

# Broadside

A FEMINIST REVIEW

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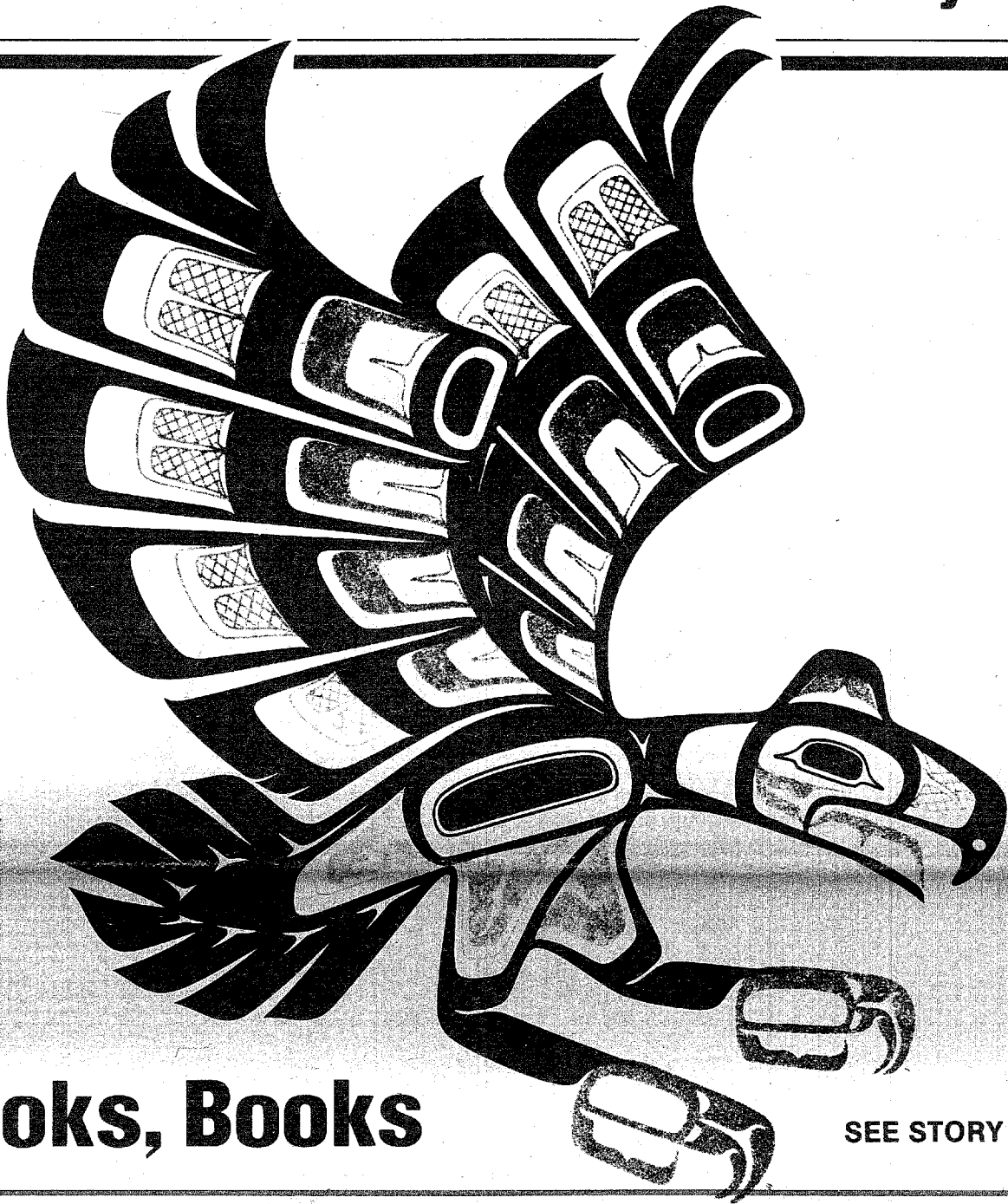


Illustration by Art Bolton, from Helen Potrebentko's Two Years on the Muckamuck Line

## Books, Books, Books

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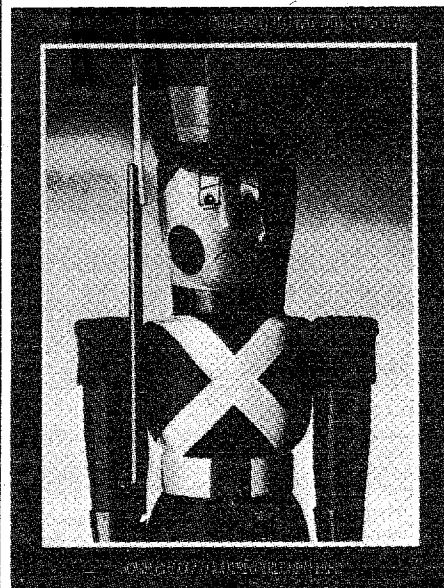
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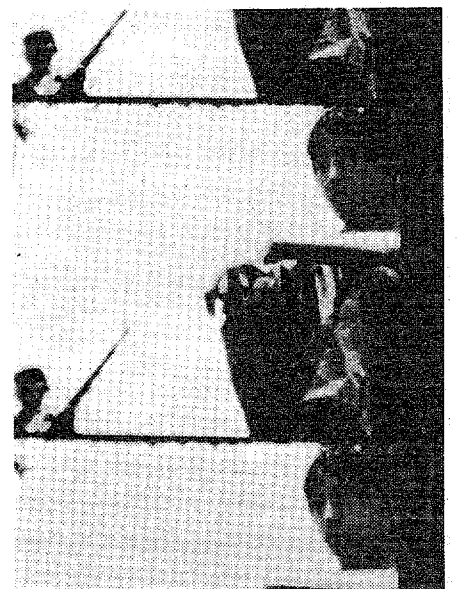
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# EDITORIALS

## TTC Finds the Better Way

The Right to Life thought they were advertising in the spirit of Christmas, but the Toronto Transit Commission did not agree. And *Broadside* celebrates a small victory.

The advertisement appeared in subway and buses for only a few days before members of the women's health movement, activists, doctors and feminist groups protested the tastelessness of the ad campaign. The Toronto Transit Commission, which grants the right to advertise on the transit system, agreed to put the issue on the agenda of its meeting November 17 to hear the protestors' point of view.

The protestors wisely stayed away from making the meeting a forum for the abortion debate. Regardless of the Right to Life's point of view on the subject, the organization does have the right to advertise. What was called into question was the content of the ad: a toy soldier weeps for lack of playmates, specifically the playmates he could have had were it not for the 65,000 pregnancies that did not come to

full-term. For any woman who has had an abortion, miscarried or lost a child in any way, the ad was a painful reminder, a rude censure in its way, and certainly an invasion of privacy that a woman would not want to experience while riding the public transit system.

These were the sentiments spoken by Eleanor Pelrine of the Canadian Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Laws. Dr. Miriam Garfinkle, representing the Medical Reform Group, explained the myriad health reasons why women choose to terminate pregnancy and spoke of the anguish of women who had lost their children through miscarriage. Other representatives from the women's service network and letters from feminist groups supplemented the protest, and outside the TTC headquarters, pickets greeted the Commissioners as they entered the meeting. Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton and Metro Chairman Paul Godfrey were singled out and encouraged to put an end to the Right to Life's ad campaign.

But the most compelling statement was made by a woman who was entirely unfamiliar to health activists in Toronto. Catherine Bee independently arranged to have her name on the agenda so that she could speak her mind. Protestors worried

that hers would be an individual voice supporting the ad campaign. Instead, Bee told of her experience of having an abortion and of her reaction to the ad. She had been troubled and then angry, so much so that she had taken it upon herself to go to the Commission.

On the other hand, the representative of the Right to Life was inexplicably ill-prepared. Whereas in the past, the organization has garnered some infamy through its ability to mobilize and manipulate, its member this time made no statement and had no idea that the Commission would be deciding the issue the same day. This lack of information spared the Commission the hysteria and hyperbole that Right to Lifers usually bring to the abortion debate.

Perhaps the Right to Life could not imagine that pro-choice forces could mount a campaign against the toy soldier ad so quickly and so effectively. Right to Life was wrong. Careful planning and smart strategy worked to convince the Commission to remove the offensive ads. But it may have been single voice of Catherine Bee that really turned the tide. Her presence at the meeting proved that a woman doesn't have to be a long-time activist in the women's health movement or even an avowed feminist to know when she is being put down.



Judy Stanleigh

## Our Rights 'Notwithstanding'

A November 20 headline in the Toronto *Sun* declares "Women in an Uproar" — a feminist revolution, finally? No, it's Canadian women's gut reaction to the stupidity and arrogance of the Canadian government's game of Constitution.

In a November 18, feature article in the *Globe and Mail*, BC Supreme Court Judge Thomas Berger declares that "the two greatest issues not resolved in the constitutional agreement...are the place of Québec within Confederation and native rights." Nowhere in the article are women's rights mentioned. Ours is obviously not a major concern. Not to the men in grey who happily barter our fundamental rights for aboriginal rights, for money, for provincial power. Trudeau says he will not barter fundamental rights. He is sad that he can't please everyone. He complains that he got no support when he needed it, and now we're unhappy with his best efforts.

And a month or so ago, a *Globe and Mail* editorial suggested that probably only 100

people in Canada understood the Constitutional question and its implications. True and False. True, probably only 100 people understood that they understood. The rest of us thought we didn't. We were mystified; confused by Supreme Court deliberations, legal wrangles over provincial jurisdiction, Québec's concerns, Alberta's needs, amending formulas, repatriation before or after, etc. etc.

We were overwhelmed by the uneasy sense that momentous decisions were being made, and we didn't know what to do or say — we didn't even know the difference between 'before the law' and 'under the law.'

But now there can be no doubt, and we knew it all along. The 'over-ride' clause abrogates our rights, pure and simple.

After listening to the preposterous language of the *white men* who are laying with our lives (Saskatchewan Premier Blakeney talks of *granting* us our rights!) women's gorges are rising. And the media, slow to

consider women's rights even an issue in the current debate, have woken up to the fact that women can be a powerful pressure group.

Naturally, women all over Canada are in an uproar. And Trudeau complains that he didn't get help when he needed it. (He was referring to Berger's article, but nevertheless he handily ignored the efforts of the National Action Committee, the Advisory Council, other action and lobby groups, and individual women to ensure the inclusion of our rights in the Constitution.)

So now, even more women are sending telegrams, phoning Ottawa, stirring up trouble. It's been suggested that if three women from every federal riding telephoned their support to the Prime Minister's Office (613-992-4211) every day for a week —  $265 \times 3 \times 7 = 5565$  phone calls — the *Government* would be in an uproar and we might get what we deserve.

Our rights can't be 'over-ridden' any longer.

## Broadside Bulletin

**Item:** *Broadside* is launching a series of fund-raising projects to help clear away our ongoing load of debt. Last spring's "Strawberry Brunch" was the first attempt at fund-raising, and its success has encouraged us to think in terms of a project every month or so to keep nunching at the debt until it is gone. We are trying to think up projects that will (1) raise enough money to cover *Broadside's* operations; (2) be financially within the range of as many of our readers and supporters as possible; (3) require the organizational energy of a small number of people — perhaps only one — to get launched. Thus we hope to involve as many people as possible in supporting *Broadside* without exhausting the collective in the process.

**Item:** Our second major fund-raising project is our *Broadside* sweatshirt drive. We put a lot of research into finding quality sweatshirts (Penman's) at a reasonable wholesale price for the shirts plus stenciling, so they're available at the very competitive price of \$15 each for adult sizes. These fine garments (in Crystal Grey, Denim, and Royal Blue, with "Broadside" stencilled on the *back*, by popular request) are not in-

tended to be the hottest bargain in town, but rather to be priced equal to, if not a bit lower than, other sweatshirts of comparable quality around Toronto. Sales so far indicate that we've hit the spot, and we're hoping to be sold out by Xmas.

**Item:** And now for something entirely different — the Valentine's Eve *Broadside* Benefit Talent Show, to be held February 13 at the Heliconian Club. This is your big chance to try something new or revive something old with an audience of enthusiastic and supportive women. We are open to everything from the sublime to the ridiculous, to talent real or imaginary, music, dance, drama, readings — anything as long as it doesn't vibrate the somewhat fragile 125-year-old walls of the Heliconian Club! With Jane Hastings as co-ordinator, we will also be looking for supporters to donate the rent, kitchen fee, beer, wine and snacks. Why not get together with several friends and make *Broadside* a gift of one of these expenses? If someone will donate wine and/or beer, we can have a super-bargain cash bar. Please let us have your suggestions to develop this evening into one of special fun. And get your act together; we

want to get a program organized early in the new year.

**Item:** And for those of you who want to guzzle and swing the old year out, *Broadside* is joining Womynly Way to give a giant New Year's Eve Bash, with Mama Quilla II providing the live(ly) music. It will all happen at 80 Winchester St. in Cabbagetown (formerly the Don Vale Community Centre), with refreshments and a cash bar. Tickets will be \$15, available from *Broadside*, Womynly Way or the Toronto Women's Bookstore. We're likely to be sold out, so get your ticket in advance.

**Item:** On January 14 at 7:30 — 10 pm, 175 Carlton St., Toronto, *Broadside* will be holding another of our scintillating, controversial **Open Forums**. Come join us to talk back, give us ideas and take some home. That's Thursday, January 14, 1982.

We are striving for variety in our fund-raising projects and hope eventually to cater to as many tastes as possible. If you have an idea that could help us, please let us know. We've made a good start, with your help we can make 1982 "The Year *Broadside* became solvent."

Happy Solstice to all.

## Broadside

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# Andreas... Bearing Gifts

by Susan G. Cole

On a typically cloudless Athenian night in 1974, one hundred and fifty thousand Greeks assembled to hear their leader give them the word. It was the first street demonstration of the Pan Hellenic Socialist Party (PASOK) since the Junta had toppled and the gathering was a pre-election rally for the barely weeks old party. The crowd was youthful, or so it seemed, angry and anxious for inspiration, some of which no doubt came from the sight of the Parthenon looming in the distance behind the speaker's platform.

But most of the excitement was to be generated by the extraordinary presence of a man with eyes deep-set below bushy eyebrows, a man with breathtaking eloquence. The man was, of course, Andreas Papandreou, elected Prime Minister of Greece in October, 1981.

He spoke, in the fall of 1974, of the strong Greek traditions of democracy and of how PASOK was the only party that could truly revive them. He was a nationalist who denounced the American military presence on Greek soil and Greece's participation in NATO. He celebrated Greek culture. At the time, he had no socialist platform per se but his was the voice of optimism that nurtured a spirit reminiscent of the wide-eyed innocence of the sixties movement in North America.

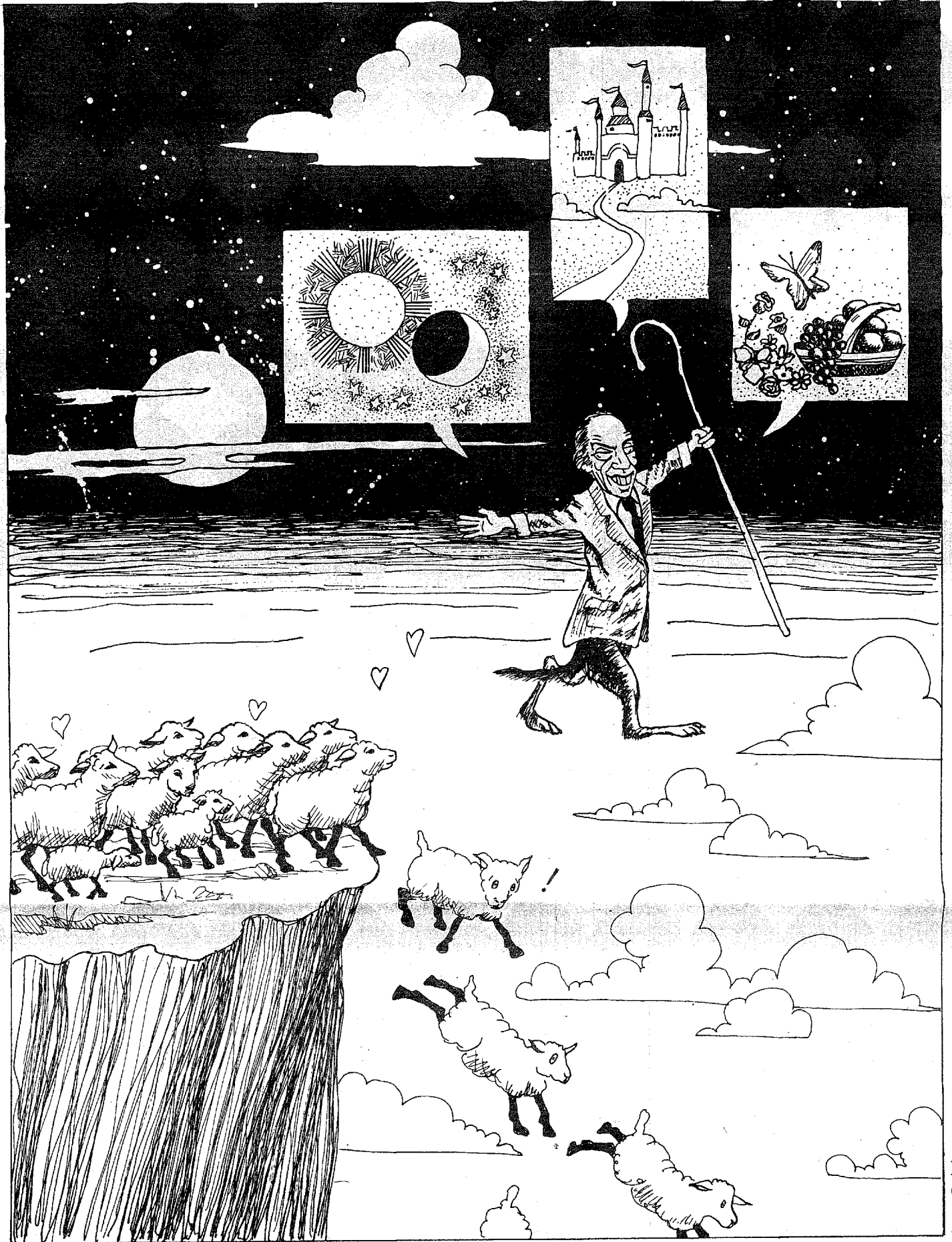
And what a voice. It ranged through the streets of Athens charged with emotion. The crowd, not inclined to deal with the political and economic realities of a platform based on turfing out foreign investment, was thrilled at what was essentially the stuff of easy politics, loved that voice. And why not. Andreas, as he is lovingly called in Greece, has what anyone with political aspiration craves. He's got charisma.

Charisma is one of those rare and splendid words that has its English usage and yet is virtually unchanged from the ancient Greek. "Charis" roughly translated means "grace" of a kind granted to mortals by the gods (mostly men, although Joan of Arc was said to have been so gifted. Cleopatra wasn't — she had sex appeal which, although related to charisma, is not the same thing). Charisma is a gift bestowed upon the chosen few. It is not something an individual can cultivate with practice, but rather it emanates from a character. In other words, you've either got it or you don't.

Papandreou isn't the only political leader who has swept to power on the strength of this gift from the gods. Ronald Reagan has it in his own way, although he is more "star quality" than charisma, but for our purposes the two terms are almost interchangeable. Alexander the Great had it. Hitler had it. Trudeau is perhaps losing it but he could never have ascended to the prime minister-ship so swiftly had he not been able to generate Trudeauania.

That's the point. Charismatic leaders create a certain craziness among people that is more than a little disconcerting. I saw it in the streets of Athens on that fall evening as Papandreou's voice fuelled the Greeks' passions. In spite of the celebrations of left-leaners all over the world, I remain wary of Papandreou's stunning triumph.

Of course, it's hardly Papandreou's fault that he has been blessed with the gift. Indeed, if it's true that either you've got it or



Anne Quigley

## CHARISMA

you don't, then the critical question is what you do with it.

It's a funny thing about charisma. When reactionaries have it, they are able to harness all the resources they need to realize the goals of their invidious platforms. Hitler wreaked his havoc. Countless charlatans depend on charisma for evangelical profit. Reagan seems to have displayed a certain mastery over Congress and the recent AWAC sale approved by Congress has been hailed as a personal victory for the American president.

But what happens with charismatic progressives? Martin Luther King was shot. Pierre Trudeau is a bust when it comes to progressive leadership. He may have paid his visit to China and he may have read Marx and flirted with socialism. But for all his pre-election babble about the Just Society, it was Pierre Trudeau who invoked the War Measures Act and who sold civil rights down the river in the new charter so that the constitution would be a memorial to his own person.

It seems that, with the possible exception of Castro, when progressives come to power through the gift of charisma they either end up dead or they turn out to be major disappointments. John Kennedy was both — a disappointment in that his escalation of the Cold War meant that he presided over a bogus Camelot, and dead, a casualty of the assassin's bullet.

No one is questioning whether Papandreou's heart is in the right place. His commitment to democratic values has led him to prison twice, the first time in 1939 and the second in 1967 when the colonels took control of the Greek government away from his father, George Papandreou. He has always been immersed in politics, as the son of one of Greece's most resilient political leaders, and in his own right as a leftist and resister of fascism. A commitment to the left in Greece is a difficult one to keep, fraught with life and death implications, and Papandreou hasn't wavered.

He was released from Greek prison in 1967 and admitted an exile in 1969 to Canada where he taught economics at York University. Toronto became the first base for his Pan Hellenic Socialist Movement, and the movement — a coalition of youth, independent leftists and women — did not become a full-fledged political party until Papandreou was able to return to Greece in the summer of 1974, just weeks before I saw him under the Athenian sky, taking the breath away from his constituency. It is worth noting that his success in the recent election is considered the product of a hefty organization of women who take seriously his commitment to women's rights.

But Greece has severe economic problems, a political culture that has been turbulent throughout this century and an army of

colonels who still harbour fantasies of political power. The left has always been feisty, but small, and fractured by Moscow's influence on Greek communists.

Unlike France's Mitterand, who is, by the way, a decidedly uncharismatic fellow, Papandreou does not have a strong socialist movement entrenched in the mainstream to give him support. He does have a powerful majority in Parliament and the gift to inspire the Greeks to put their hearts where his is.

But only a week has passed since his election when he fudged on his foreign policy. Now Greece's relationship to NATO is not to be suspended but rather, requires further study. He has just articulated dramatic measures for economic reform but he needs a strong organizational base to make real the sweeping changes he has in mind. This difficult fact must not get lost in the euphoria of victory.

Papandreou will, I hope, break the historical patterns of charismatic progressive politicians. Maybe people should stop calling him by his first name, as if the relationship between head of state and his constituency is a love affair. It helps for a leader to be inspiring and inspired, but clear policies and popular education are more likely to take care of the job at hand. Anything else is pure rhetoric, powerful in that it comes from a gifted orator and a fine mind, but rhetoric nonetheless. ●



Judy Stanleigh

# Can't Fight the Right Without Feminism

A political profile of Angela Miles, activist and theorist

by Eve Zaremba

## PART I

Angela Miles and I met in January 1976. It was at the first of many organizing meetings of what was to go down in Toronto feminist history as the Bolton Conference in May and its ill-fated December progeny, the Daughter of Bolton. At the time, a few ex-Woman's Place activists, of which I was one, had been planning a series of workshops and educationals around feminist ideas and problems. Concurrently, the small group Angela was part of was working to organize discussions among feminist radicals of different persuasions in Ontario. In a series of meetings between that group and ours, their idea of the weekend-long, out of town conference was adopted over our more prosaic educationals. Most of my original group did not continue but I stayed on to work on Bolton with Angela and the others.

Here is how Angela describes 'Bolton':

"The weekend was a tremendous success — intense discussion, the articulation of new questions and new connections made in a context of sisterly celebration among feminists working in very different ways in different places. Early morning jogging, campfire songs, dancing, walking in the woods on one of the first fine weekends of spring helped our shared determination to see and hear and appreciate one another. The question of the relationship of lesbianism and feminism emerged toward the end of the weekend as the next and most pressing question to be tackled in our newly established and still fragile dialogue."

After 'Bolton,' I moved out of the organizing group, becoming involved with other women in other endeavours. But it went on to put together a follow-up conference that December around the theme of "Heterosexuality as an Institution". Daughter of Bolton, as she was fondly dubbed in the interim period, was a devastating disappointment to the hundreds of women who came prepared to take the risks required to talk across our divisions. In Angela's words: "The threads of trust that had been spun at Bolton were torn on hard sectarian definitions of class, on lesbian/anti-lesbianism, and on ill-conceived and unisisterly personal attacks. Groups split, friendships ended and the cause of collective political development through dialogue was put back for a time in Toronto."

By the end of 1977 Angela Miles and I were again working together in an ad hoc group set up to bring Charlotte Bunch, the American radical feminist theoretician and activist, to Toronto. On a damp Friday night in November, Bunch spoke to about

150 women at Innis College on *Feminist Work, Theory and Vision*. Her words were enthusiastically received. This event seemed the high point of our fall, if not the whole year.

As it happened, Charlotte Bunch's visit to Toronto was totally overshadowed by the sudden emergence of WAVAW — Women Against Violence Against Women. A demonstration had been organized for the next day, Saturday, against a snuff movie showing at Cinema 2000 on Toronto's sleazy Yonge Street strip. At the pre-march rally in a community hall, we were reminded that since the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre was one of the major sponsors, we had to behave ourselves at the demo so as not to reflect badly on the centre. We were asked to be good, obey all the rules, demonstrate peacefully and go home quietly. But it was not to be. In the event, angry women blocked traffic on Yonge Street for three hours; numbers of them surged into the theatre and staged a sit-in; a few were roughed up and a few arrested. WAVAW was born in Toronto.

Whatever WAVAW accomplished then or will accomplish in the future, it was a powerful experience for the hundreds of women concerned. Especially for those whose first exposure to feminist action this was, it was extremely energizing and politicizing. For all its sometimes long and tedious hours of meetings, WAVAW's marches and demonstrations were (mostly) fun, never to be forgotten experiences. The diversity of feminists involved in WAVAW's early days has since played an important role in network building in Toronto. Friendships, relationships and contacts made then are unlike any others.

I remember Angela Miles at WAVAW meetings and demonstrations in the busy year and a half that followed. Always full of ideas, vocal, articulate, intense. Not always sensitive to the concerns of others; often hard to follow in her declarations and statements; tending to impatience with those less clear than she about the task before us. Miles was one of those women who tried repeatedly to express — for an unruly, diverse and not altogether grateful bunch of women interested mainly in street action — the need for an overall strategy and consistent tactics. More than anyone else there, Miles wanted WAVAW to be the starting point for a new kind of feminist politics.

But a group which had come together on the basis of spontaneous street action could not be successfully transformed into the kind of organization Miles had in mind. Efforts to structure and regulate WAVAW

only took the essential 'piss & vinegar' out of it and added nothing but frustration.

So, frustrated, Angela Miles went on thinking about feminism, teaching and organizing.

She has the reputation of a hot-shot teacher. One of her students recalls her class at Atkinson College, York University where Miles taught in the Social Science Department: "She knew her stuff; fielded all kinds of questions; gave good straightforward answers. She is forceful in a nice way; puts herself across. We would come out of class buzzing. Even the men, and some of the women who weren't sure about her at first (she could be intimidating), understood by the end what it was all about. I learned a lot from her."

of Students in some of its most turbulent years.

In 1968 she went to France for a year where, in the post May/June period, she worked as a waitress in a University restaurant. There she had a ring-side seat to observe the arrogant relationship between the student radicals and the workers, the self-defeating sectarianism of the Communist Party and student organizations, and the authoritarian structure of these groups, most notably the confédération generale du travail, the Communist trade union to which she belonged.

Angela returned to Leeds to do her MA, concerned above all to work in more respectful, open and realistic ways than were common in large sections of the Left at the



Angela Miles on the International Women's Day march, 1980.

Moir Armour

Throughout the late seventies Miles continued organizing, working to develop Women's Studies and finally, in 1979, became one of the founders of The Feminist Party of Canada. But that is another story.

In the same year she received her doctorate from the Department of Political Science, University of Toronto. Her thesis was *The Politics of Feminist Radicalism: A Study in Integrative Feminism*. This year, after years of teaching at Atkinson College, Angela Miles has left for Antigonish, where she is teaching Women's Studies at St. Francis Xavier University. Nova Scotia's gain is Toronto's loss.

## PART II

Angela Miles grew up in England as a young radical in the sixties. She received her BA from Leeds University where she was a student activist, member of the Student Council and delegate to the National Union

time. She helped establish a community newspaper, participated in a fledgling community drama group and worked with the May Day Manifesto Group in its attempt to develop new forms of radical practice and theory.

When she came to do her graduate work in Canada at the University of Toronto her activism continued. She worked as assistant to John Sewell in his early shit-disturber days at City Hall. Her interest in Canadian nationalism meant that her work in the PhD program originally focussed on the influence of nationalism on working class consciousness. At this time she was concerned with "women's issues," as most progressives are expected to be, but was clearly not a feminist. It wasn't until 1973 that the breakthrough came and she made a radical shift in both her activist concerns and her doctoral studies.

In that year she heard Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa outline the analysis in which they opened (a) the concept of



Pamela Harris

production to include the unwaged work of women in the home and (b) the concept of class to include housewives. James and Dalla Costa urged the development of a feminist politics which could recognize the importance of this work in the world and in the lives of all women. This new theory allowed Angela to understand her connection with all women and, for the first time, she experienced herself as a woman and as a radical in a simple integrated way. She speaks of this as a "spiritual awakening," "a shift in sense of self," and not a mere change in political analysis. In that, she mirrors the experience of many women for whom feminism is not and cannot be just another "ism" but is rather a fuller expression of previously hidden or fragmented aspects of themselves.

A number of women who had shared the personal excitement at hearing the "wages for housework" perspective began to work together in Toronto. This was Angela's first experience of working in a woman-only, feminist-defined group. It was, she says "a non-hierarchical, supportive, imaginative, creative working situation." But the fast developing feminist sisterhood of the group soon came into conflict with the authoritarian and sectarian methods of the Wages for Housework Campaign. Her group had resisted the rigid materialist insistence that feminism could and should be reduced to a simple demand for wages for housework. It fought to keep the Wages for Housework perspective a strategy for women's liberation rather than a narrow political tactic imposed from above. All its efforts failed, however. In 1974 a number of women, Miles among them, were officially 'purged' from the centrally controlled 'Wages' organization.

Sick at heart and physically ill, Miles discarded 'Wages' as a platform without abandoning all of its ideas. She continued to be active in a number of small feminist groups with shifting membership and focus. When I met her in 1976 she appeared very much as she is now — totally committed to feminism, very loyal to her friends, staunchly combative, eager to express her views, usually friendly, optimistic, full of nervous energy and good spirits.

### PART III

Angela Miles' practice has, from the early days of her feminism, been shaped by the need to foster the autonomous movement of feminist politics. For her, every feminist action — protesting pornography, lobbying government, pressuring trade unions, es-

tablishing crisis centres, organizing demonstrations, teaching Women's Studies — should have the conscious aim of building the Women's Movement, in addition to achieving its immediate goal. This emphasis on feminism as a fledgling politics, to be guarded, strengthened and defined in practice by us all, informs all her work, including her theoretical work.

In an interview with *Broadside* in June 1981, Miles stated her position thus: "Feminism is a universal politics. Feminism is, at this stage, key to all progressive politics. Although it is a struggle for women, it represents the most significant ground on which the Right has to be defeated. It is not just a defensive politics but politics which will enable us not only to defeat the Right but to move forward to build a new world."

It is now abundantly clear that the current rise of the Right is taking place on the ideological ground opened up by feminism. That is one very good reason why the Left (male-defined and controlled as it is) has been having great difficulty in countering it. Angela Miles recognized the centrality of feminist concerns in the New Right well before the election of Reagan. Before September 1980 she wrote:

"Feminism/anti-feminism is now the axis along which the major questions of the day are being fought. 'Women's issues,' such as marriage, the family, equal rights, women's involvement in the paid labour force, daycare, abortion, sexual orientation, payment for housework, children's rights, violence in public and personal life, are currently the most heatedly contested and most ideologically arousing debates in cultural, social, personal and political areas of life.

"The right wing affirms reproduction and private life, and the values associated with women in these spheres, in order to build a system built on the fragmentation of life and the division between and within people. This forces us to recognize that the definition and meaning of womanhood is now a key ground of struggle."

Miles goes on to argue that liberalism provides no adequate progressive response to the questions the Right raises about the nature of 'womanhood':

"In the current male-defined political discourse, right-wing glorification of the subordinate service and labour of 'true womanhood' is met by liberal glorification of the individual, male-identified 'liberated woman.' The Right reinforces the association of women's work and values with subordination and self-sacrifice; the liberals reinforce the invisibility of women's work and values by ignoring their existence."

Thus the Right claims to speak for the values of love, life and trust, and stresses the specificity (the difference) of women. The liberal denial of women's specific work and characteristics and the values that have long been associated with them is appealing to women because "our specificity as women has in the past been inseparable from our oppression as women." But Miles' argues that only the redefinition and reclaiming of these values will allow progressive forces to meet and defeat the Right. This would necessarily involve a major challenge to the male-centred radical tradition. The liberals claim to include women in the definition of humanity because they are like (as good as) men which leaves the male-centredness intact. It challenges the traditional definition of women but not the definition of humanity/man. This deeper level of questioning is essential for the development of any alternative vision.

Feminism must play a key role in the expression of that vision through the articulation of the specific political voice, values and interests of women. Yet the feminist attempt to develop this voice is hindered at every turn by the ideological collaboration of liberals (and often the Left) with the Right in confounding collective women's liberation with the individual 'liberated woman':

"The 'liberated woman,' abhorred by the Right and generally applauded (in two different versions) by liberals and radicals, comes to displace the feminist in a shared alchemy. Feminism's commitment to the liberation of all women, and our recognition that none of us can be free until we are all free is reinterpreted as a message of individual one-upmanship. It becomes a 'liberation' separate from and against other women and a freedom from the old values of caring, sharing, co-operation and solidarity. These 'liberated women' are so few as to be almost a creation of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and yet they have become the popular image of a feminist.

"This male-defined, individualist attack on women's work and values in the name of the 'liberated woman' can sometimes push women into the arms of the opposing, but equally male-defined, glorification of women's work as subservience. The autonomous women's position which feminism must express has, so far, been submerged in this battle, being waged in the name of two different male versions of women."

Miles argues that as long as feminism is kept off the political stage by the substitution of a puppet 'liberated woman's' voice, the Left will be incapable of meeting the Right's challenge. In the June *Broadside* in-

terview she said:

"I don't think (male dominated radicalism) can meet the Right on the ground that feminism has opened up and that the Right, to a certain extent, is occupying and defining at this point. That is to say, without a feminist redefinition of the struggle, what it is about, what it represents, how it must be fought, all that is possible is a defensive coalition with liberal politics. I don't think that 'liberalism' is a bad word the way a lot of people do. But it is a limited form, a defensive forum with a 'civil rights' approach. Nobody wants to deny the importance of civil rights but it is not the same level of struggle that feminism is about and that a lot of progressive politics has claimed to be about and sees itself as. In other words, there is no alternative vision, no creative offensive response possible. There is no redefinition of questions, so no new politics can emerge. In a sense what I see in the resistance of progressives... in their refusal to see this ... in their apparent contentment with retaining old forms of resistance and defensive forms of politics against the Right is to a certain extent a collaboration with the Right.

"Progressives have tended not to challenge a lot of the basic definitions that keep women down; that keep the central role of women hidden; that keep definitions in male hands; and keep male-defined politics on stage...and feminism off stage. What this means, and this bears a lot of thinking about, is that not only does the future depend on feminism but that feminism, in the end, to reach its promise, has to in fact inform the politics of men as well. There aren't many signs of movement in that direction at an organization level. Even under the pressure of the Right, even though the issues that are now key are what have been called 'women's issues', men seem to be holding firm at a coalition level of politics."

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# Thérèse Casgrain

## A Voice For Women

Thérèse Casgrain died on November 3, 1981, at her home in Montreal. She was 85. Her career as a fighter for women's rights, for the vote, for Family Allowances to be sent to the woman of a household, for native women and for human rights has been well documented and recorded. Her often repeated statement, "I want peace and I've been fighting for it all my life," was her well-known theme song.

Her connection with the Voice of Women is seldom mentioned in the accolades. Since I was one of the women outside Québec who saw a good deal of her during those years, I would like to recall some of those occasions.

Thérèse took over as President of Voice of Women in September 1962, when Helen Tucker moved on to organize a Women's International Committee for International Co-operation Year. Thérèse had organized La Voiz des Femmes, the Québec branch of VOW, so when she became National President, the office moved to Montréal. Soon after, the Women's Peace Train to Ottawa was organized. Seven hundred Québec women were joined by a bus load from Ontario, and together we all walked up Parliament Hill carrying with us a laundry basket filled with telegrams from all over the country demanding "NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN CANADA." We were addressing the Diefenbaker government and was undecided about Canada acquiring nuclear weapons. An English-speaking cabinet minister was sent in to hear from the women, who were insulted, and said so quite forcefully until a French-speaking minister was hastily substituted. A sequel to this incident was a conversation between an English-

speaking Québec member and Solange Chaput-Rolland, the writer, on the train returning to Montréal. Solange was volubly hurt and resentful and the English woman who spoke sympathetically to her in perfect French was the author Gwethalyn Graham. Their subsequent friendship and collaboration created the book "Dear Enemies," and that was one of the forerunners of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The Bi Bi Commission was given its nickname by Ghislaine Laurendeau, wife of the Co-Chairman and a VOW Vice-President and close friend of Thérèse Casgrain.

Thérèse was unable to resist the call to stand as a candidate in the federal election of 1963. Pearson had declared he was going to accept the Bomarc missiles. Thérèse stepped down as VOW President — we were very sensitive about being non-partisan in those days — and I was left "acting" in her place. After her defeat, with the VOW annual meeting coming up, she was undecided whether to stand again for President. I was thought to be very radical at the time (I was married to a Marxist professor) and Helen Tucker even considered coming back to save the day, though in the end I stayed as President. I remember sitting between these two previous presidents of VOW, each wearing an enormous and colourful hat, and being totally eclipsed by the one's grandeur and presence and by the other's flamboyance. In those days I was the equivalent of a blushing violet.

During the Casgrain reign in VOW we travelled to Montreal for Council meetings, often held in Thérèse's home. One was held on the day President Kennedy was shot. At another we received letters from women in Vietnam describing atrocities and the hardships they were facing. (In 1963 we had to find out where Vietnam was.) Casgrain was an enchanting mixture of granddame and peacenik. She enjoyed shocking her children who thought their mother's activities were often very embarrassing. Solange Chaput-Rolland, who was one of her protégés, recalled that when she dropped in for a cup of tea she might find Prime Minister Nehru, or Madame Vanier, the Governor General's wife, or a prominent politician having a quiet chat. Or perhaps Thérèse was giving advice to one of her grandchildren. I remember that when their number reached 13, she had a bracelet with charms on it for each of them. This was the perfect conversation piece in meeting women all over the world. Thérèse might not know a word of the woman's language but after a minute or so there would be smiles, nodding of heads, finger counting, showing of snapshots and firm friendships cemented.

Thérèse arrived in Paris late in 1964 having attended a women's conference in Israel. I had been at a conference organized by Helen Tucker in the UNESCO building. She had a broken ankle at the time but that didn't stop her. One of my cherished memories is of Helen Tucker in what looked like a witch's hat and black cloak, sitting in a wheelchair going up in the foodlift of the Air France jet loading in Dorval airport.

Thérèse and I joined a group of women

from NATO countries who, as a follow-up to their meeting in The Hague six months earlier, were protesting the proposed NATO Multi-Lateral Nuclear Force (whereby each NATO country was going to be able to press the nuclear button). We arranged with the authorities that we would present a statement from the NATO women to the Secretary General of NATO and we agreed to send only one woman from each country (one English- and one French-speaking from Canada) so that we did not appear to be a demonstration. The French police were very nervous. There were other peace groups protesting NATO's actions and the streets around the NATO building were filled with police cruisers and baton-brandishing gendarmes. We walked quietly in twos and threes up to the building and after some parleying were told that only one woman could enter. This wasn't good enough. We wanted a minimum of two, preferably more. There were women present from the US, France, Belgium, Britain, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. While we were talking to the guards an enormous uniformed monster reminiscent of Hermann Goering stumped out, swept us all up in a gesture, and ordered that we be arrested.

We were hustled into a police paddy wagon and I shall never forget the delighted look on Thérèse's face as she was rudely pushed up the steps. There was a wonderful cartoon later in Montréal's *Le Devoir*, "Thérèse Casgrain à Paris," where she is stepping daintily into the paddy wagon brandishing a peace sign. We were driven half way across Paris and taken to what later turned out to be a police barracks or training college. There, a group of (I think) police recruits were ordered to search and record these dangerous criminals. The two French women in the group had by this time been hustled off to some unknown fate other than their own. We were the foreign agitators. So our handbags were searched for dangerous weapons. They took my scissors and pocket mirror and when I asked why, the official vividly demonstrated how I could break the mirror in two and cut my throat with it. That idea had never occurred to me. All this was much too exciting and we were already plotting, first, how much of a nuisance we could make of ourselves and then, more important, what we could do with the press. Besides Thérèse, there were two or three women who were experts at getting publicity for their cause.

We were finally escorted under heavy guard to a large cell with wire netting for walls. Thérèse dubbed it a salad shaker. There was a bench round the sides, so we sat down and planned strategy. The Belgian woman had an appointment with her Ambassador which she raised the roof about missing. One by one we asked to visit the washroom — a primitive place if ever I saw one — and this meant an individual escort across two courtyards, with doors to be locked and unlocked police time to be wasted. Then to our delight we discovered that one of our women was pregnant. How could those brutal police treat a "femme enceinte" in such a callous way, we asked. It was very cold in our unheated salad bowl.

Paris in December was anything but tropical. Thérèse put her long and elegant gloves over her feet to keep them warm. One of the British women discovered the searchers had overlooked her small flask of scotch, so we all had a thimbleful to cheer us. I even tried the heat of a cigarette to warm myself (and then took five years to stop smoking again).

Finally, after about five hours during which our demands to see our ambassadors never ceased, we were visited by an important-looking group of officials. They read us a severe lecture and explained in threatening tones that we would be released if we promised never to demonstrate or march, nor to do several other things on pain of never being permitted to enter France again — or was it instant deportation; I forget. (The next time I was in a demonstration in Paris was about five years later. I wasn't deported.)

Off we went to make the most of our experience with the press and our embassies. Voice of Women and its "two distinguished representatives" (I liked that) were on the front page of the *Globe and Mail* and the Québec papers for three days. Official notes were sent. (Our Canadian Ambassador in Paris told Thérèse, who of course had known him since childhood, that she really must warn him when she was planning more of these escapades, so that he could protect her!) More important, when all the fun and games were out of the way, the real reason for our protest did get through. We were opposing this highly dangerous escalation of nuclear force by NATO. (It sounds familiar, doesn't it?) Months later, NATO dropped its plan for the MLF. We will take credit for some of that, although it was probably due to all kinds of other reasons.

On our return Thérèse was fêted. The Premier of Québec, meeting her by chance in the main dining room of the Windsor Hotel in Montréal, rushed up and embraced her. "Let me kiss my jailbird," he exclaimed. My treatment was rather different in Toronto. I faced a mini-inquisition of Voices for my experience in Paris. "Drinking in a Paris jail! Was that fit behaviour for the President of the Voice of Women? And who were you associating with? Did you know all the women? Were there any communists in the group? Who were they? What will our members think?" The McCarthy era was still affecting Canadian attitudes, and not least affected were many of our more timid and inexperienced women. We lost quite a few of our local members but, as Solange Chaput-Rolland said, "When the wind blows hard, some of the leaves fall off the tree." On the other hand, the response from VOW members across the country was tremendously supportive, and they showed it in their telegrams and letters to Thérèse and me.

There were many other occasions when the delight of being with Thérèse and our admiration for her were cherished by all of us who knew her. We'll miss her, but what an example she set!

— Kay Macpherson

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# A CRIAW from the East Coast

by Thelma McCormack

When the fifth annual conference of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) convened in Halifax, November 13th, the participants came expecting scholarly discussions of "Women's Culture," the theme set by the 1980 program committee. Instead, the conference turned into a political event. Telegrams were drafted and sent to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, and all of the first ministers directing them to save Section 28 of the Constitution. No "notwithstanding;" no "over-riding."

Yet, notwithstanding the Ottawa provocation, the meetings were opened by Linda Christianson-Ruffman on a less militant note in the Arts Centre on the Dalhousie campus where a women's art exhibit had been assembled. Painting, sculpture, photographs along with traditional arts, all done by Nova Scotia women, were arranged on several levels of the centre. The conference ended with art, too, but this time with a highly irreverent feminist cartoon show, "Pork Roasts," that had been put together by Mary Sparling and Avis Rosenberg. Between these two events were more than twenty sessions plus the keynote addresses on Friday night, the banquet on Saturday night, and an annual meeting Sunday morning.

Donna Smyth, one of the original editors of *Atlantis* and Professor of English at Acadia, chaired the opening session where Myrna Kostash and I spoke. (Armand Saint-Jean was ill and unable to attend.)

Kostash spoke of the women's culture found in Greek tragedy, specifically the image of Clytemnestra who saw her young daughter sacrificed by her husband and who murdered him in revenge. The message was that Clytemnestra was not a woman to forgive the brutal misogyny of her society. Nor should we.

My comments were more contemporary, and started with the legacy of Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, I suggested, was more existentialist than feminist. But the new feminist historians who followed de Beauvoir rediscovered women's collective activities. Women were able to organize and pursue political and social goals. Nor were they as victimized as theories of class-exploitation would lead one to expect. Still, this traditional culture had now gone sour and ultra conservative. Encouraged and manipulated by men it has become the bulwark of the new anti-feminism: Pro-Life, and pro-God.

Saturday night was a buffet — roast beef for the locals; lobster tails for the rest of us — and awards. But it was really Muriel Duckworth night. Ostensibly she was being honored for receiving a Persons Award.

But the sentiments ran deep, for Muriel Duckworth is to Nova Scotia women what the late Thérèse Casgrain was to women in Québec: a leader, a comrade, an inspiration. Muriel is, as Donna Smyth put it, the spiritual centre of women in Nova Scotia. Red roses and a round loaf of homemade whole wheat bread were presented to her. Marion Porter, former executive director of CRIAW, presented a special award to Senator Florence Bird. This remarkable woman who had headed up the first Status of Women Commission in Canada was in Ottawa conserving her energies for the Constitution fight.

With so many sessions to choose from, I went to those where I had least knowledge. Native women was one. Shirley Bear reviewed what must be to her and her sisters an extraordinarily painful history of multiple betrayal by their own men, by white men, by government functionaries and by the multinationals who are currently calling the tune.

At a crowded session on feminist theology Judith Vaillancourt spoke about the church in Québec, the women's culture of the nuns and the women's culture of Catholic women in Québec. Sacred or secular, both cultures were quintessential forms of patriarchy.

Between these sessions Angela Miles, an expatriate from Ontario and now teaching at "sane-uv-ex" (St. Francis Xavier) in Antigonish, was trying to arrange a future meeting where Albertan women would discuss with Maritime women the social impact of oil on community life. Angela is a bellwether, and I am inclined to believe that oil and boom-town sociology will be on the Canadian women's agenda.

Maritime women, however, don't believe yet that they are nouveau-riche. They still think of themselves as poor, and as such they led the fight at the annual meeting to keep the membership fee down to its present level, a level which keeps the executive below the poverty line. Margrit Eichler, professor of sociology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, who replaced Ann Hall as President of CRIAW on Sunday morning, didn't flinch.

Nicole Brossard read poetry; Meredith Bell sang her own songs; the Molly Grub productions did a two women show. They testified more than anything else to the determination of women to communicate with each other.

*Thelma McCormack is a professor of sociology at York University in Toronto.*

## Sylvan Sisterhood



by Jane Hastings

Given the recent spate of lugubrious articles in *Broadside* (nuclear war, incest, and pornography for starters), it should come as no surprise that there are those on the collective who extend their penchant for the morbid to their choice of entertainment and go to the opera. It is even possible to get your opera fix at home nowadays, what with the Met's traditional radio broadcasts augmented by the "Live from the Met" telecasts several times a year, and last spring's CBC telecast of the Canadian Opera Company's "Norma." For the price of a few bottles of booze or a few cartons of cigarettes one can buy records of whole operas and enjoy the whole works right in one's very own closet.

As *Broadside's* most flagrantly overt opera nut, however, I have been challenged to find something to say about opera that could be remotely appropriate for a feminist newspaper and I think that at last I may be on to something. The challenge started last fall when Alban Berg's "Lulu" was on stage in Toronto and later on TV from the

Met. Yes, there was a Lesbian Presence in "Lulu," but unfortunately just as the Lesbian Countess Geschwitz decided to go back to school to study law and to champion the rights of women, she was stabbed by Jack the Ripper on his way out from having just stabbed Lulu. That doesn't really qualify as Redeeming Feminist Content. As for Lulu herself, well, it's the tired old male myth again: she causes several poor dear gents to come to a bad end by getting them to fall in love with her and finally makes her big mistake with Jack the Ripper.

Then there was Richard Strauss's "Salome," broadcast last spring. Salome was a princess in a multi-problem family in Judea shortly B.C. Her mother, Herodias, was really quite supportive of Salome but was unfortunately too busy enticing the palace guards to be of much help in a crisis. Her stepfather, Herod, had a well-deserved bad reputation for killing babies. Not an easy home for a volatile teen-ager to live in. Salome awakened to the possibilities of sex when she saw John the Baptist imprisoned in the cistern and decided she wanted him any way she could get him, which, given his resistance, meant dead. She preyed upon her stepfather's inclination to incest to extract a big favour from him by doing her famous Dance of the Seven Veils. The favour, of course, was John's head on a platter, which she proceeded to kiss until she had an orgasm, thus shocking even Herod, who had the guards crush her with their shields. I've asked around if anyone knows of other cases of female necrophilia and haven't heard of any, so Salome qualifies in the realm of "non-traditional roles for women." But that's taking it a bit far.

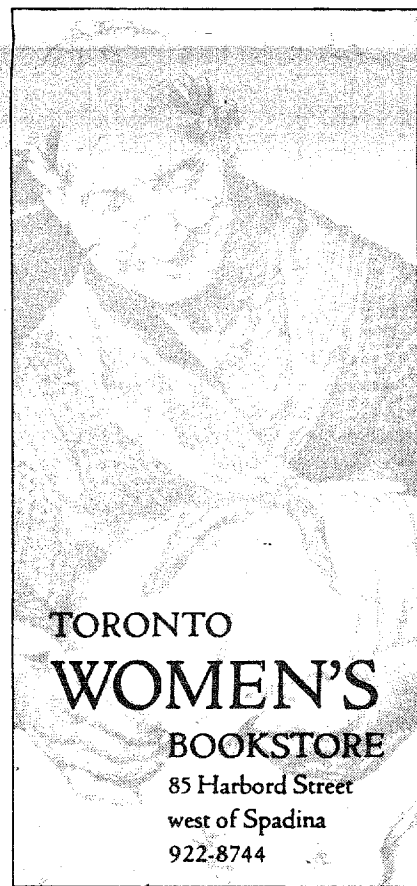
Back to the betrayed and wasting tubercular heroines for which opera is so famous. There is an encouraging undercurrent of sisterhood in Verdi's "La Traviata" (literally, the strayed female person), where we see Violetta and her sister courtesans making inroads into French society and improving their status by maintaining a united front. Violetta meets Alfredo at a party and moves in with him in a country residence, which she helps to rent by pawning her jewels. (It wasn't really so sudden and frivolous; Alfredo had been hanging out under her window for a couple of years.) Then his father persuades her to give him up to preserve the family name so that his sister can marry a nice boy. Violetta, heartbroken and fatally ill with consumption, splits for Paris, deliberately leading Alfredo to believe she ran off with a count so he will give her up and go home to Papa. In the end, too late of course, Papa is im-

pressed with her sterling character and decides to accept her into the family. At least she gets to die happily reunited with Alfredo and with Papa's blessing on their union. In those days it was no mean feat for a strayed female person to land a suitable husband and gain social acceptance. Too bad she didn't live to be an example to others, but plenty of her sisters managed the same feat and survived as well. The women of the demimonde of Paris and in the early 19th century were a real force in the eyes of their contemporaries.

When I said I was on to something, however, I meant Bellini's "Norma." Norma is a single parent whose occupation as a Druid high priestess makes the presence of her two children a real problem. Not only that, but the father is a Roman officer, and the Romans have conquered the Druids. So Norma is in a politically untenable position, especially when you realize right in the first act that the Druids depend on their high priestess to tell them when to start a revolt against the Romans. As if this weren't bad enough, the Roman in question has just fallen for another Druid priestess, Adalgisa, and is preparing to dump Norma and take Adalgisa away to Rome with him. Adalgisa is no fly-by-night priestess, however. She goes to Norma to be released from her vows to marry, which Norma kindly agrees to, remembering what she herself has been through. Norma asks who the lucky boy is, and in a tense and dramatic interchange, the women discover that the wretched Roman is two-timing them both.

Now comes the good part: they don't turn on each other at all, but rather vow mutual support and bond in a sisterly embrace. Adalgisa refuses to go to Rome and instead tries to persuade the Roman to go back to Norma and his children. He refuses and pursues her into the priestesses' residence, where he is caught. Norma at last counsels the Druids to go to war against Rome, and when the capture of the Roman necessitates that a fallen priestess be sacrificed, she confesses her own past rather than betray Adalgisa's current involvement and mounts the funeral pyre. In a singular burst of good taste, the Roman realizes what a good woman he has done in and hops into the fire with her. Women of strength and character, sticking together in adversity, refusing to let a man come between them... what more could we ask?

So at last I found some Redeeming Feminist Content in opera. "Rigoletto" is going to be on TV (PBS) on December 16th. If you can find any RFC in that one, write us your analysis and we'll send you a free "Norma" libretto! ●



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**Pork Roasts: 250 Feminist Cartoons;** \$2.95

**Witches:** Erica Jong; \$22.50

# MOVEMENT MATTERS

## The Person's Awards, 1981

On November 4, 1981 five women were honoured by the Governor-General with the Persons Awards for 1981. These medals have for three years been given to women who have made an outstanding contribution to the cause of women in Canada. The award was established on the fiftieth anniversary of the London Privy Council decision to overrule the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, thereby declaring that Canadian women were indeed persons for purposes of being appointed to the Senate.

The women receiving the award this year were:

**Barbara Cadbury**, Oakville, daughter of a suffragette, the youngest councillor elected in London elections in Britain. Her extensive and continuing work for Planned Parenthood in Canada and internationally, her work towards successfully changing the Criminal Code in 1969 and in organizing the Family Planning Federation and Planned Parenthood Association have made her a well deserved recipient of the Award.

**Agnes Davidson**, Regina, has been a pioneer in promoting the status of women in Saskatchewan for over 60 years. She helped found the Regina Status of Women and the Saskatchewan Action Committee, presented briefs on family property law and has been on the Regina Council of women and University Women's Club. She is the official grandmother of McLeod Public School and has been recognised for her work by the United Church, for refugees and for native women.

**Muriel Duckworth**, of Halifax, has been active in the creation of more than a dozen community and national organizations for education, improving the status of women and children, and of international and community co-operation. She has been President of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Voice of Women, and has been an executive member of OXFAM, UNICEF and the Nova Scotia Education Association. She has twice been a candidate for election to the legislature, won the YWCA Halifax Award for her contributions to the community and received an Honorary Degree from Mount Saint Vincent University.

**Florence Fernet Martell**, of Montréal, has worked throughout her long life as a writer, broadcaster and teacher. She has worked for the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the Women's Section, National Selection Service, Department of Labour. She worked tirelessly as Secretary of La ligue pour les droits de la femme in obtaining the vote for women in Québec.

**Cornelia Wood**, Stoney Plain, Alberta, taught school after she graduated at 16 from high school. Her work with the Women's Institutes spans several decades. She chaired the school board in Stoney Plain, wrote a book on how to conduct a meeting, and was elected to the Alberta legislature — serving 22 years, longer than any other woman. She holds life membership in many

organizations including the Consumers Association, Community Planning Association, Canadian Mental Health Association and many others.

Senator Florence Bird introduced the Award winners to the Governor General and Mrs. Schreyer, and read their citations to the assembled gathering of friends and relatives. One of the first holders of the Persons Award was Thérèse Casgrain, and Senator Bird spoke movingly of her outstanding contribution to the cause of women in Canada.

## Reason and Violence Call for papers

A day-long interdisciplinary feminist session is being planned for the Learned Societies' Meetings in Ottawa in 1982. The theme of the session is *Reason and Violence* and feminists from all disciplines are encouraged to attend and participate. A similar session was held last year in Halifax on *The Politics of Feminism: History, Philosophy, Strategy and Significance* and it was extremely successful.

The session is being organized as a workshop to maximize the opportunity for discussion and for the exchange of ideas between feminists across traditional academic boundaries. Designated speakers, therefore, will be asked to prepare relatively brief comments (rather than formal papers). If you wish to participate, please submit a proposal — an abstract or a short paper (max. 15 mins.) by the end of February, 1982 to: Geraldine Finn, 269 Jacques Cartier, Point Gatineau, PQ J8T 2W3; (819) 561-3847.

## What's New?

The Gay Community Appeal is in the midst of their 1981-82 fundraising season in Toronto, hoping to raise \$35,000 to support 23 projects requested by lesbian and gay male groups. These projects accent cultural, historical, organizational and counselling concerns. Their main fundraising activity is a Support Our Selves (SOS) party held in homes of lesbians and gay men. At these, hosts invite friends to view an audio-visual show, discuss project portfolios and to donate money. For more information phone (416) 869-3036.

## Day Care Lobby

Last May groups of concerned activists formed the Day Care Coalition of Metropolitan Toronto. The organization is embarking on a campaign to lobby and pressure members of the legislature to enact legislation to improve the day care facilities

in the province. The coalition is calling for:

1. a direct grant of \$5.00 per day for every child in a non-profit day care centre;
2. an immediate provision of 10,000 subsidized spaces to meet pressing provincial needs; and
3. a provincial task force to investigate ways of making day care a universally accessible service to all children in Ontario.

From Monday, November 30 to Friday December 11, the coalition will co-ordinate a lobby of Metro MPPs by residents in their riding. The coalition has stated that substantial improvements in child care services in the community cannot be made without intense collective pressure on the provincial government. Organizations and individuals can help make the lobby a success by joining the organization, by having your organization endorse the lobby, and by assisting the lobby committees in providing names and telephone numbers of individuals who will visit MPPs during the weeks of the lobby.

For further information, contact the Coalition's office at (416) 445-5819.

## TACWL

On September 19th, 1981 the Toronto Area Caucus of Women and the Law, TACWL (pronounced "tackle"! ) held its founding meeting. This culminated six months of organizing work by 35 women in the Toronto area. Our founding meeting was a great success: we managed to adopt a constitution, elect a steering committee, and enjoy ourselves in the bargain (Linda Ryan Nye and the Clichettes gave stunning performances during the reception!) TACWL now has over 80 members, three standing committees and eight working committees covering immigration, labour, pornography, Bill C-53, assaulted women, abortion rights, marriage and divorce jurisdiction, and the Charter of Rights.

TACWL members include lawyers, law students, community workers, librarians, secretaries, academics and anyone who supports our objectives and wants to join. Our general purpose is to work together as feminists to improve the status of women, focussing on the legal aspects of this task. More specifically, our objectives are:

- to take political action leading to changes in laws and practices affecting women;
- to co-operate in the work of other women's groups and provide them with legal resources;
- to establish programs of speakers, seminars and discussion groups to promote a better understanding of the legal issues affecting women;
- to provide mutual support among our members through the sharing of expertise and resources.

Some of TACWL's current activities include the following: the writing of a brief to oppose the transfer of marriage and divorce jurisdiction from the federal to provincial government; an in-depth study of the pro-

posed sexual assault legislation, plus our own recommendations for improving this; the setting-up of a 'domestic workers' hotline to provide legal advice for domestic workers; and intensive lobbying efforts in conjunction with other women's groups to protect the equal rights provisions of the Charter of Rights. On December 5th, TACWL members and their guests will be seeing *Not a Love Story* and participating in a discussion on strategies to deal with pornography. Panelists Susan Cole of *Broadside*, Lynn King, a lawyer who is representing artists opposed to censorship, Kim Fullerton of a Toronto WAVAW group and Dorothy Henaut who produced the film will be leading the discussion. In January, TACWL's Bill C-53 committee will be holding a forum to discuss the proposed legislation on sexual assault and the effects it may have. Also in the new year, TACWL's political action committee will hold a seminar on techniques of political action.

If you are interested in joining TACWL contact Lois at 653-5788 or write to TACWL, PO Box 231, Station B, Toronto, M5T 2T2. The membership fee is \$5 student/unemployed, \$10 employed. If your organization needs legal advice of some kind or wants a speaker on a particular topic of interest to women, please give us a call.

Geri Sadoway

## Women's Building Freezes

The Winnipeg Women's Building is in crisis financially. This building has been operating since Nov. 1979. Up to now their main source of income has been from groups who rent office space in the building. Since the winter is quickly approaching, this house is perhaps the only women-owned and operated building in Canada; is in need of funds for their exorbitant heating bills. If you wish to help out financially, contact the Women's Building at 730 Alexander Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E 1H9.

## Women Surviving

TORONTO — Over 150 men, women and children packed Friends House in Toronto on Thursday evening, October 29, to discuss "Women, War and the Nuclear Nightmare." The meeting, sponsored by Women for Survival, Voice of Women, and Congress of Canadian Women, voted to demand the Canadian government take the initiative for disarmament by declaring Canada a nuclear-free zone and ending government support for military production and the export of uranium and nuclear reactors.

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Meeting to fight the "notwithstanding" clause in the constitution are (l to r) Marion Bryden, Pat Israel, Ada Hill, Linda Ryan Nye, Jean Wood, Marilou McPhedran, Laura Sabia at OISE in Toronto, November 16, 1981.

Moira Armour





Marie Couillard and Annis Pratt at the Dialogue Conference at York University

Margaret Perkins

## RFR

*Resources for Feminist Research (RFR)*, a feminist quarterly, is soliciting material for a lesbian issue to be published in March 1983. The editors would be interested in receiving articles on subjects ranging from politics to unions, culture, work, lesbian history, and health. The issue will contain research articles, discussion pieces, book reviews, bibliographies, and resources of all kinds. Completed articles, proposals, outlines, ideas, and contacts would be welcomed. Submissions must be in by July 1, 1982.

For further information, write to: Resources for Feminist Research, c/o Department of Sociology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6; or phone Kathy at (416) 533-3945.

## Statement of Intent TRCC



The following is a statement of intent, prepared by the TRCC collective members, and submitted to *Broadside*.

Over the past four months there has been a lot of struggle at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre. This has resulted in a split within the collective and the resignation of some volunteers from the centre. While the roots of our struggle were political differences, they were not addressed openly and the focus was turned onto personal conflicts between individuals. It is important that we make this known for two reasons: so we can be accountable to the community we work with, and in the hopes that there are women within that community who have experience and knowledge that could be valuable to us as we continue our struggle.

Due to the numbers of women who have left the centre, we have had to examine how new women are integrated into the collective and how we as collective members, support one another in an ongoing way. We have clearly made mistakes in both these areas. Over the past several years the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre has politicized and radicalized. We now define ourselves as a feminist collective and we see political action as an integral part of our work. Our training sessions however have not com-

pletely reflected these changes. We have given new members a lot of theoretical knowledge without giving them the time and space to deal with the emotions that this knowledge opens up.

We are excited about where we are heading and are now in the process of restructuring the centre (among the issues we are looking at are: the use of problem-solving agreements, caucuses, and what kind of political alliances we want to make). Our commitment to keep all the services and activities of the centre going has never been shaken, besides the ongoing work of the crisis line, counselling, support groups, public speaking, and self-defense courses, we are planning a conference for the spring and other forms of political action and outreach within the community.

As an example of our new commitment to becoming more open and accessible to our community, we will continue to write to *Broadside* as the centre continues this process of change. We encourage women who have questions, concerns or comments to write or call us at : Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, P.O. Box 6597, Station 'A', Toronto, Ont. M5W 1X4; (416) 964-7477.

### MOVING?

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



Deena Rasky

Sheila Rowbotham spoke about the influence of feminism in the UK on the current political situation at the Women, Power and Consciousness Conference at the University of Toronto, October 30, 1981.

## LETTERS

### Broadside:

Am enclosing my subscription renewal. Wish I could afford the Sustaining sub. — maybe next year.

Among other articles I enjoyed in the October issue, I particularly liked Dorothy Livesay's 'Far, Foreign, and Familiar.'

I returned three weeks ago from a fortnight in Moscow, Leningrad, Tashkent and Samarkand. I found things to be as Livesay described them and I was glad. Particularly in the Central Asian Republic of Uzbekistan, in which lie Tashkent and Samarkand (the ancient silk route from the Orient), women live very different lives. They are no longer in 'purdah' and the veil used in pre-revolutionary times to hide their beauty is now thrown across a shoulder. Legislation protects women in all the republics of the USSR equally.

I enjoyed my short trip, learnt a lot from it and agree wholeheartedly with Dorothy Livesay when she says in her article, "Surely it is time to look at the common plight of women the world over, instead of raising ideological and overemotional reactions to one system or another." Well said!

Shirley Limbert  
King, Ont.

### Broadside:

Thanks for an enjoyable feminist newspaper. I've been to two Womynly Way Productions I learned of in *Broadside*, and got the albums I advertised for in Classified.

Could we have an article on how couples are coping with double last names, each keeping their original names, alternatives and what to do about their children's last names? Also, what about one on women and the laws in Canada, how we are coping with them, how we can or are changing them where change is needed and finally changes already made and in the making?

Thanks.

Laurie Kokko  
Toronto

### Broadside:

I would like to thank Chris Lawrence for providing *Broadside* readers with a very informative article, 'Arms and the Men,' published in the October 1981 issue.

I am a member of the Peace Tax Fund Committee and have written to Mr. Lamontagne and other MPs in Ottawa voicing my concern.

In her article, Lawrence mentions an organization called WANT (Women

Against Nuclear Technology) and I am wondering if you could provide me with an address for this or any other organization in order that I might become involved.

Betty Leech  
Victoria, BC

(There is a WANT group currently active in Vancouver. For information, write: WANT, c/o Annette Clough, 1530 Graveley St., Vancouver, V5L 3A6 BC.)

### Broadside:

The current issue of the University of Toronto *Graduate* reports that Barker and Margaret Fairley offered the university's Faculty Club seventeen field sketches of the Group of Seven if the club would change its membership policy to allow women to join. It did so, and women can now be members.

If any *Broadside* reader is planning to give or bequeath something of value to a group or institution, if feasible it seems like a good idea to attach a pro-woman rider of some sort to the gift. At the least this would raise consciousness about the present inequalities of women.

Anne Innis Dagg  
Waterloo, Ont.

### Broadside:

Keep up the good work and don't go under! I wish I could offer you more substantial figures, but that's life. Please renew my subscription and send your paper to my mother too, as a gift subscription from me. It'll give us things to talk about, and always makes a body consider one's own situation. Looking forward to the next issue. Luck to you.

Margaret Weiser  
Guelph, Ont.

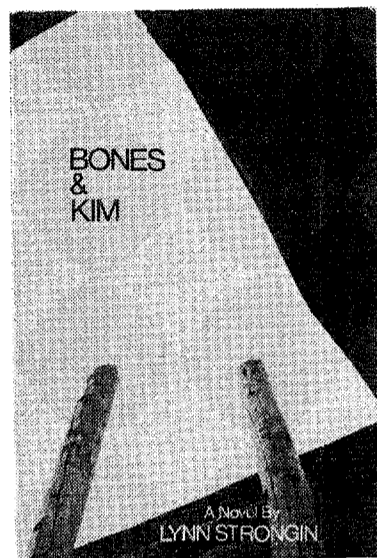
### Broadside:

We are sending you information (see Movement Matters) introducing TACWL (Toronto Area Caucus of Women and the Law) to your readers. We hope you will print it so that women's groups in Toronto will know we exist and will start using us as a resource. The recent fight for the equality clause in the Charter of Rights shows how important it is for women to come together on issues. We want to learn from other women and to offer our particular skills to help our sisters.

Gerri Sadoway  
TACWL, Toronto

# A Book For

## Ears and Bones



by Betsy Nuse

Maureen Brady, *Give Me Your Good Ear*. Argyle, NY: Spinsters, Ink. 1979. Pp. 130. \$5.50; Lynne Strongin, *Bones and Kim*. Spinsters, Ink. 1980. Pp. 116. \$6.95.

Spinsters, Ink. is a young United States feminist publishing house. The two enjoyable novels reviewed here are their first fiction offerings.

*Give Me Your Good Ear* by Maureen Brady is the story of Francie Kelly. Francie leaves Ben, her partner of two years, and sets out to live on her own. She's supported through this difficult time by Lisa, a friend from her CR group; her mother, whom she revisits several times; and also by her own insights about her life and relationships. She sees analogues in her growing up for her present pain and confusion. Her reticence with Lisa and the group reminds Francie of the discomfort she suffered during "girls' nights" at Sunday evening youth meetings. Lisa reminds Francie of her best friend from school days, Debbie. And most dramatically, walking out on Ben awakens the vivid memories of her father's "accidental" death.

It couldn't have been more than one or two minutes later ... when the scream came. It was Mother. It pierced through my blankets. It had to be her. It sounded as though she were splitting in two. I had never heard her scream before. I couldn't tell whether it was going on and on, or if it was just echoing in my ears. It was the only sound. The rain had stopped.

*Give Me Your Good Ear* is the story of present life and past life coming together, of a young woman making connections and finding strength in wholeness.

If *Give Me Your Good Ear* is a formal portrait of synphony, *Bones and Kim* by Lynn Strongin is an impressionist painting or a piece of program music. Narrative gives way to a collage of scenes, recollections, letters, and dreams, and time turns in on itself again and again. The novel thus reflects the "present" state of its main character, Kim. Now thirty-six, wheelchair-bound since the age of twelve, Kim is taking a year off to live in New England and write. Around Kim is a wonderful assortment of women characters of all ages and temperaments: Kim's mother, Bones, her grandmother Rella and her sister Mattie, her lovers Norah and Hannah, and the old women she cares so deeply for — Carey, Evelyn, Willa, and Stacey. Descriptions of where Kim has lived shine in the text like gems. Strongin has a poet's eye for the fine details that capture the essence of scenes and personalities, so her language is at once simple and memorable.

When we were girls during the war there was an ancient black wrought iron sleigh up our barn out back. Gleaming with cobwebs in the old grilling. When we were wrought up, Mattie and I, we'd slink back there ... We'd sit there tightlipped, hands on imaginary reins. Sometimes we waited an hour in utter silence, watching sun darken through the barn window till the window was shellacked, a painting. Then I'd say, "Hey, Mattie, d'you hear the sleighbells?" If she shook her black head and said "Nope," I'd wait longer. But when she finally came around and said, "Um hum, Kim, I hear 'em" we'd close our eyes tight and take off.

A friend of Maureen Brady tells a story in an afterword to *Give Me Your Good Ear* which is almost worth the price of the book for any of you interested in media politics. It

seems that *Give Me Your Good Ear* (rather like Canadian Frances Duncan's novel *Dragonhunt*, which happily was published by Women's Press and which was reviewed in the November issue of *Broadside*) made the round of establishment publishers, feminist presses, and literary agents for two years before Maureen herself in partnership with Judith McDaniel formed Spinsters, Ink. and published it. Wrote one agent in rejecting the manuscript:

I felt that the insights pointed out through Francie's situation, while valid and important, were not enough to set the novel apart in an ever more crowded market of women's novels. If you should decide to apply your considerable talents to a commercial novel, I would be pleased to see it.

Jacqueline St. Joan, a friend of Brady's, astutely points out that "as feminists, as writers, as readers, we must ask ourselves what these rejections mean from a political perspective." There are values and assumptions behind most publishing decisions that must be questioned. One assumption St. Joan postulates is that

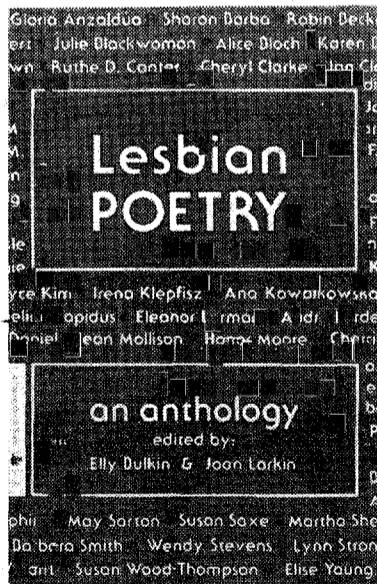
there should be a quota on the number of "women's books" on the market ... An extension of this idea is that there is nothing universal about women's literature. *Give Me Your Good Ear* thus is perceived as nothing substantially more than one woman's personal odyssey, while a book like *Portnoy's Complaint* is a best seller with "universal significance."

Fortunately Maureen Brady and the other women operating Spinsters, Ink. do not have such blinkered vision.

Betsy Nuse works at the Toronto Women's Bookstore.

(NOTE: Spinsters, Ink.'s first publication was an excellent booklet by Judith McDaniel called *Reconstituting the World: The Poetry and Vision of Adrienne Rich*. It is only 24 pages long and costs a mere \$1.95. If you haven't yet caught up with this 1978 publication, hurry down to your local women's bookstore (or order it if necessary) and get it. It'll be worth your trouble.)

## Joy and Humour



by Penny Goldsmith

Elly Bulkin and Joan Larkin, editors, *Lesbian Poetry: An Anthology*. Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press 1981. Pp. 296. \$13.95.

The word poem comes from the Greek *poiein*, meaning to make, to create, and it would be a fitting tribute to *Lesbian Poetry: An Anthology* to call the book itself a poem in that context. Bulkin and Larkin in the preface describe briefly but concisely their rationale for compiling the anthology: "For us, putting together this book combines the personal and political. The poems cover both private joy and humour, and a larger context of racial, economic and social inequality and struggle..." It works.

The cultural history of the lesbians in this anthology is varied. Elsa Gidlow is the oldest author and Felice Newman the youngest, and between them sit both the unknown and the known writers of lesbian poetry. The editors talk about the women who have come out in this anthology for the

first time, as well as the lesbians who have been writing and publishing for years. But the impact of the collection lies in the fact that the writing is almost consistently excellent.

The poetry is a history of women. It is all of our experiences — as lesbians, women with children, women of different cultures and class backgrounds. It is not a celebration of sisterhood and lesbianism at the expense of reality; it is a harsh description of our lives and struggles alone. But it is a celebration of our strength as women, as lesbians, and as poets.

These are poets, however, who do not mystify the trade. Woodsworth defined poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility." Audre Lorde has this to say:

The difference between poetry and rhetoric is being ready to kid yourself instead of your children

Poetry is supposed to be idealistic and romantic — the truth about love, that one person, the muse, who inspires the creative genius. Frankie Hucklenbroich:

For example, I know I'm going to want you to stay and watch the late movie even if it is just Roy and Dale...

I never expected any overt romance, or very much concern but Roy and Dale would be scandalized and I used to know a cigar store Indian that was softer-hearted than you.

The differences between a political poetry anthology and the emotion recollected in tranquility genre is that we don't have time to be tranquil or to recollect our emotions so tidily. Nor do we strive for it. These poems are angry poems. We are angry with each other, but mostly we are angry at the society which we're dealing with:

The legal answer to the problem of feeding children is ten free lunches every month, being equal, in the child's real life, to eating lunch every other day. Monday but not Tuesday. I like to think of the President eating lunch Monday, but not Tuesday. And when I think of the President and the law, and the problem of feeding children, I like to think of Harriet Tubman and her revolver. (Susan Griffin)

• continued page 18

## Dances and Circles

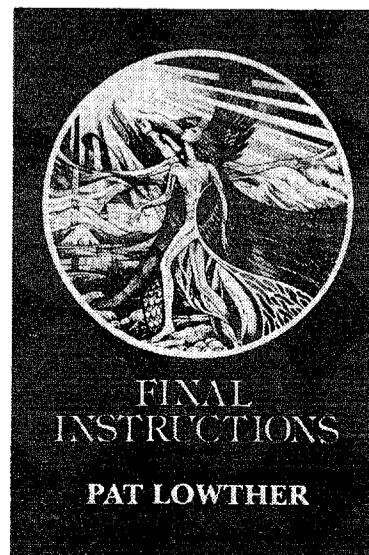
by Jean Wilson

Dorothy Livesay, *The Raw Edges: Voices from Our Time*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press 1981. Pp. \$3.

Anne Marriott, *The Circular Coast: Poems New and Selected*. Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press 1981. Pp. 80. \$6.95.

P.K. Page, *Evening Dance of the Grey Flies*. Toronto: Oxford University Press 1981. Pp. 95. \$6.50.

Pat Lowther, *Final Instructions: Early and Uncollected Poems*. Edited by Dona Sturmanis and Fred Candelaria. Vancouver: West Coast Review/Orcasound Publications 1981. Pp. 72. \$5.

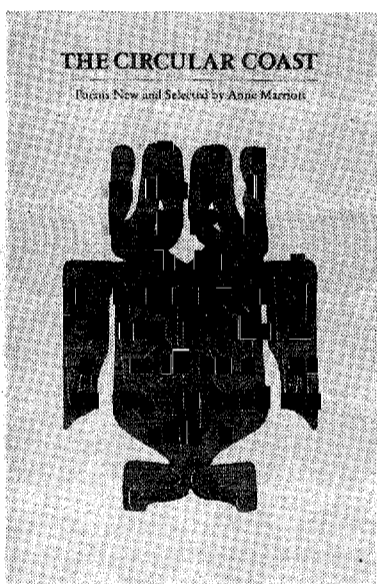


# All Seasons

Helen Potrebenco, *Two Years on the Muckamuck Line*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers 1981. Pp. 11. \$3.  
Elizabeth Gourlay, *Songs and Dances*. Vancouver: Caitlin Press 1981. Pp. 53. \$5.

This has been a bumper year for poetry published by Canadian west coast women. In particular there are six books I think are essential reading. They vary widely in theme, length, and kind, and are by familiar and perhaps not so familiar poets. Dorothy Livesay, Anne Marriott, and P.K. Page are the senior poets in this group; Pat Lowther, Helen Potrebenco, and Elizabeth Gourlay their juniors, but also polished in their craft.

Dorothy Livesay's *The Raw Edges: Voices from Our Time* is a short poem with five voices, or seven since the male and female voices speak both as painters and as "commoners," or ordinary people. The title of the book was "signalled by a dream/I knew from flying/photographs/where I had been/from what cloud/onto this man-made/torn terrain," but also has the less dreamlike connotation of being the healing edge of a wound — the raw edge is the healing edge. The poem begins and ends with the sibyl, who first sets the stage for the other voices (the poet, painters, commoners) to lament the current moral and physical decay of the world and then offsets their collective lament with an exhortation to "Sing then/for the inner ear's/hearing/so each man and woman/common and uncommon/may achieve an instant of plain prayer/be bird



on wing/meadowlark soaring high/through unsullied air." Livesay's lyric gift is again evident in this poem, and it is a good addition to her canon.

So is *The Circular Coast: Poems New and Selected* a good addition to Anne Marriott's publications. Its contents range in time of composition from 1936 to 1979 and include the deservedly much-anthologized "The Wind Our Enemy." For those who don't know this poem, it is a haunting evocation of life during the "Dirty Thirties" in the Canadian prairies — "No rain, no crop, no feed, no faith, only wind." This poem was originally written in 1937 and I for one am glad to have it accessible again.

Most of the poems in this book concern landscape. The west coast is as marvellously brought alive as are the prairies. Both provide Marriott with a "multicoloured passionate life." And yet in the end the poet is "a dark lonely indweller," who can only observe this awesome and sometimes forbidding landscape. "Tide quenched our mouths/proved us /forever/foreign."

This is a lovely book. Anne Marriott deserves more notice than she has received. Her previous publications include *The Wind Our Enemy* (1939), *Calling Adventurers* (Governor General's Award for Poetry, 1941), *Sandstone and Other Poems* (1945), and *Countries* (1971). She has been well served by her publishers in *The Circular Coast*. It is visually satisfying and one whose moods are well reflected.

*Evening Dance of the Grey Flies* is another welcome book from a major Canadian poet not much heard from recently. P.K. Page is principally known as a poet and has published 4 books of poetry, her latest being *Cry Ararat!* (1967). Her last published book, however, was *The Sun and the Moon and Other Fictions*, a 1973 Anansi reprint. The title "fiction" in that book is a short novel originally published in 1944. It concerns a young woman who gradually realizes that she has unwanted vampiristic powers which are destroying the soul of the man she loves and which ultimately destroy her. It's a powerful and horrifying story.

Page's new book also has a similarly gripping story, as well as poems written since 1974. "Unless the Eye Catch Fire..." is a memorable short story about the end of time.

And about the perception of colour and light, which seems to be a particular focus for Page. The eulogistic title poem, for example, is an interplay of grey, gold, and white. "As grass and leaves grow blank/the grey flies gleam—/their cursive flight a gold calligraphy.../at once your face/grey with illness and with age—/a silverpoint against the pillow's white/shone suddenly like the sun/before you died." Not all the poetry in this book is so heavy: P.K. Page also has a nice wry humour which comes through often.

Another poet with wry humour and who unfortunately won't be heard from again is Pat Lowther. Her *Final Instructions: Early and Uncollected Poems* is a posthumous collection ranging from the late fifties to the early seventies. The title of the book is taken from a C. Day Lewis poem of the same title. Lowther had a copy of it among her papers and had been interested in the British poets of the thirties, so the title seems appropriate.

Lowther has been least well served visually by her publishers. This is an ugly book typographically. My other main complaint is that I think even approximate dates on the poems would have been helpful, as they are arranged thematically, not chronologically. The only distinction made is between works from an "early" unpublished manuscript and "later" uncollected works.

These criticisms aside, this is an interesting collection. Some of the poems are unpolished and probably not what Lowther would choose to print, but read against those in *A Stone Diary* (1977) they make for interesting comparisons. "Stone," for example, is a fine short poem showing Lowther's gift for the pithy statement:

My son brings me a smooth stone  
Flecked with mica, marbled with green.  
Surely this is a lucky lodestone,  
Locked safely in the hollowed land.

Carefully fold your fingers, son,  
With the smooth stone safely locked within.  
Tightly grasp and guard its glisten.  
Luck's a favour few have owned.

Luck's a favour Pat Lowther didn't have.

The most didactic and visually most striking book in this assortment is Helen Potrebenco's *Two Years on the Muckamuck Line*. Potrebenco has written 3 previous books: *Taxi* (1975), a fictional account of a woman taxi driver's life in Vancouver; *No Streets of Gold: A Social History of Ukrainians in Alberta* (1977); and *A Flight of Average Persons: Stories and Other Writings* (1979). Anything Potrebenco writes reveals her social and political consciousness. She does not write the introspective, lyrical, essentially politically detached poetry the other poets mentioned do. The *Muckamuck* poem is a personal distillation of her experience on the picket line at the well-known Vancouver restaurant which specialized in west coast Indian food and was staffed by Indians but owned and run by whites. Between 1978 and 1980 there was a bitter confrontation between management and staff at the Muckamuck concerning unionization which resulted in the restaurant's closing and an unsuccessful attempt by its management to destroy SORWUC, the union involved in the strike. SORWUC is the Service, Office and Retail Workers of Canada, and will receive money remaining after production expenses have been paid from sale of this book.

The book itself is beautifully produced, principally through the efforts of Penny Goldsmith and with the help of Pulp Press and Press Gang. The long narrative poem is a colourful, scathing account of the strike written by a woman with a sharp eye and tongue.

• continued page 18

## Rights and Wrongs

Janet Ray, *Towards Women's Rights*. Focus on Canadian History series. Toronto: Grolier Ltd., 1981. Pp. 96. \$8.95.

This is an excellent concise history of the development of women's rights, particularly in Canada, with some reference to the United States, Britain and elsewhere. I would think it could be read by children from at least Grade 6 up, and it's not a bad read for adults either. Janet Ray writes clearly and interestingly and provides a lot of information in a short book.

Subjects covered include the role and status of women generally in nineteenth-century Canada, the Ontario campaign to improve women's rights, the campaign in the western provinces and the early successes there, the suffrage movement in Canada, the effect of women's obtaining the vote, and the later effect of World War II and the beginning

of the contemporary women's movement in Canada.

Here and there the main text is supplemented by relevant boxed quotations and at the end of the book is a good bibliography, questions for each chapter, and biographies of some of the principal women involved in women's rights in Canada. There are also plenty of illustrations — including an especially fine one on page 81 of the 1979 International Women's Day march in Toronto, taken by Moira Armour, featuring a stalwart band of *Broadside* friends holding a sign announcing the paper's imminent publication.

Ray's conclusion is sensible and appropriately subtitled "Still a Long Way to Go." Her last paragraph is as follows:

Many people argue that the women's movement is confined to white middle-class concerns and that it is against women who choose to be homemakers instead of seeking a career in the paid work force. All the evidence denies this. The movement has not been confined to a few isolated groups working for their own ends. Rather its strength lies in its diversity and universality ... The movement does not say that a woman must have a career outside the home rather than a career as a wife and mother; it does not say that a woman must have an abortion under certain circumstances, nor does it say that all women must seek to be bosses if they would rather be workers. The women's movement simply says that women, indeed that all people, should have the information, the legal right, and the opportunity to choose the work and make the decisions that best suit their individual needs.

This is a clear and upbeat message that most children should be able to absorb. I hope this book is well distributed across the country and that Janet Ray plans to write more such books.

— J.W.

## Casey and Co.



*The Missing Button Adventure*, by Susan Marcus CBC Merchandising, \$7.50.

Susan Marcus made up a story about Finnegan and Mr. Dressup and me. It's called *The Missing Button Adventure*. Hajime Sawada drew some pictures, and then they made it into a book. It's a pretty good story, and I'll tell you what happened in it. My teddy bear lost a button and I went looking for it with Finnegan. We went to some pretty neat places, like up in a balloon, and down under the ocean. I asked Susan if all that stuff really happened to me, and she said, no, it was just make-believe. That's good, because I didn't remember it happening to me, but I like to pretend that it did.

I think little kids will like this book, and grown-ups will like it too. If they read it to their kids a few times, they will know it off by heart. I think grown-ups will like that.

My favourite page is the one where we meet a penguin. That's the best picture, and we look very pleased to see each other.

I'm not sure how much money you need to buy this book, but if you don't have enough, you should bug the librarian to get it in the library.

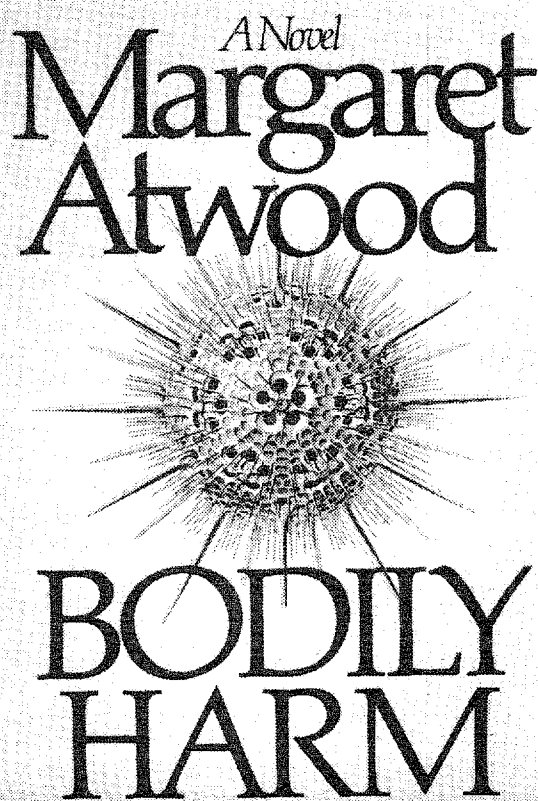
I think Susan did a good job to write this story, and it's much better for you than watching TV, even if I do say so myself. Merry Christmas and a Happy Hanukkah from Casey.

Casey

(As told to Judith Lawrence, creator and performer of the puppet characters on CBC's children's show *Mr. Dressup*.)

# ARTS

## Bodily Harm: Terminal Trendiness



by Joanne Kates

Margaret Atwood, *Bodily Harm*. Toronto. McClelland & Stewart 1981. Pp. 301. \$16.95.

During the 1973 coup that overthrew the government of Allende in Chile, a certain incident occurred. A guitarist who had been a partisan of the Allende government's liberation goals was thrown in jail. One day the military commander of the jail ordered that guitarist to be brought to him.

"Sing and play," he said to the guitarist.

So the guitarist began to sing, a song of national liberation. The commandant said no, not that one. Some other song. Again, the guitarist began to sing, and again it was the song of liberation. The commandant became angry, and yelled at him to sing something else. Again the guitarist began to sing, and again it was the song of liberation. "Take him away," the commandant said to the guards, "and cut off his hands." Which they did.

In its best passages, Margaret Atwood's new novel *Bodily Harm* is about those hands, for the questions it asks are: what makes it possible, and indeed necessary, to fight injustice? What makes it possible for some people some of the time and not at other times? Why is it that some people, at some times, see injustice and refuse to open their eyes, refuse to fight it? What does it cost to fight? And what are the costs of pretending not to see?

The hero/anti-hero who grapples with these questions is Rennie Wilford, a Toronto food and fashion journalist. On the surface, what happens to Rennie in the novel is that she gets breast cancer, survives a modified mastectomy, splits up with Jake, her live-in lover, and goes to an obscure Caribbean island to recuperate and do a travel story. While there, unbeknown to herself, Rennie becomes a gun-runner and an innocent participant in somebody else's revolution. In all Atwood's writing, surfaces are very important, but only as reflections of what's underneath, and what's underneath her rather puerile thriller is the story of Rennie Wilford's awakening — to herself and to the world.

As the story begins, Rennie is a trendy cynic, caring only for fashion, style, surfaces. Her trendiness, though, masks a profound hopelessness about the world. She doesn't think a better world is possible; ergo, she doesn't act as if it is. But part of her has stayed back in Griswold, the small town where she was raised and where style has no power. That part of her knew that her fashionable life was a lie, but it had been buried under years of trivialization. To an editor who loves her articles on trends, she says: "If I could see into the future, do you think I'd waste my time on this sort of thing?" But she keeps these insights on a short rein, because she knows that in her trendy Toronto world, her

closet honesty is a liability. Outrage is out of date, she tells herself, and she would never do anything that was out of style.

Until she gets cancer.

Cancer is Atwood's best metaphor: something is eating away at Rennie from the inside out, and she can't see it; it might even be in the breast they didn't maim. "From the surface you can feel nothing, but she no longer trusts surfaces." Like her breast, the world has suddenly become opaque, more complicated, deeper, a mask for decay. As Rennie begins to see reality, a struggle wages inside her: to open her eyes or to keep them shut. She would rather not look at the horror. "Rennie decided there were some things it was better not to know any more about than you had to. Surfaces, in many cases, were preferable to depths. She did a piece on the return of the angora sweater, and another one on the handknit-look industry. That was soothing. There was much to be said for trivia." The irony is that the more she clings to surfaces, the more they start to crack, and she with them.

Getting cancer forces her to look below, and also drags some of her illusions into the cold light of day. Rennie has always thought that somebody else (probably a man, preferably a professional) would rescue her from life, and now that she's sick, the knight on the white charger has to rescue her from death, too. He is Daniel, her cancer surgeon, and she fixates on him after the operation. He will save her life, she thinks. He will make it all better. He will love her. She will love him. Daddy will make all the scary things go away. Daniel is in charge. Daddy is the doctor. The powerlessness that Rennie makes so real by believing in it is at the root of her hopelessness. After the operation she sinks deeper and deeper into the opaque slime of her terror, of her inability to act, and as she sinks she waits for Daniel to rescue her. Her waiting takes the form of trying to seduce Daniel (a comfortably married man) because she thinks that if he makes love to her, she will feel whole once again. But when finally, after holding out long enough to create some suspense, he gives in and does it, she feels "raped" because Daniel has been the needy one, has nothing to give, and has desperately needed her. At that moment, while Daniel is putting on his shoes, Rennie has a revelation of herself, that she is playing for keeps and that no Daniel can rescue her from life, or death. This is what terminal means, she thought. "Get used to it." These epiphanies are Atwood's great strength as a novelist, these moments of revelation in which people realize important things about life. Atwood takes complex threads and puts them together in simple-looking epiphanies.

Until Rennie's cancer cracks her cynicism and makes her less manageable, she lives with Jake, who likes her for her body and not much else. Rennie goes along with this situation not because she thinks it's all right, but because she thinks she can't get anything better. She had once promised herself she'd never fake orgasm, but she does with Jake. Their relationship is a collection of little lies and alienations, Rennie massaging Jake's ego, Jake trying to be nice to Rennie, but neither acting naturally. Atwood's portrait of the revelations between the sexes is painful to read, pessimistic, and true. Women will recognize themselves and their male lovers in Rennie and Jake, and they will cringe.

Through the voice of Jocasta, Rennie's best friend, Atwood tells us, furthermore, that when women announced that they too wanted sex, "all of a sudden millions of pricks went limp. Nationwide." Jocasta says that men still want to score, but only if they have all the power; they only want

you if you struggle a little, act like a child who's being taken — a bit of genteel rape, veiled by female consent.

That's what Jake is like. He grabs Rennie from behind a lot, likes to sneak up and scare her. Once he even climbed in the window. Pseudo-rape is his specialty, holding her down and fucking her. "Admit it turns you on," he says. "Admit you love it. Ask for it. Say please." Jake is into sophisticated urban brutality, and Rennie goes along with it, pretends it's okay, until one day something hits her in the face.

She tours the seized pornography display at the Metro Toronto Police headquarters, and one particular image sticks in her craw more than the others. In one porn film, a rat crawls out of a woman's vagina. Rennie throws up all over the nice policeman's shoes, and when she gets home she sees Jake more clearly. It feels awful to be scared of the one you love, to want to trust him but not be able to, to be scared of him, to feel used by him. Part of Rennie's disintegration is this dive into letting herself feel awful about men, about Jake, about being touched, being devoured. Atwood is an expert about cannibalistic relationships. Rennie says to herself: "Being in love was like running barefoot along a street covered with broken bottles ... it made you visible, soft, penetrable..." Once Rennie sees, she slowly and painfully refuses to stay blind.

Subsequently, Rennie falls from her pedestal of stylish disengagement, and becomes engaged. She has been terrified of getting involved (Atwood constantly refers to her terror of "massive involvement," meaning runaway cancer) and would prefer staying a sweet harmless girl-woman to be parented and rescued by Daniel, but she's smart enough to stop expecting when events prove her expectations ludicrous. Slowly she sheds her trendy illusions the way a caterpillar sheds its cocoon.

Then from the Caribbean island, an activist named Dr. Minnow asks her to write articles about exploitation and hunger there. "Don't count on me," she wants to tell him, "I'm dying." But she doesn't say it; she thinks this might be worth staying alive for. Next, she touches earth again with her body, she who thought that the surgeon's knife had cut her off from ever being touched again. She who before was the prisoner of her fear, is metamorphosed — in her own head — into one of the lucky ones. She lets Paul, one of the island's inhabitants, see her scar, and tells him: "I was lucky." Her perspective on cancer is changing, and with it her perspective on herself. It is a case of illness healing the person, along with some powerful shoves from a Caribbean mini-insurrection. By the end of the novel, events force Rennie to discover her hope and her power, she flies home, knowing she will report the truth as she sees it, that she will no longer don the comfortable blinkers dictated by fashion, and that she must do so immediately, because she has little time left.

The ending is a surprise: we never quite expect Rennie to come so far, and therein lies the novel's weaknesses. We don't get to see enough of her development. She spends too many pages being a timid trendy, and not enough developing, growing into her power and vision. The surprise ending of Rennie's becoming involved is nice if you like suspense thrillers, but those of us with a taste for something meatier need more guts in the character. Atwood is a brilliant satirist. Whatever she looks at, she sees with 20/20 vision; her descriptions of the world are painfully accurate, but I want her to train those x-ray eyes on things that matter more (to me) than Toronto trends. Atwood knows, and shows the cancer in the world out there, but I want her to go farther with it. Her superficial treatment of a failed Caribbean revolution isn't enough. Rennie telling herself on the plane home that she will "report" isn't enough. What will she report? What is the truth as she sees it? What needs to be told? Exactly what is the cancer in Rennie's world, as she sees it through her new eyes, and what are her dreams now?

In spite of its political underdevelopment, the book is beautifully woven, like an oriental rug with stitches so fine they're invisible. Atwood interweaves times and places in a complex and successful flashback-and-forward structure, and the metaphors tying it all together are moving and wonderful. Now I want her to use that fine and special literary skill to dig deeper into the can of worms that she has opened. I want her to do what her most sympathetic character, Dr. Minnow, says before he is shot for it: "They cannot imagine things being different. It is my duty to imagine, and they know that for even one person to imagine is very dangerous to them, my friend."



Margaret Atwood

Graeme Gibson

# Mary Meigs: Through a Smokescreen



Illustration by Mary Meigs

David Robinson

Jane Hastings

by Philinda Masters

In *Lily Briscoe: A Self-Portrait*, Mary Meigs' recently published autobiography, the reader is presented with two opposing models: Dolly Lamb, the woman painter in Mary McCarthy's *A Charmed Life*; and Lily Briscoe, the woman painter in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Mary Meigs was the model for Dolly Lamb, a portrayal she has resented through the years; Lily Briscoe is the model Meigs has now chosen as a truer reflection of her own image.

It is easy to understand her resentment. At Toronto's Innis College in November, Meigs read from the chapter of her book about Mary McCarthy and Dolly Lamb: McCarthy wrote of Dolly (Meigs) as "a sober little girl making mud pies," who was precious and inhibited, whose painting was "sick," and about whom "if there was anybody else inside her it was a creature still more daunted and mild and primly scrupulous than the one the world saw."

It's not totally impossible to discern where McCarthy got the idea for her caricature. At first, Meigs appears timid and cautious and perhaps a little prim, meeting the world tentatively, whimsically, with a mild voice and large eyes that peer out through a long fringe of thick white hair.

But there is a tension in her voice that kept the Innis audience enthralled for close to an hour as she read of the annihilation of her character by McCarthy. It is a tension that creates a question, demanding to be resolved. "My mildness was a smokescreen," says Meigs in *Lily Briscoe*. Her voice at the reading sounded mild and hesitant, as if it might dry up in mid-sentence. But she read for an hour without once taking a sip from the glass of water brought to her mid-way through the evening. She sounded nervous; she was not.

Earlier the same week at the *Broadside* office ("Much nicer than the CBC," said

Meigs) she spoke of her turning to writing after a life-long career as a painter: "Writing an autobiography is easier than painting a self-portrait. You can't destroy what you write. You can tear it up, but it's always there for comparison. But you can destroy a painting with just the tiniest touch — to the expression of the eyes, or the mouth."

Meigs has painted many self-portraits over the years, "always with more or less the same results; namely, that there are very few of them left." In fact, the self-portrait on the cover of *Lily Briscoe* is the only copy extant; the original has long since been destroyed.

For Meigs the painter, the fear of this power of destruction is formidable, and perhaps it provides a clue to that tension in her voice, that something which makes the listener ask: Is she really as mild and timid as she sounds? Meigs presents herself as her own self-portrait, which with a flick of the brush — the wrong word, the wrong tone of voice — could be ruined.

In the introduction to Part 2 of her book, Meigs quotes Virginia Woolf on Lily Briscoe: "Such she often felt herself — struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: 'But this is what I see,' and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her."

Though the identification of Meigs with Lily Briscoe seems clear, if not obvious, Meigs herself claims that the connection isn't strong, the identification not very real. When she started the book, she used randomly chosen pseudonyms (Lily Briscoe for self, Jupiter for Edmund Wilson, etc.) but in changing to the first person, she kept the name Lily for her working title without any conscious feeling of sympathy. "I just liked her. I liked her very much as a character. I liked her name. I even called my cat Lily Briscoe."

Meigs did admit that though she didn't maintain a conscious identification throughout writing the book, she was "conscious of Lily's dilemma as a woman painter, her difficulties and her self-consciousness and also her attempt to arrest time, arrest the parts of time that were precious to her." *Lily Briscoe: A Self-Portrait* is not a straightforward, chronological autobiography. It is, in Meigs' own words, "not a book about my life's events ... but an attempt to define myself through its inescape." The similarity is striking.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meigs was born in 1917 in Philadelphia and grew up in Washington, DC. She taught English at Bryn Mawr College, served as a WAVE during World War II, and from time to time wrote "critical articles that were never published in anything very impressive." She moved to the town of Wellfleet with US writer and activist Barbara Deming, where she met Edmund Wilson, Mary McCarthy and other artists, musicians and writers. In 1963 she met Marie-Claire Blais, later moved to France with her and then returned to Québec, where they now live.

Meigs' life work has been painting, although she says she's never made a living at it. But she has always written letters. "I've written hundreds and thousands of letters which are quite literary — full of landscapes and thoughts and arguments — and a good preparation for writing the book."

Her next book will rely heavily on material from her letters. "It's an expansion of *Lily Briscoe*, the French part that's just lightly touched on in this book. It's about the French woman who entered Marie-Claire's life and took over our collective lives," Meigs laughs. "It's supposed to be a

study of how people take you over. Marie-Claire is particularly susceptible, probably because she's a writer of fiction — she has to be possessed, she has to possess."

*Lily Briscoe* was produced over a period of four years. During that time, and particularly the past year of cutting and editing, Meigs has been "obsessed with writing" to the detriment of her painting. But on her recent trip to Toronto she visited the Art Gallery of Ontario and was overcome by a feeling of "drunken joy" and vowed to get back to painting as soon as possible.

Although she paints in oil and water-colours mainly, one of her favourite forms is illustration, especially the illustration of Marie-Claire's manuscripts. She's produced a book of illustrations for Blais' *St. Lawrence Blues* and *The Manuscripts of Pauline Archange*, but she had trouble with Blais' latest, *Deaf to the City*. "It's much less funny than the other books. There has to be some element of wild humour in it for me to take hold."

Wild humour isn't necessarily something one would associate with Mary Meigs. But about her next book she says: "It's in two parts; the first is about falling under *The Spell*; and the second is about freeing oneself from it." So perhaps there's an element of black magic, of wild humour, about the way Meigs views episodes of her own life.

After her next book, she's not sure where she will go in her writing: "I'm just about through with my revelations. I don't have anything more sensational to talk about." As to turning to fiction: "I can't do that. I can embroider on something that's real to me, I can distort people's characters, but I can't make them up out of whole cloth."

To take Mary Meigs at her own word, she is neither Dolly Lamb nor Lily Briscoe. But somewhere in the middle under a smokescreen, an elegant embroidery, is the real Mary Meigs.

# Guns, Cameras, Bombs and Babies

by Barbara Halpern Martineau

It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon, perfect for a stroll in the park, kicking through dead leaves, delighting in the play of autumn light on lake water. Instead, I went to the Bloor Cinema in Toronto, for a once-only screening of the film *El Salvador: The People Will Win*. The theatre, a large one, was nearly full on this beautiful Sunday, and once the film began, the ebullient, sociable crowd, many of whom evidently knew each other, fell silent. The film, shot clandestinely, under extremely difficult conditions, is clearly a product of a highly developed tradition of revolutionary film art which has emerged out of Latin America and Cuba in the past two decades. It relies on strong cinematic techniques of shooting and editing, titling, music, graphics, commentary, to convey a vision of hardship, suffering, genocide on a scale comparable to Vietnam, with a positive sense that these people will prevail.

The film looks like Cuban poster art — vivid images of men and women wearing red and yellow face masks, carrying rifles, babies, supplies; meeting, teaching, fighting, surviving, dying, dead, mutilated, mourning, carrying on, continuing to struggle. The sides are clearly defined — in El Salvador you are either part of the revolution or part of the dictatorship. All poor people are by definition part of the revolution; as in the case of Vietnam, they are targeted indiscriminately by the forces of "law and order." Members of the Church and the ruling class who support the revolution are killed by government forces, as a lesson to would-be sympathizers — one man who stands out in the film as a white-shirted, suited member of the oligarchy turned partisan is listed at the end among those "killed while this film was in production."

There is no quarter given. We are shown a corpse with the fingers chopped off and placed, deliberately, on top of the body. We

watch as students are killed by troops at the University in San Salvador, we see a woman's body lying by the road and hear that she, a noncombatant, was raped and murdered as were hundreds of other unarmed villagers in an act of reprisal by government forces. Women mourn the brutal death of husbands, sons — one small boy vows revenge on his father's murderers, as his mother murmurs, "Many others have died, too," and we then see him being welcomed into the red-beretted revolutionary troops — he is ten, or, at the most, twelve years old.

At the end of the film, after the unwary projectionist had already rung down the curtain, after the first end credits had rolled past, we saw, with difficulty, a scene shot in the countryside, of a man handling a film camera to a woman who loads it carefully into her laundry basket, heaves the heavy burden to her head, and swings off with it. I thought of many things, of the revolutionary concept of the camera as a weapon, as a gun, of the many times women have carried guns, or cameras, or bombs, or babies, in baskets or slings through situations of great danger. And I started to think of the difficulties I was going to have in writing this review. For, in the face of such courage, such solidarity, such a *creative* demonstration of the will of a people to survive and prevail, how can I possibly carp about sexism? I remember how many women have suffered, for so long, in so many ways, from sexism, sexism of the left as well as of the right, and I offer these criticisms.

1) Early in the film there is a sequence which cuts back and forth between faces of poor peasants, Indians, "the people," and faces of the well-fed bourgeoisie at some pro-government rally in San Salvador. At one point, instead of focussing on a face, the camera picks up the high heels and cut-off blue jeans of a young woman, pans up in a standard sexploitation shot to her ass, then there is a cut to another shot of children in the countryside, faces of poverty. I am tired of seeing women used as symbols of the ruling class, when the power, the motivation, the impetus is clearly from the patriarchy, when all women are oppressed by any sexploitation image in the media,

when such a shot could just as easily be used of a revolutionary woman in order to cheapen and degrade that cause. In short, any image of a woman used to connote decadence through exploiting her sexuality is offensive and I resent it. Would the same cameraman (and I used that gendered word advisedly here) have focussed on the dancing feet and grinning face of a black bourgeois visitor to that rally, or a Chinese? Radical film makers have been making visual "points" at the expense of women for too long.

2) When I reviewed the Belgian film *As If It Were Yesterday* (*Broadside*, October, 1980) I pointed out that the women film makers had gone to some lengths to interview women, because women had played such an important role in the anti-Fascist underground, and are so often neglected in historical accounts of that period. It is clear from the commentary of *El Salvador* that women are now playing a crucial role in that struggle, and yet we hear only from those women mourning husbands and sons, we see and hear nothing specific of what women are doing, save for the postscript shot of the woman carrying a camera in a laundry basket.

Such omissions and distortions lead me to question what sort of victory it will be when these brave people win, as I am confident they will. I hope the vital roles of women will be assessed and chronicled and respected in that new society. I hope we need only bring these problems to light for a new attitude to be adopted.

"Only" bring them to light. Over and over and over.

As this issue goes to press, the struggle in El Salvador is intense, with the revolutionaries controlling half the countryside, and the threat of outside (US-supported) intervention looming large. It is time for solidarity; a time, I suggest, for feminists to remember that we earn the right to criticize by demonstrating our caring and support. The Committee of Solidarity with the People of El Salvador needs money, help, interest. Contact: COSPES, 582A College St., Toronto, Ont., M6B 1B3; telephone 593-4236 or 533-8545.



Courtesy DEC

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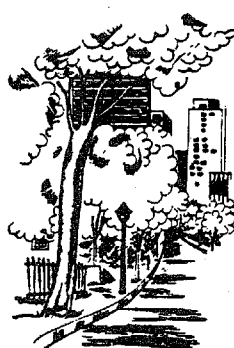
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Patricia White in *Passages*.

Courtesy Actor's Lab

# White Illuminates Passages

touch her, sometimes she speaks directly to you. *Passages* attempts to capture the essence of all women's experience through images of White's own life.

Actor's Lab Theatre was one of those underground ventures of the kind that flourished in the late 60s and early 70s, except that most of the others have long since perished. Actor's Lab has remained, dedicated to the ideal of "theatrical research" — that is, the return to roots, the involving of all of life in the dramatic process — and has managed to find the organizational qualities to enable the group to survive. There is a new International Company, there are exchange programs with troupes in Québec and Ontario, and there is much community involvement.

The theatre itself is a studio; the performances happen in "The Space," a big room with benches around the edges for the audience to sit. The stage manager sits in the corner of the room in full view of the audience and when the show starts he turns out the lights, "click," and during the show he clicks away turning on and off the red spots. You have the feeling the performer might be awaiting her entrance outside in the alley.

But although this form of theatre has its rather funny aspects, I'm not making fun of it, because it is very relaxed, very intimate, and can be very exciting. White's one-woman piece about the fairytales and myths of being a woman is intense and quite engrossing, and the very fact that the theatre seems so makeshift only adds to the feeling of having to make-believe.

A few days after the run of *Passages* ended, I talked to Patricia White at the theatre, and found her addressing envelopes for a publicity drive. Other members of the company were answering the phone and doing other similar administrative jobs. A couple of performers had just arrived back from New York where they had put on shows and workshops; their back packs were slung on the floor and they were working at their desks.

White and I retired to a small closet-sized room. She is a very approachable woman in

her early 30's, much softer-spoken in person than on stage, and very intelligent. Her educational background is a mixture of English literature, Phys. Ed. training, dance and drama. She has studied in London and Paris, worked with emotionally disturbed children, currently teaches theatre students at a community college in Toronto, and has been a dedicated member of the Actor's Lab company for four years.

Before I saw the show, I spoke to one of her theatre students who had come to see her perform. He said she taught them how to move with a beat, how to use the rhythm of movement, and sure enough the piece opened with a series of movements, rhythms that seemed to be dictated by her feet, to come out of some innate body rhythm.

"When I was abroad," she says, "I worked with groups like the Laban School, which deals with concepts of movement in dance, rather than technique. Laban teaches the use of time, the dynamic of space, the distribution of body weight." The concept was developed for children, and White worked with emotionally disturbed children using these ideas. Actor's Lab now has a community program for children using the same concepts.

White told me that she had been working on *Passages* for about 2 years. Like most of their pieces, it will be kept in the repertory for up to 5 years.

"A one-person show like this needs to be in rep. a long time, so as to find its full scope," she says. She adds that more work is needed on it, and it may run next spring for a few weeks. She especially wants to find out more about the experience of women in their forties to sixties, and hopes to perform for women's groups in hopes of getting some feedback. She thinks that doing the show for women's centres at universities, and perhaps for old people's homes, would also help.

White would appreciate talking to individual women as well, and she hopes that anyone reading this and willing to talk to her would write the Actor's Lab Theatre, 355 Adelaide St. East, Toronto, or call her at (416) 363-2853.

by Patricia O'Leary

Eyes large and round, high cheekbones, strong expressive face, Patricia White starts her storytelling odyssey, *Passages*, at Actor's Lab Theatre. She enters slowly in the dark, playing a mouth organ, rhythmically moving, her feet creating a persuasive beat, changing, up-beat, down tempo, stopping; now she speaks in a dark, husky well-

controlled voice of past images, sings past tunes, moves to past dances up through the ages from infant to girl to woman.

The audience is part of it, drawn in, intimate, part of the sound of her breathing, the faint odour of her work sweat, the rhythm of her movement. Sometimes, in the small studio theatre, you can reach out and

## Rita MacNeil: "Killing the Blues"

by Catherine Maunsell

On October 29, 1981 Rita MacNeil returned to Toronto to play at Harbourfront. The audience, for the most part women, gave her a standing welcome, responded warmly throughout the concert and were on their feet again at the end to call her back for more.

For this performance Cape Breton's Rita MacNeil worked with local women as back up: Linda Jain on drums; Gwen Zwick, back-up vocals; Shelley Coopersmith, violin and mandolin; Sherry Shute, guitar; Susan Cole, piano; and musical director Catherine MacKay, bass.

Many women felt pleasure at seeing Toronto talent, many of them women known personally to the audience, making music up there with Rita. She has been criticized in the past for using male musicians. But whether she should or not, certainly seeing an all-woman band up there on stage added an important element to the evening.

During the early numbers, some band members looked faintly apprehensive, as if slightly fearful that the performance was not going to work (they'd had very little rehearsal time). As the evening progressed, though, they relaxed and seemed to get caught up in the fun of playing for a talented performer in front of a receptive audience.

For those who know MacNeil's records well, the sound produced at the concert was

different, but it worked. This is a performer with a powerful voice (did she really need a sound system?) and a unique style. The song she writes speak to us; they evoke feelings from our separate pasts and presents.

*When i saw the black rock  
the first thing that i thought  
i'd fill up with sadness  
and cry but i sang  
and the blue sky hung over  
and the fast moving waters  
and i stood on the rocks and  
the memories began*

We've all got our own "black rock."

MacNeil's lyrics are like all good communication — clear and effective. Her melodies enhance the mood established by the words. And you don't have to listen to them 50 times to be able to hum along; they're catchy.

For those of us who aren't fans of "country" music, it's surprising to find that one of her best numbers is "But I can't stand the heartbreak of my losing you," which captures the plaintiveness and simplicity of structure of that genre. She can belt them out with the best in the business.

Rita MacNeil did not spend a lot of time chatting up the audience. Women who have followed her from the mid-70s say she has gained immensely in stage presence and confidence over the last few years. Though she is more comfortable talking to the audience she didn't spend much time doing it.

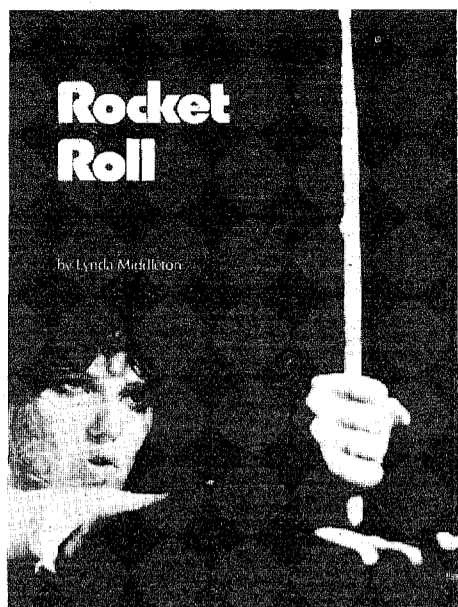
She knew why she was there. She was there to sing and that she did.



Rita MacNeil

Martha Keener

# Rocket Roll Never Takes Off



ton explained that she wanted to include women who were "involved" in rock or new wave. "I didn't intend to get all of them. I was trying to show different kinds of women. I knew some of the musicians and was advised to contact others. Some weren't interested and I was unable to get together with others. In the case of Diane Heatherington, when I was getting quotes she was in Germany. Also I decided not to have the same number of photos for each musician."

Her "go with the flow" approach applies to the layout of *Rocket Roll* as well. "Often the quotes decided where things were placed. I would put in a page of copy because I thought it would look good there. I put the photo of Lambert and her child where I did because it was so different from the others. After the big spread of the (Time) Twins, a change was needed, so copy went in."

She disagreed that her photos were cluttered.

by Deena Rasky

Lynda Middleton, *Rocket Roll*. Toronto: Welsh and Quest, 1981. Unpaged. \$7.50.

*Rocket Roll* is a small book of photos and quotations from women's rock bands in Toronto. A book on this subject is overdue. Women's rock bands are colourful and their audience would certainly enjoy good photos of the musicians. However, the photos in this book have been taken with varying success in capturing the mood, the performer, and surroundings. Middleton's photos are mediocre and the book is disappointing.

Annie Lebowitz of *Rolling Stone* and Lynn Goldsmith of *Cream* both take photos that give the false impression that all they did was point and shoot. In fact, great pains were taken. Their photos are clean and the meaning is obvious. Middleton's photos, by comparison, are cluttered and ambiguous. *Rocket Roll* appears to have been laid out in a hurry, with little thought about cohesiveness, and it raises many questions about its format and content.

Middleton started taking photos of musicians in 1978 and decided to publish a book about them in 1980. In response to why Louise Lambert and feminist bands were in the same book but not the B Girls, Middle-



Lorraine Segato

tered. Her intention was to include surroundings as information about musicians' lives. As to why no foreword or introduction to her book: "I really wouldn't know how to explain or do an introduction." So unfortunately the only words from Middleton herself in the book are exclamations like "Hurrah for the Toronto bar scene!" The book could be subtitled "Favourite Snap Shots from a Devoted Fan."

The photos themselves are badly composed. The book would have made more sense visually if there had been a clear idea why each page is placed as it is. Why mystify the reader? And after paying \$7.50, I didn't expect *Rocket Roll* to fall apart

when I removed its cellophane wrapper.

The book is not a total disaster. The photos are lint-free — a real accomplishment for a makeshift darkroom — and there are some photos to linger over. My favourite is of Lorraine Segato, lead singer for Mama Quilla II. You can clearly see her look of concentration and her hands on the guitar, the tuning pegs forming a mysterious glowing pattern. But one or two good photos do not a book make.

*Rocket Roll* is useful for the uninitiated, for those who are unaware of the strength of rock and roll women in Toronto. The idea behind it is a good one. Now we need more time, energy, and care to be taken for a proper treatment of the subject.

## Books to Note

by Elaine Berns

Margaret Atwood, *Bodily Harm*; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1981.

- novel about a free-lance journalist whose life is shattered first by a mastectomy, and then the end of a relationship. Her attempt to recuperate on a tiny Caribbean island forces her to reassess her life and values in unforeseen ways.

Marie Claire-Blais, *Deaf to the City*. Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys 1981.

- the setting for this novel is old Montreal, with a cast of characters that includes Gloria, part-time stripper and manager of the Hotel des Voyageurs, Judith Lange, a teacher and friend of suicides. Tim the Irishman, Lucia a thirteen-year-old prostitute, Florence, a deserted wife who seeks the hotel as a last place of refuge, and Mike, a child who is fighting for his life.

Brighton Women and Science Group; *Alice Through the Microscope*; London, Virago 1980.

- anthology on the impact of science and technology on the lives of women in such familiar areas as contraception, mental health and childbirth, as well as analysis of the implications of this male-dominated system for our lives in the future.

Judith Lewis Herman, *Father-Daughter Incest*; Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press 1981.

- timely book about the abuse of power in relationships between fathers and their daughters. Dr. Herman combines a clinical study of 40 incest victims with a feminist analysis of incest, as well as recommendations for treatment and more profound changes from within the family and society.

June Jordan, *Civil Wars*. Boston: Beacon Press 1981.

- essays, letters and speeches of a black woman in the US. She writes passionately about how racism has affected her life including the slow emergence of a Black female consciousness.

Gloria Joseph and Jill Lewis, *Common Differences: Conflicts in Black and White Feminist Perspectives*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press 1981.

- examination of the schism in the American women's movement around the issue of race. A selection of interviews with a broad spectrum of women, black and white, who explore the issues where this schism is most evident.

(These books are all available at the Toronto Women's Bookstore.)

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• Angela Miles, from page 5

about and sees itself as. In other words, there is no alternative vision, no creative offensive response possible. There is no redefinition of questions, so no new politics can emerge. In a sense what I see in the resistance of progressives... in their refusal to see this ... in their apparent contentment with retaining old forms of resistance and defensive forms of politics against the Right is to a certain extent a collaboration with the Right.

"Progressives have tended not to challenge a lot of the basic definitions that keep women down; that keep the central role of women hidden; that keep definitions in male hands; and keep male-defined politics on stage...and feminism off stage. What this means, and this bears a lot of thinking about, is that not only does the future depend on feminism but that feminism, in the end, to reach its promise, has to in fact inform the politics of men as well. There aren't many signs of movement in that direction at an organization level. Even under the pressure of the Right, even though the issues that are now key are what have been called 'women's issues', men seem to be holding firm at a coalition level of politics."

In her evaluation of the present situation both here and in the States, Miles is thus very leery of the various coalitions against the Right which feminists are joining or being urged to join. She views them as possible traps, which are much more likely to dilute and fragment feminism than to achieve any more than a very limited resistance to the Right. As I understand her, Miles believes that we should be very careful where we put our energies. That what feminists should be doing is "concentrating on forcing the major redefinition of political discourse itself that would necessarily come with the inclusion of the now excluded women's voice. Feminists have to force both the Right and the Left to hear women. To redefine political debates, which are currently shaped by the threat of women off stage rather than directly by women acting for themselves, is to do much more than include ourselves as one of the components or 'interest groups' of an already defined progressive politics. If we drop the struggle to do this we are selling ourselves and humanity short."

Angela Miles' underlying optimism does not blind her to the realization that at this historical juncture we may not possess the power necessary to do this. While the challenge of the Right has underscored the cen-

tral importance of feminism, it has arrived too early in our development as a movement. We aren't in a position to take it on as we would wish. This presents a grave danger to feminism, to its very existence and thus to the future of all progressive movements.

As pressure from the Right grows, Miles sees the danger to feminism as taking the form of two conflicting tendencies within the movement. First, and already referred to, is the dilution via coalitions, a dilution of feminism both in its universal aspects and in its role as an advocate for women's concerns. In coalitions, women tend to disappear precisely because women are a general category which cuts across all others. What tends to happen to us is that we "forget our specificity as a politics and our difference on the political stage from other groups, groups which are not feminist, groups which are anti-woman in many ways."

Second, a dangerous tendency lies in the opposite quarter; internal fragmentation of the movement along lines according to women's different vulnerability to "the selective attack of the Right. The Right attacks all women, viciously attacks all women... The also attack black women, Jewish women, lesbian women more, and in different ways."

Miles warns us that to line up along these divisions is a defensive politics, not an assertion of what we are about. As she puts it, "a creative shaping of the future requires a conscious feminist basis for all political activity." It requires that we refuse to espouse defensive politics both inside and outside our movement.

That is a tall order, as Miles is well aware. In the face of attack, defence seems eminently natural and even necessary. Her point

is that, while we defend ourselves on specific issues and in coalition with others, we do not do so under the illusion that we are advancing feminism, a new reality or a new vision of humanity. What is more, Miles suggests that unless we are very, very careful we will lose more than we gain by going along with coalitions on terms defined by male interests.

Recently Angela Miles spoke at a conference on *Women, Power and Consciousness* organized by the University of Toronto Women's Studies program. Instead of the scheduled topic, she wisely plunged into a presentation of some of the ideas touched on in this article. Time was short, neither location nor occasion propitious for a full discussion. There wasn't time for examples of the dangers and limitations of alliances with specific progressive groups that feminists are working with — anti-nuke, gay liberation, trade unions, etc. Participants at the workshop did not have the opportunity to pursue the topic then, but clearly Miles demonstrated the necessity to take any analysis past description to prescription. For surely, the point is not to stop entering coalitions, that would be totally impractical, but to understand the dangers and have consistent and concrete ways of dealing with situations as they arise. There are no magic formulas but there are positive, thought-out ways to act and react. These must be put forward, discussed and applied by feminists wherever possible.

Angela Miles' importance to feminism lies primarily in the fact that she is an academic, a theorist, a generalizer and an abstractor who is also an activist, an organizer and risk-taker. In all these capacities she has consistently pushed for the kind of strategic questioning that is more necessary now than ever before.

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**The Art  
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• **Lesbian Poetry**, from page 10

I've always had some inkling of the fact that the "writing in a vacuum" style of poetry had something missing. It did. It forgot to define love. It made assumptions about how people lived and what they understood to be meaningful. It defined how people worked, and where, in terms of an economic context that had no meaning as far as the lives of most women went. And then its authors were confused about why they were attacked as elitist, why people thought poetry was esoteric and unreadable.

Poetry has an oral tradition behind it that goes back centuries. It used to be a telling of stories, of history in rhyme and song. It became specialized when it started to be written down and only certain people could read it (or write it for that matter).

*Lesbian Poetry: An Anthology* is not elitist. It is a telling of our stories from childhood to adulthood and our connections with women throughout the world. The violence practised against us as lesbians and as women is here and it is not pretty. The poems have no pretensions about being ideologically correct. They are correct because they are accurate reflections of *our* experiences. They are poems because they build us a wall of emotions, responses, and reactions that supercede the everyday reality of our lives. And they do it well. These are poets writing because their centre of working incorporates more than the personal but brushes the personal carefully into the crevices of the wall until the distinctions become muddy.

...Visions begin to happen in such a life as if a woman quietly walked away from the argument and jargon in a room and sitting down in the kitchen, began turning in her lap bits of yarn, calico, and velvet scraps...

Such a composition has nothing to do with eternity, the struggle for greatness, brilliance — only the musing of a mind... (Adrienne Rich)

The anthology ends with an article by Elly Bulkin on "Lesbian Poetry in the Classroom" which provides a useful first-hand account of how to teach lesbian poetry and what the reaction and other ramifications might be. Contributors' bibliographies are even more interesting than usual here — I found myself flipping back and forth as I was reading. I wanted to know who lived where and when she was born, etc.; it was important in the context of this book. Following this is a list of "Work by Contributors" which creates a very useful bibliography of not only lesbian poetry books but journals and magazines as well. "Some Additional Resources" lists selected articles about contemporary lesbian poetry.

It is of some interest that as a reader of the anthology, I use the word "we" throughout this review. But again it emphasizes my point about this poetry — I don't feel that I should sit down and try and write something just like it, I feel excited that it is out and about. I want to take the poem about the telephone switchboard operator and copy it out for a friend of mine who is one. I want to leave waitress poems under my plate along with the tip the next time I'm out for lunch. I want to stick at least fifteen of them up on my wall. I probably will.

*Penny Goldsmith lives and reads in Vancouver, where she is presently taking a paralegal course at Capilano College.*

• **West Coast Poetry**, from page 11

Years ago, before the strike began,  
the staff were invisible.  
They were required to wear groovy T-shirts  
and pay for them.  
They were required to work without lunch or coffee,  
as if they were mechanical objects,  
whose only purpose was to provide a genial  
atmosphere,  
and do all the work.  
Nobody saw them  
until the picket line went up.

The last book in this group is Elizabeth Gourlay's *Songs and Dances*. Gourlay has written one other book, a play titled *Isabel: The Continuous Dream of the Former Prime Minister* (1979). *Songs and Dances* is a series of untitled introspective poems dedicated to "the Muse" which create a mood of haunting mystery with somewhat sinister overtones, belying the book's title. The book doesn't celebrate life the way "songs and dances" might imply, but rather in vivid images, often related to colours, reveals Gourlay's perception of "the naked truth." Consider this excerpt:

*dance, dance the crowd shouts*

the girl rends her green hair  
weeps blood on her green thumbs  
pleads for the instruments with strings  
the gentle woodwinds

the conductor brings the baton down

the girl bares her neck  
the musicians pull the knives  
from out their mouths.

This is spooky but intriguing poetry, and it repays rereading. Gourlay hooks you in the way Margaret Atwood often does.

Obviously, all of these books hooked me one way or another. Don't overlook them.

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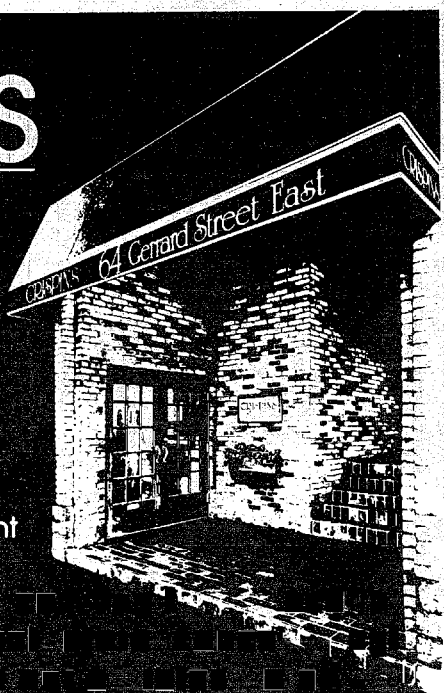
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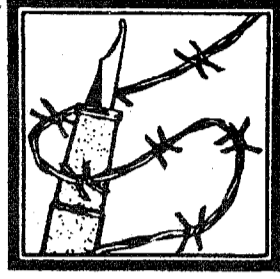
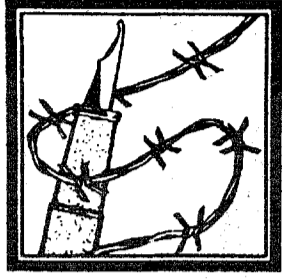
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# MOVEMENT COMMENT

## Women Writers' Rights?



by **Connie Guberman**

An international writers' congress, *The Writer and Human Rights*, was held in Toronto, October 1-4. Sponsored by the Toronto Arts Group for Human Rights and held in aid of Amnesty International, the congress was designed to be both a symbolic and practical statement of concern for human rights that are coming under attack around the world. It was also designed to provide an opportunity for writers of differing political and cultural backgrounds to consider and organize practical means of protecting their rights and those of others.

By most measurable standards the congress was a great success: over 3,000 people attended the various events, thousands of dollars were promised to Amnesty International, hundreds and hundreds of people signed petitions on behalf of imprisoned writers, and there was a significant amount of local, national, and international press coverage.

The congress did succeed in all these ways, but it failed in one major one. Panel discussions with topics as provocative as the Writer and Terrorism, Isolation and Elitism (dealing with the writer and community), Colonialism, Committed Writing, and Censorship and Self-Censorship, failed to deal with the particular conditions of women — that women are oppressed in all the ways that men are, *and more*. That women are enslaved not only because they are black but because they are *women*; that women in prison are not only mutilated and raped because they are prisoners but also because they are *women*; that women have not really written fewer books than men but it is because they are *women* that fewer have been published; that women who have been banned, beaten, tortured, exiled, imprisoned, mutilated and refused jobs for what they think and write have been attacked because they are *women* thinkers and *women* writers and *women* activists.

We must not trash groups who work to

put on events such as the Writer and Human Rights Congress — we must look at them critically while supporting them. We must develop a strategy of working within these groups and of formulating questions at the conferences themselves so that we as organizers working on boards and coalitions, as panelists and guests, or as members of the audience, can speak out, reminding, showing, explaining to people who still don't realize or won't see that universally women are *the* most oppressed people. It is important that this be a collective strategy, that no woman be left in a solitary fight against sexism.

In all our work we must, as Adrienne Rich wrote in her letter declining to attend the congress, struggle "toward the affirmation of *truly* human rights, and the elimination of all forms of cruelty and enforced ideology."

(Connie Guberman works with Amnesty International in Toronto and was an organizer of the congress.)



Deena Rasky

Participants at the congress, Susan Sontag, Nadine Gordimer,

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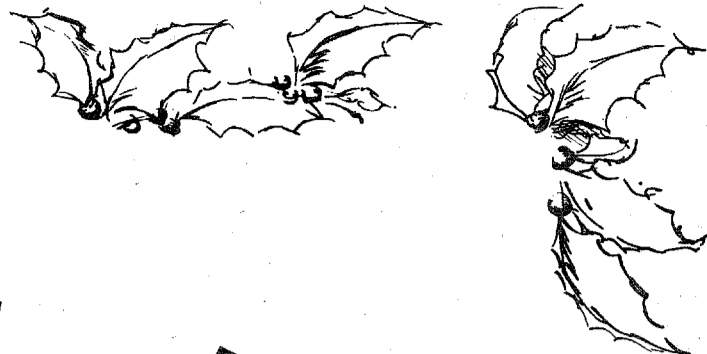
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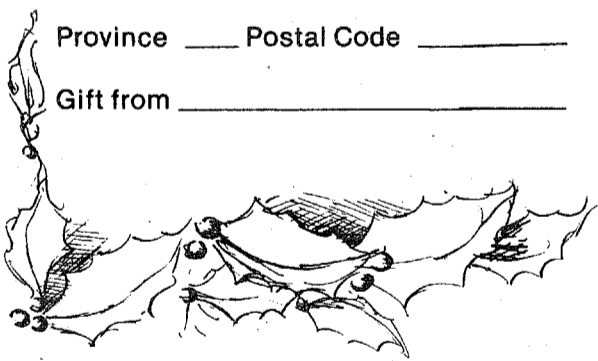
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