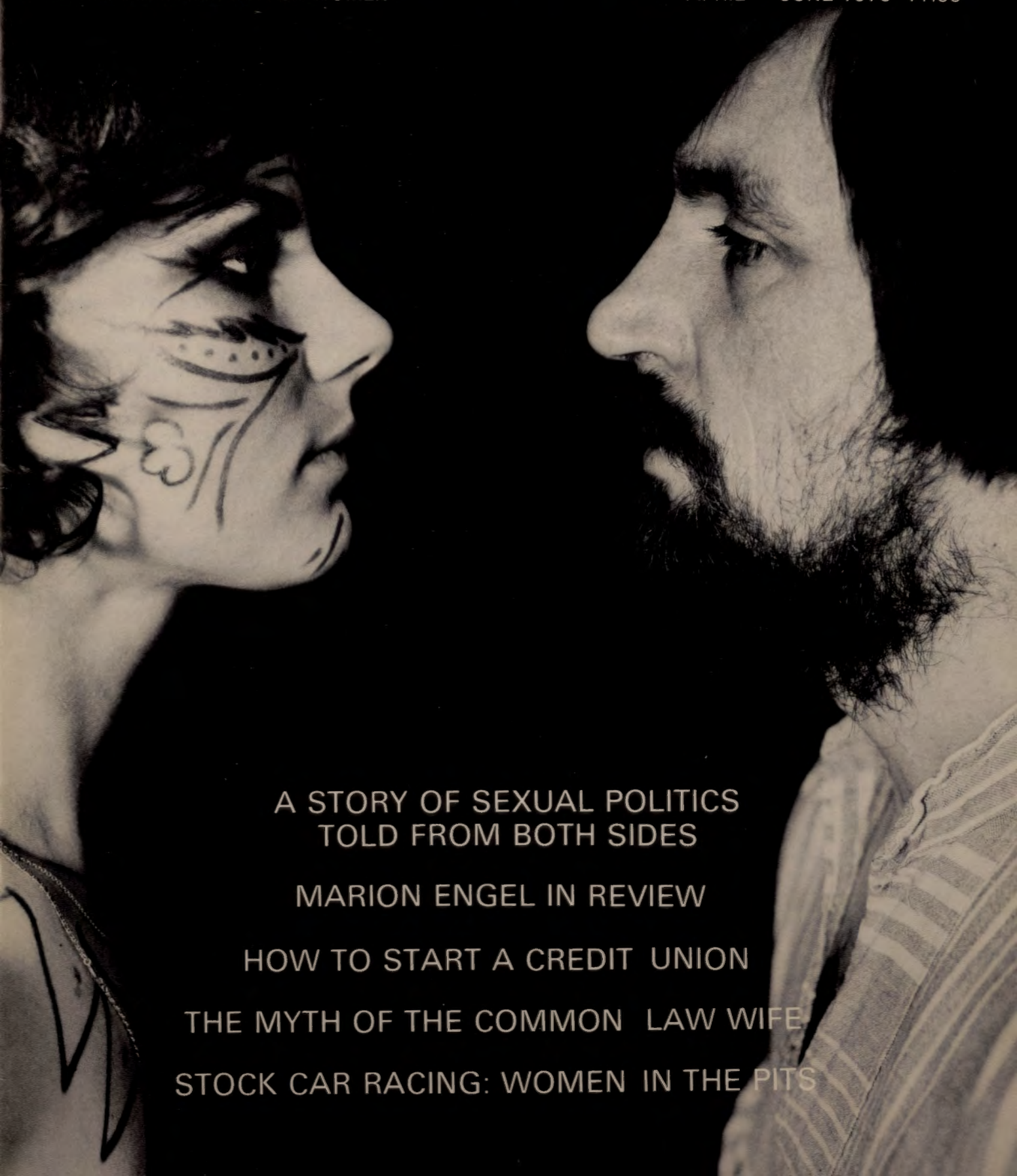


# Branching Out

CANADIAN MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN

APRIL — JUNE 1976 \$1.00



A STORY OF SEXUAL POLITICS  
TOLD FROM BOTH SIDES

MARION ENGEL IN REVIEW

HOW TO START A CREDIT UNION

THE MYTH OF THE COMMON LAW WIFE

STOCK CAR RACING: WOMEN IN THE PITS







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Branching Out

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# letters



Tanya Rosenberg is a star! The satire and humour in *Codpieces* is joyful indeed — I wish I could see the whole repertoire. Her work is a vindication of women that outdoes all the rallies and ravings of recent years. Hurray!

Margaret Phinney, Bridgetown, N.S.

*Codpieces* was thought-provoking and funny.

Mary Lee Morton, Sylvan Lake, Alberta

I was not impressed with the February/March issue, including the article *Codpieces*. There is so much for a Canadian magazine of women to write about that I see no need to try to compete with *Playboy* and the like.

Grace L. Cook, Edmonton

Anita Lerek's piece on meeting the women poets was really fine... but 'lady' is a four-letter-word to me, like 'role.'

Alison Hopwood, Vancouver

Your recent editorial about the "gearing down" of the feminist movement evoked again the enormous irritation I feel when I hear complaints about the slow progress towards women's equality.

Fundamental changes in society and culture take a long time to achieve. And we might do well to remind ourselves, in times of discouragement, of the long battle to abolish slavery in the British Empire. Attitudes towards slavery were almost as well entrenched as attitudes towards the inferiority of women. And although I do not wish to suggest that women today in Canada are in a position comparable to that of slaves in the 18th and 19th century, I do want to draw a comparison between the process — the long time and sustained effort — needed to abolish slavery, and the similar efforts that are needed today in the feminist movement.

William Wilberforce, as a member of Parliament, introduced a bill in the House of Commons for the abolition of slavery every year for *twenty* years! In 1811 he finally achieved the outlawing of the slave trade in the British Empire. And not until 1833 was the institution of slavery outlawed in British colonies. The first committee for abolition had been formed in England 100 years earlier, and it should not be hard for us to imagine the countless letters, petitions, study commissions, rallies, pamphlets and public meetings which preceded and contributed to Wilberforce's final success.

Feminists are asking for fundamental social and cultural change, and so I believe we must prepare ourselves for the long distance race, not the sprint.

In particular, I believe we must become less naive and more involved in politics. We have the vote, but we must learn how to organize and use it. Whatever way we choose to work for change, we must look forward to a long, sustained effort over many years, perhaps for many of us the rest of our lives.

It won't be easy but it will be worth it!

Ann Dea, Edmonton

I take issue with Laurie Bagley's cooing review of *The Diviners* (February/March). The central character, Morag Gunn, is quite contrary to the Venus Ms. Bagley labours to justify. She is, like many educated middle-class women of her age, an indecisive sufferer who obstructs and is obstructed by her rather lengthy development. The book is written with considerable commercial skill, exemplified by Laurence's preference for blatant categorization rather than character development. This is especially noticeable in her character naming.

*The Diviners* is not a literary achievement, but a saleable product of little substance.

Sonja Krickham, Oakville, Ontario

I disagreed with Karen Lawrence's article "Enough" (November / December). I still don't think that "enough" has been written (or done) about immigrant women, economic exploitation or anti-abortion legislation. In Toronto it costs \$35 just to get counselled about abortion, so what would it cost to get an abortion? Women cannot magically attain liberation by becoming androgenous superwomen overnight when the material conditions of their existence have not yet changed.

Gwen Hauser, Toronto

\*\*\*

## Note to Readers

We have been unable to make up the six weeks of work and revenue that we lost during the mail strike, so we have decided to publish five issues of *Branching Out* this year instead of six. The next three issues will appear at the beginning of July, September and November. All subscriptions will be extended to make up for the lost issue.



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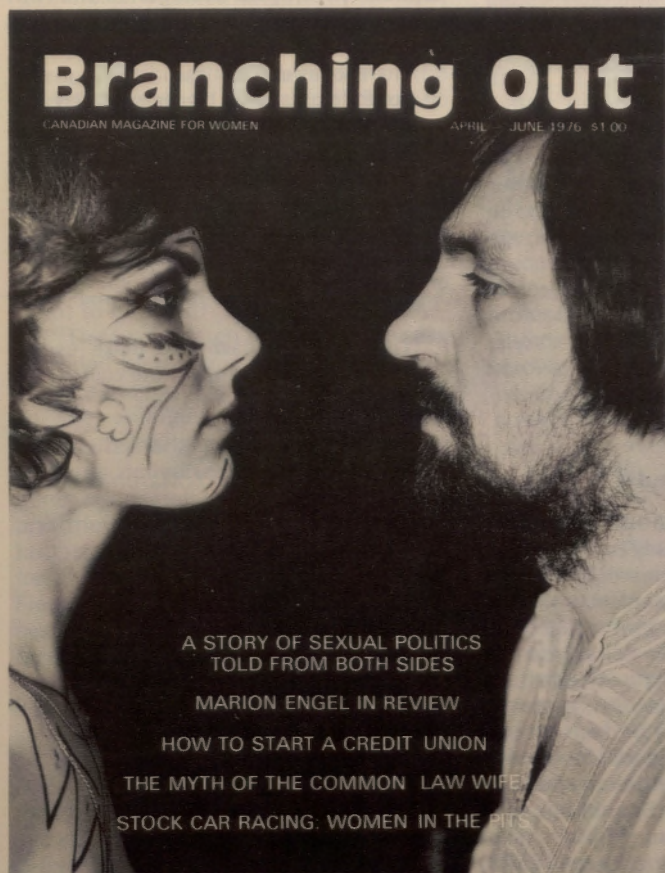
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# here and there

We welcome ideas from readers for this section. Items should be less than 500 words. Sorry, no payment, but we will send you a copy of the issue in which your contribution appears.



The Evelyn Roth Moving Sculpture Company in the sculpture "Possum Times."

## Birds of a Feather

What would *you* do with your left over feather mop when it has hit the dust? Vancouver artist Evelyn Roth is in the habit of recycling hers into beautiful new clothes. And if she can't get her hands on feathers, she'll make do with discarded videotape, worn wool sweaters, leather scraps and old fur coats.

Roth originally made tactile articles which functioned both as sculpture and wearables. After a New York show in 1971 which established her work as a permanent art form, she discovered videotape and became more concerned with the ecological aspects of art. In addition to the fantasy clothing she creates, her hopes for videotape include more useful items — knee pads, towing ropes, fishing nets and fences.

Roth believes that people should become involved in the creative process of her work and should not just view a finished product. With the formation of the Evelyn Roth Moving Sculpture Company, Roth's multimedia performances developed into moving sculptures. These pieces incorporate the textures, materials, and techniques of

her earlier works and set them in motion. People of all ages respond to her knit sculptures and she and her dance company have used them in workshops where people can explore their own movement and develop sensitivity to the movement of others.

For more of Roth's unique style, pick up the *Evelyn Roth Recycling Book* (Talonbooks) for \$6.95.

## Effects of Rape Studied

How are rape victims affected by their experience? A study has begun at the University of Guelph will look at the social and psychological effects of rape on women. Any woman who has been raped who would be willing to be interviewed or fill out a questionnaire is urged to contribute to the research project. All names will be kept strictly confidential, and results will be used to help women who have been raped.

Write to Betsy Spaulding, c/o Psychology Department, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario; or call (519) 742-6745.

## Thank heavens for legislators

Legislators have not forgotten the spirit of IWY as this excerpt from a speech in the Alberta Legislature shows.

Dr. Kenneth Paproski (Edmonton-Kingsway):

Mr. Speaker, on a very important item. Although International Women's Year has ended, I think it's very important that we in Alberta continue to recognize that important gender as equal and for their extra-special contribution to the life of Alberta and Canada. We as the male gender in Alberta too often forget their strong support, their equal and/or superior contribution to the well-being of our society and to the fabric of families in Alberta. Difficult as it may be to acknowledge from time to time by the male gender, I'd suggest that maybe it would be wise to just take two lines from Maurice Chevalier. If I may say this, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence and with the tolerance of the House. It's only two lines:

Thank heaven for little girls,  
For little girls grow bigger every day.  
Thank heaven for little girls.  
They grow up in the most delightful way.

Mr. Speaker, I won't sing anymore. But if I may just quote the other two lines. Those lines go like this:

Those little eyes so helpless and appealing  
One day will flash and make us crash right through the ceiling.  
Thank heaven for little girls.

Mr. Speaker, again I thank them all.

*Alberta Hansard, March 8, 1976*





## Midwifery Re-examined

Canadian women who argue for the benefits of a warm, familiar environment during childbirth are increasingly demanding home deliveries. Most doctors express horror at the suggestion of home deliveries and state that the trend, if it becomes widespread, will be a dangerous step backwards in obstetric care. This assertion is met with skepticism by home delivery advocates, who counter that the biggest danger is to the pocketbooks of obstetricians. In Europe after all, home deliveries by trained midwives are commonplace, and the mortality rate is low. In Canada, during pioneering days, the granny-midwife was looked to in doctorless communities and sometimes boasted an impressive record of successful deliveries.

Urban Canadians probably don't realize that the nurse-midwife plays an important role in northern communities, in Labrador and in Newfoundland. In all other parts of Canada, midwifery is illegal. The midwives who do practice in Canada are either European-trained or graduates of the post-R.N. course at one of the two Canadian universities which offer midwife training, the University of Alberta and Dalhousie. Peggy Ann Field, director of the University of Alberta program, and Judy Friend, an instructor in the same program, have received many calls recently from women who want to give birth at home.

The two women agree that the care provided by our hospitals during childbirth is inadequate, but they would like to see changes within the hospital system rather than widespread return to home deliveries. Both women have done home deliveries outside Canada and they feel the experience can be a fantastic one for the midwife, as well as for the mother and her family. But, says Field, "Within the Canadian health-care system, we don't have the back-up facilities for coping with home deliveries. If anything goes wrong, we don't have the sort of ambulance services that can get out with emergency help in a short period of time." Midwives in Canada believe that there must be some trained personnel available for women who insist on home deliveries, although we lack the medical safeguards that exist in some other



countries. In Sweden, where a high proportion of babies are delivered at home, cases are carefully screened beforehand and doctors are available on short notice if an emergency arises.

Field believes that improved treatment in Canada could be achieved if better use were made of nurses in the midwifery role in the hospital. In a normal pregnancy, the nurse-midwife would see the mother at home both before and after the birth, and would provide care for the mother throughout the labour. Because of legal restrictions the midwife could not do the delivery, unless it was an emergency and the doctor did not arrive. The doctor and midwife would be part of a team in which the role of the doctor would be to screen patients, and provide ongoing care in the event of complications.

Bringing midwifery into our hospitals would necessitate changes in attitudes, fee structures, and nursing schedules. Field suggests more sitting room accommodation in the hospital, where a woman in labour can "sit up, be with her husband, play cards or do whatever she would do at home." Nurses would have to have more flexible hours, so they would not suddenly go off shift when the patient was most in need of attention. There would have to be opportunities for nurses to see the patient before admission to the hospital and after release. This would mean changes in salary structure, "because a hospital budget

pays only for actual employment of staff in the case room." A fee-for-service structure might be necessary to cover the cost of the midwife with her own caseload. Finally, the opposition from doctors would have to be overcome, since the nurse-midwife in the hospital is seen as a threat to the doctor's livelihood. Resistance is particularly formidable in western Canada, where the ratio of obstetricians to population is unusually high. Field does not foresee midwifery undermining the medical profession, but feels it would take a demonstration project to convince doctors of this. "Change is a threat. What we need are the funds to set up research projects which would show the midwife functioning as a team member."

Acceptance of the nurse-midwife concept by the Canadian Nurses Association came several years ago. Prior to that, "it was too hot an issue to have official acceptance." When the program at the University of Alberta was established in the 1940's, by the then professor of obstetrics, it was called 'Advanced Professional Obstetrics' rather than 'Midwifery' because "he knew he would not be able to get it established with his medical colleagues otherwise. Recently we've begun calling it midwifery and we've suddenly run into static because we're being honest about what we're doing." And aside from the program at Dalhousie, no other midwifery training programs have been established in Canada "because medical opposition is such that these programs fold".

Both women believe, however, that public dissatisfaction with hospital treatment at childbirth makes the time right for acceptance of midwives in our health care system — provided that midwifery is not equated with home deliveries. One midwife in northern Ontario is able to play a role much like that which Field and Friend hope will eventually be possible throughout the country. Ironically, this is possible because the doctors in the area have more work than they can handle and are happy to utilize the midwife's skills. Concludes Field, "This sort of thing only occurs where there are overworked doctors, yet it provides better all-round care."

\*\*\*



# *End of Winter*

## *poems by*

### *rosalind macphee*

#### *End of Winter*

There is a sound  
in the mountain, deep  
with its foliage  
and waters, it has a voice  
that cannot be forgotten  
or described,  
a warning  
as if its foot were coming  
to life  
from the pain of needles  
or a malaise. A woman  
is awake,  
taking refuge  
closing the yellow eyes  
of the owl. Nourished  
with silence  
and snow, she climbs  
the pergola to  
the sun.  
Without explanation  
without knowledge  
she waits beneath its eyelid  
hoping for the rainbow  
for blood.

#### *The Banished*

Mehlia  
rides the bittern  
across the grey winter  
across the mountains  
and sky  
of old men's  
songs:  
in a window or  
a river, she is the face  
of madness  
or the white dress  
of death. She is waiting  
waiting with the bittern  
or the rain.  
She hangs from dreams  
and stands still  
at noon.  
No one weeps  
no one laughs  
as they breathe in her  
unknown shadow:  
no sound has she  
no track in the sand  
nor scent of musk.  
She is no seraphim or muse  
yet, she has in her heart  
the unending darkness  
that can bestride fences  
or practise flight on the  
reflection of  
trout.



## Spring

There are signs  
and indications:  
it is possible to see the  
coming of the season  
like the turn of a  
woman's face  
or an innocence that  
sounds behind a wall  
of sunsets, of blossoms  
as they leave their  
tracks.  
In her robes, she  
moves up the hill like  
blood  
into snow  
leaving a rue  
leaving flowers with eyes  
to spread like a fire  
into the mountains.  
There are nests and ice,  
and yet, sometimes  
she forbids us to look as  
she moves  
into twilight  
as she moves into laughter  
leaving her heart behind  
like a death or  
a lamb  
silent with suffering.

Vancouver poet Rosalind MacPhee has been published in numerous magazines, including *The Canadian Forum*, *Prism* and the *Malahat Review*. With the assistance of a Canada Council grant, she is completing a manuscript entitled *The Crucial Edge*.



photo by Eunice Willar





by Julia McLean  
illustration by Laura Coutts

# Militantly Impotent

## has the women's movement come to this?

Every strength conceals a weakness, every weakness a strength. In the case of the women's movement, its wide appeal is both a positive and a negative factor. Our movement should look for the signs of its own demise in the very conditions which gave so much force to its birth. When we talk about a women's movement, we are really discussing a myth. Since our beginnings in the sixties, we have suffered severely from a lack of unified strategy, and there are few signs that indicate we are getting over the dualism of the personal vs. the political which divided us in the first place. Many women have questioned the need for a 'political' way of viewing the world which is not based on immediate personal experience. This reaction to the theoretical and practical excesses of the male-dominated Left has helped keep the women's movement 'feminine', in the traditional sense of being personalistic, non-intellectual, and moralistic.

The power of feminism was supposed to derive from its ability to encompass all women's experience, to transcend class differences, and to embody a fundamentally maternal, all-accepting, 'organic' force which would change society primarily through moral persuasion rather than violent action. However, concessions had to be made to critics in the Left, always ready with



accusations about the middle-class, reformist nature of feminist movements.

In the beginning, it was a matter of pride for the women's movement to demonstrate its ability to be 'as revolutionary' as its ever-present Marxist critics. It was largely as a result of the Left's early influence on the women's movement that consciousness-raising groups were originally conceived as a means of breaking down the dichotomy between personal and political experience, and were seen as a tool for politicizing women. As places for political growth, c.r. groups sometimes succeeded, but most often failed. Without a strategy around which to develop militant practice, an ideology inevitably evolved which saw consciousness-raising as an end in itself, rather than a stage in a woman's political development and a prelude to action. As a movement, we now seem to have stopped believing in politics and mass action. In that sense, we have stopped being a movement, and have become a proliferation of small groups, projects, and 'tendencies'.

In Canada, there are currently more signs of feminist activity than ever before: more groups and projects, more public awareness, even a tokenistic response by government and business to the 'changing role of women'. A quick glance would indicate that the women's movement is stronger than at any time in its six- or seven-year history. But there are an equal number of signs to show that its direction has never been more uncertain, and it may be that our movement will not survive the current proliferation of activities. Canada's radical feminists have toned themselves down in order to qualify for government funding, and by and large their visible activities have consisted of setting up social service projects, dressed up in aggressive rhetoric. Behind last year's trendy smokescreen of 'concern' with women's issues, there is a basic lack of government interest in women, and a serious vacuum of leadership within the women's movement itself. We are now living in the trough of the tidal wave that began in the sixties when women began saying they were angry. The slogans have lost their bite; our perspectives are turning into clichés.

It may be time we took the sex out of our politics and the politics out of sex. Contrary to its expressed intentions, feminism often promotes puritanism and a negative view of sexuality which encourages a revolt against Nature because Nature is 'anti-woman'. One form of politically-based sublimation was bizarrely illustrated in an interview which the Toronto newspaper *The Other Woman* printed a couple of years

back. One woman is quoted as saying that lesbianism, for her, was a natural development, which more or less coincided with her evolution as a socialist, feminist, and Canadian nationalist.

Female separatism and lesbianism are two very interesting cans of worms which, once unleashed on a particular group, can create much conflict and confusion. 'Gay-straight splits' are among the most bitter of the conflicts that tear apart women's groups. I've witnessed orgies of guilt and innuendo as people's sexual orientation becomes a semi-public battleground: just one example of how energy is wasted in forms of introspection that eventually lead to polarization and dissolution.

Women's alleged emotionalism, tendency to personalize, and fear of self-assertion seem to be the real or imagined causes of many groups' failure. We are undecided about what so-called feminine tendencies we want to promote, and which ones we want to deny we ever had. The rhetoric of 'dealing with' our collective sense of inferiority results in a lot of time spent on informal kinds of therapy. In groups, we worry more about how everyone is getting along than about whether anything is getting done. Some women even argue that the only worthwhile goal of the women's movement is sisterhood, defined as everybody getting along.

When the realization dawns that we don't get along, we suppress it until the last possible moment. We put the blame on infiltrators and less 'conscious' women. Or we seek refuge in encounter group rhetoric and an extreme personalization of reality which prevents discussion of our real differences ('We are all women, we have the same experience, let's be here now', etc.). In some instances, we bureaucratize our groups, centralize power, and try to pretend we can solve our problems by forming committees and writing briefs for the government.

The personal liberation approach gives birth to a characteristic utopianism, exemplified by the belief that feminist counter-institutions should play a leading role in the development of the women's movement. In Canada, where only a small number of women have adopted a feminist 'lifestyle', these counter-institutions tend to become social service projects, and the feminists who staff them often experience a wide separation between their organizing situation and their political beliefs. The necessity of "toning down" creates a bit of schizophrenia and adds to the ideological confusion. So sometimes we have to reconcile separatism as a personal ideology with social service image and bureaucratic skill as a means

of landing and holding on to government grants. It appears that the masses of women are not turning on to radical feminism — so for the radical feminist the alternatives are either to be militantly impotent, or to compromise and set up yet another social service institution under government supervision.

Perhaps the trouble is not with the masses of women or even the government, but with the ideology itself. What is the use of a perspective if it confines itself to the lifestyle of relatively few women? It can't be called revolutionary. Conceivably its objective 'truth' or intellectual importance might not be diminished by minority appeal, but its political effectiveness certainly is.

To get beyond paralysis we need patterns of action which bring women out at the community level. There are enough groups which operate out of women's centres and deal in single-track services like rape crisis or abortion referral, or act as centres of co-ordination and information. Alternatively, we need projects which take shape according to the real needs of the housewives and working women who make up the neighbourhood. Community-run laundries, day-care centres, citizens' groups formed to take action around street violence and other crimes directly affecting life in the neighbourhood, are the kinds of programs which the women's movement should actively encourage. Their orientation should be to bring women to look at their lives and move positively together to change things.

We need a very different approach from the one usually taken by women who get together to form a particular project (a rape crisis centre, for example) and then look for funding from some government source. In the first place, there needs to be much more direct involvement with the women of a given community, without whose support nothing of significance will ever happen. Such support takes time and effort to build. For a group of feminists to plant themselves in a working class community, (where headquarters can always be rented cheaply) and begin setting up programs, means little or nothing. If the local women have not been around to make decisions from the beginning, the centre cannot possibly represent their needs and interests.

Class differences separate women. No matter how high their level of commitment is, young, middle-class, 'radical' movement women can be as insensitive and unconsciously prejudiced as anyone else when it comes to understanding the life situation of a working class woman. You cannot "organize" anyone until you are able to see things as she sees them. Your interests must be in some way identical;



every other approach is a form of manipulation. Often the most difficult reality for movement women to accept is that the majority of women are not feminists and may in fact never become feminists. Some movement women respond to this realization with a maternalistic, social-service ideology which only increases the distance between them and the women they are trying to "help".

But these "non-feminist" women are often tired, fed-up, angry, and want improvements in their lives: decent housing, cheaper and better quality food; safe streets and playgrounds; more time and facilities for recreation; equal pay and more control of their unions if they work; access to birth control and abortion; self-respect and some chance to develop their own potential outside the roles of wife/mother/underpaid worker.

Basically, we need a perspective which deals directly with the strictly economic aspects of women's oppression as workers in the home and outside it, so that when we approach women we do it from an understanding of their most fundamental interests, and not with our heads full of ready-made programs copied from segments of the U.S. movement and designed with only feminist women in mind. We need a method of organizing which takes

women at the community level, in their kitchens, gardens, neighbourhood stores, laundries and nurseries, and seeks to involve them in actions which bring them out of domestic isolation, providing them with contacts and information which can eventually enable them to change the conditions in which they live.

But who is in a position to do this kind of organizing?

Information and referral services, by and large, are too involved in their own internal politics, bureaucratic activities, and grant-scrouring efforts, to develop any deep rapport with their constituencies. And rape-crisis centres are oriented to deal with only one of the side effects of the decay of urban communities, instead of attacking the economic and social causes of street violence. Rarely do these projects, so popular with federal dispensers of funds, get beyond the limitations of a social service style of operation. And chances are anyway that few of them will outlive the next funding fad.

Large-scale co-option has had a crippling effect on women's groups, many of which are unable to see beyond the government grant apparatus and the constraints it imposes. The collapse of many women's centres can be traced to their complete lack of relation to the communities in which they are located. An atmosphere of unreality often surrounds the hard core of women's centre staff and volunteers who struggle to make things happen in the midst of a slowly-dissolving, apathetic membership. Without roots in a neighbourhood and involvement in concrete issues, internal conflicts are magnified and become capable of destroying a group.

We must re-examine our principal strategy: the building of a separate women's movement. What does that really mean? Apparently it means quite different things to different people. For radical feminists, separatism is both an end and a means. As an end in itself, it supposedly resolves the "inalterable"

sexual antagonism which exists between women and men. Socialist women conceive of an independent movement as something quite different. Their concept of separatism does not absolutely rule out the possibility of alliances with men around common goals. In this perspective, an independent women's movement becomes an indispensable bargaining tool for setting the terms of any alliance, to ensure that women's particular interests are not cast aside.

Women who work, for instance, in groups which have evolved out of the wages for housework movement, seek to extend traditional socialist thinking to take much greater account of women's work in the home and its economic as well as social importance. They also attempt to broaden the definition of class struggle to include the particular struggle of women against oppressive relations within the family. From this point of view, although women may choose to work through groups which exclude men, in the end their interests form part of an inclusive, people's struggle.

By seeking to confine ourselves strictly to issues which can be defined as *women's* issues, we seem to move inevitably in a reformist direction. For example, the issue of rape. Some rape groups, beginning with the assertion that "all men are potential rapists", pursue an organizing line which mystifies the issue of rape and isolates them from sources of support. Rape squads and crisis centres deal with individual cases and confine their political work to proving the inevitability of rape in a male-controlled society.

Rape, like murder, has always existed. But its rapid increase is symptomatic of a general increase in crime and the decline of the quality of life in urban areas. It makes sense then for anti-rape groups to align themselves with other groups fighting around issues such as housing, community control of police, welfare, rights, and the

cont. on page 48



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# Goodbye to the Powder Puffs

women stake their claim in stock car racing

by Joyce McCart

photo by Susan Stewart

It's Sunday night at the stock car races. The Claimer Stocks are on the track and roaring into the fourth corner when suddenly the pack splits and Car 96 goes into a drift toward the concrete retaining wall. A second later the crowd is on its feet as another car hits 96 broadside, spinning it out of control. The car shoots across the track, flips over twice, and shudders to a stop in the dust of the infield. "Hey," shouts the announcer, "I think that's a girl!"

A girl? A woman driver in the world of stock car racing? A world where men are men, and women are women; where men in the pits is the rule, and a woman in the pits is unlucky. A world where a man is a mechanic or a driver, and a woman is a wife or a girlfriend or a trophy queen; where a man belongs to a race club, and a woman joins the auxiliary. A world where the woman who has everything is presented with a gift-wrapped, star-spangled maxi-pad, a couple of guys who have had a few too many have a piss fight in the beer pits. It doesn't sound like a place for a woman to make a breakthrough, but a breakthrough is being made nonetheless.

Stock car races are a North American phenomenon, held throughout the USA and Canada on dirt tracks, paved ovals, and occasionally on road tracks. Except for the bold numbers and flamboyant advertising painted on their bodies, they look much like the cars people drive to work in the morning — hence the name "stock". But while stock cars and family cars look similar, the resemblance is only apparent. As New York Times sports writer John Radosta comments in his book on auto racing, "stock appearing" would be a more realistic term.

To look under the hood of a stock car is to see an engine that is

disappointingly small and surprisingly bare. The battery has been moved, the familiar air cleaner has disappeared, the innards of all the accessories have been stripped out. If you look in the trunk, you find only a few springs and a sway bar to interfere with a view of the ground. All the excess metal has been cut away. The interior of the car receives the same ruthless treatment: there is no glass, no headliner, no upholstery, no doorhandles — nothing save a single molded seat on the driver's side and a maze of heavy pipe welded into a protective cage.

There are several classes of stock cars, however. In addition to the powerful, expensive, and well-publicized Super Stocks and Hobby Stocks, the smaller tracks often run races for the Claimer Stock. The claimer, lowest of the low in stock car racing, is a car very like those on the road. Aside from the typically gaudy exterior, it differs only in having the windows removed, a guard placed on the radiator, the battery moved to the floor of the interior, and a roll cage installed to protect the driver. At the Circle 8 Speedway in Calgary, anyone can claim a Claimer Stock off the track for \$199.00 provided the purchaser enters the car in a race the following week. During the 1975 racing season, three women took up the offer for the first time in the history of the Circle 8.

Although it's unusual, even unheard of, for women to drive stock cars, women race drivers in other brands of racing have been around for a long time. In his book *Atalanta*, S.C.H. Davis demonstrates that women have been racing cars ever since there were cars around to drive. They have raced in rallies, road races, record trials and hill climbs. They have raced in France, England, Germany, South Africa and Sweden. In 1901, Frenchwoman Camille du Gast drove 687 miles in a race from Paris to

Berlin, and in 1903 she completed 340 miles of the last Paris-Madrid race ever run. (The race was stopped by the authorities at Bordeaux because of the appalling number of deaths on the roadway.) In 1905, an Englishwoman named Dorothy Levitt raced at speeds up to 78 miles an hour to place third in one class, first in another, and win the AUTOCAR Challenge Trophy. In 1935, Canadian Kay Petre took a car around England's Brooklands Track at a lap speed of 130 miles an hour. The same year Gwenda Hawkes drove her own Derby Special at Montelhery at a speed of 149 miles an hour — a record that stood for more than 20 years. Women competitors were represented throughout the thirties at the Monte Carlo Rally, the Le Mans 24 hour race, the Donington 12 hour race, and even turned up at the South African Grand Prix. In 1952, Frenchwoman Gilberte Thirion came fifth in the German Grand Prix and the Tour de Belgique, captured a class second in the Paris-St. Raphael Rally, failed to finish in the Tour de Maroc and the Alpine, and finished first in both the Belgian Wolverthem speed trials and the Rally Soleil-Cannes.

In North America, however, the picture was radically different. "Over in the United States," writes Davis, "women were not encouraged to race, in fact, were regarded as entirely redundant in the sport to such an extent that officials . . . barred the way even to the pits during big races." Davis tells the story of Betty Shelton, an American who obtained an AAA (American Automobile Association) license by unspecified means, and was clocked at 143.44 miles an hour on the 4.7 mile Chrysler Track. "Rumour has it," remarks Davis, "that some of the elders of the Three A's promptly had apoplexy." Fortunately for the blood pressure of the AAA elders, the organization didn't last until 1965 —

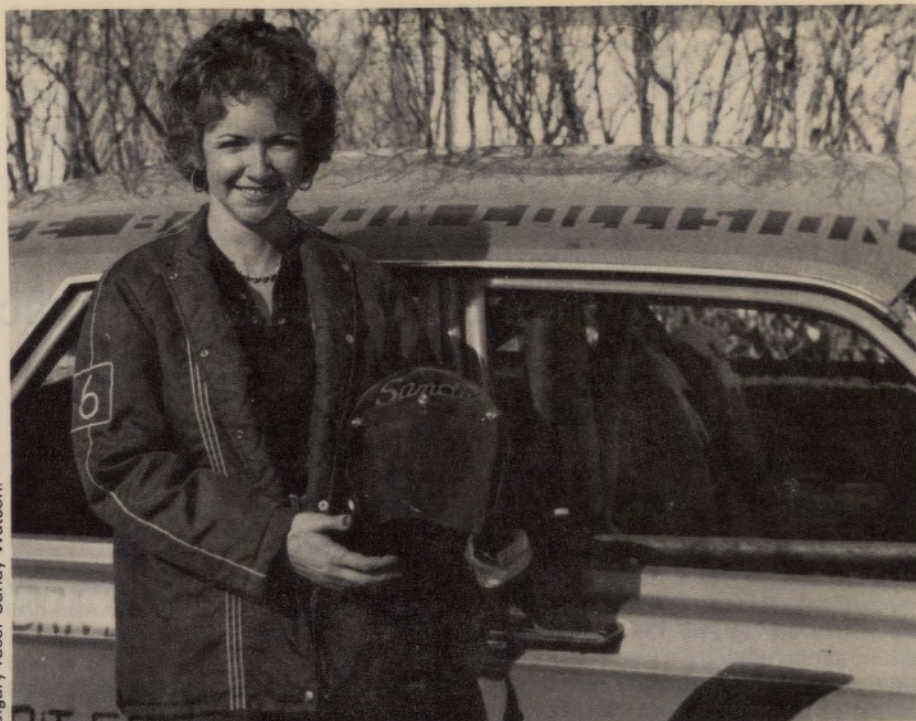


The year Lee Breedlove drove *Spirit of America* — *Sonic I* over the Bonneville Salt Flats at 335.070 miles an hour.

Stock car racing in the USA is still in the mainstream of the Triple A tradition. Two organizations have now replaced the Triple A in sanctioning stock car races — USAC (The United States Auto Club) which was formed in 1955, and NASCAR (The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing), formed in 1949. Writing in 1971, John Radosta referred to USAC as a "resourceful opponent of the 20th Century . . . From Triple A, the United States Auto Club inherited much of its personnel and policy and went backward from there." Apparently the inherited conservatism served to exclude women from stock car racing since, according to Radosta "Women participate in road racing, something that is unthinkable in USAC and NASCAR . . . At nearly all the tracks of those organizations, with minor exceptions women are not even permitted to enter the pit areas." Both NASCAR and USAC do have an official policy accepting women drivers now. NASCAR's is based on the equipment a woman has (or can borrow) so there are now three women drivers racing out of Birmingham, Alabama. USAC has no women competing, but this is not surprising since they base their admission policy on the women's experience — difficult to get unless they let them drive.

One predictable result of the restriction on women in the pits was illustrated by a letter to the editor in the October 1975 issue of Stock Car racing magazine. Writing to protest her treatment at the hands of the Pocono International Raceway officials, Kate Alexander of New York asked "Do you know that it took us two days at the track before we located the ladies restroom facility in the pit area? Nobody we asked knew where it was."

At the Circle 8 Speedway in Calgary, everybody knows where it is, and it doesn't bother the women drivers that it's located in the same outhouse the men use. "It caused a few embarrassing moments when the women were first allowed in the pits," grinned one, "but it sorted itself out once the guys got out of the habit of leaving the door open." It is only in the pits, however, that facilities for women are lacking. In the public areas of stock car tracks, there are restrooms for both men and women, and hot dog stands for the kids. Stock car racing is a family affair, and the sport's staunchest fans are the wives and children of the mechanics and drivers. A wife or girlfriend watching from the stands is a welcome part of the stock



Calgary racer Sandy Watson.

car racing tradition, but in the pits she is in much the same position as an 18th Century woman aboard a sailing vessel — her presence is considered unlucky.

More than anything else, this superstition has prevented women from breaking into stock car racing. Other arguments advanced against their presence in the pits (the men's profanity, the female capacity to distract) are insignificant compared to the racing driver's reluctance to provoke fate by inviting his sweetie to the pits. This reluctance is at least partially understandable in view of the wholly masculine origins of stock car racing — its traditions are rooted in the depression years of the deep south where the stock car evolved to meet a vital need. A man making a midnight run with a load of illegal whisky needed a car with exceptional speed and manoeuvrability — particularly on the nights when the feds were on his tail. It is also understandable that a man's desire to leave his wife or girlfriend at home on these occasions might harden into superstition as running stock cars formalized into a sport.

Despite the power of the myth, however, the men of the Stampede City Auto Racing Association voted to allow the members of the SCARA Girls' Club to race claimers. Sandy Watson, the first woman to drive in a demolition derby at Circle 8, promptly became the first woman to claim and drive a Claimer Stock. Alberta Toy had the foresight to claim a car which had a newly installed motor, and immediately started picking up racing points. Debbie Schorn, who had

originally intended to borrow her brother's Hobby Stock and race in the Powder Puff races, changed her mind and claimed a car of her own instead. She placed third in her first race, and was holding her own in her second, when she rolled her claimer and put it out of action for the rest of the racing season.

The women who are associated with stock car racing are, for the most part, working class women. Many of them are married to men who work in the automotive trades — truck drivers, mechanics, welders, body men. These women are not like the women involved in sports car racing. They are, for instance, less interested in achieving an elegant image than they are in being well prepared — wearing blue jeans, warm jackets and wrapping themselves in blankets — for the rubber dust, freezing cold, and smears of mustard that are the hazards of a long evening in the grandstands. The practical approach is reflected in the pits, where the men of stock car racing are more interested in performance than paint jobs, worry more about drive shafts than dents, and buy nothing that can be either borrowed or built. At Circle 8, the first women to gain access to the pits encountered a prohibition that would be incomprehensible in sports car circles: no shorts, no halters, no bikinis — in the stock car pits, everything is strictly business.

On the track, however, there is a single exception to the seriousness of purpose that typifies stock car racing. This is the few light-hearted laps called the Powder Puff. Powder Puff was established as a race for the



women in the stands, and any woman who can beg, borrow, or coax a car from her brother, husband or boyfriend is eligible to enter. It's a race between borrowed cars with inexperienced drivers — the more inexperience the better — designed more to provoke amusement in the spectators than to satisfy the competitive instincts of the driver. As a crowd pleaser, Powder Puff ranks high in the evening's entertainment.

The SCARA Girls who have claimed a car, however, are not entitled to compete in the Powder Puff. They are considered to be drivers. Nor are they entitled to all the glamour and glory that surrounds the Powder Puff ladies — in the interests of fairness, the men have requested that the announcer not specify the sex of a driver in the claimer events. Even so, the girls who have chosen to forego the indulgent fanfare accorded the Powder Puff ladies, have few regrets. "Powder Puff is *slow*," says one girl. "They just *creep* around the track." "There's no competition in Powder Puff," declares another. "If you want to really race, you have to race with the men."

Racing with the men is rough. The rapping and roaring of the claimers cruising the oval for a running start is

enough to drive the meek into the safety of the stands. The start is an ear-splitting blast of sound, and the race a debacle of noise and devastation as 20 spitting, roaring, spinning, crashing cars battle toward the finish line. The crowds love it. So do the drivers. "Spinouts are nothing," laughs Sandy Watson. "Just like turning around."

Racing Claimer Stock is not one of the more dangerous forms of car racing. The drivers are well-protected, the excessive speeds are largely illusion, and while it is commonplace for twenty cars to start the race and only half-a-dozen to finish, it is rare for anyone to be seriously hurt. The driver of Car 96, despite the spectacular antics of her car, was only slightly bruised, and was released from the hospital almost as soon as she was admitted. Although the performance cost her her car, it won her \$50.00 and a trophy — enough for her to insist that she'll be back on the track in '76.

If by indulging the women, their husbands and boyfriends hoped to get rid of them, that hope should be blasted by now. The three women who raced in 1975 all plan to race in 1976, and have been joined by several new

recruits. On the subject of their reception in the pits, they are both jubilant and generous. "The guys are really good," they say. The women give the men credit for apologizing for swearing and for leaping to help every time a girl picks up an oil can; at the same time they deny the necessity for either. "They warned us the pits was no place for virgin ears." "Sometimes a job needs the strength of a man, but we do most things ourselves. It's fun."

If none of this sounds very militant, it's not surprising. The seven or so women now racing on small tracks in North America aren't out to become famous drivers. The fact their attitude borders on flippancy. If they were ambitious, their challenge to the male racing establishment would probably have met with much more resistance than it did. However, now that the precedent has been set, the way is clear for a woman who wants to go to the top, in a powerful car or her own.

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Joyce McCart is general manager of a Calgary-based biological consulting firm which she co-founded with her husband. They raise sheep on a farm near Crossfield, Alberta and are in the process of starting a magazine called *Sheep Canada*.

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# WHY? WHY NOT! ♀

At the Provincial Museum of Alberta between April 2 and June 27

An exhibition illustrating some of the outstanding contributions made to the natural sciences by Canadian women. Meet 19 exceptional women — pioneers from the past, side by side with respected scientists of today —

from Catharine Parr Traill (1802-1899), an early botanist and pioneer, to Barbara Froom, contemporary conservationist and expert on snakes.

Why? Why Not! was produced by the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Ottawa for International Women's Year. Edmonton is the last stop on its cross-country tour.

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## THE BALLET DANCER RETIRES

a  
lone  
on the  
hot  
bright  
stage  
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dorothy farmiloe

Dorothy Farmiloe teaches at St. Clair College in Windsor, Ontario. She has published six books of poetry and a novel, and is currently working on a second novel.



# Women Giving Credit Where It's Due

by Patricia O'Leary

We all know the troubles we've seen, trying to get credit. It doesn't matter if you're single, married, separated or Little Orphan Annie, chances are you'll have hassles if you try to raise money.

There are ways of solving this problem. The one I describe here is based on the experience of a group of women who, after a year of reading and talking and thinking, applied for and received a charter to set up a credit union. The charter was granted in November 1975 and the Metropolitan Toronto Women's Credit Union now has a membership of about 200 and assets of more than \$70,000.

Credit unions are basically very simple organizations. As Philinda Masters, Chairperson of the Education and Public Relations Committee says, "It's just a financial co-operative. A group of people get together, pool their money, and lend it to each other." They hope eventually to reach as many of the one million women in Metropolitan Toronto as possible, but building a membership is a slow process that involves working through already-established women's groups and fanning out from there. The Toronto women also hope that other groups around the country will decide to set up credit unions. Many such groups would provide an economic base from which women can press for real changes in society.

Credit unions are under provincial jurisdiction, so women in each province will have to discover the exact procedure from their provincial departments; but it's basically the same set-up as in Ontario. After about a year of reading everything about credit unions they could get their hands on — in particular, the Ontario Credit Unions Act and the Standing Committee Report on the Credit Unions Act — the Toronto women decided they were ready. "It took us ages to figure out a lot of things because there's so much mystification," says Masters. "Like the constant references to 'negotiable orders.' We

finally figured out that that means 'cheque.' It took us about three or four months just to wade our way through the jargon of the financial world and figure out that a credit union is really simple."

The next step was to hold a meeting of 22 women. The Ontario Credit Union Act requires a founding membership of at least twenty people who must meet in the presence of two witnesses. At the meeting, the group confirmed their intention to set up a credit union and signed their application for a charter. In about four months the charter was granted. "It usually takes about two months," says Masters, "but our was returned once because we wanted our Bond of Association to be all women in Metro Toronto. We had to have an organization and the Women's Information Centre, which already had a charter for all of Metro Toronto, agreed to be our Association." Anyone joining WIC, for \$5.00 can become a member of the Credit Union. The group had the backing of the Ontario Credit Union League, which liked the idea of such a potentially large membership, and obtaining a charter was relatively smooth going.

The union has a Board of Directors, a Credit Committee which decides on loans and suggests policy to the Board, and a Supervisory Committee which conducts internal audits. The Toronto structure is a collective, so the thirteen women on all the committees meet together to decide on matters of policy, philosophy, publicity, and so on. The Credit Union idea is admirably suited to the feminist philosophy of women working for women — it is democratic, autonomous and non-profit (that is, profits are returned to the members). Each member has only one vote, unlike a bank where the more shares you have, the more votes you get.

The money put into the Credit Union is absolutely safe. The Union subscribes to a Stabilization Fund of the Ontario League so that if it is in financial difficulty the League can help by taking over or merging it with another union.

All the members who work in any capacity with the Union's money have to be bonded, a simple procedure. The Credit Union has a "blanket bond" which covers all thirteen board and committee members. The bond was obtained by paying a fee, in this case under \$100, to the Credit Union Mutual Insurance Society; this protects the Credit Union if one of the thirteen absconds with any money.

You don't need a great deal of expertise to begin. "Most credit unions are really grass roots organizations," says Masters. "Many of them were started in Parish basements. They're not a high-powered financial organization in the usual sense. Our credit union has as much expertise as any other. We have a very broad cross-section of women in the membership, including black women, immigrant women, women who have run their own businesses, professional women." The Ontario League offers courses in accounting and credit granting for new union officials. As with most new credit unions, all the workers are volunteers at present although in the future they hope to be able to pay someone to run the operation from day to day.

The main purpose of the Credit Union, apart from offering a savings organization, is to grant loans to its members. Older and bigger credit unions also offer cheaper mortgages, life insurance and even holiday plans. At this point, the rates for loans are about the same as those offered by other lending institutions, but the credit union gives dividends at the end of the year which in effect lowers the rate. (One big difference between a credit union and a bank is that the bank's dividends go to the shareholders and the credit union's go to the members.) Although the credit union doesn't have deposit accounts yet which give interest on savings, they will as soon as they begin to make a profit, probably in the second year. It is usually two years before the interest rate of a credit union is competitive with that of banks.



## HOW TO START A CREDIT UNION

by Mary Hassard

### Credit Committee Metro Toronto Women's Credit Union

1. a) Get 8 to 12 women together who can commit themselves for at least one year, preferably two.  
b) Try to have at least two women with bookkeeping experience (accounting would be even better). One should be willing to stand for election as Treasurer (a lot of work), the other for election to the Supervisory Committee.
2. Discuss philosophy and aims. It's not necessary to agree on political aims, but there should be basic agreement on what you see the credit union doing.
3. a) Read the Credit Union Act for your province.  
b) Call your local Credit Union League office, or the local "Chapter" (an information body formed by several credit unions in a geographical area. There may not be a League office everywhere, but there should be a Chapter). They have specific operation manuals, and should be able to tell you where to get other necessary reading material.
4. Discuss philosophy and aims again in light of information obtained.  
Make sure you have a sufficiently large potential membership. (Consult with the League or Chapter).
5. a) Approach your League or Credit Union Chapter for assistance in preparing your Charter application for submission to the provincial government.  
b) At same time ask for help in understanding and learning to run the Credit Union.
6. Before application, establish a Bond of Association with a formal organization.
7. Have the founding meeting to confirm that you want to set up a credit union, and sign the Memorandum of Association (the application for a charter). You will probably have to pay a small fee to the government (in Ontario it was \$22.00) and maybe to the Credit Union League's Stabilization Fund.
8. Submit the application. It should take a few weeks, but be prepared to wait a few months.
9. Locate office space and buy supplies.
10. Have a first meeting for the elections.

You're in business.

As for loans, the Credit Union operates much differently than a bank. The Metro Women's Credit Union will lend money to women solely on the basis of ability to pay. While welfare, baby bonuses, child support or separation allowances are not considered sufficiently safe income for banks, they are all acceptable to the Credit Union. If a woman has a steady income on a fairly regular basis and is willing to pay, even if it's ten dollars a month for three years, she is eligible for a loan. Penny Goldrick of the Credit Committee says that about 25 loans have been applied for and about 21 accepted. The applicants who were turned down "were those we felt

were overextended in terms of other loans," says Goldrick, "or who had welshed on other loans."

Goldrick also thinks that a few women had taken advantage of the publicity at the opening "and thought we might be soft touches." As Goldrick says, although they are all feminists and want to help other women as much as possible, they also have to make the business work.

Some of the loans granted point up the possibilities of the organization. One woman was on mother's allowance; she had a freezer and saw an opportunity to buy a lot of meat at a very good price. "We lent her several hundred dollars to

buy the meat which will do her for several months," says Goldrick. Other loans are made to consolidate the loans a woman already has, or to tide someone over a difficult period, like a marriage breakup or the opening of a business where early cash is scarce. One woman wanted a sort of "mental health" loan; she needed a weekend away from her kids. Eventually the union wants to concentrate on larger loans to individuals who want to further their education or start up various sorts of trade co-ops.

As to the inevitable question of whether a co-op that doesn't allow men to join is discriminatory, the Toronto women's answer is that since most of the money and most of the power rests in the hands of the big financial institutions which are controlled by men, they have to "segregate back" some power for women. This sounds a lot heavier than what some people want to hear, but the fact is that an all-women's credit union is giving women the chance to run everything by themselves, for themselves. In doing so, they are learning a lot about running a financial organization. And the Women's Information Centre, the Bond of Association for the Credit Union, has a charter which includes an exemption from the Human Rights Commission of Ontario from having to allow men to join. Which seems to indicate that they are not in any serious danger legally of being ruled discriminatory. In any case, as Philinda Masters comments, "No one asks a Ukrainian Credit Union if it's discriminating against non-Ukrainians. They assume that it's a good thing for Ukrainians to get together and do something for themselves."

She and the other founders hope that their credit union will be the first of many run by women all across the country.



Pat O'Leary is a Toronto freelance writer and broadcaster. Recent projects have included a series of scripts for children's television and a radio script on suicide. She has two children.

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## Day to Day with Arrow

photos by Linda Marchand

Photographer Linda Marchand lives in La Durantaye, Quebec. She took these photos for a book called "Where's My Dad?", written by Gail Wexler. The book is intended for preschoolers and is about the child in a single-parent family.



# Kids Write



gaelic

craig

11535 73 Ave

- The Queen is Bying Some Thing in The Super Market. She got in time. She is Lucky. The Super Market Closed At 11:30 IN The Night But The Queen got There at 10:30. It Was Nearly Closed. I Love The Queen. She is so Nice To Chidrens. When Some
- childrens Don't Have Nothing to eat She gives Food And Money's To Them And This Queen is NICE To Every One. The Queen Don't Have A King. She Was Still Happy  
Jane Lem

The field that stretches across the world  
makes me feel like it is fire or a shallow  
lake full of rushes.

The sunset looks like a huge bird that  
hugs the earth and keeps it warm.

Reni POTREBENKO



# GIV THE WOMEN WERKER'S MORE MONY

WE WANT YOU TO GIV THE WOMEN WERKERS  
MORE MONY. SUM TIMES THE WOMEN WERKERS  
DONT GET ANUF FOOD. IF THEY DO NOT  
HAV HUSBUNDS THE CIDS ARE HUNGRY  
ALL THE TIME KUS THE WOMEN WERKER  
S KANT FINDE GOOD ANAF JOBS.

Reni POTREBENKO

stringy  
oily slinky, slimy, ugly eels, Man is hunting -  
he is hunting hard. He is hungry and  
hot. Fierce but hot he catches the eel.  
He goes home. It's a long journey.  
He cooks the eel. It's good.

The moon falls and he and woman go  
to bed. The owl's eyes are glowing.

Tomorrow  
will be woman's time to hunt.

Kirsten Kolind



# Inner Realities

drawings by Gail Geltner



Geltner

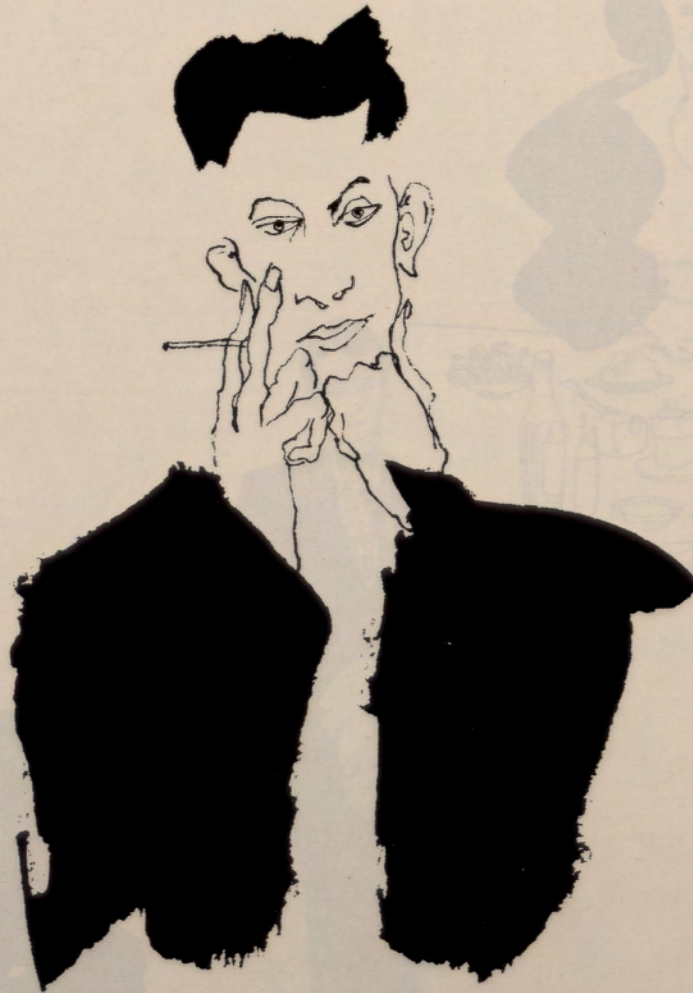




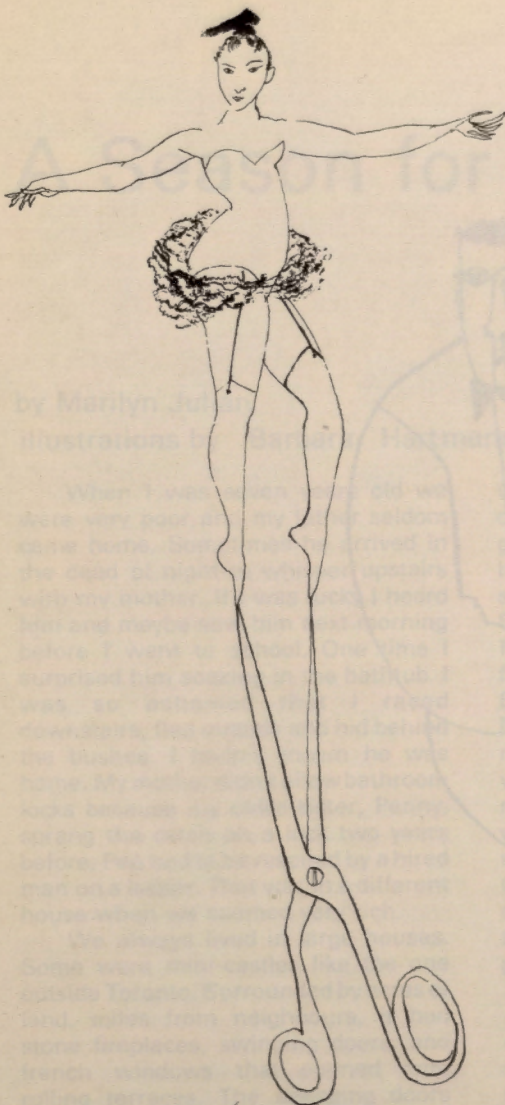


# Inner Realities

drawings by Gail Galtner







by Marilyn Jay

Illustrations by Gelfin

When I was born, my mother and father were very poor. They lived in a small, one-roomed house in the city. My mother was a seamstress and my father was a shoemaker. They had a small family of four children. I was the youngest. My mother and father were very kind and loving. They always made sure I had everything I needed. I was very happy and loved my mother and father. I was very close to them. I was very happy and loved my mother and father. I was very close to them. I was very happy and loved my mother and father. I was very close to them.

One day, my mother and father were very sick. They were both in bed. I was very sad. I was very close to them. I was very happy and loved my mother and father. I was very close to them. I was very happy and loved my mother and father. I was very close to them. I was very happy and loved my mother and father. I was very close to them.

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Gail Geltner is a Toronto cartoonist and illustrator. Her work has appeared in many Canadian publications, including *MacLean's*, *Saturday Night*, *Books in Canada* and *Canadian Forum*. She illustrated the Women's Press book *Women at Work* and in the summer of 1975 helped organize the "Women Graphic Artists' Exhibition."



# A Season for Sharks

by Marilyn Julian

illustrations by Barbara Hartmann

When I was seven years old we were very poor and my father seldom came home. Sometimes he arrived in the dead of night to whisper upstairs with my mother. If I was lucky I heard him and maybe saw him next morning before I went to school. One time I surprised him soaking in the bathtub. I was so ashamed that I raced downstairs, fled outside and hid behind the bushes. I hadn't known he was home. My mother didn't allow bathroom locks because my older sister, Penny, sprang the catch on a lock two years before; Pen had to be rescued by a hired man on a ladder. That was in a different house when we seemed very rich.

We always lived in large houses. Some were mini-castles like the one outside Toronto. Surrounded by acres of land, miles from neighbours, it had stone fireplaces, swinging doors, and french windows that opened onto rolling terraces. The swinging doors meant trouble for me. I'd go flying through them and smack somebody on the other side, one of my sisters or my little brother, Kink, or Monkey, the hired man. When my father was home he punished me by making me *walk* through the doors a hundred times. When he finally said, "Okay, you can go!" ... I'd go: *flying* through to get outside.

Controlling myself seemed impossible. That's what my mother used to say: "These kids have been *impossible!*" Then my father would take off his belt. I would head for one of the bathrooms, rather senselessly, because there weren't any locks. I believed bathrooms were sacred ground. And I idolized my father. He was very handsome, a good hero for a kid my age — especially since I didn't see much of him. When he wasn't home, Monkey was.

Monkey must have been funny-looking, but to me he looked all right. His living quarters were a flight down from the kitchen. Because he wasn't married

we forced him to promise to marry each one of us kids, except Kink, when we grew up. When my father wasn't at home, Monkey ate with us and sang us songs in the living room after dinner. Sometimes he played the mouth-organ. My mother stood before the huge stone fireplace staring nervously into the fire. Every little noise made her jump. But Monkey kept singing or warbling on the mouth-organ to let her know things were okay. Once there'd been a good number of hired men who came and went with my father. They had weird names like Angel or Rosie or Flowers. One was called THE JUDGE, but I didn't know who he was. Monkey was the only one who ever stayed on the place.

Then one day he left.

We had the mumps. I was the culprit who brought them home from school. We'd just finished making a slide-show in class and I wanted desperately to view the end product; but I could feel the sides of my neck expanding like balloons, the balloons got hard and sore, and Teacher said, "Don't come back tomorrow, Miss Edgewater." Monkey escaped the next day. Mother laughed at him, called him a big, silly coward. She wasn't doing any giggling when we gave our mumps to her. She and Pen and I had doubles, Karan and Kink had light singles; all of us were done in toothache flannel. Mother was flat on her back in bed: she mumbled instructions at Pen and me; we mumbled at each other to set up a short-order service.

We were all alone, Mother and the four of us. Kink, aged two, spent most of his time on the floor getting into things. We'd hear a muffled wail. Pen and I'd fly around to find him stuffed into a bottom drawer of one of the built-in wardrobes. Karan, who was four, couldn't tolerate messes, so she pushed the drawers back into the walls. She cried to bring the roof down when Mrs. Boles, the cleaning lady, didn't show up anymore.

We had our hands full. Pen looked after food and maid-service for Mother; I had the kiddie detail. The whereabouts of common items were great mysteries; the kitchen stove with its knobs and doodads baffled us. Pen said, "Always remember what you touched so if it doesn't work you can turn it off before the house burns down."

Our basic ignorance made us helpless when the men started prowling around.

We saw them in the daytime. They came from across the fields and out of the bushes. Because we couldn't see the driveway or the far-off highway through the thick front hedge, we didn't know if they drove cars. We never heard them come. Pen or I'd be standing in the living room or the multi-windowed sun room and we'd see men's heads bobbing around the house. Pen said to lock the doors and windows and not tell Mother because she was so sick. I think Pen was scared. When I whispered hoarsely, "Who are they?"; she said, "I don't know. Old friends of Daddy's, maybe."

They didn't act like old friends. They didn't knock at the door and ask, "Is Mr. Edgewater there?" They peered into windows and scouted around. Sometimes they came in pairs, sometimes in threes. They were dressed in ordinary suits like Daddy's, but wore hats with odd-coloured hatbands. There was something sharp and chintzy about them. But if Pen said they might be old friends, maybe they were. She had a longer memory than I did. She remembered all the hired men as far back as three houses, two cities, and four or five years ago. I had trouble remembering how old I was. I could recall strawberries, a river, a dog somebody shot, and a hired man Pen hated so much she squirted fly-spray in his face. Also, I remembered the time Mother threatened to leave us because neither Daddy nor Monkey was home. Pen and I had been playing "Ships" in Mother's bathroom, and all of a sudden



there was an ocean. Mother put on her coat, went out in the snow to the garage, in plain sight that time, started up her Lincoln, made as though to leave. It was as bad as when somebody shot the dog.

Now these old friends were prowling around the house.

Then one day somebody knocked on the door. From the bedroom Mother mumbled, "Who is it, Pen?"

Pen shouted, "Nobody, Mother!"

The knocking didn't stop. Pen wouldn't open the door. We were in the kitchen, Pen staring at the door and me staring at Pen. We heard Mother rumbling around. Before I knew it, Pen flew to the door, yanked it open, shouted "Go to hell!", then slammed it.

The knocking stopped.

"Who was it?"

One of *them*."

"Penny," my mother cried weakly, as she did when she wanted help to the bathroom. Pen flew into the master bedroom off the hall. I flew after her, stopping a minute to drag Kink out of a drawer. Karan was building cardboard homes for her ragdolls.

My mother was sitting on the edge of her bed with the blankets and sheets trailing down to the rug. She was supporting her head in her hands. Pen was on her knees in front of her. I knew she'd told about the men because after a minute my mother said, "What did you tell him?"

"I told him to go away."

"We must do something."

"Do you want me to kill them?"

"No!"

The idea of Pen stalking through the bushes with the butcher knife, trying to stab one of them, horrified me. And normally Pen didn't use hired men words like *hell* or *kill*. I realized the danger we were in. These men *weren't* old friends. They wanted something. "What do they want!" I wailed.

"Shut up," Pen said to me. "They want Daddy."

My mother blew her nose carefully.

All business, Pen asked, "What are we going to do? We must have a plan."

"We must find Daddy," Mother said. She told Pen to run find a pencil and paper.

While Pen was out I asked, "Don't you know where Daddy is?"

Mother fell back on her soggy pillows. "I'm not sure."

Right then I knew the world was caving in. Mother didn't know where my father was. I assumed she knew, that she had always known.

Pen brought the pencil and paper.

"Have you been outside, any of you?"

Pen shook her head. We hadn't been outside for weeks.

"Good. Don't go out. Not for any reason."



That meant we were on a ship with sharks cruising around it, like the game we played at night on our beds, except this was real water with real sharks. Pen sat on the edge of the bed and wrote down telephone numbers which my mother dictated.

"Be sure to ask for Mr. Edgewater," my mother said. "Don't say, 'Is Daddy there?'"

I giggled. I'd forgotten all about the telephone. It hadn't rung for days.

"June," my mother said to me, "you round up Karan and Kink. Bring them in here."

"What if they won't come?" I didn't want to struggle with them. I wanted to listen while Pen used the telephone. My mother glared at me. I ran out to find the kids. I was back with them just in time to hear Pen say, "Nothing happens. I dialed and dialed, but it's dead."

My mother groaned, "Oh my God!"

At the sound of Mother's groan, which was different from her being-sick groan, Karan and Kink began to cry.

"Hush up!" Pen said.

They cried louder. I thought my mother was dying; she lay so still, staring up at the ceiling.

"Hush them up!" Pen shouted at me.

I spread Karan's toys on the rug and pulled her and Kink down. "Come on, let's play dolls."

Karan sniffed, "Will you make Roxanne a dress?"

I took from her the bits of material and needles donated by Mrs. Boles. The crying stopped. Pen was kneeling beside the bed waiting for Mother to think of a new plan. I kept watch on them. Just when my mother whispered something to Pen, Karan screamed.

Kink had removed the clothes from his rubber doll. Karan smacked him with a cardboard wall. He howled. I dragged him up and sat him in a wardrobe drawer.

Pen had left the room. She came back wearing her coat and carrying Mother's purse. She ran to the bed. Mother took some money from the little leather change purse, and gave it to her wrapped inside the paper with the telephone numbers.

On the way out Pen said, "Come here, June."

I went out into the hall with her. "Are you going *out*?"

"Down the highway to the telephone booth."

"You can't!"

"I have to."

"But the men...!"

"Lock the door behind me. Watch for when I come back. And keep those kids quiet!"

"I can't," I said. "You can't go, Penny. You better take a knife."

"I have one."

Her hand trembled as she showed me the shortest, most wicked-looking paring knife shoved into her pocket.

We went out into the sun room; if there was anyone lurking around on that side, we'd see them. It was getting close to winter time. There wasn't any snow yet, but the lawns were brown-looking and the fallen leaves flew around like mad little birds. The hedges, higher than the house, were impossible to see through. I let Pen out the glass door and snapped the lock. As I ran down to the end of the room I could see her head bobbing close to the house. I climbed on a wicker sofa to see if anyone was waiting under the window.



Pen's face peeked around the side of the graystones; then she darted down the terrace, down to the hedge, and squeezed her way through.

There was no telling what monster lurked on the other side of the hedge. But Pen had the knife. It was such a long run to the telephone booth. Maybe the Service Station men would help her, or maybe they would laugh — or worse, capture her as a truant. But she had the knife. She could stick it into their guts, and run. She'd do anything.

My legs were tired from being tense. A scream came from the interior of the house. Somebody must help us! In the bedroom Kink was pinned into the drawer. He was howling. Karan patted her dolls innocently, and Mother was struggling up. I arrived first, unfastened Kink and dragged him out. "Bring him here," Mother said. I hoisted him onto the bed beside her. *Some King*, I thought, *always screaming*. My mother looked terrible, her face so puffy.

"Do you want anything?" I asked her. "Something to eat, or some tea?" Pen never let me serve anything. Here was my chance.

"No, June," she answered. "Go watch for Penny."

It was too soon, but I think she wanted me to check for prowling men. I stepped out into the sun room feeling kind of spooky. I shivered. It seemed everything was waiting for Pen; even the wind was dead. To the south, straight ahead, the lawn stretched to a thicket of hedge. Halfway, there were three leafless maples where we set our picnic table last summer. The stone barbecue sat unused and lonely like a cemetery vault near the trees. The west was blocked by cedars in a straight line this side of the garages. At the end of the garages the cedar row jogged, then ran straight back forever. We weren't allowed past the garages. Once Pen sneaked back and found a large conch shell. She hid it in our bedroom and at night we listened to the ocean.

We were isolated. My father had thought it best. One of our houses had been next to a Mrs. Brunkel. When Pen took short cuts through Brunkel's prize-winning flowers, Brunkel threatened to tell Daddy. When Pen sprayed the garden hose through Brunkel's open window, Brunkel called the police. Pen thought THE JUDGE would nab her. When I asked who he was, she said he was a silencer.

If anyone caught Pen he'd regret it. She would scream and kick and bite. But what if there was more than one man...? The grass looked straw-yellow where Monkey had cut it too short. As long as I stayed where I was, it was impossible to see any danger close up...

Pen! She was at the door from nowhere, banging with her fists. She squeezed in cold and breathless, and flopped into a chair. "Get down!" She pulled me down.

"Are they out there?"

"Don't know. Can't let... can't let them know I've been out."

"Did you talk to Daddy?"

"Couldn't find him. Nobody knows where he is."

She paused, catching her breath. I could feel the cold from her. "What did you say on the telephone?" I worried that she had asked improperly. "What did you say, Pen?"

"I said, 'You tell Mister Edgewater to come right home. My mother's sick and we haven't any food!'"

"Oh."

"I was so scared I couldn't say anything else," Pen admitted.

"What are we going to do?"

Pen looked at me with disgust. "Nothing, because Daddy's going to come. I *know* he is." She threw off her coat and flew through the house. I swept up the coat and flew after her, thwanging doors all the way.

Late that night after the kids were in bed and Mother was asleep, Pen and I sat hunched up in the stuffed chairs in the living room, listening to the radio. For a few half hours, Country & Western programs kept us awake. Pen especially liked these. She liked the idea of singing "On Top of Old Smokey" from the back of a horse. Then the programming switched to symphonies and piano concertos; the music became thinner and less cosy. The shadows grew immense around us. Except for the moon, the only light came from the tiny sparkle of the radio tubes. We talked, but quietly, because we could hear the

echoes of our own voices.

"Don't you wish Monkey was here?" I asked.

"Yeah, maybe," she replied guardedly. "He ought not to have run off. He's paid to look after us."

When William Tell's Overture galloped across the room I giggled. "Remember that one, Pen?"

"What?"

She was too occupied with shadows to remember the house by the river where Mother's ivory-fingered William Tell rode us with golf clubs for lances around the room.

"Where are you going?"

"To check. I thought I heard something."

I hadn't. I held myself to the chair, scarcely breathing. William Tell sounded ghastly. Pen's shadow moved noiselessly from window to window. She disappeared into the dining room.

I didn't see her again until she stood beside me.

"See anything?"

"No."

We didn't know what to expect. Pen was determined to stay up, to wait for Daddy to come... if he came.

"Are you hungry, Pen?"

"A bit."

She went to the kitchen and returned with some raisins and chopped cooking walnuts. We held our hands together and munched.

"Sure would be great to have a fire with popcorn," I said, "like when Monkey was here."

"Shush up."

Even though she said this I knew she would talk to me. Ever since she came back from outside I wanted to ask her. "Pen, don't we have any food?"

"No milk or bread or meat."

"How come?"





"Nobody's been to town, not since Monkey took off."

"Oh," I muttered gloomily. Starvation wasn't anything I'd seriously considered. I'd been only slightly starving once. That was the last time we were at our cottage in Haliburton. My grandmother and us kids arrived early, before Mother and Daddy, on a Saturday night. I can't remember how we got there. Uncle Dick must have dropped us off. Pen hated him, said he was a welcher. Grandmother wouldn't let us eat any of the food in the cupboards. Said it was contaminated. Wouldn't let us sleep on the beds either. "Lice," she said. We sat clutching our pillows, staring hungrily at each other.

"What if Daddy doesn't come?" I asked Pen.

"We'll starve, and freeze. The furnace hasn't clicked on."

"Can't you fix it?" I'd wondered why I was getting cold.

"There's no furnace oil left. And Monkey never brought in any wood for the fireplaces."

"If Daddy doesn't come, couldn't Mother drive to town?"

"No!" she said, so bluntly she made me jump.

"Why not, Pen?"

"Cause Mother's car's been stolen."

It was my turn to gasp. Mother's Lincoln was part of the family. It was silver-twin to my father's black one. "Did Monkey...?"

"No! Why would he?"

Monkey had his own black Ford.

"I'll tell you something else," Pen said. "On my way back I peeked through the hedges by the drive. Everything in the garage is smashed, June, even the windows."

\*

I must have fallen asleep. When I woke up everything seemed far away and different. Pen's chair was empty, I was shivering and light eked from the kitchen. There was some noise. I ran to the kitchen, stopped, and crouched below the cupboard top at the doorway. It was stupid, but he looked so tall standing beside Pen. They were talking quietly. When he turned, instead of saying, "Why aren't you in bed?", he held out his arms. I let the door splat back and felt how rough his beard stubble was.

"Have you been good?" he asked.

I nodded. I hadn't smacked anyone lately.

"Is your mother awake?" he asked. I shrugged. He said, "You help Penny." Then he tossed his hat on top of the refrigerator and went down the hall.

I squeezed Pen's arm. "Oh, he came."

She shook me off like a fly and shoved packages at me. "All this lovely

food," she said. "Wonder where he bought it this time of night."

We tidied up the kitchen. Before we went upstairs Pen made a pot of tea and covered it with a warmer.

The kids were sound asleep in their room. When I slipped between the sheets of my twin bed I whispered a glad good-night to Pen. In my prayers I told God that I didn't know what it was all about, but thanked Him for making everyone safe.

I fell asleep quickly and dreamed. First I dreamed I was marrying Monkey. I told Pen, who was my bridesmaid, to let go of Monkey's arm... she could marry him next week. Then I dreamed about houses in rows along a crooked street; they became huge overturned bushels of food, and men were setting the bushels on fire. I was crying. I wandered down the street, now a dirt path, until I saw my father coming the other way. Before he reached me there was a loud crash. I sat up.

Penny was sitting up too. "Did you hear that?"

I clutched at the blankets. "What was it?"

"They're after Daddy. It's the Sharks!" She jumped out of bed and lifted up her mattress. I thought she'd gone mad.

"What have you got?"

"This. Come on." Holding a heavy object in her right hand, she took my arm with her left and pulled me after her to the door.

"Where did you find that gun, Penny?"

"Monkey's room. This afternoon."

She halted abruptly at the stairs. I bumped into her. "Watch it!" she hissed. "This rod's loaded. Keep behind me and don't make a sound."

Halfway down the stairs we heard another crash. It came from the living room, the front hall.

I fumbled in the darkness behind Pen into the front entrance hall. Pen stopped short again. I bumped into her. In front of us I saw the outline of my father facing the door, his hand raised, clenching the carving knife. Before the next resounding kick came from outside, he realized we were behind him.

Pen held out the revolver. "It's loaded, Daddy."

Ordinarily he would have told us, me anyway, to go back to bed. But nothing like this had ever happened to us before — that I knew of. I held tightly to the back of Pen's pyjamas. When the next kick splintered the solid wood we watched our father take low aim.

He fired one shot.

A voice howled. Pen raced to peer out the window. She raced back to the hall. "You must have nicked one," she said. "They're gone!"

My father wiped his forehead with his sleeve. "Scared them, anyway," he

said.

I shivered. "Who are they?"

Looking at me, probably seeing me there for the first time, he said, "Bums. Two-bit sharpies. You go back to bed now, June." His voice sounded nervous.

As I shuffled back upstairs, alone, I knew that he and Pen would keep watch for the rest of the night, with a fire.

In the morning he was gone.

\*

That next day, acting on my mother's bed-directed instructions, we packed everything. Toys, books, ornaments, pictures, paintings, clothing, dishes, pots, pans: all our possessions went into packing boxes which Pen and I dragged up from the basement. We stripped beds, took down curtains and drapes. Pen and I carried the smaller pieces of furniture downstairs. We rolled, twisted, then threw the clumsy mattresses over the stairwell. Pen, who was tired and snarky, refused to answer any questions. Kink revelled in the upset, but Karan cried and stamped her feet until I assigned her small tasks of packing toys neatly in boxes. I was soon exhausted, and worried. I was anxious about school. What would the teachers say when we didn't come back? We would miss making Christmas Santas and taking part in the plays. When I plucked up nerve enough to pester Mother about it, she said, "There will be a school where we are going. That's the least of our worries."

School was really my minor worry too. I was afraid we'd be going to Timbuctoo, that awful boogey place that hired men referred to as "the ultimate escape." Or Siberia. Or Alaska. Or "Your parents oughta ship you back to the orphanage, kid!" I gritted my teeth and asked, "Where are we going, Mother?"

"I don't know yet." She was tired but a little stronger. "I don't know yet, June. Be a good girl, help me pack my clothes."

Wherever we were going, we were leaving that night. The last things were packed, we were ready and waiting in semi-darkness at nine o'clock. My mother was sitting on the sofa we'd pushed up to hold open the kitchen swing-door. She was bathed, dressed, with her hair smoothed for the first time in weeks. She wore navy slacks with a sweater set, as we did. Like us, she wore a thick flannel scarf around her neck. Karan was asleep on one side of her, Kink on the other.

We were all smothered in blankets. Pen and I were stretched out on a flipped-over mattress, fingering our pillows on our laps. We never went anywhere without our pillows. They were special feather ones which our other grandmother had given us. Whenever we went on overnight trips or



to the cottage, we lugged them along. I called mine 'Jeanne'; Pen called hers 'Fuzzy'. They were far better than lumpy dolls, or pets that had to go to the bathroom at night ... or got shot.

Even though I felt wide awake lying on the mattress, I must have fallen asleep. Pen too. Next thing I knew Daddy was shaking me awake.

"Wake up, Penny, June," he said. "Put on your coats and hats and go out to the car." I rubbed my eyes, sat up and saw that the kids were gone. My mother was talking to someone in the kitchen. Pen and I pulled on our coats. "Put on your boots too," my father said.

When we clumped through the kitchen carrying our pillows, we saw Monkey. He grinned sheepishly at us but didn't say "Hi!" or anything. Pen wasn't awake enough to remember to kick him in the shins. Outside the door we had to skirt an old Company transport with racks that was backed up to the door. To my immense joy, it was snowing.

I ran around collecting snowflakes on my tongue before Pen said, "Stop fooling, June. Get into the car."

Karan was snoozing in blankets in one corner of the backseat; Kink was sprawled on the front. "Hey," I hissed at Pen, "this is Monkey's car."

"I know, stupid."

"Where's Daddy's car?"

"He sold it. He told me he was going to get rid of it before they smashed it or stole it."

"Who?" I clutched at my pillow.

"The men."

"Why?"

"Because they're trying to take everything. They'll get you too if you don't shut up."

"No they won't. I'll bite them."

"First thing they'll take is Jeanne."

I clutched my pillow tighter. "I'll throw Fuzzy to out to them."

"Ha ha," Pen said. She leaped up to lock the buttons on all the doors.

Because the engine was running for the heater, the car key dangled in the ignition. I asked Pen, "Can you drive us out of here if the men come?"

"Sure. All I do is sit down on Fuzzy and Jeanne, then take off down the highway. They'd never catch us."

I caught Penny's confidence. My father had let her steer the Lincoln a few times. This was a Ford, not so super, but I would gladly lend Jeanne to Pen if we had to make a quick getaway.

Pen was mistaken about using the highway. My father steered the Ford over all kinds of crazy backroads, following the transport in the snowy dark. I was lost as to which direction we were headed. A police cruiser passed us. It signalled the transport to stop. My father pulled past a ways, then without headlights drove to the side of the road.

"They may have borrowed a cruiser," my father said. My mother let out a groan, then sat rigidly in her seat. So did Pen and I. I hugged Jeanne tightly, expecting someone to creep up and grab her from my arms.

But the cruiser was legitimate and Monkey moved on. I thought it might be a good idea to tell the police about the men who were after us, but I knew better than to suggest it. Pen told me once that some policemen take money from guys to throw the book at you. She hated cops, probably because of the Brunkel flower rap. THE JUDGE didn't get her that time, but shortly afterwards, she began to hate Uncle Dick because he was in league with HIM. "You never know who your friends are," she'd said.

As we drove away in the snow I wondered if I had any friends. There was Elizabeth at school. But she told Dennis Lyle that I loved him. It was a mean thing for her to do. Dennis was nice to me after that, gave me pencils and ate lunch with me. Once Monkey drove him home because he had missed his bus; he had a long way to walk without a hired man to drive him. I would have liked to say good-bye to him. Then there was the grade eight girl who was awfully ugly and fed me pieces of wax she kept hidden in a ditch... I fell asleep.

When I woke up we were going through a medium-sized town I'd never seen before. The transport was still in front of us. The deserted streets with overhead lights and snow falling past them were pretty, like Christmas time. Outside the main part of town my father stopped the car. He directed while Monkey backed the transport into a driveway.

\*

Home was a two-story brick farm house with an old-fashioned verandah. It was big, but it wasn't any castle. It had only one bathroom. It was interesting because somebody had left furniture in all the rooms.

We never saw Monkey again after that night, or relatives, or anybody else we had ever known. We didn't see my father again until Christmas Eve.

We were in a state that night because we didn't have a tree. Mother told us to choose up chairs in the living room so Santa would know where to put the gifts. We were doubtful. Then at nine o'clock my father came!... all smiles, wearing scruffy old clothes, and dragging a pine tree through the door.

It was the greatest Christmas ever. Santa brought jazzy homemade pillow slips for Fuzzy and Jeanne, and dime-store colouring books, crayons, girls' adventure books, and fudge. There weren't any of the usual slick toys, except Karan got a huge, fully-clothed walking doll, and there was a red fire truck that carried water and did all sorts

of things for Kink.

Christmas morning my father took Pen and me aside. "You've been good girls," he said, "your mother told me so. Things aren't the same as they used to be. Santa brought fancy gifts for Karan and King because they haven't been getting them for as long."

We protested we loved our gifts.

"Good," he said. "Did you think of giving anything to your mother?"

We shook our heads. We'd never given anything to anyone else. I felt a bit selfish, and I guess Pen did too. "What can we give her?" Pen asked.

"Do you still have your silvers?"

Our silvers were silver dollars. We'd been getting them for years from relatives and from Daddy on birthdays, at Christmas, and when teeth fell out. They weren't any use to us, we never bought anything. We said we had them all. He told us to put them in a box and write our names on a card: *To Mother, From Penny and June*. We learned many things that day: that Christmas is more than getting, that Santa doesn't necessarily come down a chimney, that we weren't to expect things anymore, that Mother was our friend who wouldn't say we were "Impossible!" again, or threaten to leave us.

After New Years', Pen and I started back to school. Our new teachers were pleased that we learned quickly. It was a pleasant old school and I soon overcame my embarrassment about my short hair. Mother had chopped off our expensive permanents before New Years', before she registered us at school as the Edges. "There," she said after the snip-job, "your own grandmother wouldn't recognize you."

As well as our hair-styles, our original furniture and appliances began to disappear. We had too much now anyway, but I worried that perhaps the men were taking it. One day when I stayed home sick, I learned the truth: Mother was selling the stuff through private ads.

Then Mother went to work. Not a glamorous job. She cleaned houses for rich people in town. What she earned kept us fed, almost. I was terribly hungry those days, I guess I was growing too fast. But I knew better than to ask, "Is there any more?"

At school in my little pink lunch box there was always a sandwich, an apple perhaps, and sometimes two homemade cookies. This never filled me up, so I made friends with the skinniest rich kids in class. Their lunches were stuffed with luxuries we no longer had. I became a human garbage pail.

Sometimes it was difficult to keep face with these rich kids. One day Esther, my best groceteria, remarked:

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by Karen Lawrence

I guess I want to write about playing the bone game because I learned something about relationships — between women, between women and men, between my man and myself. The game began as an artifact of another race, with unfamiliar symbols; but as I played, it became my reality. The game is a great teacher. It creates an environment which, if we accept it and participate in it, acts as a mirror which lets us observe the dramas we create and act out as we relate to others.

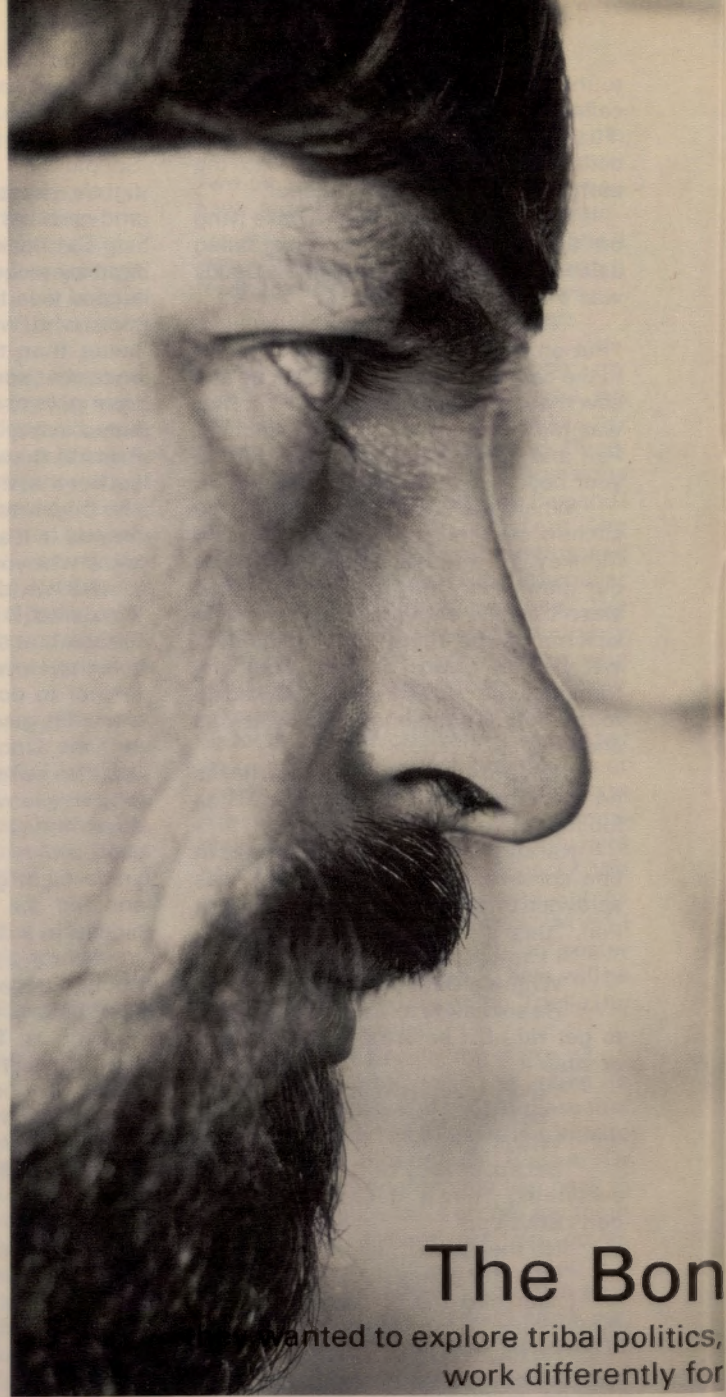
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In the morning, we decide to form our tribes, a tribe of women and a tribe of men, of about ten members each. Both tribes go off by themselves to get their power objects together, to choose their representatives, and to share their energy. I walk across the dry meadow with the other women; it's early summer, but already the grass is scorched yellow, rustling softly under the bellies of snakes. We find a spot in an abandoned orchard, where a few orange and lemon trees hang heavy with blossoms and fruit, and sit here. Some of us bare our breasts to the hot sun, and we talk about the game. I feel excited, and curious to see how we will relate to the men in what feels like a challenging situation. I am happy to be with these women in this exclusive way. Manda and Maitri (many members of the group had chosen new names for themselves) say they feel manipulated, co-opted since a man, our 'wilderness guide' on this trip, suggested that we play the game in a male vs. female fashion; he had described how powerful an experience it had been the last time he played it that way. Someone else said "Honey, it couldn't have gone any other way."

Hidden Mountain has some face paints, decals, and a tiny mirror. As we paint ourselves and each other, we decide on two *hiders*, a *pointer* and a negotiator, agreeing that replacements can be made at any time with group consensus. I am to be the negotiator. I feel some discomfort because I'm not sure what I'll have to do, and I am pleased that the tribe wants me to do it, whatever it is — they support me.

I'm trying to hold still for Manda as she applies red streaks to my cheeks, when I notice someone walking across the field to our grove. A man. We all bristle at his approach, the trespasser. "You'd better not come any closer, man, you're invading us." He seems startled, halts. "Our tribe is ready to play, so send out your negotiator." But we haven't even talked about our stakes yet. "Well we're not ready to play, we need about another hour." "An hour's already up — that's how long we agreed we'd take ..." "We're not ready to play; we need more time."

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## The Bone

wanted to explore tribal politics,  
work differently for

There are many different versions of *the bone game* as it was played by North American Indians. In its basic form, the game is played by two tribes. Each decides amongst themselves upon some thing to offer, a sacrifice, a stake of some value which will revert to the other tribe if they lose the game. The stakes are then offered through two representatives or negotiators, one from each tribe, who bargain with each other to establish the proper and 'fair' stakes for their tribes. Each tribe plays the game with several 'power objects' and some non-magic tokens — stones, bones, etc. The game is played in rounds; in a round, each tribe attempts to guess, through its *pointer*, in which hands of the other tribe's *hiders* the power objects of that tribe will be found. If the pointer guesses correctly in a certain number of tries, his/her tribe





## e Game

but the power of the game seemed to  
men and women

receives a token from the other tribe, the winning tribe being the one accumulating the most tokens. The game gave a tribe an opportunity to consolidate and demonstrate its magical powers, as well as to achieve unity or solidarity of its members; the energy of a tribe had to be 'together' in order to defeat a powerful opponent. Often a tribe's pointers and/or hidiers achieved renown for their intuitive and magical ability. Playing the bone game was sometimes a substitute for more warlike activity, and if nothing else, provided diversion during the long months of winter.

We were a group of men and women on a nine-day pack trip in the Ventana wilderness in California. On the second day of the trip, we decided to play the bone game. Following are two accounts of what happened that day.

by Derril Butler

As the men straggled over and resignedly sat down in the prickly grass of an open, sunny hillside, Sam (the part-time lawyer) expressed the undercurrent of embarrassed scepticism and resentment of the group by remarking "We must be a bunch of assholes to get manipulated into playing this stupid game. I came up here to rest and enjoy myself." This attitude was echoed by Orville (a retired newspaper editor and union negotiator). But Talus (a psychology undergraduate) summed up the prevailing feeling in fashionable Gestalt jargon: "Well, I take responsibility for agreeing to play. I think we can gain some important awarenesses here."

Lam (a resident in psychiatry) reminded the tribe that less than three-quarters of an hour remained to prepare for the game. Some decisions were quickly made. Accepting the first name proposed, as such groups do in order to risk offending anyone, the men rapidly chose Clair (a tight-looking self-styled healing expert) to be the pointer, and Wu Wei (a henpecked, itinerant gynecologist) and Rising Eagle (an anxious director of a growth center) as hidiers. Wart (the English professor) accepted the crucial role of negotiator only after all the men promised to support whatever agreement he might negotiate.

The decision about the stakes was more complicated. Everyone seemed to accept the basic premise stated by Wu Wei, that "Women are naturally trickier, more united and gifted with greater intuition than men. So we must carefully prepare the most devious strategy possible, or they will make complete fools of us." The procedure suggested by Ulysses (a New York lawyer and political organizer) seemed most promising: "The women will probably make several fake offers, in order to soften us up, so we'd better prepare some counter-proposals". Several spurious stakes were considered: the men would agree to screw any of the women at any time during the rest of the trip (Clair); they would agree to be absolute slaves of the women for a day (Wu Wei). Two proposals were finally decided on: the suggestion of Jacob (a paunchy Philosophy professor) that after the camping the trip the men would take the women out to a fancy restaurant for dinner; and Talus' suggestion that the men would carry the women's packs back to the road. The rationale behind these two offers was that while both could be defended as substantial and generous, they were not unduly risky for the men, and were sure to be rejected as sexist by the women.

The debate to decide the serious offer became heated, but as time had run out and no better idea emerged, the men decided to stake their eight days' food supplies. Sam and Orville decided to withdraw because the game was senseless. Jacob doubted that he could survive for eight days in the wilderness without food, but he had made a commitment to play and wouldn't quit now. Feeling somewhat pessimistic about the lack of tribal unity, Wart once

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He walks away. It's only about ten minutes before we see another of that tribe heading in our direction. Mutterings, warnings. "Our tribe says that unless you're ready in ten minutes we're not interested in playing anymore." "Go away." Power politics — already they're trying to fake us out.

What stakes will we offer? Much discussion. Marcy says "What if we couldn't talk to each other for the rest of the trip?" Eight days of silence between us — I'm uncomfortable even with the idea of it. A sacrifice. We will offer this. Suddenly the game seems very serious, very much *for real*. Joining hands, we sit in a circle and chant. At first oms, soft private noises, music. "Naaa..." — a sound emerges from one throat, then another and another. It takes shape as a word, a name that we share. Chanting it loudly, our power chant, we become a clan, a secret society, a family, a tribe of women. The energy between us is palpable in hands touching. I want to dance, I feel like a green shoot in this dry land.

We are ready. I hug everyone, feeling a little like I did the first time I went to the dentist alone, small and shaky. I walk through the field towards the men's encampment, feeling stronger as I move, proud and beautiful in my paint. I reach their place. I wait; no man comes out, apart, to meet me. I walk over to our communal hearth and sit, impatient. It is several minutes before I hear someone coming. My lover sits down across from me.

"Oh God, I can negotiate with anybody but him," I think. "How did they know it would be me?" And I smile. ("Honey, it couldn't have gone any other way.") I sit facing him, cross-legged, wary. He makes a suggestive remark about the way my body looks, shocks me. He announces that his tribe wants a concession from us since we started the game late. At first this seems unreasonable to me. We hassle; finally I agree to his concession, that I won't consult with my tribe while the negotiating is taking place. As soon as I agree to this, he summons his tribe. They arrive in a noisy procession, one of them blindfolded and wailing, and sit behind him. I feel twenty eyes upon me and try to look confident and detached.

Now we must decide who will offer their stakes first. He suggests that we have a screwing contest to decide this. I am angry; his remarks are crude and bullying, he's trying to humiliate me. I know this is the reaction he wants, to put me on the defensive. We go back and forth. I measure my phrases coldly and carefully, determined not to be pushed around. I

hate his amused arrogance. I try telling myself "Tara, it's a *game*"; but I am in it as though there is nothing else. The Indians — their negotiators fought, sometimes remained deadlocked for days. Weeks even. Some tribes killed their negotiators when they didn't bargain successfully.

Finally he makes an offer. If we lose, we'll take all of you out for dinner when we get back from the trip. "Out for *dinner*? What kind of outrageous bullshit is this? 'You must be crazy. Out for dinner — what kind of stake is that? What would you be sacrificing?' I state our offer. 'Well what good is that to *us*? What do we care if you don't talk to each other.'"

I tell him their offer is totally unacceptable. He makes a second proposal; they will carry out our packs for us if they lose the game. This stake also seems insulting; I wonder why he is offering stakes which he must know I will not accept. It is beginning to seem like we aren't playing the same game at all, and we argue over the nature of the game and the 'rules' that Ra spelled out to us before we began. He insists that we must give up something which will be of immediate value to his tribe, and I maintain that the game requires us to offer something in the nature of a personal sacrifice. I feel like they're treating our offer, and ultimately the game, like a joke. I am discouraged, feel hopeless. I want my tribe behind me.

He reminds me that I have agreed not to consult with them — the concession for starting the game late. I want to have them with me, to feel their energy and support. So I walk over to get them, accompanied by a male escort who is to make sure I don't talk about the negotiations. They are full of questions. All I can tell them is that I can't say anything. They accept this; Sea tells me that they are behind me whatever I decide is the best thing to do. Her words fill me with warmth, relief, assurance. We all walk to the hearth, arms linked.

With my tribe sitting behind me I feel cool, even. I am firm in my stance that we will not play for trivial stakes. Their final offer is to give up their food for eight days. (The Indians often staked horses, winter's supply of food, or many pelts; thus the tribe's fate was in the hands of their opponents, who could return the goods if they chose to. Some tribes starved or froze in the winter.) This is offered if we will make a concession. "We want you all to leave your tops off for the rest of the trip." I can't believe he's really suggesting this; I wait for him to start laughing at his joke, but he stares back at me coolly. Another cheap shot. I can't understand where he's coming from, why all his remarks are derisive and sexist. We will not agree to this. After some debate, he reluctantly gives it up. Will we agree then, to put our tops back on? Though I am suspicious of this rider clause on their offer, it doesn't seem like anything that could hurt us. I want to get the game going. I accept their offer, and put on my t-shirt.

The negotiating is essentially over. I am satisfied with the stakes, yet feel a kind of unease about the personal issues which came up between us — I wonder how we will work them out. When we begin playing, the game seems very important — this is *it*. Hidden Mountain is our pointer. She seems confident, and finds the magic objects in her first two guesses. She finds them again on her fourth guess, and we win two stones in the first round. Elation.

The men's pointer is a man I dislike. I don't trust him, think he's crazy. His 'blind soothsayer' act seems so melodramatic, so phony. His tribe wins one stone in the first part of the second round; when we rejoin to finish the round, there is a new development. He has taken off his clothes and is staggering around the camp. I watch him kneel beside a poison oak plant and rub the leaves all over his hands and arms. His wife, Marcy, tells me that he is immune to the effects of the plant. It becomes clear that he intends to use these hands while he gropes for the hidden power objects of our tribe. I think this is a sick, vicious act, and tell their negotiator that we cannot allow contact between our players and theirs. If this is not agreeable, they must choose a new pointer.

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more asked for, and received, a unanimous commitment to honor whatever agreement he negotiated.

Talus was dispatched to find the women and inform them that the men were ready for the contest. He brought back some disturbing news: "The women are really getting it together; they're bare-breasted and painted up and they really gave me shit for invading their territory," he said grimly. "And they said they need more time to prepare." "What the hell are they up to?" asked Wu Wei. But Talus could only reiterate that they seemed to be preparing an aggressive and united offensive.

This evidence of the women's craftiness and malice quickly generated some new defensive strategies. Wu Wei decided that "They are trying to irritate and knock us off centre by deliberately keeping us waiting." This seemed likely to everyone. Ulysses suggested that the men counter by keeping the women waiting when they did finally come. "And Wart can use their lateness to negotiate some concession." Cheered by this judicious strategy, the men made an attempt to unify the tribe by inventing some rituals of their own. 'Chanting' was the only suggestion that won substantial support; but the resulting 'om' sounded so pitiful that the attempt was soon abandoned in favor of a more 'natural and spontaneous' approach — waiting.

The second shock to the tribe's confidence was administered about one-half hour later, when the women's negotiator suddenly appeared about twenty yards away, looking formidable with elaborate designs on her face and bare chest, her nipples painted a startling scarlet. Worst of all, it was Tara, the lady with whom Wart was obviously hopelessly in love. "They must have found out who our negotiator was and chosen Tara because they knew Wart would be vulnerable," declared Wu Wei darkly. Most of the men agreed this was a shrewd manoeuvre. Wart, feeling somewhat insulted, found himself declaring with more assurance than he felt that he really could be trusted to resist the wiles of his own lady and not betray the tribe. Like all the men, Wart did not really consider that the advantage might be his.

After what was deemed a suitable waiting period, Wart left his apprehensive brothers and followed Tara to the negotiating circle. Sitting across from her, and absorbing the full impact of her tantalizing sexuality and seeming utter indifference to him, Wart suddenly felt the game as intensely real and risky. It seemed to him that the only way to counter her challenge and prove himself to his tribe was to play the role of the blatantly sexist male. To preserve his masculine self-image he had to win this contest, even at the risk of permanently alienating her.

Wart opened his offensive by insultingly pointing out that, typical of women, Tara had been late coming to negotiate. His tribe's trust in the women's ability to keep their agreements had been shattered, and she could restore that trust only by making a concession. They could not proceed unless Tara agreed not to consult her tribe during the negotiations. She seemed somewhat bewildered by Wart's insistence, but finally agreed. Immediately he summoned the men, who came and sat behind him in the circle. When Tara expressed outrage at this, Wart reminded her that he had made no agreement not to consult the men. He felt a little thrill of satisfaction with the success of his trick.

They had a lengthy discussion about who should offer their stakes first. Wart suggested a screwing contest; whoever gave out had to present the first offer. Tara snorted her utter contempt of Wart for coming up with such an idea. Feeling generous because he had already scored so impressively, Wart finally agreed to go first. As he'd expected, Tara declined with due scorn the men's offer to take the women out to dinner. She countered that the women would agree not to talk to one another for the rest of the trip. She emphasized that this was an enormous sacrifice, since it meant they would have only the men to talk to. Wart, assuming this was a spurious offer, likewise rudely declined, pointing out that his tribe had nothing whatsoever to gain from this proposal. He then said that the men would carry out the women's packs. Again, Tara was indignant that they could be so stupid as to imagine her tribe would allow them such an honor. And she reiterated her first offer, which Wart declined once more. They had a long discussion; Wart refused

to advance any further offers unless Tara's tribe had something that would benefit his, and Tara maintained that Wart's offers were not even worth considering.

Still convinced that Tara was holding out, but increasingly curious to find out what the women's real stakes were, Wart decided to break the stalemate by grandly announcing that his tribe would stake their food. Looking disappointingly unimpressed, Tara admitted that this offer, while it didn't yet match the gift of the women's silence, was a bit more like it. Wart began to feel bewildered and angry. "You've missed the point of the game," he said. "You're supposed to offer something of value to the other tribe, not just make some useless sacrifice." Later, Wart wondered if this basic contrast in approach to the game is somehow a characteristic difference between men and women.

Tara seemed suddenly confused and said she would have to talk with her sisters. Wart suggested this would be a gross breach of promise and conclusive proof that the women's tribe could not be trusted. Tara said she wanted them to be present anyway, even if they couldn't confer — in fact, she wouldn't continue negotiations otherwise. Wart magnanimously agreed to let her summon her tribe, provided that one of the men go with her to make sure she didn't talk to them. A little later, seven bare-breasted, elaborately painted, incredibly self-possessed-looking women quietly sat down in the circle behind Tara.

Wart now realized that he was caught in his tribe's own trap. The women hadn't intended to make any spurious offers. Unless he was to sacrifice the one point he had scored and allow Tara to confer with her tribe, he had to accept the stakes she had offered. But how could he accept those stakes (which were beginning to look more and more reasonable and interesting) without completely capitulating? In a last desperate attempt to get the game underway, Wart suggested that the women's proposal would be acceptable if they would agree to go bare-breasted for the rest of the trip. Tara indignantly refused, because of the cold and the insects. Moved by a sudden reckless impulse to finish these tiresome negotiations and get the game started, Wart agreed to accept the women's silence as their stake if they would immediately remove the distraction of their bare chests by covering them. Tara agreed. The two tribes separated to prepare for the bone game.

The reaction of his brothers was even more devastating than Wart had expected. Jacob wailed that his food supply was being risked for nothing. Rising Eagle complained that the stakes were 'destructive'; no matter which side won, everybody would lose if people couldn't talk to each other or eat. But Wu Wei was the most bitter. He regarded the negotiations as a humiliating defeat for the men. "I saw her get every concession she wanted without giving you anything. My God, it sure was easy to see who has the power in your relationship," he said to Wart with unmasked disgust. Wart felt too hurt and betrayed by these onslaughts to argue. "Jesus," he thought, "this isn't a tribe, it's a pack of hyenas."

The defeat turned into a rout when the women's pointer, with uncanny luck, won two of the men's stones in the first round. Wart felt annoyed at the women's triumphant display. "Do they always have to be so smug?" he wondered. Clair, who had appeared on the scene blindfolded and exhibiting spastic symptoms in unconvincing imitation of an entranced shaman, now began an embarrassing solo performance that was probably calculated to unsettle the women and restore the men's confidence. He tore off all his clothes and began to moan and slobber and roll violently on the ground. But the powers of magic were not to be wooed by such idiocy. No one was surprised when he turned up only one bone in his first point. Apparently willing to resort to any extreme to intimidate the seemingly-invincible women, he asked for some poison oak which he rubbed vigorously over his hands and arms, then signified his intention to feel the hands of the women hiders before making his second point. The women were infuriated. Clair refused to point unless he could touch them. The game ground to a stop.

Clair's display of insane egotism was the final blow to the already-enebbled unity of the men's tribe. Wart watched their ultimate disintegration with growing disappointment. Wu Wei and

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## TARA

We decide to take a short recess. A member of their tribe comes and sits across from me. He looks nervous, and says in a shaky voice, "I'm the new negotiator for our tribe. We want to offer some different stakes. We don't want to give up our food." But several other men tell me that this man doesn't have the sanction of any of his tribe to speak, he is speaking out of his own fear. Yet some of them feel they have given up too much, and are afraid of losing all their food to us. Are they afraid of our vengeance? Don't they realize we can give it back if we win?

After an hour or so, the men's hidens return from a walk. There seems to be some intense discussion in the tribe; the hidens have decided they don't want to play any longer. There is something they don't like about the way the game is going — I'm not sure what it is. There are now only two or three men who want to play. Their tribe is disintegrating.

So we have no opponents. Some of the women are saying "We won." I look at the two stones on our side of the hearth, feeling frustrated, unresolved, dissatisfied. It's the last thing I expected, that they would just stop playing. I have a sense of how hard it must have been for Wart to negotiate for a tribe which was not solidly behind him. We decide to make a fire to cook our supper.

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A Buddhist teacher says "We do not give our experiences time. We must seize them, cook and eat them right away." As I give this one some time, still digesting, it is clear that we women were very serious about the game. We were creating a living myth for and about ourselves, or perhaps trying to relive the ancient experience of the matriarchal clan. The energy I felt with those women that day was strong, high, healing. It carried us along the next day; we split from the main camp and went on a pack trip together, spent a night camped in a fragrant canyon.

What made me uncomfortable was a sense of not-sharing; the exclusiveness nurtured me, yet alienated me when I saw it become nose-thumbing "We're better than you are". I had a sense that the men didn't know what had gone wrong. They could see that we shared something they didn't have with one another. The game could have brought them closer to one another, but it split them. Regardless of the outcome of the game, the women had a sense of family which satisfied.

Wart and I have worked on some of our differences; some of them we're still exploring. As negotiators, we learned that differences don't have to be fatal to a relationship — as long as you can keep a dialogue going.

## WART

Rising Eagle decided to go for a short walk, then sent back the message that they would not continue the game. Clair, suddenly sensitive to the group's rejection of his behaviour, announced that, since no one else seemed to really have the spirit of this game, he ~~was~~ not going to play anymore. Ulysses wandered off, and Jacob said that he hadn't really wanted to play the game in the first place; only his commitment to the group had kept him in. Lam walked over to the women and announced that the men didn't like the stakes and he was the new negotiator, come to negotiate some different ones.

Stung by this betrayal, Wart heard himself blurting out angrily "I negotiated those stakes in good faith, with everyone's support, and if you guys back out now you're a bunch of creeps." He declared his intention to finish the game even if he had to do it alone. But when only Talus agreed to join him, a bewildered and bitterly disappointed Wart gave up and walked away from the scene. "Is it inevitable that men and women must alienate each other like this?" he wondered. Later he began to feel very lonely, but decided he had better take time to pull himself together before going to look for Tara.

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*In the summer of 1975 a group of women belonging to the Women and the Law Association at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law, received a grant from the Student Community Services Programme of Secretary of State for the purpose of disseminating information on women's legal status. During the course of this project these women researched legal topics of particular interest to women, and the information was transcribed into booklet form. Community-centered*

*workshops were also sponsored by the group for the dual purpose of exchange of legal information and discussion of the legal status of women. The following is one of the articles, researched and written by Dawne Peterson-Dyck. The booklet itself is prefaced by the statement that the information is useful for general purposes only and cannot substitute for legal advice which must always be tailored to the particular case. I might add that while the status or lack of status of the "common law*

*wife" is generally the same across Canada, there are variations from province to province in the rights and privileges accorded to her through various provincial statutes. This article is based on Ontario law. I have editorialized in some parts to include information pertaining to other provinces, and to indicate recent developments.*

Linda Duncan

## The Common Law Wife: Myth or Mrs.?

by Dawne Peterson-Dyck

There is no such thing as a common law marriage in Canada: that is the law. It is probably a surprising statement to most people as "common law wife" is a term frequently used both in our daily speech and in the media. "Common law marriage" is used to describe the situation where a couple live together as man and wife without having gone through the legal requirements for a valid marriage. They have not been formally married, either in a church or a civil ceremony, so there is no registration of a formal marriage. Usually when people speak of a common law marriage, they mean a fairly permanent relationship as compared to a brief affair.

Common law marriages began in England. For many years there were no laws governing marriage and no requirements for any type of church ceremony. A couple could marry in a number of traditional ways: by speaking certain words, by exchanging certain promises, or by going to live together and calling themselves man and wife. These couples were said to be "married by the common law of England", meaning that they were married accor-

ding to custom and tradition. Such marriages were valid in England until 1753, in Scotland as recently as 1939 and are still valid in some American states.

Today in Canada, in most cases, common law marriages are not legally valid. That means that the law does not recognize these situations as marriages and does not consider the couple involved to be husband and wife. So any law which refers to a wife or a spouse does not apply to a woman living common law. Under Canadian law, a so-called common law marriage is simply two people living together; it is not a marriage and does not become a marriage no matter how long it lasts.

Although in law the common law relationship will not be held to be a legal marriage, some provincial statutes have recently granted the common law spouse some benefits. Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba all allow the common law spouse to claim under the Workers' Compensation Legislation, but the definition of common law spouse varies significantly for each province.

In Alberta there must be co-habitation to the knowledge of the community for 5 years or 2 years where there are children; in British Columbia seven years cohabitation; and in Manitoba 3 years cohabitation. Alberta allows the common law wife, strictly defined, to claim under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act as well. Other exceptions are noted later on.

Traditionally, common law relationships arose when two people wanted to marry, but could not. Today many couples consciously choose not to marry. This may be because they reject the traditional roles of husband and wife as seen by our society and legal system. Other couples reject marriage for financial reasons. Two pensioners who marry may lose in over-all benefits as a result.

Excerpt from Alberta Hansard, March 18, 1976.

DR. WEBER (P.C., Calgary Bow): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address this question to the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health. It has been reported because of social



security benefits a large number of senior citizens are living common-law. As it now stands a couple may be economically better off to live common law than to marry.

I was wondering if the minister anticipates any changes in social security benefits to alleviate this situation.

**MISS HUNLEY** (Minister of Social Services and Community Health): Mr. Speaker, I'd be shocked and surprised to find out a few dollars difference is what makes people decide to live common law or to marry. I have an opinion that our senior citizens have higher values than that, but I'm not one to moralize about who should live with whom. I think that's a decision they need to make for themselves.

**MR. NOTLEY** (N.D.P., Spirit River-Fairview): It's a question of incentive.

A man marrying a woman employee will no longer be able to deduct her wages as a business expense for tax purposes, which might mean a serious financial loss to a small business, so such a couple may opt for a business, rather than a marriage partnership.

A deliberate, informed choice not to marry may be in a couple's best interest. Where there is no marriage, there are no legal barriers to ending the relationship whenever the couple chooses. Each partner maintains his or her independence, and since the laws governing husband and wife do not apply to them, the couples are free to define their own relationship.

Despite the wider grounds for divorce that have existed in Canada since 1968, many couples find themselves living common law for the oldest reason: one or both of them cannot get a divorce to end a previous marriage. They cannot marry because one of them is legally married to someone else so they live common law out of necessity rather than by choice. Other couples live common law because they mistakenly think they can create a legal marriage this way. A common idea is that after living together for seven years a couple is married. This is completely wrong. Women living common law with this or similar misconceptions about their position often suffer hardships because they do not take steps to protect themselves legally, believing themselves to be legally married.

Another type of invalid marriage which is often included in discussions of common law relationships is marriage according to ceremonies or customs not recognized by Canadian law. Marriages according to Canadian Indian or Inuit customs are in this category. The legal status of these types of unions are not

definite, but in most cases these "marriages" have been considered to be common law relationships only.

A recent case involved two native people who, with parental consent had cohabited for several years as husband and wife with the intention of continuing the relationship permanently to the exclusion of all others; they had borne children. The relationship was deemed by the court not to be a marriage and the women was compelled to testify against her "husband" in criminal proceedings.

*Ex Parte Cote* (1971) 19 DLR (3d) 486

Whether the common law relationship arises by choice or necessity, it is very important that the partners understand what their legal status is. Women in particular can find themselves in an extremely bad situation when a common law relationship runs into difficulties unless they have been aware of their legal position and have taken steps to protect their own interests.

The most important right a legal wife has is to be supported by her husband. A husband must be sure his wife has adequate food, clothing, shelter, and adequate medical care. The wealthier he is, the better the style of life he is expected to provide. If a husband does not provide the things his family needs, his wife is entitled to pledge his credit; that is, she can obtain what she needs on credit and he will be obliged to pay for it. These rights cannot be claimed by a common law wife. The man she lives with is not obliged to provide for her. Unless a woman supports herself, she is dependent on her common law husband's generosity which can leave her without even the barest necessities if he does not wish to provide them.

Technically, a common law wife can lay claim to support. Section 197 of the Criminal Code provides that every husband must provide for his wife and every parent for his child. Under that section, a common law wife who has been recognized as a wife without evidence to the contrary, will be deemed to be a legal wife. However, a common law spouse would usually have little difficulty providing "evidence to the contrary" if he wished to do so.

Two provinces also extend the right of support, in a more limited scope, to the common law wife. In British Columbia, the *Family Relief Act* allows either partner of a common law union of at least 2 years duration to claim support and maintenance. In Manitoba, the *Wives and Children's Maintenance Act* gives a woman the right to support where the common law union has existed one or more years and she has had his child.

Married women do not acquire rights in any property simply by marriage; neither can a woman acquire any property rights by living with someone. Any property in a woman's name is hers and any property in a man's name is his whether the property was acquired before or after they began to live together. The general rule regarding all property is the one who pays for it owns it. An exception is property given as a gift. If the man a woman lives with puts property in the woman's name, he may be able to reclaim it unless she can prove that he gave it to her which is often hard to do. They may be the only people who knew of his intention and if he denies her claim she may lose the property.

A woman is free to purchase property in the joint names of herself and the man she lives with and would be wise to do so whenever possible. If there is any dispute about ownership, this property would be divided according to the amount each person contributed to its purchase unless one person can prove that the other person intended to bestow a share of the property as a gift. Where a woman or man purchases a major item such as land or an automobile and wishes to have it placed in joint names, they should get legal advice to be certain the choice reflects the intention to share equally.

All of these rules apply to a woman's home as well. If the home is in the man's name, she has no right to remain there, should he choose to order her out. A woman has no dower rights in any of the man's property under a common law relationship so any land or home owned by the man can be sold without the woman's consent. For residents of Quebec, the law of community of acquests does not apply to members of a common law union. This law only applies to property held by legally married couples.

If a woman's common law spouse has named her as his wife in a pension plan under the *Canada Pension Plan Act*, she can collect as his widow as may the common law husband. The woman, however, must prove to the satisfaction of the Minister that she had cohabited with the man for seven years, that they could not marry because of an existing marriage and that the fact of the common law union was public knowledge, or where there was no existing marriage, that they had cohabited for several years and she was publicly known as his spouse. Similar provision is made under the *Pension Act*, *Civilian War Pension and Allowance Act*, and *Defense Services Pension Continuation Act*, all of which are federal statutes. Further, workmen's compensation payments



have been made to common law partners.

If a woman's partner has group insurance plans at his place of work which pay benefits to his wife, the common law wife may not qualify, especially where there is a legal wife living. It depends on the individual plan. A woman's partner should enquire about her coverage and, where there is no coverage, investigate to see if the plan can be varied to include her. Life insurance policies are payable either to the estate of the policy holder or to a named beneficiary. If the man's insurance is paid to his estate, her share depends on the laws of inheritance. If he names the woman as beneficiary the proceeds go to her. Where the policy is simply made payable "to my wife", the insurance company might refuse to make payment to a common law wife especially where there is a legal wife who attempts to claim the money.

When a husband dies without a will a large portion of the estate automatically goes to the wife. If a man living common law dies without a will, his estate will be divided among his next of kin. A legal wife would have first claim, followed by any legitimate children, then more distant relatives including his parents, brothers, sisters, and so on. The common law wife could be left without anything while her partner's estate went to a distant relative he never met. The only claim a common law wife could bring against the estate is one for a legitimate debt such as a loan to her partner for his business or back wages if he had been paying her for some business or house keeping services.

**An exception to the inheritance laws occurs in British Columbia under the *British Columbia Administration Act* whereby the common law wife can claim her partner's property for her support where he died without a will.**

In order for her to receive any of her partner's property after his death, the common law wife would have to be named in his will. The man should name her specifically to be sure no mistake can arise. A gift made "to my wife" with no name specified could lead to disputes if there is a legal wife living who attempts to claim the estate. The common law wife could benefit from such a bequest where there is strong evidence that the deceased intended her to benefit rather than the legal wife but considerable legal battling could be involved. Even where the common law wife is especially named in the will, a legal wife and children of the deceased could contest the will under dependents' relief acts. If the legal wife and children could show that they are

unable to support themselves adequately, some or all of the estate could be given to them. A common law wife may be exempted from paying succession duties on anything that she inherits from her common law partner if they cohabited for a certain length of time and she was known publicly as his wife.

Since the common law wife is not a legal wife she cannot, for income tax purposes, be claimed as a deduction under married exemption. Still, a common law wife can provide tax advantages. The man may be able to pay the woman wages for her house-keeping or child care services or work she contributes to his business and claim these as tax deductions just as if he had made them to a stranger. Legal husbands cannot deduct wages paid to their legal wives because these services are considered part of the marriage agreement. The common law husband may be able to claim some deductions for the support of their or her children. A lawyer or accountant can provide advice for the best means of minimizing taxes by way of these benefits.

If a woman lives common law, she may find her welfare payments cut off, on the assumption that a man who is living with her ought to support her. This will not happen where a woman sleeps with someone occasionally, but will if she lives with a man as his wife and is regarded as such in the community. Realistically, although the woman may lose her welfare benefits, her partner, if he is receiving welfare, may be able to have his benefits increased on the basis he is now faced with having to support a common law wife and perhaps children.

If a woman is receiving maintenance after a divorce, her ex-husband cannot stop payments because she is living with another man. A woman should remember, however, that a maintenance order can be varied at any time there is a change in the circumstances of the parties. If a woman's ex-husband can show in court that her common law partner is contributing to her support, the ex-husband may be able to have his payments reduced or stopped altogether. He will still have to make child support payments to any children of the former marriage.

Where a woman is receiving alimony under a separation agreement, the terms of that agreement will determine whether payments continue. Some separation agreements contain *dum casta* clauses specifying that a wife must be physically faithful in order to receive support. If the agreement contains the clause, a woman's husband can stop paying if his wife lives common law. Another common clause is called a *dum sole* clause which disentitles a woman to payment if she

lives in a husband-and-wife relationship; again, it is obvious that living common law would stop payments if such a condition was part of the agreement. If neither of these clauses is part of the separation agreement, the husband may have to continue payment. A woman should obtain legal advice as each agreement is different.

Canadian laws create two categories of children — legitimate and illegitimate. Legitimate children are children of married parents; all others are illegitimate. The children of a common law marriage are illegitimate. Legally, the mother is the child's only parent. The mother is entitled to custody and control of the child unless and until she is shown to be unfit. The father has no such rights at this time.

**A recent decision of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Alberta held that the father of an illegitimate child has the right to apply to the family court for access to his child.**

*White v. Barrett* (1973) 3 W.W.R. 293

The child will be registered with the mother's last name unless the woman and her partner request in writing the child bear the man's surname.

A child's father is required to support the child until she reaches the age of 16, and beyond if she is handicapped and unable to support herself. If the man acknowledges that he is the father, the woman can ensure support only by bringing an action in family court, to prove that he is the father, within two years of the child's birth. The woman must have evidence to back such a claim; her word is not enough.

An illegitimate child cannot inherit any property from her father unless a father specifically makes a gift to her in the will. If he has no will, the child gets nothing. The child can inherit from her mother if the mother dies without a will, but legitimate children have better claim. A woman should note that if she and her common law spouse eventually marry, any children born before the marriage are considered legitimate, as if the parents were married at the time of their birth, and their birth registrations can be altered to show their father's surname if they do not already do so.

A common law union ends when and however the couple decide to end it. There is no legal way for either to stop the other from leaving. When the union ends, the woman has no right to any financial support from her partner as when a legal marriage ends. A few exceptions were indicated earlier. A woman is entitled to keep only her own property or her share in any jointly held



## Vancouver Rape Centre Plans Test Case



In the last issue of *Branching Out* Linda Duncan proposed that rape victims seek justice in civil court rather than attempting criminal prosecution. Responses to the article included the following letter from the rape centre in Vancouver. We also found an account of such a case that had been successful in the United States.

I'm glad to see that the idea of taking women through civil action rather than or in addition to criminal procedures is occurring to others in Canada. We feel it to be a reasonable way for a woman to redress the crime against her. We are in contact with a lawyer here in Vancouver, who is willing to take on a test case with one of our clients.

So all in all I'm very pleased with Linda's article. I have only three questions. First of all, you write that corroboration is required, and the implication is that it is required *by law*, in order for an accused rapist to be convicted. This is not so, to the best of my knowledge. Indeed, in his charge to the jury, the judge must instruct that it is "unsafe", and some say "dangerous", to convict the accused solely on the basis of the testimony of the victim. However, he must also instruct that the jury *may* convict in the absence of corroborative evidence if they are satisfied that the woman is telling the truth. In practice, this does mean that the accused is afforded an extra "benefit of the doubt", but it does not mean that a conviction is impossible without corroborative evidence.

Second, in B.C. victims of rape are entitled to claim damages other than the specific ones you have listed from the Workers' Compensation Board. Sums to cover time lost at work in particular seem to be more common here. Awards are never terribly substantial though.

Third, I am appalled at the way you treat the question of "responsibility" for the rape. We believe that it is the structure of sex roles in Canada which fosters the crime of rape, which patterns men to rape. However, at the moment that a woman says "no" to sexual intercourse, whatever has gone before, her decision should be final. A man who disregards a woman's right to make that decision is totally culpable for the act that follows. You cite drunkenness, hitch-hiking, and voluntarily keeping questionable company as "contributions" to the rape on the part of the woman. I agree that these activities do constitute a "momentary lapse in self-protection" (note that this only applies to women, not to men), but they do not contribute to another's assault. That logic would allow all of us to bear only partial responsibility for taking advantage of the weakness of another person. Is stealing from

cont. from p. 37

property. The law protects legal wives but the common law wife, in the majority of cases, must protect herself. While the relationship is going well, the common law wife is as well off as the legal wife, or maybe better off. It is when the relationship goes wrong that the woman becomes vulnerable and then it is usually too late to do anything. A woman should start to protect herself when she is secure in the relationship.

The best protection a woman can give herself is economic security. The law regards financial arrangements between the common law wife and her partner as it would arrangements between two people in a business relationship. It does not apply assumptions that arise when a husband and wife are involved. A common law wife should take advantage of this and keep her financial relations on a businesslike basis. She should be sure her name is on the title to any property she contributes money towards. She should keep records of who paid for what and any arrangements made with respect to

ownership of property. A woman may wish to keep a separate bank account for her own wages and income and if not should keep a record of her deposits to any joint account. If she follows these precautions she will have some protection in case the relationship ends. If a woman trusts in her partner's good will, she could lose everything she has.

If a woman is attempting to keep her affairs on a businesslike basis by using written agreements, she should note an important problem. A contract which is based on an agreement to live together is void; the promise made by the woman to live together with the man if he will in return pay certain expenses, for example the rent, is not considered to be legal consideration. A woman cannot benefit under a contract where the thing she gives in return — living common law — is deemed to be an immoral act. The law here is very difficult. If you wish to draw up an agreement, consult a lawyer to be sure it is valid.

Today, the common law wife is

often still regarded with disapproval, the product of traditional morality and our society's emphasis on marriage and the legal family as the basic social unit. Women should take the lead in re-examining such attitudes about marriage so that as we move towards independence we can choose the lifestyle we prefer without being penalized by our society or its laws.

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Dawne Peterson Dyck is a third year law student at the University of Ottawa and is a member of the executive of the Women and Law Association. She is originally from Saskatoon. If your organization would like to obtain a list of other titles in this series and information about the availability of the papers prepared by the Association of the Women and the Law, write to Women and Law, c/o University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law (Common Law Section), 57 Copernicus Street, Ottawa, K1N 6N5.

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Appreciation is extended to Ms. Jean Burch for the use of her legal research paper "The Common Law Marriage" for the purposes of supplementing the foregoing article. L.D.



children, little old ladies, and drunks therefore also excuseable on the grounds that the victims should have taken better care in protecting themselves? I think that this is an assumption inherent in society's attitude towards rape and rape victims that we must fight continuously.  
Connie Bagnall, Rape Relief, Vancouver

*I'm excited about the fact that your Centre is encouraging civil action and that you have a lawyer willing to represent the victim. In answer to your comments on corroboration you are correct that, while at present the warning as to corroboration must be given, in fact a guilty verdict is possible on the victim's testimony only — this was unclear in the article.*

*Secondly, you mention compensation for the victim from the "Worker's Compensation Board." I believe here you are referring to the Crimes Compensation Board and in Alberta damages, although small, have been awarded to compensate for loss of income while the victim is unable to return to work.*

*Thirdly, I agree with your response to the concept of apportionment of responsibility as it is likely to be applied in a rape civil suit and wish to assure you that the idea is not mine. In the article, I was reiterating a judicial process which is likely to occur. It is up to the victim's lawyer to persuade the court that the victim bears no responsibility for what happened. I also wished to make the point that, should the court find the victim partly to blame for the attack, in a civil suit this finding does not mean she must lose her case.*

Linda Duncan

Linda Duncan is a lawyer with the Edmonton Social Planning Council and editor of the law column for *Branching Out*. She is also on the board of directors for the Rape Crisis Centre of Edmonton.

## Civil Suit Successful in U.S.

In January 1976 an American woman was awarded civil damages as a result of a law suit she brought against two rapists two and a half years earlier. A jury of 8 men and 4 women awarded Mary Knight \$40,000. in compensatory damages and \$325,000. in punitive damages in a decision believed to set a precedent in U.S. courts.

Knight was attacked by two strangers after she left a singles bar in Washington, D.C. The two men forced her into a car and drove her to a home where she was raped repeatedly. Both men were convicted and sentenced to prison terms although one is now out on parole. Knight decided to bring the civil suit because, "I didn't think jail was going to do these guys much good. I knew I was going to remember that night for the rest of my life and I wanted them to remember it too." She says the money is not the reason she brought the suit. "I just wanted to see if society would put a price on what they did to me, the hurt, the pain and the mental anguish."

The men have filed notice of appeal arguing that the award is oppressive.

(*National Inquirer*, Feb. 14, 1976.)

# music

## Getting the Message

by Beverley Ross  
illustration by Audrey Watson

Rita MacNeil's album "Born a Woman" has arrived too late. As the liner notes explain, MacNeil was first impelled to create her songs by the strong emotions she experienced as the result of her involvement with the women's movement in Toronto in 1971. But lyrics like:

And the media they've done so fine  
Exploited our bodies and they buried our minds  
Follow their line and you're sure to be  
Another brain-washed member in society  
With a wonder bra to improve your figure  
And girdles designed to make you five pounds slimmer  
Cover girl to improve your complexion  
O don't offend the male population.

© Skinners Pond Music

while they were fine perhaps in the earlier days when we were all on fire with our new found selves, are not as timely as unabashedly political statements need to be. Today, as we awaken to the "morning after" of IWY and the increased disillusionment in society at large, MacNeil's presentation of the problems of liberation are dated

by their simplicity and naivete.

Surely, the omnipresence of the media being what it is, everyone in the English speaking world who is *going* to have their consciousness raised has had it raised. The liberation songs on this album are not likely to be useful tools of instigation.

If MacNeil's live performance has been a source of inspiration to women's groups across the country, her presence on the album is held down by singularly pedestrian musical arrangements on the more heavy-handed songs, such as the title track and "Need for Restoration". Where the lyrical message is more subtle as with "Angus Anthony's Store" or "John and Mary", the songs receive a correspondingly more creative treatment from musical director Jim Pirie.

When MacNeil sings from her emotional rather than her political consciousness, Pirie matches the haunting, ballad-like quality of the songs with suitably shaded sounds. On tracks like "Rene" and "Who Will I Go To See" MacNeil displays her gift for expressing her personal experience within the bounds of traditional folk song.



Her voice is strong and clear, with the reedy vibrato quality of a Joan Baez. It is in keeping with the Cape Breton-Scottish ballad tradition from which her songs arise.

This is an album in which half the songs are immediately appealing because they are real, warm and human. The others, while they may be sincere in their inception, sound as if they were written out of a sense of duty. They are obtrusive and awkward in both message and musical treatment. Unfortunately, it is these songs which are likely to stand out and make Rita MacNeil a more obscure artist than she deserves to be.

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It seems that every new Joni Mitchell album is her best. "The Hissing of Summer Lawns" is no exception. Very few artists have managed to survive and grow in the ruthless climate of the "pop" music world in the way that Mitchell has. Critics have accused her of being too introspective, too painfully honest. I've always believed that this criticism came from those too inflexible to accommodate her point of view. Hardened by their (often male) roles, they seem untouched by her minute perception of the world and her image in it. But as the edges of these roles gradually become blurred, perhaps Mitchell has come to realize that she speaks not only for herself but also for many women and men who identify with her vision.

The poetry of this new group of songs is more self-assured, more universal than before. It is still Mitchell magic, but here the other personae outnumber the formidable "I" of her past albums. The imagery is a mixture of both the fanciful and the urbane:

Battalions of paper-minded males  
Talking commodities and sales  
While at home their paper wives  
And their paper kids  
Paper the walls to keep their gut reactions

hid

Yellow checkers for the kitchen  
Climbing ivy for the bath  
She is lost in House and Garden  
He's caught up in Chief of Staff

© 1975 Crazy Crow Music

Since there are no production credits on the album, one can assume that Mitchell and the musicians she worked with are responsible for the masterful direction of the album. An acknowledged leader in the search for "new" sounds, Mitchell continues to experiment with songs like "The Jungle Line", where lyrics juxtapositioning "uptown" images with figures from Rousseau's paintings are superimposed

on a musical backdrop of Moog synthesizer and Burundi warrior drums. Her use of "voice-as-instrument" techniques, where masses of multi-tracked vocals are used like horns and strings, continues to be copied for its innovation. "In France They Kiss on Mainstreet," the inevitable "top-40" track, makes no concession to that market. Also intriguing is the Jon Hendricks' tune, "Centrepiece" set right in the middle of "Harry's House." The album continues with a traditionally rooted half *a capella*, half choral song "Shadows and Light":

Critics of all expression  
Judges of black and white  
Saying it's wrong  
Saying it's right  
Compelled by prescribed standards  
Or some ideals we fight

For wrong, wrong and right  
Threatened by all things  
Man of cruelty — Mark of Cain  
Drawn to all things  
Man of delight — born again, born again.  
© 1975 Crazy Crow Music

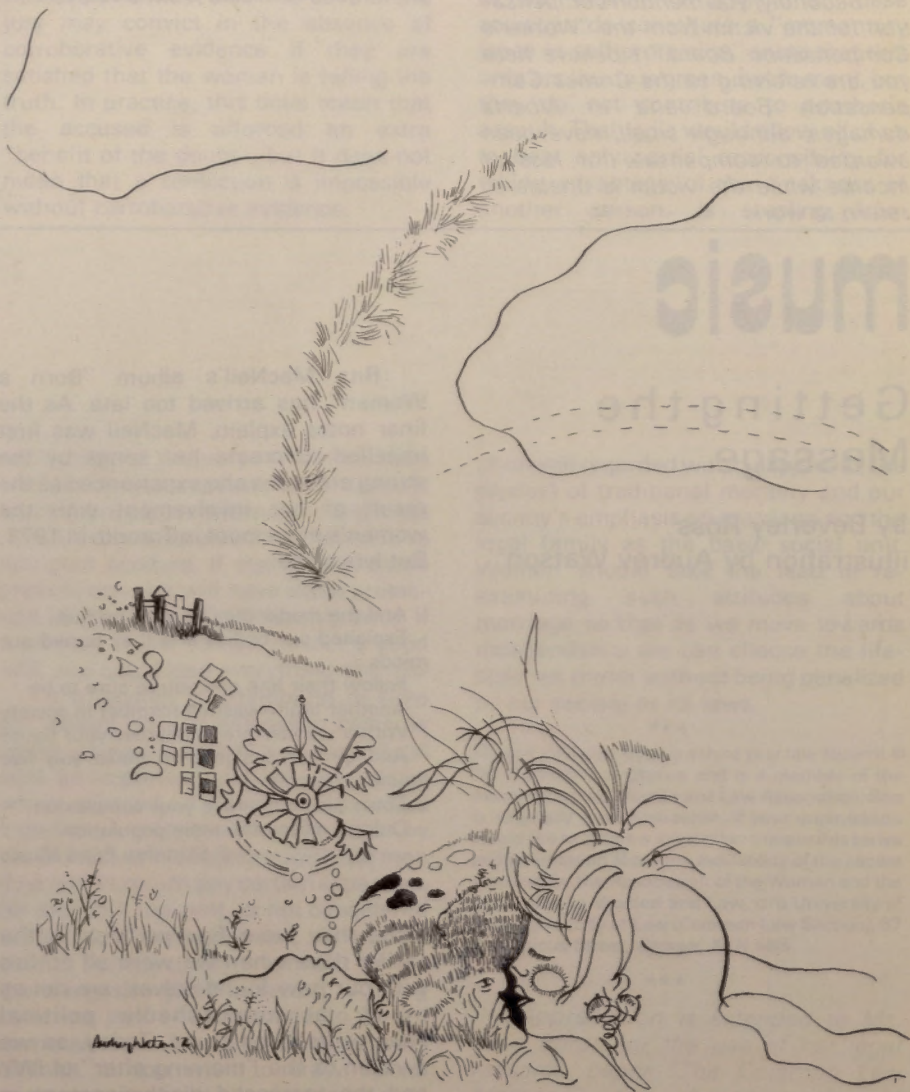
I prefer to receive the messages a la Mitchell but I won't ask you to judge by my "prescribed standards." Be drawn to that which delights you.

Rita MacNeil "Born a Woman,"  
Boot BOS 7154

Joni Mitchell "The Hissing of Summer Lawns," Asylum 7ES-1061

Beverley Ross is an arts instructor at the Youth Development Centre in Edmonton. She also sings, composes and contributes regularly to *Branching Out*.

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## THE PRINCESS OF SERENDIP

Marian Engel in Review

by Christa Van Daele

Marian Passmore Engel is a species of writer all to herself. Though she has been steadily at it since 1965, her reputation is only just recently securing itself. By temperament and by choice, Engel is no Laurence, Atwood, or Alice Munro. And it is my hunch, though it certainly can't be proved, that the very presence of this celebrated triumvirate of established women prose writers in English-speaking Canada creates an atmosphere at once encouraging and formidable for other mature writers who themselves hanker after a piece of the popular pie. It's as if the image-makers in corporate publishing offer only so many slots in the Department of Women Writers; when those are respectably filled, good luck to ye who yet knock.

What Marian Engel is doing in her books — relative to even such a wildly diverse grouping as a *Diviners*, a *Surfacing*, or a *Lives of Girls and Women* — is substantially different. Different and hence unfairly suspect; though some of her bad reviews, at the start, dealt with a real unevenness in the writing. One of the big differences, as I see it, is Engel's highly-personalized approach to style and craft in general, the whole business of shaping a book. The secret is that she *doesn't*, really; she prefers to treat literary architectonics somewhat more loosely. In Engel's novels, structure appears incidental, even arbitrary; afterthought rather than forethought, by-product rather than skeleton. As a result, the success of each piece of fiction she makes tends to vary drastically, depending as each does upon an energizing current of spontaneity. If that current is there, there is happy, fortuitous writing — serendipity, to borrow a little concept from Engel's *Bear*. If it is absent, the infectious sweetness and light evaporates from her writing as well.

Consider a novel in which a feeling of sweetness and light does abound, *The Honeyman Festival* (1970). It features as its protagonist Minn, an immensely lovable pregnant woman. The enormous pregnancy of *The Honeyman Festival*, in Engel's hands, swells casually, effortlessly, to a metaphor for Minn's whole existence: "She could hear time ticking around her, beginning to expand". Minn, with a

gallant sense of humour; Minn, unfashionably and hilariously out of favour with her Zero Population Growth friends; Minn, reading Edna O'Brien behind a locked bathroom door, stealing an hour, a chocolate bar, or just a pleasant moment of sexual rumination. The novel's life feeds off her big, vulnerable honesty, her philosophical agreeableness that a spade, after all, can be called a spade. Ask for more, Minn's nature tells her, push for what you want; and the plot, which sees Minn through one concentrated night of reflection, comfortably juxtaposes the solid, immobile Minn against a weaving tableau of faces, conversation, and Victorian bric-a-brac. This tight working out of one night's business admirably takes *The Honeyman Festival* straight to a point.

There is Sarah, too, meet Sarah: Porlock is the name her father gave her, but Bastard will do, for so she has rechristened herself. A character not unlike Minn — there is the shared faith in "our smells and our necessities and our procreation" — Sarah of *Sarah Bastard's Notebook* (1968) breaks patterns, challenges traditions. She concludes that "it doesn't matter what lifts you over the hurdle...drinks, drugs, incantations, bombs, petrol, Milton...". *Sarah Bastard's Notebook* is written to the tune of a lively comic upswing. It is comedy patterned in the broad, archetypal sense, the comic movement that once cinched plots in terms of social wedlock (festivals, weddings, births, masques, parties). This broad comic spirit, translated into a remarkably contemporary idiom in the very best of Engel's books, is spiritually allied to the element of serendipity that unfailingly distinguishes the Engel pulse from other pulses in Canadian writing.

Unhappily, when this comic spirit breaks down in Engel's work, it does so with serious repercussions to the total imaginative grasp of her fiction world. Because a wistfulness sets in instead. Something, well, *beaten down* creeps in, that cannot, I think, be entirely explained away in terms of her *characters'* expressed views. So that Audrey Moore, the narrating voice of *One Way Street* (1973) is a bit of a



puzzle to me. She's looking for something, that much is clear. But when she finds it in a vague, sentimental image (the image of a Greek *chatistas* dance) the task of the quest, in both exterior and interior terms, is naggingly incomplete, the husk of experience rather than experience itself. Although Engel, in this case, attempts to redress the balance of that curious pronouncement with a more robust and panoramic touch — the little *satiri* anecdote of the last few pages — it is too brief and too late.

Which brings me, with some regret, to Engel's latest novel, *Bear* (McClelland & Stewart, 1976). *Bear's* principal character is Lou. Lou is bookridden — a librarian, in fact. She is thus already a stock Engel type (Sarah, Ph.D., English Lit.; Audrey, esoterically well-read, as well as straight meat-and-potatoes-Tennyson; Minn, a voracious reader of all manner of printed matter). But for Lou, huddled among books in an historical institute, the musty world of letters provides a convenient, if soul-destroying, mode of existence. Lou seeks the sun, she craves life (Audrey is a sunseeker, so is Sarah), she is buried in junk (Minn, Sarah), she has a not *altogether* unsatisfactory male companion (see also Sarah's Joe, Audrey's Max, Minn's Norman) but yearns, understandably, for the Other Man (Engel's rewrite of the Other Woman).



And Lou, God knows, has been hedging her bets since primordial times. Her arms are "slug pale", her fingertips marked with "old, old, ink". There is a genuine poignancy in this portrait of Lou: "...When she found that her eyes would no longer focus in the light, she was always ashamed, for the image of the Good Life long ago stamped on her soul was quite different from this..."

The character is beaten down, all right, she is conceptualized in the thinnest of prose, but *Bear* — at least at the outset — exhibits a light, offhand use of sustained metaphor. Lou the Mole. In fairytale land. The twist in this novel, if the title hasn't given it away already, is that the Other Man is, yes, a bear. Lou takes up with, makes love with, a bear.

That is the gist of it. Yet if *Bear* means to construct a "joyful" and "Elizabethan" world (this is how Lou grasps the notion of a bear in her life), I am confounded. After the first few chapters, any sense of lyricism or metaphor — the necessary image-making resources that seem crucial to an exotic venture of this kind — falls down disappointingly. A baleful flatness of tone (contemporary realism), a degree of fantasy and faery in the subject matter (mythopoeic high romance), and some pretty heavy slogging in the myth-and-symbol line (clitori, for example, that are deeply embedded in body cavities) do not, in the proportions given, jell together to execute the perplexing idea at the centre of the novel. To her credit, Engel does not anthropomorphize the bear. Nor does she, except for dry allusions made through dictionaries, documents and the like, collect a lot of magical/mythological properties around the beast.

There are irritants, too, that stand in the way of our enjoyment of Lou's experience. Brief, wispy pieces of language in the narration ("Pumped herself a clean pail of water, went to bed"), especially at chapter endings, seem unjustifiably odd and spotty. The author's occasional oversight in practical matters (the bear uses his tongue on Lou's cunt, at one point, without bumping into her clothes; Engel fails to remove them from her character) contributes to exasperating reading. Finally, sensual subject matter without a sensuousness of language strikes me as downright peculiar. How can eroticism be delivered otherwise? The rebirth of a dejected character, the sexual awakening of a tired woman by a princely animal creature — are these not themes which cry for consideration, for lushness, for ornamentation and colour?

*Inside the Easter Egg* (Anansi,

1975) brings together 19 of Engel's short stories. Prohibitively priced at \$12.50 and available in hardback only, the collection includes a few gems that appear side-by-side with bread-and-butter stories that first appeared in *Chatelaine*. While publishing fiction in *Chatelaine* is a perfectly reasonable way of supplementing a writer's notoriously inadequate income, I see little rationale for reprinting terrific and embarrassingly crummy stories together in an edition of this nature. It balls things up in the long run and makes one *lemon* of a book. Some of the pieces show wit, point, and economy; among my favourites is the very interesting housewife's catalogue, *I See Something, It Sees Me*. This lucid and intelligent story is reminiscent of the classic housewife's outcry that turns up in American science fiction anthologies from time to time (Pamela Zoline's *Heat Death of the Universe*).<sup>1</sup> Others, like *Meredith and the Lousy Latin Lover*, are real sleepers. Sentiment, cliché, and soap opera plotting — and this at \$12.50 — no thanks, Anansi.

Christa Van Daele is a Toronto freelance writer who works with the Women's Press. Her fiction, poetry and reviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and magazines.

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## Towards a Sociology of Humans

by Marylee Stephenson

*Another Voice: Feminist Perspectives on Social Life & Social Science*, edited by Marcia Millman & Rosabeth Moss Kanter. Doubleday, 1975, \$3.50 paper.

Anyone who has tried to start a course on the Sociology of Women, or anyone who takes one and talks about it to other people has probably run into two questions: "What *is* Sociology of Women?" and "What about a Sociology of Men?"

It helps to answer the second one first. Carefully arranging your face, your tone of voice, you answer — "All the sociology you *know* is Sociology of Men." It's men studying men, drawing on their own interpretations (or that of their scholarly forefathers, male gender taken literally) as to what "human nature" is about, then setting priorities as to what is interesting and important to them — men in factories, men in formal, public, political and economic structures whose actions you can see, count and manipulate statistically. Poor or black or Indian men show up only when they are a problem, in terms of

crime, poverty or the heroic down-trodden, potentially revolutionary if they would just see where their true interests are and if the capitalists — over — there — would — just stop — oppressing — them. Women show up only when they are acting out the roles most sociologists see as being of any consequence for women — wives and mothers, in the upbeat studies; and again, people who have or present problems — prostitutes, single parents on welfare, working women neglecting their work as mothers. So that's Sociology of Men: descriptions of certain people grossly distorted by the presumption of generalizability to *humans* in given situations, distorted by deep biases along class, age, race, national and sex lines. There has been a half hearted attempt in sociology and the social sciences in general to make apparent and then correct some of those biases. But those that are gender-based are the last holdout and the latest issue.

That's where the Sociology of Women comes in, where *Another Voice* is invaluable. It is a paperback collection of 12 articles and an editorial introduction that comprises the best collection, in one volume, of critiques of existing sociology (the Sociology of Men) and statements of what a truly universal sociology must consist of.

The editorial introduction is an excellent summary of the limitations of sociology as an area of study. The editors define six critical problems which are dealt with in the articles in the book and in work done by other feminist scholars. The articles each take a sub-area of sociology, criticize existing work for its sexist theory, methods and research findings, and propose alternate, often innovative ways of studying the same areas in a whole fashion, by asking what *women* are experiencing in their worlds. I am going to list these six problems in some detail because I would like you to be familiar with them even if you don't buy the book. They are crucial to anyone interested in what the social sciences can or should do for us. Firstly, "... the use of certain conventional field defining models ..." leads to "... a systematic blindness to crucial elements of social reality.... Most of the models that dominate sociology focus upon traditionally masculine concerns and male settings." 2) "Sociology has focused on public, official, visible, and/or dramatic role players and definitions of the situation, yet unofficial, supportive, less dramatic, private, and invisible spheres of social life and organization may be equally important." Of course, it is in the latter spheres that women figure so heavily. The gap in knowledge about women is enormous, and the need to use this potential



knowledge to broaden our understanding about all people is equally large.

Thirdly, "Sociology often assumes a 'single society' with respect to men and women, in which generalization can be made about all participants; yet men and women may actually inhabit different social worlds, and these must be taken into account." If you want to test the possibility that you as a woman live in a different world from men, compare notes with a man on how each of you feel about walking down a city street alone at night; how you feel passing a construction site, at lunch hour in particular; what you thought about 'working' when you were a teenager. The topics for comparison are legion, I would say. 4) "In several fields of study, sex is not taken into account as a factor in behavior, yet sex may be among the most important explanatory factors." This, of course, is particularly important in trying to understand heavily female-populated fields (education, especially at the early levels) and predominantly male- or male dominated- fields such as medicine, industry, management, etc. 5) "Sociology frequently explains the status quo (and therefore helps provide rationalization for existing power distributions); yet social science should explore needed social transformation and encourage a more just, human society." This critique is not new; but the recognition that women as a class are the largest group disadvantaged relative to men at any stratum of society is new, and that knowledge must contribute to changing women's oppression.

Finally, "Certain methodologies (frequently quantitative) and research situations (such as having male social scientists studying worlds involving women) may systematically prevent the elicitation of certain kinds of information, yet this undiscovered information may be the most important for explaining the phenomenon being studied." Quantitative research prevents the scholar from gaining a sense of the subject's own experience. When men study women — if and when they do — it is difficult for the male researcher to "put himself in the other's place," to "take the role of the other". Obviously, the chances for distortion are very high in these circumstances. And if you see political power only in terms of elected office, or economic clout as directorships held, you will not be seeing women. Neither will you find out what else may be involved in the exercise of power — informal pressures or manipulations, the role of interpersonal interaction, of unsung thousands of envelope-stuffers, of millions of people who aren't politically active in the

traditional sense (supposedly out of apathy). And what if, as McCormack suggests in her article, non-voting is an active, conscious, realistic response to futility? Or maybe the fact that women vote at all and in the numbers they do is really a sign of tremendous interest, considering the lack of payoff for them.

The articles in *Another Voice* are all quite intelligible and not heavily loaded with sociologese. They have a straightforward, unpretentious quality that is not usual in sociology, to my mind. The one drawback for a Canadian audience is that in the discussions of specific areas to be researched in order to improve policy formation, the problems cited, research required, and policy suggested are quite specific to the American case. This is not to say that women are better off, or have radically different problems in Canada, but the specifics of situation and possible solutions sometimes vary widely in degree, in legal and historical context, etc. But the American bias is not a crucial issue in many of the articles, and is overshadowed by the book's importance as a critical, evaluative work.

The formation of a truly adequate sociology, that can tell us what the world is really like for all the people in it, is an important if far-off goal. This book is a much-needed beacon on a long, debris-strewn path.

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Marylee Stephenson is a sociologist who has taught women's studies at several Canadian universities. She is now living in Hamilton and teaching at McMaster University. She is an editor of *Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women*.

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## Capturing the Moment by Barbara Novak

*Ghost Towns*, by Florence McNeil.  
McClelland and Stewart, 1975, \$3.95  
paper.

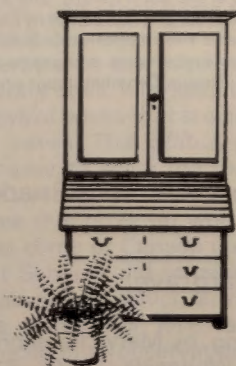
Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.

T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

It may be uncommon to begin a review with a quotation from another poet's work. But I do not think I am doing either Eliot or Florence McNeil an injustice. In *Ghost Towns*, McNeil's fourth volume of poetry, the elusive concept of time is explored with imagination, sensitivity, and striking clarity of vision. The volume contains some of the most unaffected, yet highly affective poetry I've come across in a long time.

Flowing freely between the Victorian and Modern Age, the subject matter relies heavily upon the effects of media. During the last century or so, technology has made it possible to capture a moment of time — through the use of photographs, film, and of course, television. These, together with paintings and the printed word, are the windows that allow McNeil a glimpse into the past.

Deceptively simple, these lucid poems explore a complex and shifting reality. Individually, they are easily understood. As McNeil states in the introductory poem, "Safety", "if I am/oblique/with you/it is/unintentional" — and she very rarely is. The structure of the volume is such that it



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spirals inwards from an external, distant link with humanity towards an internal awareness of self. The progression is an intriguing one, which constantly tries to link past and future with present.

McNeil sees early film techniques as crudely unsuccessful in recording great moments of the past. In "Queen Victoria's Funeral", the solemn milestone is seen preserved as a graceless charade. Not content merely to comment upon the inadequacies of the film, McNeil completes the poem with a powerful projection of the newsreel as a grotesque anticipation of the future (of which we are now in the midst):

Better to let the fable be  
record her death in dignity in print  
Say there was music and colour and tears  
and bury this black and white record  
noiselessly giving us a presentiment of disaster  
the vicious faces of nations  
passing like puppets with tangled strings  
leading grey processions  
which blend with one hopeless frenzy  
into the twentieth century.

When recording her own immediate past, however, McNeil regards the film medium as a comforting, magical resurrection, imperfect though it is. "Home Movies" is a sensitive portrayal of the painful pleasure derived from witnessing with nostalgia a time now past in which too soon "... the promises merge into/unaccountable dots."

A frightening parallel is established in "Reruns or the Return of Tom Mix" between yesterday's movies, when the hero was capable of miraculous feats of endurance in the name of Good, and today's in which we "grin at newer cowboys/who make real blood that splatters out of trees/where good guys always hang".

Now it is simple to recognize the flaws in the early pictures, but at one time, this fiction was trusted with a tremendously willing suspension of disbelief. Will the horrors that await us in the future render films such as *Straw Dogs* as hopelessly unrealistic and innocent as *Tom Mix* or *The Perils of Pauline* appear to us today?

Part of the poet's struggle for identity arises out of the awareness that she is an infinite series of individuals, each shifting slightly from the previous one as self-perception is affected by the passing of time. Nowhere is this concept more vividly expressed than in "Portrait of the Artist" in which the poet as a

young girl watches an elderly Canadian painter stand beside a portrait of himself as a young man. A similar mood of mystery and awe is achieved in "Hereditry" where the presence of the past is undeniable as the poet recognizes herself in photographs of her father:

Sometimes my own face  
looks out through my father's  
brown bewildered photographs  
(when I am least expecting it  
when I have clarified our relative  
positions)  
he is young  
and I am already  
taking over  
my eyes framing his eyes  
our unclear heritage

The poems in *Ghost Towns* reveal a search, a search for a place on the continuum. In a very real sense, McNeil is trying to locate herself. It is not enough to know that she is Canadian, although she writes of this aspect of her identity in "West Coast Christmas" in which she contrasts the Romantic notion of a white, "hans brinker" Christmas with the reality of the West Coast where "we/held umbrellas/upright as if they weren't there/and watched our limited landscape/flood itself for Christmas." "Winter Carnivals", "Calgary Winter", and "Elegy for the Prairies" all are specifically Canadian in content. The power and the relevancy of the collection, however, lies in the fact that despite cries for Canadian content, McNeil does not limit her scope. The poems have a universal appeal and immediacy, because the poet has allowed herself free, imaginative reign over every aspect of her heritage.

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Barbara Novak studied English at Queen's University and, on completing her M.A., moved to Banff where she worked at the Banff Centre. She is now assistant to the producer of a film company located in Banff. Her reviews have appeared in *Books in Canada* and *Quarry* and articles and poems have been published in various Canadian magazines.

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## McClung for the Young Reader

by Helen Hargrave

*Nellie McClung*, by Mary Lile Benham. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975, \$1.95 paper.

Having often thought that Nellie McClung would be a suitable subject for *The Great Canadian Biography*, and yes, I confess, even imagined myself as its

author, I was delighted to receive a copy of *Nellie McClung* by Mary Lile Benham. This book is a long way from being a great biography but it fills a certain need.

It is one book in a series entitled "The Canadians" designed to introduce Canadian children to their country's heroes and heroines in an interesting manner. We have had too few books of this type and the ones we have are usually lengthy and serious, altogether too intimidating for the enthusiastic young historian.

There are many photographs in the book, another plus. The story is accurate and obviously much care has been taken in research. Delightfully, too, there is new material which has not been obtained from Mrs. McClung's autobiographies. All too often, magazine articles on this wonderful woman have just been a rehash. Perhaps one of the most interesting sections is the analysis of the McClung novels.

The writing in the book is in clear, concise English with a vocabulary suitable for the young reader. But how dull the author's prose stands in contrast to Mrs. McClung's flowing, expressive style! It is almost tempting to skip from quote to quote and to reread these gems.

I wonder if it was the author or the publisher who decided to insert questions at the side of the text, to stimulate the little reader. Obviously someone believes that no opportunity should be missed to cultivate the young mind. I can almost hear the child say in utter disgust, "Yuk!", although it is much more likely that the questions will be blatantly ignored. I hope so, because some of them are insufferable — "Should married women with children be employed outside their home?" or "Are women more emotional than men?" These are questions that seem completely out of place in this day and age.

Benham's *Nellie McClung* certainly deserves a spot in our children's libraries and its failings may one day inspire someone to write *Nellie McClung: The Great Canadian Biography*.

Helen Hargrave is a teacher in Creemore, Ontario. For several years she has written for *The Courier*, a teacher's magazine.

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# SELECTIONS FROM KIDS CAN PRESS the moral tale revived

by Juliet McMaster

*Yak*, by Rosemary Allison, with illustrations by Ann Weatherby. \$1.95 paper; *The Peanut Plan*, by Claire Watson Garcia, with illustrations by the author. \$2.95 paper; *The Sandwich*, by Ian Wallace and Angela Wood. \$2.25 paper; *Strange St.*, by Ann Powell. \$1.95 paper; *Sara and the Apartment Building*, by Yvonne Singer, with illustrations by Ann Powell \$1.95 paper. All published by Kids Can Press, 1975.

When Alice finds a little bottle in Wonderland that is labelled "Drink Me," she prudently decides to check first that the bottle is not also marked "poison": "For she had read several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them." Alice has been well trained on the grim threatenings of cautionary tales, and Lewis Carroll could afford to take this playful dig at that kind of literature for children because his own books are so exuberantly free of moralizing. It is the crazy Duchess who insists, "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it" — and she yokes wildly inapplicable morals to every pronouncement.

The morals in this group of children's stories published by Kids Can Press are all too easy to find. These stories are not so grisly as Alice's cautionary tales, but they do tend to be reducible to moral abstractions: "Freedom is desirable but involves responsibility"; "Discrimination against racial groups is wrong"; "Tolerance of a range of lifestyles is right"; "Knowledge is valuable and useful" — and so on. It's not that one disagrees with the morals, only with the degree of emphasis. The poor ectomorphic stories fairly totter under the weight of the endomorphic Messages.

Otherwise, the tales are charming in their ways. Rosemary Allison's *Yak* is a simple allegory, in which a caged yak hears about freedom from a character called Idea. The text is provided in French and English. Ann Weatherby's pen-and-ink illustrations of the shaggy clumsy animal have, at their best, a fine poetic quality.

Another animal tale that is more



illustration from *The Peanut Plan* by Claire Watson Garcia

ambitious is Claire Watson Garcia's *The Peanut Plan*. Here there is some time and devotion spent on the development of atmosphere, and the moral about the value of knowledge and tradition is more fully incarnated in character and action. It is a rather bookish book — I mean that as a term of praise, by the way — and incorporates Latin quotations, maps, recipes, tales of old times, and other items to be stowed in accessible crannies of the brain. The characters are squirrels, and very literary ones, who keep libraries in their dreys of books that are literally made up of leaves. The peanut plan itself is a scheme to solve the food shortage by the widespread cultivation of peanuts: I hope this program works better in the cool clime of Canada than the Groundnut Scheme did in central Africa. The illustrations, which are by the author, are labours of love, and are full of affectionate observation of character and gesture in a treetop setting.

*The Sandwich*, by Ian Wallace and Angela Wood, has a promising motif — the Italian boy's stinky mortadella sandwich makes him a target of mockery at school; but the narrative is

not energetic enough to sustain the conscientious moralizing.

Ann Powell's *Strange Street* is an attack on stereotypes and bourgeois standards. "Little boys don't cook," announces a mother who doesn't live on Strange Street. Similarly they are not supposed to wash dishes, play with dolls, or cry when they hurt themselves. This little boy learns to think for himself and reject such rules.

Yvonne Singer's *Sara and the Apartment Building* is short on plot. It merely recounts the sort of things kids do if they live in apartment buildings — working intercom systems, playing on balconies and so forth. Ann Powell's illustrations for this story are more supple and appealing than her rather stereotyped anti-stereotype work for *Strange Street*: the two girls playing superman in the elevator are charmers.

Juliet McMaster

Juliet McMaster is an associate professor of English at the University of Alberta. She is the author of *Thackeray: The Major Novels* and articles on the English novel. She was recently awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to work on Trollope's novels.

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## A Tale of the New York Ghetto

by N'eema Lakin-Dainow

### *Hester Street*

Director Joan Micklin Silver  
 Producer Raphael Silver  
 Distributed by Midwest Films, 10 East  
 53rd St., New York, N.Y., 10022.

The influence of women in the film medium has generally been confined to the roles they play on screen. Despite the tremendous impact of female stars larger-than-life image, the real positions of power and authority in the film industry, that of director and producer, remain predominantly male domains.

Under the now defunct Hollywood studio system a few women, such as Ida Lupino, Lillian Gish, and Dorothy Azner, were given the rare opportunity to direct films. In more recent years, with the collapse of the studio system and the rise of independent production, women are faced with the additional problem of finding financial backing and distribution outlets as well as coping with traditional prejudice against women directors.

The experience of Joan Micklin Silver, an awardwinning writer and director, provides an excellent case in point. Although the much acclaimed "Hester Street" is her first feature length film, Ms. Silver had previously directed several prizewinning short films; "The Immigrant Experience", "The Fur Coat Club", and "The Case of the Elevator Duck". Yet, due to her sex, she was unable to obtain the necessary financial backing to make "Hester Street". She and her husband raised \$400,000 and were eventually able to direct and produce the film on an independent basis.

"Hester Street" is a film depicting the attempts of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe to begin a new life in the promised land of America during the late 1890's.

In general, Jewish immigration to North America (brought on by the tremendous persecution in Eastern Europe) was a family immigration, including a large number of women and children. Yet, little is known about the



Gitl with her "American" hairdo.

women who formed such a large segment of the immigrant population. The focus in both literature and film has generally concerned the male experience: Saul Bellow's novel "Augie March", Richler's "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz", and Ted Allan's "Lies My Father Told Me", to name just a few.

In both written work and in films, women have been interpreted through male eyes. However sensitively portrayed, they merely form part of the background against which the main male character presents his own story. In reality the problems faced by im-

migrants — the attempts to preserve the old culture while assimilating into a new society, the sense of personal isolation, and socio-economic dislocation — often made the strain upon women particularly and tragically intense.

In the "immigrant novel" this reality is translated into the presentation of women as doomed tragic figures. In this capacity they exert tremendous influence upon male characters, yet are rarely central to plot development. An exception to this tradition is the novel "Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto",



upon which the script for "Hester Street" is based. "Yekl" was written in 1896 by Abraham Cahan, a leading Yiddish author, chronicler of the Jewish immigrant experience, and editor of the leading socialist Jewish daily, "The Forward".

Cahan's novel concerned the attempts of a young Jewish immigrant to establish himself in the new world. Yekl (Jake) is a young worker in a clothing sweatshop in New York's lower east side ghetto. His wife, Gitl, and his son, Yossele, have remained in Russia, and Yankel is living the life of a free-wheeling bachelor, courting Mamie, a local dancing instructor.

Eventually Jake sends for his wife and son. However, when they arrive, he is ashamed of their old fashioned manners and appearance. He quickly sets about to Americanize the boy. Gitl is either ignored or berated for her old country ways, and Jake begins to court Mamie again.

In spite of this treatment, Gitl gradually determines just how Americanized she is willing to become and establishes a life for herself in her new environment. When her attempts to keep her husband fail, she gets a divorce (shocking in those days), obtains a large settlement, and marries a shy scholar who has loved her from afar. She then uses the money to set up a small store which she will manage.

In the film "Hester Street" director Silver adapted the storyline to further emphasize the experience of the female characters, and in particular to focus upon the role of Yekl's wife, Gitl. Through Carol Kane's sensitive characterization of Gitl, the particular

problems of the female immigrant experience are defined at an individualized comprehensible level.

The characters in "Hester Street" could easily have become the lovable stereotypes so often found in this film genre. Silver's perceptive direction manages to avoid this pitfall, incorporating a personal, nostalgic, yet non-sentimentalized approach to both the characters and the era in which they lived.

None of the women accept the tragic fate common to women in the "immigrant novel". On the contrary, they form a strong bond of community and support. Ms. Kavarsky, a strong and independent widow, tries to help Gitl adjust to the social mores of her new life, and defends her from Jake's abuse. Mamie Fein, the Americanized "other woman", is a likable, self-supporting, hard working, and non-manipulative person, who happens to love too well. Gitl, through her own inner strength, overcomes her dependency on her husband, abandons her attempts to please him, and begins to adapt to life in a new country on her own terms.

Individual vignettes employing minimal dialogue strikingly portray those elements comprising the immigrant experience. The terror experienced by Jake when encountering the snide immigration official at Ellis Island is made almost palpable to the audience. (The fear was real; often people were sent back to Europe or separated from their families for months at a time on the whim of an immigration official). The sense of displacement and homesickness is

beautifully and succinctly expressed by Gitl and Bernstein, watching Jake play baseball with his son, disclaiming "a pox on America".

"Hester Street" is a sensitively directed and beautifully composed film. The sets and exteriors are used with photographic clarity to evoke all the sights, smells, and sounds of an era. The recurring sections of Yiddish dialogue supplemented by English subtitles, further enhance the film's authenticity.

The acting is uniformly excellent. Steven Keats is very effective as the super-American Jake, and Carol Kane ("Wedding In White") is brilliant as Gitl. Mel Howard as the scholar, and Dorrie Kavanaugh as Mamie Fein also give good performances, as do the rest of the supporting cast. "Hester Street" received excellent reviews in 1975 at the Cannes Film Festival, the Dallas Film Festival, Filmexpo in Ottawa, and the Telluride Film Festival.

After completing "Hester Street" Ms. Silver adapted and directed a short film based on the F. Scott Fitzgerald short story, "Bernice Bobs Her Hair". Future projects include two feature films, "The Home Place" and "Three Five Seventeen", the latter an original screenplay by Ms. Silver and Eleanor Perry.

N'eema Lakin Dainow is a graduate student in Communications at Simon Fraser University. She is specializing in the area of film and has organized several film series and seminar concerning the role of women in film.

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Divorce proceedings are explained to Gitl by the Rabbi.

## Adele H: Fighting for Air

review by Christa Van Daele

An unprecedented sense of the Gothic is beginning to pervade Canadian letters. General public suspense surrounds the fall release of Atwood's latest novel, *Lady Oracle*. John Glassco's *Harriet Marwood, Governess*, a kind of Victorian rococo rendering of a sado-masochistic fantasy involving Governess and Stripling Lad, emerged to respectability in January with Canadian publication. It was formerly an underground porn piece, pirated and distributed in various schlock U.S. versions.

*Adele H.*, Truffaut's widely-acclaimed study of a woman's obsessive love, should fill Canadian movie houses with further spectres of

cont. on page 48



ADELE H.

cont. from page 47.

the Gothic sensibility. The elements are all there — the graveyard scene, a high and stormy windswept sea, attempted communication with the ghosts of the dead. But the chief and provocatively arresting neo-Gothic feature of the film is the psychology of its passionate, driven, heroine — a bewitching Mademoiselle H.

Who is Adele H.? In a film that is overwhelmingly literary in nature, the question is elegantly posed in Adele's own diary entries, which we see her feverishly scribbling, night after night; in a dusty mirror graffiti, to which the young lady applies a gloved finger and prints her father's name, so very carefully; in a brief encounter with a child, to whom she gives her sister's name; and then, in a gentle *volce-face*, the name *Adele* that is properly hers.

*Noms de plumes* painstakingly cover identities — what we are dealing with here, in this portrait of Victor Hugo's second daughter, is a striking case-study of an identity-hungry female ego fighting the whirlpool for air. One thinks immediately of the Bronte women, writing the first book under assumed names, and of Mary Shelley, who allowed *Frankenstein* to come out under Percy's name. (As Byron put it, *Frankenstein* was, after all, the work of "a mere girl".) *Adele H.*, a film that takes as its subject the daughter of a famous man, unravels a number of interesting strands that have more to do with literary activity and literary thinking than is commonly portrayed in the cinema.

Consider the film's astonishing visual emphasis on paper, ink, books, letters, and mail orders. Adele's principal activity, for sheer volume of film footage, is not the actual pursuit of Lieutenant Pinson, but what she has to say about that pursuit; the film is not simply a study of her self-destruction, but of Adele's self-absorbed attempt to record and make sense of her own singular route. To this end, she becomes the favoured customer of a bookshop, where she buys paper, not books. The familiar tinkle of the bookshop's doorbell opens first to a lovely, cream-complexioned face. Gradually, as Adele retreats more and more from actual events, which are bleak in the extreme, the face dons spectacles, the figure stoops, the hair falls any which way, and a ritualistic assimilation of events takes place in the nightly writings.

So the nocturnal writings by the glow of the lamp make... a religion of love. Temperamentally unfit to be anybody's 'mere girl', the second sister to Leopoldine, her father's beloved first child, Adele chooses the discipline of writing as the activity that will save her

soul. She examines her act of crossing the sea to join her lover with a Brontesque gesture of exaltation: "This incredible thing.... that a girl should walk on the water, should cross from the old world to the new, to rejoin her lover, this incredible thing.... is what I will do."

Pinson, the love object, is raised up beyond all recognition — Adele becomes a servant of love. Yet her ruin cannot be said to be entirely masochistically based. There is a terrifying intelligence in Truffaut's portrait of Adele Hugo. Her will matches the vehemence of her emotions, and when she insists to her father that her music be published for the income it will yield, we glimpse the acute anguish of a nineteenth-century woman who is chained to her eminent father not only by name but by the brutal fact of economic dependence.

Am I carrying away too much from the film to see that only the sympathetic landlady of the Halifax rooming house respects Adele's fervent wish to remain *incognito*? I think not. I was pleased at what I dearly hoped was a neat feminist touch on Truffaut's part; each man Adele meets in Halifax, from the doctor to the bookshop proprietor, seems eager to sell her straight down the river, to line up with the great Hugo on the side of patriarchal strategy in giving away his daughter's cover abroad. Accidental or no, the landlady's instinctive move to protect Adele's real identity polarizes the characters in the film who are interested in the essential *Adele* — and those who, alas, are interested in Adele H.

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#### MILITANTLY IMPOTENT

cont. from page 10

preservation of working class neighbourhoods against destruction by commercial developers. In fact, the women's movement should support all efforts by groups of citizens to increase their control over living conditions in downtown communities, while working to gain support from these groups for women's issues.

We need to re-evaluate what we mean by a separate women's movement. By failing to define and face up to the differences in perspective inside the movement, we lay ourselves open to potentially disastrous internal conflict.

Julia McLean is a freelance writer who lives in Montreal. She has worked in women's centres in Montreal and Hamilton. Other interests include cycling and collecting women's dreams.

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#### A SEASON FOR SHARKS

cont. from page 29

"Gee, your mother dresses smartly... for a cleaning woman."

That happened when Mother stopped at the school office. She did look spiffy, resembling closely Elizabeth, the soon-to-be Queen of England. I felt proud of her. When we made Royal Family scrapbooks at school I pretended I was snipping out pictures of my mother: the Princess dancing with the Duke; the Princess rides her favourite horse, attends the races, walks her pet dogs, opens a new factory! I liked Princess Margaret too, second-best, but oh! so daring. In my pride, I dared to drag Esther "The Groceteria" home after school. I showed her Mother's wardrobe, which included a number of furs. Mother didn't wear these anymore, but she hadn't sold them either.

The next night Pen cornered me in our bedroom. "What's the idea of you showing Mother's clothes to everyone!"

Dumbfounded I said, "What's wrong with that?"

"Stupid! Do you want people to find out who we are?" She was close to tears.

I cried, "Who are we?"

She said: "We're the Edgewaters! Don't you ever forget it! But don't spread it around either. Lots of people are worse off than we are. They don't have homes or food or a family. But nobody's better than we are. So you don't need to go around proving it."

After that, I tried to hide my pride and enthusiasm under a humbler skin. But I did not stop begging. I was a proud little beggar. Now and then, I was tempted to add a *water* to the Edge when I began signing my surname on test papers. We were the water-less Edges. I didn't know why. It was many years before I understood why.

When business bubbles explode, what happens to people caught in the middle, happened to us. I didn't know then how Penny knew some of the things she did. Much later I learned to listen. I heard that THE JUDGE wasn't a silencer; he was a silent partner with government connections. When he pulled out we became the playthings of creditors. We were stone broke, but they wanted blood. I heard that mumps had been an excuse — Monkey abandoned us because he hadn't been paid. Nobody had.

Marilyn Julian was born in Southern Ontario in 1944. She graduated from McMaster University, Hamilton, with an honours degree in History and Philosophy, 1967. In the past two years her short stories have appeared in *Fiddlehead*, *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, *Canadian Forum* and *Chatelaine*.

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# That wonderful first sale

## Nothing—it would seem—ever equals the magic of a first sale.

This last February 9th, to show you what we mean, Edith Kirby literally danced into our office . . . to tell us of her first sale to Homemaker's Digest. We were just as pleased as last September 30th, when Neil Crichton told us his novel had just been accepted by General Publishing. (He sent flowers.)

Neither of these had been writing very long. Not like Guri Opstad who started in the "dirty thirties." The dream, she told us, never died. On April Fool's Day, 1958, she started her first novel. It didn't win laurels in our Search-For-A-New-Alberta-Novelist Competition, but she was encouraged to try it with the Winnipeg Free Press. Maybe you read it as a serial there—"Servants Of The Sageland."

Our authors have sold poetry to Borealis Press and juvenile science fiction to Hamish Hamilton of London. In the Peace River country, a husband-wife team, enrolled in our correspondence courses, each received \$100 from Reader's Digest for separate "Life's Like That" anecdotes—same day, same mail. Each rushed, shrieking, to the other: "Guess what . . .!"

Over a four-year period, Alberta Culture's Literary Arts Branch has piled up a pretty impressive total of first sales by Albertans who came to us . . .

- ☐ Six new novelists published by Macmillan alone (and a new competition ending!)

- ☐ Well over a hundred first sales in the periodical field—from smaller magazines like Stitch 'N' Sew to big monthlies like Woman's Day.
- ☐ We're particularly proud of a heart-warming biography by a lady in Innisfail: her New York publisher has ordered a 10,000 first printing for openers. (She and her husband took us out to lunch!)

What we're saying is—we like to think we helped a little.

- ☐ Through our **ALBERTA AUTHORS BULLETIN**. Through our correspondence courses in fiction and non-fiction techniques.
- ☐ Through streamlined workshops geared to getting authors into print.
- ☐ Through consultative help in our office and by mail.
- ☐ But most of all through caring.

We wish we could give such help to all authors — not just to Albertans. Because we believe there's one thing that beats the magic of a first sale . . .

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