

NEW COLLEGE

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Scene from 'Dark Circle'

SEE STORY PAGE 14

FEATURES

STEINEM A STAR: Whether she likes it or not, journalist and activist Gloria Steinem is a star of the first magnitude in the US women's movement. On a recent tour of Canada, Steinem talks to *Broadside's* Susan G. Cole, and to women at U of T, about her new book *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*. Page 4

WOMEN'S BIRTH RIGHT: The way a culture handles birth, in practice and ritual, reflects the mythical and real status of women. Sheila Kitzinger talks of western birth ceremonies; Vicki Van Wagner pleads the case for midwifery; and Karen Walker tells us of the obstacles to setting up a Birth Centre in Toronto. Page 10

ART HIS-STORY: Fine Arts and art history are really the stories of patriarchal preference and priorities, says Susan Crean in her review of *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard. From the pyramids to Picasso, women in art is a story untold. Page 12.

INSIDE BROADSIDE

COMMENT

1984 AND ALL THAT: With elections looming in 1984, we must make sure our worst fears don't materialize by default, says Eve Zaremba. Voting is important, which *man* wins is important, and minority governments are important to "minority" groups. Page 3.

HOLIDAY READING: *Broadside* presents its 2nd Annual Idiosyncratic Book List for your delectation. Have you read *Indemnity Only* by Sara Paretsky, or *Life by Drowning* by Jeni Couzyn, or *Eve and the New Jerusalem* by Barbara Taylor? With these, and 70 other titles to choose from, you won't have time for parties. Page 16.

NEWS

SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS: Life in Nicaragua is one big school, says Nomi Wall: education permeates everything, and integrates all

political struggles. It is a politics of survival which has the support of a mass women's organization. Wall is interviewed by Gay Bell. Page 6.

CRITICAL FORUM: Feminists gathered at McMaster University to discuss writers, from Christine de Pisan to Agatha Christie, and imagery from Medusa to the 'wild zone.' Sylvia M. Brown reports on the "Facets of Feminist Criticism" conference in October. Page 9.

MOVEMENT MATTERS: Read about Affirmative Action and the OFL; about keeping warm this winter; about the Toronto Women's Bookstore, the Squamish Five, Women and Words, Women Against the Budget, and an upcoming Valentine's Dance. Page 8.

OUTSIDE BROADSIDE: Don't miss this month's calendar of Toronto women's events, for December 1983 and January 1984. Page 19.

ARTS

DILEMMA AT DIABLO: *Dark Circle* is a film about ongoing life in a nuclear age: the moral and practical dilemmas in general, and the struggle at the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant in particular. Although both men and women face the contradictions, says reviewer Donna Gollan, it's the women who act. Page 14.

FROM ESCAPE TO SURVIVAL: Carol Bolt's work in progress, *Survival*, concerns characters from a previous play, *Escape Entertainment*, and explores the mass suicide approach to life. It is Bolt's first feminist play, says Amanda Hale, and it's conclusion is revolutionary. Page 14.

NO DEAD-END STREET: Brewster Place, the home of seven women in Gloria Naylor's novel, may be on a dead-end street, but the women's lives are full of hope and magnetism. Karen Wendling reviews *The Women of Brewster Place*. Page 15.



LETTERS

Women of Colour

Broadside:

I was disappointed with Annette Clough's review of *Fireweed 16: Women of Colour* in *Broadside* (October 1983). I did not disagree with her points but was dismayed at Clough's lack of analysis and discussion of this groundbreaking publication. *Fireweed's* Women of Colour issue, "the first work of its kind to be published in Canada," is a rich anthology of experience and thought and as such deserves more attention. Clough's descriptive review informs *Broadside's* audience that the volume exists but does little to inspire potential readers.

Clough states that "the theme which recurs in most of the contributions is that of breaking the silence and making visible the invisible." But in her review she does not quote any of the writers directly nor does she name any. Himani Bannerji's *The Story of a Birth* is an exceptional work of short fiction, for example. I would have preferred a review which discussed one or two pieces in detail rather than an overview which I felt minimized the anthology's impact. Political buzz words overused and unaccompanied by examples, in my opinion, tended to understate racism's blood and guts so poignantly described by the anthology's contributors. Consider, for ex-

ample, Nila Gupta's *So She Could Walk* and Sylvia Hamilton's *Someone's Old Favorite*. Both writers transform horrific experience into good poetry, bearing witness to the evil of racism while at the same time emotionally and spiritually engaging the reader. Some of the contributors of *Fireweed 16* had work published for the first time and nascent writers need respectful, attentive criticism.

Clough expresses concern that in future work by women of colour the theme of celebration rather than oppression be highlighted. More debate is needed on this point as it raises questions about aesthetics, the theme and structure of literature by women of colour and the problems inherent in creating a relevant criticism for historically silenced writers. Which leads to another critical question. Was Annette Clough asked to review *Fireweed 16* because she is a woman of colour? I ask this because this editorial practice is all too common and serves to shift educational responsibilities onto the shoulders of the oppressed. If Clough volunteered for the task did she do so worried that the anthology would not get reviewed by white women? Why was the review so brief and why was it squeezed in, as it seems, at the bottom of a two page review of another book? Both the review's brevity and lay-out are an insult to the guest collective who "pursued their vision through ten months of unpaid labour, while continuing their commitments to families, jobs, studies and other political work."

I would love to see the *Fireweed 16* guest collective interviewed in upcoming issues of *Broadside*. There are so many questions: What has been the reaction to their work by people of colour and white women, especially in Toronto? Are there plans for another volume? How have the contributors been affected by the publication of their work in such an anthology? Is any new work in the near publishing stages for any of the contributors? Are there discussions going on in Toronto about feminist criticism as it relates to writers of colour, comparable to the formation in the United States of a Black Feminist Criticism? Clough states that she hopes that "in the future we won't need special issues for women

of colour..." Do the collective members agree with this perspective?

Cy-Thea Sand
Vancouver

Lesbians & Men

Broadside:

When I first read your front page introduction to Lilith Finkler's article ("Lesbians Who Sleep with Men" November 1983), which claimed that Lilith was "coming out all over again, this time as a heterosexual," I was dismayed and confused. I idealistically asked myself how could feminist women purposely misconstrue the message of a lesbian feminist?

Then I got angry. Your blatant denial of Lilith's sexuality—which is clearly lesbian-identified throughout the article—is reminiscent of our entire herstory of men defining our sexuality. Is "women defining their own sexuality" simply a slogan to the *Broadside* editorial? It would appear that way. Otherwise, I'd expect an explanation for your sensationalistic tactics that, in my opinion, belong in the *Toronto Sun*, not in a feminist newspaper!

Pam Munro
Toronto

Broadside:

As a close friend of Lilith Finkler's I was incensed by the misleading introduction you offered to her article "Lesbians Who Sleep With Men" (November 1983). You wrote that Lilith "talks about coming out all over again, this time as a heterosexual." This gives the impression that Lilith considers herself heterosexual in her orientation. Lilith is well-known as a lesbian-feminist. I found this misrepresentation sleazy and

sensationalistic.

I have been close to Lilith before, during and since the relationship she writes about and her commitment to lesbian-feminism has always been solid, even when it caused her great personal difficulty. Call me heterosexual and you are telling the truth. Call Lilith heterosexual and you are lying. I am very disappointed.

Karen Pearlston
Toronto

Branching Out

Broadside:

This is an open letter to the Women's Community of Toronto.

We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the women who have supported *Branching Out: lesbian culture resource centre*.

Over the last six months we have done a great deal of work in organizing towards our goal. Our goal is to raise enough money to open a house for lesbians to pursue cultural, political and social interests.

We extend our thanks to all women who have attended *Branching Out* events in such great force and are deeply touched with such an overwhelming response to what we are trying to accomplish.

We have a series of events planned for the new year. There will be a Film Night, Art Show, Sexuality Conference and many more dances. For times and dates of these events keep your eyes peeled.

If you have any suggestions, ideas, or questions, want more information, or want to be on the *Branching Out* mailing list, please write: *Branching Out*, lesbian culture resource centre, Box 141 2 Bloor St. W. Ste. 100-99, Toronto, M4W 3E2.

Barb Hawthorn, Natalie Zlodre, Kelly Mason, Anna Gutmanis, Ruthann Tucker, Jan Champagne,
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EDITORIAL

IWD: March 8 Matters



GAIL GELTNER

Last month the Toronto International Women's Day Committee wrote a letter to *Broadside*. In it, they invited women to come to the first organizing meeting of this year's March 8 Coalition, and they announced changes in the Coalition process.

To refresh your memory, the Committee wrote: "Although the numbers attending the IWD rally, march and fair have grown each year, we are also aware that there are improvements to be made in the coalition process, outreach, and in the events themselves."

The improvements include, first of all, starting earlier—this year's initial meeting is called for December 7 (rather than January as in previous years); an attempt to improve outreach by dispensing with the "long, arduous discussion" regarding the leaflet, and in fact dispensing with much of the leaflet—"We are proposing a shorter discussion on the specific themes and demands out of which a short, snappy outreach leaflet would be written,"

and, the Committee this year has drawn up a proposal in advance for three themes and related demands to be decided upon at the first Coalition meeting, in an attempt to circumvent endless debates at the first several meetings. The Committee is attempting to broaden the scope of the Coalition by encouraging as many women (or groups) as possible to join in organizing this year's events.

Let us say right now that we applaud the changes outlined in the letter, not the least of which is further clarification of the difference between the IWD Committee and the March 8 Coalition. We also approve of the move away from the usual leftist attachment to wordy leaflets, which the Committee agrees "most women find unreadable and boring."

Although the Committee's proposals for change are commendable, there are improvements which only members of this year's Co-

alition can ensure: shorter discussions and less wordy leaflets will only happen if those attending meetings strive for brevity; a broad-based coalition will only happen if many women attend meetings; agreement on themes and demands will only be smoothly achieved if all women keep in mind that this is International Women's Day, and a feminist perspective must be the basis of unity.

The Committee emphasizes, in conclusion, that "the proposals in this letter are just that, and will be discussed and decided upon at the December 7 meeting." We urge our Toronto readers to attend.

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Manoeuvring the Minorities

by Eve Zaremba

Nineteen eighty-four. That fateful year with which Orwell chose to identify the horrors of totalitarianism in one of the most frightfully prescient books of our time. Inevitably, at the end of 1983, we are being subjected to glib viewing-with-alarm by commentators who point to aspects of our current reality which appear to reflect Orwell's 35-year-old novel.

It is too simple to point to parallels between the products of his imagination and our reality, while ignoring differences and current possibilities. Negativity is cheap. And counterproductive. An overload of present or imminent horrors, whether of injustice or nuclear apocalypse, ultimately serves to numb the mind and permits taking refuge in despair. There is nothing easier than to give up. So, however unpromising the world of 1984, our real danger lies in the temptation to succumb to "eat, drink and buy, buy, buy, for tomorrow we die." That is what we are constantly being pressured and brain-washed to accept. I am convinced that the not-so-subliminal message coming from TV screens and newsprint is "Why bother to oppose the inevitable?" This insidious propaganda is aimed at immobilizing and turning us into sheep ready for the slaughter. Our worst fears will undoubtedly be realized by default if we, and enough other people, get brow-beaten into passivity. Even if the world is in fact going down the tubes, it is still in our power to refuse to lubricate its passage. It's the least one can do to keep one's self-respect.

With that in mind, it is worth recalling that '1984' has claims on our attention other than as a synonym for totalitarian nightmare. It is a year which will be rich in elections; for sure the presidential in the USA, most likely the federal in Canada, and possibly the provincial in Ontario. (Sound like lotteries, don't they?)

It's time we started taking elections seriously. The horrible examples of Reagan in the US and Bennett in BC should remind everyone who still needs reminding that it *does* matter who gets into office. In the by-gone days of the 60s and 70s it was the politically correct position amongst most leftists and other radicals, including feminists, that it made no difference which pack of white, bourgeois males held power. Since it made no appreciable difference, it was silly to get involved in electoral politics (except perhaps for the ritualistic vote for the New Democratic Party.) As recently as 1980, *Broadside*, in its federal election issue, published a statement by a radical lesbian feminist who succinctly explained why it made no sense to bother with elections. In an adjacent column, Kay McPherson, then an NDP candidate, told us why the NDP was our only choice. These were the only two acceptable points of view at that period. How long ago all that seems! Now both of these positions appear too simplistic for our times. We can no longer afford, if we ever really could, to be either so idealistic or so ideological.

This is not a plea for a return to party loyalty

or any such old fashioned stuff. A little pragmatic deviousness is called for, I believe.

Let's first look at the States, like all good Canadians.

Canadians cannot participate in the American presidential campaign, but we can sure learn from it. Take the emergence of Jesse Jackson as a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. He has no chance of winning himself, but his very candidacy will pull thousands of black and female voters into the electoral process. This is sure to give Reagan trouble come next November, regardless of who becomes his Democratic opponent. What's more Jackson's constituency—described as "a rainbow coalition of the rejected, blacks, women, Hispanics, Indians, Chinese, Europeans, Filipinos"—will also have to be reckoned with by whomever emerges as the Democratic candidate. Thus, Jackson will have had an effect on the election and on the President-elect, even though his name may never appear on the ballot.

Our system is very different, but a "rainbow coalition" here in Canada could also influence the outcome of our next federal election, even though it will still be white, bourgeois males who will run this country.

To accomplish this, more of us will have to vote and vote smart.

As I see it, the prime danger for us is a Conservative sweep by an electorate sick of Liberal rule. A big majority for Brian Mulroney will mean that the influence of the P.C. right-wing will grow and could escalate to the Bennett level once in power. Since all signs point to this outcome, the pragmatic question is how to prevent the worst from happening. Historically in Canada, minority governments have been best for the "rainbow" people. This suggests a strategy of building a combined anti-PC vote, which would go to whichever of the two other parties is strongest in a given region or constituency. To hell with ideology, let's vote so it hurts the Right. For instance, in the west all anti-PC votes should go to the NDP as the party there with the only chance. In Central Canada, the drive should be to mobilize all sectors, including NDP supporters, to vote Liberal in strongly Liberal constituencies. Whether the NDP will bring themselves to do this is a moot point. But unless we stop our sentimental attachments to old fashioned parties, the Right will split our vote and win in a walk.

This is not an easy idea to accept or to implement. It would need careful planning, district by district, and a stupendous coalition effort. But that's no reason not to try. We all

have much to lose if the Bennett phenomenon is anything to go by. All political parties will hate such a coalition and fear it. Which is a point in its favour.

It's as well to remember that there is more than one way to be involved in electoral politics. We need not play the game by the established rules. Combining in self-defence as suggested above has the added potential of helping the un- and under-represented segments of society to show dissatisfaction with the inequities of a 'winner take all' electoral system which works to the advantage of the established parties.


We are insufficiently conscious of the reality that our governments are almost invariably really 'minority' governments, having been elected by a minority of votes cast (not merely a minority of the population). The electoral system which we share with the Brits leaves all so-called minorities at the mercy of the largest single party, even though these 'minorities' may add up to a plurality. Parliamentary seats do not reflect popular vote, since votes for all but the candidate with the most votes in any constituency are essentially 'lost'; they do not count. For instance, the Thatcher government in the UK was said to have won a smashing victory in the last election and has a massive majority in Parliament, yet the Conservatives did not get 50% of the votes cast. It is possible to hold power for years while supported by less than half the active electorate. Take the dreadful example of the Ontario Tories. They just about own the province, having been in power for forty years, although they have never once had a majority of votes cast in any of the 12 elections they have 'won' since 1943. So much for democracy.

Rejecting our electoral system on ideological grounds, and paying lip-service to extra-parliamentary radical change is worse than useless, it's counterproductive. A lack of clear means of achieving these ends produces discouragement and apathy which plays into the hands of the ideological activist-right.

Let's think seriously about electoral coalitions as suggested above, and let's consider the possible advantages of proportional representation as a goal for the future. It would totally change the political map of Canada and prevent the kind of one-party regional monopolies we are prone to. More people would take electoral politics seriously because their votes and their party work would count. Groupings like Feminist or Green parties would have some chance, since they could get representation proportional to their support in the population.

It does not hurt to think about it. ●

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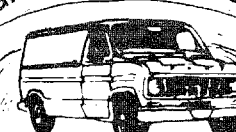
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Straightforward Steinem

by Susan G. Cole

She would hate it said this way, but it's hard to deny the fact that Gloria Steinem is a star of contemporary feminism.

As a founding mother of *Ms.* magazine, she could be called a heroine on the one hand, a brave soul responsible for carting the feminist message to the most unlikely places in America. Then again, she could be called a bona fide sell-out, someone who had to dilute feminist precepts in order to maintain a readership for the magazine. As an activist she has been a presidential appointee of Jimmy Carter, so maybe she's a reformer. But as a writer, she coined the phrase "reproductive freedom" and is that movement's articulate and outspoken advocate. By any theorist's standard, this makes her a revolutionary. Some of her admirers thank mother nature for having bestowed upon her the good looks that have defined her public persona in a hyper-sexualized culture that is critical of feminists who supposedly "couldn't attract a man." Her detractors will forever distrust a pretty face, no matter what she does.

Her recent book, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, and her visit to Toronto in November to promote it, provided a rare opportunity to find out first-hand who she really is. The scene was the Medical Sciences Building at the University of Toronto. The auditorium was packed. She spoke plainly with a bit of a midwestern twang and only the slightest trace of her confessed fear of public speaking. She spoke about how feminism had changed the language. She gently argued that a class analysis was not quite adequate for women. She answered questions, and while the audience juggled the labels that so many

But it's precisely the distance she puts between her own nascent consciousness and her experience that makes "I Was a Playboy Bunny" so effective. That distance (some call it objectivity) obliges her to be precise about detail—the three-inch heels the bunnies had to wear, the little fur jacket she was "allowed" to have on at the door to the Playboy Club, a jacket that still left her cleavage open to full view, and all the rest of the nasty tidbits that expose Hugh Hefner as a crypto-pimp. Any further analysis would have been heavy-handed.

Her strongest material comes out of the mouths of other people: you simply cannot be a reporter without a good ear. "Here bunny, bunny, bunny" are the first words she hears as she enters the Playboy Club for her job interview, and her dehumanization to pet status is instantaneous. Steinem occasionally pauses just to listen, and hears one Bunny complain, "I told him our tails were asbestos and he tried to burn it to find out."

A good eye is just as important as a good ear. Steinem notices a sign on the bunny dressing room door; "Knock!" it reads, then underneath: "Come on guys, please cooperate." We get an immediate image of flunkies barging in on women who have no privacy at all.

The terrific assessment of Richard Nixon's speaking style, in "Campaigning," rings almost too true:

For the phrase 'we must reach up' . . . he may stretch both arms downward; for 'the whole world' he may gesture close to his chest, or tick off the first two points on the third finger; for the one arm thrust that marks important statements, he may find himself with

lions is a compendium of pieces written for *Ms.* magazine. Except for "Networking" and "Houston and History," which are both a little too glib and a few others ("In Praise of Women's Bodies" and "The Time Factor") which don't seem important enough to reprint, the articles are models of clarity, either shedding light on the goals of the women's movement or providing analyses of issues and events that help us understand how the world works.

For example, transsexualism is a phenomenon feminists have viewed with discomfort, though many of us haven't been able to pin down exactly why. In her article on the subject, Steinem helps us understand why we find transsexualism so threatening. Put simply: If a man wants so much to be a woman, why can't biological females be happy with what they've got? And something is awry, she says, when Renée Richards can garner so much sympathy by going through a sex change when draft resisters, many of whom embody a real challenge to the old gun-toting image of machismo, receive no sympathy at all.

In the mid-seventies, the press pronounced the death of the women's movement, taking most of their evidence from observation of conservative women in college. The *New York Times Magazine* in particular seemed to make endless treks to universities in order to trumpet the news. For the sake of feminists who were wringing their hands in distress over their invisibility, Steinem counters with "Why Younger Women Are Conservative," where she explains that women, unlike men, grow more radical with age and that it's important to "educate reporters who announce feminism's demise because its red-hot centre is not on campus."



Cheryl Daniels

are anxious to affix to high profile personalities, Steinem did what she does best. She communicated.

She is first and foremost a writer and a good one. Her book is a collection of the best work she's produced over two decades as a reporter and commentator. The first two articles, "pre-feminist," as she calls them, one on life as a Playboy Bunny and the other on campaigning with McCarthy, McGovern, Rockefeller and Nixon, are proof that Steinem was a first-rate journalist.

"I Was a Playboy Bunny," written unbelievably in 1963, is state of the art reporting, a feminist *Black Like Me* in which Steinem describes the entire process—interview, bra stuffing, physical examination, the works—of becoming a Playboy Bunny. In an interview with *Broadside* she complained that the Playboy piece was superficial, that it had no analysis and that she almost regrets its apparent naiveté (though it is still the lead piece of the book). "I knew I was humiliated," she says, "but I didn't really know why." She also confesses that at the time she was wary of doing "women's pieces," and tried to avoid them in order to be guaranteed a serious spot in the media establishment.

his arm raised too soon, and pause visibly to get coordinated . . .

Good luck helps as well. At the end of a painful interview with Pat Nixon (one of five interesting profiles in the book), in which the then first lady has been responding in near monosyllables, Nixon suddenly spews out a pathetic confession. She can't answer the questions; no one's ever asked her anything to indicate that she might have ideas of her own. What starts off badly turns into the kind of encounter writers pray for.

Steinem even manages to be prophetic. On the campaign trail with Richard Nixon she remarks wryly, "We who learned who Kennedy was only after he died may find out who Nixon is only after he's president." And unfortunately we did.

We will never know what other gems Steinem the reporter might have furnished had she not chosen to come out feminist and to write about women. Except for the articles on *Playboy*, "Campaigning," the profile of Pat Nixon and a moving and personal account of her relationship with her mother ("Ruth's Song," written especially for the book), *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebel-*

In her article on genital mutilation, she shreds the arguments belonging to those apologists for clitorotomy, expressing outrage that the opponents of genital mutilation in Africa are called cultural imperialists, and scoffs at other assumptions: "The fact that women in the Middle East who are prostitutes also have clitorotomies is cited as proof that it doesn't reduce pleasure—as if women become prostitutes out of desire."

But her arguments in favour of reproductive freedom are the most useful and should be required reading for us here in Canada, where the issue is coming to the crunch in the courts. She answers the question "If Hitler were alive whose side would he be on?" in an article so titled, and discusses the Nazi policy on women and reproductive freedom. As is often the case with Steinem, one sentence says it all: "Who decides, and where the authority lies, are never discussed in these emotional comparisons between abortion and death camps."

She has the valuable gift of making radical ideas understandable and this is her crucial contribution to development of a broad-based movement in the US. She is, for instance, a friend, admirer and associate of An-

drea Dworkin, whom she considers the "great prophet of modern feminism." Steinem? The apparent moderate, conciliator, America's best PR agent for the women's movement, in the same room as Dworkin, that outrageous raver who inspires radicals but scares just about everybody else to death? The idea seems preposterous.

Steinem admits that her "editing" relationship with Dworkin consists of her saying "Do you have to say *all* men? Couldn't you say *most* men? Or you shouldn't say thus and so, and her ignoring me altogether." Steinem revels in the energy at the radical end of feminism's spectrum and takes equal relish in pitching it to the middle. It's almost fair to say that part of her role is providing feminists with the tools for good argument. Another vital part of her role is to interpret feminism for the "I am a feminist but..." contingent.

Frankly, Steinem is not a master prose stylist. She has an irritating habit of listing events or observations, and these catalogues often seem to be an avoidance of having to organize her thoughts. But she does have a flair for one-liners that can make her work appealing. On pornography: "the preaching of sexual fascism;" or on making the ERA a constitutional amendment: "like reconstructing the entire nation's phone system to get one message across." For the most part, though, her desire to convince is revealed in prose that is often flat, even pedestrian. Steinem is not an elegant writer who soars, but rather one who likes to have her feet planted firmly on the ground. Hers is a style that does not like ambiguity.

Of course, while avoiding ambiguities she tends to skirt the complexities of an issue and this is bound to provoke readers who, from the inside of the women's movement, know that the differences in some areas are sharp and that Steinem has left some things out. She is decidedly unfrontational in her approach, and this poses problems in one or two of the weaker articles in the book.

"Networking" is the worst offender. It begins by reporting on "women and everything" conferences that brought ambitious and career-oriented women together. This "networking" Steinem describes as important for developing contacts. Behind all of this is the assumption that if women took their places in the board rooms of the great American multinationals, things would improve immeasurably—a sentiment which will bother many who insist that more profound changes in the economy are required to make much difference. She tries to assuage these critics in the same article, by turning "networking" into political organizing against the system. At some point one wishes to remind Steinem that she simply can't have it both ways. In many ways, the article on networking reflects the worst of *Ms.* magazine when it tries to be all things to all women.

As an appointee of Carter's presidential commission and an organizer and sponsor of the National Conference in Houston in 1977, Steinem had a hard time wearing both the hat of the organizer and the hat of the reporter. She starts out in "Houston and History" as if to write a puff piece about a conference whose success is still the subject of a heated debate. Then she deftly sidesteps most of the contemporary issues by writing that the Houston conference was not the first of its kind, and that we should rescue from obscurity Seneca Falls and other conventions like it, giving them their rightful place in history.

She speaks glowingly in the same article about the emerging coalition between black and white women. It is a most optimistic analysis. It's easy to agree that the potential for mutual self-interest is there among white women and women of colour, but it's a bit premature to remark on an effective coalition.

But her continued optimism is vintage Steinem. She's a quintessentially American writer. She doesn't mind being called American, as if it were more a state of mind



Cheryl Daniels

Gloria Steinem and *Broadside's* Susan Cole chat before Steinem's talk at U of T in November.

than an adjective connoting place of birth. "Yes, I do feel American and positive about it," she said in our interview. "I guess it's because I was able to move out of a working class background. There's a crazy kind of class mobility in the States and a multicultural experience that doesn't exist anywhere else."

She still harbours confidence in America's institutions. Even advertising, she argues, can be a forum for consciousness-raising. Her response to criticism of *Ms.* ads was unblinking: "*Ms.* couldn't exist without advertising," she insists. "Advertising constitutes about 40% of the information we get. So we use *Ms.* magazine as a forum to teach advertisers the appropriate images of women. We get them to imagine women driving sports cars and men taking kids to the dentist."

Her confidence in American political institutions is similarly intact. She writes in "Far from the Opposite Shore" about how she and other feminists worried that the ERA amendment would be a drop in patriarchy's bucket of sexist institutions: "The slowly revealed

cumulative potential of mass movement pressure has made a lot of us change our minds. So has the right wing backlash and its implicit testimony to the importance of a constitutional principle of equality." She said in the interview that her primary agenda and her gift to Canada will be to get rid of Ronald Reagan, and one of the outrageous acts she recommended to her audience at U of T was simply to vote.

If the point of Steinem's work is to make sense out of feminism, then she's very good at it. In fact, she has done more to raise the collective consciousness of American women (and men) than just about anyone else. She couldn't have done it without travelling the country, talking to women and making sure she stayed involved in a struggle with them. She couldn't have done it by being anything other than what she is—a plain-talking midwesterner who has a lot in common with her potential constituency and who makes sure she speaks the same language as the people she's trying to reach.

And reach them she does. ●

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School for Survival

by Gay Bell

Nomi Wall was the tour co-ordinator for a group of Toronto educators who recently returned from Nicaragua: two Toronto Board of Education trustees; three representatives from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation; and eight "popular educators," like herself, who teach English as a second language and literacy in community-based centres. The particular focus of their tour was the education process taking place in Nicaragua since the Literacy Crusade of March-August, 1980. Nomi Wall speaks to Gay Bell.

Nomi Wall: A number of us who had been doing political work on different issues in Toronto had become discouraged. We were feeling a loss of heart, a deepening pessimism—that we were working in a tunnel and there seemed to be no clear way out. It seemed like changes were so far down the road and we were losing sight of any possibility of creating a context where revolutionary change was possible. And at the same time we were seeing the rise of the right, the rise of reaction, the organizing of reaction and we felt we were flailing around. We began to see our movement shrinking rather than growing. So it was like a shot in the arm, the idea of getting out of here and going to a place where they had made a revolution. From what we had heard they had been successful, in spite of an insidious disinformation campaign and the US's undermining, threatening and bullying this tiny country with a population size the same as that of Toronto.

Many of us had made a kind of identification with the Nicaraguan people. We felt it our responsibility to go down there and see what was going on, to learn what we could from people who were attempting to create a humane society in the face of incredible odds. If we want to improve the quality of life, if we want social transformation, we have to open ourselves to people who have grasped a vision and are seeing it through. And Nicaragua is so close to us. We believed that the changes taking place there had to effect some change here. And it is true that Nicaragua is one big school.

We were overwhelmed by what they've accomplished in four years, the fact that they stick to their programs in the face of attacks everyday, attacks that necessitate the mobilizing of the entire population for war. Yet they're continuing their education programs, they're building schools. This humane society exists... it's not pie in the sky.

In just five months the Nicaraguans had reduced their illiteracy rate—illiteracy where people could not write their names—from 50% to 12%. That was a crusade that mobilized the entire country. *Brigadistas*, high-school students for the most part, went out into the countryside. They taught the *campesinos* to read and write. The *campesinos* taught the *brigadistas* about life in the rural areas, the hardships, the poverty. When the *brigadistas* went back to the city they were revolu-

tionized because they had seen the life the *campesinos* had been living all those years.

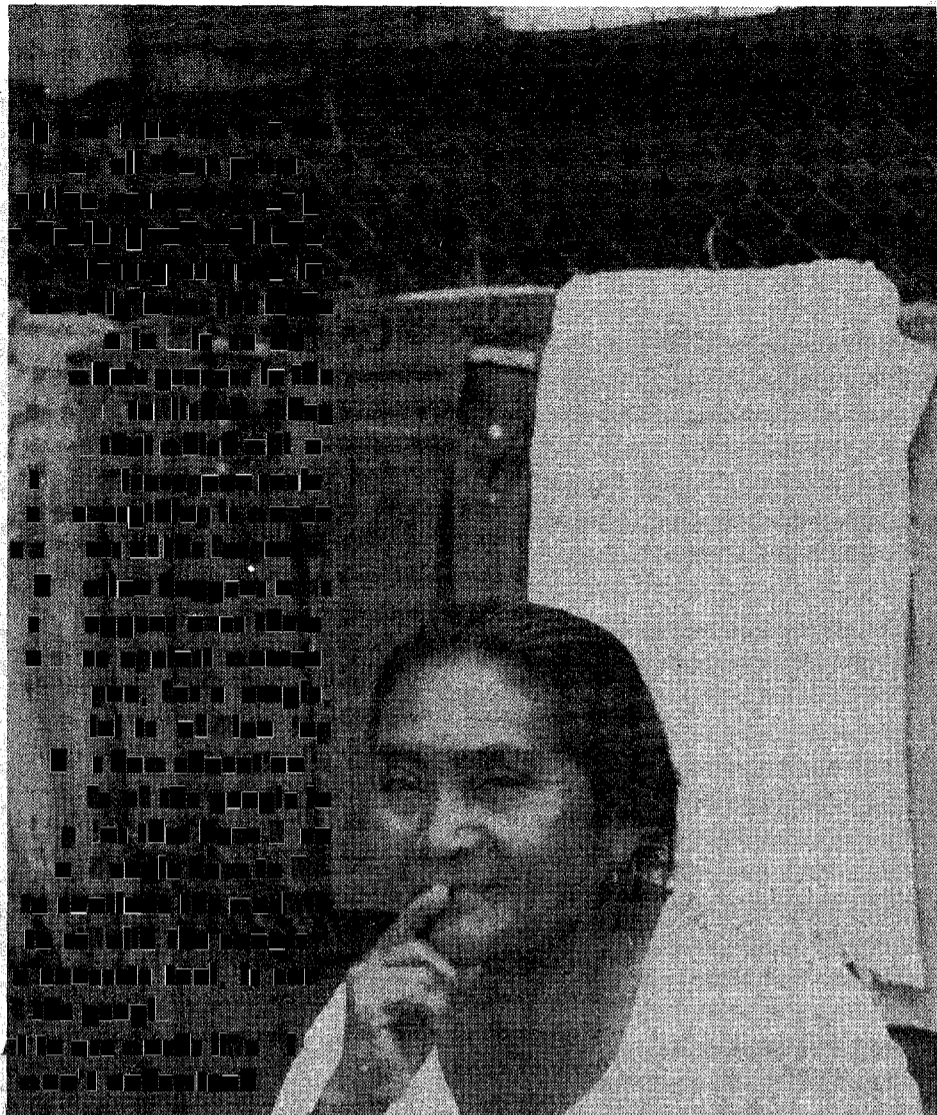
In Nicaragua, education permeates everything so that the same ideology and methodology that informed the literacy crusade informs the health crusade. It informs the trade union movement. Education in Nicaragua is the gravity that roots the whole process in the popular power that they've established. They understand education to be that which will inform the entire population. Nicaraguan society is like a tapestry where everything is woven together. Here, we are victims of the fragmentation in this society. Education happens over here. Trade union work happens over there. Health campaigns, violence against women, all are separate. In Nicaragua, for example, people who work for the Ministry of Planning (economic planning) told us how education is integrated into the work life of the people in order to consolidate the gains that have been made since the revolution. People have to become skilled in order to continue the work in production, in order to rebuild the country. Education becomes a concrete tool, is connected to the goals of the people.

We're told here not to use words like "imperialism": "People won't understand what you mean, or they'll distrust you." In Nicaragua, the *campesinos* use the word "imperialism" and they know what they're talking about. They speak a revolutionary language, even the kids. We asked a 12-year old boy, "Are you happy the FSLN won the war?" "Oh, yes." "Why?" "Because it moved us forward." He was a boy we bumped into in the street. If we used words like that here, we'd be accused of using rhetoric. So we asked him, "What do you mean by 'moved us forward'?" He said, "Things are much better now. They used to take our families out in the street and kill them right in front of our eyes. Now we don't have to worry any more." "Yes, you do. There are all the counter-revolutionaries." "Yes, but they're the enemy and we can fight them. We're the government now. The people are the government of Nicaragua now. This is our country now."

Gay Bell: Is AMNLAE (Luisa Amanda Espinoza Nicaraguan Women's Association) the equivalent of our women's movement?

AMNLAE isn't a movement, it's a mass organization that permeates the entire society. It has credibility and the respect of the government. It is responsible for breaking down some of the most traditional and difficult ideological concepts of the Nicaraguan people. This mandate came about as a result of women fighting, taking part in the insurrection.

Our movement is in a different kind of struggle. Some of the issues we take up, they take up there, like the need for day care and equality at work. On other issues, they're in a different place. For example, abortion is once again a central focus for us here. Abortion is not now a focus for AMNLAE. If you ask the women in AMNLAE, what's your position



Courtesy Toronto Adult Educators' Tour to Nicaragua

on abortion, you will get different responses. Some will say, "Abortion is illegal in Nicaragua. If we have a problem with abortion, we will attempt to educate around birth control." Other women will say, "Abortion is a problem in Nicaragua and we are going to address it and see to it that women in Nicaragua have access to abortion. Right now it cannot be our priority because we're dealing with a particular oppression and we're dealing with a counter-revolution. Our focus now must be to defend our revolution. We are not able at this time to mount the kind of educational campaign for a woman's right to abortion to become a rallying cry."

Nicaraguan women who already accept the idea of access to abortion don't want to skim the surface of the issue—which I think is a mistake we sometimes make here. We have hundreds of women in Canada, working class women, who don't necessarily understand abortion as a question of choice and who are not being reached. How do we reach them. Many women in AMNLAE firmly believe that they will initiate that kind of base-

community educational work that will bring women together on the question of abortion. Not that they're all going to reach this at one time, but they want to have the space and the resources to mount that kind of educational campaign. Now women in AMNLAE are researching the problem, recognizing the need for accessible abortions for women. They are able to do what we cannot do here, because they have a government which supports mass education, mass education in new ideological concepts and the creation of whole new perspectives. When we want to mass educate, we're fighting a whole system that operates against us. The message to us from AMNLAE women is that their women's movement comes out of the particular kind of struggle for survival. It is not that they're saying we're going to have to wait and deal with that in the future. It's not that simple. There are concrete, objective reasons why abortion is not their central focus.

But even the fact that the government of Nicaragua respects and supports the work of AMNLAE does not mean that women in the

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organization do not have to struggle to achieve their goals. For example, the central focus of AMNLAE at the present time is the law of military conscription.

I think it is terribly important for us to understand here that the main concern of women in Nicaragua is to defend their revolution, which is under constant attack. Women in AMNLAE are now in the process of debating the military service law which, in its present form, excludes them from compulsory military service. The most forward-looking women in AMNLAE don't accept that. They want to be expected to fight in the regular army alongside the men, which they did during the insurrection. They can volunteer for the army, and they had to fight like hell for that much. And they are expected to be in the reserve battalions and to volunteer for the popular militia. But they have been told over and over again, by the men, that they are not physically capable of sustaining the rigorous training required in the regular army. Women in AMNLAE are fighting to get that law changed. They're still debating that law. They're still knocking on doors all over the country getting women to talk about that law. They know about the rigorous life of *campesino* women, and they know about the machismo backlash. Many women in Nicaragua have to fight tooth and nail just to attend literacy classes in the countryside.

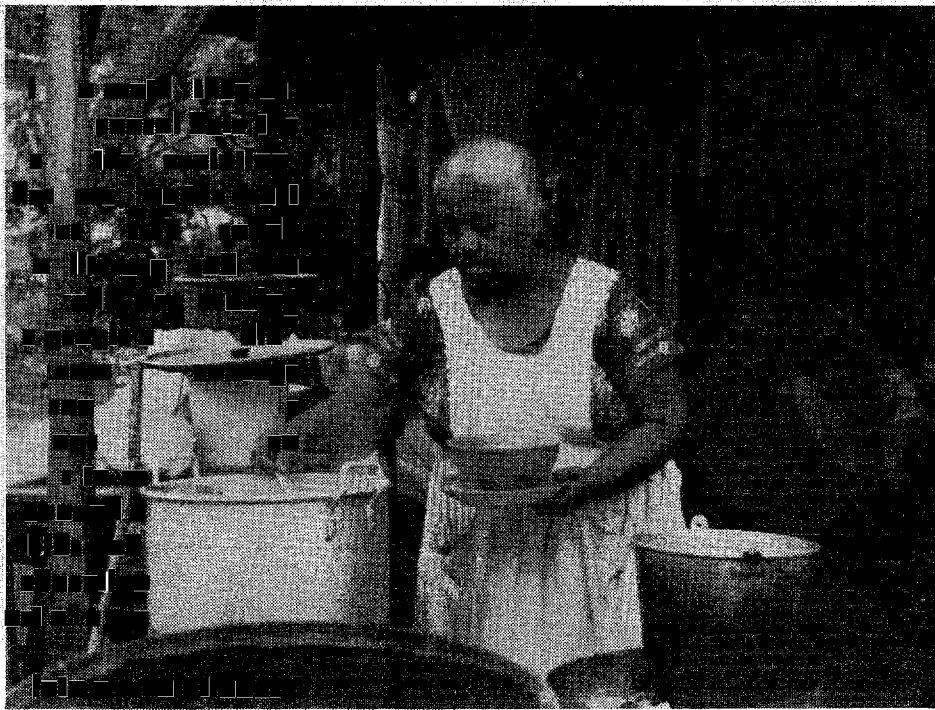
We were able to see political work being done in a survival context. We spoke to women who continue to be very poor, but

learn their history, they learn math, they acquire the skills they need to consolidate the gains made and to defend the revolution. Popular education teachers are, for the most part, Nicaraguans who have passed through levels of competency in literacy and are prepared to teach those who are moving through those levels. The people are teaching each other. AMNLAE women encourage *campesino* women to confront sexism in their homes. There are workshops where women work together to find ways to articulate the problem of not getting enough support and help in the home, from kids and specifically from the men. And this education has the encouragement and support of a mass women's organization.

To integrate feminism into a revolutionary struggle, the women in Nicaragua understand the need for an autonomous women's movement. AMNLAE women will tell you that in Nicaragua the class struggle preceded the women's movement. The consolidation of the women's movement came out of the realization on the part of women that they had fought for the revolution. They had stormed the National Palace. They had taken prisoners. They had fallen as soldiers. We have always said that we've got to have the women's movement active and struggling as an autonomous fight for our rights, parallel with a class struggle, because a newly transformed society—a socialist society—won't guarantee us anything. We'll be stabbed in the back. As women in North America, we've established our autonomous women's movement, and now we've got to relate that movement to class struggle, or we'll always be attempting to live outside the real context of our society. Just as we can't have social transformation—liberation of society—without the liberation of women, we can't have the liberation of women without social transformation.

Several of us on the tour asked different women about lesbian rights. Lesbian rights don't come up unless you bring it up; and nine times out of ten you'll be told that the question doesn't come up because it isn't a problem. So we say "Lesbians are everywhere, even in Nicaragua," and usually we're told that though there may be lesbians, they're not an organized movement, they don't ask for their rights, we don't know anything about them. My sense was that AMNLAE would respond in a positive way to an organized effort from lesbians to get their issues raised, and of course there are lesbians in Nicaragua. There is a growing gay and lesbian rights movement in Latin America. And Latin Americans living and working politically in North America, and certainly in Toronto, see that lesbian and gay rights is a real issue here, and that lesbians and gays are working in solidarity with them in their struggle. As political people they can see that our fight is credible and just. They understand oppression. They make an identification. As we continue our solidarity work with Nicaraguan women, we have to continue at the same time to raise the issue of lesbian rights, to bring our fight to the foreground.

Gay Bell: I asked Nomi what are some of the current ideas amongst those doing solidarity work regarding the peace movement.



I don't know the peace movement internally, but externally they equally condemn the US and the Soviet Union. They present the problem as an east-west conflict. But that's not very helpful. The Reaganites are always linking peace with the East-West conflict. The enemy, the devil incarnate, is the Soviet Union, so says Reagan. He sees the same struggle whether you're talking East-West or North-South. But in reality the struggle in Central America is a North-South conflict. The imperialist power is the US and the people fighting for their survival, their sovereignty, are in the South. In our part of the world, it is our responsibility to confront the role the US is playing in the Third World in this hemisphere. And there is a confrontation now in this hemisphere which can lead to a nuclear war, and that confrontation is in Central America.

One of the great frustrations of people in North America who are doing solidarity work with the people of Central America is the reluctance of many people in leadership positions in the peace movement to take up the issue of peace in Central America as a major focus. The peace movement's focus is on nuclear disarmament. There is a kind of lip service paid to the struggle in Central America, but the movement does not prioritize the struggle of the Central American people. In Canada, there are many people within the peace movement who are trying very hard to raise this issue, to bring it into the foreground, and they have succeeded to some extent. Those of us doing Central American solidarity work don't make a distinction between peace in Central America and nuclear war, or peace in general. The war in Central America is a seedbed for nuclear war. By separating the "peace" issue, or the nuclear disarmament issue, from the war in Central America or in any Third World country, we run the risk of allowing the peace movement to become a kind of smokescreen for US intervention in El Salvador or Nicaragua. The US invaded Grenada. They are preparing a major regional conflagration in Central America.

We can't look at peace in a vacuum or peace only in relation to nuclear arms buildup. We have to look at peace in relation to war. Where are the wars now? Those are the places where nuclear weapons could be used. We have to stop thinking in terms of a generalized global nuclear war and direct the focus of the peace movement on conventional warfare going on now, where the seeds of nuclear war are being planted—in Central America by US imperialism.

Gay Bell: Finally, I wanted to know how Nomi has managed to connect her solidarity work with her politics as a Toronto feminist.

Some feminists take the position that there are somehow only slight or insignificant differences between women who are poor and women who are privileged. I think that's an irresponsible position to take. I recognize what poor women and privileged women have in common in relation to the patriarchy and certainly in relation to the men in their lives; lovers, husbands, sons, brothers, fathers, bosses, etc. I also recognize that violence against women crosses class lines. But the fact is that sexism and the oppression of women exist in a class context in our society; they don't exist in a vacuum. As feminists we have to relate to that context in its entirety.

There are women in the women's movement in Toronto who have difficulty understanding why so many feminists—and we are feminists—are taking up an anti-imperialist struggle. It's so crucial for feminists to accept that we're not going to get anywhere unless we operate from a class perspective and understand what the ramifications of class differences are among women. And once you have an understanding of class divisions in society, then an understanding of imperialism and how it operates in a world context becomes clearer. Imperialism can't exist without class divisions. In relation to other people in North America, I may not be that well off; but in relation to people I met in Nicaragua, there's no comparison. My lifestyle, the fact that I've got more than adequate food, clothing and shelter depends on their poverty. That doesn't immobilize me, but it is a fact I have to keep in mind when I am prioritizing my commitments.



who understand the causes of their poverty in a way they did not understand it before the revolution. In Toronto, too, there are poor women who are struggling to survive, but in most cases they don't see that struggle in a political context. The women's movement has made various efforts to place that struggle in a political context, but it hasn't happened yet. What we learned in Nicaragua from poor women is that, through the insurrection and since the revolution, the struggle to survive as a poor woman has become rooted in a political context: there are reasons why you're poor. This understanding was achieved through popular education.

Popular education centres abound in Nicaragua. These are centres where the Nicaraguan people who have achieved proficiency in literacy continue their education, where they

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Gay Bell is a Toronto playwright and actor. *Nomi Wall* teaches English as a second language at St. Stephen's Community Centre in Toronto.

MOVEMENT MATTERS

Affirmative Action

by Mariana Valverde

When the government or the media talk about affirmative action, they usually mean the promotion of a few token women into management positions. Labour and women's groups, on the other hand, are more concerned with the plight of the *majority* of women, as was evident at the Toronto forum organized by the Ontario Federation of Labour's coalition on affirmative action and held on October 28 and 29.

The starting point for the campaign was a position paper on affirmative action presented at last year's OFL convention; this brief was also the reference point for most of the 5 briefs presented at the Toronto forum. Some of the points made repeatedly both in the OFL position and in the statements presented at the forum by labour unions, women's groups and community groups were:

- the recession and some of its consequences
- (e.g., wage controls) have significantly diminished labour's bargaining power, but the fight for equality cannot wait for better times;
- the current voluntary affirmative action programs sponsored by the federal and provincial governments are total shams;
- legislated *mandatory* affirmative action is essential to make any inroads at all;
- collective bargaining is another essential strategy to force employers to alter their hiring and promotion practices with respect to women;
- since affirmative action into non-traditional jobs is only a realistic option for some women, equal pay for work of equal value is a necessary complement of any affirmative action program; in this way, the condition of women employed in pink-collar ghettos will not lag behind;
- affirmative action is not merely a workplace issue, but includes anything designed to "overcome past and present discrimination and improve the economic status of women" (OFL brief). In this context, many unions and groups spoke of the need for daycare and other services.

The linking of non-workplace issues such as daycare to affirmative action was one of the highlights of the forum: it was evident that the women's movement had made its point, and that women within the labour movement have managed to persuade many, if not all, male union leaders to leave business unionism behind in favour of a more integrated approach.

Some concrete and winnable goals were

targeting of specific companies. The OFL, in accepting the brief at last year's convention, also accepted a proposal to implement an in-house affirmative action campaign. Thus, at this November's convention, five women will be elected to senior positions, which will significantly alter the ratio of men to women on the executive.

As for the forum itself, the Friday night opening session was planned in an original way, incorporating lots of music and some readings from plays. The latter were presented by Erika Ritter, Carol Bolt and Anna Fuerstenberg on behalf of the Guild of Canadian Playwrights: not your typical union by any means, but it was a welcome way to liven up the evening and integrate feminist culture with union politics. Presentations then followed from the Metro Labour Council, OPSEU, the Secondary School Teachers' Federation, and CUPE 79 (the local representing the workers at City Hall, where the forum was held). The last presentation was by Women Working with Immigrant Women, and included a personal story from a Salvadorean woman worker. The WWIW presentation raised some important points about the need for organizing immigrant women and the reasons why unions have sometimes neglected this sector of the labour force. Its inclusion on the opening night was certainly a sign of good will on the labour movement's part, and one which hopefully will lead to further co-operation.

The presentations were received by a panel including OFL president Cliff Pilkey, Metro Labour Council president Wally Majesky, Shelley Acheson from the OFL, Andrea Knight from the International Women's Day Committee and Ingrid Wellmeier from the Microtechnology Work Group. Once more, the inclusion of feminists from outside the labour movement marked a welcome departure for the OFL, which has sometimes jealously guarded all such visible positions for union bureaucrats.

The evening ended with a reception in the City Council's luxurious hall. The 250 or so unionists, feminists and sympathizers devoured quantities of sandwiches and fruit and drank to our hearts' content, feeling that the evening was a positive step for both our movements. The next day, the forum consisted solely of the reading of briefs, and there was no time for questions or discussion; understandably, it was not well attended. Nevertheless, union activists I spoke with stated that the whole process by which each union and group elaborated its brief, as well as the work of organizing the forum, were as important as the statements themselves.

Bookstore Update

TORONTO—Since the fire destroyed its old home the Toronto Women's Bookstore has been housed in temporary quarters, where it is now open for business with an ever-expanding stock of books, magazines, records, cards and other goodies.

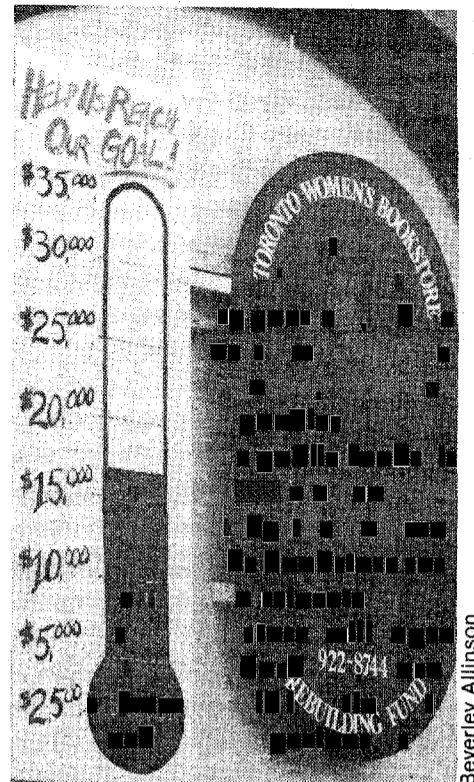
As of November 15, the public fundraising campaign has raised \$30,000 via benefits and donations. This support by the community has been needed to help the bookstore survive the loss of business and to relocate.

The new, permanent store will open in February 1984 at 73 Harbord St., Toronto, just a few doors from the old location. It promises to be much more spacious, so that browsing will not only be encouraged but will be possible, even on Saturdays.

In the interim, a couple of fundraising events have been scheduled, both to take place at Trinity United Church: on December 5 there will be readings by Canadian women writers and on January 28 a Used Book Sale (see calendar for more details).

With continuing community support the fundraising goal of \$35,000 will be reached by the time our new bookstore opens its doors.

Meanwhile, the temporary location of the Toronto Women's Bookstore is 296 Brunswick Ave. (at Bloor), 2nd floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2M7; telephone (416) 922-8744; open Monday to Saturday 10:30 am to 6 pm.



The Toronto Women's Bookstore's financial thermometer as of September 1983. By the end of November, \$30,000 had been raised.

Squamish Five Update

VANCOUVER—Ann Hansen, Juliet Belmas, Gerald Hannah, Brent Taylor and Douglas Stewart, the Squamish Five, are still spending every day in court as the *voir dire* section of the trial is in progress.

Voir dire is a trial within a trial. The Crown presents the more contentious evidence and the defence has the right to cross-examine the crown's evidence and witnesses for admissibility when the trial begins. The jury is not present for the *voir dire*. The contentious evidence is around the admissibility of police surveillance information and the legality of admitting wire tap evidence.

The police have been taking the stand and are giving an insight into their structure and methods of operation and coverups. So far, the Security Service (a section of the RCMP), the National Crime Intelligence Section, the Vancouver Integrated Intelligence Unit, the Coordinated Law Enforcement Unit and the RCMP have had a chance to speak over the last three weeks.

Depending on the outcome of the arguments, the pretrial period of the *voir dire* could extend another four to six weeks. The first trial, for charges of conspiracy to rob a Brinks truck, possession of weapons and vehicle theft, may begin in January 1984.

The jury selection process took ten days and 175 people from the jury panel selection list were questioned before 12 suitable jurors were chosen. A legal precedent was set by permitting the defence council to extensively question the prospective jurors for any prejudice.

—Marty Crowder



Women les and femmes Words et les mots

Women and Words Update

TORONTO—About 60 women gathered at A Space Gallery on November 22 to talk about the Women and Words conference, past and future. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: to draw in new women interested in Women and Words; and to deal with old business.

The Ontario regionals reps, Gay Allison and Libby Scheier, stepped down after two years of hard work, and a five-woman committee was elected to take their place. The new reps are Makeda Silvera, Frances Rooney, Ann Ireland, Dionne Brand and Jacinthe Fraser.

An annual general meeting of the Women and Words Society (Vancouver "headquarters") will be taking place in January, and to this end resolutions were passed at the Toronto meeting to be presented at the AGM concerning a change in structure (to give regions more autonomy), collection and allocation of Society dues, and the location of a second conference in 1985. (Toronto women aren't interested in hosting it at this point, but Montréal's rumoured to be a possibility.)

The new committee will spend the next couple of months doing outreach, forming subcommittees and arranging for a follow-up meeting in February. (The date and place for this meeting will be announced in the next issue of *Broadside*.)



Kay Gardner: Composer, conductor and flutist, in concert in Toronto, November 4; a Womynly Way production.

Marty Crowder

Women and Therapy

Next month, *Broadside* will be printing a feature article on the Women and Therapy Conference held in Toronto in November. If you attended the conference, short comments (1-2 pages, typed and double-spaced) on specific workshops are welcome. Deadline January 2, 1984.

Valentine's Dance

The Women's Movement Archives is holding a Valentine's Dance February 11, 1984—9 pm at 300 Bathurst Street (South of Dundas), Toronto. All women welcome. For more information, call (416) 597-8865.

Solidarity Update

VANCOUVER—On November 13 the BC Government Employees' Union settled with the government, winning a two-year contract with (very small) wage increases, retention of seniority rights, exemption from Bill 3 (also applicable to other public sector unions), and the death of Bill 2 on the order paper. In the present political climate in BC, these are solid and important victories. They were in part achieved through the truly massive support of the Solidarity Coalition, and that's why right now (one week later) enormous debates rage within Solidarity.

Many community groups within the Coalition—women, tenants, co-ops, handicapped, anti-poverty, religious, seniors—believed there was a commitment to keep the struggle, including job action, going until the Socreds met movement demands on social services, the Human Rights Commission, the Rentalsman—in fact the whole package announced by Bill Bennett back in July. Community groups were excluded from the decision-making process which led to the Bennett-Munro meeting in Kelowna—but are not excluded from the effects of those decisions. It appears that Bennett committed his government to nothing more than “ministerial con-

sultation” on social service cutbacks, etc. This had been “offered” all along, and is known to be meaningless. Therefore, many community group participants in Solidarity, and many rank-and-file unionists, believe the top union leadership sold out.

Women Against the Budget is part of this debate. WAB was intensively involved in strike support; its members made a major contribution to shutting down the Vancouver schools when BC teachers were hit with injunctions forbidding them to picket. Throughout, WAB delegates and members in the Coalition have played leadership roles in moving the Coalition to militant mass action. Now, since women's issues were not addressed by those making the settlement, some WAB members feel we erred in committing so much energy to the Coalition, and the possibility of leaving it is posed. Some feel we should have maintained more autonomy. Some feel we were right to involve ourselves as we did and that the job now is to continue the work of the Coalition and strengthen the many good links made with other community groups and with unionists.

Casting these accounts is very difficult, because so much of the Solidarity experience is unprecedented. Never before have major

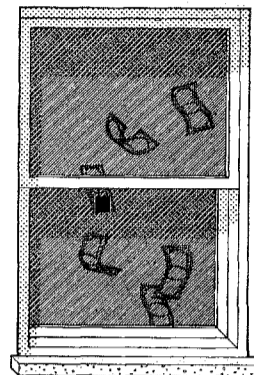
unions and community groups come together in such a fashion, never before has there been such a conspicuous absence of both a Legislature and an Opposition (the non-presence of the NDP represents a major rearrangement of the political molecules of BC), never before has such a massive politicization of the province taken place. And never before have the teachers struck. Their militance surprised many, and the question of whether or not their strike would have “held” was a major factor in the recent events.

Solidarity's actions and goals will be discussed at several important meetings shortly: the Lower Mainland Coalition, the BC Federation of Labour, the Provincial Coalition, and Women Against the Budget all have major gatherings coming up. Meanwhile, a confusing trickle of statements and counter-statements leak from Victoria and Jack Munro, and we try to find out exactly what was agreed to in “the Kelowna Pact.” Bill Bennett, interviewed on a TV talk show (only in BC does the premier make major announcements to His People thus), clearly feels he and his government have come out of this experience with just about everything they wanted. Not a good sign.

—Cynthia Flood

Operation Draftstop

TORONTO—Operation Draftstop is a new energy assistance program to help low income single parents, senior citizens and the handicapped keep their winter heating bills down.



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Writing from the Wild Zone

by Sylvia M. Brown

A conference on “Facets of Feminist Criticism” held at McMaster University, Hamilton on October 27 and 28 offered many facets indeed. On the roster were the well-known American feminist critics Carolyn Heilbrun, author of *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny* (1973) and *Reinventing Womanhood* (1979), and Sandra Gilbert, co-author with Susan Gubar of *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), along with a poetry reading by West Coast writer Susan Musgrave and Pol Pelletier's inimitable and stunning performance in *Night Cows* by Jovette Marchessault. Add to this an archival exhibit of the holdings in McMaster's Library in the women writers collection, and you have a well-conceived event of great importance to the feminist literary community.

In keeping with the methods of feminist criticism, many of the papers delivered were contextual studies of women writers and the conditions under which they exercised their talent and genius. A recurrent theme was of women coping somehow with a literary and social environment in which their concerns were peripheral to the dominant male culture. Heilbrun quoted Elaine Showalter's term “wild zone” to describe that area of experience from which many women write but which men have not experienced. For the reader this zone proscribes the vast area of myth and virtually everything fictional that is based upon male dominance, leaving few texts or fictions for women writers to emulate. And, Heilbrun argues, to create new fictions women need new biographies, which are only to be gained by placing themselves at the centre of the universe and fantasizing alternative female destinies to the traditional choices, as in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, between marriage and motherhood or death. She considers women's despair the most emphatic subtext of female utopias, where many writers have dreamt of a world without men. Detective fiction is a genre where a hidden female text became possible because a female character could be a hero in the British tradition (à la Agatha Christie); she is the equal of her charming, effete, gentle male counterpart. Heilbrun is well-qualified to speak on this phenomenon, being a detective fiction writer herself whose pseudonym, Amanda Cross, was chosen both for her protection—“I wouldn't have had tenure at Columbia otherwise”—and for its attractive existence as a secret other self.

McMaster's Sylvia Bowebank's talk on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, made these historical strictures on the female imagination even more evident, for Cavendish took to writing peculiar poetry after her ambition to be recognized as a serious writer and natural philosopher met with contempt and derision by her male peers in the arts and sciences of the seventeenth century. Due to her nobility, she received only flattery from her contemporaries, in lieu of recognition. To

cope with her exclusion from the intellectual community of her day, she retreated into fantasy and eccentricity and retaliated against the Royal Society by publishing her own works. She earned for herself the nickname “Mad Madge” by writing, like Swift's modern hack in *A Tale of a Tub*, plays and poetry replete with digressions, subjectivity, with a proliferation of Prefaces, and in unrevised form “because lack of method recreates nature.” She dealt with her enforced isolation defiantly, using methods that she was always first to acknowledge were deliberately riotous.

Though not overtly discouraged from writing, Sylvia Plath in our own time felt similar difficulties when she considered how her “poetic grandmothers” had been belittled. In her talk on Plath, Sandra Gilbert outlined how male critics and, more importantly, the male writers whom Plath admired, denigrated female writers and created a painful situation for someone as sensitive and ambitious as Plath. The major modernist poets of the '50s were mainly men who wrote disparagingly of Plath's female precursors such as Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Barrett, and the women who had gone directly before Plath were already forgotten—Marion Moore, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. In her wide-ranging literary studies, Plath no doubt had read Pope's satire of Anne Finch and Hawthorne's infamous reference to a “damned mob of scribbling women”. Thus, Gilbert points out, Plath oscillated between two poles—from loyalty to the male tradition in which she was bred, to a rivalling sense of her own power and an identification with women writers who had gone before her. Of Woolf's novels she wrote in her journal, “Hers make mine possible.” Her radio play, *Three Voices*, written in 1962, echoes the introspection of Woolf's three women characters in *The Waves*—Plath's copy of the novel is heavily underlined, Gilbert added. Their method of composition was similar—rewriting by reading aloud, and in broadcasting for the BBC Gilbert claims that Plath acted out of linguistic audacity against an age-old edict that says women should be silent.

Plath's relationship with her husband, poet Ted Hughes, also came up for scrutiny because of the contradictory remarks she left in her letters about her self-effacement in reverence for him. Plath clearly was torn between her longing for great literary achievement and her conviction, much imposed on women raised in the post-war era, that her man's work was more important than hers and that it was only feminine to be admiring and unable to keep up with him. In this bizarre situation, Gilbert argued, Plath's death was the most appropriate expression of her female desires at the same time that it was also a release into the only country of fulfilled dreams accessible to her. In her short lifetime, Plath had undertaken the hardest occupation for a woman—to create herself at a time when women were expected to put men first. But, despite her continual

assertions that she wanted Hughes to be ahead of her, Gilbert affirms that Plath's overwhelming desire was to be a woman famous among women as well as a writer equal to Yeats, Thomas, or Joyce—to be, perhaps, Woolf's Judith Shakespeare incarnate.

Joan Coldwell added that Sylvia Plath's poetry was infused with Medusa imagery, especially in *Ariel* and her journals. In her paper she outlined how Medusa figures in many women's writing, with references to her in the work of George Eliot, May Sarton, Iris Murdoch, and Margaret Laurence. Her origins date to before 1300 BC and the ritual mask depicting her hair of snakes was used to frighten men and demons away from matriarchal worship. Her use by women writers is one of exulting power, turning her enemies to stone. She can be an ambiguous figure, however, her appearance sometimes symptomatic of the mental anguish in creative paralysis. The Medusa became shunned by society for being raped—a fate for which she was not forgiven, thus becoming doubly victimized and forced into separateness. The irony is that the name Medusa actually means “mistress”, “ruler”, or “queen”—the mortal queen of the Gorgons. Thus for the woman artist in a patriarchal society, this figure portrays in myth an experience she shares with many other women whose power has been usurped.

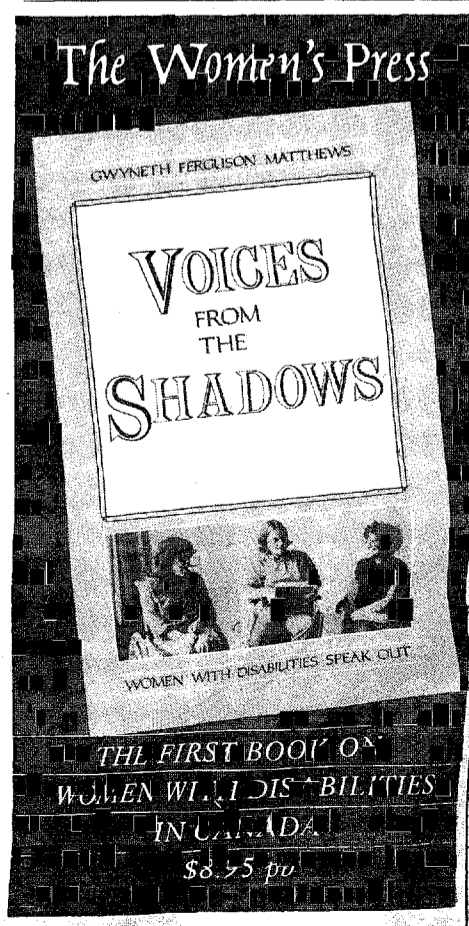
A more hopeful note was sounded in Jean Kennard's paper on the creative friendship between Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby, two of the writers whose papers are in the McMaster Archives. Graduates of Oxford after the First World War, these women formed a sixteen-year working partnership until Holtby's early death at the age of 37. Their mutual influence, plus the example of many peers who managed to avoid leading the sheltered lives of Edwardian women, enabled them to seek the public arena to lecture against sexism, racism and militarism. Having lost friends and relatives in the Great War, their pacifism became very much a part of their feminism. The evidence of their intellectual interaction as well as their political sympathies runs through their novels—Brittain's *Testament of Youth*, Holtby's *South Riding*, and many others. Kennard has a forthcoming book on their unique collaboration, evincing examples of their unity of viewpoint, an ongoing acquisition with each new piece of journalism or book they wrote. Their fiction especially became an opportunity to rewrite the self, and in a sense they rewrote each other's work by picking up trains of thought and continuing their discourse in their novels. Their instinctive responses to their other self bolstered their productivity and helped each other in their attempts at self-definition.

Barbara Godard, well-known for her appearances at women's studies and literature conferences from Montréal to Vancouver, spoke of comparative literature in the Canadian context of English and French poetry by women. Her far-ranging and detailed paper

attested to our “matriarchy of Canadian letters”—the oral storytelling of Antonine Maillet, the opposing language being forged by Nicole Brossard, and the frontier explorations of Elizabeth Smart that go beyond the preserves of our colonizer-patriarchs' experience. It was unfortunate that her moment came at the end of a long day in which participants' attention spans and schedules had been stretched to the limit. We will undoubtedly hear more from her through the newly formed annals of *Tessera*, a new journal which she edits with a collective dedicated to publishing feminist literary criticism in a Canadian/Québec context.

One controversial presentation stood in direct contrast to all the others, a talk in which Sheila Delaney attempted to debunk Christine de Pisan as a worthy “mother” for feminists to, in the words of Virginia Woolf, “think back through”. In this case, Delaney's contextual criticism was to her subject's disadvantage, for instead of showing us how Pisan coped with a historical situation in which she wrote under duress, we were shown a woman of noble Italian birth, living and working under the patronage of the French court of Charles V. She was the first woman in France to earn her living by writing, and this fact was ostensibly the criterion used in her selection as a role-model worthy of a

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Rites of Passage: Birth in Our Culture

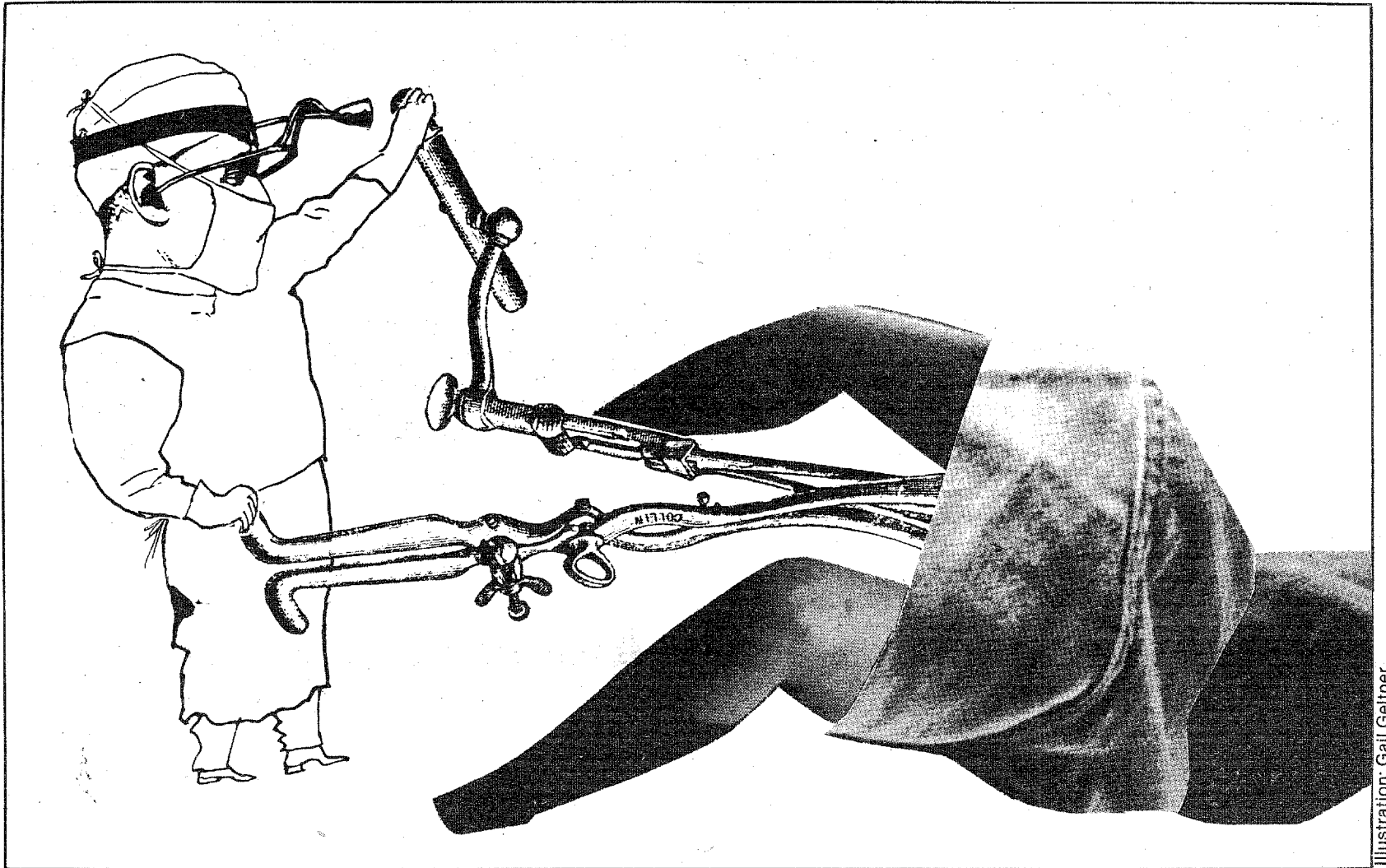


Illustration: Gail Geltner

Reinterpreting Ritual

The following are excerpts from a paper presented by Sheila Kitzinger to the International Pre and Perinatal Conference held in Toronto last July. The whole speech will be published in *Healthsharing*, a Toronto women's health magazine.

Motherhood, in our western society, is a second-rate occupation. A recent study of pregnancy at work, done in Britain, has shown, for example, that women are often moved to back-room jobs because they tarnish the cosmetic image of a firm when they become pregnant...

... I think when we look at birth in our own culture, it is really very surprising that any woman is *not* depressed after childbirth. Those who do not feel themselves nurtured and valued may sometimes feel that they have nothing left to give a baby. The undermining of confidence, the systematic disorientation of women's psyches starts the moment a pregnant woman becomes a patient; it starts very early in the system of prenatal care. The pregnant woman is given all sorts of implicit messages in the way she is treated during pregnancy. She is told, in effect, "You are in a dangerous state. Your baby is not your own. The fetus is valuable, you are merely the container for that fetus. Because you are a woman, you are a threat to the fetus."

It really ties in with the carrying over of almost universal taboos about female body products, especially, for example, menstrual blood, which is also considered terribly dangerous. It can make crops wither, bacon go bad, the milk curdle. It makes warriors become defeated in battle, hunters lose their quarry, and men become impotent. The female essence threatens male power. And therefore women must be regulated, controlled, directed by rules and warnings so that they cause least harm to men.

This is why there is such outrage when a woman takes responsibility for her own maternity care, when she starts to question the rules, when she decides, for example, to have her baby at home, when she challenges the system...

... One very important goal for those in childbirth education is to help women develop confidence in their own bodies, trusting themselves, and another very important goal which is becoming even more important with our complicated care today, is 'coping with the medical system.' In the past, I believe that birth education has often reinforced the power of professionals by introducing yet more rules, more constraints on women and preparing them to exert self-discipline, not to cry out, to be nice to the nurse and the doctor, to cooperate, to obey instructions, to wait to push in the second stage until you

have been given permission. This issue of control is basic. For to be 'in control' in this context is to *surrender* control to the obstetric team...

... We live in a society which moulds women into compliant housekeepers, mothers and patients. Let us just see what happens when a woman becomes a patient. A hospital turns a woman into a maternity patient through a series of rites, remarkably similar to those which in a Third World society mark the transition from one social status to another, puberty rites for example. But in our society the medical profession has largely taken over the power of the priesthood to supervise these rites. We have doctors rather than priests in charge of the rites making sure that we're doing the correct thing. These ceremonies control the passage of the individual and impose social constraints which define individual behaviour. Hospital rituals are designed primarily to reinforce the power of the institution, and to control the activity of everyone, staff as well as patients, inside the structure.

The first and very important ritual is separation, separating the initiate from family and friends, removing him or her to a different place. There follows ceremonies of depersonalization, acts designed to obliterate all signs of individual identity. The clothing which is usually worn, for example, is removed, and everything else which distinguishes one individual from another. And then there are often rites of infantilization, which reduce the initiates to the status of small children... Other important rites are those of cleansing, purification. The initiate is purged, often literally, with purgatives and purified by a ceremonial bath. An important part of many ceremonial rites is the stimulation of fear. The initiate is supposed to be terrified by the changes which are taking place, and their awesome significance... And during all of this time, and this is a very important element of it, instruction is given as to how they must behave in their new status... And finally, there is an act of rebirth, a purifying bath, dressing in fresh garments, and welcoming back into society in their new identity with celebration...

... Let us just look at our hospitals today. There are, first of all, the admission procedures, when a woman is "prepped." She first gives up her own clothes, and is dressed in a hospital gown, with an identification bracelet fixed to her wrist. She is often addressed in an anonymous way, as 'dear' or 'mother.' Very often the perineal hair is shaved. The routine enema or suppository is another rite of admission. The patient is often covered from the waist down by a sheet, the baby is born through a little hole in the sheet. These drapes have an important ritual function, because they distance the obstetrician from the woman. They produce an armour against communication between the two as human beings and they symbolically represent the medical nature of the act of birth, and the way in which in western culture delivery has become a process performed by a team of professionals on the body of a woman, rather than an act of birth giving on her part...

... The rituals which are used in childbirth in the Third

World tend to perform a different function than the hospital rituals in the west. Third World peasant rituals, instead of reinforcing the role of professionals, and the power of the institution in which birth takes place, have the major function of providing what we might call a language of metaphor, through which the labour is given meaning and is dramatized and in which the significance of the act of birth for the society as a whole is given vivid expression. And above all, the right progress of labour, the dilation of the cervix, the opening of the vagina, is seen as dependent on the right ordering of the relationships between the parents, in the kin group, within the lineage, and the larger society. And if relationships aren't right, the labour will go wrong... In many parts of the world today there are situations of acute culture conflict in childbirth, and then the comforting symbols, the support provided by religion, helps women through the ordeal of labouring in an alien environment, among strangers. Peasant women in Jamaica, for example, take their bibles with them, into the labour ward, and they shout passages from the Psalms. They clasp each other, they rock their pelvises, in unison, and they cry out "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus—ah-ha, ah-ha, ah-ha, ah-ha," and then the midwives say the mother's second staging. They don't need to examine. There is a synthesis of birth, sex and ecstatic worship, because this is exactly what they do in the revivalist churches up in the hills—getting spirit possession (they call it 'labouring in the spirit')...

... The kind of care we provide in our society, I believe treats women as irresponsible and selfish children. Women are not treated as if they could be responsible for themselves or their babies, artificially producing a child-mother, who continues to be dependent, who is unable to make decisions, who becomes very anxious when she is supposed to take on the full responsibility of the baby and who looks to experts for advice. It is a meticulously conditioned helplessness.

The briefest introduction to the reality of motherhood is enough to convince us that it is wholly false. The woman on a pedestal, just like the woman on the delivery room slab, is an idealized male image, an image created by men...

... Women are now reclaiming our bodies in childbirth. We are beginning to challenge the whole medical system which men have imposed on us, and which professionals have imposed on us because of their fear of the female essence. Every thing which flows out, from within the centre of a woman's body, out through the orifices, is the flowing power of womanhood. Their fear is that they will be emasculated by the power of menstrual blood, by the strength of the contracting uterus, by the lifegiving force of the placenta...

... Birth is glorious. Birth is an embrace. Birth is a benediction. Birth is an act of love. To relive it in imagination is to rediscover not birth trauma and terror, but the depth and strength of that love. And the supreme affirmation of life expressed in all the striving and the pain and the longing and desire, and the fulfilment of the birth passion.

Organizations

Ontario Association of Midwives, Box 85,
Postal Station C, Toronto M6J 3M5.

Midwifery Task Force (Ontario), Box 489,
Postal Station T, Toronto, M6B 4C2.

Québec Alliance of Midwives, c/o 4581 de la
Roche, Montréal, Québec.

Midwives Association of British Columbia,
1053 Douglas Crescent, Vancouver, BC, V6A
1V4.

Midwifery Task Force (BC), 926 School Green,
Vancouver, BC, V6H 3N7.

APSAC—Nova Scotia, 19 Fairmont Rd,
Halifax, NS, B3N 1H5

ASAC—Alberta, 10435-154th Street,
Edmonton, Alberta, T5P 2H9.

Midwives Alliance of North America, c/o
Concord Midwifery Service, 30 South Main St.,
Concord, NH, 03301, USA.

Books

Sheila Kitzinger is both prolific and expert on
almost every aspect of birth. A lot of her
books are helpful.

Ehrenreich and English, *Witches, Nurses and
Midwives*.

Suzanne Arms, *Immaculate Deception*.

Elizabeth Noble, *Childbirth with Insight*.

Elizabeth Davis, *Heart and Hands, A Guide to
Midwifery*.

Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*.

Barbara Katz-Rothman, *In Labour: Women &
Power in the Birthplace*.

Rebirth of Midwifery

by Vicki Van Wagner

Midwives have been persecuted, controlled and driven underground many times in history. In the 14th- and 15th-century European witch hunts and later in New England, during the consolidation of the medical monopoly over women's health care in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and in western countries today, midwives seemed to patriarchal institutions a dangerous key to female autonomy.

Midwives have traditionally preserved and passed on knowledge about birth control, abortion and childbirth. They symbolize female control of reproduction, and, historically, are often painted as leaders in a conspiracy of women against male order and civilization.

Single mothers, working mothers in traditional families, lesbian mothers—all kinds of women, of every class and race and age—give birth and raise children. How women do this, and how they bring their children into the world, carries social messages which reinforce the status quo of the culture they live in. In our culture misogyny and violence against women is both obvious—rape, pornography—and hidden. The misogyny and violence of modern obstetrics has been well documented, by Ehrenreich and English, Rich, Arms and Katz-Rothman (see resource list), to name only a few, but is not obvious to most women. Not only does obstetrical care carry negative social messages to women, it is not in fact the safest care. Don't misunderstand, obstetrical skill and technology

can be vitally important in some circumstances and must be available when necessary, but not routinely used for reasons other than the health of the mother and baby.

Hospitalization, forceps, caesarean section, epidural and general anesthesia and episiotomy can be helpful and/or life-saving when their use and the need for them is understood and chosen by mothers. Sheila Kitzinger has eloquently pointed out that the reason these procedures are overused is not medical. The rationale for their routine use has never been scientifically documented. Many others have argued that fear and awe of female reproductive processes and sexuality, menstrual blood and birth in particular, have deep roots in patriarchy. Modern obstetrics is an attempt to be in control of these experiences. Most women believe that without their male rescuer, their babies or themselves would have been in danger. This is usually just not true. Modern obstetrics creates most of the emergencies it then 'saves' us from.

Just picture the difference in the symbolic meaning, in the social message, of a woman giving birth flat on a delivery table, drugged, her baby removed with instruments, taken from her by the male expert above her; and a woman upright, actively pushing, working with the pain and power of her body processes, reaching down to catch her own child, assisted by the women around her.

Labour is difficult, usually painful and emotionally trying. Most women in labour, often late in first stage or transition, feel that they cannot possibly make it through, that this is the hardest and most horrible thing they have ever done. This time of labour is a dark night of the soul, and women deserve the most tender, supportive care to help them through it. Most women, allowed to continue and push their babies out into the world, experience a rush of joy and a sense of pride and power. When this does not happen women frequently feel, and not always consciously, robbed, and often raped, by the care they get. And yet typical of our conditioning, most women turn

this in on themselves. They "needed" the forceps delivery which tore and damaged their bodies, because they were not right somehow: their pelvis was not big enough, or their labour did not happen quickly enough to fit the medical deadline. And some women take this inadequacy as a strange proof of their femininity; they needed help. Women do need a great deal of help in labour, but what kind of help we give them, what kind of help women choose, tells us a lot about our attitude towards women.

When a woman chooses a midwife as her primary caregiver, she is making a decision in complete opposition to female conditioning and conditioning we all have about the "experts." Instead of choosing God-the-Father-Obstetrician, she chooses a woman very much like herself, a caretaker who will relate to her as an equal, instead of as a child-patient. She decides that what she needs to help her through her labour is not male authority, but someone who will inspire self-confidence and help her make her own decisions. It is an act of demystifying the medical profession, of trust in the female body and the process of birth, of trust in herself to be an active decision maker, of trust in other women to have the skill and knowledge to care for her.

To me, being a midwife means respecting and nurturing women, giving them back control over a process which can either strengthen and inspire them or reinforce female submission and male dominance. Women in labour are beautiful in their courage and endurance, a symbol of female strength.

It has been easy to see the need for control of reproduction in terms of *when* we give birth: the right to choose whether and when we will have children. *How* we give birth, indeed *how* we prevent pregnancy is just as important. In the words of Adrienne Rich, in *Of Woman Born*: "To change the experience of childbirth means to change women's relationship to fear and powerlessness, to our bodies, to our children; it has far reaching psychic and political implications."

Reclaiming Control

by Karen Walker

It is a beautiful dream: a place outside of hospitals where healthy women can give birth with their chosen companions, where they can participate in pre- and post-natal education, prenatal counselling and care, labour and birth care, and where they can receive home visits following the birth.

A Toronto Birth Centre could provide comprehensive care instead of the compartmentalized care that women currently experience in hospital, with an emphasis on eliminating unnecessary medical intervention and on non-invasive means of assisting the women in labour.

The care, provided by teams of physicians and nurse-midwives, would be individualized, flexible, personalized, and the atmosphere home-like. The Centre would be administered by a Board of Directors of parent consumers so that support for the rights and responsibilities of the parents would be the priority philosophically and reflected in the administration of the centre.

But so far, it's still a dream. The Toronto Birth Centre Committee, a group of parents and professionals, was formed in 1979 to explore the possibility of creating a birth centre and has been meeting regularly since then. The Committee is involved in developing a research demonstration project prior to the opening of the actual centre. There are still some controlled studies required to establish cost-effectiveness and consumer satisfaction, and to demonstrate all safety factors. By doing this research, it is possible that other centres will be able to open elsewhere in Canada.

It's a sane and rational approach. And many individuals and groups have expressed support either for the concept or for the specific proposal being developed. But sweet reason and support have not been enough to get the funding or approval needed from government: partly because of the complexities of government lobbying and political process; but more importantly, when it comes to birthing centres, the opposition from doctors is powerful indeed.

The Birth Centre Committee has been open with its plans, meeting with various medical professional groups—Ministry

of Health representatives, the College of Nurses, the Ontario Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, to name a few. Some, like the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, have been supportive. Others, like the College of Nurses and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, have been interested but non-committal. The only outright opposition has come from the Perinatal Committee of the Ontario Medical Association. But that opposition appears to be quite serious, so serious that the Birth Centre Committee is starting to think that informing medical groups was naive. It appears to have allowed the opposition to mobilize against what they perceive to be a direct challenge to their control of childbirth care.

In a society that believes that "doctor knows best," it is not that hard for doctors to assert their authority. The press and other media are often heavily influenced by doctors, and the news coverage of an issue can be seriously distorted as a result. The Birth Centre Committee has discussed its proposals with a number of media representatives, who invariably rush off to seek medical opinions and proceed to publish only the information about the risks of out-of-hospital childbirths. It then appears as if the Committee is not dealing with safety issues, and of course, the opportunity to refute the claims of doctors is seldom provided.

The clout that doctors carry at hospitals has actually been used to dissuade physicians from getting involved in the Birth Centre Committee's work. One doctor in particular, who was interested and experienced in exactly the kind of research the Birth Centre needed, suddenly begged off. At first, she explained that she was busy, but later it became evident that she had been threatened by a senior physician with the loss of her good standing at her affiliate hospital if she were to persist with the Birth Centre Committee.

But it's at the government level, where funding and approval for the Centre must come, that doctors seem to do their best undercover work. Government bureaucrats, many of whom are physicians themselves, regularly consult the medical network on health proposals. Medical experts are consistently asked to evaluate funding proposals and to advise on any steps the government might take.

The physicians' mystique is so powerful that the Birth Centre Committee's doctor is usually taken more seriously than the others. At a meeting with then Health Minister Larry Grossman last spring, Ruth Lubic, a nurse mid-wife who is the Director of the Maternity Centre Association's Childbearing Centre, remarked that birth centres may be safer for the

healthy ('low-risk' is the medical term) woman than hospitals. Grossman commented that he would believe it only if the Committee's doctor agreed.

In the midst of the Birth Centre Committee's attempts to sound 'reasonable,' it's the medical establishment, ironically enough, that delivers the passionate and emotional response: "It won't be safe, babies will die." Physicians tend not to accept that the safety of birth centres has been demonstrated in the US by the Maternity Center Association's Childbearing Center in New York City, among others. The Toronto Birth Centre Committee's proposal is clear about safety features, and among them, initial and ongoing risk screening according to provincial standards, and back-up referral or transfer to Women's College Hospital, Toronto General Hospital and the Hospital for Sick Children, including access to their Neonatal Transport Team. In addition, the Centre will be equipped for emergencies and has developed protocols for response to any problem that may arise.

But it's obvious that the medical establishment wants to "protect" babies from their own parents, whom doctors accuse of putting their wishes for a positive birth experience above the safety of their baby. This medical paternalism is obviously out of hand. Regardless of the fact that no health worker can remember parents who have not been concerned first and foremost about the safety of the baby, there is no proof—not a shred of evidence—to suggest that a hospital will provide safer care for a healthy woman than out of hospital birth care. There is, instead, evidence in the literature suggesting the reverse.

The evidence, nonetheless, is not stopping physicians from lobbying, and with good results, against a birth centre. The provincial government is now making efforts to block the Birth Centre Committee's fall-back position of seeking other funding sources, citing legal constraints. And another Ontario group seeking alternatives to hospital birth care recently learned that their efforts to incorporate were blocked by representatives in the Ministry of Health.

In the end, it's a political decision, not a medical one. If there's one positive aspect to the process so far, it's the extent to which women have succeeded in making their voices heard. The medical establishment is feeling the criticism of their patriarchal approach to childbirth. They are very defensive, because it's a matter of power, pure and simple. Doctors are accustomed to controlling childbirth. Obviously, they don't like it when anyone else tries to step on their turf. ●

ARTS

Body Blow to Art History

Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., New York: Harper & Row, 1982

Reviewed by Susan Crean

It's over ten years since I left the field of art history, after 7 years of study and 2 teaching at York University. Ten years since I've looked back to see whether the events of the real world have had any effect on the charmed existence of the Fine Arts and those elegant creatures—like Anthony Blount and Kenneth Clark—who interpret them for us.

Art history, as I knew it, was mainly about the art of the Western world since ancient times; the pyramids to Picasso in one long-winded heroic tale of progress glorifying the accomplishments of the patriarchs, popes and princes who commissioned the monuments, and the technical prowess of the artists who made them. Like all such tales there are plots and subplots and cautionary notes. Ostensibly, the Fine Arts are about aesthetics: the formal and intellectual qualities that denote excellence in the visual arts. Actually, like all history, the history of art is a mixture of fact, conjecture and hearsay, laced with megalomania. It too boils down to the story from a particular point of view—that of white, middle class, first-world males, though in the case of the arts this has to be qualified. For the males in question are middle class with upper class pretensions. They are the gatekeepers of Official Culture and responsible for devising an aesthetic which legitimizes the values of the modern aristocracy—the mandarins, tycoons and idle rich who hold the purse strings and govern the policies which control the arts. Excellence, it turns out, is in the eye of the

beholder and from experience we know that it is rarely either female or Canadian.

Ten years ago, I would not have put it in such bold terms. But I certainly was aware that art history was in the business of classifying things; establishing where on a predetermined scale particular artefacts belong. Moreover, it was clear that the arts of some people are, by definition, finer than everybody else's. And some couldn't be considered art at all. So art history first of all had to distinguish between greater and lesser forms of art; for example, between art that is merely decorative (the 'minor arts') and art that is major league material. You guessed it, the pyramids and Picasso. The Great Masters, you'll notice, weren't quilt makers. They worked in oil paint and marble, and these materials have acquired a special status that automatically puts them in a class apart.

Having drawn these definitions, the job of the curator/art historian is then to patrol the frontiers of art, making sure no one slips in who isn't invited. This is not, as you might imagine, a simple task; for the borders are constantly changing, following the demands of the art market, which is ever-hungry for new styles, new artists and new forms of art for collectors and museums to speculate in. In this the visual arts are unique, for no other art form is so directly tied to a monetary value system in which the whole idea is for the artists to create capital assets for others to turn into wealth. Degas said it for all artists when he remarked after one of his paintings was resold for 900 times the price he'd originally received, that he felt like the horse who wins the Grand Prix and is rewarded with his usual feed of oats. Whatever else the art critics or curators may think they are doing, part of their job is providing stock evaluations for investors.

However, they don't tell you this in art school. Along with all the other cultural assumptions and clichés about Truth and Beauty and Art being its own justification comes the myth that excellence is absolute and universal. It is a matter of discernment, not debate. Thus art (and the whole question of its biases) can be neatly abstracted from life and the social and political circumstances surrounding its creation. And in such an exalted atmosphere the contradictions and omissions are not immediately apparent. But contradictions there are, and it was, I think, inevitable that a new generation of scholars influenced by the women's movement would notice half of humanity is missing and demand an explanation.

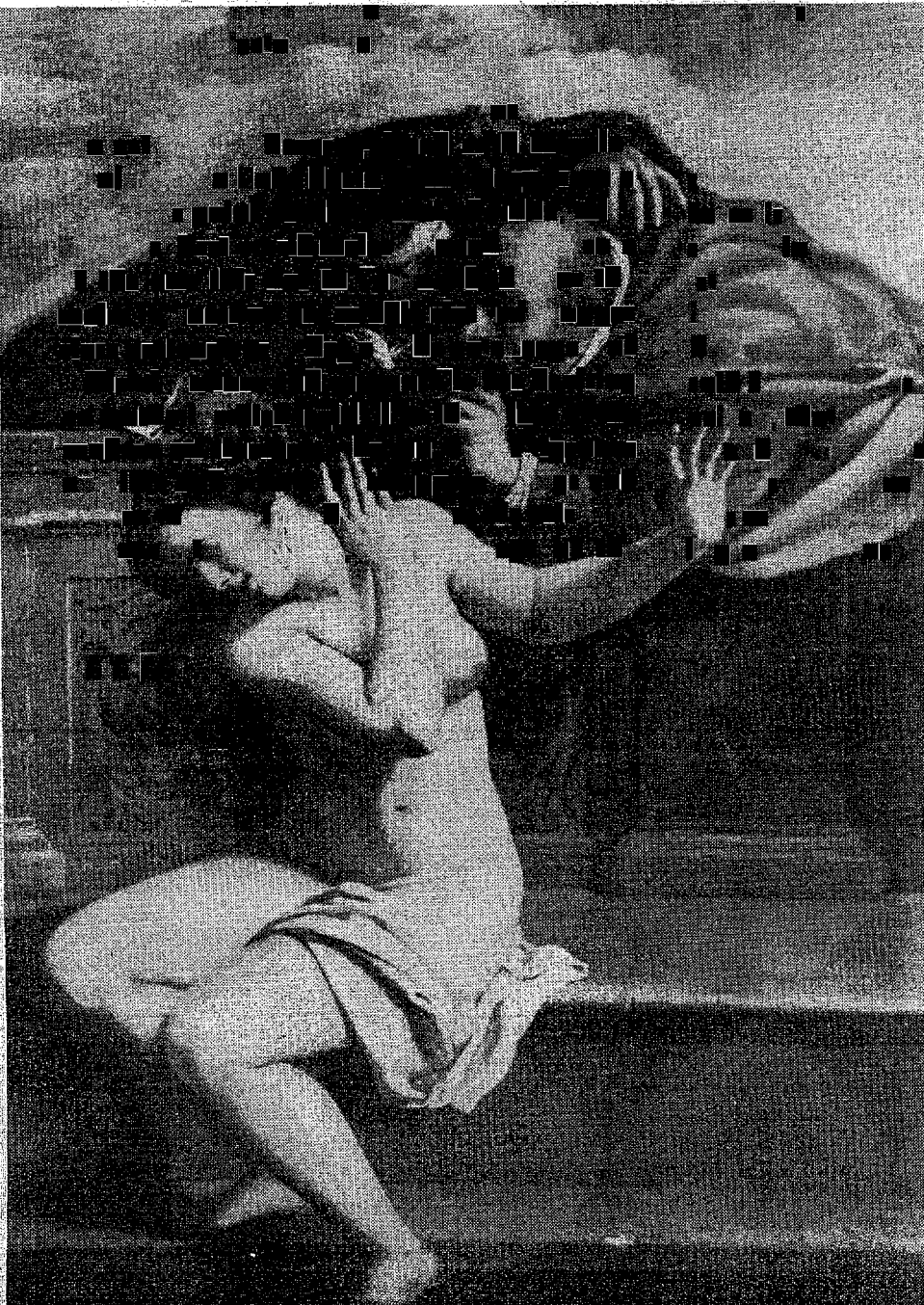
Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany is the result of serious boat-rocking that's been going on in academic waters in the United States. Ever since Linda Nochlin wrote an essay in 1971 called "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" and answered it by saying that the question itself falsifies the nature of the issue, which is not whether or not women possess genius ("If Giotto, the obscure shepherd boy and Van Gogh, the epileptic, could make it, why not women?") but how the pressures and expectations placed on women "simply made total devotion to professional art production out of the question and unthinkable," the intellectual floodgates were open. The activity touched off by Nochlin, as this collection of articles demonstrates, has been fast and furious. Several of the contributions here were originally presented as papers at special sessions of the prestigious College Art Association meetings in 1978 and 1979 (the CAA being the learned society for art historians in the USA). Most of them are scholarly and ponderously written, but all of them are irreverent and intended to contribute to what the co-editors call the feminist revision of art history.

Surveying the record of male/American art history, feminists have attempted to do three things. First, to retrieve the names of women artists from the dark corners of history (Germaine Greer's book *The Obstacle Race* has been the main corrective effort so far); and second, to conduct a reevaluation of the litany from a feminist perspective, adjusting for the distortions built into masculine art criticism. Undertaking this latter work has implied a completely new notion of historical time than we have been used to. To wit: "Just as Renaissance humanists were able to define the Dark Ages for the first time as a separate transitional age bounded at either end by differing cultures, and could therefore understand it as a distinct period with cultural characteristics that were unique to it rather than universal, so feminists have named as 'patriarchal' that period of more than 5,000 years which reach down to the present and which began with the gradual replacement of a long standing Goddess-worshipping culture by patrilineal and God-worshipping civilizations." When you think of it, this is indeed a profound difference. It totally broadens and alters the con-

text in which art is seen and understood. The third objective of the feminist revision has been to take such revelations and turn art history back on itself; to question the very canons of art theory and methodology, opening up possibilities for entirely new avenues of investigation.

Mary Garrard's article on Artemisia Gentileschi is a wonderful example of the feminist rescue from oblivion. (Gentileschi, incidentally, was one of the elect invited to Judy Chicago's Dinner Party.) Garrard does an amazing piece of detective work using a feminist critique to attribute an early seventeenth-century painting of *Susanna and the Elders* to the hand of a very young but already extremely proficient artist who also happened to be the daughter of the northern Italian minor master Orazio Gentileschi. Orazio is, of course, known to art history; but so is Artemisia, though arguably more because of the historical gossip about her rape by a colleague of her father's than because of her extraordinary achievement as a woman and an artist. When Tassi (the attacker) refused to marry Artemisia—this being the customary 'way out' for a respectable rapee—Orazio brought suit and at the end of a five-month trial, Tassi was sentenced to prison. During the trial it was Tassi's word against Gentileschi's; only her word was put to the torture test with thumbscrews, and eventually even that wasn't good enough. Tassi was finally acquitted and Gentileschi was meanly and unjustly branded a hussy.

The apocryphal story of Susanna and the elders also involved a rape—or a suggested rape. The two elders didn't stop at propositioning the young Susanna; they tried to coerce sexual favours from her by threatening to expose her as an unfaithful wife. Susanna resists; the elders denounce her and once again it's her word against the men's. Like Artemisia, Susanna was eventually vindicated but that hasn't stopped history from thinking the worse of her. Tellingly, Garrard notes, there are very few paintings either of Daniel's judgement or the stoning of the elders. Painters and their patrons through the ages have preferred the scene where the elders surprise Susanna at her bath and make their lewd suggestion. Although the elders are usually depicted as aging lechers, and despite Susanna's uncommonly self-assured rejection, she is habitually shown as a half-willing participant in the affair, wavering in her resolve to turn down the two dirty old men—not through fear but because of temptation! Her strength in the face of danger is completely ignored as the male artists seize on a church-sanctioned opportunity to indulge in a bit of soft-core. Susanna, like Artemisia, Garrard remarks, has been the butt of one long historical dirty joke. She goes on to explain exactly why the exceptional painting dated 1610 (and in a private collection in Germany) has to have been painted by a woman; by Artemisia, and not her father as scholars have decreed. For it shows Susanna reacting to the pressure of a threatened rape, not posing as a



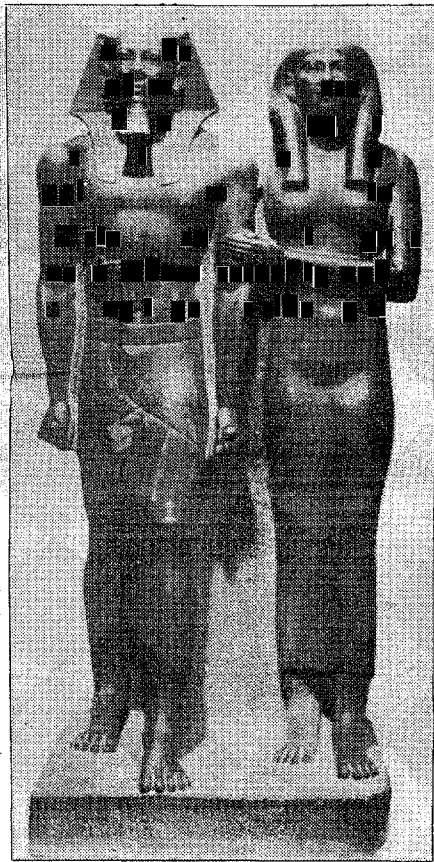
Susanna and the Elders: Artemisia Gentileschi's version (left) is compared to Tintoretto's (right) and Rembrandt's (far right) sexist versions.



sex object in a decorative and half distracted manner. She is a person, not a sexual fantasy.

Most of the essays in *Feminism and Art History* are examinations of similar such moments in recorded art history. They are reports of return visits to familiar territory by scholars, mostly women, who've gone back armed with a new set of glasses. They have a feminist's sensibility, a different sense of time and are frankly sceptical of what the male perspective has established as fact. Nancy Luomala's "Matrilineal Reinterpretation of Some Sacred Egyptian Cows" is a good case in point. She points out that while the implications of matrilineal descent are well understood by anthropology, art history has misrepresented Egyptian art and life by wilfully applying its own patri-cultural standards.

A statue from the 4th Dynasty (2470 BC) of Queen Khamerernebt and King Mycerinus standing together side-by-side in the heraldic



pose typical of Egyptian sculpture nevertheless shows the Queen making an unusual gesture, embracing the King (her right hand at his waist, and left hand touching his left arm). Art historians have taken this as an indication of the weakening of the concept of the pharaoh as an unapproachable and divine being. A woman has dared to touch him! The truth of the matter is quite the contrary. No Egyptian king inherited his throne. He oc-

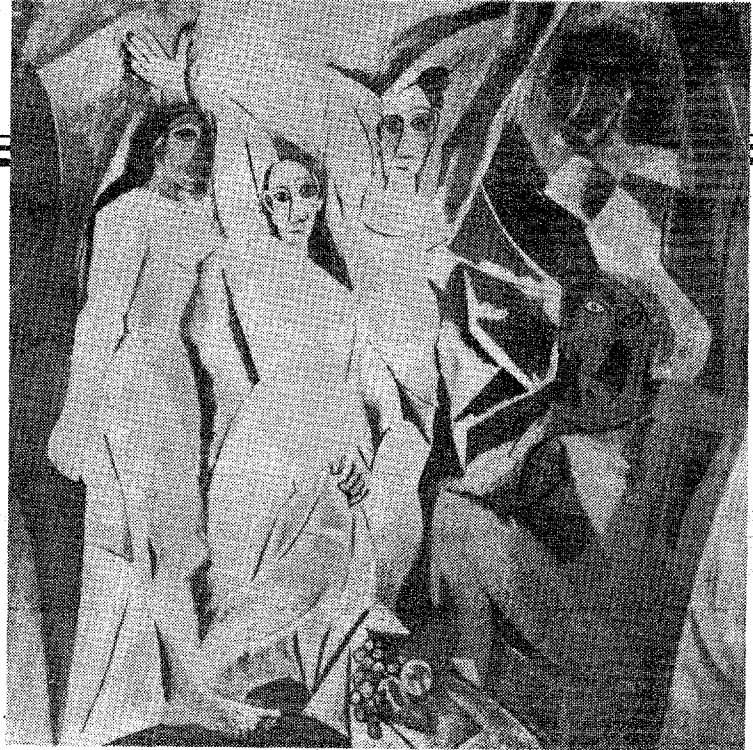
cupied it, and exercised its power because of being related to, or married to, the Queen who had inherited it. The women transferred the power and delegated it to the men; and they received it through their connection to the supreme power of life, the Great Mother Goddess, who was worshipped throughout the Mediterranean in pre-dynastic times. The Egyptian tradition was a holdover from earlier days and that has been entirely misunderstood by male art history for centuries. So much for objectivity.

Co-editor Norma Broude's article on "Degas's Misogyny" offers another fascinating angle on the Feminist Revision. The irony here is that the French Impressionist painter, renowned for his pictures of ballet dancers, was labelled a woman-hater by some of his contemporaries, and the reputation stuck. Quite unfairly, as it happens. The reason has to do with the artist's unconventional compositions, his candid, slice-of-life interiors depicting women about their everyday activities; unceremonious and unidealized. The critics looked and cried "ugly." Anyone who could paint such unappealing pictures of women must detest them. Degas's bachelorhood corroborated the gossip. Well, it is true that Degas never married. But he did have some abiding friendships with women, including Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt, whom he supported and admired as fellow artists. The same cannot be said for Degas's contemporary Renoir, who it was said was only interested in women likely to become his models. It is sometimes breathtaking to behold the lengths male history goes to prop up the male perspective.

Turning to modern art and its antecedents in German Expressionism, there are two essays which deliver a body blow to art history, and begin to offer an explanation as to why it was necessary to savage such a benign sexist as Degas. Alexandra Comini's "Gender or Genius?" explores the careers of three powerful women artists: Käthe Kollwitz, Paula Modersohn-Becker and Gabrielle Muntz, whose existence has been grudgingly recognized by art history but whose true contribution has never been properly acknowledged. The second punch in the combination, by Carol Duncan, is demurely and perhaps slightly satirically titled "Virility and Domination in Early 20th Century Vanguard Painting." This is really the *pièce de résistance* of the book, which I guarantee will change the way you think about Picasso forever.

Duncan begins by pointing out that (American) avant garde art, which is to say the Official Art of these very sexist times, is based on ideals of artistic freedom and rugged individualism established at the turn of the century, ideals which found boldest expression in the painting of female nudes. It is no mere coincidence, Duncan notes, that so many of the works of that period singled out by the critics as being particularly important are of naked women who are rendered as powerless and passive under the gaze of the artist's virility. (Today we'd say machismo.) The female model serves not as a subject of the painting but as the object of the artist's sexual domination, which is the real subject of the work. That holy icon of modern art which graces the covers of so many art books—Picasso's brothel scene *Les Femmes d'Alger*—says it all; but Duncan puts it into words for the first time: "No other modern work reveals more of the rock foundation of sexist anti-humanism or goes further and deeper to justify and celebrate the domination of women by men."

Now think again about what was happening during those years when Picasso and the boys were inventing the avant garde. The suffragettes were making the first serious challenge to male political domination; Kollwitz and her colleagues were making the first concerted challenge to the male monopoly of artistic images. The first achievement of twentieth-century Art, it now has to be understood, was to masculinize it. Not only did Picasso and the others paint images of women which are truly degrading, they masterfully



Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*: the artist's view of women as terrifying beasts.

sideline all women artists by learning to paint with their penises and declaring that authentic art could only be made by people who possessed the right technical equipment. Small wonder that once the collectors and critics got over the shock of Picasso's assault on traditional images they lined up, cash in hand, to buy the work. For if the new Art was outrageous in the disregard for perspective and human form, it was absolutely conventional in its attitude to women. Picasso always said that women were either goddesses or doormats; in life and art he celebrated the subjugation of religious or history story-telling, he conceived an art that could be about what interested him most: naked submissive women. In short, he invented the Playboy centrefold long before Hugh Hefner, and battalions of male critics were sent in to cover up the evidence with formalist art theory.

Feminism and Art History has been a revelation for me—but also something of a disappointment. The reader does have to wade through thick pads of academic prose to uncover what I have described. It is worth it, but I suspect only for those who have some familiarity with the argot—and have the patience to follow the scholars through their rituals of minutiae. Unhappily, few of the writers are up to the wonderful paradoxes and insights their material hands them on a platter. Most of them are still trapped in the conventions and manias of the discipline, and really are addressing their profession rather than feminists or a general readership. In questioning the litany, they only go so far. Their radicalism only serves one purpose, and they don't think their positions all the way through. In assailing the sexist assumption, the collection actually brings down the whole house of cards, though no one seems to notice. The editors do talk about re-thinking the whole of art history, but no one takes on the full implication of sexist bias in art history which is, of course, that if American art history has been guilty of promoting chauvinism, and the oppression of women, it has also had a hand in classism, racism and imperialism.

I came away from the book pleased to know that some winds of change have gusted through the discipline and given a few elders in the field cause for unease. And it has given me a couple of insights of my own. First, that a feminist critique clearly can be used effectively to demystify art and inject a down-to-earth, humanist approach back into the interpretation of the arts. Canadian art history could do well with some re-interpretation along these lines. I am also reminded of the session I attended at the Women and Words conference in Vancouver last July. It was on feminist criticism (is there or isn't there one?) and I recall the two academics on the panel giving lectures to the audience which were somehow patronizing and abstract at the same time. Here was an audience of receptive and well-informed women and the two academics deliberately talked to an in-crowd of other academics who weren't there. There has to be another way! Feminist academics have to break with that confining language or what is the point of our supporting their well-paid positions in the university? This seems to me to touch on another theme which came up at Women and Words and which has to do with whether we should have special expectations of women in the mainstream media covering women's issues. My short answer is, yes. I think it is fair to expect women, wherever they are working, not to behave as if they were men and to criticize them when they do. I think it is fair to criticize women scholars for talking down to us and for creating theories about our work which only other academics can understand or even want to.

1. Blount, for many years the Keeper of the Queen's Collection, was recently exposed as the elusive Fourth Man in the Burgess/Philby/Maclean spy ring. Clark became famous by name dropping his way through art history in glorious colour on the TV series *Civilization*.
2. In *Woman in Sexist Society*, V. Gornick & B.K. Morgan (eds.) New York, Basic Books 1971.

Susan Crean is the author of Who's Afraid of Canadian Culture and co-author of the recently published Two Nations.



Käthe Kollwitz, *The Call of Death*: away from masculine images in art.

The Days Before The Day After

by Donna Gollan

Prod. and Dir: Chris Beaver, Judy Irving, Ruth Landy. Filmed and Ed: Chris Beaver, Judy Irving. Nar: Judy Irving. Ass. Prod: Judith Lit. Ass. Ed: Michael Levin, Victoria Wiley. Sound Ed: Karen Spangenberg. Sound effects: Deborah Hoffmann. Orig. Music: Gary S. Remal, Bernard L. Krause. Add. Music: Pat Metheny, Lyle Mays, Everhard Weber. Dist. Co-ordinator: Ellen Geiger.

Dark Circle is not just another analytical, statistic-quoting, scary film about nuclear war. It is the story of ongoing life in an atomic age. The beginning of the film has a lyrical quality: as we watch masses of geese migrating we are told four billion years ago life appeared on earth; one million years ago these geese began to migrate; five thousand years ago 'man' began to record his own history and less than forty years ago the dropping of the first atomic bomb signaled the beginning of a new age, the atomic age. The film goes on to explore exactly what is occurring to people who live in this age, through their own stories and in their own words. Many of them must make difficult moral or political decisions. Fortunately the film allows them each plenty of air time. We are led through their dilemmas in a way that forces us, as viewers, to reexamine our own involvement in the atomic age.

This film takes us inside a factory in Rocky Flats, Denver, and shows us the small, plutonium disc that is used as the trigger inside each bomb. Certainly it is horrifying to hear that three of these triggers are manufactured each day, fifteen a week, seven hundred and eighty a year, but the real terror is that just one of these four pound discs contains enough plutonium particles to give cancer to the whole human race. The strict emissions standards for this factory ensure that the waste products are 99.97% pure, but the people who live within miles of Rocky Flats are still dying from twenty times the expected rate of cancer for the normal population. As Lloyd Mixon, a nearby farmer explains, what's the use of making nuclear weapons if all the Americans are killed before we ever get a chance to use them? How's that for an "anti-nuclear" point of view?

Lloyd Mixon's is not the only point of view that comes from an ordinary citizen. Ruth Landy, one of the film's three main filmmakers, spoke to me after the film screening about the use of "non-experts" in the film's text. She explained that the filmmakers wanted to leave viewers with some hope for the future and a feeling that they could work

to change things now. To this end they avoided experts who would simply discourage people, causing them to feel powerless and "non-expert" themselves. By introducing active, concerned citizens who have come to their own conclusions about how the atomic age is affecting their health and lives, the filmmakers hoped that the audience would identify with these people, making that voyage of discovery a little less difficult to take.

Judy Irving, another of the three main filmmakers, decided to narrate the film because it is, in part, her voyage of discovery that grounds the film, making it as effective as Bonnie Klein's personal discovery of pornography in a recent NFB film, *Not A Love Story*. Both are films about issues that people prefer to ignore, not because they feel any safer not knowing, but because they feel that knowledge will not help, that it cannot empower them as individuals. A successful voyage of discovery, then, proves them wrong. *Dark Circle* is very successful in this way. The stories we hear from a dozen or so people, who have become "experts" through their own experiences, are alarming but not overwhelming. We are left with a modicum of hope for the future, provided we act now, as some of these individuals have done.

Who is a more qualified "expert" than Don Gabel, a man whose job at the Rocky Flats plant required that he work in a space with his head up against a warm pipe. He speaks to us with a large portion of his head missing. The film explains that he died shortly after the interview. This is an expert on radiation effects who is hard to discredit. Lloyd Mixon, who has been raising animals for years on a farm close to Rocky Flats, explains the deformities which he is seeing occur more and more frequently in his animals. Sumiteru Tanaguchi survived the blast in Nagasaki and lives to tell us about it. He explains that as he lay in bed recovering from severe burns for over a year and a half, his anger slowly developed beyond its initial stages at Japan for losing the war: "I began to hate my parents... everyone's parents. I found myself hating not only the war itself, but all the parents who had not opposed it." Rex Haag, a developer, deals with another kind of anger. He cannot comprehend his government's justification of the contamination of certain areas for the ultimate public good. He has lost his daughter to cancer, all the time wondering if it is somehow his fault, if perhaps he should not have been developing that particular piece of land. The voices we hear are full of self-doubt, fear and fight. These are experts who have gained their experience the hard way, and they are easy to believe.

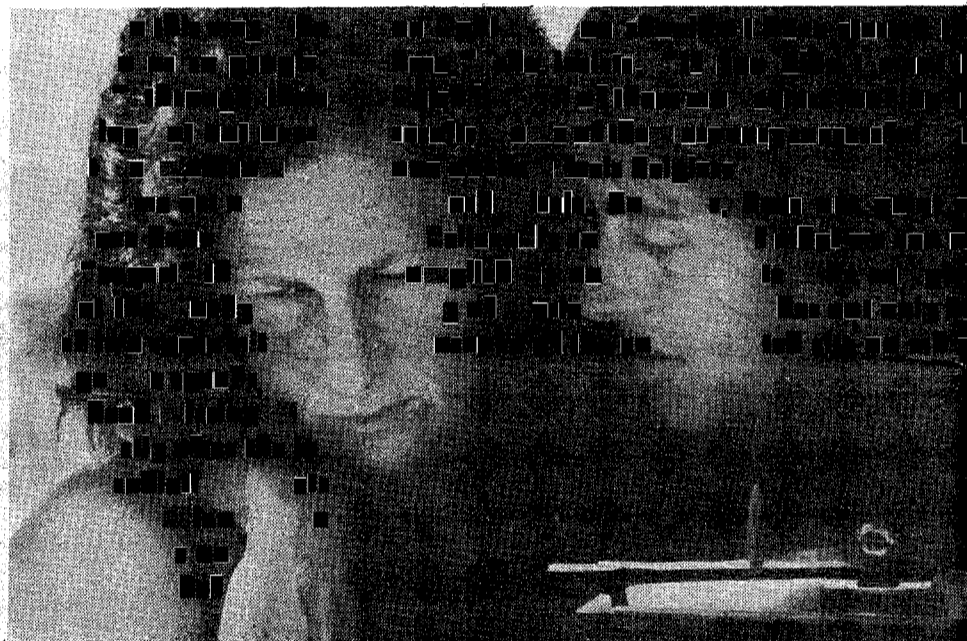
More powerful still is the voice of women in

Dark Circle. Even as we listen to Judy Irving narrating her own story, we know that her concern became a film. This is one woman who realized her discoveries with action: she made a statement that would be used to convince others. Pam Solo, a Catholic nun, turned her concern into organization with the American Friends Service Committee, a rally and a blockade. Marlene Batley, a worried mother of two, knocks on her neighbours' doors and alerts them to her own concerns of living in a contaminated area. Raye Fleming, as a member of the Diablo Canyon Mothers for Peace, begins by handing out leaflets and ends by organizing a blockade that is 30,000 people strong. Richard McHugh claims that he never would have begun his appeal to the US military for compensation for the leukemia he developed years after participating in early atomic tests if he had known how upset his wife would get. He looks tired and dejected but his wife simply states, "We're gonna fight... You shouldn't have started this here," she insists, "if you didn't want to finish it." All of these women are looking for results. Some of them are very successful. Not one of them feels helpless.

Dark Circle, however, does not paint an unbelievably rosy picture of what we can accomplish by our own efforts. The complete story of Marlene Batley includes not only her ignorance of the contaminated site on which

her new home is built and her increasing concern and fight for local support. The film also moves full circle to show her packing to leave, too much afraid for her young daughters' health to stay in the area. When she sold the house to another young couple with children, she admits that she was afraid someone would mention the contamination and ruin her sale. Too much of her small family's wealth was tied up in that home for her to sacrifice it to any cause. The moral contradiction cannot be easily resolved. On the one hand it is easy to say that she sold out. On the other, is the individual responsible to pay any penalty, no matter how high the price, when she is pulling against all society?

There are many more such difficult decisions to be made by individuals in *Dark Circle*. The film should be lauded for its efforts to be sympathetic to the people involved while still allowing its viewers room to come to terms with these moral and practical contradictions. It is this particular film's saving grace that it allows ordinary people a chance to have their say. As the film concludes: the men who invented nuclear weapons thought that they could make up for it by inventing nuclear power. Nuclear reactors have simply spread the technology needed to create weapons. It may not be experts who lead us out of the dark circle, out of this atomic age and into the next. ●



Raye Fleming (left) recognized the link between nuclear power and weapons, and joined the Diablo Canyon Mothers for Peace.

Brave New Work

by Amanda Hale

Carol Bolt's new play, *Survival* was presented to the public for the first time in Toronto in early November. It was performed in The Extra Space at Tarragon Theatre as one of this season's showcase workshops in the Brave New Works program run by Factory Theatre Lab. Carol Bolt describes *Survival* as her first feminist play. She has developed the script during workshops, first in Banff, then at Factory Theatre Lab. The workshop process involves a short rehearsal period, during which attention is focussed on the script rather than on acting or production values. Workshops are a service for writers, enabling them to develop and revise their scripts with the benefit of input from actors, director and dramaturge.

Factory Theatre Lab's workshop production of *Survival* was directed by Jackie Maxwell, artistic director of Factory, with Rina Fraticelli of Playwrights' Workshop Montréal as dramaturge, and a cast made up of Susan Hogan, Nicky Guadagni, David Bolt, and Steven Bush. The play was performed with script in hand since the actors, during the relatively brief rehearsal period, devoted their energies to developing character rather than learning lines which, in any case, were being rewritten from day to day. Carol Bolt has been working on the script for about two years and says that she often felt like giving up

on it and probably would have without frequent prodding from Susan Hogan who was eager to know what happened next.

Obviously one cannot review the play critically at this point because it is still a work in progress, but some plot description and general comments are in order. The four characters in *Survival* are the offstage characters from a previous Bolt play, *Escape Entertainment*, performed at Tarragon Theatre a few years ago. The main character, Nadja, returns to her Toronto house from filming in Morocco to tell her husband, Pancho, that she is leaving him to run away to Pago Pago with her leading man, and she's taking the two kids. But Pancho is at his lover's country cottage, with the kids. There are telephone calls back and forth throughout the play. Pancho is a film director and his colleague, Baz, who has carried a torch for Nadja since high school, is at the house working on rewrites of *The Cold War*, a movie adventure story of the discovery of the North West Passage. Nadja's brother, Cyril, arrives with his lover, Cheryl, who has three Ph.D.'s and dreams of a condominium in Bora Bora. Cyril's wife is at the farm with the kids. Nadja cannot stand Cyril. He is a thoroughly obnoxious character who epitomizes the money-grubbing, insensitive, non-thinking type so often connected with big business. He talks of

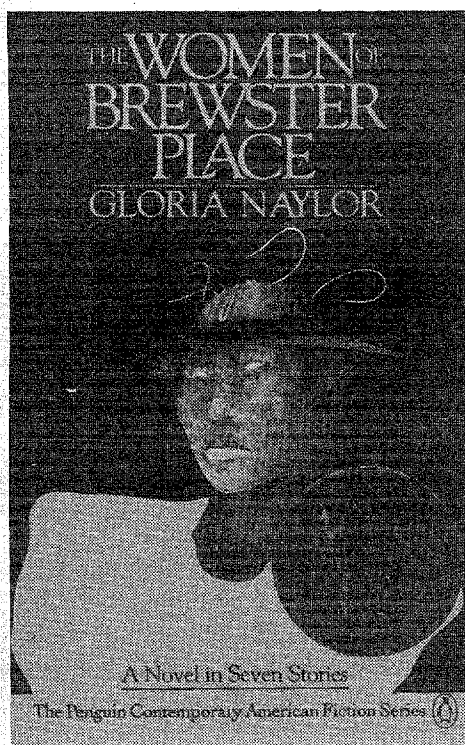
dollars in the millions, makes porno flicks, and is trying to sell a warehouse full of waterbeds. But Carol Bolt knows all the layers and facets of her characters and, amazingly, is able to write Cyril sympathetically.

The play is feminist in that it addresses the major issues facing contemporary western society: issues which are of vital interest to the feminist movement as a life-force concerned with perpetuation of the species rather than with the 'get it while you can', mass suicide approach to life/death. These diametrically opposed attitudes are personified in the play by Nadja and Cyril, who are in conflict over every possible issue. The four characters discuss the peace movement, pornography, feminism, morality, and the quality of life. The men reminisce about their youth in the 60's when "if you stayed up late enough and drank enough, you could change the world." The women focus on the future and Cheryl enthuses about her tête-a-tête with Nadja as though she had never actually talked with a woman before. Carol Bolt handles her dialogue with a light touch. Dealing humorously with heavy issues is a technique that she chooses, rather than a compromise, in order to reach her audience. She likes to work with comedy and, further, it does enable her to engage the audience's interest by presenting as popular entertainment some of the serious

questions about life, while also provoking people to consider those questions.

The play ends with Nadja announcing to Pancho over the telephone her decision to stay in Toronto with him and the kids, and to continue her affair with the movie actor. Carol Bolt has received some interesting response to this play. The majority of women really like it, she says, except for the ones who are totally male-identified. Those women tend to be even more hostile to the script than many of the men whose reactions have been more hostile to one degree or another, from a careful avoidance of discussing the issues, talking merely about the "interesting language," to outraged protest and remarks such as "She can't do that! Nadja can't telephone Pancho and say that! She's a real cunt!" The old double standard is hardly news but it's still there, and some women still want to have their cake and eat it, just like the boys. "Nadja could have rejected both options and moved to Parkdale with the kids," says Bolt, "but she likes living with Pancho, she likes her career, she likes having a lover." Indeed, within the realm of women who opt for change from within the structure, the conclusion of *Survival* is revolutionary, and perhaps more disturbing to the male sector of the audience than their reaction to radical feminist theatre from which they feel justified

Brilliance in Brewster Place



The Women of Brewster Place, by Gloria Naylor. Penguin, 1983. \$5.95.

Reviewed by Karen Wendling

Brewster Place is a housing development in a large northeastern American city. It was built just after World War I, but in the intervening years one end of the road was walled off for traffic control, and the buildings began to deteriorate. During the civil rights era, Brewster Place was gradually re-populated by blacks who came north looking for something better, and settled into the four aging apartment buildings at the end of a dead-end street.

The Women of Brewster Place tells the stories of seven women. Mattie Michael, the woman in the first story, is the most developed character in the novel, and the only one who appears in all the stories. Mattie moves north from Rock Vale, Tennessee in the 1940s to give birth to and raise her child. When the baby is bitten by a rat in the boarding-house where they live, Mattie packs up and leaves immediately. But no one will rent to an unmarried black woman with a child, until Mattie runs into Miss Eva. Miss Eva invites Mattie and her son, Basil, to stay with her and her granddaughter in her house.

Mattie stays for thirty-one years. After Miss Eva's death Mattie works two jobs to carry the mortgage on the house so Basil, the focus and joy of her life, can grow up in a good place. Years later, when the adult Basil is charged with manslaughter after a fight in a bar, Mattie puts the house up as collateral for Basil's bail. Basil skips out before the trial, and Mattie ends up in Brewster Place.

The other six women's stories cluster loosely around Mattie's; they form part of her network of family, friends and acquaintances in Brewster Place. Etta Mae Johnson is a childhood friend of Mattie's who left Rock Vale in the 1930s because the south was no place for a proud young black woman. Neither was the north. It is Etta Mae whom Mattie goes to when she gives birth to Basil. Etta moves on, but she returns to Mattie and to Brewster Place.

Kiswana Browne is a young radical who is trying to organize a tenants' association in Brewster Place. She dreams of marches and black power, and she argues with her mother, who lives comfortably in a nearby neighbourhood and thinks Kiswana wants too much, too fast. Lucielia Louise Turner is Miss Eva's granddaughter, who Mattie lived with before Miss Eva's death. Ciel's life rotates around her young daughter, Serena, and Serena's father, who has returned after abandoning Ciel soon after Serena's birth. Cora Lee is a single mother who loves babies so much that she keeps having more and more of them.

"The Two" are Lorraine and Theresa, a young lesbian couple who move into Brewster Place and are ostracized when a rumour passes around that they are "that way." Lorraine is hurt and becomes more timid when her friendly hellos are met with hostility and fear by some of the residents of Brewster Place; Theresa is furious in the face of the same treatment. They argue. Theresa wants Lorraine to stand up for herself and have more spine, but what Lorraine wants most is not always to feel so different.

Gloria Naylor takes many risks in the story of Lorraine and Theresa, and it is a testament to her sensitivity and skill as a writer that she is able to pull it off as well as she does. Lorraine is a schoolteacher who lost her job in Detroit (for being a lesbian, we are led to believe). She and Theresa have moved several times because Lorraine is terrified that people around her will discover she is a lesbian, and she will lose her job again. Theresa resents the moves. Their relationship is slowly deteriorating under the pressure of living in the closet, and the glimpses Naylor gives us of this are almost painful in their clarity. She accurately describes the sorts of arguments lesbians in this situation would (and do) have—such as

whether or not the neighbours really are behaving strangely, or whether being a lesbian is central to, or merely one aspect of, who you really are—and she allows the reader to see that both women's positions are valid. Even more than this—no small accomplishment in itself—she also captures subtleties of behaviour and attitude which elude all but the most skilled observers and writers. Gloria Naylor is both.

All of Naylor's risks do not work out so well. One night after an argument Lorraine goes out alone to a party. On her way back she is gang-raped in an alley by a group of teenage boys. This much is brutally believable. But without giving the story away here, I do not find Lorraine's actions after the rape either physically or psychologically plausible. It seems to me that Naylor displays a profound ambivalence to her lesbian characters here; Lorraine's actions could as well be explained with reference to her lesbianism as they could with reference to her rape—and that is a weakness. In addition, the novel's ending left me feeling that Naylor had pulled a trick on her readers, as if she needed a quick ending after the climax of Lorraine's rape, and this was all she could come up with.

These criticisms are relatively minor when we view the whole novel, however. *The Women of Brewster Place* can hardly be praised too highly. It is brilliant, richly deserving the American Book Award it received this year, and what makes it so is less the plot than the writing and the character development. Naylor's prose is spare and achingly beautiful, and her gift of understatement leaves me breathless. Many of the novel's "events" occur in the background, as the women of Brewster place go about their daily lives cooking, washing dishes or visiting friends. In the first story, 25 years slide by in the space of one paragraph as Mattie lovingly watches Basil eat his breakfast—and we know everything we need to know. Naylor can compress years of shattered hopes into the mental pause between two sentences; or a lifetime of friendship and loyalty into a glance or the silent offer of support. Etta goes out with a minister whom she has just met and whom she decides to marry, but he has different plans:

All evening Etta had been in another world, weaving his tailored suit and the smell of his expensive cologne into a custom-made future for herself. It took his last floundering thrusts into her body to bring her back to reality. She arrived in enough time to feel him beating against her like a dying walrus, until he shuddered and was still.

Etta returns to Brewster Place early in the morning, her spirit broken, to find that Mattie has waited up for her:

... someone was waiting up for her. Someone who would deny fiercely that there had been any concern—just a little indigestion from them fried onions that kept me from sleeping. Thought I'd pass the time by figuring out what you see in all this loose-life music.

What matters is not so much the events in the lives of Naylor's women, as the caring between them.

The writing never overshadows the characters, however. Naylor's descriptions contribute to the characters' development; they do not distract the reader. And Naylor possesses the gift which carries the novel into greatness: she has a kind but objective eye. Naylor genuinely likes all the women in the book, but she never allows this to distort them as *women*. All of the women of Brewster Place live there because of circumstances at least in part beyond their control, but none of them are either heroines or victims. Naylor explains the behaviour of her characters without making excuses for them. What they do—all of them, even the minor characters—makes sense. Mattie and Ciel talk at the kitchen table after the return of Serena's father:

No, she wasn't talking to Mattie, she was talking to herself. She was convincing herself it was the new job and the paint and Serena that let him back into her life. Yet, the real truth went beyond her scope of understanding. When she laid her head in the hollow of his neck there was a deep musky scent to his body that brought back the ghosts of the Tennessee soil of her childhood. It reached up and lined the inside of her nostrils so that she inhaled his presence almost every minute of her life. The feel of his sooty flesh penetrated the skin of her fingers and coursed through her blood and became one, somewhere, wherever it was, with her actual being. But how do you tell yourself, let alone this practical old woman who loves you, that he was back because of that. So you don't.

You get up and fix you both another cup of coffee, calm the fretting baby on your lap with her pacifier, and you pray silently—very silently—behind veiled eyes that the man will stay.

Naylor allows us to see the women on their own terms; we view their actions as having meaning for them. This surpasses skill; this is genius. ●

in separating themselves, and thus don't have to deal with it. Men have been generally less interested than women in the major issues dealt with in the play, such as the peace movement, says Bolt. This seems logical, given the fact that women, as the bearers of life, whether or not they exercise that option, have a responsibility and interest in protecting it that the majority of men seem to lack for various and complex reasons. People who are not benefitting from a life-threatening system are obviously going to be more engaged in the matter of changing it than those who do benefit.

Carol Bolt has written more than twenty plays, and she was already a successfully established playwright back in the early 70s when the fever for Canadian content in the arts was at its height. Carol Bolt feels that women cannot take on their full role in theatre by the imposition of rules regarding percentages of female participation, any more than Canadians could take charge of their own theatrical scene by legislating Canadian content. This leads to tokenism and Bolt personally would prefer to see her work welcomed and understood in a small theatre than produced as a token female piece in a major Canadian theatre. Bolt recognizes the female voice as distinct from the male and she believes that women's profile in theatre can be increased by the grassroots work of such groups as Nightwood Theatre and Mean Feet, where women who are dedicated to conveying the feminist perspective are working, sometimes in conjunction with men, to effect a slow but sure change in the theatrical status quo.

Bolt cites *This Is For You Anna* as an example of feminist theatrical sensibility in contrast to *Billy Bishop Goes To War*, the boyish and extremely successful glorification of Canada's star bomber pilot's war experiences. Money is a great factor, Bolt points out. Given sufficient backing and promotion, feminist theatre could be achieving the success which much of it deserves. *This Is For You Anna* was presented at the Partisan Gallery during the Women's Perspective '83 series. The show was created collectively, and the script written by Banuta Rubess in collaboration with Aida Jordao, Suzanne Khuri, Ann-Marie Macdonald and Maureen White. It deals with the true story of Marianna Bachmeyer who, in 1980, entered the courtroom in Germany where the strangler of her seven-year-old daughter, Anna, was on trial for murder, shot him seven times and said, "I did it for you, Anna." She was not awarded a medal. She was sentenced to six years imprisonment.

Following the Tarragon showing, *Survival* played for two nights at the National Theatre School in Montréal under the auspices of Playwrights' Workshop Montréal. Carol Bolt was involved with rewrites between the Toronto and Montréal showings, and will do further work on the play before it receives production as a finished piece. It is to be hoped that we will not have to wait long to see the finished product. Also, watch out for further showcase workshops in Factory Theatre Lab's Brave New Works Series at Tarragon's Extra Space during February and April of 1984. They provide a unique opportunity to witness the development of new Canadian drama. ●

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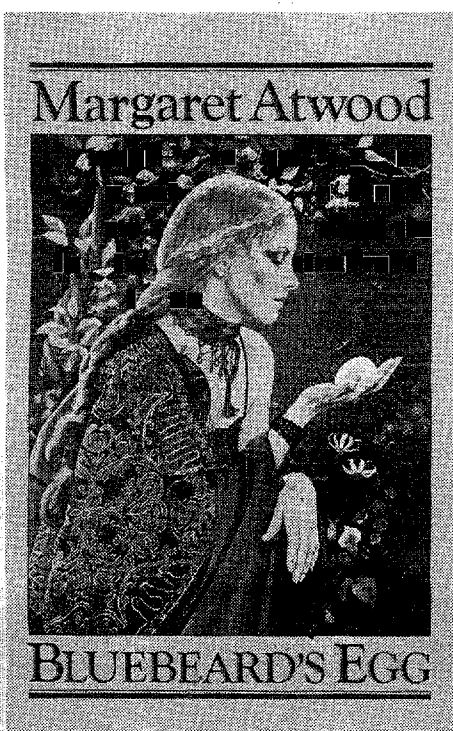
2nd Annual Idiosyncratic Book List

by Carroll Klein, Gail Van Varseveld, and Jean Wilson

Holidays are coming and it's time to settle in to your winter reading and to buy books for your reading friends. If you have half as much fun discovering the books on this list as we had making it up, you're in for a high old time.

FICTION

Atwood, Margaret. *Bluebeard's Egg*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1983
A new collection of short stories that lives up to Atwood's high standards and her readers' expectations.



Murder in the Dark. Toronto: Coach House Press 1983
Atwood having a lark in short fictions and prose poems; one of the most entertaining books in Canlit in 1983.

Beattie, Ann. *Distortions*. New York: Warner Books 1983. *The Burning House*. New York: Ballantine Books 1983
Short stories that make Beattie's novels pale in comparison.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. *Thendara House*. New York: Daw 1983.
A new Darkover novel about the Guild of Free Amazons.

Brewster, Elizabeth. *A Houseful of Women*. Ottawa: Oberon 1983.
Short stories by one of Canada's best women poets.

Brindel, June Rachuy. *Ariadne: A Novel of Ancient Crete*. New York: St Martin's Press 1980
Ariadne was the last matriarch of Crete. She and other queens were crushed some time between 1800 and 1400 BC and with them died a system of belief that regarded childbirth as the primary miracle, all women as intrinsically holy, and the Great Mother Goddess as supreme deity.

Brossard, Nicole. *These Our Mothers. Or, the Disintegrating Chapter*. Translated by Barbara Godard. Toronto: Coach House 1983
A self-reflexive text which is a session of wen-do against the violence of patriarchal discourse (original title: *L'Amèr ou le Chapitre effrité*)

Cross, Amanda (pseudonym of Carolyn Heilbrun)
Marvellous mysteries starring Kate Fansler, an erudite and witty English professor at a New York university who solves unusual academic puzzles.
Six books: *In the Last Analysis*, *Poetic Justice*, *The Theban Mysteries*, *The Question of Max*, *The James Joyce Murder*, *Death in a Tenured Position*.

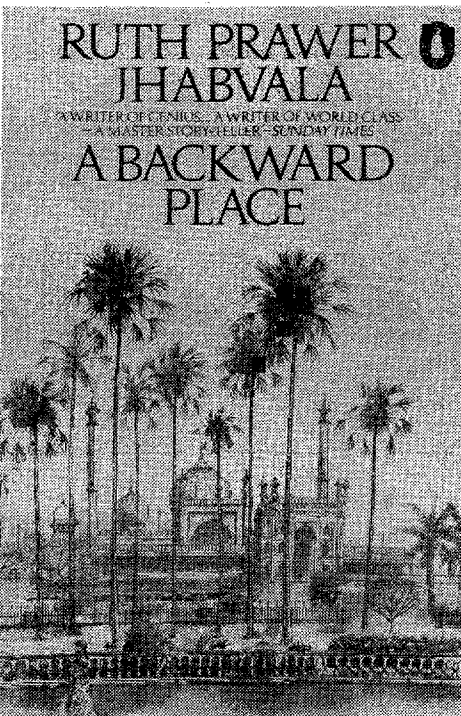
Culleton, Beatrice. *In Search of April Raintree*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Press 1983
A moving story of the life of a young native woman trying to discover her identity in the painful, unjust world of urban native life.

Desai, Anita. *Clear Light of Day*, *Fire on the Mountain*, *Games at Twilight*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
Desai's skilful portrayals of the lives of women in present-day India make her a must for all Anglo-Indian enthusiasts.

Gallant, Mavis. *A Fairly Good Time*, *Green Water*, *Green Sky*. Toronto: Macmillan. Reissued in paperback in 1983.

Gardam, Jane. *God on the Rocks*, *The Sidmouth Letters*, *A Long Way from Verona*. London: Abacus
Two novels and a short story collection by an English writer whose writing is a joy to read.

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver. *How I Became a Holy Mother*, *Heat and Dust*, *The Householder*, *A Backward Place*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books
Jhabvala is a European who writes brilliantly of her life in modern India.



Kernaghan, Eileen. *Songs from the Drowned Lands*. New York: Ace 1983
A novel of high fantasy, the first chapter of which appeared in *Room of One's Own* science fiction issue.

Lee, Tanith. *Red as Blood, or Tales from the Sisters Grimm*. New York: Daw 1983
Conventional European fairy-tales retold by one of the greatest imaginations writing fantasy today. Not particularly feminist.

LeGuin, Ursula. *The Compass Rose*. New York: Bantam Books 1983
Another collection of LeGuin's wonderful short stories.

Lessing, Doris. *The Making of the Representative for Planet I*. London: Granada 1983. *The Sentimental Agents of the Volyen Empire*. London: Jonathan Cape 1983
Novels 4 and 5 in the incomparable *Canopus in Argus: Archives*.

Lynn, Elizabeth A. *The Woman Who Loved the Moon and Other Stories*. New York: Berkley 1981
Two years old but still a splendid fantasy collection that should not be missed, especially the title story. Also try *The Chronicles of Tornor* (3 vols.) and *The Sardonyx Net*.

Manning, Olivia. *The Balkan Trilogy*, *The Levant Trilogy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1983
Reissues of six enthralling novels by an English writer who has never had the reputation she deserves. For those who love a long, satisfying read.

Naylor, Gloria. *The Women of Brewster Place*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1983

An award-winning first novel of the lives of black women in urban America is compelling reading. Not to be missed.

Paretsky, Sara. *Indemnity Only*. New York: Ballantine Books 1983
The first novel about V.I. Warshawski, a female private eye in Chicago.

Robinson, Marilynne. *Housekeeping*. New York: Bantam Books 1982.
A wonderful novel about two girls growing up in one of the most eccentric families in contemporary fiction.

Salmonson, Jessica Amanda. *Tomoe Gozen*, *The Golden Naginata*. New York: Ace 1981, 1982
The saga of a female samurai set in a parallel Japan, by the writer who edited *Amazons!* and *Amazons II*.

Tyler, Anne. *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. New York: Berkley 1983
The witty, strangely touching story of the not-so-wonderful Tull family. Try also *Searching for Caleb* and *Morgan's Passing*, both reissued by Berkley this year.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich 1983
The Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by the best of the black women writers in the United States.

White, Antonia. *The Lost Traveller*, *The Sugar House*, *Beyond the Glass*. London: Virago Press 1981-3
White's trilogy of a young woman growing up in England in the early 1900s and wrestling with the burden of a devout Catholic inheritance.

POETRY

Broumas, Olga. *Beginning with O*, *Soie Sauvage*, *Pastoral Jazz*. Yale University Press, Copper Canyon Press 1981, 1983
Poetry by a Greek-American lesbian of great power and range.

Cadsby, Heather and Maria Jacobs, eds. *The Third Taboo*. Toronto: Wolsak and Wynn 1983
A delightful new Canadian anthology of poems on jealousy.

Couzyn, Jeni. *Life by Drowning: Selected Poems*. Toronto: Anansi 1983
Work from 4 previous books, plus a new sequence on childbirth, a group of chants and spells, and the complete long poem *Christmas in Africa*.

Forché, Carolyn. *The Country between Us; Gathering the Tribes*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1982, 1983
The Country between Us was reviewed in the September 1983 *Broadside*.

Ford, Cathy. *Affaires of the Heart*. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing 1983
One woman's escape from housewifery to artistic creation and love between women.

McPhee, Rosalind. *What Place Is This?* Toronto: Coach House 1983
A poetic travelogue of a theatre troupe travelling from Skagway, Alaska, to Dawson City, Yukon, at the height of the gold rush.

Mouré, Erin. *Wanted Alive*. Toronto: Anansi 1983
Straight from the heart and gut poetry by a west coast railway worker who is also one of the best poets writing in Canada.

Nelson, Sharon H. *Mad Women and Crazy Ladies*. Dewittville: Sunken Forum Press 1983
Reviewed in *Broadside*, September 1983.

Plath, Sylvia. *The Collected Poems*. New York: Harper & Row 1983

Wallace, Bronwen. *Signs of the Former Tenant*. Ottawa: Oberon 1983

Webb, Phyllis. *The Vision Tree: Selected Poems*. Vancouver: Talonbooks 1983
Poetry by the winner of the 1983 Governor-General's award.

NON-FICTION

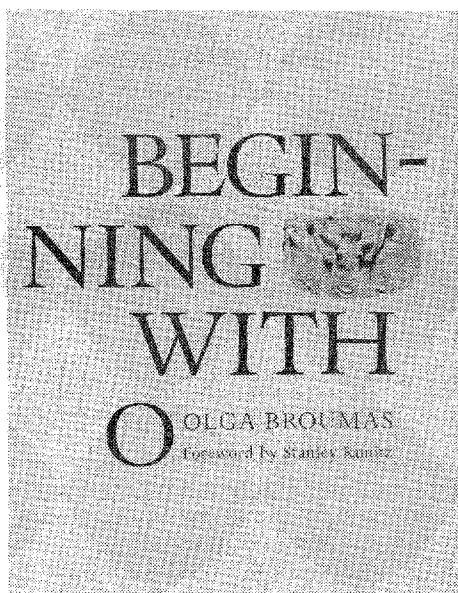
Bauman, Nicola. *A Very Great Profession: The Women's Novel 1914-39*. London: Virago Press
A study of the lives of women between the two world wars.

Briskin, Linda and Lynda Yantz, eds. *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement*. Toronto: The Women's Press 1983
Articles, bibliography, and cineography on Canadian women's experience of the labour movement.

Brownstein, Rachel M. *Becoming a Heroine: Reading about Women in Novels*. New York: Viking Press
Another piece of interesting literary criticism.

Chernin, Kim. *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness*. New York: Colophon Books 1982
A sensible, feminist look at the ways in which women's images of their bodies have been warped in North American society.

Collis, Louise. *Memoirs of a Medieval Woman: The Life and Times of Margery Kempe*. Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside 1983
The adventures of a 15th-century woman who left her 14 children to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to expiate a secret sin of her youth. Based on an autobiography and contemporary accounts.



Emecheta, Buchi. *The Joys of Motherhood*. London: Heinemann 1983. *Second Class Citizens*, *The Bride Price*. London: Brazillier 1983
An Anglo-African writer well worth reading.

Especially idiosyncratic entry, the. *Sailing (sa'ling)*, i.n. the fine art of getting wet and becoming ill while slowly going nowhere at great expense: *A Dictionary for Landlubbers, Old Salts, and Armchair Drifters by Henry Beard and Roy McKie*

Faderman, Lillian. *Scotch Verdict*. New York: Quill 1983
The author of *Surpassing the Love of Men* investigates the true story behind the trial portrayed in Lillian Hellman's hit Broadway play, *The Children's Hour*. The trial was of 2 school mistresses in Edinburgh accused in 1811 of having sex together.

Fisher, M.F.K. *Among Friends*. San Francisco: North Point Press 1983
A fascinating autobiography by an American woman (now 75) who has written as magically about Marseilles and Aix-en-Provence as about *The Art of Eating*.

Fountaine, Margaret. *Love among the Butterflies*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1983

Diaries of a Victorian woman who discovered that the delights of travel, butterfly collecting and sex far surpassed her early life as the proper, unmarried daughter of an Anglican priest. Great fun.

Glendinning, Victoria. *VITA: The Life of Vita Sackville-West*. London: Weidenfeld 1983

For devoted Bloomsberries, a new delight based on the life of a woman for whom "the possibility of being wrong was never seriously entertained."

Goodfield, June. *An Imagined World: A Story of Scientific Discovery*. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1982

A story of scientific process, about a woman immunologist and her colleagues (mostly women) in various disciplines who over 5 years uncovered the association between the immune system and iron, especially with relation to Hodgkin's disease.

Herrera, Hayden. *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*. New York: Harper & Row 1983.

Reviewed in *Broadside*, October 1983.

Holcombe, Lee. *Wives and Property: Reform of the Women's Property Law in Nineteenth Century England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1983

Feminism as an organized movement appeared in England in the 1850s specifically to win reform of the married women's property law. This book explores the reform campaign in the context of its time and the people involved, such as Charlotte Cushman, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Harriet Martineau, and J.S. Mill.

Hubbard, Ruth, Mary Sue Henifin, and Barbara Fried, *Biological Woman: The Conventional Myth*. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., Inc. 1983
12 essays and a comprehensive bibliography.

Lifshin, Lyn, ed. *Ariadne's Thread: A Collection of Contemporary Women's Journals*. New York: Harper & Row 1982

Marcus, Jane, ed. *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West 1911-1917*. London: Virago Press 1983

West's early political journalism, mostly from *The Freewoman* and *The Clarion*.

Markham, Beryl. *West with the Night*. San Francisco: North Point Press 1983

Markham's story of her own life as an aviator who lived in and wrote about Africa.

Martin, Del and Phyllis Lyon. *Lesbian Woman*. Toronto, New York: Bantam Books 1983

A revised and updated edition of one of the most important contemporary books about lesbianism.

Martin, Judith. *Miss Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior*. New York: Warner Books 1983

An etiquette book for anyone who hates etiquette books: original, irreverent, and a delight to read.

Richardson, Joanna. *Colette*. London: Methuen 1983

The definitive biography of the remarkable French writer.

Robinson, Janice S. *H.D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1982

The first biography of the great imagist poet, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886-1961). She was once the fiancé of Ezra Pound, but spent most of her life with the British writer, Bryher (Winnifred Ellerman).

Slung, Michelle, ed. *Crime on Her Mind*. New York: Random House 1983

Fifteen stories of female sleuths from the Victorian period to the 1940s.

Spalding, Frances. *Vanessa Bell*. New Haven and New York: Ticknor & Fields 1983

The first biography of the sister of Virginia Woolf, wife of Clive Bell, lover of Roger Fry and Duncan Grant; she was also a successful artist and a pivotal figure in Bloomsbury life.

Steinem, Gloria. *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*. New York, Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1983

A collection of Steinem's personal and political journalism, with commentaries.

Sternburg, Janet, ed. *The Writer on Her Work*. New York: Norton 1981

A wonderful collection of essays on being a writer and a woman by Tyler, Didion, Gordon, Milford, Moore, Murray, M. Walker, Griffin, A. Walker, Bengis, Bambara, Hong Kingston, Burroway, Rukeyser and Godwin.

Story, G.M., W.J. Kirwin, and J.D.A. Widdowson, editors. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1983

For word freaks, this dictionary is a must. Know what a "brail" is? "to frounge"? a "scrob"? "screwing room"? (not what you might think!)

Taylor, Barbara. *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Virago Press 1983

An account of feminist ideals and practices among the Owenites, a 19th-century utopian socialist movement.

Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose by Alice Walker*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich 1983

Walker's new collection of essays, available only in hard cover.

Woodcock, George, editor. *A Place to Stand On: Essays by and about Margaret Laurence*. Edmonton: NeWest 1983

KIDLIT

Day, Shirley. *Ruthie's Big Tree*. Toronto: Annick Press 1982
Another adventure with a spunky little girl (ages 4-7).

Hewitt, Marsha and Claire Mackay. *One Proud Summer*. Toronto: The Women's Press

The 1946 Montreal Cotton strike as seen through the eyes of one of the workers—13-year-old Lucie. A fine, moving fictionalized account of a black period in Canadian labour history (good readers, 12 and up).

Munsch, Robert. *David's Father*. Toronto: Annick Press 1983

A little girl learns a lesson about kindness and tolerance (ages 4-7).

Jonathan Cleaned Up, then He Heard a Sound.

A young boy takes on the bureaucracy and wins (ages 4-9).

The Paper Bag Princess. Toronto: Annick Press 1981

This anti-romantic and hilarious little story is a great antidote to the plethora of stories about wimpy little girls (ages 3-8).

Norton, Mary. *The Borrowers*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich 1952

The first of a series of 5 books published in the 1950s in England about the miniature world of the Borrowers, who live in quiet, out-of-the-way country houses. This book stars Pod and Homily Clock and their independent and adventurous daughter, Henrietty, and is a wonderful fantasy for kids and grown-ups alike.

Taylor, Barbara. *The Man Who Stole Dreams*. Toronto: The Women's Press 1983

A new delight from the author of *I Climb Mountains* (ages 7-10).

Holiday Greetings...

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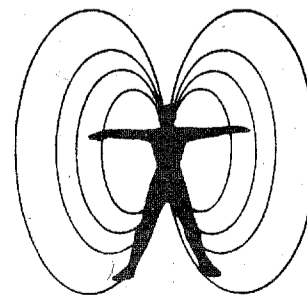
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FACETS, from page 9

place-setting in Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*. What seemed shocking to her audience was the way that Delaney drew from historical sources depicting the popular heretical movement undermining Catholicism, the European revolts of peasants and labourers against feudal oppression, and the French insurrection of 1413 by the bourgeoisie for fiscal reform, to prove how Pisan was alienated from the popular fronts and a staunch supporter of an already obsolete monarchy. Her sympathy lay with the nobility and this, Delaney would have us believe, disqualifies Pisan as a foremother who could possibly mean anything to our current revolution. One might concur with Delaney's objections to Pisan's argument against the subversive *Roman de la Rose* in which her concern was aimed more at the text's obscenity (read homosexuality and extramarital sex) than its misogynistic content—Pisan's solution was to burn the book, an extreme form of censorship even in her day. Said Delaney, "Had she lived in the twentieth century, Christine de Pisan's prudery would have wanted James Joyce and Henry Miller censored." Delaney's other objection was that Pisan's *City of Ladies* (that just appeared in an English translation last year) fails as a feminist viewpoint of young women's education because it counsels only a limited curriculum—no study of Latin, no scholarly texts, and no arithmetic such as Pisan herself had been taught by private tutors. Omitted from her discussion were the reasons for Pisan's conservatism and preaching of women's submission—Sylvia Bowebank, in the open discussion that ended the conference, felt that Pisan had indeed struggled against an oppressive background, having been widowed when she was 25, with three children and a mother to support, and that her despondency brought her to the conclusion that it is better to be a man.

Jean Kennard felt that no one should be discouraged from working on Pisan, but most disturbing for Carol Heilbrun was Delaney's own disavowal of feminism, since, as a Marxist, class rather than gender oppression is the bottom line for Delaney. This was the divisive issue, that women scholars should still need to internalize their male colleagues' ideas and become tools of masculine ideology. "French feminist critics," said Heilbrun, "taught us to deconstruct these ideologies

and not pay lip service to them anymore, for they defy our psychic strength." For her, taking the name 'feminist' for oneself involves a recognition of the forgotten, 'too radical' or 'crazy' women who made one's own relative liberation possible, an identification with other contemporary women in their liberation work, and the imparting of strength to our sisters which they would be deprived of otherwise. She felt that Christine de Pisan's power had been underestimated. However, Delaney's contention, given the way most feminist writers have been marginalized, suppressed, ignored or forgotten in time, is still a haunting one—that Pisan was much translated after her death and made internationally famous for centuries because she had been a supporter of the status quo.

It is interesting to note that all this lively discussion is now causing male critics to jump on the feminist bandwagon. Feminist literary criticism has recently attracted the attention of Jonathan Culler and Wayne C. Booth, whereas as recently as 1979 two books were published assessing the state of contemporary literary criticism and ignoring feminist criticism—Booth's *Critical Understanding* and Gerald Graff's *Literature Against Itself*, both from University of Chicago Press (which also publishes the feminist journal *Signs*). One male colleague, among several who were asked to introduce the visiting speakers, took the opportunity to berate the organizers for not having invited men to give papers in this area (are there any male critics ready to discuss feminist aesthetics, one wonders?). In contrast, I think Joan Coldwell and her colleagues in the English Department at McMaster deserve a huge bouquet of gratitude for the way in which they tried to compensate for centuries of women's exclusion from university colloquia.

By way of an announcement, one conference participant asked for contributions of facts, dates, and attributions in women's literary history for a Feminist Companion to Literature which she and her colleagues are working on. The companion is to have 2,500 entries from the fourteenth century to the present and information can be sent to one of the contributing editors: Pat Clements, English Department, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta.

Sylvia Brown is a freelance writer living in Toronto.

Broadside CLASSIFIEDS

WOMEN'S WINTER CAMP at Tapingo near Parry Sound. Friday, January 20 to Sunday, January 22nd. \$55. Register by January 16. Send cheques to: S. Power, 52 Admiral Rd., Toronto, M5R 2L5. For more information, call Susan: (416) 921-4755 (after January 1).

ROOM AVAILABLE January 1. Would you want to live in a semi-veg, non-smoking house with 2 dogs, a 3 year old child, and three socialist feminists (2 women, 1 man)? Shaw and Harbord. Call (416) 532-8584.

THE WOMEN'S PRESS loudly announces the formation of the Lesbian Manuscript Group. We are looking for proposals, translations & submissions by lesbians with emphasis on lesbian content. Send to: Lesbian Manuscript Group, The Women's Press, 16 Baldwin St., Toronto, M5T 1L2.

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WOMYNLY WAY seeks friendly, hospitable women to house performers and guests of WW. For more information, call M'Alice, (416) 365-0486 or 925-6568.

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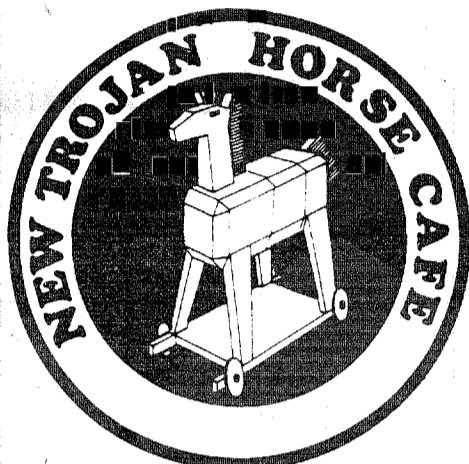
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Week of December 1

● **Thursday, December 1:** Workshop on the Community use of song, with Arlene Mantel, singer/songwriter. Part of A Space Community Arts Group series. 7 pm. A Space, 204 Spadina Ave. \$3. Info: 364-3227.

● **Friday, December 2:** Fran and Sharon perform women's music "with a message." 9 pm. New Trojan Horse Café, 179 Danforth Ave. (at Broadview). Info: 461-8367.

● **Saturday, December 3:** Santa Claus Parade against the cruise. Celebrate the true spirit of Christmas. 12 noon, Liberal Party Headquarters. Info: call ACT, 461-7003.



● **Saturday, December 3:** Marie-Lynn Hammond of "Stringband" performing at the New Trojan Horse Café, 179 Danforth Ave. (at Broadview). 9 pm. Info: 461-8367.

● **Saturday, December 3:** Christmas Sale. Gifts, clothes, food, films, raffle. Women's Action for Peace. Free childcare. 10 am to 4 pm. Bathurst St. United Church, 730 Bathurst St. (near Bloor). Info: Lisa, 360-3807.



● **Saturday, December 3:** Workshop on the community use of theatre with Robin Endres and the Pelican Players. A Space Community Arts Group series. 1 pm. A Space, 204 Spadina Ave. \$3. Info: 364-3227.

Week of December 4

● **Sunday, December 4:** WOODS Doggie Romp, for dogs and owners. Meet at Grenadier Restaurant, High Park. 11 am. Info: Jane, 532-5035 (evenings).

● **Sunday, December 4:** Open Stage at the New Trojan Horse Café. 9 pm. \$1. 179 Danforth Ave. (at Broadview). Info: 366-5396.

● **Sunday, December 4:** Lesbian Mothers' Potluck Brunch. 1 to 4 pm. Info: 465-6822.

● **Monday, December 5:** The Women's Group, a support group for lesbians. 8 pm. 519 Church Street. Info: Raechel, 926-0527.

OUTSIDE BROADSIDE

TORONTO WOMEN'S EVENTS CALENDAR

DECEMBER 1983 / JANUARY 1984

● **Monday, December 5:** Picket in support of Drs. Morgentaler, Smolling and Scott, charged with conspiracy to procure an illegal abortion. Organized by OCAC. In front of courthouse, 361 University Ave. Noon. Every Monday during course of trial. Info: 532-8193.

● **Monday, December 5:** Toronto Women's Bookstore Benefit Reading: Margaret Laurence, Joyce Marshall, Miriam Waddington, Helen Weinzweig, Adele Wiseman, Rachel Wyatt. 8 pm. Trinity United Church, 427 Bloor St. West. \$7.50. Info: 922-8744.

● **Tuesday, December 6:** Access to Health Care: A Nursing Alternative. Centrestage Forum, St. Lawrence Centre, 27 Front St. East. 8 pm. Info: 362-7041.

● **Tuesday, December 6:** Lesbian Phone Line, open tonight for calls from women. 7:30 to 10:30 pm. 960-3249.

● **Tuesday, December 6:** Toronto Addicted Women's Self-Help Network (TAWSHN) meets at Central Neighbourhood House, 349 Ontario St. 7 pm. Info: 961-7319.

● **Wednesday, December 7:** March 8 Coalition meeting for International Women's Day 1984. All women welcome. 7:30 pm. Metro Library, 789 Yonge St. (just north of Bloor). Info: Mariana, 532-8989.

● **Wednesday, December 7:** Lesbian Phone line general meeting. Interested women, prospective volunteers welcome. 7 pm. 348 College St., 3rd floor. Info: 960-3249.

● **Wednesday, December 7:** Toronto Independent Dance Enterprises (TIDE) opens 5th season with work by Sallie Lyons. Toronto Dance Theatre, 80 Winchester St. Info: 596-8384. To Saturday, December 10.

● **Wednesday, December 7:** Exhibit of Toronto feminist artist Jean Eng, at Gallery Nine Forty. 8 pm. 940 Queen Street East. Info: Phyllis Waugh, 466-8840. To Wednesday, December 21.

● **Friday, December 9:** Vigil for peace in Central America. Organized by IWDC. 5:30 to 7:30 pm. US Consulate, University Ave., just south of Dundas. Info: 961-8638.

● **Friday, December 9:** Public meeting with Susan Nghidinwa of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) central women's committee. 7:30 pm. Auditorium, Harbord Collegiate Institute, 286 Harbord St. (west of Bathurst). Info: David Duff, 967-5562.

● **Friday, December 9:** GLAUT Christmas Party. End-of-term party for Gays and Lesbians at U of T. All welcome. Info: 923-GAYS.

● **Saturday, December 10:** WOODS Dungeons and Dragons. Interested Dungeon Masters and novices welcome. Bring pizza money and pillows. 4:30 pm. Info: 463-0924 (evenings).

● **Saturday, December 10:** Pyjama Party: lesbian and gay dance, organized by the Gay Community Dance Committee. Two dance floors. Disco, rock, new wave, women's music. 9 pm to 5 am. The Concert Hall, 888 Yonge Street. \$8.

Week of December 11

● **Sunday, December 11:** Beverly Glenn-Copeland in Concert, a Womynly Way production. 8 pm. The Premiere Dance Theatre, 207 Queen's Quay West. \$8.50. Info: 925-6568.

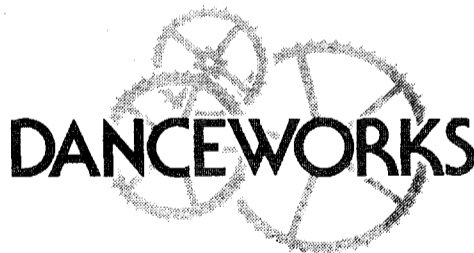
● **Sunday, December 11:** Pro-Choice Defence Fund Benefit with the Clichettes, Sheila Gostick, Lillian Allen, Danny Grossman dancers, and videos of the Parachute Club, the Hummer Sisters and Carol Pope. 8 pm. Convocation Hall, U of T. \$8. Info: 532-8193. Childcare available (call 591-1434).

● **Monday, December 12:** The Women's Group, a support group for lesbians. 8 pm. 519 Church Street. Info: Raechel, 926-0527.

● **Tuesday, December 13:** Lesbian Phone Line open tonight for calls from women. 7:30 to 10:30 pm. 960-3249.

● **Tuesday, December 13:** Toronto Addicted Women's Self-Help Network (TAWSHN) meets at Central Neighbourhood House, 349 Ontario St. 7 pm. Info: 961-7319.

● **Wednesday, December 14:** International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) meeting. Time and location TBA. Info: Amy, 977-6854.



● **Wednesday, December 14:** Danceworks Choreographic Workshop, with new works by Louise Azzarello, Chantal Bourgeois, Sarah Dickie, Peggy McCann and Patricia Wynter. 8 pm. Joseph Workman Auditorium, 1001 Queen St. West. \$3. Info: 533-1487.

● **Thursday, December 15:** "Home Feelings" by Jennifer Hodge, about Toronto's Jane-Finch Corridor. Screening at A Space, 204 Spadina Ave. 8 pm. Free. Info: 364-3227.

● **Friday, December 16:** WOODS Seasons Greeting Pot Luck. Bring food and musical instruments. 7:30 pm. For location and info: Jane, 532-5035 (evenings).

● **Friday, December 16:** Women's Independent Thoughtz (WITZ). A seminar/discussion group for the exchange of ideas and creative endeavours in art, literature, philosophy and political thought. 7 pm. Info: 766-9496 or 536-3162.

● **Saturday, December 17:** "Wommon's Solstice" healing gathering in the wiccan tradition. Bring food to share. \$2 donation. 7:30 pm. 33 Price St. (Summerhill subway). Info: Janice Canning, 595-1298, or leave message at 626-5465.

Week of December 18

● **Monday, December 19:** The Women's Group, a support group for lesbians. 8 pm. 519 Church Street. Info: Raechel, 926-0527.



● **Tuesday, December 20:** Toronto Addicted Women's Self-Help Network (TAWSHN) meets at Central Neighbourhood House, 349 Ontario St. 7 pm. Info: 961-7319.

● **Tuesday, December 20:** Lesbian Phone Line open tonight for calls from women. 7:30 to 10:30 pm. 960-3249.

January

● **Wednesday, January 4:** Lesbian Phone Line general meeting. Interested women and prospective volunteers welcome. 7 pm. 348 College St., 3rd floor. Info: 960-3249.

● **Monday, January 9:** Opportunities for Advancement course in self-confidence and self-esteem, for sole-support mothers on government assistance. 9 locations in Metro, transportation and childcare provided. Info: 245-4241.

● **Friday, January 13:** Fumerist Kate Clinton. All new material. 8 pm. Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, 427 Bloor St. West. Tickets: \$7.50 advance, \$8.50 door. Info: 925-6568.

● **Friday, January 13:** Tribunal on Human Rights in El Salvador, sponsored by COSPES. At U of T. For more information, call 534-1707.

● **Saturday, January 14:** Women and humour workshop given by Kate Clinton. 1:30 PM. Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, 427 Bloor St. West. Info: 925-5568.

● **Saturday, January 28:** Used Book Sale, benefit for Toronto Women's Bookstore. 10 am to 3 pm. The Gym, Trinity United Church, 427 Bloor St. West. For information call Betsy, 483-7471.

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