



# LETTERS

## Broadside:

I am going to accept the invitation to share my thoughts on Lorna Weir's excellent article on coalition politics in the February issue of *Broadside*.

I would like to address the troublesome business about the special relationship between the feminist movement and the anti-war movement.

I see the military-industrial-academic complex as the quintessential form of male domination and exploitation and their ar-

mies as presenting an organized, united front to defend the patriarchy using the ultimate means of defence — violence. All methods of violence or force are anti-feminist. Therefore it is in keeping with feminist thinking and interests to vigorously (and non-violently) oppose war.

Now, the mass anti-nuclear and anti-war movements tend to be once again male directed, albeit by men who have understood the limits of war. As yet, however, they have failed to see war as the manifestation of patriarchal thinking. The anti-war movement, I think, is potentially the most receptive male audience to the feminist perspective. I believe we could convey the feminist position to the peace movement and find some understanding and support. In short, I see an eventual alliance of the feminist movement — on its own terms — with the non-violent peace movement as one way to advance our cause.

I would like to refer Lorna Weir to an article taken from the War Resisters League Or-

ganizers Manual, written by Donna War-nock. It indicates to me that the peace movement is beginning to understand that it must confront sexism and "commit itself to overthrowing the Patriarchy."

Marian Sinn  
Perth, Ont.

## Broadside:

Please allow me to comment on the excellent article by Lorna Weir on Coalition Politics (February 1982), specifically as it relates to the long term goal of the feminist movement "to control and transform the state."

The greatest misfortune which could befall the feminist movement on its way to full participation in, not to mention control of, the state is a war. An armed revolution, a coup d'état or any other violent event would allow men to resort to and reaffirm their ul-

timate source of power: armed force.

Most of the world's nations are ruled by military dictatorships. All of the world's governments are prepared to defend their right to govern by armed force. There is no better way to keep women in their place than for men to engage in armed combat. It is the only field in which men have and will continue to have a clear advantage over women. A nuclear war would literally throw back the feminist cause to the Stone Age.

Violence against women is not confined to rape or wife beating. Ultimately all violence is anti-feminist. Any form of violence, even that which is exercised in the defence of women (and children), tends to reaffirm the dominance of the male. Strictly speaking, calling the police in case of rape or wife beating is a reaffirmation of masculine superiority, albeit at a higher level than that intended by the rapist. I am not suggesting that women should not call the police in their de-

## Broadside

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## EDITORIALS

### Wife Beating...

When we heard that Saskatchewan ex-Premier Allan Blakeney wanted to trade two women's rights for a Native right in the constitutional debate, the fact that we are governed by male caprice hit home to millions of Canadian women. The rights of women could be bandied about like a squash ball, or so our fearless leaders thought. You may have noticed that Allan Blakeney is no longer counted among our fearless leaders. We hope his quotable quote still haunts him.

During the constitutional debate many women came of age politically and consciousness was raised in unusual quarters. But the subject then was civil rights, an abstract principle that exercised theoretical ideas only. But the word "fearless" was wasted until our fearless leaders started laughing about wife battery. Now the issue of our physical safety is at stake.

By now all of us are undoubtedly aware of what happened in the House of Commons last May 12. Margaret Mitchell (NDP Vancouver) asked why the shelter situation for battered women was so dreadful, and what was the Canadian government going to do about it.

A hearty guffaw rose from the house.

### Queer Bashing

On Friday, May 7, two police officers of the Morality Squad entered the Toronto office of *The Body Politic*, a gay magazine, with a search warrant. Subsequently, all nine members of the TBP collective, and its publisher, Pink Triangle Press, were charged with publishing obscene written material.

The charges came just three weeks before Pink Triangle goes to retrial on a four-year-old "scurrilous material" charge, for which all accused were acquitted on March 6, 1979.

The recent raid was carried out by the same police officer who had last month charged Toronto's Glad Day Books with selling gay pornography. The same Crown Attorney initiated both the Glad Day and *The Body Politic* raids, reportedly as part of an investigation.

The "obscene material" of the current charge was a satirical article describing a particular sexual practice within the gay community, entitled "Lust with a very proper stranger."

Whether or not one has a taste for the "particular practice" described in the article is beside the point. It should be noted that neither Glad Day Books nor TBP are largely, or even mainly, concerned with explicitly sexual material. The bulk of it is literary, social comment and political analysis. Also the two magazines confiscated at Glad Day

We'll never know exactly who caused the uproar. Parliament has its own ways of covering itself. Even Margaret Mitchell herself refused to identify the culprits, feeling that since the reaction in the House was so widespread (yes, a few NDP members harrumphed with glee), singling out individuals without naming every name would be unfair.

She sought instead, on May 13th, to secure from the House of Commons an apology to all the women of Canada. And the sorry saga continued.

Apologies pass in the House only if they receive unanimous approval. No go. Speaker Jeanne Sauvé heard some "no's" from the Liberal side of the house. The dissenting Liberals claimed that they *always* say no to motions for apologies that come from the opposition. Party politics will always have priority over the female constituency.

Marcel Roy (Liberal Laval) gave it a try. "No's" were heard again, this time because Anglophone MP's had not put on their translation headphones fast enough. One can imagine the English-speaking Members languishing in their chairs while Roy went on in that foreign language. The respect ac-

corded to Francophone MP's is probably only several cuts above the respect MP's can muster for the women of this country.

Finally, Ursula Appolloni (York South-Weston) wrenched out an apology to the women of Canada from the House on May 14th. It took two days chock-filled with furious telegrams and vituperative press for Members of Parliament to get the message.

One might well ask what the MP's were laughing about in the first place. Nervous laughter they called it. Did we hear the House snigger away at the deaths of seamen off the coast of Newfoundland? Did they howl at the hilarity of mercury poisoning of fishing waters natives rely on for their survival? Would they have got away with it if they had?

Then again, let's just deal with the facts. As one angry reporter put it, if one out of ten Canadian women living with her spouse is a battered woman, then that means that one out of every ten men living with his spouse is a batterer. Let's see. That means there would be about 25 Members of Parliament who beat their wives.

Isn't that a riot?

divide us, as feminists, as lesbians, as women from the gay community and gay liberation. The right of free expression for women, for lesbians and for gays is ultimately indivisible. No way will we let them get away with this! No way!"

## ERRATA

In the April issue, an article entitled "Survival — Whose Priority?" stated that the Women's Program, Secretary of State, had refused funding to a Toronto group, Women for Survival, for a conference on women and militarism. In fact, at the time the article was written, the application was still under consideration.

In the April issue in an article entitled "Creating Our Own Image: Canadian Images Film Festival," the name of the director, Susan Ditta, was omitted. Also the description of the panel on Pornography, Eroticism and Censorship should have read: "... the panel was composed of ... Bonnie Klein, maker of 'Not A Love Story,' and Barbara Hammer, the above-mentioned lesbian-feminist film maker."

fence. I am merely indicating the extent to which women depend on that which they oppose and the urgent need to find alternatives to the use of violence at all levels of human endeavour.

Let me recommend the nuclear disarmament movement as a potentially powerful instrument to shake up the male establishment. The feminist movement does not have to fear assimilation by the disarmament movement. On the contrary, if the feminists set their minds to it they probably could swallow the nuclear disarmament movement whole.

In spite of its size both in Europe and now once more in North America the disarmament movement is basically weak. It is crisis oriented. It comes and goes with the rise and fall of global tension and has no staying power. It has no concept of the role of violence in the established order of things. It has no long term strategy and is unable to translate its concerns into structures and institutions which would give it a constant and growing presence. The movement runs on emotion and, other than a clearly articulated aversion to nuclear war, it has no viable alternative to replace the strategy of nuclear deterrence.

During the 1960's the nuclear disarmament movement's lack of social analysis and vision was largely glossed over, first by its old and then by its New Left leadership. Yet the blatant inability of the Left to make practice fit theory and ends fit means has eroded its credibility even among politically innocent members of the disarmament movement.

It seems that the growing feminist movement has the interest, the analysis and the organizational ability to take the nuclear disarmament movement and give it eyes, ears, arms and legs. Through the feminist movement, the demand for nuclear disarmament might become more than the disembodied outcry of an anxious people. With any luck the feminist movement will see to it that the disarmament movement will keep going and not exhaust itself at the feet of stony faced generals leaving governments unshaken in their faith that "power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

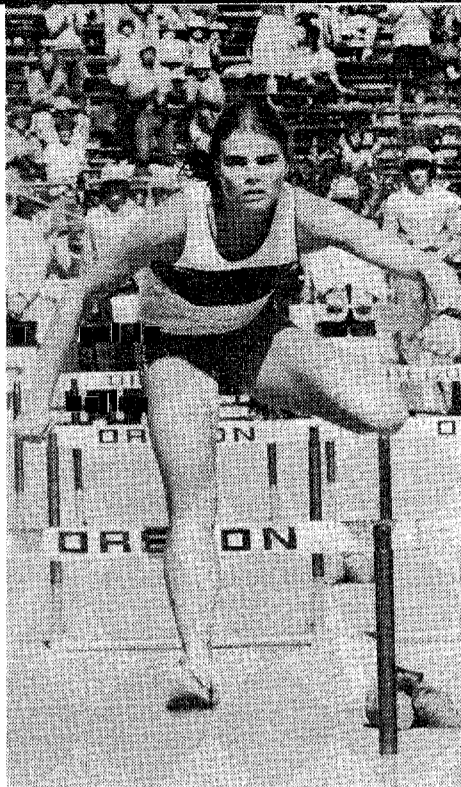
Hans Sinn  
Perth, Ont.

#### Broadside:

It was good to see the articles, "Adding Insult to Injury" by Lisa Freedman, Susan Ursel and Susan G. Cole (April 1982).

I am a worker in a hostel for women north of Toronto. Owing to the recent decision by most Family Court judges in Ontario, it has become necessary for a client who needs a restraining order to stop her mate from harassing, molesting, or otherwise annoying her, to go through the added trauma of hiring a lawyer and going to the Supreme Court of Ontario. Usually the woman cannot afford to hire a lawyer herself and has to go through Legal Aid, which can take three to four weeks.

The nature of assault is an emergency one, and this time-lapse is unrealistic. To expect a woman, already battered and/or fearful that her children may be snatched from her, to "lie low" and hope her mate gives up before he finds, injures, or kills her is almost to le-



#### Broadside:

I was very glad to read Lois Fine's review of *Personal Best* in *Broadside* (April 1982), glad that she refused to condone what was meretricious in it for the sake of the sympathetic treatment of a lesbian relationship.

It is very tempting for lesbians to rejoice when our existence is acknowledged in a non-patronizing way and to isolate the love-scenes between Chris and Tory from the rest of the film. This is exactly what we are supposed to do — to overlook the fact that the sweet lesbian relationship is just part of a packaged pudding that is put together to please everybody and to offend no one. One sees this recipe used in films and TV shows wherever "difficult" subjects are aired. One saw it here in Quebec in *Arioso*, a television play by Louise Maheu-Forcier, in which one sees two lesbians, whose loving relationship is shown without any hint of censure, but who are literally annihilated at the end, when one dies and the other is paralysed in an automobile accident and the paralysed lesbian ends up in a wheel chair being wheeled along by a man she has always hated.

In *Personal Best*, there is a new twist: Chris's affair with her boyfriend is actually endorsed by Tory who says, "For a guy he isn't so bad," or words to that effect, and those of us who have fallen in love with Tory love her even more because she is such a good sport. In fact, Tory has become the chief agent of the brain-washing process, which has made the old patriarchal idea acceptable even to a lesbian — the idea that a lesbian relationship is just a preparation for the real thing (heterosexual, of course). This

galize mental cruelty.

Of 57 murders in Toronto in 1981, 24 were domestic-related. How long do women have to nurse their broken bones, soothe their bruised and battered minds, and keep quiet while their children watch or receive the agony too, because it might not be in the jurisdiction of a Family Court judge to grant a restraining order to quickly put an end to this?

Shirley Limbert  
King, Ont.

idea triumphed, to the despair of all good lesbians, in *The Fox*, and is here perpetuated, but so cleverly that we have eaten the whole pudding without even noticing that it is poisoned.

Mary Meigs  
Montréal

#### Broadside

Lois Fine's critical appraisal of *Personal Best* (April), was excellent, especially in light of Susan Cole's approval of the film in her review (March). Any Hollywood sale of lesbianism is inherently exploitative and as such can hardly be applauded.

Lesbian existence implies a firm denial of male access to our sexuality. The patriarchal stranglehold on the popular culture necessitates one of two responses to this existence. Lesbianism is presented as either a titillating sexual freak show or as a kinky warm-up act before the "real" thing: heterosexuality.

*Personal Best* neatly achieves both of these objectives. The relationship between Tory and Chris is not recognized in the film as a lesbian experience; even they do not name it as something more than a fleeting physical encounter. The option of doing so clearly never existed. The dramatic tension is relieved as the warm-up act achieves its pur-

pose: Chris sleeps with men. As patriarchal notions of lesbianism reduce us to sexual beings to the exclusion of all other aspects of our lives, Tory must, of course, fade out of the plot once her sexual role is terminated. The film's plot closely conforms to the oppressive notions of lesbianism that ultimately diffuse any radical threats to the compulsory heterosexual norm.

Patriarchal profit-making and myth-making entail the subtle but complex process of taking away something that once belonged to us, packaging it, then selling it back to us in men's interests. Until all women are free to live complete lesbian lives, the exploitation of our sexuality will continue in this manner. Since the achievement of such a freedom is not in the interests of the Hollywood boys, we can hardly expect any assistance from them in our struggle.

It is therefore not surprising that *Personal Best* received extensive coverage in the latest *Playboy*. I now regret having sat through about half of what is the personal worst of all films that I have seen in a long time. The consumption of this sort of entertainment promotes and legitimates the insidious reduction of our sexuality to a commodity in the rape culture marketplace.

Anna Marie Smith  
Toronto



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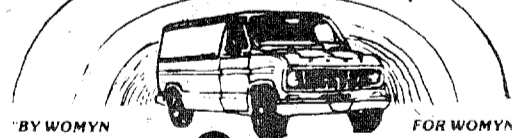
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# Falkland Islands: Target Practice

by Susan G. Cole

Oh, what a lovely war. I'd never seen one from beginning to end. I was born after World War II. I was too young to get to know Korea. The war in Indochina was hidden from any public scrutiny for half its duration. And other vicious nagging wars may have started, but show no signs of winding down.

But this one all of us have seen in living colour from the moment the Falkland Islands were taken by the Argentines. There's no such thing as a message from the front anymore. We've watched all the action, as it happens.

Never had we had so much time to prepare ourselves. The British were coming at such a leisurely pace: for fourteen days we followed the British fleet across the ocean. The news footage gave the event an air of unreality. In fact, it was hard to believe that those were news clippings at all. It all looked like a Hollywood version of a page from a British novel about nationalism.

There was a prince on one of those boats. And what better way to dredge up the old feelings for Britain's colonial past than to have Britannia rule the waves.

A sea battle! Cleaner perhaps than those messy skirmishes the marines always get into. For a while there, war was not a dirty word. The Falkland crisis had put a little romance into it.

It was certainly more palatable than being subjected to repeated reports of raids in varying parts of the Middle East. And it made us forget entirely that 600 El Salvadorans were being slaughtered in one of those typically vicious nagging wars.

There was the occasional reminder that what was about to happen off the Argentine coast was the real thing, like the British practising their aircraft manoeuvres on carriers. But even so, those machines looked more

like model airplanes than tools of destruction. And when a source inside the British

Foreign Secretary remarked that the crisis would give the armed forces a chance to see how their expensive equipment worked, he sounded like a child waiting to try out new toys.

The Argentinians, in the meantime, had miscalculated slightly. Having seized the Falklands, the military junta had hoped to score a few political points with a populace susceptible to such bravado gestures. But the strategy could work only if the Falklands remained in Argentine hands. Ioannides and the Greek military junta had invaded Cyprus in 1974 in much the same spirit. The Greeks passionately believed that the Turks had no rights to Cypriot land and the Colonels hoped to capitalize on the fervour. But Turkey said "war" and the Greek government, completely unprepared for such an eventuality, lost face, panicked and then collapsed forthwith. It looked like much the same scenario for Argentina.

Argentine President Leopold Galtieri assumed that the British would respond with "Devil of a thing to do. Could you pay us a small sum for the islands? Good, then. Carry on." But Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party were not such good sports. What do you do with billions of dollars in weaponry and high unemployment on the home front? As the warships churned toward their destination it became plain that the answer was not "negotiate."

The troops on board became visibly agitated, even as the television cameras cranked on in relentless pursuit. The boys, few of whom could have had real war-time experience, were gearing up. They'd had quite the send-off. They were into it. At least now they would be *doing* something.

The United States eyed the situation, anxious in that now predictably opportunistic way to get another foothold in Latin America. That is where the action is nowadays. Britain may be NATO but Argentina is oil. A little influence there might provide the

Americans with yet another view of El Salvador. Galtieri could not have cared less.

General Haig, at his daffiest and doughtiest, proved to have as much credibility at the negotiation table as Mickey Mouse. And Ronald Reagan, who with the rest of us forgot for the moment that it wasn't a movie, suggested that the Soviets "butt out." The State department had a collective apoplectic fit and issued a flurry of press releases, each of which was a garbled variation on "he didn't mean it."

Besides, who needed those shifty Americans when pure national pride was at stake for both parties. There was no need for another player, unless it was the unimpeachable United Nations.

Britain took back one Falkland Island — bloodlessly it seemed. But Argentina did not capitulate in the face of Britain's sophisticated weaponry. Suddenly the news coverage was not so meticulous. The planes didn't hover or move in circles like the parts of a mobile suspended in space. It wasn't pretty in the least.

Our own attempts to gloss over the truth — that this was a war and not a rehearsal for Hollywood movie that would be a great day for extras — were becoming feeble indeed. The Royal Navy hadn't sent a Task Force at all. Those were warships, not limos carrying diplomats. President Galtieri boasted that his countrymen, having accepted 400 deaths, would take 4,000 more, even 40,000 if it came to that.

And for what? Two small islands? For a short time, the posturings of the British colonialists had looked as silly as the macho fulminations of the Argentinians. We would watch it go down like a harmless chess game. But it's not so lovely anymore.

We have forgotten that we can see all of it, thanks to the same technological knowhow that could blow us all to smithereens.

Those same gentlemen eager to see if their planes really fly and go boom are the same ones that advise on the subject of nuclear

warfare. Why should they be any less interested in whether those nuclear toys can really do the job?

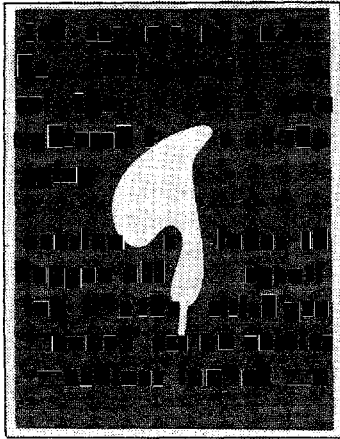
A quick survey of those who make the crucial choices as to whether or not to "go all the way" reveals some disheartening results. If Galtieri will settle for another 40,000 deaths, he's likely to be quite comfortable if a few hundred thousand non-Argentinians were to go up in smoke. Ms. Thatcher has been downright terrifying. I've always agreed with Charlotte Whitten's formulation: that women have to be twice as good at everything as men. (Fortunately, she added, that's not difficult.) But I dreaded the day when we would be vying for the privilege of making war. There is no consolation in the fact that Thatcher has proved that she can gun it with the rest of the boys. How far will she go?

The nuclear issue is a subject that fills many with utter despair. It is too big, say some. It's out of control. We haven't the means to stop it.

Well, we don't have the wherewithal to dismantle, literally, the horrible machinery, but we can do what we must. Such resistance is coming from the most unlikely sources. Lily Tomlin got the message across in her prime time TV special. Joanne Woodward is heading up a peace coalition in the States whose press release read like a feminist manifesto. While meeting in Toronto, the American Psychiatric Association (hardly the last bastion of radicalism) twigged to the fact that the threat of nuclear annihilation is a mental health issue. The AMA has made working to end the arms race an organizational priority. June 6 will be a day for enormous world-wide peace demonstrations. There is talk of making peace the crucial issue for Americans in 1984. The Europeans have already begun to show us how it's done.

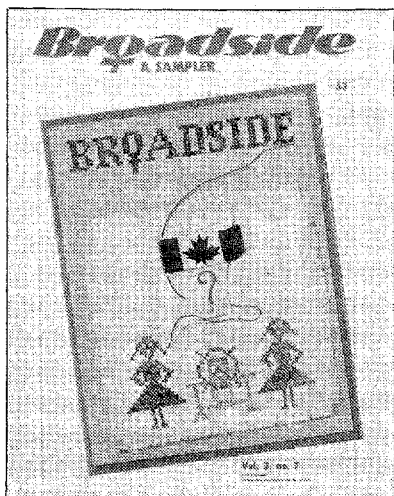
So we'd better do it. No war is benign, even if it's camouflaged by Task Forces and battles at sea. The notion that we will ever watch a war from beginning to end is preposterous. Remember that in this day and age the end is THE END. •

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# MOVEMENT MATTERS

## BILL C-53

Bill C-53, concerning changes in the rape law, is currently before the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. In the opinion of the Toronto Area Caucus of Women and the Law (TACWL) the new law includes many regressive provisions which rather than alleviate the problems serve only to endanger women further. Below is printed a statement on Bill C-53 which TACWL hopes will be supported by many women and women's groups. Women who wish to join the fight against Bill C-53 should write to: TACWL, PO Box 231, Stn. B, Toronto M5T 2T2.

### JOINT STATEMENT ON C-53

All supporters of this Statement believe strongly that the present law of what is now referred to as rape and indecent assault must be radically changed. We also believe strongly that those sections of Bill C-53 (sections 244 and 246) which deal with this area of the law are overall a step *backward* for women. The changes that must be made in C-53 are so fundamental that it is very unlikely that it can be sufficiently improved in the Committee stage.

We disagree on some issues, but we all agree that the changes to C-53 listed below are vitally necessary. We will not support Bill C-53 unless and until these changes are made. We also wish to emphasize that we have by no means covered all the problems with these sections of C-53 (or even touched on the problems with the rest of the Bill). Making these alterations would certainly not make C-53 an ideal bill; there would still be points on which we would want further changes and improvements. Our proposed changes are required to make C-53 even *minimally* acceptable.

1. *Section 244 (4)(b)* (Inference of consent): This section must read that consent shall *not* be inferred from the fact that the complainant submitted or did not resist by reason of: a) the application of force, b) threats to the complainant or a third person, c) fraud or d) the exercise of authority.

2. *Section 244(5)* (Defence of "honest belief" in consent):

At a minimum, the jury must be instructed that the defence of "honest belief" must be based on honest and reasonable grounds, and that a mere "honest belief" is not a sufficient defence.

*N.B.* We say "minimum" because some if not most of us think that there should be no defence of "honest belief" at all.

3. *Offence Structure (Sections 246.1 and 246.2):*

Without discussing the issue of what the offences should be called, we think that the structure of the offences section must be altered.

(a) There should be a three-tiered structure. The lowest tier should be a summary conviction offence, covering minor sexual assaults. It would bear a similar relationship to the more serious offences as "common assault" presently does to such offences as "assault with intent to commit bodily harm."

(b) The middle tier, presently called "sexual assault" in Bill C-53, should have a maximum sentence of 14 years. With a 14 year maximum sentence, judges cannot give absolute discharges.

(c) The highest tier, presently called "aggravated sexual assault" in Bill C-53, should include any offence committed by multiple offenders ("gang-rape"), and should include any offence which results in bodily harm, not just "serious" bodily harm.

4. *Section 246.3* (Corroboration): Subsection (2) which says that nothing in subsection (1) prevents a judge from commenting on the credibility of a witness in his charge to the jury should be eliminated.

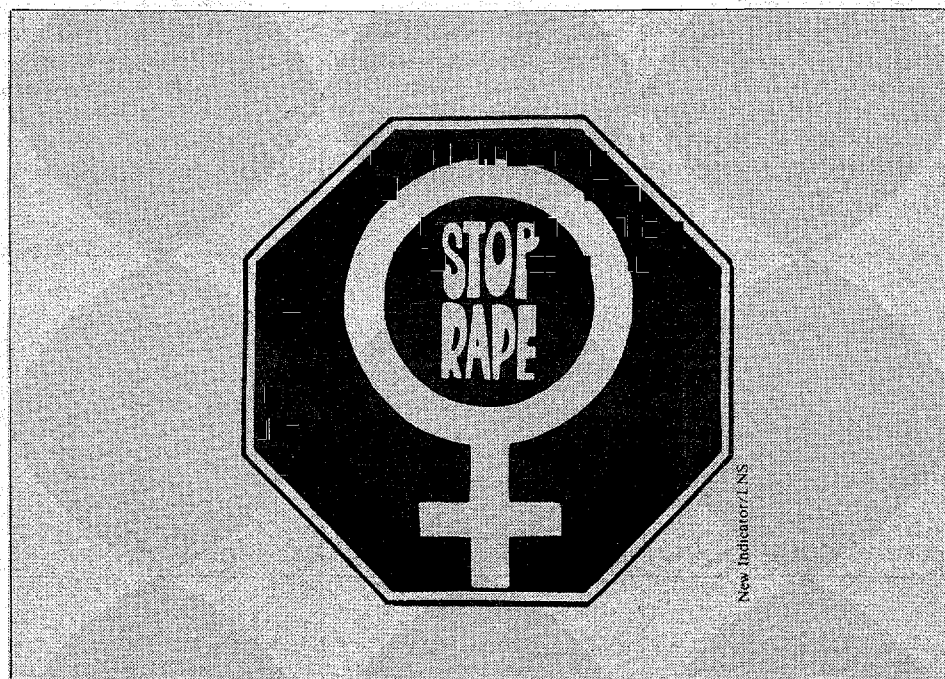
5. *Section 246.4* (Recent Complaint): This whole section is unclear, incomplete, and must be rewritten. The section should state clearly that the "first complaint" is always admissible. Both the complainant and the person to whom s/he complained should be allowed to testify in detail. The complainant should be allowed to explain the circumstances of the complaint, including why it was made at that particular time. The judge should not be allowed to comment on whether the complaint was made within a "reasonable" period of time.

6. *Section 246.5* (Previous sexual history with others than the accused):

This section must state clearly and simply that previous sexual history by the complainant with others than the accused is irrelevant and inadmissible.

Because these minimal changes are so extensive we advocate that:

1. A bill be passed immediately eliminating spousal immunity and the admission of previous sexual history of the complainant with others than the accused and;
2. No bill be passed until there has been an opportunity for meaningful input from all women's groups on this matter of such concern to our health and life.



## OPEN LETTER FROM VANCOUVER

For several years, members of Vancouver Rape Relief have been meeting with Vancouver feminists to discuss accountability to the movement as a whole, and bases of unity for struggle. The relationship between Rape Relief and the community has never been an easy one, and broke down over the controversy around government funding cuts last February. The following open letter to the Vancouver Women's Liberation Movement concerning Rape Relief, was signed by 80 women, many of them workers in the rape crisis movement, and is reprinted from Kinesis, Vancouver's Status of Women newspaper (May 1982). Reaction to the open letter was varied, and Broadside will provide more information as it is received from Vancouver.

The policies and practices of Vancouver Rape Relief have been the subject of controversy among Vancouver feminists for the last

three years. We have tried to resolve these controversies. Our experience has proved that dialogue with Vancouver Rape Relief is not productive.

We, the undersigned, withdraw our support from Vancouver Rape Relief because we believe that they are no longer supportive of women.

From our experience we know that Vancouver Rape Relief:

- is hierarchical;
- has an entrenched elitist leadership;
- is effectively closed to other feminists;
- misuses therapeutic and political tools, e.g. constructive criticism;
- mystifies and does not share information and skills, either internally or externally, thus creating a dependence on the 'leadership';
- does not provide a quality service to women who have been raped by refusing to support a woman's chosen action unless deemed

"politically correct" by Vancouver Rape Relief;

- does not do either advocacy work or follow-up counselling, thus, in effect, limiting women's choices to a very narrow range;
- exploits women's vulnerability at the time of contact with the crisis line to recruit them without that intent clearly explained to women;
- has replaced training sessions with a method of indoctrinating women through the use of so-called "radical therapy";
- denies a woman the right to develop from her own experience an individual consciousness of her own oppression;
- tells women that they bear some responsibility for their own victimization;
- is anti-lesbian. They believe lesbianism to be a 'fear of men' rather than a positive choice to love women;
- has some members who do not support a woman's right to choose abortion;
- has some members who do not support a woman's right to fight back against violent men;
- protects rapists by not giving information to women who ask about their legal options;
- puts the interests of rapists ahead of a woman's right to decide whether or not to use the legal system; exploits and adds to women's self-blame by portraying the rapist as a victim of society;
- holds women responsible for reforming men;
- protects the violent men in Men Against Rape by not believing women who have told about violence committed against them by men in Men Against Rape;
- gives information which is supposed to be confidential to Men Against Rape;
- has isolated itself from the women's movement and has lost its credibility with community organizations and institutions;
- refuses to refer women to anyone outside of Vancouver Rape Relief;
- does not hold itself accountable to anyone. This includes women in their own Support, Education and Action groups;
- believes itself to be the revolutionary vanguard (i.e. they believe they are leading the women's movement);

• has jeopardized the funding of the anti-rape movement in B.C. Vancouver Rape Relief has been saying since September of 1980 that they would go off government funding by April 1982. After having agreed to a contract with the government for funding, Vancouver Rape Relief made strategic decisions not to provide statistics as required under the contract, which endangered the funding of the Coalition of B.C. Rape Centres. A smokescreen was raised to the public; that smokescreen was "confidentiality."

We refuse to choose between the government, the police and other institutions, and Vancouver Rape Relief.

We seek another option and therefore some of us are organizing a Women Against Violence Against Women/Rape Crisis Group. Based on our individual and shared experience as women, our aim is to create a feminist rape crisis centre which will:

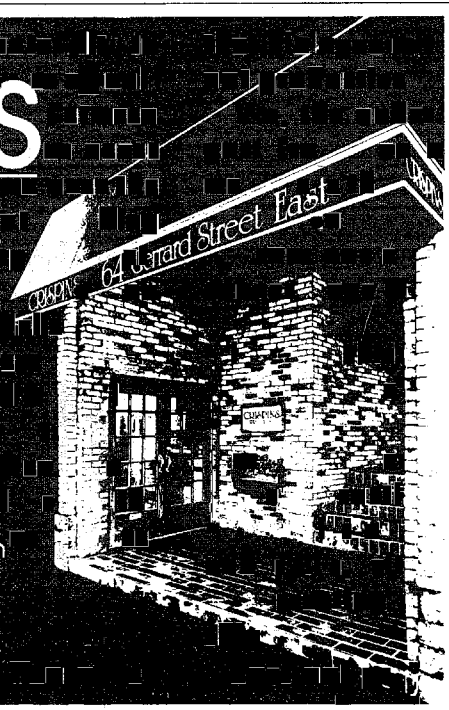
- strive towards collectivity;
- be part of an autonomous women's liberation movement;
- fight violence against women on many fronts, in many ways;
- be pro-choice on abortion;
- support a woman's right to self-defence;
- support a woman's sexual choice;
- provide a service based upon the belief that men are solely responsible for the violence they commit against women;
- be organized non-hierarchically;
- find ways to learn from each other which are empowering to all;
- find ways to resolve individual differences among ourselves with respect for all women in the group;
- work together with other women's groups;
- find ways to be accountable to the women's liberation movement;
- be open to feminists and women interested in rape crisis work;
- hold training sessions for women interested in doing rape crisis work, sharing skills and information;
- provide a service, including legal and medical advocacy, crisis counselling respectful of the woman's choice.

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## FIGHT THE RIGHT

The following is excerpted from a speech given at the Fight the Right Festival in Toronto on May 1.

May 1 was chosen for the Fight the Right Festival because traditionally it has been a day of community celebration. May 1 is also a day to commemorate the battle for the 8 hour work day and the Haymarket martyrs of 1886. It has been a day to demonstrate working class solidarity. We want to continue this tradition and to reclaim the day as one of community celebration and solidarity for our various struggles.

The Fight the Right Festival has been organized by various groups which have been active in fighting the right over the last few years — groups such as Gay Liberation Against the Right Everywhere, The Toronto Abortion Committee, Lesbians Against the Right, Riverdale Action Committee Against Racism, the Feminist Party of Canada, Canadian Abortion Rights Action League, In Struggle, International Women's Day Committee, and the Anarchist Community, among others. Since we are fighting the same enemies we decided to form a coalition to plan a Festival which would bring our various communities together.

Just who is the Right that we are all fighting? It includes groups and individuals who are committed to the reactionary values of the past and who want to return to a mythical better time that never really existed. The Right would like to remove the gains of any progressive movement. It must be understood as a response to feminist ideas and to their strong impact in the 1970s on popular consciousness. The Right is opposed to: abortion, feminism, lesbianism, homosexuality, socialism, unions, national liberation movements, financial and social assistance programs and racial equality. The Right is in favour of: capital punishment, capitalism, the nuclear family, the submission of women and children to the authority of men, militarism, nuclear technology and white, Christian power.

Some of the Canadian right wing groups currently active are: the so-called "Right to Life" anti-abortion groups, Renaissance, Positive Parents, National Citizen's Coalition, the Ku Klux Klan, not to mention the right wing of the Conservative party, the *Toronto Sun*, big business and most government policies...

Let's look at what life would be like under the Right. If you were a white, Christian, Anglo-Saxon, middle class, heterosexual, right-handed male, everything would be terrific. Men would be kings of their castles kept spotlessly clean by their wives. There would be no sex until marriage and then only for procreation in the missionary position. We would no longer be descended from monkeys but from Adam and Eve. There would be no more ring around the collar. Everyone would be subordinate to their superiors. There would be no male birth control. Cops would be tops. Gays and lesbians would be sent to re-education camps. Masturbation would be eliminated. The prayers of Jews would not be heard. We would all be put in our "proper place — blacks, women, children, natives, Québécoises, the disabled and immigrants. There would be no unions, no affirmative action, no childcare, no maternity leave and no strikes by public sector workers or essential service providers except, of course, for doctors or anyone else making over \$100,000 a year.

We can make fun of the right but we must also take them seriously because they take

themselves and their beliefs very seriously. They do not have power over our lives. We not only have to mobilize to fight the right. We also have to develop our own vision of how we want the world to be: a world where every person has the right to free choice about how they define their lives and the power and control to ensure that freedom. Our vision must be based on women's liberation, racial equality, freedom for lesbians and gays, heterosexuality no longer being compulsory, a real democracy with worker and community control of our workplaces and institutions, freedom for different life styles and an egalitarian world free of war and oppression. Our vision must also include access to the information necessary to make free choices, freedom from police harassment, full reproductive rights for women which includes free abortion on demand, safe effective birth control, no forced sterilization, 24 hour universal childcare, access to jobs, equal pay for work of equal value and paid maternity leave, and finally, the freedom to define and form our own families and communities.

—Shelley Glazer  
Fight the Right Festival Coalition

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# Emergence of a Cul

## Sense and Nonsense

Montréal, on April 14-16, was the site of "L'émersion d'une culture au féminin: perspectives transculturelles et interdisciplinaires," a conférence organized by Nicole Brossard and Marisa Zavalloni, to analyse the emerging feminist culture and its place in the social order. Speakers from France, Belgium, the United States and Québec addressed topics such as "Wanderlust/Wonderlust: remembering elemental powers of women" (Mary Daly) to "Arbre de pertinence et utopie" (Louky Bersianik) to "Femmes comme futur(res)?" (Luce Irigaray).

by Louise Forsyth

We met in Montreal in mid-April — 150 women — to share our thoughts and reflections on the "Emergence of a Culture in the Feminine." Conference organizers Mairisa Zavalloni and Nicole Brossard had proposed an open approach of "transcultural and interdisciplinary perspectives." Such perspectives were indeed offered in the presentations of the thirteen speakers: creative writers and academics in a variety of disciplines, each with her exciting feminist view of culture. We shared the joy of hearing words reflecting our experience from women who speak other tongues and belong to other nations, yet who spoke strongly in the feminine, in our tongue, about who we are, what we have been, what we shall be.

We spent three days in Montreal celebrating our complicity, sharing our awareness of problems, opening out and exploring the space of our cultural expression. We began with our common experience of the constraints and censorship which the systems of patriarchy have imposed on us so absolutely that we are seen to have little history, our reality knows only the silence of cultural traditions, our experience is absent and invisible on society's public forum. We took a look together at the problems of socialization processes and educational systems which assure that the conceptual world of each new generation of children is structured according to the same tenacious patriarchal traditions.

We were strengthened by the shared certainty that this vicious circle of cultural domination can be broken. Women can create new objects, occupy space otherwise, and so give material form to our experiences and our inner life. We knew throughout the conference that we must lay claim to language. It is in using words in a way that suits us that we shall be able to reappropriate our being, our thought, our collective memory, our visions, our images. Through words we shared our collective projects. Mary Daly, author of *Gyn/Ecology*, spoke of us as "websters" in "Wanderlust/Wonderlust: remembering elemental powers of women," when she said we have had enough of "plastic emotions" and "potted passions." We are now weaving our own web of words, using them in radically new ways in order to assure ourselves that the body of culture can be ours. The anger, sorrow, vision, and projects we shared during those three days in Montreal were a source of great energy.

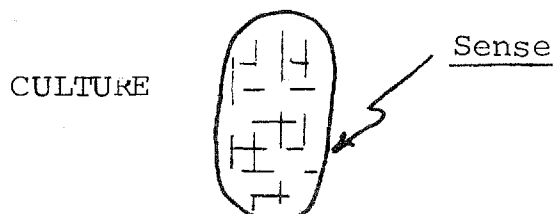
Our anger and sorrow arose out of the difficulties feminists are having everywhere, out of the disappointing impact we have had on patriarchal institutions, despite the extraordinary achievements women alone and collectively have made. We turned our anger upon ourselves as we realized, in the very conditions of the conference, that we do not yet have forms of language and discourse which suit us as women for purposes of public meeting, exchange, and dialogue. Nor do we yet have any access to public space which would allow us to come together and share experiences under circumstances which correspond to the cultural truths we know as women rather than in the cold, squared, alien halls of a university. The material environment of the conference served somewhat to keep

us alone. One of the most discouraging aspects of the conference was the apparent fatigue of some of those women who contributed most brilliantly to the feminist movement through the seventies. I was struck most forcibly by this when French philosopher and psychologist Luce Irigaray spoke. She has made an extraordinary contribution to French feminism, particularly with her first two books: *Speculum de l'autre femme* (1974), and *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (1977). She had the courage to challenge alone one of the strongest patriarchal institutions in the form of Freudian and Lacanian psychology. For years she has practised a radical feminist approach to psychoanalysis and paid the penalty for it in attacks received from hostile colleagues and critics. By far the largest crowd of the conference came to hear what she had to say. Using her experience as a psychoanalyst, she spoke of the possibility of a reciprocal transfer of love between patient and analyst, each listening to the other and sharing their quest of a cultural matrix in which women's experience might find meaning. The subject was good, but it did not work. Irigaray's apparent fatigue rendered impossible a bond of understanding with the audience. There was considerable hostility during the question period, with aggressive speakers challenging her position in a number of areas, while she seemed to misunderstand deliberately most of the questions asked. It was a painful evening.

During the conference many questions regarding women and culture were raised but remained unanswered. There were regrettable absences: those of creative women working in painting, sculpture, and theatre, for example, and the absence of any displays or presentations of the works of creative women. Also not there were the women who are submerged in their daily lives under the sexism of popular culture. Undoubtedly, other conferences will offer new perspectives on these and other areas in the enormous area of culture for women, by women, in the feminine.

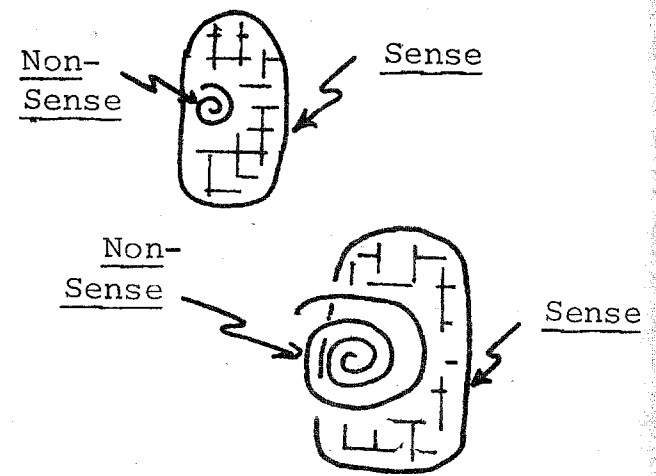
On the positive side, the conference brought us great insight and new awareness. Some of the speakers, such as Jessie Bernard (United States), Marie-Josée Chombart de Lauwe (France), Françoise Collin (Belgium), Mary Daly (United States), Michèle Jean (Québec), Danielle Lafontaine (Québec), Guiseppina Moneta (United States), Marisa Zavalloni (Québec), have been involved in major scholarly research in areas such as psychology, philosophy, theology, sociology, and history, studying the nature of woman's exclusion from the cultural field and so developing new conceptual approaches in these fields. There was general agreement that what is assumed generally to be truth and reality in these various disciplines only has such a status as a result of the dominance of patriarchal ideologies. The problem is a serious one, since woman's thought, emotions, spiritual being can serve to establish and assure her sense of identity only when they are collectively recognized and so reinforce, rather than undermine, the significance of the experience of each girl and woman.

Other speakers, such as Louky Bersianik (Québec), Nicole Brossard (Québec), Michèle Causse (France), are creative writers, the "découvreuses" who are exploring domains that are still unknown and saying what has not yet been said. Nicole Brossard captured graphically the aspirations of those attending the conference when she spoke of dis-articulating the body of Western culture which has been developed and controlled by patriarchal perceptions and interests. She depicted this body of culture as solid:



Within the body of culture, the spiral of women's words, thoughts, dreams, images, and visions has begun to turn on a new axis, a third dimension, upsetting the binary polarity of established cultural views. The spiral has even made enough turns to cross the circum-

ference of established cultural boundaries, transgressing limits and exploring, in another colour, the hitherto unknown:



The dream for the future of culture in the feminine, which will obviously represent a total renewal of all representational systems, is that the transgression continue to the point of causing the break-up of the formerly solid cultural structure:

THE EMERGENCE  
OF  
CULTURE  
IN THE FEMININE



Culture will have emerged in the feminine when women's truth and women's reality are no longer invisible from the general perspective, when our collective memory has been re-stored, when the sense of identity of girls and women is firmly based in their autonomy as individuals, when the "I" and the "we" of the collectivity, as seen in society's institutions and representation systems, mutually reinforce women's sense of self, alone and together. When that occurs, we will no longer have to feel we are being forced to take part in the death march created by the dominant patriarchal culture.

Louise Forsyth teaches French at the University of Western Ontario, and has a particular interest in feminist literature from Québec.



"Exploring the space of our cultural expression." From Saint-Jean, Michèle Jean, Marisa Zavalloni, Michèle Causse and Guiseppina Moneta.



# ture in the Feminine

## Presence and Absence

by Betsy Warland

I'm beginning to believe in the tower of Babel. I do not speak French. The language of the conference and of the informal conversations over dinner and late-night drinks was French 75 percent of the time. To attribute Babel to this seems a gross oversimplification. I was fortunate to have patient friends who frequently interpreted and over time, the submersion in the environment of those three days enabled the language of sound, gesture, and psyche to speak its osmosis through our skins.

### I

Jessie Bernard opened the conference with a succinct, deceptively simple paper on "the female world." I don't know if the impression of simplicity was a matter of her seemingly innocent speaking style or if it was because the obvious is ultimately the profound.

She reminded us that the realities of our lives vary from country to country — that many women do not live in nations. They live in camps, tribes, colonies, refugee camps, institutions. Such statistics as 0 to 100 percent illiteracy and 3.8 to 60 percent employed are easily definable sociological differences.

She reminded us that "human knowledge" is male and that most of what we know about ourselves is still rooted in the male perspective. Bernard referred to the pull of age, race, occupation, fertility, religion, patriotic loyalty, culture, class, and power as the "centrifugal forces" which do create wide differences. Deep differences. The "centripetal forces" of shared repression do have the potential, however, to be equally powerful.

Bernard cautioned that building a global sisterhood/solidarity is perhaps more complicated than we admit. It requires of us a "cross-cutting of loyalties"; it requires that we become as aware of the limitations within our own thinking as we have become aware of the limitations in the thinking of men.



ft: Armande se, Nicole

Photos by Denyse Coutu

### II

Babel still statistics on the page, Guiseppina Moneta presented her paper. Her topic — thinking. In examining the implications of western thought being metaphysical, she spoke of the need to "step back" to the unthought, the unasked. In a measured, rich voice she made statements like: "Reason elevated is the most obstinate obstacle to thinking."

Metaphysical thinking — everything objectified by the subject, everything conceptualized: subject and object are equal. Metaphysics resides in "will to power...to know is to will to know." Scientific methods have been transposed onto human sciences. Orderability of life, calculated thinking — thinking becomes technique. Moneta asserts that: "Metaphysical thinking comes to its end in western technology and the nuclear age." Zenith.

We have experienced one movement of thought. "One no longer thinks but is occupied by thinking." Step back. The unthought. The unasked. When listening is the primary gesture of thought, thinking is not an act but a way of living: "it issues from the very nature of things."

She gave no game plan. Some women commented afterwards that she wasn't telling us anything new...that this is what we're already doing. I'm not so sure. I also heard the comment: "She's not a feminist, you know." There was a quality of oracle about her speech. I couldn't then and can not now dismiss Moneta because "she's not a feminist," nor Bernard because she could be interpreted as being a bit dotty. Babel was becoming apparent. We were hearing so differently. Then Françoise Collin spoke in French and I saw everyone spinning away like a kaleidoscope from her talk. Every interpretation was different. It was like a scene of an accident...no two accounts the same.

### III

Mary Daly. We moved into a larger auditorium. Excitement building. She spoke with a surprising, careful intensity in a patchwork fashion — flipping through a much longer text than time allowed, pulling out facets of her current thought. A strange staccato lapse between Daly and the audience. I couldn't tell if it was due to her style of presentation, or if it was due to the audience being largely French-speaking, or if her concepts were not quite ordered enough for public consumption. I'll not forget Daly's reeling away from the podium at the end of her talk — away toward the blackboard wall, collecting herself during the applause. Her desire to reach us made her surprisingly vulnerable. I hadn't expected it. Was this yet another misconception propagated by the press? I don't know.

Daly. A weaver of webs... patterns not apparent at first? Filaments. Creator, inflator of words, discoverer of their dimensions. "I think it's in the words, it's just for us to see what's there." Woolf — when the "pen gets on the scent."

Daly describing our manmade word as a "bore-aucracy" and the patriarchy as "the presence of absence" while at the same time we are caught in the net of "the absence of presence." The absence of presence — the "meaningless packing of the mind" by the media and by the patriarchal manipulations of our passions.

Plastic passions. Her naming for depression, guilt, boredom, fulfilment — emotion induced, used. Potted passions, our authentic emotions stunted and pruned. Bonsai trees of love, joy, desire, rage, hope, despair, daring...plastic passions/potted passions subverting women's emotions.

We must break out. Rediscover our "wanderlust." Not just as a violent sexual desire but as "origin, fertility of the planet, longing, eager enthusiasm..." She seeks an elemental feminist philosophy (the sub-title of her next book). Elemental, "relating to the forces of nature, natural, unrestrained spirits, angles, demons, elements of the universe." We are a "race of female elemental beings running, spiralling away from the grasp of the patriarchy."

In the question period she was asked if she saw lesbianism as a political solution to patriarchal oppression. Her response was not well received by the radical fem-



"A weaver of webs": Mary Daly at the Emergence conference

inist who asked the question. "If I were forced to choose between the labels of feminism and lesbianism, I would choose feminism." She does not see sensuality as inherently political. The act of one woman sleeping with another woman does not automatically eradicate the oppression of the patriarchal consciousness from her mind.

During a discussion the following day, another perspective surfaced. We were talking about male presence of absence and how women are the vehicle for presence. She then described what she referred to as "a horrifying phenomenon" she had frequently witnessed at women-only events: "When there are a few men present it is more peaceful. The incarnate male presence is a reality. At women-only events we *feel* the patriarchy isn't present yet we're not sufficiently conscious of the extent to which we carry the patriarchal presence within us...snap, we're into roles of women or men and begin attacking one another — turning that violence upon ourselves. We put on the masks of women and men and dance out the prescribed rituals."

Reactions I heard to Daly ranged from "she's still a theologian" (patriarchy) to "boring," to various statements of mild enthusiasm. She felt the gap herself. She asked me with some anxiousness, the morning after her speech, what kind of reactions I had heard...wondered about the "language of difference."

It was apparent that it was more complicated than two languages. Daly said herself that each woman is a species, that what we are attempting is an "inter-species communication." The more we speak — the more we realize difference.

### IV

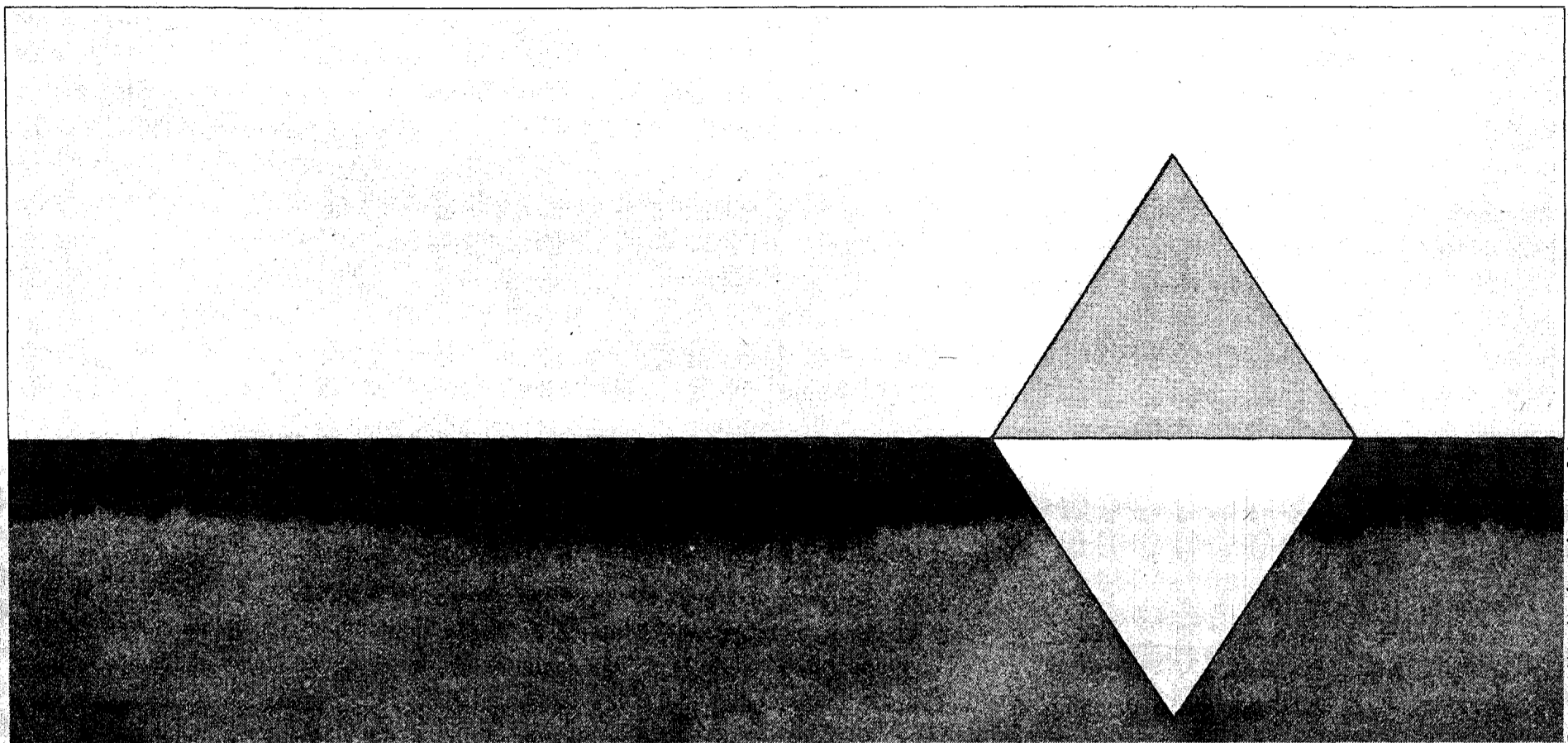
Language. It seemed to always come back/down to language. French and English. Interdisciplinary — different premises, definitions, vocabulary. Bernard. Babel. Moneta. We lack our own language. It is borrowed from the patriarchy. It seems we need to redefine, inflate every one-dimensional patriarchal word. We misunderstand one another too easily.

These women are some of our finest thinkers yet they were unwilling to discuss their different perspectives publicly. The opportunity for dialogue was not pursued. The language shifts like quicksand beneath our feet. When I asked one of the speakers which paper(s) stimulated her the most, she replied: "Oh no, I wouldn't say." These are not timid women, yet...this fear?

Betsy Warland is a Vancouver poet whose book, *A Gathering Instinct*, has just been published. She is one of the organizers of the "Women and Words" conference to take place on the west coast in 1983.

## Classics Revisited:

## Ti-Grace Atkinson: Relentless Logic

Barbara Nessim, from *Amazon Odyssey*

Radical feminism: Triangles represent feminist action in the war zones (bands) of the oppressor.

by Lorna Weir

Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Amazon Odyssey*, New York: Links 1974.

How shall I praise *Amazon Odyssey*? Let me count the ways, for it remains the least read of the feminist classics.

The most striking feature of *Amazon Odyssey*, other than its fierce and passionate intelligence, is its astonishing originality. Although the book was not published until 1974, the bulk of the text consists of talks given between the years 1967 and 1971 as the women's movement was remobilizing after nearly forty years of inactivity. Atkinson not only invented the phrase "radical feminism," but also gave it a political content. As she notes, "the persecution of women has never been taken as the starting point for a class analysis of society"; it is the intent of the book to sketch with broad strokes the basis of radical feminism. Atkinson remarks in her introduction that she realized from the beginning that feminism "raised fundamental philosophical issues." The integration of philosophical training with feminist politics gives the book its solidity and idiosyncratic power. If it be granted that there is such a thing as feminist philosophy, and that its existence is in fact desirable, then *Amazon Odyssey* is its inaugural text.

### Metaphysical Cannibalism and Other Delights

The standard response of feminists to queries regarding men is to say that the women's movement is about women; thus the "men question" is not germane to discussion. While this is a useful technique for avoiding interminable dialogue on the joys and sorrows of contemporary male-female relations, it is clearly glib: "The question is why men do the things they do and have constructed the system they have." Atkinson proceeds to elaborate a theory of the origins of male supremacy in two essays, fetchingly entitled "Metaphysical Cannibalism or Self-Creativity" and "Vaginal Orgasm as a Mass Hysterical Survival Response." The former is a psychology of the oppressor and the latter a psychology of the oppressed.

Reminiscent of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, "Metaphysical Cannibalism" is a hypothetical reconstruction of the "evil contract" which resulted in the domination of women by men. There is a measure of insecurity in all human existence, writes Atkinson, because our bodies are physically vulnerable. In order to become an oppressor, an individual or group must find another individual or group in a relatively weaker position. Men "fixed on those who had the social disability of reproduction," i.e. women. The location of the origin of women's oppression in reproductive vulnerability has been a common theme in radical feminist theory from Shulamith Firestone onward. Within Atkinson's

theory, which is strictly speaking more a phenomenology than a metaphysics, oppression was a reaction to a condition of existential anxiety. If women were the first dominated group, then, Atkinson argues, the oppression of women is the model of all other forms of oppression.

The claim that the sex-gender system is the paradigm of all oppression is dubious, and if granted, of little assistance in showing how women's and other forms of oppression function in contemporary times. We cannot explain how the money system works by using as our model barter, although the money system evolved from barter originally. Similarly, the domination of women may be the original form of oppression, but this statement does not imply that the scene of the primal oppression can explain the organization of women's oppression today, nor the oppression of other social groups. There is a grave danger in propounding a metaphysics of oppression-in-general because it is the nature of metaphysics to portray its categories as immutable, beyond history and beyond politics. There is no such thing as oppression in general, but only specific forms of oppression. In the last analysis, "Metaphysical Cannibalism" is based on a type of philosophical pessimism which could as readily be anti-feminist as pro-feminist. The women's movement is less in need of a metaphysics than a history or anthropology of women's oppression.

### Sex/Sexuality

The "discovery" of the clitoral orgasm by Masters and Johnson placed the vaginal orgasm in political jeopardy. If vaginal intercourse played only a limited role in women's sexual pleasure, then heterosexual intercourse was evidently an unnatural act, for women. Much feminist theory in the late sixties and early seventies was concerned with the legitimization of the clitoral orgasm, at the expense of any form of penetration. In retrospect, we can see it was a necessary phase. Atkinson's insights into the social function of the vaginal orgasm remain valid to this day: it is a learned response, an adaptation to male needs. Sexual intercourse as a social institution, and not a natural drive, links the role of wife with that of mother. The love of women for men appears as an internalized denial of oppression, and a pathological identification with the oppressor for the purpose of survival: "What is love but the payoff for the consent to oppression?" An oppressor of any shape or form must try to break the formation of group identification among the oppressed. Women's love for men breaks the solidarity of women and makes for gender collaborators. Atkinson's theory of heterosexuality (which she at the time took for a theory of sexuality), strikes one initially as hard-hearted. Talking with women who have had little exposure to feminism, however, can lead one to a renewed appreciation of her ideas, for feminism is al-

most invariably resisted on the ground that it undermines the love of men — present or longed for. The ideology of love, as any feminist activist knows, leads women to identify with men at the expense of identification with other women.

With relentless logic, Atkinson moves to consider the question of what motivates an individual to have sex with another person. Having outlined a critique of sexuality as an institution, she is trying to lay the groundwork for thinking about deinstitutionalized sexual practices. Why do people not remain content with autoeroticism? The question Atkinson asks — why bother? — would be appreciated for the radical act it is, in the midst of a regime which subjects sex to relentless intensification and surveillance. "What is peculiar to modern societies..." Michel Foucault, in *History of Sexuality*, has perceptively remarked, "is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the secret*."

*Amazon Odyssey* made an initial attempt to understand the political significance of lesbianism. The starting point for that analysis was Atkinson's perception that feminists were frequently accused of being lesbians, and discounted on that basis. This reflex attack on feminism has never been adequately explained. Atkinson attributes it to men's seeing women primarily in sexual terms; thus the rejection of men entails women having sex among ourselves. At any rate, the accusation of lesbianism is a scare tactic intended to make women forswear each other's company and leap at the opportunity of returning to the role of men's helpmates. The earliest of the essays on lesbianism in the *Odyssey*, "Lesbianism and Feminism," is close to being incomprehensible from our present standpoint. This is extremely fortunate, because, if understood, it would probably be infuriating. The argument, from what I have been able to piece together, runs as follows: lesbianism reinforces the sex-gender system because: (1) it involves role-playing; and (2) it is based on sex, which is the presupposition of male oppression. (Atkinson actually refers to the sex-class system; the interpolation of gender is an anachronism on my part. The concept of gender gained currency only later in the movement.) Identity formation is problematic for both heterosexual women and lesbians: "Woman's identity must be sought in the eyes of her oppressor (men). To turn to other women for ego support is like trying to catch a reflection of her self in a darkened mirror." On the other hand, lesbians, so the text reads, construct their egos by identifying with the role of the oppressor, which is ultimately self-oppressive.

The argument is a tissue of error from start to finish. Firstly, role-playing among lesbians was as much a subversion of the sex-gender system as a reinforcement of it. Butch dykes are and were women without access to male privilege. Role-playing was a

violation of gender norms which made those engaging in it subject to social censure; role-playing, as Joan Nestle has emphasized in her article in the "Sex Issue" of *Heresies*, made lesbians socially visible, a fact which took considerable courage on the part of the women involved. One of the important contributions of feminism to lesbianism was its critique of role-playing, but we must not use the critique of role-playing to turn upon a form of social resistance and protest which was integral to lesbian history.

Sex itself is not a form of male domination: it is or can be one of the many pleasures of life. The women's movement is trying to challenge the institutionalization of sexuality, not to abolish sex. This is an essential distinction absent in Atkinson's article. Lesbianism, as a prohibited form of sexual behaviour, is of course interested in the social implantation of sexual heterogeneity — the reverse side of compulsory heterosexuality. Lesbianism can either reinforce or subvert the sex-gender system, but this depends on how it is politicized and the social meaning lesbians give their sexuality, not because lesbianism has to do with sex.

Identity formation is a much more complex process than Atkinson realized. She did not take into account socially constructed identity except under the condition of oppression and in relation to identification with the oppressor. The identity of oppressed groups is not wholly dictated by their dominators. Traditions of resistance to power exist among the dominated; in any dominant culture, subdominant, counterpoint elements may be found locally. It is upon such traditions of resistance that political movements are built. Women have been looking to each other for support and getting it for an awfully long time. To see women as the mere negation of men is the presupposition of male supremacy, a dangerous presupposition for any feminist to accept. Problems do abound when women turn to each other for support; the problems are not, however, caused by our being but a negation of men.

Atkinson's idea of lesbians as a buffer zone between men and women has not received the attention it deserves among feminists. Attempting to conceptualize the strategic importance of lesbianism to feminism, she sees lesbians as a group which has broken free from the institutional roles of marriage, motherhood, and prostitution that are available to women. Disagreeing with the commonly held position that lesbianism is a statement of women's right to autonomy, Atkinson makes the important point that, "Lesbianism is pretty clearly about 'association,' not about aloneness." A buffer may be progressive if identified with the oppressed, regressive if identified with the oppressor. Hence the importance of trying to incorporate the buffer zone into the oppressed.

Much of the incorporation of lesbians into feminism was later accomplished through

the development of lesbian-feminism. Many feminists are now coming to see the strategic significance of lesbianism to feminism as the critique of compulsory heterosexuality. Through compulsory heterosexuality the benefits of male privilege and male supremacy accrue to heterosexual women. (Cf. Charlotte Bunch, "Not for Lesbians Only" in *Building Feminist Theory*). Because the concept of compulsory heterosexuality had not been developed at the time Atkinson was writing, her concept of lesbianism as a buffer zone lacked a concrete strategic significance for the women's movement.

The essay in which Atkinson discusses her concept of the buffer zone, "Strategy and Tactics," is profusely illustrated with a series of enigmatic charts which show the development of a revolt among the oppressed from pre-revolutionary quiescence to post-revolutionary triumph. Within the oppressed three major subgroups may be found: pro-rebellion, neutrals, and anti-rebellion, with the buffer zone occupying a position between oppressor and oppressed. It is easy to agree with Atkinson that the oppressed group most consolidate itself as pro-rebellion and mount a victorious offensive against the oppressor, but the problem with the charts and the accompanying text is that they present no program for doing this. Lovely designs, the charts lack concrete political content. (Though lacking in strategic sense, the charts would make inspirational designs for quilts.)

### Women as a Class

A consistent thread in *Amazon Odyssey* is the definition of women as a class. Of this theme Atkinson is perfectly conscious: "The analysis begins with the feminist's *raison d'être*: that women are a class, that this class is political in nature, and that this political class is oppressed." A class Atkinson defines as, "...a group of individuals all of whose members share a common characteristic." Pitched at this level of abstraction, what Atkinson calls "class" might equally well be named group, category or even species.

One cannot quarrel with the original motivations for theorizing women as a class.

Considerable effort had to be expended in order to legitimize organizing women as women, partially to counter the orthodox Marxist approach of organizing women as workers. The concept of women as a class was a declaration of the specific nature of women's oppression and the commonalities among women, with the intent of building a collective political identity among women. The lasting contribution of the concept of women as a class was the autonomy of the women's movement.

It is possible to agree with all the above goals and *not* define women as a class, but as an oppressed group. At the time Atkinson was writing, there was already in existence a long tradition of resistance which defined class as a relation of economic exploitation in production. This concept of class is useful for explaining some of the major characteristics of contemporary socioeconomic organization. It is not at all what Atkinson had in mind when she called women a class. There is another perfectly good concept used to explain social contradictions which are not reducible to economic exploitation: it is called oppression. There are many forms of oppression, among them the domination of women by men or people of colour by whites. The concept of women as a class came to be discarded by radical feminists, largely because the Marxist concept of class has descriptive and analytical value for feminist theory, and also because alternative grounds were readily available for conceptualizing the particular nature of women's oppression.

### Trauma in the First Years

Re-reading the early books of the second wave of feminism, one can't help but get the feeling that their authors were in a state of constant personal crisis. The first theorists of the second wave were creating a radical movement which questioned all relations of power, including those affecting their own personal lives. They were trying to bring into being a movement of resistance fundamentally unlike anything which had occurred before. Pilloried by the media, embattled in

meetings, struggling to live their personal lives in accordance with feminist principles, there were surely few places of safety for these women. The personal cost they paid in those early days is frightening to see today when reading or rereading the feminist classics. Atkinson's *Amazon Odyssey* is no exception to this pattern.

The bleakest part of *Amazon Odyssey* is printed, appropriately enough, in white on black. Entitled "On 'Violence in the Women's Movement,'" the paper was delivered at a "Panel on Violence" in New York City in 1971. Atkinson's position on violence as a tactic of the women's movement was perfectly reasonable: violence is a systematic characteristic of structures deployed by oppressors to keep the oppressed in place. Violence is not a tactic available or politically appropriate to the women's movement or to any other oppressed group (at least in short and medium term resistance).

Then, having stated this, she began a eulogy of her friend who had recently been murdered: Joseph Colombo, Mafioso and founder of the Italian American Civil Rights League. The gist of her speech was that while feminists talk, Mafiosi act. The speech goaded the audience to really "act" by "hanging around" St. Patrick's Cathedral with her for an hour, just to see what would happen. There would seem to be no political sense whatsoever in inviting several hundred people to "hang around" and possibly get arrested for reasons that are unclear. Such tactics are guaranteed to keep political groups ineffective and isolated by frightening away possible supporters. The speech on violence is horrifying to read: in her grief and despair Atkinson bullied, baited, and taunted the audience.

What might have led her to do such a thing? It is a characteristic of all oppositional practice that when one joins or identifies with an oppressed group, one is placed in a minority position with respect to dominant social power. Minority positions can easily come to be confused with moral/revolutionary superiority: the more embattled one is, the greater one's superiority. This is frequently coupled with the fallacy that the most oppressed are the most revolutionary.

Soon the well-meaning activist gets caught in an infinite regression of always being in opposition within the opposition, which status, by its own peculiar logic, always confers superiority. This tendency should be called by its proper name: elitism. Elitism of this kind consists of an endless struggle for a politic more correct than the group in which one is participating. It avoids the real responsibility of identifying with a group, working to build its politic despite one's disagreements, and organizing people from the position they occupy. Feminists, to steal a line from Plato, must have the temperament of guard dogs, patient and protective of our movement, and hostile to those who would attack us. Certainly, principled political disagreements and splits do exist, but when a single individual is in the position of denouncing an entire movement, she has succumbed to the romance of the marginal.

By far the most delightful part of *Amazon Odyssey* is the "Afterword," which details Atkinson's collaboration with the artist Barbara Nessim in designing the book. Following the words of her maternal grandfather, "a book is the home of an idea," Atkinson wanted to make an adequate home for her collection of writings. Of the feminist classics, *Amazon Odyssey* is the only one which can lay claim to being book art: the design of the page amplifies the meaning of the text. The "Afterword" is about attachment — to her work, to art, to Barbara Nessim. Of course there were problems with the publisher, but the tone is one of striving to accomplish something she deeply cares about. The "Afterword" is printed in black on white.

*Amazon Odyssey* was the first feminist book I read, and I will always have a warm place in my heart for it. At the time I was so excited I found it difficult to remain seated, wanting to run wildly. The book has a lasting courage, passion, and integrity, as I have lately rediscovered. Wherever Ti-Grace Atkinson may be, I wish her well.

Lorna Weir has been active in anti-war, feminist, lesbian, and gay politics, and is currently working on a doctoral thesis on political theory.

## Adrienne Rich:

# Wild Patience, Primordial Urgencies

by Alexa DeWiel

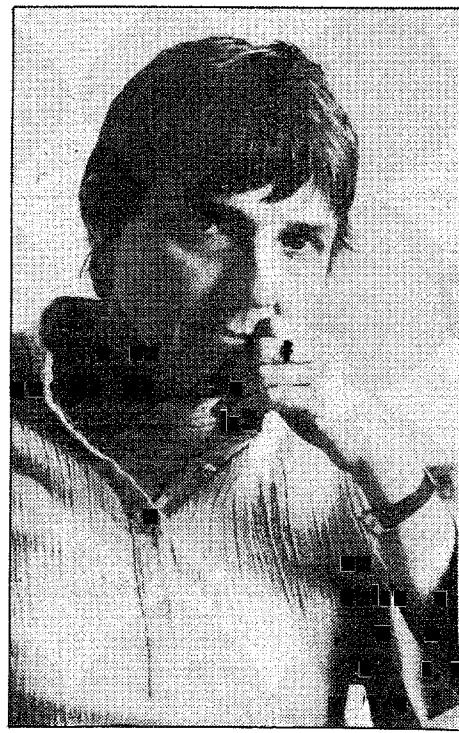
Adrienne Rich, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co. 1981. Pp. 62. \$6.95.

In the hey-day of Viennese opera, when composers we now call the masters were presenting their latest works for the approval of their patrons and the general public, there was one definitive gauge by which to measure the success of a new work. This was not by the critical statements of the day but by whether or not the shoeshine boys were whistling fragments from the overture in the streets outside the opera house the next morning. So it is, I think, with measuring the success of poetry. It must hit you at the whistling core.

Even in this era, when poetry is looked upon as a gothic leftover, it has always struck me that poetry continues to crop up at public occasions such as after-dinner speeches and inaugurations. Inevitably someone will stand up and quote some famous lines from a poem, the promissory many-miles-before-I-sleep kind of declaration. All of which is to say that it is the longing of the tongue to turn itself again around a particular verbal configuration and an attendant twisting around of the heart and mind that keeps good poetry in the mainstream of life, useful to the ideology of the psyche, no matter how many contesting and sometimes more accessible stimulants are available.

The poetry of Adrienne Rich continues to satisfy that longing and to live up to the expectations of her preceding works. Her latest book, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*, roots deeper into the causal relations of *The Dream of a Common Language*, a collection of poems which firmly embedded itself in the lives of many people who don't usually read poetry.

I discovered Adrienne Rich in 1973 when her book *Diving into the Wreck* was published, a time when the agony of Sylvia Plath's work was fashionable and when I, as a youngster in the field, was searching through the acerbic brilliance of Margaret Atwood and the politically satisfying but austere Denise Levertov for company for my thoughts, for a woman poet who could speak to me, yes, about the dream of a common language. In *Diving into the Wreck* I found a sisterhood of words, a genderline at-



"Conscious, passionate tenacity for life": Adrienne Rich

JEB (Joan E. Biren)

tack against objectivity with an underlying compassion that was truly breathtaking. With all the fulfilled promises of her past work, Rich had a lot to live up to. That is probably why I find the title of this book so delightful.

These poems in it are reminiscent of the tone set in the "Twenty One Love Poems" cycle of *The Dream of a Common Language*. Here, too, is the opening scene of inner city blues for "sycamores blazing through the sulfuric air" and the awareness of the deadening effects of neon-lit pornography silhouetting the cityscape. A woman wakes up to wonder: "And what can reconcile me/that you, the woman whose hand/sensual and protective, brushes me in sleep, /go down each morning into such a city?" This theme, repeated, paints a portrait of a woman of words who is starved for positive images and hope among the familiar landmarks of misogyny which surround her, a poet terrified that she might "never romanticize language again," "to become free of speech at last" in the war of images.

It is in answering these questions by categorizing and praising the details of her daily life that Rich's verses resonate. Her new poems ring with (dare I say it?) meaning. There are descriptions of primordial urgencies, forgotten heroines, shelved reputations, racial hostilities, with all the atmospheric changes of mates living on domestic ground. What a change this conscious, passionate tenacity for life is from the paralysis of earlier writings by Rich such as the desperation in passages such as this one from *The Will to Change* (1968): "In America we have only the present tense. I am in danger. You are in danger. The burning of a book arouses no sensations in me. I know it hurts to burn. There are flames of napalm in Catonsville, Maryland. I know it hurts to burn.

The typewriter is overheated, my mouth is burning, I cannot touch you and this is the oppressor's language."

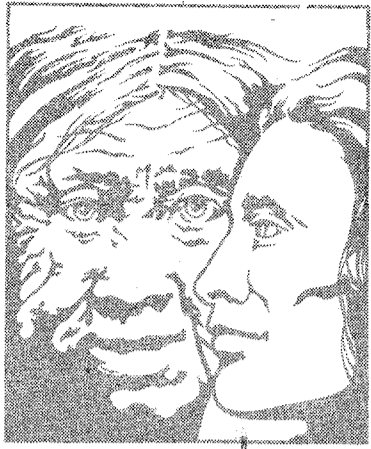
The word "uneven," attributable to most volumes of poetry, is irrelevant in this case. This book is the product of the sure hand of a major poet:

how you have given back to me  
my dream of a common language,  
my solitude of self.

A largely commemorative book to the living as well as to lost women who have passed away, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far* should be read and reread. Take, for example, the poem "Mother-in-Law," in which an old woman repeats, "tell me something, some secret we both know and never have spoken," initiating a fierce dialogue with a surprise ending. Read "What is Possible," for its typically complex simplicity, or one of my favourite poems, "Transit," for its lilting rhythms, or the restrained anger of "Heroines":

You draw your long skirts  
deviant  
across the nineteenth century  
registering injustice  
failing to make it whole  
How can I fail to love  
your clarity and fury  
how can I give you  
all your due  
take courage from your courage?

Alexa DeWiel is the author of *Conversations with Bibi*. She lives in Ottawa, where she works for the Women's Programme of the Secretary of State.



## An Interview with Anne Cameron

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### "Now We Get Some Truths"



by Jean Wilson

Anne Cameron (Cam Hubert) has been familiar to Broadside readers as a contributor. She also has written *Dreamspeaker* and many screenplays, poems, and short stories. In 1980 one of her stories appeared in the excellent anthology of Canadian women's writing called *Common Ground*, published by Press Gang in Vancouver. Late last year, the same press published *Daughters of Copper Woman*, which was reviewed in the April issue of *Broadside*. Recently, while she was in Toronto for the Genie Award ceremonies as an author of the screenplay for the film *Ticket to Heaven*, Anne Cameron talked to Jean Wilson, mainly about *Daughters of Copper Woman*.

Although she now lives in Powell River, BC, Anne Cameron was born and raised in Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island. There and through her travels on the island, she became friends with many native people, especially native women. They are the ones who ensure that their people's history is retold by one generation to another. Over the years, in the spirit of trust and friendship, Cameron has been privileged to hear many of the coast Indians' stories. Recently she was entrusted by the Nootka people of the village of Ahousat with the retelling of them to a wider audience. *Daughters of Copper Woman* was the result, and there is likely to be at least one sequel to that book.

There are 19 stories altogether in *Daughters of Copper Woman* and all are ones "given" to Cameron to retell. "In native culture there is something that I think works better than the Canada copyright, and that is that Indians believe that a story doesn't belong to the person who hears it. The story belongs to the story-teller and to the people involved in the story. The same applies to songs and poems. Often someone will give you a story and tell you you can use it any time. Then it becomes your story as well."

"Often, though, if it's a story that hasn't been published or that isn't common knowledge, you are told not to retell it. I started hearing stories, but the Indians said 'don't tell anybody,' so I didn't, not even my kids. I think that was a test."

"The stories weren't told in chronological order; they were simply part of an evolving, connected mythology. Native people don't teach linear narrative. They'll tell you something at the time it seems right that you should know it. On the mythological side of *Daughters of Copper Woman*, there are gaps in the Copper Woman/Old Woman stories, but I imagine that I will be able to fill them in eventually."

"The historical stories are the ones I really, really like because they explain so much I had previously not found an explanation for — why a society that doesn't believe in property ownership and money, the way we do, did have slaves. The west coast was the only place where there were slaves in this country. For me, this situation is explained by the fact that west coast native society was driven to a state of murderous blood-lust as a result of the first encounters with the Spanish. It would have taken four generations to get over the sicknesses transmitted by those encounters. But the Indians didn't have four generations."

Asked whether "Old Woman" is a figure common in other Indian mythologies, Cameron replied: "She gets different names everywhere. Copper Woman/Old Woman is used on Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlottes, and the BC coast, in Washington, Oregon, and up the Fraser River. 'Spider-woman' in Arizona is probably related. In fact, most tribes that I know anything about were at one time matriarchal, matrilineal, and matrilineal, so they all had such female figures. She wasn't necessarily the 'creator' though, since in most stories the world was here, and then the first mother arrived or developed."

Concerning a sequel to the book, Cameron remarked that one story would be about a woman chief. "History books imply that all chiefs were male. The woman whose story will be in the next book lived near Hope, BC. Once Haida warriors, the fiercest on the west coast, were coming downriver to attack this woman's village. She left it, met the raiders, said 'we're peaceful, we don't want trouble — go home.' They did — but you'd never learn that story in history books. The whole patriarchal ideology denies that women can be shamans, healers, so Indian society as a whole has been misrepresented and women have been downgraded."

That reality can be misrepresented was something Cameron learned as a small girl in rough, redneck, coalmining Nanaimo. She discovered that even an incredibly beautiful place could have incredibly ugly economic things happen in it. "The only job skills most people had were related to coalmining and that was a dying industry. Most were too old to learn new skills and afraid to move away. One of the only certainties was that every second Friday was payday and that then the men would beat up the women. I spent a lot of time reading. There was no order in the world, but books at least had margins. When I was about 11 it occurred to me that books had been written by someone. That was it. I wrote my own stories and also if I didn't like the endings in other people's stories I'd just rewrite them."

Now Anne Cameron lives and writes in another somewhat isolated and redneck west coast town, Powell River. "I'm not writing as much now as I was before. I moved to Powell River a year or so ago. I have nothing to plug my electric typewriter into! Here I am, the original hothouse flower, and we (the woman she lives with, various dogs, and

herself) have no electricity, no running water."

"This winter it was -10° C for weeks on end and the pump to the house froze so we had to do a great water trek regularly. It was awful. I wept and wailed in letters to my friends. One morning I went out bleary-eyed and shivering and found out after I'd sat down that there was ice on the outhouse seat. I decided then that things couldn't go anywhere but up. But winter got worse! However, I'll stay in Powell River as long as I can be endured, I suppose."

By now, spring has arrived even in Powell River and Anne Cameron has long since returned, to help put a new roof on the house, among other things. But she certainly hasn't stopped writing. In November, Avon Books will publish her next book — a feminist western: "I may become the Duster Queen." The book, she reports, has all the standard cowboy elements. "There's even the fallen woman — she didn't fall, she jumped. And there's the mad marshal, too, but I couldn't make a believable mad woman marshal. There are limits to my political incorrectness!"

Maybe so, but that's probably a book to watch out for. Anne Cameron rides again.

One of the mythological stories in *Daughters of Copper Woman*, "Mowita," has a male character in it somewhat startlingly named "Snot-Boy, the incomplete manikin."

"I had some trouble calling him that," said Cameron. "I was raised very WASP and tight-assed and that name jars me. But 'Mucous-Man' or 'Phlegm-Person' doesn't work somehow. Also, the story's message is that you have to learn to accept all your bodily functions. I've never heard him called anything else. So there he is — Snot-Boy."

Concerning the stories in the book that are placed in contemporary settings, Cameron described how the oral method of story-telling had worked in her experience. "Oral tradition is as much a style as academic linear narrative, but it has been given no respect, I think because the elitists don't want us to know that we have our own folk art forms. I like the way west coast native people handle story-telling in a seemingly roundabout way that covers everything, that perambulates, never quite stays on the track. Nothing happens anywhere without affecting everything, which is partly why the mythology doesn't come chronologically. Probably it didn't come that way originally either."

"These old women would start off and in the telling of one story I'd realize I'd probably been told several others, too. And because there's a loose, comfortable feeling, if a kid falls off the back steps and cuts her chin, everybody can take time out to comfort her. I like having the kids there all the time. In some ways they're incredibly disciplined. They aren't allowed to ride roughshod over everyone else. If they misbehave, out they go."

According to Cameron, reaction to *Daughters of Copper Woman* by Indians and non-Indians alike generally has been favourable. One of her anecdotes concerned meeting well-known west coast chief George Clutesi on the ferry from Nanaimo to Vancouver. She told him that she was publishing a book of stories, with permission. Immediately he asked who was publishing them and Cameron replied that a women's press named Press Gang was doing so. "This incredible smile grew and grew and this incredible 80-year-old wrinkled face lit up, and he said, 'Women publishers? Now maybe we get some truths!'" ●

## Jazz Five Alive!

by Lil MacDonald

May 1 at Harbourfront in Toronto marked the debut performance of *Alive!*, a San Francisco jazz quintet, in Canada and if the "sold-out" audience response was any indication, *Alive!* will definitely be back.

Instrumentally, *Alive!* is piano, acoustic bass, drums, percussion and lead vocals; the bass player also plays electric bass and cello and joins the pianist in supporting vocals; the pianist writes much of *Alive!*'s original music. Percussion was in abundance, and some quite unique instruments were incorporated into their music — from an African Kalimba to a strange wooden tube that, when tipped, produces a sound not unlike waves against the seashore. There were lots of little chimes and bells and just about every standard percussion instrument you could name. The result of all this percussion was certainly enjoyable, and at times thoroughly delightful. *Alive!* has that unmistakable California sound — slick and well produced — through which they play jazz, blues, ballads, fusion and something resembling Latin rock.

There were a few things about the concert that didn't quite live up to its full potential. Although *Alive!* made a unique entrance — playing an African beat on percussion and chanting as they moved through the crowd and towards the stage — the audience response drowned out the dynamics of the unamplified singing. The show was marred by a few technical problems, ranging from feedback to bad monitor mixing. The overall vocal mix didn't always complement some of the very subtle dynamics attempted by

lead vocalist Rhiannon. The drums were too loud, the bass too quiet and the piano never quite present enough to add the flavour it could have. But setting up the sound for that concert couldn't have been easy. Aside from the concrete-block walls, the band itself had a widely varied volume level from one number to the next.

As the lead vocalist for *Alive!*, Rhiannon seems to control the band with all the ease and confidence of a seasoned pro. Vocally, she is a tremendous talent — she phrases well, has several vocal textures at her command and is one of the most powerful singers I've seen recently. Her range is very good — probably three octaves or better — with impressive dynamics and sensitive, sensual interpretations. I hear several influencing styles in Rhiannon's singing. There's a lot of Bette Midler in her style; she scats like LA's Damita Jo DeBlanc, but shows that she often listens to Al Jarreau. One cannot help but credit Rhiannon as the real strength in *Alive!* because without her they would be rather ordinary.

The drummer, Barbara Borden, is not a jazz drummer by any stretch of the imagination. She plays on a rock kit, complete with roto-toms and a full-size bass drum. Her style, too, is more akin to rock music and her solos and ballads weren't very creative. But her time was good and, except for stumbling into the fast swing in "Call It Jazz," she was always there to hold it together. Suzanne Vincenza is a very slick electric bass player. Her cello playing is good but she should be given more room to experiment because her solo rather failed to get off the ground. As an acoustic bassist, she's more than adequate, but still doesn't have much kick as a

jazz player. Her blues playing in "Wild Women Don't Get the Blues" had a delightful growl to it and was one of her best works all night. Pianist Janet Small demonstrated a marked talent as a songwriter and arranger, but not as a particularly able player. Her solos seemed laboured and didn't really build past quarter notes. When she played any faster than that, as was frequent, she tended to sound sloppy and rushed.

Although all members of *Alive!* play percussion, their principal percussionist is Carolyn Brandy. When performing, she is surrounded by tables of instruments, all of which she played with fine technique and good taste. Her weakness at this concert was her conga playing, which, in a purely rhythmic sense, seemed a bit disjointed. Her patterns didn't really lead anywhere, and were choppy and uneven, with no apparent direction.

Although members of *Alive!* were not individually brilliant, collectively they had a full, exciting sound. They might do well to add a horn player for diversity, but their fans at this concert didn't notice. *Alive!* received a well-earned encore and a standing ovation — their fans clearly felt they got their money's worth. I was impressed with *Alive!*'s grace and warmth and their ability to reach their audience. They've recently released an album recorded live at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, and I can recommend it most enthusiastically as a sample of what *Alive!* can do.

And when you hear of their return engagement, you'll have to move quickly to assure your ticket. There must have been a hundred disappointed fans that night who wish they had. ●

# Hilda Paz: Light Through the Darkness

by Susan Sturman

Most of us lead fairly crowded lives. As feminists, as lesbian/feminists, these lives are often led in a material and political struggle for survival. We have realized over the past few years the value and necessity of cultural expression as a part of the change we hope to make. We understand too that partaking of cultural expression is nourishing, helps us to grow as individually and collectively and occasionally provides a much needed (if only temporary) respite from everyday woes. We have established an alternate feminist music network and recording industry, countless theatre and dance companies, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, and journals. And we have encouraged women musicians, composers, playwrights and actors, dancers and choreographers, poets, novelists, and journalists in their work, even when they are not "officially" part of the movement.

But in this vast cultural renaissance, the visual artist finds herself comparatively underrepresented and undersupported. Aside from Judy Chicago and Georgia O'Keeffe, how many woman artists gain the attention and respect from feminists given to women in other disciplines? How many women even go to galleries to see their work? (And why don't they?) Why are there so few alternative galleries where women's work can be featured? These were questions that came to mind as I travelled to Womanspirit Art Research and Resource Centre in London, Ontario (see *Broadside*, April 1982) to see the work of painter Hilda Paz.

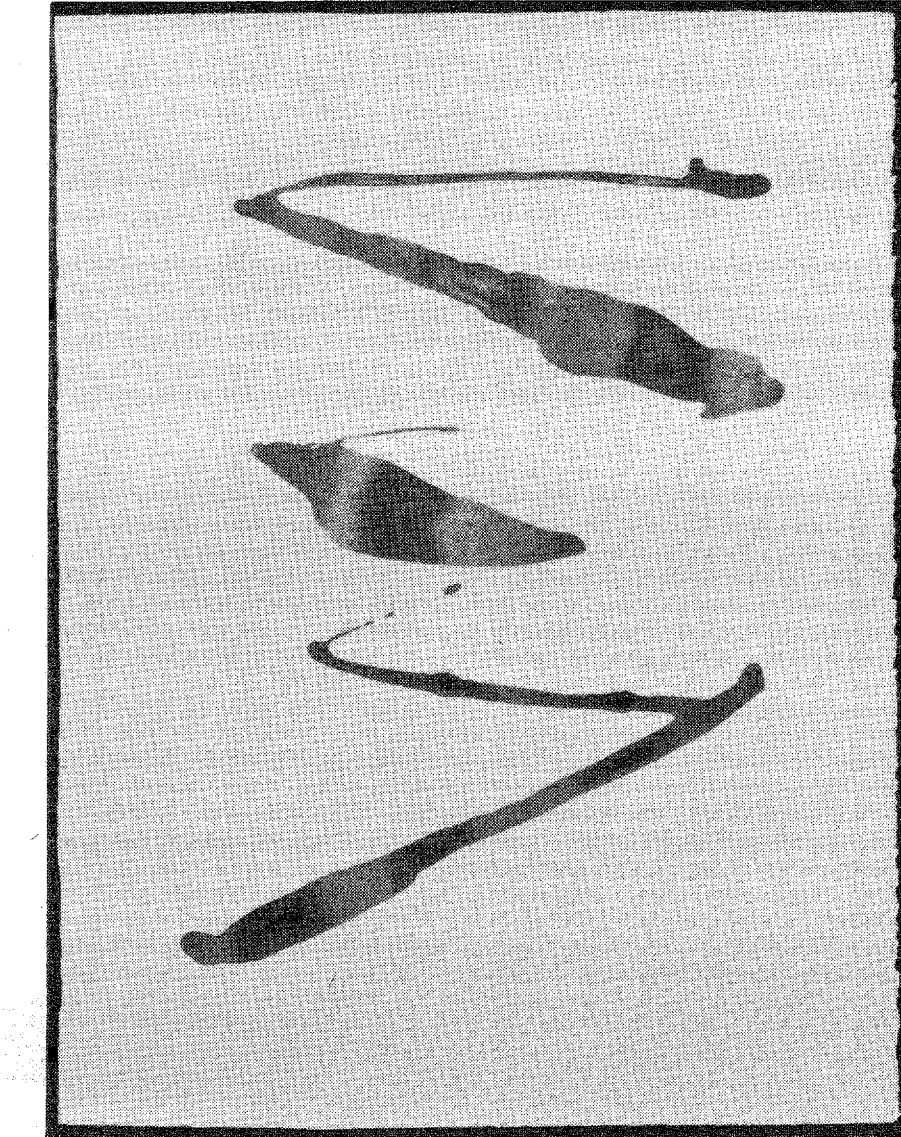
Hilda Paz was born and raised in Ottawa, where she studied art and French literature at Carleton University. She came to Toronto to continue her studies at York University, where I first saw her work in 1974. At the time she was working on a series of "landscapes," stark, horizontal canvases with bands of airbrushed colour so pale they were almost invisible. In 1978 she suddenly stopped painting altogether. After two difficult years she began to paint again. Her exhibition at Womanspirit is her first since then.

The new paintings on paper are colourful and spacious abstractions, some "spontaneous," some more obviously "constructed." While the forms are spare, the sparseness is "warm," unlike the icy asceticism of the Landscape series. In some of the paintings, shapes envelop an open centre, which exerts a positive, vital force, drawing the viewer in, through, and around. In others, craggy tunnels draw the eye down into cave-like space. Still others are mountainous expanses that go "up." All the works are participatory in that they challenge one to enter them and move with them, to be moved by them in a contemplative way. They are deliberately without title in order that viewers can be free to "go wherever they want" when looking at the pieces. Hilda acknowledges, however, the difficulty that many viewers have with abstraction: "Being given that freedom is not something they are used to. They need guidelines, they need the title, they need the object to relate to."

Her paintings do not deal with concrete objects so much as they deal with moods and feelings, with personal states of mind. The last painting of the series chronologically (No. 8, April 1982 in the exhibition) contains a ground of pink purple washes, moodily beautiful, with an open centre. On the edge of the centre, an intricate kernel of blue/gold/red/orange begins to grow. Hilda described the process of creating it: "I was extremely depressed and I woke up one morning and saw this — I saw the outside and the white space between it. I just lifted myself out of bed and I did it — and it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. And you have to understand in terms of my psychology — after that was created there was a sense for something within, a sense for the focus that needed to be given there, a direction." In another painting (No. 9, Aug. 1981) the outcome of the process was totally unpredictable: "I took a bottle of mixed paint and made a spiral with my hand and the paint fell on the paper, just like that." Then, when the blue paint dried, it completely changed colour. The resulting painting is a pure bolt of electric-blue energy.

Two other paintings (Nos. 4 & 5, June 1980) have a more literal inspiration. They feature a Prussian blue ground, lattice-like, through which small pieces of intense colour flicker. Hilda recalled the experience of entering the "dark cave" of Chartres Cathedral and being overwhelmed by the flashing colours of the stained glass windows. The sensation of seeing light through the darkness brought her back to painting again.

"The first while of coming back to paint-



Hilda Paz, *Untitled, January 1982*, acrylic on paper, 24" x 32"

ing is terrifying, to sit in front of a white page and to not know what is going to happen, and all the paper and all the paint you waste trying to find out what it is, or where it is. But now I've gotten to the point where I can carry inside a feeling, or a colour that creates the feeling, or sometimes, the whole thing is just there. Now I'm working with the paint on paper and it's working with me. It's not as if I'm controlling it."

"I've also come to realize that the time between painting is very important. When I stopped, I feared I might not paint again. I haven't painted now for a month — it doesn't worry me as much as it has, because I know that what I'm experiencing is taking form inside and then when I come to paint again, it will always be there."

The paintings function as a whole — they record what seems to be a personal progress, the struggle of one woman to express herself, to find the courage she needed in order to do it. Somehow when one looks at them, they give hope. Visually they lead up, out, through. They are full of light. "What led me to believe that there was more to life than difficulty was looking through the window and seeing that in every cell there was something more. A reason to exist. I want people to see that in the work, to move with colour, with the senses."

Despite an increasing sense of optimism and confidence in her work, Hilda feels quite isolated as a painter. She claims that she does not get much support from others, particularly women, for the work that she does. Most people are not very well educated about art, she believes; this may account for some of the hesitancy, especially when the work leaves one to her own devices.

This is perhaps true. In feminist circles we tend to accept formal experimentation more readily in film (e.g. Barbara Hammer) and literature (e.g. Bertha Harris) than we do in art, because in film and in literature the visual and verbal images are more obvious than in abstract art, and so is the information they convey. Though we applaud *The Dinner Party*, in visual terms it is rather crudely literal. This is not to advocate "art for art's sake" by any means, but to suggest that there is room for greater stylistic experimentation and appreciation of same in women's visual art. We do not have to rely on "social

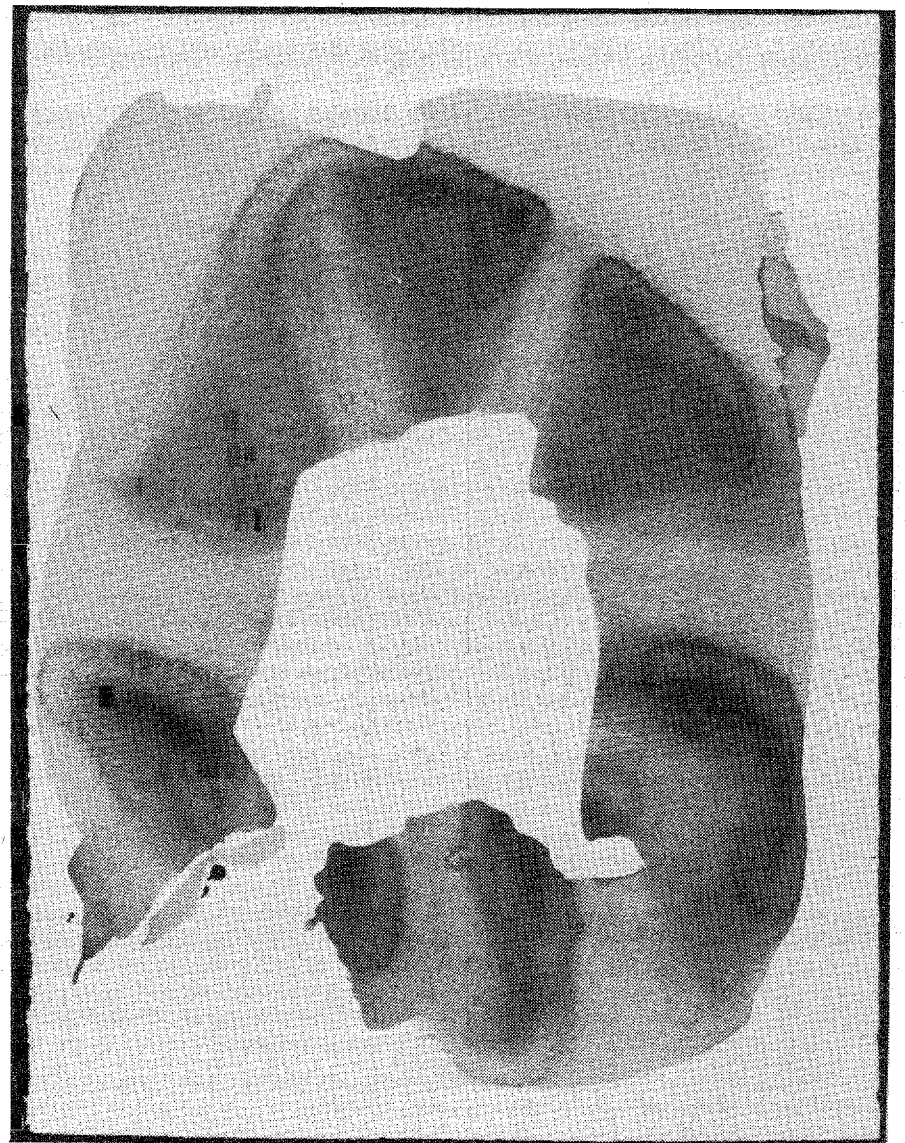
realism" or reactively replace patriarchal iconography with icons of our own design (à la Chicago and others) in order to represent our ideas artistically.

There is obviously a class aspect to "appreciation of the arts." Art galleries and art appreciation classes are largely patronized by the monied. As a result, most art spaces have an oppressive, intimidating air about them, no matter how "open to the public" they claim to be. They are *designed* to make one feel ignorant and small (especially if one is a woman.) Anyone who ventures an unsophisticated opinion in such places will find herself labelled "philistine" and will probably be reminded of the tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

An individual artist, especially a woman, usually has a fairly hard time being taken seriously and trying to get her work shown in these cultural mausoleums. She will probably have to spend a fair bit of money to frame and hang and even publicize the works, once she has made the connections necessary to get her foot in the door. Then she is at the mercy of the marketplace. To those who buy art in commercial galleries, she must be "established" enough to be a good investment. What this has to do with the making or enjoyment of art is anybody's guess.

In light of this it is good to know that places like Womanspirit exist, both to provide support for artists like Hilda Paz and to allow women to see their art in a non-oppressive, woman-run environment that also provides facilities for education about women's art and literature. We need to support and acknowledge the work that has and is being done by women artists and art workers, and to create more spaces like Womanspirit in London, the Powerhouse Gallery in Montréal, and Women in Focus in Vancouver. We need to recognize the importance of women's visual art and how it can nourish, inform and inspire us, personally and collectively. As Hilda Paz said to me: "I'm a woman and I paint, and what I feel in common with other women is probably very real. We share a common existence. If you care to look at my work, it is there."

Susan Sturman is a Toronto graphic artist and member of the women's rock group, *Mama Quilla II*.



Hilda Paz, *Untitled, April 1981*, acrylic on paper, 24" by 32".

# Yearning for Glory

by Barbara Halpern Martineau

Every now and then I go to see a movie,  
But the hero is never me.  
— Holly Near, "Lady at the Piano"

My ten-year-old son has seen *Chariots of Fire* ten times. He loves it for the running and jumping, which he does himself, for the scenes of Scotland and Cambridge, part of his father's background, for the discussion of Jewishness, part of his mother's background, and most of all, I think, for the fine sensitive beautifully orchestrated rendering of relationships between young men who love to run and do things and win for the glory of God, their country, their college, and perhaps, just a little for themselves.

The theme of glory is subtly woven through this film — glory isn't a word we hear very much these days but once a great deal was done in the name of glory, much of it quite nasty. Also, some fine music was made in the name of glory, and beautiful buildings built, and so forth. In *Chariots of Fire* the manifestation of man's impulse to be glorious in the service of some cause or other is more modest and less harmful than empire-building or war — at the time of the events inspected by the film a very inglorious war had just been fought at great cost to all participants. The film does not fail to observe that the Paris Olympics of 1924 were the first Olympic Games to be held after the war, and that much of the emotion used to justify the need for glory at that event was based on the awful loss of so many young lives — "the flower of a generation," as they all said.

I find *Chariots of Fire* to be a beautiful, finely wrought, inspiring film, one which tackles a question of universal interest, the question of motivation, the will to win, and do, and live well, according to one's best lights. That these lights must be in harmony with some at least of the professed ideals of one's social context, e.g., country, church, or college, is a necessity not taken for granted by the film — in fact, the narrative structure hinges on points of conflict or tension between the hero's lights and those of his "superiors" (Eric Liddell vs. the Prince of Wales and the Olympic committee; Harold

Abrahams vs. the Master of Caius College). It is clear to me why this film was not named *Personal Best* — it is about so much more than personal accomplishment and competition. It is about the self in its universe, carrying all the resonance of centuries of patriarchal values. *Chariots of Fire*, a good title, conveys that feeling of tradition passed from father to son.

The sons: Harold Abrahams, son of so many fathers, running to outrun everyone, because he is a Jew at Cambridge, a Jew in Christian England; Eric Liddell, son of missionaries, running for the glory of God, a stern Presbyterian God, Scottish not English, who abhors running on Sundays; Sam Mussambini, coach of Abrahams, declaring that Abrahams won his Olympic medal for Us, the Wogs, in his case Italians and Arabs, murmuring to himself that Abrahams is his son; the two Masters of Cambridge, quietly supercilious about Abraham's background, but prepared to treat him as a son because of his success, although they disapprove of the audacity which underlies his success; Aubrey Montagu, the young man with the beautiful face, writing home to his parents about the events of his Cambridge days, his quest for glory in the name of country and college, his love for his friends, a male bonding which transcends personal jealousy and even defeat, for Abrahams takes Aubrey's secret heroine for a girlfriend, and wins after Montagu loses in the Games — all these sons of fathers, and yes, mothers, too, yes lovers of women, but not centrally so, brothers of sisters, but not centrally so — primarily sons running for glory. First the Olympics, then girlfriend, sister, career, mission. The issue isn't really God or country first, but rather, glory first, as one sees it.

Structurally, *Chariots of Fire* works well, in the presentation and interweaving of characters, of historical context, of natural and social backgrounds. The script, music, casting, art direction, costumes, are all so good, working together as these elements ought to work together. The subtlety and depth of analysis of the patriarchy in this film is of the sort that can only be achieved from within, and it has much to offer to those of us without. But primarily I am interested in, attracted by, curious about the concept of glory which so permeates this film. One very

strong reaction I have is to want very, very much a female equivalent of glory.

I think of *Personal Best*, the other currently showing film which depicts Olympic athletes in training, women, women who sleep with each other but don't dignify their relationship with a name, don't call themselves lesbians or women loving women; and I think of how it is, essentially, a *shoddy* film, more than anything else cheap and sensational. (See Lois Fine's excellent review in *Broadside*, April 1982, Mary Meigs's letter in this issue, and my forthcoming article in *Fireweed*, no. 13.)

*Personal Best* pretends to be about women; really, it's another film by and about men and their fantasies. It teaches me very little, except yet again how the male/patriarchal point of view is imposed upon us, parading as something else. The extent of favourable response to *Personal Best* among lesbians is to me an indication of how deprived we have been of images we can relate to as lesbians, rather than as women yearning to be men, or yearning for the privileges of men, or simply yearning for glory.

*If one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical.* — Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*.

Now, I'm not suggesting that glory, in the

sort of great cathedral messianic tradition of crusades and empires and war as developed by patriarchy, is an appropriate or desirable goal for women. But the yearning to do well, to make the best of one's abilities, to excel, and not at the expense of others, is a deep and valid yearning, and the channels we provide for such yearnings in our daughters and sons are important channels. The yearning for glory can be channeled into winning Olympic games, or wars, or pinball games, or making vast quantities of money or compelling, enlightening films, or producing magical, consciousness-raising theatre, or building communities for living and working, or forming movements to save the planet and the patterns of life upon it...and so forth.

The time-worn, beautifully appointed channels of Oxford and Cambridge as shown in *Chariots of Fire* led straight to World Wars I and II and the continuing upheaval of dislodging the British Empire from the backs of so many non-British peoples. The hastily thrown-together channel of shallow competition in sex and sport suggested by *Personal Best* leads to a shopping mall where one can buy different colours of Adidas cheap. Once again, we find ourselves faced with the task of reconstruction, rethinking, redesigning, finding new directions for old urges, making new vehicles, new roads, finding new horizons. ●

## Books to Note



by Elaine Berns

### PROSE

**Alice Bloch, *Lifetime Guarantee*.** Watertown, MA: Persephone Press 1981: an excellent and moving chronicle of the author's experience with her sister's impending death from cancer, as well as her relationship with the rest of her family. Interwoven with this theme is that of her coming out as a lesbian and the beginning of a new relationship.

**Rita Mae Brown, *Southern Discomfort*.** New York: Harper & Row 1982: a novel set in Montgomery, Alabama, covering two decades beginning in 1918. In it, Brown probes the underside of Montgomery upper class society, and the racism that is never far from the surface of it.

**Amanda Cross, *Death in a Tenured Position*.** New York: Dutton 1981: the latest Kate Fansler mystery, in which our heroine solves the murder of Howard's English Department's first and only female tenured professor.

**Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, *How to Stay Out of the Gynecologist's Office*.** Culver City, CA: Peace Press 1981: this is a very good source of health in-

formation that, among other things, prepares you for a visit to the doctor's office, as well as describing alternative treatment for many problems, such as herpes, vaginal infections, and menstrual cramps.

**Charlene Spretnak, ed., *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*.** New York: Anchor Press 1982: this is a collection of essays that gives a wide perspective of women's spirituality, by such women as Mary Daly, E.M. Broner, Ntozake Shange, Merlin Stone, Judy Chicago, and Adrienne Rich.

**Sheila Ortig Taylor, *Faultline*.** Tallahassee, FL: Naiad Press 1982: this is a funny, well-written novel about the adventures of a lesbian mother with six children, three hundred rabbits, a six-foot-tall black drag queen child-care worker, and other equally wonderful characters.

### POETRY

**Betsy Warland, *A Gathering Instinct*.** Toronto: Williams-Wallace International 1981.

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

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## Halifax Women's Events

• **Sunday, June 6:** Women's Calendar Collective — general meeting for members of the collective to critique the last month's calendar and to make proposals for next month's calendar. 3 pm, A Woman's Place.

• **Monday, June 7:** AIRS (Abortion Information and Referral Service) — monthly meeting of the line's volunteers. 5-7 pm, A Woman's Place.

• **Monday, June 7:** WAVAW (Women Against Violence Against Women) — meets every Monday — meetings are open to all interested women. 7:30 pm, A Woman's Place. Mondays till June 28.

• **Monday, June 7:** Women's Recognition Dinner — Recognition of women in the Halifax area. 6:30 pm, Nova Scotia Hotel.

• **Wednesday, June 9:** WIRRS (Women's Information Resource and

Referral Service) — meetings for volunteers are held every other Wednesday. 12:30 pm — A Woman's Place. Also June 23.

• **Friday, June 11:** Lesbian Drop-In — meets every second and fourth Friday. 8 pm — A Woman's Place. Also June 25.

• **Friday, June 18:** Student Union Women's Committee — Nova Scotia College of Art and Design — Open House. There will be a showing of women's videotapes, photography, paintings, etc. Speakers from community groups will also be invited to speak. Refreshments. 3:30 to 7 pm.

• **Summer 1982:** Student Union Women's Committee — NSCAD — Another film series by and about women is planned for the summer. Films and times to be announced.

**Week of May 30**

• **Tuesday, June 1:** Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party" on display at the Art Gallery of Ontario until July 4. Tickets, 598-0414. "The Making of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party" film, screened each day until July 4. Information, 598-0414.

• **Tuesday, June 1:** Albion Community Centre presents "Cultural Pressures on the Battered Woman" 9 am, 1485 Albion Road, 622-3133.

• **Wednesday, June 2:** Lesbian Phone Line Collective meeting, 348 College Street, third floor, 7 pm; more information, 960-3249.

• **Thursday, June 3:** Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) meets at 519 Church Street, 7:30 pm.

• **Thursday, June 3:** Lesbian Coming Out Information and Discussion Series presents "Lesbian Mothers" 7:30 pm. Registration, 960-2024.

• **Thursday, June 3:** Toronto Arts Production Forum: "The State of the World Environment, 1982" 8 pm, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor St. West.

• **Thursday, June 3:** Super 8 Film Festival, workshops, seminars, screenings (to June 6) Ontario College of Art, 367-0590.

• **Thursday, June 3:** House of Anansi Press, 15th Birthday Celebration. Harbourfront, York Quay Centre, 8 pm. Free.

• **Friday, June 4:** Toronto Nuclear Disarmament Network presents "Speakers Night" with Harvey Cox and Richard Falk in discussion with Ursula Franklin, Dan Heap, Richard Kopicinski, and Dave Patterson. Convocation Hall, 7:30 pm. \$2.

• **Friday, June 4:** "Visiting Hours." Canadian made film at the Imperial Six about a feminist newscaster (horror film).

• **Saturday, June 5:** Parade for Peace in support of United Nations Special on Disarmament. 10:30 am, Christie Pits; picnic, 12:30, Queen's Park.

**Week of June 5**

• **Sunday, June 6:** Festival for Peace, Ryerson Theatre, includes Beverly Glenn-Copeland, Anton Kuerti, dancers, piano trio and speakers from Japanese Peace Delegation. Tickets, 595-5088.

• **Tuesday, June 8:** Lesbians Against the Right (LAR) meeting, 7:30 pm. 730 Bathurst Street.

• **Friday, June 11:** Mama Quilla II performs at Scuffers, 76 St. Clair Avenue West.

**OUTSIDE BROADSIDE**

**TORONTO WOMEN'S EVENTS CALENDAR**

**June, 1982**

**Week of June 13**

• **Sunday, June 13:** Poetry reading by Gwen Hauser and Richard Harrison, Abbey bookshop, 168 Brunswick Avenue, 2 pm. Free.

• **Tuesday, June 15:** El Salvador Benefit Concert. Nancy White, Marie Lynne Hammond, Bob Bossin and others. Titania Hall, 147 Danforth Avenue. Information, COSPES, 593-4236 or 533-8545.

• **Wednesday, June 16:** "Where Do We Go From Here?" Rexdale Immigrant Women's Centre, Albion Community Centre, 1485 Albion Road. 9 am. 622-3133.

• **Thursday, June 17:** Mama Quilla II performs at the Rivoli, 334 Queen Street West.

• **Saturday, June 19:** Water colour and ink on paper by Elisabeth Hopkins, a Galiano Island artist. Bau-Xi Gallery, 340 Dundas St. West. (continues to July 8).

**Week of June 20**

• **Tuesday, June 22:** Lesbians Against the Right (LAR) meeting 7:30 pm. 730 Bathurst Street.



**SPIDERWOMAN THEATER**

• **Thursday, June 17:** Hamburger Patti and the Helpers at the Isabella Hotel, Lower East Side, 556 Sherbourne St. (also Friday June 18).

• **Thursday, June 17:** Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) meeting, 7:30 pm. 519 Church Street.

• **Thursday, June 17:** Lesbian Coming Out Information and Discussion Series presents "Sexuality" 7:30 pm. Registration, 960-2024.

• **Wednesday, June 23:** Lesbian and Gay Community Council Meeting, 519 Church Street, 7:30 pm. Information, 533-6824.

• **Wednesday, June 23:** Women And Revolution in Central America: An Evening of Solidarity, 7 pm. Trinity Church, 427 Bloor Street West.

• **Thursday, June 24:** Womynly Way Reaching Out on the Environment Series presents "Spiderwoman" at Harbourfront. 8:30 pm. Studio Theatre \$6. Till June 27.

• **Thursday, June 24:** Lesbian Coming Out Information and Discussion Series presents "Taking Care of Yourself." 7:30 pm. Registration, 960-2024.

• **Thursday, June 24:** Mama Quilla II performs at the Concert Hall, 888 Yonge Street.



• **Friday, June 25:** Women and the Impact of Microtechnology Conference, Carleton University, Ottawa. Information, (613)563-3576. Till June 27.

• **Saturday, June 26:** The Pointer Sisters at Massey Hall. Tickets, 698-2277.

• **Saturday, June 26:** "Hot Summer Night", dance to start the "Doing It" Festival. Concert Hall, 888 Yonge Street.

**Week of June 27**

• **Sunday, June 27:** Lesbian and Gay Pride Day. Grange Park, 12:30 pm. Parade, entertainment, picnic, exhibitions.

• **Wednesday, June 30:** "Wilde '82" Lesbian and Gay History Conference, (until July 3) Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. Information 977-6320.

• **Monday, June 28:** "Doing It" — A Festival and Conference, Lesbian and Gay Liberation in the '80's. Theatre, film, festival, picnic, speakers. Registration and information, Toronto Gay Community Council, 533-6824. Till July 4.

• **Wednesday, June 30:** Women and Militarism, Grindstone Island Centre, four day conference on sexism, violence, and feminist alternatives. Registration, \$135. Call Toronto: 923-4215. Till July 4.

**July**

• **Thursday, July 1:** "Doing It" Conference. Registration \$20. (See Monday June 28.) Till July 5.

• **Friday, July 2:** Toronto Workshop Productions presents "A Place on Earth," a play by Betty Jane Wylie about a widowed woman. 12 Alexander Street, 925-8640.

• **Tuesday, July 6:** Lesbians Against the Right (LAR) meeting. 7:30 pm. 730 Bathurst Street.

'Outside Broadside' is a monthly feature of the paper. To help make it as comprehensive as possible, let us know when you are planning an event.

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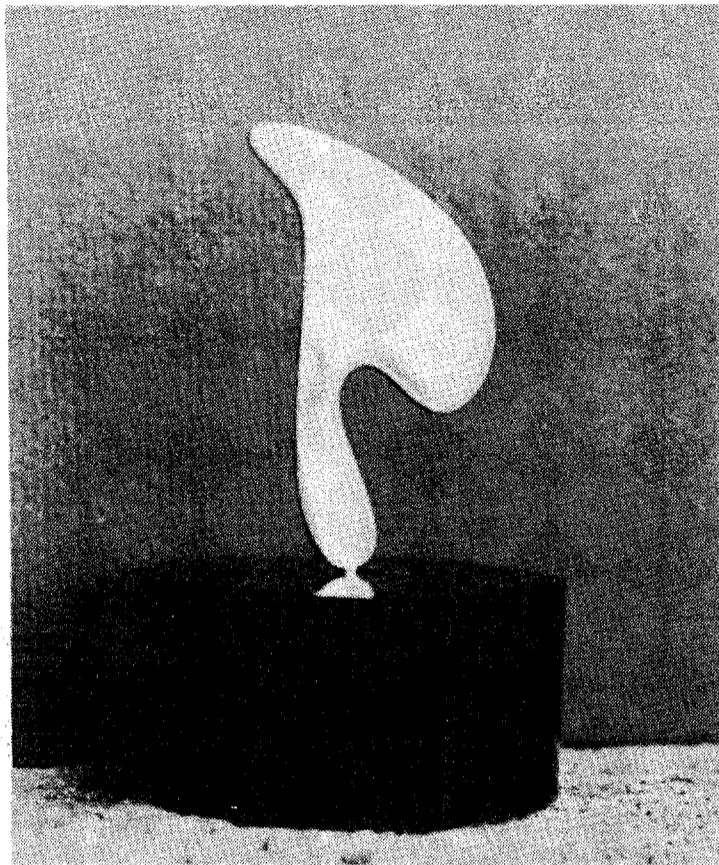
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