

# Broadside

A FEMINIST REVIEW

Volume 3, number 2

November 1981

\$1



Illustration by Gail Getner, courtesy Women's Press

## Confronting Pornography

SEE STORY PAGE 10

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#### FEATURES

##### **PORNOGRAPHY — A DOUBLE BIND:**

The pornographic image portrays women as bound, speechless and powerless, but suggestions to regulate the pornography industry bring cries of 'Freedom of Speech.' Susan G. Cole explores the place of pornography, and the industry, in our lives. Page 10.

##### **POLISH PATERNALISM:**

Church and State band together in Poland to ensure woman's place in the home (and in the work force, too). After going out to work all day, a woman has to clean, cook, and shop, but that means standing in line for hours. Naturally, grandmothers are very important. Barbara Roberts interviews a Polish feminist, one of the few. Page 6.

#### NEWS

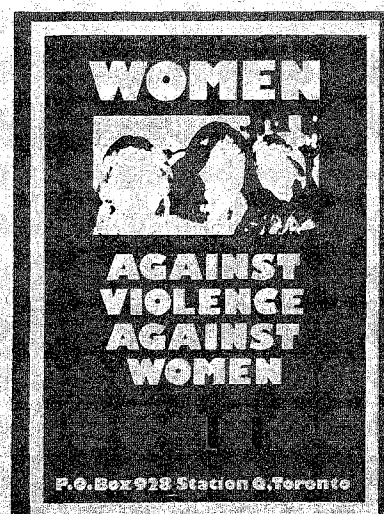
##### **PRESS ON:**

The FBI knows it; do you? The US women's movement is held together by its network of newspapers, magazines and bookstores. Marge duMond reports on the recent print media conference in Washington, DC. Page 7.



Marge duMond

#### COMMENT



##### **NATURALLY WAVAW:**

One of Toronto's most visible feminist action groups — Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) — annually held a Remembrance Day service at City Hall. This year, in memory of WAVAW, and hearing rumours that it may spring to life again, *Broadside* prints WAVAW's Statement of Intent, written in 1977. Page 19.

##### **OIL ON THE WATERS?**

The oil agreement between Ottawa and Alberta *should* calm our fears, but as Eve Zaremba suggests, we'll be shafted again: the 'Power Partners' will win out, and no powerful interest group can stop them. Page 3.

#### ARTS

##### **INCEST — FROM VICTIM TO SURVIVOR:**

Barbara Halpern Martineau relates her experience working with the producers of *Equal Time in Equal Space*, a video installation on incest. They weren't prepared for the response in Toronto, where many women shared their memories, pain and anger. Page 12.



# LETTERS

## Broadside:

Re: Vol. 3, No. 1; October 1981.

I was pleased and particularly proud of two insightful articles in your latest issue: 'Far, Foreign and Familiar' by Dorothy Livesay and 'Arms and the Men' by Chris Lawrence. They reaffirmed my belief in a feminist perspective.

Rather than narrowing our scope of belief and commitment, I felt the articles exposed our most immediate responsibility — to go beyond the personal and encompass our totality.

We must understand ourselves in relation to the progress of all women in this world. We must become exceptionally well attuned to our present world political situation in

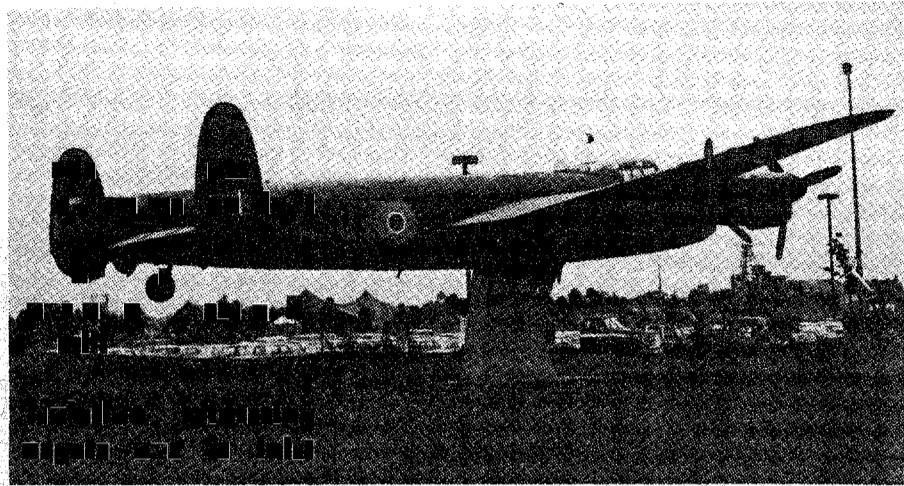
order to know who our enemy is, how they hold power and why, and how we can fight back.

By expanding our boundaries of knowledge and acceptance, our own understanding of womankind will dynamically develop.

There is no virtue in isolation. Splintering from society is to negate our feminist responsibility — our conscience — as women of the world.

And what better way to develop and enhance these "feminine" qualities than to study voraciously, read widely and promote the very essence of our being — the fight for peace.

Dale McDonough  
Toronto



Moirra Armour

## Broadside:

It was very gratifying to see Chris Lawrence's article on Canadian militarism in the October issue. Her explanation of the connections between unemployment, inflation, resource diversion and the military economy was clear and understandable. It is good to see feminists making this analysis.

It is more important that the article closed by naming the taproot of militarism, that

being the oppression of women. It will only be when our peace movement makes this connection and others as to racism, to the ripoff of native peoples and to the lack of workers' control in the workplace that we will avoid the mistakes of the previous male-dominated peace movements.

I was disappointed, however, in that the most obvious example of Canadian complicity in the arms race was left unmentioned. The Canadian government has granted \$20 million to Litton Systems in Rexdale, Ontario as start-up money for the production of the guidance system for the Cruise missile. The Cruise missile, a small com-

puterized medium range nuclear missile, is part of the United States first strike planning. It is making a mockery of attempts at arms limitation agreement with the other superpower. 225,000 Europeans from a wide coalition were in the streets of Bonn on Saturday October 10 to protest the planned deployment of 100 Cruise missiles in West Germany.

Canadian working people are being used once again to provide the hardware for the US war planners.

Tom Joyce  
Toronto

## Broadside

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The *Broadside* Collective does not necessarily share the views contained in any article, even if the byline belongs to a collective member. Views of the Collective are expressed only in editorials, and essays signed by the Collective.

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## EDITORIALS

### Shattering Silence

Just over ten years ago, when the women's movement began its surge known as the second wave, women took to the streets in demonstrations that sought to end the fact of women's invisibility as a political force. The reactions from onlookers were usually somewhat stunned as feminists chanted their demands. We made noise in those streets, the kind that shattered the silence that until then had enveloped women's experience. Since those days a decade ago, we have uncovered more hidden information, about witchburning in the past, for example, or genital mutilation in Africa in the present. In every instance, it has been a struggle to come to grips with the shocking facts of women's lives, to say nothing of the struggle to be believed, even to be heard.

This month's issue of *Broadside* features descriptions of the attempts women are making to discuss some issues that have received precious little of our thought and time. These areas remain unexplored because they are tough ones and because resistance to discussion has been inordinately strong.

The incest video that recently played Toronto (see page 12) sought to uncover the truth about one of society's most successfully closeted syndromes. The dynamic presentation brought together hundreds of

women who were able to share the experiences of the videotaped speakers. An astounding proportion of the audience, in some cases over half, were able to begin the process of resolving their own experiences with incest. For those people in particular, the incest video provided the impetus to deal with personal conflicts about their past. This is, of course, the first step toward breaking the silence among social workers or in legal circles — breaking the internal silence of the victim, about which Margaret Cannon also writes in this issue.

For black women who have wanted to express their truths, many barriers loom large, particularly the barrier of language. In our culture, the only experience that is legitimate is the one that can be described in a tongue that is familiar to the majority, a language that has the slang we know, the rhythms and tone with which we are comfortable — the English of the white middle class. Women who on account of their background do not have a facility for the language of the white establishment have been forced into silence. But they do have a voice and now that it has found a means of being published we are discovering that the voice is a powerful one. In this issue, *Broadside* reviews the work of some of these women of colour, and explores the sil-

ence that racism imposes (see reviews of *This Bridge Called My Back* and *Claiming An Identity* and the report of the US Print Media Conference).

Finally, our centrespread examines the pornographic image, an image that has had a strong presence throughout history in every culture. In 1981, the image seems to be omnipresent. The pornography industry is succeeding well enough to cram every neighbourhood variety store with an array of photographs, and movie houses with films, that depict women as willing victims of violence. The image is appealing to a consumer whose desperation is perhaps frightening, but not as frightening as is the pornographer's escalating hate campaign against women.

More and more women are raising their voices in protest, and as *Broadside* reports, meeting with enormous hostility. Pornography is an emotionally charged issue. So is racism and so is incest. While the facts about each are devastating, and the resistance to them equally so, *Broadside* believes that one of its critical functions as a member of the alternative press is to uncover truths and even to give opinions about them that may be unpopular in the mainstream.

Silence is, after all, the best friend of the status quo.

### Broadside Bulletin

**Item:** *Broadside* is planning to hold a New Year's Dance in Toronto. We hope to have a live band, cash bar and all the trimmings. Everyone's welcome. We'll publish details in our next issue.

**Item:** The *Broadside* Collective will be holding another 'Open Forum' or talk-back meeting, as we call them, in January. All women are encouraged to come, ask questions, find out how to work for *Broadside*, give suggestions, or just give us a hard time. Date and location will be announced next issue.

**Item:** In the new year, starting Vol. 3, no. 4, *Broadside* will be publishing a Toronto

Women's Events Calendar (we'll come up with a catchier title) in every issue. Start planning now to include your events, dances, meetings, garage sales, art shows, plays, concerts, etc. Call the office for details.

**Item:** In May '82, we will be publishing a *Broadside* "Sampler" — a compilation of the most informative/newsey/funny/outrageous articles in Volumes 1 and 2, with graphics and authors' bios. The "Sampler" will be on sale, year round, but subscribers will receive one automatically instead of a May issue of the paper. Again, stay tuned for details.

**Item:** Lovely, long-sleeved sweatshirts will soon be available to readers and friends of *Broadside*. In grey and two shades of blue, with the *Broadside* flag printed on the back. In five sizes (S, M, L, XL and children's). Details will be forthcoming on how to get your very own lovely, long-sleeved *Broadside* sweatshirt.

**Item:** Next month's *Broadside* will have: book reviews for holiday reading, including Margaret Atwood's *Bodily Harm*; an account of the recent election in Greece; a profile on Canadian feminist Angela Miles; an interview with the Jamaican women's theatre group 'Sistren'; and more.

**Broadside:**

I enclose my personal cheque to cover the cost of a gift subscription for the new Women's Centre recently opened in Fredericton.

Would you please send your excellent publication to: Fredericton Women's Centre, 629 King Street, Fredericton, N.B., E3B 5E3.

Thank you very much, and good luck... carry on your good work.

**Marie Patrick**

**Fredericton**

**Broadside:**

Mariana Valverde's article, "Union Made Union Maid" (*Broadside* Aug/Sept.) was very interesting, but some of the statistics need updating. (The following information, and more, is available at the Women's Bureau, Ministry of Labour.)

In Ontario, 1979, 53.3% of all women earned a wage, while 40.9% of all workers

were women. Of the paid labour force, 76.7% of women workers had full-time employment (and 23.3% worked part time).

Of the women in Ontario's paid labour force in 1978, 38% were single, widowed or divorced, which indicates their total economic dependency in most cases. Fifty percent of the paid working married women had husbands who earned less than \$15,000 in 1978, making their incomes essential to the well-being of their families. Full-time women workers earned 62% of what full-time men earned in 1977. Only 11.2% of all Canadian families had a "low income" (in real wages and assets, not in value of service from housewives, etc.), but 42.8% of the families with a woman as the head of the household fell into this category.

The accompanying tables describe women's share of employment in the major occupational groups in Canada, and the arrangements that working parents make for childcare.

I tend to agree with all of Valverde's suggestions except for her faith in the notion that feminists should support affirmative action programs, as they can divert our energies toward bureaucratic hassles while our attention is so desperately needed in the area of quality of working life for women (which includes job security beyond the next election), but that is another subject matter entirely.

Anna Marie Plaxton Smith  
U of T *Women's Newsmagazine*  
Toronto

**Women Employees as a Percentage of Major Occupational Groups in Canada - 1978**

Clerical	76.9%
Service	53.8%
Managerial/Professional	41.7%
Sales	38.1%
Processing	19.5%
Materials handling, other crafts	19.0%
Transportation	4.2%
Construction	1.2%

**Child Care Arrangement, Canada — 1973**

	only school-age	school-age and pre-school children	pre-school children in school part-time	all children not in school
Unpaid Care 1	36%	42%	44%	30%
Children Care for themselves	46%	14%	—	30%
Paid Care	11%	33%	33%	57%
Other	08%	11%	—	08%
Work oriented 2	—	—	14%	05%

1. Childcare by unpaid relative, sibling etc.  
2. Parent adjusts schedule to children's needs, brings child to work, etc.

**Distribution of Working Women, Canada — 1978**

Service 1	69.7%
Trades/Construction	02.0%
Primary, Secondary Industry 3	11.2%
Administration and Finance 4	04.5%
Professional 5	11.4%
Unclassified	01.1%

1. Religion, Teaching, Artistic, Recreational, Clerical, Sales and Service.  
2. Machining, Transport equipment operation and repair, Product repair, Construction Trades, Other crafts and equipment operation  
3. Agriculture, Processing, Product fabrication and assembly, Materials handling  
4. Managerial and Administrative  
5. Natural Sciences, Engineering, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Medicine and Health.

**Broadside Invites You**  
to an  
**Open Forum**  
in January, 1982  
Date and location to be announced in our next issue.



**Over a Barrel**



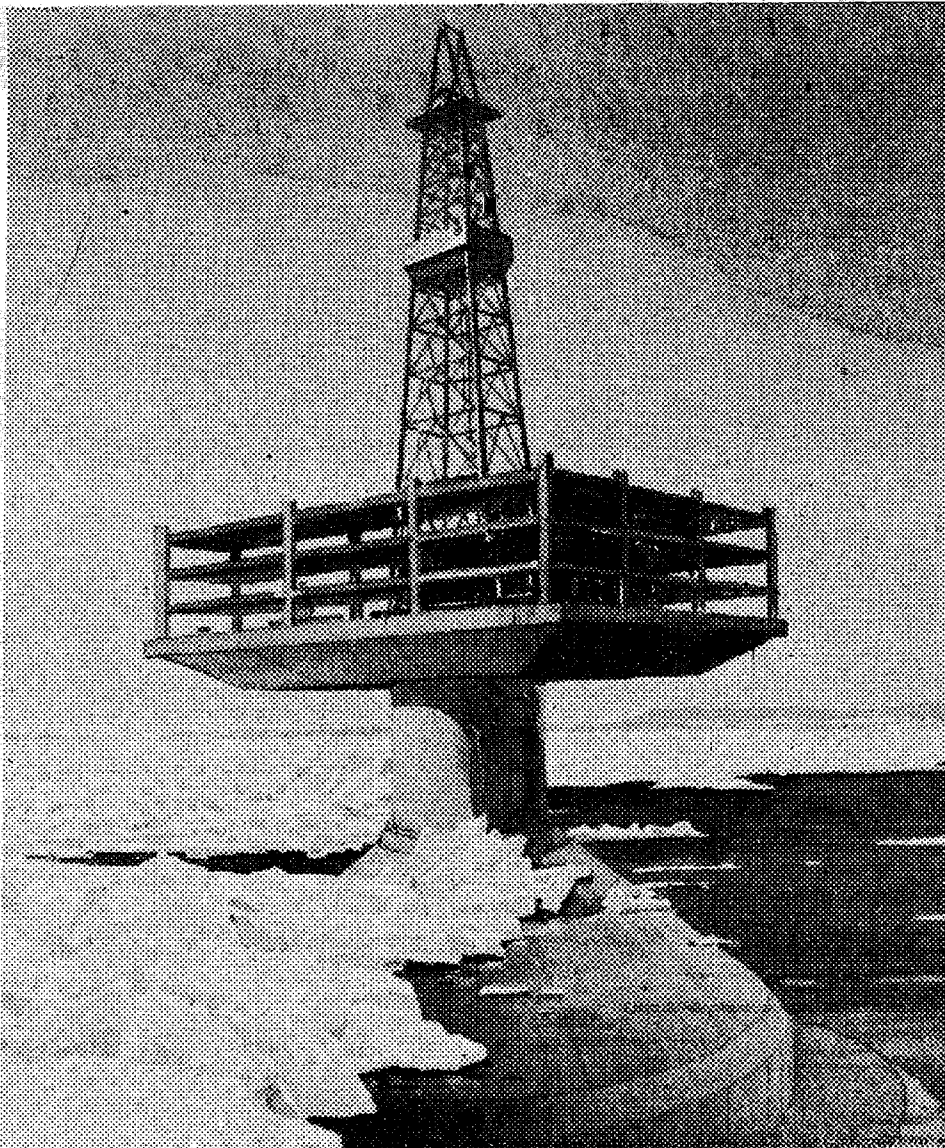
by Eve Zaremba

I have long been in favour of a more realistic price for oil in Canada. I am aware that high cost of an essential commodity is a form of rationing via price — a very regressive method of allocating scarce resources. Nevertheless, in a country like Canada, where the consumption of energy is so high, it seems to me that demand can and must be forced down right across the board by means which, like-it-or-not, work best and fastest, i.e., raise prices. It has been claimed that demand for gasoline (at least) is inelastic and does not respond to increases in price. Of course, this has turned out to be nonsense.

It is madness to spend tax dollars to subsidize everyone's fuel bills, thereby guaranteeing no incentive to conserve for anyone. It makes more sense to force everyone to pay full price and use taxes to help those who are badly hurt by the increased cost. Of course every price increase hurts the poor more than the rich, but in the case of energy it is inadvisable to treat it as a cheap commodity for whatever reasons.

Now it seems I will have my wish. However, I can restrain my joy at the circumstances. It looks like we are going to be shafted — again.

Now we are faced with an oil agreement between the government of Canada and the province of Alberta (and BC and Nova Scotia, with more to come) in which government henchmen not only divvy up the loot but get to decide on the price and thus on the amount to be squeezed out of our pockets. The higher the world price of oil the more the Power Partners will get. While it's high time we started adjusting to the fact that the days of cheap energy are over, it is somewhat disturbing to realize, now that Ottawa has climbed into bed with the producing provinces, that it is no longer in the interest of any powerful group for the price of oil to go anywhere but up, up, up. The Treasury boys are already worried in case the world oil price does not go up as fast as they have projected.



Before October 1973 the oil industry ruled the roost, controlled markets, set well-head prices which the oil-producing countries had no choice but to accept, and kept home governments out of the game. Oil companies made their money at the consumer end (in refining and marketing). Keeping the price of oil low was in the interest of the companies. Fed with a cheap commodity, markets and volume grew and grew. Everyone was happy, rich and getting richer, except the producers.

Those were indeed the good old days never to be seen again. In 1973 oil hit a high of \$3 a barrel. Those days ended when the oil companies in their hubris turned down an OPEC demand for a doubling of the price to \$6 per barrel. Six dollars — imagine!

Then came the embargo and the energy crisis as OPEC nations found out they had all kinds of clout. They had the rest of the world by the short-and-curlies. Not surprisingly, governments throughout the world

screamed bloody murder. Especially the biggies, the industrialized countries which were not used to be shafted by Wogs, and, besides, whose life was dependent on oil.

So government after government shouldered aside the oil companies (which still handle all the transport, storage, refining and distribution) and took over negotiation and control of what they belatedly recognized as an essential and politically crucial commodity.

As the role of governments grew, the oil industry lost much of its clout. Set up to operate in a market with cheap oil, it had to live and learn to prosper in quite a different market situation. Now oil is expensive, markets controlled, and volume expansion over. In that amazing way large capitalist enterprises sometimes have of making a buck no matter who is in charge and whatever the circumstances, the big oil companies adjusted their interest and methods to a high cost market. It used to be in their interest to keep oil prices down. After all it's nice to keep the price of your raw materials low especially when you have to pay the producing country a percentage royalty. Now that they have no control over price but are in turn given a fixed percentage of the spoils, the higher the price the richer they get.

In their turn governments are moving in the same direction. They are now in the oil pricing, supply, and development business and get a piece of every barrel produced, refined, transported, and sold by anyone. Many are managing to control their horror at OPEC price increases. Every hike in price swells their treasuries.

Of course, the high cost of energy brings with it many serious problems, for OPEC countries, oil companies and our own governments. But it's amazing how much easier it is to bear the strain when it also produces billions of dollars in revenue.

I think I was happier when the interests of international cartels and governments did not coincide quite so closely. A little conflict among the powerful is good for us peasants.



# Sociobiology Revisited

by Barbara Chapman

Ever since sociobiology first emerged as a discipline, it has been criticized for being both scientifically and politically unsound. Among the chief assailants of the theory have always been feminists, including Eve Zarembo and Flora Macquarrie, whose article "Sociobiology: Monkeying with Science" appeared in the Dec. 1980/Jan. 1981 issue of *Broadside*. These authors have claimed that sociobiology "is demonstrably not a science or even a scientific theory," and that it has a "male supremacist bias" and can be "used as a legitimization of the status quo."

Certainly sociobiology has its faults, but the feminists' criticism is greatly overstated. First of all, it is unfair to deny sociobiology's status as a scientific theory. A scientific theory is, according to the dictionary, merely a system of assumptions designed to analyze specific phenomena. Surely this definition fits sociobiology, which is a system of assumptions derived from the idea that human behaviour is genetically controlled, and which was devised to analyze the specific phenomena of human social behaviour. The fact that sociobiological theory has not, as yet, been proven does not mean that it is not scientific: much of Einstein's theory of relativity is equally unproven, but is nevertheless generally accepted as science. And although sociobiology has not been proven, there is some solid evidence to support its fundamental postulate, the idea that human social behaviour is to some extent inherited. The psychologist Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt has observed that infants from many different societies all smile in response to pleasurable stimuli. Even babies who are born blind will smile, so they cannot be learning this behaviour by watching the adults around them. Smiling then must be an innate behaviour, and as such, it must be genetically controlled. This does not, of course, imply that the much more complex social behaviours studied by sociobiologists (altruism, aggression, etc.) are also inherited. The ethical impossibility of isolating human subjects from birth makes it doubtful whether the innateness of these complex behaviours will ever be directly proved.

Though not of itself unscientific, sociobiology can be justly criticized for the methods of argument utilized by its proponents. Zarembo and Macquarrie have pointed out that E.O. Wilson, the patriarch of sociobiology, often employs "metaphors, analogy and anthropomorphisms" in his works.

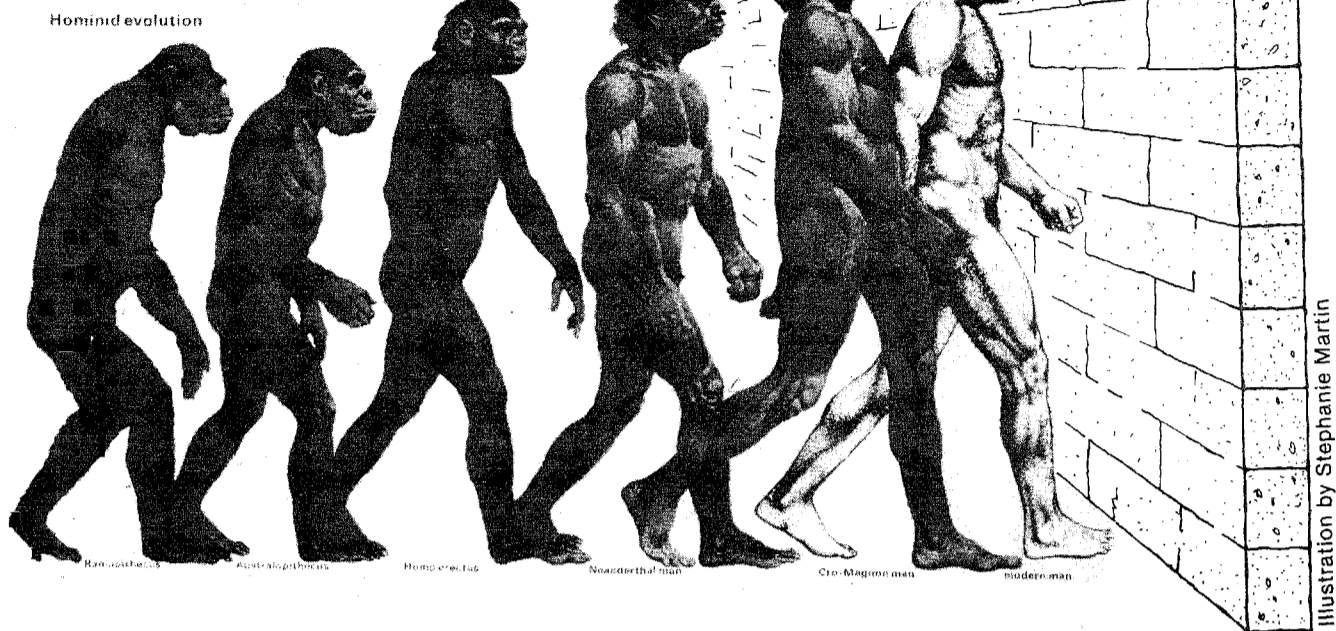


Illustration by Stephanie Martin

The use of such devices in scientific writing should certainly be discouraged, but their presence does not necessarily invalidate the theory on behalf of which they were mistakenly used. A theory cannot always be judged by the arguments used to back it up: that inadequate or inappropriate evidence is used in support of a theory does not prove that theory wrong; it merely leaves the theory unproven. It was discovered recently that Gregor Mendel, founder of modern genetics, based his first published hypothesis on fudged experimental results. Surely Mendel's use of bad data was a graver sin and greater threat to the validity of his theory than was Wilson's use of analogy, and yet Mendel's theory has been proved adequately by subsequent experimentation and is still in use today. Who's to say that the same fate does not await sociobiology?

While we wait for sociobiology to be proved or disproved, however, we must recognize that it may present a grave political threat. Zarembo and Macquarrie, as well as many other feminists, fear that sociobiologists' ideas will be used to validate male supremacy. They argue that by stating that behaviour is inherited, and therefore adaptive, sociobiology justifies existing social arrangements, and is a "legitimation of the status quo." This argument only holds, however, if one assumes that behaviours which are evolutionarily adaptive are necessarily good or right. As Robert Trivers, a

noted sociobiologist, points out, "arguments in terms of natural selection only appear to justify that which has evolved when one imagines — incorrectly — that traits evolve for the benefit of the species." Since the species-advantage perspective has not been accepted since before Darwin, the status quo cannot be supported by sociobiology. Wilson himself agrees that his theories do not justify today's society when he speaks of the "fallacy which uncritically concludes that what is, should be."

Sociobiologists, particularly E.O. Wilson, have also often been accused of being sexist in their language. It is clear from his writings, however, that Wilson is not an overt, intentional sexist. Although he makes some seemingly outrageously sexist remarks, Wilson always follows them with temporizing, non-sexist statements. For example, although Wilson says that "genetic bias is intense enough to cause a substantial division of labour even in the most free and egalitarian of future societies," he is careful to assure his readers that "this is only a guess, and even if correct, could not be used to argue for anything less than sex-blind admission and free personal choice." The latter statement is certainly not that of a male chauvinist pig.

Sociobiologists, however, are sexist in a slightly more subtle way. They seem, as Zarembo and Macquarrie have pointed out, to have totally ignored the evolution of "so-

called female traits, e.g. coyness." This lack of attention to female characteristics, though it is regrettable and should be remedied, does not in any way affect the work which has already been done on male characteristics. It does, however, raise some interesting ideas for further study. What, for example, is the adaptive value of coyness? Zarembo and Macquarrie single out two more obviously adaptive qualities, intelligence and initiative, as female characteristics necessary for raising children. Speaking of children, implicit ageism in sociobiology should be allowed no more than implicit sexism. Since the first few years of life are the hardest to survive, young children probably exhibit some innate, adaptive behaviours, too. And what about senior citizens? Do grandmothers aid their grandchildren so that their genes will be carried on?

Clearly much work remains to be done in the field of sociobiology. New evidence for or against the theory must be found. Misguided persons whose inability to comprehend Darwinian evolution leads them to believe that sociobiology supports the status quo must be enlightened. And sociobiology itself must be broadened to consider female characteristics, and the behaviour of the very young and the very old. These tasks are the duty of critics of sociobiology who, instead of trying to prove the theory inadequate, either ought to prove it false, or correct its inadequacies.

## EVE ZAREMBA'S RESPONSE TO BARBARA CHAPMAN

At the outset, let me reiterate one absolutely basic point about which there need be no argument. *There is a genetic component to much human behaviour.* The strength or importance of this component varies. It is probably safe to say that it is high in simple, involuntary responses (such as a baby's smile) and weak or nonexistent in complex social behaviour.

That being the case, it is dangerous to use the term genetic 'control' in the context of human behaviour. Genetic origin does not equal genetic 'control': 'innate' does not mean beyond human control. Unlearned, instinctive, reflexive behaviour may be changed, deflected, prevented by an act of will. Further, the actual extent of genetic input into any human behaviour is unknown, and as Chapman points out, essentially unknowable.

Thus sociobiology, to the extent that it is 'a system of assumptions derived from the idea that human behaviour is genetically controlled' is just that — a bunch of assumptions — which can be neither proven or disproven. The issue is not that there is no scientific proof of these assumptions — that is often the case with scientific theory in its early development — but that these assumptions are so constructed that they cannot be disproven. Theory may be very

hard, even impossible to prove directly but unless it is *capable of being disproven* it cannot claim to be scientific.

Most arguments made by such sociobiologists as E.O. Wilson are totally circular — e.g., a given human behaviour exists because it has adaptive value in promoting genetic fitness, *therefore* all existing human behaviour promotes (or promoted) genetic fitness and is more or less fixed. Or, put the other way, only human behaviour which promotes genetic fitness can/could have survived, *therefore* all existing human behaviour is genetically controlled and more or less fixed. (I think that's a fair paraphrase.) What this means is that it is an *a priori* assumption that behaviour *must* be explainable in terms of its adaptive value. Given the wonders of human imagination, this is what is done, no matter how tendentious and far-fetched some of the explanations turn out to be. No contra-indications or examples of conflicting behaviours are accepted as disproving anything any given sociobiologist may wish to claim. How can assumptions constructed on this basis lay any claim to being a science?

As Chapman mentions, it is notable that sociobiologists are highly selective about which human behaviour they choose to pre-

sent and explain, i.e., which they consider important and relevant in evolutionary terms. Not surprisingly, these turn out to be predominantly the behaviours of adult males.

Chapman's comments on coyness and 'ageism' are not only misdirected but downright frivolous. Coyness is an invention of sociobiologists presented as a part of female sexual strategy. Youth and old age are but descriptions of stages in the human life cycle. In any properly balanced account of the development of males and females, these stages would be thoroughly covered. Unfortunately, sociobiologists have a penchant for neurotic over-emphasis on the 'mating' aspect of human life, especially in the context of the adult male.

It is immaterial to what degree the bias which seems to govern sociobiology is the result of conscious decisions, inborn chauvinism or mere male myopia. It matters little whether Wilson is otherwise a nice man. The point is that assumptions with far-reaching political and personal implications for all of us are made and allowed to stand in the guise of abstract, objective science. I do not believe that in our critique of sociobiology, feminists are 'misguided' or 'unable to comprehend Darwinian evolution.'

The feminist position is much sounder scientifically than that of those who would equate sociobiological assumptions with objective search for truth. Sociobiology, as presently constituted, is merely an updated, sophisticated version of biological determinism, a vulgar doctrine which provides the intellectual underpinning of much of what is destructive in the relationships between nations, classes, races and the sexes. People who fail to consider its political fallout, its potential for use and misuse may be forgiven on the grounds of political naivete and historical ignorance. But what would be our excuse?

For those feminists who, like myself, are fascinated with the subject of evolutionary biology, anthropology and the search for the roots of human behaviour, let me pass on a piece of good news. Now there are feminist scientists working on it, researching, studying data, writing exciting books and papers. We are no longer totally at the mercy of androcentric, biased pseudo-scientists. For a start, let me recommend to all interested readers, especially Barbara Chapman, *The Woman That Never Evolved* by Sarah Blaffer Hardy, Harvard University Press, 1981; and *Eve's Rib* by Mariette Newak, St. Martin's Press, 1980.

We have only just begun!

# Oldest Taboo — Newest Outrage

by Margaret Cannon

It's called "the oldest taboo" and the "crime of silence" and it's always been a twilight affair, existing somewhere on the edge of a child's nightmare. Now, in the cold self-fulfilling air of the Me decade, incest has arrived — proclaimed in Penthouse magazine as "the deviation whose time has come." The arrival has been swift. In 1974, Roman Polanski used incest as the central corrupting metaphor in his film *Chinatown*. By last year, incest was being "sensitively portrayed" in films like *Luna* and the made-for-TV *Flesh and Blood*. With the media cleansing comes a group of sex therapists, social workers, and psychologists who are seriously considering the notion of "positive incest," and who declare that the oldest taboo has become a healthy part of a child's sexual development.

Whether or not it's time for society to make a U-turn on its age-old disapproval of incest, there can be no better moment than now to pull the wraps off the subject and take a hard look at who does it and why, and what impact incest has on those who experience it. The facts alone compel such an investigation. Reported instances and case studies indicate that at least 10 per cent of all North American women have been involved in incest and American studies linking incest with delinquency, crime, teen-age prostitution, and runaways suggest the incidence is closer to 25 per cent. A survey by *Cosmopolitan* magazine showed that a whopping 40 per cent of readers had been involved in some form of incest — most often with their brothers.

What the figures and statistics don't show are the results of the act. Is incest really something to feel "dirty, soiled and guilty" about, as Canadian novelist Charlotte Vale Allen records in *Daddy's Girl*, her harrowing chronicle of her incestuous relationship with her father? Or can it be the road to "healthy self-actualization" described by California sex therapist Joan Nelson, who regards her five years as her father's mistress as "the best five years of my life."

Nelson, the self-proclaimed leader of the Pro-incest Lobby, believes that societal taboo against incest is the cause of victims' psychological problems and argues strenuously for legal and moral lifting of the taboo. She has been joined by social workers and university professors who claim research supports the idea of positive incest. Toronto psychiatrist Hans Mohr, while not an incest advocate, claims that his studies on children indicate that the worst that can happen is that the child is bored and a majority of the children "found the experience pleasurable."

Allen, who found it anything but boring or pleasurable, dismisses such views as "unadulterated crap and attempts to romanticize a crime by loonies who probably like snuff movies, too." She considers her own research, conversations with hundreds of women who contacted her after she wrote her book, to be more valid than any scienti-

fic analysis. "After incest, you don't trust anyone. It's the same kind of physical and mental invasion as rape, except that the rapist isn't a stranger with a knife. It's your father who's supposed to be protecting you."

The circumstances of protection turned to coercion serve the incestuous parent well by keeping the child — and the woman she becomes — silent. While reported incidences are on the rise, professional stress about family circumstances and professional horror continue to keep incest in the shadows. For instance, if a child is attempting to keep the family together — often the case in the tumultuous incest-prone household — exposure most certainly means removal of the child and the breakup of the home, the very act the terrified child is trying to avoid. Once reported, therapists and counsellors are reluctant to touch the squeamish subject. Adeena Lungen, a staff counsellor for Winnipeg's Klinik Community Health Centre, says that "people have a hard time dealing with incest and it's taboo even for a lot of workers. People are becoming more aware, acknowledging that it occurs and is far more prevalent than we thought. But people working with incest still feel that they're working in a vacuum." To fill the vacuum, Klinik runs workshops for teachers and guidance counsellors, and has organized a city-wide interagency group to coordinate services to all family members. The push is on now, according to Lungen, "from sheer necessity."

There's more behind Lungen's urgency than a need to educate the public. Little of the evidence trickling in from incest services supports the optimistic views of the advocates. According to Val Ogle of Vancouver Rape Relief, where nearly 25 per cent of all calls are incest reports, 14 per cent of victims end up "severely emotionally disturbed." Joy McShane of the Fredericton Rape Crisis Centre points to another outcome of incest: increased susceptibility to rape. McShane says that 70 to 80 per cent of the rape victims she counsels have also been partners in incest. While emphasizing that this is a clinical observation and not the result of a study she would love to do and can't obtain funding for, McShane sees the connection. "Rapists like passive women and the women who've experienced incest send out clues in body language and the like which indicates a passive victim for the rapist." The effects on women are "appalling. The experience of the rape triggers the buried memory of the incest and the woman is doubly traumatized."

As women are the most frequent victims of incest, Canadian women are striking back. Incest survivor groups have been set up by the Vancouver and Toronto YWCAs, rape crisis centres, and hospitals in Toronto, Winnipeg, and Halifax. However, support has not been forthcoming from funding agencies. When the Women's Referral, Counselling, and Education Centre of Toronto requested funds from the Ontario government for an incest hotline and counselling programme, they were turned down flat. Ironically, professionals agree that the

first step in gathering the necessary statistical evidence on incest and assisting its victims is to set up adequate, accessible listening-posts. "We just don't know a lot about the whole area and our detection isn't skillful," says Barb Parkinson of Regina's Mobile Family Service. "If we can get data, get incest out of the closet, get more and more reporting, then we can learn how to recognize the victims who can't speak up without help."

But just how much long-run good will reporting and spot-treatment of victims do, if incest is rooted in a deeper cultural malaise? Toronto family therapist Judith Golden, one of Canada's few incest specialists, thinks that just such a malaise — the breakdown of the customary family roles in the extended family, due to stress — is the breeding ground for incest. "Affection and sex are synonymous in our culture," Golden says, "so many men don't know other ways of being liked or respected by society. Incest isn't usually the first thing that happens in a family. The husband and wife aren't usually having sex, and there's already a breakdown. The stress of unemployment, or whatever, along with proximity between father and child, can lead to incest." Logical alternatives for the man, like extra-marital affairs or turning to prostitutes are not usually considered. "Most of these men lack the social skills to attract women. They rationalize away prostitution with fears of disease and a desire to 'keep it in the family'."

Bizarre as those rationalizations may appear, they are part of the justification of incest as a cultural dilemma. The whole message of the pro-incest movement, according to Barbara Waisberg of the now defunct Violence Against Women project of the Toronto YWCA, is "that incest is OK. It's liberating. The rise of incest advocacy is a part of what's wrong with society, part of the liberal attitude which leaves people concerned solely with sexual expression not put in any kind of context." As part of her work, Waisberg has analysed years of pornographic magazines, searching for the clues to how men perceive women. There is no question that pornography, both hard and soft, is ramming home the message that little girls are fair sexual game. "Stuff available in your local milk store," says Waisberg, "has adult women dressed in little-girl dresses, with teddy bears in their hands and thumbs in their mouths." Advertising, with its use of such kiddie sex-symbols as Brooke Shields and "Nothing between me and my Calvins" flogs the image of the child as provocatress, lending public credence to the myth that children entice adults into sexual liaisons.

While the child-as-seducer school of therapy still has its followers, most therapists are now using a pragmatic approach which focusses on the entire family. American incest expert Kenneth Reich doesn't know exactly why men commit incest, but he believes that the entire family suffers. "Just because other children aren't directly involved doesn't mean they aren't paying in other ways," says Reich, pointing to the

typical routines of coercion, guilt and emotional blackmail. "The man says, 'keep giving me what I want and I won't bother your little sister'." It's when the girl finds out that father is already "bothering" little sister, that the whistle on incest is usually blown.

When the situation erupts, victims can expect short shrift. A 40-year-old Toronto factory worker arrived home early one evening to find her husband in bed with her 15-year-old daughter — threw him out and pressed charges. In the following weeks, she discovered that her 13-year-old had also been seduced — a pattern repeated by most incestuous fathers who move from child to child and then branch out to cousins and grandchildren. "The judge gave him two years in the reformatory on a work program," said the furious mother. "He was on the telephone to my girls every day. The judge told me he 'didn't want to break up the family unit.' What family unit?" Since her court appearance, she has unlisted her telephone and moved in order to protect her children. Now, with her husband due for early release, she is moving to another province. "Why do we have to be the ones in hiding?" she asks bitterly.

The very fact that, despite the consequences, victims and parents are speaking out is a small step toward the solution of the incest syndrome. There is no substitute for telling the truth and telling it to anyone who can listen. Charlotte Allen urges victims to "speak up. People are more sympathetic than you believe and once you tell someone, keep speaking until all the poison is drained away and you can put it behind you and get on with your life." Certainly if society can believe that incest exists, that all men are not sexual animals who must be serviced, that children are not miniature courtesans tempting fathers to bed, then the public will begin to understand the twilight world of incest and take moves to put the oldest taboo into a strong light.

It's not the newest sexual fad, but a crime of abuse against children. "We must believe our children," says Allen. "Otherwise, we're creating a group of unhealthy adults who can't relate normally in the real world. Incest destroys our society from the inside out ... like termites. Only the termites are six feet tall, and they're burrowing inside our children."

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: The research and background for this article would not have been possible without the assistance of women's groups across Canada, but the most valuable resource were the clipping files compiled by the Toronto YWCA Violence Against Women Project and the Women's Resource Library. It is with deep personal and professional regret that I note the end of these major aids to the community and to journalists attempting to understand and report the complex issues of women in today's world.)

Margaret Cannon is a Toronto freelance writer.

Abuse clinic too short of cash to rescue kids

70% of delinquent girls - Rehabilitation

70% of incest - Most child molesters relatives, MD claims

How could I save her from incest?



# A Polish Feminist Speaks Out: Standing in Line for Leftovers

by Barbara Roberts

*Barbara Roberts teaches history at the University of Winnipeg. Recently she conducted an interview with a Polish feminist, the substance of which is printed below. "Maria Malinowska" is a pseudonym, and to further ensure anonymity, the date and location of the interview are not given.*

**M:** Although women in Poland seem to believe that there is sexual equality since women can get essentially the same education as men, this is only apparently true because statistics show that women tend to have jobs which are paid less. Few women have jobs in engineering, mechanical and construction fields, which are well paid. Some professional women can get almost any kind of job, but then they can't advance much. They reach a certain level of responsibility or power, but rarely become managers or administrators. I insist on saying women *believe* this, and you might wonder why. It is because in the economical, professional, and cultural sense they simply are not equal, despite professional emancipation in Poland and other eastern European countries in the late 1940s.

Women think there is no discrimination because the government censorship doesn't allow circulation of information about recent findings, especially by women involved in the feminist movement. I am referring to the vast number of books about different aspects of the female condition in anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics, history, art, and so on which show that women's inferior position is not necessarily natural, and that the roles women are forced to play are not necessarily their only option. I myself at least keep abreast of current feminist literature because I can read some foreign languages. However, there has been nothing published in Polish and during discussions with my friends, educated professional women, it just doesn't occur to them that there has been any unfairness or discrimination.

The real situation is that women in Poland have access to the labour market, very large access in fact, since it's one of the largest in the world. Women represented 47 1/2 per cent of the working population in Poland in 1972, I think. This is a large percentage of working women, but at the same time nothing has changed in their cultural position. Women continue to fulfil traditional roles, taking care of all household chores and raising children. Of course, that overburdens women, who thus have two full-time jobs usually, but they still take that situation for granted. Some become tired, disappointed, and bitter, but they think it is just their personal problem or that they are not efficient enough to organize their work or that their husbands are just unkind not to share more. Children and the household are not considered both partners' responsibility.

**B:** Give me some examples of getting food, preparing it, cleaning. What do you have to do?

**M:** Some questions distributed recently to women in Poland on a nationwide scale showed that the average woman spends a minimum of 4 to 8 hours a day or even more on such things. She has 8 hours of outside work as well. For women living in cities in the age group from 18 to 59, 89 per cent work, so it is typical for a Polish woman to work outside the household. Even married women with children do so. About 60 per cent of married women, with 2 or 3 children (which is the average in Poland; they rarely have more than that) work. They spend time getting to and from work and another 6 to 8 hours on top of that lining up to get food. It is not like Canada, where you can go to one supermarket and get everything you need. Before you get everything you need in Poland, you might

have to go to 5 or 6 different stores and line up in each, so shopping is very time-consuming. You shop often. Since food is not processed, has no preservatives, it's very healthy, but the average working woman would rather have processed food and buy it once a week instead of every day.

So you go shopping every day, and since you don't have a car you carry heavy bags on overcrowded buses. People start work early in Poland and work until 4. After 4 a typical sight is women carrying big bags, crowded into buses and trams, standing in lines. It is really hard physically. After a day's work women do this, and then they go home and prepare dinner. Everything in Canada seems half ready to cook. In Poland, cooking a simple dinner takes between 1 and 2 hours, and then there is cleaning up after dinner! Women don't have dishwashers or chemical aids. Then there is laundry. Again, there aren't laundromats in apartment buildings, so the average woman does her laundry in small manual machines. Such a woman with children spends all her spare time taking care of the house. She is overworked and tired and yet she thinks that is normal.

**B:** Is this true for women no matter what kind of work they do, if they work outside the home?

**M:** Absolutely; that is the situation for engineers, doctors, office workers. No matter what kind of job or education they have, women still have all the household obligations. Child care is another difficult problem for many reasons. Because women work, they have to have day care centres and kindergartens, but the government does not supply enough places so it is hard to find space for one's child. Many professional women realize that conditions in these centres are not very good because they are overcrowded; there is typically one instructor for 20 or more children.

There are two kinds of institutions. One is for children from one year to three or four years of age, and the other for those three or four up. Both kinds are crowded and children easily get sick in them. Professional women try to arrange for their children to stay home because they think it is worse for a child to be brought up in an institution than for a grandmother to take care of the child. Some more fortunate women can have help at home or a babysitter who comes into the home or lives with the family. Usually this applies only to highly paid professional women in big cities.

The grandmother is important in Poland because she helps in childraising and also in the household, so any family which has grandmothers is considered very fortunate. As I mentioned, childraising is the woman's duty. The husband may check whether a child has done homework, but that is likely his only contribution. Taking care of a child's health is also very time-consuming. You wait in lines for doctors or dentists. You can spend a lot of time at that, but women do also have some privileges in that respect. They can obtain health leave if a child is sick or has to be taken to a doctor. Legally they have the right to one or two days a month for child care. In that sense men are discriminated against because if some man wanted to do that he would be unable to do so. Prescribed sex roles are enforced by the law.

Maternity leave is also for mothers only. A woman is entitled to four months' maternity leave but then she can take one year or up to two years' unpaid leave for childraising. I imagine that there would be some men who would voluntarily take care of a child after the first few months, but legally it is an opportunity only for women.

**B:** Are the responsibilities of women for childraising used as an excuse to keep them from advancing in their professions?

**M:** I would say so. There is very subtle discrimination against women because of their family obligations. They can be more or less overtly used as an excuse. Consciousness of

that problem by women is so minimal that it is practically non-existent. Women are so brainwashed that they think they cannot take more responsible positions because they have these obligations. Whenever I mention this subtle but profound discrimination, women object strongly. I point out that 80 per cent of the doctors in hospitals are women, but that all bosses are men. In the university, the percentage is much lower, but in high schools teachers are 90 per cent female, but principals are almost always male. Fabric factories are practically all-women workplaces but directors or managers are men. When I point out all this to my friends they say: "But you know women are not able to take all this responsibility, they have children to bring up, they have houses to look after."

I think that attitude is mainly due to total lack of information, of feminist literature in particular, and to lack of access to consciousness-raising opportunities. That kind of information is inaccessible in Poland mainly for two reasons. One is economic, the other political. The former is that the government is unwilling to put any money or effort into development of the infrastructure which would be adequate to the majority of women. When the process of integrating women into the work force started in the late 1940s, the government was aware of the need for this infrastructure and many efforts were made in this direction, such as organizing canteens in all offices. They still exist, but they become less and less popular because food is very poor there, or if the food is all right, prices are too high for the average family to afford. The government is not interested in making women more aware of the unfairness of a situation where they have to cope with two full-time jobs.

**B:** What would happen if all necessary services were socialized and available as alternatives?

**M:** That would be an advance in women's situation, by liberating them from household work. The other solution would be to have household obligations and childraising be the equal burden of both partners. This would entail profound cultural, social, and psychological changes, which would need a large information campaign. But the emancipation of women in Poland and other eastern European countries so far has only partly happened. Women do complain about their situation, but all that the government suggests as a solution is to get women back into the household. There was a large newspaper campaign started a few years ago in Poland which claimed that the birth rate had not increased enough and that childraising by an institution was far less proper or effective than education by mothers, so women should refuse outside jobs.

The reasons for this campaign were economic. In the late 1940s there were economic reasons for encouraging women to work outside the home. First of all, the country was devastated by the war and the labour market needed as many people to work as possible since the methods of work were very primitive. As well, many men were killed during the war, so there was a big demand for women to take their places. Another reason was that the economic orientation of the country changed from agricultural to industrial, and again there were too few men for the labour force. Another reason was that wages were very low and since men's wages alone were insufficient to support the family, women also had to work.

I think that in any poor country, wages are very low in comparison with the cost of living. Poland is not a very rich country now, but right after the war it was extremely poor, and since everything was nationalized the major part of national revenue was taken for other things than salaries. The wage level is decided by the government, so I think the decision then was that people would be paid low wages and most national

revenue would be invested, especially in heavy industry. A lot of money was also needed to construct housing. There was much propaganda encouraging women to work, and together with this propaganda there were some organizational, administrative, legislative, and economic changes, including the organization of cafeterias in workplaces and of cheap food places in cities. These gradually disappeared, starting in the 1960s. In any case, prices are now so high that it is impossible for families to eat at such places.

After the war, there were also many day care centres in factories or other workplaces, until the mid-1950s or early 1960s. After that the economy needed less and less inexpensive women's labour.

Statistics on working women in Poland show that women are more educated than men. For similar jobs, women always have higher qualifications and education. However, the salary difference between men and women is from 20 to 40 per cent. The early 1970s campaign referred to above encouraged women to leave vocational work mainly because the structure of the economy had changed, demographic changes had occurred, and technology had improved in that work was now more mechanized and Poland did not need so many workers. But the campaign has not been successful.

Wages are still not high enough for a husband's earnings to be sufficient. Also, since women have participated so much in the work force, some changes have occurred in their attitudes. Women now are defined by their own achievement and proficiency, not by their husbands' positions. Women who refused to work outside the home would be perceived, and would perceive themselves, as reduced in status. They would not get enough respect because household work has almost no social prestige or respect. I do not think it is possible to get women out of the work force. For example, a few of my professional educated women friends have followed their husbands abroad when the husbands have been representing various institutions. The women have been unable to get jobs abroad and have felt anonymous. They have hated every minute of this situation.

These are some of the economic reasons for not allowing any feminist literature into Poland. The other reason, in my opinion, is political. Since women seem generally unaware of discrimination and unfairness in their situation, they are obedient citizens, doing whatever is suggested to them, like providing unpaid labour for the family. There would be large social and economic disturbances if women refused to continue this unpaid labour. Women who become aware of the unfairness of their situation would be more prone to leave their families, and of course the stability of the whole society would be undermined. This now happens slowly, invisibly. For many years, the divorce rate in Poland has been very high. It occurs mainly in cities in middle or upper middle class groups, but more and more in the blue-collar population. This creates many problems. Divorced women are often single mothers so the possible obligations of the government increase, such as to supply more day care centres, to financially assist single mothers, and so on.

In that respect the government follows church policy. The Catholic church in Poland is a very powerful political fact. Poland in this respect is unique in the eastern bloc. It has been one of the three most Catholic countries in Europe, Spain and Italy being the others. The church continues to be very strong and although the government does not encourage it, it has to put up with it. Sometimes the government realizes it is helpful to have the church's assistance. The church, in exchange for being tolerated, keeps the population quiet and co-operative. That happened very clearly in 1975/6

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when the workers' demonstrations occurred. Church and government collaborated. I think both institutions are agreed in trying to keep women quiet, obedient, and unaware of the injustice of their situation.

*B:* In an article I read, a male Polish academic said that in his opinion the state had already and must continue to use the church to enforce the status quo in order to keep women in line — in their traditional roles, doing their work in the marketplace and the family — and to prevent divorce and abortions, which would make changes neither state nor church wanted.

*M:* I agree with that, only I would not say the government is using the church. I'd say that they're co-operating, for the good of both. Policy is made by the government. For example, abortion has been legal in Poland since 1956. Poland was one of the first countries in the world to legalize abortion, against strong opposition from the church, so at that point the government was following its own interest, as that policy was needed economically and demographically. The name for the campaign which started in the early 1970s was "Two Plus Three" — two parents plus three children. But it is almost impossible for a woman to work outside the home and have three children. What happens is that many women refuse to have children, like me and most of my women friends, or have just one child. That is typical of professional

women. But the government, for very unclear reasons, wants more children. The reasoning behind this seems to be that the population growth in all countries around Poland is much greater, and Poland's birth rate is not large enough in comparison. So there seems to be a militaristic imperialist feeling that the more we are, the stronger we are, although even some demographers in Poland publish statements saying that they don't see any need for a higher birth rate.

In the present situation, it is impossible to consider having three children. Some women journalists have said women would have more children if they were helped by the government, that is if the government built more day care centres, increased the production of processed food and all supplies which make childraising easier. That was the most women got to say. They were attacked in the press violently, as being disloyal. The result of the campaign was that discussion about abolishing legal abortion started. Almost everywhere else abortion has been legalized, and it has been a basic right in Poland. However, male doctors began to say it should be forbidden. Until now nothing has happened. Women are not protesting because there is no organized way to do so in Poland. Women are not only non-active in defence of their rights or in struggle against discrimination, they are not even aware of either. They don't see these problems as a large social issue against

which they could organize and struggle. Whatever the government says, women still are very unsatisfied and yet do not protest. All social values in Poland, especially those concerning the family, sex, and sex roles, are as conservative now as they were 30 years ago. This is the result of collaboration between church and state. There are also many ways of discriminating against unmarried couples. For example, when you live with a man, especially if you have children, you marry him, because otherwise there is a lot of harassment. Similarly, homosexuals are invisible, and are tolerated only because they are so well hidden. There is no legal sanction against them, which there is in the USSR, for instance. It is an offence to engage in homosexual relations there. However, if I were homosexual I would be ostracized. I think the fear of what might happen is so strong that homosexuality just does not appear openly.

*B:* It sounds like there are all kinds of formal and informal institutions and pressures that force people into nuclear families, that feed into all these social and economic political structures.

*M:* Exactly. It is amazing that there is so much opposition to Marxist principles concerning the structure of society. At the same time many anti-government activities have begun because the stress to fulfill basic needs is so high. The birth rate is high and growing, but the government could stop or slow it down, simply by allowing divorces.

The legal provisions for divorce are very general, so the law doesn't have to be changed. It would be enough to tighten up the divorce law, and I think that is going to happen. To some extent it is happening now, very subtly, by the government encouraging the courts to be less liberal. Reconciliation is part of the law, and one can be more lenient or more strict about that. Unfortunately, in Poland I can foresee courts forcing women to remain in nuclear families, to stay at home, and to be more consistent with traditional sex roles.

## MOVING?

Send *Broadside* the address label of your latest issue and your change of address.

# Feminism in the US Publish or Perish

by Marge duMond

"This is historic. Never before have these groups gotten together to say, 'How can we accomplish what we've got to do?'" — Donna Allen

The FBI knows it: a recently leaked internal report declares that the women's movement in the US is held together by its print communications network, and this network consists of some 200 projects scattered across the country.

The women know it: some 250 of them were at the 1981 Women in Print conference, October 1-4, 1981 in Washington, DC, representing 150 of these projects — feminist and lesbian periodicals, book publishers, printers, bookstores and archives. About 25 women of colour attended; at the first WIP Conference four years ago, there were none.

At the first session, someone asked for a show of hands; how many of us earn a living from our projects? About a third of the women raised their hands. More questions revealed that of the paying projects, more than half are bookstores, most of the rest are book publishers and printers and only a handful are periodicals. Significantly, the further away from the actual content creation, from words, from writing, the better

the chance for a living, if only a poor one.

Throughout the weekend three themes predominated: 1) our need to own our own media; 2) commitment of every part and project in the network to help and support every other part; and 3) commitment by white women in media to share resources with women of colour and to struggle against our own racism.

In addition to these major themes, the issue of class and other differences was raised halfway through the conference, when working-class lesbians convened a workshop. It was suggested that women who rise to speak identify themselves as to background as well as name and organization.

Jewish women had not formed a caucus but during the last session when someone invited Jewish women to stand, about a third of the hall rose. The lesbian presence was not announced, probably because it would have seemed superfluous to do so.

### Owning our media

Donna Allen, editor of *Media Report to Women* in Washington DC, sketched our history. "This is the second wave. What's in between? We're studying that. In the 50's, where were The Other Women? There were no women's papers, bookstores, publishers — we didn't get together. So The Man

could control us, tell us what to think. This can never happen again — we are forging a connection. We build our own."

In the US today, Reaganomics is drying up the grant money. This is not necessarily a bad thing; it will force many women's enterprises into a business footing and ensure their survival and independence. Janis Kelly of *Off Our Backs*, Washington, DC, said that she's "not depressed, we're not all going to fold. We are creative, energetic women and we have access to all sorts of things. We can work this out. Every problem has in it the seeds of its own solution; this is just another problem. And remember — very seldom in history has anyone been paid to be a revolutionary." And said Beverly Smith, executive director of the Black Women's Film Series in Boston: "We have to find ways of getting our communities to get up off their discretionary income."

### Interdependency and mutual support

Action plans proliferated. Periodicals can learn to use direct-mail techniques, like those used by the Moral Majority Inc. Bookstores can have monthly (or weekly) Fight the Right letter-writing sessions in their communities. Periodicals can exchange ads to tap each other's audiences for

new subscribers. Everyone needs to remind readers and customers regularly how important it is for all of us to support women's media. (Remember that FBI report?)

Of course, the most important aspects of the conference were to make informal connections and alliances. Myself, I found a printer to make my rubber-stamp into postcards, and the printer found a distributor ready to handle any postcards we make. Such new connections, as well as many first-time face-to-face meetings among women who've been working for years by mail and phone, are the life-blood of the women's movement and the women's print network.

On a larger and more structured scale, by the conference's end the publishers had formed the US Union of Lesbian and Feminist Publishers; the printers announced the start of the US Alliance of Lesbian and Feminist Printers, and will start putting their own union 'bug' on materials they print.

Bookstores, the most affluent sector of the network, already have their own Feminist Bookstore Newsletter.

### Against racism

Editors agreed it is vital to examine the 'we' in any writer's work. If 'we' means only 'we white, middle-class women' this fact must be made clear. Editors should work with writers to rethink the scope of their 'we' and, where appropriate, broaden it. Reviewers also must identify their backgrounds and biases when commenting on the work of others.

The Conference was the happy occasion for the launching of a new press, Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. Five Third World women had been working together in New York since last Hallowe'en to start this press and the Third World Women's Archives. Adrienne Rich passed the hat for these new projects, saying: "We've got to learn to write cheques." Anxious as we are about how little white women have, she said, we still have to share with women who have less. The collection in cash and cheques came to \$1,325.80. (If anyone else would like to contribute, send your donation to Kitchen Table, Box 592, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn NY 11215, USA.)

On a personal note, I went to the conference because I'd been dreaming of starting a magazine. I wanted to learn what it takes, get some guidelines of information to tie the dream to the ground. Right now I don't know what I'm going to do about that dream. I do know that the women's print network runs on love for women, hope, and passionate commitment to a vision. I know that women left the conference with more tools, more reasons, more energy for the work of the Women's movement.

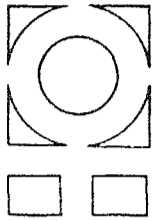


Kitchen Table women; from left: Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga and Hattie Gossett. Not present: Myrna Bain.

Photo © JEB, 1981



# MOVEMENT MATTERS



## Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Following is a statement issued by Lucie Pépin, president of CACSW, regarding last month's Supreme Court decision on the Constitution:

"The Council shares with many thousands of Canadian women a sense of concern that the Supreme Court of Canada has not clearly ruled on the inclusion in the constitutional Resolution of a Charter of Rights. Over the past year, women have worked with passion and commitment to secure entrenchment and improvement of a Charter. Now it appears that these efforts may have to be doubled and redoubled, within a different and perhaps more difficult context. In order to know that context we must await the response of the government to the Supreme Court's decision.

Despite the ruling, however, we wish at this point to remind all the governments concerned of commitments they have already made to the principles of the Charter.

The federal government, having put the Charter before Parliament, is clearly committed to its principle. We call upon the government now, whatever course it elects to follow concerning entrenchment, to begin immediately a review of all federal legislation to ensure its conformity with the Charter of Rights. The government should

follow a disciplined timetable of review and put before the House of Commons, on a regular basis, a program of proposed changes.

We believe this action is crucial to prevent the fight for equality from coming to a standstill, regardless of whether we secure an entrenched Charter in the immediate future.

Secondly, we would remind the provincial governments of one of their oft-repeated reasons for opposing entrenchment of a Charter — that is, their belief that the provinces can adequately secure equality and opportunity for women by enacting provincial legislation. We therefore call upon the provinces to begin immediately the preparation of new legislative programs, to improve the status of women, and to give these programs the highest priority.

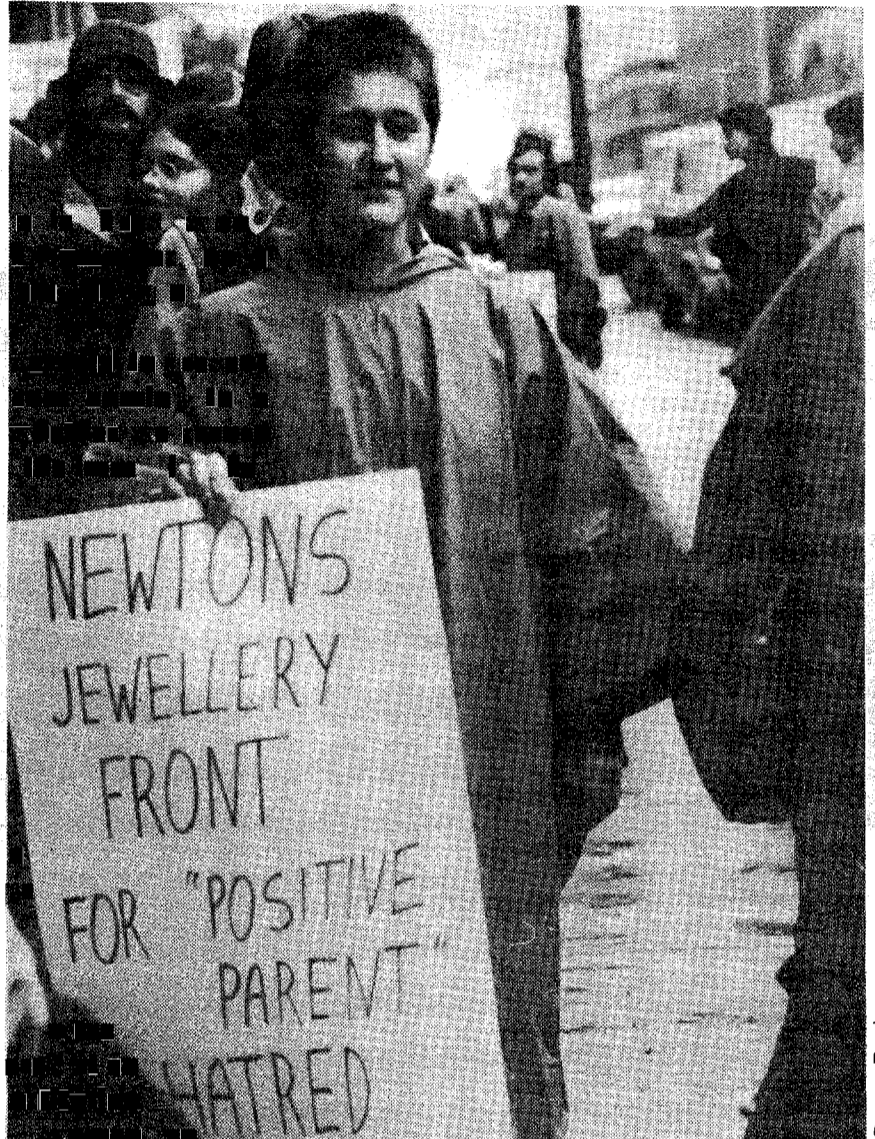
We have recently had evidence of women's continuing commitment to work for constitutional change. In recent months over 2,000 women registered at conferences on Women and the Constitution. We are confident that these 2,000 women, and the more than 20,000 who earlier supported the Council's brief calling for entrenchment and improvement of a Charter of Rights, will continue their efforts to achieve legal and constitutional equality for the women of Canada."

## Women's Pentagon Action

Last November 16, 2500 women from all over the Northeast came to Washington, DC. We held workshops and then on Nov. 17 surrounded the Pentagon. Some 150 women were arrested blocking the entrances. "We are gathering at the Pentagon," we had written in our Unity Statement, "because we fear for our lives. We fear for the life of this planet, our earth, and for the life of the children who are our human future."

Although women had certainly demonstrated at the Pentagon before, this was a new step. Women of many backgrounds, active in feminism, peace, ecology, and lesbian rights came together. We had begun to see how that nuclear war which threatens our entire future is but the continuation of the constant daily war on women, people of colour, on all our children, on animals, forests, soil, air, and water. It is a war on the urban and rural poor in our own country and the struggling lands of Asia, Africa, and South America.

Each day the men in power make these connections clearer, terrifyingly so. Each day they train some new weapon on us: the Family Protection Act with its anti-women, anti-gay, anti-labor provisions; the aid to the Junta in El Salvador; unchecked violence against the black population; the licensing of new nuclear plants; the abandonment of pollution and strip mining controls in violation of treaties with Native Americans. Food stamps are taken from us. Shelters for battered women are taken from us. Neighbourhoods crumble around us while generals and admirals go off on a shopping



Deena Rasky

Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE) organized a demonstration in front of Stew Newton's jewellery store in September. Newton, head of right-wing anti-homosexual group "Positive Parents", has been distributing homophobic hate literature door to door in Toronto.

spreed. They "must" have the Neutron Bomb, Redeployment Forces, the F18 bomber. And more, more.

Last year we said, "We will not allow these violent games to continue. If we are here in our stubborn hundreds today, we will certainly return in the thousands and hundreds of thousands in the months and years to come."

The Women's Pentagon Action, a growing web of local groups from Maine to North Carolina has set November 15 and 16 for our return to the Pentagon. This date is close to the anniversaries of the deaths of Karen Silkwood and Yulanda Ward. Both these women were killed by the long arms of the patriarchy; one in struggle with the Nuclear Industry, the other through male violence in the streets. It's an appropriate time for women to gather again in Washington. We will create new sisterhood confronting the Pentagon with the full range of its crimes through our ritual, our demonstration of our strength, our civil disobedience.

All women in the geographic area are welcome and needed in planning and participating in this action. To get in touch

with the other Pentagon Action women in your area contact: Lynn Breslawski, c/o New Women's Times, 804 Meigs St., Rochester, NY, 14620 USA; 716-271-5523.

## IWDC — Our Allies

As part of their fall program, International Women's Day Committee (Toronto) is giving educational on "Our Allies." Women are encouraged to join IWDC for these sessions:

November 4: Our Allies — Anti-Racist Groups and/or the Immigrant Community  
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All meetings will be held at University Settlement House, 23 Grange Road, Toronto at 7:30 pm sharp till 10 pm.

## Kitchen Table

Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press is committed to producing and distributing the work of Third World women of all racial/cultural heritages, sexualities, and classes that will further the cause of Third World women's personal and political freedom.

Although other presses may at times publish work by women of colour, it is not their top priority and fewer works by women of colour get published by both independent and trade publishers than those of any other racial-sexual group. On the other hand, the amount and quality of work actually being produced by Third World women writers and artists is phenomenal (especially considering the social and economic conditions under which they create) and is in no way accurately reflected by the disproportionately small volume of work that actually gets published. Too often Third World women writers find themselves in the position of having a completed manuscript and then facing the dilemma of having no real option as to where to submit it in order to get it produced.

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4. **Ladykillers: Why Smoking is a Feminist Issue**, by Bobbie



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The establishment of KITCHEN TABLE: WOMEN OF COLOR PRESS addresses this need. For more information, write: Box 592, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215, USA.

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# Confronting Pornography

by Susan G. Cole

I

Most of us pretend that it isn't there. Every newsstand is jammed with it. In the back of almost every variety store entire displays are devoted to it. Partly because it's the worst of our culture, and partly because we can't believe that the fear and loathing of women can be so strong, we try to shut it out.

The pornographic image. Woman in a state of ecstasy, the plaything of her male master; woman grovelling for more abuse; woman strapped in leather, straining to get loose; woman still hungry for the next lash. Who is she? How much longer, even as we avert our gaze, can we pretend that she isn't affecting us?

Essentially we tend to exclude the pornographic image from among those that really matter because the image is perceived to be a fringe phenomenon, part of the underside of our culture. But the profit figures associated with the pornography industry, greater than those of the film and record industries combined, suggest that this is big business and not a series of fly-by-night operations designed to cater to the transient and the furtive.

And the industry is far from underground. The makers of the National Film Board's "Not a Love Story," a film about pornography, travelled to the peep shows, the live shows and the trench-coated set to uncover horrifying images of women. But the most grotesque portrait was not to be found in the bowels of our culture. It was there on the cover of *Hustler* magazine — a woman's body churning through a meat grinder — available on every newsstand in the US. More than 50 per cent of pornographic material portrays violence.

We are expected to accept that the male aroused to orgasm by the sight of a woman being brutalized is a relatively benign phenomenon, that we should leave the poor fellow alone in his fantasy world. And who are we anyway to deign to exercise the kind of thought control that would judge anyone's fantasies? Fantasies after all, are an inalienable right. This would be a very useful question were it true that the male fantasizer is repulsed by his tendencies, filled with self-loathing because he needs to conjure up the image of a mangled female body for a sexual object that he is, at least in healthy quarters, supposed to love.

But he isn't conjuring up the hideous images. The pornographer does it for him. And the men in the films and photographs who shove bamboo up women's vaginas are not depicted as crazed weirdos. Quite the contrary, they are lionized, imbued with strange powers, roles models, if you will, for the fantasizer. Whereas it could be true that a random male, may, if left to his own devices and fantasies, develop a sense that his proclivities are peculiar, that something is not quite right, the pornographic image presented in mass quantity serves the function it would in any mass medium. It legitimizes the consumer's disease. Far from bringing the consumer to terms with who he really is, the pornographer absolves him of his guilt.

Of course fantasies are an inalienable right, provided that they remain fantasies. The rise in the rape rate and the incidence of violence against women in the home provides a convincing argument against the notion that pornography is a safety valve that keeps men off the street and without any need to act violently. We are told nevertheless that the pornographic image is harmless and that under no circumstances is it ever translated back to real women in the real world.

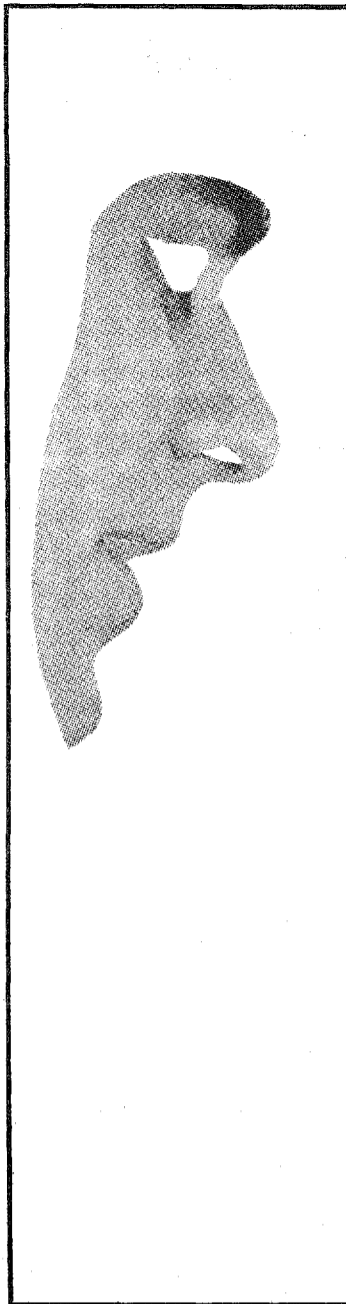
Unhappily we are without the kinds of controlled studies that would prove unequivocally that there is serious fallout against women as a result of the massive distribution of the pornographic image. We do however have some tidbits of information that if borne in mind serve as a reminder that the media are powerful indeed.

New York: A film entitled *The Warriors* is released and frequented by patrons anxious to experience the gang warfare depicted in the film. And experience it they did. In fact, members of the audience went on a rampage of the theatre while the film was being shown. Florida: a youngster replicates a violent crime he has seen on a Made-for-TV movie. California: Countless sexual therapists accept film as an effective tool for practising sexual therapy. And everywhere in the world the advertising industry relies on the precept that the medium delivers a message, one so convincing as to move the receiver of the message to buy a product. The idea that the pornographic image has no impact appears to be but wishful thinking as it goes against one of the critical assumptions of the adman, himself part of the very backbone of our consumer society.

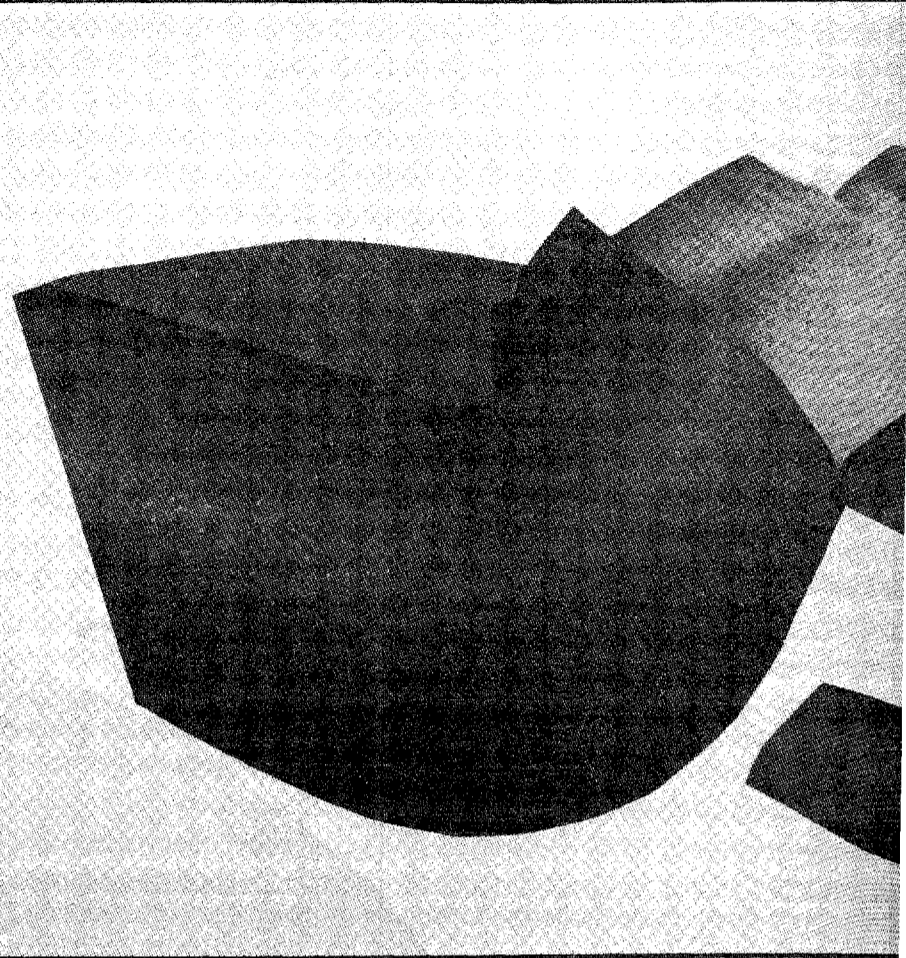
The image itself is not a great deal different from the one that graces countless billboards or the movie and television screens. That "something about an Aqua Velva man" is the same awesome power the male has over the female in girlie magazines. The pornographer is no rebel. He reinforces images already prevalent in our culture. He is the absolver of the sexually dysfunctional male's guilt as he informs his consumer that the desire to violate women is not only acceptable but has its own rewards. With the possible exception of the advertising executive, he is our culture's most effective propagandist, designing as he does this vicious hate campaign. His success depends upon our silence.

II

It is not always easy to break the silence. Those of us who have made attempts to explore the issue publicly have been shocked by the hostility in the reactions to a fresh perspective on pornography. One gets the sense that many people would prefer that we let the matter rest. Telling it like it is



# Gagged, Bound and Silenced



makes many people uncomfortable. The women who made the NFB film *Not a Love Story* (see *Broadside*, Vol. 3 No. 1) were baffled by the fury of male reviewers, one of whom called the movie a sample of fascist bourgeois feminism. The film critic in question, who no doubt fancies himself a progressive, was referring to what he perceived to be the film's positive stance on censorship.

What had gone wrong? The film's only statement on censorship was made by Susan Griffin and she articulated a point of view against censorship. The filmmakers themselves were confused on the subject and were inclined to shy away from the censorship solution. The film, a collage of images from the world of pornography, only reflected their confusion. And yet the dailies merrily published reviews that led the reader to believe that these women wanted the state to shut the industry down. They didn't. They just wanted to show ugly pictures. The ugly pictures elicited an ugly reaction that in the experience of the filmmakers was as much of an eyeopener as shooting the film itself.

The censor, of course, was no more generous, refusing to let the film be shown more than once for public viewing.

Andrea Dworkin's book *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* was released last summer. The prose is tough and unsparing, laced with words like cunt, prick and fuck, because Dworkin believes that the point cannot be made by pretending that the pornographer's lexicon does not exist. In presenting her argument that pornography enforces male power, she does not take the easy route that traverses only the 50 per cent of the pornography industry's output that overtly exploits violence, but rather, deals as well with the other 50 percent, making the connections between force and objects. She is a rhetorician, and indeed the first chapter, a crash course on feminist theory, tends to be heavy-handed for an already conscious reader, but the rest is powerful, too powerful for squeamish reviewers, who have trashed the book unmercifully.

More alarming is that Dworkin has been put down personally, especially in the east coast establishment press. The critic for *The Village Voice* (yes, the *Voice*) reduced Dworkin's anger to resentment that men and not women get to put their fantasies on the screen and in books. In other literary circles, she has been labelled a freak who hates men. During a conversation with *Broadside*, she described how women merely seen holding the book have been deemed weird psychotics. No network public affairs program will agree to have Dworkin appear. The only vehicle through which any of the media will agree to let Dworkin have her say is a panel that would pit her against a bona fide pornographer.

Here in Toronto, this writer agreed to such a set-up, and made an attempt to espouse a feminist perspective on the pornography issue on a local public affairs program (I use the term here loosely) that featured Al Goldstein, the publisher of *Screw* magazine. The encounter began with a variation on the "if you're a feminist you don't like men" theme, but this time it was, "if you're against pornography then you don't like sex." Better still, "you don't like the right kind of sex." "You're a lesbian. How dare you infringe on someone's rights when you are the advocate of perversion." Whether the attack, relentless as it was, was effective, I'm not certain, but the strategy was to neutralize in any way the argument that pornography works against the interests of women.

III

As unpleasant as it is to accept, we have to face the fact that any opposition to the free dissemination of pornography is an unpopular stance: that resistance to the point of view is emotional and can evoke incomprehensible anger that the tactics used to diffuse our arguments will be very dirty; and that any measure will be used to coerce back into the cocoon of silence.

But what do we say? What do we do? We are uncomfortable with the unattractive option of censorship and with the fact that any desire to dismantle the pornography industry is shared with interests, the moral majority in particular with whom we really prefer to believe we have nothing in common. Our hands are tied by liberals who balk at the notion of denying anyone freedom of anything and by artists who believe that their creative vision will be cramped by constraints imposed on them by an external body. For the most part, one can find a sympathetic ear to the notion that pornography is not good for women. But it is difficult to argue forcibly for solutions to the problem that don't hit the hackles of even the most progressive and well-meaning listener.

It would probably be useful if we were to stay away from the word censorship and replace it with the more acceptable "regulation." Regulation is actually a more accurate term for what should be done with the pornography industry speaks more eloquently to the fact that only an infinitesimal amount of pornography could possibly fall under the rubric of art, which we are least likely to want to restrict. The rest is not art, it is *product*, and there is nary a product on the market that is not regulated in some way or another. So, when we say that the product must not celebrate violence against women and suggest that the censor admit that guideline, we are seeking to regulate in the same way we say that white bread can contain only so much preservative or that a lot of hot dogs can contain only so much alcohol.

This is admittedly a piece of fancy verbal footwork which helps to place the pornography industry in its proper context. It is an industry and as such deserves no more special treatment than any other industry. There is no convincing reason why the pornography industry deserves a handout policy, one which is accorded to no other capitalist venture.

The main drawback to stern regulation is the degree to which the guidelines may prevent the artist from exploring the potential for erotic art. But for our purposes, the proposed guideline in question provides no threat to anyone who wishes to depict graphically any sexual acts. Even the depiction of violence would be acceptable, as long as the perpetrator of the violence is not portrayed as a heroic individualist has enough confidence in himself to grant each of us the right to say anything we want, confident that the right would not be abused. At the same time refuses to believe that an individual's depiction of violence is a depiction pure and simple.

The progressive-minded is worried most that regulation can be used against political dissidents and anyone else who supports alternative points of view. As a contributor to *Broadside*, certainly not a mainstream newspaper, keenly aware of such dangers. But I'm hardpressed to





Illustration by Gail Geltner

gine that *Broadside* would be threatened by a clear guideline prescribing the celebration of violence against women in film (or violence against anyone in any medium for that matter; at no time have the publishers of *Broadside* been inclined to depict women beating up or castrating men for the pleasure of our readers). The other assumption of the fearful progressive is that if we let the censor at violence then the banning of everything erotic will follow closely behind; give the state an inch and it will take a mile. But bear in mind that the state has seen fit to regulate what comes out of the Inco smoke stack without preventing us from barbecuing in our own backyards.

The issue of freedom continues, nevertheless, to be near and dear to the hearts of committed liberals, in spite of the fact that there does not exist a single social policy that does not to some extent curtail individual freedom. The basic tenet of our social contract is compromise, that we cede our rights in order to live in this world together. Yet instead of asking the pornographer to cede his right to exploit and propagandize, we grant to cold-blooded entrepreneurs the right to ply their trade even if in so doing we deny ourselves the right to walk the streets free from the fear of violence.

This last is a critical point that challenges one of society's most accepted assumptions, that freedom is our most precious value. But is it? Freedom of speech always sounds splendid, and in the abstract is worthwhile to be sure, but in reality it is precious only if it is afforded to everyone. The pornographer tells his customer that women have no right to speak, only the right to get fucked, and so the pornographer works to deny us the freedom of speech. And the recent experience of feminists attempting to avail themselves of a public forum in order to discuss exactly this is turning democracy's much-vaunted free market of ideas into something of a joke. An even more radical formulation is to say that as long as there is no real equality, freedom of speech is useful only to those who already have power.

Many will argue that if power is to be vested in anybody, the last to be given more clout is the Censor Board. But regulation does not have to take place only at the hands of the censor. The members of the film industry might consider some form of censure of popular directors like De Palma (*Dressed to Kill*) whose speciality is the glorification of violence against women. Filmmakers might do well to throw out of their associations and academies those filmmakers who abuse their craft and eschew art for exploitation.

The courts could be used more effectively if the Criminal Code, particularly section 159 which deals with obscenity, were taken a little more seriously. Obscenity has to be defined more clearly so that any photograph or film that makes brutality directed against a female heroic is *de facto* obscene. Sub-section 7 of the section on obscenity makes it an offence to depict pictorially any crime. This section has the potential to allow charges to be brought against anyone who distributes material in which the assault of women is made titillating. Assault is, after all, a crime. But either of these approaches has its problems. While it could discourage pornographers from their most gross excesses, it could also clog the courts with case after case, conceivably grinding our already moribund justice system to a halt.

If the notion of regulation either by the courts by the "artists" peers or by the censor cannot be made palatable to the public, then perhaps we should allow the pornogra-

pher industry run amok and then tax it to death, both at the consumer's and manufacturer's ends. The goal would be to take some of the profits out of the industry and back into the hands of those battling the industry's influence. It would be a new kind of Reconstruction program.

Add a hefty tax to the price of a girlie magazine and possibly consumption would fall off. If the appetite for pornography is so voracious that the consumer is still willing to shell out his money, then a tax on the pornographer's income might defray profits so considerably and add so much to his paperwork that he might choose to leave the business.

Such a solution places pornography in the same category as alcohol and tobacco — another vice for the state to exploit — but this time with a twist. The tax monies derived from the industry could be earmarked for the services that exist to mitigate the effects of violence against women. At least rape crisis centres, the shelters for battered women, and counselling services would have a greater means to undo the damage.

#### IV

Protestors would encounter less resistance if the image were of a Jew being led to the chambers while a swastika-adorned German jacked off, or if the pornographic image were of a Black being lynched to the sexual delight of a white hangman. The outrage of the Jew, the fury of the Black would be understood by cultural critics. In fact, our legislators have been so moved as to devise hate literature laws that ban the dissemination of material that advocates the genocide of any group, but only on the basis of religion, creed or colour, not on the basis of their sex. Hence, only women are without protection.

Why that is the case has to do with the mysteries of sex and eros, subjects that lend themselves only to analyses of the most abstract variety. We can speculate that the desperate need the consumer of pornography has for the pornographic image is connected to his need for total control and domination. He may be able to render women dependent on him — for money, for status, for information, for survival — but the last frontier is the one between the sheets, and while he may have a female sexual dependent, one whom by law he can force to have sexual relations, he can never master her the way the pornographic image tells him he can.

In the light of his failure to master her he must be convinced that she is totally depraved, and that if he can't bring her in line someone else can. And so her erotic energy becomes transformed into something pornographic. Hence the image is what it is — women capitulating to a sexual frenzy brought on by the manipulations of a masterful male. It is an image of women possessed, at once by her uncontrollable sexual urges and by the men who can exploit them. The very existence of the myriad photographs and films of women as victims give to the men who peer at them a sense of security. Just the fact that women pose for them is proof of our depravity. That women who work in the industry do so mostly because of a lack of economic options is no matter. That the only other option available to many women in the trade is prostitution, one they perceive to involve many more risks, is of course not going to cross the consumer's mind. According to the man getting off, if the women submit to the humiliation of being photographed, then the message in the actual contents of the photograph

must be true.

The pornographer's strategy is to harp on the symbols already woven into our cultural fabric — particularly the dual symbol of woman as either whore or virgin. She is either destructively depraved or completely innocent until, with the invasion of one of her orifices, she finds her true self — sexually berserk. Of late, the consumer of pornography can get the best of the virgin and the whore. Women are as corrupt as ever, enjoying especially masochistic experiences that find her branded with hot irons or gang-raped. Less and less, though, is she portrayed as the coy virgin. That role now falls increasingly on the shoulders of children.

As the pornography industry continues to burgeon, especially in the areas of kiddy porn and violence, more and more concerned observers are thinking that the most positive steps can be taken in the area of sex education, so that the pall of terror and disgust that hangs over the sexual arena can be dispelled. A crucial subject for study is the pornographic image, because it reinforces the power and control that the obsessive consumer of the image can never have. His quest for domination is doomed not because there is such a thing as a lesbian, or because historically men have been less than artful in their sexual relations with women, but rather because sexual energy was never meant to be manipulated or used or taken away — from anyone by anybody. Our erotic energy is our own, to share when we please, and for our own sake.

But the pornographer continues to rage against the power we want to keep. In the face of the barrage, we are expected to settle for the dubious assumptions of pornography's various apologists.

We are asked to believe that men have the right to get sexual pleasure from the image of victimized women, and that the pornographic image never affects real women in the real world. We are asked to believe that the pornographer is a potential artist and that his vision can brook no constraint. We are asked to believe that the smallest amount of protection in the form of regulation of the industry works against the precious value of freedom and therefore against us. We are asked to believe that if we protest against the pornographer's propaganda we are either crazy or sexually dysfunctional.

We are asked to remain silent.

It is all too much to ask.

### For more information

#### BOOKS:

• Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, Simon and Shuster, New York 1981.

Brownmiller's groundbreaking work on rape puts violence against women in its proper context and does away with many myths that surround the issue of rape.

• Lorraine Clark and Debra Lewis, *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality*, Women's Press, Toronto, 1977.

Clark and Lewis connect rape and possession of property in this important Canadian book.

• Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, Perogee Books, New York, 1981.

According to Dworkin, pornography reinforces male power. This is a compelling book especially because Dworkin does not hide her feelings about the subject. Not for the squeamish but then neither is the issue itself.

• Beatrice Faust, *Women, Sex and Pornography*, MacMillan, New York, 1981.

This concerned point of view stresses the need for sex education in a culture that needs pornography.

• Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature*, Harper and Rowe, New York, 1981.

This is an ambitious text that tries to deal with art, eros and other cultural issues. Griffin's is the most eloquent argument for women to speak out, but the book makes most sense if you are familiar with her last book, *Women and Nature*.

• Laura Lederer, *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, William Morrow and Co. Inc., New York, 1980.

This anthology of writings on every aspect of the pornography issue includes women's experience in the trade, the legal issues, the political issues and excerpts from major texts. As an overview, this book is most useful.

#### PERIODICALS

• *Body Politic*, April and August 1978. In the April issue, Gerald Hannon articulated the gay liberation point of view on censorship opposing the feminist stance. In the August issue, the *Body Politic* published the responses from feminists under the title "Pornography: The New Terrorism?" Included is a think piece from Andrea Dworkin addressing issues that are dealt with more extensively in her new book and a letter from Eve Zaremba and Susan G. Cole.

• *Saturday Night*, September and October 1978. Robert Fulford's September column contained familiar arguments against censorship but in his October column, he admits that he ought to think about it a little more. Perhaps the sentiments expressed in Christina McCall Newman's piece on the back page of the October issue had something to do with his change of heart.

• *Mother Jones*, April 1980. Entitled "Sex Porn and Male Rage" this is a must read issue for anyone exploring the issue of violence against women. Included is an examination of the pornography industry and an extraordinary investigative piece on the anatomy of a sex crime.

• *This Magazine*, Vol. 12, No. 3, July-August 1978. This issue contains Myrna Kostash's "Pornography, a Feminist View" which is the first careful study of the issue from a feminist perspective published in a Canadian periodical.



## ARTS

## Notes of an Incest Video Survivor



Barbara Martineau

by Barbara Halpern Martineau

I think that art is fundamental in making social change. — Paula Lombard, *Art to Heart: The Issue is Incest*, radio show produced by Catherine Stifter as part of a year-long media campaign for incest awareness in Los Angeles.

"Womjeop" — Hollywood-ese for Woman in Jeopardy — producers sit around talking about how much "womjeop" a film needs to be successful. The relation of this attitude to mass media journalism is demonstrable — Los Angeles newspapers carried a photo of one of the dead victims of the Hillside Strangler, posed with her legs spread in a position identical to one run by *Hustler* magazine. Coverage of the Strangler both terrorized women and suggested that since all his victims were prostitutes it wasn't all that important.

1977, Los Angeles: Ariadne, a Social Art Network, founded by Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz, presented *In Mourning and Rage*, an art project which connected the current case of the Hillside Strangler to the general issue of violence against women. In grooming the mass media for appropriate coverage of the project, the women supplied shot lists giving exact directions for filming the show, as well as detailed information on the issues. Media coverage of the Strangler in the LA area improved enormously as a result of the project.

"In secret, in silence, in shame, in sorrow, incest" — *Art to Heart: The Issue is Incest*

1977, Los Angeles: Nancy Angelo made a videotape in which a woman describes her incest experience. Many women responded personally to the tape, saying it spoke for them; many men were enraged, and Nancy was attacked, vilified, received hate mail, and a lawsuit was launched against her. She realized how important the issue is, and that she couldn't carry it alone. So she teamed up with Ariadne and became part of an incest-awareness project, in coalition with the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Centre (GLCSC).

"It's not incest that's taboo, it's speaking about it," says Nancy Taylor. She is director of the Community Education office at GLCSC, where an incest prevention and recovery program includes a hotline, referrals, and support groups. It was considered important to dispel the stereotype of gays and lesbians as child molesters — 97% of sexual child abuse is perpetrated by adult heterosexual males.

1978, Los Angeles: *Bedtime Stories: Women Speak Out About Incest*, an art exhibition, was presented at the LA Women's Building by Paula Lombard, Leslie Belt, and other incest survivors. They had coined the term "incest survivor" to signify the transition from victim to survivor each had undergone in making art from her experience, sharing it, breaking the taboo of silence.

"The poster is a picture of a little girl holding the world on her shoulders, and in the world, there's a picture of a nuclear family, in negative. It looks like she's carrying the burden, and it looks like she might be able to toss it off. The caption says, 'Once upon a time she thought incest was something she had to carry around all by herself.'" — Bia Lowe, *Art to Heart: The Issue is Incest*, describing her poster for *Bedtime Stories*.

The art exhibition attracted five thousand visitors, more than any other event at the Women's Building.

1979, Los Angeles: Having failed to attract funding for her vision of a six-tape video installation on incest, Nancy Angelo decided to go ahead anyway, relying on private donations and volunteer time. Seventeen women, including six survivor/performers, six "buddies"/camerawomen, and five supporting producers endured and survived ten consciousness-raising sessions in which each woman spoke of her own pain, rage, understanding, analysis, synthesis, and then:

February, 1980, Los Angeles: They taped, six cameras, six women, each taking her turn to speak as the others listened, equal time.

June, 1980, Toronto: Ottie Lockey at the Women's Counselling, Referral and Educational Centre (WCREC) was working on a proposal for an incest hotline and direct service program. She and other women from the women's services network in Toronto formed a group to identify the issues surrounding incest.

Summer, 1980, Toronto: *FUSE* magazine published an article by Terry Wolverton, a survivor/performer in *Equal Time in Equal Space* as well as *Bedtime Stories* and *Art to Heart*, and a former Toronto resident. The article described a video installation to be performed in the fall of 1980.

Fall, 1980, Los Angeles: *Equal Time in Equal Space* opened at the Women's Building in LA. Six monitors (TV sets) on sculpture stands arranged in a circle were interspersed with chairs for the audience. Cushions in the centre provided more seating, for 30-40 people. On each monitor, a woman spoke or listened to another woman — each taking her turn, each at the same head level as the audience. Equal time in equal space. A magic, storytelling circle. A protected, charmed circle, where women in the audience could speak their own experiences after the tapes had played.

Fall, 1980, Toronto: Ottie Lockey and Barbara Martineau, a volunteer at WCREC, decided to try to bring the tapes to Toronto. In November, at a feminist film conference in Chicago, a woman from LA whose lover had worked on the project gave me phone numbers and more information. Question: How to find six monitors, six decks, lights, cables, stands, space to put them, and money to bring women here from LA? Meg Thornton at Trinity Square Video suggested I talk to Jane Perdue and Peggy Gale at A Space, a video gallery. A Space loved the project, so "all" we had to do was prepare a budget, write a proposal, and find a space (University College agreed to house us and contribute some money).

June, 1981, Toronto: The Canada Council approved A Space's funding request, and we knew we were on. So, we immediately formed a group of volunteer organizers, consisting of women from the women's services network who have done work with survivors and/or are survivors, one video artist, one graphic artist, and ourselves, Ottie and I.

The rest was not easy. There were many meetings, many phone calls, letters, organizing work, preparing a flyer, mailing it out, doing outreach to the women's community and to the media, dealing with problems of a constantly changing membership in the group, all the usual headaches of organizing a project when everyone is overloaded and close to burnout, and what none of us identified until Nancy Angelo articulated the problem in a phone call: the painful fact is that working on an incest project raises every woman's deepest fears about authority figures, trust, her own worth, her own anger, others' anger, her own ability to speak up, to speak out.

For myself, it was a long road to travel from our first meeting, on a hot July afternoon, with a small fan buzzing and my own ears ringing, as one of the women turned to me and said, "Barbara, you haven't said anything yet." "Oh," I said in a tiny voice, "I'm not an incest survivor, but my first woman lover was." It was a long journey from that terrible moment, voicing a never-shared pain, receiving validation from other women that I could in fact feel pain on behalf of someone I loved, to the moment months later, during the final Toronto performance of *Equal Time in Equal Space*, after I had seen the tapes seven times, sat through six public discussions, when I finally realized that I am a survivor of something in my own early childhood so painful that I can't remember anything from those years at all, and that whatever it was, it has produced feelings in me very similar to those described by other women who are conscious incest survivors. A partial measure of the power of the show is that I no sooner made the connection than I voiced it, and voicing it was an enormous relief, and immediately another woman responded to my statement that each of us carries within us the pain of growing up in an incest culture. As one woman put it, if you are not an incest survivor, it is not your choice, but that of the men in your family. One out of four women in our society is sexually assaulted before the age of eighteen, 80% by someone in the family or close to it, a male authority figure.

October 13-17, 1981, Toronto: *Equal Time in Equal Space* was presented at the UC Playhouse in Toronto by four women from Los Angeles: Nancy Angelo, Julie James, Bia Lowe, and Terry Wolverton; by eleven women from Toronto; Wendy Barrett, Elaine Berns, Michele Dore, Alicia Dowling, Luce Gauthier, Vicki Kelman, Ottie Lockey, Barbara Martineau, Margaret Moores, Debbie Parent, and Judy Stanleigh; with help from A Space, UC Playhouse, and the Immigrant Women's Centre.

We weren't prepared for the response. Most shows were packed, and the phone never stopped ringing after a Tuesday morning radio interview on CBC's *Metro Morning*. One of Nancy's letters from LA had suggested that after each screening we ask incest survivors in the audience to speak first. We thought that wouldn't happen, not in timid Toronto. We were wrong! At every show, sometimes after a long thought-filled pause, one woman spoke, then another and another. Women came back, bringing sisters, mothers, friends, or just themselves. Women spoke at women-only screenings, at mixed screenings, at the screenings for professionals. And again and again and again, women who spoke commented on the power of the tapes, the immediacy, intimacy and trust created by the environment. One woman said there were only two places in all her life where she had felt safe; one was with her therapist, and the other was here, in this circle, where she had just spent one hour.

It was a magic circle, a storytelling circle. On the floor, a white parachute was spread in a flat circle; overhead, another parachute created an upward spiral, diffusing light from four pink-gelled theatre lights. Around the circle, 24 chairs, interspersed with six video monitors on stands, at head level with people sitting in the chairs. Inside the circle, pink and peach-coloured cushions for more people (there were 60 at our most packed house). After the introductions, when the lights dimmed and six of us turned the decks on, six coloured images of women joined the circle, speaking their pain, their memories, their anger, their sorrow, their love, their understanding, their analyses and syntheses. The tapes played for 40 minutes. The audience was then asked to spend a few minutes writing their responses. Then, in pairs or small groups people shared their reactions for a few minutes more, before we opened to the whole group and asked that survivors speak first. In that magic storytelling circle we shared memories, pain, rage, love, understanding, analyses, syntheses. ("Hey, wait a minute," one woman said, "this is really political.") We shared the stuff of our daily lives, so as to change our lives, change the world, break the taboo of speaking out, shatter the silence, challenge the myths that incest is okay, that incest doesn't happen, that anyone has the right to touch us when we don't want it, that might makes right, that art doesn't matter, that documentary isn't art, that art isn't real, that kids don't matter, that kids are the rightful property of their parents.

Feminist artwork is the oldest art there is, art for the community. — Bia Lowe, *Art to Heart*.

On the tapes, Terry Wolverton speaks about being a lesbian, about the fact that all the women who made the tapes are lesbians. She raised this to destroy the myth that "lesbianism" is "caused" by incest, pointing out that nearly one-quarter of the female population has suffered incest, whereas lesbians account for a much smaller percentage of women. Instead, she said, lesbians are more likely to be able to speak out about incest and to criticize the family structure which makes incest so common, because lesbians are outside that structure, because lesbians have little or no investment in relationships with men, because lesbians have community support for their action in speaking out. For many years, she said, lesbians have worked on behalf of women in crisis, against violence to women, and that lesbian presence has been invisible. It is time to make ourselves known. Yes, said a deep sigh of response from Toronto women, it is time.

The budget for bringing *Equal Time in Equal Space* to Toronto was \$6135, of which \$4735 came from A Space, \$500 from University College, and \$900 from ticket sales. That money went to equipment rental, supplies, airfare for the Los Angeles women, publicity, expenses during the show, and curators' fees.

# West Coast Notes

by Jean Wilson

For those perhaps not up-to-date on recent west coast cultural developments, the kind *not* reported in the *Vancouver Sun*, and not even reported in the national edition of the *Globe and Mail*, here is some idiosyncratic information.

- On September 17, an interesting literary event occurred at the Octopus East, a good secondhand and new bookstore on Commercial Ave. in Vancouver. Seven authors included in *Common Ground*, the popular anthology of women's writing published by Press Gang Publishers last year and reviewed in the October/November *Broadside*, read from current works. Penny Goldsmith ably stage-managed the well-attended reading — about 60 people showed up. Among those participating were Helen Patrebenko, Kathryn Woodward, L.L. Field (as read by Penny Goldsmith), Mary Schendinger, Cynthia Flood, Frances Duncan, and Anne Cameron.

- Elisabeth Hopkins, who is 87 years old and one of Canada's best-known and popular artists, has had an exhibition of her recent watercolours at the Bau-Xi Gallery in Vancouver. Elisabeth is well and living on Galiano, as is 'The Colonel,' her handsome feline friend.

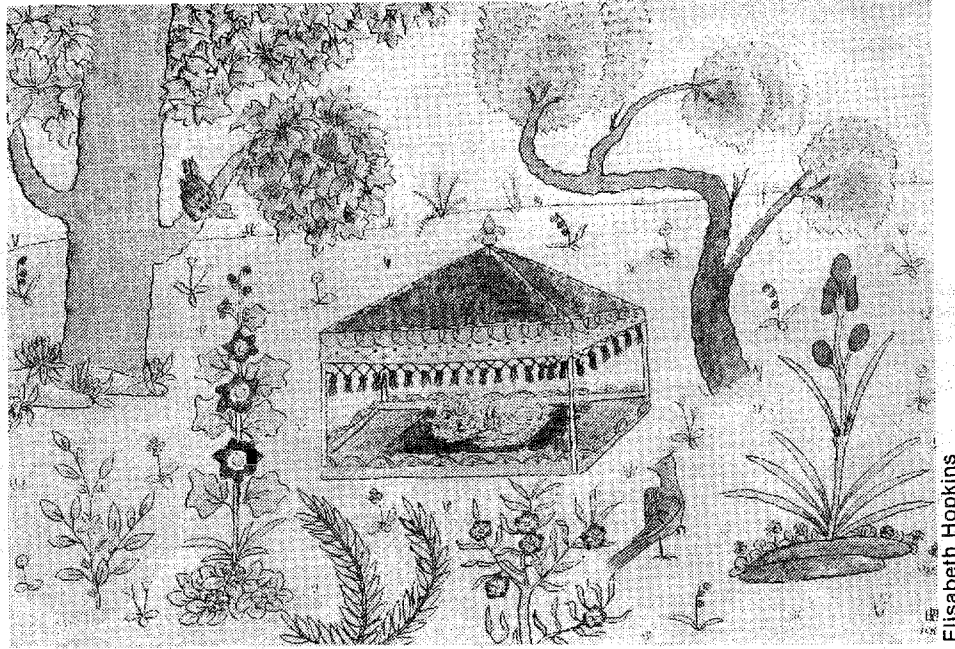
- In Vancouver, women's bookstores are in the news. The Women's Bookstore has opened a new store on East Hastings to re-

place one destroyed by arson a year ago. Over in Kitsilano, Ariel Books has become the property of Janice Pentland-Smith and Margo Dunn, who have made considerable changes to the store's appearance and also have updated and augmented the stock. They plan to have an official opening on Hallowe'en and periodically will have special displays such as the one in January 1982 to celebrate the centenary of Virginia Woolf's birth.

- Further east of Ariel Books, in the new Vancouver Status of Women headquarters on W. 5th Ave., Janet Beebe has taken over as editor of *Kinesis* ('news about women that's not in the dailies') from Gayla Reid, who's skipped off home to Australia for an extended visit.

- While on the subject of books, Jane Rule fans will be glad to know that by this time next year all of Jane's books will be in print. Various publishers are preparing to issue paperback editions of the whole canon. And Jane is at work on a new novel.

- Future news of note is that Betty Fairbank, a well-known Galiano photographer who has recently been very successful with her colour photos of totems extant on BC's west coast, will be having a two-month exhibition next summer at K'san, an Indian village near Prince Rupert. There is a federal art gallery there. If you're planning a trip to Emily Carr country, don't miss Betty's show.



Elisabeth Hopkins

- Dorothy Livesay, who also lives on Galiano, and who recently celebrated her 73rd birthday, will be writer-in-residence at U of T in 1982/83. She has had a new book, *The Raw Edges*, published this year. (See forthcoming December issue of *Broadside* for a review.) A book of her mother's translations from the Ukrainian has also recently been published. Florence Randall Livesay was a well-known poet and translator in her own day, but this is the first time this particular collection has been published.

- Margaret Hollingsworth, author of the plays *Mother Country* and *Ever-Loving*,

among many others, is teaching this year in Nelson, BC.

- The lesbian workshop manual is well in hand and should be available from Press Gang Publishers within the next few months.

- *Room of One's Own*, Volume 6, Number 4, is just out and features a long autobiographical extract by Mary Meigs and an interview with Anne Cameron by Eleanor Wachtel.

That's it until the next round-up. Adios.

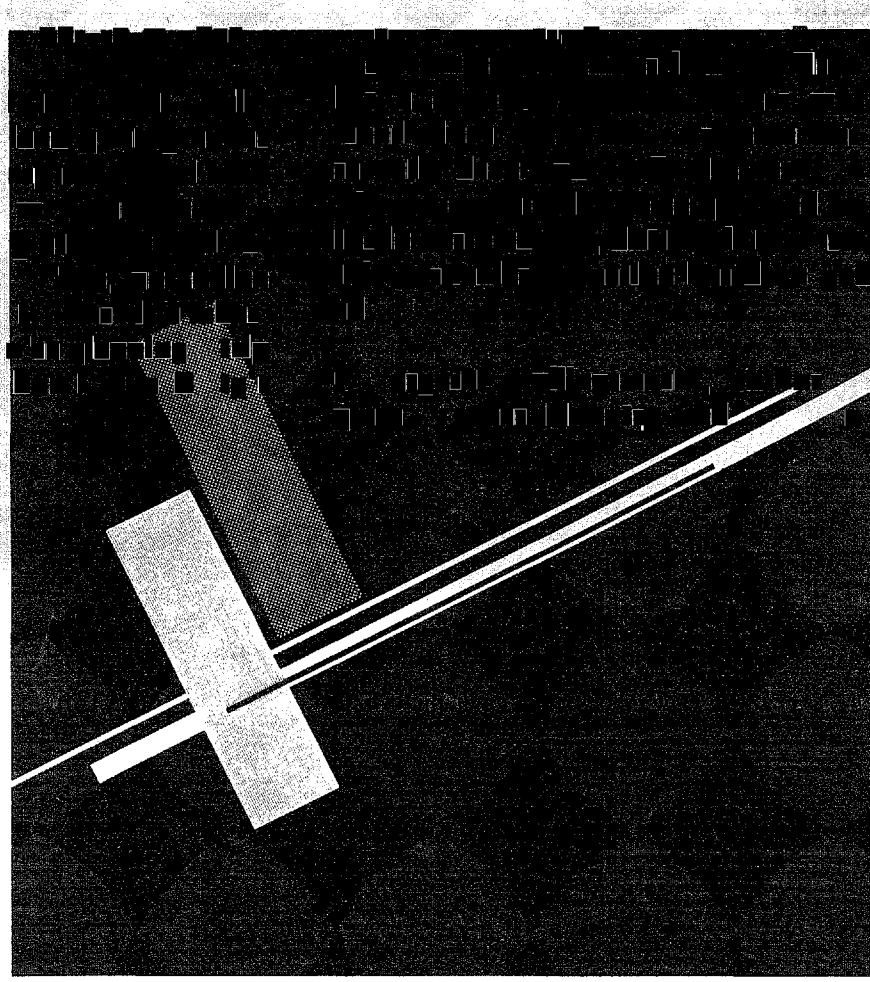


Martha Keener

Singer June Millington performed at Harbourfront last month, and impressed listeners with her excellent musicianship. Millington was brought to Toronto by Womynly Way Productions.

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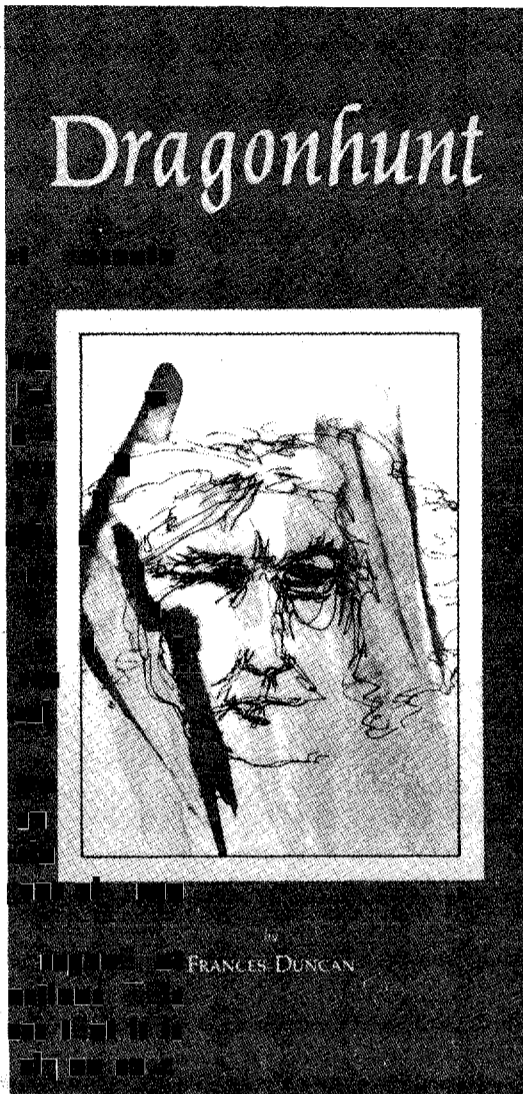
# Dragonhunt: Quintessential Quest

by Mariana Valverde

Frances Duncan, *Dragonhunt*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1981.

Attitudes toward experimental writing, or avant-garde art of any sort, fall into two main categories: one is an outright dismissal of it all as humbug and nonsense, and the other is a mystified awe of Art's ability to transcend the boundaries of ordinary common sense. Most people, not excluding this reviewer, waver between the two extremes. When I see or read something which falls outside the narrow limits of realism and which I instinctively *like*, I strain to find "meaning" of some kind in it — or failing that, I resign myself to not being among the elect. But when I see or read something I can't stand, I am not above using the old redneck arguments: my two-year-old can paint better than that, etc.

Reading Frances Duncan's *Dragonhunt* has led me to question these reactions. This novel self-consciously announces that it is experimental, that it does not rely on common-sense concepts of time and of reality, and that it is definitely not just a story. Duncan uses nature symbolism right, left, and centre, in true Canlit fashion; but she does so with a sense of irony, throwing in television sets and plastic pearls along with the inevitable seagulls and crashing waves. The only real character in the novel, Bernice, turns out to be less real than one thought, as she leaves behind the recognized myths — an ageless knight in search of a dragon, a magic goat skull — which had made her seem so homey and solid, by comparison. Realistic descriptions, such as a ferry trip from Vancouver to Galiano Island, are used only as backdrops for fairy-



tale events, thus throwing the reader off her guard just as she thought she had found a firm place to stand on.

And yet, there are plenty of straightforward descriptions and vignettes, and the conventions of English syntax are generally followed: *Dragonhunt* does not read like a feminist *Finnegans Wake* (whatever that would be like!), and it is not loaded with allusions or hard-to-get puns. The difficulty does not lie in reading it.

Is it then possible to disturb the reader's sense of what is proper, the woman-on-the-street assumptions about time and reality and sanity, without thereby ensconcing oneself in an academic hide-out? Yes, it is; and Duncan manages to do it, although not faultlessly. She is just not experienced enough to make it seem effortless, and her "techniques" are on occasion so obvious one can almost read her outline tacked above her desk. And, especially in the first fifty pages or so, she tends to sound earnest verging on pompous, as though she were bent on producing Art.

Later in the novel, she improves things drastically by allowing her sense of humour to emerge: the reader stops feeling that she is in a Lit Crit class, and begins enjoying the succession of outlandish images. For example, I was delighted that the poor knight — who had made a rather unheroic entrance by killing Bernice's goat accidentally — is finally given a real, fire-breathing dragon to heroically destroy. The painstaking description of how the dragon's breath sings the trees on the shores of the Pacific is a wonderful joke on realism: I can just imagine a critic saying, "But there are no dragons in the New World!"

It is possible to interpret *Dragonhunt* as

"a woman's journey to self-discovery" (as an advertisement might put it). However, most novels in that genre involve quantities of soul-searching, thinking, and talking — activities which are conspicuous by their absence in this novel. We are told what the characters *do* and what they *see*, including what appears on a ubiquitous TV set that pursues Bernice everywhere, but there are no clues as to how Bernice herself interprets her experience or feels about it. Thus, we cannot say: "she is hurting because of..." or "I wouldn't react in that way..."

Because we are not given the usual information about "what the character is thinking" and "what the writer *really* means", we cannot ask the usual questions about meaning. For example, we cannot ask if the images that appear on the TV set are meaningful or not, for we do not know to whom they are addressed — to Bernice herself, or to the reader? Thus, the characters are liberated from the usual task of conveying the writer's intention to the audience in neat little packages. Whether the dragonhunt is Sir George's project, or Bernice's, or the reader's, or the writer's, we never can quite tell: and if we can answer, "all of the above," then we are led to yet more questions about just how all of these entities can be pursuing the same unreal goal.

*Dragonhunt* shows some weaknesses, in particular a tendency to ponderousness — the metaphysical speculations on the nature of time I could do without, and some of the vocabulary is just a little too precious. Nevertheless, it remains an important work, one which challenges the conventions of Canadian literature, books "about" women, and realist literature in general. I look forward to reading Duncan's next novel.

## Michelle Cliff: Claiming An Identity

by Annette Clough

Michelle Cliff, *Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise*; Persephone Press, 1981.

Among my mother's old photographs is one, taken in Jamaica around 1910, of her as a little girl with her grandmother and great-grandmother. Her great-grandmother was the daughter of a slave. She was black. I was born and raised in Jamaica. I never saw that photograph until I was in my twenties.

Michelle Cliff was also born in Jamaica, five or six years after me. We went to the same high school. She now identifies herself as a lesbian/feminist and a woman of colour. So do I. I too am claiming an identity they taught me to despise. It is therefore not easy for me to review this book in the usual way. This is a book which speaks to me of things I know and have never before seen in print. It urges me to reminisce, to conjure up almost forgotten pieces of my life, to examine them in a new light.

We are a strange breed, we creole women. (*Creole*: this means to be island-born of non-aboriginal descent but is often taken to mean of racially mixed heritage as well.) Most of us are racially mixed. If we are dark-skinned we are taught to hate ourselves for what we are and to envy those who are lighter-skinned, those with hair that hangs loose in waves and does not cling to the head in tight curls. (Cliff: I am remembering: women in Jamaica asking to touch my hair.) If we are "fair," able to "pass" for white, we are encouraged to think that we are white, to believe the lie, to deny what we are and to hate that which we deny. This kind of thing can divide families. (Cliff: In the family I was called "fair" — a

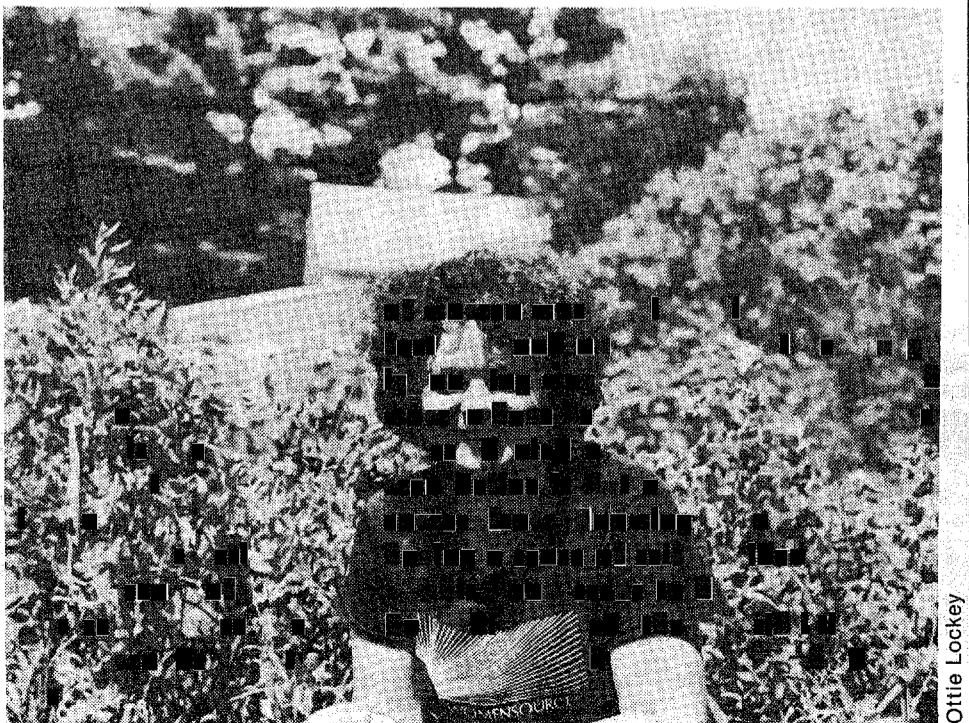
hard term. My sister was darker, younger. We were split — along lines of colour and order of birth. This kind of splitting breeds insanity.) So often the question of "who am I," the question of identity, is predicated upon a lie, the myth of superiority based on the colour of one's skin, and the denial of one's ancestry. And to deny one's heritage is to lose one's history, one's sense of connectedness to past and present, to become invisible. (Cliff: Passing demands quiet. And from that quiet — silence.)

Michelle Cliff's book breaks that silence, the silence of our lives as women of colour, and the silence of our lives as sisters, daughters, workers, lovers, the silences under whose shadow I grew up, not knowing their names but feeling their weight, searching books for the words that would unravel the mystery of what I suspected they weren't telling me. There were few books then written by Jamaicans and we weren't encouraged to read them anyway. I can't remember any written by Jamaican women which spoke of women's lives. But it is women I remember the most — my mother, my sisters, my grandmothers, my myriad aunts (there are very few men in the old family photographs), my female friends and teachers in an all-girls high school, the women who cooked and cleaned for us, the women who came down from the hills once a week with vegetables and eggs in baskets on their heads. Cliff writes of women: the ones I don't know but might have — her sister, her mother, her grandmother; the ones I heard about — Annie Palmer, the white witch of Rose Hall, legend of our childhood; the ones I remember — the women carrying market baskets and laundry from the washing place at the river. And not only of Jamaican women, but of Harriet Tubman and Mary Wollstonecraft,

of women workers in Malaysian electronics factories and nuns in fifteenth-century Italy, naming ways, through history, in which women have been lied to, divided from each other, denied access to power not only as men define it but also to the power which comes from knowing who we are, from having a sense of self, an identity.

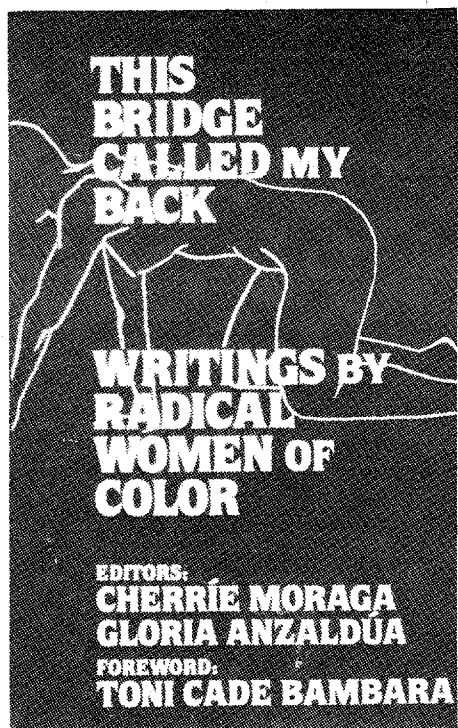
This book seeks to heal the splits which have diminished the possibilities of our lives. Books like this, which draw the

strands of our histories together and say no to the divisions, empower us all. Michelle Cliff speaks her story/my story/our story with a passion and an honesty and a love which is healing. (Cliff: I want to raise the handmade paddle of the dugout canoe: to have the green-blue vision tint the skin of my upper arms. To sweat freely as I remove myself under my own power. Away from the domain of the ice-cliffs — frozen into silence.)



Michelle Cliff

Ottie Lockey



# Writings By Radical Women of Colour

## This Bridge Called My Back

by Betsy Nuse

This Bridge Called My Back, eds. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, Persephone Press, 1981.

Early in 1981 two articles by Adrienne Rich called "Wholeness is no trifling matter: some fiction by black women" were published in New Women's Times Feminist Review. Rich devoted almost two-thirds of her first article to *The Salt Eaters*, a first novel by a black women writer of short stories, Toni Cade Bambara. Rich spoke with great admiration of the writing of other black women I had never read. As a result, I read *The Salt Eaters* and found it artistically, linguistically and politically the most exciting, the most amazing novel I had read in ages. Reading some of the other writers to whom Rich referred has been equally rewarding.

Then Persephone Press published *This Bridge Called My Back*, a fine anthology of "writings by radical women of colour," and I felt that it was time that these writers, their ideas and perceptions found a place on *Broadside's* pages.

Feminists in the US have been struggling with racism within the movement. Read, for example, the editorial in the most recent (Summer '81) volume of *Maenad*. It's a report from the May '81 meeting of the National Women's Studies Association Conference on the theme "Women respond to racism."

The NWSA Conference depended too heavily on its academic cover to be able to penetrate the realities of racism. Somehow the format and the proposition were not in harmony. What was called for was an opening towards thoughts that have been stifled by the system instead of an environment that perpetuated that behaviour of closing. Sitting and listening to talk about racism allowed us to shade ourselves with the umbrella of intellectualism and did not, as was perhaps intended, get to the guts of racism: the experience, the reality; the meanings.

Some of you may recall earlier public controversies: the many responses to Elly Bulkin's article "Racism and Writing" with its criticism of Mary Daly's *Gyn/ecology* in the pages of *Sinister Wisdom* or criticisms of the journal *Chrysalis*. On a personal level, many black women, native women and other Third World women — Asian, Chicana, "immigrant" — in the U.S. have been drawn by the realization of their oppression as women to the feminist movement, but have encountered racist attitudes there. The third section of *This Bridge Called My Back* recalls some of these experiences:

I worked so hard as part of a local women's coffeeshop and bookstore, harder than I've ever worked. I ordered for the kitchen, and the art shows, did shifts, brought flowers, cleaned, met the pest man and phone man, did entertainment, washed a million coffee cups. Recently someone told me that a young lesbian whose parents have given her a law practice, commented that she remembered me. I didn't work, she said, all I did was talk to people.

When Third World women are asked to speak representing our racial or ethnic group, we are expected to move, charm or entertain, but not to educate in ways that are threatening to our audiences. We speak to audiences that sift out those parts of our speech (if what we say does not fit the image they have of us), come up and shake our hands with "That was lovely my dear, just lovely," and go home with the same mind set they come in with. No matter what we say or do, the stereotype still hangs on. I am weary

of starting from scratch each time I speak or write, as if there were no history behind us, of hearing that among the women of colour, Asian women are the least political, or the least oppressed, or the most polite.

Typically, white feminists have reacted to this criticism defensively, white lesbian separatists the most defensively of all. "If I were a white feminist and somebody called me a racist," writes Doris Davenport, in *This Bridge*, "I'd probably feel insulted (especially if I knew it was at least partially true). It's like saying someone has a slimy and incurable disease. Naturally I would be reactionary and rake out my health department/ liberal credentials, to prove I was clean."

What white lesbians have against lesbians of colour is that they accuse us of being "male identified" because we are concerned with issues that affect our whole race. They express anger at us for not seeing the light. That is another aspect of how they carry on their racism. They are so narrow and adamant about that that they dismiss lesbians of colour and women of colour who aren't lesbians because we have some concern about what happens to the men of our race.

One of the most dangerous and erroneous concepts that separatists have put forward is that other oppressions, in addition to sexism, are attributed to men only. Some separatists believe that although women are racist, when men disappear and no longer rule, racism will not be a problem. It's very analogous to people who are Marxists who say "Well, when class oppression and racism end, definitely the oppression of women and lesbians will end." What lesbian separatists are saying is that when we get rid of men, sexism and racism will end too. I think that this is one of the most racist aspects of it because it does not recognize the racism that women, including lesbians, have.

After such criticism and counter-criticism, what remains but to despair for the solidarity of the US feminist movement? There is more than one path to solidarity, as well as more than one oppression that needs criticizing; these are some of the radical messages of this anthology.

*This Bridge Called My Back* is divided into sections. Each section is well developed, especially admirable considering that the whole book comprises the work of close to thirty different women writing in a great variety of genres: essay, letter, poem, prose poem, interview.

One section to which I have already referred speaks of racism within the women's movement. But three other sections look, from different points of view, at the differences among women of colour themselves. In one section, the writers look at growing up, their earliest experiences of racism and other oppressions. As Beverly Smith says, "There is virtually no Black person in this country who is surprised about oppression ... Because the thing is we have had it meted out to us from infancy on." Another section describes the ways women evolve their political consciousness from their own experiences. Hence women describe visits back to old communities, experiences at white colleges and political work.

Yet another section of the book probes the ways differences in class, culture and sexual orientation divide women of colour. Says Barbara Smith, "There's nothing to compare with how you feel when you're cut cold by one of your own."

momma took her outta  
almost all black lincoln high

cuz she useta catch hell  
every day in gym class ...  
cuz she was dark enuf  
was smart enuf  
wasn rowdy enuf  
had a white girl friend  
cuz none of them would be

beige or buff/ecru or chamois  
just wasn color/ed enuf  
to get picked for the softball team  
wasn sufficient protection  
'gainst gettin tripped in the shower

This country is so racist that it is possible to take many, many things and concepts that have nothing to do with race and talk about them in racial terms ... Therefore Black people have the option of taking things — sexuality behaviour, conflicts, whatever they don't like — and saying, "That's white." Lesbianism is not the only thing seen as a white thing. A real good example is suicide. Black people say, "Yeah, suicide is a white thing."

The divisions and the separations among women of colour — among black, brown, and yellow, among languages, among generations, and between richer and poorer, between lesbian and straight — form a seemingly limitless catalogue. More than one writer laments her fragmented identity.

I carry a shell a white and crisp  
voiced shell to hide  
my golden soft spanish voiced inner  
self to  
pass to hide my puertoricanness

I carry a pole 18 inches long to hold  
me at the  
correct distance from black-skinned  
people  
I carry hard metal armor with  
spikes with shooting  
weapons in every joint with fire  
breathing from  
every hole to protect me to  
prepare me to assault  
any man from 13 to 89

I am a whole circus by myself a  
whole dance company  
with stance and posture for being in  
middle class  
homes in upper class buildings  
for talking to men  
for speaking with blacks for  
carefully angling and  
directing for choreographing my  
way thru the maze  
of classes of people and places thru the  
little boxes  
of sex race class  
nationality sexual orientation  
intellectual standing political  
preference the automatic  
contortions the exhausting  
camouflage with which I  
go thru this social space called

### CAPITALIST PATRIARCHY

a daunting but oh so nicely covering  
name this is no  
way to live

But the same writer does not deny the differences, the contradictions within herself or between herself and others. She goes on to say

Listen listen with care class and  
colour and sex do  
not define people do not define politics  
a class  
society defines people by class a  
racist society  
defines people by color  
We feminists socialists  
radicals define people by their  
struggles against the

racism sexism classism that  
they harbour that  
surrounds them

In other words, we can and should explore our differences, not deny them. This dynamic criticism and self-criticism can be combined with co-operation and solidarity. Audre Lorde articulates this attitude to difference in this way:

Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. For difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways to actively "be" in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters.

Within the interdependency of mutual (non-dominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged.

This vision of bridge building, of both consensus and struggle, was for me one of the most exciting messages of this anthology.

*This Bridge Called My Back* is primarily an anthology of writings for women of colour by other women of colour. As such, it carries many messages that I have not even touched upon. A whole section of the book explores the role and influence of the Third World woman writer in her own community. There is also a strong and interesting thread of spirituality in several of the texts. But *This Bridge* has a loud and strong message for me as a white feminist: bridge building is the responsibility of us all. As a white feminist, it's my responsibility to educate myself about Third World women's issues and lives. Writes Audre Lorde:

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance, and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now we hear that it is the task of black and third world women to educate white women, in the face of tremendous resistance, as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought... Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and this time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives here. See whose face it wears. Then the personal and the political can begin to illuminate all our choices.

Toward the end of all of us better educating ourselves, *This Bridge Called My Back* concludes with a select bibliography of writing by and about Third World US women. If you have not done so already, I urge you to seek out this anthology as well as the fiction and non-fiction of other Third World women. And check out the pages of future *Broadside's*, where I hope this review will open a dialogue and forum on the lives and writing of Third World women in our own community.



# Critique of a Feminist Critique

by Anne Chapman

Margrit Eichler. *The Double Standard: A Feminist Critique of Feminist Social Science*. London: Croom Helm, 1980.

For Margrit Eichler, "feminist research and writings centre around issues of inequality." She starts from the taken-for-granted premise that "women and men should always be treated equally for equal behaviours." Not doing so is the "double standard" of her title. Using her premise as yardstick, she explores the inadequacies of the prevailing analyses in the areas of sex roles, sex identity, and class. She makes clear in the introduction that her method is "picking up salient concepts and examples" rather than "giving a comprehensive overview"; it would be unfair, therefore, to carp at what is left out. The subtitle, however, does raise the expectation that there will be an evaluation of already existing feminist positions on the topics considered: "a critique of feminist social sciences." That so little of the body of feminist writings on social science is, in fact, considered, is therefore disconcerting; nor is it compensated for by the introduction of the interesting idea that feminist critiques in general have "not (gone) far enough" in the direction of abolishing "sex roles and sex distinctions," because the "scholar who continues to examine sex roles continues to emphasize and possibly overemphasize their importance."

It is not feminist science that is Eichler's target in the detailed analyses she makes, but the science that is sexist in "purporting to be applicable to humanity while largely ignoring women"; generally taking the male as the "norm, the female as the deviation"; and being full of "preconceived notions concerning a masculine and feminine nature." The three central chapters of the book show various ways in which existing approaches to their subject matters are sexist and use a double standard.

A long section on the concept of class argues that both the Marxist and the non-Marxist analyses of class are inadequate because they not only fail to, but are incapable of, including women within their theoretical framework. "Women (in class analyses) must either be totally ignored, or else seem to belong to the same class to which the male they are seen as attached to belongs." This because, "in the case of women ... the family and the economy are both important factors"; and the family is a "quasi-feudal" institution with which class analysis, "premised on a capitalist ... type of relationship," is not equipped to deal.

Beyond opposing to the "Marxist feminists (who) maintain that feminism cannot be radical unless it is placed within the context of class society" her own view that Marxist analysis is "eminently conservative, insofar as its definition of social class is a completely androcentric definition in which women have no place except as objects that link men to men," she does not critique socialist feminist writings (such as, for instance, those referred to in the review article in *Signs*, Spring 1980).

In the discussion on sex identity, Eichler points out explicitly that she chose not to deal with the development of sex identity or its maintenance, but to focus instead on the definitions and measurements of masculinity, femininity and androgyny (all of which she criticizes on the basis of both faulty methodology and undesirable political implications). This choice fits her announced aim of examining the double standard: her argument ultimately leads to the conclusion

that "in order to overcome the sexual double standard, we need to show that sex is an irrelevant basis on which to make those distinctions which today are still being made between the sexes." The aim stated in the book's subtitle is, however, ill served by the focus chosen, since as a result major feminist theoretical positions such as Chodorow's and Dinnerstein's are left untouched.

In the chapter on sex roles, Eichler once again zeroes in on sexist rather than feminist science. She questions the "purportedly universal cross-cultural regularities in terms of sex roles which are widely accepted," as for example in the statement that "in most cultures men are more aggressive and dominating, have greater authority and are more deferred to than women" which she singles out for analysis. She accepts that "men tend, in general, to be more aggressive (in a physical sense) than women." In support of her acceptance, she cites MacCoby and Jacklin's authoritative survey, *The Psychology of Sex Differences* (1974). But she does not consider, critically or otherwise, the feminist critique (as outlined, for instance, by Salzman in Hubbard and Lowe's *Genes and Gender II* (1979), of the male aggression issue as documented in her reference.

At its best, Eichler says, feminist writing is critical not only of "existing social structures" but also of the "ways to perceive them," and goes beyond this to provide "an alternative viewpoint and data to substantiate it," as a contribution to "a transformation of social science and society." The strength of her book lies in its pointing out of inadequacies in the current ways of perceiving society, and its suggestion of some alternative viewpoints, taking the responsibility of an activist orientation in recommending changes to be made. It is less strong in the area of substantiating its conclusions, perhaps because its approach is largely a casting of doubt on the validity of existing interpretations, rather than a proving them wrong; a suggestion of alternatives that may be more accurate than what is currently accepted, rather than a demonstration that they are.

For instance, in an extensive discussion of social restrictions surrounding biological sexuality and especially menstruation, Eichler usefully raises the question: given that the taboos surrounding the chief's sex life in some societies are seen by scholars as "indications of his inherent power," "why is the same type of power (in scholarly analyses of menstrual taboos interpreted) as subjection, degradation and inferiority on the part of women?" The implied answer is: because of the operation of the double standard. To make this a fully convincing answer, however, the argument would need to show conclusively that the two types of situation are equivalent; and this is not done.

Similarly, in criticizing the assertion that men "are generally assigned the physically strenuous, dangerous tasks and those requiring long periods of travel," Eichler suggests that the unquestioned assumptions about what is "strenuous" may need to be re-examined. She says "grain grinding (which, in 92 per cent of "234 tribes from all over the world" is a female occupation) ... is certainly at least as strenuous and physically demanding as hunting (in 98 per cent of the same tribes a male occupation) — if not more so." This may well be true, and would repay investigation; but the claim is made without the establishment of any criterion whereby to measure strenuousness, and without any evidence as to the relative

degree of strenuousness of the two activities. As it happens, a measure that could be used does exist: Rappaport's article on the agricultural Tsembaga in the September 1971 issue of *Scientific American* gives the energy input for various tasks (unfortunately, neither hunting nor grain grinding) for both men and women in terms of kilocalories. It is interesting to note that in this society clearing trees, at the expenditure of .26 kilocalories "far less strenuous than clearing underbrush," is exclusively men's work. Both sexes do the "hard work" of clearing underbrush. In this task, men on the average outperformed women by one third, if the performance is measured by the area per hour cleared, but at the cost of expending more energy per minute. Rappaport concluded that "the performance of men and women ... was surprisingly uniform," with the "energy input of each sex ... approximately equal: some .65 kilocalories per square foot." This goes to show how tricky claims about relative strenuousness can be: on the basis of these data, it could be argued that the work done by men was more strenuous because they expended more energy per minute, or that the sexes were equal because they expended the same energy per area. Strenuous is as strenuous does.

Eichler's criticism of the assertion that men are generally assigned the dangerous jobs again has the advantage of raising the possibility of new ways to look at what constitutes "danger" — and the disadvantage that her own analysis can be criticized for imprecision. In tribal societies, she sees clearly that "whether or not the male tasks are more dangerous is ... difficult to judge since there are different types of dangers ... and without the evidence of some statistics on injuries or death rates by type of occupation we can make no judgement"; but she accepts, with no grounds given, that not only the pursuit of sea mammals and hunting but even "the trapping and catching of small animals" "may also be assumed to be dangerous." In the case of complex societies, Eichler argues that industrial work done by women in nineteenth-century England was dangerous in various ways, causing injuries, disease and debility. The question of how dangerous this work was relative to other work done by men and other women, and by what measure, is left open. In the twentieth century, the job of "housewife" is dangerous not only in that "housewives are more likely to commit suicide than married women in the labour force," but also because home accident fatality and injury rates are four times those occurring in industrial premises, mines and quarries: "females are differentially exposed to a higher risk of home accidents." However, Eichler does not consider that the leading cause of fatalities and injuries is transport accidents, to a higher risk of which men are differentially exposed, due to their documented (especially job-related) higher rate of automobile use. To validate her point, a detailed comparison of risk rates would be needed.

Eichler's conclusion that "as far as

women in the labour force are concerned, Mussen's generalization that men perform the dangerous, physically strenuous tasks cannot be accepted," is not proven by the evidence she presents. What her evidence does do is to disprove that women don't do such tasks — a very different thing.

The final chapter, "Whither Feminism?" is a call for action in both components of what Eichler considers feminism to be for an academic: the scientific and the practical-political. Feminist science, she says, must de-masculinize language; abandon the universal notion of masculinity and femininity, and cease to devise and use scales to measure them; stop treating qualities such as rationality and emotionality as though they were mutually exclusive; recognize the family as a pattern of relationships rather than a unit; define work as all work, paid or not, and regardless of the sex of the worker; stop classifying people in terms of social class as now defined; and start seeing sex role socialization "as a systematic form of crippling people" rather than as a "normal, healthy, necessary building block of one's personality."

The practical-political issues she treats, briefly, concern the elimination of sexism from teaching materials (the success of which undertaking she perhaps overestimates); control over one's body (where "women have some special difficulties to overcome ... due to the way the (overwhelmingly male) medical establishment regards their sexuality"); sexual justice (prostitution and rape are analyzed as examples of the sexual double standard, lesbianism seen as "supplying a needed corrective for dependent male-female behavior patterns" but "as a form of political protest ... not likely to be successful, since it does not represent a strategy for political change").

The longest section is devoted to the issue of economic justice. It examines the difficulties of the concepts equal pay for equal work (men and women do not now do equal work, so this strategy will not overcome their economic disparity); equal pay for work of equal value (who is to establish value? by what criteria?); wages for housework ("as an educational device the campaign for this has been somewhat successful," although much of the criticism of it Eichler finds justifiable); wages for childcare (which, she argues, would give women the option to stay home full time and look after children or take full or part time employment; attract men into childcare; free women from economic dependence on men as breadwinners; create employment; upgrade the quality of childcare; and improve women's bargaining position in the labour market).

Provocative rather than definitive, this book raises more questions than it gives answers; and rightly so, since its major contribution is to raise readers' consciousness about a number of issues related to that "questioning of the legitimacy of the culture to dispense different punishments (and rewards) on the basis of presently accepted sex roles" which is of basic concern to feminists.



## The Boulevard Cafe

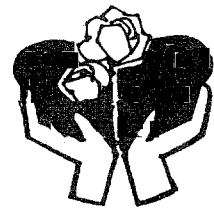
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# No Poetic Licence for Women

by Sharon H. Nelson

Sexism, which puts individuals of one sex at a disadvantage, is a problem in Canadian society. Sexism disadvantages women writers and therefore must concern all members of the League of Canadian Poets, for sexism is not a "women's" problem but a problem of the entire membership. The activities, policies, and political structures of the League put women as a class at a disadvantage.

The extent of the sexism of our culture is becoming increasingly apparent. According to a recent Gallup Poll, in 1971 only 36% of the population of Canada believed that women and men did not enjoy equality of opportunity or equal chances for success. Today the figure is 58%, with 63% of Canadian women and 52% of Canadian men believing that sexism affects women as a class and is a detriment to them as individuals.

The Autumn 1980 issues of *ARC* contained excerpts from a "random sampling" survey of women poets. Although *ARC*'s editors may have asked the wrong questions, the answers are significant. Although only one poet admitted to being a "feminist", several poets pointed out that women writers have difficulty being taken seriously, that women's writing is often unpublished and unreviewed, and that the prevailing literary establishment is male.

Regardless of questions of colonization, domination, hostility, or sensibility, these statistics show the treatment women poets get from editors, publishers, and funding agencies. Women writers as a class are disadvantaged. Quality is no index; anthologies are full of mediocre writing by men, but to be included a woman's work must be exceptional, or her reputation so large that exclusion would be an embarrassment to the editor. Although just under a third of the members of the League are women, women get approximately 7% of the space in anthologies.

In response to the allegation that "women writers are still unpublished and unheard," *ARC*'s editors cannot resist asking: "which good women writers?" In their

search for virtue they do not seem to have noticed that they have presented a tautology. Women writers suffer the eternal conundrum: their work goes unpublished or unnoticed or unreviewed and when no one has heard of it we are told that "good" women writers succeed in any case and that the rest do not have the reputation, the credibility, or a high enough profile for inclusion in anthologies, or for jobs, or for awards.

Poetry in Canada seems lately to have become a competitive sport. So far, women have had little training in competitive sport, in team playing, or in gamesmanship. They lack not only competitive skills which, until very recently, were perceived as "unladylike" and taboo, but also the easy camaraderie and connections which grow out of competitive sport, even when the sport is entirely intellectual and the locker room is a bar. Women are therefore apt to retire from the competition to be published, to be recognized, or simply to be heard, rather than confront a chronically no-win situation. That judges of contests are usually male (8 out of 9 in last year's CBC Anthology competition) and often members of the literary establishment, is not encouraging.

These circumstances and the competition for publication, publicity, readings, and tours affect "success" and the development of "a high enough profile." Stereotypes make women particularly sensitive; one would rather not compete than have one's anger termed "hysteria," one's concerns dismissed as "trivial," one's strengths described as "ball-breaking bitchiness," and one's writing career described by such implicitly pejorative terms as "women's writing." Nor is one anxious to be labelled "poetess," a sobriquet no wire service in this country has allowed in 20 years. Like the Sixth Fleet, the terminology is all there and always ready. It is prejudicial, pejorative, diminishing, abusive, or merely condescending.

The League of Canadian Poets is not a pristine collection of idealists devoted to the practice and pursuit of the best in poetry but a collection of self-interested people

who are involved in the business of getting and maintaining power and credibility and the funding which flows from these. They are neither unworldly nor naive about power. Poets are savvy enough to invite representatives of government funding agencies to annual general meetings and worldly enough to undertake national poetry competitions as fund-raising events. The League's business, in fact, is the politics of poetry.

According to the most recent *League Directory*, 114 men and 52 women were members of the League: men outnumber women more than 2 to 1. The membership statistics do not reflect the number of poets in this country of either sex. They do reflect the sponsorship system by which poets are recommended to the League by its members. The fact that there are fewer women than men in the League ensures that there will continue to be fewer women than men. These statistics are related to the underrepresentation of women on policy and decision-making committees, especially membership committees. They also suggest some fault in the League's policies and activities which makes the League unattractive to women or makes women feel unwelcome in the League. The recent fee rise aggravates the situation. To claim that one can "write off" a \$100 fee in a "professional organization" is to assume a secure and sufficient income.

Women earn 58% of what men earn. That means for every dollar a man earns, a woman in Canada earns 58¢. The cost of membership above a token payment therefore becomes discriminatory, and the lack of services provided for members makes membership an extravagance. Further, there are fewer women in secure posts than many women work part-time because that is the best they can get or because they cannot leave children, and many women are not only single parents but the sole support of families. The recent rise in membership fees reflects a bias. It may result in a membership which consists of an elite of poets noted not for their excellence but for their financial security. This affects not on-

ly women; as all budgets get tighter, the marginal jobs for artists of either sex evaporate, and although it is not only women who are going to feel the pinch, they are likely to feel it first.

If the League is to fulfill its obligations, it must examine the representation of women on the executive and on committees as well as the number of women members overall. Almost a third of the members of the League are women, yet only two members of the executive are women; three committees have no women members, and one committee has what appears to be a token woman member, although the Lowther Award committee consists entirely of women. This reflects the lack of integration of women into the political structure and also may be related to the fact that one cannot be elected to a position or a committee unless one is present at the AGM. The AGM in its present form is a kind of junket not many women can afford, and because women do not necessarily perceive as men do the broadly political nature of the League's business and activities and their effects and repercussions, they are not cognizant of the central reasons for attending. It is no secret that, aside from the obvious costs of the meeting, the costs of attendance for women are often higher than they are for men. Women in "traditional" jobs cannot take time off for meetings without sacrificing salary, vacation time, or good will. Many women have to pay for childcare if they are to attend meetings or conferences. This brings us full circle to the financial facts.

The Pat Lowther Award serves well as a focus for problems relating to sexism. This is an award for the best book of poems written by a woman in a given year. The prize consists of the losing entries — a bag full of well-thumbed and dog-eared books of indeterminate quality. The very same people who present this award are insistent that a National Poetry Competition must offer large cash awards to winners on the grounds that if such awards are not promised and provided there will be little interest

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• from previous page

in the contest and the award will lack credibility and importance. When the Lowther Award committee last year suggested that a cash prize should accompany the books, we were told that there was absolutely no money available for such purposes, yet the League raised and spent close to \$57,000 on the International Poetry Festival, an event during which tokenism was evident in the program when women were represented at all. One might conclude that not only are women under-represented in the League and particularly on policy-making bodies and committees, but that women are being insulted when the League takes cognizance of their existence.

The Lowther Award is tokenism at its worst and most hurtful. It is also tokenism at its most dangerous, for it allows the League to appear to recognize the value and importance of writing by women when actually the award carries neither cash value nor kudos, and what costs nothing has no value in our culture.

The system is a vicious cycle and at some point it has to be broken. To do so is particularly hard because it is in the interests of men to maintain the status quo, which in effect means maintaining their own power structures. Also, in their perceptions and ideologies many members of the League are perhaps unknowingly committed to sexist ideologies and philosophies.

Women writers are ghettoized or ignored, yet when one raises the question of feminism or group action these same writers express fear that feminism or group action will ghettoize women writers. We are asked to believe in androgynous writing or genderless sensibility; these are entirely spurious concepts. "Androgynous writing" is based on male models and male culture and it follows that "genderless sensibility" is male sensibility for we are culturally condi-

tioned by a sexist environment and male sensibility is perpetuated by a male-dominated critical establishment.

The problem would be less urgent if it were not for the tendency of bureaucracies to create self-fulfilling prophecies. The government wants to deal with organizations rather than with individuals, and the larger the organization the better. The League is increasingly being consulted as the bureaucracy which represents poets, and thus will be more and more in a position of power in relation to fund distribution, awards, prizes, tours, and the general tenor of the poetry business. If women are not fairly represented not only among the membership but on decision and policy-making bodies, women will be increasingly disadvantaged as they are seen and heard less and less. As things get tighter and more competitive women will feel that disadvantage more and more.

It is interesting to note that problems related to sexism arise in all the arts and that the only feasible way of dealing with these problems so far has been to set up parallel institutions. This has occurred in a number of fields, from the recording industry to the gallery business, and with full government support in the visual arts at least. Parallel organizations and publications for women writers would again leave them outside the mainstream of the literary establishment and therefore continue the disadvantages women face in dealing with that establishment. A reasonable approach at this time may therefore be to make what changes can be made in organizations like the League.

An affirmative action program is an absolute necessity for the League. There will have to be more women members of the League before there will be more women visible in the League and more women

elected to decision-making bodies. The League, as I have said, is a political organization, and the political debates in this country at the moment are about constitutional reform. The constitutional question has arisen now partly because disadvantaged and under-represented groups are demanding correction of the imbalances and injustices they have experienced. The government itself is anxious at least to appear to be taking the direction and pointing in the direction of equal opportunity. If the League is to maintain credibility or provide any service to poets in this country it will have to encourage and enable more women to join and participate in its governance.

I do not think that feminism is a sex-linked characteristic, nor am I suggesting that the League invite a mass invasion by feminist writers. That is not the point. The point is rather that women are under-represented among the literary establishment and have little access to it and little power to change it. Women are under-represented in the League and they are certainly under-represented on decision and policy-making committees. If the League is to maintain credibility with fund-granting agencies or if it is to represent the poets in this country or claim to do so, the League will have to examine what it offers and its policies and political structures so that these more equitably reflect women's needs and concerns.

If the imbalance in the representation of writing by women in anthologies and magazines, and the lack of critical attention to writing by women in textbooks and journals are not issues to which the League of Canadian Poets should address itself, what are the issues the League ought to address? And why, given the gross discrimination against them within the literary critical establishment, should women writers support and pay fees to an organization which, by failing to attempt to right the imbalances, encourages their continuance?

(Excerpt reprinted from "The Sexual Politics of Poetry" by Sharon H. Nelson in League of Canadian Poets Newsletter, July/August, 1981.)

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# MOVEMENT COMMENT

## WAVAW: The Way We Were

In November 1977, four years ago, women in Toronto first met to form WAVAW, Women Against Violence Against Women. WAVAW was essentially an ad hoc, spontaneous action street group with a firm political base.

Its first action was a take-back-the-night march with an impromptu demonstration against Cinema 2000 which was showing a "Snuff" movie. Later demos included those against Harry Rosen men's wear store for its anti-woman sado-masochistic window displays; against the "Battered Wives"

rock group at O'Keefe Centre; and at the Fleck plant in London, Ontario in support of a union struggle.

And, of course, for three years running on November 11, WAVAW women held their own Remembrance Day at Old City Hall, beside the traditional ceremony, as a memorial to all women raped or killed in war or "peace" the world over.

For our November issue, Broadside reprints below WAVAW's provisional statement, written in the fall of 1977, and the WAVAW Demands.

tionally heroic aspect to it which confirms men's position and strength. Other kinds of violence between men, such as racial attacks, get much of their energy from ignorance and fear of the distant and strange. Women's experience of violence is totally different from men's. Violence 'happens' to us supposedly as a natural and 'normal' consequence of being female. Even if we escape physical violence to our bodies, and that is rare, we can never escape the constant assaults on our psyche which totally dominate the world we live in. This world is deeply misogynistic. Its violence against our deepest selves scars and destroys us. WAVAW intends to fight this violence against women on all fronts.

— WAVAW specifically rejects the passive role of victim in which women have been cast and which is continually forced upon us. WAVAW's declared policy and practice is to initiate, encourage, and support strong and positive actions by women against all violence against us. WAVAW totally rejects any so-called 'solutions' to the problem of violence against women which perpetuate fear among women and increase reliance on the existing power structures or on male protection generally.

— WAVAW's list of demands summarizes our position on major areas of violence against women. WAVAW is open to any women who agree with those demands and with the general perspective expressed in this document.

— Any group of women which endorses this statement (including demands) and acts in a manner consistent with it can be considered part of WAVAW and may receive any support or help within the power and resources of the present WAVAW group.

— WAVAW may support any women on any one or more issues listed under DEMANDS, whether or not these women support ALL the WAVAW demands, as long as their perspective on the specific issues(s) is feminist and consistent with that of WAVAW.

— WAVAW will not actively seek cooperation with non-feminist, non-women-only groups. WAVAW may align itself on any specific issue with any group, organization or individual whose objectives coincide with WAVAW on that issue, or whose position or resources may be helpful in carrying on the struggle or solving a specific problem (e.g. arrest).

— WAVAW's intention is to contact as many women and groups as possible for the purpose of building a women's network of communication, cooperation and mutual support. WAVAW is presently compiling a list of women's organizations and groups in the Metro Toronto area. Input is needed from the women's community at large, especially from small, informal units such as consciousness-raising and feminist study groups, women's fitness, self-defence and self-improvement classes, women's art and craft groups and similar.

### STATEMENT OF PERSPECTIVE AND INTENT

WAVAW is women fighting for women. WAVAW's orientation is specifically feminist in content, structure and execution. It is conceived of as but one segment of a broad struggle which women are waging throughout the world. It in no way replaces or supercedes any other feminist struggle or group.

— WAVAW believes that violence against women differs fundamentally from violence against men. Much of the violence between men (such as war, fights for the possession of women or other 'property') has a tradi-

these remain under the control and direction of women who staff them and women they serve.

6. We insist on the elimination of female job ghettos and the growing wage gap between men and women. We insist on full economic self-sufficiency of women.

7. We insist on the right of any woman to bear and raise children in dignity and freedom from economic want. We insist on adequate support for single mothers and welfare women and on day care for all children who need it and want it. We insist that children not be separated from their mothers because of their mothers' lesbianism.

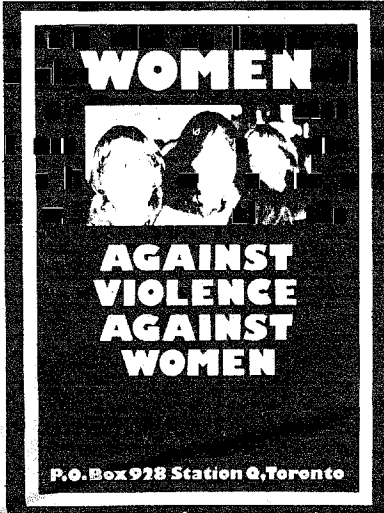
8. We insist that abortion be taken out of the Criminal Code. We insist on the provision of women-run clinics where good health care, birth control information, and safe abortions will be available free to all women. We insist that the need for back-street abortions be removed.

9. We insist on dignified treatment of women in prisons and all so-called correctional institutions. We insist on feminist training and good pay for female staff and on non-sexist counselling for all women.

10. We insist on the right of women to express themselves sexually and not be harassed or discriminated against for lesbian and sexual orientation. We insist that lesbians be covered by the Human Rights Code.

11. We insist that forced sterilization of immigrant and native women be stopped.

12. We insist on an end to violence against women in mental health institutions and the offices of private psychotherapists. Such violence takes the form of sexist counselling, the abuse of shock treatment, extensive drug therapy and psychosurgery. We insist on provision of adequate feminist therapy and referral services.



### WAVAW DEMANDS

1. We insist on freedom of movement for all women, in any part of the city or country, at any time. We insist on our right to remain unmolested physically and verbally wherever we are and wherever we are. We insist on our right to defend ourselves and each other by any means available.

2. We insist on action which focuses on taking the profit out of violence and hate propaganda wherever it occurs and NOT harassment of working women who have few enough choices as it is. We insist that the current hypocritical 'cleanup Yonge Street' campaign be stopped. We insist that police, who now 'serve and protect' business interests which profit from violence and hate, stop harassing lesbians and prostitutes. We insist on full civil rights for all women, especially lesbians and visible minorities.

3. We insist on the decriminalization of prostitution.

4. We insist that rape is a crime based on hate and not on sex. It is an act of violence against the whole person of the woman intended to intimidate and to confirm men's power over all women. We insist that the law and the courts treat it as an assault and not a 'sexual' crime.

5. We insist that police and courts respond to wife and child beating as they would (or should) to any assault. We insist that women cease to be coerced to remain or return to intolerable home situations. We insist that all women but especially poor, native and immigrant women, have the means to escape and a place to escape to. We insist on adequate support for Nellie's Hostel for Women, Rape Crisis Centre and other places necessary for our safety and survival. We insist that

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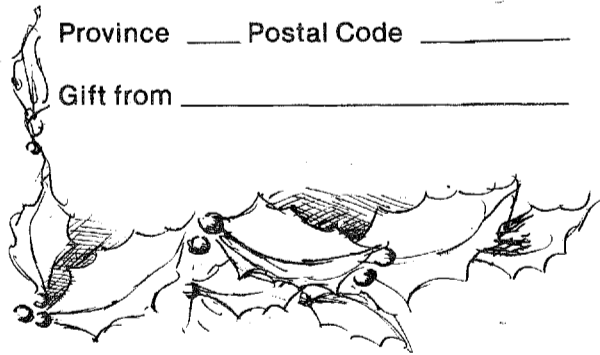
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