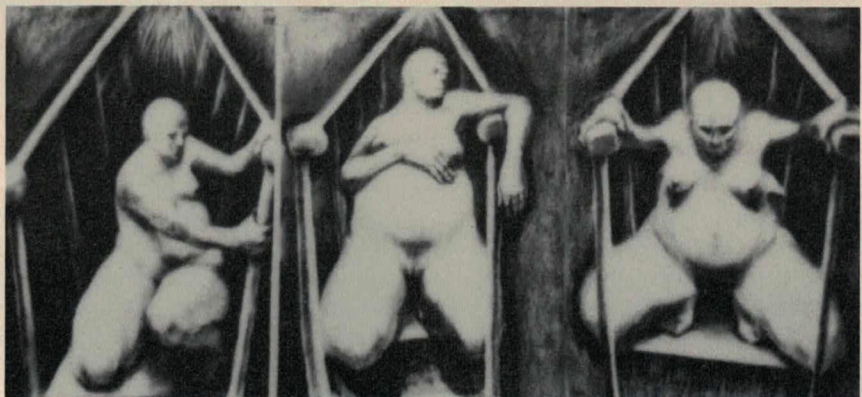
While all that is true, it gives no indication of the fact that for almost six years, *The Other Woman's* collection was maintained, organised, and expanded by one woman working almost entirely alone. As the piles of boxes and files in Pat Leslie's basement grew, it became known that any material from any organisation was welcome and wanted in the collection. Finally in the spring of 1983, the boxes and files moved into their own office space.

There are, it goes without saying, stresses. Money is a constant worry, and as the group becomes larger and better known, questions of direction and focus cause differences of opinion. Staffing is a chronic problem although, given that much archival work is tedious in the extreme — opening and sorting mail, entering each new acquisition in the finding aids, noting donors, clipping relevant material from a huge number of periodicals — it is surprising that it is not even more of a problem.

How to make sure that the process continues? Money is always welcome. Groups can add the archives to their mailing lists; can send all documents (xeroxes if necessary) — paper, flyers, minutes, poster and buttons; can document their events by taking minutes of all meetings and taping and photographing important discussions and activities. Individuals can send almanacs, journals, correspondence, and the feminist goodies in their closets. Finally, the archives are to be used.

Canadian Women's Movement Archives

P.O. Box 928, Station Q  
Toronto, Ontario M4T 2P1  
(416) 597-8865 ▼



Lori Dell "Labour" 26/9/84. Charcoal on paper.

Photo by Lori Dell

## Producing women's art

Heather Ramsay

What do you do when women artists are under-represented and virtually invisible in almost all forms of visual media? Well if you are the feminist collective of Gallery 940 (a gallery whose mandate is specifically to exhibit work by women), you create FEM FEST '85, a multi-disciplinary festival of women's art, presented in Toronto, May 1-25.

Continuing the tradition of feminist cultural events which have occurred in Toronto over the last two years, (The Women's Cultural Building, Women's Perspectives, and Alter/Eros), FEM FEST '85 consisted of three gallery exhibitions showing the work of over 40 feminist artists. Also included were a series of lectures, panel discussions and workshops dealing with feminist cultural perspectives, and three evenings of video and film screenings accompanied by performances, readings and music.

The works exhibited reflected a variety of female experiences dealing with body image, sexuality, pregnancy, childbirth, menstruation, the workplace, abortion, sexual harassment, and others. One large floor piece by Kate Brown is a graphite rubbing of a crucified woman whose image, as people continually walked over it, gradually fades, symbolising the slowly changing position of women in society.

The festival also attempted to highlight works by lesbians, women of colour and working class women whose specific identities take on additional dimensions of discrimination and isolation within their social condition as women.

One of the organisers stated: "For some women the act of taking themselves seriously as professional art-

ists may be the strongest feminist statement they will ever make."

By presenting images conceived and controlled by women, this festival has helped educate and validate the vital role feminist cultural perspectives have in developing a stronger and more visible feminist community.

Although FEM FEST '85 has closed, the discussion, debates, and representations of feminist art will be ongoing. Gallery 940, The Sparkes Gallery (Toronto), Women's Spirit (London), Women in Focus (Vancouver), Powerhouse (Montreal), Plug-In (Winnipeg) and a number of other parallel galleries and organisations across the country will continue to focus on and promote feminist artistic ventures. In response to the awareness that women's art and feminist criticism are not well known in either the art world or the women's community, and that general knowledge of Canadian women's art is quite limited, the Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC) has been recently formed in Toronto to document women's cultural work and to actively generate feminist aesthetic theory in Canada. This has also included the formation of the Women's Cultural Network, a forum designed to share information among individuals and women's organisations, particularly in regard to fundraising.

If FEM FEST '85 is any indication of the true importance of feminist cultural perspectives, then all women can and should be taking an active role in shaping a feminist culture — a culture in which all women will be able to speak passionately about themselves, and one that will aid us in our struggle to change the conditions under which we live. ▼



## The changing scene for farm women

Nancy Painter

The multi-faceted role of women farmers makes it difficult for them to have any free time for themselves.

This is one of the undisputed conclusions of Molly McGhee's study "Women in Rural Life — The Changing Scene," which was presented recently at a one-day seminar for farm women in Brandon, Manitoba.

McGhee noted that the problem is magnified when the farm woman holds an off-farm job. In 1981, 56 per cent of all Ontario women worked outside of the home. Among young farm women aged 22 to 44, the figure rose to 73 per cent.

Rural women's families were a concern high on the list. Child care is needed in rural areas, for mothers with off-farm jobs and for those concerned about the safety of children remaining with their parents during busy periods on the farm.

Maureen Schwanke of the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women reported she is finding similar results in an informal study of her region in Manitoba. A recurring thread, she said, is the feeling of invisibility, that farm women and their contributions are not recognised by financial institutions, the educational system, the business world or the public.

Farm women are also concerned about educational opportunities for their children and themselves. They want to learn more about farm finances, business management and agricultural production to help them take their place as equal partners in farm operations. They want confidence to play a greater role in general farm organisations. Ontario women also wanted education and changes in women's legal rights and pensions, and talked about the discrimination against them in those areas by agribusiness and financial institutions.

Brandon University psychologist Dr. Lilly Walker, who conducts stress workshops and is researching rural stress, led seminar participants in discussions and workshops in which they identified problems and some of their causes, and brainstormed on solutions.

The sharing of problems and the examination of causes and possible

solutions are important to counteract farm women's feelings of helplessness to deal with their situation. The key to dealing with stress, she said, is to solve some problems and learn to live with the others. She urged the women to solve their problems on two levels, personal and political, changing their lives personally while working for changes in the system, too.

Presentations during an afternoon panel discussion reinforced the universality of rural women's concerns. Edna Hammond, provincial Women's Institute president, explained the work of the WI, and emphasised the need to strengthen networks for farm women, and to provide more farm business courses and mental health and family counselling.

Verna Fulton, sole woman director on the general council of Keystone Agriculture Producers, a provincial farm lobby organisation, also urged women to become involved despite their busy schedules, because women are needed as resources and spokespersons in farm organisations.

Farm women at the seminar agreed with another of Molly McGhee's findings — that even with its problems, farming is the only life they would choose for themselves and their families.

Participants shared a growing recognition of their own worth and the importance of their contributions, coupled with frustration at their lack of recognition from others and the general public's lack of understanding of modern agriculture.

"We have power in our numbers and in our similarities," Dr. Walker told them. "See that there is that power and you can find solutions, both personal and political. You are changing, and making changes happen."

Molly McGhee



Photo by Nancy Painter

## Going on alone

Nancy Painter

Decision-making can be the key to adjustment for widows, and the best preparation for such decision-making is to understand the family business before you have to cope with it alone. 150 rural Manitoba women learned at a seminar on Going On Alone held in Ste. Anne, Manitoba.

"I think if widows feel free to make decisions or to seek advice in making them, they are more likely to get their lives together," said Dr. Carole Harvey, an associate university professor who has researched effects of widowhood in both the U.S. and Canada.

Of the more than one million widowed people in Canada, 82 per cent are women, and the proportion is increasing, Harvey said. While most widowers remarry, widows are less likely to remarry.

Coming to peace with the fact the death occurred can take from a few weeks to many years, Harvey told the audience. It is usually after the funeral, when everyone has gone, that the widow realises she is on her own. Most widows face a dramatic decrease in income. One-third of Canadian widows have no other income than Old Age Security, and worries about basic economic survival can become so pervasive they affect other areas of their lives, Harvey noted.

"Income is a better predictor of morale... than any other factor," she told the audience.

Most widows adjust in one of three ways, she said. Some cope by doing the same things they've always done, maintaining continuity in their lives. Others seek a replacement — remarry or do more things with friends or children. A small percentage follow the least desirable mode of adjustment, withdrawal or disassociation, in which they withdraw from the outside world and do as little as possible.

In many ways, "Survivorship is up to the survivor," Harvey said. Widows can find help in support groups or good friends who act as confidantes. Consciousness-raising also seems to help, she said, because once they are confident about and conscious of themselves, they can go ahead and do other things in their lives.



Knowledge of the family business can ease worries about decision-making. "I knew about the operation, and that helped take the fear out of daily living after my husband's death," Bernice Anderson, a farm widow from Morris, told the group that her involvement in the decision-making on her and her husband's farm helped her when she decided to continue operating the grain and hog farm with her children.

Anderson recommended farm women know their accountant, banker and lawyer, understand their husband's will and know where it's kept. Have the property in both names, she advised, adding that with escalating bankruptcies wives should check that move out with an accountant first to avoid losing their dower rights. She recommended joint bank accounts, plus one in the wife's own name. The money in that account is available while the estate is being settled, and helps establish a credit rating in the widow's own name.

"I felt all of a sudden I was nothing," Anderson said of her treatment by businesses, which were reluctant to even put her name on bills and invoices, preferring to deal with her oldest son. It was only through her insistence that their viewpoint changed, and when her sons started dealings of their own, she had to insist all over again that she still had her own operation.

"I still find it difficult to do many things," she said, "but I'm growing... I look ahead but I live one day at a time."

Janet Johnson, a Winnipeg widow who offers grief counselling through the YWCA, divided her handling of grief into four areas, beginning with the fragmentation of her life for several months after her husband's sudden death. During her floundering stage, she made lots of movements but no decisions, she said, such as writing letters of application for jobs and never mailing them.

During her finding stage she had to find out who she was as an individual rather than as part of a couple. It wasn't until the fulfillment stage that she came to terms with her feelings and found new meaning in her life. It was then that she returned to school and eventually began her grief counselling and workshops for widows. ▼



Photo by Les Kossates

Pat Smith

## Keeping a sister in mind

Nora D. Randall

On February 25, 1985, Pat Smith was struck and killed in Vancouver, B.C. by a man who was charged with impaired driving. With her death, the women's movement has lost a woman of courage and creativity who managed to accomplish much in her 35 years, both in her own right and by supporting and encouraging other women.

Pat moved to Vancouver in the early 70s from Ontario where she was born and raised. She worked on *The Pedestal*, Canada's first women's newspaper from 1973 until its demise in 1975. She was a member of the collective that opened the Vancouver Women's Bookstore (1973). She called the first meeting of the lesbian caucus at the British Columbia Federation of Women's founding convention in 1974. She worked with Press Gang, a women's press, for ten years. Pat brought to the press her considerable graphic design skills and the press taught her to print. She then went on to the Women's Press in Toronto where she learned publishing skills. Returning to Vancouver she contributed to Press Gang's growth as a feminist publisher. At the time of her death she was running another print shop but she was still an active member of the Press Gang publishing collective.

Besides her work in the women's movement, Pat was a strong supporter of the Chilean Resistance movement and other Third World Liberation movements.

In 1984, Front Room Theatre, a Seattle women's group, produced Pat's one-act play, *The Oldest Living*, about an elderly lesbian couple living in a small Ontario town and their scheme to bring bathroom plumbing to the first floor of their house.

Pat Smith has left us a rich legacy of art work and writings, political organising and feminist publishing. She also leaves behind many friends from diverse communities across the country especially in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. On March 3rd over 300 people gathered in Vancouver to remember Pat and mourn her passing. There were also memorials in Toronto and Vancouver on International Women's Day. ▼

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## Mary Beth

Mary Beth Dolin, former Manitoba Labour Minister and long-time feminist, died in her Winnipeg home on April 9th, after a lengthy cancer illness.

During her less than 2 years as a cabinet minister, she accomplished a host of labour reforms, including the recognition of pension benefits in the division of family assets and more portable pensions. She also served as Minister for the Status of Women for much of her term and was effective in bringing a feminist conscience to her caucus.

Mary Beth was loved for her determination, her integrity, as well as her compassion and kindness.

## Porn home videos

Home videos have become the form of entertainment of the 80s. Presently 30 per cent of the pornography available in Canada is found in home videos.

In a study of the "Pornographic Content of Adult Home Video Cassettes in Kitchener-Waterloo" (Ontario) with the University of Waterloo, results show that approximately 20,000 such videos were rented by the public in 1984.

The videos were classified as being mostly degrading pornography. Of the total pornography recorded, 72 per cent was found to be degrading, or objectified women. Another 15 per cent was coercive; women had sexual activities for fear of economic consequences. A small percentage included sexual activities between a child or teenager and an adult. In half of these, women were portrayed as teenagers.

Thirteen per cent of all pornography recorded was violent. Women were portrayed as enjoying pain, and if women did not enjoy it and asked the male to stop, their requests were always disregarded and the level of pain increased.

Barbara Strachan

## Media self-regulation nets little

It's been a year in the making, but it's finally out. Media Watch, a national organisation devoted to improving the image of women in the media, has just published a 233-page report written and compiled by Ana Wiggins, which confirms what many of us suspected. Women are still treated as dim-witted sex objects on television, with little control over their lives, even less integrity about themselves, and almost no resemblance to the female half of the world.

So, if you don't like it, you can turn the channel, right? Watch the news instead. Three quarters of the reporters and on-air newsmakers will be men, who will quote sources and interview largely male newsmakers and experts (80 per cent according to Media Watch).

If you're looking for better role models on radio, you'll be disappointed there too. The same

proportions of reporters and newsmakers apply, but even fewer women are quoted on radio news; a paltry 8 per cent.

Flip. Back to television; a commercial. The woman's embarrassed about the stains on her husband's shirt. Media Watch found that 30 per cent of radio commercials were sexist too.

The only redeeming feature of this news (which was written by a woman and is quoting female authorities) may be that the two-year period of self-regulation regarding sexism in the broadcast industry is now over. Two years ago, after a CRTC inquiry into sex-role stereotyping in the media, the broadcast industry agreed to regulate its sexism on its own, rather than face imposed guidelines. The CRTC will be holding self-regulation hearings on sex-role stereotyping in September.



### OOPS!

In April, we carried a story on a breast screening study. The article was written by Joanne Mitchell, not Jane Mitchell, as appeared in *HERIZONS*.

### CORRECTION

The correct address for the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (L.E.A.F.) is P.O. Box 6989, Station "A", Toronto, M5W 1X7. It appeared in *HERIZONS* April edition incorrectly. Please send donations today!



## Women and Words update

Sally Ireland

### British Columbia

From August 4 to 18, 40 women will spend two intense weeks in Vancouver, writing and discussing their work at a summer school for writers. The school is only one of numerous projects initiated by local Women and Words groups across Canada since 1983 when the original Women and Words/Les femmes et les mots Conference attracted 700 women involved in writing and publishing.

The school will offer an intensive poetry workshop led by Daphne Marlatt and a fiction workshop led by Gail Scott. There are 10 spaces available for each workshop. In addition the organisers have made provision for 10 retreat students who will not attend the workshops, but who will have the opportunity to work on their own, uninterrupted by distractions. There may also be a play-writing section but the leader has not yet been confirmed. In addition to the workshops there will be readings by students and instructors. The fiction writer Jane Rule will visit the summer school as guest lecturer.

Funded by Canada Works, the school has three organisers on staff: Betsy Warland, Gloria Greenfield, and Brenda Kilpatrick. Information on tuition, accommodation and scholarships is available from the West Coast Women and Words Society, #210-640 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C., V5Z 1G4. Telephone (604) 872-8014.

In May and June of 1986 the Women and Words Vancouver Centennial Project came to fruition. Sponsored by the Vancouver Centennial Commission and partially funded by a \$20,000 grant from the Department of Communications, the project mounted a two hour professional theatre production celebrating the lives of Vancouver women during the past 100 years. The piece incorporated conversations, songs, recipes, journal entries and interviews. Eight actresses from various ethnic backgrounds played 30 to 40 characters. The production, mounted at Robson Square Media Centre in Vancouver, also toured schools and community centres in the city.

In Creston, B.C. on February 15, 16, and 17th, 100 women attended a conference funded by a \$4,500 grant from the Secretary of State. There were workshops and panels on Women Writing, Female Characters in Canadian Writing, Freelance News-writing and Using Libraries for Research. Among the participants were Paulette Jiles, Rita Moir, Dorothy Livesay and Luanne Armstrong.

### Manitoba

In Winnipeg *Nuance*, an anthology of writing by seven members of Women and Words has been published by Lilith Publications. The book costs \$5.95 and can be ordered direct from Lilith Publications, 32 Lipton St., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 2G5.

### Quebec

In Montreal ongoing activities include readings, writer workshops and a study group on feminist literary criticism. For the future, Montreal les femmes et les mots is considering publishing an anthology of 20th century Quebecoise writing.

### Newfoundland

The Women and Words group in St. John's, Newfoundland, held a poetry reading in conjunction with the Newfoundland Status of Women Council on March 8, International Women's Day. They have applied to the Secretary of State for a research grant to travel to the Newfoundland outposts to interview local women about their lives. They may also compile and publish a book of poetry by Newfoundland women.

### Ontario


In the summer of 1986 the second

pan-Canadian Women and Words Conference will take place in Toronto. The coordinators, Makeda Silvera, Adrienne Drobnies and Lorraine Gauthier together with other members of Toronto Women and Words have put out a call to women across Canada to become involved in planning, organising, outreach, fund-raising and programming. They can be contacted at P.O. Box 12, Station E, Toronto, Ontario, M6H 2X0.

### National

Early this year Sandy Duncan, Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland initiated a Women's Peace Write to protest Canada's increasing involvement with American nuclear defense strategies. They solicited short written manuscripts from women throughout Canada on the subject of Peace. In April, after selecting 52 of the contributions they began sending one each week to federal MPs. The campaign will continue until April 1986.

After the original conference which inspired the founding of regional groups across Canada it became clear that Women and Words/Les femmes et les mots needed an umbrella organisation to facilitate communication among local groups and to coordinate lobbying, outreach and education at the national level. A task force of 10 women across Canada put in hundreds of hours developing a structure and constitution for the new organisation. At their annual general meeting in January Women and Words adopted the new constitution. Over the next year representatives from all the local groups will put the new structure in place. While the pan-Canadian organisations will play an important role in coordinating and facilitating, most projects will still be initiated at the local level.



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## Where's the women?

Charlynn Toews

The media coverage of a "Day for Women in the Media" conference confirmed the preliminary findings of a Mediawatch (Manitoba) study of images of women in three of the province's newspapers. The research findings, presented at the one-day gathering on March 23 at the University of Winnipeg, included 302 articles spread over 64 front section pages for two weeks in January, 1985.

The image of women in the articles as a whole included 25 articles with women presented primarily as newsmakers, 14 spokespersons (consistently called spokesmen by the Winnipeg Free Press), 13 victims, 5 experts and 2 sex partners. One woman-as-a sex partner story detailed various investigations of local corrections staff members, including one who allowed an inmate and his wife to have sex at the institution. Although this may be an unusual occurrence, it is not unusual media coverage of women. When women weren't stereotyped in

the whore/madonna roles or made honorary members of the status quo, they just weren't considered newsworthy.

The second-highest category in this study was "invisible" (35) and the highest (183) was "assumed", that is, males were quoted, named, photographed, while females were assumed to be included in gender-neutral terms such as "voters, "citizens" or "motorists". The overall effect of these omissions leaves the newspaper reader with the impression that men do everything that is important.

The irony of two men (Joe Borowski and Henry Morgentaler) personifying the reproductive choice debate was topped momentarily by the coverage the Media Women's Day received. The newspaper and TV stories reporting on a full day of dozens of women speaking to women about women's issues focused on one moment: when a male reporter was denied entrance to the conference. Even a women's event was defined from a male perspective and focused on a male character. We know where our beef is: Where's the women?

## The feminine plastique

Of 40 young women who were finalists in this year's Miss Teen Canada contest, nine said their mothers were the most influential women in the world, eight said Margaret Thatcher and seven listed Sister Theresa.

Six said Princess Diana, three said Queen Elizabeth, two named Jeanne Sauve, Miss Universe, Margaret Bourgeois and Karen Baldwin got one vote each. Two of the contestants didn't (or couldn't) come up with the name of an influential woman.

On the yes/no question on feminism, 28 said they weren't, four said they were feminists and another seven offered answers somewhere in between.

The most often volunteered reason to oppose feminism seemed to be a desire to have others open doors for them. Some argued they opposed feminism because they think men and women are (or should be) treated equally.

Canadian Human Rights Advocate

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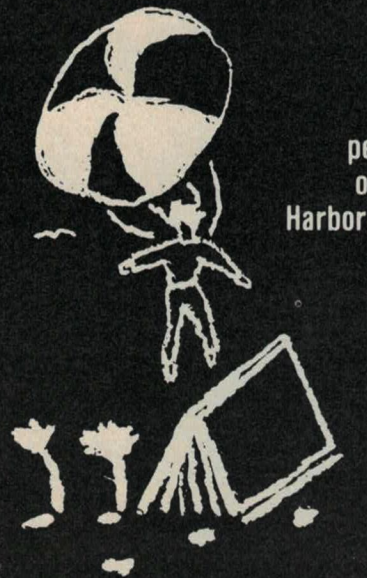
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## PLACE SETTING

This could be five or six years ago  
four of us seated  
at a mahogany table  
candlelight shrimp in avocado  
His face the same a little puffier maybe  
Only the hostess has changed younger  
more animated each gesture a keepsake

Invited to forget  
I must remind myself:  
another woman draws away  
from the table in another house  
another province  
She gathers the stainless  
rinses it in the sink  
"You can play in the yard until  
bedtime" she tells her dinner companions

By then I'll have drunk too  
many cognacs My tongue will ache  
from holding back her name  
"We could talk of old times"  
I want to say flippantly "if we had any  
to speak of"

© Karen Davidson,  
Moncton, New Brunswick

## "I DON'T KNOW, IT JUST HAPPENED."

Cliffy Henry One Arm  
stabbed Annie Rosalynn Ross  
ten times  
because  
it just happened  
and before that  
Bear Sinclair shot Collin Waywayshhecappo  
because  
he just happened to  
and way, way before that  
Old man Clive Littleleggs  
drowned  
because he was too weak to swim  
against the current  
and his voice too hoarse  
from years of drinking and crying  
to call clearly for help  
and I think  
Cliffy Henry and Bear Sinclair  
knew exactly how  
Old Man Clive Littleleggs felt.

© Fawn,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

## SUBVERTING DEFINITION

You've abstracted from me  
an abstraction of your likeness  
Pile bouquets of approval at my feet

You made me a uniform  
Reserved for me a place in line  
Stick me in the dictionary  
To make your understanding of me lit  
I exist as a definition

I break from your sentence  
Write a paragraph of my own  
Create new forms  
Space

I did laneways to jump your highway ride  
Turn gutters into trenches

. . . . Ida is a higgler in the market place  
Reta is a drummer in the band  
Heather is part of the incite collective  
And Sheila, she's a woman identified woman

You've taken my abstractions  
Broken my images  
Carved images of broken on my mirror  
You've data processed my needs  
Packaging dreams for me on TV  
Separating me from self  
From race. From gender  
From history

In metaphysics we exist as your abstraction  
Similarly equal  
In the social pattern as cultural forms  
In art, as creative differences

We who create space  
Who transform what you say is  
Send you scurrying to the dictionary  
To add new words

We.  
We are the subversives  
We.  
We are the underground

© Lillian Allen, Toronto, Ontario

## FOR WHAT'S-HIZ-NAME

he told me it prevents  
acne and everyone else  
has tried it  
I said half the surveyed  
women preferred to read  
or sew a seam

sixteen times I blew-out  
candles smearing lipstick  
tangoing past steering wheels

that rubber condom must  
have seen eight moons through  
the window in his wallet  
hasty silent hurtling sperm  
history changed  
in one fast shot

on the way back he  
told me zilch and I wondered  
if he felt more male  
and when my zits would  
start to heal or  
what those surveyed women read

© Eunice Brooks,  
Surrey, B.C.

## OU UN LOUP-GAROU

night setting  
the theme seems always  
to be that  
sky's dark  
a starless abyss  
we so willingly spiral into  
most high  
immutable

child at a window  
looks on as beautiful aurora  
weaves magic between poles  
coincidence of opposites  
exorbitant

while down below  
snowwoman stands askance  
in the parking lot  
of a mythical homeland  
lights caught in her coal  
black eyes  
pale as day  
cast against night  
like moonstones

from Double Standards

© lola lemire tostein,  
Toronto, Ontario

POETRY



"Neither one of us likes to eat very early. We might have a bowl of granola, then I'll nap a bit while he's playing. He's very good at playing by himself. I get back up at 9 o'clock and he usually watches *Sesame Street* and all the childrens' TV shows in the morning. So I closet myself in the washroom and work on material. Write a tune. Just to get my practice time, because he is very well occupied. Then we go have lunch. Go for a walk, go to the park, or the movies, or roller skating. If I can get him into a day care, then I will for a couple of afternoons during the week which gives me more time with my music. For the last two years that we've been on the road, I've been running my record, so I've been making long distance phone calls, writing letters, doing promotions, and booking myself. We go for supper around five, then I start getting ready for work. I take him over to the sitters at seven. Go down and work. Pick him up and bring him home at the end of the night."

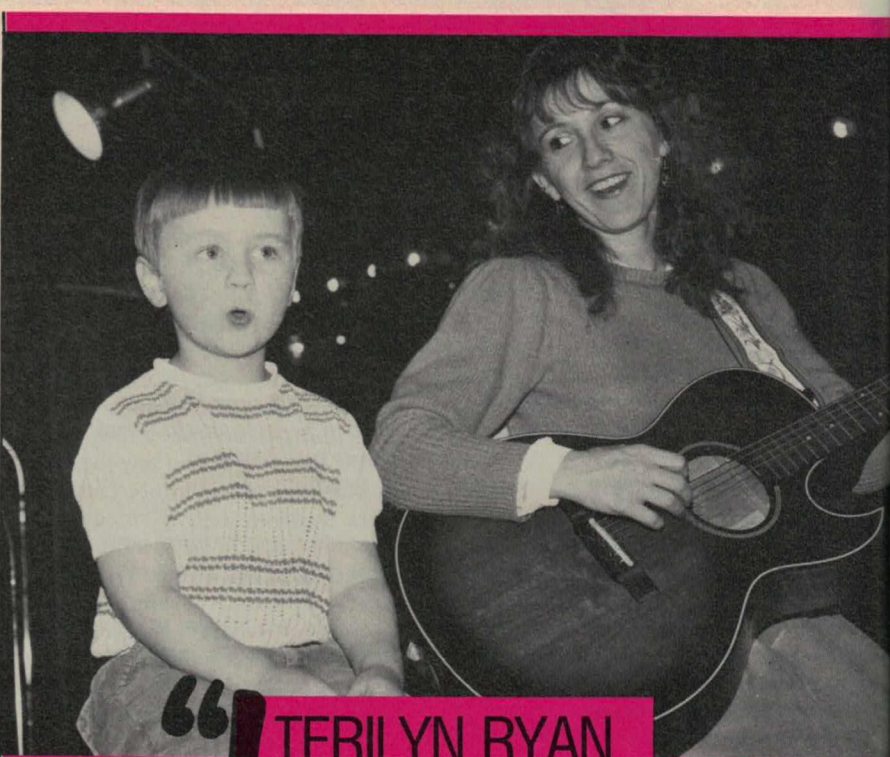
That's just one day on the road with Terilyn Ryan, country singer and single mom.

This September, Terilyn will finally come in off the road. Her son Larkin will be of school age so it will be time to settle down. She'll unpack her van, move the toys and books and sewing machine inside, and probably write a song about the change.

There have been times when the two of them have had a semi-permanent place to hang their hats (or in the case of her son Larkin, his little stocking cap) but their real home has been the country music circuit from B.C. to Alberta, and their family includes the cousins, daughters, sisters and wives of club owners who care for Larkin on the nights Terilyn is working.

She was born in 1954 in Bowness, Alberta, a town annexed by Calgary but still country enough to have horses grazing in back yards. Her dad was a janitor who became the labour representative for CUPE. ("He was always running for MLA of the NDP. Unfortunately they're the wrong party in Alberta."), and her mother was the head of the cash office at Safeway. There were three brothers before her and a sister after, as well as several foster children who grew up beside them.

"At home we listened to country music, ever since I could remember. Mom played the accordian and had an offer to be a singer in a band back when she was 16. But in those days singers were held in a different light, so she had to refuse. It wasn't until my older brother



## “TERILYN RYAN I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A DREAMER”

CONNIE SMITH

Connie Smith is the producer and host of CFRO radio's *Rubymusic* and writes a monthly music column in *Kinesis*.

got his own records that I heard anything different. He was playing the Beatles, the Animals, the Dave Clark Five. And I liked it all. Still, I was really into Tammy Wynette and my all-time favourite was an album by the Carter Family. I bought a few 45s and a couple of albums. One album was by Connie Francis. I didn't know who she was but I liked the cover and it was on sale."

When Terilyn was young she sang in a trio called the Bow Valley Belles. They entered talent shows and worked the stampede breakfasts. She also sang at the supper table, walking down the street, in restaurants, and in movie houses. "It seemed subconscious in that I never really noticed. To me it was always the right time."

In high school, she was head of the

drama club, president of her high school class, and captain of the cheerleading team. She worked weekends folding laundry.

She graduated when she was 16, and went up to Fort McMurray, alone. She wanted to be on her own and to experiment. At 17, she moved on to Edmonton where she applied for her first job as a singer. The manager of a rock and roll band hired her and put her on the bus to Prince George. She stayed with the band for two and a half months. Based on this brush with rock and roll, she reconsidered her decision to be a singer. "I had a lot of fun pretending I was Janis Joplin. But I ran into some health problems and lost all my confidence as a singer. So I quit music."

Well, she didn't exactly quit altogether. Instead, she enrolled in the drama department at the University of Calgary. She also studied saxophone and guitar and supported herself by working

Music



nights as a cocktail waitress.

During this period, she met her husband, a country musician down from B.C.'s Kispiox Valley, looking for work. When things didn't turn out for him, he returned to the Kispiox. As for Terilyn, after two years, she was dissatisfied with school. "I loved the performance side but the academics didn't really hold my attention." She left school, organised her own western puppet show and went on the road. "We were very well received and had endless bookings but as I didn't have a good business mind at that time, I moved on to waitressing."

She waitressed in Alberta, crossing paths for the next two years with her husband, who was riding horses and playing country music.

"I always seem to end up waitressing at various periods of my life. I even like waitressing because of the communication with other people. Wherever I worked I was called the singing waitress by workers and customers. Sometimes I even got requests. My music was just always there. I made no point of it."

In the summer of '73, she moved to the Kispiox. She was overwhelmed by its beauty, by the tolerance of the people, and by their music. That summer she found in northern B.C. a valley rich in counter-culture, a haven for American war resisters. "It's a very magical place." It was a complete change of pace for Terilyn. She received a lot of encouragement from the community and she began to play her guitar and write her songs.

***I've always been a dreamer  
My dreams will never end.  
People always push you  
they'll always try to bend  
you to the way they do it,  
the way that they see;  
I've always been a dreamer,  
my dreams they live with me.***

In 1974 she joined her husband in Calgary. He played bass, and they became a duo, working on his material and learning the country standards. In 1975, they attended the Country Music Awards.

"It was quite exciting. I wore a formal and did up my hair, acting like a country singer. At one of the parties, people were jamming and somebody asked me to sing a song. I was terrified. My husband wasn't in the room, but I went for it anyway. Two weeks later, back in Calgary, we got a call from Bryan Fustukian who had heard me. He wanted us to join his band."

Together they joined the Hair Trigger

Cowboys, an Albertan band notorious for churning out country musicians. But there was a hitch. Her husband got paid. Terilyn didn't.

"I was the flower in the band. You're supposed to stand there and try and look good and make everybody smile. I sang about three songs lead and as much harmony as possible. So I just did a lot of learning in that group." After eight months, a decision was reached between Terilyn and her husband. She would leave the group and he would stay.

"After I left the Hair Trigger Cowboys, I was terrified really. I knew very little guitar. I knew nothing about being a musician. I had no equipment. I had a classical guitar. No pick-up. Nothing. I tried to be a waitress, but it was really strange. There were no jobs. It was in February and everybody who had jobs was hanging on to them.

"I had the songs that I'd written and I had composed them on my guitar, and I could really play them. So I thought, I'll go down to the agency and play a couple of my songs with all the energy I have and see if they'll book me as a single. So I went down to the worst agent in town and he booked me.

For the next four years Terilyn travelled throughout B.C. and Alberta via Greyhound Bus Lines. She played the northern circuit, the southern circuit and all points in between. If the bar had a name like Silver Spur, Wild Country, or The Ranchman, Terilyn was there. She made a good living for herself singing her own songs and the country classics. In 1979 she decided to form a band. "I just bought a p.a. for the band. Speakers. Just starting to get the members together. Then the day after my speakers were delivered, I found out I was pregnant. I immediately got a day job as a telephone solicitor and continued singing at night. I worked until three days before I had my baby."

***It's not the way we choose it  
Change with the times  
Sometimes we skip the water  
Sometimes we tow the line  
Sometimes you're down and out  
Sometimes you're satisfied  
But you feel so good  
Because you know you've tried.***

When Larkin was born, Terilyn moved back to the Kispiox with her husband. "The Kispiox is a good place for a kid to grow up. We could make a living on the circuit from Prince George to Prince Rupert, Community dances. But it didn't work out, and after a series of

unfortunate incidences, she and her husband separated.

In the aftermath, the country music circuit was there. And Terilyn knew it by heart. She was well liked in the communities and they welcomed her and her new addition. Larkin became part of that larger country music family.

In 1982 Terilyn moved to Vancouver and released her first record. And she did it the way she had done everything else. On her own. "The first single, I did everything as well as have the nervous breakdown. I paid for everything and folded, cut and glued every little record cover. I wrote all the promo, I sent it to all the stations, I did all the follow-up, all the phone calls, everything. A thousand of those little beasts. But it was worth it.

"I originally started this project as a birthday present to myself; that once a year I could spend money on recording and in ten years I'd have an album. And I could give it to my kids. I was a singer, you guys. Listen to this album."

Terilyn's first single was written with a crayon on the dash board of her car on the way to Seattle. It was called *One Hour Away*. The b-side, *Blue Mountain Skies* was written during her days in the Kispiox. The record received airplay on 35 stations in B.C.

Last year, Terilyn recorded her second single, *Lovers and Love* and *I Can't Help Myself*. This time, she was playlisted on over 100 stations nationwide. She was nominated for Female Vocalist of the Year at the B.C. Country Music Awards, and she received an Honourable Mention in the 1984 Canadian Songwriting Contest.

In January, Terilyn finally formed that band she wanted. She called it *Line-driver*, a term reserved for a trucker who knows the shortest distance between two points, the most direct route. And until September, she'll be out there on that route.▼





In the last few years of her life, Sharon Stevenson could be found daily at the corner of Bloor and Bathurst Streets in Toronto, selling copies of the Marxist-Leninist paper *People's Canada Daily News*.

She told a friend that when she was writing poetry, she wore gold earrings. Sometimes, when she saw her friend on the other side of the street, she would smile and touch one earring.

Sharon committed suicide at her mother's Scarborough, Ontario home on September 7, 1978. *Gold Earrings*, a collection of her poems put together by friends and family after her death, has been published by Vancouver's Pulp Press.

Once the protégé of poet Dorothy Livesay, Sharon had at different times in her life been passionately committed to both mainstream Communism and its radical variant, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), married and divorced, lived in the Soviet Union and published one volume of poetry. She was 31 at the time of her death.

*Gold Earrings*, which takes a chronological approach to Sharon's work, shows clearly the progression of her political beliefs from her teens through her years as a student at the University of British Columbia and beyond.

Her early work consisted of personal, lyric poems based on her relationships with her family and friends. One poem, titled *Letter to Raymond* (her father's name), foreshadows the psychological torment that later overwhelmed her.

*eleven  
& shy  
maybe already damaged  
cried  
I'm split  
someone lives  
inside my skull  
raps designs  
on the bone  
patterns the world  
outside*

Sharon spent the first 11 years of her life in mining towns in northern Ontario, where her father was a union organiser. Both her parents were ardent



SHARON  
STEVENSON

# TRANS- FORMING POLITIC AND PROSE

JOANNE BLAIN

Communists, and encouraged her involvement in the party's youth wing. After the family moved to Toronto, she took jobs as a waitress and a secretary to support herself. While working at the Ontario Hospital Association, she tried to organise a clerical workers' union.

In 1967, she married Ken Dent, then a student and now a Vancouver physician. The same year, the couple received permission to study Marxism-Leninism at an institute for political study in the Soviet Union. Sharon was still a member of the Communist Party at that time, and remained committed to mainstream Communism for another six years. Her marriage, however, was short-lived; she and Dent separated in 1968, soon after returning from their year-long stay in the Soviet Union.

Back in Toronto, she met Charles Boylan, then editor of a youth magazine and an active member of the Communist Party. She followed him to Prince George, B.C., when he got a position teaching English at the College of New Caledonia in the late 60s. They remained in Prince George until 1970, when they made the move to Vancouver. Sharon enrolled in an undergraduate English program at the University of British Columbia.

Her father, a blue-collar worker who had never gone beyond high school, opposed her going; mother Bea, who had been active in student politics at Queen's University, demurred. For Sharon, the conflict lay in whether she could best serve the Communist Party by writing poetry and furthering her education or by becoming a union organiser like her father. Her decision to attend university would later trouble her even more.

While at UBC, Sharon showed her poetry to Dorothy Livesay, a poet interested in the struggle of the working class who was teaching English there at the time. The two met through Boylan, who was doing his master's thesis on Livesay's poetry.

"I was very interested, because so few young people, especially young women, are concerned with working conditions," says Livesay. She was also impressed by Sharon's lyrical poetry, much of which was about her family. But even

Whores



those poems had political overtones:

*my mother home  
peeling potatoes for supper  
1953  
the news that  
Stalin was dead  
she cried  
the potatoes didn't cook*

The couple left Vancouver for Edmonton in 1971, when Boylan took a teaching position at the University of Alberta. However, they returned two years later to a communal house with six other adults and several children.

Art Hister and Phyllis Simon, who lived in the house with Sharon, describes her as a forceful individual who relished passionate debates about literature and politics, who didn't hesitate to let everyone know what she thought.

Once, Hister and Simon found themselves in the same movie theatre with Sharon and Boylan. The entrance of an actress in a revealing bodysuit prompted Sharon to stand up and exclaim: "This is sexist bullshit!" She then stalked out of the theatre.

But she also had a softer side, one that caused her to take a real interest in the poetic efforts of friends who clearly weren't writing at her level, says Hister, who is now a physician living in Vancouver.

"If you want to be alive, you pick people like Sharon to live with," he says. "They open you up. They make you think."

In 1972, *Stone*, her first collection of poems, was published by Talonbooks. The book had only one printing of 300 copies, but it brought her enough recognition for the League of Canadian Poets to include her in a recording of young poets reading their own work.

But Sharon's relationship with Livesay and other friends began to fall apart in the mid-70s, a few years after Sharon and Boylan were ousted from the Communist party over their opposition to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

For the next few years, they had no formal political ties. Then, around 1973, they joined the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), an extremist group that once followed Maoist doctrines and now maintains that true socialism exists only in Albania. It was at this point, say Livesay and several others who knew her, that Sharon ceased to be the person they once knew. Her fervent, unquestioning devotion to Marxism-Leninism put her in a position of ideological conflict with her parents

and many of her friends. It overwhelmed every aspect of her life. She would tolerate no criticism of the CPC-ML's policies, even from those she previously counted as friends.

"It was almost an automaton approach," says Simon, who now owns Vancouver Kidbooks. "There was no room for discussion."

"It was very painful for anyone who knew her great theoretical brilliance to see that brilliance devoted into sloganeering," says Robin Endres, a playwright and director of a community theatre group in Toronto. Endres knew Sharon in the early 70s and wrote the introduction for *Gold Earrings*.

Sharon began to question the effectiveness of her poetry. Despite her earlier success, she felt she was not reaching the working class audience she most wanted to address.

She attacked poetry in general and her own work in particular in the thesis for her English degree at UBC, which she obtained in 1974. The essay damned Canadian poetry as the ineffectual mutterings of the petit bourgeoisie.

"The working class works," she wrote, "and the owning class directs the affairs of the country. The class in between writes." As part of the thesis, she included a number of her own poems, which she set out methodically to prove should themselves be classed as petit bourgeois.

Her early poems bore titles like *Lovers' Anatomy* and *Flower Song*; now, they had names like *Defeat the Government* and *End Marriage of Heaven and Hell: Make the Rich Pay!* She challenged fellow poets to take up the revolutionary cause in *Poetry too Has a Class Nature*:

*so put away the pastels of the old  
violet  
world  
collapsing in the decadence of its fright  
whispering the individual is all  
despair your only right  
pick up the bright red sickle of  
revolution  
there are throats it will fit in sight  
grasp the bright red hammer of our  
class  
there are feudal maces lingering to be  
smashed*

The CPC-ML did publish this poem in a journal called *Literature and Ideology*, but there is no evidence the party subsequently supported her writing.

"She desperately wanted to become a writer who could contribute to the class

struggle," says Bea Stevenson, who now lives in Toronto. But because of the party's rejection of her work, Sharon had "that terrible feeling that no one felt her poetry was of use."

Livesay, who visited Sharon in Toronto a few months before she died, says that rejection troubled her deeply. "She was really, at heart, devoted to poetry. So this other connection really tore at her roots."

In the months before her death, "she was asking a lot of questions about the way things were going (in the CPC-ML)," her mother says. "I think she was beginning to feel that she had to re-examine her commitment (to the party)."

On the day she died, Sharon went to her mother's house to tell her that she had quit her job, saying enigmatically that "it was no use".

Bea, exhausted by the lengthy visit of a houseguest, went to bed early, telling Sharon they would talk some more the next day.

In the morning, she found Sharon's body on the living room sofa, a bottle of sleeping pills — prescribed for Bea by her doctor — and an empty rum bottle in front of her.

Bea and Sharon's sister, Zoya, held on to her unpublished poems for several years before deciding to put them together in a posthumous collection. With the help of a few of Sharon's friends, including Endres, they spent three years putting together *Gold Earrings*.

Her last poems, most of which had never been seen by anyone before Sharon's death, are the ones that continue to haunt those who worked on the book.

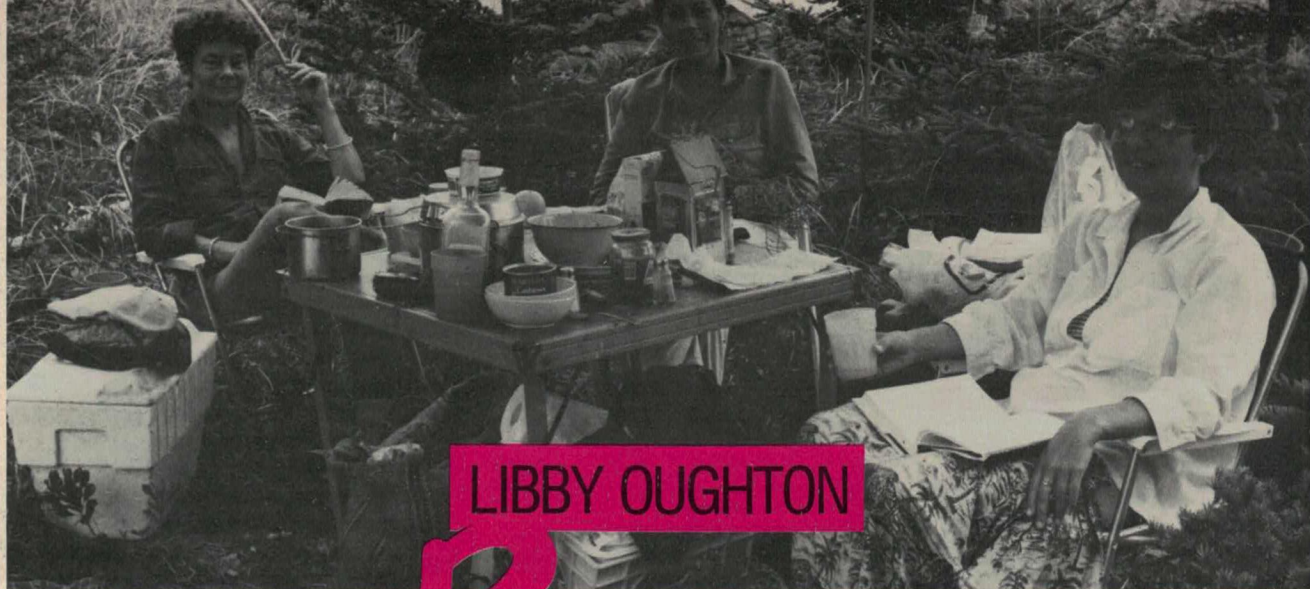
Bea Stevenson classes them into two categories: they were either political diatribes "or very personal and full of pain". The latter type "reflected her lessening self-esteem," she says.

Endres says she was initially put off by the relentlessly political nature of the majority of Sharon's last poems. She felt at first that she had sacrificed poetry for politics. However, Endres says she finally came to the conclusion that Sharon "was trying to take that rhetoric and transform it, really make it passionate."

"Once I got past that, I really saw the beauty and the brilliance of those poems," she says. "I don't think there is anything like them in Canadian literature." ▼

*Gold Earrings* is available through bookstores or from Pulp Press, Suite 202, 996 Homer Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 2W7.





LIBBY OUGHTON

Libby Oughton, Sue McManus, Julie Dodd.

# RICHES FROM RAGWEED

J O Y P A R K S

For most Canadians, Prince Edward Island brings to mind pastoral, red-soiled fields of potatoes, quaint tourist inns and, of course, Lucy Maude Montgomery's timeless *Ann of Green Gables*. Prince Edward Island is the home of the prototypical female free spirit, Ann, a character created by Canada's first internationally known woman writer. Thus it seems fitting that this part of the country should also be home to the beginnings of a not-so-quiet revolution in feminist publishing.

In stately Charlottetown, in a charming one-time girls' school is Ragweed Press and it's driving force, publisher Libby Oughton. She's working to slowly turn Ragweed from a small regional press into a publishing house that will make known the fiction, poetry and dreams of Canadian feminist writers.

Sitting with Libby Oughton during one of her infrequent trips to Toronto, it is impossible not to be drawn into her hopeful and positive feminist vision. The energy and strength that gravitate from her is intense and thoroughly convincing. Her life reads like the script from a documentary on contemporary womanhood.

"I got pregnant on my first screw," she offers. "That was 1958 and things were so different then, I had to get married."

After her "horrendous" marriage ("He wanted me in a white apron when he got home at night. I couldn't even open my own mail and if he found any dust, he wouldn't speak to me all night.") ended after seven years, Libby was left with the responsibility of raising a six-year-old daughter and a three-year-old son. In short her marriage to a man from Westmount (a fashionable upper-class sec-

tion of Montreal) who spent his working days perfecting napalm, left her searching for anything other than a 'normal' life.

The Sixties were in full swing and Libby became involved with alternative publications, working at Rochdale (an experimental free college in Toronto) where she made about \$40 a week. But since her children were growing up and she needed a 'real' job Libby went to work at the newly formed Independent Publishers Association (now The Association of Canadian Publishers). It was at this time that the early stirrings of the women's movement touched her life. Libby plunged into it wholeheartedly.

"The women's movement was the greatest glory of my life. It was the first time women my age were getting together and talking about our lives. I fell in love with women. I had my first affair with a woman. And when I began sorting things out, I realised that the only really important thing in my life was this joy in being with women. Feminism really helped me get my feet on the ground. I realised that I really don't trust men. My marriage left me not liking them very much."

In 1980, when her son left home, Libby realised that she was at the point in her life when it was time to work for herself. She packed her bags and headed for Charlottetown, not knowing what was ahead of her. At the same time, Ragweed Press, a tiny regional press that specialised in local history and tourist guides, wanted to expand. Libby joined the Ragweed staff but after three titles, her partner left. She became the sole owner of the company.

In that opportunity, Libby saw a chance to establish a legitimate publishing house which she could eventually merge with her feminist beliefs. She sold her home in Toronto, paid off all her debts and set to work at Ragweed. Her plan was to slowly phase out the regional titles and phase in a publishing program that would, according to Libby, "do the most important political work I can do — publish poetry and fiction by women".

Ragweed's most recent titles are: *The Square Root of Female*, a collection of lesbian poetry by Gilleen Chase; *Binding Twine*, Penny Kemp's collection of poetry about a mother losing custody of her children; *The Book of Fears*, a collection of short stories by Susan Kerslake; and *Out On The Plain*, an experimental novel by feminist author Frankie Finn.

Libby explains the reason behind her emphasis on creative work by women: "I felt there was a gap in Canadian feminist publishing. I was asked to be the keynote speaker at the Women and Words conference in Vancouver and while I was preparing what I wanted to say, I also had to give some serious thought as to what I was going to do with Ragweed when I got home. In that

Words



process, I realised that yes, we have feminist presses but that no one was paying serious attention to women's fiction, poetry, journals, dreams, and so on. There are all kinds of non-fiction books dealing with political issues, but there aren't any books of our glory, delight and strangeness — books on the importance of us as women, not just on our necessary political activities. All feminist writing is necessary, but we're also dreamers. We're glorious and imaginative and want to write our poetry and fiction and have it published. I am interested in pursuing the idea that women do not write in a form acceptable to male editors, male publishers, male critics. And they should not. I think Ragweed's power lies in giving women who seriously want to write a home. I want to establish Ragweed as a good spirit publisher. We read every manuscript and we actually write letters. I believe in good writing. I'm not saying everything is publishable for political ends. I'm very tough on editorial control!"

Right now Ragweed's main problem is trying to balance the women's series with other titles that will bring enough money to support the press and keep it a going concern until the feminist series is fully established — without compromising the politics of the press. So far, Ragweed has been able to do so by publishing a vegetarian cookbook (*Joanie's Country Cookbook*, by Joanie Sutton) and a number of quality children's titles, such as *A Child's Inn*, Ann of Green Gables re-told from young children's perspectives by Deidre Kessler and *The Witch of Port Lajoye* written by Joyce Barkhouse and illustrated by Daphne Irving.

Considering the distance between Charlottetown and the other larger Canadian centres of culture, it comes as no surprise that isolation is a big problem for Ragweed. However, the press receives much support from the small but active maritime feminist community.

"There are good spirits in the Maritimes," says Libby. "Bright gutsy women who are quite apart from normal male politicising." Libby attributes this 'good spirit' influence to the fact that Prince Edward Island is literally "the edge of the world", with "so much control you can't breathe and so much freedom you can fly", a coastal gathering place for unusual people. Still, mountains, oceans, distance and bad weather cut PEI off from the rest of the country and Libby admits that Charlottetown probably isn't the ideal place for a feminist

publishing house. However, she is opposed to the centralisation of interesting and different people, fearing that such a trend will leave the rest of the country culturally barren. Libby believes that even if only a small number of local people read a few of her women's titles, then the seeds of change will have been planted. "It's all a part of the movement of women beginning to share with each other, beginning to like each other, beginning to realise all the power they should be having now. I think it's very important to try this idea in a place like Charlottetown."

Libby agrees that her present list of women's titles and her planned series would no doubt receive greater acceptance in the United States, but she emphatically speaks of her desire to concentrate on helping to build a strong Canadian feminist literary network of writers, publishers, critics and readers.

"It isn't that I dislike American women. No matter what country you're from or what colour you are, we women are all in this together. Rather, I dislike America. Ronald Reagan is the most frightening individual I've ever seen. I disliked Vietnam. I dislike Star Wars. If I'm going to make a go of Ragweed Press, then I choose to do it here in Canada."

Despite the best intentions, the financial realities of publishing feminist books anywhere is grim. As in the case of many small publishing companies, Ragweed cannot afford to have a saleswoman out on the road. Much of Ragweed's marketing scheme, particularly with regard to the feminist titles, relies on word-of-mouth advertising and good publicity. Libby hopes that Ragweed will become a part of the existing network of information on books and writing by Canadian women; as an audience is built, readers will know that when they see a Ragweed book they can trust the content. Libby dreams of the day when Ragweed has published enough titles for her to stick in a van or pack on her back and travel to various smaller towns and villages to promote Ragweed Press and to literally tell the rest of the country, "Here we are. This is what we do. We believe in writing by women."

Libby quickly dismisses the possibility that the present return to the right will mean an end to feminism, particularly feminist writing/culture.

"I think it's just begun and my hope is that it will burst out. There's a desperate battle going on now. Men are getting quite twitchy about keeping power and we women are getting quite mouthy



about not having it, and I don't just mean men's power. If the world is going to survive, if culture is going to survive with Reagan in the States and Tory men in Canada, I think women are going to have to write more and be published more and grow into being good critics.

"The critical element is important because it is the critic who begins to tell the world about the book and how many respected women critics are there? I don't trust a man to review one of my women's titles. We have to write more, publish more, criticise more, read more, buy more books. We have to do the whole routine because for thousands of years we've spent our time and energy and what little money we've had buying up male writers, male critics, male magazines. Whether you live alone or with a man or a woman, you should spend your time buying books, reading books and writing about books with women, just to make up the balance."

Idealistic? Yes, but Libby Oughton's passionate commitment to the imagination, power and creativity of 'glorious' women is strong. The often hard events of her life have tried her and proved her to be a survivor. Hopeful that further generations of women writers, critics and publishers will add fresh energy to the hard earned wisdom of women like herself, Libby speaks with pride of her daughter who got the message, and turned out "wonderful". Libby reveals a great faith in the future of women saying, "we've just begun to get things right".

For Libby Oughton, the future means turning Ragweed Press into a self-supporting, viable feminist publishing house, with as little compromise as possible. "I'm using my 47 years of life and politics and friends and spirit to begin an idea," says Libby. "I don't know if I can pull it off but I've thought about it a lot and I do think it is a good idea. Now I have to figure out the best possible way to make it happen." ▼



# SPEAKING THE UNSPEAKABLE

J O Y P A R K S

**Joy P:** To start, can you tell us a bit about yourself, your background?

**Betsy W:** I grew up in Iowa . . . on a farm. I went to school in Iowa — a small fine arts college and I became radicalised there. This was during Vietnam, the early part of the second wave of feminism. We had a lot of black students on campus who came from Chicago . . . it was a very intense time, I mean, I was on campus during the time of Kent State . . . I became very caught up, very angry with the U.S. government and I knew that I was going to become a very angry, very paranoid person and I didn't want to live like that. I came to Canada about 12 years ago and I felt at home immediately. The whole sensibility, the smaller population felt right to me and the gentleness of the Canadian people really appealed to me.

**Joy P:** When did you start to write seriously?

**Betsy W:** I started to write when I was in grade 8 or grade 9 and then more seriously about 12 years ago when I was first living in Toronto. At the time, I felt dissatisfied with the writing workshops available because they were very male-dominated. So through the YWCA, I helped to set up groups of women that met regularly to read and critiqued each other's work, which eventually became the Women's Writing Collective. I was in Toronto for eight years, then I lived up north while I was refining my first book (*A Gathering Instinct*, Williams-Wallace Publishers, 1981). Then I moved to Vancouver and got involved with putting

Women and Words together (a conference for feminist writers, journalists, and publishers held in Vancouver in 1983).

**Joy P:** Would you qualify yourself as a feminist writer, a lesbian writer?

**Betsy W:** I would, I'm not uncomfortable with labels . . . I'd call myself a feminist writer and a lesbian writer and I guess I could also call myself a Canadian writer; the list goes on and on. I know there is a certain amount of reluctance of women to refer to themselves as feminist writers or feminist poets. They might say they are feminists, but not feminist writers or that they are concerned about some of the issues of feminism, but they are not feminists. There are very few English women writers who will say "I'm a feminist" whereas in Quebec that's not a problem. Not only is it taken seriously by the women's community, but literary men also see what the feminist writers are doing as the cutting edge of poetry.

I came up through a different system, I didn't have to go through the male literary system so it (feminism) has always been there with me, and those of us who felt feminism was essential to our lifestyle and our writing have created spaces to meet or get our work out. A lot of women who are well-known writers in this country came up through the male system and it's much more of an offense for them to say that they are feminists, but that is starting to change. I think we will see a real shift in the next few years.

Whereas

**Joy P:** How do you think your own work has changed between *Gathering Of Instincts* and *open is broken*?

**Betsy W:** Well, the Toronto community was much more developed for me because of the Women's Writing Collective. It has dissolved but there is a network of women that still exists. In Vancouver that network was not in place until Women and Words . . . now I see lots of helping each other out, going to each other's book launches, but it is still plugged into the male literary system there. But it is coming. But the community in Vancouver is much different. I'm more known now than I was in Toronto, so this makes it hard to make a real comparison. I didn't feel comfortable with the literary community in Toronto, it was very competitive and from what I hear from friends it still is. Nobody seems to trust anybody. In Vancouver, there isn't that competitive edge. The writers in Vancouver see each other more, talk to each other. There are more writers here experimenting with language. That's my experience anyway and I feel much more at home in Vancouver.

**Joy P:** We talk a lot about networks and building a tradition of women's writing. What women would you consider your literary influences?

**Betsy W:** Most of the women who influence me the most, I've read very little of their work. I guess I should start at the beginning to explain that. In my early days, it was Margaret Atwood in terms of the whole quality, the deceiving simplicity. Atwood appealed to me because she was breaking some taboos for a heterosexual woman, for a woman period. Her bluntness was devastating. Then Adrienne Rich, her *Twenty-One Love Poems* was important for many of us. Marge Piercy. Then I stopped reading journals, other writings . . . I had taken so much in and I had to stop.

Now my influences are Daphne (Marlatt), Nicole Brossard, although I don't read french, and I only started reading what has been translated a year ago. But I knew Nicole and I'd hear her at readings and I'd get little bits here and there and she was influencing me even though I had read very little of the actual body of her work. The same is true for Mary Daly. I have not yet read any of her books. But I've heard her speak. I wrote a review on her speech at a conference in Montreal a few years ago. I know the terminology. I am really tempted to read *Pure Lust*.

It is almost like osmosis for me with these two writers. I'm connecting and I haven't wanted to read their work too





thoroughly because I had to get grounded in my own vision and how to present that vision. I didn't want to be too influenced. But now I'll be reading Nicole and she will have done a certain word-play or etymology which I've done. . . that's happened when I've been reading other writers and I think it's very exciting. . . like we are all plugged into this subterranean network. Also, other writers like Dale Spender and certain theoreticians, Cheryl Sourkes, a photographer in Vancouver whose work is recreations taken from all different sources, re-interpreted. She's been an influence. . . Audre Lourde, her *Uses Of The Erotic As Power*. That was a key influence.

**Joy P:** A number of American feminist poets have begun to write prose as well: Jan Clausen, Audre Lourde and now Judy Grahn. Can you see yourself moving in that direction?

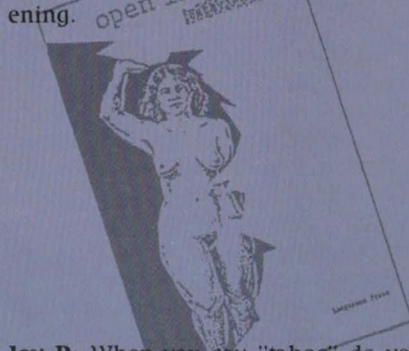
**Betsy W:** I can see myself moving into what the Quebec feminists call "Fiction-theory". The first two poems in *open is broken* are like that, in them, I'm dealing with a poetic line, but there's theory too. I like mixing the creative with the theoretical, right brain and left, and I will be doing more of that. The book I'm working on now is a long poem, it's an essay, theory, a real blurring of the genres.

**Joy P:** Do you think that perhaps feminist writers in Canada are more closely connected to feminist writers in the U.S. than they are to male writers in their own country?

**Betsy W:** Well, in my first book, I was very concerned that the poetry would be accessible to everyone. . . I wanted to think of myself as a "people's poet", I didn't want the poetry to be veiled or abstracted. I associated that with male poetry. In writing that first book, I came out as a lesbian, and there are a few poems that refer to that. . . but you'd have to be a pretty astute reader to pick them out. I really didn't have enough material to make a statement.

*open is broken* does make a statement. I'm not afraid now of speaking out of the theoretical part of my consciousness — so there is a lot more playing with language, form and theory. I've found that most readers still connect. I really denied that part of myself before. Daphne (Marlatt) was helpful in that because she provoked me not to back off from the more theoretical, intellectual journey I was on. That helped me to re-discover language in a way that was crucial for me to be able to speak what I couldn't speak before.

Also, I was more involved with image in my first collection and rhythm and rhyme. Those elements are still important but now I've become more interested in the sound of words and in the language itself. I was a painter for a long time and in that first collection, I think I used to paint a picture. That's fine, I like that, but I could only go so far with it. I had to get into the language and break it apart so that I could say the things that were taboo, that were frightening.



**Joy P:** When you say "taboo" do you mean the eroticism in *open is broken*?

**Betsy W:** Once I got to the place where I could say those things on the page, in public, I felt really liberated about saying anything. Things that I couldn't speak of before. I had to start in my body, my well-spring, my life-source and re-claim the language to speak the things we are not to speak of. Interesting enough, now I can speak of things that are disturbing.

The book I'm working on now is concerned with warfare and politics and the connection with sexual politics. It seems that now I have got to that place of pleasure and authenticity that nourishes me. I can also speak of other things I couldn't speak of before. Now I have the courage, the sustenance to do it. I'll still return to the erotic, I still have to go there, that's my ground, my home soil.

**Joy P:** Do you ever consider your audience when you write?

**Betsy W:** I don't. Every now and then when I'm writing, I stand back from the work and I say "Who is going to read this? Who is going to be excited by this?" and I have no idea. It doesn't matter when you are in the heat of writing because you just have to write it. With *open is broken*, I thought some lesbians would be interested, but then it wasn't even published by a women's press. There was a woman at Longspoon Press who said they wanted to see the manuscript because they are interested in women's writing and writing that is language centered; writing that does new things with language. I had a male editor, he was great, he was very excited by

both the content and with the way the poetry was written. If someone would have told me this before it all happened, I'd have said "NOOOOOOO" [laughter].

**Joy P:** What would you like to see happen in the near future?

**Betsy W:** I want to keep writing, I want to keep being published, to connect with people. The majority of my audience is women, more lesbian than not and that makes sense to me but I also see that there are gay men and heterosexual men that appreciate my work in a very deep place. I hope that continues, even though I realise with quiet content that it is more women who read it than men. My greatest fear is that of being censored, either blatantly or by being obscured or silenced. Any of us who speak from an alternative lifestyle or even a different culture always have to remember that our freedom to speak can be taken away. When you speak from outside the dominant culture, you might be OK now, but you can't be sure that it will always be that way. I feel very conscious of that. When you are breaking taboos, you are running the risk of being silenced one way or another. I hope not to be silenced.

I also want to do more collaborations with Daphne (Marlatt) or Cheryl Sourkes, the photographer I spoke of before. I'd also like to collaborate with some of the Quebec feminists. They have done more of that in Quebec and it is really exciting. I think that is the next step in our evolution and that's where my heart lies.

**Joy P:** When someone reads your poetry or hears you at a reading what is the essential message you want to leave with them?

**Betsy W:** I want them to be moved. Particularly with *open is broken*. What is at the heart of this book is speaking what has been unspeakable before. I want my work to stir that in other people, urge them to speak their unspeakables, what they haven't had the courage or the language to do before, whether they say it in a relationship or in a creative act. I also want people to feel more liberated about the language, to recognise that they can do more with language than they thought they could, that they can play with it, that they can make it up, that they can re-discover it. The language isn't separate from us, over there in a dictionary. You know, language and tongue have the same root, it is our tongue, part of the body. Hopefully, in seeing this connection, readers will be stirred to connect this body, their body with the rest of their lives.▼



# SCIENCE FICTION WITH A DIFFERENCE

CHRISTINE KULYK

## FEMINISTS FIND FANDOM

Madison, Wisconsin might seem an unlikely place for a Canadian to rush off to in February. But for a feminist who is also an avid science fiction fan, Madison does offer a rather unique attraction. WisCon, an annual science fiction fans' convention held in Madison, has established a reputation for devoting much of its formal programming to feminist topics relating to science fiction.

WisCon 9, held at the Concourse Hotel in downtown Madison, attracted over 600 participants, quite a respectable number for a local convention; almost half of them were women. A couple of decades ago, it was usually estimated that only about 20 per cent of SF fans were women. Most of the featured Guests of Honour at WisCon for the past nine years have been women, including such feminist authors as Susan Wood, Elizabeth A. Lynn, and Suzy McKee Charnas. This year, WisCon 9 featured SF authors Lisa Tuttle and Suzette Haden Elgin, and Alicia Austin, a visual artist. Hosted by the members of SF3 (The Society for the Furtherance and Study of Fantasy and Science Fiction), WisCon was a unique and very enjoyable opportunity to discuss feminist issues and feminist science fiction with other fans; to find people who love or loathe the same things as I do, in the realm of fiction, TV, and films.

During the convention, I spoke to Janice Bogstad, who has been involved with organising WisCon since it started 10 years ago. I was curious to find out how they managed to create this happy marriage of SF, fandom, and feminism. Janice Bogstad is a writer, critic, and librarian who is working towards imminent completion of her PhD dissertation on the topic of "feminist theory in the contemporary science fiction of women writing in French and English".

Jan Bogstad remembers how, back in 1976, she became one of the co-editors and co-publishers of *Janus*, a small-press, amateur magazine ("fanzine") devoted to feminism and science fiction. That year, she went to her first SF convention, along with Jeanne Gomoll (*Janus* co-editor). It was the 1976 World SF Convention (Worldcon) in Kansas City, with several thousand fans in attendance. Among dozens of program items at the Worldcon, says Bogstad, "They had one feminist panel [but] we [Jeanne and I] got so excited; it was just so much fun, and we learned so much

from that panel, that we decided we'd try to do that ourselves."

Along with Jan Bogstad, Jeanne Gomoll was the prime force behind the idea of doing "a feminist SF convention". Ms. Gomoll has worked on the organising committee for successive WisCons since 1976, as well as co-editing *Janus*, which has been re-named *Aurora\**, one of the few magazines devoted to both SF and feminism. Jeanne works as a graphic artist, and she recently was commissioned to do interior illustrations for a new young people's fantasy book, *The Silver Horse*, written by renowned author Elizabeth A. Lynn, published by Bluejay Books (New York, 1984) and distributed in Canada by Methuen Publications.

With Bogstad and Gomoll's impetus, the idea of an SF convention with a sizable amount of feminist programming took hold, and the first WisCon was held early in 1977. It's been going strong ever since, with attendance of several hundred fans each year, and a reputation for being well-organised as well as lots of fun.

Which is not to say that the idea of feminist programming has not met with resistance along the way. In the macho world of science fiction and SF fandom, it would be surprising indeed if there had been no opposition.

As Jan Bogstad says, "In some groups, we have a very negative image because we do a lot more serious programming and feminist programming than most small conventions, and are a lot more book and discussion-oriented. . . . "But," she adds with a smile, "to get people to come to Wisconsin in February you've gotta do something special! . . . And we seem to have gathered a following of people who like it, who come to WisCon 'cause it's the only one that does what it does.'"

\**Aurora*, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624

In the male-dominated world of "scifi", women were often seen (usually wearing harem costumes or the ubiquitous "brass bra") but rarely heard — a situation mirroring the sexist silencing of women in mainstream culture. Many makers of SF films, in particular, have freely admitted that their work was (and is) designed mainly to appeal to adolescent males. A glance at the covers of popular SF magazines from the 30s to the early 60s indicates that a similar target audience was very much in mind there, too. In fact, as a woman and an SF fan, I have often been infuriatingly confronted with magazine-retailers' tendency to place SF magazines in the shelf-space amidst the men's soft-porn mags.

In recent years, science fiction (or speculative fiction, as some prefer to call it) has, in the skillful hands of several



women writers, become a powerful vehicle for the expression of feminist themes. Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*, Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground*, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* are among the best-known works of feminist SF. For a

Whores



writer who wishes to envision the possibility of a non-sexist society, or of androgynous sexuality, or of a matriarchal culture, the SF genre offers a prophetic vision. Many writers have employed science fiction motifs in order to create visions of feminist utopias, or of anti-feminist dystopias — dire warnings of the possible future. Writers such as James Tiptree, Jr. (the pseudonym of Alice Sheldon) have used the SF genre to create stories in which the very meaning and essence of gender itself are explored. Writers such as Joanna Russ and Elizabeth A. Lynn have created SF tales of adventure with strong and capable female protagonists, and with positive portrayals of lesbian love and other forms of human sexuality which our society currently represses.

Other common themes of feminist SF include: the effects of changing technology and scientific discoveries on sex roles and on the status of women, encounters between Earth humans and extraterrestrials from a non-sexist society, speculations about what would happen if women were free to develop abilities to their fullest extent, and visions of feminist rebellion in the far future against an increasingly oppressive patriarchal system.

Some interesting insights into the growth of a feminist fan and writer came from Lisa Tuttle, a transplanted Texan who has been living and writing in England since 1979, and is the author of the novel *Windhaven* (1981).

Lisa Tuttle titled her talk "What It's Like to Be an Alien". She was referring both to her sense of being a cultural alien in Britain, and to the fact that women feel like aliens, or strangers, amidst the world's patriarchal culture. Rather than denying that feeling of alienation, she says, "We should remember that we are strangers or aliens, and not take things for granted when we could be making changes instead." In particular as an SF writer, she points out that "one of the tasks of science fiction should be to make things new".

Ms. Tuttle told us how, at the age of

13, she was already a voracious reader, reading everything in the house; but she hadn't yet begun to read SF. In her local library, symbolstickers were placed on the spines of the books. And, since the "little red rocketships" stuck on the spines of the SF books seemed so similar to the "little red baseball bats" on the sports books, Lisa thought those books must be boys' books, too. Luckily, a young girl friend introduced Lisa Tuttle to SF when she surprised her one day by taking a book from the "little red rocketships" section, and saying how good it was. Soon Tuttle was an avid SF reader, then a con-going fan, and well on the way to becoming a writer herself.

Later in the convention, Lisa spoke about her current work-in-progress, a 200,000 word encyclopedia of feminism from the 1800s to the present. The book will be published in England, probably in late 1986. According to Lisa, her book will contain historical, biographical, and bibliographical material, mainly focussing on the English-speaking nations (including Canada). She is also including summaries of divergent points of view on a plethora of feminist issues. She plans to include a section on women SF writers and feminist SF, and its relation to non-SF fiction.

Other feminist items at the con included a panel discussion about fat and body image, a panel on strong women characters in fiction, and a demonstration of self-defence for women. But the highlight of WisCon 9, for me, was the workshop conducted by Suzette Haden Elgin, an SF author with a doctorate in linguistics. She has taught linguistics at the U of C in San Diego, and she now lives in Arkansas. Her latest novel, *Native Tongue* (published in 1984, by DAW Books) introduced Láadan, a language for women, as an integral part of the fictional plot.

In *Native Tongue*, women in the 22nd century are struggling against a fiercely-oppressive patriarchal social structure wherein women have once again been deprived of all legal rights including the vote and the right to own property. Indeed, women and children have again become the property of their male relatives. In rebellion, some of the women in the story begin to develop a women's language — Láadan — one that will be free of patriarchal biases, and will finally enable women to talk comfortably about the things that matter to women.

Elgin has just completed work on *A First Dictionary and Grammar of Láadan*, which has been published by SF5 in Madison.

*The Dictionary* states that Láadan was developed by Elgin as "a language constructed by a woman, for women, for the specific purpose of expressing the perceptions of women". Explicit in such a statement is the conviction that existing human languages (in particular, English), being the products of a patriarchal culture, are not adequate for women's linguistic needs. That, as a result, women attempting to use existing human languages are in a perpetually tongue-tied state.

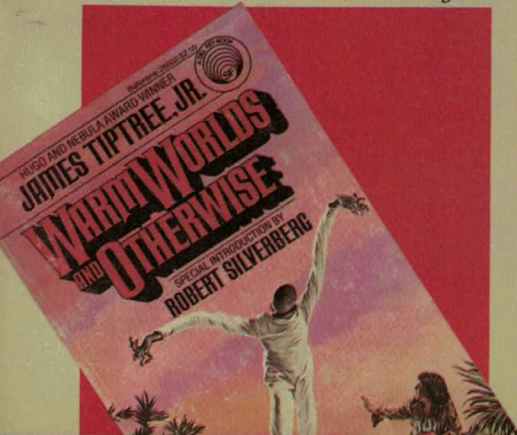
In her workshop at WisCon, Elgin told us that in creating Láadan, "I took good things from every language that I had studied".

For example, "In Láadan," she says, "you can't do one of the things that most irritates women in English." That is to say, it is not possible in Láadan to directly invalidate another person's statement of her perceptions by simply contradicting her (at least, not without appearing ridiculous in the process of contradicting her).

In Láadan, NO definitely and unequivocally means NO, if the speaker wishes it to do so. It is also possible to say a qualified YES, but again, the qualification would be unequivocal. For example, one brief sound attached to the YES would make it possible to state quite clearly, a complex response such as "Yes, I will dance with you, but I'm only doing it to be polite, not because it will be a pleasure for me. . ."

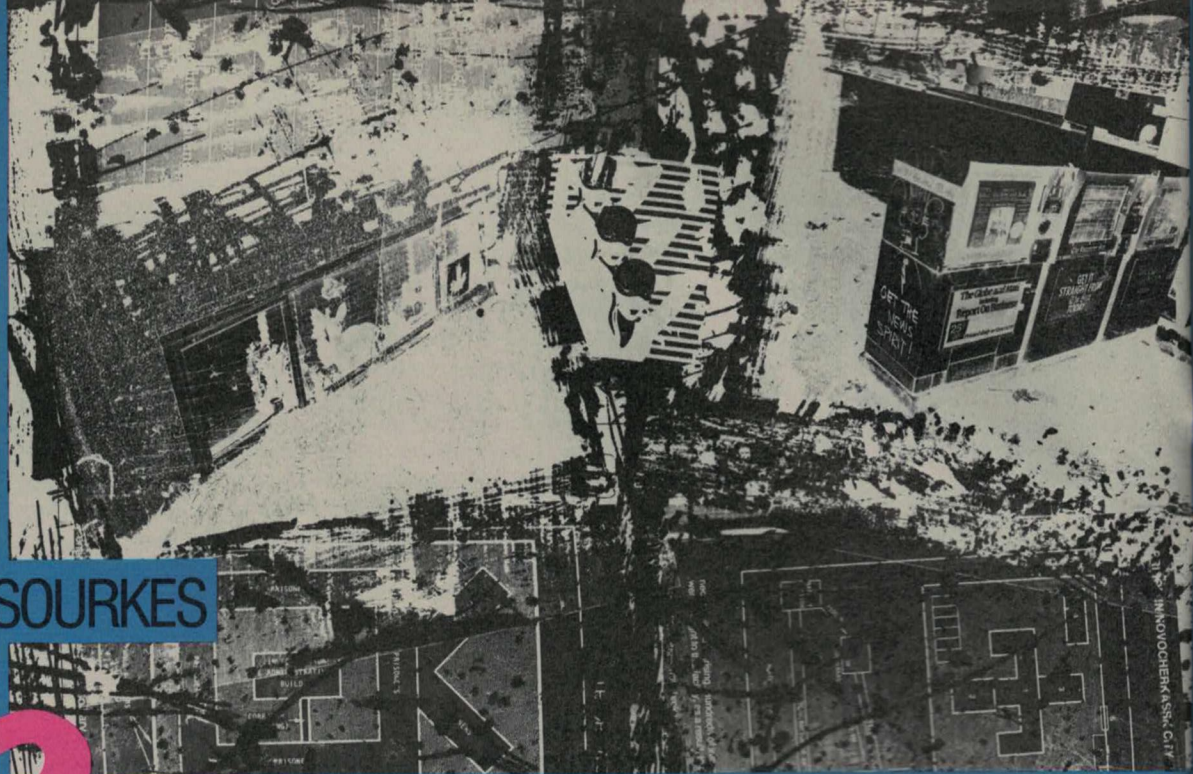
Other attractive features of Láadan, according to Elgin, are that it makes it very difficult to lie convincingly, and it also makes it almost impossible to use irony or sarcasm to "put one over" on another person. *The Dictionary* contains (as yet) no translation for the words "murder" or "kill", but it has several words meaning "to menstruate" (for the first time; early; late; painfully; joyfully. . .), and several words for different kinds of love. As Elgin points out in the book, "English has no word whatsoever for what a woman does during the sexual act", although it has many words for what a man does.

At one point, resounding applause was heard as Elgin noted that "the word for 'person' in Láadan means woman unless it has a male suffix attached". With just a hint of a twinkle in her eyes she added: "That was done for spite." Later, she remarked to the men present that, "Maybe some of you men who've always wondered what do women want, have found out [now], a language we can talk in!" ▼





Study for  
Of Difference Lost  
and Retrieved  
16" X 20"  
by Cheryl Sourkes  
1985.



CHERYL SOURKES

# REACHING THE POINT BETWEEN WORDS AND IMAGES

Sometimes, I feel jaded; mired in my own rigid perspective. I cannot see anything except in terms of my own life — I feel closed to both those around me and the world in general. Most often, it is at a point where I am struggling to come to grips with something. Some people sleep a lot, others eat. Still others express their creativity — I turn to others' creativity and usually find it a solace or comfort. It shows me someone else's perspective, it stands as their belief in themselves and it provides a feeling of hope.

As a woman, more often than not it is art made by women that I turn to. In the wilderness of male domination, women's voices have and still are rising to the surface.

A particularly strong voice in Canada today is that of Cheryl Sourkes. Through her black and white photomontages, she continues to present challenging, evocative and articulate comments on ways of being in the world.

On some level, I find it odd that a photograph can have that much power, that much presence so as to incite such deep feelings. Yet her images do just that. Specifically but not exclusively, her newest work embodies wordless sentiments of where the world is and seems to be going. It is even more curious, since her prints incorporate words. But Sourkes uses language as a bridge or a signpost between visuals. Sometimes, the words themselves act as another image, their 'true' meanings are obscured. And they have the same effect that pictures do — they go beyond their rational meanings and incite memories, connections and interrelationships.

I think that part of the power of Sourkes' art stems from her ability to reach the point *between* words and images. She attains a "kind of simultaneity where order and chaos both exist" (Cheryl Sourkes). Her prints wriggle between recognition and dreams. They stand at the point of how things should

JILL POLLACK

be and where they really are.

One of the ways that she achieves this reality-that-isn't is by combining visuals from disparate sources. Hours and hours are spent in the library browsing through books, looking for something that fits — although what exactly it fits may or may not be apparent. In a sense, her way of working (process) mirrors the final collage. It is the same as not knowing what it is one is looking for until one finds it. She continues this search by walking around Vancouver with her camera. Sometimes things which we consciously and unquestionably accept jump out at her and take on a deeper and more significant meaning. That 'thing', whatever it is, becomes a photograph and may or may not end up as a part of the final collage.

# PHOTOGRAPHY



Sourkes re-enacts her sense of the world in her images. One provocative piece from the series *Difference Lost And Retrieved* combines Russian prison floor plans, characteristic city structures and a 'new wave' design with scratchings, white areas and obfuscated black lines. Each element carries an individual sensibility as well as contributing to the whole. The overall work has a separate identity from each element. Everything in the piece reminds me of something: part of the floor plan looks like a swastika or a bomb site. It calls to mind oppression, death, horror (shades of WWII and sadly, now). The building in the left has a maple leaf insignia on its facade. I do not know where the building is or its usage, but it seems to stand for all the lies and denial inherent in patriotism — "love and defend your country even though it is not your country". Virginia Woolf once wrote that a woman has no country, and history has proven her right. By combining the Canadian national emblem with the clean, impersonal floor plan of a bomb site, Sourkes is making a definite connection between the banner we are told to stand under and the resulting proven ramifications of such a stance.

In the middle of the collage and resting on a broad stroke of black is an image of three androgynous figures, with their arms upraised behind their hooded heads. They appear to be the same figure, repeated three times. They are also the sole human presence in the print. It is interesting to note that this particular aspect is very design-like, and might be found in an ad. Taken out of its original context and placed in this collage tends to change the way in which it is interpreted. Rather than acting as a graphic, the image becomes something else. The hood with its eye-slits, the arms upraised and the repetition of a faceless, identity-less figure conjure up a feeling of bland, blind obedience. In this print, it marks the denial of individuality and the predominance of conformity.

These three figures also point out the way in which any visual can be manipulated, can take on a new meaning when placed in a different setting. Further, this speaks of the effect/power of isolating a recognisable image; transferring it into an unusual context; and letting its new definition jar against its familiar one. Sourkes frequently does so in her pieces and through her careful selection, she accentuates the ambiguousness of the visual. What was previously a 'harmless' image (in that it was intended to

seduce/convince you into owning something you probably don't need) is now a powerful comment on the status of the individual in a mass-oriented society. I am constantly surprised at Sourkes' perceptual abilities — she continually depicts that which we take for granted in an innovative, exacting way.

On the far right of the print, Sourkes introduces ironic humour — another example of that which we are told and that which we know to be true. Pictured are

**As a woman,  
more often than  
not it is art made  
by women that I  
turn to.**

newspaper vending machines with a sign which denotes that newspapers are for sale. On the side of one machine is a piece of graffiti showing a caricature face and the words, "GET THE NEWS SPIRIT!". We all know that that which we read in the newspaper is edited, selected, fragmentary, one-sided and censored; yet we all tend to believe it and it helps to shape our vision of the world. In this image, the 'news' is around the corner (literally and metaphorically). Here in B.C., a re-occurring slogan has been, "The B.C. Spirit" which is supposed to translate into 'forget your troubles, forget your woes, come to B.C. Place and don't think'. It actually means that over 15 per cent of the people are unemployed, living below the poverty level (another mis-use of terms) and feel quite hopeless.

But as with all the references which Sourkes includes in her work, we do not need to know that she lives in B.C. or that she is not a Socred. Her references stand on their own in the context they have been placed. Her images are complete in and of themselves. We can interpret them according to our own perspectives and experiences. True, she does give us clues, but she sets up each collage so that we may only gaze quickly at it or we may choose to inspect it at length.

And, in the final analysis, perhaps that is why I find her work so comforting — she is speaking of herself and through her own perspective, but usually I feel that she is speaking for me too.▼



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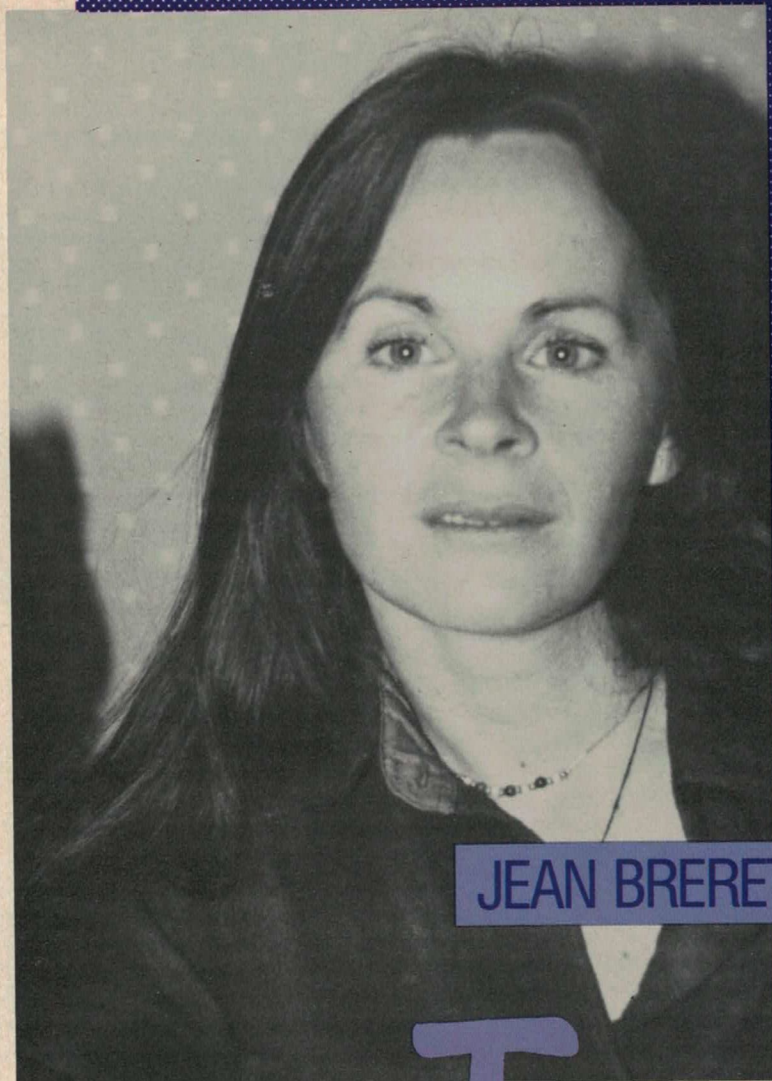
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JEAN BRERETON

Photo by Debra Pilon

Late into the night of February 12, 1948, the labouring woman, superstitiously afraid her child would be born on Friday the 13th, pushed and cried and gritted her teeth in vain attempts to will the 10 pound baby girl out into the world.

Jean Brereton had other ideas. Despite her mother's wish to have her delivered before midnight, Jean took her first breath five minutes after midnight, five minutes into Friday the 13th. Adding another unconventional twist to her birth story, she was delivered as a breech birth. "My mother always told me I did everything ass-backwards," she says with a chuckle.

With her Sun in Aquarius, doing things in unique and innovative ways delights rather than dismays Jean,

## THE ART OF FEMINIST ASTROLOGY

DEBRA PILON

whose other Aquarian traits — an interest in people and an ability to make quicksilver connections between abstractions and concrete "reality" — are goddess-given gifts bestowed to her in abundance. With her Moon in the sensitive, intuitive sign of Pisces and a Scorpio ascendant that invites people to trust

her with their innermost secrets, Jean Brereton is making a life for herself as a feminist astrologer in Ottawa and Toronto.

The study and practice of astrology is both the seed and the flower of Jean's personal quest for spiritual insight and fulfillment. Inside her childhood home, she was introduced to astrology. Then, as she got older, the search expanded to Zen Buddhism, theosophy and the writings of Ram Das. In 1971 she moved to Golden Lake, Ontario from New York City and embarked on an intense, solitary study of astrology from home, a ten-room log house at the end of a five mile dirt road.

During the last two years, Jean has left her rural home every few months to minister to the needs of a growing number of Ottawa women. She has never advertised her services yet she finds herself increasingly in demand as word of mouth increases the popularity of her maverick form of astrological counseling.

With few exceptions, Ottawa women love her. Says Sherry Galey, a feminist writer/broadcaster who also works on issues involving women and development with MATCH International: "When I went the first time (for a consultation with Jean), I went without any real knowledge of astrology except what I had read in the horoscopes in the newspapers. I didn't know what would happen." Sherry found Jean's approach was "undeterministic" — something she not only appreciated but also required in order to accept what Jean had to say to her.

"I have a basic resistance to any kind of fatalistic philosophy. And I found that Jean uses astrology to help you get in touch with what's inside you. The planets symbolise psychic drives and there's nothing and nobody forcing you to do anything."

Since her initial session with Jean, Sherry has returned again and again for consultations. An Aquarian, she says she appreciates Jean's "sensitivity and understanding of feminist issues and concerns and ways of being. . . I don't think I could go to someone that I had to explain these things to."

Jean is a feminist astrologer who is working with a non-traditional approach to astrological interpretation. Working with astrological symbols and values which must be continually refin-

# ASTROLOGY



ed in order to be valuable in her own life and the lives of other women is a struggle Jean wages on a grand scale.

"The most important thing for me is that astrology validates the personal perspective," she says. "It's the only thing that I've been able to find that tells me that my instincts are appropriate."

To this end, astrology is an important tool — one of many — that Jean uses to reclaim and re-integrate that yin principle for women.

The sexism inherent in traditional astrology distresses Jean, whose instincts tell her all astrological symbols should be inclusive rather than exclusive. "I would find interpretations like: (the planet) Mars is a masculine principle and, of course, women don't have this and Mars in a woman's chart doesn't really have anything to do with who she is but most often it describes the man in her life, right? And there was this sense of taking the symbols literally. It was very much like our society, you know, which took a symbol and said: This is where you should be. Venus, you go to your kitchen and Mars, you go to the boardroom".

Since Jean's journey into astrology has as its basis a desire to re-integrate the feminine principle into astrology, she



gravitates to books such as *The Moon and the Virgin* by Nor Hall and *God Herself* by Geraldine Thorstien — books rich in the lore and symbolism of the goddesses who were worshipped thousands of years ago. Goddesses had hundreds of names all over the world; they represented birth, life, abundance and the mysteries of life. And womynly power was the earthly counterpart of this acceptance of the feminine principle. Many 20th century feminists seeking spiritual empowerment steep themselves in the available literatures and are rediscovering the rituals surrounding the ancient worship of feminine principles.

It took Jean a long time to learn she could trust in the profound relevance of intuition over reason in her own life. Yet, conversely, the roots of that trust were with her from the time she was born. Astrology, she says, is a legacy from her mother, who is now dead.

"Mrs. B. they called her in Montreal," Jean recalls. "She would buy horoscope books at the corner store. There were piles of them by her bed and she'd always be reading them. It drove my father crazy because that kind of stuff was so weird." Her mother's uncanny ability to use what she picked up in the horoscope books in a way that made sense to other people soon earned her a reputation as the local wise woman. Once her mother's life-line to the occult was established, the Brereton's telephone line never stopped ringing. Everyone from the local hairdresser to neighbourhood wives and mothers called Mrs. B. wanting to tap into the astrological lore she had gleaned from 25 cent horoscope books. "My mother wasn't well educated and she didn't have the ability to work things through in the conceptual realm. In fact, she never read a serious astrology book in her life," says Jean. "But she had this intuitive sense... it was amazing." ▼

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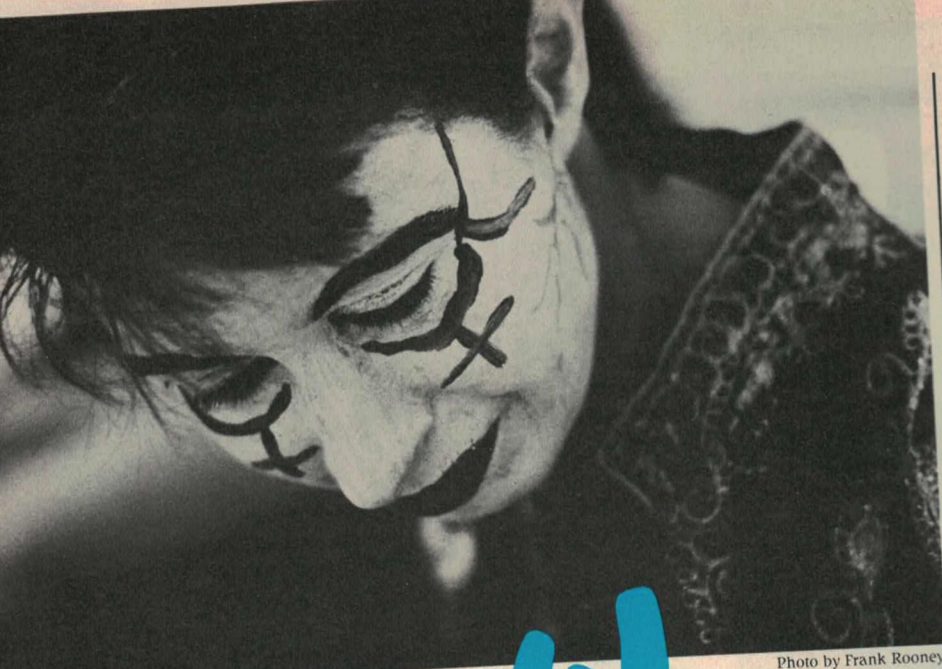
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Gay Bell

Photo by Frank Rooney

Feminist work has found its niche within the broader category of alternative theatre. There we can pursue new approaches to creativity, foster new directions in performance. There our voices are strongest.

Amanda Hale is a feminist writer and performance artist who enjoys working collectively. Cynthia Grant is a collective member of Nightwood Theatre, Toronto's most established women's theatre company. Gay Bell is a writer and actor who sees theatre as a powerful tool for education.

All of these women are committed to producing women's theatre, in spite of the fact that its financial rewards are slim. Community support is strong, says Amanda, and audiences are expanding into schools, the broader theatre community and different women's groups.

I talked to these three women about why they were working in feminist theatre and how the collective process affects their work.

Gay Bell has taken a straight forward approach to theatre as a source of livelihood: "When I was 25, I decided I had to have a skill if I was going to survive as an artist." So she took up typesetting and she also teaches English as a second language.

Gay takes theatre out of its traditional environment to the people she's trying to reach. Her work is sometimes best described as guerilla theatre; it's motivated by the various communities of which she is a part. Whether she's addressing the concerns of lesbians or those of another group, Gay's main desire is to be

accessible to those outside of the arts world, not to gain notoriety within it.

Gay is very specific in her goal to educate people about lesbianism and to educate women so that they can regain control of their sexual identities. Her work extends into the political forum on various issues, all of which tend to be based on the timely necessity of them being understood. She is now working on a play dealing with the subject of abortion.

Amanda Hale says her work is meant to be educational too. It's something that started with her own development. "I didn't write so much feminist material until I learned to understand the oppres-

sion." Her latest play deals exclusively with the medical profession, actively challenging its traditional ideas, its values, the contradictions in its mystique. "The Medical Show or the Mystery of the Purple Hand" reflects the misrepresentation of women in the medical community, our illusions about its ability to keep us healthy and the various ways it has caused the abuse of women.

Despite the fact that collectives and all the changes and criticism they involve leave a writer feeling quite vulnerable, Amanda is confident that her work is better for having been produced by a collective. "Working together with a group of women, improvising, brings the characters to life much earlier. It's a way of working that is very appropriate for feminist material. Giving other women power to investigate your material is a very vulnerable position for the writer, but anybody that's doing anything in the arts that really matters to them makes their material vulnerable."

Cynthia Grant also puts a lot of faith in the collective process and its ability to produce good, meaningful theatre. "The whole direction of the collective process is creating a new structure within theatre. It allows the collective to continue working on a 'finished project which can be an on-going experience. It also breaks down the established roles of director, writer, of them being able to control the whole product. . . It breaks down the hierarchy of the old guard theatre. Women want to see the theatre change more than the males that I know. Changes are a threat to the existing structure — prejudices towards text, action, plot. Collectively produced theatre is a way of developing women's taste."

Whereas Amanda and Gay are comfortable with the term "women's theatre" Cynthia is a little more ambivalent about using it. "I think that women in general are afraid of 'women's theatre' and to some degree I agree with them because if we looked at the statistical breakdown in theatre we would be running around calling the majority of theatre men's theatre."

Nightwood didn't start out doing strictly feminist work. That was something that evolved over time. Although the collective's main desire is to provide its audience with intelligent, non-sexist material it was really the critics who were quick to define Nightwood as feminist. It dealt with women's issues in-

# WORKING TOGETHER ON FEMINIST THEATRE

JANINE FULLER

# THEATRE



telligently and consciously — it had to be feminist. It seems impossible for mainstream critics to simply judge Nightwood on its theatrical merit.

How would these three women like to see theatre fit into society, if they could restructure it to best serve their needs?

As a writer, Amanda has found it difficult to find a woman director who is both experienced and dedicated to her feminist politics. She recognises the need for women to operate away from the mainstream but she can also see the benefits of drawing experience from within it.

"When I was in England last summer I found the theatre being produced there very exciting. It was a more extreme, a more separatist type of women's theatre, where women were working just with women. This doesn't just pertain to actors and writers; it's women designers, directors, musicians, artists all working together to develop a really strong feminist vision. I think that what's lacking here is experience in the mainstream and the skills, the right type of politics and the right kind of feminist vision."

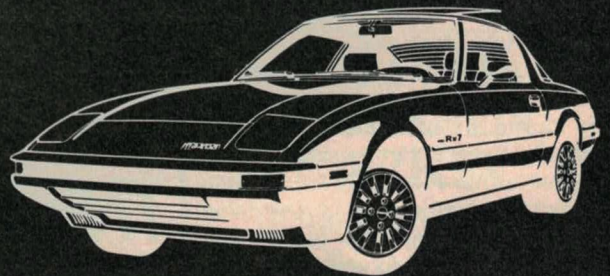
For Gay it is important to reexamine where theatre happens and who it happens for. "Ideally I'd like to see a whole restructuring of society where artists are community representatives, community spokespeople and where all communities have artists who are in the process of teaching other people their art forms. To Gay, theatre means accessibility and expression — a way of presenting the ideas of people not usually given a voice by the mainstream. It's a tool for people who need access to public expression: working class women, immigrant women, disabled women, women of colour, lesbians.

Cynthia sees theatre as a way of coping, of expressing and understanding the changes women are undergoing in our society. Theatre is dealing with the technological revolution; it's assailing American politics around Latin America; it's struggling for peace. "I hope that women's writing in the theatre can make as many connections as possible and make as many comments as possible on these extremely serious problems of our time, problems that are in such an advanced state that they don't even appear as problems anymore."

Even with minimal funding women's voices and ideas are being heard and seen. There's a growing network of women in theatre. We are developing our own structure, our own thoughts and an audience that wants very much to listen. ▼

*There are some things about a classic that shouldn't be taken for granted...*

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Making films was not the career that Gail Singer consciously set out to accomplish in her life. Growing up in Winnipeg in the 50s, she recalls that the community at the time was "just too disconnected with the making of films". Instead, she attended university, did a modest amount of writing, opened a shop specialising in kitchen accessories — all interspersed with travelling. It was on one such journey in Europe that she got her first taste of working in film. By luck, she landed a spot on the crew of *Underwater in the Gulf of Aquaba*. That was in the late 60s.

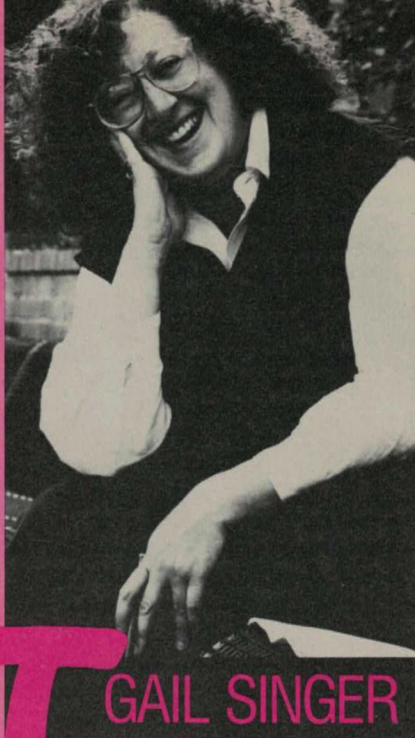
Her break in the Canadian industry came in the early 70s when she was offered the job as executive director of a cable broadcasting experiment in Winnipeg. Gail remembers it as a crazy time. "You could make mistakes, everyone was forgiving," she admits, then, in defence, adds, "We sometimes came up with brilliant ideas too!"

While active in social and environmental issues of the day, Gail wanted to "try to find a way to make pictures of them (the issues)". Her persistent desire to achieve that eventually led her into the public affairs area of television (CBC), which she says was "the best size film for a person to do who didn't have the experience of doing larger films."

From the experience she gained with CBC, she realised that she knew just as much if not more than the producers and set out to make the point. She moved to Toronto, established her own company, *Singer Productions*, and began producing. Primarily, she made half-hour television documentaries, among them *Time of the Cree*, *We Don't Live Here Anymore*, and *Season of Plenty*. Again, these films focused on social and environmental issues, areas where Gail obviously felt some passion.

Then suddenly, part of her life changed. Early in 1980, the National Film Board (NFB) approached her to do a film on wife-battering. She accepted the offer. Reflecting back, Gail says, "It was a very interesting process for me because it was the first time that I began to look at women. Up until then, I'd copied all the good film documentaries I'd ever seen... I did a decent job of copying them. I was able to sell them... But they scarcely had women in them... I never talked to women about environmental issues."

Through the process of making *Love, Honoured and Bruised*, Gail came to see that there was a world that she was connected to in an intimate and profound way, the world of women. She began to take women, herself included, much



# T GAIL SINGER HROUGH THE EYE OF CONSCIENCE AND CAMERA

M I C H E L E  
H E I N E M A N N

more seriously. *Love, Honoured and Bruised* is a powerful documentary on the subject of battered women and Gail feels a much better film than any she'd done previously. I spoke with her recently about this film.

**Michele H:** Why did you feel *Love, Honoured and Bruised* was better?

**Gail S:** It opened up the whole world because up until then I'd been making films in a sort of theoretical way. By dealing with men, who never really treated me as an equal, I wasn't aware of it, but in retrospect, I could see that... The success of that film... is the degree to which I made myself be honest and so it was possible for people to be honest back with me. It's been illusive and the thing I've fought to retain and maintain ever since then. I came to enjoy the state of total honesty with my-

self. The rest falls into place after that. **Michele H:** Obviously a major growing time in your life?

**Gail S:** During the process of making *Love, Honoured and Bruised*, I had to look very carefully at the way I viewed women who were battered and who stay in that situation. I had to acknowledge at the front end of this process that I was a victim of the same propaganda that everyone else was. I thought that they [battered women] liked it somehow. Knowing that I had that prejudice was very important as I went through the process of getting to know people and listen to them tell their stories and realise that, of course, I was absolutely wrong — nobody wants it. In the absence of any other emotional connection, they might seek out some emotion rather than none, they might have been programmed to need punishment, but almost all women, or all that I've encountered feel better when the punishment stopped.

**Michele H:** You are very aware of the impact of *Love, Honoured and Bruised* had on you. What kind of social impact do you see it having?

**Gail S:** It would be stupid and foolish of me to take any credit for what's happened... but coincidentally that's exactly what has happened. There were two women's shelters in all of Canada when I made that film. Now it is normal for there to be shelters. People are free to speak about their problems. People are sympathetic — they no longer think the woman is at fault. They no longer jump to the conclusion that she incites the violence... A film can contribute to a social movement, beginning or about to begin.

Following close on the heels of *Love, Honoured and Bruised* was the hilariously funny and poignant *Portrait of an Artist as an Old Lady* (NFB, 1982) which Singer wrote and directed. Profiling Russian-born artist Paraskeva Clark, then 86, the film focuses on her struggles as a woman artist suffering through the dilemma of work and family. Singer is attracted to Clark because of her frank and spunky nature but in producing *Portrait of an Artist as an Old Lady*, Singer has chronicled much that is true about women in Canadian society. Clark's influence on Singer took the form of more questioning, more clarification.

**Gail S:** I suddenly was the feminists' feminist.

**Michele H:** You knew you were something other than the perceived public image implied you should be.

# Film



**Gail S:** Yes, I felt resentment being cast in that role. I hadn't thought anything through. I didn't feel like the image — I was partly influenced by Paraskeva I'm sure. I didn't feel like a person like that [the image]. I didn't feel hard-line, strident. I realised I am a feminist, it's just that the label got there before the philosophy and understanding of what it meant did.

**Michele H:** Why in particular did your contact with Clark spark off these concerns with you?

**Gail S:** She, like me, (and I think like all women), is ambivalent about her role as a woman. Sometimes she'll rail about women not being accepted, but then she'll say, "but it's destined. That's the way nature made us, that's the way it's going to be." That dichotomy is always with us. It's so important to accept that some of these things are not resolvable and then you can get on with your life and keep thinking about it. It's fascinating to think and rethink and watch your philosophy develop.

Singer's latest film — *Abortion: Stories from North and South* which she co-produced with Studio D, (NFB), was screened across Canada last fall. It is a well-researched, honest and thought-provoking examination about, "the true nature of abortion," says Singer. The hour-long documentary looks at abortion historically and from the perspective of worldwide practices and attitudes. The film clearly establishes what contemporary feminists consistently acknowledge. *Women do not have the right to decide.* Church and state yield that power — power that still falls primarily to men. Their decisions on moral and economic considerations wreck havoc for women, who defy husband, church and state, often risking their own lives in order to end the pregnancy they do not want.

Already the film has stirred controversy. Late in October, '84, the CBC announced its refusal to air the film, claiming it to be journalistically unbalanced. Almost simultaneously, the prestigious International Festival of Documentary Film (Nyon, Switzerland) awarded *Abortion: Stories from North and South* the top honour — the Prix de Publique.

Singer's film credits mark her as a respected professional in her field. She has sought and found the balances that many people search for. Her work is honest, first to herself and so to its subject matter. She sees the world through eyes that mean only to honour humankind. That they fall short of that says much, much more about the social condition than it does about Gail Singer. She is not afraid to say the truth. ▼

# POETRY

## YEAR PAST

Another year  
has tumbled over my life  
dissecting my heart  
rearranging it  
carving age into my skin  
in endless patterns  
blood that's drawn  
beads and rolls away  
filling my earth with scarlet.

The core of my soul  
has drowned in a loved one's death  
the womb of my body,  
swelled by a new life  
a child  
growing in the wake  
of my agony  
a tiny bud of my being  
drawing my days and nights  
into its unfolding blossom.

My tears, resting on its petals,  
become the morning dew  
that evaporates as the sun  
rises over us.  
We take our first breath  
in its warmth  
and begin our new life together  
my baby and I.

© A.M. Reimer,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

## DU CHAMP

Grand amant  
entourant l'espace de ma vie  
me craquant de chaleur  
m'écrasant de lourdeur  
me noyant de tes larmes

Laisse mon esprit  
ressortir de cette noirceur  
permettant à mes enfants  
de revoluer au vent  
portant mon sang  
mon être  
mes semences  
à travers le temps

© Nicole Pribilski,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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## MISS CHATELAINE

In the movie, the horse almost dies.  
A classic for children, where the small girl pushes a thin  
knife into the horse's side.  
Later I am sitting in brightness with the women  
I went to high school with in Calgary,  
fifteen years later we are all feminist, talking of the girl  
in the film.  
The horse who has some parasite & is afraid of the storm,  
& the girl who goes out to save him.  
We are in a baggage car on VIA Rail around a huge table,  
its varnish light & cold,  
as if inside the board rooms of the corporation;  
the baggage door is open  
to the smell of dark prairie,  
we are fifteen years old, serious  
about women, these images:  
the girl running at night between the house & the barn,  
& the noise of the horse's fear mixed in with the rain.

Finally there are no men between us.  
Finally none of us are passing or failing according to  
Miss Chatelaine.  
I wish I could tell you how my I love you,  
my friends with your odd looks, our odd looks,  
our nervousness with each other,  
the girl crying out as she runs in the darkness,  
our decoration we wore, so many years ago, high school  
boys watching from another table.

Finally I can love you.  
Wherever you have gone to, in your hidden marriages.  
When the knife goes so deeply into the horse's side, a  
few seconds & the rush of air.  
In the morning, the rain is over.  
The space between the horse & barn is just a space again.  
Finally I can meet with you & talk this over.  
Finally I can see us meeting, & our true tenderness emerge.

© Erin Mouré,  
Montréal, Québec

## LANGUAGE: WRITTEN IN ORANGE

Orange thots written in orange ink on white blue-lined paper —  
Are you confused? No wonder!  
Sometimes there is too much colour in a dream  
And to tell that dream is impossible.  
Saying "dream" and I already am discounted  
Saying "dream" and I am a witch with visions  
Saying "dream" I am a woman who speaks, a sorceress.

© Elke Werchonowicz,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

## STILLNESS APPALLING

she had not thought it possible  
for all her to stretch between  
two little clicks  
such small clicks

hadn't realised  
couldn't possibly have known  
this quarrel was unlike any other  
not like all of them melded into one

deliberate turning of stiff back  
arm reaching high suitcase shelf  
grating of reluctant dresser drawer  
click suitcase shutting  
click front door closing

silence the graveyard kind

truly  
two loves had died  
between those clicks

© Eileen Burnett,  
Milner Ridge, Manitoba

## ALWAYS

Always  
is not such a long time.  
In fact, I remember when I  
always wanted to be a little girl.  
But, I grew up  
and was allowed to smoke and vote,  
(though never political by nature).  
I then decided I  
always wanted to be free.  
But that passed  
when I joined the ranks of suburban housewives  
without the unnecessary children  
clinging to my pants  
(I never wore skirts in those days). I  
always wanted to be in love  
but that state also changed,  
when I recognised a distinction  
between lust and love  
(we had nothing in common.)  
And so I said I  
always wanted to be divorced  
and selfish  
and eat breakfast at three  
in the afternoon.  
But that dwindled with my appetite.  
I decided to  
always be independent,  
then started accounting for my time  
and heating midnight snacks  
to four a.m. to please  
you.  
Always, I think,  
is a finite state in time.

© Genni Gunn,  
White Rock, B.C.

POETRY



# La fleur féroce

par Anne Dandurand



J'ai trop appelé ma mort au secours: elle s'est installée à demeure, en moi.

Je croyais à une dépression, une fatigue sans fond et je découvris la fleur.

Mes problèmes avec l'amour allèrent s'asseoir dans le fond de la pièce, comme des enfants turbulents qu'on punit. La vie, ce qui m'en restait, ne toléra plus que je m'attarde à ces fariboles. L'isolement dont je souffrais devint réelle: d'un bord, ceux qui mourront plus tard et de l'autre, moi, qui crève un peu plus à chaque heure.

Le malheur s'était enfin cristallisé dans cette fleur féroce dévorant mes organes. L'adversaire dormait avec moi, plus près que n'importe quel amant, je ne pouvais rêver mieux.

On m'opéra tout de suite à l'Hôpital de la Reine. Un poumon et quart. En m'éveillant, avant la douleur j'ai senti ce vide entre mes côtes.

Dans ma salle, elles ont toutes la fleur. On se montre nos sutures, une au-dessus de l'oeil, une le ventre, une le deuxième sein. On trouve le moyen de faire des farces. La Pirate, la Pécheresse et l'Amazone. Moi je leur raconte l'histoire d'une cicatrice qu'on a tatouée, un serpent à plumes, qui donne un vague sentiment d'éternité. Certaines ont des enfants, moi que mes mots.

Ma mère est venue me voir après sa classe, les yeux inquiets comme le lendemain matin de ma tentative de suicide, à seize ans. Il y a maintenant quatorze

ans de cela, mais cette fois, les pilules me sauveront peut-être.

Mon docteur dit que je ne combats pas, il a raison. Je ne suis même pas en colère: j'ai eu si souvent le goût de la fleur que je la mérite bien. Et je souffrais déjà tant avant, là au moins la Pologne, l'Afrique du Sud et l'Amérique du même nom se développent en moi, minute après minute.

Je regrette le dessin de la fumée dans le clair-obscur d'une lampe et la facilité avec laquelle je grimpais les escaliers. Les très mauvaises nuits d'asthme, plusieurs voix chantaient dans ma gorge. Maintenant ça chuinte comme un tuyau rouillé d'harmonium. Je ne peux plus que fredonner tout bas, les bonnes journées.

Mon docteur m'a promis de n'en parler à personne. Mais ma soeur le sait, je ne pouvais pas la trahir. Pauvre elle: le chagrin restera avec elle, après.

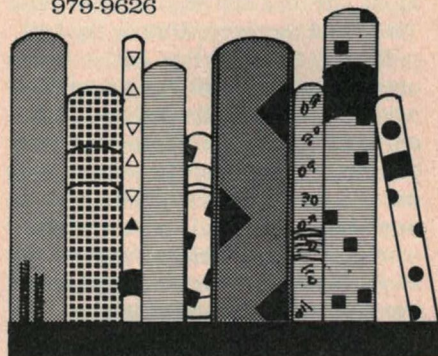
Celui que j'aime vient me voir. Il souffre de culpabilité pour ne pas m'avoir assez aimée. Maintenant nous sommes toujours trois ensemble: lui, moi et la fleur, ça gêne un peu l'intimité. Elle me donne une trop mince revanche, je n'aurai pas le temps d'en profiter.

Et même les mots n'ont plus qu'un poids dérisoire, qu'importe l'éternité quand le présent disparaît. ▼

Cette nouvelle est extraite du recueil en préparation "Le Journal de l'araignée."

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## Children's

## FICTION



## THE TUNNEL

LYN COCKBURN

Kathy was a bright girl. Everybody said so.

"How clever you are," said her mother when Kathy was three and learned how to put on her own shoes. On the correct feet, too.

"What a smart girl," said her father one night when she was four and a half. He was reading her a story and noticed that she was reading along with him. "Now you can read me stories," he said and after that, they took turns. One night he read her a story and the next night, she read him one. He liked Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs the best.

"Thank heavens I've got a bright granddaughter," said her grandfather when she was five. Her grandfather loved good music and was always complaining that nobody else in the family did. He was delighted when Kathy sat down beside him and listened carefully whenever he put on his favourite records of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and all those other famous musicians.

"Thank heavens I've got a bright granddaughter," said her grandmother when Kathy was six and a half. Her grandmother was a baseball nut. She watched all the games on TV during the season and went crazy at World Series time. She also loved to play catch. She was always complaining that nobody else in the family liked baseball. After

that, she and Kathy played at least twice a week. "Takes to it like a pro," said her grandmother. "She'll be the first woman in major league baseball. We'll have to rename her Jaqueline Robinson."

"Aaaaaaaarg," moaned her little brother after his first week of school when Kathy was seven. "I wish I was smart like you. I'm never going to make it through grade one."

"Good for you," said her teacher. "You always learn everything so quickly."

"Wowie Zowie," said her best friend. "You always get such high marks."

Kathy was surrounded by people who thought she was clever, smart, intelligent and bright. There were so many of them that she never dared tell anyone how frightened she was.

She didn't know why she was afraid; she just was. School frightened her. What if she answered a question wrong? Elevators scared her. What if she got trapped in one in between floors? The dark frightened her. What if the things in the closet crept out? Thunder and lightning frightened her. What if lightning hit her house? Having her hair washed frightened her. What if the soap got in her eyes and she went blind? Large dogs frightened her. What if one bit off her entire left arm?

Most of all, the thought of doing something wrong frightened her. What

if everybody stopped loving her?

Mostly, she held the fear in and it only came out in little dribbles. Kathy is a little nervous; Kathy is a little high strung; Kathy is a little hyperactive, said her parents and teachers, using those big words adults use to describe children they don't understand.

Every once in awhile, she couldn't hold the fear in and it oozed out all over the place.

"OOOOOOOOOH," she would cry as her father washed her hair. "I don't like it. Stop, stop!" and her voice would go all funny.

"Goofball," said her dad. "Relax."

"Where are my shoes," she would screech at her mother. "I can't get to school without my shoes. Where are they? Where are they?" And her heart would pound. Bang, boom, bang.

"Don't be silly," said her mother. "Relax. Here they are."

"No, no. I don't want to take the elevator. Let's walk up. Please, please," she would beg her grandparents when she went to visit them. "Well, O.K.," they would say. "You need the exercise."

"Let's go this way," she would say to her little brother as they walked home from school and she would start shaking because she'd just seen a large German Shepherd a block ahead. "Sissy," said her brother, who knew she didn't like big dogs.

One Saturday when her father was washing her hair, the light in the bathroom went out right in the middle of the second rinse.

She couldn't breathe. She couldn't talk. She couldn't swallow and she couldn't stop shaking. She jumped out of the bathtub, ran upstairs to her room and pulled on some clothes. She was dripping water everywhere, but she didn't care. Not till she had on her jeans, heavy socks, a long sleeved shirt and two sweaters did she stop shaking. She put on her boots and her hooded coat on top of all that, ran downstairs and out the front door. She heard her father calling from the bathroom, "Kathy, Kathy sweetie, it's all right. I fixed the light."

She liked it when her father called her sweetie, but she couldn't stop. She kept right on running.

She raced around the side of her house, through the back yard, over the fence, through the neighbour's back yard and into the little park next door. She didn't stop running till she came to her tree. She'd discovered this tree last summer. It was big and leafy and if she climbed most of the way up, nobody from the ground could see her. She



climbed and climbed and wedged herself into her favourite spot in between two big branches. She leaned back against the trunk and let herself cry.

"I'm not smart and clever," she sobbed. "Smart and clever people aren't scared all the time. I'm stupid, stupid, stupid." And she cried some more. In between sobs, she said to herself, "I'm going to stay up here forever. Nobody likes stupid kids." And she shut her eyes tight and cried some more.

A little later she opened her eyes and was surprised to find she was no longer sitting in the tree. Instead, she was standing in a forest. There were big trees and little trees all around her and she could hear squirrels chattering. In fact, one was sitting on a stump a few feet away, staring at her solemnly.

"Hello squirrel," said Kathy. "Where am I?" The squirrel chattered to her, but she didn't understand what it was trying to say.

"I guess I'd better go home," she said to the squirrel.

"Daddy will wonder where I am." The squirrel wriggled its bushy tail at her and disappeared. Kathy started walking.

There was lots of sunlight in the woods and it wasn't scary at all. The chatter of the squirrels and the chirping of the birds sounded friendly. Kathy kept walking.

Finally, she came to a great big rock. She stepped around it and came face to face with the opening to a cave. She bent down and peered in. She thought she saw a light way in the distance.

She didn't like the darkness in the cave, but the light way off seemed to say, "Come here, come here."

"I'm not afraid, I'm not afraid," she said. "I like elevators, I like the dark. I like having my hair washed. It doesn't matter if I lose my shoes. I like this cave."

She knew she didn't really, but for some reason, she bent down again and looked into the cave. Before she knew it, she was inside.

It was dark. "I'm getting out of here," she said, but she stayed. Her eyes became accustomed to the dimness and she noticed a tunnel on the other side of the cave.

"I'll just have a quick look at the tunnel and then I'm getting out of here," she said to herself.

She slowly walked over to it and knelt to look in. It was a small, narrow tunnel. She was sure she could see a speck of light in the distance.

She stuck her head in the tunnel and quickly pulled it out again. "I'm getting

out of here right now," she said, but she didn't. Instead, she was inside the tunnel. On all fours. Crawling.

She was instantly terrified. It was dark, it was cold, it smelled terrible and the speck of light had disappeared.

"Why am I doing this?" she moaned. "It's worse than having my hair washed. It's worse than dogs and elevators." She would have given up her allowance for a whole year just to be back home in the bathtub in the dark, rather than in this tunnel.

But she was too frightened to turn around. It was easier to crawl forwards than backwards, so she kept going.

After what seemed like five weeks, she really could see a big patch of light ahead. She crawled as fast as she could, her heart pounding and her breath coming in short little gasps and then she stumbled out into a big meadow with lots of lovely soft green grass.

She threw herself down, took a couple of deep breaths and after awhile, her heart slowed down and didn't go Bang, Boom, Bang anymore. She could breathe properly now and that's when she felt something cold against her cheek. She opened her eyes and looked into the face of a huge brown fuzzy dog with a large pink tongue. She opened the other eye and saw that his entire body was shaking, because he was wagging his tail so hard.

"Hello," she whispered to the dog, her voice quivering. At the sound of her voice, he wagged his tail so hard he nearly fell over. He licked her face at the same time.

"His name is Ralph," said a soft voice behind her.

She jumped and her heart started to pound again. She looked around and there was a big, brown haired man holding a guitar and smiling at her in a friendly way. His hair and beard were every bit as shaggy as the dog's.

"He's very friendly," she said shyly. "Is he yours?"

"Oh, he sort of belongs to everybody," said the man. "Would you like to pat him? He loves affection."

Kathy carefully patted Ralph who looked as though he wished he knew how to purr. Then he rolled over with all fours in the air and let her scratch his tummy.

The man squatted down on the grass beside Ralph and the three of them sat in silence for a little while.

Then Kathy took a big breath and asked, "Have you ever been through that tunnel over there?"

"Oh, all the time," he said. "I go

through it every single day."

"Isn't that scary? Doing it every day?" she asked.

"Well, that depends," he said slowly. "It's a magic tunnel, you know. If I think it's small and dark, then it is. And I have to crawl and that's scary. If I think it's large and bright with funny drawings on the walls, then it is and I can walk through it and have fun."

Kathy didn't know whether to believe him or not, but she asked politely, "How do you make yourself think it's large and bright?"

"Well, it helps to talk about it," he said. "Lots of people come through that tunnel and when they do, we always talk about it. It helps to sing too."

"Oh," said Kathy.

"Would you like to practice?" he asked. "We can sing some happy songs and then I'll come back through the tunnel with you, if you like."

"That would be wonderful," she said gratefully.

He played his guitar softly and they sang. Happy songs, funny songs.

Kathy laughed, Ralph made happy snuffling sounds and wagged his tail and the man smiled gently and played his guitar.

After awhile, he said, "Would you like to go back now?"

So they got up, Kathy and Ralph and the large, shaggy man and they went into the tunnel.

"If it starts to get small and dark, let me know," said the man, "and we'll sing some more."

But it didn't. It stayed large and bright.

"Thank you very much," said Kathy when they got to the other end, through the cave and into the woods where the sun shone down and the squirrels chattered and the birds warbled.

"I hope you'll come to visit me again," said the man. "I enjoyed singing songs with you. Ralph likes you too."

"Oh, I will, I will," she said.

"There's one thing I have to tell you though," said the man. "I can't come and get you. You have to come through the tunnel by yourself. I can always come back with you if you like, though."

He held out his hand and Kathy shook it politely. Ralph wagged his tail; the two of them disappeared and Kathy was back in the tree.

She climbed down, still humming one of the happy songs and went home. She found her grandfather in the living room, listening to a record he'd just bought.

"Hi, lovely," he said. "Just listen to this. Isn't it beautiful?"





They sat side by side listening to the music for a few minutes. Then Kathy said, "Grandpa, were you ever scared when you were a little boy?"

"Basements," said her grandfather.

"What?" asked Kathy.

"Basements," he repeated. "I hated basements. I was terrified of them. Dark, horrible things. I was sure there were monsters in the basement. My dad could never understand why I didn't want to learn carpentry. All his tools were in the basement and I didn't want to go down there. I'll tell you a secret lovey, I still don't like them. Nobody should have to put up with basements." And he smiled and patted her on the arm.

"Cats," said her father who must have been listening from the kitchen. "Cats eat your toes and when you haven't any toes left, they start on your fingers and then on your ear lobes. Do you know, I still can't stand having cats around, even though I'm almost sure they don't eat your toes."

"Standing up in front of the class and reciting poetry," said her mother sitting down beside them. "I used to feel I couldn't breathe and that I'd die. I used to try to get sick on the days we had to recite. The only poetry I like now is stuff I never had to recite."

"Being laughed at," said her grandmother coming into the room. "If I said something wrong or did something wrong, I was always afraid somebody would laugh at me and say I was stupid. Do you know, all these years later, I still have to remind myself everyday what a great person I am."

"Lakes," said her little brother, coming in and sitting on the floor. "Swimming. I get scared that if I go in the water I'll never come out again. There's something big and ugly at the bottom of lakes. It pulls you down and eats you."

"Do you mean that everybody's scared of something?" asked Kathy.

"Oh, yes," said her father. "In fact, most people are frightened of lots of things."

"It's O.K. to be scared," said her mother.

"Oh," said her little brother. "Well," he looked at his mother. "The next time we go swimming at the lake, could you sort of swim near me for awhile till I'm not so scared?"

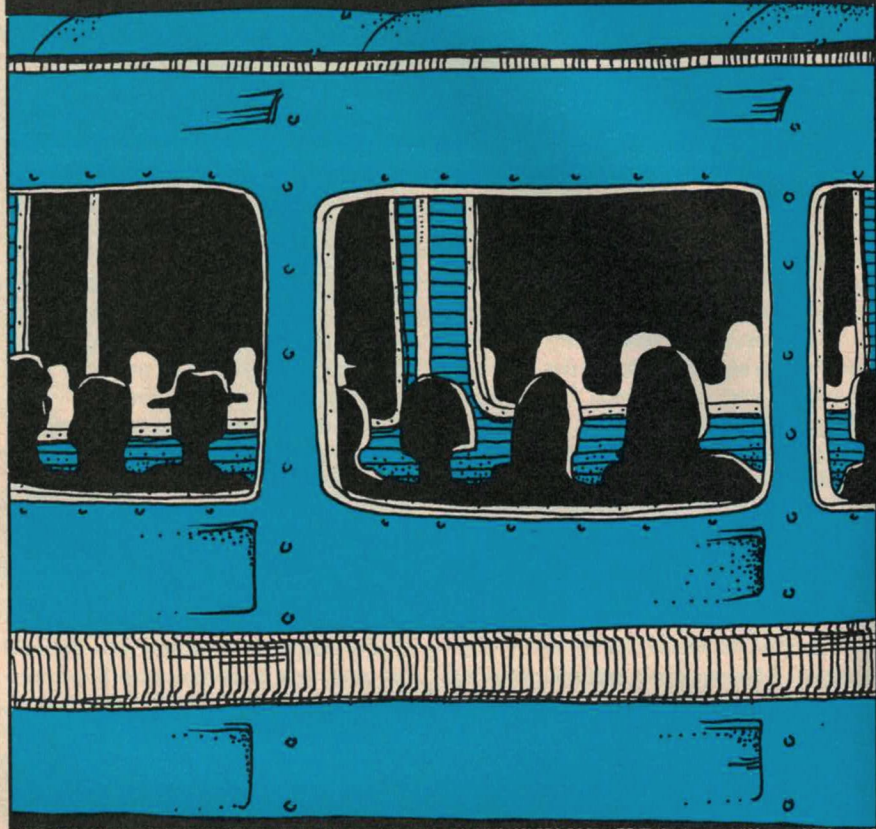
"What a clever idea," said his mother.

"Dad," said Kathy. "Will you show me how to wash my own hair?"

"What a clever idea," said her father.

"Let's play catch," said her grandmother. ▼

# TORONTO MONDAY MORNING



## FRANCES ROONEY

The great gleaming sightless worm roared into the station. God, how I love it, Janice thought. Good thing, I spend so much time in these tunnels.

She settled into a seat. She'd always needed a lot of time to wake up and was glad of the long ride. Her morning routine was ordinary enough so that she didn't have to be alert for it: get out of bed just before the alarm was due to go off, put on the coffee, fix her face, feed the cat, get a coffee, climb into the tub, scrub the body, heave out of the tub, cover the body, grab briefcase and purse, put on one coat and two gloves (matching), check that she hadn't forgotten any essential piece of clothing, and run out the door.

Then it was get onto the bus, flash pass without trying to feel like a spy or a worker in a nuclear plant, grab a bar, and wait . . . until the flow of bodies took her off the bus, down the stairs, through the turnstyle, and onto the plat-

form. From there she could only go two places: onto the track or onto the train. Since she was reasonably content with her life, had no great unfulfilled passions or torturing guilts, the Anna Karenina gesture seemed excessive. Some days she worried that perhaps her life had too little passion of any kind. Those days she would stand a little closer to the edge. The singular passionlessness of the protest appealed to her.

In her car this morning were two suited men, each with combination lock briefcase and *Globe and Mail*, one with optional vest and watch chain; three chattering men in work shirts and boots whose five o'clock shadows at eight a.m. showed them to be on their way home from graveyard shift, members of the armies who live life backwards; a couple of students; and one of those intimidatingly impeccable creatures who must have all the time and money in the world to put into the care and feeding of her wrinkle-proof clothes and skin. The usual bunch.



"Runnymede station next, Runnymede."

A very pregnant woman got on and lay down on the floor.

"Stay clear of the doors, please. Keep the doorways clear."

The pregnant woman moved to the middle of the car and lay down again. Propping her head against a pole, she pulled out a copy of Thurber's *The Beast in Me* and began to read.

"High Park Station."

The hump that had once been the woman's stomach gave a violent lurch.

One of the suited men stood up and growled. Then he turned his paper upside down, stuck his left thumb into his mouth and sat back down. He seemed much happier.

The pregnant woman's stomach lurched again.

"Keele."

Keele, reel, real, keal . . . over.

The contractions came regularly now. The faster they came, the faster the woman chewed her gum. Just after the Dufferin stop she put her book away, took out a copy of the *National Enquirer* and spread her legs. A beautiful, delightfully green baby appeared and floated to the ceiling. It pulled, hand over hand, on the umbilical cord until it held the orange and purple placenta in its hands. The woman put the *National Enquirer* away and took *The Love Machine* out of her bag.

The Sister of Saint Sapphia hopped over the used-to-be pregnant woman and sat down in front of Janice. Her habit was of the old type, but even though Janice had grown up with that kind of habit, there was something decidedly cold about this one. It took her a minute to figure out that there was no white around the nun's face. The only trace of colour was a small red cross embroidered on the forehead of her baseball cap. Otherwise, her comfortable body was entirely enfolded in black.

A woman dressed as Craig Russell dressed as a red-haired Mae West sat down beside the nun and they began to talk in some language Janice had never heard before about the red head's cousin's drunken husband. It was a pretty steamy conversation. Janice wondered where the nun had learned about all that stuff, especially since she had taken a vow of silence 42 years before.

The popcorn man sold three medium buttereds before going out the window.

The baby blew up the placenta to beachball size and bounced it off the ceiling. When it got tired of that, it tied the cord around a pole and used it for a

jump rope.

The man with the cello began to play. The duck took off his hunting shirt and flamencoed to the cellist's Mozart.

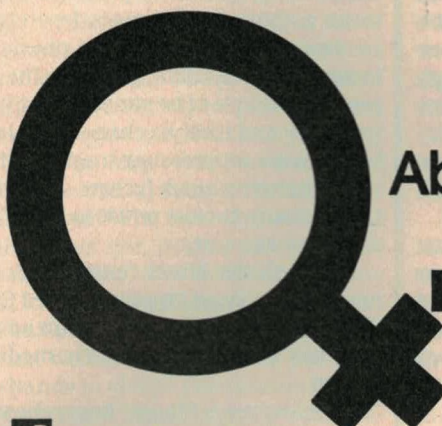
The redheaded Craig Russell Mae West told a joke. The nun laughed. It was the most beautiful face Janice had ever seen.

The baby started to squawk. After a couple of minutes it dove from the ceiling straight into the mother's blouse. She lost her place in her book. The baby sucked long and loud. The mother made a note to buy it an etiquette book, then went back to her novel.

Her left leg went first, sucked up into her body. Then the right one, followed by the hand with the book, then the other one, then the head, the right breast, and the rest of her body. The kid kept sucking until it had swallowed the by now rather outside left breast.

The nun kissed Craig Russell Mae West full on the lips. Janice burned with jealousy.

The baby belched, content. A second belch turned it into a rhododendron. Janice made a mental note that, should she ever consider trying it, it's easier to turn into a butterfly than a rhododendron. ▼



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## NOTIONS AND POTIONS

## Traditional Medicine Meets a New Disease

*"A woman has to become the authority on herself. Until that time, she can't win."*

For 20 years Maggie Burston has been fighting for her health.

Maggie has chronic candidiasis, a condition some researchers say could potentially affect 30 per cent of the population. Its symptoms are as individual as the people who exhibit them: migraines, depression, arthritis, PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome), allergies. It's a diagnosis that's easily overlooked, one that threatens the "single cause, single effect" approach to medicine, and one many physicians do not consider, either because of ignorance or because they refuse to acknowledge that the condition exists.

*Candida albicans* is a type of yeast whose preferred home is the mucous membranes of our gastrointestinal and genito-urinary tracts. Many of us are familiar with some of the infections caused by an increase in its numbers: vaginitis (yeast infection), oral thrush or diaper rash in children. However, current medical practices and various environmental factors are now known to aggravate the frequency and severity of those infections. Of particular importance are diets high in carbohydrates, the widespread prescription of antibiotics (also consumed in meat) birth control pills, and exposure to drugs which weaken the immune system. Long term exposure to certain environmental and occupational chemicals can also cause *Candida* to multiply rapidly. If the immune system is kept weak, toxins produced by *Candida* will move, through the bloodstream, to all parts of the body.

Severe candidiasis has been dubbed a Twentieth Century disease and is an indication of the changing pattern of disease. There are huge numbers of new chemicals coming on the market every year, the majority of which are never adequately tested for toxicity. Quite simply, our bodies are being forced to adapt too quickly, and are reaching their limits.

In Maggie's case the initial infection was a bladder infection 20 years ago. It never went away. As treatment, she was given antibiotics which led to the perfect conditions for yeast overgrowth. The yeast then began releasing its toxins into her bloodstream, which in turn weaken-

## MARY LOUISE ADAMS

ed Maggie's immune system and caused, among other things, a bladder infection, and the cycle was then repeated.

It's not a simple matter to test for a *Candida* overgrowth. Since almost everyone of us plays host to the yeast, a lab test to determine its presence would mean nothing. Its diagnosis depends on treatment and observation. A physician must suspect *Candida*, prescribe the appropriate course of treatment (most likely dietary and lifestyle changes — along with a yeast suppressing drug) and then wait. There's no quick fix here — precisely why many doctors refuse to take *Candida* into account.

Although the direct cause of her illness is a tiny yeast organism called *Candida albicans*, she says her main adversary has been a paternalistic medical system.

For many years Maggie knew she was seriously ill. She saw several different specialists, none of whom communicated with each other, none of whom would give her access to her medical records. In spite of chronic vaginal pain and increasingly severe allergies (in response to the yeast by-products entering her blood stream) she was repeatedly told that nothing was wrong with her.

Working primarily from her anger, Maggie went about changing her life to accommodate her research. At a point in time when she was too ill to read or write she acquired tapes of a conference from a doctor in Toronto. She learned from them that the people who could be the most help to her were in San Francisco. She wrote to them and then several months later went to see them. They found her so immune-threatened that they prescribed a treatment called transfer factor in which she received products from the immune systems of healthy people. She was advised to stay in San Francisco to continue treatment. However, she returned to Toronto when money ran out and now the treatments are unavailable to her. She is currently in search of a physician with hospital privileges who both understands *Candida* and who will petition on her behalf to import the blood products necessary for the treatments.

## Diagnosis difficult

If *Candida* overgrowth is manifest in so many different ways, how are we to know if our health problems are *Candida*-related? Dr. William Cook, author of *The Yeast Connection*, says to consider the following questions before jumping to conclusions:

- have you taken repeated "rounds" of antibiotic drugs?
- have you been troubled by premenstrual tension, abdominal pain, menstrual problems, vaginitis, or loss of libido?
- do exposure to tobacco, perfume and other chemical odours provoke moderate to severe symptoms?
- do you crave sugar, breads or alcoholic beverages?
- are you bothered by recurrent digestive symptoms?
- are you bothered by fatigue, depression, poor memory, or "nerves"?
- are you bothered by hives, psoriasis, or other chronic skin rashes?
- have you ever taken birth control pills?
- are you bothered by headaches, muscle and joint pains or incoordination?
- do you feel bad all over, yet the cause has yet to be found?

The usual treatment for *Candida* infections is a low carbohydrate, mold and yeast-free diet in conjunction with an anti-yeast drug.

Bladder infections are inevitable, says Maggie. But the syndrome of recurring infections leading to candidiasis is not. Maggie says we have to educate ourselves. We need environments where our own feelings and observations will be taken seriously and will be validated. Our health depends on it.

For more information write to: *Candida* Information and Research Foundation, 155 Marlee Avenue, #2101, Toronto, Ontario M6B 4B5; or call (416) 781-0230. ▽



## ENTERPRISING WOMEN

## Food for Thought

When a male writer from the *Toronto Star* wrote an article about the new quiz/board game *Food For Thought*, he called the salt-shaker markers used in the game "men". And although he probably didn't think much about it, you can be sure his use of that word and the attitude it represents caused the six Ottawa feminists who created the game to cringe.

Having spent the last 18 months of their lives creating, fund-raising for and producing *Food For Thought* makes the women behind the game a bit particular about the way it's described. Despite the fact that they don't make a big deal about their feminism when they're talking to the mainstream media, there are plenty of clues which point to this being a feminist-inspired project. The logo for the company they formed to oversee the production and marketing of *Food For Thought*, for example, depicts a deep, round bowl adorned with six women's symbols and overflowing with luscious red cherries. In fact, the company's name, Taste For Life, Inc., says a lot about its mothers: Joan Crichton, Joanie Flynt, Judy Girard, Iris Mills, Julie Norton and Lynne Steuart. When they decided they wanted to fashion a popular board game, their collective creativity, intelligence and high spirits almost guaranteed the result itself would be fun, educational and yet fundamentally relevant in a world seeming obsessed with food — and the lack of it.

Yet the mainstream media doesn't seem capable of viewing *Food For Thought* as an entity in itself. Comparisons to *Trivial Pursuit* are rampant and newspaper writers have often overlooked *Food For Thought*'s unique features: that it's based on a different philosophy from most competitive board games and that it represents a daring effort by a group of women friends to work collectively in the male-dominated business world to make a dream come true.

Working together for a year to research, compile and edit the questions and answers contained in *Food For Thought* was followed by five intense months of fund-raising and an exhausting quest to hire non-sexist firms to print, manufacture, distribute and publicise their venture.

Between July 1984 and the late-No-

## DEBRA PILON

vember champagne party held to celebrate *Food For Thought*'s first day on the market, the women raised \$100,000 — mostly from women investors — to produce 10,000 games. They estimate the total cost of the project from start to finish has been \$250,000. The result is a game which gently tests players' knowledge while also teaching us a lot of fascinating things about the food we purchase, produce and peddle. Some of the questions will appeal particularly to a feminist audience. (For example: What historical cooking vessel was considered the matriarchal symbol of the home, fire and warmth? The iron cauldron. What male tennis star, despite an enormous vitamin intake, was defeated by Billie Jean King? Bobby Riggs. Which herbal tea was used as a birth control device by Italian women in so far as it put their husbands to sleep? Chamomile.)

The number six seems to be a particularly bewitching one for the group. The 6006 questions in the game are divided equally into six categories: Agriculture, Culinary/Gourmet, Cultural/Historical, Medicinal/Nutritional, Commercial and Pot Luck. A maximum of either six individuals or six teams may play the game at once. Retailing at \$40, *Food For Thought* is being sold, not in toy stores or hobby shops, but in bookstores specialising in cookbooks as well as in gourmet and cooking utensil shops. The

Toronto Women's Bookstore will accept mail orders for the game at 73 Harbord Street, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1G4, as will the Ottawa Women's Bookstore, 380 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1N1. The idea of selling the game across the country in a department store such as The Bay is currently being explored.

In toiling collectively to produce *Food For Thought*, the women encountered numerous problems, not the least of which was a blurred image of where work ended and each woman's individual life began. Joan Crichton, who has worked most of her life as a teacher, says "the strict line between your business and your personal life just didn't exist in this group".

The women relentlessly stuck to their principles when it came to making the game non-sexist, non-racist and non-ageist. A potential distributor in Toronto was sent packing after he revealed he saw nothing wrong with advertising the game in *Playboy*.

But if that was a low point, there were also high points such as finding a Toronto printer whose union shop has never been involved in a labour dispute despite 70 years in business or discovering a thriving adult occupational centre (not ARC industries) in Edgar, Ontario to assemble and package the game.

The way these women have done business makes it easier to believe women can be a powerful force in the business community without being corrupted by it. And that is certainly food for thought.



Julie Norton, Lynne Steuart, Joanie Flynt, Iris Mills, Joan Crichton and Judy Girard, creators of *Food for Thought*.



## SATIRICALLY YOURS

## F.I.N.E. Ladies of Canada

It is with great pleasure that I announce the formation of a new organisation to combat the cancer of feminism.



F.I.N.E. Ladies of Canada (Fulfilled, Intelligent, Nice and Enthusiastic) held its first meeting last Saturday night in my friend Susan's bathroom, which is as large as any of the other rooms in her six bedroom house. We held it there as not to disturb our husbands who were watching the hockey game.

Before bearing down on doctrinal statements however, we discussed leadership.

First, we considered asking Brian Mulroney to be Board Chairman, a logical choice since he has appointed a man, Walter McLean, as Secretary of State for the Status of Women, but we felt he might be too busy. Then we thought of Joe Borowski, but assumed he's also occupied assuring the press and police that he's a non-violent person, concerned only with Henry Morgentaler's safety. We finally settled on Fred, Susan's husband who is a lawyer, but waited of course, till the game was over to ask him. (Edmonton won 6-2).

While we waited for the third period to finish, we went over the statements in our position paper. And it was with enthusiasm, intelligence, a spirit of niceness and a sense of fulfillment that we finalised the following points.

**Prostitution:** We propose to dispatch all prostitutes to Inuvik where camps will be set up to rehabilitate them and where courses in ladylike behaviour will be compulsory. We are sure that six months of behaviour modification will deter those unfortunate women from their compulsion to sexually harass innocent men.

**Pornography:** We plan to introduce new legislation which will call for the arrest of all women who act in porn flicks or pose for *Playboy* or *Hustler*. There was unanimous consensus that men don't really like porn and if it weren't for the women there wouldn't be a problem.

**Abortion:** After we have successfully engineered the repeal of all present

LYN COCKBURN

laws, we intend to ask for the return of the death penalty for any female who acquires an abortion.

**Unwanted Pregnancies:** New laws will require women to carry all pregnancies to term. Prospective unwed mothers will be obliged to give up their babies to childless couples; they will not be permitted to keep their offspring, a practice which only increases the welfare roles, creates a need for day care centres and forces mothers to look for work.

**Family:** We are not just pro-family; we insist on it. Any woman who does not produce her first child within two years of marriage, will be heavily fined. Any married lady who can prove she is physically incapable of having children (We are convinced that it is always the woman's fault when no children appear. The idea that some men are sterile is a radical feminist myth.) will be given one or six, depending on her husband's income and on the current incidence of unwed motherhood.

**Working Women:** No mother may work; that hardly needs saying. Childless married ladies may work temporarily, in order to help save enough money for the downpayment on a six bedroom house. Single women will be permitted to have jobs, but not careers. They'll be encouraged to type, teach kindergarten, waitress or do anything else men consider beneath them. They may not become lawyers, truck drivers, doctors or take up any other activity which might endanger full employment for family men, provide them with a false sense of fulfillment or deter them from a discreet search for a suitable mate.

**Abused Wives:** They'll be given counselling in how not to provoke their husbands. Funding of shelters for battered women will be cancelled because such establishments only encourage women to choose to get beaten up at whim.

**Day Care Centres:** These will all be closed down since married mothers will no longer work outside the home and there won't be any single mothers because they'll not be permitted to keep their babies. (See Unwanted Pregnancies).

**Divorce:** This scourge upon the family will only be permitted for men who have sent their wives to Marriage Re-Education Courses and who can prove that their wives have refused to adjust their attitudes. Women of course, will not be allowed to sue their husbands for divorce.

**Premarital Sex:** Only men will be allowed to indulge in it, not women. And certainly not ladies.

These then, are our main proposals. It was decided to leave such topics as herpes, homosexuality and hugging for a later paper.

Once the hockey game was over, we presented our propositions to our husbands who were immediately enthusiastic and praised us in such glowing terms that we felt even more fulfilled than usual.

They all agreed to serve on the Board of Directors, with one lady as Secretary. Susan volunteered.

Even as I write this, the other ladies are stuffing envelopes and licking stamps in preparation for our first mail-out. The men are in the living room finalising a press release.

We are confident that the response to F.I.N.E. Ladies of Canada will be overwhelming. If you do not receive our publicity brochure in the mail within the next week, write to me care of this publication and I'll get one out to your right away.





## A L A M O D \*

## running

at our school, cheerleading practices were held at the same times as cross-country running practices, so you couldn't go out for both, you had to choose, one or the other. i decided, against my mother's desires, to run. and it has made a difference. to me and to my mother.

(it's not that i'm against cheering. i like to encourage others. but not loudly from the sidelines; i prefer to cheer quietly, while running beside on the same course. this too has made a difference. to me. and to my coach.)

because no one else showed up for practices at eight o'clock in the morning, i ran by myself — thus i grew accustomed to being alone. and, to fill the space and time, i started to examine all sorts of ideas and feelings, actions and reactions — i grew accustomed to thinking. and as my distances increased, so did my aptitudes for solitude and thought.

over the years, as i continued running, i developed strength and endurance, and with these qualities came confidence — i would go out freely day and night, aware that i could probably outrun any adversary. and, as a consequence of frequently choosing to stride along unknown paths, my sense of direction improved considerably.

eventually i realised that i had become an oddity. no, as i was no longer in my adolescence, i was a downright deviant. my mother made it clear that women weren't supposed to sweat, and when she saw me once drenched and haggard (glistening and triumphant), she was quite obviously disgusted, or disappointed, or both. my coach made it clear that one was not to stop to pick flowers during a race or jump two feet together in the puddles, and above all, that one was not to encourage one's opponents (fellow runners). my friends made it clear that women do not go anywhere alone: you're looking for trouble, think you're too good for us. and my colleagues and professors made it clear that women were not expected to think: at the philosophy department parties they offered glasses of wine instead of ideological interchange.

it seemed that my running, which had created so much of what i am, was clearly antagonistic to what i was supposed to be. and the results weren't the only

chris wind

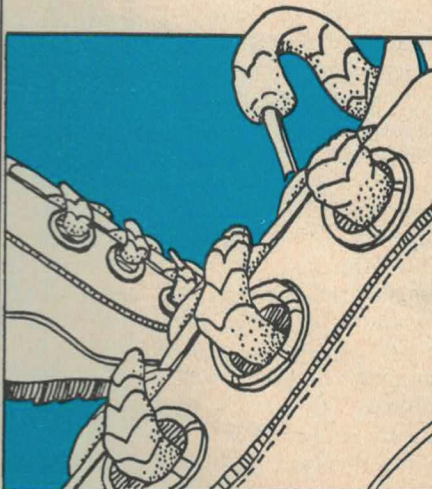
objectionable aspect — my reason for running was also suspect and hence, put on trial.

i run for the freedom of it: it feels so good, leaping unrestrained over miles and miles of open country. my worst nightmare used to be having an accident that left me crippled for life. (now it has an epilogue in which i have nothing but men tending to me, treating me either like a child or a goddess, bringing me glasses of wine and boxes of scented anti-perspirant.)

but others accuse that i run to escape: they patronisingly explain how it's therapeutic, a symbolic solution to my inability to fit in, to my sex-role confusion — they say i'm evading, running away from reality.

i find their negative valuation of escape strange. i suppose it depends on what you're running from and what you're running to. it is possible to escape into freedom. i mean, if you're about to be attacked by a sabre-toothed tiger (or any other life-threatening force) and you run, no one would reprimand you from escaping instead of staying to face the situation. then again, in a way they would: according to current attitude, you *would* be more heroic if you *did* stay and kill it or at least (how would they know) put up a good fight. which is all the more reason for me to run.

(do not worry. i have strength and endurance. my sense of direction is finely tuned. i am used to aloneness and i think: i will outrun my adversary.)



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## REVIEWS

## BOOKS

## LE MANITOBA DES FEMMES RÉPOND

Par ADELE J. FINLAYSON

Dans le domaine de la communication, tout l'art est de faire communiquer les autres ou du moins leur donner l'occasion et le désir de s'exprimer. C'est le défi relevé par Janick Belleau dans cet ouvrage fourni et intéressant qui groupe les réponses de 131 Manitobaines francophones à un questionnaire inspiré des œuvres de Gabrielle Roy.

Je dois avouer qu'au préalable, j'avais certaines réticences en ce qui concerne l'utilisation de la formule d'un questionnaire pour tenter de dégager des renseignements sur la vie psychique d'un groupe de personnes. Le format essentiellement vertical d'un questionnaire est idéal pour révéler les prises de position générales d'un groupe donné, mais me semble moins bien adapté quand on veut inviter sa répondante à la confiance. Ceci dit, le questionnaire tel que formulé par Janick Belleau permettait une certaine latitude aux répondantes, dont plusieurs ont profité, et esquissait donc une partie des difficultés inhérentes à la tâche entreprise. Il faut ajouter que l'approche adoptée par Belleau a le grand mérite de permettre un sondage des attitudes et des préoccupations d'un groupe suffisamment large pour prendre le pouls de la communauté des femmes franco-manitobaines.

Il s'agit d'un livre qu'il faut lire attentivement pour en cerner les ramifications essentielles. C'est un ouvrage de consultation et d'analyse qui est exigeant pour le lecteur, la lectrice, tout en étant d'une approche aisée. Je m'explique. La langue utilisée dans le questionnaire et dans les réponses des répondantes est simple, l'œuvre est donc facilement abordable et pourrait être utilisée par exemple, dans un cours de français langue seconde, de niveau intermédiaire avancé. Par contre, Belleau ne fournit pas d'analyse des réponses obtenues. Elle laisse au lecteur, à la lec-

trice le soin d'en venir à ses propres conclusions et cela exige un effort de synthèse considérable. Dans ce sens, il aurait peut-être mieux valu avoir le questionnaire au complet au début du livre plutôt qu'à la fin puisque le questionnaire en lui-même offre un outil précieux pour la compréhension du texte et fournit une carte de route à travers les méandres de la pensée des répondantes. Le questionnaire constitue également une bonne introduction à certains aspects fondamentaux de la pensée de Gabrielle Roy. Dans la mesure où cette étude cherche à faire le pont entre les personnages de Roy et la femme franco-manitobaine, et se destine sans doute aux groupes de femmes et aux universités et collèges, la présence du questionnaire au début de l'ouvrage aurait été bienvenue.

Les thèmes abordés à travers le questionnaire vont de l'amour à la politique, de la guerre à la maternité. Comme tous les grands artistes, Roy a su exprimer les questions essentielles qui hantent la condition humaine. De fait, dans une entrevue récente, l'auteur du questionnaire, Janick Belleau a souligné une remarquable coïncidence entre les personnages de Roy vivant dans les années quarante et cinquante et la Franco-Manitobaine d'aujourd'hui. Je crois que Belleau a raison, les réponses des répondantes semblent fournir le profil d'une femme humaniste, pacifiste et maternelle dont le plus beau "bonheur d'occasion" a été le jour de la naissance de ses enfants.

Par contre, ce n'est pas une femme fortement politisée. J'ai été surprise par les réponses données à certaines questions touchant au nationalisme. Par exemple, à la question "Que signifie pour vous l'expression 'être chez-nous'?", la plupart des répondantes ont répondu que cela signifiait être à l'aise, pouvoir se détendre chez-soi, être bien dans sa peau, etc. Or, c'est une question potentiellement chargée de contenu politique, mais les répondantes ne l'ont pas perçu ainsi et il serait intéressant d'analyser pourquoi. Il faut croire que le fait de faire partie d'un groupe linguistiquement minoritaire, qui constituait une situation délicate pour Gabrielle Roy, n'a plus le même retentissement pour ses compatriotes d'aujourd'hui. Etant donné l'intensité des conflits linguistiques qui s'est traduite dans la Référénde sur le Manitoba devant la Cour suprême du Canada, ce retrait politique me surprend.

Il faut cependant ajouter que plusieurs répondantes ont dit qu'elles exprimaient

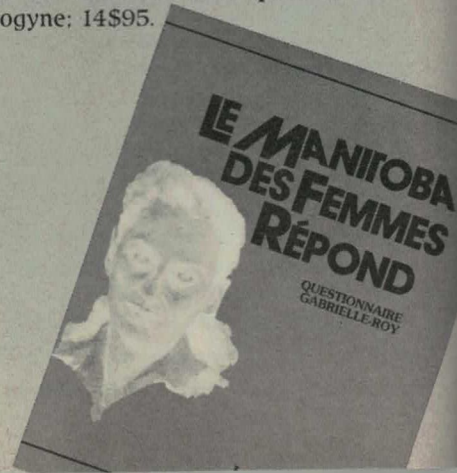
le mieux leur nationalisme en parlant français, c'est-à-dire, elles expriment leur nationalisme dans leur vie privée et dans leur milieu social. Le nationalisme, tel que conçu par les Manitobaines francophones est une affaire de tous les jours.

Cela semblerait rejoindre les attitudes exprimées par beaucoup de répondantes à des questions plus personnelles. La femme franco-manitobaine, si on se fie aux réponses données, a une conscience sociale très aiguisée. Dans ses rapports avec les autres, elle cherche égalité, justice et ouverture sur le monde. Les femmes qui ont répondu au Questionnaire Gabrielle-Roy, malgré des divergences considérables sur d'autres points, semblent toutes avoir les mêmes aspirations profondes, une même idéologie de base. Mais, cette idéologie est intimiste et constitue un retour à un certain traditionalisme.

À travers les réponses données, on sent un certain ralentissement dans l'aspect strictement politique du mouvement féministe, du moins au Manitoba français. Ce n'est pas nécessairement une mauvaise chose, il y a des rythmes dans tous les mouvements sociaux: il y a un moment pour courir et aller de l'avant; et un moment pour reprendre son souffle et repenser sa perspective. Le sondage effectué par Janick Belleau semble suggérer que les Franco-Manitobaines sont dans une de ces phases de reprise d'haleine et de réflexion. Il est probable que ce ralentissement soit également senti parmi les autres communautés francophones du Canada.

Cet ouvrage plein de renseignements et d'intuition offre certainement matière féconde à la réflexion et à la discussion.

Le Manitoba des femmes répond: Questionnaire Gabrielle-Roy de Janick Belleau; publié et distribué par CEFCO, 200 av. de la Cathédrale, St-Boniface, Man. R2H 0H7; distribué à Ottawa par la Librairie des femmes et à Montréal par les librairies Aube-épine et Androgyne; 14\$95.





# LA DÉTRESSE ET L'ENCHANTEMENT

Par JANICK BELLEAU

*La détresse et l'enchantement* de Gabrielle Roy, Editions du Boréal Express, 1984

Ma propre détresse provient du fait que je ne sais trop sous quel angle aborder la dernière oeuvre de Gabrielle Roy. Une autobiographie, en fait, dans laquelle elle raconte à coeur ouvert sa vie au Manitoba: sa famille, sa mère surtout, ses années d'institutrice; une carrière au théâtre volontairement avortée; sa passion de la nature; son séjour d'une durée de deux ans en Europe: son premier amour, sa venue progressive à l'écriture liée à la découverte de son identité propre. Que puis-je dire que Gabrielle Roy n'ait déjà si bien exprimé dans *La détresse et l'enchantement*?; si ce n'est, en somme, que de parcourir avec elle, le long et torturant chemin qui la conduisit à la révélation de son identité de francophone et d'écrivaine:

"Pour moi qui avais parfois pensé que j'aurais intérêt à écrire en anglais, (...) tout à coup il n'y avait plus d'hésitation possible: les mots qui me venaient (...) au bout de ma plume, étaient de ma lignée, de ma solidarité ancestrale (...) Je ne m'étonnais pas d'ailleurs que ce fût en Angleterre (...) que je naissais (...) à mon identité propre que jamais plus je ne remettrais en question" (p. 392).

Je ne sais trop pourquoi mais, j'ai le sentiment que ce n'est pas le fruit du hasard si l'oeuvre de Roy est composée à 70% de ses souvenirs manitobains. Cette "désertion" de son "pauvre peuple dépossédé" juxtaposée au désir de lui "faire honneur" la poursuivit-elle toute sa vie?

"Notre petite ville française et catholique ne nous élevait pas au prix de tant de sacrifices, d'abnégation et de rigueur, pour nous laisser partir sans y mettre d'obstacles (...) Tout départ, étant donné notre petit nombre, était ressenti comme une désertion, un abandon de la cause." (p. 211).

Et pourtant, la romancière tentera "l'impossible pour leur "faire honneur" comme on disait alors dans notre petit monde de l'un de nous dont le succès pouvait rejaillir sur tous". (p. 241).

Quand Gabrielle Roy a quitté, à l'âge de 28 ans, sa "petite ville des plaines de l'Ouest canadien", elle dirigea vers la France et l'Angleterre son appel au secours. "J'aspirais à une patrie, et ne savais où elle était" (p. 141). Quelle détresse dut être la sienne! Quitter un St-Boniface natal pour sillonner, en 1937, l'Europe... à la recherche de son identité!

"J'étais possédée par la folie de m'arracher du sol (...) Peut-être au fond pour me soumettre à un essai, découvrir si j'étais apte à devenir quelqu'un, quelque chose, n'ayant là-dessus qu'une idée bien confuse, pas même assurée au reste d'avoir du talent" (p. 198).

Roy n'a certes pas choisi la voie la plus facile pour "faire honneur" aux siens, nonobstant les propos acidulés de ses détracteurs. Très tôt, elle réalisa qu'elle était "d'une espèce destinée à être traitée en inférieure" (p. 11). La résolution donc de venger les siens, sa mère surtout, elle la prit très jeune: "A quinze ans, j'étais une petite vieille toujours fourrée dans mes livres"; peut-être parce qu'elle avait compris que pour venger sa mère, elle devrait "travailler doublement, être la première toujours, en français, en anglais, dans toutes les matières, gagner les médailles, les prix, ne cesser de lui apporter des trophées" (p. 33).

Quelques années plus tard à son entrée à l'Ecole normale de Winnipeg, le directeur lui confirmera que les "minorités ont ceci de tragique, elles doivent être supérieures... ou disparaître" (p. 85). Il parlait certainement en connaissance de cause, étant lui-même originaire de l'Ecosse, pays encore déchiré par des conflits linguistiques.

Est-ce le souvenir des ces sages paroles qui la poussa à devenir cette institutrice consciencieuse dans la région de la Petite-Poule-d'Eau et à enseigner à ses élèves "quelques matières en anglais" bien que le "Department of Education, situé pour ainsi dire dans une autre planète", ne l'aurait jamais su si elle avait transgressé la loi?

Avait-elle souffert de ces "extrémistes" qui préconisaient le "refus d'apprendre l'anglais nous acculant à un isolement tragique ou, tôt ou tard, à nous expatrier" (p. 85).

Je savoure encore cette anecdote relative à une religieuse enseignante qui, un jour, l'exorta lors de la visite imminente d'un inspecteur anglais, d'un "Sauve la classe, Gabrielle". Faut-il rappeler que Roy a fait ses études à l'épo-

que de la promulgation de cette loi inique qui interdisait l'enseignement de la langue française (et toute autre langue d'ailleurs, autre que l'anglais) dans les écoles, à compter de 1916? La réplique de la jeune Franco-Manitobaine nous renseigne éloquentement sur la mission qu'elle s'était donnée: "Je savais déjà la classe en français (...) Je trouvais que c'était beaucoup de la sauver aussi en anglais" (p. 73). En effet!

Et pourtant, Gabrielle Roy "née en quelque sorte pour servir la Société des Nations" a montré à quel point elle a chéri ceux et celles qu'elle a déserté-e-s. L'écriture fut-elle le moyen privilégié pour manifester sa loyauté envers les siens? Quand on se souvient des distinctions qu'elle a récoltées au cours de sa vie d'auteure, pour ne mentionner que le Prix Femina 1947 et trois Prix du Gouverneur-Général du Canada, il semble bien que la petite Franco-Manitobaine ait tenu la promesse faite à sa mère jadis. Je ne suppose pas que Roy ait, par sa seule écriture, empêché le Manitoba français de sombrer dans l'oubli mais, elle a certainement contribué à le mettre sur la carte si l'on tient compte du fait que des 14 livres écrits, 12 ont été traduits en anglais.

Malgré son amour de la "province-mère", elle n'a pas été tendre envers le Québec qui, lui-même, ne l'est guère pour ses compatriotes du Canada français:

"J'ai beaucoup souffert de cette distance que les Québécois mettaient alors et mettent encore entre eux et leurs frères du Canada (...) Je sens quelquefois à travers l'estime dont on m'entoure (...) comme un regret que l'auteur aimé d'un bon nombre ne soit pas né au Québec. Et peut-être aussi parfois comme un obscur ressentiment ou grief — comment l'appeler autrement? — chez certains du moins que, solidaire comme je le suis du Québec, ce ne soit pas à l'exclusion du reste du pays canadien où nous avons, comme peuple, souffert, erré, mais aussi un peu partout laissé notre marque". (p. 140-1)





On pourrait croire sûrement que tant d'infortunes eussent pu/su développer un sentiment de solidarité avec les francophones du Canada. Eh non ! Et c'est bien "le plus triste de notre histoire (...) que tant de malheurs ne nous aient pas encouru unis". (p. 29)

Les racines de Mad. Roy qui étaient résolution françaises, trahissent néanmoins l'influence d'une mer anglophone dans laquelle se débat un "petit clos fervent" de culture française. Je fais allusion ici à la liberté que prend l'auteure de parsemer *La détresse et l'enchantement* de mots anglais qui certainement ont leur équivalent dans la langue française : Department of Education, fog, breakfast, bay-window, dusting, chit-chat, cup of tea et j'en passe. Je ne cacherais pas que cette profusion de mots anglais ne m'ait initialement ennuyée. Mais, ayant réfléchi à la question, il faut bien convenir que seule une personne maîtrisant la langue française, comme Gabrielle Roy la maîtrisait, peut se permettre des mots à résonnance... exotique. ▽

(Original d'un article dont quelques extraits ont paru dans le journal LA LIBERTÉ en décembre 1984.)

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## THE WORK OF A COMMON WOMAN

Reviewed by HEIDI MUENCH

*The Work Of A Common Woman* by Judy Grahn; The Crossing Press, Trumansburg, New York, 14886, \$6.95.

*"The necessity of poetry has to be stated over and over, but only to those who have reason to fear its power, or those who still believe that language is 'only words' and that old language is good enough for our descriptions of the world we are trying to transform."*

—Adrienne Rich

For Rich, the importance of Grahn's poetry lies in the transforming power of the anger, violence, grief and compassion its expresses: emotions Grahn uses to explode patriarchal teachings regarding the nature of female reality. Grahn's poems are rooted in her life, not in theory, not in anything acquired or imposed. The poetry is political because, as a lesbian feminist, Grahn rejects outright the conventions and images of a society that both she and Rich charge with actively denying, distorting and destructively punishing lesbian experience. In speaking of the independent women's presses she and her lover, Wendy Cadden, became involved with in the late sixties, Grahn maintains that "They have made it possible to speak the unspeakable, to reveal what has had to be hidden, to redefine the experiences of women and the connections between us." This is also what Grahn's poetry makes possible.

*The Work Of A Common Woman* is a collection that spans over a decade of Grahn's writing, from 1964 to 1977. It contains four previously published works and one previously unpublished and unfinished series of confrontational love poems. Each of the sections is introduced by Grahn. These prefaces, in which Grahn speaks of what fed the poetry and of the reactions it has elicited, form a chronicle of interconnectedness that renounces conventional distinctions between public and private life, and between writer and audience. In one preface, Grahn explains her former need to hide her work: "my subject was women in general, and lesbians in particular. Such notes could be, and sometimes were seized by government authorities and used against other people, as happened to me in the Air Force." In another, she suggests the poems be

read "while someone else hums a waltz". Grahn also discusses the effect of the work on her own life and comments that "It is odd to think that what we make leads us, rather than the other way around." The prefaces contain no posing, no mystifications, and no reader-limiting interpretations. They are annotated invitations to enter the work whole-heartedly.

That Grahn writes from a lesbian perspective is important to an understanding of her politics, but this perspective in no way limits the applicability of her work. In *The Psychoanalysis of Edward the Dyke*, the socialisation Edward undergoes at the hands of Dr. Knox is a process familiar to most women. The doctor's insistence on restructuring Edward's physique to fit current beauty standards ("This year the normal cup size is 56 inches. And waist 12 and ½.") and his confidence that even Edward's awkward height (6 feet 4 inches) can be normalised by "extracting approximately 8 inches from each leg, including the knee cap... standing a lot doesn't bother you does it my dear?" is only an extreme example of still active and acted upon woman-deforming attitudes. Her cure, accomplished with the use of electric shocks, results in Edward tonguing a lollipop and responding with "Yes sir yes sir," a phrase appropriate to her now domesticated nature. The majority of us, dyke or not, have mouthed the same or similarly lethal words.

In *A Woman Is Talking To Death*, the speaker, witness to a bizarre suicide/accident, confronts her own social and legal invisibility:

*how clear, an unemployed queer woman*

*makes no witness at all  
nobody at all was there for  
those two questions: what does  
she do, and who is she married to?*

That her existence must be legalised by some function or by some man's acquisition of her is typical of a social system that values only conventional, safe lives. This poem bears witness to oppression that includes the mundane, the individual, the societal and the institutional. One of the more chilling examples is a World War II episode in which a total of 150 men, because no order to quit the exercise is given, drown by driving one faulty amphibian tank after another into the sea. In another passage, the speaker admits, under mock interrogation, that "Yes I have committed acts of indecency with women and most of them were acts of omission. I regret



them bitterly." These lines echoed for me for days: withdrawal, denial, avoidance are indecencies few of us are innocent of.

I cannot encapsulate the intensity and scope of *The Work Of A Common Woman* in a few paragraphs. I can only relate my surprise at the force of Grahn's poetry: at its ability to startle me into self-recognition. Grahn's poems rage loudly against the denigration of femaleness and supplant invective and insult with images of uncompromised assertiveness: "I'm not a good lay/I'm a straight razor/look at me as if you had never seen a woman before/I have red, red hands and much bitterness." In the section entitled *The Common Woman*, Grahn writes of women often denied a voice in feminist works: women caught in arid, embittering roles, male-defined women who defend their poisoned sense of self with an ugly tenacity. And she writes of them not as failures, embarrassments or anachronisms, but as vital beings. Certainly there are poems, particularly among her earlier work, that fail either to stimulate or please. But, most often, Grahn's poetry provides the reader with an opportunity to see herself reflected in images not always appealing, but consistently true. ▽

## HOW TO SUPPRESS WOMEN'S WRITING

Reviewed by LUANNE ARMSTRONG

*How To Suppress Women's Writing*, by Joanna Russ; published by Women's Press Ltd.; London, England.

Now that the women's movement has made some respectable gains, now that politicians are at least giving public lip service to our needs and demands, now that feminism has become respectable enough that the most overt forms of discrimination, in work, politics, religion, and family life can be safely and publicly attacked, there is a real danger from discrimination that has been driven underground, become subtle, hard to identify, and even harder to combat.

One of these real danger areas is writing and publishing. Despite the number of women who work in media and com-

munications, many Canadian women writers have felt for a long time that there is a plethora of male academic Canadian writers, all busy publishing one another and boring the rest of us who try to read them.

*How To Suppress Women's Writing* is one of those eye openers, a bell ringing book which you read with excitement because finally, someone is making clear what you have felt, or dimly thought, all along.

Russ, who teaches Creative Writing at the University of Washington at Seattle, is best known for her award winning science fiction. She is a strong dynamic writer who writes in her own distinctive, conversational tone. Reading this book is like having an intelligent and thought provoking discussion with a friend. Russ leaves you room for your own thoughts, and I found myself taking longer than usual to finish this book. I kept putting it down in order to pursue some idea, memory, or train of thought that she had provoked.

Although this book has the full weight of Russ' academic studies and scholarship behind it, I found it as engaging to read as a good detective story. Russ leads the reader on an exploration, both historical and literary, of the ways in

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which women's writing is ignored, suppressed, passed over, and lost to us as a heritage.

Finally, I truly understand my deep frustration and anger when, three years ago, as I sat in a poetry class and heard Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, both of whom I had just discovered and was excited about, dismissed condescendingly as "confessional". Russ calls this kind of labelling "pollution of agency". She writes, "male accounts of intense autobiographical experience are not usually put down by being called 'confession'. I would add that female art thus labelled is called 'confession' because of the nature of the experience, (not simply its femaleness) — Plath's rage, Sexton's madness, and Millet's lesbianness... what appears to be at issue here is the same old spectre of immorality, with the taboos located in essentially the same places: rage, accusation, (or accusatory despair) and unacceptable sexuality".

Besides pollution of agency, the author explores other categories of denial of women's writing, such as "denial of agency" (some man wrote it) "the double standard of content" (she wrote it but she shouldn't have), and "false categorizing" (She is not really an artist, and it is not really it, so how could she have written it?).

Russ also points out who we didn't get to study in school, or if we did, in what ways important women writers were dismissed or belittled. She also talks about the present difficulties women writers have in giving importance to their own work, their own voices.

In Russ's epilogue, she admits that the book is unfinished and challenges her

readers to finish it themselves by going on and doing the work. I agree. I think this is an area that could use a lot more exploration and discussion.

For any woman who has ever felt her concerns, her writing, her creative expression, dismissed as unimportant, who has had her concerns over discrimination in publishing dismissed because "you're just not good enough" or who has had to listen to male professors put down and dismiss women writers she knew were important to her, this book will come as a revelation and a relief.

## LABOUR PAINS

Reviewed by ROSEANNE MORAN

*Labour Pains* by Pat Armstrong. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1984.

Pat Armstrong's book, *Labour Pains* presents a broad examination of women's work and lives in the midst of the present economic crisis. It is not a cheerful book, in fact it is fairly depressing. Although Armstrong begins by claiming that the future is not etched in stone, that women can make their own history, she doesn't offer much evidence of this in *Labour Pains*. The intent of the book, she states is to develop an integrated understanding of what is happening to women's work both in and outside of the home, and to prepare ourselves for an uncertain future. *Labour Pains* makes it clear that there is much to prepare ourselves for.

In her attempt to develop a more "sex-conscious analysis" of crisis, Armstrong looks at developments in the labour force and in the household, discussing the impact of state policies and technological change on women's work in both spheres. She begins by presenting her particular theoretical approach and a brief historical sketch of women's labour force participation. Her own theoretical approach which is a combination of feminist and Marxist assumptions is thought-provoking in its own right and is good reading for anyone interested in the ongoing debates within feminist theory.

The main strength of *Labour Pains*, however, lies largely in its analysis of the impact of technological change and the economic crisis on women's labour force participation. As with her previous works, *The Double Ghetto*, and *A Working Majority* which she co-authored with Hugh Armstrong, the wealth of tables

and statistics included is invaluable.

Armstrong stresses the importance of government sector jobs for women. Not only does this sector provide women with a majority of their unionised jobs, but most of the new jobs for women have been found in the areas of health, education and public administration. Without these jobs, she concludes, women's unemployment would have soared. In this light, government cutbacks will play a crucial role in shaping the nature of women's work in the future. As jobs disappear, women are also facing increasing competition, and as Armstrong finds over and over, in areas where women compete with men, women are the first to go.

In her chapter on household labour, Armstrong attempts to draw together the varied ways in which government restraint, economic crisis and technological change combine to affect women's domestic work and lives. She covers areas such as rising stress levels and domestic violence, increased isolation of women within the home as a result of tech change, larger domestic workloads due to cuts in government services, the growing backlash against women's right to abortion and the fight against pornography. The discussion in this chapter, however, is rather sketchy and superficial, offering very brief discussions of many issues without the same rigorous analysis found in other parts of *Labour Pains*. It serves more as a place to begin to develop a much broader picture of women's work in crisis, one which cannot be easily quantified using numbers and statistics.

A chapter on government programs, volunteer work and part-time jobs is similarly sketchy. It serves to raise important questions and issues for further discussions and touches on some key debates regarding volunteerism and part-time work. Armstrong surveys a number of federal job-creation programs and concludes that they have focused largely on male unemployment. She discusses the growth of volunteer work among women, and demonstrates the government's encouragement of volunteerism through the terms of its job-creation grants. After discussing three recent reports on part-time work in Canada, including Julie White's report for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women in Canada, Armstrong suggests an alternative approach to work that does not make a distinction between part-time and full-time work. This distinction, she claims helps to perpetuate "the difference between



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women and men in and out of the labour force'. Instead, Armstrong presents a solution which lies in creating jobs with shorter hours, better pay and fringe benefits for everyone.

Finally, Armstrong touches on an aspect of women's work that could have serious, although unclear consequences for the future, namely "homework". New technology makes it increasingly possible for work to be taken out of the office and put into the home, harkening back to the days of the seam allowance. Of course, it is women, who with their family responsibilities and weaker position in the labour force would be the most likely candidates for such work.

Although parts of *Labour Pains* seem incomplete, the book is well worth reading, especially the chapters on women in the labour force and technological change.

## VOICES FROM THE SHADOWS

Reviewed by ELIZABETH SEMKIW

*Voices From the Shadows: Women With Disabilities Speak Out*, by Gwyneth Mathews. Toronto: Women's Press, 1983.

Requested to by the Nova Scotia government, Ms. Mathews originally wrote a discussion paper on the special problems of disabled women. This paper was turned down because it was deemed "too depressing".

The depressing truth they did not like to know about was, and is, the daily life that must be endured by some people. We can surmise there certainly will be no relief when the powers-that-be prefer to pretend the realities of the disabled do not exist.

The government also commented that her paper had "too much sex". This is merely a reflection of society's general opinion that ANY sex is altogether too much for disabled women as they are supposed to somehow be castrated [of "that"] by nature immediately upon becoming disabled.

Why was this paper disregarded? Readers may glean the answer for themselves while reading *Voices From the Shadows*, which came into being because Gwyneth Mathews persisted and was asked to write a book for the Women's Educational Press of Toronto. Now we are able to partake (one cannot really say enjoy) of a fine little book

which covers many issues such as health care, income, transportation, and personal relationships with a depth and a variety of settings one would expect from a much larger volume. The insight and information it gives us is expressed in a refreshing balance of honesty, clarity and feeling.

Lacking in *Voices From the Shadows* is the sentimentality and illusion often pegged on the disabled person, or on the other hand, the extremely dry objectivity also found in writing about disabilities. Mathews' manner of expressing the pain and the problems living life as a woman with a disability means these women are not soon forgotten to the reader.

The women who were the subject of the book opened up to the author partly because she knew disability herself. "You've been there," they said. Why does the schism between disabled persons and T.A.B.'s (Temporarily Able Bodied) loom so large that the endless problems disabled women face are not rectified? Why has the women's movement, while touching on issues common to disabled women, largely left them out in the cold? It is shown time and again how disabled persons' groups fight for the most basic necessities ALONE.

However, the women Mathews writes of do not leave the reader in a negative slump. Despite the lack of counselling for newly injured paraplegics, unreasonable attitudes, and all their losses and struggles, they go on and willingly accept their responsibility to take the time and effort to educate adults not to see disabled people as "them". Children especially need to receive the appropriate answers to their natural questions in the hope that another generation might go beyond "us" and "them".

Neither Mathews nor her subjects avoid topics because they are intimate or painful. The same mature and candid style deals with it all, even how extolling to have 'faith' can leave a person feeling a guilty failure. The reality is laid out, explained, given human dimensions without rancor or an accusing finger pointed at anyone. Readers are given enough insight to decide for themselves where the accusing fingers might point. To quietly "tell it like it is" gives all the more impact to *Voices From the Shadows*.

The chapter "A House is not a Home" is especially disturbing to read, not only for the pain one feels for the repeated assaults on human dignity, but also because of the anger that wells up knowing that these assaults are routinely and

unnecessarily allowed. Patients being bathed in full view of one another tells us that what would never be tolerated by TABs is quite in order for disabled persons. The fear of having to live in an institution does loom large for disabled people but is seldom discussed, let alone within writing. Mathews' description of one "home's" urine odoured hallways, terrible food, inhumane staff, stagnation and loneliness aptly account for that fear.

The further fact that the women enduring these abuses felt they had only the author, and, through her, subsequent readers as a hope for help is particularly damning. It clearly tells us that all the offices of ombudsmen, human rights commissions, self-help groups and other supposed avenues of aid have failed in many cases to reach disabled women.

We must accept the shame of our contribution to society's acceptance of such a mind set and compliance in the degradation of our sisters. If those who read *Voices From the Shadows* learn, and then, in their own little corner, act to improve the conditions affecting disabled persons, then this book will not have to be written again.

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## FILMS

DEFENDING  
SUPERGIRL

Reviewed by LOIS ANDERSON

Like many kids growing up in the 50's and 60's, I spent hours pouring over Superman comics. It was a source of embarrassment that I shared the name of the most insipid character in the series, "Lois" Lane. I found myself searching those comics for a neutralizing female image. And I found one in the person of Linda Lee, alias, *Supergirl*.

So it is that I have a vested interest in flying to the defence of *Supergirl*, who has been unfairly trashed first by male reviewers in the popular press, and finally in *HERIZONS*.

It cannot be stated too emphatically — THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH THIS MOVIE! Gandhi it is not, but then neither was Superman — I, II, or III. Yet Superman was greeted enthusiastically by reviewers and made fistfuls of money for everyone associated with it. *Supergirl*, meanwhile, is hailed as a poor relative and a copycat. The public, who depend on reviews to help them sift through a hundred new movies a month, are staying away in droves from a movie which is in every way Superman's equal.

It is a comic-book storyline, with comic-book style dialogue and characters with comic-book dimensions. There are the obligatory scenes of destruction and salvation which continue to thrill youngsters. It is a movie for kids, and for adults who remember the pleasures of being kids.

Yet within that framework lie jewels of liberating philosophy which are precious indeed in an environment of male-dominated, male-oriented media.

In an opening scene, two truck drivers attempt to sexually assault *Supergirl*. Unaware that women are expected to feel afraid on the street at night, she asks in simple surprise, "Why are you doing this?" Perplexed, she makes mincemeat of them before continuing about her business.

A little later, when a runaway steam-shovel threatens to wreak havoc, is it

Jimmy Olson who leaps into the cab in an attempt to bring it under control? No, it is his girlfriend, Lucy Lane, a plucky little sis to Lois.

Not only are the heroes females who need no help from males, but even the "bad guys" are gals, with a token "guy" making appearances. The villainess uses unladylike language, and at one point growls, "Never send a man to do a woman's work!" Further, it is the males who need to be rescued and who are continually bested by the women.

What seemed to irk Debra Pilon was that *Supergirl* is "one over whom teenage boys can salivate". Indeed, love is a central theme in this movie. It is interesting that Ethan, who falls in love with Linda, is able to identify her in her *Supergirl* guise, because her kiss was unforgettable. Not only was that charming, but it allowed Ethan a dignity which will be forever beyond the reach of the equally salivating Lois Lane.

That *Supergirl* responds to Ethan is also liberating. Would it be more acceptable if a strong woman was depicted as unattractive to men? And would *Supergirl* be a more complete person if she showed no emotional side?

These subtleties may not be consciously noted by child audiences, and may offend male reviewers who have no parameters within which to judge a female adventure/fantasy. But the value can nonetheless be demonstrated by the reactions of my children.

At every crisis in the movie, my 7-year-old daughter gasped, "Is this where Superman comes to save her?" By the end of the movie she had learned that at least one woman could take care of herself.

My four-year-old son, with an air of authority mixed with bewilderment, declared, "Girls can be Superheroes, too, you know." He had been told that before, but at last he had seen the proof with his own eyes.

Marvel Comics has announced that in an attempt to pare down their world of Superheroes, this year they will kill off Superwoman, albeit in an attempt to save Superman's life. It saddens me that there is not enough room in their world, for a woman of strength.



## classified

OUT OF LINE, a socialist and feminist newspaper will start publishing bi-weekly in Vancouver this autumn. The new newspaper will be visually exciting, popularly written, objective and useful. You can help by taking out subscriptions to *Out of Line*, by contributing ongoing financial support, by distributing the paper in your area or by submitting stories and articles to: *Out of Line*, P.O. Box 65701, Stn. F, Vancouver V5N 5K7 or call Ivan Bulic (603) 874-8240.

ANSWERS TO "THE SILENT SCREAM". The Fargo Women's Health Organization has copies of an edited 23 minute film (½" and ¾" video) produced by Planned Parenthood of Seattle/King County (Washington) presenting physicians, a psychiatrist, a sociologist and P.P. director Lee Minot responses to the film's miss-statements. Also available is a videocopy of a CBS morning news panel of physicians who dissected and discredited the Nathanson film. Contact Fargo Women's Health Organization (701) 235-0999.

MANITOBA PREMIERE AND OPEN AIR SUMMER THEATRE. "Uneeyen Ou Not' Bord d'la riviere". Tragi-comedy about Louis Riel. July 10 - August 10, 1985. Wednesday - Sunday 8 p.m., presented at C.C.F.M., 340 Provencher Blvd., Winnipeg. Call Michele ou Therese at box office 235-1985. Adult \$6.00. Seniors 5.00. Students under 18 yrs. with i.d. 5.00. Group discount available for 10 or more.

FEMINIST GROUPS & FUNDRAISING — I am doing research over the summer on the issues, ethics and achievements of feminist fund raising. If you or your group are also interested in the politics of funding, please contact me.

Dianne Kinnon, 522 McLeod St., Ottawa, Ont. K1R 5R1, (613) 234-8483.

SURVEY OF COTTAGE INDUSTRY by the Island Women's Society on the Queen Charlotte Islands. We are looking for material to provide development resources, education, training and skill programs, financial sources, business management and planning, marketing strategies. Many women hope to work in cooperatives or self-employment out-of-the house. Can you help with information? Write IWS/EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN, Box 176, Port Clements, B.C. V0T 1R0.



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