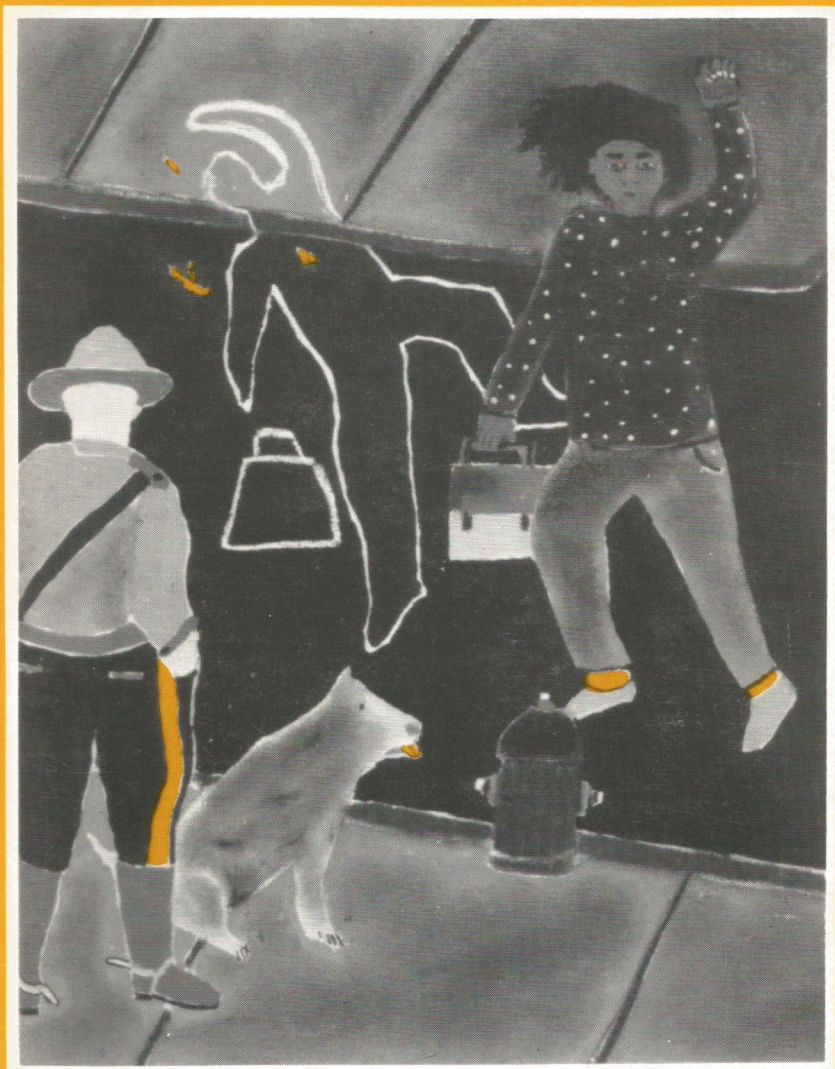


A FEMINIST QUARTERLY

FIREWEED

FALL 1982



A FEMINIST QUARTERLY
FIREWEED

Fear & Violence

Issue 14



fire-weed *n* : a hardy perennial so called because it is the first growth to reappear in fire-scarred areas; a troublesome weed which spreads like wild-fire invading clearings, bomb-sites, waste land and other disturbed areas.

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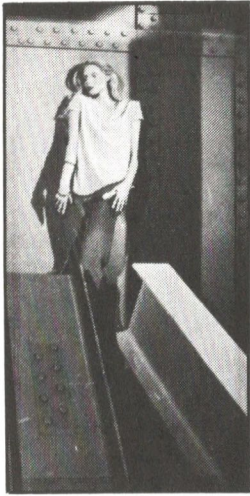
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EDITORIAL

In a recent issue of *This Magazine*, Margaret Atwood writes that when she asked a male friend why men felt threatened by women, he replied that "They are afraid women will laugh at them." When she asked a group of women why women felt threatened by men, they said, "We're afraid of being killed."

Last spring, six other women and myself started meeting for dinner and wine, ostensibly to discuss our work. One night someone told the story of how she had been attacked and raped. And every other woman in the group followed with her own story beginning, "Well, the time I was attacked, he..." or "The second time it happened, I handled it better than the first..."

Wife assault, rape, murder, child-molesting, pornography and discrimination are issues that make good press. In the last year almost daily our newspapers have carried stories graphically outlining the violent and sexual details of an assault, followed by a brief statement from the Solicitor General or an Attorney General or the Chief of Police. These statements usually say that they have "promised to issue firmer instructions to police to lay criminal charges against violent spouses." And every now and again, one of our MPPs shows themselves capable of great insight and social acumen, and says laudably, that "hitting one's wife is the same as hitting a stranger and it is as serious a crime and it is a criminal act." (*Globe and Mail*, Oct. 16/82) At the same time — our MP's in Ottawa rather inexplicably seem to find something humorous about reports on battered wives.

On a recent trip to Washington, I had two articles in my briefcase — Shirley Endicott-Small's article on wife assault, and a report on shelters for immigrant women. I left my hotel, went to the Library of Congress to compile a bibliography on violence against women. And as the reports were researched and filed, chronicling the stories, the attacks and the horrors, it was appallingly easy to start thinking in terms of numbers, percentages, and statistics.

I returned to the hotel. Glass was broken in the hall, and in the room next to mine I could hear someone screaming, thudding, falling, hitting, angry voices. I called a security guard, who came about five minutes later, and (through my peephole I observed) when a man emerged from the room, he handed the guard a \$10.00 bill, and the guard left. The beating continued. I called the police, and about five minutes later four of them arrived and burst in the door. A woman was crying, bruised, her clothes torn. To their credit, the police separated the two of them, reassured her that she would be protected, and urged her to tell them what he had done to her. And she denied that her husband was beating her up, said she had clumsily knocked over the lamp, that there was no trouble.

Finally the police left, one saying to the other that he was tired of filing these reports, answering assault calls and finding another husband and wife having it out. "Goddamn full moon," he said.

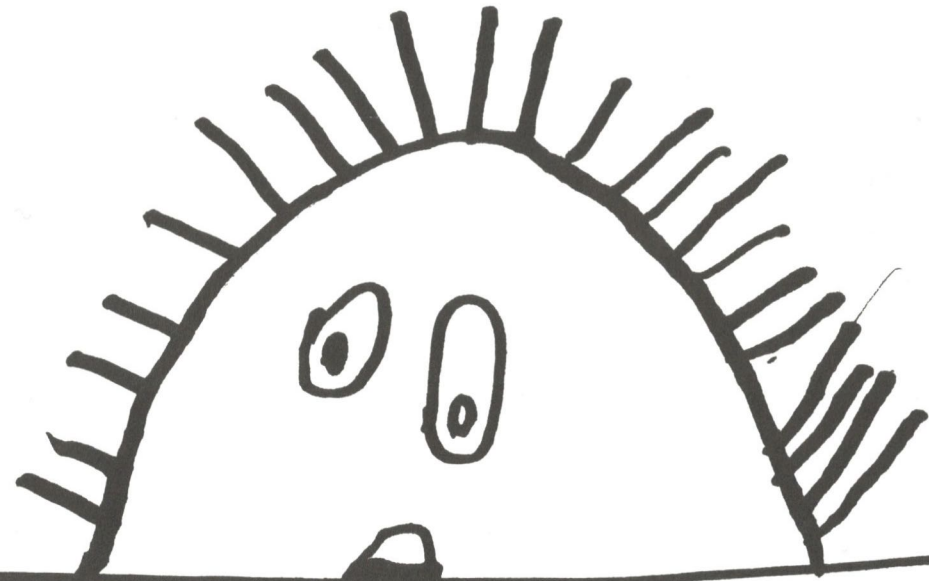
And the beating continued. On and on and on into the night.

Women and fear. Women and violence. Real women with real fears. Fears that none of us are exempt from, that all of us are to one degree or another familiar with.

In this issue of *Fireweed*, we explore some of those fears. Collectively, this process is important for many reasons. Although in our heart of hearts, we may know that we are not the only person who has nightmares, whose heartbeat increases when someone walks behind us on the street at night, who has been raped, who has been beaten, it helps to realize that it is not our own personal paranoia, inadequacy, victim-mentality or helplessness that allows these things to exist. As women we have been operating under a state of siege for a very long time.

And our daughters, even at a very young age, share this fear. We looked at drawings of nightmares done by a group of children between the ages of four and twelve. The boys' drawings were almost all of solitary heroes defending themselves against identifiable but very "unreal" adversaries — staving off the Space Invader with a laser, tying up Spiderman with a web stronger than his own, making sure that the Swiss Army knife stayed in its drawer. The girls' drawings (some of which are included in this issue) reflected very real fears — helplessness, being tied up, mothers dying, being trapped in a corner of their home.

But there are tactics, strategies, ways of fighting back. If we can define the places where the tactics ought to be used, and what (or who) they ought to be used against, they are much more likely to be effective. For ourselves and our daughters this means identifying (as Judy Posner does in her article) the images of ourselves that are projected through advertising; it means coming to terms with our own creative and regenerative strengths (as Carole Yawney and Robin Endres do), and realizing that those powers are not to be feared, restrained or controlled, but celebrated. It means that we need to analyse the way we act and react. Articles by Judi Stevenson, Yvonne Klein and Paula Cornwall look at very different kinds of strong or violent actions that women have been involved in, and to very different political ends.



Ayoola Silvera

And through the nightmares, an exciting new short story by Cynthia Flood, poetry by Lillian Allen and Erin Mouré as well as photos by Pamela Williams and Susan Eckenwalder, Issue 14 of *Fireweed* tries to illuminate just a very few of those dark and scary corners of our minds and our lives.

Fear is not weakness. Fear can be a very real and appropriate emotion in the face of certain threats. But fear does *not* have to be incapacitating. Neither is it necessarily linked to violence. We are fearful for reasons other than violence. We do not have to react with violence because we are afraid. But many times, one suspects, we are afraid because we underestimate our own strength.

Power is not so much seized as it is granted, allowed to exist. If there are powers that be that we wish were *not*, it is not because they are stronger than we are, it is not because their numbers are greater. It is because our voices have not yet reached their full strength, they are not yet as loud as they will be.

As you read this issue, reflecting not only on the stories you read, but on the story *you* have to tell and on the stories of your mothers, your sisters, your daughters, and friends, remember that together, retold and resung, these are very strong stories and songs indeed.

And if our slogans at the moment seem reactive — disarming rapists, fighting back, and taking back the night — the time is coming when that won't be enough. We are going to take back the day, too.

Carlyn Moulton

Wife Assault: An Overview of the Problem in Canada



Shirley Endicott Small

During the spring of 1978, the first Toronto support group for battered women was organized by Sally Cross, a volunteer at the Women's Counselling, Referral and Education Centre (WCREC). The author attended the weekly meetings for two months as an observer and resource person.

It is a prevalent myth that wife-beating arises as a result of an interaction gone wrong, an argument which has gotten out of hand. In this widely-believed view, the beating is simply the natural outcome of a normal disagreement, a conflict which escalates on both sides until physical fighting results. The conflict is usually given a gender neutral name — marital violence, domestic dispute, interspousal strife — which hides the fact that this type of assault is overwhelmingly violence against women.

In another "popular" view of wife assault, the victim precipitates the violence. This view is particularly potent in academic circles due to the introduction of the concept of victim-precipitated homicides by Wolfgang in 1958. The latter makes it clear, however, that this concept only applies when the victim is the first one to use physical violence. When a woman kills her husband to end years of brutal beatings, for example, that is a victim-precipitated homicide.

Wolfgang's concept has become distorted, as evidenced in the following quotation from a widely used sociology textbook:

Because of the presence of interaction between persons in a situation of violence, the victim is a crucial agent in the action that is

Illustration by Gail Geltner, Still Ain't Satisfied! Canadian Feminism Today, Women's Press, 1982.

taken. *Victims, in other words, tend to precipitate their own victimization.* (Quinney, 1970, p.250)

Certainly many women feel that they are to blame for the assaults. In one research paper this subjective feeling is taken as actual evidence of victim precipitation:

The evidence for victim precipitation is strongly supported by the fact that 54% of the women indicated that they felt some responsibility for the fights. (Coleman, 1978)

In the same paragraph the researcher reports: "Many of the women blamed themselves saying, 'I should have tried harder...I should be a better housekeeper...I did not really understand him.' "

When you probe deeper, listen more carefully, get past a woman's low sense of self-esteem, the following reality emerges: a battered woman is one confronted with a bully who is physically larger, stronger and more aggressive than she, who assaults her in a wide variety of situations, of which a heated argument is only one. Many women find that unless they are able to meet their husbands' every whim or desire even the most trivial actions on their part will trigger an attack. Furthermore, an argument which ends in wife assault is a power struggle which a man is determined to win. To dismiss it as an interaction gone wrong is to ignore the power situation.

"She has a sick need for punishment" is another myth which makes it hard for a battered woman to obtain relief from her situation. The director of one Ontario Family Services Association, in a personal communication, notes that physically abused women may be unconsciously masochistic. (He also says "sexual rejection by a wife might be considered a form of physical violence toward her husband".) Beverly Nichols (1976), an American caseworker, reports that not only do marriage counsellors fail to take "abusiveness as the focus of intervention" but also that

the position caseworkers take often supports a belief that the wife encourages, provokes or even enjoys abusive treatment. As a result, when family caseworkers hear the complaints and confidences of an abused wife, they are often inept in treating the problem of abuse.

In general, theories of wife assault which focus on psychopathologies serve to keep this problem from being tackled as a social issue. The following incident is instructive. A psychiatrist from the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry (an institution to which couples in conflict are often referred for help) told a Toronto symposium in 1977 that domestic violence occurred when the "equilibrium of traditional family roles" was disturbed:

A classic example is the aggressive domineering wife and the ineffectual, passive husband. In order to protect his threatened masculinity the husband may resort to episodic violent abuse of his wife, who in turn, accepts it out of her guilt for having usurped his mas-

culine role. Another pattern is the self-belittling wife who has little sense of personal worth; who not only accepts, but provokes abusive and demeaning attacks by the husband.

Haka-Ikse, 1977, p.185)

Another myth which permits wife-beating to be a crime committed with impunity and keeps it from being tackled as a social issue, is the "sickness" theory advanced to explain the assaulter's behaviour. More than one woman in the WCREC group told of therapists whose strategy was to explain the husband's actions as being caused by his early childhood experience and his consequent mother-hatred, immaturity and distorted ego-needs. This sickness theory is eagerly accepted by battered women because it is less threatening to their self-respect than either the victim-precipitation or masochism interpretations. As one woman reported:

It made it easier for me to live with it (the violence) because I realized it was not my fault. It made it easier for me to survive and helped me to think the beatings were just slappings.

While there may be some truth in this explanation on the psychological level, when it is emphasized within a general context of societal tolerance of wife-beating the net result is to increase the ease with which a violent husband escapes responsibility for his behaviour.

Patterns of Assault/Assaultive Husbands:

The myth is that women provoke their husbands and thus the assault. However,

- in one study, 77% of the assaulted women said that no verbal disputes preceded the physical assaults
- in another study, 40% of the assaults not only were not related to any verbal argument but what the women did was irrelevant to the assault.
- in several recent studies, it has been found that 40-60% of husbands' attacks on wives begin during the wife's first pregnancy.

The violent patterns are not related to the women's behaviour but the woman is blamed — by the husband, by the law, and often by herself. Guilt is another part of the violence done to herself.

Explaining a man's violence by his drinking problem leads to the same results. It is widely assumed that family conflicts involving assaults are caused by the use of alcohol by one or both spouses because drinking coincides with the attacks. However, Gelles (1972) argues that "individuals who wish to carry out a violent act become intoxicated *in order to carry out the violent act*."

A recent Vancouver study offers a plausible explanation for why women get beaten up so often after their husbands have consumed alcohol: the drinking takes place with "buddies," often at parties where the interaction frequently focuses around "the support and encouragement that men give each other in reaffirming their role as breadwinner and boss." (Epstein et al, 1978, p.27)

In general, the most plausible psychological explanation of wife-beating is that it is learned behaviour. A man learns to do it much as anyone learns any behaviour. Suzanne Steinmetz, who conducted the first American spouse-abuse survey with a scientifically selected random sample, believes that explaining wife-beating by some psychiatric aberration is not realistic. This behaviour is too widespread to be the work of those who are mentally ill. In most respects, assaultive husbands are just like anyone else. Their actions reflect a social tolerance of this behaviour embedded in our cultural and legal heritage.

The Rule of Thumb

Our legal heritage from England and Europe condones and abets wife assault. Writing in 1765, William Blackstone, the famous codifier of Anglo-Saxon law, described the English Rule of Thumb as a husband's right "to chastise his wife with a whip or rattan no bigger than his thumb, in order to enforce the salutary restraints of domestic discipline." (Langley and Levy, p. 49). A man could chastise his wife physically "in the same moderation that a man is allowed to correct his apprentices or children." (Dobash and Dobash, p. 11). Blackstone stressed the need to confine the violence to within "reasonable grounds." Thus, the rule of thumb was a way of regulating the husband's right to chastise his wife.

During medieval times, in England and in Europe, the community assumed it had the right to intervene in the personal relationship of a husband and wife, to protect the right of a man to be lord and master in his own home. Women who were seen as not submitting properly to their husbands were subjected to ridicule and degradation. Public chastisement of "misbehaving" wives ended only toward the end of the 19th century when the community stopped interfering. What went on behind the closed doors of the home became the husband's private business. This principle of non-interference, however, has helped wife-assault to continue. When wife-beating was legal, the community interfered to enforce the law; when wife-beating became illegal, the community did not interfere to stop a brutal husband.

Outright legal support for wife-beating was gradually withdrawn in England. Although the law which gave a husband the right to chastise his wife was repealed in 1829, another 62 years would pass before the landmark court decision of R.V. Jackson completely abolished the legal right of an English husband to restrain his wife by physical means. (Dobash and Dobash, p. 63). The Rule of Thumb, however, was still endorsed in laws regulating marriage and divorce, because it was difficult for an assaulted wife to obtain practical relief.

The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 allowed a wife to obtain a judicial separation from her husband on grounds of cruelty. However, the standard of proof was so high that this road of escape was both expensive and impractical. The courts interpreted cruelty so narrowly that the beatings had to be habitual and damaging to the wife's health before a separation could be obtained. A divorce was only available to an assaulted wife if she could prove adultery in addition to cruelty. (Dobash and Dobash, p. 63). In sum, although the legislation upholding wife-beating was abolished, the new marriage law had the effect of regulating wife-beating, of setting limits upon how far a husband could go in controlling his wife by physical force.

Canadian legislation has followed the English pattern. Cruelty only became grounds for divorce throughout the country in 1968. Before that time, following the common law view established in the Russell v. Russell case of 1897, a Canadian wife could claim alimony for cruelty but she had to prove that it was extreme, excessive and involved conduct causing danger to life, limb or health, bodily or mentally. A strong wife who could survive abuse without breaking down physically or mentally had no recourse. As one Ontario Chief Justice commented in 1920, "a husband may subject his wife, daily and even hourly, to such treatment as makes her life a veritable hell on earth and she is without remedy if she is robust enough to suffer it all without impairment of her physical health or her mentality." (Dranoff, p. 65).

Although the new Divorce Act of 1968 made cruelty grounds for divorce,

Assaulted: How many women?

- 10% of all married women (500,000 Canadians) are regularly (daily or weekly) assaulted by the men they live with.
- 50% of all married women are beaten by their husbands at least once in their marriage.
- in more concrete terms, this means that in Greater Vancouver alone 4,000-5,000 women are beaten to the point involving serious injury every year.

for a number of years the old standard of *Russell v. Russell* was upheld so that there had to be actual danger to life, limb or health. By and large this standard has now been replaced by a wider definition of cruelty, but the courts are still ruling that several minor assaults which would be infractions of the Criminal Code do not constitute cruelty. (McCaughan, p. 151).

A double standard in the definition of assault was the twentieth century Canadian version of the Rule of Thumb. From 1909 to 1965 there was a special offence of wife-beating. A two-year jail term was provided but only if the husband caused his wife "actual bodily harm," a definition of assault which was much narrower than that found in other sections of the Criminal Code. There assault is defined as "the intentional application of force to another by act or gesture." (Dranoff, p 102). This is the measuring rod used when a stranger assaults a stranger on the streets or a striker assaults a policeman on the picket line.

In 1965 this special offence of wife-beating was removed from the Criminal Code, but the double standard continues on: women who are beaten up by the man they live with find that the justice system does not offer them any real protection and that there is widespread tolerance for wife assault in Canadian society.

The justice system, as it presently operates, simply does not protect the woman. In Ontario, the new Family Law Reform Act says both spouses are equally entitled to possession of the matrimonial home unless there is an agreement providing otherwise or a court order. So, unless a woman can get a civil or criminal order restraining her husband from entering the house, she cannot keep him out. An assaulted woman is routinely told to lay charges in Family Court, and in Family Court proceedings, an assaultive husband can come back into the house. This leaves her vulnerable to retaliatory beatings.

A woman is reluctant to press charges for many reasons. During the time delay of about six weeks between laying the charge and appearing before the judge, she must live in the same house with her assailant. Furthermore, the first time a husband appears before a judge he usually is given an adjournment and frequently months can pass between the laying and the hearing of the charge. She must either continue living with him while he is enraged at her action or must go into hiding while he wanders the streets trying to get her.

When the police are called, they are reluctant to get involved. Dutton and Levens monitored calls for service coming to the Vancouver police over a two month period in 1976 (Dutton, 1977). They found that "in men-women fights where police presence was specifically requested a car was dispatched 53.8 percent of the time." Furthermore, in the majority of cases the car was sent out on a priority two call. In all, "in only about 10 percent of the cases where police service was requested in a family violence situation was a car dispatched on a priority one basis, which is not very often compared to calls for service on breaking and entering, where a car is dispatched virtually 100 percent of the time."

A United Way survey of Greater Vancouver led that agency to believe that between 4,000 and 5,000 women had undergone beatings involving serious injury in 1976. (Downey and Howell, 1976). The comparative estimates for Metropolitan Toronto would be between 10,000 and 12,250 battered women. A survey of professionals in Thunder Bay revealed close to 1,000 known cases of wife assault in a city with a population of about 119,000. (*Women in Transition*, 1978).

The best indicator of the prevalence of the problem is the rapidity with which a newly opened women's shelter is filled up, mainly with wives fleeing violent husbands. Women's Habitat was filled to capacity within a week after opening in November, 1978. In 1977, 72% of the clients of Interval House, Toronto, sought refuge because of marital violence. (*Interval House*, 1977).

Given a heritage which amounts to social permission of wife assault, the scope of these statistics should not surprise us. Given the historical and contemporary tolerance of patriarchal violence, it is not surprising that the legal order dilutes social condemnation of wife assault by defining it as a woman's private dilemma, not a social issue or a community problem.

Assault: How deadly?

- one-third of all assaulted women required medical treatment.
- in one sample of 100 assaulted women:
 - all had been bruised and hit with a fist
 - 59 had been kicked regularly
 - 44 were cut with a bottle, knife, or razor blade
 - 26 had broken bones or teeth
 - 11 were burned or scalded
 - 10 were strangled
- assaults tend to be part of a regular pattern, increasing in severity. Some end in murder.
- 20% of all homicides in Canada are husband/wife slaying. It is usually the husband who kills after a period of regular assaults.
- 60% of all female victims of murder are killed in a family context.
- in one study, all women who killed their husbands had been severely beaten by them.

The Effects of Violence on Women

A battered woman frequently cooperates with her assaulter in covering up his crime. The reasons for keeping it a secret are not hard to deduce. First of all, shame of being beaten is enormous. As the women in the WCREC discussion group put it: "Telling the truth means admitting I made a bad choice." It also means admitting "I'm not a good wife" for a battered woman usually feels she is to blame and that others will agree. As one woman told me, "Don't you think I would have gone running to the neighbours for help if I had thought they wouldn't say to me, 'Well, what did you do to provoke him?'" This message is given to a woman in many different ways, perhaps even inadvertently. Take the case of Susan. After her make-up had come off during the course of a two-hour seminar, her professor exclaimed: "Susan, what is the matter with you? First, you have your hand in a cast and now you have a black eye. Are you fighting with your husband?" The way the question was framed put the blame on Susan; the humiliation of that encounter burns bright in her memory, three years later.

Fear is a major factor in the denials and fabrications. If she tells the truth she runs the risk of a retaliatory beating. The experience of a North Carolina rural health clinic shows the extent to which battered women do not report their beatings because of the "paralyzing anxiety" the attacks produce in the victims. (Hilberman and Munson, 1977-78). Over a twelve month period half of the 120 women referred by the medical staff for psychiatric evaluation were found to be victims of repeated assaults by their husbands. Until the women were specifically asked about the presence of marital violence, the history of assault was known in only four of the sixty cases. And yet most of these sixty battered women had been on going patients of the health clinic!

It is commonly assumed that wife-beating is a woman's personal dilemma because all she has to do is leave her husband to escape the violence. There are many reasons why a wife does not leave a violent marriage. One major problem is having no money and no place to go. The large number of penniless battered wives who turn up at shelters demonstrates how many of these women are totally financially dependent on their husbands. Welfare regulations make it difficult to leave a violent marriage. At present, in Ontario, a woman must move out of her husband's house in order to qualify for welfare. Without money, the only place to go is to an emergency shelter and these are often filled up when the crisis arises. Furthermore, women who do leave often discover that landlords will not rent to a sole support mother. The inability to find suitable living quarters often prompts a battered wife to return to her husband.

Even a woman with some financial resources risks a severe drop in her standard of living if she leaves her marriage. In many cases assaultive husbands threaten to make it impossible for her to take even her own personal possessions from the home. When she leaves she often discovers that recovering cherished and needed items from her previous home is done at

great risk to her personal safety. Court orders giving her the right to these possessions are costly to enforce and assaultive husbands are not noted for their fair-mindedness or generosity. Indeed, these husbands often take the attitude that they will not let their wives lead a peaceful life. They use the legal system to harass her in hopes she will give up and return. And many times she does.

In addition to the financial and housing difficulties involved in leaving, a battered woman holds numerous beliefs which serve to keep her in a marriage. Hilberman and Munson (1977-78) have listed these; all except the first one reflect the widely held social beliefs discussed above:

1. the violence is perceived as a norm; this is most likely when the victim comes from a violent family of origin
2. the violence is rationalized; he is not responsible because he is sick, mentally ill, alcoholic, unemployed or under stress
3. the violence is justified; she deserves it because she is bad, provocative, or challenging
4. the violence is controllable; if only she is good, quiet, and compliant, he will not abuse her

Husbands Assaulting Wives: No Protection/No Crime.

- wives are beaten an average of 35 times before they call the police.
- when the police are called, they respond in little over half the cases, and seldom with haste.
- in one study, the police laid charges against the assaultive husband in 2% of the cases where the woman required medical attention. In another 60%, they advised the woman to lay charges.
- if a woman lays charges, she faces a complex legal procedure in which she has the choice of a) staying in the house with her husband for the weeks or months it takes to get a hearing, or b) finding shelter and income for herself and family, in spite of the few shelter spaces available, and her ineligibility for welfare.
- all of these "facts" prevent charges of wife assault: even when charges are laid judicial attitudes and procedures also work against women. For every 10,000 incidents of violence against women in the home, there are 2 convictions.

In addition, battered women commonly believe they cannot survive without their husband. They often think leaving an assaultive husband is desertion; they do not know they are still entitled to financial support and custody of their children. They stay "for the sake of their children." They keep hoping he will change, that it will not happen again especially if they give him enough love and nurturing.

Conclusion

The way wife assault is conceptualized largely determines the social response to this problem. At present in Canada the issue is typically defined as a woman's personal dilemma instead of as a social problem, as interaction gone wrong instead of patriarchal violence. Instead of freedom from assault being a woman's basic right, it becomes something she has to earn by being more submissive or by entering into counselling, which are usually futile strategies. More appropriate conceptions and solutions might arise if the starting point was the reality as experienced by battered women themselves.

If a doctor were to treat a patient without taking a case history but merely to prescribe treatment on the basis of observed symptoms, this would be considered poor medical practice. In the area of marital violence, however, this is what is happening in many cases. The perspective of the victim is omitted; it seems to be considered irrelevant or too biased to be worth considering. The victim, in turn, has internalized this evaluation of her experience and typically is silent about the violence or fabricates the case of her injuries. The silence and denial serve to reinforce the prevailing mythology that she has a need for punishment or has provoked the attacks.

What can I do for an Assaulted friend?

- Reassure her that she does not cause the beatings. A wife beater learned to use violence as a way of expressing anger or frustration long before he met her.
- Physical safety is the first priority. Beatings usually get worse as time goes on.
- Tell her that she is not alone in her predicament. (see above)
- Help her to make an emergency plan in advance. Contact a shelter for assaulted wives in your city for advice on how to do this.
- Your friend needs your moral support and your help to find a life free of assault. But if she is not ready at this point to make major changes in her life, do not take away your friendship. Your support and advice may be what will make it possible for her to act at a later date.

compiled by Janet Patterson

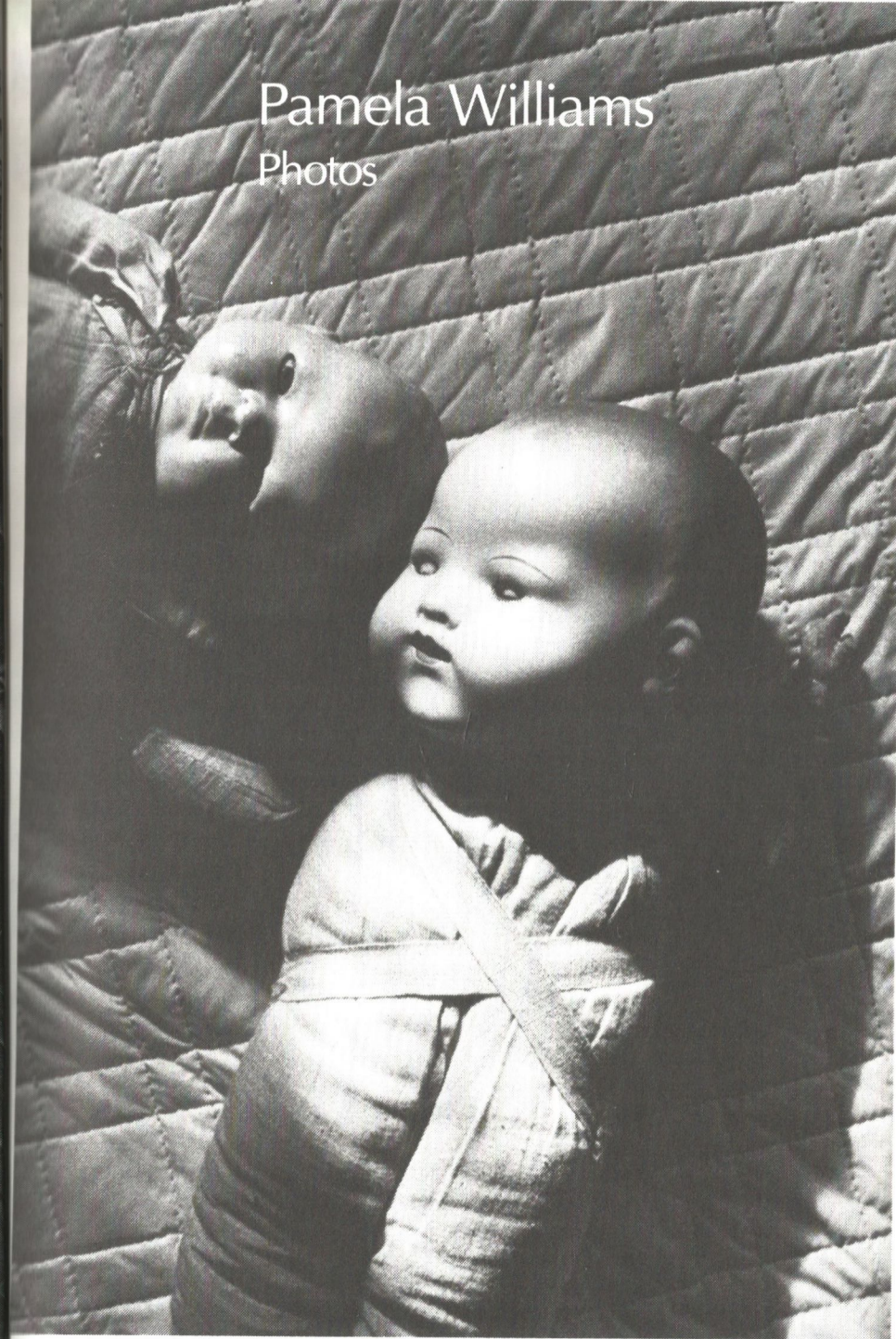
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Pamela Williams
Photos



Two Poems by **Lillian Allen**

I Fight Back

ITT ALCAN KAISER
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce
These are privileged names in my Country
But I AM ILLEGAL HERE

My Children Scream
My Grandmother is dying

I came to Canada
and Found the Doors
Of Opportunities Well Guarded

I Scrub Floors
Serve Backra's Meals on Time
Spend two days working in one
And Twelve Days in a Week

Here I Am In Canada
Bringing Up Someone Else's Child
While someone Else and Me in Absentee
Bring Up My Own

AND I FIGHT BACK

And Constantly they ask
"Oh Beautiful Tropical Beach
With Coconut Tree and Rum
Why did you Leave There
Why on Earth did you Come?"

AND I SAY:

For the Same Reasons
Your Mothers Came

I FIGHT BACK

They label me
Immigrant, Law-breaker, Illegal
Ah no, Not Mother, Not Worker, Not Fighter

I FIGHT BACK

Like my Sisters Before Me

I FIGHT BACK

I FIGHT BACK

Marriage

When mi sidown
Pon mi bombo claat
ina calico dress
under the gwango tree
a suck coarse salt
fi the night fi dun
wen twist face joan
and mi man mus come
down those concrete steps
from her tatch-roof house
han in han an' smile
pon them face

An a bus'im 'ead
wid a cistern brick
blood full mi yeye
a tear 'er shut
rip 'im pride
the little heng pon nail

The two rocky miles 'ome
we drop some fists
Blood soaked licks
Kasha sticks

But lateron
a sooth 'im pain
bathe the blood down
the cistern drain
ten common-law-years
ina wi tenament yard

An sure as 'ell
wi anger rest
'im eyes regret
plea 'an confess
then glide mi

to gramma dead-lef bed
an' marry mi
under the chinnelle spread
again an' again
'till day does done
evening come

© Lillian Allen, *Rhythm and Hard Times*, 1982.

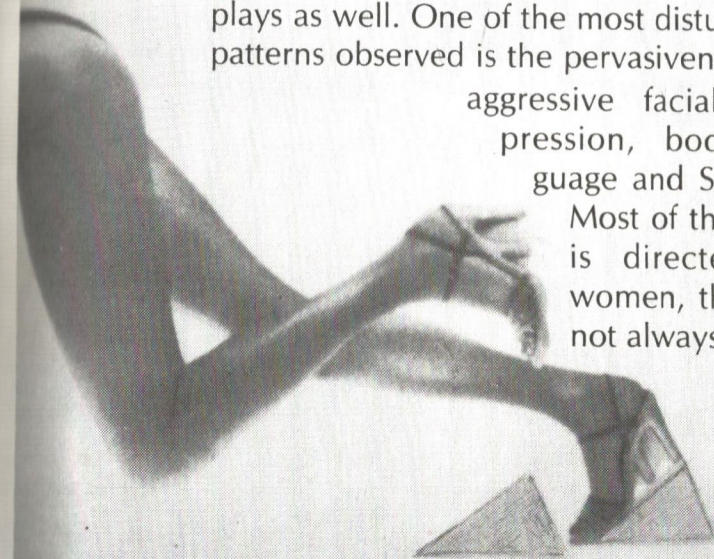
From Sex Role Stereotyping to Sado Masochism

Judy Posner

The following pictures illustrate an emerging trend in advertising, namely, the use of sado-masochistic imagery. I have been collecting and analysing ads from popular magazines with respect to gender and sexuality for over a decade; more recently I have begun to look at store window displays as well. One of the most disturbing patterns observed is the pervasiveness of

aggressive facial expression, body language and S/M props.

Most of the aggression is directed towards women, though this is not always the case.



High heels don't have to hurt"-Joe Famolare

Although the majority of advertising does not explicitly exploit S/M themes, it is important to acknowledge the continuum from which such imagery emerges, i.e. the relationship of S/M imagery to less extreme forms of dominance and submission characteristic of traditional sex role stereotyping.

So, we begin with the notion of gender display and the infantilization of the female. Gender display refers to the socially prescribed verbal and non-verbal cueing of gender, i.e. women move their heads back and forth when they speak, and they move their pelvis and buttocks differently than men when they walk. Some of these differences may be biologically based, but others are purely cultural. For example, the male is generally larger than the female, but our culture chooses to accentuate this discrepancy through socially prescribed body language. In real life and in advertising, men present themselves more frontally, straight and assertive, whereas women are more frequently depicted sideways, tilted, convoluted with cocked head and bent pelvis. These features serve to exaggerate her passivity and infantilized quality.

Figure 1 depicts a classic example of the weak woman leaning on the more powerful man, "the baron." Figure 2 depicts a macho male while a languishing female hangs on to him like a baby monkey. Woman's passivity, signalled by her bent posture and cocked head, is apparent even in ads which attempt to exploit post-liberated ideology (see Figure 3 — the Virginia Slims campaign from a few years back).

Figure 4 is an amazing example of gestural gender display which deteriorates into soft-core porn. Figures 5 and 6 also reflect the physical dominance of men over women. In Figure 5 the female, depicted by the smaller shoe, is

Figure 1

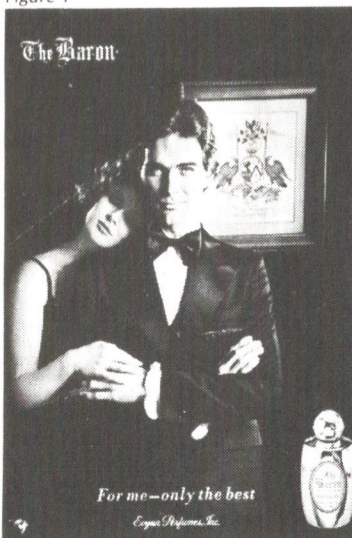


Figure 2



tilted once again, leaning against the stronger male. In Figure 6 the plot thickens. Here the feet are used to convey seduction and romance. One shoe off suggests disrobement. Even the way the woman rubs her ankle with the disrobed foot suggests a sensual tactility, as contrasted with the male who stands motionless. The dropped flowers are also suggestive; she has succumbed sexually.

The plot thickens still further as we progress to Figure 7 in which the woman is involved in a triad. She is partially clad, thus reflecting the double standard of nudity and woman's sexual passivity. Yet there is a strange contradiction here. She appears to

Figure 4

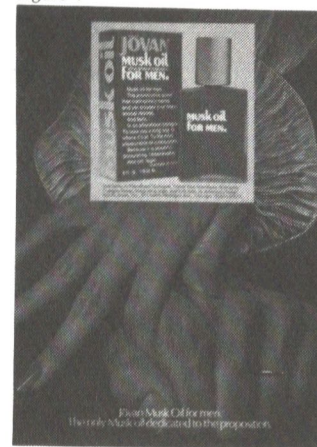


Figure 6

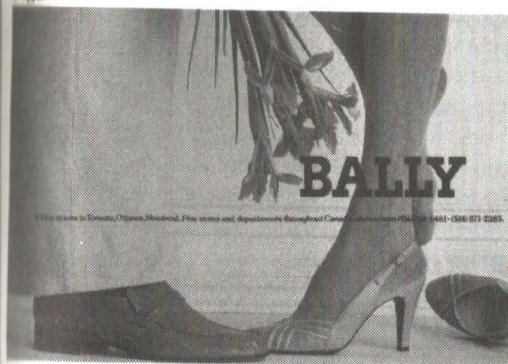


Figure 3



Figure 5

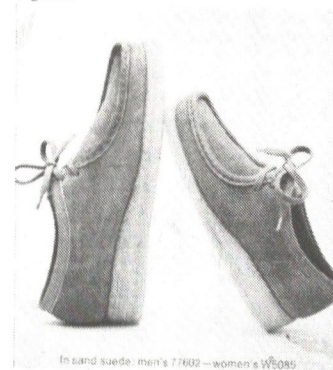


Figure 7



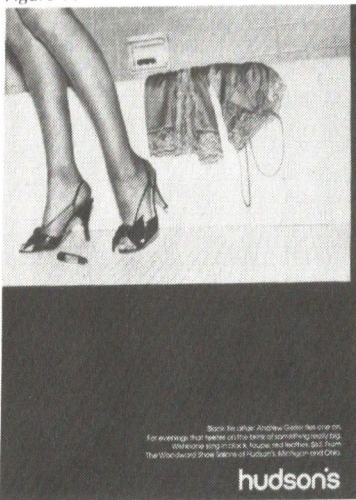
Figure 8



jean waistband, taking off a woman's boot (from a rather interesting position I might add). Note too that she is on the floor, reflecting her submissiveness.

Figure 9 exploits a simple but explicit bondage theme. Figure 10 is somewhat sinister, as well as suggestive. The notion of women wearing shoes and no clothes is considered kinky in our culture; evolving from burlesque. The suggestion of nudity is high-

Figure 10



be the sexual aggressor. She seduces one male with her hand and another surreptitiously with her foot. The copy informs us that she is "playing" with both of them. The theme of woman as wench is dominant here. Her leg posturing, simulating the high heel position which produces high tonus in the calf muscle, is suggestive. (Ethnologists tell us that one sexual courting cue of the female is the raised calf tonus which is frequently accompanied by swayback, chest protrusion and pelvis tilt).

Moving on to more explicit, recent developments Figure 8 depicts the macho male, complete with hairy virile chest and open

Figure 9



tened by lace lingerie draped casually over the bath. The model poses on raised toes heightening the high heel raised calf muscle. The dropped lipstick is suggestive. Has she been caught by surprise? The ad distinctly echoes the movie *Psycho* and others which exploit women's vulnerability, for example, their fear of being attacked in the shower.

Violence against women in shoe ads is exemplified by Figures 11 and 12, one of which is explicit, the other more suggestive. In Figure 11, (see title illustration), she is barely clothed, on the ground, legs flailing.

Figure 12

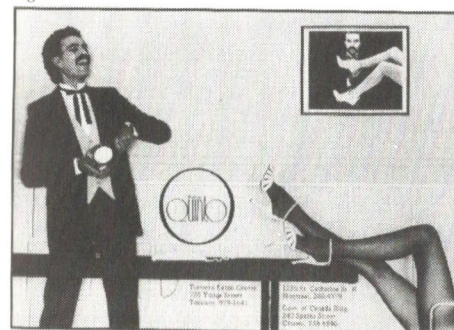
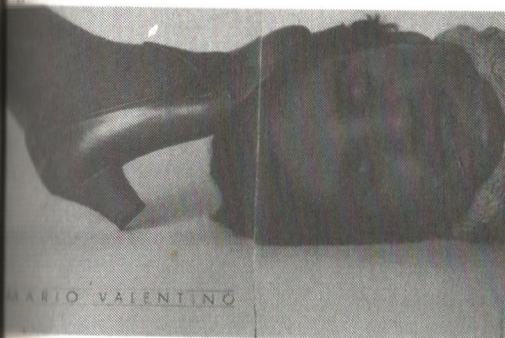


Figure 14



The slogan *Highheels don't have to hurt* acknowledges the fact that women subject themselves to pain in order to perform their role — an obvious allusion to S/M. Figure 12 is slightly more vague. The woman is on the floor and the man is above her. He holds a bottle of wine, but symbolically it might be a gun or weapon. She is faceless; he laughs jeeringly (in the picture on the wall he looks almost evil).

Figures 13 and 14 seem somewhat innocuous. For example, in the first figure he is still disrobing her, i.e., undoing her ankle strap, and in the second figure he enjoys his victimization too much to take it seriously. She even crosses her legs in traditional female fashion emphasizing her vulnerability. As alluded to earlier, women are not always depicted as the victims of aggression. Post-liberated ideology lets us dish it out as well.

Figure 15 looks more like the real thing. She is still undressed on the floor;

Figure 13

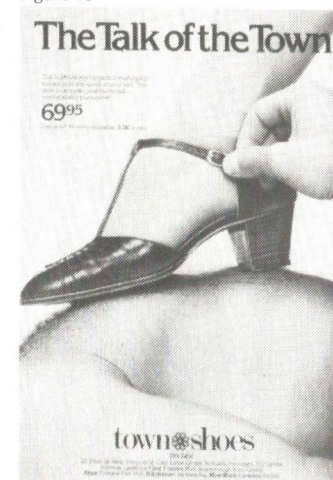


Figure 15

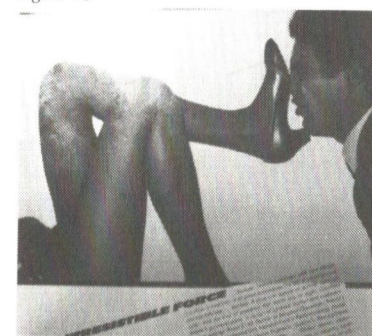


Figure 16

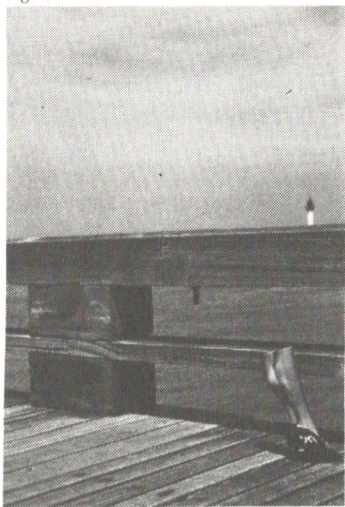


Figure 18

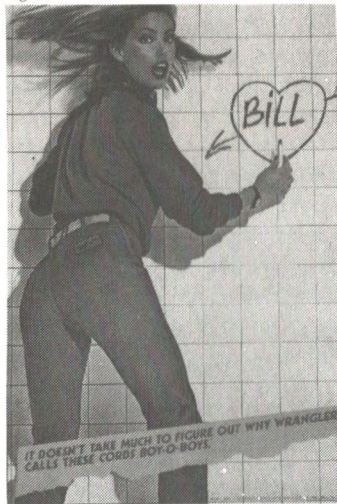
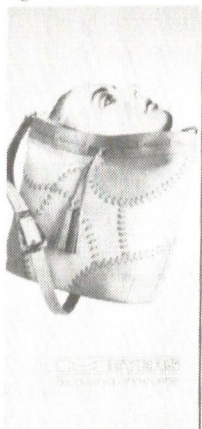


Figure 17



he is clothed. In short, there are some disclaimers here that help to negate or soften woman's aggression, as though it is too much for us.

Finally, we have two examples of female dismemberment (Figure 16 and 17). While in many ways such plates seem to be innocuous examples of surrealism, in the tradition of artists like Dali and Magritte, it is important to recognize that such images involve women almost exclusively, suggesting that it may have something to do with general societal attitudes toward the "evil sex."

In looking at other products which reflect a trend towards increasingly explicit sexuality and occasional hints of sado masochism, we turn next to jeans. Obviously one of the social functions of jeans, as reflected in the now classic GWG commercial, is to accentuate the buttocks (with a hint of genital emphasis).

Figure 18 depicts the infantilized female. She exhibits traditional passive infantile cheesecake posture, her head turned round looking over her accentuated buttocks. Her mouth is open, her hair reflects gay abandon; she writes childish love notes on the wall. Her expression suggests that she is a "naughty" girl, caught in the act of defacing bathroom walls.

Figure 19 is a more aggressive version of the same pose. However, here the facial expression is almost a grimace. Her eyes are closed, signifying sexual ecstasy. In short, her expression is a mixed one, connoting both pain and pleasure.

Figure 20, probably the most famous jean ad of all time, depicts the infamous Brooke Shields in a pose so convoluted that it looks impossible to hold. She is childlike and innocent, but her blouse is dangling as though it has been ripped off and her buttocks are presented in hyperbolic fashion!

The trend towards the use of pubescent and prepubescent models has been on the rise in recent years. Basically, it can be seen as an extension of the infantilization theme. When a high degree of infantilization is combined with sexuality, the result is extreme submissiveness that frequently borders on sadomasochism.

Figure 21 is the most offensive version of the head over buttocks cheesecake pose with wind swept hair. First of all, it uses a very young model with a seductive childlike expression. Worse still, is the *double entendre* copy which alludes rather blatantly to anal sex, gang bangs, etc. And finally, the clothes themselves are obscene in the way that they target the female's buttocks.

Figure 20

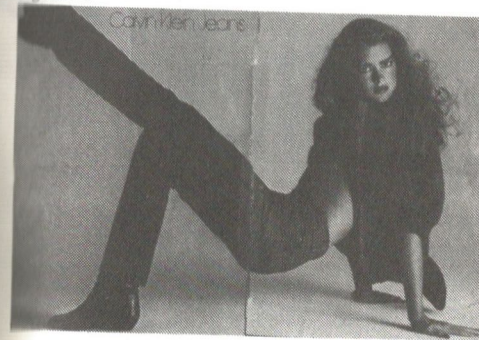


Figure 19

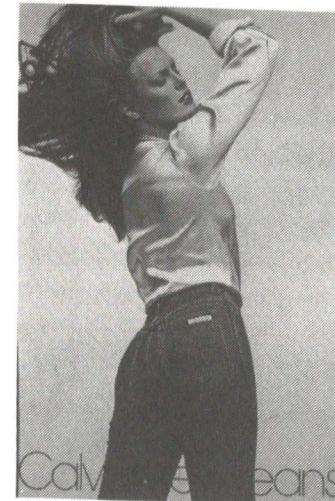


Figure 21

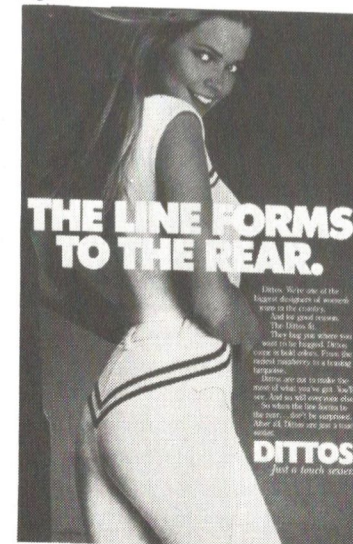


Figure 22

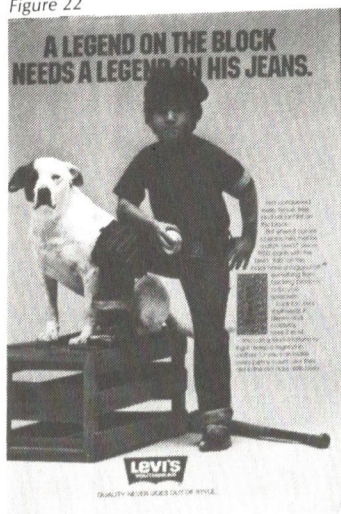


Figure 23

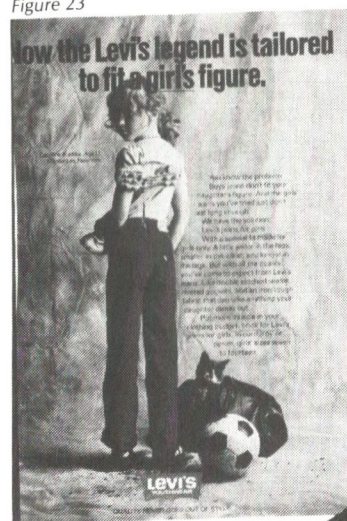


Figure 24

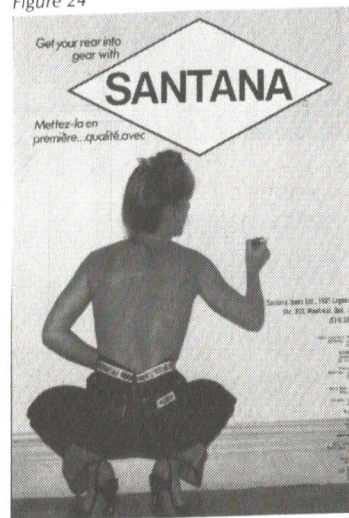


Figure 25

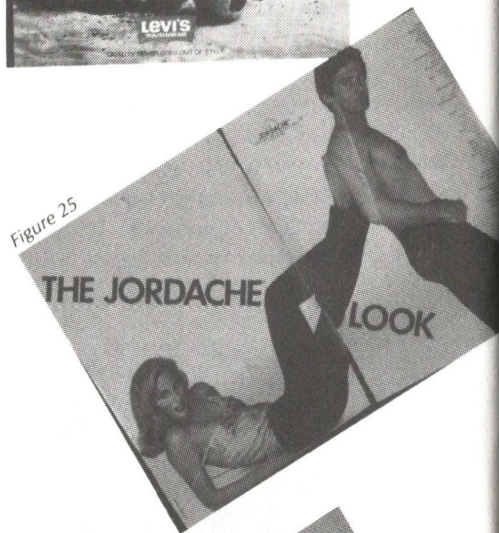


Figure 26

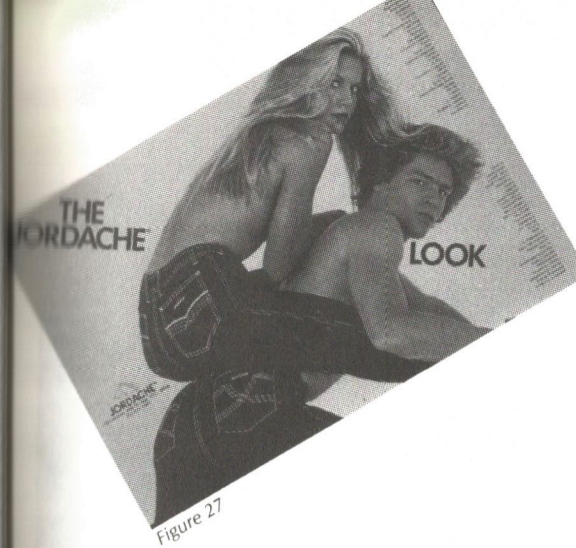
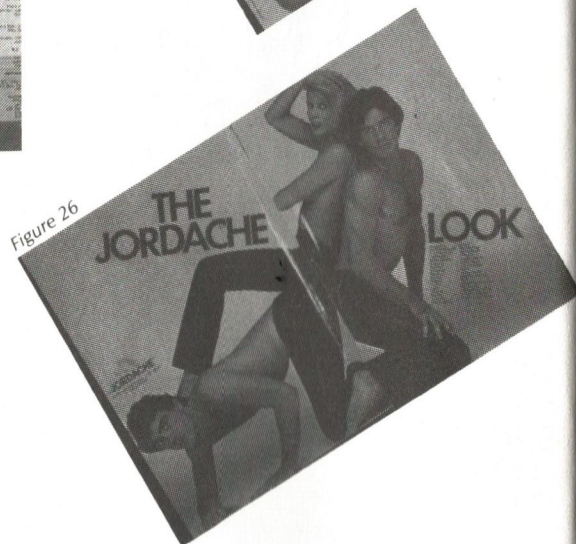


Figure 27

Figure 28

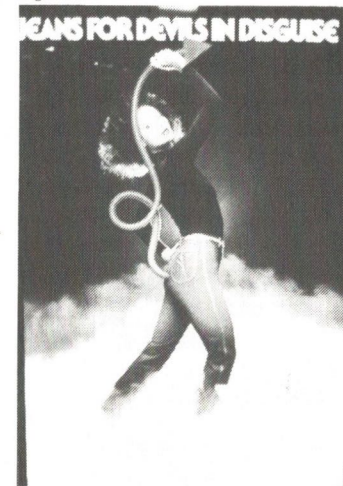
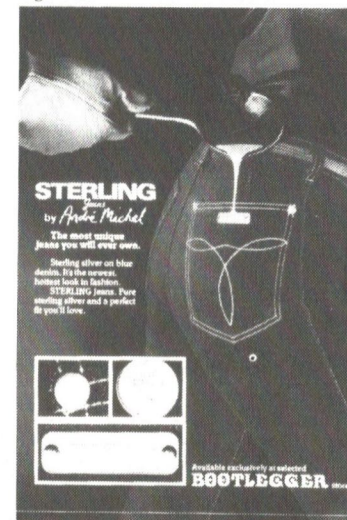


Figure 29



Figures 22 and 23 are examples of traditional macho and cheesecake gender display which feature children.

Figure 24 is more explicitly aggressive. The woman poses in a quasi-masculine manner. Her lack of blouse both eroticizes and masculinizes her. Her hair is worn up, likewise downplaying her femininity. But the high heels and natural buttocks shape is enough to reaffirm it. This ad, like many others, plays around with gender display and androgynous imagery reflecting changing sexual and social mores and the increasing aggression of women. The ads for *Jordache* (Figures 25, 26 and 27) illustrate increasingly blatant sexuality evolving into bestiality. Figure 27 is blatantly bestial as echoed in the mane-like hair of the female and the hostile facial expression of the male.

Figure 28 for *Angel Wings* (which created quite a stir a few months ago prompting the TTC to remove it from their depots) employs both traditional cheesecake imagery and newer aggressive themes. Woman as witch has graduated to woman as devil, and androgynous devil as well. Her phallic tail is neatly accompanied by an aggressive facial expression. The setting is appropriately sinister, but the dominant quality here is sexual, as epitomized by the model's swayback posture.

Finally, Figure 29 creates a sinister setting in which hot molten metal is being poured onto the women's buttocks.

Figure 30



Figure 32

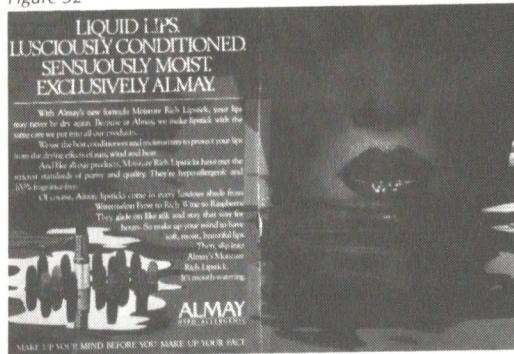


Figure 33



Figure 31



Figure 34

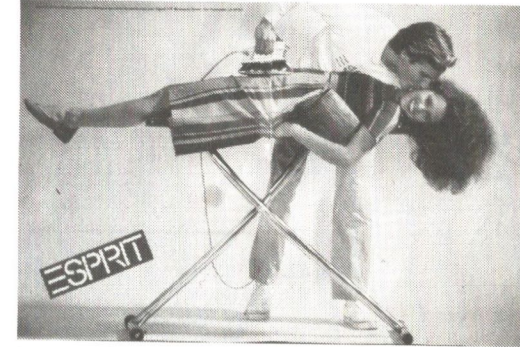


Figure 35

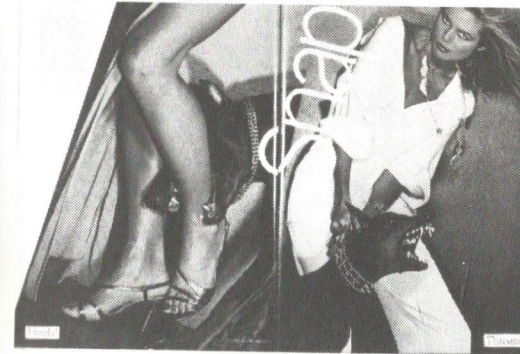
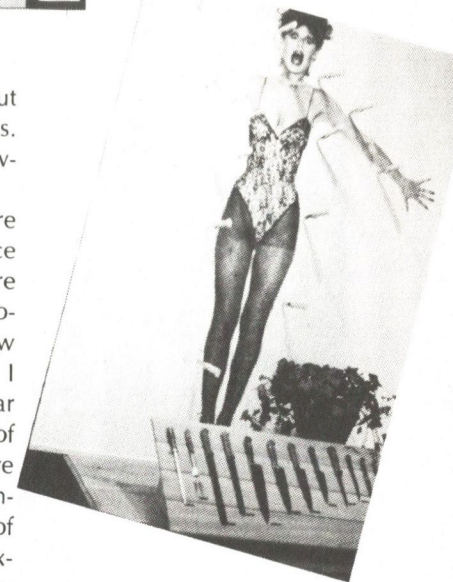


Figure 36



From an ethnological perspective, lips are genital echoes, so it is not surprising to find that they are portrayed in ways which emphasize their symbolic significance. Figure 30 is a rather typical lipstick ad. The model's mouth is parted, signifying sexual readiness (who puts lipstick on like this?). Even the way she holds the tube is unnatural and the copy affirms alternate visual connotations.

Figure 31 is a more extreme example. Note the classic head-held-back — eyes-closed pose associated with orgasm and/or death. The model is also biting the bullet.

In Figure 32, the model's parted lips seem to connote death as opposed to mere submissiveness because her skin is blue and she appears to be drowning. The final lipstick ad (Figure 33) also plays on the theme of vio-

lence. On the surface it looks innocuous but the red smear has aggressive overtones. (Either that or it is a child-like woman drawing on the walls again).

These last slides (Figures 34 to 36) are miscellaneous images of explicit violence against women in advertising. There are many more explicit examples of sadomasochism in ads. I have not attempted to show the worst of my collection here. Rather, I have attempted by focusing on particular products to demonstrate the evolution of trends in advertising and how images are transformed over time from seemingly innocuous displays of sex role stereotyping of submission vs. dominance to the more explicitly brutal images characteristic of contemporary pornography.



On The Point

Cynthia Flood

The lake in early morning is calm, brown-silver beneath mist which dissolves to vision's periphery as she turns her head.

So quiet.

Louise is the only person; her footprint on the cool wet wood of the small bridge across the bay is the very first.

She is eight.

Each morning a new cobweb spreads in the angle of the handrail's last span. She ruptures the web, for Mrs. Ireton. The thread gums her fingernails, and she rubs her hand hard on her faded red shorts, each morning.

She has come from the tangled green, thigh-high cold and wet, of the once-croquet lawn by the cottage. Up on the hill now, where the cows graze in the afternoon, the tubes of tough grass are bitten down to an inch. The stubble feels good underfoot, something between tickling and scratching. She looks down, to avoid cowpats. Warmth touches the left side of her thin body and goosepimples prickle on the right. The sun will rise over the hill while she gets the milk from the farm, and on the way back she will be warm all over. She can tell that the day will be very hot. Top of hill now, with the farm briefly in view and the cows coming slowly from the barn. Close by stand a crowd of giant pines and hemlocks, black-green and witchy. Down the hill, down down down through milkweed, Queen Anne's lace, clover, Indian paintbrush, goldenrod, purple vetch. Down to the gate, cold metal fatly beaded with silver, which opens with a harsh squinch-grind. This is the first noise of the morning.

Once through she is truly on the point, a long isosceles triangle of land which goes out and out into the lake. She has a glimpse of the beach. The transparent water moves slightly now, lips over the hard smooth sand, prepares to form waves. How good it would feel to step just there where beach and lake connect. But the path curves away from the water and the mist is rising and the milk will be ready, and so into the little wood, birches and poplars. The path is narrow, hard, rooty, fringed with shining clusters of poison ivy; she must watch her step, but she knows where the best birches are and stops to look. Their leaves hang like earrings. The rising breeze moves them, and now there is clear sunlight on the fluttering green.

Up the little rise and out into the full new sun. Here lies the old flower-garden. A quick look on the way past — an overgrown mass of a thousand shapes of green, with flashes of pink yellow mauve white scarlet purple orange blue like butterflies randomly throughout. A vapour rises, a dew-cooled fragrance. Now the real garden, bigger, vegetables in rows, but she hardly looks, for here, here is the farmhouse. The broad shallow steps curve down with time, and on the middle step there is a cat, always a cat, and the cat is always lumpy with kittens or gaunt from nursing them.

The screen door.

In the kitchen are two women, old and middle-aged, mother and daughter: Mrs. Ireton and her only child, Pearl.

Finally, young Mr. Ireton knows, decides, says, that he must go for the doctor.

Maybe he just can't bear being with her any longer, can't bear her cries, tears, smells, can't bear the bloody helpless abandonment of her limbs. Maybe even if he goes out to the barn where he can't hear her, he can still see her? Maybe he feels sorry, guilty, angry at her for causing trouble.

He tells her he's going. Probably he waits for a gap in the pains, shoves his cold bristly red face down to the pillow.

The mare comes from the barn, snorting, flicking mane and tail at the snowflakes jumping all over her like summer flies. Now, now the young husband is frantic to go, but the sledge is piled with wood and he must spend whole minutes flinging pinelogs into the snow. He's in at last, wraps the fur robe round. The mare starts down to the frozen gritty beach. At the edge of the ice, hoof raised, she hesitates. She always does, he knows that, but right now when he is doing what he should have done hours, days, weeks ago he just can't bear it and slashes the whip. Blood flies threadlike onto the snow. Again, and she moves to get away from hurting.

The trio of man and mare and sledge recedes across the lake. Smaller and smaller. Quieter and quieter. Now Mrs. Ireton, lying in labour in the bed upstairs, cannot hear anything except the gentle blowing of the windy snow — and presumably her own cries, if she is crying. Smaller and smaller, a tiny dark nucleus against the whiteness, spinning its filament of track. In dreams that filament is red, like an overlay in a medical text showing the highways of

the blood. It begins to branch out, to form a frail scarlet network over the lake, over the snowladen trees, over the dark house — he can't leave an oil-lamp burning for all those hours he will have to be away — over barn, fields, hills, a network frail, elusive, sticky, clinging everywhere.

Does Ireton look back? What would there be to see? A brown house on a thickly treed point, a small brown house with a second floor gable. There is the cat at the window. From halfway across, the frozen lake and the bays have flattened into the shoreline, the off-shore islands have coagulated with the mainland; the house and the few shuttered cottages can't be seen at all. No, probably he doesn't look. He concentrates on his task. This quick invigorating drive through lightly blowing snow may even be enjoyable. He has more sounds to listen to than she — the mare's brisk metallic steps, the slap and jangle of harness, the scraping runners of the sledge. Does he consciously listen? Does he really look at the mare's dull brown rump moving from side to side, at the clouds of her warm breath evanescing among the snowflakes?

Now he is past the big island. He turns south, down the inlet at whose uttermost tip, four miles away, huddles the little town where perhaps he will find the doctor. Just one look back now? There is only the grey-white frozen lake with the dark band of trees about its edge and the whitish hills rising beyond. No islands, no point. Is she there any longer?

Pearl gives her sweet broad smile to Louise and strokes her hair lightly. Pearl's own hair is curly grey; she is plump, soft, moves slowly. She walks silently to the long table at which Mrs. Ireton stands, rolling out pastry, and touches her arm. The thin old woman turns, peers sharply. She does not smile at Louise, but the child feels welcome and asks what kind of pie it is today. *Blueberry*, says Mrs. Ireton, and Pearl smiles again. While the daughter and mother go to the stone pantry for the milk, city child looks at the discs of cream-coloured pastry and the great bowl of dark blue fruit crusted with sugar, and studded with dabs of butter. Six large pyrex pie-dishes stand ready. This food is for the "tourists" who tent in the field beyond the barn. The child knows she is not a tourist, but one of the "summer-people"; still, she wishes that she could have some pie, just once. The linoleum is cool and slick underfoot. She sees a thin bar of fiery orange at the rim of the door of the big wood stove. The calendar by the pump shows a snowy field, a small stone house with a smoking chimney, a tiny lighted Christmas tree. There is a clean smell of eggs, milk, Oxydol, homemade bread. Also vinegar. Nothing is like her home.

Old Mrs. Ireton gives Louise two glass bottles of milk, hung in a wire contraption which enables her to carry the burden in one hand. Pearl takes a long wooden spoon and dips into the bowl of fruit. Smiling, she puts the spoon to the child's lips. The sugary globes startle her taste-buds, so cold, blue, sweet. Pearl chuckles as she opens the door for the child and watches her go out into the sunlight, past the gardens and into the little wood. The mother has already turned back to her pastry.

Mrs. Ireton must also wonder if he is really there. She cannot visualize his "there" exactly, as he can hers, but somewhere out on the lake, past the big island by now surely, perhaps even close to the far end of the inlet. Perhaps she does what many of us do when waiting through something horrible, interminable — *I will count to three hundred and then I will hear the sledge coming*, something like that.

Three hundred once, three hundred twice, three hundred thrice.

Or perhaps she does it by the contractions. *After three more I will surely hear the sledge*. But time in labour is not accountable. No point can be named. Certainly not in that labour, alone, the birth gone wrong, alone, the pain unbearable, and not a thing in the frozen world to do but bear it. Does she believe that it need not have been this way, if she, if he, had been different?

Perhaps she comes to that point at which we are sure that what we await will never come.

Someone (who?) will eventually find her, dead, with the dead child stuck like a little frog in the mouth of a bigger one. All the house will be cold as the stone pantry, the cat mewling savagely, the Christmas pies turned to leather on the long table in the kitchen.

A spider sits in her web in the angle of the ceiling. Of course it must be dead. They don't move in cold weather anyhow. But what if it isn't? What if it does? If it begins to reel out its line and waver downwards, floating, swaying, turning at first in the waves of her breath and then in the still air, down and down towards her, over her, around her? There will be no feeling. There will be snow a foot deep on the doorstep. The tracks of the sledge across the lake will be obliterated. That long purposeful line leading away from the point will be completely gone.

City child, city woman, Louise still doesn't really understand how the young Iretons planned to live, there, at the turn of the twentieth century. What was their vision? That country is now loud with cottages. But then — not wild, even then, close to empty, the Indians long gone. A half-dozen summer places around the miles and miles of lake. A small farmhouse on the point. Some acres of stone-studded clay soil (city child makes snake-coils and squat bowls of the plastic dirt, dreams of staining them with brilliant vegetable and berry dyes, but they fall apart in an overnight rain). Some hill-sides, thin coats of grass and bracken over rock, a thousand places for a cow to break her leg. A small stream (city child makes flowerboats, leafboats, knows a flat stone on which one day lie a dead frog and a white leech, next day half a frog and a fatter leech, etc.), a small thin stream which mushes out into swampiness which turns gradually into the lake.

The lake. In winter Ireton cuts ice and fills the icehouses of the summer people, stacks cords of wood by the cottages. In the spring, go round the lake and take off shutters, check pumps, repair docks buckled by ice; in the fall, reverse the film. He builds cottages, boathouses, outhouses, docks, sheds, as the land around the lake gets sold. (Not his land, yet.) He works

alone. He's gone, dead, years before Louise's birth in the late 'thirties. That solitary labour is still mentioned first when his name comes up among the congregating summer people. Next: he was stingy, money-grubbing, mean. Next: he did beautiful work. With pride, the summer people show each other an Ireton dock, an Ireton stepway to the beach.

The barn. City child spends afternoons here, smelling the hay, chewing it, watching the spiders spin their webs, playing with kittens and calves. Cows. Gradually Louise learns that there was once an almost-scandal — the animals tubercular, the milk polluted, awful — all because Ireton wouldn't buy some equipment or have some tests done, something, something that would have cost money. That is another thing the summer people always mention.

The cows are all young Mrs. Ireton's work. Milking; milk cream butter; rinse, boil, fill, carry, empty, measure, count, and sell. Daily, like the hens. City child does not like hens much, but always goes round for eggs with old Mrs. Ireton, once, at the beginning of each summer. The summer she is eight they see the biggest cobweb ever made, a great floating wheel of silver filament with its creator motionless at the hub. Louise sees with amazement that a tiny swollen sac beneath the spider moves, moves tumultuously. She cries out. Mrs. Ireton's hand sweeps, slashes decisively down. Her foot stamps again and again.

The vegetable garden. Young Mrs. Ireton's work: sow, weed, thin, harvest, can, preserve, bottle, pickle, salt, and store.

The baking, the laundry, the housework.

The flowergarden. Obviously she found some time.

But how then did it happen? Why did she come to her first and only childbirth alone except for him, and then all alone? Money? Surely the doctor must have had patients who paid in chickens, in cutting wood; surely he would have come? Did no neighbour know that she was near her time? No one thought to drop by the house on the point and see if the young mother carried high or low, if it was her lower back that hurt or her swelling ankles? Were they all afraid to come, afraid of him? Did their husbands tell them, *No, stay out of it?* Did she ask him to get someone to come and did he say, *No?* Or did he just not answer when she spoke to him? Did she even speak?

Perhaps he thought she was making altogether too much fuss. Animals don't behave like this. Still — sometimes the farmer, the vet, the shepherd has to thrust hands or instruments into the choked birth canal to bring out the new creature. He must have known that. Perhaps he had even done it himself?

A deep unused verandah shields the front room of the farmhouse, and thus it is cool even in August. Each year, once, city child is allowed to enter. An old Axminster on the linoleum is extraordinary underfoot. There is plush on the carved couch. The lace curtains look soft, clingy, but are stiff with sugarwater. Painted flowers brighten silky cushions (city child tries it on a t-shirt and it all goes runny). Pot-pourri and furniture polish. Before she goes

to sleep that night in her cabin with the water lapping the shore ten feet away, she tastes roses, spice, harsh lemon at the back of her throat.

Summer after summer, Louise looks at the sepia photographs in the oval wooden frames. The proud young man is bearded, mustached, has a strange high collar which looks uncomfortably tight. The young woman's dark hair is cloudily soft about her head, and a locket is half-visible in the lace at her throat. Who are these people? One day, one year, the old woman bends down to give her the milk bottles and a thread of gold loops down from the wrinkled pink neck. She sees the curve of the locket behind the faded stripes of the housedress.

But she was beautiful....

Even if he had pulled calves and foals out of their slithery birthholes, trailing blood and amniotic fluid, even if he had dealt with placenta and feces and all the dripping mess of animal birth, perhaps he could not bear the doing of these things for her, by himself or by anyone else.

Or he was afraid that he would be too rough, too big. He would kill and that would be manslaughter, not just the unfortunate death of livestock.

Or perhaps he feared the mystery of her body.

Or infection.

Or perhaps he was just a skinflint bastard who didn't rate his wife as high as a mare or a cow, resented the fatigues of pregnancy which made her slow at her baking, cleaning, milking, washing, preserving, gardening, hated the look and feel of her great swollen body and wanted only for the birth to be over so he could get back to sticking it in her every night.

The silence of the farm kitchen draws the child. At the cottage, at Louise's home in the city, people talk all the time. There is a continual fluent counterpoint between her mother's German-flavoured soprano and her father's firm confident Canadian bass. Most often, at the cottage, there are guests, lots of guests, and a steady ripple of conversation in two or three or four languages amidst the scripts, daubs, films, wines, editorials, galleries, and novels. If there is no talk, there are said to be Gaps. (In her teens she will suffer greatly from Gaps.)

In silence, she watches Mrs. Ireton lift a big mound of soft dough, strips and flaps bobbling round its edges, onto the flour-sprinkled oilcloth. A few passes with the rolling-pin and the pastry flows out like an ironed sheet over a bed. Louise watches the muscles working in the thin old arms. Mrs. Ireton peels the knobby potato in one unbroken spiral. When she tops and tails beans they flip like tiny batons under her knife. The old woman bends over her work. The parting goes straight down the middle of her head with absolute precision. Louise is sure that if she could count the silky white strands springing up from the pink scalp, there would be exactly the same number on each side. At the back there is a perfectly round bun of hair, slightly yellowish here. Louise can see no hairpins. How does it stay up there? Mrs. Ire-

ton is preparing the chickens. Ugly, bristly, flabby, dead. The long match hovers over breasts, legs, wings; there is a strange acrid smell; the wings tuck under and the onions go in, and the legs are bound. And there clearly is roast-meat-to-be, which never flapped and squawked around the yard. So quick, quiet, neat. The pink fingers of the old hands are thick, and do not flex far. The nails are always the same length, exactly. The child looks at her own brown grubby digits. She can stretch a full octave on the piano at home in the city. It is hard for her to cut the nails on her right hand, and sometimes her father exclaims at their length and helps her. She has learned this year a Schumann piece called the *Happy Farmer*, though her mother is shocked at this name and says it is really the something *Landmann, A Merry Peasant*. What is a peasant?

Meanwhile Pearl slowly wipes the long table, the counters, with a white cloth pungent with Javex. She washes pots. She sets the tables for the tenters' dinner. Then she starts again with the cloth. Mrs. Ireton gets up quickly with a little *Tsk!* noise and shows her a pail of potatoes. Pearl smiles and slowly begins to scrub. The sun is all over the room. A bee's drone, falling and rising, falling and rising, inscribes itself on the screen door. Occasional small crackles come from the stove, and the rich smell of roasting chicken. Pearl pushes back the grey tendrils of hair from her perspiring forehead, and mixed drops of sweat and potato-water fall on her plump arm, on the floor. Her mother (*Tsk!* again) gives her a handtowel and points. Louise, at last, finishes the little pan of beans Mrs. Ireton has given her, and the old woman tips the handful neatly onto the green pyramid in the waiting pot. The child stretches, and takes a kitten from the basket by the stove. Once on her lap the little creature purrs, licks itself, then turns its stomach to the sun and sleeps, its tongue sticking out. Pearl looks at child and kitten, and smiles. The forgotten potato lies in her damp lap. Her mother sets it in her hand again. Then Mrs. Ireton takes down the ironing-board, and everything which is crumpled and rough becomes smooth.

How long has Mrs. Ireton been lying there?

Long enough to feel great pain, to feel despair, to know the uselessness of tears, to reach quivering hands down under the heavy wedding-present quilts to the wetness between her legs and to quick pull the red hands back again.

The cat, for a while, is on the bed with her. Is that some help, to feel the warm fur and hear the purring? But then it jumps down, so lazily, lightly, goes downstairs to forage, and doesn't come back.

Does she scream, just to know she is there?

She can convince herself that the spider is moving.

What does she think of? How many times is she sure that at last she hears the runners of the sledges?

Pain and pain again. Winter darkness comes early, even though everything is white outside; he left in the early morning and in December they light lamps by one, two in the afternoon. There are no lamps lit, only the

lights in her head and the silver filament above and the pain that comes and comes and comes. The baby inside her that isn't moving any more, can't move, is blocked and choked and caught in the place of birth.

But of course, it is darker inside the house than out. When he emerges from behind the big island and turns for the homestretch across the stone-hard lake, the doctor beside him, the mare speeding up because she knows the barn is near and she is cold and tired and hurts where she has been slashed again and again. When he emerges, everything is pale grey, oncoming darkness suffused with snow. The sledge itself is much darker, a little blot or core of black away, away across the lake, impossible to tell what it may be, only that it moves and is coming closer. Gradually the shape declares itself: horse, sledge, two people. Are they talking? What about?

Now the bays begin to open up to them, the shore no longer a plain black-green belt, and the point appears. The small brown house is shrouded in snowiness, no smoke. The fire gone out as it had to.

Here in the home bay the snow is forming drifts. It is hard for the mare. The doctor (wearily? angrily?) loosens his fur robe and gathers his bag to him; there are metallic clicks within. The mare strikes sand beneath the snow. The runners scrape. That sound, finally, is heard. The doctor is out. He is running clumsily through knee-high whiteness to the farmhouse door.

Alone, Ireton goes to the mare's head and leads her to the barn.

Oxygen deprivation: the term and its implications are now commonly understood.

At the birth, something went wrong, was what Louise's mother said one summer when the young girl (not quite a child now) finally grasped that Pearl was odd in some way beyond acceptable variations of *normality*. The words were said very neutrally; this was to protect; it was probably wise. What terms did the country people use when Pearl was a child, was growing up? Stupid, touched, not all there, dumb, simple, retarded, idiot, wanting? Something went wrong at the birth. How long was it before the mother, the father, understood? Did they talk about it? Did she say, *You almost killed me and look what you did to our daughter, our beautiful daughter?* What did he say?

There were eighteen years for such possible discussions. Then Ireton died of a stroke.

Once in a later summer Louise told her parents that Pearl made her feel the way the cows did. Her father laughed immoderately, spluttering over his espresso on the verandah after dinner; her mother's laughter was less, but still laughter. So she never said it again, but it was true. There were the same great gentle eyes, staring so calmly, the slow, leisurely movements, as though there were all the time in the world to dry a dish or eat a head of clover, the ample shape, warm, maternal, the sweet breathing smell. That same August, she and a visiting friend were climbing on the hills beyond the farm. The day blazed so they could almost hear the liquor in the trees, the bracken, the grasses being sucked out by the ardent heat, could almost see the

leaves begin to crisp and wrinkle and flicker and fire. Down a little gully the girls went, and there was the skeleton. Huge hoops of grey bone. A strange angular structure with two enormous round holes in it. A litter of straight shards, imaginable inside legs. The bones were pitted like driftwood. Mastodon, dinosaur, woolly mammoth; but now imagination could not sustain these delightful fantasies. This was cow. They were frightened that if they looked too closely on the ground nearby they would find the tail. Somehow that would be the worst. So they ran hard down the terrible hill to the new municipally-provided gravel road, and went that way back to the cottage instead of going by the point. They jumped along the road to make great clouds of white dust rise and cover their tracks.

Nonetheless, it was Louise's father who, still another summer, told her much more of the truth. He came at the subject sideways, through complaints that no one now could do work around the cottage as well as Ireton had, all those years ago. And from there he moved into irritable recollection of how unpleasant Ireton had been — surly, taciturn, cheap. *Wouldn't even get a doctor when she had Pearl. Anyone could see that woman'd have trouble having a baby; she's narrow as a post. Oh no, wouldn't lay out a cent on that. Probably scheming how to raise his prices while she was lying there. And finally he did go, and when the doctor got to her at last she was half-dead, torn to pieces, and Pearl like that. Probably held it up to her after that he'd had to pay doctor's bills. Twenty years old, she was.* He looked then at his daughter, fifteen, and frowned. Later that day Louise's mother sought her out. She talked well, most lovingly, but the calm of the sunlit kitchen was gone forever.

Forty years after Ireton's death, Pearl also took a stroke, as the country people there say, and died.

Louise, now in a distant city, heard of her death some months later, and that night dreamed of the scarlet filament for the first time. What had those four decades been like for Pearl? For her mother? In the name of God what were they like?

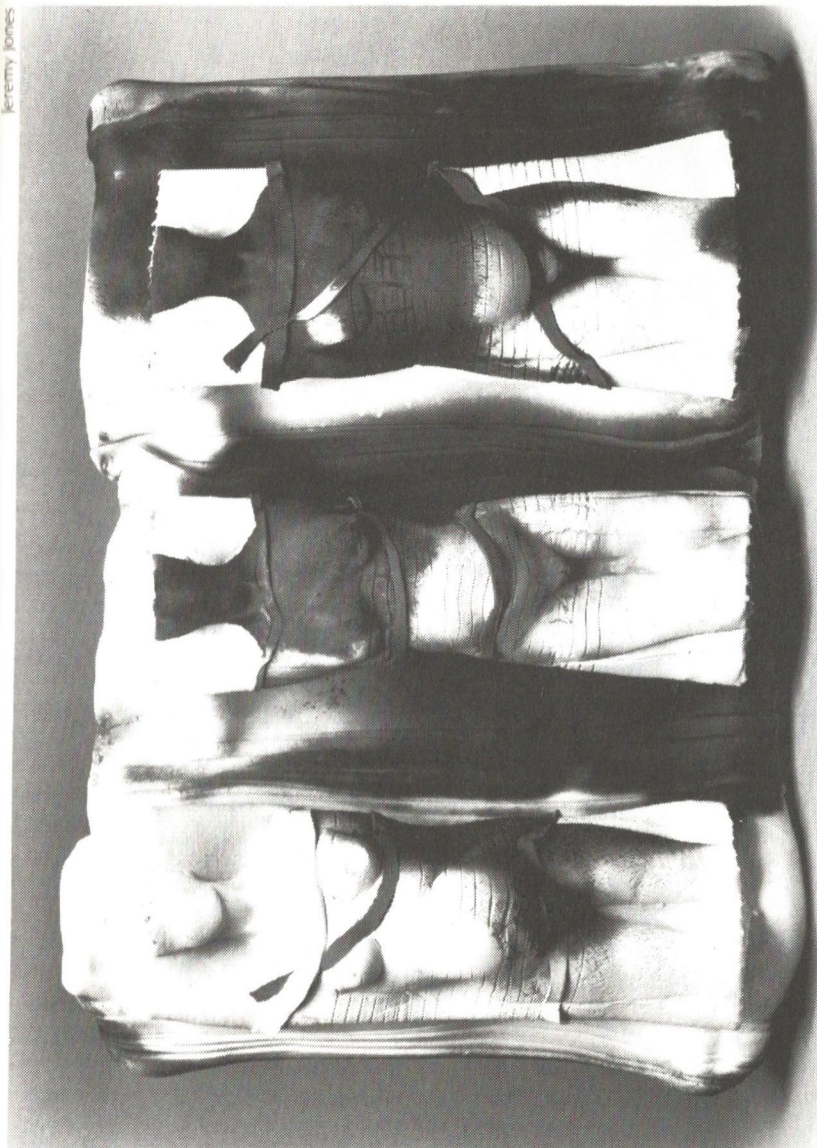
City child, now city woman, came with her firstborn to visit her parents, came to the lake to show her baby the paradise of her childhood. The little that was left of the Ireton farm had been sold, and Mrs. Ireton was about to be put in a Home. She was staying with a neighbour. She had shrunk; was quite deaf, and did not know who the visiting mother and baby were at all. She did not touch the little girl, but sat working her fingers together in her cotton lap. Louise longed for Pearl. There was conversation with the neighbour lady over Oreos and iced tea, and Louise then took Mrs. Ireton's knotted cold hand to say goodbye. The old woman looked up with that well-remembered peering glance, but there was no light in it.

Going back to her family's cottage, the new mother found that she could not bear to walk by the point, and so took the long way by the now-paved road, crying, and holding her healthy baby very close.

Susan Eckenwalder

Susan Eckenwalder's sculptures are in smoke fired ceramics, and play with tomb imagery and their excavations. They are part of a larger series entitled "Death Objectified." These pieces were exhibited in September at the Prime Canadian Crafts gallery in Toronto. Eckenwalder is a ceramist, born in Nebraska but now living in Toronto.

Jeremy Jones



Death Objectified No. 1



Death Objectified No. 2

Illustrations from: *Iconographia Gynaecologica: A Pictorial History of Gynecology and Obstetrics*, 1973.

Of Demons & Doctors

the Medical Management of Women



Carole Yawney

Ideas about what causes illness vary from culture to culture, and in some societies like our own such notions have changed considerably over the centuries. Regardless of the soundness of these ideas, medical diagnosis and therapy based upon such assumptions about health and disease can have consequences reaching far beyond strictly medical concerns. I am referring to the role that medicine plays as an institution of social control. Medicine has extended its scope into areas of human activity which, objectively speaking, are non-pathological, such as sexu-

ality, birth, and death. By defining any deviation from social norms in this regard as "sick", "bad", and therefore undesirable, physicians are able to coerce people to undergo treatments which might actually be more dangerous to their health than the threatening behaviour.

In order to receive treatment, the patient's demeanour must conform to certain standards which, while not directly relevant to successful therapy, reinforce values deemed acceptable by other interest groups in the society. *Women are "ladies"; children should be seen but not heard; big men don't cry.* The "ideal" patient is one who conforms to the cultural paradigm of the therapists, however much it might conflict with their own interests and their need for expression.

Whether disease is attributed to possession by demons, to invasion by germs, or more currently, to debilitating lifestyles, individuals can be influenced to feel fearful, powerless, and somehow morally responsible for their own illnesses. As a result, they are willing to submit to medical procedures which might do violence to them as human beings, in any number of ways. Medicine as a form of social control is carried to an extreme in Western society where the technological imperative against disease is exercised in an attempt to master the forces of nature. Women in particular are subject to this dynamic because of the kinds of energies they are said to symbolize in all societies. Not only are women as patients pressured to conform to cultural expectations, but they are generally said to represent the forces of nature which all cultures attempt to control. Since women everywhere are regarded as closer to nature than men, they have reason to be fearful of the medical establishment and the kinds of violence it may direct specifically towards them.

The Technological Invasion of the Human Being

Critics level two kinds of charges against modern medicine. They argue that the social organization of medicine tends to be over-centralized and out of reach for many citizens, replicating the class structure of our society, both in terms of its own internal hierarchy, and in the manner in which goods and services are distributed. Then there are more serious criticisms made on the grounds that the kind of medical care offered is in itself inappropriate to the needs of our society and possibly even dangerous to our health. The technological bias of medicine and its inherent elitism have fostered the development of a medical-industrial complex which encourages doctors to practise for profit rather than for people.

Why do we have a medical system which does not always put the interests of the patient first? We need to approach this problem historically in order to understand how one group of practitioners established a monopoly in the field of medicine and how they defined medical science in a way that protects their interests. Many of the limitations of medical science or allopathic medicine (therapies that are used which produce effects different from the disease) are related to the fundamental premise that disease is an entity, something with a life of its own, independent of the individual patient who

may be said to have "caught" the disease. While the concept of disease as an entity is common to many cultures, allopathic medicine has at its disposal the technological resources to pursue to its ultimate conclusion the implications of this assumption. In *Man Adapting* René Dubos has written that:

To think of disease as an entity separate from oneself and caused by an agent external to the body but capable of getting into it and thereby causing damage seems to have great appeal for the human mind In prescientific medicine, such explanations took the form of demonological concepts, disease being regarded as resulting from the malevolent influence of taboo violation, sorcery, revengeful ghosts, witchcraft, hostile ancestors, or animal spirits Similar psychological concepts still influence today the interpretation of phenomena established by scientific medicine.

(Dubos, 1980: 320)

When doctors treat the disease, rather than treat the person who has an illness, then the patient as a person suffers. At best, the individual becomes an obstacle to their own therapy.

In a provocative discussion of the persecution of women as witches in the Middle Ages, Ehrenreich and English argue that medical doctors as we know them today became institutionalized on a broad scale because of their role in certifying witches and in defining reality on behalf of the establishment (Ehrenreich and English, 1979: 37). The kind of medicine these doctors practised also gained considerable legitimacy despite its frequent inability to heal people. From the 13th to the 17th century, 85% of the thousands of people who were executed for witchcraft were women, mostly of a rural background. This move effectively deprived the peasant class, which constituted the bulk of the labouring population, of medical services. One of the charges frequently levelled against women as witches was practising medicine without a licence.

To understand this problem we would have to appreciate the lay healing culture of the period. In contrast to the upper classes who could employ professional male physicians trained in the popular theories of medicine of the day, peasants had to rely mainly upon their own resources. Women, because of their responsibilities for domestic affairs, and their mutual support in childbirth, accumulated a body of knowledge about healing substances and practical therapies. Their approach was based upon practice and experience. This was the so-called empirical tradition. Even present-day pharmacopias employ remedies which were well known to the so-called witches — ergot, belladonna, digitalis, clary, hyssop, lily etc. They tended to rely upon gentle, common sense therapies, such as plasters, poultices, baths, and massage. Contrast this with the "heroic interventions" of the medical men — leeching, bloodletting, and purgatives.

With the publication of the *Hammer of Witches* in 1484, a witchhunting manual written by two clergymen, the persecution of witches swung into high gear. The Church declared it heretical *not* to believe in witches and en-

couraged its members to report suspected witches. Trials were conducted and torture was used routinely to extract confessions. Executions were mainly by burning at the stake. Regardless of the fact that the wise woman or white witch was able to help her patients, she stood accused of practising healing without the approval of the Church. By the 17th century, male physicians with the aid of new technology, such as forceps, had come to dominate even the field of childbirth, traditionally a woman's art. Once again, rude and violent methods supplanted the gentler and more natural approach to normal deliveries. Having ruthlessly eliminated its competition over a period of a few centuries, is it any wonder that the dominant medicine inherited a legacy of violence?

It was not until the discovery of germs and the development of antibiotics and antitoxins that allopathic medicine established a credible basis for the treatment of illness. Paradoxically, as dramatic as these breakthroughs seemed in the eradication of epidemic diseases such as typhoid fever, tuberculosis, diphtheria, etc., there are several studies that show that the major decline in the mortality rate caused by infectious diseases had already occurred due to social and preventive measures. (See for example, McKeown, 1979). Nevertheless, medical science capitalized on these changing circumstances. The doctrine of specific causation — or the germ theory of disease — became firmly established as a working principle. This served to reinforce the idea of disease as an entity, even in complex cases where the patient's illness was due to several interrelated factors. While today's doctors no longer simplistically believe in the pure essence of disease as opposed to its multiple and possibly misleading manifestations in individual patients, they tend to respond to illness in a manner similar to their 18th century colleagues. Foucault has described this attitude as knowing the truth of the pathological fact by abstracting the patient (Foucault, 1975: 8). In other words, the patient as a person gets in the way of the doctor's understanding of the disease.

We are faced with the problem of how an approach to illness which seems inherently limited in its understanding of disease became firmly entrenched in our medical culture. With the persecution of the witch-healer and the suppression of other forms of healing, we seem to have experienced historical amnesia. Throughout this period there did survive another approach to healing which emphasized the spirit of cooperation between doctor and patient, that recognized the role played by rallying the patient's innate healing energies, and that basically regarded illness as part of the life process of an individual — an attempt on the part of the organism to restore normal functioning. This approach is characterized by naturopathic medicine today. This kind of approach to therapy seemed ineffective in the face of the great plagues which were coincident with the processes of urbanization and industrialization. Indeed, the plagues seemed impervious to any kind of medical solution at the time. The discovery of microorganisms was then heralded as a major technological breakthrough. While appropriate to an understanding of epidemic kinds of illnesses, the doctrine of specificity was generalized as an approach to other kinds of medical problems. Here we have

to understand the correspondence between this medical philosophy and the emerging cultural paradigm that has come to dominate the 20th century. This is characterized by regarding the body as a machine, and by approaching health as an engineering problem. Human life is conceived as a mechanical act which can be controlled medically.

The persecution of witches can be seen as a major exercise in medical social control. Conflicting worldviews which recognized the nature-principle or the holistic quality of human life were exorcised. In their place we find the notion of disease as an entity, as something with a life of its own. Physicians approach illness as if it were possible to isolate and eliminate the single underlying causative factor. This heightens the confrontational dynamics of therapy. Even the language of allopathic medicine is violent: war against cancer, invasion by germs. We are reminded of the image of conventional warfare vs guerilla resistance. This attitude that disease is mainly a scientific-technological problem reflects a mechanistic worldview that ignores the reality that illness, suffering, and death are *human* experiences.

We are currently witnessing an epidemic of iatrogenesis, or medical problems which have their origin in the treatment itself. The notion of disease as an entity allows doctors to argue that side-effects are simply undesired or unintended consequences of treatments. Patients know better — there are only effects. The notion of disease as an entity has led to overspecialization among doctors, where the part is treated rather than the whole. Because the nature of the person is not regarded as critical to the therapeutic process, the special healing relationship that could develop between the doctors and patients is overridden in favour of reliance upon technical means. Because of our fear and vulnerability in a time of crisis we often submit to questionable procedures. The problem at this point is: to what extent will we allow medicine to intervene in our lives in ways that do violence to our dignity as human beings?



St. Agatha offering her ablated breasts to God, symbolizing her martyrdom.

Doing It Scientifically: The Medicalization of Life

Science in our society has acquired the reputation of being an objective, value-free search for the truth. Nevertheless, the language of science and scientific research masks a lot of hidden interests. Research priorities are determined in a way that reflects the vested interests of those making the decisions. For example, much research energy has been expended on developing birth control means for women which are often dangerous to their health, rather than exploring possible alternatives for men. Still, many human endeavours covet the mystique and the status of science so they will seem more credible in the public eye. Thus, we have domestic science, business science, administrative science, and of course, medical science. When we as patients are told "scientific facts" about our illness and the best way to proceed therapeutically, naturally we are inclined to believe.

Medicine as a form of social control has special implications for women. People are extremely vulnerable when they are ill. They are frightened and anxious; their lives are disrupted; but most importantly, they are suffering and in pain. They are likely to tolerate any kind of intervention in their lives, however intimate. Women as patients are subject to the same kind of indoctrination about values and behaviours as other sick people. But women have to deal with medical sexism directed specifically at them. Women as witches were also charged with crimes of a sexual nature, such as taking pleasure in sex, making men impotent, and practising contraception and abortion. Today, a moral attitude towards women's sexuality still persists. It is almost as if women are being punished for being in touch with their senses. Yet trusting in the message of the senses was the very basis of the empirical tradition in medicine.

This attitude towards women is not unique to Western societies. Most cultures express some degree of ambivalence about the nature of woman. In her discussion of the subordinate status of women in all societies, Sherry Ortner asks if female is to male as nature is to culture? In other words, are women universally regarded as being closer to nature than men? What are the implications of this attitude for the treatment women are accorded in their respective societies? She writes:

"We may thus broadly equate culture with the notion of human consciousness, or with the products of human consciousness (i.e., systems of thought and technology), by means of which humanity attempts to assert control over nature women are seen 'merely' as being closer to nature than men. That is, culture (still equated relatively ambiguously with men) recognizes that women are active participants in its special processes, but at the same time sees them as more rooted in, or having more affinity with, nature."

(Ortner, 1974: 72-73)

Ortner argues that women are perceived in an ambiguous category, neither clearly part of nature nor culture. Culture is largely the business of men who define it and determine it. One of the goals of culture-making is to clearly distinguish between culture and nature, however conceived. Women's intermediate position seems to confuse the issue. While women as human beings apparently operate well enough within the sphere of culture, they seem to have considerable rapport with nature. Ortner asks if perhaps men see women's commitment to culture on shaky grounds. Women's life functions are manifestations of great natural vitality, which demand some kind of control in order for society to be comfortable with them. After all, one of culture's objectives, especially in Western society, is to control nature. Thus, women's biological processes in many societies are defined as polluting and contaminating, necessitating the use of tabus, prohibitions, and isolation tactics to control — manage — them.

In her study *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas points out that the sacred and the powerful are often the object of tabus, serving to protect the more mundane from being overwhelmed by the holy. The original meaning of *holy* in fact is "set apart" (Douglas, 1979: 9). Ironically, in the case of women, the meaning of those very biological processes which serve to demonstrate her powerful connection with life forces is inverted by culture and women end up having to fight for their right to experience life in a normal human way. In Western culture, women's greater rapport with nature seems to threaten the dominant cultural paradigm of a mechanized world view, which includes a major technological assault on nature. For example, women are forced to bear their children in sterile hospital settings, isolated from family and friends, and are frequently subject to violent birthing techniques. I.K. Zola has argued that in order for medicine to function effectively as a means of social control, it must extend its expertise into areas which were previously beyond its jurisdiction (Zola, 1978). Indeed, this is an imperative given the expansionist nature of the medico-industrial complex. Not only is the medicalization of life processes profitable, but it also serves to propagate a particular view of reality. The linkage between medicine and technology makes the scientific approach to life seem especially unassailable.

Recently, there have been several studies documenting the kinds of violence women suffer as a result of medical intervention in their lives. They have appeared within the context of a growing literature critical of the medical profession. One of the more interesting trends in this regard has been the publication of books by medical doctors concerning the subject of their training and their practice (Haseltine, 1976; Light, 1980; Mendelsohn, 1979; 1981; Shapiro, 1979). The most recent book in this genre is Michelle Harrison's *A Woman in Residence*. Its author is both a feminist and a medical doctor. Thus, she not only exposes the internal machinations of the medical establishment, but she gives some very valuable ethnographic insights into the workings of feminist society and the possibilities of women's solidarity.

Harrison's book is a good point of departure for our discussion of the med-

ical management of women, because she deals with the full range of medical sexism, from the contemptuous treatment she received from other doctors for being both a woman *and* a single parent, to her own complicity in sexual surgery. In his book *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life*, Barker-Benfield presents us with an historical account of the development in America of surgical procedures for women specifically designed to control their sexuality and their behaviour. Michelle Harrison brings Barker-Benfield's analysis up-to-date. Where he documents the widespread occurrence of clitoridectomy, female circumcision, and ovariectomy, she asks a lot of questions about the high incidence of hysterectomy, caesarian sections, and episiotomy.

Most of Harrison's book is based on diary records kept during her first year in a part-time residency programme in gynecology and obstetrics. She had earlier specialized in family medicine, intent upon practising in a caring and humane manner. She gradually became involved in women's healthcare because it was in that area that she saw a great many distortions. Her interest in promoting safe home births and better healthcare for women motivated her to undertake specialized training so she could be a more valuable asset to her community and ally with like-minded colleagues such as midwives. Trying to balance her home and social life with her hospital life against great odds, she ultimately resigned from the programme because she no longer had faith in the kind of medicine she was practising there. Of this dilemma she writes:

When I returned to training more than ten years after my first medical school rotation on OB-GYN, I thought I could more easily accept the compromises that were necessary, and indeed for a while that was true. But the same conflicts were with me.... If we are murderers we are murderers. If I take out a uterus that need not be removed, if I cut a perineum that need not be cut, then I am committing those crimes. The tissue is no less cut, the organs less removed because I, as a woman, am wielding the knife.... Medical training is no less violent than surgery or poisoning. It leaves women and men no less scarred or no less without the organs that have been removed.

(Harrison, 1982 : 257-8)

The focus of this discussion for Harrison lies primarily in the area of childbirth where she argues the greatest amount of unnecessary intervention occurs. The very process of giving life is usurped by culture. Once a decision is made to interfere with normal labour, a chain reaction of consequences is initiated which turns childbirth into a technological event lying outside the control of the parents. Forcing a woman to give birth lying flat on her back is unnatural and demands more effort. Most cultures encourage mobility and the use of various positions for labour and birth. The use of the fetal monitor assures that the mother cannot get about, not to mention the possible ill-consequences its use might have. If the trauma of isolation, restriction, and

confinement causes slow or hesitant labour, induction is always a possibility. While this might be convenient for the attending staff, various problems can arise. Improper dilation, the necessity of pain-relieving drugs, routine episiotomies, recourse to Caesarian sections — one thing leads to another. The experiences of the mother and the child in the hospital after birth can also be quite distressing. Harrison found that contrary to her expectations she was learning little that could be of assistance in routine home deliveries.

Harrison also raises several questions about other medical procedures which may be unnecessary and dangerous to women's health. In his book *Mal(e)practice: How Doctors Manipulate Women*, Robert Mendelsohn, a medical doctor, echoes all of Harrison's criticisms, but in addition provides many suggestions about strategies that women can employ to protect themselves from medical violence. In a chapter entitled "I'm Afraid We'll Have to Operate" Mendelsohn advises how to interview a doctor about the surgery he

wants to perform and how to go about getting as many "second opinions" as necessary to make an informed decision. This is applied to such problems as breast cancer, surgery of the reproductive organs, and childbirth. In another section, he deals with the more routine prescribing of drugs for women and includes a great deal of information about their hazards. Mendelsohn asks such questions as: why are women far more subject to "incidental appendectomy" than men? Surgeons might remove a woman's appendix in the course of a hysterectomy, for example, as a matter of preventive surgery. He asks, "how many women would permit, much less

seek, a hysterectomy for a reason that was not life-threatening if they knew that in 1975 more than 1,100 women died from the procedure?" (Mendelsohn, 1982 : 99-100).

Given the problems of medical sexism it is clear that women as patients are going to have to struggle to protect themselves and their children from



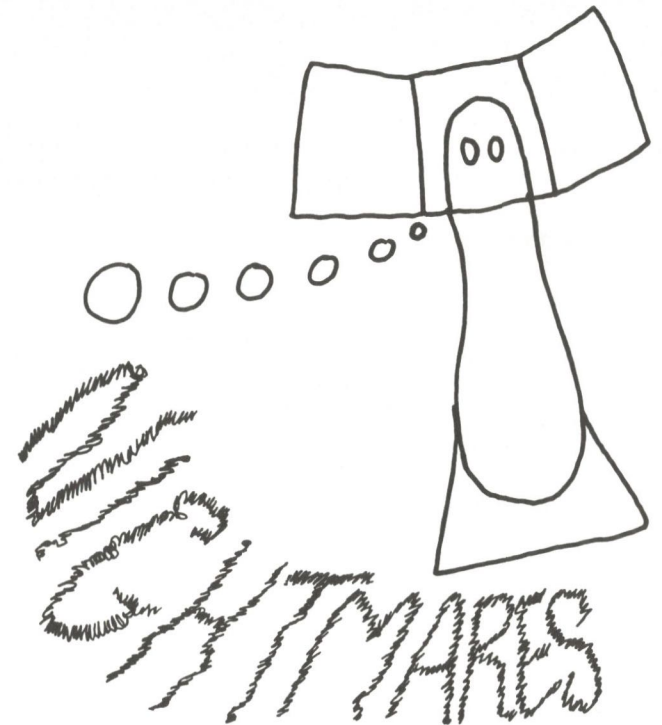
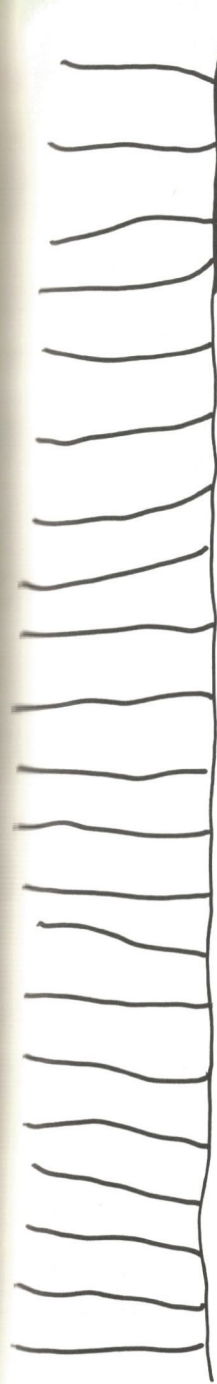
A Japanese patient, late nineteenth century, after successful operation.

medical violence. A collective effort makes this task easier. Women need to exchange medical experiences; they need to inform themselves about sympathetic doctors and hospitals *before* they have a medical crisis; they need to be prepared to support one another when medical assistance is needed. And they need to take whatever preventive measures they can to avoid medical intervention in their lives.

Suggested Further Reading

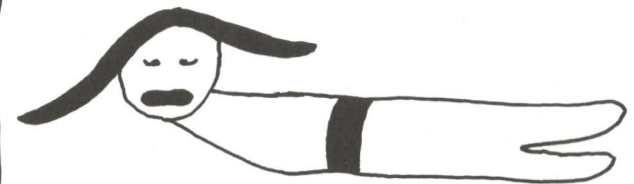
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Carole Yawney would like to thank the members of the Fireweed Collective for making the writing of this article such a positive experience. Also, thanks to Judy Posner of York University for providing the illustrations which accompany the text.



You recognize the shapes and can't quite give them a name. But the feeling — the icy, paralyzing feeling — is unmistakable. Your throat constricts, aches with the effort of trying to scream. And when that cry finally escapes your lips, you bolt upright, terrified at the sound of your own voice. A NIGHTMARE.

No one *likes* a nightmare. And in our nightmares, what we do can be as frightening as what is done to us. This small collection of drawings and jottings is meant to remind us that fear and violence are not only very real elements of our waking lives. They thrive and stalk in our dreams as well.



Becky, age 4

Nightmare

Neila Gupta

Tell me a story, my love.

It is very late at night. I am in an opening in the woods. There is a very strong wind blowing. It is so strong that it could set me flying, sweeping me into the sky. There is much forest noise. I am alone, anxious and expectant. I am waiting for something. I do not know what for — but it feels like I've always been waiting for this, and now I know, that finally the time has come — it will arrive tonight.

Then, the clouds pass in front of the lone lantern moon. There is much darkness. Oh, sweet comforting darkness. I wish to rest on the soft forest floor. I wish to rest and avoid what I know will arrive. Perhaps, if I close my eyes...?

Then, oh then, from everywhere at once comes screaming white light. It pierces me, searing my bone marrow. I am flung against the trees — which have become walls. I am imprinted on the wall, pinned and hanging off the wall. I am melting down that wall.

Are we in Hiroshima yet, my love?

I cannot see in the terrible white light. I can only feel and I feel the furnace heat. I cannot see; my eyes are blind, oozing molten red blood. I feel the flicker of people around me. They are teasing me. I *know* that they will torture me. All around, people are dancing and chanting and laughing. *We are one. We are one.* They set waves of heat in motion, smothering me.

I am on a funeral pyre, tied to a stake. Joan of Arc. They hated her vision — sought to blind her. Hated her voice — silenced her.

Was it suicide, my love?

They are laughing at me. I am Sylvia Plath being burned by her critics. And I'm screaming over the roaring fire, "Daddy, daddy, you do not do, you do not do, anymore white shoe, in which I have lived, poor and brown, barely daring to breathe or achoo...I always *knew* it was you."

And they keep chanting, *We are one. We are one.* And I know I am the EXCLUDED one. They chant: *We are one. We are Right. Join us.*

They have a bucket of white paint that they say they will throw on me, on the fire, to extinguish the flames, if I say "I do."

And I am screaming NO NO no non nooo nein...

Chop. Off goes my tongue. I scream still — my guttural cries come from way down deep and from far away back.

Unheard, I am about to be hung off a tree. If I were a man, they would only laugh at my provoked erection. But I am a woman, and they want not only to watch my breasts dangling, but to mangle them like beat-me fruit. *And they think i like it, after all, i'm only a doll, but i don't i don't at all, them playing with my limbs while i'm hanging there by my hair and with my shy eye i do not see, drooling faces staring at me, and though i've got wings to fly, do i have anywhere to go?*

And Christ, they've got me pinned to the wall, and oh oh I cannot forgive them. I cannot forgive them at all.

Chanting. *We are one.* They are coming together, forming a ring, crowding towards me. And I scream at them with my voice from way down deep, "HOW DARE YOU DISTURB MY UNIVERSE?" And they retort, as they slap me senseless, "How dare you eat that peach?"

I can feel their hate ooze out of them, flowing, glueing them together. They come at me and they are clothed in white (I *know* it, though they think me blind.) White sheets, that somebody's father bought, and somebody's mother bleached, and somebody is wearing tonight. A family affair.

Their eyes are gleaming red. A fucking question in their eyes. Join them. They will leave me alone if I become a brick in their wall. A pained figurine on the wall. I say yes, nodding.

Are they gone yet, my love?

Yes, they've disappeared.

Then, I am in a city. I am a city wall. A slightly raised painted figure on the wall, facing a parking lot. Somebody comes at me in the nighttime with a bucket of red, and they paint over me. They paint the words: WHITE POWER: WE WILL SEE RED UNTIL WE START SEEING WHITE!

What happens then, my love?

A Nightmare

Anonymous

For several years I have had a rather infrequent nightmare of something coming out of me that was a vegetable, an inert MVD-like object, that was still a being, a trapped soul, a trapped consciousness. It looked like a turnip. This turnip was not only something I gave birth to, my child, my responsibility, my love, but also something that I made, my product, my work, the result of my activity. The locations for the dream varied; it could have been on the side of a mountain or the interior of a house. This nightmare had quite a terrifying hold on me. Several times on the day after the nightmare, it seemed the most real thing to happen.

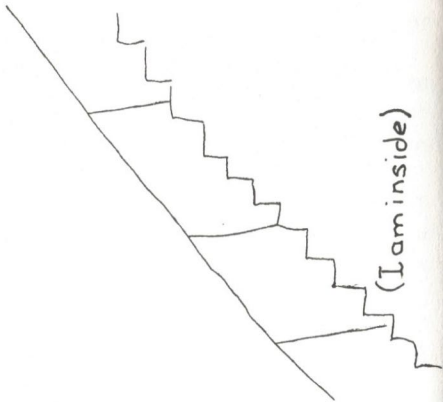
However, about four months ago, I had an unexpected miscarriage, during an unexpected pregnancy while waiting for an expected abortion. I've realized this dream no longer holds its terror over me. It seems I've had my turnip.

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106	107	108	109	110
111	112	113	114	115
116	117	118	119	120
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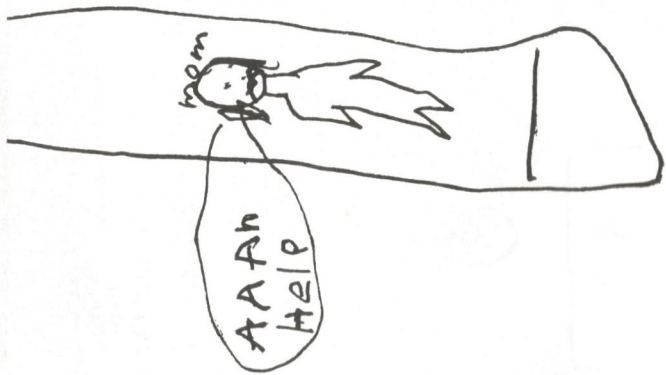
Shawna, age 8



(I am inside)



Rosie, age 9



My dad is falling in the disintegrator, but he has to go to work. My mom has to go to work too, but she is on the swing that shoots up and goes thru the trap door to the clouds.

Katie, age 8

A Real Nightmare Carlyn Moulton

I am hiding in my room. Curtains drawn against the cheery summer sun, I wake up sweaty, sticky, much too warm. The answering service called and said it was a lovely day out there, but they don't know that I am shivering in the dark at noon on such a lovely summer day.

Above my curtain is a panel of stained glass, fourteen inches by fifty-three inches. Coloured bits of softened light move slowly across the ceiling as the cheery summer sun makes its way across the pale blue sky. If someone parks a car across the street and opens the door, if the sun is in just the right place, the light catches the chrome and spears across my ceiling, piercing the muted reds and greens, shocking in its brightness. I don't know for sure that this is the explanation for the light on the ceiling, but if my ears are to be trusted, it always seems that a car drives up, stops, a door latch clicks, and flassssshhhhh. Anticipating this, I close my eyes in time, and open them slowly, letting them adjust gradually to the intrusion. It is much easier to cope with this way. At other times I forget and am surprised. No. Horrified.

Outside, in the street, life goes on. This is a line from a comic book, which has just taken us from the internal mental machinations of the plotting villain on the 54th floor of an unsuspecting tower in Dallas to the much less interesting, totally predictable lives of the ant-sized creatures down below. But we are not on the 54th floor. We are on ground level, hiding. Curtains drawn against the cheery summer sun.

Behind the drawn curtain is a window, which faces the street. Which borders the street. Which has its back to the street. For no good reason we think of windows like eyes, as if you can see both ways through eyes. As if you could hear through eyes, as if you could jump through eyes, break eyes, cry with your windows. I listen to the street with my window slightly open behind my closed curtain. A ball bounces by, splunk, slow, splunk, steady. Basketball. A door slams and stiletto heels click down steps four doors away, and click by, clipped little steps, steps with a purpose, steps that have to be somewhere. Little children's feet patting by, crying often. The mothers call after the children in languages I don't understand.

Behind the curtain, the shower gushes. Blocking all sound, all ringing, all possibility of contact. Sorry, I was in the shower. Apart from deafness, the only acceptable excuse for not answering, not hearing.

I remember the theory about hot and cold water, opening and closing pores. I only want to open them, to let out the — it is only for its numbing effect that I soap and rinse myself over and over and over again and watch the rivulets trickle down the wall behind the cracked caulking longer than is necessary, knowing that damage is being done to the foundation. I soap my hairy tufts

again, and turn the cold water tap back, just a bit, just to keep the temperature prickling hot, my pores screaming in the steam. Above each eye is pinned a swollen red badge of courage that won't wash off.

The pores are open and white slugs of fright poke and ooze their way through this seamed garment of skin. The threads, inch by inch, are giving way. I bulge uncontrolled, a cellulose puddle settling down around my feet. Cross-legged on the porcelain, it is almost like rain, what if the heavens rained hot, if they steamed down upon us, if God kept turning the cold water tap back, just a bit, just a bit more.

Numbed. Benumbed. Nubbled. My mouth open to the stream, I feel the heat jet into my throat, I sit and feel my bladder gently push open, the warm water falls between my legs. If it goes in and comes out, if it passes through, I am showering the inside of my body. I take my plastic bottle of shampoo, point it down my throat and squeeze. It slips and slithers, oozes and chokes. I look between my legs, half expecting to see suds.

When real nightmares happen, no one says, it's just a dream.



illusions of
POWER

Yvonne M. Klein

The relationship of lesbian sadomasochism to feminist theory is one of the most hotly-debated topics among lesbian feminists at the present moment. It is not an argument which develops in an atmosphere of calm — terms like “fascist” and “bigot” are in frequent use on both sides of the debate. Feminists who are appalled by S/M practices see in them a reproduction of patriarchal power relationships; lesbian sadomasochists maintain that this reaction is the product of a fear of sexuality and propose lesbian S/M as a creative route to a new source of power. Gayle Rubin, in “The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M,”¹ suggests that lesbian sadomasochism pro-

vides a way of avoiding what she sees as the historical error of early twentieth century feminists: their denial of an active female sexuality, which led to their waging anti-vice campaigns and, she implies, which led as well to the ultimate defeat of the movement. It is worth taking a look at this last idea and trying to put the whole debate into historical perspective.

There are certainly some chilling parallels between our own situation and the period following the success of the women's suffrage movement in the early decades of this century. It is a commonplace to remark that the first wave of feminism failed in its original purpose — the radical transformation of society in the direction of a new and total egalitarianism — and became diffused and disoriented in the post-war period, achieving a few important social reforms before finally subsiding into a condition of irrelevancy. To the generation which came of age in the 1920's, the older feminists were an embarrassment, as they insisted on forwarding the claims of women at a time when it appeared that victory had already been achieved.² This perception of liberation persisted despite all the data which indicated that progress toward sexual equality had barely begun, and despite clear evidence that no movement whatever had taken place in the direction of a radical transformation of society.

It persisted because the idea of liberation had become contracted to refer solely to sexual liberation, and in that area in particular, vast changes had taken place in a remarkably brief period. Birth control technology had advanced to the point where middle-class women, at least, were freed of the inevitability of forced reproduction; due to the decimation of the male population of Europe during World War I, conscious lesbianism as an alternative to heterosexual marriage had become a thinkable, if not approved, way of life.³ Every time a young woman of the 20's dressed, she was reminded of how far she had come in a few short years. Everything she wore spoke of sexual availability, just as everything her mother had worn at the same age had spoken of sexual constraint. Her clothing allowed her the freedom of movement enjoyed by men for which women had yearned for centuries and had even cross-dressed to obtain. All she had to do was to compare what she was wearing to what the Suffragettes had on when they were smashing windows in Bond Street to know that the revolution had been successful.

Yet it wasn't. It had hardly begun to take place. Within a decade, the slow slide back to the repressive definition of women as wives and mothers had accelerated and skirts were close to the ankle once again. A cynic might conclude that the sexual "liberation" of the twenties was a cleverly designed distraction away from the harder tasks of revolution and that as a ploy, it was immensely effective.

But we need not adopt a conspiracy theory of history to explain the attraction of sexual liberation as a replacement for revolution. In any movement for social change there is a heady moment when society accedes to the expressed desire for reform, simply because it is cheaper to do so than to allow the movement to continue to agitate. Although the battle for the vote was won by women who fought long and hard for it, it was successful at a mo-

We need not adopt a conspiracy theory of history to explain the attraction of sexual liberation as a replacement for revolution.

ment when it was less threatening for men in power to permit women to vote than for them to run the risk of seeing the suffrage movement converted into a far more radical anti-war movement which might have disturbed conventional power relationships represented by the First World War. The bargain worked out, for example, by the British government with the militant suffragettes led by Mrs. Pankhurst was a trade-off: in return for allowing themselves to be enlisted in the war effort and thus ceasing to challenge patriarchal power, women would grudgingly be permitted to vote after the war. It was a deal which male power could not afford not to make. But it was also as far as it would go. Any attempt to press for the other, more far-reaching demands of the feminist movement would cost too much in terms of power and would be met with a blank wall of indifference and contempt.

Yet it is impossible to turn off a popular movement for social change like turning off a tap. If the deal is to hold, real change must be perceived to have taken place. There was one area in which change could be permitted fairly comfortably, and that was in the area of sexual relations. Part of the feminist vision had long been the abolition of the double standard. For some of the radical feminists, like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, this had meant the introduction of identical standards of chastity for both men and women. But for other feminists of the period, especially for those under the influence of what they understood of Freud, the achievement of equality between the sexes demanded a freeing of women's sexuality to the point where women had the same options and choices as did men.

Many radical men, like Floyd Dell, editor of *The Masses*, enthusiastically endorsed this latter course or, at least, their own version of it (as did a lot who were not radical at all). They found the idea of the New Woman, freed from the dreary old concerns with motherhood and responsibility and transformed into what Dell called the "Glorious Playmate," immensely attractive. And because this was all the revolution that would be permitted without a deadly struggle, this was all the revolution there was. Women were now allowed a brief premarital fling before settling down. If you were rich, like F. Scott Fitzgerald's Daisy Buchanan, this meant a year or two of frantic sexual activity before subsiding into a life of desperate inconsequence; if you were not, a few months of sexual experimentation before taking on the double role of wife and worker. For a few, there was the option of an at least apparently celibate devotion to a career. Although social relations between men and women had changed considerably since the 1890's, power relations between the sexes remained substantially the same; what was different was the almost universal, and fatal, belief that a revolution had taken place.

*

Today, when the wave of feminism which began in the 1960's is receding, without even having the satisfaction of attaining a major goal like winning the vote, those women who maintain their original faith in feminist revolution are frequently greeted with the same expressions of embarrassed disbelief as were the feminists of the twenties. The majority of women who were involved in the women's movement ten years ago have settled for individual accommodation: a "radical" lifestyle which might mean rural isolation, a good job, or single motherhood. The relative handful of women who continue the struggle in political terms are barred from using the language of the feminist revolution at the risk of alienating all around them. "Sisterhood" will certainly raise a snicker; even "patriarchy" is beginning to be viewed as a touch extreme. When visionary language cannot be employed, it is difficult to maintain a vision. Yet the goals of the feminist revolution are, if anything, further from realization than they were even in the twenties — daily the ultimate triumph of patriarchy looms even closer in the threat of nuclear war.

In this condition of political frustration, it is not surprising that the hottest topics of debate in feminist circles should concern issues of sexual liberation. Questions of individual gratification become more interesting, as they did in the twenties, when the possibility of broad social transformation becomes less likely. Thus pornographers invoke the First Amendment and demand civil libertarian support; lesbian sadomasochists demand political acceptance as the radical cutting-edge of feminism. Their argument, especially as articulated by Gayle Rubin, is internally consistent. There exists an oppressive hierarchy of sexual values embedded in the social structure which progressively devalues variants from the monogamous heterosexual norm. The further one deviates from this standard of behavior, the more one is oppressed. Therefore, argues Rubin, sexual outlaws (boy-lovers, transsexuals, transvestites, sadomasochists, and, one presumes, pornographers and men who like little girls, though she does not mention them) because they "have an acute perception of the sexual hierarchies and how they work" are the source of "some of the most creative political discourse since 1970."⁴

Her argument rests on an unexpressed assumption, the same assumption that animated the "free lovers" of the 1920's. This assumption is that sexual repression is the primary oppression and thus that the liberation of sexuality is a potentially revolutionary act. It is a Romantic notion which goes back at least as far as William Blake and one which accounts for the elevation of the Marquis de Sade into a culture hero in some circles. But sadly, though it is true that repressive societies tend to repress sexuality along with everything else, the converse of the proposition does not hold. In Berlin in the 20's, for example, there was a remarkable degree of toleration of sexual variation. Nevertheless, Nazism triumphed despite (not, as some might argue, because of) this relative freedom. Similarly, the previously unparalleled acceptance of sexual experimentation which characterized the U.S. in the same period had no effect whatsoever on the oppression experienced by blacks, women, or any other oppressed class in the country. The founda-

The relative handful of women who continue the struggle in political terms are barred from using the language of the feminist revolution at the risk of alienating all around them.

tions of the state do not tremble whenever one of us comes.

Rubin is sharply critical of what she sees is the present direction of feminism, a tendency she terms "feminism." "Feminism," in Rubin's view, rests on the belief that a female culture and value system exists and that these are superior to the dominant male counterparts. "By this analysis," she says, "the task of feminism is to replace male values with female ones, to substitute female culture for male culture. This line of thinking does not encourage women to try to gain access to male activities, privileges, and territories."⁵ The true task of feminism, in Rubin's view, one presumes, ought to be precisely the reverse: to emulate male values, to seek to compete on equal terms in male power struggles. But failing this access, what lesbian sadomasochism promises is an imitation of power confined strictly to individual experience. It is a position which despairs of social transformation and settles instead for the illusion of a piece of the action.

Rubin also attempts to draw certain parallels between historical feminism and what is happening today. She claims, for example, that much of the first wave of feminism "degenerated into a variety of morality crusades, with conservative feminists pursuing what they took to be women's agenda in anti-prostitution, anti-masturbation, anti-obscenity, and anti-vice campaigns."⁶ She implies that the early feminists failed because of this false direction and that it would be "an historical tragedy of almost unthinkable dimensions" if feminists should wage similar campaigns today. Her criticism here deserves attention because it goes to the heart of the difference between feminist politics and the politics based on sexual liberation.

The feminists who engaged in the "purity" campaigns were motivated by a lively sense of the exploitative nature of tolerated vice. Their demand was not a conservative but a radical one: the abolition of the double moral standard which erected a thicket of protection around the middle-class woman while permitting men to sexually exploit the most vulnerable members of society: women and children of the poorest classes. Josephine Butler's successful campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act expressed this concern. The act, which subjected prostitutes to periodic medical examination and which could imprison women who were found to have venereal disease, in essence legalized prostitution for women over the age of twelve. It was a typical liberal measure of the late Victorian period in that, in appearing to reform an injustice, it in fact institutionalized it in a way most comfortable to men in power. Butler opposed the act both on civil libertarian grounds —

In the defense of lesbian sadomasochism, the experience of power is not analysed; it is merely affirmed as a means to more and better orgasm.

the women were presumed guilty until proven otherwise and were not provided normal legal protection — and on the far more radical ground that the act divided women into two unequal classes: women who enjoyed male protection and were thus exempt from the Act, and poor, unmarried women, who could be exploited with impunity. Because she recognized a commonality of oppression between women of her own class and working-class prostitutes, Butler came to be regarded as “worse than the prostitutes themselves”⁷ by the men who wanted their pleasures made safer through disease control and she attracted considerable working-class support for her ultimately successful campaign.

The purity campaigns were not so much founded on a conservative attempt to enforce an out-moded moral standard, but on a radical demand for an end to the exploitation of women. The women who engaged in them tended to view heterosexual sex as essentially exploitative by nature. Since they were prevented for the most part by reason of their historical situation from envisioning the possibility of sex between women as an alternative, they were forced to adopt a view of women which defined them as largely asexual. It was not a position which would prove persuasive during the twenties when women were being assured that their right to orgasm was the only right they needed to pursue. If the radical feminists made a “tragic historical error,” it was in failing to accommodate women’s sexuality in a realistic way; it is not an error we are likely to repeat. The error they did *not* make was the libertarian one of refusing to acknowledge the existence of coercion and exploitation in what passes for “liberated” sexuality.

At their best, the earlier feminists maintained a vision of the world which was not simply reformed, that is, one in which all had equal access to the tools of exploitation, but a transformed world, in which exploitation ceased. The arguments which seek to conform sadomasochism and pornography with feminism are merely reformist. Presuming the permanence of the power relation expressed by dominance and submission, proponents of the political legitimacy of sadomasochism argue that it is somehow healthy to experience a “more & more powerful self”⁸ (and, one supposes, a more and more submissive one as well). If this experience were recommended as a means of confronting the complexities of our relationship to power in order to understand and transcend it, there might be some merit in it. Certainly an acute and vibrant awareness of our authentic sexuality can provide the impetus to demand real and lasting change and indeed must occur as part of the condition under which change can take place. But in the defense of

lesbian sadomasochism, the experience of power is not analysed; it is merely affirmed as a means to more and better orgasm.

In this way, lesbian sadomasochism reproduces the fruitless “sexual revolution” of the 1920’s. A “liberated” women’s sexuality was tacitly approved by the male power structure following World War I not merely because it provided a greater and safer sexual access by men to women who had formerly been off-limits, but, more importantly, because it helped to destroy the feminist consciousness of sisterhood which had been based on the idea that the interests of men and women as classes were profoundly different and antagonistic. Once women were convinced that liberation lay exclusively in sexual fulfillment, they were impelled out of the movement for broad social change into the bedroom, with results that were predictable. Similarly, lesbian sadomasochists find their immediate allies not among women as a whole, or even among other lesbians, but among other sexual outlaws who experience a comparable sexual discrimination — gay leather men, heterosexual sadomasochists, transsexuals, and transvestites, if we use Gayle Rubin’s list. The primary demand of this group can only be for a freedom from interference in their sexual pursuits, a demand which our society can readily accommodate without finding its fundamental power relations threatened in any serious way.

Established society can tolerate, and if necessary, even encourage, individual sexual gratification of whatever outrageous form if it is less expensive to do so than to suppress it. Sadomasochism in general is a theatrical travesty of the patriarchal politics of dominance and submission which allows the powerless the illusion of power. Lesbian sadomasochism does nothing to challenge real power — it merely plays a flirtatious game with it.

The politics of sexual liberation presume that sexual gratification is somehow “pure” — that the liberating and energizing experience of orgasm is self-justifying. By a rather slippery bit of logic, the liberationists conclude that any act which procures this moment of freedom is exempt from ordinary political analysis. In so doing, they threaten to open wider the gap between the private and the public, the personal and the political, which feminists have been struggling so long to close. It would be a grave mistake on the part of lesbian feminists to respond to the sadomasochistic critique by inventing a list of “politically correct” sexual acts or to declare practitioners of “incorrect” sex politically indefensible. But it would be equally disastrous to imagine for a moment that “if it feels good, do it” is the starting point of revolution.

Footnotes

1. Gayle Rubin, "The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M," *Coming to Power*, Samois, San Francisco, 1981.
2. Eventually, even *Punch* was aware of this reaction. A 1930 cartoon shows a young woman dressed in a feminine floor-length dress looking askance at her "liberated" mother and saying, "I wish you weren't so modern, Mother. It's terribly out of date!"
3. Ruth Adam, *A Woman's Place: 1910-1975*, W. W. Norton & Co, New York, 1975, pp. 95-106, *passim*.
4. Rubin, p. 224.
5. Rubin, p. 214.
6. Rubin, p. 215.
7. Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History*, Vintage, New York, 1976. p. 52.
8. Martha Equinox, "If I Ask You to Tie Me Up, Will You Still Want to Love Me," *Coming to Power*, Samois, San Francisco, 1981, p. 38.

Two Poems by Erin Mouré

Camouflage

Trick air, trick
colours, like camouflage, magenta as a
sunset,
scars on the woman's arm
some evenly inflicted
one crooked & hard, a bar fight,
a night in the green corridor of emergency,
not answering questions
Trick air
can't push it away from her
the insects too heavy to fly
the heat unbroken by nightfall
a kiss
the woman opens her legs
& the street looks in
& steps out again, dizzy, with difficulty

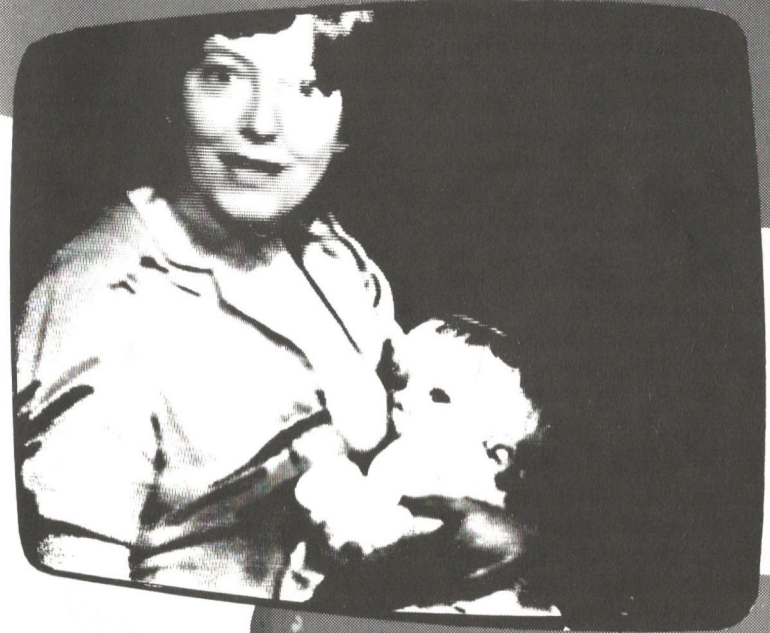
Shock Troop

Shock troop
Shock exercise
Knife is a verb
Bayonet is a verb
Coat a verb
Absolute is a conjunction
Now get up & pay for the coffee,
make a sentence, fool

She knife, she coat, absolute she bayonet
he said
incomprehensible as
shock troops blowing the door in
& taking the TV down stairs to a truck

You don't pay me, you live here
she said, pushing his money back, the tip, too

A PELICAN IN HER PIETY ♪
A VIDEOTAPED PERFORMANCE ♪
WRITTEN BY ROBIN BELITSKY-ENDRES ♪



Excerpts from the script performed at
the Theatre Centre December 14,
1980, by Robin Endres and Ivana
Shein. The show was directed by Bob
Reid, videotaped by Alan Fox, music
composed and performed by Jody
Berland, stills by Joss MacIennan. ♪

Robin is playing with Ivana on her lap. The Pelican theme music is played as audience seats itself. Brian, Ivana's father, is in the front row of the audience. Robin stands up and puts the baby in Brian's arms, and walks over the pelican podium. The pelican podium is a lecture stand with notes on it and a drawing of the pelican taped to the front. Music ends. She reads:



Stretch Marks

The brown pelicans nest in trees, but the white pelican makes its nest on the ground. She places one to four eggs in the middle, which some say are round and pale blue, but by other accounts are white, rough textured, blood stained and dirty. With her bill she strokes the rubble of the nest to make rays or spokes in a symmetrical pattern, thus creating a mandala in which to incubate and hatch her babies. The pelican's pouch, like the uterus, expands twenty times its normal size.

The uterus is the largest and strongest human muscle. The pelican, who weighs only 15 pounds, can hold up to 40 pounds of water and fish in her pouch. These muscles really work.

So I guess we can take it as a compliment when they call us old bags!

On Reproduction

I can't believe he said that.

No new subjects for twentieth century art

Then he takes off to the movies.

Well what about women?

(I say that no matter what we're arguing about.)

The invention of the movie camera.

Incorporating random, chance elements in performance. Isn't that the definition of motherhood?

Why isn't breast versus bottle, or the right time to wean, theorized as much as the fluctuations in the business cycle?

The very fact that sentences move across the page in a straight line from left to right is an invention of male artists. I had to learn to write with a prosthetic penis!



She walks around the podium and speaks to the drawing of the pelican

Robin takes Ivana back from Brian and walks over to a chair and sits with the baby in her arms. Musical transition.

Robin unbuttons her blouse and begins to breast feed.



The audience laughs. Ivana stops feeding and looks around to see where the noise is coming from.

Ivana making noises. Robin puts her left breast back and changes the baby to the other breast.



Robin closes her blouse.

The names of the goddesses are addressed to Ivana. Slow music in the background.



Robin gets up to waltz to the music holding Ivana and chanting to her.



(That's going too far. I always do that.)

The woman's sentence will look the way we talk. We talk around and around. It takes us forever to get to the point. We're all starting to sound like our mothers.

We will write clitorally! That's it — the clitoral sentence as Marx said of human history, will be a spiral!

Movies. Women artists in the last decades of the century are analogous to the invention of film in the first decades.

Our very existence is a technological fact. We're here because we control reproduction. Either we don't have them or we have them when we want them.

We're about where the movies were just before the talkies came in. Except we talk too much. Our features will have silences.

And new... old ...

Words.

Invocation to the Moon Goddess

Ishtar

Sacred Stone

Venus' Shrine

Astarte

Great Goddess of Arabia

Goddess of Untrammelled Sexual Love

Impression of Aphrodite

Mistress of Turquoise

Many Breasted Mother of Mysteries

Mourning Aphrodite of Lebanon

Winged moon

Perfect Intelligence

All Dewy One

Queen of the Dust

Mistress of the Field

Green One

Hecate the Dark Moon

Sender of Nocturnal Visions

Goddess of Magic

Opener of the Womb

Silver Shining, Seed-producing and Pregnant

She of the Ten Thousand Names

Black Anu

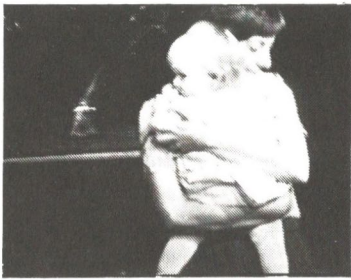
Kilili

Shing Moo

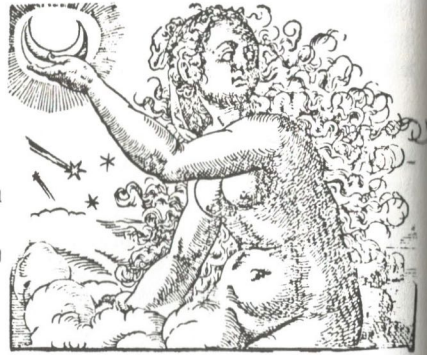
Antea

Cybele





Selene
Derketo
Al-Uzza
Irnini
Anahita
Artemis
Dea Syria
Atargatis
Ashtoreth
Ishtar
Ishtar
Ishtar



Robin's voice on tape. Music stops.



During the taped speech Robin gives the baby to Brian to hold. She puts on a glove with puppet fingers and plays with Ivana, then gives her a doll. Ivana is squealing.

Spoken

Tape starts again

Robin sits in chair and starts to speak

Birth

She was born so cleanly
there was so little blood
Kite on a string, flying from the very centre, dead
centre, of my body.
The placenta slithered out; then there was nothing
left inside. The midwife put my nipple in the
baby's mouth.
I wasn't holding her. Just lying there with her in
the space between my arm and my stomach.
That hurt one fuck of a lot, I said.
Everyone frowned.

I had to say something to bring myself back.
She fills up a hole so big I never knew it was
there.
The first few days when she cried I held her to my
chest.
When she felt my heartbeat, she stopped. As if
she were still part of my body. But later when she
cried, her lower lip shivered.

I whispered her name to her. Ivana.
Ivana Victoria.

I named her over and over. I phoned everyone.
Friends and acquaintances and people I hardly
knew. So I could hear myself say: I'm a mother. I
have a daughter.

Once the hard work of getting the head out was
over, the rest slid out in a great slippery slithery
rush. One day, changing her diapers, there was a
hard brown turd in her, half in and half out. She

Musical transition.

**Robin goes over to the pelican
podium and starts to read:**

**Robin walks over to the side wall.
Music starts, dramatic and loud.**

**Robin walks across the room and as
she begins to speak, music stops.
She picks up laundry basket and
holds it during this speech.**



She squats, still holding basket.



squirmed around for a while before it finally came
out; then there was a big gush of yellow shit
behind it. That's exactly what it was like. It was
like having the biggest shit you ever had.

The Fool

In ancient Egypt a pelican signified a fool. It was
easy for fowlers to plunder their eggs because the
nest was on the ground. They surrounded it with
dried dung which they could set on fire to keep the
mother pelican away. She would beat the air with
her wings in fear, but this only fanned the flames,
and singed her wings. So the fowlers caught her
and stole the eggs.

I dream two men are trying to kidnap the baby.
Frantic to save her, I leap at one of them, my
fingers go around his throat. This only allows the
second man to overpower me from behind. They
tie me up, prepared to kill us both. I'm halfway
across the hall to her crib before I wake up.

Battle Fatigue

I'm so tired
when my feet hit the floor
it feels like I'm standing
on the skeleton of my feet.

I hate the sight of my dearest friends

My skull feels like an egg
someone just cracked
in order to scramble my brains

music
feels like poisoned arrows
in my flesh

A caress
feels like
cats' claws on my neck

Sunlight on snow
hits my eyes
like laser beams

I'm so tired
I wonder how anyone
in the whole world
and down through all of time
has ever survived it.

Musical transition.

Ivana is waving at Robin and making noises. Robin starts to fold laundry, then picks up Ivana and carries her over to podium.

She holds Ivana in one hand and turns pages with the other as she reads:



Musical transition.

Robin walks over to the chair and sits down with Ivana on her lap.



Ivana starts howling. Robin strokes her hair.

Audience laughs. Ivana looks around at them.

Robin addresses this section to the pelican drawing.

Breaking the Suction

Feeding time in the pelican colony. The mother drops into the nursery with a pouch full of fish. She backs up, arching her neck until the ends of her bill can be anchored in the ground, and slowly opens the enormous pouch. The baby bird dives down into his mother's throat until only his flapping wings can be seen. When the food's all gone, or when the mother has had enough, she tries to stand. But the baby won't come out. The mother shakes and shakes him, covering ten or twelve feet of ground, until she finally throws him off his feet and sends him sprawling in the dirt.

At first she sucked for a whole hour at a time, and every two hours she wanted the breast again. That's twelve out of twenty-four hours on the tit. My nipples felt as if they'd been chewed. For weeks I couldn't hold a plate of glass without spilling something; my whole being seemed always to be spilling out. Downtown shopping or talking to someone at a party great dark wet blotches would appear on the front of my dress. To get her to stop, just when I felt my nipples were flayed beyond endurance, I poked my little finger in her mouth. It's called 'breaking the suction.' It always enraged her. She screamed so loud to stop my ears from hurting I'd shove the nipple back in her mouth. Someone told me it was cruel, this practice of breaking the suction, and as has been claimed for all infant care practices → and their opposites — would result in severe and permanent psychic damage to the child.

Do your friends look down their beaks and hint that you are an inadequate mother, merely because you fling your baby into the dirt when you can't stand his gobble, gobble, gobbling a second longer?

Robin feeds Ivana juice. Robin's voice on tape.



Robin puts the baby in Brian's arms, goes to centre stage, dances and sings to rock and roll on the piano.



The music suddenly stops. Robin pauses, looks around. Music starts and stops again.

Spoken.

Dear mama pelican — in your heart do you have secret doubts?

Do you think if you were a true mother, instead of this selfish bird who wants so much flying and fishing time to herself, you would let your baby guzzle indefinitely?

Did it hurt to lay that egg?

Thank You Very Much...Milk

I wake at five in the morning, my breasts so full I have to get the baby up and let her suck on them. Milk flowing, spurting from my breasts, dribbling down her neck, sweet milk running down my body, the salt taste of semen and sea water in my mouth.

Honeysuckle is the pearl of all flowers
Of all jewels, pearl is the honeysuckle

Milk rains over us
This is the reign of milk
breast stream of nurture opalescent water mother
mother of pearl smooth face dripping with spilled
milk of flowing love flowing through women through
pain through death flowing on great river giving life...

Afternoon Nap

The secret of successful breast feeding is to take three naps a day

If the phone keeps on ringing
I will rip it from the wall
If someone doesn't turn down the record player
I will throw it out the window
If the man next door doesn't stop mowing the lawn
I will punch him in the head
If the woman across the street doesn't stop yelling
at her kids
I will disembowel her
If the jet plane continues to roar over my house
I will machine gun it down

if the baby keeps on crying,
If the baby keeps on crying —

The baby keeps on crying.

**She takes Ivana over to podium.
Transition music. Robin reads:**



**Robin takes Ivana back, sits down
and feeds her juice as taped voice is
playing.**



Read at pelican podium.



**Ivana burps, Robin and audience
break up laughing.**

**Robin walks around with the baby.
Her voice plays on tape. Musical
background.**

**Ivana making noises, grabbing juice
bottle.**

On Abortion

Because the alchemical pelican
loves its young to excess
she puts them to death with her claws
but on the third day for grief
she mutilates herself
pierces her breast with her beak
then letting the blood from her body
drip upon her fledglings
she raises them up from the dead

*three times
you called to me
I said: I don't know you
odour of citrus rind rakes the air*

*three times
I allowed the womb to be
scraped out like an orange
silent splash of a single drop of blood
falls on the cold cement basement floor
over and over*

*Only after my baby was born
I began to hear in the night
the cries of the one I killed
would be seventeen years old now*

The pelican is also the name of an alchemical
vessel, the spout of which runs back into the belly
of the retort. The directions for making the philo-
sopher's stone are:

Take the child of the bird which is mixed with
redness and spread for the gold its bed which
comes forth from the glass; and place it in its
vessel whence it has no power to come out except
when thou desirest, and leave it until its moistness
is departed.

The pelican is the hermetic vessel, the conjunctio
or uniting of separated qualities. It is the circular
distillation, it is the mandala, the completion,
the cure.

*Green willow tree bends down its branches
to touch small graves
moving silently
in the breathing wind*

Robin speaks

**Ivana is still making noises. Robin
gives her to Brian to hold, and walks
back to centre stage.**

Noise as Ivana drops her toy.

Sung as a hymn to slow piano music.

¹ (St Thomas Aquinas, trans. by Richard Crashaw)

**Robin walks over and picks up
Ivana.**



**Robin brings a high chair over and
puts Ivana in it.**

**She puts a bib on the baby and
brings over a bowl and a biscuit.**



**Robin goes to get the bottle. Ivana
starts crying but stops as soon as
Robin gives her the milk.**

Years later, and at last, I am able to feel the pain of
that death. Those deaths.

It was right, of course, not to have a child until I
knew I was ready. It would have overwhelmed me.
I didn't want the life my mother had.
Yes, we control reproduction. But there is no birth
control which works and is really safe. So when
pregnancy is unwanted, women must have the
right to end it.

But it is still a botched, bitter world that any
woman ever has to face that choice.

*Oh soft self-wounding pelican
Whose breast weeps balm for wounded man!
Oh, this way bend thy benign flood
To a bleeding heart that gasps for blood.¹*

On the Nuke Unit

*Robin and Brian in a tree
k-i-s-s-i-n-g
First comes love, then comes marriage,
Then comes Robin with the baby carriage*

Wait a minute! — doesn't the nuclear family as an
economic unit under capitalism oppress women
and children?

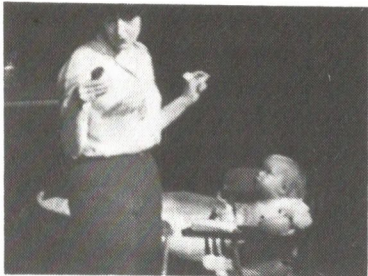
But here I am, in my very own nuke unit at last!
We need a new theory of the family.

Pelicans have equality of the sexes, by the way.
Male and female incubate the eggs, trading off
nest time for free time. Mama sits, Papa fishes.
Then they switch around in something called the
CNR — Ceremony of Nest Relief. Equal time. Equal
pay for work of equal value. Both feed the young
from their pouches. But sharing domestic tasks
doesn't really solve the problem. Even when the
man does 50% of the work, as he certainly does in
my nuke unit, there is still no greater inefficiency,
no poorer human design, no more pure idiocy than
two people in a large city with no relatives, trying
to care for a baby.

Pelicans live communally — and fish collectively.
The trouble here is that while the adults are silent,
the young sound like a construction site at the
airport. And although the brown baby pelicans
stay in their playpen tree nests for a few weeks,
the white pelicans learn to walk very early, and if
you don't watch them every second, they rip up
your books and drink the Draino.

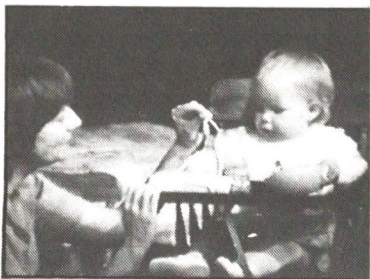


Robin brings over a jar of baby food, opens it and gives a spoonful to Ivana.



Robin finishes feeding Ivana, and cleans her face and hands during taped poem.

Soft baroque piano music in background.



Most pelicans don't mind too much. They say you can't change pelican nature, after all. But what about those who need to or want to write or paint or make music? When the chicks are asleep they lie awake trying to decide if they should move out or if they could afford a pelican *au pair*. If it would be ethical to exploit a young female pelican in this way. They just can't resolve the contradiction between the isolation of the nuke unit on the one hand, and the need for privacy on the other.

When to Introduce Solids

When to introduce your baby to solid foods. Hello Mr. Gerber's strained carrots, no salt or sugar added, I'd like you to meet my daughter, Ivana. *Hello Ivana, you can just call me mush. Orange mush if you want.*

Poem for Pat

Another rhythm
another style
another accent
— across all these we leap to friendship

Another country
another season
another faith
— beyond these a spark lights us
sisters
in the ancient, secret cult
of baby worship

*"She was a real little woman today
a real little woman
When she wasn't sittin' up
she was rollin' over
when she wasn't rollin' over
she was suckin', suckin', suckin'
on her little toes
a real little woman she was
she smile and smile
even when you down
she smile and smile
and you have to laugh, man
you have to laugh!"*

Music

Music stops.



Music starts again. Robin moves over to laundry basket and folds clothes. Ivana is playing in her high chair.

Music stops.

Robin makes faces at Ivana and kisses her. Ivana laughs and waves.

Music



Music ends.

We have our differences all right,
She tells me I'm too fat and won't let me take her picture
She blames **me** for the diaper rash
I exult in secret that I am the one who breast feeds
Each day we fight for the joy of making up
Proudly I announce, *I gave the baby yoghurt this morning.*

Of course, I brag, it really makes her shit stink!"
Don't kid yourself, she says
All shit stinks
The queen shit, my shit, your shit, her shit —
There's not shit in this world don't stink
Don't kid yourself
SHIT STINKS!

I go at the end of the day to pick up the baby
the little girls, two and three years old, hear my knock
bah-bee, bah-bee, bah-bee they chant, and all three of us jump up and down as Pat sweeps down the stairs holding the laughing bah-bee

How was she today, I ask, not needing to, but just to hear:

*She was a real little woman today,
I give her a bath*
Then I give her a little kiss on her pom-pom
she like that, man — she laugh and laugh,
She lift up her legs to get
another little kiss on her pom-pom!

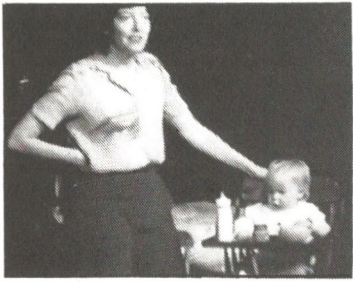
She hands me the baby
Our eyes meet over her shining head

Another landscape
another gesture
another sister
another
mother

Dear Pat
Thank you for looking after my baby
So I could write this poem about you

The End

One morning I walked into her room
she was standing up in her crib
grinning



I cried for a week

All the long journey, eighteen months
from conception, morning sickness
that lasted all day
deep hormonal depression
then the cracking of granite defences
cement falling away
inside the ocean-vast want
shaking me like a convulsion:
I'm going to have this baby



The body slowly rounding out
pumpkins, beach balls
I was free, could be for once
as big as I am
Evenings I walked out
and talked to the moon
carried her back into the house
inside my body
mornings I filled a blue china bowl
with warm brown eggs

**Robin picks her up and holds her.
Ivana starts crying and Robin gives
her to Brian. She gets Ivana's bottle
and gives it to her then returns to
centre stage as she speaks.**

One day
the moon and the sun walked off
I was alone
dark clouds bones of the sky
cracked and broke
light like knives of fire
seared the edges of the horizon
all the winds gathered in a knot
at the apex of the world
tornado twisting down
granite head of the cyclone
driving through boiling liquid
rock at the centre of the earth
and she was born



In the middle of paradise
breasts like footballs
vagina a torn battered wing
nipples large and erect as penises
newly circumcised
the body defined:
three angled co-ordinate of pain
swollen with milk and excreta
months of on-the-job training
in motherhood



how to change, swaddle, clothe, feed, hold
So much hard work to keep that
little door in my mind shut tight
the one that hides the words:
What's given can be taken away

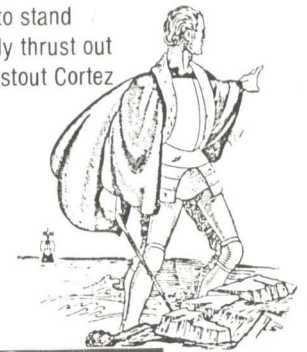
And then one day
she's on her feet laughing
having her own little joke with the world
not a baby any more

I cried for a week
grieved for the loss of the moon belly
the delicately bird boned baby
lay down and licked my bruised fur all over...

Her father has no patience with me
understandably
out of the corner of my eye
I see her waving from his arms
she's just learned this most social of gestures

We travel together now, she and I
crossing on the ferry
from Horseshoe Bay to Nanaimo
I take her up on the deck
for her first look at the ocean
holding on to the side of a box
she pulls herself up to stand
her little penguin belly thrust out
There stood she like stout Cortez

And all her fine hair
blowing back
in the sea wind



**Robin goes over and picks up Ivana.
She takes her to centre stage and
puts her down. Ivana stands up
holding on to the chair.**

**Ivana flops on the floor. Everyone
laughs.**

**Robin strokes her hair, lights dim,
and Pelican theme music starts to
play.**





Notes written on August 6, 1982, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

North-west corner of Queen and Bathurst Streets, 6:30 a.m.

Lynne and I are standing in front of the three public phones, our backs to the street, each of us bent over a fluorescent paint stencil reading "DISARM RAPISTS". We are half finished when Lynne says to me, *What are we supposed to do if a policeman comes/stops us?*

Don't say anything. Give your name but you don't know what you're doing.

Lynne: Don't say anything at all?

Paula: Uh uh,...why?

Lynne: There's one coming.

Paula: A policeman is here?? (*incredulous*)

Lynne: Right behind us, on a bike.

Paula: What should we do, keep spraying?

Lynne: I don't know. I suppose so. Do you want to?

Paula: I don't know.



The traffic cop is behind us. We straighten and turn to talk to him. (He is about 5'11", perhaps 24 years old, with a roundish, pudgy face, very short, reddish light-brown, kinky hair, stocky build, fair complexion. If pressed, I would say his eyes were blue).

Cop: Excuse me, ladies, what are you doing?
(*We look at the stencil, dumbly.*)

Paula: Ah,...

Cop: Is this the first one you've done?
(*No answer.*)

Cop: How many others of these have you done?

Lynne: I don't know. (*Shrugs*)

Cop: Have you been putting these all around the city?

Lynne: No.

Cop: Why are you doing this?

Lynne:preliminaries to our big poster campaign. (*joking*)

Pause, shuffling of feet. We put the paint down. Cop calls in for a squad car to the corner of Queen and Bathurst, reporting "Mischief."

We proceed to wait. Lynne and I go and sit on the Bank of Commerce steps. Cop follows, plants feet, crosses arms, begins to stand guard. Lynne asks if she could buy cigarettes at the restaurant next door.

Cop: I think you better just sit here.

We sit.

Later:

Lynne: I'm going to buy cigarettes. You can watch me through the window if you like.

(She stands, he follows and motions for me to come as well. Into the restaurant and back on the steps. More time passes.)

Lynne: We should have bought coffee while we were in there. I can hardly stay awake.

Paula: You're right. I wonder if we could. *(To cop)* Could we buy coffee? We'll treat you to one.

Cop: You stay *(points to Lynne)*. You can go *(points to me)*.

Paula: Do you want one?

Cop shakes his head no. I go and return with two coffees. More time...

About 7:30 the squad car pulls up. The officer gets out and converses with the traffic cop, who gestures to stencil. The officer walks over and takes a look at it. Officer approaches us. (He is about 5'10", twenty pounds overweight, early 30's?, dark brown straight hair, nice features, brown eyes?, olive skin). He makes some rather facetious remark, such as, *Well, ladies, you're up early. Would you like to come talk with me in the car?* He asks the traffic cop to get the stencil and paint. They're put in the trunk. The four of us get in the squad car. The officer pulls out his small, black notebook and a pen. He asks the traffic cop his name,

Cop: *Leff. L-e-f-f.* He also gives numbers I cannot remember. The officer then asks for Lynne's name, address and birth date, and then mine. Lynne tells him not to call her "dear".

Officer: Okay. You are now under arrest, to be charged, or you will be charged, or you may be charged with the offence of "Mischief to Public Property". I'll now read you your rights, well, er..not rights exactly, ah, your Charter of Rights.....

He proceeds to tell us that we have the right to remain silent, that what we say may be used against us, that we may contact counsel immediately (i.e., when we get to the station), etc., etc.,

Officer: Do you understand?

Lynne says yes. I say yes. The officer calls in to say that we are on our way. The traffic cops asks that the officer tell Division 14 that he is on his way too.

The traffic cop gets out and mounts his bike.

We begin the drive. The officer says that he isn't sure what will happen at the station, that we may only be cautioned, he doesn't know, but that it's "up to the detectives." Somewhere en route, the officer explains why he called Lynne "dear". He asks us if, because of the nature of the stencil, we belong to any particular "Ladies Group" in town.

Lynne: Not in relation to this.

The officer expressed what seemed to be sincere embarrassment over his handling of the delicacy of women's issues, in a conversational context.

We walk into the entry room and are asked to take a seat on the bench. There's a tall, thin, Germanic-looking officer behind the counter who begins to fill out forms for Lynne and me. We are asked if we were ever arrested before.

Lynne: No.

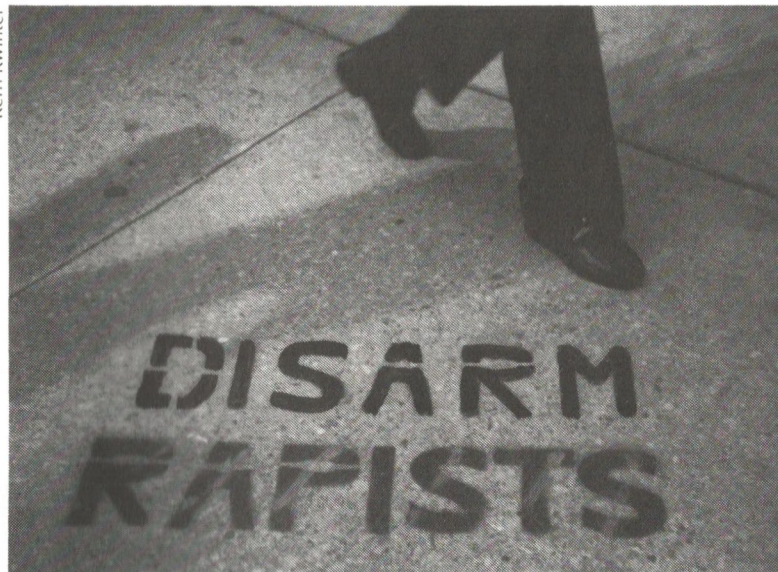
Paula: Uh uhhmmm.

We are then asked to follow the arresting officer and traffic cop upstairs to what is called the Old Office. Once inside, Lynne and I are ushered into separate but adjacent rooms at the back. We are told to empty our pockets onto the tables. I had 80¢ and the hood key to Lena's (the driver) car. The arresting officer asks me whose car the key belongs to.

Paula: A friend of mine.

Arresting Officer: The one who drove off?

Kerri Kwinter



I shrugged. I'm sure it was taken as an affirmation. He takes the key and leaves, closing the door. I am shut inside to wait for further notice. I hear office voices joking and swearing outside the door. *Disarm rapists? What does that mean, cut their balls off?*

The arresting officer enters carrying a typewriter complete with a summons form and begins to type out my name, address, phone number, place of work, work number, next of kin, and her address. I can't remember my S.I. number. He asks if I've ever been arrested before.

Paula: No.

Arresting Officer: For anything at all?

Paula: No.

(Out in the office I hear my name mentioned in connection with a phone call.)

Arresting Officer: My...a call from a lawyer already.

Paula: Lynne must have called one.

Arresting Officer: No, I think your friend(s) did.

Paula: Oh.

Arresting Officer: Am I being polite enough for you?

Paula: Yes.

We joke about relative typing abilities. With the form finished, he gets up and leaves without closing the door. The sergeant motions for me to come out and points me to a phone. I talk to the lawyer. I sit some more. I play with a rubber band.

A woman cop (she is about 5'8", 28 years old?, blond hair tucked into her hat, around 140-145 pounds) enters and says, *Well, I'm here to search you.* Her voice sounds slightly fatigued and detached. I stand up as she's pulling the blinds.

Paula: Why? So no one will peek? *(No answer.)*

I turn to face the wall as she says, *Strip.* She checks each piece of clothing thoroughly as it comes, sets it down and waits for the next.

She: Drop your drawers. *(I begin to take off my underwear.)*

She: No, that's enough.

Paula: Oh, I though maybe you wanted to poke around a bit.

She: No, thanks, I'd rather not.

Paula: Yes, well, I'd rather you didn't. *(I start to get dressed.)*

She: So, what are you in for?

Paula: Ah, we've been charged with Mischief to Public Property.

She: What did you break?

Paula: We didn't break anything.

(Pause. She looks on as if expecting clarification.)

Paula: ...We were found with a stencil.

She half smiles, dryly, and leaves the room. I open the curtains and sit on the ledge. More playing with rubber band. Sound of the door opening — Sergeant enters. I stand.

Him: You know, this is really silly.

Paula: Yeah, ha. *(I thought he meant us being brought in for spray-painting.)*

Him: *(something to the tune of)* ...Going around spraying paint on sidewalks, spraying things that people don't want to look at anyhow, it offends them. We don't want graffiti here like they have in New York City. This is not New York City *(did he say 'thank God'?)*. And you put this garbage all over the city. There are better ways of dealing with these problems. I don't like rapists either. My job, I put them in front of a judge. There are right ways of doing things.....

I say nothing. He turns and leaves. I sit in the chair, waiting.

Arresting officer enters holding the trunk key in his outstretched hand.

Officer: What kind of car does this belong to?

Paula: I know nothing about cars.

Officer: It's a G.M. model!...

Paula: *I shrug.*

Officer: What colour is it?

Paula: I really don't want to answer that.

Officer: There are a lot of girls out there....you don't want to keep them waiting..."

Paula: Why don't you ask them?

Officer: Ha, ha.

He gives me the key and leaves. I go to the window and look out. I see Louise and another woman standing at the phone booth. Louise is talking to someone. She hangs up and they walk toward the building and out of sight.

The arresting officer enters with the summons report/form. He asks me if I still want a phone call. I say no.

Officer: Then sign here. It shows that you turned down telephone privileges.

I sign.

It's going on 8:40. I wait some more.

Arresting officer and traffic cop enter and ask to see my money.

Paula: I think I have 80 cents.

He writes this sum in the appropriate box on the summons form.

Officer: This means you had eighty cents and that it was not held. Sign here.

I sign. Senior motions for me to step forward. He reads the Promise to Appear form to me.

Officer: Do you understand?

Paula: Yes.....But, why does one go for fingerprinting before the court date?

Officer: Well, for the records.

Paula: But you said it's for the 'identification of criminals'. Shouldn't you wait until after the trial?

Officer: No, no, no...

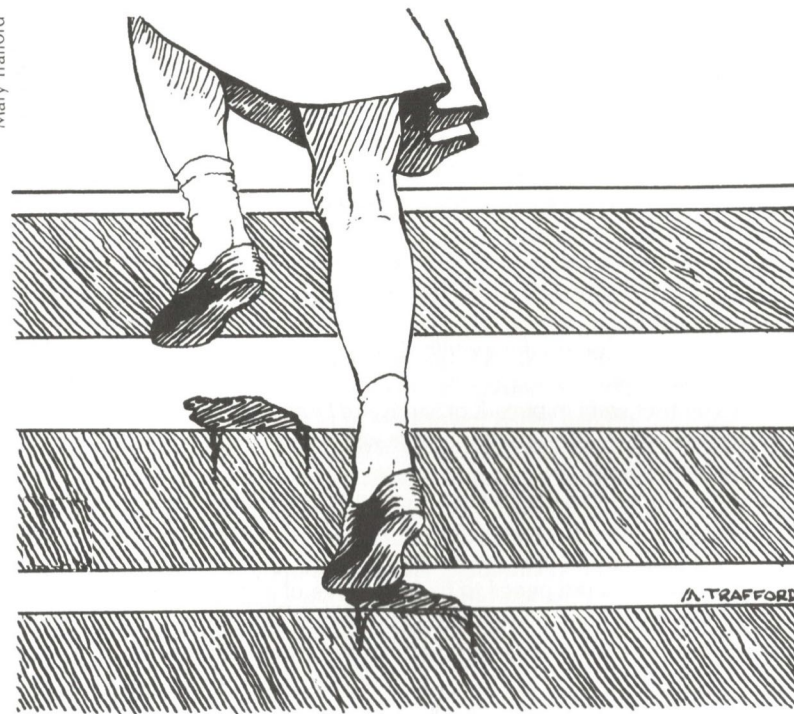
(I sit back down.)

Officer: Lynne?

Lynne steps up. Arresting officer motions for me to follow him and points to the brown door of a washroom in the next room. I begin to go behind the counter, he corrects me and I go around in front of it.

Hi! I look up into the faces of my sister cohorts. *Hi!* I use the can, sit down with the others until Lynne arrives and we leave the station.

Mary Trafford



Scab

Bibbi Lee

After the bombs had been dropped and it was discovered that most of them were duds, evacuated families were allowed to return home. The bombs had made craters from the impact and detonation crews were dispatched to remove them. The children were kept indoors while this took place. On the day the work was completed we made our way to the crater nearest home. It was a hole in the paved road, a large bowl of earth and gravel with scalloped edges. The area was roped off but I crawled under the hemp barrier. My friend Oluf even ventured into the hole, braving displeasure and calls to get out of there from the few adults whose curiosity had matched our own.

Ellen did not show. Her house had been burglarized while she and her parents were away during the overnight evacuation, and Ellen's mother would not let her go outside. Late that afternoon I climbed the eleven con-

crete steps to her back porch. It was summer and I wore a knitted dark blue skirt. One white chicken with a pale pink comb hanging to one side stood perfectly still at the top of the stairs. I knew it was a blind chicken but it watched me as I fell and reopened the deep wound below my right knee-cap. Blood flowed in a slow, thick ribbon down my shin. Limping, I reached the wooden porch to knock at Ellen's door. It was ajar. I had to hold the knob with one hand while I knocked with the other in order for it not to open more. Ellen's mother appeared, I curtsied, and the chicken hurried inside.

Oh, Sarah, she said to the hen, trying to stop its passage with her feet.

Can Ellen play? I asked. My knee hurt and I held it with my left hand, standing on one leg.

No, but you can come in for a while. Does your mother know you are here?

Yep, I said, lying.

Ellen's mother went in pursuit of Sarah and I followed through their living room to the kitchen. Ellen sat at the table with a book and colouring pencils.

Hi, Karin, she said.

Her mother cornered the chicken, picked it up with both hands and, holding it in front of her the way my mother would hold my sister's dirty diaper, marched it to the porch and set it down.

Ellen let me use a red pencil to fill in the area of a girl's shoes. The socks were already dark blue. Ellen had had her hair washed and braided. Plaid ribbons decorated the ends of her pigtails. My hair was short and dark. I was envious of her blond curls which her mother thought unruly and kept in braids. I told Ellen about the crater. She didn't say anything.

Can Ellen play tomorrow? I asked her mother.

Yes, in the morning, she answered. She was taking two mackerel out of a bundle of newspaper by the kitchen sink. They were stiff and blue, some of the newspaper sticking to their skin. Their eyes stared through a mother-of-pearl film. She washed them.

I'll come get you, I said to Ellen.

Good, was all she said, but she smiled and coloured some more on the red shoes I had sloppily filled in. Her mother walked me to the porch door. Sarah was standing outside on one leg. She didn't make it inside before the door closed behind me. A new scab was forming on my knee. The dried blood on my shin and in the palm of my hand was dark brown and brittle. I made it down the steps without bending my right leg. When I looked back, Sarah was standing on one yellow leg, her head cocked to one side, pink comb flopped over, watching me. I turned and ran.

They had two rabbits as well as the five chickens. The animals were kept in an enclosed area under the porch. Keeping them warm in the winter was a problem. Great care had been taken to cover the walls of the enclosure to assure that no light or heat escaped from the single lightbulb which was suspended from the low ceiling. When the war was over her father slaughtered the two rabbits for Christmas dinner but no one ate. Their skins became Ellen's hat and a muff which she occasionally wore. The muff hung around

her neck on a braided silk cord and made her feel self-conscious and different from all the other kids. We did not know what a muff was until she appeared one grey and cold afternoon to join us at the pond where we skated in the winter. We laughed at her then because she could not keep her balance with her hands in that muff. We thought she was a snob and a dummy although the rest of her clothing was as ungainly and pieced together as ours, if not more so.

My knee in a bandage, I hurried to Ellen's house the next morning. Sarah was nowhere to be seen. I had run the whole distance not wanting to miss a single moment of her allotted playtime. I liked playing with Ellen. She made up stories and we acted them out together, mostly under the slab of slate which formed a table in her yard. It had a central pedestal and we hung blankets over the top to form a small circular room underneath. In this tiny room we played with empty cans, discarded saucers, and the seven dwarves. Snow White was kept in a drawer in her parents' bedroom. I had seen her only once and thought her magnificent. The seven dwarves were made of bakelite and were beautifully coloured. We did not know the story of Snow White and the seven dwarves. The dolls simply represented gnomes according to the Norwegian tales of those industrious little people who live inside the mountains, creating glorious silver trinkets.

I wanted to play in our secret room under the table this morning. It was warm and a good day for gnomes. Ellen did not want to. Her mother had let her out with admonitions not to go near the bombraters. Ellen wanted to play away from her house. We made our way out the front gate and were walking down the gravel sidewalk when she stopped and showed me the two large copper coins in her palm. I was impressed. She said her father had given them to her so that we could go to the store and buy anything we wanted. We both knew that fizz powder would be our choice. We would have preferred chewing gum. It lasted a long time if you kept it overnight in an egg-cup filled with sugar. But there was no chewing gum or sugar. We ran all the way to the store and told the lady behind the counter what we wanted: raspberry-flavoured fizz powder. Ellen handed over the two five öre coins and we went to sit on the curb to enjoy our treasure. Fizz powder was meant to be mixed with water to be a surrogate carbonated drink, but we preferred to put some in the palm of our hand, stick a wet finger in it, and transfer the stuff to the middle of our tongues where it would bubble and make our mouths feel funny.

Ellen and I sat on the curb for a long time until half of the contents of each paper envelope was gone. I picked on the bandage on my right knee until it came loose at the edges. The rest was stuck to the scab. Ellen looked at it. She said to close my eyes and bite my lip and she would do the rest. She did. Scab and bandage came off with a resolute jerk from her hand. Tears stood in my eyes as I opened them on her command and viewed the bleeding knee with disgust. She blew on it with raspberry-scented breath. I left the bandage in the gutter when we departed and started up the hill to the forbidden crater.

No one was around when we got there. No vehicles went by even though it was a main road. We helped each other over the rope. I could tell that work had been done since the day before. Earth and gravel had been put in the hole. Two open barrels filled with tar stood by the side of the road, their contents black. A skin had formed on the surface as in a pot of scalded milk cooling.

Together we built a road inside the crater. It was in the shape of a spiral, starting in the middle and ending in a hill up the side of the crater, joining the real roadbed and leading to the tar barrels. We dug holes here and there and used sticks for imaginary bridges. It was decided that these should be paved. We dipped the sticks in the tar. They came out with a thick coating of black goo. Ellen got some on her hand. She tried to pick it off with her teeth and succeeded in chewing it off. She dipped two fingers into the barrel and scooped out a lump of tar. All of it went into her mouth. She said it tasted good, but I was not convinced and refused the experiment. She chewed for a while, then opened her mouth for me to examine the results. It was black. Her teeth were coated, showing bits of white through here and there. I told her to take the tar out. She said she couldn't. Sensing trouble I said we had better go to my house to take care of it. We walked in silence. Her teeth were sticking together and every once in a while she would flash me a tight-jawed smile, lips curled back like a snarling patrol dog. I was frightened, knowing I was partly to immeasurable punishment. I wanted to cry, but Ellen, who was in far more trouble than I, showed no signs of fear. She tried to talk but I could not understand the mumblings through her clenched teeth.

My mother was at home and noticed the missing bandage immediately. She started to scold me and I told Ellen to open her mouth and she flashed her snarling dog smile at my mother whose mouth opened in astonishment.

Oh, my God, she cried and then she burst out laughing. She sent me to my room which I shared with my baby sister and older brother. I went to bed and to sleep, the black-out curtains securely tied down. My mother walked Ellen home. I did not see her for a long time after that.

Women Who Kill

Judi Stevenson

Women Who Kill by Ann Jones sounds like the sort of book you might pick up in the bus station, hoping for a good trashy read on the way to see the folks in Timiskaming. It's not. It is a serious study of the murders committed by women in the USA over the last 200 years: who was killed, why, and with what impact on the public imagination.

The Third Deadly Sin by Lawrence Sanders sounds like a religious tract you'd find mouldering in Grandma's attic. It's not. It is a best selling novel about a female mass murderer, hacking open men's throats and stabbing them in the genitals as part of her "MO" (*modus operandi*).

Why did two such different books on the unlikely topic of murder by women hit the booksellers at the same time? It is because of what they have in common. They are both about men's fear of women. Jones knows it, but Sanders seems unaware. His unawareness is telling, for it seems to me that fear of women is the unconscious source of his book — and the reason it is selling faster than beer in the ballpark.

The scholar Jones and the pop novelist Sanders have something else in common. Both are having a conversation with the women's movement. Jones threw herself into an academic debate which eventually made it to daytime television talk shows. One side made the provocative claim that the women's movement has "freed" more women to become criminals. Jones says no. In *Women Who Kill* she says that men's fear of free women breeds over-reaction to the few women criminals that there are.

And over-react is exactly what Sanders has done. His women characters in *The Third Deadly Sin* are pure textbook examples of misogyny — the fear and hatred of women. But more about them later. Let me first praise Jones before I vilify Sanders. Jones' book makes gripping reading. She has

searched out a lost literature of women's homicides, and retells some of their stories. They are pathetic and dramatic, even in the neutral words of the historian. I was unexpectedly moved as I came to know them by name: Mary Martin, who killed the bastard child gotten on her by her master's act of rape; Hannah Kinney, alleged to have poisoned two layabout husbands after supporting them for years by long hours in a millinery business of her own; Mary Harris, the Irish shopgirl convicted of shooting the man who jilted her after promising marriage since she was 13; Roxanne Gay, who cut the throat of her 225 lb. defensive linebacker husband to stop the years of beatings he gave her every time the Eagles lost a game ... and many, many more. Some are grotesque and unsympathetic. But most are victims more truly than criminals: prisoners of a time or a place or a family or a man that brought them to the edge of desperation — and then pushed them over. I felt the flexing of my own anger as I read: rage for generations of women who experienced obliterating kinds of oppression, with no hope of freedom.

In brief sketches Jones brings these women to life — and they are our symbolic mothers as much as the Elizabeth Cady Stantons or the Nellie McClungs. But it is not Jones' main purpose to resurrect them one by one. More important, she shows how the killings committed by women fall into clear patterns, given their shape by the rules that have defined and limited women's lives at particular stages in American history.

In colonial times, Jones discovers, women were scarce commodities. The Mayflower pilgrim mothers were less typical of the women who came than is Ellinor Spinke, one of the "rogues and whores of Newgate" (prison), jailed by transportation from England to the New World. Others were working class girls enticed or kidnapped from the backstreets of English cities. Some, no doubt, lived satisfactory lives. Others lived in near slavery as indentured servants or purchased wives. A few killed their masters/husbands in order to escape. Their crime was known as "petit treason", a scaled-down version of killing the monarch himself. Since the hanging of women was held to be "immodest", the punishment was burning.

A more typical murder of the times was the killing of bastard children. Bastardy was both illegal and immoral, so there was great incentive to erase the mistakes of ignorance and rape. These mistakes were all too common, enhanced by the impossibility of refusing sex with the master, and by laws which actually prohibited marriage for servants.

By the nineteenth century the country had become more 'civilized' and most women had become respectable as wives, or as textile workers. In either case, their round of life was limited, tedious and crushingly hard. The rights and privileges of men were ascendant. One of the responses of women of the time was protest: temperance, anti-slavery, suffrage, women's rights. Another was the occasional murder of husbands. It was never so common as wife murder, but the hysteria that accompanied it was much greater. And no wonder. The women's rights movement and the homicide of husbands were equally threatening to the established order of men. The men grew frightened, as rulers always do, of the possible revolt of the ruled.

Alleged poisoning, usually by arsenic, became the crime of the century. Jones' excerpts from trial evidence and tabloid accounts are almost funny. The men judging and jotting often found the motives of the women on trial so unthinkable and unnatural that they declared them either innocent, or mad. They could not imagine that a sane woman, no matter how mistreated, how impoverished, or how hopeless, could have any reason to kill a husband.

Another group of nineteenth century women who killed were the abandoned conquests of "vile seducers". These women were left not just brokenhearted or angry, but often pregnant and ruined, both socially and economically. They had no redress in law, and the few who struck out at their despoilers seem more like heroes than criminals. Some were celebrated as such even then, for there was a strong (but unsuccessful) lobby for laws against seduction.

Women's homicide in early America was particular to them. The justice they got was particular too. It treated them as dolls, as children, as witches or as fiends. Some, especially middle class "respectable" women, were treated chivalrously, and judged sympathetically even in barbaric cases. Many others were judged insane. Insanity was an excellent choice of defense for their lawyers, because it was commonly believed that pregnancy, partuition, menopause, and even menstruation were preconditions to insanity. Still others were judged punitively, harshly and hysterically. Pronouncements by judges and newspapers often rang with calls to convict and hang as a deterrent to other women, as if the streets swarmed with murderous women — as well they might have, given their frequently miserable lives.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the sexual rules of American society were beginning to loosen. But divorce was not available as a means of changing partners, so murder was sometimes the option. Cases involving an adulterous woman concentrated on her rapacious sexuality and the outrage of her betrayal of her husband more often than on the killing itself. These women were Eves, tempters of innocent men, and some of them feared that she lurked in the heart of Everywoman.

Which brings us back to Sanders' book, *The Third Deadly Sin* — a book about Everywoman. It was my hairdresser who recommended it. "Great," I thought, "Jones' book is mostly historical, so I need a bit of a window on how women who kill are seen today." I'm sorry I looked. As if the vile acts attributed by Sanders to his murderer were not bad enough, it dawned on me as I read that all three significant women in the book are monsters. Hard on the heels of that shock came the realization that almost every one of the distorted images of women who kill found by Jones in 200 years of cases are packed into this single novel — along with some classic bits of misogyny that Jones left out.

Sanders' murderer, ironically called Zoe ("life" in Greek), acts out Jones' themes as if programmed. First, she rebels directly against her economic masters by killing only in hotels, striking at the very business that employs

her (*petit treason*). Second, she has no direct reason to kill her victims; all innocent strangers to her (the fiend who kills without motive). Third, she entices her victims to their bloody ends by dangling her hidden sexuality before them (woman's insatiability revealed). Fourth, she has memories of a despoiling husband, who is nevertheless presented in mild terms (the over-reaction of women to 'normal' male appetites). Fifth, the chivalry of the male investigators at first lulls them into discounting women as suspects, so Zoe nearly gets away with it (permissive inequality before the law). And sixth, the most enraging part of all, she seeks men's blood only as she gets her period (insanity inherent in the woman's body)!

Then there are the women in the supporting roles: Maddie, the friend who disintegrates utterly from strength and vitality to vulgar exhibitionism when left manless; and Monica, the wife of our hero, who fails in her wifely duty to resign from her own life when her husband retires from the police force, evermore to serve him his favourite man-sized sandwiches in the study whenever the urge should take him. Instead she continues to develop her own interests: and what should these selfish activities turn out to be? Meetings of her women's group.

All this, and then the ending. In the final triumph of female evil over male innocence, our Zoe butchers the one wholly good person in the book, the one man who might have saved her. Alas, dear reader, some women never learn.

If the whole thing sounds transparent, don't be fooled. It is a skillfully written thriller, and I would not have seen the whole of its subtextual message of fear and hate had I not been alerted by reading Jones. Most of Sanders' readers have no such advantage.

The match between Jones' facts and Sanders' fiction left me in no doubt that the two books are outgrowths of the same phenomenon: swelling male fear of women. The same male fantasies that oozed to the surface alongside Jones' cases are served up on a lurid platter by Sanders, however unconsciously. The significance is this: when women are feared, they are punished and attacked. Is this a time of rising fear of women? The evidence is all around us.

One question remains: what about women who kill today? Jones thinks the 'typical' case of our times is the woman who kills a battering husband or lover. Not necessarily in the heat of an attack, but possibly after one is over or, like Roxanne Gay, before the next one can occur. I turned to the Canadian files to see whether they suggest the same pattern. (Canadian cases, of course, have never been drawn together; if women's history is underdeveloped, Canadian women's history is nigh unto non-existent.)

The most that I can say at this moment is that there are very few Canadian women who kill. The 1981 figures for Metro Toronto show 13 women charged with first or second degree murder, out of a total of 67 incidents. (Conviction rates were not available.)

In Ontario, using 1979 figures, there were 166 charges of murder and manslaughter laid: 20 women and 146 men. (Conviction rates were not

available.) In Canada as a whole, this time using 1980 numbers, there were 59 females and 454 males listed as "homicide suspects". And in 1978, the entire penitentiary system of Canada held only 37 women convicted of murder or manslaughter. This last small number is the one that tantalizes me, for behind it I catch the glimmer of our women and their stories.

As of today they are still unknown. But in a haphazard examination of the Toronto newspapers' coverage of women who have killed over the last three years, a variation of Jones' idea suggests itself. That is the case of the young native woman, defeated and despairing, in the city or on the reserve, killing a "john" who has used her for sex, or else the lover/husband in a violent relationship.

The 1979 case of Kristine Linklater is one. She was twenty-three when she shot her husband while both were drunk, after he had beaten her up for the dozenth time. The jury found her guilty of murder in the second degree, and the judge sentenced her to life in prison. He did not believe in leniency for a woman trapped inside a violent marriage, in a town too isolated to provide refuge (Old Crow, Yukon), in a culture where drunken oblivion is often the only alternative to suicide.

The judge, of course, was a man.

OURSTORY

Fireweed is, and will continue to be, a journal in the process of continual change and growth as Collective members leave and new women bring their ideas and energy into the shaping of the journal. This section is intended to keep you in touch with the women working on *Fireweed*.

Leaving the Collective:

Joss MacLennan is a Toronto xerox artist who has generously passed on her knowledge of *Fireweed's* production methods and collective process to the many new women joining the journal with this issue. Her patience, wisdom, and Saturday morning sacrifices did much to keep *Fireweed* alive during a time of transition.

Eddie Hoffman, a fiction writer, has contributed her editorial and administrative expertise to the Collective since Issue 9. Her advice and encouragement to our contributors has been invaluable. Eddie continues as an Associate Member of *Fireweed*.

Sheilagh Crandall has suspended her Collective duties while working temporarily in Kenya.

Joining the Collective

Sheila Block has moved from Vancouver where she was a Regional Representative and has now joined the Collective.

Susan Douglas-Drinkwater, art historian and critic, lives in Toronto. Susan is a member of the Women's Cultural Building Collective, and will be Managing Editor of Issue 15. She joined the *Fireweed* Collective in September.

Anne Nixon is a free-lance seamstress who lives and plays in Toronto. She worked on Issue 13 of *Fireweed*, and has now joined the Collective.

Neila Gupta is a writer who plans to become a film maker and therapist. Neila worked in the *Fireweed* office this summer and is active in many women's groups.

Eina Mahalek is a free-lance journalist and fiction writer. She is currently writing a screenplay on sexual harassment. She joined the Collective with this issue, and is just beginning to understand the jokes.

Makeda Silvera is a black woman, a worker, a lover, a feminist, a mother, a writer, a Rastafarian, a visionary...she refuses to be circumscribed by any one single identity which she feels is used by the ruling apparatus to divide the masses. She lives in Toronto with her two daughters.

New Associate Members

Linda Gustafson, a graphic artist, is now an Associate Member of the Collective, a rising air musician, and Art Director of this issue.

Christine Higdon is an Associate Member of the Collective who is currently working on a children's novel. In addition, she is entering a period of new discovery.

Kate Jarosz is an Associate Member of *Fireweed* and worked on Issue 13.

Carlyn Moulton is a freelance writer and television producer whose work has appeared in Canadian poetry magazines, *Waves*, *Toronto Star* and on CBC. She is an Associate Member and worked on *Fireweed's* Issue 13.



Acknowledgements

The Collective would like to express our appreciation and special thanks to the friends and associate members who willingly offered their time and talent in the publication of this issue: the regional representatives, for their continuing efforts; **Sara Adams** and **Monique Dykstra**, for their help during the planning stages; everyone who worked on the board game, which "never passed Go"; **Janet Patterson**, for her devotion beyond the call of duty; **The Women's Press**, for including us in the 1983 edition of *Everywoman's Almanac*; **Lisa Freedman**, **Janice Lavery**, **Jennifer Smith**, and **Lisa Wyndels**, for their help in proofreading articles; **Marlene Kadar**, **Daria Stermac**, and **Susan Sturman** for their tremendous efforts during production; **Ellie Barrington**, for her promotional counseling; and a Collective Cheer for **Lynne Fernie**, who got us started, and stayed just a phone call away.

Contributor's Notes

Lillian Allen comes from a large family of twelve in Jamaica who had everything but money. She has been reading poetry in Toronto since 1975 to community groups and night clubs. In addition to her poetry, she works full-time as a community worker. As significant people who have influenced her work as a poet, she would like to acknowledge Louise Bennett, a Jamaican storyteller and Oku Ohura, a dub poet also from Jamaica. She presently lives in Toronto with her husband and young daughter. She holds a B.A. degree in English from York University. **Paula Cornwall** is a painter working in Toronto, and a member of the Women's Cultural Building collective. **Susan Eckenwalder** is a ceramist who has exhibited widely in Canada and the U.S.A. She recently had an exhibition at Prime Canadian Crafts. She lives in Toronto. **Shirley Endicott-Small** is a Toronto sociologist, writer and one of the founding members of Education — Wife Assault, formerly known as Support Services for Assaulted Women. **Robin Belitsky Endres** is artistic director of Pelican Players, a multicultural theatre in Toronto. **Cynthia Flood** is a Vancouver writer whose stories have appeared in *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, *Makara*, *Wascana Review*, *Quarry*, *Matrix*, *Room of One's Own*, *Atlantis* and *Queen's Quarterly*. She contributed to *Common Ground: Stories By Women*, an anthology from Press Gang of Vancouver in 1980. **Neila Gupta** is a writer and future therapist and filmmaker. She is currently a University of Toronto student specializing in psychology, and a FIREWEED collective member. **Yvonne Klein** teaches and writes in Montreal and is a founding member of Newspace at Powerhouse and the Centre for Feminist Culture. Her work has appeared in Issue 11 of FIREWEED. **Bibbi Lee** is a writer, planning consultant and translator living in California. **Carlyn Moulton** is a freelance writer and producer whose work has appeared in *Poetry Canada Review*, *Waves* and on CBC. She is currently working on a ten-part series for television. Like everyone else she knows, she sometime hopes to publish a first novel. She is an associate member of FIREWEED. **Erin Mouré's** collection of poetry *Empire York Street* was published by the house of Anansi in 1979 and was nominated for the Governor General's literary award. Her work has appeared in Issue 10 of FIREWEED. **Maureen Paxton's** work has appeared in many issues of Fireweed. She works out of Toronto in both commercial and fine art. **Judy Posner** teaches sociology at Atkinson College of York University. **Judi Stevenson** is a writer living in Toronto. **Mary Trafford** is a medical illustrator studying at the University of Toronto. **Pamela Williams** is a photographer living in Toronto. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines. **Wendy Wortsman** is an illustrator and painter who lives in Toronto. "Working with the subject matter of this issue makes me really happy: it's what illustrating is all about." **Carole Yawney** teaches medical anthropology at Atkinson College of York University.

Announcements:

Women's Press is planning to publish an anthology of original feminist short stories by Canadian women. If interested, please write us for details: Judy McClard, Women's Press, 16 Baldwin St., Toronto, Ontario M5T 1L2

The Gay Self-Defense Group in Toronto offers an eight week self-defense course specifically designed to meet the needs of lesbians and gay men. In a supportive, non-competitive atmosphere, students learn basic strikes, kicks, blocks and releases from various chokes and holds. In simulated role-playing exercises we deal with one-on-one attacks, group attacks, rape defenses, and attacks with weapons. For further information contact the G.S.D.G. at 423-4803.

A Free-Standing Abortion Clinic is opening in Toronto. The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) wants to see this clinic and others like it succeed. To show your support for the establishment in Ontario of clinics giving safe, medically-insured abortions on demand, wrote to Hon. Larry Grossman, Minister of Health, Queen's Park, Toronto M7A 2K5. You may also wish to join or make a financial contribution to OCAC, Box 935, Stn. Q., Toronto, M4T 2P1, 961-1507.

The first issue of a new journal is out: **The Celibate Woman**, A Journal for Women Who Are Celibate or Considering this Liberating Way of Relating to Others!

Available from: The Celibate Woman, 3306 Ross Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008 at \$4 (for a single issue) or \$8 for a subscription (2 issues). Submissions welcome!

Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada's only women's university, is asking for one dollar from every Canadian woman to support urgently needed scholarships and bursaries for deserving women and to fund neglected areas of research in women's issues. Donations of \$5.00 and more will receive income tax receipts. Please make checks payable to Mount Saint Vincent University and send to:

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Erratum

The editors regret that the footnote on page 122 of Issue 13, in Susan G. Cole's article "From Ms. to S/M", was incorrectly attributed to Eve Zaremba. The origin of the quote is unknown. We are sorry for any confusion this may have caused.

UPCOMING ISSUES:

Issue 15: Feminist Aesthetics

Issue 16: Women of Colour

Submission deadline for Issue 16: December 31, 1982.

We deeply regret that we can no longer afford to pay contributors for their work. We continue to welcome and appreciate all submissions sent to us.

Submission Requirements

When submitting written or visual material to *Fireweed*, please:

- Always make sure that each submission is carefully labelled with your name and address.
- Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for our reply or return of your submission. (If you live outside of Canada, attach an international reply coupon with sufficient postage.)
- Type written material on 8 1/2" x 11" paper (single-spaced for poetry, double-spaced for prose). When submitting poetry, we suggest that you send six or seven poems to give the editors an idea of your work. For prose, no book-length manuscripts, please.
- Visual artists are encouraged to send whatever material you feel would reproduce well in our format. Send slides or photographs — no originals through the mail.
- Your covering letter should include a brief biographical note, including previous publication credits, if any.

These guidelines will ensure the safety of your work. Please write us if you would like further information.

event will be collecting material —
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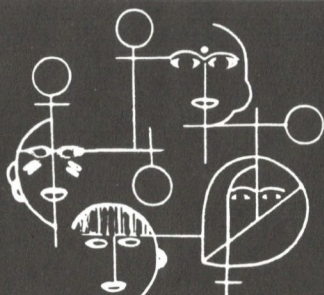
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***Although** in our heart of hearts, we may know that we are not the only person who has nightmares, whose heart-beat increases when someone walks behind us on the street at night, who has been raped, who has been beaten, it helps to realize that it is not our personal paranoia, inadequacy, victim-mentality or helplessness that allows these things to exist...*
