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breaking the SILENCE

a feminist quarterly



WOMEN DEFINING CULTURE

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Feminism and the Artistic Community

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about Breaking the Silence

For too long women's voices—our
struggles, and joy—have been
silenced. Living in a patriarchal
world, we have been separated
from one another and from the
mainstream of society.

The *Breaking the Silence* collective
is committed to giving women a
voice. In particular, we provide a
forum for discussion on the social
welfare needs of women—needs
such as support services for
survivors of violence, affordable
housing, sufficient and good
daycare, adequate pensions and
employment.

We are committed to moving
toward a world absent of
oppression: be it sexism, racism,
classism, homophobia or ageism.
We are committed to helping to
build a peaceful and humane world
where women's ideas, experiences
and activities are heard and made
visible.

Culture, when broadly defined, includes social
institutions and the attitudes, beliefs, customs and morals that
shape the way in which people perceive the world. But in the
more limited sense, the word culture is also used to refer to the
arts. The arts are the product of the larger culture and, as
such, reflect the society that creates them. In this issue on
women and culture, the collection of articles covers both
definitions.

In "Finding our Reflection: Images of Women on
Canadian Stamps," Janice Manchew uses the portrayal of
women on stamps as an indicator of our position in society.
Martine Rochon explains in "La p'tite dame à Paris" how the
blatant objectification of women's bodies in French culture
affects women's behaviour. Gert Beadle points her finger at
one of the most significant cultural stereotypes in her article,
"Turning Off the Mother Mind." In "Breaking the Silence on
Incest," Sandra Butler outlines the personal, political and
structural reasons why women incest survivors remain silent.

Women's involvement in the arts is important in helping
to convey alternative attitudes and beliefs to stereotypes, since
the arts reflect society and culture and, at the same time,
influence that culture. Art subverts the status quo when it
shows women's true nature and reinforces our strength and
power.

Cathy Miller writes about her experience as a feminist
songwriter. In an interview with Martha Muzychka, Cathy
Jones talks about using satire and humour to show women's
experiences. Nancy Russell interviews Pat Smart who has
found that women are usually at the forefront of change in
Québécois literature. Yvonne Van Ruskenveld writes about
Starhawk, a writer, performer and witch, who translates
spirituality into action to create a woman-positive culture.

Dawn Dale and Virginia Howard call for the creation of a
feminist art community "interweaving art and feminism," in
which women's art can be properly nurtured. In "Feminism
and Literary Criticism," Tünde Nemeth examines how literary
criticism contributes to our analysis of culture, and as such
should be a feminist concern.

We are very pleased to be able to include fiction and
poetry: three short stories by Sarindar Dhaliwal, offering
glimpses of women's lives in Indian culture, and "For
Andrée," a poem by Tünde Nemeth.

This issue of *BTS* shows how women influence and are
influenced by all aspects of culture. We must support each
other in our efforts to reflect feminism in our culture and
society — through the arts and through our lives.

L. E. T. T. E. R. S.

Dear *Breaking the Silence*,

I read with great enthusiasm Maxine McKenzie's article on racism in the Spring 1987 issue. I found it eye-opening and very well expressed.

As I turned to the article on language, however ("My Dad Calls Me a Lezzie"), I was struck by the fact that one of the ways in which "white feminists continue to see their reality as the norm and everything else as a deviation" is through the use of language. As vital as it is to create a non-sexist language, we must be careful that it be inclusive and not *exclusive* to the "feminist activist community" and of no relevance to any other women. How many women can relate to expressions such as "networking," "separatism," "non-monogamous," and "woman-positive" in the way we use them?

Although such language is a useful tool for those of us involved with activism, we must remember that it reflects *our* reality and is *our* creation. Women of other

backgrounds have their own realities and consequently their own way of using language. To impose our language on them is to silence them, as effectively as patriarchal language silences women.

There is no universal "feminist." All women must be free to use the language which reflects them. For example, to say that Canada should become trilingual (English, French and Feminist) is to suppose that francophone feminists and anglophone feminists speak the same "language," and that French feminist expressions are simply the equivalent of English ones — which they are not. They express different realities and different concepts in different ways.

Language is a powerful tool. The strength of feminism will be to allow for all the diversity of women's experiences in language as in all else.

Yolande Mennie

BTS Postal Subsidy in Jeopardy!

Over the years, the federal government has created a structure of postal, tariff and tax-related incentives and support measures for Canadian periodicals. These have helped the growth of Canadian periodicals despite a small spread-out population and powerful foreign competition.

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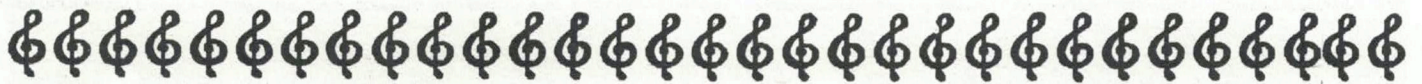
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by Cathy Miller

In my experience, creating something — especially writing — is a necessarily solitary activity. It involves "turning off" the external world and focussing on an inner landscape of one's own making. From the outside, it often looks like writers are goofing off. Not true. Usually.

The actual composing of a song may be done in solitary; however, the rest of the process of making music involves other people. There are other musicians, arrangers, producers and — most importantly — the audience.

I learned a long time ago that the music I write reaches a lot of women. There hasn't been a lot of music over the years that has reflected a woman's perspective of the world, and the demand for it is very high. When I write honestly from my own emotions and experiences, there have always been women who understand and relate. This is a wonderful kind of support, and it really helps me to develop as a writer and performer. I often think that we underrate our value as an audience. It really is a give-and-take situation between a performer and an audience. Ideally, everyone benefits.

Music is a very powerful medium. It touches people on both a verbal and non-verbal level, encouraging an emotional response as much as an intellectual one. There aren't many things left in this society that really allow us to publicly express emotions. I like to think that when I sing a song that means a lot to me — that I feel very deeply — I am also encouraging other women to value what they feel.

"Song for Jan" is a good example of this kind of song. It is about two friends saying goodbye — but not being disheartened by it.

*It's not the end
And I know we can fend for
ourselves
Go, and stand up tall
But don't forget to call
Now and then.*

Facing the Music



Design: Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

Photo: Mary Belgraver

It is a song of strength, of sisterhood, and of sharing my life for a time with someone else. We were both made stronger by the friendship. I had no idea how the song would be received, only that I was saying goodbye to a very special friend. I wrote it very quickly, and from the heart. Now, the song is regularly renamed by other women who have said goodbye to their own friends. They request the song under their name!

The same audience connection seems to have happened with "Superwomen." I have always loved to sing this song, but I had no idea how widespread the appeal would be. Since I wrote it five or six years ago, it has been used in three theatre pieces, highly requested by all age groups (including the 3 to 9-year-old crowd), and performed by at least three other singers. This last is the highest compliment for me as a songwriter. "Superwoman" came from a "devil's advocate" approach, that the woman with whom we are presented daily in TV and print ads actually exists.

Who can leap mountains with a little hop?

Who goes out hunting for some evil to stop?

Who is ambitious to get to the top?

Who can do gymnastics with a pail and mop?

Superwoman.

There is a political element in this kind of writing, too. I don't often write political statements directly any more. The task I have set for myself is to express certain perspectives in an artistic way. I have never found it



appealing to write diatribes, or speeches as songs, although I understand there are applications for that kind of a song. But if a political statement is one that tries to lead to a better world, or one that encourages individual responsibility or power, then everything I write is political.

I write best when I am learning. Writing helps me to work my way through new ideas and how I feel about them. I started writing in high school for that reason and continue in the same approach. At no time do I ever presume to know everything about a subject; I generally write impressions and moments into songs, like remembering a special place, encouraging personal growth in myself and in others, or exploring how something in the external world affects me emotionally. Sometimes I write pep talks for myself, especially when I'm feeling disheartened.

Once I have a subject and perspective worked out for a piece, the process usually becomes easier. Writing works best for me when it involves a free association, a letting go of myself, of what others think of me, and of my own image of who I should be. It means making the creation more important than myself for a time. For some people, the ability to let the "creative juices" flow becomes quite mystical (they even give courses on it). It might involve invoking the Muse, but some people think "creative juices" refers to Scotch. Those who know me understand that in my vocabulary, "Scotch and writing" occur as a pair far less frequently than "Scotch and bubble baths."

There are more realistic and healthier techniques, however. For

me, jogging is the answer. It clears my mind very quickly and allows free association. I've found that the times just before and after sleep are rich in ideas. Sometimes you'll find me jotting down phrases that I hear in normal conversation, that may or may not find their way into a song. I'm also often inspired by other musicians

I spend my life constantly moving between living in the world and relating to people, as a woman, as a songwriter and as a feminist, and retreating from the world in order to put my impressions into words and music. Each involves its own kind of commitment and each is difficult in its own way. But at the same time, there is a kind of balance between the two sides: each contributes to my understanding of the other. I look at the world differently than I did before I wrote songs. I write differently than I did before I was a feminist.

bis

Lyrics taken from Cathy Miller's cassette tape, *Superwoman*, Sealed With A Kiss Records (SWAK 01), P.O. Box 4803, Station E, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5H9. All lyrics © Cathy Miller, 1985.

Cathy Miller is an Ottawa singer, songwriter and vocal instructor. She was a member of Red Rose Revue, a feminist cabaret collective. She wrote the music for the GCTC production *Side Effects*, a play about women and pharmaceuticals, and sang the theme song for the NFB film, *Not a Love Story*. She is a little political, a little facetious, a little nostalgic and a whole lot of krazoo.



Finding Our Reflection



Design: Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

Images of Women on Canadian Postage Stamps

by Janice Manchee

The word 'culture' usually brings to mind CBC dramas, the National Ballet, exhibits like *The Dinner Party* and other activities or creations we separate from everyday life. Of course, culture is much more than these things. It includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by members of society (1).

While we make a point of going to plays and art galleries, and writing our own plays and painting our own pictures, sometimes we overlook reflections of culture that we encounter daily. Take, for example, Canadian stamps — things many of us not only see but work with daily. The stamps carry clear messages about Canadian women.



Ironically, one of the first stamps issued in Canada portrayed a woman, young Queen Victoria. Since that first issue in 1851, few women have been represented on Canadian stamps, other than members of the royal family and religious figures. The "royal" women represent the Crown. They're interchangeable with "royal" men and they aren't even Canadian. Madonnas and angels represent Christian beliefs rather than women's reality or accomplishments (2).

Leaving "royal" stamps and madonnas aside, less than 85 out of 1091 Canadian stamps issued between 1851 and 1986 depicted women. In comparison, men (excluding "royals") appeared on 226 stamps. This shouldn't come as a shock — stamps have traditionally been used to commemorate those in the public sphere (i.e. men). Only occasionally have they represented life in the private sphere (i.e. women). It is interesting to note that almost half of the stamps showing women have been issued since 1975, International Women's Year (3).

The earliest Canadian stamps showing non-royal women, "Allegory of Flight" (1928), "Allegory of the British Empire" (1932) and "Birth of Bell" (1947),

reduced women to symbols. Angelic in inspiration or surveying their empire, the women shown only existed in men's imaginations.

The first real woman to be shown on a stamp (1961) was Pauline Johnson or Tekahionwake, a poet of Mohawk blood. While Canada has not done much better at commemorating native people than women, this was the first in a group of stamps issued in the late 1960s and 1970s showing Native women (4). But out of the eight additional stamps in the series, only two show a woman doing something besides attending to a child. In one, the woman is dancing with a man and, in the other, a woman is helping a man





construct a summer tent. In the remaining six, the woman is sitting or standing quietly with a child.

Two other Native women have been commemorated, Molly Brant (1986) and Kateri Tekakwitha (1981). Both of these women are celebrated for turning away from traditional Six Nation values and embracing the British Empire and Christianity. The message here is that European, Christian values should be celebrated even when they mean the destruction of other traditional systems.

Before Canada's Native peoples were honoured, a common theme in stamps was that of the pioneer. Two (1934 and 1984) have been issued to commemorate the United Empire Loyalists and others show French, Scottish and Mennonite settlers (5). In all of these, women appear with men and, in several cases, with children.

Numerous other stamps exist that address exploration and all of these show only men (Native and European). Judging from these stamps, women are followers. We



are seen only after our men have already cleared the way. As well, the Mennonites are the closest we get to showing ethnic or racial diversity in our immigrant population.

Four pioneer women are commemorated for their own actions. Jeanne Mance founded the first hospital in Montreal in 1642. The other three women were members or founders of various religious orders. Marguerite Bourgeoys opened a school for girls in Montreal in 1658 and recruited teachers. Marie de l'Incarnation taught girls in Quebec during the same period and compiled Algonkian and Iroquoian dictionaries and Marguerite d'Youville founded the Order of the Grey Nuns in 1737.

This focus on religion reflects the options open to women during this period, but surely there were more than four important pioneer women. What about *les filles du roy*, who left their homes and came alone to a new country?

Despite this largely passive image of women, Canadian stamps leave the impression that we are quite athletic. In 1957, a stamp called "Swimming" showed a woman actively engaged in physical exercise. Skating has been shown a number of times, along with fencing, hurdling, basketball and field hockey. Women are also shown winning in "Medal Ceremony" (1976), which commemorates the Olympic Games.



While a few stamps show the volunteer organizations we've set up and participated in, such as Associated Country Women of the World (1959), Salvation Army (1982) and Girl Guides and Brownies (1960 and 1985), it appears that Canadian women do very little paid work. One stamp in 1958 shows a nurse; others show farmers (1969), teachers (1980) and military officers (1985).

But the stamps showing women farming and teaching commemorate male painters, Suzor-Côté and Harris, rather than women actually working.

It is also typical that in a series of stamps commemorating letter carriers (1974) and showing the process a letter goes through when mailed, only one female worker is shown, even though almost half of postal workers are women.



One form of women's work that has been commemorated, and one that is generally even lower-paying than most other women's occupations, is that of the artist. As mentioned above, Pauline Johnson was honoured in 1961 and exactly ten years later the painter, Emily Carr, was commemorated. As well as Carr, the author Germaine Guèvremont (1976), the opera singer Emma Albanie (1980) and the author Lucy Maud Montgomery (1975) have been commemorated.

In 1984, a stamp honouring the Montreal Symphony showed two women — a harpist and a violinist. This has been the extent of Canadian women artists commemorated to date. Surely we can expect the work of Margaret Laurence to be marked in this way.

Canadian stamps leave us with images of women who are largely passive, tied to children, not very active in the paid labour force and, oddly, quite athletic. We are European or Native and all of us are actively Christian. The few actual women who have been commemorated have shown only our religious and artistic nature. Mostly, we are invisible.

There is, however, a small group of stamps commemorating women who have actively opposed just this restricted image. In 1973, Nellie McClung was honoured for her struggle for women's suffrage. This was a companion stamp to one issued in 1967 commemorating the 50th anniversary of women winning the right to vote in some provinces.

In 1981, a block of four stamps, known as The Feminists, was issued honouring Emily Stowe, Louise McKinney, Idola Saint-Jean and Henrietta Edwards. All were strong advocates of women's rights and each played a pioneering role in furthering those rights.

Finally, in 1985, a pair of stamps commemorating the Decade for Women was issued honouring Thérèse Casgrain and Emily Murphy, who were also strong advocates for women's rights. These eight stamps, plus the one commemorating International Women's Year, at least indicate Canadian women are more than the image outlined above. Nine stamps, however, out of 85 in a total of 1091 seems a token effort.



Taking Control of Our Image

Canadian stamp designs are selected by the Stamp Advisory Committee. This Committee is made up of ten members selected by the Minister Responsible for Canada Post, and they hold the position for a specified term. There are currently three women and seven men on the Committee, but their names are kept secret by the government. It's hard to know how well-qualified these people are to choose our stamp designs.

Anyone can submit an idea for a person or event to be commemorated during an upcoming year, with the

understanding that the person must be deceased and must have contributed to Canada during life. The actual artists to create the designs are selected from those who have submitted samples of their work to the Directorate of Postage Design at Canada Post.



To date, this Committee has not shown itself to be particularly aware of, or perhaps concerned with, Canadian women as a whole and non-Native women of colour in particular. *Les filles du roy* haven't been honoured, nor have the 30,000 Blacks who used the Underground Railway to come to Canada. And what about the many immigrants joining us from the Third World?

The majority of Canadian women are now in the paid labour force, but from our stamps, we would hardly know it. Where are Susanna Moodie (pioneer), Laure Gaudreault (unionist), Edith Berkeley (scientist) and Phyllis Dewar (athlete)? Canadian women participated in the formation of the League for Peace and Freedom in the early 1920s, and it is now a huge and influential organization, yet our involvement has not been marked. Where are the centuries of domestic labour performed by women? Where is the self-defined heritage of Canadian women?

The answer is not currently to be found on Canadian stamps. But we can change this by demanding equal representation on the Advisory Committee and demanding that our heritage be represented. Feminist artists should make a point of submitting their work for consideration to Canada Post. Through these actions we can ensure that we are shown on these small but pervasive reflections of Canadian culture.

bts



(1) This is based on the anthropologist E.B. Tylor's definition of culture (1871).

(2) Approximately 120 Canadian stamps have portrayed female members of the royal family, with most issued prior to 1968. After 1968, about 20 stamps were issued at Christmas showing madonnas and angels.

(3) This should not be taken as overwhelming proof that the postal authorities have turned over a new leaf. As 38% of Canadian stamps have been issued since 1975, it's not surprising that a lot more stamps with women would have appeared.

(4) These stamps were part of a larger series that honoured Native culture.

(5) Although the "French" stamp shows a woman and two men, it commemorates Jean Talon, the first Intendant of New France.

Resources

Postal Advisory Committee
c/o Postage and Product Design
Canada Post Corporation
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0B1

Janice Manchee is an Ottawa stamp collector. She'd love to hear from other feminist philatelists.



humour and women: an interview with Cathy Jones



Illustration: Gitty Novin

by Martha Muzychka

Cathy Jones is late for her interview, and is apologetic when she arrives. Her one-woman show, *Wedding in Texas*, is packing them in wherever it goes, and her schedule is a crowded one. Late nights mean late mornings, but Cathy, sitting in her dressing room crowded with the costumes and props of her varied characters, is modest about her current success.

"I love touring, but I hate leaving my daughter behind. I love doing my show. I always wanted to do it and I really appreciate getting to do it," she says. "It's funny that they like me."

Not really, as Cathy has finally arrived as an actress who can make it on her own. The younger sister of Andy Jones, also well known across

Canada for his solo show *Out of the Bin*, Cathy began her career as a member of Codco, the famed Newfoundland comedy troupe.

"For years I was being dragged along and made to be an actor when really I wanted to sell muffins," Cathy says ruefully. Her decision to create a solo show was based on the need to have people see her as an individual and to experience the freedom and risk of being alone on stage. "I've been able to work in theatre as a professional since I was 18, but I always wanted to be acknowledged. It's very satisfying to perform by myself."

Wedding in Texas has been called a woman's show, another entry into feminist theatre. But Cathy

says she didn't mean to write a feminist play.

"I'm not a political person. I believe in all kinds of women's movement stuff, but I'm not a feminist. (Wedding) is the lighter side of feminism," she says. "It's the stuff that's been going through my mind for the last 15 years. I didn't mean to become a feminist, but I rebelled against all that sexual stuff when I was young."

Cathy describes as a major influence the birth of her daughter, Mara, and her problems in being a single parent. "It came out, with Mara being born, and all the things that were happening to women. A lot of my stuff is sub-conscious; I don't know where it comes from. I'm not

a big thinker, it's all spontaneous," she says somewhat deprecatingly. "I don't know where things are in the world. I'm just learning about love."

Though feminists have been told they have no sense of humour, or the issues are too serious to laugh about, it doesn't stop Cathy from trying and succeeding. "When I started writing from being a woman, I realized that you're in the position of having had some horrible things happen to you because you're a woman," she says. "That's a really difficult position to be in in comedy."

One of the most powerful pieces in the show is "Rod and Cheryl," a depiction of a typical battering situation for women. Says Cathy: "I'm not trying to be funny (there). I was thinking the other night that, 'wait a second, this isn't fair, laying something heavy on them in the second scene.' But I think that's one of the reasons I put it in there, so people would go 'oh, oh, oh my god.' It's a good piece, but it is hard to do. It's hard to watch."

At the same time, Cathy says she tried to write a show that was positive, not just about women, but about everyone. The main piece, "Wedding in Texas," is about an outport lesbian going off to see her first lover get married to a man. There are many themes expressed in the skit, but the most important one for Cathy is the need for people to have love.

"I see a lot of gay women coming to the show, and they love it because it's about lesbians, although it's sad because she dies," Cathy says. "I wanted to make a show about how (lesbians) live, what they go through. I wanted people to see that (gay people) are normal just like they are. To call it a dark subject (as one woman said) is bananas. I get such a positive vibe about the show, about people laughing about it, about accepting them."

Making people laugh, or provoking some kind of response from the audience, as well as maintaining her cultural identity is important to Cathy. The audience response to the show and her particular kind of humour has been very good, Cathy says.

"Some jokes they don't catch — they're not smart enough to go to those levels of humour. They're not used to that many jokes, I think. In Newfoundland we're always making saucy, saucy jokes," adds Cathy wryly.

"There's about 18 thoughts going through (the joke) men are like a box of chocolates," says Cathy, referring to the piece, "Fudgeos and Feminism." She becomes Vave Gladney, one of her funniest creations. As the host of "Fudgeos and Feminism," Vave parodies morning talk shows and herself.

Comments Vave on men: "I know what you're thinking; they're fattening and it's hard to stop at one, but you got to learn to pick the nuggets. It's no good fooling with the world of men if you're going to end with a load of vanilla creams!"

Adds Cathy: "Meaning blow jobs, right? There's a lot of levels going on there." Vave continues explaining the modern woman's problems: "You're going through Loblaws and your uterus drops out. What do you do?" Or on the unreliability of birth control: "If any of you are missing your period, don't worry. I've got it."

Says Cathy about the "women's humour" in her play: "Men laugh at it too, but they don't know why it's funny. That's a pro-woman thing, isn't it?" At the same time though, Cathy is reluctant to identify her show as a product of women's culture.

"I don't consider myself any different than men, so I don't set out to make a women's show. I am a woman so you're going to get women's ideas and women's experiences in there," Cathy explains. "But I think it kind of points big fingers at you if you say this is women's culture. We all live in the same place, men and women. I don't think we have to separate ourselves so much."

"It's good to say that this is a people's show, not a women's show. Because women are people and the stuff that they go through is relevant to men," she says. "If women laugh more than men, well, that's okay. Men have to be drawn into it and not be separated from it."

It is an issue that Cathy finds difficult to resolve. "I get really frustrated with women's poems that say, 'this is a poem that no man will ever understand,' because it's bull," she says intensely. "I believe in the things that women are fighting for, like day care and stuff like that, but men have to be fighting for them too."

Even so, *Wedding* contains some strong feminist themes, which Cathy wants to pursue and amplify. "I want to make a movie about *Wedding in Texas*, about how Love Murphy does a lot of fucking around and his wife suddenly starts having an affair with a woman, and it shakes his foundations," Cathy says. "He's a macho man, and he's blown apart. It's the ultimate slap in the face for him. For Love Murphy, the shock is that women can do what they want, that they have these kinds of feelings."

Cathy plans to write new material for her show and reorganize the presentation. There's a lot more she wants to add to get new perspective. "I'm changing, people change, and I think I'm going to have to change some of the play, because there are things that I say in the show that I don't say any more, that I don't want to say anymore," she says reflectively.

"I want to make a positive show with a secret message about positive thinking and about accepting your circumstances and getting the fuck out if it's not good," Cathy concludes bluntly. "If I fail, then I'll write another show."

bts

Martha Muzychka leaves the collective of Breaking the Silence with this issue to return to Newfoundland. Having spent two fascinating years as a compulsive editor and book reviewer for BTS, Martha plans to get her MA and write a thesis on her favourite writer, Fay Weldon.

Turning Off the Mother Mind

by Gert Beadle

Do you remember the first time the insidious suggestion of mothering was gently tucked into your childish subconscious? Was it when you noticed how delighted the grown-ups were when, in your ceaseless quest for approval, you began to help others? Was this the beginning of your readiness for "woman's work"?

Or was it when, under penalty of betraying your slave mother, you were established as caretaker for younger brothers and sisters? Or perhaps it was Baby Boo-Boo, whose wet diaper and pitiful cry released more passion to protect and console than any pre-ordained little mother would need, who helped you to realize that you had a special role to play.

It seemed a natural transition to go from caring for babies to caring for men. Each of us knew down in our very bones that it was our job to look after our men and keep them happy. From that early vantage point, it looked like a big job — learning to keep his house, cook his food, wash his clothes — but (as Paul Anka noted) having his babies put a little romance into the mission.

Starved as we were for any male approval, is it any wonder we rushed through the time allotted to our maidenhood to get at the real action — a man of our own and space to exercise the maternal instincts carefully nurtured by those already caught in the web of deceit.

We, of course, didn't know a damn thing about mothering. We would learn to call it "sacrifice," and get our first dividends from the martyred state. Oddly enough, there is something about knowing you are carrying a load that others should share that energizes you. Later, when we became political, we would call it "rage," and know we could have changed our situation if we had so wished, but at the time we needed to hate our men for their indifference.

By this time "the mother" was in control. Father forgot her name as he competed with his male offspring for his share of mothering. We learned what "maternal" means: it takes responsibility for success and failure; it preaches and teaches; it consoles and inspires; it protects and excuses; and it purposely refuses to see. By its determined selflessness, it helps those whom it purports to love to become selfish and self-centred and to accept unspoken charges of guilt. And it feeds growing impatience.

As expected, one day we begin to tire, not only of the demands on our time and energy, but also of our own addiction to answering every need. Moreover, having served only men, we may be led to believe that women would be more appreciative of our mothering.

One timid toe into the waters of feminism, however, and all our behaviour modification is open to merciless scrutiny. We learn that

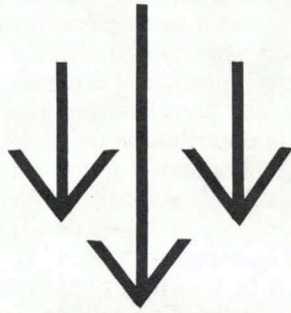
taking the garbage from one sex to another leaves us just as confused about what our role is — or is supposed to be — as before. Mothering, as the net result of one's ability to be loving, presents us with a dilemma: how do we retain our women-strength and love without hanging on to the oppressive mother-image?

Getting one foot firmly on the bridge of Sisterhood, we begin to see the politics behind our choices. It becomes clear how all our energy and intelligence was diverted from the pursuit of knowledge and sexual equality to serve instead the interests of those who dominate us — our religions, our governments, our education and our arts.

This insidious early grooming of the woman-child's mind is aided and abetted by hormonal impatience and romantic maternalism. We remain concerned for years afterwards to spare the nest from being defiled by our anxious leaps into exploration. Yet we cannot see our folly until we have gone beyond it and recognized that our need to be loved and respected need not be met only through mothering. It is ironic that we, as strong women, should require permission to show our real strength for fear of losing that mother-image — our only legitimate display of strength.

If we knew that our most precious gift — the will to love —

La P'tite Dame A Paris

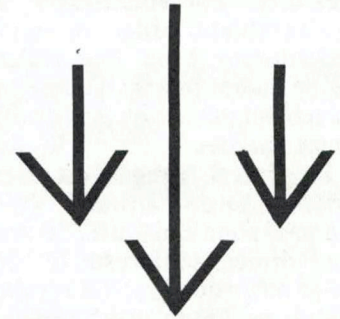


Martine Rochon

"Alors, qu'est-ce qu'elle veut la p'tite dame?" Cette remarque d'un barman m'a figée dans mes mots. Par le biais de voyages antérieurs, je croyais m'être parée contre le manque manifeste de conscience féministe en France. En effet, les publicités sont une preuve flagrante du manque de respect chronique vis-à-vis des femmes, et du fait qu'on leur prive du droit à la pudeur. De l'utilisation libérale, généreuse et exclusive du corps féminin comme appas pour quelque produit que ce soit, les femmes souffrent certainement. Malgré tout, je suis restée surprise par cette remarque.

Cependant, au delà de ces expressions manifestes du sexisme sur tous les pans de murs, métros, arrêts de bus, vitrines, etc., et des remarques paternalistes, l'attitude des françaises est intrigante. Si l'on peut qualifier de mentalité masculine celle qui promeut ce genre d'exploitation de la femme, ce qui devient intéressant est la réaction de celles qui sont en cause.

Un récent voyage me donna l'occasion de constater que les termes du sexisme s'exprimaient peut-être de manière plus évidente en France qu'en Amérique du Nord. Je fus donc inspirée à écrire l'article suivant sur les difficultés inhérentes à la femme française vis-à-vis du sexisme.



Design: Annick Amyot

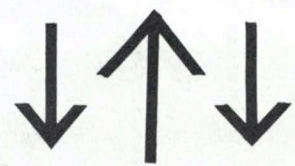
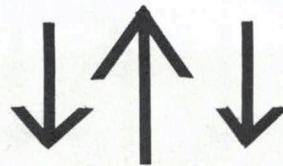
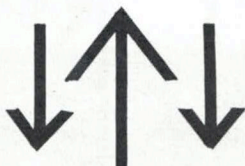
Au premier abord, les femmes ne semblent guère que démontrer un genre de placidité avide et un silence agressif. Voire, un des phénomènes les plus frappants à Paris, c'est l'air et le comportement farouches des femmes. Quoiqu'elles ne semblent pas s'objecter aux manifestations irrémédiablement offensives de l'avilissement féminin, elles font transparaître un genre de résolution amère. En gros, cela se traduit ainsi: elles se protègent en se rendant inabordables.

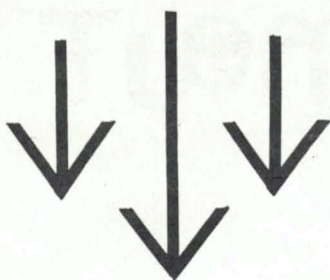
Les femmes françaises font face à un paradoxe: même si elles méprisent les commentaires et les regards lancés en leur direction, ainsi que les atteintes à la pudeur, il semble qu'à la surface, seules ces expressions servent d'appréciations de leur valeur.

En France en particulier, ce phénomène pourtant commun à tout le monde occidental entraîne des conséquences plus visibles qu'ailleurs. En effet, le cliché bien établi que les femmes françaises

savent mieux s'habiller que les femmes américaines fait ses preuves de vérité. L'on pourrait avancer que cela tient du fait qu'elles ont meilleur goût, qu'elles ont des couturier(e)s plus doué(e)s, mais cela tient plus vraisemblablement du fait qu'elles prisent moins le confort que l'esthétique. Cette réaction est justifiable dans la mesure où même si cette méthode d'agir attire des attentions peu désirées, elle constitue l'unique recours car une femme française n'est valorisée que par son apparence extérieure. Elle doit donc s'acharner à plaire aux hommes avant d'avancer à un autre palier, qu'il soit personnel ou professionnel.

L'on peut considérer dans ce cadre que le regard d'un homme qui remarque une belle femme s'arrête à sa beauté. (A remarquer que cela n'est évidemment pas toujours le cas. Néanmoins, il semble que cet attachement acharné à la beauté visuelle de la femme soit plus répandu et plus important chez les hommes.) La seule alternative pour



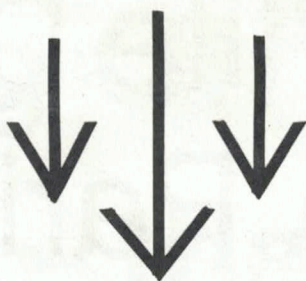


les femmes est d'ignorer les regards et les cris. Par conséquent, leurs yeux semblent vides lorsqu'elles marchent dans la rue. Non seulement elles ne voient pas les hommes, elles ne semblent même pas prédisposées à voir les femmes.

En général, le regard est réservé à l'observation de l'attirail. Vu qu'il n'y a pas, pour ainsi dire, de contact visuel direct, seul reste le regard réservé à l'évaluation. Le résultat est qu'elles ne "regardent" pas; elles jugent. La force du cynisme et de la froideur dans ces regards est foudroyante. Néanmoins, tout ceci peut-être interprété dans le contexte d'un mécanisme de défense.

Il n'est pas inconcevable que ce manque de chaleur ou de confiance trouve sa souche dans le système rigide de l'éducation française duquel peuvent se détacher trois volets négatifs. Primo, c'est un système qui encourage une logique extrême et rejette toute idée qui ne s'imbrique pas dans ce moule. Ce système exige une expression exacte (expression qui d'ailleurs ne se limite aucunement à la langue parlée et écrite mais qui déborde dans tous les domaines, dans le domaine de l'évolution émotionnelle comme dans l'apprentissage des connaissances).

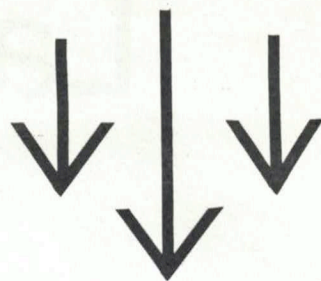
Secondo, pour la plupart, la pédagogie consiste à critiquer l'étudiant-e; cette méthode est perçue comme un stimulus, un moyen de forcer l'étudiant à toujours pousser plus fort. La motivation rationnelle pour l'utilisation de cette méthode est de faire en sorte que l'étudiant-e pousse atteindre en actualité son potentiel. Cependant, dès le départ,



l'idée de potentiel ne s'inscrit que dans le cadre de ce que l'autorité (soit le professeur, le système scolaire, le ministère de l'éducation, etc.) trouve acceptable. Tercio, c'est un système qui pousse à ses extrêmes la conception de la compétition.

Tout ceci n'est pas nouveau, et certainement ce n'est pas un problème qui se limite à la France. L'éducation reste un domaine dont découle une bonne partie des difficultés auxquelles fait face le mouvement féministe. Il est évident que des notions inculquées depuis le plus jeune âge perdent difficilement leur valeur. Cependant, il est impossible de nier que les conséquences en sont très néfastes, surtout pour les femmes. Le sens de sécurité individuelle est ébréché dans la mesure où les enfreintes au code sont punies par la désapprobation et l'intolérance. En embrassant un système logique et traditionnel inébranlable, l'éducation encourage une pensée à structure masculine. Par conséquent, elle rejette une pensée qui se montre moins attachée à cette rigidité, soit une pensée féminine.

En France, il y a des théoriciennes féministes qui considèrent que la langue est elle aussi coupable car elle porte en elle une structure masculine; c'est-à-dire qu'elle tend à unifier l'univers dans un symbolisme logique et juge acceptable strictement ce qui est du domaine de l'entendement humain. De par cet argument, toute expression qui n'est pas immédiatement réductible aux symboles choisis n'a pas de valeur. Tout ce qui ne tient pas de la logique est négligeable. La

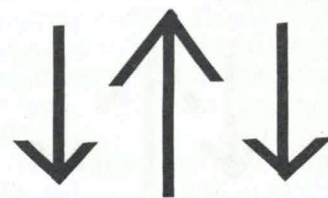
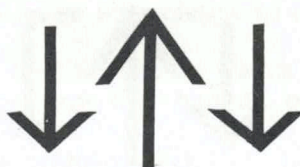
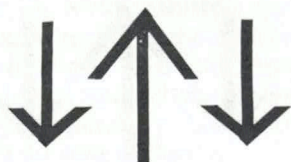


femme a traditionnellement occupé la place d'honneur dans les domaines du sentiment et de l'émotion. Que cela soit juste ou non, il suffit de voir dans quelle mesure ces capacités sont respectées pour comprendre à quel point la contribution de la femme est prisee. Si donc le mode de penser acceptable est masculin, il n'est point étonnant que les armes de défenses le soient également.

Vu la situation historique de la France, celle-ci ne semble pas avoir fait les pas qu'a fait l'Amérique du Nord sur ce plan de l'émancipation féminine. Ce dernier a eu l'avantage de commencer à zéro au XVII^e siècle. Ses idées politiques et sociales dès le départ étaient plus évoluées. Les femmes en France sans cet avantage se trouvent inévitablement défavorisées. Plûtôt que de réagir aux enfreintes par une lutte féministe (qui se définit par la capacité de démontrer que l'attitude vis-à-vis des femmes est erronée) beaucoup parmi elles ripostent du tac au tac. Elles jouent les snobs dans les rues, et si on leur adresse la parole elles connaissent la répartie. Ainsi, sans le vouloir, elles perpétuent l'attitude phallocrate.

Dans ce cadre qui se décrit par des luttes individuelles, grâce à l'éducation et à l'attitude qu'elle appuie, le sens de compétitivité se trouve accrue chez les françaises. Souvent, une femme qui observe une autre ne cherche qu'à déterminer si sa présentation extérieure est mieux réussie. Il en découle un manque cornplet de solidarité entre les femmes.

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STARHAWK:

MAGIC, SEX AND POLITICS

by Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

Presented by the Women's Centre of the University of Ottawa in cooperation with the Women's Studies Program and the Student Federation, April 6, 1987

*She changes everything she touches
and
Everything she touches, changes*

*Change is Touch is
Touch is Change is*

*We are changers
Everything we touch can change*

*Change us Touch us
Touch us Change us*

The auditorium was filled with the sound of voices chanting and harmonizing to the beat of Starhawk's drum. The word "change" echoed through the hall. As the sound faded, Starhawk said, "Magic, sex and

politics are all about change."

Starhawk is a witch. She is also a feminist, writer, teacher, counsellor, political activist and non-violence trainer. Her billing as a witch, however, is probably what attracted a standing-room-only crowd to the University of Ottawa's Alumni Auditorium.

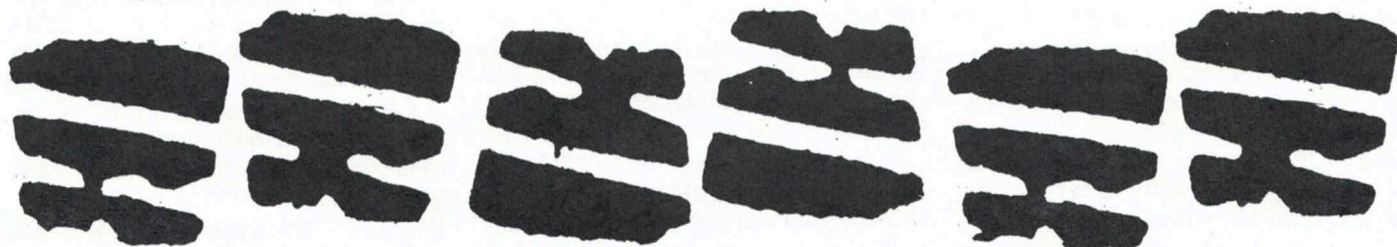
If anyone in the audience expected to see a pointed black hat or to be initiated into the esoteric world of magic potions and rituals, she would have been disappointed. Although Starhawk did speak about ritual and provided a wonderful demonstration of its energizing effect, she also spoke about power, spirituality and action. And, she

wore green.

For 12 years, Starhawk has been a practitioner of witchcraft in the Covenant of the Goddess. As a witch, she believes in the sacredness that dwells in all living things. To Starhawk, this "immanence" is the manifestation of the Goddess through each individual and the living earth. Hence, her spirituality has provided her with a solid base for political activism in support of environmental and feminist issues, and has enabled her to weave her beliefs and experiences into the fabric of a philosophy on power, spirituality and action.

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Design: Gabrielle Nawratil



Writing in the Father's House: Women in the Quebec Literary Tradition

by Nancy Russell

**an
interview
with
Patricia Smart**

Patricia Smart is a professor at Carleton University. She is the first woman to have won the Marston Lafrance Fellowship, which is awarded each year by Carleton's Faculty of Arts to the professor with the best proposal for a book. The fellowship allowed Smart to take a year off from teaching to write a feminist study called *Ecrire dans la maison du père* (Writing in the Father's House).

Ecrire dans la maison du père analyzes the innovations women have brought to Quebec literature from the 19th century on. According to Smart, women have been subversive, and open to change in the "father's house" of traditional literary forms, while male writers have remained trapped in those forms.

Ecrire dans la maison du père is scheduled for publication in French this fall by a Montreal feminist

publisher, Editions de la pleine lune. Smart then hopes to work on an English edition.

During the 1987-88 academic year, Pat Smart will be directing the Women's Studies Program in the Institute of Canadian Studies at Carleton.

The following interview, originally broadcast on the university radio station's morning show, discusses the Marston Lafrance lecture given by Smart on March 2, 1987, as part of International Women's Week. In the lecture, Smart introduced many of the main themes of *Ecrire dans la maison du père*.

BTS: The title of your book is intriguing. Can you begin by explaining what you mean by "father's house"?

Pat: The father's house is, first of all, an image of culture — patriarchal

Design: Michelle Benjamen

culture, western culture. I think you could apply it to any western culture that you wanted to study, but it applies beautifully to Quebec literature, where you have a very clear social and ideological structure. I'll give you another example of what the father's house is: it's also a metaphor for how people write, for traditional forms in literature.

The traditional novel is a father's house; the construction of language which men have used in order to conquer the world, to dominate what they have always considered "otherness." A feminist approach to literature involves starting to look at some of those forms from the point of view of women, who have been part of that "otherness" that men set out to conquer in their narratives.

BTS: *How does the father's house work in terms of the books you're dealing with?*

Pat: How the father's house works in literary form means how women write within it, how men write within it, and what different products result because they're men and women. You know, it's often been noted that women tend to write more autobiographically, more personally — using diaries or letters, for example.

To the extent that's true, it happens because women are uncomfortable in the "father's house" of traditional forms, which don't allow them to be themselves. Even when they do use these forms, they do it differently than men. Think of all the emotion in Gabrielle Roy's *The Tin Flute*, for instance. Can you think of a novel by a man that dares to show so much love for its characters?

BTS: *One of the differences you talk about is the difference between "texture" and "the law". Can you explain this difference?*

Pat: That formulation occurred to me during my work this year, and I really do think it explains a lot about the difference between men's writing and women's writing. What it allows me to do is not to say that women are

biologically and for all time different, that you have to put them in one category and men in another and "never the twain shall meet." We know that's not true.

If you start to look at a literary text according to what I've described as "texture" and "the law," I think what you see in every text is a dialectic between those two poles. The law is the linear, logical order that the text has to have to some extent; what some literary critics would call "closed identity systems." A simple example is a narrative: a straight narrative line that starts at the beginning and ends at the end, and usually has a male character at the middle of it with all the others treated as a peripheral. But every literary text also has texture, which is perhaps more difficult to describe.

Texture has to do with rhythms, gestures, silences — what is between the words, if you like. I think probably the best known example of texture in writing is Virginia Woolf. If you think of Woolf's writing compared to that of any male novelist, I think you'll see what I mean by texture. It almost gets away on you; it's harder to get hold of than men's writing. Looking at women's writing in Quebec, I've come to see this privileging of texture over law as characteristic of women's writing.

Women are not so much interested in law: linearity, logic, imposing structures on the world. In other words, women tend to let reality speak through their writing, rather than imposing their writing on reality.

I also describe texture in terms of the way women talk to each other. The chatting women do... that doesn't necessarily have to be linear, that has to do with the pleasure of exchanging, of exchanging words... is the equivalent in language, I think, of what happens when you "chat" in literature is that you come up against the law — the patriarchal ideology that dominates society. And this confrontation is what makes women's writing subversive.

BTS: *How has this different sort of texture, as you call it, within women's writing, changed the Quebec literary tradition?*

Pat: It has changed it very much. The chronological order of Quebec literature has always been explained in nationalist terms, and quite rightly, because Quebec literature is very nationalist. But if you set up this chronology and look closely at it, you'll see that in every major period, the breaks with the old order, the old ways of writing and the old ideologies, have been in women's writing.

The "novel of the land" in Quebec is a clear example. For 100 years, the novels of the land, many of which are masterpieces, were all basically a defence of the status quo — that is, the nationalist, conservative ideology of survival. Louis Hémon sums this ideology up clearly in the famous lines from the end of *Maria Chapdelaine*: "In the land of Quebec, nothing must die and nothing must change."

There was only one woman writer of any importance in 19th century Quebec, Laure Conan, and she broke with that tradition by writing a first-person narrative, a psychological novel, which questioned for the first time the effect of this ideology on people's lives.

Later, in 1945, Germaine Guèvremont wrote a novel which critics have always regarded as the end of that classic period of the novel of the land, and which basically argued that things were changing and maybe that was not such a bad thing. In the same year, Gabrielle Roy published Quebec's first major urban novel, *The Tin Flute*.

It's always women who mark the break, who bring about the changes. And it has to do with the fact that they have a different perception of society and different things to say. They're more interested in talking about change and growth as a positive thing, whereas traditional literature in Quebec has tended to be very frightened of change.

continued on page 32

The Unsuitable Suitors

by Sarindar Dhaliwal

My cousin B. was 26 by the time she finally agreed to marry someone. She had been peevish about the whole business for several years, blaming the family for not trying hard enough to locate a husband worthy of her. The suitors had been paraded before her in person and via photographs, and she sulkily and haughtily rejected each one.

In 1972, my grandfather, who was living in Glasgow, had a conversation with a neighbouring woman. "We have a nephew living in Vancouver," she mentioned casually. "Why," replied my grandfather, "My middle daughter's eldest girl in is Toronto."

The telephone rang on Brunswick Avenue. Long distance from the West Coast. However, marriages cannot, even in this day and age, be negotiated over the phone. Send a letter (enclosing a picture), urged the Brunswick Avenue clan. To the family's surprise, the very next day an eager uncle accompanied by the hopeful young man arrived at Malton airport.

B. sneaked one sidelong look at the boy from outside the doorway. She sniffed and turned away. "He's too short and besides he has a long nose," she stated flatly and stomped off. Another quick courtship.

The Three Sisters

by Sarindar Dhaliwal

They were born in the village of Noormahal in the district of Jullunder. Their mother died when the youngest was four years old. Their father fled his widowhood and the confines of Noormahal by emigrating to Britain. They weren't to see him again for another 20 or 30 years.

The girls were raised by their maternal grandparents and grew up in a light-hearted, loving atmosphere. The century was barely in its bloom; Gandhi still in South Africa and the Nehru dynasty lay in an unimagined future. The British ruled India, and the girls had heard of the most wondrous and the most horrible things that existed in that faraway place, England, a country that would swallow up so many of the Punjabi

menfolk. It was rumoured that they even had machines in Europe that could turn one's skin white!

Noormahal: much gossip at night, sitting outside on the charpoys talking in excited whispers by the light of the oil lamps, incredulity creeping into their voices as they picked people's doings and misdoings to the bone. The days were spent in the cool of the mud house folding the heavy, embroidered sheets or rearranging the framed photographs perched on the suitcases and trunks piled against the walls. Many of their chores were done outside squatting in the empty space of courtyard that no one bothered to keep nice. Slicing spinach on the curved, upright scythe with the footplate or shelling peas into the small, brass pot. The chapatis were prepared in an instant with the three



Many of their chores were done outside



The Love Letters

by Sarindar Dhaliwal

young women to do the kneading, rolling and cooking. They made the pickles that were stored in glass jars: quarters of turmeric-dusted lemons and finger-long slices of ginger and carrots, coated with oil and spices.

One by one the sisters were married off to lads from surrounding villages. It had been a question that they had never discussed in their nocturnal talks, each having an absolute faith in the system of arranged marriages. The weddings took place when the girls were 14, 15 and 16 but they stayed at home in 'sunny, safe Noormahal and only visited their husbands' villages once every two years or so (as was the custom in those days), staying for a couple of months. Sometimes they would return to Noormahal pregnant.

Eventually, at the age of 20 they would depart to the in-laws permanently, each to bear her burden privately for the three husbands that had been chosen for them were far from perfect.

They regained that golden, gossipy household peace 30 years later in Toronto, living in separate, suburban houses a few doors apart, with beloved sons or daughters. One sister widowed, another courageously separated and the third having reduced her husband into a toothless, shuffling silence. They cooked chapatis together and spent the late afternoons watching Indian films on the VCR as they waited for their grandchildren to return from school.

What I remember best about Munni are her large sloe-shaped eyes. She had the habit as a very small child of eating paper -- any paper, but her favorite was wallpaper. In their house, whole rooms had areas of paper torn away where Munni had stripped the lower walls. However, despite this addiction, her marriage had been fairly easy to arrange.

At the age of 20, Munni accompanied her mother to India to view a prospective husband. Munni's mother, who is my "chachi" (that is the wife of my father's younger brother, my "chacha"), had learnt of this young man from a friend, whose sister-in-law's brother he was. He seemed golden brown to Munni, handsome and good. My aunt was relieved that he still wore the turban. Her own sons' rebellion at thirteen or so had badly shaken her belief in her indisputable power and authority over her children. The boys had finally had enough of the taunts of their English schoolmates and the plaits tied up with brightly coloured ribbons had seriously hindered their soccer careers.

The matter of the marriage agreed upon, Munni and her mother returned to England. The engaged couple began to correspond. Munni's

letters, written in large rounded script, were a little childish since she'd never had occasion to write to anyone before. Gradually, she warmed to the task and began to tell him about the grumpy foreman at the cosmetic factory where she worked and to relate the bizarre, convoluted storylines of the recent Indian musicals she had seen at the local cinema. His letters were full of insubstantial, polite formalities phrased in the flowery, archaic English used by the village scribe (Munni could not read or write Punjabi and he was unable to express himself in any form of English). Still, even with this middleman involved in and interpreting their communications, her heart fluttered each time the blue airmail form dropped through the letter slot onto the coconut matting. She loved him already.

Sarindar Dhaliwal is a visual artist living in Kingston, Ontario. She has recently been awarded an Explorations grant from the Canada Council to continue working on stories based on arranged marriages.

READING FROM THE HEART

A FEMINIST CRITICAL PRACTICE

by Tünde Nemeth



Illustration: Gitty Novin

My sister and I used to fight a lot. Now that we're grown up, our worlds are far apart. We no longer share a social class; our politics and our values are very different. Yet we still share one passion: books.

It was my sister who taught me how to read. She was the one who used to take me to the library Saturday mornings. I remember being a little reluctant at first. But that reluctance quickly turned to jubilation as I discovered a whole new world, a world contained only by the limits of my boundless imagination.

Soon I was taking out as many books at a time as they would let me — and reading them all by mid-week, so I also needed books from the school library.

My early trips to the library were part and parcel of my equally early fascination for both language and books. I was a born winner of spelling bees and always did well in composition, grammar and literature classes. This carried over into my adult life, although it took me a long time to realize I ought to pursue these things academically.

At various times in my life, I've made words my career — as a proofreader, editor, writer and, most recently, student of literature. I now know that words are my life; I expect always to work with words, for money, for pleasure, or both.

I've discovered gradually how important words are to me as a feminist as well. For a long time I had no way to reconcile two of the major organizing structures of my life, literature and feminism.

I had no words for the rift between them, which I at first perceived as a huge contradiction in my life. On the one hand, I knew that concrete political action was the only reality that counted. On the other, I felt that what I was doing critically with literature was authentic and exciting, and somehow relevant to that political action.

Image my relief when I discovered feminist criticism. I found I could analyze literature to my heart's content and still be a feminist. Then, when I started the women's studies program at Carleton University nearly two years ago, I found that the same analytical skills I used in literary criticism were not only

useful but essential to analyzing feminist issues as well.

I began to see that I could analyze women's relationship to culture, society and ideology in the same terms I use in my literary work. I realized I could make some sense of ideology and culture, in the broadest meanings of those words, by looking at them as "texts" to be read and interpreted, just like literary texts.

For instance, one form of feminist criticism is "images of women" criticism — one that examines literary works for the images of women portrayed therein. Feminists do the very same thing with advertising and pornography. More broadly, we also do a similar kind of analysis when we ask hard questions about how women are viewed and treated in our society.

"Images of women" analysis is only one example of how literary and social analyses intersect. The same kinds of links exist for other analytical frameworks, be they materialist, Marxist, psychoanalytic or whatever.

I look at "cultural texts" in a new way that is coloured by my experiences as a student of literature. But now I've found there's a reciprocal relationship involved. Not only has my literary analysis changed my view of feminism, but my feminism has also changed my view of literary analysis and what exactly I mean by "feminist criticism."

Jill Vickers, one of the founding mothers of women's studies at Carleton, once asked me, "Is feminist criticism just another flower in a garden of flowers?" In other words, is feminist criticism just one way, among others, to look at literature? Or is feminism a way of looking at the world so that everything you do is coloured by your feminism, and literary criticism is one of the areas of interest to you as a feminist?

When Jill asked me this question, she crystallized many issues for me. It made me realize that all along I'd been talking about feminist criticism as if it were one "school" of criticism, equal to and separate from New criticism, formalism, post-structuralism and so on. In fact, I'd never really believed that. I'd used several different methodologies for analyzing literature, but my feminism

had always informed everything I did.

It is important for me to feel I'm not wasting my time and skills by doing the work I do. I've spent a lot of time over the past year or so thinking about whether I'm being self-indulgent or foolish in thinking that the work I do as an embryonic critic of literature could somehow benefit other women, could someday add to an exciting new body of knowledge that takes seriously women's struggle.

As is often the case, I have found validation in the work of other women. In an essay called "Are women's Novels Feminist Novels?" British critic Rosalind Coward observes:

Images, representations, words are part of feminism's stock-in-trade. More than any other radical movement, feminism is aware of the material effects of images and words and the oppression or resistance which can be involved in them. This concern has motivated campaigns against oppressive stereotypes, has led to political and theoretical writing on the role of ideology seriously challenging earlier Marxist traditions, and has led to the strong presence of feminists in cultural politics -- film, theater and literature. It would be a shame to consign this impressive tradition to the bourgeois literary critics and to suggest that the novel is not an arena of political struggle but something we read on holiday when "real" politics are put aside with the boots and banners for a fortnight (1).

I, too, would hate to relegate the impressive tradition of feminist cultural analysis to Coward's "bourgeois literary critics." I, too, feel that the work we do in this area is vital to the women's liberation movement.

At times it seems we do a good deal of collective navel-gazing. But, in recent times, out of that navel has come a recognition of our diversity and our strength, a recognition that all women's work is important work, and that our diversity is our strength.

bts

(1) Rosalind Coward, "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*. ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), pp. 225-39.

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Tünde Nemeth is a graduate student in Canadian Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa. Her thesis area is the dynamic of silence and voice in Canadian women's writing. She has worked as an editor and writer.

BREAKING THE SILENCE ON INCEST.

by Sandra Butler

Design: Louise Guénette

There are personal, structural and political reasons for victimized children and women to remain silent throughout their lives. The many sources of their silence take different forms.

The first reason for silence in the life of a sexually abused girl is her own internal need to defend and protect herself from the experience of her abuse.

Often threatened, bribed, tricked, cajoled, isolated or entrapped by her abuser, the child must confront the painful recognition that the adult who is entrusted with her safety and well-being is the same adult who is molesting and abusing her.

She cannot easily bear such knowledge, and therefore needs to insulate her psyche by trying to convince herself that she made it up, or that somehow she made him do it. Shifting reality around and believing

something she has done or said caused this horrifying abuse to occur is less painful than the truth.

It is easier to believe that she is the cause of the adult behaviour, because then she can try to convince herself that, if she worked hard to change herself (rather than attempting the overwhelming task of changing the behaviour of an older child or an adult), the abuse would stop.

Children find a variety of ways to shape reality into a tolerable form. Some minimize the abuse: "It only happens once in a while," a child might say; or "I don't even let it bother me. I just let my mind drift away until it's over."

Other children rationalize the experience by telling themselves that "It's because he drinks too much," or "It started happening when Mom got sick."

When minimizing the experience

does not succeed in muting it and keeping it from full consciousness, a more complete defence may become psychologically necessary for survival. Total amnesia is one way the child can block out what she cannot handle.

She might also split herself into a number of selves to allow the pain to be diffused, and to protect herself against the full impact of such devastating information.

When these girl children become adult women, they may have only selective memories of their abuse or no recollection at all — just the sense of certainty that the abuse happened. Some women have a sense of being imposters compared to "real" incest victims.

"It was only my uncle," a woman might say, or "It was only exhibitionism. He never actually touched me, but just kept showing

me dirty pictures while he masturbated."

Often there is no one to listen to and validate the feelings of abused children. Some fear that by disclosing their abuse they will be blamed, ignored or further abused.

Their survival requires that they reverse reality. Part of the psychological process of denial for victims of abuse is to make what is all too real into something not real. Such adaptive skills become part of their internal foundation, and an important part of their coping mechanism.

The need to maintain silence varies depending on the age of the child, when the abuse began, her relationship to the offender, whether force or trickery is used, the length of time the abuse continues, and her relationships with other members of the family.

For every woman, each of these dimensions may differ and cause her to devise many different ways "not to know." Fundamental to recognizing this silence is the recognition that the child is doing the work of adults, by being responsible for her own protection and psychological well-being.

Surely this should not be the task of children. Indeed, it is testimony to the strength and tenacity of survivors that they find ways to navigate the treacherous waters of adult behaviour in a boat of their own wobbly design.

A second reason for the silence of victimized children is the rule within the abusive family that all members pretend nothing unusual is going on.

Much like alcoholic families, families where sexual abuse occurs have silence as their central organizing principle around which everything else revolves. This leaves the children undefended, unprotected and unacknowledged. Fear, retaliation, further abuse, or generational patterns often paralyze other family members, or make them unable or unwilling to act on behalf of the abused children.

The rules are simple and clear. No one outside the family can know. No one inside the family can tell. In order for the family to continue as an intact unit, silence is essential.

With growing numbers of women breaking the silence we are beginning to understand that the traditional nuclear form of the family is dangerous because an offender has so much power in this situation while a child has so little.

Silence is demanded of the small, victimized child. The child capitulates because she has no other choice. Belonging to her family, even in the face of abuse, neglect, isolation or violation, feels better than not belonging to a family at all.

Hundreds of women have reported to me that they were explicitly or implicitly made to understand they were never to speak to anyone outside the family about the violence, drinking or bruises.

For many women, then, there is a combination of an internal need for silencing along with external pressure from the family to minimize the violation. One woman told me:

My Father kept warning me never to tell anyone about what "we" were doing "together" because he would do something terrible to me if I did. The family would be ruined, he said, and since we were a family of some substance in town, that had a lot of weight for me.

At the same time, while he was abusing me, I had learned to drift away into the chenille bedspread so that I was not experiencing the assault at all. It was like it was happening and not happening at the same time.

The double reality of needing both to acknowledge and to deny the abuse is a demanding tightrope for an abused child.

She needs to acknowledge her abuse in order to maintain watchfulness and vigilance, so that she can try to anticipate when the abuse is going to occur, and what kind of protection she might need to invent to ward it off. At the same time, when the abuse is actually occurring, she needs to keep it out of her consciousness, to "drift away." Both approaches are required for her psyche.

In addition to the silence each victimized child exacts of herself, coupled with that which the family

tacitly or overtly requires, there is yet a third reason for silence: the larger and utterly pervasive silence our society demands of girl children and adult women. It is what might be called the structural or political dimension of silencing. The forces of gender, power and generation all serve to keep children captive of the adults who care for them.

The poet Muriel Ruekeyser wrote, "If one woman were to tell the truth about her life — the world would split open." During the past 15 years, women have insisted, demanded, shouted and written the truth about our lives. Some of the world has begun to split open as a result.

While women who have been brave enough to break the silence continue to be blamed, isolated, ridiculed and punished, and our experiences trivialized and labeled as pathology, we have persisted. For many, there is now room for them beyond the confines of whispers, denial and self-blame.

Silence is a hydra with much power that can only be conquered as we remember what we have forgotten and retrieve what we have lost. Although we cannot avoid the many faces of silence, we can begin to name them and, in so doing, empower ourselves.

Since about 1980, women have been calling themselves "survivors" instead of "victims" of abuse. This welcome shift shows how women are empowering themselves by re-naming old phrases used to describe abuse. We are no longer speaking in a language which blames, labels, dismisses or silences us, but in a language of struggle.

By telling our stories, we are indeed breaking silence.

bts

Sandra Butler is an authority on sexual assault. Her pioneering work, Conspiracy of Silence: The Trauma of Incest, is used as a reference and guide to understanding the crime and counselling survivors. She works with survivors and trains mental health professionals and community groups on abuse counselling.

Interweaving Art and Feminism

*by Dawn Dale and Virginia
Howard*

In the National Capital Region, there is no lack of art organizations and institutions directed towards showcasing, promoting and encouraging all sorts of artistic endeavours. As well, the region has no less than three parallel (artist-run) galleries and three schools to produce new artistic talent.

We are just two of the many products that emerge yearly from the University of Ottawa where 85 per cent of the visual arts students are women. Our attempts to find our way through the obstacle course of the local art community in search of a feminist perspective have been somewhat futile. We have seen and read about what is possible by the example of the activism in the cosmopolitan centres of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver: for example at A-Space gallery and the Women's Art Resource Centre in Toronto, at Powerhouse Gallery in Montreal, and at Women in Focus in Vancouver.

All this has prompted us to want to share some of our observations and hopes for a community in which there can be a meaningful dialogue about women's art practices.

Encouraging noises have been made in the art community. They have taken the form of a conference on sexuality, hosted by the parallel gallerie 101 in the spring of 1985, an arts committee for the promotion of women artists at the Ottawa Women's Credit Union, small shows at the Ottawa Women's Bookstore and so on. Unfortunately they rise and dissipate, largely unseen and unheard — so much energy, potential and effort unused. An art show mounted for International Women's Week (IWW) is just such an example. The show clearly bore the stamp of feminist practice which we will describe here in an effort to reaffirm its values.

The exhibition curated by Maxine McKenzie and Donna Quince, the

Design: Virginia Howard

founders and energy behind the future Houseworks Gallery Cafe, demonstrates their commitment to the promotion of multicultural women's art. The participating artists were: Mitzi Bidner, Mary-Anne Caibaiosai, Joan Jee, Tomoko Kodama, Christine Major, Barbara Stephenson, Manuela Ramos Movement, Martha Ottolenghi, Donna Ward and Winsom.

We choose not to comment on the individual artists or only certain works in the show because it is our belief that a critique of any sort of group show should be a case of all or none. The question is not who is the better artist, but rather what is the context of the inclusion of each and everyone of the artists. To pit one artist against the other only sets up a hierarchical/competitive atmosphere, a star system that is counterproductive to meaningful growth. Our focus should be the work's content, which is filtered by the curatorial process.

The IWW show featured artwork made with unconventional materials, that is, materials not normally associated with wall-hung art in a gallery space. The works made with beads, straw matting, ribbons, hair, feathers, and tie-dyed, quilted, embroidered and appliquéd fabrics found equal pride of place with the more conventional art materials of acrylic, oil and watercolour painting and photography. The artists represented a cultural diversity that included Ojibwa, Chinese, Peruvian, Japanese, Haitian, French-Canadian, European and African backgrounds.

An unexpected challenge, however, was an incident of censorship which arose in the context of the show. The director of affirmative action at Ottawa City Hall requested that two paintings, considered offensive on the day of the opening, be removed. Houseworks felt they had no choice but to alert the press. Unfortunately, the press focussed on the incident to the detriment of the show itself. Articles began with sensationalistic references to the censored paintings and concluded with barely passing references to only a few artists. As

well, disparaging remarks were made about the presence of "craftwork." For the most part the press did not even acknowledge, let alone understand, the concept of the show.

While there can be no denying that different skill levels were demonstrated in the handling of art materials and compositional elements, we feel that this is counterproductive criticism. The structure of the art world until the mid-twentieth century was completely male-oriented. Women's art demonstrating any "female sensibility," such as depictions of women's conditions, lives and feelings, was and still is trivialized and marginalized within the system.

The concept of aesthetics has also been wholly male-defined. Critical analysis is based on the male/manly terms of competition, power structures of dominance and maintenance of the status quo. As a consequence, art history is grounded in sexism, as well as classism and racism, in that it values only the selective history of male European art. Women have had to participate in this male system in order to survive.

One aspect of feminism focusses on the process that artists all too often must depend on to bring their work to the attention of the public. The players in this process — the curators, the critics, the gallery directors and the grant administrators — become the mediators of what we see and, more importantly, how we perceive it. Lisa Steele, a video artist and feminist writer, calls them "the gatekeepers."⁽¹⁾ Both the artist and the viewer need to be fully aware of this process and the power the players wield.

With the advent of the feminist movement, more and more women

have felt they have the freedom, support and responsibility to explore and share their sensibilities. This sensibility cannot yet be defined as it is still in the process of emerging.

In writing this article, we reaffirmed our belief in coming together with other women to communicate and perchance organize for various sorts of positive action. We decided to initiate a discussion group to focus on feminist theory and process as it might relate to critical analysis and women's art practices.

bts

(1) Lisa Steele, "Who minds the gate?", *Parallelogramme*, Summer 1984, Vol. 9 No.5, pp. 15-16.

Resources

For more information on this new discussion group, contact

Dawn Dale
(613) 684-5184

c/o Women's Place
242 Besserer Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 6B1

House Works gallery café will be opening this Fall, at 371 Lisgar Street, Ottawa. Its primary objective will be to present multicultural art which explores and highlights women in art and particularly women's art. It will combine a casual café atmosphere with access to the fine and performing arts. For more information or for memberships, call 728-7357.

Dawn Dale is a fledgling artist, the new mother of Anna, an apprentice feminist activist and an avid reader of Fuse magazine, Lisa Steele and Lucy Lippard.

Virginia Howard has been contributing graphics to BTS for over a year. She is a graduate of the Visual Arts Program at the University of Ottawa.



Illustration: Gitty Novin

FOR ANDREE

I recite your litany endlessly.

My friend died.

*Oh, what a shame. Was she old, was she sick, was it expected?
Was it sudden?*

Very. Suicide.

Oh how dreadful.

She jumped 17 stories from her balcony to the pavement.

She was . . .

Yes, she was sick. Diagnosed as psychotic, at least that's what they labelled it in her case. She was on six different kinds of drugs at any time, big blue ones, little pink ones, white ones, yellow ones. . .

You can't blame yourself.

I don't. Well, a part of me doesn't. A part of me will always feel I could have done more.

I try to imagine what it
was like.

Seventeen stories long
did you stumble
at the end?

Did you screw up your
courage
take a running start
to dive into a deep pool
of hard concrete?

Did you
climb slowly
trembling
atop the railing
clinging to the wall
beside you
for dear life?

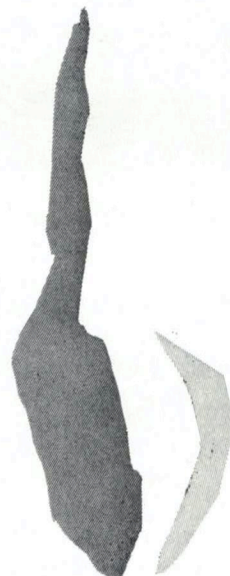
Did you

look before you
leaped?
measure the distance
convincing yourself
it was the only way
there was no more
hope no more
life no more
love?

Did you feel the wind
rushing past your heart
as you fell, endlessly fell

Did you
change your mind at the last instant?

Did you
fly willingly to greet your death
wings spread, soaring
angel's wings
at last?



I've stopped reciting your litany i've stopped sharing my pain i've given it
a band-aid a tranquilizer i've stuffed it with cotton balls and the bleeding's
dried up. I can even think about you without tears now i can analyze it
quite coldly,
with nary a trickle

Dry of eye and heart i can say *it was the best thing for you it was hard for
you to accept our love and support when you felt you had nothing to give in
return*

Dry and sober i can say that like betty blue you had already left your body
behind and only wish that someone had had the courage to save you from
having to do it yourself had had the courage to save you that final pain to
hold the pillow over your swollen face until life and breath were gone

I want to have been able to spare you your death

But there, tragically, there was your ounce of control the only control you
ever had over your own life when life became too terrifyingly dizzyingly
spinning when reality lost its edge in a drug-filled dream of whispers and
accusations of pitying glances of friends who knew too much and loved too
little you clung to the walls of your desire and then let go

I've stopped reciting your litany.

New skin grows pink and tender over my wounds.

But i still think about you i think about you every day without fail for some
part of every single day my thoughts about you become part of the new
tender pink skin settling around my heart like milk that's been boiled it tears
away and re-forms, tears away, re-forms, endlessly, still liquid

Tünde Nemeth

Polaris and Other Stories

By Fay Weldon

London: Coronet Paperbacks, 1986

reviewed by Martha Muzychka

Reading anything by Fay Weldon reminds me of eating a chocolate bar after a year on a diet. You savour each bite, tasting the sweet and the bitter, and occasionally cracking your teeth on a nut. But long after the chocolate bar is gone, Weldon's sharp, perceptive commentary on relationships in the 1980s remains, leaving us a little sadder and much, much wiser.

On the face of it, this latest collection of short stories from Weldon seems cheerless and unhappy. Husbands leave wives, wives leave husbands, and children leave their parents. But if you go below the surface and sink to the depths, in much the same way the submarine does in the striking first story, "Polaris," you find humour, understanding and acceptance.

"Polaris" is a series of contrasts between life and death, love and hate, peace and war. Meg's battle with her husband's dog is a battle with her husband, whose life doesn't change with marriage. Timmy expects his wife to follow the rules, the pattern of his own making, even if he doesn't, and this patently unfair treatment grates on the nerves.

Yet we laugh at the crew of the Polaris submarine who are obsessed

with fresh fruits and vegetables for their gourmet cooking while they are on their tour of duty under the ocean. But we would cry if we ever let the thought dominate that these men, concerned over the quality of olive oil, are manning a nuclear-powered submarine.

Weldon takes the familiar institutions of modern life — single parenthood, unfaithful lovers, disapproving parents — and dissects them with clever grace. In spite of the misunderstandings between the sexes and the resulting conflicts, Weldon discovers something to uphold: our ability to adapt, to change and to survive our exchanges with other people. How we do this is another matter, and we are sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, because of it.

"Christmas Lists — A Seasonal Story" best illustrates this principle of Weldon's. Louise and Rupert Brann are a happily married couple with children, sundry relatives and friends. In some ways, their relationship is a paradigm for modern marriage. But Louise makes lists, and lists of lists of things she must do and has done.

These lists, sprinkled throughout the story, show the progress of the Branns' relationship and the external forces which work upon it. In the end, Rupert comments to Louise: "I suppose now we're back to the beginning, there's nothing to stop us starting all over again. But let there be no more lists."

Not all of Weldon's stories have such clear or positive resolutions. "Birthday!" is a sad parable of the wife left in suburbia, dutifully looking after her children and husband, and guiding her life by the zodiacal signs. Mark, as a Gemini, reflects his dual nature by living a double life — the tired, overworked,

austere husband at home, the extravagant, high powered and sexy advertising sales executive at work.

Molly learns the truth when her husband's co-workers come to the house as a birthday surprise and present him with a special video tribute. We share Molly's disillusionment even as we feel anger that she, blinded by the ideal of marriage, failed to see the clues proving Mark's falsity.

The images that Weldon creates and the dismal domestic scenes she envisions could result in truly depressing stories. Yet even as Weldon shows women confronted with the realities of their lives, she refuses to let the women be bowed down. The stories are worth reading, both for Weldon's pointed insights and for her quick, witty commentary.

It is also part of Weldon's craft to portray the patterns of women's lives and the roles men play in them. Because we understand the paradigms too well, we sense from the start the direction the stories will take. And, as we read, we feel uncomfortable, our hearts and minds pricking with remembered hurts and shared experiences.

Weldon contrasts what women believe, or would like, their lives to be and what they actually are. While historians may deny that history repeats itself, Weldon proves, in this strong collection of stories that, in the war between the sexes, nothing ever changes.

bis

Martha Muzychka has left the collective of Breaking the Silence with this issue to return to Newfoundland. Martha plans to get an MA and write a thesis on her favourite writer, Fay Weldon.

BOOK REVIEWS

Science Fiction: The Best of Marion Zimmer Bradley

Edited by Martin H. Greenburg
Chicago: Academy Chicago
Publishers, 1985.

Moonsinger's Friends

Edited by Susan Schwartz
New York: A Tom Doherty
Associates Book, 1985.

reviewed by Janice Manchee

Science Fiction has long been a way to explore the present by looking at the future. Unfortunately, much early sci-fi was restricted to exploring the physical sciences from a distinctly male perspective. Two female authors, however, have provided a counterpoint to this through their focus on women and social change. In 1985, two anthologies were published to mark their work.

In *The Best of Marion Zimmer Bradley* we are treated to a broad selection of short stories and novellas that illustrate the evolution of Zimmer Bradley as a writer and a feminist. While some might not agree that she is a "true" feminist, she is committed to telling women's stories from our perspective, so helping to free us of social stereotypes.

Zimmer Bradley is perhaps best known for her Arthurian novel, *The Mists of Avalon*, which tells the tale from Morgaine's perspective. The *Darkover* novels, her well-known series, explore a forgotten Terran Colony that has developed a telepathic, feudal society with all the expected oppressive trappings for women. But several books in the series are dedicated to the story of the Renunciates or Free Amazons, women who fight against this oppression and create an alternative for those who wish to live outside the patriarchy.

In the anthology, the first offering, "Centaurus Changeling" (1954), tells the story of Beth who is the wife of an interplanetary diplomat. She becomes pregnant on a planet where no Terran woman has survived childbirth. But the story develops into an unexpected, at least for the 1950s, tale of an alien woman, Cassiana, reaching out in sisterhood to try to save Beth's life despite the colonial and patriarchal dictates of Terran culture. Zimmer Bradley reverts to 1950 stereotypes of women, but it is a minor problem compared to the strength of her work.

Some of the stories feature male protagonists and some feature women. Several, such as "The Wild One," explore sexual politics. In that story Hela Lassiter is a typical example of the over-protected, controlled wife, except that we discover she is a shape-changer who needs the freedom of the woods and finally takes it.

The second anthology is a tribute to André Norton, a classic sci-fi writer who took a male pen-name. *Moonsinger's Friends* provides a collection of short stories, almost all by young women writers in the tradition of Norton. There is a touch of fantasy and magic, the

companionship of a variety of animals, and fundamentally strong, dignified women. While there are several male-female love stories in the anthology, such as "Lion and the Sea" and "Team Venture," they are based on equality and on the heroine's commitment to her own quest.

Again, a story by Zimmer Bradley appears. "Sea Wrack" explores the pain of a woman unable to share in sisterhood due to a secret she must keep. "A Flock of Geese," by Anne McCaffery, is about Wicca, a castaway in time who is not always able to deal honourably with those trapped with her.

bts

Janice Manchee is the technological change co-ordinator with the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Dreams and Tricksters

by Tanya Lester
Winnipeg: self-published,
1985.

reviewed by Candis J. Graham

Every once in a while a book comes out that is entirely different. *Dreams and Tricksters* by Tanya Lester is just such a book.

Dreams and Tricksters is a curious hybrid, a cross between a novel and a collection of short

BOOK REVIEWS

stories. Each of the eleven stories is complete within itself, yet each one is linked to the others.

Tanya Lester's stories are about two women: Tyeanne Forsey, a white feminist, and Betsy Courchene, a Metis and a warrior. Both women are poor. They live and meet in a block of slum apartments, ironically named the Duchess Apartments, in downtown Winnipeg.

A tall woman with long black braids enters. I recognize her right away. She's the woman from my dreams. Trailing behind her is Bill. Unlike the woman, the caretaker hesitates at the doorway, before coming inside. A bystander at protest marches, I bet.

"Hi, I'm Betsy Courchene," she announces. "We got to do something about this goddam cold water."

Fighting words, just like in my dream.

Betsy is a single mother on welfare, trying to provide for two young daughters and a teenage son. Tyeanne is a writer and student. Both women are fighters - fighting to survive, struggling to gain some control over their lives. Confronting the enemy in all his many guises. The rich drama of their everyday lives is describes with humour and empathy.

Hey, baby, come and sit on my face," a construction worker yells at her from the middle of the street. Tyeane wonders if she should take the time to stop and kill him.

Tanya Lester has the courage and skill to write about issues that affect our lives: poverty, sexual harassment, lesbianism, formal education abortion, marriage, violence against women, racism,

single mothers, classism, sexism. This is one of the many things I like about *Dreams and Tricksters*. The stories are political. Not political theory or rhetoric or scholarly philosophy, but about social change and the fundamental day-to-day realities and politics of our lives. This perspective is missing from most of the books I read.

These political stories are also fun to read, because Tanya Lester is a talented writer. Her use of different voices and writing styles to tell these stories results in a delightful variety.

One of my favourites, "Josephine and the Pomegranate," is a story within a story. It's the middle of winter and the heat is off. Tyeanne is caring for Betsy's two daughters. The three of them are huddled under a sleeping bag, trying to keep warm, and Tyeanne entertains the cranky children with a wonderful fairy tale. It's the kind of tale I wish someone had read to me when I was a child. But I'm thrilled to read it at age 38.

In "Suicide Prevention," the tenants of the Duchess Apartments receive a flyer from their member of parliament. The MP says, "I am opening up my home to you, the constituent. I want you to feel welcome to drop by ..."

It just happens that everyone is on the street that day, having been evacuated from their apartments so men can come in to spray the cockroaches. Taking the MP at his word, Betsy drags Tyeanne and the other tenants to this house. They make it their home away from home until the fumigating is finished. This isn't quite what the MP had in mind.

Reading this book kept me chuckling and occasionally brought me close to tears. Page after page, I found myself cheering for these feisty women. And, as I cheered for them, I felt their energy propelling me to

take action in my own life. This is another of the many things I love about this book.

The writer, in the same spirit as her characters, has taken control over her writing by publishing and distributing the book. Publishing is an important issue for women readers and writers. Who and what gets published is controlled by a few people, usually men. They are rarely interested in feminist writing. We have a few small feminist publishers, like Pressgang in Vancouver and the Women's Press in Toronto, but they have limited funds and resources and are able to produce only a few books each year.

This enchanting collection is presented with a bright yellow cover. Each story is accompanied by a black and white illustration by the writer's sister, Louella Lester. Personal histories about the writer, illustrator, and proofreader are included at the back.

I, for one, am looking forward to Tanya Lester's next book. I'd especially like to read more about this pair of wild women, Tyeanne and Betsy.

bts

Dreams and Tricksters is available at some bookstores and for \$7.95 from

Tanya Lester
394 Simcoe Street
Winnipeg, Man.
R3G 1W2
(204)774-4372

Candis J. Graham is a fiction writer. She reads almost anything, and can't resist writing about exceptional books. She supports herself by working for voluntary organizations and is currently having a wonderful time at the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association.

Au Théâtre Vengeance brûlée

par Louise Guénette

Y a-t-il, parfois, dans une situation de viol, un moment où la victime pourrait prendre le dessus en attaquant son agresseur? Quelles en seraient les conséquences?

La pièce, *In Extremis*, présentée par le Théâtre d'Ia Corvée décrit une telle situation. Dans la première scène, Marjolaine est attaquée par un étranger qui entre chez elle. Les spectateurs, bouleversés, sont témoins de l'agression brutale, ne pouvant presque pas la supporter. La pièce réussit surtout à représenter le viol de façon réelle, dans toute sa laideur. L'objectif de l'homme est clairement la violence, la subjugation et l'humiliation.

Marjolaine réussit finalement à prendre le dessus en utilisant un vaporisateur d'insecticide, tout-à-coup à porté de sa main. Les yeux brûlés, l'homme est incapable. C'est alors que Marjolaine peut l'attacher et le tenir prisonnier dans son foyer, derrière les barreaux d'une tête de lit en cuivre.

La situation est maintenant renversée et Marjolaine soumet l'homme à un traitement semblable au sien, afin de le contrôler mais aussi pour se venger. L'auteur, William Mastrosimone, tente d'explorer les sentiments des femmes agressées qui ressentent la rage, la frustration et le besoin d'agir malgré un conditionnement qui les empêche souvent d'adopter des mesures violentes.

Maintenant emprisonné et blessé, l'homme continue quand même de menacer. Il est toujours confiant en lui-même puisqu'il a de son côté le système judiciaire et une société patriarcale qui transforme les victimes de viol en accusées. Il promet de revenir chez Marjolaine, une fois libre. Face à la possibilité de revivre ce malheur, Marjolaine décide d'éliminer son agresseur et de l'enterrer dans son jardin.

L'exécution de ce plan est empêchée par l'arrivée des deux colocataires de Marjolaine. L'homme,

très habile, les manipule et réussit à obtenir leur pitié. Il accuse Marjolaine d'avoir suscité son attention et ensuite de l'avoir attaqué sans prétexte. Finalement, les deux femmes ne croient plus Marjolaine. Cette trahison est le moment le plus difficile dans la pièce et a suscité beaucoup de critiques.

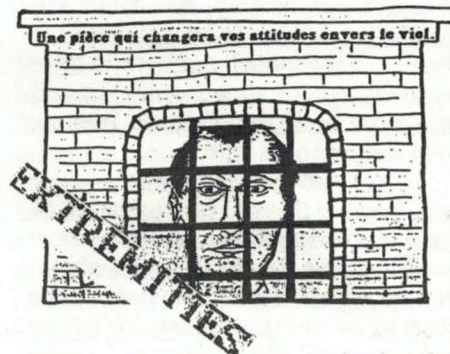
L'homme est délivré de sa cage afin que l'on soigne ses brûlures et c'est alors que l'on découvre le couteau de chasse qu'il cachait. Marjolaine s'en sert pour obtenir la vérité. L'homme avoue finalement les intentions qu'il avait avant même d'entrer dans leur maison. Maintenant défait, réduit à rien, il s'enfuit dans le foyer et demande à Marjolaine, en pleurant, de ne pas le laisser seul. Conclusion qui n'attire pas moins d'opposition.

Dans une lettre distribuée avec le programme, le Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions sexuelles (CALAS) et la Collective d'auto-défense féministe de l'Outaouais énumèrent plusieurs objections quand à la représentation de l'agression sexuelle dans la pièce.

Premièrement, peu importe ses intentions, l'auteur finit par propager des stéréotypes qui ne représentent pas la réalité. Alors que l'agresseur apparaît de plus en plus malade ou psychopathe dans la pièce, tous les centres qui travaillent contre l'agression sexuelle répètent sans cesse que seulement 3% des agresseurs ont des problèmes d'ordre psychologique. En réalité, les femmes doivent se méfier surtout des hommes qu'elles connaissent tels un parent, un voisin, un ami ou une connaissance.

Deuxièmement, on critique la comédie dans la pièce. Seul-es l'agresseur et les deux colocataires font rire les spectateurs. La comédie remplace-t-elle le drame entourant les agressions sexuelles? Et enfin, par sa manipulation, l'agresseur capte toute l'attention du public. Situation qui aurait dû être évitée.

Finalement, CALAS et la Collective d'auto-défense féministe



de l'Outaouais s'opposent à la situation créée dans la pièce, lorsque tou-te-s se liguent contre Marjolaine. Celles qui luttent contre l'agression sexuelle croient à l'entraide et à la solidarité entre les femmes. Le féminisme est basé sur les principes d'écoute et de valorisation du vécu des femmes. Enfin, dû à ce manque de solidarité, la situation décrite dans la pièce n'offre pas d'outil ou de méthode afin de lutter contre le viol.

Avons-nous une tendance innée à souffrir lorsqu'une autre femme est agressée ou pourrions-nous être insensible et incapable d'aider comme les deux femmes dans la pièce? C'est ce qu'il nous reste à déterminer. Même si il est pénible, ce moment de trahison dans la pièce représente peut-être une certaine réalité dans notre société.

Quelle que soit la réponse, il faut aussi se demander qu'elle est la responsabilité de l'auteur-e lorsqu'une pièce traite d'un sujet tel que celui-ci. Ne faudrait-il pas qu'il/elle tente de différencier son oeuvre des autres représentations stéréotypées? De plus, est-ce que sa tâche est de refléter une certaine réalité ou est-ce qu'il/elle se doit d'offrir des outils de défense?

bts

Louise Guénette était membre de Comité organisateur de la Semaine internationale des femmes 1987 et a donc participé à la promotion d'une des présentations de la pièce *In Extremis*. Elle est aussi membre de la Collective de BTS.

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would, from our first breath to our last, be used and abused to enslave us, would we relegate our daughters to share our burden, or would we instead teach them to become allies in resistance, and teach our sons to have more respect for all women? We will not know until the code we operate with has our own signature.

The consequences of withdrawing that old interpretation of good mothering is becoming apparent — that noise we hear is the chest-thumping of insecure males in the process of being weaned. We may feel we would like to spare our sisters that weaning process by taking on some of their pain, but it takes a crisis of identity to raise the consciousness of either sex. The maternal instinct does not aid this process. We do more for each other by challenging the maternal myth than by helping a victim share her pain. We must not

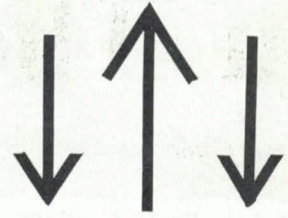
be diverted from pursuing our own choices.

* * *

I have finally left that mother country and have entered the beautifully sparse territory of the Crone. I stand here bone dry of any desire to mother anyone. I would not stoop to roll one stone away for you; for if I do you may never learn what I have learned — what my heart had to break to teach me.

bts

Gert Beadle was raised by her father. She married the boy next door at 18, mothered two sons and, in her sixties, became part of the feminist community. She has published three books of poetry and received the Persons Award (1984) and the Order of Canada (1986) for her work with women. Now 72, she lives in Kelowna, B.C.



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Cette situation est décourageante, cela va sans dire. La tendance à dévaloriser ce qui ne n'inscrit pas dans le moule prescrit (celui élucidé par l'éducation, la politique, la science etc.) compte parmi ses méfaits une méfiance aggrandie à l'égard des femmes, un esprit de défiance et une posture perpétuellement à la défensive chez les hommes. Notamment, une des attitudes les plus difficiles à surmonter est celle qui mène les hommes à étiqueter "féministe" toute femme qui ne semble pas satisfaite; cette étiquette permet le luxe de ne plus y prêter attention dans la mesure

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Mind you, Quebec has had very good reason to cling to its identity, but in clinging to that, it set up a rigid society that depended very much on women staying in the traditional mother role.

Women writers in Quebec aren't anti-nationalist, and neither am I. It's simply that they have a more open way of looking at what borders and frontiers are all about. Categories and borders are male creations, and women can't be contained by them.

BTS: *You certainly do see that in contemporary Quebec literature. In the 1970s, women in fact moved to the forefront of Quebec literature. Is this a result of a new openness to change? And an openness to experimentation and new forms?*

Pat: It's both. I think Quebec is in the mood for that kind of openness to change. If you look simply at relationships between Quebec writers and English-Canadian writers, for example, in the last ten years, the Quebecois, for the first time in their history, have started to show an interest in English-Canadian writers. And I don't think it's accidental that women are so central to that reaching

out.

The other thing that's happening in modern Quebec literature is what you can call avant-garde writing, a critical attitude to old forms of writing. Avant-garde writers regard traditional literary forms, and even language itself, as a "trap" that has to be opened up, deconstructed.

It's not an accident that women are so important in that movement, because women — far more than men — have been trapped in language and in the traditional forms of literature.

BTS: *Talking about contemporary women writers, I'm wondering what you see ahead for Quebec literature. Do you see these trends continuing?*

Pat: Feminist writing has been a very important element in Quebec literature since 1976, and it's still very important. But I don't think we should delude ourselves about change being an easy thing to accomplish — either in literature or in society.

There's still a long way to go. A hopeful sign is that one also sees the influence of feminism on much of the men's writing of the present generation. But that too is a slow process, because what's really at stake is getting to the roots of the

patriarchal nature of the symbolic order that we've all been living in for the last 3,000 years or so!

The wonderful thing about Quebec writers, who have always been fascinated by language, is that they're aware of this, and they just keep hacking away.

bts

Resources

de Lauretis, Teresa. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982)

Godard, Barbara. "The Language of Difference," *The Canadian Forum*, June/July 1985, 57-75.

Bersianik, Louky. *L'Eugelionne*. Vancouver: Press Gang, 1976.

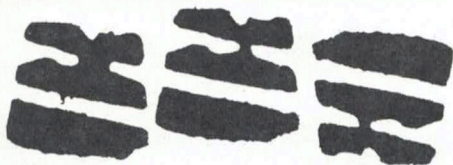
Nancy Russell recently completed her MA thesis, entitled "From Region to Desire: the Female Quest in Contemporary Prairie Fiction by Women," in the Institute of Canadian Studies at Carleton University. She has been a co-host on CKCU's Special Blend.

où ses opinions sont extrémistes.

En dépit de ces difficultés, les femmes commencent à entrevoir qu'elles ont peut-être plus en commun qu'on ne leur a laissé entendre. Elles commencent à comprendre également que leur contribution en tant que femme a, elle aussi, une valeur intrinsèque à part les valeurs apprises à l'école ainsi que dans les milieux du travail et ménager. En France comme ailleurs, les femmes sauront surmonter le sexisme inhérent à leur vie quotidienne, car en dépit de tout, les p'tites dames ne se font pas marcher sur les pieds.

bts

Martine Rochon habite à Toronto. Elle est rédactrice et éditrice en tant que pigiste. Elle a participé à l'élaboration du Every Woman's Almanac de 1988.



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Starhawk has learned a lot about power, which she identifies in three forms: "power-over," "power-from-within," and "power-with." We are more accustomed to power-over, the power of domination and oppression. This is the authoritarian power that supports the hierarchies of our society's institutions and allows the exploitation of those who do not fit the class, colour or sex of the power structure. It is "the power of the gun and the bomb."

Power-from-within is the spirit within each of us, united with our bodies in passions and ideas. It is the immanence of the Goddess, giving strength and linking the spirit to the world. Magic, which Starhawk defines as "the art of changing consciousness at will," comes from power-from-within.

Power-with is how and how much we listen to others. It is similar to influence but can only function in a

society of equals where there is no single leader and everyone appreciates the rights, values and existence of others. Idealistic as this may sound, many collectives operate effectively through power-with. Each member contributes equally rather than one or two members constantly being relied upon for leadership and ideas.

Both power-from-within and power-with empower people individually and collectively, and help them to realize they can change the world. Starhawk lamented the hopelessness in many lives: people who believe they are powerless to effect change stop feeling and become numb and apathetic.

Although she allowed that outright rebellion may be "a step in the right direction," Starhawk warned against responding in kind to power-over actions and thus perpetuating dominance and oppression. In place of rebellion, she proposed resistance to false images, such as the image of women as inferior beings or the image of the earth as a "knowable, controllable, big, dead machine."

According to Starhawk, resistance works through "talk, organization and action." We live in a collectively created reality that requires a collective effort to change. Starhawk emphasized the importance of working for change with others. As a group, taking action can be fun, not a chore or martyrdom. It feels good to act out our own wants and needs with others.

Ritual is a tool that can help to bind and support individuals working together. Starhawk spoke of the importance of ritual in her religion, for commemorating feast days and celebrating the Goddess. She also explained that ritual is useful in helping members of any organization to interact on many different levels: intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual.

In using ritual, we become less susceptible to controlling or being controlled on any single level. She suggested that simply taking action can be a magic ritual, like the establishment of the peace camp by the women of Greenham Common. Ritual gives value to any subject or

activity by affirming each participant and setting forces in motion that can cause change. For example, a consciousness-raising group can be a ritual for support and change.

In response to a question, Starhawk discussed the presence of both female and male elements in the Goddess, but she had a special message for women: the female elements must be awakened, drawn out and enhanced now, more than ever, because women are not yet empowered through their own spirituality. The dawning of the Goddess from within is a force for change ... a force for healing our hearts.

Starhawk spoke for over an hour and a half, drawing reactions and responses from her audience. Finally, at the end of the evening, she gave us the gift of a ritual. With the rhythmic beat of her drum, she led a meditation, chant and dance.

Somehow she managed to draw people into the long sinuous line of a spiral dance, winding and twisting through the rows and aisles of the little auditorium. The space reverberated with energy and sound. The ritual expressed Starhawk's commitment to joint action and the affirmation of the sacred within each of us.

She changes everything she touches and

Everything she touches, changes.

bts

Resources

Starhawk has written two books:

The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.

Dreaming the Dark—Magic, Sex & Politics. Boston: Beacon Press, 1982.

She has a third book coming out in 1987 entitled *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery*.

Yvonne Van Ruskenveld is a freelance writer and editor living in Ottawa and a member of the BTS collective.

RESOURCES

No More Secrets! A Conference on Child Abuse

This national conference is being held May 24-27, 1988. It is designed for professionals who work in the area of child abuse. The complex reality of incest survivors, children of alcoholics, battered children, and adult survivors of child abuse will be explored. Counselling theories, public mores, state responses will be challenged. Together, participants will share feminist theories, current practices and their impact on their work. For further information write to:

Community Resources and Initiatives
303A Melita Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 3X1
(416) 536-6340.



The third biennial **International Feminist Book Fair** will be held June 14-21, 1988, in Montreal, bringing together editors of books, magazines and newspapers with writers, translators, distributors and booksellers from around the world. The International Feminist Book Fair permits an exchange across

continents, languages and disciplines. For more information or to send your donation, write to:

Third International Feminist Book Fair
420 est, rue Rachel
Montreal, Quebec
Canada
H2J 2G7

Submissions for an anthology of writing by and about daughters of alcoholics are being solicited. Writings may cover the following issues: recollections of being a daughter of alcoholic parents; present day issues such as struggles with personal addiction, relationships and healing. Poetry, interviews, short stories, diary excerpts, etc... are encouraged. Send your material to:

Natalie Zlodre
3082 Melita Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 3X1.

Oops, Sorry!

We made a mistake in the last issue on Lesbianism and Feminism, Vol. 5, no. 4. The table of contents should have indicated that "Defining Myself as a Lesbian — Finding My Voice in a Community" was compiled by Joan Riggs.

This was the last issue that Joan worked on and we'll miss her input.

Advertise in *BTS*

Because of the rising cost of publishing the magazine and the lack of ongoing funding, the *BTS* Collective has decided to accept paid advertising. Our advertising rates are:

Business card size (3 1/2" X 2"):	\$25.00
1/4 page (3 1/2" X 4 1/2"):	\$50.00
1/2 page (7 1/4" X 4 1/2"):	\$100.00
Full page (7 1/4" X 9 1/2"):	\$200.00

Send your camera-ready ad to: *Breaking the Silence*, P.O. Box 4857, Station E, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5J1