

# Branching Out

canadian magazine for women

december 1977 \$1.25

## **Women and Politics**

**Do we want to play the 'old boys' game?**

**Laura Sabia's Power Brokerage**

**Rosemary Brown's Feminist Campaign**

**Abortion Law: Where the Real Power Lies**

**Jane Rule on *Sita***

**Filmmaker Marva Nabili**

**A Radio Play with a Part for Both of You**

**Photography, Art, Fiction, Poetry**









# Branching Out

## Board of Directors

Dallas Cullen, Halyna Freeland, Sharon Batt, Elaine Butler, Annette Henderson, Marylee Morton

## Editor

Sharon Batt

## Business Manager

Elaine Butler

## Contributing Editors

Linda Duncan, Jannie Edwards, Susan McMaster (Ottawa), Mary Lee Morton, Diana Palting

## Editorial Departments

Art: Barbara Hartmann

Books: Aretha van Herk, Shirley Swartz

Design: Annette Henderson, Terri Whetstone

Fiction: Heather Pringle, Anne O'Grady, Helen Rosta

Film: Margaret Cooper

Photography: Diana Palting, Lauren Dale, Cherie Westmoreland

## Administration

Jennifer Ellman, Diane Walton

©Copyright 1977 by the New Women's Magazine Society, Edmonton, Alberta. All rights reserved. Unless used in a review, the reproduction of this work in any form, by any means, including photocopying, recording, information storage and retrieval systems, et cetera, is forbidden without the express permission of the publisher.

*Branching Out* is published every two months by the New Women's Magazine Society, a Canadian Charitable Organization. Editorial office located at 8631 - 109 Street, Edmonton phone (403) 433-4021.

Published with the assistance of Alberta Culture, the Alberta Law Foundation and Canada Council

Back issues of *Branching Out* are available on microfilm from Micromedia Ltd., Box 34, Station S, Toronto, M5M 4L6. The magazine is on file with the International Women's History Archive, now housed at the Special Collection Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60201. *Branching Out* is a member of the Canadian Periodical Publishers' Association.

Send all correspondence to Box 4098, Edmonton, Alberta. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope. We review unsolicited manuscripts from Canadian women only. Subscription rates in Canada, \$6.00 per year, \$11.00 for two years for individuals; \$10.00 per year, \$20.00 for two years for institutions. Add \$1.00 per year for U.S. rates, \$2.00 per year for overseas rates. Advertising rates available on request.

Typesetting by Superior Typesetting Ltd.

Second Class Mail Registration Number 3517,  
Vol. IV, No. 5, november/december 1977, ISSN 0382 - 5264

## Columns

3 letters

5 law

Medical Rights: Beyond the  
Written Law

*Louise Dulude*

39 film

"My Audiences Work for  
Themselves"

*Margaret Cooper*

43 books

*Sita*: From Painful Record to  
Singing Tribute

*Jane Rule*

But Can You Type?

*Rebecca Smith*

The Comfort of Words

*Rebecca Smith*

And More Books

Children's Books for Christmas

## Features

2 Whither WISP?

*Lisa Strata*

8 Political Power: how and why

9 "We Need a Network of Power  
Brokers"

*Maureen Hynes*

12 "You Have to Run for  
Yourself"

*Maria Eriksen*

14 "Power is not Electoral"

*Jean Burgess*

16 Running a Feminist Campaign

*Rosemary Brown*

19 How to Run and Win

*Elaine Butler*

## Women in the Arts

8 poetry Dinner

*Audrey Conrad*

15 poetry

*Nellie McClung*

22 art essay At the Edge

*Val Power*

26 fiction At Home

*Barbara Brown*

29 poetry Putting on Shoes

*Rosemary Aubert*

31 photo essay Jay

*Marian Penner Bancroft*

34 radio play The Apple in the Eye

*Margaret Hollingsworth*

cover photo and photo on page 6 by Diana S. Palting

Photos pages 19, 20, 21, courtesy of *Alberta at the Turn of the Century*, Provincial Archives of Alberta



# Nation Ponders Unity Threat

## Whither WISP?

news feature by Lisa Strata

A recent Gallop Poll showing that the Women's Independent Separatist Party (WISP) has suddenly gained amazing strength was publicly pooh-pooed by the country's male leaders. In private however, speculation has mounted as to what effect separation by the women would have. The primary objective of WISP is to form a separate country tailored to the cultural and economic needs of women. The realization that women really might separate has shocked and saddened many men. Said one, "Women add a special dimension to the country. It won't be the same if they go." Another voiced the militant view that is also gaining adherents: "Who needs them? We've given them enough already." He cited maternity wards and brassieres as amenities that society had provided specifically for women and said that the federal program providing special washroom facilities for women in national parks was a waste of taxpayers' money. Some men are willing to compromise, however, if it will keep the country together. Said one, "They have many legitimate complaints, but if we give them special status within confederation perhaps they'll be willing to stay." For a start, he suggested a plan which would allow women the run of businesses and government offices on weekends. A majority of women are reported to be still undecided about separatism but experts

predict that a charismatic leader could sway the undecided women to the cause.

### Secret Meetings

WISP was started over 10 years ago and government insiders say there are many secret reports on the group's activities. A leaked document shows the RCMP burned down a day care centre in 1970 because women were found to be congregating there and the Force's listening equipment could not pick up the women's conversations over the children's shouts and laughter. The use of day care centres as a meeting place for women was subsequently discovered by police to be so widespread the government decided it was time to take the movement seriously.

### Training Program

One result is a little publicized housework training program for senior civil servants. Since 1970 over 8,000 civil servants with no previous housekeeping skills have been hand-picked by the Prime Minister's Office and assigned to take the six-month course.

The training program includes intensive 8-hour sessions each day with specifics tailored to the bureaucrat's unique slovenly habits. Areas covered include bed-making, washing dishes, sewing, vacuuming and picking up clothes. Each civil servant receives his own Brillo pads, vacuum cleaner and toilet brush which he is

allowed to keep upon graduation. No civil servant has refused to take the course but in private many have called it a waste of time. One deputy minister complained that his office was always clean when he arrived in the morning. "I finished the course in March," he said, "but I haven't needed to houseclean once since I got back on the job. I'm beginning to lose my house-cleaning skills." A recent Royal Commission Report on the housework training program said it had failed to close the widening breach between men and women. The report recommended that housekeeping be taught in school, beginning in kindergarten. The recommendation was shelved after boards of education said they would require huge budget increases to carry out the plan in order to train and hire thousands of teachers with advanced degrees in housework. In a recent speech the Prime Minister denied that he had ever shoved housekeeping down men's throats and assured hecklers that no Canadian man would be forced to learn housekeeping if he didn't want to.

### Federal Leaders Concerned

Despite the apparent failure of the government's main program to undermine the strength of WISP, the Liberal Party feels the separation threat could be its new trump card. "Trudeau is the only leader with documented personal

experience in this area" said a highly placed aide. "He's obviously the one men are going to look to as they grope to understand women's talk of separation. If worst comes to worst and they do leave, he'll know how to get us the custody and financial settlements we want." Conservative and NDP leaders are upset by the Prime Minister's unfair edge in this matter. A Conservative insider said Joe Clark had issued a memo to all party members requesting any man whose wife had left him to step forward to be groomed as his top advisor. Ed Broadbent stated that he could well understand that women would want to separate from Canada considering how they had been exploited by the two federal parties that have ruled Canada since confederation. He said his goal was to convince women they could achieve their objectives under an NDP government. Said Broadbent, "I'm sure they'll see that if they leave they'll just be swallowed up by the Americans." Admitting that the party lacked a power base among women Broadbent said he had scouts out looking for women all the time and that quite a few had been informed of the party's stand.

Peter Lougheed and Rene Levesque are two premiers who have taken a position on WISP. Lougheed said the men of Alberta wanted the women to stay but if they decided to leave Alberta would get along without them and

*cont. on page 18*



# letters

## Enchanted Summer

In her review of (September/October) of *Enchanted Summer*, my translation of *Cet été qui chantait* by Gabrielle Roy, Shirley Swartz accuses me of "incomprehensible inaccuracy" because the murderer of Monsieur Toong — *un rat musque* in the French — has become "a little heron" in my English. This change, however, was made by Gabrielle Roy herself after she was informed that muskrats are not devourers of frogs. She made other changes too, and a few small omissions, as she always does, marking these for me in a special copy of the book. I realize that your reviewer almost certainly doesn't know Gabrielle Roy is never satisfied with a book — even after it has been published, she continues to work on it — but even so I'm a little dashed that as an experienced translator I should be thought guilty of such sloppiness or perhaps simply unable to distinguish a small fury creature from a long-legged bird.

Joyce Marshall, Toronto

## Suitable for a sex manual

I was concerned by the article "On Reading the *Hite Report*" by Karen Lawrence, and the accompanying photograph (July/August). In my opinion an article like this should go into a magazine for married women, married couples or a sex manual. Why antagonize single girls with articles like this in a woman's magazine? It could incite many sexually inexperienced girls and create the idea that sex for sex's sake is desirable, instead of being the final expression of love based on a relationship of mutual respect and trust.

If for the author sex is such a gratifying experience, then more power to her. But most relationships, the great majority in fact, are not like that. Anyone who has ever read some of the writings of the renowned gynecologist, the late Dr. Marion Hilliard, will know what I mean.

There are many good articles in

your magazine. Why spoil it with something like that?

Anita Wilhelm, Ottawa



Cover photo: pointless?

I have had a subscription to your magazine for some time and usually enjoy it thoroughly. However the September/October issue left a bit to be desired.

The cover was ludicrous. What was the point of it? Your fiction "In Transit" may be a reflection of the many cases of child abuse and may be very realistic. But I would rather read a factual article on the subject — not be depressed and outraged by the figments of Ross's imagination. It sickened me.

Can't you be more selective?

Samara Gale, Edmonton

## Hey Baby . . .

Re: feminist overkill in Karen Joyce Hood's "Hey Baby, what d'ya say?" (September/October).

Let's take it again from the top: "You are walking by yourself through a family department store in search of some light bulbs. Suddenly a man appears beside you. He says, 'I can't help but admire your nipples'." Hood says, "Most likely you will try your hardest to

walk on and not reveal your mortification." [*Italics mine*]

I mean, really, mortification? I am aware that this happened in Toronto, hardly noted for its joyous, relaxed approach to sex: but this incident hardly seems an occasion for mortification. It barely even qualifies as an instance of harassment, although there are women who would swear it constituted a sexual attack, and would react accordingly.

It doesn't seem surprising when women go around with their nipples clearly visible, that men are likely to comment on them occasionally. If the woman becomes outraged by so mild a response, she must enjoy being outraged. The danger in this aggressive uptightness is that it muddies the distinction between the "friendlier" kinds of street-noises men make (whistles, kissing sounds, "bonjour mademoiselle" etc.) and the real, heavy-duty, violent forms of harassment. By blowing up every trivial little episode into some sort of sensational illustration of women's oppression, feminists lessen the credibility of the anti-rape movement. At times, this sort of over-reaction reveals a WASP-ish insensitivity to immigrant cultures, which may indeed be patriarchal but which also have a few lessons to teach the average Canadian puritan.

When a man smiles and makes smooching sounds as I pass him in the street, I look him in the eye, smile back and say "Bonjour, monsieur" in a voice that makes it clear I recognize him as a human being, but also that I don't want to be followed. I have never had any bad experiences using this approach. As for responding with indignation, "How dare you!" and so on, well, shades of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. It turns what would otherwise be an inconsequential or even mildly friendly encounter into a scene, and my life is overpopulated enough without starting to pick fights with strange men for saying "smooch-smooch-smooch" to me in the street.

But I must admit I once walked alone down Yonge Street in Toronto, on a Saturday night, and was shaken and appalled by arms waving out windows



and beerbottles on proud (and oh-so-wicked, they seem to think) display. Since nothing of the sort had ever happened to me in Montreal, I put it down not to "patriarchal oppression" but to the peculiarities of the Anglo-Canadian view of sexuality, that obsession with the side-show, or some basic guilt which still hasn't been thrown off.

When talking about street harassment, we should try not to confuse the issue with trivia which ends up only uncovering our own unconscious fears (maybe fantasies, even). A sense of humour helps.

Josephine Edgar, Montreal

The photos of Cape Scott Trail (September/October) were breathtaking. I also enjoyed the article "Hey Baby, What D'ya Say?" but felt only one side was shown. Why didn't Karen Hood interview some men and ask them why they harass women in the ways described in the article?

Paula Murphy, Lorette, Manitoba

Editors' note: Hood did consider interviewing men but felt this would have to be another article which would itself require extensive research.

#### Magazine looks dull

Some comments on your last issue (September/October): I thought the poems, art work and reviews — especially Shirley Swartz on Gabrielle Roy — superb, and the film festival reviews were excellent. Cherie Westmoreland's photos were absolutely beautiful. "Haec Ars Viros Dedecet" was very punchy, "Body Politics" looks interesting and I enjoyed Veronica Ross's searing little story. A lot of *really* first class stuff and I haven't even read the first four articles. But I wanted to suggest that the reason I haven't read the first four is that visually there is less about them to draw me in. They are the most political, the most feminist pieces in the whole issue and yet they seem heavy and didactic. I think it's less the material and the style of writing than the visual presentation.

Every time an issue of *Branching Out* comes out, I make sure other people see my copy. Initial reaction is often that it looks dull, that it emphasizes fairly familiar issues from consciousness-raising five years ago, but a closer reading inevitably turns up a lot of interesting, searching articles and often some quite exciting stuff. I feel you could expand your readership a lot by being a bit newsier, more visually creative and perhaps occasionally more cultural in emphasis.

Anne McLean, Montreal

#### Nature of Women

I would like to commend you for "Can a Feminist be a Stripper?" (September/October) because I thought the topic was handled beautifully. It revived my faith in erotic art, art being, to me, that which facilitates being in touch with ourselves or even opens doors of self-awareness.

I would like to be able to refute Peter Draper's assertions about new improved stereotypes of feminine nature (in his letter in the same issue) but I can only say that the nature of woman is obviously experiential and not constructed by intellectual deliberations. I agree that we do not have "special links" with the mystic and natural, meaning that we do not have a monopoly of them, however I do believe we are more expressive of one side of human nature than the other side. Call it yin and yang, intuitive and rational, receptive and directive or whatever, but I believe the first one of each pair is stronger, usually, in women. As human beings we naturally need to develop all of our potential, so I do agree this is no excuse for sexist behaviour.

Lorraine Wiley, Calgary

#### Home birth

*Branching Out* is my link with the outside. I relate to every poem, sketch, article and photograph!

The interview with Ruth Simkin has restored my faith in the medical profession. I also liked the home birth article. Birth, the most beautiful experience in a lifetime seems to hold low priority in most hospitals. My son was born in the Inuvik hospital two years ago and I still feel bitter, somehow robbed, when I think of those nurses who were in delivery with me. I'll never have another baby in a hospital!

Wanda Anderson, Inuvik

#### Militant feminism rejected

Although *Branching Out* has many redeeming features, some of the articles and drawings are in questionable taste, to say the least. They hardly serve to promote the dignity of human beings, and women in particular, and I am wondering why you find it necessary to publish such material. I believe such an approach impedes our progress by showing a lack of respect for women and thereby creating a reactionary response in many who are otherwise favourably disposed towards the women's movement.

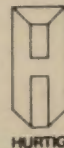
The militant feminism, with its

## All of Baba's Children

From Myrna Kostash

*I've come full circle. The "ethnic" part of my identity, like the "female," the "writer," and the "prairie," is not to be denied if I am to make sense of how I got to the "here" of Edmonton, 1977, from the "there" of a western Ukrainian village, circa 1900. It is no longer possible to be uninterested in the route.*

Available at all book and department stores. \$12.95



emphasis on lesbianism, its bitterness and hatred, was not what I was expecting when I subscribed to *Branching Out*, and it certainly is not what I want. I am disappointed.

Elizabeth Page, Toronto

#### Intelligent and human

Upon visiting your province recently, I had the pleasure of reading your publication. I thoroughly enjoyed the variety of topics covered and the approach with which they were written. It's the first women's magazine I've read which doesn't separate society into male versus female roles. Instead it presents women's ideas on all facets of life, not just sexual, in an intelligent, human way.

In the interest of humanity, I hope your publication will soon spread across the nation to help join the east and west in a better society.

Susan Wahay, Toronto

Editors' Note: *Branching out* is currently available in approximately 100 retail outlets across the country including 17 in the Toronto area.



## Medical Rights: Beyond the Written Law

by Louise Dulude

After years of being convinced that the repeal of our abortion laws would give women more control over their bodies, I recently made the interesting discovery that Canada has no abortion laws at all, no more than it has any laws concerning contraception, sterilization or any other medical procedure.

As I have no wish to be summarily cast out of the legal profession, I hasten to add that I am aware of the fact that abortion is dealt with in some sections of the Criminal Code, and that most medical treatments come under the provisions of provincial health laws and medical codes.

What I mean, when I say that these laws do not exist, is that their effect is so insignificant that they might as well have never been enacted.

Starting with abortion, which is ostensibly the most state-regulated of our reproductive phenomena, we find that section 251 of the Criminal Code prohibits abortion in all instances except when performed by a qualified doctor in an accredited hospital following approval by a hospital therapeutic abortion committee which believes that the continuation of the pregnancy would be likely to endanger the pregnant woman's life or health.

Stripped of its prohibitive tone and jargon, this interprets as follows: "Abortion is legal in Canada if it is performed by a doctor and approved by three other doctors in positions of authority." Whichever way we look at this, common sense tells us that it is not a substantive criminal law rule at all, but a mere act of passing the buck.

As a result it is doctors who decide who can get a free and safe abortion in Canada, and more specifically older doctors who are more likely to hold positions on hospital committees.

A most interesting finding of the Badgley Committee was that although politicians, lawyers and judges may have convinced themselves that Canada had a real abortion law, it would appear that the public was never fooled.

As part of its national population survey, the Committee asked ordinary Canadians whether obtaining an abortion

in Canada was legal or illegal. The result was that almost half the women and men answered that abortions were illegal whatever the circumstances. After noting that people's answers were greatly influenced by whether or not abortions were available in their area, the Badgley report concluded that people were very ignorant of the law — which just goes to show that the wo/man in the street is sometimes more politically astute than the so-called "experts".

---

### **Less than 8% of G.P.'s and gynaecologists knew that the Criminal Code sets no time limit during the pregnancy after which an abortion can no longer be performed.**

---

The Committee's survey of physicians (G.P.s and gynaecologists) was even more revealing. Less than 8% knew that the Criminal Code sets no time limit during the pregnancy after which an abortion can no longer be performed. The general impression one gets from the doctors' answers is that very few cared about what the Criminal Code said or did not say, a fact which in no way prevented them from acting or having opinions upon the law according to their respective prejudices.

This almost universal lack of knowledge is a good indication that Canadian doctors are informed on at least one point, which is that within very broad and flexible limits the decision is really up to them, or at least up to the more powerful among them who control our hospital administrations.

But what eventually fully convinced me of our abortion laws' almost total ineffectiveness was the realization, while reading the Badgley report, of what would happen if the Criminal Code's abortion provisions were repealed.

If abortion was no longer considered a criminal offence whatever the circumstances, the federal government would lose all jurisdiction it presently exercises over it. Abortion would simply

become a medical treatment subject to provincial health laws and medical codes. Needless to say, this is not the best way to ensure uniformity of abortion practices throughout the country.

A second thing to be expected, according to the physicians' answers to the Badgley survey and the Canadian Medical Association's public statements, is that decriminalized provincially-regulated abortions would almost certainly be restricted to hospitals.

And what this means, of course, is that hospitals whose boards are against abortion would still, as they are now, be able to prohibit abortions from being performed on their premises, while other boards could set whatever restrictions were felt to be required in their communities. In other words, back to square one for women!

Sterilization is a good case in point. Voluntary sterilization is not and has never been illegal in Canada, but any childless young woman who has tried to get such an operation will tell you that it can be almost as hard to obtain as an abortion.

The Canadian Medical Association's position on sterilization, as expressed in this resolution passed in 1970 by its General Council, is strangely reminiscent of the Criminal Code's present prescriptions on abortion:

"Any procedure for the purpose of producing sterilization of either male or female is acceptable in the following circumstances: When it is performed by a duly qualified medical practitioner; and if performed in an active treatment public hospital or other location with adequate facilities; and if performed with the written permission of the patient and after the patient has signed a statement to the effect that he or she understands that the sterility will in all likelihood be permanent, similar consent of the spouse, or guardian, if applicable, to be obtained when possible."

In practice, as the Badgley Committee has found, this does not necessarily mean that sterilization can take place whenever a woman and her doctor agree to it. In fact, the Committee found that less than half of the hospitals it visited



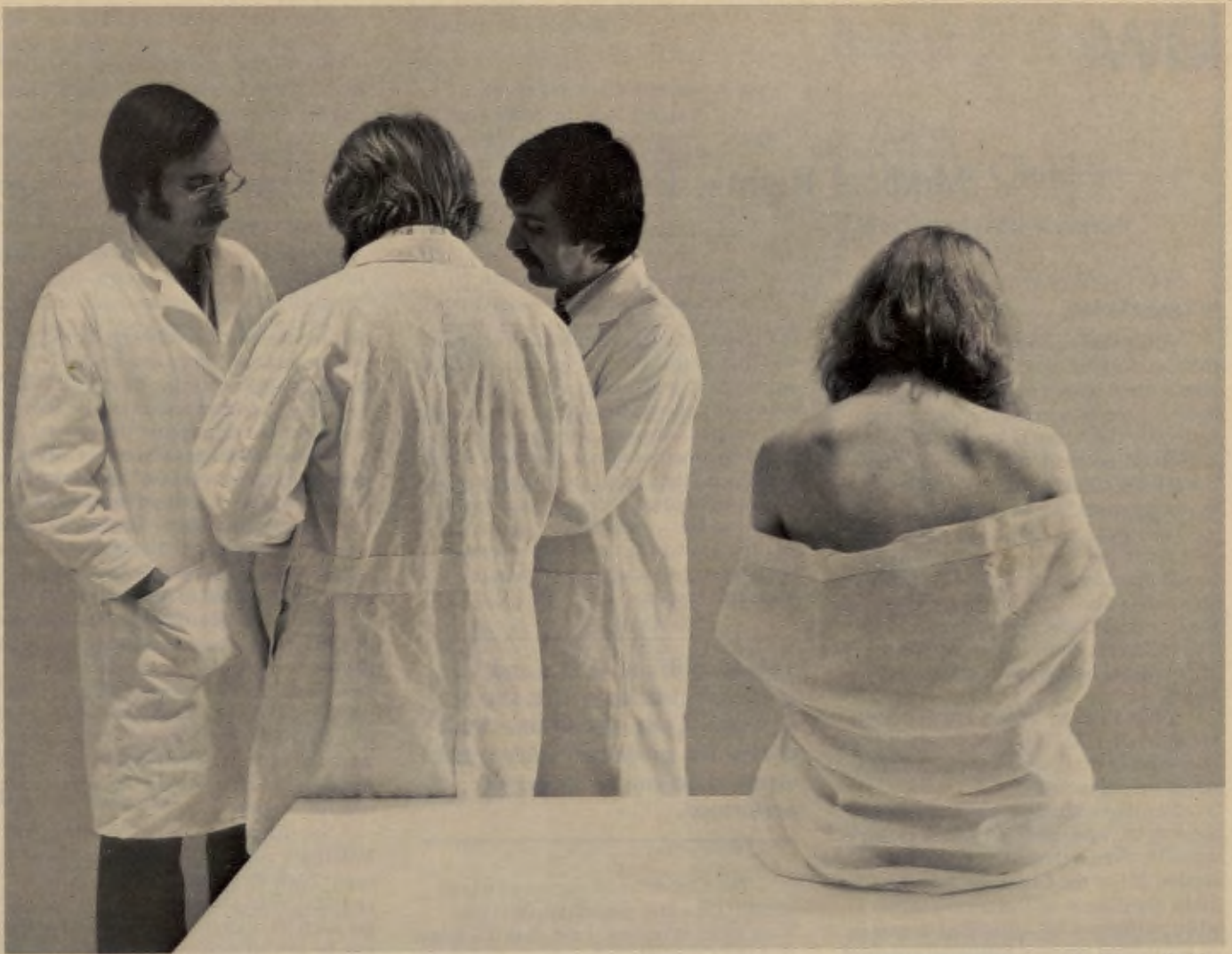


photo by Diana Palting

## **We can stop believing that an occasional protest letter or petition to the federal minister of justice is going to make any difference.**

considered this sufficient to allow the operation to take place on their premises.

Close to one-quarter of the hospitals had decided to use the arbitrary "rule of 100" (the woman's age multiplied by the number of children she had); 20% had a special hospital committee which reviewed each request; and approximately 10% used other formulae or approved sterilization only for medical reasons.

Moreover, a comparison of statistics on abortion availability and sterilization practices by region reveals that the provinces where abortion is more accessible are also the ones where sterilization is less strictly regulated. Only 26% of Quebec hospitals surveyed had decided that sterilization was solely a matter between a woman and her physician, for example, compared with 67% of the hospitals in British Columbia.

For those whom this information has convinced, like myself, that the sexuality of Canadian women is in large part controlled by medical practitioners and hospital administrators, the obvious question that arises is "What do we do now?"

For one thing, we can stop believing that an occasional protest letter or petition to the federal minister of Justice is going to make any difference, because that's not where the power is.

In sexual politics as it stands in Canada today, the power is in the hands of family doctors and gynaecologists (one-third of whom refuse to provide contraceptive counselling to girls under the age of 17), of public hospitals boards (elected by interested members of their communities), of hospital committees (appointed by hospital boards on the recommendation of senior medical staff)

and of provincial governments (which have jurisdiction over health matters and education).

The actions we need to take are quite clear: 1) continued education of the public, and of women and doctors in particular; 2) more women in medical schools; 3) community political action to get open-minded people elected to hospital boards; and 4) reform of provincial public health laws.

Most of all, we will need dedication and patience. Contrary to recent reports to the effect that women are bored with abortion and similar issues, the fight over sexual power in Canada has barely begun.

*Louise Dulude is a former Quebec legal aid lawyer and has been a researcher with the Federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women for the last two years.*



# Dinner

Skate and capers  
the bones like bamboo  
the sauce delectable  
with lemon, parsley.  
This woman  
who chose the wine  
from a list of labels  
I didn't know  
is my friend.  
She pierces ripe tomatoes  
with a fork  
or flattens butter curls  
with the edge of her knife.  
I tell her  
of faithless lovers  
and my house  
that creaks at night  
with cats on the roof.  
She peels back  
the white flesh  
of an elegant fish  
and waits  
for a tragedy of her own.  
These things are certain,  
are only a matter of time.  
She feels darkness  
collecting around her name.  
She is not afraid.  
In front of the cafe  
a man is sweeping.  
It seems about to rain.  
I tell her of faithless lovers.  
She cuts into a pear.  
From where I sit  
I can hear  
its smooth skin snap  
beneath her blade.

Audrey Conrad

*Audrey Conrad has had poetry published in Grain, Canadian Literature, Fiddlehead and the anthology Storm Warning 2. She emigrated to Canada from the midwestern U.S. in 1973.*



# Political Power

how and why

Four Politically-minded women tell what they have learned about getting power and using it.





# “We Need a National Network of Power Brokers”

Laura Sabia interviewed  
by Maureen Hynes

In September of this year, reports crackled across the Canadian Press wires that Laura Sabia had announced her intention to start a national feminist political party. The women's party would challenge the power of the “backroom boys” in the three major parties, and begin to act on the areas the “boys” have persistently ignored. During that lecture at Seneca College in Toronto, Ms. Sabia catalogued the areas on which Royal Commissions and Advisory Councils on the Status of Women had offered recommendation after recommendation: provincial family law reform, a change in property laws, the removal of abortion from the Criminal Code, housewives' contributions to the Canada or Quebec Pension Plan. Women already in the House of Commons, she complained, did not exert any power in their parties, and had become “part of the male-dominated political structure and inevitably must toe the line in caucus.”

Well, Sabia's experience certainly qualifies her to pronounce on the unwillingness of all levels of government to move on issues affecting women. She began her political career, after doing her young housewifely stint of community volunteer work, by running for the Separate School Board in St. Catherine's — a city of 120,000 on the Niagara Peninsula. She won hands down but, after serving four years, resigned because she no longer believed in a Separate School Board. She moved on to become an alderman in that city, again winning landslide victories, and remained eight years on City Council. But it was really becoming National President of the Federation of University Women — “a stuffy lot” she says of the membership — that took her into a national sphere of politics. The period when she was president was a time in which, she says, women's patience with submitting briefs to the Cabinet reached a breaking point. They were ready to force the government to act. It was this “stuffy” group of women that forced the hand of the federal government, prompting them to hold a Royal Commission on the Status of Women out of which grew the federal and provincial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women. Laura served briefly on the federal Council, but resigned in order to become Chairman of the Ontario Council, in the fall of 1973. Two months before her term was up, in the summer of 1976, she resigned from the Ontario Council with the firm conviction she'd been bought and sold. She took potshots at all those who

participate in the “subliminal seduction” of women — the governments, the media, the corporations, the church and even the Advisory Councils. The latter she calls “pacifiers”, paper-pushing structures that make the government look good; if there are any complaints on the status of women, the blame can be foisted off on the Councils, and not accepted by the government that refuses to follow the advice the Councils offer. “Forget the councils!” she had said, departing from her position as chairman of the Ontario one, “Face the politicians eyeball to eyeball!”

The announcement of a feminist party was a logical development of Sabia's belief that councils, briefs, reports and commissions are ineffective, I thought, as I travelled to St. Catherine's to learn more about her plan. On my arrival, I was somewhat surprised to hear Sabia say that, in fact, she'd merely mentioned a feminist political party “to fly a kite.” Although she was delighted with the reaction — “nationwide response, from practically every province” — she claimed that the press had not accurately reported her intentions. In fact, Laura Sabia does not believe in a separatist women's party: “I don't think we should have a political party headed by a woman and that only women should belong to it. That would be detrimental. We would not get into power. That would put us on the periphery. I am not a great believer in starting new organizations.” This last statement was a particularly strange remark from someone who'd helped initiate a Royal Commission, who'd started the National Action Committee, who'd served on the first Advisory Councils of the Status of Women, who is still working on establishing a Women's Trust Company, and who, many years ago, started the first P.T.A. on the Niagara Peninsula!

What Laura Sabia *does* want is simply fifty to seventy women in the House of Commons after the next federal election — fifty women in any or all parties — and “twenty or thirty or forty” women in each of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies. The organization she is proposing, then, is not a feminist party, but rather what she calls a “power brokerage,” a network enabling women to actually get those seats. Sabia envisions a





Laura Sabia

CP photo

national network that would spot "safe" seats and vacancies and teach women — this is crucial to her — the importance of politics. She suggests the organizations could act as a broker even in the sense of finding the funds to support women candidates. "What we need is for some of us who've had a lot of experience to become the power brokers, so that we form a bloc, a network across the country where we bring in women who are interested in running for public office but who really don't know all that much about it — as men don't know much about it." She sees that men, though, have a power structure which they enter and which enables them to win seats.

A major role, then, for this network would be the education of women about political issues, not only the "vital issues of the women's movement" (abortion, daycare, the pension plans, property laws, equal pay), but also inflation, productivity, unemployment, why the government is printing money, the difficulty of selling Canadian goods on markets abroad. "Knowledge is power", she says, and if this new organization were to issue a newsletter with excerpts from Hansard, thousands of women would finally receive the pertinent facts of what goes on in the House.

I asked her how she thought this organization was going to operate, if not as a political party in its own right. For one thing, she would like to see feminist caucuses infiltrating each party; however, Ms. Sabia thinks we even need "parties working with each other" to get women elected, and that women should "cross political lines" to support a good woman candidate. "We'll have to be politically smart. If it looks like a party

is going to be returned, we should concentrate on loading it with women candidates." When I questioned the likelihood of any of the parties working together over an election, she pointed to the possible strength of women galvanized to action to get a good woman elected. In her view, all the parties are the same, "so what does it matter if I'm a Conservative, but there's a good woman running for the NDP in my riding?" So, in a sense, she suggests we cast aside politics in order to get women into politics.

Sabia believes that, instead of starting a new organization, it would be better to make use of existing ones. She plans to propose the idea of the power brokerage at the executive meeting of the National Action Committee in November, and has already received warm reactions from this Committee over the proposal. The National Action Committee, she explained, is affiliated with over a hundred women's organizations across the country — a ready-made network which could be used for both educational and campaigning purposes. Committees could be set up in each province; local groups could be brought into a main area for conferences, supported by the federal money that NAC has access to.

Sabia sees this type of brokerage as necessary because it would be less "formidable" than an organized feminist party; it would "teach women the political facts of life." She feels that this is a very crucial time; we are in the midst of an economic situation that could well bring about the loss of women's rights already gained. Furthermore, she stated, unless legislators are forced to contend with issues like the wide dissemination of



contraceptives or the discrimination of women in marriage breakup at the hands of archaic property laws, they will endlessly stall. "But if we had 75 women in the House, the politicians would damn well have to listen." And such a power brokerage would prevent the familiar syndrome of an elected women "fading into the woodwork of the traditional parties," as she says Lise Payette has done within the Parti Quebecois. And finally, the "taste of power" would make women very unwilling to give up their economic and political gains, and the power itself.

I asked Sabia if she was working on this project with Maryon Kantaroff, the Toronto sculptress and co-founder, in the late 60's, of the New Feminists. Kantaroff, last spring, also announced intentions to start a "feminist political party." When Ms. Sabia said she was, indeed, working with Kantaroff, I brought up the latter's statement that this party would be "totally elitist" with "no room for the woman in suburbia." Well, said Sabia, she thought that Maryon had changed her thinking and no longer feels that a separate women's party would be viable or effective.

And what of this disturbing "elitism?" Replied Sabia, "I think what she's saying is, 'Let's pick out the top-notch women who can and will and want to do the work involved, and not worry about the rest of the masses.' Now I don't quite go along with that. I think you have to *start* with the masses. I think you'll find a lot of women with a hell of a lot of good common sense who never saw the inside of a university."

This sentiment brought our discussion around to the question of unity in a women's political movement. Sabia feels that the women's movement did, in fact, fail: "Why the hell are we still fighting for equal pay for work of equal value? We're still doing the same thing we were doing in 1967. Where have we gone wrong? I know one thing we've done wrong — we didn't bring the masses of women with us. We made some changes in attitude, but not in law. Legislators simply would not move because they knew that the masses of women didn't agree with 'these radicals'." How to carry the "masses of women" along? Said Sabia, the women's movement itself was responsible for the division between working women and housewives, because it did not *begin* with a concern for "the woman in suburbia." The "divide and conquer" tactics of the male power structure have always fostered these divisions and women are to blame for swallowing them.

I expressed the opinion that, even with no elitist policies at the inception of the "brokerage," it might yet prove to be just another establishment organization, strengthening those already at the top of the heap or on their way — only different in that it was for women. Sabia's response was quick, "People say, 'You're imitating men!'; I say, 'So what! Let me get some women in the House and I don't give a damn who I imitate!' Many women have said to me that we don't want the same power structure, and that's right. But the hard facts are that you either get in there using the same tactics, or you don't get in. And once we're in, we'll be different." Sabia seriously believes that the larger the number of women "at the top," the *less* likely they will be to duplicate a male political structure. She deplores the Queen Bee Syndrome where the women who have made it turn their backs on the needs of working-class women in our society. But she insists, again, that a strong elected caucus of women would "be different." I wondered if this confidence would be borne out in reality.

I wanted to explore another of the possible implications, that of a male backlash against this attempt by women to gain a foothold in traditional male political enclaves. "There may well be one," she answered, "We'll just have to face that." But women must "sell" the idea that, the more secure and reasonable a man is, the less likely he will be to react with fear or hostility to this new competition. And, she adds, "If we're good, we'll be accepted." The onus, then, is not on the men or



photo by Diana Palting

### Feminist caucuses should infiltrate each party.

the parties to change; nor is it necessary to expect them to: women must become better at all the old political games than men are, and then, with the power in hand, change the game.

After I left Sabia I wondered about her statement, "Once we're at the top we'll be different," and its political implications. What are the dangers of seeking representation in a system that has always oppressed us? Is it possible to get elected and *then* purify our ideals and methods of getting our due? Should we choose the same parliamentary path that has rarely operated in the best interests of housewives, welfare recipients, unemployed women, immigrant women, unionized and non-unionized female workers? Would, in fact, a sizeable number of women in the House assure representation for these women? (Has the large number of *men* in elected office assured representation for *male* welfare recipients or immigrants?) What's to prevent women in office from becoming a female elite? Would they not be led down the old familiar path of excelling in competition?

Although Laura Sabia believes that "the entire political structure stinks," she wants to get women fully represented within it. She cannot predict what direction a large number of women in the House would take, but merely sees getting them in there as the next and crucial step. Certainly a so-called democratic system that does not fully represent or answer to 52% of its population does "stink"; the question then remains if it should be abandoned rather than reformed.

*Maureen Hynes teaches immigrants at George Brown College in Toronto.*



# "You Have to Run for Yourself"

by Patricia Preston

Some would deny it. Others would couch their servitude in acceptable, pleasing terms. Many would rationalize their excessive concern for others. But, clearly put, most women are altruists, who've taken their altruism far beyond mere concern. They've allowed their unselfish concern for the welfare of others to shape their lives and, in the process, have negated or, at best, shuffled their individual needs to the bottom of their deck of priorities.

This altruism has, according to Maria Eriksen, a Calgary psychologist who ran unsuccessfully in the 1975 Alberta election, been a key factor in women's decisions to enter politics — a factor she feels needs changing.

She views her reasons for running as the Liberal candidate in Calgary-Buffalo as "wrong from this (today's) perspective," but is prepared to "live with" her decision of two-and-a-half years ago.

"At the time I honestly believed that women just needed to get out there and run, run, run. I don't totally disbelieve that now, but I do think running for election is more complex than I realized when I ran," she said.

"On the one hand, by being out there and running you are a role model for children and others. Regardless of your beliefs, your physical presence out there is important for society. On the other hand, I think now, and many women would disagree with me, that we ought to honestly want the power and the position and go after both ruthlessly."

She said she has come to that position because women are so altruistic. "It's just plain dumb being that way," she explained. "Who are we to say we know what's best for everyone, for the world? All we can do is say 'I know what's best for me and dammit I'm going to get it.'"

Eriksen pointed out that her decision to seek election was based largely on the obligation she felt to other women. "After all," she added, "I'd said repeatedly that 1975 was going to be a shoo-in for the Conservatives in Alberta and that women should take the opportunity of all the vacancies in the Liberal and NDP parties and run."

"So I felt obligated to put up or shut up," she said.

She believes women have to work at changing the attitude that has always made it 'wrong' or 'bad' for them to want anything for themselves. This attitude, based on years of conditioning, helps to preclude women from admitting they want power for themselves. They avoid even the quest for it.

"We are reluctant to say 'I want it (power) for me'," she said. "We have never done anything for ourselves. It's always been for the children, for him, for the community, for society. Again I ask, who are we to know what's best for *them*? All we can really know is what's best for the self and if we put the responsibility there where it belongs and then charged ahead I think we might get to where we want to go faster."

Eriksen is concerned about women's reluctance to speak up and say what they want out of political life.

"We are so afraid that someone in society won't like us that we don't take any strong stands," she said. "Imagine being in a position like that and being elected. Everyone could push and pull you and you'd end up being despised by everyone. You

cannot please everyone.

"I look back and I'm glad I didn't win. I wouldn't have been in a good position because I'd still have been doing everything for everyone else, never having admitted to myself that I wanted the power for myself. Within six months I am sure I would have been so disoriented I wouldn't have known my own name. At least if I ran now, I'd know where I was going," she said.

Eriksen admits she leaves herself open to charges from other women that she's now willing to play the man's game, the man's way.

"In some ways," she said, "that's absolutely true. But if women aren't going to play the man's game in politics, whose or what game are we going to play?" As a member of the Status of Women Action Committee of Calgary, Eriksen has been very much involved in lobbying for changes to Alberta's matrimonial property laws. "I'm having a hard enough time getting change on this one little thing. I will not for one second try to change everybody."

Eriksen said it's "unquestionably easier" for men to get money to run for office.

"Men are more credible as candidates," she said. "Business knows why a man wants to be elected. The man wants the position and the power and that's clearly understood by those who seek to have him run and by those who support him. Business and the candidate both know what the payoffs are. They don't know what the game is with women. Women never say. Business doesn't know what payoffs are in it for them," she said.



Maria Eriksen

photo by Mark Lowey

**"I think we ought to honestly want the power and the position and go after both ruthlessly."**



Eriksen's campaign cost her about \$3,000 and she calls that "extremely cheap."

She believes prospective candidates should decide at the outset not to run if they haven't got the money. "If you can't afford it, don't run," she emphasized. "There are many candidates who spent a lot on their campaigns and were stuck with lots of bills. The day after the election people forget. Win or lose you're stuck with the bills."

During her campaign, Eriksen learned how differently men and women think about money. She cites the example of a man and a woman with equal fixed or limited incomes. "The woman will give \$10 and the man will give \$50. It's related I'm sure to self-image. The man feels he'd be looked down on if he gave less — he'd be embarrassed — whereas the woman knows that's all she can afford and gives it. If we are going to change women so that they give more to political campaigns, we will have to recognize that they give for different reasons than men." She emphasized that if a woman makes a decision to support someone, she should keep in mind how expensive campaigns are. "Let's not make Sunday School contributions but give as much as we can."

Eriksen's campaign was hard work. She chose to run in the same riding as MLA Ron Ghitter because she respected him as a campaigner and felt she would learn a lot opposing him. She views the campaign as a learning experience despite the fact that she only met Ghitter once. (The Conservative party initiated a policy whereby none of the incumbents would appear at any forums. A local women's group managed to get Ghitter to appear at one forum they sponsored.) "A smart move," said Erikson of the MLA's low profile.

The constant grind and monotony of Eriksen's campaigning was eased and interrupted in several ways. She singled out some incidents as particularly memorable.

She recalls losing her voice just before she was due to speak at a forum. "I'd learned that the secret of regaining your voice quickly is to suck alternately on a lemon and a spoonful of honey," she explained. "So I took my lemon and honey in the car, dashed to the meeting and as soon as it was over, raced to the car for more medication before the next speaking engagement. I'm not sure I believe that the show must always go on, regardless, but when you're in a campaign the show is over in 39 days so I made sure it did go on."

Standing by herself on a downtown streetcorner with her arms full of neon pink signs was the loneliest moment of Eriksen's campaign.

"My organization had decided to stand on a different streetcorner every night during rush hour — complete with placards," she said. "This one night I lugged the awkward signs to the designated corner and no one showed up to hold them. I stood there alone, obviously the candidate, because my face matched the one on the sign, and very conspicuous because we had printed the signs in neon pink so they would stand out. Because it was so cold I was wearing ski pants, also bright pink. That cold, lonely night was a real learning experience."

Much of Eriksen's campaigning involved door-knocking.

"That, too, was a learning experience," she said, smiling. "I was greeted several times by men in pyjamas and once a nude male invited me in to talk further. I was pretty blasé then and declined. I realized that previously I'd heard about this kind of thing, but in reverse, from men."

She's convinced that there should be a public campaign to encourage women to seek election.

"We need to get women to think of themselves as public figures, to take the power," she said. "I hope there will be a lot of women running in the next federal election. Political parties should court women in the business world as possible candidates and business women should, in turn, seek out the parties of their choice and then run."

"One really important thing I learned was that although



photo by Diana Palting

**"... for the children, for him, for the community, for society . . ."**

many men might not have supported me politically, they really respected me for running. You need to put yourself out there on the line or you miss this kind of experience. They might not give you money, work for you or even vote for you, but they respect you because you're willing to put yourself on the line."

She linked women's hesitancy to put themselves in front of the public to traditions that die hard.

"Traditionally," Eriksen pointed out, "if we aren't liked, we assume we aren't respected. I think we must change that. Respect is more important in the long run. Liking is emotional but respect is long-term. It is hard for women to separate these two because we've always put so much emphasis on relationships."

Would she run again?

"I think until recently I would have said no. But if I really thought I could have some power to change things, then I'd try again," she said.

"Talking to backbenchers discourages me because they tell me how powerless they feel. Unless I could be a cabinet minister I don't know as I'd want to be in the race. I'd have to tell the party that. If they agreed, fine. Otherwise, there are other things for me to do. I would level with the party because their response would indicate to me what kind of support I'd get and whether they would just consider me a token woman candidate. I'd establish what I want with the party. I didn't do that before, because I didn't want anything for myself. No more altruism for me."

*Patricia Preston works with the Status of Women Action Committee in Calgary and teaches journalism at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.*



# "Power is not Electoral"

by Jean Burgess

Politically I am a Marxist socialist and a Feminist. I have chosen to align myself with socialism because I believe the majority of Canadians — working people — would be better served by a socialist economy. In our existing political system we have a working class struggling against a ruling class. The Conservative, Liberal and Social Credit parties offer no possible means to end this struggle but many socialists in Canada see the NDP as the solution. My own experiences with NDP governments in three provinces and the understanding I have subsequently developed as to how social democracy differs from socialism have led me to reject electoral politics in favour of work outside the party system.

I am currently working with the Saskatchewan Waffle, a Marxist socialist organization. This group initially worked within the NDP but, through experience with an NDP government, realized that even when the Waffle had the support of the party it could in no way influence government decisions on making realistic progressive changes. When it formed the

opposition the NDP did, in fact, voice some concerns of working people. They pushed for social and economic reforms and criticized the exploitation of workers by private businesses that were backed by the government. However, once in power, the party demonstrated itself to be a capitalist one: social democratic not socialist. Social democracy is the term which represents the ideas of reforming capitalism with social reform programs making the inevitable exploitation, poverty, unemployment and inflation a little easier to bear. These social reform programs are the first to be cut back in a period of depression as has been our experience in Saskatchewan and Manitoba with education and hospital care.

I don't agree with the view of a few people who call themselves socialists or socialist feminists that working in the NDP is the only viable political option, that such work is a realistic acceptance of the power structures and that important gains and reforms can still be made by working in government. In my work on labour and women's issues in Sas-

katchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia, I found it was the NDP government that stood in the way. In Saskatchewan, for example, the government has made it clear that services for women, including day care, maternity rights and abortion should be tied to the needs of the work force — that means private enterprise. If businesses need cheap women's labour, only then will government-supported daycare be provided. The government fought the unionization of day care workers, blocked the struggle for equal pay in hospitals for female nurse aides and supported the federal Anti-Inflation Board wage control program. None of these actions was accidental, nor were they due to personalities of cabinet ministers or the lack of socialists in the NDP. The explanation for this consistent anti-worker stance lies in the limitations placed on parliamentary politics by the economic system and the inherent pro-capitalist ideology of social democracy. The NDP does not have power in this country because power is not electoral, it is economic control. Historically, governmental system grew out of an served the economic interest of private enterprise and this situation still exists.

If we are to have a socialist society, I believe socialists must work politically in areas other than the legislature or parliament. To try to represent working people's interests within parties that serve private enterprise is either naive or opportunistic. It is misleading to the people who want and need major changes in society. We need to demonstrate that social democracy is radically different from socialism and that an alternative has to be built outside of electoral parties.

I see three ways of achieving this. One is to form and coordinate active political organizations that provide a truly socialist perspective, give real support to working class organizations on class struggle issues and can develop into a viable political option. These organizations must develop nonsexist, nonracist, democratic principles and practices so that people can live without oppressing one another and exploiting one another



photo by Diana Pating



"... power is not electoral, it is economic control. Historically, governmental systems grew out of and served the economic interest of private enterprise and this situation still exists."

economically. In the Saskatchewan Waffle, I attempt to challenge and reduce the chauvinism present in the organization and to increase understanding of the discrimination and exploitation of women. I take part in political activities of the organization which assist in supporting working class struggles, for example, fundraising benefits for a union local, assisting on picket lines, educational work for union locals such as the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. I attend an informal study/action group in which we study specific problems like unemployment, inflation, sexism, racism, Quebec nationalism and the relationship of these issues to socialism, Marxism, capitalism and other political systems. We try to apply the insights we get in this theoretical study to our own jobs and our work in the community. Our goal is to develop a realistic and viable socialist alternative to the NDP. We think it is possible.

A second important strategy is to work with existing organizations that have a working class membership and that can have some hope of developing into a working class political force. Trade unions, pensioner groups, tenant groups and welfare groups are good examples. I work for a union called Service Office Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC). This is an independent union that

was started by a group of working women for the purpose of organizing women in low paying white collar jobs. My job is not itself political but there are a number of specific issues that I support in my union work which I consider to represent a political choice. Democracy within the union is one. We attempt to organize in such a way that the power for decision making for these union locals is not taken out of the hands of workers and put into the hands of union bureaucrats. Another priority is union militancy. We support any militant expression of the grievances that bank workers have against the banks. It is also important that women have the leadership in their union since they make up the majority of bank workers. Through SORWUC, women can act not only for themselves in struggles with the bank corporations but their gains become gains for working class women as a whole.

A third political alternative for socialists is to integrate our politics into our everyday lives through our jobs, our personal relationships and the way we live. I attempt to do this in a part time job I have teaching student teachers at the College of Education. I show respect for the students and their opinions and try to do a competent job of preparation for the classes. We look at the class na-

ture of Canadian society and the way the school system perpetuates this class system. We try to find ways in which teachers can be progressive both by countering oppressive practices of the schools and by developing better alternatives. We also try to discover ways school teachers can show respect for their own students while helping the students to develop a critical awareness of the need for social change. I have involved myself in issues that arose at the university such as discrimination against homosexuals, the imposition of a biased English language text on foreign students and discrimination against women in university hiring and promotion practices.

If we work collectively in these three ways I think we can discover what kind of socialism could be built in Canada and how to gain the power necessary to do it.

*Jean Burgess lives in Saskatoon. She grew up in Timmins, Ontario and has worked as a government researcher and program planner in education in Manitoba, B.C. and Saskatchewan. She has also worked in various clerical, teaching and union jobs.*

no reporter  
from *Nepal Ladies Wear*  
was there  
to interview  
Mrs. Buddha  
on how she felt  
the day the Prince  
came home & told her  
(and the babe)  
he was leaving the castlelife  
for the countryside  
forever  
to study the growth  
of daisies.

Nellie McClung

*Nellie McClung is a Vancouver writer whose poetry has appeared in The Tamarac Review and other literary magazines.*



# Running a Feminist Campaign

by Rosemary Brown

Juliette Mitchell, the feminist theorician, defines a feminist as a person who recognizes that women, solely because of their sex, constitute a separate group in society — a separate group in any segment in society to which they may belong — and are oppressed and exploited thereby.

A feminist, therefore, takes into the political arena, a commitment to change the status of all women in all groups in society. She is very clearly different from the "woman politician" who says that she is a politician with a general commitment to all people. For the "woman politician", the fact of her femaleness does not indicate any special concern for the needs of women as a group. A feminist politician accepts that she must explore a new kind of politics, making new demands and representing an emerging constituency, namely, women demanding representatives committed to their struggle for true equality in all areas of their lives.

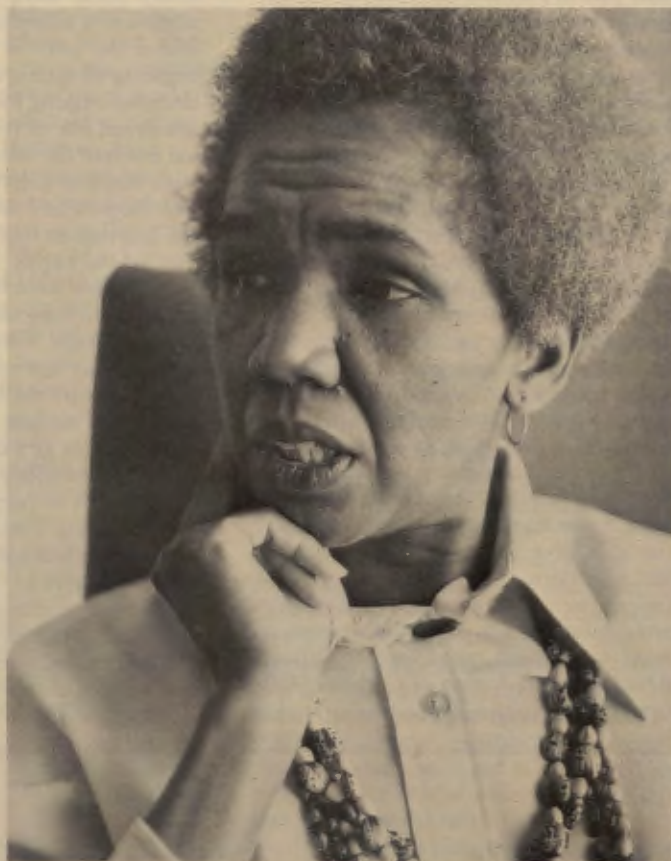
Over a number of years, there has been a dialogue as to whether women should be involved in politics and, if involved, whether they have anything of value to contribute to the political arena. It is important for women to take a long hard look at the political process to see whether it is relevant to their struggles. It is necessary for women to look also at themselves, to see whether they have the stamina and ability required to make a valuable contribution in this area. And it is necessary for women to closely examine the alternatives to see whether there are not ways of achieving the changes that they desire, other than through the political process.

As to whether women should be involved in politics, I agree with U.S. Congress woman Shirley Chisholm who said, "... politics is the only route to power and even in the most democratic society, power is the name of the game. For it is power that makes, interprets and enforces the laws. It decides what interests shall flourish and which shall perish. It determines who will be educated and how much, who may work at what kinds of jobs, where they may live and what they may do and with whom . . ."

As to whether women have anything to offer to the political process, it is my belief that women bring to the political field the same skills and ability as anyone else. I also believe, as Chisholm stated, that they will not be monolithic, that, "... they will be hawks, doves, moderates, progressives. (That) This is a multifaceted society and it is necessary to have input from every facet."

If we are committed to ending our oppression and achieving true equality, then we are going to have to do the job ourselves — we can no longer sit back and hope that nice, kindly, concerned gentlemen are going to do the job for us. I accept, too, the findings of the Harris-Setlow Poll in 1971, the University of Princeton Poll and the John Galbraith Study of 1973, that women have proven to be "less likely to go to war for the sake of honour." They are more pacifist. They care more about protecting consumer interests and are generally less hardened to the suffering of other people.

It seems crucial to me that women bring an added dimension to politics, that we be more than just carbon copies of male



Rosemary Brown

photo by Diana Palting

politicians. True equality demands that we be free to be as incompetent and mediocre as some male politicians. But, I believe that we have the opportunity and the responsibility to kill three birds with one stone: to achieve equality, to improve the calibre of politics, and to improve the quality of life for all people. Poverty and despair could cease to be the lot of so many women of this country, and through our efforts we could end the ruthless exploitation of people, our resources and our environment.

A final question has to do with alternatives. We have always been assured that we did not need political clout to achieve our goals because of the special and unique relationship which we share with our oppressors who oppress us only to protect us. We were taught that politics was an ugly and unpleasant forum — no place for delicate creatures like us — and that, in any event, our oppressors were better informed as to what was best for us and could be depended upon at all times to act and make decisions on our behalf and in our best interest.



As we look back over the centuries we can see the fallacy of that myth. The protection of men has served to deny us our rights, deprive us of our responsibilities as well as our privileges, and to leave us economically vulnerable. We have been denied even the freedom to make decisions affecting either our bodies or our minds, and we are tied up in legislative tangles which depict us as incompetents. Insurance and pension plans penalize us for living too long and there is debate whether our life is worth the expenditure of sums of money on such things as early detection units for breast cancer.

It is no longer necessary for us to explore why we should be involved. Our energies should be directed to the more crucial question of what we can bring to the political arena.

If we as women are entering the political stream to do things in exactly the same way that men have done them all along, then our contribution to the quality of life of the women in this country will be very limited indeed. If we accept the male definition of power and indulge in machismo political games, we will in fact be participants in an act of betrayal. As women, very few of us have ever known real power in the male sense. We have been part of a subordinated group, rather than a group that exercises control over others. Surely our role as oppressed people rather than as oppressors must give rise to a different perception and understanding of power which should provide us with a different perspective on its use and function. This should result in a determination that, if and when we have the opportunity to break down the old competitive/control/dominance system so prevalent in politics today. In its place we should explore the concept of politics as a creative force, as a tool for cooperation, as an instrument of collective decision making through which the productive energies and capabilities of all people are released to their full capacity. Surely as feminists we will not accept that political involvement has to mean the replacement of one type of power for another.

The approach I took when I ran for the NDP leadership in 1975 illustrates the qualities that feminism can bring to politics. I was asked to consider running by a search committee that wanted a feminist socialist woman to make a serious bid for the leadership of the party. After many open and frank discussions with my constituency executive, the constituency membership, my running mate, women across the country and many others, I decided to "throw my hat in the ring".

We established five ground rules for conducting a campaign. The campaign was not going to be a star oriented personality campaign. I was going to stay in until the very end and not play the role of "stalking horse" for anyone. There would be no deals. The campaign was to be run on the issues of feminism and socialism, and all decisions were going to be arrived at collectively.

Through the months, my campaign did emerge as different from the others. My campaign committees across the country were made up largely but not exclusively of feminist women. Decision making was decentralized with each provincial committee making its own decisions about how to conduct the campaign within its borders. The emphasis was on education through discussion of issues, not on a slick, well-packaged campaign. We used volunteer labour to prepare and distribute gestetnered policy statements. Children played an active role, from working the gestetner, stuffing envelopes, stapling material, to staffing the information booth at both provincial and federal conventions.

The campaign was intended to be a learning experience for women. They prepared policy statements, designed the final leaflet and organized the fundraising.

There was a change in the attitude of the media during the five months of the campaign. At the start the emphasis was personal: on my clothes, my children and my house. But gradually they were forced to deal with the issues I was presenting. They

finally realized that this was not a game. At the convention itself they were confused by the open decision making of our committee and amazed that this included the reporters, who were allowed to attend all meetings. We eschewed traditional tactics such as "the numbers game". Reporters would come to our committee room and ask "How many have you got?", meaning how many delegates are committed to you. This tactic is used during the leadership campaigns and is used to intimidate and impress the other candidates and the media. The night before the balloting we were deluged by reporters, quoting facts and figures which had been supplied to them regarding the strengths of each candidate. We maintained our position that we were not willing to play those games, that we knew we had support and this support would be demonstrated through the ballot.

The other tactic which is used is going after big name endorsements and then supplying this information to the media. We refused to do this. We stated publicly that we would not publish a list of people who were supporting me and my campaign. We felt that it was important to have the support of many people and we considered every member of the party to be a "big name".

More than anything, we concentrated on ensuring that the "Brown" campaign was well organized, that the policy statements were well researched, that we were serious and that as many women as possible benefited from the campaign.

We soon came to realize that because we were outspoken in our demands for socialism with feminism and because of our continued open exchange of ideas, we were contributing in a very real and meaningful way to the examination of issues and to a change of direction in the party. As a result of this we found ourselves dominating discussion and strategy on the convention floor. We concluded that, although we may have started

photo by Diana Palting



**"We must be more than just carbon copies of male politicians."**



out as amateurs and naive idealists, we were emerging as mature exponents of a new kind of politics, both personal and collective. We had proven that the creative and co-operative use of power would give birth to new political forms.

When we as feminists challenge the political structure and enter the political arena, as we must, it is not solely because we view politics as the last bastion of male chauvinism. Although we recognize the destructive force of sexism and male chauvinism, which drains our psychological and emotional energies and consumes valuable time, we know these setbacks are not the tumour, they are the accompanying pain. When, as feminists, we challenge the political structure, it is because we recognize that politics is part of the vital network through which our oppression is channeled and maintained. If we could but turn that structure around, it could be made one of the most useful and effective tools in our struggle for liberation.

John Kenneth Galbraith, in outlining our economic function as consumers who support an economic hierarchy which leeches us, concluded that, "For women to see how they are used is to see that they serve purposes not their own." I believe this, and I also believe that it is women who must decide what purpose they will serve. We, as feminists, have a responsibility to help define this purpose and to help develop an adequate analysis of the process which, historically, has led to the present situation. The oppression of women is so deeply rooted in history, so deeply embedded in the morality and psychology of

civilized societies, that it presents enormous complexities. But our understanding of these complexities is crucial if we are to fulfill our role as feminists in the political arena. For me, understanding has come from the political philosophy of socialism. The legislation that we passed as a socialist government in British Columbia was a challenge to the discrepancies that exist between classes and between peoples. We were trying to get to the root of an existing order that dehumanizes, alienates and oppresses people.

For me, feminist politics embodies and encompasses socialist politics and vice versa. The achievement of either one without the other is impossible. In addition to my responsibility to all the constituents of my electoral district, I have made the decision to represent and work on behalf of all women and I have been prepared to take the consequences of such a decision. I am convinced that until we have more women in politics — openly, flagrantly and unashamedly committed to the struggle for the liberation of women and determined to change traditional power politics to make it more responsive to the dispossessed of this earth — we as women are doomed to many more years of oppression and exploitation.

*Rosemary Brown is a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Vancouver-Burrard in British Columbia. In her bid for the leadership of the New Democratic Party several years ago she finished a strong second.*

*cont. from page 2*

would definitely not be interested in any sort of association with the independent women's nation (Some women have said they would only separate if the new women's nation could arrange an association with the remainder of Canada involving a sperm bank). "Alberta men are united in their opposition to the sperm bank idea," said Loughheed. He added that tar sands development would go ahead on schedule without the women. Levesque is reported to have a special police unit ready to stop the movement if it gains any more ground in Quebec. He said that the PQ only supports separation under very special circumstances and that Quebec women did not have cause to separate. He admitted that some Quebec women had expressed support for WISP but this was because they did not understand the PQ policies.

The view of economists is that separation might, at least in the short term, be beneficial because it would create new job openings. There might be difficulties later, however, if men de-

cided they didn't want the jobs vacated by women or felt they should be paid more. "Some of these jobs are pretty crummy," noted one economic advisor to the government. "I don't know who we'll get to fill them if the women pull out." Employers who were paying maternity benefits might save money in an all male country he noted, but this would be scant comfort to those employers who didn't offer such benefits.

### **Banks Not Worried**

A spokesman for one of the country's banks said the banks would be fairly secure in the face of separation. "We don't really need women's business," he said. "For some reason not very many of them have opened large accounts with us. They come in every month to cash those pitiful Family Allowance cheques which just cause us a lot of paperwork." He noted that only a few staff replacements would have to be made above the level of teller and that customers would soon get used to having male tellers again. Royal Bank chairman Earle McLaughlin was over-

heard to say he wished the women had separated several years ago. He later tried to withdraw the statement but it had already been picked up by reporters.

The media have been quick to analyze the new separation movement. A probing study by the *Canadian* magazine asked women in all provinces if they favored separation from Canadian men (a) with a guarantee of reproductive cooperation via a sperm bank (b) without such a guarantee. Eighty percent said they would definitely separate if there was a guarantee of a sperm bank but only 25% said they would separate without the bank. Interviews with male members of the magazine's staff indicated that women would have to be very naive to think Canadian men would make their sperm available to the women after separation.

In another media scoop, *Chatelaine* magazine sent a reporter out to ask families what they thought of separation. Most wanted to know if it would mean the breakup of their family and when the reporter said it would, responses were

varied. Some women were enthusiastic about the idea and, to the pained surprise of their husbands, asked how they could join WISP. Men often thought they could tolerate the breakup of their family but had second thoughts when the reporter pointed out that there would be no women available to replace their wives. When asked if *Chatelaine* would stay in Canada if the women left the country the magazine's new editor said it definitely would. "The publisher has said he wouldn't let the magazine go," she observed, "It's a big moneymaker and can still be mailed to the women if they leave." She expressed concern that some women have tended to refer to men as oppressors but predicted that with women gone from the country the last vestiges of this outmoded conflict would wither away.

Most magazine editors have confessed they were running the stories for novelty value only, since the media generally views the separation movement by women as ridiculous. Said one, "Nothing like that ever happens in Canada."



# How to Run and Win

In putting together this issue, we at *Branching Out* became puzzled over the lack of women willing to put themselves to the fore as political candidates. Being unsatisfied with the usual excuses of lack of party, family, constituent or financial support, we sent out two intrepid investigative reporters to find the true reasons. Instead they came back highly excited about a pamphlet they had been able to obtain by unspeakable methods from a male MP who shall remain nameless. According to our reporters this booklet lays out in graphic form the methodology of running a successful campaign and the devious, subliminal, subversive psychology behind that methodology. Our nameless

MP, being a member of the "Boys in the Back Room" Club, boasted in a moment of maudlin pride (as we said their methods were unspeakable) that no one but the inner circle of power brokers and a few chosen Up-and-Coming-Young Men in which he included himself were permitted access to this instruction manual. Consequently no women have been able to share in this information.

Therefore, in support of all present and future women candidates and with disrespect to (most of) the "Boys in the Back Room", we present for you the chapter on "putting together your campaign pamphlet". Do with it what ye will.

Elaine Butler

## THE POLITICAL PAMPHLET

Although theoreticians on political strategy claim that a politician's main objective is to explain his stand on the issues, the true primary goal in a campaign is to get the public just to recognize your name. That alone can give you 18% of the votes since most voters by the time they get to the polling place can never remember who stands for what anyway.

Therefore, your political pamphlet should concentrate on acquainting the voters with your name while not giving them any reason to dislike you.

We have listed below the correct types of photographs to include as well as suggestions for maximizing their effectiveness:

1. Include *one* photo of you surrounded by your family in a scene of domestic tranquility. They may be presented in the following order of importance: children (in order of youngest to oldest); family dog; other family pets; your parents; wife.

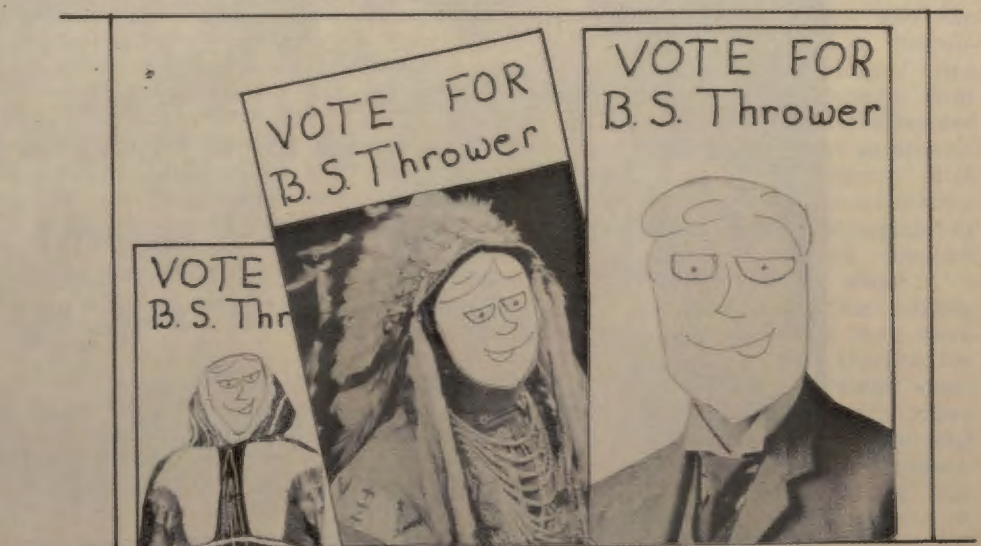
Under no conditions should you include any of the servants or your children's nanny; however, you could include your own nanny.







2. Include one or two shots showing you active in community sports or charitable programs. This can be combined in one effort if you are willing to volunteer some time as Little League Hockey Coach. If you can't spare the time or are afraid of aggressive players, donate money to Big Brothers and borrow one of their kids for the afternoon.
3. Nowadays one can't depend on the political machine for getting into office, so it is necessary to appeal to all sorts of people for voting support.
  - A. Photographs showing that you have much in common with the local ethnic groups are a must. If you can imply that you actually are a member of that or those ethnic group/s to whatever small extent, without having to give up claim to your Anglo-Saxon superiority, then you will have achieved a major coup in the campaign.



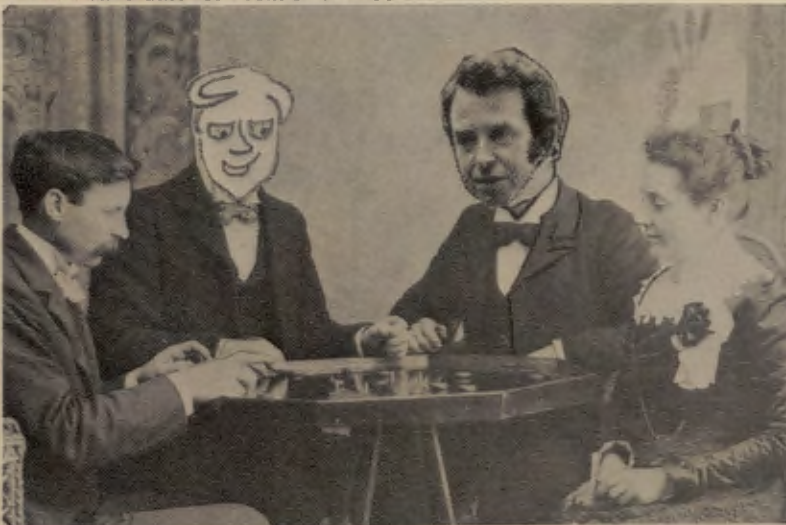




B. The working class like to feel that the office holder knows what it means to work for a Friday paycheck and live on it. Since most of us have long forgotten or never knew such complications, it is necessary sometimes to fake these sympathies. Imply that you're a Common Man with a picture of yourself working at something (other than politics. For some reason this doesn't seem to count). If necessary buy a wheat or cattle farm as U.S. politicians are now buying peanut farms. If funds are limited, rent a plow or tractor and  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre for a summer.

At the very least show that you have friends who work or can get along with such people.

4. Show the voters that you have the trust of the party leader, or some older, established member of the political body to which you aspire. If they all hate you, it is possible to present a picture of you together as though you were best of friends even though they may be discussing indictment proceedings against you. Doctoring of photographs will not be discussed here as the wrong hands may gain possession of this paper. Plain brown envelopes marked TOP SECRET/CONFIDENTIAL will be sent to you with a complete discussion including what to do if *you* are the party leader being cut out and pasted up as a supporter of the KKK's candidate for Premier of Alberta.



With these instructions to follow, you should find running a successful campaign much easier.  
Good luck!



# At the Edge

drawings by Val Power















*Valerie Power lives in Salmo, B.C. She took her formal art training in B.C. and has travelled extensively in the U.S. and Europe. She has been selling her work privately and is currently preparing her first exhibition.*



# At Home

fiction by Barbara Brown

illustration by Barbara Hartmann

She crouched low as she'd been told to do in the last practice session and unleashed as much strength into her swing as her complaining muscles could render. The ball smashed in low just above the fault line and shot down to the floor satisfyingly short of her opponent's unprepared lunge. "Christ, at least I got one point." She wiped the sweat from her forehead with the back of her hand.

The ball surged up from the front wall towards her. She'd missed the serve, concentrating on her own fatigue and overheated system. She was out of control, wildly slashing seconds after the ball passed; too late; too late. And she lunged again towards the soft ball deciding too late to pick it out of the air. The ball bounced flaccidly off the back wall and ran between her fumbling feet as she sought securer ground.

By way of apology, abject image protection, make some excuse because everything was excusable, is forgivable, but failure. So she mumbled, "I swear I'm looking at the ball. How can I miss it?" But who listened to a loser? Her opponent silently positioned herself to gain the final game point.

Later, in the locker room as she bent down to untie her running shoes, she mentally reworked the game. The real problem was her inability to discipline her body. There was no control there, no direction, no understanding, no acceptance. Why was that? Her mind was infinitely, disgustingly malleable. Feed it Sartre; push the button for existentialism. Offer R. D. Laing; pluck out madness. Why couldn't she feed her mind physical commands and elicit performance? She tried on the courts. She really tried but she didn't respond fast enough. She didn't run when she should have; she didn't return to the T. She knew the critical litany that followed each point lost to her husband. Where was the T? It couldn't be just at centre court. It must be hidden somewhere; it must be a mental state, an eager expectancy, a competitiveness. If it was just a position on the court surely she could find it and return to it. Her husband always stopped after each botched rally. Patiently, like a teaching surgeon, he explained her weaknesses, pinpointing her hesitant backhand; her failure to move from the serving court. At least that's what he thought he was doing. But the tautness of his voice told her the object of his complaints was elsewhere. This brutal encounter with her on the squash court was somehow tied to her perfunctory performance in bed. His insistence she "get in shape" for the sake of her health was

really for the sake of his ego — her ego. What was it for? "You cannot accept what you are; what we all are," he said during infrequent tender moments. "You want to always deny the physical tie not only between us but between yourself and all other humans. You think books, the abstract world, will save you but they won't." And after that extraordinary diatribe against her temperament he signed them both up as members of the squash club.

So here she was, totally physical. There were no abstracts within those four white walls. But where was that? What was here for her but aching muscles and an enveloping sense of her own inadequacy as match after match ended in her admission of inferiority in a skill she had not wanted to acquire in the first place.

She unzipped the white squash dress and let it fall to her feet. Turning abruptly, she faced herself squarely in the wall-length mirror that displaced the lines of lockers on that fourth wall. She suddenly felt dizzy and reached out a hand to steady herself. For a moment she thought she'd seen a double image of herself; a doppel-gänger. But it was only another player who had emerged from the shower and sauna room behind her into the dimness of the change areas. For one shocking moment she felt she'd seen herself both covered and uncovered. There had been a disorientation, a second of terrible truth in which she was revealed in her schizophrenic nakedness. No one should see that but herself.

The unknown woman turned to the lockers on the right-hand wall and silently withdrew a squash bag crammed with clothes. Alison awkwardly reached back and unhooked her brassiere. That image was real, she thought. That was really me. I'm doubled on that court, mind and body. Why can't I get them to work together? As she turned to the showers she was struck by the prominence of her brownish nipples against the white skin of her breasts.

With terrifying clarity she suddenly remembered her first experience with the triad of shame, pleasure and terror. He was a molester, a tit freak or whatever you want to call him. She couldn't have been more than sixteen at the time. She was employed as a salesclerk in the toy department of a downtown store. Because of the staggered lunch hours and her own natural reticence she usually went alone to the basement lunch counter, pushing and shoving her way to the tasteless hot dogs and the







**"Excuse me but I think you have my leg and isn't this your arm? Are you sure those are your hairs?"**

watery orange drinks. As she left the counter and carefully threaded her crowded way to the escalator, she felt a tight clasp on her arm. Simultaneously she was aware of a man standing in front of her. Close—close, blocking her way, forcing the other unseeing shoppers to flow around them. They were in their sealed universe. Nothing could intrude. With his other hand, the one not holding her arm, he fondled her breast, smoothly, roughly, smoothly. It wasn't her; not her; not her body. Her head had floated off, to safety, to a removed place. The rest of her, the body submitted for eternity to the hot flushes rising from between her legs and the sensuous warmth of his touch. Click, he moved on. She reintegrated and moved on.

What a Goddamn creep he was, she thought. What a horrible creep and he looked normal, almost handsome. She lowered herself gingerly into the whirlpool making certain she sat at a discreet distance from the other water relaxed woman. Imagine being fondled or screwed in a whirlpool she thought as she let both her legs and breasts relax and float. One day my parts may just float away and the other woman's too. Can you imagine us saying, "Excuse me but I think you have my leg and isn't this your arm? Are you sure those are your hairs?"

She was aware the woman across from her had her eyebrows raised questioningly. "I'm sorry," she said. "I was dozing. Did you ask me something?"

And the unknown woman repeated, "Do you play squash here very often?" And the usual answers because they didn't matter; at all, at all, since the conversation was heading toward its core no matter what peripheral words surrounded it. The woman moved to the central obsessive query. "Do you think this water is recirculated from the men's whirlpool?"

The hysterical image of squirming sperm-fish threading their way past the inlet, through the water flow into all those unsuspecting vaginal openings. The ultimate comic reversal: woman seeks cleansing in bath and claims defilement. What could she say? And she said, "Oh no. I'm sure it's clean water." Perceptibly, the woman relaxed and her now opened legs floated just under the surface of the swirling water. Alison slowly gained her footing on the slippery stair. She couldn't stay in the pool with that mind.

A couple of other women were now in the change room, beet-red, brows beaded. They quickly stripped off their white outfits and stepped naked into the shower area. Without underwear, without towels, finishing their dissection of the game, they tested the water. Alison was struck, as she always was when other women stripped in front of her by the infinite variety-monotony of the human form. They all had breasts, some small, some grossly pendant, but they were there. Hips slightly swelling or voluptuous; bellies, flat or protruding. And most were ill-proportioned. Oh why hadn't they known that earlier? All of them, all those developing girls in the change room of that old school basement.

The pool had been installed in the city school as a political plum. No new science equipment, no more library books but a pool that the parents could see as a visible sign of the improved educational achievements of the school. And they hated it with a passion. It meant changing into your tank suit, showering, swimming, then drying your hair and dressing all within 45 minutes. The teacher never entered the pool, just checked the attendance and yelled instructions from the tiled side. "That's it. Keep your head down in the water. Keep your hands cupped." Meaningless. Who learned to swim there, to feel the water, to relish moistness, to return to the T? Alison claimed

she had a heavy period and argued with vehemence when she was challenged. As well, she nagged her mother into producing a cold note at least twice a month. The result was an attendance record fulsomely dotted with C's and M's. Still, occasionally it was necessary to swim.

Then she became one of those pale creatures torn between taking off their brassiere or underwear first. Which was the worst part to reveal to public gaze? She could never make the choice since all of it was equally reprehensible. Of course, there were a few girls who simply stepped out of their clothing but they were different. So the rest of them established their private bubbles of space, backs to the open centre of the room and quietly undressed. Each age has its own definition for agony.

And that was the last time she had seen naked females. My God the last time. No one told her they were heading in the same direction; stomachs with tell-tale upper ledges; fleshy female thighs. The problem was the Playboy lie. That was the mythology. God had punished you if you were not physically a part of it.

Look at them she thought. This is really where the integration will occur; in here not on that court. When I can accept my uniqueness and my conformity, then I'll probably feel more at ease on the court. She crossed the carpeted change section and pulled her red squash case from the locker where she had crammed it during a moment that now seemed to have frozen in earlier time. As she pulled on her jeans she turned towards the sound of the newcomer behind who was breathing noisily. It was simply the fattest naked woman Alison had ever seen. Her breasts hung almost down to her navel line. The supporting skin was stretched taut to support the weighty flesh that had sunk like milk in half-full plastic sacs. The rolls around her waist and stomach were covered with unnaturally shiny skin. They reminded Alison of the diseased red shininess of the skin that had covered the bulging cellulitis on her daughter's forehead. There was no way the woman could even see her own pubic hair, never to see herself except in reflection. She is disgusting, Alison thought as she turned her eyes protectively away.

The movement of her daughter drew her attention to the entrance corridor. "Are we going now?" her child asked. "Can I put your racquet in the bag?"

"Sure," she answered, her mind still running over the flesh on that grotesque body to her right. As she turned to zip up her bag, the other two women returned from the shower, naked, young, younger than her, limbs swinging, no towels hiding them, no decisions about what parts to hide. The fat woman turned full, frontal and nude. And all three of them smiled at her daughter who smiled back; not shyly, not furtively, just smiled, no eyes lingering on nipples, no glances at flashing pubic hair. Alison stared; her daughter did not.

Then she knew it all. She had given somehow that gift of ease and she would take some of it back. As they left, her daughter turned to wave to the naked trio.

"Goodbye," she said. She turned again. "Are we going home now?" she asked her mother.

"Yes," said Alison.

*Barbara Brown lives in Scarborough, Ontario.*

*Barbara Hartmann works as a community programmer with the Edmonton public library. She has been art director of Branching Out for several years.*



# Putting On Shoes

Putting on shoes, knotting a scarf,  
shuffling the dishes, laundry, the children's  
lunches, and

at the supermarket  
all slides by with the usual ease,  
muzaked.

There is no clue among the oranges,  
the onions, the shoppers',  
faces impressive as cheese,  
bumper-to-bumper at the check-out slot,  
there is not

a clue  
that her question to you:  
"Do you know the price of this?"  
thrust at your face  
will poke a hole

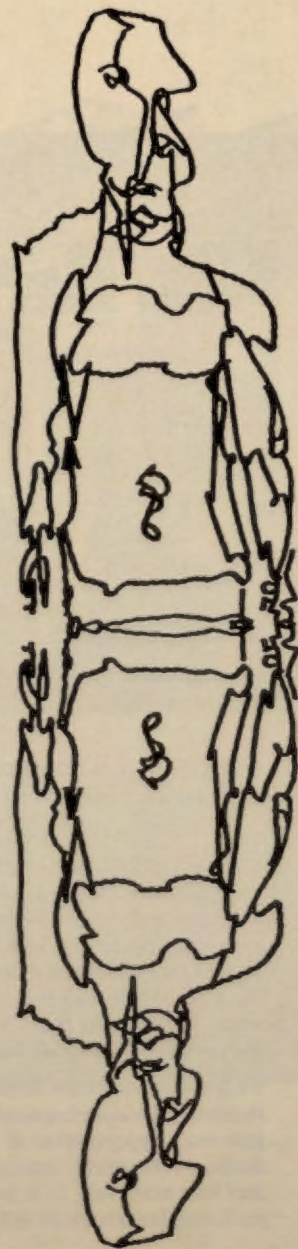
and leave you  
looking at your hand  
and how it fills  
the space around it,  
while your fellow species  
(all short-term specials, too)  
shoulder to shoulder mutter,  
and here you are and  
here  
is an enormously simple proposition  
which you have no clue how to solve;  
there is only the moment itself  
curved back, like a question  
inflected.

It is not possible to assert  
that her blondined head won't bend  
and bite your hand, or that  
the walls will not expand  
and fly off scattering tins, or that  
eventually normality will click in place.

"I asked you twice.  
Do you know the price  
of this?"

Rosemary Aubert

*Rosemary Aubert is a Toronto poet and book editor. Her first book of poetry, Two Kinds of Honey, was recently published by Oberon.*



Sarah Jackson 76 ©

*Sarah Jackson is a Halifax artist whose work ranges from sculpture to drawings reproduced with a Xerox copier.*



# A chapter in Alberta's history... **PRESERVED**

*the Magrath Mansion  
6240 Ada Boulevard, Edmonton*



GLENBOW-ALBERTA INSTITUTE

*Oak panelling, a staircase in the grand manner, linen wall coverings and leaded glass windows are among the superb features of the Magrath Mansion.*

The year is 1912 and the atmosphere is buoyant. Alberta is enjoying an unprecedented economic boom and in Edmonton a local real estate developer, W. J. Magrath, builds a magnificent home that captures the optimistic spirit of the day.

Today this elaborate three-storey residence speaks eloquently of that era's appreciation of architectural grace, craftsmanship and fine materials. It is an enduring landmark in Alberta's

history — one that fortunately has been preserved for our enjoyment and for future generations.

Because of its historical significance, the Magrath Mansion has been designated a Classified Historic Site in accordance with the Alberta Historical Resources Act. Designation places a responsibility on the owner in matters of alteration, development or disposal and may also provide for assistance in the proper management and preservation of the site.

There are several thousand buildings and sites in Alberta whose age, architecture or

association with important events makes them a significant part of our heritage. These are non-renewable resources that should not be left to decay, nor thoughtlessly destroyed.

*If you know of such a building or site, the Historic Sites Service may wish to add it to their lists for future consideration.*

Report it to:  
Alberta Culture  
Historic Sites Service  
4th Floor, 10158 - 103 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 0X6  
Telephone 427-2355

**Alberta**  
CULTURE  
Historical Resources



# Jay

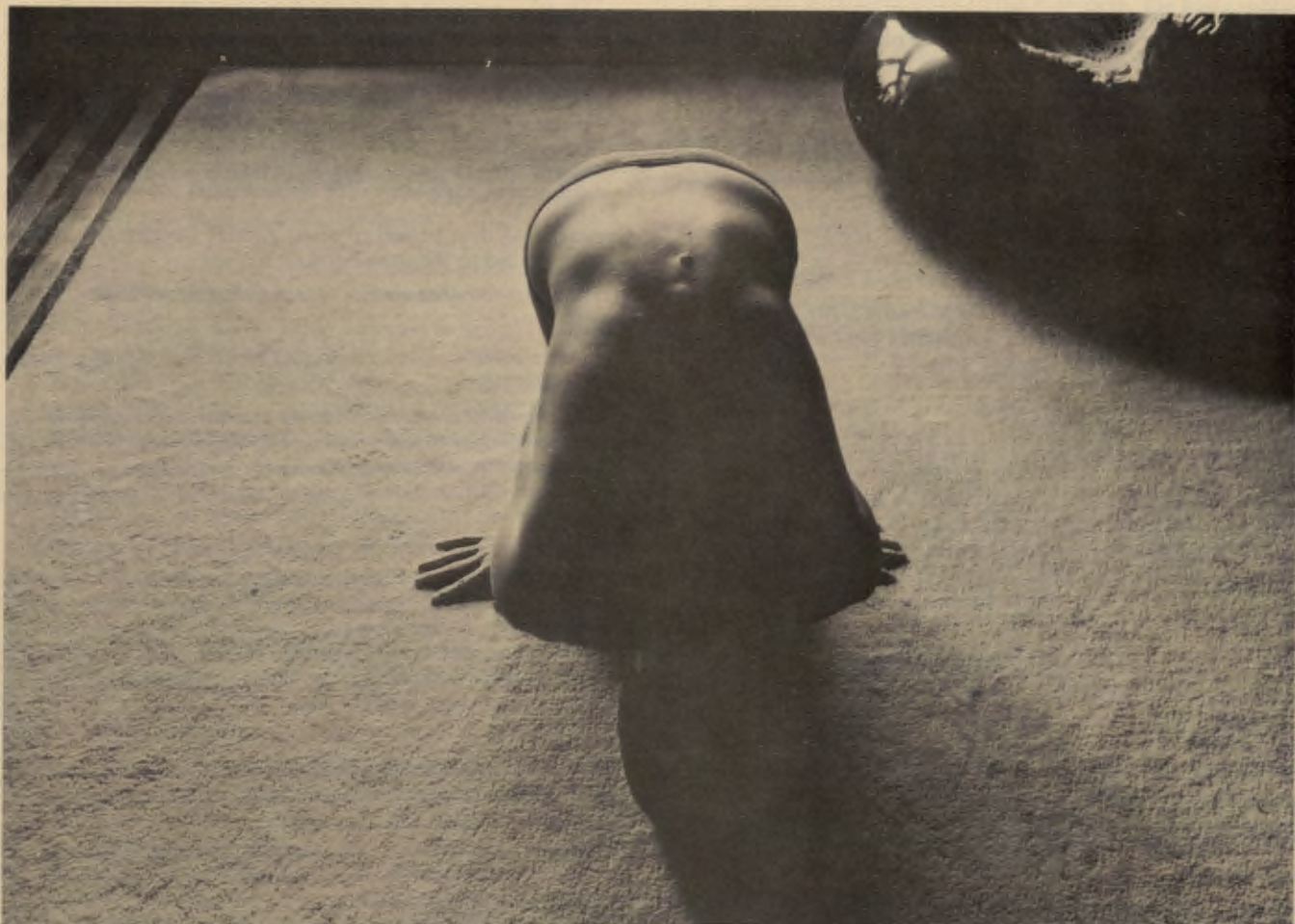
photo essay by Marian Penner Bancroft











*Marian Penner Bancroft is a Vancouver photographer and a member of a woman's media group that is making a documentary film on immigrants. She recently had a photo exhibition at Nova Gallery in Vancouver and will have another at the Photographers' Gallery in Saskatoon in June 1978. The photographs shown here are of her husband, Jay.*



# The Apple in the Eye

by Margaret Hollingsworth  
a half hour play for radio

Characters: Gemma, a woman of about 30, and her husband  
Martin, a computer scientist.

The play takes place in bed, on a Sunday afternoon.

*The majority of this play takes place in Gemma's mind, and these speeches are indicated by the direction Thought Voice. It is suggested that these speeches should have a different auditory quality from those labelled Present Voice, which indicate immediate speech (the exchanges between Martin and Gemma which interrupt or stimulate her thoughts.) Where Martin's speeches are labelled Thought Voice these are actually being remembered by Gemma. They should be a little more immediate when he is addressing her in her thoughts than when he is addressing the group of party goers, lecturing his students or reading his book, (she is reconstructing these episodes in her mind.)*

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Martin?

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Grunts

**Gemma:** Martin!

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Gemma . . . I'm reading, can't you see? I'm reading and listening to the game. I can't do three things at once. I can't listen to you and . . . I can't keep my mind on . . . Sssshhh!

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Mind . . . ?

*Thought Voice* If I was to take a very sharp knife and gently, so gently cut through my mind, how would it be? Soft and spongy like sodium? If I was to put it in water would it ride over the surface? Race around and burn itself out? No. I wouldn't let that happen. Keep the mind dry. My mind would be like an apple . . . *Present Voice* Martin, give me a six letter word ending in E meaning secret.

**Martin:** *Present Voice speaking automatically* Arcane.

**Gemma:** Never heard of it.

**Martin:** Does it fit?

**Gemma:** Yes.

**Martin:** Then it's right.

**Gemma:** *Persisting* Are you sure it's a word?

**Martin:** Ssshhh

**Gemma:** How do you spell it— with a c or with a k?

**Martin:** Ssssssssh!

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* My husband Martin taught me to do cross-words. Its really very easy. I read out the clues. He gives me the answers. I do them in bed on a Sunday afternoon. *Spells* A-R-C-A-N-E. If I were to cut through my apple of a mind with a very sharp knife it would fall apart in two neat halves.

**Sound** a sharp crack

**Martin:** *Present Voice* What are you doing?

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Thinking.

**Martin:** No you're not, you're cracking your finger joints again, you know I can't stand that noise.

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* . . . In two neat halves. And there they would lie on the bed. On the green and orange sheets, which I shall burn next week because I am tired of orange and green dreams. The colours of a flag . . . which one? I should ask my husband Martin. He is a collector of trivia. He hoards it and displays it at parties. The colour of a pineapple. My husband Martin can hold forth for ten minutes to any number of party goers . . .

**Martin:** *Gemma remembers Martin holding forth pompously to a number of people* Have you ever noticed the relationship between the eyes of a pineapple, which trace a logarithmic spiral and the golden rectangle, which was familiar to the Ancient Greeks?

**Gemma:** And then he will go on to wonder whether this can also be applied to the strawberry—

**Martin:** *Remembered speech* An equally regular fruit

**Gemma:** It is one of his party tricks. Some people produce white rabbits. Martin produces logarithmic spirals. And similar trivia.

**Martin:** *Remembered speech, more intimate since he is not addressing so many people.* Trivia? My dear Gemma, someone or something has master-minded the pineapple — it is yet another indication of a defined order in the universe . . .

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* My husband Martin has a sneaking suspicion that God may be greater than computer science, since computer science has yet to come up with the perfect pineapple. A pineapple to me is simply orange and green. The colours of the girl's private school I was expelled from, for painting a phallus on the statue of the founder. The colours of some football team . . .  
*Fade in*

**Sound (Radio Commentary)** The Blue Bombers are on the Stampeders' 20 yard line. It's 2nd and 5, they come out of the huddle over the ball . . .

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Are you really listening to that my love, my only love? Or is it simply a background noise. The beating of a moth's wings on an outside pane. The beating of a mother's heart over the growing foetus. Have you ever considered that we are developed under the shadow of noise pollution? Boom. Boom. Boom. My husband Martin is extremely concerned over environmental noise. He is the chairman of our local branch of SPC. *(She spits this out)* The society for pollution control. He believes that the environment is doomed. There will be no more apples. *Present Voice* Give me an eight letter word meaning giant mythological beast, ending in moth.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Sssshhh

**Gemma:** Giant, mythological . . .

**Martin:** *Snaps* Behemoth

**Gemma:** Behemoth. Large and portentous. Yes —



**Martin:** What?

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Nothing my love. You must understand that these are my own, my very private worries. Although they are trivial they are not interesting enough to add to your collection. What are such small worries when all around us the world is sinking, children with bloated bodies litter the T.V. screen . . . and my mind lies in two halves on the green and orange sheet.

One half of my mind contemplates the possibility of arcane amusements, while the etching on the other half comes slowly to life, and the golden spider with eight inch legs and a tiny diamond head, nestling behind the etching, emerges and bites into the apple which is the two halves of my mind.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* (*Feverish*) – you should take an aspirin Gemma. Quit the crossword for a while.

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* That was my husband. He's a very concerned man. The feeling of his hand on my forehead was received in perfect perspective by the now fractionally smaller but still exquisitely arcane half of my mind which lies on the centre of a large orange moon. Here beside me lies my husband Martin. Large and pale, since he works with his mind and not with his body *Spells M-a-r Pause a-t*. Here beside me lies Marat in his bath. He has been bitten by the golden spider. His head drips blood, while into one ear, through a small plastic receptacle, not unlike the receiver of a hearing aid, flow the latest and greatest exploits of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and the Calgary Stampeders. My only love.

*Fade in*

**Sound** (*Game commentary*) Stevens takes a snap — hands off to the full-back who hits the hole, off right tackle — he's made three yards . . . Racked up by Dubinski the middle line backer with an assist from the left corner back . . .

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* His lips twitch — have they scored? Or has the space ship in the science fiction novel which he is reading — taking care to hold it above the reddening water — has it taken off, hurling the intrepid earth-men towards

greater and yet greater exploits in outer space? He is on page 53 of "The Last of the Teritans".

A large and nubile lady climbs out of the half of the apple which lies by my pillow. Saskia, wife of that artist in the velvet cap, with the kind squinty eyes. For a moment she stands poised on the edge of the bath. Poised ready to plunge. No, she's dragging Marat out of his bath, and the bluish light glances off the heavy folds of her bum. He's holding on. He doesn't want to leave. He's waving "The Last of the Tertiens" above his head to keep it dry. She drags the ear piece from his ear, unhitches him . . .

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Oh for God's sake Gemma. Can't you see I'm reading. Listening. Save it eh? Save it for 4:30. Take some medicine or something if you don't feel so good eh?

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* It is Sunday afternoon. On Sunday afternoon my husband Martin remains in bed, and, apart from infrequent visits to the bathroom, (he has a rubber lined bladder), he has been up only once. He has put an overcoat over his pyjama legs, taken the Volkswagen from the underground car-park, and driven 23 blocks south, to the only shop in town where you can buy bagels and lox on a Sunday morning. Every Sunday morning he complains that in this town there are no Jewish ghettos, and if there were, there would be more shops stocking his Sunday morning manna. When he gets back it is my turn to rise, and he returns to bed. I undo the package, spread the bagels with cream cheese, arrange the lox on a plate with a small silver fork, and return to bed, carrying with me a perfect still life. My love destroys it with a single move. The cheese is squeezed between the warm yeasty folds. The lox is dangled aloft in a long pink tongue, and swallowed, seal fashion. Every week he complains that the bagels are not as good as the ones his mother made.

Anyone who didn't know us might find this a carnal scene. It is not. My husband Martin is a computer scientist. He is an A.I. man. He is A.I. (To those who don't know, this stands for artificial intelligence, although those who do know might be right in thinking that artificial insemination is equally appropriate, particularly for my husband Martin.) He lectures. I'm told he's a very thorough lecturer.

**Martin:** *Thought Voice* Now I want you all to understand that this system is intended to be a general purpose generator for domains in a formalism similar to FLIP. The method used is close to FLIP but the search space is complete, unlike FLIP and several similar systems. The entire LAYAWAY programme, (that's l-a-y-a-w-a-y) comprises 52 clauses and aims at conciseness and clarity rather than efficiency. Nevertheless the present implementation solves some standard problems roughly 10 times faster than FLIP. LAYAWAY is perhaps interesting as a system implemented in first order logic, which solves problems in first order logic. *Voice fades*

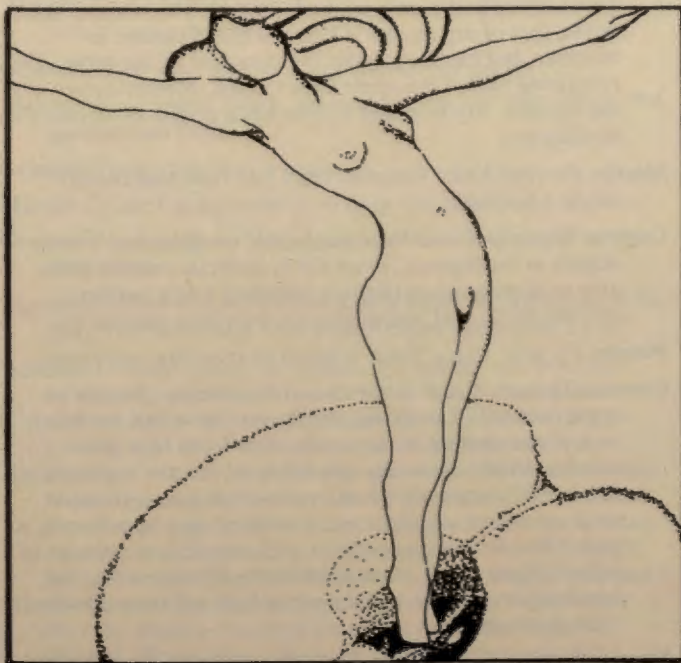
**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* My husband Martin is a computer scientist, greatly admired by his associates I am told. My husband Martin is a computer.

**Martin:** *Thought Voice* Now you see my dear Gemma, I want you to understand that the gulf which divides us is simply due to a differing approach to the same problem. It may be solved quite simply by a slight adaptation on your part, it is a question of applying first order logic and a degree of systematisation to your primary thought processes, which will then reflect on . . . *Fade into a howl of real anguish. As he is speaking we hear Gemma's voice, repeating*

**Gemma:** Flip — flip — flip — flip —

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Hey, just watch what you're doing with

. . . out of the half of the apple which lies by my pillow . . .



illustrations by Barbara Hartmann



that ball point pen Gem, you've messed up the crossword — just missed my eye, what's the matter with you today?

**Gemma:** *Thought voice* Saskia pulls Marat from his bath, it is like taking an oyster from its shell. He lies and reads, oyster coloured, flaccid.

**Martin:** *Muttering as he reads* . . . When the Tertian homed the target he emerged from a bank of low cloud to see a hexagonal structure glistening with a glossy steel finish on top of a pole on the highest peak of mount Karmino. Beside the pole was a human being sitting on a rock pile, and a tethered bison searching the herbage. The human being jumped to his feet, jabbering and waving. He must have been 200 years old.

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Saskia leans over him. Seen in this light the two halves of her buttocks are burnished, resembling nothing so much as a golden delicious, split in half, each half lying side by side, perfectly rounded, barely touching. A dark stalk is hanging between the two halves. I pull the stalk, the halves of my mind slam together with such an impact that Marat pops into a new position. Propped up at a banquet table he slurps his soup, and almost swallows his spoon.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Coughing and choking Oh Christ, hit me on the back will you? *Splutters* Its gone down the wrong way. *Coughs*

**Gemma:** *Thought voice* On Saturday night before we go to bed I pop a pan of corn and place it on the locker on Martin's side of the bed in a cut glass bowl, ready for Sunday afternoon munchies, as Martin puts it.

**Sound** *Coughing. Clump as she hits him on the back*

*Present Voice* Better now dear one?

**Martin:** *Still sputtering, mumbles* Mmmmm.

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Saskia is under the table, under the snowy white folds of the snowy white table cloth. Marat's pants reside peaceably around his ankles. To all outward appearances he is an invalid — wounded in some dark arcane place, by a dark barb from which he has never recovered. Propped up on a satin pillow — barely able to eat, he splutters while Saskia — Saskia sucks. Not a muscle twitches. Not a sign on her inert torso would indicate the pure arcane delight which is occurring under the white cloth, under the snowy white folds. The behemoth swells as Saskia sucks and Marat savours his soup.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* How come the popcorn ran out so quick this week Gem? Its nearly finished.

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* We were almost out of corn. I could've gone to the corner . . .

**Martin:** Sssh . . . touch down

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Touch down and blast off. The space ship passes into orbit and Marat comes.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Score! They scored!

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Saskiabucks. For a second the table is balanced on her broad flanks — then it dumps back to earth and the dishes fly through the air in slow motion — Marat sits. His legs are all pappy and he sits among the dishes, quite unaware that the assembled company is staring at his fallen pants, quite unaware of the huge, lard-like woman, kneeling at his feet. He has more than soup in his lap.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* How about some tea honey?

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Did they make it?

**Martin:** Who honey?

**Gemma:** Your team. Your team of course.

**Martin:** Sure. Sure they made it. Too easy. Lousy game.

**Gemma:** You make it.

**Martin:** Make what honey?

**Gemma:** The tea. You make the tea.

**Martin:** I made it last week.

**Gemma:** So you did.

**Martin:** Feeling better now sweet?

**Gemma:** Better?

**Martin:** I thought you had a head-ache.

**Gemma:** That was last week.

**Martin:** So it was.

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* I get out of bed and slide my feet into the sheepskin slippers my husband Martin bought for me for Christmas last year. I find it hard to walk. I look down. I am wearing the sheepskin slippers I bought for my husband Martin for Christmas last year. Last year he advised us to exchange utilitarian gifts. He is always afraid that I will spend more on him than he spends on me. His slippers are larger than mine, they contain more sheep, two dollars more, therefore in addition to my slippers, I received a pair of red wool and nylon socks. Martin buys his own socks. He wears pure wool. But to have bought me pure woolen socks would have meant spending more than \$2. This was computed against the possibility of upsetting me with inferior quality, and the ticker tape decided that the possibility was minimal, since I do not wear socks anyway. I take my right foot out of his left slipper, and there on my big toe is speared — a perfect apple.

I hobble into the kitchen, taking care to walk on my heels, and plug in the kettle. The apple waves to me. I turn down my toe and stub it violently against the linoleum. The apple splits into two perfect halves. One half stays still, staring at me benignly from two small pip-like eyes, the other skeeters across the floor under the kitchen table, where it is dark, and dark and warm. I crawl underneath, but I can't find it. I hunch up and stay still, listening to the growl of the kettle as it prepares to boil. The noise is not unlike that of my mother's heart, which I cannot remember, but can feel, under the darkness of the table. The remaining half of the apple stares at me. Martin comes into the kitchen. My husband Martin has a doctorate in artificial intelligence.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Gemma, can't you hear that bloody kettle whistling?

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Now one would imagine that with a degree in intelligence, even if it is artificial one would be able to distinguish between a whistling kettle and an electric kettle, but apparently my only love cannot.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* There's steam all over the apartment.

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Far away a train steams through an apple orchard; it is spring, the flowers have not yet fallen — it is somewhere in the south. Hot. I can hear the cicadas. (Many years ago my husband Martin's upper teeth lost out to somebody's foot in a football game. He now wears dentures which he has a habit of clicking when he is mad.) The flowers are painted with tiny delicate specks of colour. Each speck lends itself to the whole, so that the whole is not too much and not too little, all there absolutely right, each speck.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Jesus Gemma, can't you do something about that damned kettle?

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* My husband Martin is now shrouded in





There on my big toe is speared — a perfect apple . . .

steam.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* What are you doing Gemma? What are you doing under the goddamned table? I thought you were going to make the goddamned tea.

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Yes. Yes, I was. Only then you started swearing . . .

**Martin:** *Present Voice* When? I wasn't swearing.

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Yes you were — you said goddamned.

**Martin:** That was just now. I said it just now after you said you'd make the tea.

**Gemma:** Mind your foot — don't step on my apple.

**Martin:** What apple? Look, are you coming out from under that goddamned table . . .?

**Gemma:** There, you said it again.

**Martin:** Or am I going to have to drag you out?

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* (My loved one likes to pretend he's a cave man)

**Martin:** *Present Voice* All this is as a result of my trying to be fair. You're pulling your little funnies again aren't you?

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* He stands. He stands, my beautiful behemoth, guarding his cave. He shrugs, a man and a woman look over one of his shoulders. What are they looking at? Out over a vast expanse of water, with no apparent interest. It is Sunday afternoon. There are people in pairs picnicking by the side of the water. The man and the women stare, stiff and erect, he in a frock coat and top hat, she in a dress with a bustle and an absurd little black hat. A monkey plays at her feet . . . and a dog. If you look closely you can see the tiny points of colour from which they are made — none of them touching. She holds a parasol. Para — for, sol — sun. Really two words. The parasol is growing, imperceptibly at first. I am the only one who notices as it grows, enveloping everything where everything is in pairs. Dog — monkey; boy — girl; lover —

lover; man — woman; apple — apple; it is absolutely necessary for everything to be in pairs and for nothing to touch. Everything is stiff and formal, and nothing grows except the parasol which continues to spread and the woman with the starched face wants, oh she wants to make them all move, set them in motion. She runs her hand down the man's left thigh, slowly, nobody is looking. She moves it slightly to the right, he is not aware of her touch, his face remains stern, and then . . .

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Ow! What are you doing? What are you doing with my pyjamas? Gemma!

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Joke!

**Martin:** *Present Voice* That's not funny. Come on out of there. And why don't you feed the cat once in a while? Look at her, she's half starved.

**Gemma:** She just ate.

**Martin:** What did she eat?

**Gemma:** Lox. She ate your lox.

**Martin:** She did not. I ate my lox.

**Gemma:** Then she must have eaten mine.

**Martin:** I ate yours as well, don't you remember? You said you didn't want it.

**Gemma:** That was last week.

**Martin:** Come off it Gemma, joke over.

**Gemma:** Stop shouting.

**Martin:** I'm not shouting.

**Gemma:** If you go on shouting the neighbours'll find out we have a cat and we're not allowed to keep cats in this apartment.

**Martin:** You don't deserve a cat. Letting it starve!

**Gemma:** You've got nothing on your feet. The floor's cold. You should put your slippers on.

**Martin:** How can I? You're wearing them.

**Gemma:** Why don't you go back to bed Hon?

**Martin:** I'm not moving till you come out of there.

**Gemma:** Be reasonable.

**Martin:** Reasonable? When you spend half of Sunday under the kitchen table!

**Gemma:** Mind out!

**Martin:** Mind what?

**Gemma:** You almost trod on it.

**Martin:** What?

**Gemma:** The apple.

**Martin:** What apple? What are you talking about Gemma?

**Sound** scrape as he moves the table

Good God, don't you ever clean under that table?

**Gemma:** You just performed a lobotomy.

**Martin:** It's filthy. Don't you ever get behind the furniture?

**Gemma:** What for?

**Martin:** You're getting slovenly. You should watch yourself Gemma.

**Sound** Water pouring

There you are — I've made the tea. You get the mugs and bring the tray back to bed.

**Gemma:** Sure. Yes. Okay. I'll do that.



**Martin:** *Voice fades* Good *He goes*

**Sound** door closing

**Gemma:** *ThoughtVoice* Whew! That was a near thing. Now where did the other half go? I'm going to find you other half. You can't go on hiding for ever. Ah, there you are, behind the stove. Hiding in the cobwebs. Got you. And we put the two together, — so. Very gently . . . Almost a perfect seal . . . You're getting smaller. Now the tray he said . . . And the mugs. We'll have the Micky Mouse mugs just for a laugh. No . . . He mightn't think it's funny.

*Calls* Martin? Should we have the Micky Mouse mugs just for a laugh? Martin?

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Bring it in a goddamned samovar, I don't care.

**Sound** clanking of crockery. Door opening.

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* I'm sorry . . . your game. You're listening to your game.

**Sound** clink of cups. Sound of tea being poured.

Shall I move the popcorn? I said do you want the popcorn to stay on your stomach?

**Martin:** *Grunts*

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Okay, so I'll leave the popcorn.

*Thought voice* Leave the popcorn. Leave the popcorn and put the mug into one of the hands. The big, bony hands, veins protruding, hands in prayer. Marat in his bath never had such hands, strong, square hands, with square nails, well-etched lines, arched in prayer. No dirt under the praying nails. One hand holds the book open, the other holds the mug, one ear listens to the football game, the other listens to . . . *Pause* . . . The A.I. The air is charged with A.I., A.I., A.I., (*She intones as if in prayer*). The Lord be praised for A.I. A-a-a-men.

**Martin:** *Present Voice* Pass the sugar will you?

**Gemma:** *Present Voice* Its in the kitchen. I didn't bring the sugar.

**Martin:** Well it's not sweet enough.

**Gemma:** I didn't sweeten it.

**Martin:** Why not?

**Gemma:** I thought you did.

**Martin:** How could you think that? You hadn't even taken the mugs off the shelf when . . . oh damn!

**Gemma:** What?

**Martin:** They scored.

**Gemma:** That's good . . . isn't it?

**Martin:** I don't know.

**Gemma:** Now you're not being logical Martin. Of course it's good.

**Martin:** I didn't hear who did the scoring. I didn't hear who it was.

**Gemma:** Does it matter? As long as they scored. Its not as if you knew them personally . . .

**Martin:** Sssh

*Pause*

**Gemma:** I love Sundays

**Martin:** I used to.

**Gemma:** They haven't changed. Before we were married you spent Sundays in bed. You had bagels and lox and football

and popcorn, and now you have me as well. Nothing's changed.

**Martin:** Ssshhhh.

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* Nothing changes until 4:30, when the match ends and you turn onto your left hip and say, "how about it Gemma?" And I unbutton my pyjama jacket, and you take my left breast in your right hand and squeeze it, till the nipple shows its face, and squeeze and squeeze until . . .

**Sound** she makes a popping sound by putting her finger in her mouth

out pops . . . an apple. A tiny little apple — and it bounces, yes it bounces over the bedspread and onto the carpet and across the carpet and up into the window seat, and it sits there and stares and you say,

**Martin:** *Present Voice* What are you staring at Gemma?

**Gemma:** *ThoughtVoice* And I say *Present Voice* — only the apple in the window seat *ThoughtVoice* and you say,

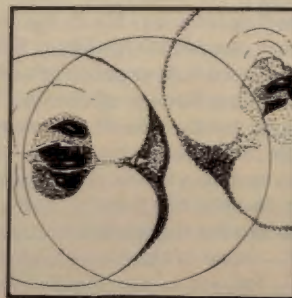
**Martin:** *Present Voice* You've got goddamn apples on the brain today.

**Gemma:** *ThoughtVoice* And I say *Present Voice* You're right, oh how very right you are — you don't know how right you are *ThoughtVoice* And you say,

**Martin:** *Present Voice* What is it? Were you thinking you'd make an apple pie for supper?

**Gemma:** *Thought Voice* And I say, *Present Voice* Apple jelly.

*Thought Voice* And I watch and wait for the apple over by the window to split open, and it waits for me to stop watching. It sits on the window seat, a determined little apple, wizened as hell, and it waits. And finally I throw back the sheet on my side of the bed. And you're pouring out a glass of sherry from the decanter we keep in your locker, since there isn't any sugar for your tea. And you put your sugarless tea in its Mickey Mouse mug on the floor beside the bed. The sherry is the same as the sherry we usually keep until after 4:30 when we both do what we do together, drink a glass of sherry, each, and I get up and I take a shower, and you get up and you take a shower, and I go into the living room and watch T.V. till its time to get supper, and you go into the den and read A.I. or think A.I. or call up a colleague about A.I. and I watch T.V. and You . . . . But you're drinking the sherry and it isn't four thirty, and you've switched off the game, and you watch me over the brim of your glass as I get out of bed and walk over to the window, and pick up the apple and walk over to your side of the bed, and brush your mug with my foot, and I'm not looking at your invitation, I'm walking towards you, with the apple sitting on the palm of my hand, and I reach you, and I drop it into your glass, and you take one last gulp, and swallow it down. Whole.



Margaret Hollingsworth lives in Galiano, B.C. Her play *Apple in the Eye* has been produced on CBC radio and on radio networks in Britain, Australia and Germany.



## "My Audiences Work for Themselves"

interview with Marva Nabili  
by Margaret Cooper

In our September/October issue the Berlin festival report ranked *The Sealed Soil* among the most interesting features at the Forum of Young Films. Recently, I had the chance to talk with Marva Nabili about the film which won her the Best New Director Prize in San Remo last spring and an enthusiastic reception elsewhere in Western Europe.

**Margaret Cooper:** Since *The Sealed Soil* isn't available yet in Canada, would you describe the film for our readers.

**Marva Nabili:** It's about an 18-year-old woman in southern Iran and her search for identity. She rejects the old ways of her village but she's still ambivalent about the modern world. In the film that world is represented by the new town the government has built directly opposite her village for her people. Rooy-Bekheir — that's her name — has refused three offers of marriage. Naturally, her family is feeling anxious about her situation. In this village women usually marry when they're thirteen or fourteen. She's rejecting this life; the new ways have had an indirect, subconscious influence on her. But she's also rejecting the new life. We see that she never wants to enter the new town to get water. She always sends her younger sister to do that. So she's somewhere in between two worlds, feeling something but not quite sure what it is, trying to dig it out. The pressure on her finally becomes so intense she has a kind of breakdown and accidentally kills one of the chickens. The villagers think she's been possessed; they bring in an exorcist. After he goes through his ritual, you see her a month later. She's doing the same old routines, nothing has changed, and someone else is coming to propose marriage. Then, in the last scene she's walking towards the new town to get water.

**And on the verge of accepting the new life?**

Not exactly. It's the first time she's going to the new town, but that doesn't mean she's accepting the new life. She's just shifting gears from one state to another. It's an open ending, really.

**Why did you make your first feature-length film about a woman in this transitional situation?**



Marva Nabili (left) during shooting

Well, most women in the world are in a similar state, aren't they? In my country, of course, it's especially true. Historically the country's in transition, too. And I'm also in that situation. I have my Eastern background but I've been largely living outside Iran for fifteen years. I'm accustomed to Western culture, both in England and the States. So I'm somewhere in between East and West.

*I wondered about the autobiographical basis. Still, between you and a peasant woman there are vast differences.*

Of course. But the film has different layers to break through. I'm talking metaphorically. You can say the film is somehow autobiographical, but my main objective is to show what Iran is really about. Rooy-Bekheir is the country too; she's Iran in transition. Both haven't found their identities yet.

*The film obviously says much to women from similar cultures. I'm think-*

*ing of the Turkish delegates at San Remo who were tremendously moved by the film and came up afterwards to embrace you. But it also seems to create a strong identification on the part of Westerners. Does this surprise you?*

It surprised me that in different places a lot of men really loved the film! But at the festivals, especially in the press conferences, it was mostly women who'd come to me and say how much they felt the situation. Now a rural villager in southern Iran has nothing to do, let's say, with an old German woman. And here she came to me, this very woman, and said how much she felt the film. I'm happy about that. As much as my film talks about Iran and a historical situation in a certain place, it's about anyone trying to find an identity.

*The film won't be screened in Iran until later this year, but I understand that a number of your compatriots living abroad have seen it. How have they*



reacted to *The Sealed Soil*?

In different ways. Favorably and critically. Most Persians living outside Iran are students; many are ultra-leftists. Some who saw the film in West Germany claimed I wasn't presenting Iran's true problems. So I asked them, "Well, what is the problem then? What do you consider a problem?"

*Were the objections coming from both men and women?*

There were quite a few Persian female students in the audience, but they never said anything. So I don't know if they agreed with the men or were simply shy. The males were vocal. Their minds were ideologically set and they did a lot of theorizing. But they had problems seeing how their theory could be put into practice in a film. We had this very interesting dialogue going on.

*What kind of film did they want? Something like Bertucelli's *Ramparts of Clay*? Pamphleteering cinema?*

Both. Let me talk first about *Ramparts of Clay* because so many people say my film reminds them of Bertucelli's. His also deals with village life in transition, only in North Africa. And it has a woman who's unhappy with her tribal role. I liked *Ramparts of Clay* but I feel Bertucelli made the kind of film radical intellectuals want to see. It's got a European approach. My objection to it — and to pamphleteering cinema too — is that they're directed at a limited audience. And that audience is an elite which knows what the problems are. I want to reach other people. I want them to see what problems exist. Pamphleteering cinema and films that tell audiences how to react don't do that. I think my role is to question a situation, point it out, let people observe it, and then decide what they want to do. I'm not some kind of cheerleader urging them on.

*On the other hand, can you really help audiences come to conclusions without suggesting courses of action? Like Bertucelli, for all his European and masculine bias, showing women intervene in a strike against a corrupt employer. Or criticising a bourgeois government which calls itself revolutionary?*

But you see, a film can create a gradual awakening in people. I believe it can have a subconscious, subtle effect. It doesn't have to hammer things into people's heads. With the masses that approach can create reactionaries. People may turn to exactly the opposite of what you want as a response. That's the worst thing you can do.

*What was it like, making your own film about tribal life, when you'd been abroad for so long?*

Well, when I got to Iran, no one knew me, and it was hard to get around.

It was also rough finding the finances. I couldn't get a producer, so I finally produced the film myself. It took about \$30,000, mostly from what I made producing children's tv programs in Teheran.

*Over how long a period?*

Over a year's time.

*Did you, as a city person and a woman, have problems getting the villagers who appear in the film to cooperate with you?*

I really didn't have much trouble there. Maybe I was lucky. My sister lives in the south, and the village I used is thirty kilometres from her house. She had a driver who's a native of the place; he took me around. I saw a lot of villages before Ghalleh Noo-Asgar but didn't find them suitable. When I came there and started talking with the people, they were somehow receptive to me. You see, this driver knew them and they knew my brother-in-law. Still, in the beginning I had to work my way in. It took a while. I used to go there every day to talk to them. Gradually, after they got used to me, I moved into the village. I lived there for a month to work on the script. I wanted to see how they lived. I also wanted them to accept me so that I wouldn't have trouble later. After we returned for the shooting, the village was looking forward to seeing me. Of course,

I did have some problems with the women. They didn't want to participate. The men didn't mind taking part, but the women refused. You see, women involved with cinema in Iran — I'm talking now about commercial films — have a very bad reputation. Any woman in cinema is considered a prostitute. Therefore a village woman would never think of participating in a film.

*How did you cope with this?*

Well, I talked to the women and explained that the film was going to be almost a documentary. I said, "I just want you to show me how you do your daily work." Finally, they accepted the idea. But I still couldn't use a native woman as the protagonist. They wouldn't let me bring someone in the film who wasn't married. They wouldn't even let me take pictures of the unmarried girls.

*Where did you find your lead?*

The actress I used, Flora Shabaviz, isn't a professional. She's a city woman involved with cinema but hasn't appeared in films. I liked her character very much. It was what I was looking for, so I worked with her. Of course, I worried if the village was going to accept her and the crew. Actually, I used a small crew: five people. I couldn't afford more and I didn't want the village to be disturbed too much. When I started



Flora Shabaviz in *The Sealed Soil*



working with Flora, she and I came to the village for about ten days without the crew. To get her used to the people. I also wanted her to practise their daily work. They do things a city woman would never do.

*Such as?*

Oh, carrying trays or pots or baskets on their heads. Squatting on the floor. These things she'd never done. City women in Iran, you know, have a completely different way of living. It's very Western by comparison. Of course, the most important thing for me was the way she moved. I didn't want her to have a city woman's body movements. They're completely different from the gestures and movements of villagers. I was super-sensitive about this. I'd seen other films made in Iran where they'd used actors and actresses to play villagers, and you could just spot them as city types. I remember working on one scene, a rain scene. It's a very long shot, three minutes. Rooy-Bekheir's under the rain in the forest and she takes off the top of her clothes. She's supposed to be in a kind of ecstasy. Suddenly Flora put her hands on her hair the way a city woman would. Because of just that one gesture I had to cut the film and tell her to repeat the whole difficult scene. As for the villagers, well, when they got used to Flora being there, they accepted her very nicely. Sometimes they would say that she was part of their family. And they were very good in front of the camera because I was asking them to do what they ordinarily did every day. We were able to do the entire shooting in six days. Which is amazing, you know.

*You must have been working from a very tight script.*

Yes, everything was planned. Everything. I don't believe in taking a camera and just shooting something coming on. It took me six months to write the script and the shooting script. I planned everything ahead. It was so precise that I drew each shot. I made a map for the camera locations and put down exactly what lenses the camera should have. I worked the script in such a way that I didn't have to change very much on location. All I needed to do was to tell the cameraman to look on the map, see where the camera was, put the camera there with the lens, and shoot. There's no accident in the film, you know. Of course, I did let the people do what they wanted to do. I'd tell them approximately what I wanted them to say and then let them say it in their own way, the way they felt comfortable. I think this kind of freedom and the limitations of my style worked well together.

*This style, it's a difficult one in some ways, isn't it?*

Yes. I'm basically Brechtian. I've worked very hard trying to use Brecht in cinema and create my own style. My shots are all static; there's hardly any camera movement. Once in a while you'll see a pan, that's all. The character's distance from the camera is built in a specific way. She doesn't get close to the camera because I want to set distance between the audience and the event. There are a lot of people trying to work on Brecht in cinema, but they use his theatrical method. I wanted to translate his theory into cinema and give it a different form.

*Does this account for the minimal dialogue?*

Partly. But there's also very little dialogue because I didn't see much point to it. My film is very much visual. The only reason for the dialogue is to give information, to lead you to the next step.

*I suppose the visual emphasis comes from your background as an art student.*

Yes. I studied painting in Iran before I got into film. So there's a painter's eye in the shots and composition. In the style of the shooting, I've tried to adapt the look of Persian miniature paintings. Persian miniature tells you a story. It's exactly like narrative film, you know. In every little part of the miniature, you find a detail telling you some part of the story. My shots — they're mostly long or medium — are like Persian miniatures. The viewers have to look for certain things in different parts of the shot and put everything together to have the whole picture. I've tried to make my audiences work for themselves. With their

eyes, rather than my giving them a close-up of a detail, hammering into their heads, "Look I'm showing you *this*." So it's hard for them. I'm asking my audiences to work for ninety minutes. With their brain and their eyes. It's hard, but I think it's satisfying too. Once it's finished, they've participated with me in the film.

*Earlier you mentioned that your problems as a woman filmmaker were really minor during the shooting. Would you elaborate on this.*

I think it even helped that I was a woman during the shooting.

*How so?*

Well, once the village accepted me, I had no problem being a woman director there. Maybe this was true because I was dealing more with the women. They're the main characters in the family we used. But actually the whole village — it's a kind of family too — reacted to me very easily. My cameraman was male, and the villagers behaved completely differently toward him. They played games with him, like giving him the best seat. With me they were more relaxed. They took me as part of themselves.

*You say that the entire village is a family. Would you explain that?*

You see, the shape of the village is a kind of fortress. Each family lives in one or two rooms. There's no such thing as a house. Just these little rooms inside the structure. It's a communal life entirely, and fascinating, because there's no individuality. This is what I'm trying to bring out. The protagonist is trying to be an individual. You see the pressure other



Marva Nabili



## I don't believe in taking a camera and just shooting something coming on. I plan everything ahead.

people put upon her because she's reacting against the old communalism and the repetition of the generation's rites.

*Where did you have your real problems in making the film, if the village didn't present them?*

Working as a woman in the film industry in Iran, I had the hardest time. There was tremendous difficulty in the sound studios. I was post-synchronising the film, and no one would take me as a serious filmmaker. I was changing their whole sound system habit and introducing something new. They were used to a very old method of recording as far as tone is concerned. I wanted an atonal way of talking, a sort of monotone. I didn't want any musical quality in the speech. All this was new and they were reacting negatively to it, especially because it came from a woman. I had a dubbing manager who wouldn't listen to me. When I told him what I wanted, he refused to do it. And because he refused,

the dubbers — the people who were speaking — were on his side. So it took six months to do the sound! Then there was trouble mixing the sound. Again, because I was introducing something new and because it came from a woman. When Agnes Varda was making her last film, she did part of it in Iran. She said she had an incredibly hard time and was amazed that I could make a film there. Well, if she had difficulty, I had twice as much. When foreigners make films in Iran, they're given all the facilities and lots of assistance. I wasn't exactly a foreigner and was doing it all by myself, so . . .

*Speaking of home, what are the prospects for the film's distribution in Iran?*

That's another problem. We have a very bad distribution system. The theatres are mostly owned by chains.

*National or foreign?*

Persian chains. Most of the films

they carry are Persian, but they're very bad commercial films. A lot like Indian films in that respect. We make eighty movies a year, and our population is about 30 million. So the amount of films made is good. Except that out of these eighty films, maybe one is decent. The public isn't used to this kind of film because of the taste the others have created. So obviously a distributor doesn't want to show what may lose him money. Films like mine are bound to have trouble in that system.

*As an independent, and one who wants to reach a broad audience, do you find the set-up much better working from a New York base?*

Not really. I have a distributor in California who handles women's films and some other interested parties. But the system is impossible in the States, too. There are only the chains that worry about box office returns or art houses and special screenings that reach only limited audiences.

*It's even worse in Canada.*

So I understand. It's easier in Europe because there are all these little cinemas that distribute non-commercial films and have surprisingly broad audiences.

*Unfortunately, that's a reality that's still remote from us. Will we be seeing *The Sealed Soil* — and maybe even Marva Nabili — in Canada soon?*

I certainly hope so. At the moment, I'm having financial problems. I have only one print with English subtitles, and it's still going around in the festivals. I'll be showing it in London in November and then in Teheran. By spring I'll have the print to myself. Then I'd love to send or even bring it to Canada.

---

*Trained as a painter in her native Teheran, Marva Nabili was active in the New Wave of Persian Cinema in the 1960s. After working in film in England for three years, she moved to New York, where she participated in theatre and dance productions and helped make several documentaries and short films. She has a Diploma in Direction and Production, a B.A. in Film and Drama from the City University of New York, and an M.A. in Film from Goddard College in Vermont.*

*Margaret Cooper was on the executive of the National Film Theatre/Edmonton for over four years. Now a Toronto resident and Film Editor for Branching Out, she is preparing a critical survey of New Cinema in the Americas.*

# TOUCH THE EARTH




**with host Sylvia Tyson**  
**a contemporary folk music show**

**Tuesdays at 8:30 p.m.**

**CBC**  
**RADIO**

740





## *Sita*: From Painful Record to Singing Tribute

by Jane Rule

*Sita* by Kate Millett, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$11.50

Kate Millett has had the hard task of serving her apprenticeship as a serious writer in public. When she was catapulted onto the international scene with her first book, *Sexual Politics*, which was her Ph.D. thesis, she thought of herself as a feminist scholar and a sculptor. Without the pressure of the success of that book, she would not have had the subject matter for her next, *Flying*, or perhaps the impetus to write it, the publisher's large advance both an encouragement and a burden of unearned money, already committed to making films, buying a farm, going on with sculpting. It is no wonder that, in both *Flying* and her new book, *Sita*, she is often defensive about what she is doing, standing off critics whose chief interest is in belittling her first success by discrediting her next two attempts, both of which are frankly autobiographical, made from journals sometimes using the original entries. The form itself is often glibly dismissed as not "literature," and so much exposure of one's self and one's friends is always dangerous. As Kate says in *Sita*, "on behalf of the great generalized hostility of the world, I have here perfected the instrument of its revenge. I have lodged its loathing in a ball in my stomach." When she ponders writing fiction instead, she is concerned with it only as a device to protect herself and other people and hasn't the emotional room to explore it as an aesthetic question. Other writers like Truman Capote and Marie-Claire Blais who also served their apprenticeships in public had the protection of fiction. Models like Violette LeDuc and Anais Nin worked privately for years. LeDuc's great autobiographical works are the result of her translating her earlier novels back into statements about her own life, and Nin's journals are the carefully edited and revised work of her old age so that even her earliest journal has the benefit of her mature judgement and craft. In both *Flying* and *Sita* Kate Millett is writing under the double burden of living inside the experience she is recording and learning how to record as she goes along.

As a book *Sita* is more satisfying in form than *Flying* because it is limited to the study of one relationship. Readers who liked the rich variety of people and preoccupations in *Flying* may find *Sita* a bit claustrophobic, but importantly it is a study of claustrophobia, and it is the tension between Kate's passionate need for the woman, Sita, and her terror of losing herself in that relationship which gives the book its central energy. Locked in love, Kate cannot work; separated from Sita, she despairs of any meaning in her life. "Does the withdrawal of love produce all these symptoms of degeneracy? Remove every vestige of confidence, ability, intelligence?" Her solution is to spend six months of the year with Sita in California, the other six months alone in New York, the myth of Demeter and Persephone a model and justification, to which her old and frank friend Sherman says, "Bullshit!" Sita, a woman ten years older than Kate, with three marriages behind her, a son and daughter and a granddaughter, with a commitment to her own work and a great deal of erotic charm and energy, cannot be expected to mourn and wait through six months of the year, and she does not. The book opens at Kate's return from their first separation to find the house the two of them had shared full of



Kate Millett

photo by Cynthia MacAdams

*Sita's* children and their friends, Sita herself determined not to give up relationships which must sustain her through Kate's long absences. Deprived of working space, humiliated by jealousy, suffering from the lack of time and attention Sita can give her, Kate longs to leave, but her dependence on Sita seems absolute. "I have put this love ahead of any adult consideration of work or profession. I am simply diseased." In a mire of self pity and self justification, only the notebook in which she analyses the gradual disintegration of the relationship gives her some sense that as an artist "the ability to record experience . . . makes me more than its victim."

Therapeutic art has never been a genre but simply a term of derision both for works that fail aesthetically and for those a critic finds embarrassing or morally reprehensible. *Sita* is not an aesthetic failure. It is often stylistically flawed: speeches presented in simply more casual prose rather than in speech rhythms, emotions offered in generalities, pace sacrificed to needless repetition. Kate is still best at making general statements, a technique learned at the academy, and even when the opinion offered is one to be questioned, it is handsomely done: "All love becomes vulnerability, the doorway to cruelty, the



stairway to contempt." Erotic passages, of which there are many, are done in an entirely attentive prose, which makes the final transformation at the end of the book successful. When she focuses that kind of energy on all the problems of style, her work will be even stronger and more compelling than it is. What embarrasses and offends some readers is the deepest source of power for others, Kate's willingness to explore her own experience at whatever personal cost. She is candid rather than honest. Her exaggerations, deceptions, rationalizations, blindnesses are all part of the truth of her experience, exposed for us to see. When she describes her relationship with Sita in the past and says such things as "But somehow I saved her life," and "I comforted her, I listened, I reassured," the reader winces not because Kate is trying to whitewash the past but because, standing accused of selfishness and lack of sympathy and abject dependence as she is now, we all try to whitewash the past. It is horribly real, *true* in a way the truth about the past would not be without it. And the real past is there, too. When Kate is self important about being an artist and makes such statements as "artists who hazard their work for love commit a terrible sin," she is making the effort all of us make to recover our self respect by exaggerating it. Such candor serves to underline some of her more accurate insights, "Is it her love for me that I love . . .?"

Kate Millett is a romantic. Art is her high calling, and Sita is finally transformed from lover into muse, the book from painful record to singing tribute to a woman worthy of being suffered and lost. It is a book May Sarton would recognize as authentic. Her Mrs. Stephens describes love as the artist experiences it, "Love as the waker of the dead, love as conflict, love as mirage. Not love as peace, or fulfillment, or lasting, faithful giving. No, that fidelity, that giving is what the art demands, the art itself at the expense of every human being." And Willa Cather, too, for she observed, "Human relationships are the tragic necessity of human life, that they can never be wholly satisfactory, that every ego is half the time greedily seeking them, and half the time pulling away from them." That Persephone and Demeter myth may be "bullshit" in real life, but it is obviously deep in the dreaming need of a lot of women who are artists.

Kate asks "if we had the cover of fiction, would our experience be more worthwhile, less disreputable, even more 'real' to readers? Or would we be only a 'story'?" The women's movement has made clear a hunger in women for the

uncovered, the disreputable, the raw testimony of their own experience, and the journal has been the one place where women's voices have been recorded and so becomes a form of historical as well as immediate importance. It cannot be judged as either less worthwhile or realer than fiction. It is probably the harder form to apprentice in, particularly in public, because the line between authenticity and self indulgence is subtle as well as thin, and failures are more self incriminating and therefore potentially more damaging. Kate Millett's *Sita* is the testimony of a survivor of great losses, with more, much more to say.

*Writer Jane Rule lives on Galiano Island, B.C. Her recent books include The Young in One Another's Arms, Lesbian Images, and Theme for Diverse Instruments.*

#### BUT CAN YOU TYPE?

by Rebecca Smith

Jill McCalla Vickers and June Adam. *But Can You Type? Canadian Universities and the Status of Women*. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., Ltd., in association with the Canadian Association of University Teachers, 1977. 146 pp.

"That seems to be the haunting fear of mankind — that the advancement of women will sometime, someday, somehow place interfere with some man's comfort." Decades ago, Nellie McClung made this assertion; and in the first monograph published in the CAUT series on problems facing Canadian universities, analyst Dr. Jill Vickers — using forty statistical tables dealing with the position of women in every area of the university structure, which were supplied by Dr. June Adam — suggests that things have not changed much. Vickers attacks the most basic problems in *But Can You Type?*. Canadian university structure appears to reflect the social and moral value structure of society, not ameliorate it. Those with power in the academic profession do not appear to differ from those in other professions, such as engineering, architecture, and the pure sciences: many men do not want changes in the structure of academic institutions or in the sexual division of labour, despite the blatant discrepancies that become evident when the statistical data is compiled.

Vickers does not shy away from the sticky areas in the on-going examination of the position of women in academia: The number of women in undergraduate

schools has increased by over 25% in the last twenty years, but the bulk of women students still "choose" to enroll in traditionally female fields: education, arts, nursing, home economics, medical technology, secretarial training, and social work. It could be asserted that women in Canadian society enjoy opportunities for higher education equal to those of men, because the women are not actually *denied* access to educational facilities and professional training. There are no explicitly stated discriminatory policies. Therefore, there is the possible interpretation that women either do not want, or are not capable of achieving, the same goals that men pursue in the occupations that offer practitioners the "possibility of challenging activities, high levels of remuneration and access to positions of power and influence in our society." Furthermore, Vickers tackles the more insidious "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" school of thought — some exceptionally talented and/or dedicated women attain success in the predominantly male professions. If they can do it, then, the argument runs, other women can too, if they will just "try harder."

Vickers counters with statistical evidence that clearly indicates the extra problems faced by women entering higher education — as undergraduates, graduate students, or teachers. Assuming that everyone is all too familiar with the data on the powerful effect of the socialization process, Vickers mentions it only in passing and goes directly on to other facts: Women seeking summer jobs to earn money for their education find fewer jobs and are paid less money for their work than are men. Women have more difficulty getting loans and scholarships, despite need, reliability, and merit equal to that of men. Day care centres are not provided by many universities, and part time students (mostly women) are often denied access to those that do exist. Part time programs frequently are available only in limited fields, rarely in engineering, science, and other "professional" fields, so the women students are, in practice, denied access. Refresher courses are rarely available for people — usually women — who have had to interrupt their schooling and need to review briefly and to catch up on recent activities in the field. There are few models for women in atypical fields, in their text books (only 2% of 22 introductory history books studied; in another study the figure was 5/100ths of 1%), or among their university instructors (fewer than 1/5 of all full time positions in Canada in 1970 were held by women). Of those women who do have jobs at Canadian universities, most "are concentrated in the lower ranks regardless of their years



of seniority and they are paid salaries lower than their male counterparts at every level." But most women academics are part of the exploited "pool" of part time and replacement employees.

Assuming that there will be no radical changes in the structure of families — that women will continue to marry, become pregnant, bear and raise children, and care for families and homes — the university structure must be compelled to adapt itself to accommodate the needs of women. Vickers concludes that "it is still, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, far more difficult for women to 'make it' in the world of higher education in Canada than for men." Thus, she calls for affirmative action programs to recruit women for the less traditional areas of study so they can gain professional status and ability equal to that of Canadian men. Vickers examines the possibility — and explicitly posits it — of Canadian universities being used to help change the social patterns of society, not merely to reflect them. *But Can You Type?* is solid, fact-filled, important reading for any woman involved in the Canadian university structure in any way. And it should be compulsory reading for high school counsellors and freshman advisors.

## THE COMFORT OF WORDS

### review by Rebecca Smith

Elizabeth Brewster. *Sometimes I Think of Moving: Poems by Elizabeth Brewster*. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1977. 123 pp.  
Pat Lowther. *A Stone Diary*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977. 96 pp.

Strong, compassionate, clear, immediate, sensuous, funny, unpretentious, honest: These are the adjectives I listed in my notebook while reading Elizabeth Brewster's most recently published collection, entitled *Sometimes I Think of Moving: Poems by Elizabeth Brewster*. And the adjectives refer to all aspects of Brewster's poetry — style, themes, imagery, effect.

The book is divided into five sections, identifying the general concerns in each section: coping day by day ("The Silent Scream"), coming to terms with the people, places, things, and events that have formed one's body and soul ("Where I Come From" and "Map of the City"), death ("The Dancers"), and all kinds of love ("Renewal," the final section). These are, of course, the simple and most basic concerns of all people; and Brewster's style is equally as clear and simple. But this stylistic and thematic simplicity does not result from a lack of depth or from superficial understanding or from easy answers. No, it is in-

stead the strong simplicity of elemental shapes and essential knowledge — like circles, triangles, and squares. Thus, rhythm, images, and ideas mesh, and the result is poetry that is hard, bright, and clear.

The poems in the various sections of *Sometimes I Think of Moving* lead the reader through old familiar dilemmas, concerns, cares, joys, regrets, guilt feelings, and hurts. But they also lead one back out and into life; they are personal poems but not self-indulgent. Thus, for example, Brewster writes of her own attempt at suicide:

Twenty-four years ago  
I tried to kill myself  
but with my usual incompetence  
did not manage to.  
Not even one good poem  
out of it.  
Obviously  
I was no Sylvia Plath.

But she quickly moves beyond self-revelation in the poem to wit and wisdom:

It's been a dull life  
much of the time  
but lots better  
than no life at all.  
You don't know how much  
you may yet enjoy  
just waking up  
and peeling oranges  
to eat with sugar  
while you listen to the clock strike  
down at the Town Hall  
telling you again  
that you're still here  
and Sylvia Plath isn't.

Elizabeth Brewster is an old-fashioned poet, writing sensual and/or sad love poems, powerful laments and elegies, bittersweet poems of loneliness and survival, and vivid evocations of past times and places that engage both one's mind and heart. The poet's control and her ability to transmute her perceptions so immediately to the reader demonstrate her concern for "words," which she expresses in her usual clear, vital style:

Words, how they comfort,  
how I hold them to me  
as I held the pebbles  
I collected as a child

I think  
when I die  
someone will find  
a clutch of pebbled words  
a peire of rhymes  
under my pillow.

Brewster, with an established reputation built on an autobiographical novel and seven books of poetry, addresses the first poem in this collection to Pat

Lowther, murdered in 1975, the author of three books of poetry published by small presses and relatively unknown until the publication of her last, posthumous collection, *A Stone Diary*. In "For Pat Lowther," Brewster confesses,

And I remember  
that this summer I envied you  
your poems,  
their gull-and-falcon swooping,  
and even the pain behind them  
that poured blood into them.

Indeed, Lowther's *A Stone Diary* — although at times characterized by each of the adjectives earlier applied to Brewster's poetry — is most immediately characterized by its painful intensity: "The world," she says, "is not a sphere,/ it's a doughnut,/ there's a huge/ hole at the centre." Lowther handles her subject and creates her effect with the same spare, controlled intensity. For example, in the long sequence on the concentration camp in Chile she writes,

we forgive each other  
our absurdities,  
casually accept splendour;  
we forgive even death  
but these places  
of death slowly inflicted  
we can't forgive, but writhe  
coiling in on ourselves  
to try to forget, to deny:  
we have travelled so far  
and these are still with us?

Lowther is concrete, visual, and particular, but in her best poems in *A Stone Diary* she goes beyond, to reveal her own insights and stimulate ours, as she does in "The Dig," addressed to all women in all times:

Will our bones tell  
sisters, what we died of?  
how love broke us  
in that helplessly desired  
breaking, and men  
and children ransacked our flesh,  
cracked our innermost bones  
to eat the morrow.

These books of poetry by Brewster and Lowther reveal the maturity, intensity, and control of the two poets. Both reveal in their works the witty sanity of "the incredible shrinking woman" in Lowther's poem:

just by standing  
here, i'm dwindling  
to a dot.  
(actually it's that  
i'm finally learning  
perspective)

I eagerly await Elizabeth Brewster's next collection; and I lament the loss of Pat Lowther's strong poetic voice.

Rebecca Smith teaches at the University of P.E.I.



Brady, Elizabeth. *Tin Type*. Vancouver: Fiddlehead, 1977. 36 pp.

Rikki. *Knife Notebook*. Vancouver: Fiddlehead, 1977. 36 pp.

Rogers, Linda. *This Is A List*. Vancouver: Fiddlehead, 1977. 36 pp.

An artist recently complained to me that she overheard a stranger at her show comment that the artist "must be sick to have painted such pictures". She was hurt at what she felt was a personal attack.

She was right — the stranger's remarks had little to do with her art, but when I saw the show for myself I understood why it had provoked such a response. Her paintings, though beautifully conceived and executed, were all expressions of a single theme: woman sexually chained to man's desires and crushed by them, her own desires submerged in the process. And they all had similar titles: Diary, (date).

My own response was mixed. Had I seen just one painting in isolation or in the company of others of a different subject or by a different artist, I would have been drawn to it. I may have wondered about the motivation behind it, but my curiosity about the artist would have ended there. An entire show, however, based exclusively upon the one highly personal theme served to exclude me from the art — rather than being drawn into an artistic, imaginative world, I found myself responding to it in terms only of the artist.

A poem operates in a similar fashion. It begins to work when it draws the reader into its own world, to respond subjectively to the terms of the poem's own creation. Unless that world is broad enough to include the reader, the poem cannot really succeed. And if the idea of the "poet" intrudes too deeply, there is little room left for the reader.

The subject matter of these three poetry books by Canadian women is strongly rooted in their own personal experiences. In the case of *Tin Type*, by Elizabeth Brady and *This is a List*, by Linda Rogers, the poets have created something that, while of themselves, goes beyond, leaving air for the reader's experience to come alive with that of the poets. *Knife Notebook*, however, by Rikki, leaves the reader involved not with the poems, but with the poet — wanting to advise her, to sympathize with her, to tell her some men are different . . . but this is not the purpose of poetry. As with the paintings, individually the poems are quite excellent — the imagery is particularly striking, the

rhythm is strong and well-controlled, the forms are well-chosen and supportive without intruding. But to base an entire volume upon such an intensely personal theme (which, through an ironic coincidence, is quite similar to that of the art show), is self-defeating. The message, rather than being assertively angry, becomes by the fifth or sixth poem, one of impotence and even self-pity.

The "notebook" is divided into two sections of poetry and prose-poems, with a prologue and epilogue, and a section of Iconography consisting of a series of illustrations done by the poet in 1974.

The narrator emerges as victim, trapped by her desire for a man who is at once "quicksand", sucking her down and suffocating her, and "key", unlocking her sexuality. She hates him for the pain he causes her, but is afraid of the greater pain of giving him up: "How to pull out the knife deep as it is and twisted in bone?"

*Tin Type*, Elizabeth Brady's first book of poetry, is a small masterpiece. Beautifully structured around the basic image of a photograph album, it explores the illusory quality of time — the way in which facts about the past require a leap of the imagination to "live", but how they are distorted in the process:

Lives are drawn taut:  
between process and photograph  
we attenuate ever  
green illusions

Freely moving between bare facts, crude artefacts and hollywood distortions, the poet searches for truth, adding her own imaginative embellishments and gently echoing and alluding to those of others. Her focus settles upon portraits of figures ranging from unknown Victorians, to Keats, Virginia Woolf, literary characters, her own family and finally, her self.

*This is a List* covers a wide range of subjects: "This is a list./ how many ways I can lie on butter making/ shapes . . ." Like Brady, Rogers is fascinated by the shift from the world of reality to that of the imagination. She feels safer in the dream-world of her poetic experience. Reality is imperfect, full of "broken/ shadows", "broken teeth" and "broken steps". In her "song of myself" and her "dance of myself", reality is the only threat:

Bag the mood, these broken  
shadows cut through skin and  
bloody  
rain escapes to feed  
a wind bending my perfect rows.

This is Linda Roger's fourth book of poetry. For the first time her striking imagery is equalled by a fine sense of rhythm and a more controlled use of language. In previous volumes her message

seemed oddly inadequate in relation to the means used to convey it. But now her poems have achieved a depth of experience that makes serious study worthwhile.

Barbara Novak

Barbara Novak is a freelance writer and editor in Toronto.

*Population Target; the Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America*, by Bonnie Mass, published by Women's Educational Press and Latin American Working Group, reviewed by Leslie Bella.

Bonnie Mass would say that those of us who read *Branching Out* are "bourgeois feminists", and we are the audience for whom she wrote *Population Target*. As middle class women in an industrialized and urban society, we support family planning. We want to choose the number of children in our families. Many of us still campaign for liberalized abortion laws. We enthuse over progress towards smaller families, both in our own and in other countries, for we believe that women will only be liberated when bearing children becomes optional. The Mass book shows that family planning in poorer countries is not the benign and humanitarian program we believe it to be, but is instead a deliberate attempt to reinforce existing patterns of exploitation of the working classes. The middle class North American feminist has supported family planning for herself, and for others, and has unwittingly assisted in the exploitation of working class women in the third world.

Mass presents four arguments in support of her thesis. First, the population explosion is a myth, for world food supplies are increasing faster than population. Artificial shortages are created by multinational corporations to keep prices high. Second, the reason for poverty in third world countries is not over population, but exploitation by an indigenous elite, and by multinational corporations. The natural resources are removed from the country, with little of the profit accruing to the indigenous working class. Third, that as the multinational corporations benefit from the status quo, they attempt to perpetuate it. A more numerous working class population would consume more of the countries' natural resources, so that less would be available for export. Also, a poor, restless and numerous working class could create a revolution, throwing out the multinationals. To prevent revolution, the numbers of poor must be kept in check by population con-





photo by Marlene Smith

trol. Fourth, the U.S. government has been urged to follow the lead of the multinationals, and has become extensively involved in family planning programs in third world countries. Some poorer countries are now denied aid unless family planning programs are introduced. Case histories from Columbia, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Chile and Guatemala largely support the Mass thesis.

Although her analysis of capitalist countries is thorough and critical, her presentation of the "socialist" alternative is, as with many Marxist writers, less penetrating. Family planning is, she admits, pressure sold to the people of Cuba and China. Since the political systems of these countries are communist rather than capitalist, she assumes they are less exploitive, and therefore that pressure for family planning is somehow more acceptable. She points to the greater availability of health care, day care and a living wage in socialist countries. Only under these conditions are women really free to choose whether or not to have children. In a third world country, under a capitalist system, with little health care, very low incomes and no child care provisions, poor women presented with contraceptives have little choice but to use them.

Mass presents one side of the case, but without any critical analysis of the function of family planning in a communist economy. With less emotion and rhetoric, and more systematic comparison of socialist and capitalist countries, her arguments would have been more convincing. Expenditures on family planning and on other health services in Columbia and Brazil could have been

compared with those in Cuba and Allende's Chile, and might have reinforced her thesis.

*Population Target* is an important book, shaking our assumptions and raising awkward questions about our relationship to the third world. A bourgeois feminist reader stalled by the Marxist rhetoric in the first few chapters should first read the case examples, and then start again from the beginning. *Population Target* is not the whole story, but it does show how as women, our fertility is manipulated to meet the needs of the economic system — particularly if we are poor women in a capitalist economy.

Leslie Bella is a graduate student in political science at the University of Alberta and she teaches in the Recreation Administration Department at the University. She has been active in the leadership of the Urban Reform Group of Edmonton for several years.

Wayne Roberts, *Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893 to 1914*. Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1976. 60 pp.

What I appreciate most in this little book is the author's respect for the women about whom he writes. His purpose is to explain why women wage earners, though sometimes overworked and underpaid into early graves, still failed to unionize in any numbers. Were they really victims of a self-destructive femininity who expected no more from life than a chance to "suffer and be still"? We often hear this explanation, but Roberts finds it insulting and glib. Working wo-

men were not spiritual cripples, he insists. Instead, respect for themselves as women fed their anger about oppression in the work place. The bars to organization were circumstantial, not psychological: women worked alone or in small shops; their stay in the labor force was brief; the long and arduous work days left little time for collective activity; union officials were too often hostile or patronizing.

"Judged by some standards, we should wonder at the absence of women from the organized labour and reform movements, though we should never lightly ascribe this to passivity or equanimity," Roberts writes. "Judged by the objective realities of their position, we must marvel at what they accomplished."

The disappointment of Roberts' work is that it doesn't permit us to marvel properly. His study is full of strikes and meetings and attempted associations, but very few individual people. The one notable exception is Marie Joussey, who amongst other remarkable things went door to door trying to organize Toronto's domestic servants and wrote the poem from which Roberts drew the phrase "honest womanhood". Even in her case we lack the detail which would help us understand her motivation and fully appreciate her achievements. Judging from the notes at the end of the booklet, Roberts has been meticulous in his search of newspapers and government reports, so the stories I want to hear may never have been written down. Interviews might prove a richer source. Without more intimate information, questions about how working women viewed themselves and their work cannot be answered with real sympathy or conviction.

by Candace Sherk Savage

Candace Savage is a Saskatoon writer and editor.

*Child of the Morning*, by Pauline Gedge. Macmillan of Canada Co., 1977. \$9.95, cloth.

The story of Hatshepsut, the first woman Pharaoh, could be both fascinating and evocative for women today. Unfortunately, the best thing that can be said about *Child of the Morning* is that it is an interesting story. Gedge has told the kind of tale that carries the reader along, waiting to find out what happens next. It is not however, a well-written story. For all its potential, the author has allowed her novel, to slip into that grey area of romantic escape literature that is, nonetheless, too good to be called



"pulp." Within that class of fiction *Child of the Morning* could be considered an excellent novel.

Although Gedge is to be commended for her obviously extensive research, that too creates a problem. The reader is persistently confronted with description upon description of Egyptian food, clothing and ritual that dominates the novel to a point where it borders on the tedious. Most disappointing of all, the character of Hapshepsut, although interesting and believable, is too distant. Use of the third person point of view shows the reader only the surface of her beauty, power and strength, when we re-

ally wish to see more of the interior struggles of the Pharaoh.

Gedge has undertaken a huge task and acquitted herself reasonably well. As a first novel, *Child of the Morning* reveals a lack of both discrimination and judgment (perhaps only a lack of practice), but it does show the beginnings of a good story teller.

A. van Herk

*Aretha van Herk is completing her Master's degree in English at the University of Alberta. She has been the book review editor at Branching Out since September.*

and still more books . . .

#### Children's Books for Christmas

*Willie the Squowse*, by Ted Allen. McClelland and Stewart, 1977. \$5.95 cloth.

Award-winning story of a talented and intelligent squowse — half squirrel, half mouse.

*The Canadian ABC Book*, by Roy Peterson. Hurtig Publishers, 1977. \$4.95, cloth.

A well-illustrated book for children beginning to read. A mouse called Zed leads the way through a uniquely Canadian alphabet.

*Peter Pitseolak's Escape from Death*, by Peter Pitseolak. McClelland and Stewart, 1977. \$3.95, paper.

The true story of an Eskimo adventure. Beautifully illustrated with Pitseolak's original drawings.

*Fairy Tales of Isabella Valancy Crawford*, ed. Penny Petrone. Borealis Press, 1977. \$9.95, paper.

Imaginative tales of flowers, animals and fairies by one of Canada's early poets, Isabella Valancy Crawford.

*Little Badger and the Firespirit*, by Maria Campbell. McClelland and Stewart, 1977. \$7.95, cloth.

Well-illustrated Indian legend of how the Cree people were given fire.

*The Painted Cougar*, by Elisabeth Margaret Hopkins. Talonbooks, 1977, \$7.95. Well-illustrated story of an adventurous cougar.

*Magook*, McClelland and Stewart, \$1.95 an issue. A new series of children's books. Stimulating and well-illustrated. *Magook 2* features a French/English picture story; *Magook 3* a Child's Guide to Nature.

*Garbage Delight*, poems by Dennis Lee and illustrations by Frank Newfeld. Macmillan of Canada, 1977. \$6.95, hard.

A great collection of nonsense poems and pictures for children.

*The Night the City Sang*, by Peter Desbarats, illustrated by Frank Newfeld. McClelland and Stewart, 1977. \$5.95, cloth.

Christmas story poems for children.

We Specialize in  
Children's Books and  
Books for Parents  
about Children

the  
VILLAGE BOOKSHOP  
10212 - 140 St., Edmonton  
phone (403) 452-3791



illustration from *Peter Pitseolak's Escape from Death*





# Take a break . . .

read *Branching Out* six times a year.

An original gift  
for yourself and your personal board of VIPs

Six issues for \$6.00 or 12 issues for \$11.00

Gift Specials: for \$1.00 extra your gift card will also include a  
*Branch Out!* button with our tree logo on it.

Please send: . . . . . 6 issues (\$6.00)\*  
. . . . . 12 issues (\$11.00)\*

Please send: . . . . . 6 issues (\$6.00)\*  
. . . . . 12 issues (\$11.00)\*

of *Branching Out* to:

of *Branching Out* to:

Name .....

Name .....

Address .....

Address .....

City .....

City .....

Province ..... Postal Code .....

Province ..... Postal Code .....

Payment enclosed ..... Please bill me .....

Payment enclosed ..... Please bill me .....

Include a *Branch Out!* button: .....

Include a *Branch Out!* button: .....

Make cheque or money order payable to *Branching Out*  
Box 4098, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 4S8

\*Add \$1.00 per year for U.S.A., \$2.00 per year overseas.



**you probably  
won't know...  
until you ask.**

**so ask us  
at the Alberta  
Women's Bureau**

When you don't know what procedures to follow in business, legal or social situations, ask us. We have prepared or are preparing information sheets on a number of topics concerning women and their rights, and they are available free of charge. Tell us what you're interested in. We can probably help.

Here are just some of the topics available:

- ☐ Changing Your Name
- ☐ The Insurance Dilemma
- ☐ The Illegitimate Child
- ☐ A Woman's Rights
- ☐ Children: Custody and Access
- ☐ Establishing a Good Credit Record
- ☐ How to Prepare a Meaningful Resumé
- ☐ Helping You Cope With Widowhood
- ☐ Probate Procedure

Write, phone or come in.

**ALBERTA WOMEN'S  
BUREAU**  
1402 Centennial Building  
10015 - 103 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta.  
T5J 0H1  
Phone 427-2470

**Alberta**  
WOMEN'S BUREAU

