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THE VOICES THAT DARE

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The Voices That Dare

The role of the storyteller is critical in all societies. In ancient times the storyteller was historian, soothsayer, critic, poet, dramatist, song maker and prophet.

Though we are living side by side with computers and micro chips, the modern storyteller continues this venerable tradition.

In this issue of *Tiger Lily*, entitled *The Voices That Dare*, we pay tribute to women writers who have not lost the fine art of storytelling — storytelling that challenges, empowers, teaches as well as entertains. These new voices have dared to write about themselves, have dared to attack the images imposed upon them by others and most of all to empower themselves as they create their own literature and write their own histories.

Sonya Wall's profile of *Jeannette Armstrong*, Medicine Woman, poet, novelist, educator and one of the founders of En'owkin International School of Writing which will teach and train First Nations writers, is inspiring in the sense that nothing is truly impossible if one believes in one's self and is secure within one's culture, Alice French's *My Name is Masak*, gives a rare look into the life of a young Inuit girl, Zanana Akande's article on *Fran Endicott*, the first Black woman in Canada to be appointed as Board Trustee to the Toronto Board of Education and her courageous if unpopular stand at that time to expand the school curriculum in order that minority children would get better quality education, gives her the status of warrior! Arun Mukherjee's essay *The Third World in the Dominant Western Cinema*, attacks the stereotyping of visible minorities that has taken place over centuries. In her essay, *After the Door has been Opened*, Ivy Williams, takes an indepth look at the mental and physical health of Canadian immigrants and refugees and in particular visible minority women and the government programmes that are being put in to place to assist both patient and health care givers and finally Z. Nelly Martinez literary essay on Isabel Allende's *The House of Spirits*, explores the need for women to empower themselves as their very survival as a species may well depend on it.

These are the stories that we at *Tiger Lily* take pride in presenting to you our readers. We feel that it is important that this century should be *the* century when the achievements of visible minority women be duly recorded. As we come to the end of the century, there is a perception that all is well, but this is not the case. The rise in racism and sexism and the disparaties between classes is becoming more prevalent each year. More people are going hungry, more women and children are being abused and more young and elderly people are becoming homeless. Our universe is aching from our destruction; the people who make up the planet are dying from lack of care, lack of respect and from economic, political and social violations, an overwhelming helplessness prevails.

Perhaps on the grand scale there is very little that one person alone can do. However, there are many steps we can all take: we can take care of our immediate environment and our families, we can give time and money to the many food banks and to women's hostels. In a time when women's programmes are being cut, we can petition our elected government officials that funding for women and minority programmes are critical and necessary, and we can raise our voices and fists in protest at injustices wherever they occur.

As one looks back over the past three decades, we realize how much the Women's Movement have contributed to change. We of course, all realize that there are disparities within the movement and future challenges that face visible minority women, but thanks to the efforts of millions of women globally (the unsung heroines) who have persisted in developing research programmes, who have established women studies programmes, women's shelters, have rewritten the forgotten women's history, have evoked the names of our goddess, who have challenged the economic and political status quo, who fight daily battles on the frontlines, who seek better housing and quality day care, who protest against the violations to our environment and march for equality and to all those women who are the heartbeat of our nations — *Tiger Lily* salutes you. The struggle continues!

THE ONLY WOMEN
The only woman who is able to be
is she who knows that
the dawn of her life begins now.
She who marks out her own domain
not with tears but with arrows.
Kate Flores

Ann Wallace

Jeannette Armstrong: A Native Writer and Administrator

by Sonya C. Wall

It is unusual to meet a writer who moves through genres as fluidly as Jeannette Armstrong, and even more unusual to meet one who combines a career in writing with the administrating and organizing of an International School of Writing. However, Jeannette Armstrong is such a person. She has managed to be both an exceptionally versatile writer — writing everything from children's literature to poetry, novels and, now, non-fiction — while also being an organizer and driving force behind the En'owkin International School of Writing located in Penticton, British Columbia.

Jeannette Armstrong, who is an Okanagan Indian, believes that through experimenting with different genres she explores her own creative process, and in so doing, she helps define a cultural stance for Native Peoples. Through her writing she seeks to bring healing and empowerment to Native Peoples. She achieves these goals by stressing the history, culture and spiritual strength which are inherent within the traditional Native community. She believes that writing is essential to the Native community as it helps define and resolve the cultural problems which face Native People today.

It is, as she explains, "Important to present my own and, indirectly, other Native People's journeys; to record the tracks that are left. Affirmation is important to the community — there is a difference in saying, "I am

not like you", and in saying, "Here is my beauty and my understanding of my cultural beauty." Jeannette believes that through the defining of Native Peoples' cultural beauty one is able to clear up misconceptions and stereotypes associated with Native Peoples that have been founded and promoted by non-native writers.

Because Jeannette believes that language and writing are empowering and because she sees a real need for more work to be published by Native writers, she became a driving force behind the establishing of the En'owkin International School of Writing. The school was established by the En'owkin Centre and by six bands of the Okanagan Nation. The first term of this unique school commenced in September of 1989, and its purpose, as stated in the school's pamphlet is "not only to assist Native students to find their voice as writers, but to encourage them to interpret and record Native experience through Native eyes, and thereby to promote understanding of the world-view and cultural complexity of Native Indian people."

The Writing Program offered by the school consists of five courses which are accredited by either Okanagan College or the University of Victoria. One of the five courses deals with publishing and a goal of this course is to develop a Native publishing program which is attentive to the particular characteristics of Native writing. The En'owkin Centre will publish an annual journal that will feature the work of the Native students enrolled in the writing program and it may also include some critical writing.

Theytus Press, who publishes Jeannette's work, was one of the motivating forces behind the establishing of an International Writing School. Theytus, a division of the En'owkin Centre and Canada's first Native Indian publishing house, brought to Jeannette's attention the need for potential Native writers learning their craft from established Native writers using literature and curricular materials written by Native writers and published by Native presses. Jeannette listened, agreed, and decided to look into the possibility of starting a Native writing school.

"There is a demand for the writings of Native People, both fictional and non-fictional, and also for school curricular material; yet there are neither enough Native writers to keep up with the demand nor presses that have enough integrity not to try to alter the work given them. So, the idea to start a Native writing school was viewed as a solution to the problem and was discussed two years ago at the workshops given through the Centre. The idea was further fuelled by the Feminist Book Fair held in Montreal in 1988. There I met with so many indigenous writers from all over the world who were experiencing the same problems we were: lack of materials and literary works to teach people about their own culture and a lack of presses and editors who respect the language, ideas and syntax of a Native writer's work."

Because Jeannette is not only a writer, but also an administrator of the En'owkin Centre, she knew what was needed to start an accredited Native writing school. She went about looking for public educational institutions willing to affiliate themselves with the program and found two: The University of Victoria and Okanagan College. She then got approval from the Board of Elders and secured base funding with the Department of Indian Affairs. Then, in order to help raise funds, add credibility and gain more ideas, she put together a Steering Committee made up of writers from all over North America. She also arranged for some of these writers plus other Native writers not on the Steering Committee to teach writing seminars at the school.

One important element of Native writing which Jeannette and the other writers involved with the writing school want to stress is the Native art of storytelling. They emphasize that this is not only a creative but a spiritual process. Jeannette, in her two children's books, *Enwhisteetkwa* (1982) and *Neekna and Chemai* (1984), uses a written form of the Native oral tradition of storytelling to teach Native children about their history and culture. She believes that it is essential for Native children to read books which tell their history from their point of view in order for them to develop a positive image of their people — one which will allow them a firm foundation from which they can determine their own identity.

The two books detail the life of the Okanagan bands before contact with white people. They illustrate the seasonal tasks that were performed by the Okanagan people and emphasize the importance of the individual's role in ensuring the well-being of the community. Respect for one's elders and for the traditions they uphold is also emphasized as is the importance of traditional dances, songs and religious rituals which are performed to honor the Great Spirits.

Neither of the books concentrates on the effect of contact between the Okanagan people and white people and this empowers the stories because the focal point is on Native Indian culture and heritage and not on Native people's response to white people's culture or white people's response to theirs.

In her novel, *Slash*, which is set in modern day, Jeannette deals with the problems facing Native youths. She parallels the traditional Native community life with the life offered by urban white society and illustrates the spiritual and physical danger facing Native youths who try to reject their own culture and history.

In the epigraph to the novel she intimates that stories and laughter are the strength of the Native people and this belief is borne out in both Jeannette's writing and in her conception of the function of the writing school. The innovation and power inherent in Jeannette's writing is equal to that of her creative vision and both this ability and her contribution to the

upholding of a traditional, yet progressive, Native culture is inspiring to all peoples.

Sonya Wall is completing her Ph.D. on Caribbean Women Writers at Simon Fraser University, B.C.

Breath Tracks

by Jeannette Armstrong

From The Landscape Of Grandmother

Words are memory
a window in the present
a coming to terms with meaning
history made into now
a surge in reclaiming
the enormity of the past
a piece in the collective experience of time
a sleep in which I try to awaken
the whispered echoes of voices
resting in each word
moving back into dark blue
voices of continuance
countless sound shapings which roll thunderous
over millions of tongues
to reach me
alive with meaning
a fertile ground
from which generations spring
out of the landscape of grandmother
the sharing
in what we select
to remember
the physical power in thought
carried inside silently

pushing forward in each breathing
meaning wished onto tongues
transforming with each utterance
the stuff of our lives
to travel on wind
on air
to bump wetly
against countless tiny drums
to become sound
spasms coursing upward into image
there to turn grey silence
into explosions of colour
calling up the real
the physical
the excruciating sweetness of mouth on mouth
the feltness of the things of us
then settling soundless
colourless
into memory
to be hidden there
reaching ever forward into distances unknown
always linking to others
up to the last drum
vibrating into vast silence

Travelling Song

A spirit
travelling on the wind
touched me
with its song
opened the door
swept me upward
I looked
saw stars
and desert red
painting paths
on lonely stretches
of land
for once
alone
with quietness
there is beauty
there

In the distance
a soft light
cast shadows
from a window
come back
come back

I will come home
bringing star designs
and desert paint
a quiet song
to sing
when the travelling song
ends

I will have things
to take out
and give you
before
I leave
for the silent
place

Threads of Old Memory

Speaking to newcomers in their language is dangerous
for when I speak
history is a dreamer
empowering thought
from which I awaken the imaginings of the past
bringing the sweep and surge of meaning
coming from a place
rooted in the memory of loss
experienced in ceremonies
wrenched from the minds of a people
whose language spoke only harmony
through a language
meant to overpower
to overtake
in skillfully crafted words
moving towards surrender
leaving in its swirling wake
only those songs
hidden
cherished
protected
the secret singing of which
I glimpse through bewildered eyes
an old lost world
of astounding beauty

When I speak
I attempt to bring together
with my hands
gossamer thin threads of old memory
thoughts from the underpinnings of understanding
words steeped in age
slim
barely visible strands of harmony
stretching across the chaos brought into this world
through words
shaped as sounds in air
meaning made physical
changers of the world
carriers into this place of things
from a place of magic
the underside of knowing
the origination place
a pure place
silent
wordless
harmonious
from where thoughts I choose
silently transform to words
I speak quietly
powerfully become actions
becomes memory in someone
I become different memories to different people
different stories in the retelling of my place
I am the dreamer
the choice maker
the word speaker
I speak in a language of words
formed of the actions of the past
words that become the sharing
the collective knowing
the links that become a people

the dreaming that becomes a history
the calling forth of voices
the sending forward of memory
I am the weaver of memory thread
twining past to future
I am the artist
the storyteller
the singer
from the known and familiar
pushing out into darkness
dreaming splinters together
the coming to knowing

When I speak
I sing a song called up through ages
of carefully crafted rhythm
of a purpose close to the wordless
in a coming to this world
from the cold and hungry spaces in the heart
through the desolute and lost places of the mind
to this stark and windswept mountain top
I search for the sacred words
spoken serenely in the gaps between memory
the lost places of history
pieces mislaid
forgotten or stolen
muffled by violence
splintered by evil
when languages collide in mid air
when past and present explode in chaos
and the imaginings of the past
rip into the dreams of the future

When I speak
I choose the words gently
asking the whys
dangerous words
in the language of the newcomers
words releasing unspeakable grief
for all that is lost
dispelling lies in the retelling
I choose threads of truth
that in its telling cannot be hidden
and brings forward
old words that heal
moving to a place
where a new song begins
a new ceremony
through medicine eyes I glimpse a world
that cannot be stolen or lost
only shared
shaped by new words
joining precisely to form old patterns
a song of stars
glittering against an endless silence

Blood Of My People

blood of my people courses through veins
coming to me through dust rising and falling
across ages the dust that is my people
that is the land rises a continuous red line
across people across time is what we are
the living pulsing walking earth
inside me this collection moves a brief shadow
under the sun lifted by air pushed by the force
of earth circling majestically silent
this small storm for one intense moment
this fragile breath lifted to whirl to dance
to fly the elusive magic of weightlessness
catalytic movement needed to press blood
forward a red liquid stream that draws
ground upward that shakes earth and dust to move
to move a long line before settling
quietly back into soil

Poems by Jeannette Armstrong — from her book Breath Tracks to be published by Williams-Wallace 1991.

My Name is Masak

by Alice French

Alice French (1930-) was born on Baillie Island in the Northwest Territories. As a child, she attended All Saints' Residential School in Aklavik for seven years. She wrote about her childhood experiences in *My Name Is Masak*, an excerpt of which follows.

In the spring of 1937 when I was seven years old my father told my brother and me that our mother had tuberculosis. We would have to go from Cambridge Bay to the Hospital in Aklavik. So when the Hudson's Bay Company ship came in with supplies, my father and mother and my brother, Aynounik, and I, sailed back on it. We got measles on board and that made my mother even sicker. I didn't know how long it took us to make that trip but it seemed to last forever.

When we landed at Aklavik my mother went to the hospital and my brother and I were told we would be going to a boarding school, whatever that was. My father tried to explain that a boarding school was where children lived and went to school. He would not be able to take care of us while mother was in the hospital and we would have to stay there. I did not like the idea. My brother was only three years old and too young to understand.

Alone.

How could there be so many people living in one building? I was so scared that I hung onto my father's hand. I did not like it there and I did not want my father to leave us. There were too many people. My brother was taken away by one of the supervisors. I tried not to cry in front of my father — he felt bad enough as it was.

An Eskimo girl, whose dialect I did not understand, took me to the playroom. She was talking to me in Eskimo, but it did not make sense.

Thank goodness she spoke English too. She told me that we were having supper soon. I asked her if I would see my brother. She said yes, at supper time. Then she introduced me to the other girls by my Christian name — Alice. My Eskimo name was not mentioned and I did not hear my name Masak again until I went home.

Then I became aware of different languages. I asked my new friend what dialect the girls were speaking. I was told that it was the language of the Mackenzie Delta and that most of the Eskimo children were from there, except for a few from Coppermine and Cambridge Bay. There were a lot of Indian children from the upper Mackenzie. They were mostly Loucheux with some Dogribs and Slaveys.

Then a white lady came in to tell us it was supper time. Everyone got into line except me. She took my hand told me her name was Miss Neville. I was taken to one of the lines and told that this would be my place from now on. We marched in single file to the dining-room. Suddenly, I saw my little brother. I started towards him, but I was told to stay in line. How little he looked, lost and lonesome. I felt like going over to tell him that everything was going to be all right, only I was not too sure of that myself.

After supper we went back to our side of the school. I did not even get to talk to my brother. We saw each other only at mealtimes. Sometimes we had the chance to shout at each other while playing outside but even outside the boys and girls were not allowed to mix.

Sometime later that fall Reverend H.S. Shepherd, our minister, came to the school to tell me that my mother had died. I did not believe him because I had visited her that morning. I went back to the hospital to find her but the bed she had been in was empty. How could she be there one day and not the next? I felt terribly alone. She was the only link I had with home and the life I had been used to. My father had gone back to his trap-line and we would not hear from him for a long time. It was not out of cruelty but out of necessity that he left us.

Boarding School

Inside the school we had four dormitories on the girls' side. I was in the youngest girls' dormitory for ages six to eight. The dormitories were joined by a big common washroom. There were towel hooks along both walls, wash basins, and jugs of water on a long table. Little brushes and tins of powder were on a shelf built into the middle of the table. I had to wait to see what the other girls would use the little brushes for, so I watched what they did with them as we got ready for bed.

So that was what it was — to brush your teeth with. I wondered what that was supposed to do for you. Sombody told me that it was to keep you from having holes in your teeth. They certainly did have a lot of strange ideas. Another idea was combing your hair with coal oil when you

first came to the school. That was to kill the head lice. I didn't have any but we all had to suffer through the coal-oil treatment whether we had lice or not.

Our house mother's name was Annie and she had a room just off the washroom. She told me that my mother was her cousin. That did not mean that I would be favoured above the other girls, but it felt good to know that I had a relative close at hand. She got us off to bed at night and woke us up in the morning.

The staff in our school slept in rooms off the hallway. Downstairs were two big classrooms, kitchen, staff dining-room, children's dining-room, principal's office, laundry room, a furnace room and two playrooms. The lavatory used to be outside until they had one built into the side of our playroom. The whole of the basement was a storeroom for school supplies and food was kept there, like in a root cellar.

Our days started at seven in the morning. We dressed, washed, and brushed our teeth, made our beds and tidied our dorms. Then we went down to breakfast at eight o'clock.

Breakfast usually was porridge, sweetened with molasses, bread and jam, and tea to drink with sugar and milk. It never varied except on holidays. At nine we went to the classrooms. Then a break for lunch — soup, bread and powdered milk — and back to school again. Supper was the big meal of the day with fish, meat, potatoes, dessert, bread and tea. We had this at five-thirty, usually after a walk around town, or out into the country with our teacher. Bedtime was seven o'clock for the little ones, eight o'clock for the next lot and so on, until the oldest were in bed at ten and the lights were out. I expect it was the same for the boys.

While we were getting ready for bed we talked about the scary stories we would tell after the lights were out. I shivered thinking about them while I brushed my teeth. Betty, standing next to me at the sink, jabbed me in the ribs and scared me half to death.

'Hey Alice,' she said. 'Did you know that we have a ghost in our dorm? She always sits in the corner combing her hair and you can see the blue sparks flying in every direction.' I started to shake because my bed was in one of the far corners of the room.

'Which corner?' I asked in a quavery voice.

'Your corner,' she said, and went off to bed.

Then Miss Neville came in and I pleaded with her to tell us a story. As long as she was telling a story the lights would stay on and maybe the girls would go to sleep or be too tired to tell ghost stories.

'Not tonight, Alice,' said Miss Neville. 'All right, girls, time for bed. No talking after lights out, please.'

She looked around to make sure that we were all under our covers and then she turned out the light and closed the door. It sure was dark in there then. I made certain that my bedding was loose so that I could jump out

of bed fast if I had to.

Then they began to tell stories. Why did they always have to be scary ones — reindeer herders taking a coffin creaking through the woods on a sleigh, men reincarnated in dogs, rattling doors and the Devil's cloven hoof-prints on the snow?

Connie, whose bed was closest to the door, was posted as lookout. Her job was to tell us if someone was coming, but she was a most unlikely choice for the job. She talked more than any of us, and often she would forget that she was supposed to be listening for the supervisor's footsteps. As a result we were caught talking and were punished. We had to stand in the corner of the room for half an hour. This got to be very cold, for all we had on was our nightdresses.

One night I was punished in another way for using my bed as a trampoline. I was showing the girls how to go into a standing position from a belly flop. As I came down the bed collapsed to the floor with a crash. Just as I disappeared from view into the bedding, the door opened and there stood Miss Melville.

'What is going on here?' she asked sternly.

There was a silence while I climbed from the ruins of my bed. She came over and grabbed my shoulder and gave me a good shaking.

'Alice, how many times have I told you not to jump on your bed?'

'Many times, Miss Melville,' I answered with my teeth rattling in my head.

'That is correct,' she said. 'For being a naughty and disobedient child you shall sleep in your bed just as it is for a week. Now all of you settle down and no more nonsense.'

I climbed into bed and found that it was quite comfortable. In the morning I woke up and realized that I had slept through the night without once waking up because of the cold. By the end of the week I had grown quite attached to my bed on the floor and hated to give it up for another.

Friday night was bath night. All one hundred and twenty-five of us were issued clean bedding and clothing. This consisted of one pair of long underwear, one pair of fleece-lined bloomers, one pair of black woollen stockings, a navy blue dress and clean towels. We took this with us and all headed for the laundry room. Inside there were eight galvanized tubs ready for use. These tubs were all filled by hand and had to be emptied the same way. We bathed two to a tub. Sometimes it got so steamed up that we could not see who our partners were. Our hair was washed by the bigger girls. Following this a jug of cold water was poured over us. This was to shrink our pores so that we would not catch cold, we were politely told.

Saturday was the most pleasant day of the week. We did all our housework in the morning — sweeping and dusting and tidying our dorms. After lunch, if we had parents in town, we could go home for the

afternoon. I sometimes went home with my good friend who was called Peanuts because of her size. Her house was right in Aklavik. Then we went out to the Hudson's Bay store or to visit our other friends. Sometimes we just stayed at home enjoying the family atmosphere. After the crowded school life it felt good to be by ourselves for a while. Her mother would remind us that it was almost time to leave and we would collect some dried meat, bannock, butter, and sweets to take back to school with us.

Once a week, usually on Sunday, we were given seven candies by our supervisor. We were not allowed to eat them all at once. Instead we put them in a small box with our name on it and each night before bedtime we were allowed to have one candy. Sometimes we promised a friend a candy in return for a favour, and so that day we would have to go without.

Something else that we had each day was cod-liver oil, and it sure didn't taste good. It came in five-gallon cans on the boat during the summer. Before it was dished out it was poured into a two-pound can which our supervisor held. We would file past her each morning for a tablespoon and then dash to the toilet to spit it out. When our supervisor caught on to this we had to stay and open our mouths to show that we had swallowed the horrid stuff. I guess that was why we were so healthy. But by the time the five-gallon can was empty it was so rancid you could smell it a mile away. I have never taken cod-liver oil since.

Alice French, *My Name Is Masak* 17-30

Excerpt from *Northern Voices Inuit Writing in English*. University of Toronto Press. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

The Third World in the Dominant Western Cinema: Responses of a Third World Viewer

by Arun Mukherjee

Recent feminist criticism of dominant cinema has shown how it constructs images of women to suit the psychological needs of the male spectator and the male filmmaker. The woman is contained, co-opted, and often dismembered so that the male needs of dominance and status quo can be satisfied. The feminists insist that what we see on the screen are male fantasies of what a woman ought to be. The cinema cleverly displaces the conflicts of male-female relations in the real world and contains the intransigent woman through its narrative and cinematic techniques. Sometimes it succeeds so well that the female spectator gives her allegiance to it.[1]

As a female viewer, I have no difficulty in sympathising with the analysis of the western feminists. However, as a Third World viewer, occupying a marginal space in places like the media and the universities, I have other concerns which I consider to be more wide-ranging. My concerns are with the misrepresentation, manipulation and fantasization of the people of the Third World. It is not only my sex that the western films demean, but my culture, history and racial being as well — if the individualistic west can understand such a thing as the collective being.

Of late there has been a spate of films, television serials, songs and novels about the Third world. They join in with the images of the starving, the sick and the dying whom the likes of Mother Teresa administer. One needs also to add to these images the voices of people like Ronald Reagan and George Schultz who tell the naughty, socialist-minded Third

World leaders that they will never be able to raise their countries above the dung-heap if they don't adopt the capitalistic ways.

What is, of course, hidden behind these images and pronouncements is the bitter history of colonialism. However, what is not admitted does not go away but keeps hovering like Banquo's ghost at the banquet. No matter how many fathoms deep the white man tries to bury his burden, it continues to surface unrepressed. Or else, why make films like "A Passage to India," "Gods Must Be Crazy," "Out of Africa" and "Crocodile Dundee"?

Of course, there is nothing wrong with facing one's past and coming to terms with it. If one does it honestly, one can lay to rest the nagging anguish caused by the sins of omission and commission, and get on with the business of living. To a certain extent, that does happen in "Gandhi." It is an honest movie which takes an unflinching look at the past. Whatever its shortcomings, it is a film that continues to attract me and retains its appeal through multiple viewings. It is because I feel that the filmmaker respected the country and the people he was portraying and allowed them to speak in their own voice.

This is not what one can say about "A Passage to India," "Out of Africa" and "Gods Must be Crazy." What I see happening in these films is the white man's attempt to exorcize the past and to make it appear as though the bad part — the sin and guilt part — never happened. What I see happening in these films is cultural recolonization, an attempt to go back to the place of one's past crime and recreate the past in a way that the crime is displaced, muffled, washed out.

That impulse, of course, is there in much of white man's literature. The question is, how to do what has to be done and stop the naggings of the guilt-ridden conscience? In James Fennimore Cooper's novel, *Deerslayer*, Natty Bumpo, the good white man, kills an Indian in self-defence, and the dying Indian utters a benediction absolving Bumpo of the guilt. As Peter Abrahams has David Brown, the black pastor, say in *The View from Coyaba*: "It is not enough to take what is mine. You want me to tell you it is right for you to do it."[2]

That is what happens in all the three films I want to look at. The white man in them wants the Third World native to tell him that it was all right for him to have taken away the victim's birthright, that it was indeed good for the native that the white man came to his country and "civilized" him. And if the Third World native refuses to do it in the real world — just look at the voting records of the Third World countries in the U.N. — the white man will construct images of him in the imaginary world of art and make him perform the desired genuflections.

These films use many subtle and not so subtle techniques of cinematic discourse to present an aesthetic experience that is demeaning and infuriating for the Third World viewer. These devices include distortions of

history and contemporary reality, subtle omissions, imposition of the perennial western form of romance, caricature of the native people's viewpoints and characters, exoticization of their land, and presentation of the western characters as larger than life and benevolent educators. Most westerners do not see the racist and imperialist designs of these aesthetic experiences. As well, they dismiss the Third World viewer's responses as "ideological," and "too political," art supposedly being free from ideology and politics.

"A Passage to India," for example, was lauded whole-heartedly in the media as another of David Lean's classics and awarded its share of Oscars. Most of my white friends commented on how beautiful the photography was, how lovely the Indian landscapes. Of course, there were a few deviations from the Forster novel, but then the filmmaker is allowed to take a few liberties, they said. The more astute among them reacted negatively to the clown-like portrayal of Professor Godbole and the happy ending where Aziz bids farewell to his white friends in the most submissive manner. But the portrayal of the Third World is not a matter of identity crisis for them as it is to us, products of the soil, visible carriers of its stamp upon our skins, our features, our minds. They went back to teaching the canonical works of English and American literature, popular literature being a pariah at our universities, along with questions of racism and imperialism.

One cannot go back to these higher pursuits, however, if one has a child who must go to see films like "Gods Must Be Crazy" and "Crocodile Dundee" because all his other classmates have seen them. One must sit through the films, feeling like a spoilsport and a weirdo, because everyone else seems to be laughing their heads off. And finally, one must go through an impassioned session of discussions with a nine year old child, to make him aware of the indignities perpetrated on his kind of people in the name of harmless fun. One feels a sense of profound alienation at such times. One writes to counter that alienation and to put on record that the discourse of cultural imperialism is not the only discourse.

What then, bothers one most? Perhaps it is the all-pervasive narrative structure of a white man loving a white woman in an exotic tropical landscape filled with equally exotic natives. The centre of all the three films is this romance, embellished with strains of classical western music. What is at a premium is the sexuality of the white characters, hauntingly explored. The cinematic experience is entirely devoted to the tensions of the heterosexual romance. All else is secondary.

Thus, in "A Passage to India," Lean shifts the focus away from Dr. Aziz, who is the true hero of the Forster novel and turns it on Adela, with whom he opens the film. Lean manufactures a rather tacky section in which Adela sees erotic sculptures in the wilderness, supposedly "to let you see she is beginning to awaken sexually ... because India can do this

you know."[3] The section subtly changes and depoliticizes the toughest aspects of Forster's novel. In the film, Adela is overpowered by this erotic awakening to such an extent that she dares to talk to Aziz about "love" and asks him whether he "loved" his wife. His reply to this is, "We were young, and we were a man and a woman." In the book, however, the conversation is not so civilized. Instead of talking about "love," Adela asks Dr. Aziz: "Have you one wife or more than one?"[4] It is this insensitive question that leads to disaster and not Adela's sexual awakening. Stung, muttering, "Damn the English even at their best," Aziz plunges into one of the caves "to recover his balance."[5]

The film, however, sweetens the imperialistic relations of the British and the Indians to mere social misunderstanding. The "bridge party" is seen as a personal failure of the Turtons who just happen to be bad-mannered. Mrs. Moore's acid comments about "an exercise in power and the subtle pleasures of personal superiority" somehow make it all right to have an empire if only one exercized good manners. The book is much tougher on Mrs. Moore.

The "love" talk helps Lean to rewrite the court scene in an idiom as tacky as the fake erotic sculptures. Lean tells us that Ronny has willingly stepped down as magistrate in Das's favour because of the stringent requirements of British justice and sense of fair play and not because, as the novel has it, the Indian defence lawyers have demanded it. Finally, there is a long, awkward statement from Adela about her "intimate" conversation with Aziz about "love" and how she came to realize that she and Ronny did not love each other. It is Adela's sexuality, her western cultural values about love as essential for marriage that gain the centre of the stage, obliterating her insensitive assault on Aziz's sensibility.

Focussing the film on Adela's sexual misadventure allows Lean to decentre Dr. Aziz. How does it matter to him if Aziz is the first character to whom we are introduced in the novel, or that the book also closes with him, aloof and intransigent? The Aziz we meet in the film is a wimp and not one who, "like all Indians," is "skilful in the slighter impertinences."[6] Thus, in the book, when Mrs. Turton and Mrs. Lesley appropriate Aziz's tonga without even noticing him, let alone asking him, he subtly, ironically underscores their rudeness by commenting: "You are most welcome, ladies."[7] The film allows no such "impertinences." This attitude is what, probably, made Victor Bannerjee, the Indian movie actor playing Aziz, comment bitterly on the Hollywoodian imperatives of the film.

One of the major final let downs of the film comes when we see Fielding and Stella projected against the Himalayas with loud background music and a submissive Aziz bidding them goodbye. The novel admitted that power relationships cannot be transformed into friendships. The film papers over this profound statement in a most awkward and disturbing manner. What else can one expect from a producer/director who believes

in the white man's burden? Lean comments in an interview that he deliberately "toned down" the novel's hatred towards the British Raj." It's all very well to criticise the English but just take a look at New Delhi, look at the railway system, look at the postal system — which works. We've left them all sorts of bad things, I suppose, but they also got some very good things."[8]

Not only does Aziz embrace Fielding, unlike the bitter and vitriolic Aziz of the novel, we hear his voice reading a conciliatory letter to Adela asking her to "forgive him." It is a very subtle manipulation of the semi-humorous, semi-ironic letter he writes in the novel. Of course, he never asks her to "forgive him." Nor does he say: "It has taken me all this time for me to appreciate your courage." The poor native, it took him two years to learn his manners. The film ends with Adela back in England, standing against a window, as the rain falls soothingly outside. As Michael Sragow so approvingly puts it: "It's as if, with its wild panoramic beauty and apocalyptic catastrophes, her time in India was a primal dream — a dream she now carries with her, every waking hour."[9]

What a nice closure! The native is put where he belongs — in the "primal dream" that comes to disturb one's tranquillity once in a while. One can continue with the business of daily living once one has contained the native in this dream space. In fact, it is a double containment. The native is relegated to the subordinate role in the dream structure of the film and then further relegated to the dim memory of the white character gone back to the Metropolis.

This is what a Third World viewer sees in films like "Gods Must Be Crazy," "Out of Africa" and "Crocodile Dundee." The native in all these films is the white man's fantasy of the noble savage, naked and painted, content in his habitat. Mick Dundee of "Crocodile Dundee" is the fantasy white man who lives in harmony with nature and is at home with the natives. He even paints his face and participates in the ritual midnight dance in the recesses of the wilderness. As to the aborigines' land claims, he says: "The aborigines don't own the land; the land owns them."

The natives in "Gods Must Be Crazy" are equally content. Only, the reality of apartheid is a lot uglier. As anthropologists Richard B. Lee and Toby Volkman point out, "The Bushman as Noble Savage is a peculiar piece of white South African racial mythology."[10] They demonstrate the contrasts between the fantasy !Kung San of the film and the way they really are in the 1980s. "There is ... little to laugh about in Bushmanland: 1000 demoralized, formerly independent foragers crowd into a squalid, tubercular homeland, getting by on handouts of cornmeal and sugar, drinking Johnnie Walker or home brew, fighting with one another and joining the South African army."[11]

Such dissenting opinions have not been on the forefront of media coverage. The film has been a run away success in Toronto. And it is not

just children who like it. Some colleagues of mine in the English department of an Ontario university could not see an ounce of racism in it. The film was for them an example of pure comedy and a living symbol of their belief that art and politics have nothing to do with each other. They could not see why the noble savage living an innocent, non-materialistic, non-urban life was offensive to me. For them the film was an unabashed criticism of the complex, machine-dependent urban life.

The stated and unstated meanings I see as a Third World viewer are much closer to the ones pointed out by Lee and Volkman than to ones seen by my fellow teachers of literature. It is galling to me to be told that !Kung San are content in their habitat when they don't even have one.

But the fantasy of the white man does not stop at the noble savage bit. His guilt, very much like Cooper's, makes him portray the native as voluntarily rejecting such bounties of civilization as the Coca-Cola bottle. Now what could be neater than that? The white man can enjoy his consumerism and standard of life without worrying about the native's poverty because not only does he like his poverty, but also because he rejects material goods since they destroy his harmonious life style. What could be a better salve for the white man's conscience?

Equally interesting for a Third World viewer are the clownish portrayal of Marxist revolutionaries who are ineffective, stupid as well as barbaric. They destroy the otherwise paradisical countryside in their frantic and meaningless flight from the forces of law and order. A Third World viewer wonders whether these are wishful portrayals of Mozambicans, Angolans, Namibians and ANC guerrillas. And how convenient to use the native to destroy his own countrymen. The insurgents are captured with the help of the Bushman hero's devices. Meanwhile the two whites in the film pursue such high-minded subjects as scientific experiments on elephant dung, dissemination of education to the benighted natives and, finally, romance.

The film is an out and out insult to the aspirations of the Third World people as a whole and particularly to the African people struggling for justice. It is disconcerting for a non-white Canadian to find that this longest running first-run movie in cities like New York and Toronto, has won acclaim from the pundits.

Although a non-white living in North America must face several types of blatant and not so blatant racism, it is the cultural racism of the subtle kind that hurts the most. "Gods Must Be Crazy," "A Passage to India" and "Out of Africa" are supposedly "better" movies. They do not propagate racism openly. In fact they are so seductive as depictions of lost paradises that they tend to disarm an unwary viewer. After all, what can be more apolitical than a man and a woman falling in or out of love? To the western audience saturated with this theme, the films may seem totally innocuous, no more than travel promotion for these countries. In fact, many people, including my gas-meter reader, have commented to me

about the lush natural beauty of India and Kenya as depicted in "A Passage to India" and "Out of Africa." The films obviously did nothing more for these people than to provoke a vague desire to visit these countries.

However, that is not how Third World viewers watched them. There were angry responses in India and Kenya. India banned "Gods Must Be Crazy" on grounds of racism. According to *The Toronto Star* of March 26, 1986, Kenyans considered "Out of Africa" to be "a demeaning racist movie." It is interesting to contrast these reactions to those of North American reviewers who, while acknowledging that "Out of Africa" paid no attention to the greediest land grab, spoliation and inheritance, went on to speak about its "epic" reach, its "sensuous" and "sensual" qualities. Their attention was focussed on the romantic couple in the lap of nature. These two elements, sexuality and the grand sweep of the landscape, were what stuck to their imagination.

But what does stick in the mind of a non-white viewer? Sam Kahiga, the Kenyan reviewer quoted in *The Toronto Star*, was deeply offended by the "positive image" of Lord Delamare, a man who once killed two Africans by running them down when they failed to jump away from his car in time. Kahiga says, "Such are the characters *Out of Africa* honoured."

It is instructive for non-whites and concerned whites to read what N'Gugi had to say about Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* in his book *Detained*. As he shows, Dinesen used an extensive animal imagery to portray Africans. His most acute criticism of Dinesen pertains to her use of Africa as a background for her erotic fantasies.[12]

There is no space in these films for the experience of victimization perpetrated by colonialism. No effort is made to sort out the mess of history. The Third World viewer feels nothing but a profound alienation and degradation upon seeing such films. The non-white viewer can only react with anger when, after seeing the marginalization and caricature of African people throughout "Out of Africa," he or she hears Karen Blixen's voice-over in Meryl Streep's fake Danish accent: "If I know a song of Africa, of the giraffe, and the African new moon lying on her back, of the ploughs in the fields and the sweaty faces of the coffee pickers, does Africa know a song of me? Would the air over the plain quiver with a colour that I had had on, or the children invent a game in which my name was, or the full moon throw a shadow over the gravel of the drive that was like me, or would the eagles of Ngong look out for me?"[13] This emotional self-indulgence is a masterful example of possessive individualism. Of course, Africans remember Dinesen, but not in the images of high romanticism as she would have wanted. N'Gugi's ruthless criticism of her writings is a perfect antidote for the sick sentimentality of the film.

At the PEN Conference in New York last year, Salman Rushdie was accused by angry American writers of being "prescriptive" when he

suggested that American novelists should also write about their country's imperialistic relationship with the developing countries.[14] Indeed, that is a question many of us have on our minds. How is it that the west keeps churning out works about attenuated sensibilities while disregarding the havoc caused by relations of imperialism in the less privileged parts of the world? And then, to add insult to injury, not only does it deny its complicity, it transforms our denuded, depredated earth into a colourful backdrop against which the drama of attenuated sensibilities can be played and re-played.

As long as such relationships prevail, a Third World viewer like myself can only feel what Aziz feels at the end of Forster's novel: "Aziz in an awful rage danced this way and that, not knowing what to do, and cried: 'Down with the English anyhow. That's certain. Clear out, you fellows, double quick, I say. We may hate one another, but we hate you most. If I don't make you go, Ahmed will, Karim will, if it's fifty or five hundred years, we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then, ... and then,' he concluded, half kissing him (Fielding), 'you and I shall be friends.' As the Mau sky and the earth say, in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' ... 'No, not there'."[15]

However honey-sweet the discourse of these films, it does not make us friends. Their fictional space is as unsuitable for friendship and understanding as Mau. They only lead to heartache and anguish and a long chain of misunderstandings.

FOOTNOTES

1. These concepts are presented in Annette Kuhn's *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).
2. Peter Abrahams, *The View from Coyaba* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 117.
3. David Lean interviewed by Harlan Kennedy, "I'm a Picture Chap," *Film Comment*, 21:1, January/February, 1985, p. 30.
4. E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass. (1924; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 164.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
8. "I'm a Picture Chap," p. 32.
9. Michael Sragow, "David Lean's Right of 'Passage'," *Film Comment*, 1985, 21:1, January/February, p. 27
10. Toby Volkman, Letter to *The New York Times*, reprinted in *Southern Africa Report*, June, 1985, p. 20.
11. Volkman, p. 20.
12. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (London: Heinemann, 1981), see pp. 34-38.
13. Quoted verbatim in the film from Isak Dinesen (1937, 1954; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 64.
14. Reported by A. Sikri, *India Abroad*, June 24, 1986.
15. *A Passage to India*, pp. 314-5.

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Fran Endicott, Trustee, Ward 7 Toronto Board of Education

by Zanana Akande

For more than a decade the New Democrat Party philosophy has influenced the direction and policies of the Toronto Board of Education. This achievement was no accident, but rather the result of the collectively aggressive efforts of the eight N.D.P. trustees, representing five of the eleven wards in the Toronto Board.

As one of the N.D.P. trustees Fran Endicott has reaped the rewards of her involvement and the resentment and reaction to her political association with the N.D.P. Yet Fran's pre-trustee community activities were focussed on the same goals for which she strives as an N.D.P. trustee.

Having graduated from the University of the West Indies with a B.A., Endicott, a native-born Jamaican, came to Canada to visit in 1978 and remained here. After a brief stint at the University of Regina, pursuing a graduate degree in an area of study not sanctioned by the academic leadership, Fran accepted an assignment in Toronto at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, as a projects officer for Third World Studies. It was a role which not only used her knowledge, but also sparked her interest and motivated her to greater involvement in the Third World community in Toronto.

It was during the seventies, a period of high immigration from the West Indies, and Endicott was involved in an institution devoted to studies in education and catering primarily to graduate level education of teachers relative to the practical needs of their daily roles. This put her in a front-line

position to hear the concerns of the education system regarding the integration of the immigrant students. Herself a Jamaican immigrant, she was also privy to the complaints and concerns of the West Indian immigrant population.

Armed with this information, and motivated by feelings of social responsibility coupled with a genuine desire to help, Endicott, with interested others, set about to provide the information/communication links which she hoped would facilitate West Indian integration into the school system. She helped to initiate the Black Education Project, a group which performed a wide variety of services from tutoring classes for students and counselling or advocacy for their parents, to presenting workshops for school board staff and lobbying boards for the initiation of better programs and the appointment of staff to address the problems. She co-authored a teaching text, *City Kids*, which included a more realistic picture of many urban students' lives. The text attempted to program the lessons, information, and attitudes teachers should present to today's students, while reflecting and so recognizing the reality of their lives as urban apartment dwellers, many from the working class, and living in multi-cultural or multi-ethnic communities.

The more extensive Endicott's involvement became in the school immigrant problem, the more obvious it became that this problem had existed for many years with other immigrant groups and the poor. She concluded that the sudden increase in Black immigrants only highlighted the problems which were demonstrated throughout the social system, although their base was political.

Endicott's acceptance of the invitation to run as an N.D.P. candidate for the Toronto Board trustee for Ward Seven seems as natural as the party's decision to solicit her candidacy. She was already a member of the N.D.P. party and knew their educational policies focussed on the concerns that she was already involved in addressing. Yet her interests have not been limited to only those relating to the immigrant populations in the schools but also include such issues as increasing parent involvement, labour relations and education, adult literacy, the schools' recognition of and response to changing social needs such as daycare centres and better programming to prevent low level streaming of poor and immigrant children.

Endicott does not see her role as a trustee ending at the Board table, but works with staff to effect what the system must do and be. She is an active committee member, designing implementation plans, defining and developing resources, and searching out financial and human backing for projects.

In spite of the defeat of several N.D.P. trustees in the 1985 municipal elections and their replacement with a covertly aligned Liberal Conservative Board coalition, Endicott has retained her seat as trustee for Ward

Seven and continues to work in her own personal style toward the goals she shares with the N.D.P. She maintains that the years of an N.D.P. majority on the Toronto Board has had a long standing effect. "The progressive presence of the Toronto Board has empowered people in a way which did not exist before. It has set a tone and affected Board practices. It has resulted in a change in style to the co-operative and collaborative. It has helped to plug people into the political system."

Regarding the N.D.P. party presence in the municipal arena, she expressed the belief that the advertised N.D.P. party affiliation of some trustees has emphasized the fact that trustees are politicians, not volunteers, and are influenced by their political party affiliation, even if such affiliation is not advertised.

Zanana Akande is a school principal. She lives in Toronto.

Because I Could Not Stop For Death

by Ramabai Espinet

Because I could not stop for Death
He kindly stopped for me
The Carriage held but just Ourselves
And Immortality.

Emily Dickinson

When He stopped I did not recognize him. I was told afterwards that is the only way — you wouldn't have stopped if you had known, they said. And I stayed with him for a long, long time. My best friend Shalimar called him Svengali and said to me over and over, "You can't see it, but you have changed, you have changed. He's chipping you up into small pieces and eating you. He's a dark — he's feeding off your life supply — soon all your energy will be depleted. And when he's finished you'll be like what a spider hangs at the end of his web — a dried up old skeleton. No one else will want you, but what's worse, you won't want yourself."

I never listened — or I heard but the words made very little impact. Death was very demanding: as a person, as a lover, as a thinker, as a companion, as a dependent. I lived on the edge and one false move would mean that I would go over forever. I knew that, and I knew too that it would be me who would take myself over. That's how Death works. He never pushes you. You have to reach the point where within your deepest

self you contain your own readiness for death, and then you do yourself in. Death means that the body kills itself, plain and simple. Suicide means that the self kills the body before it has arrived at the point of readiness for death. All this he taught me while he stayed awake at night and slept through the day so as to sustain his own readiness for the depletion of my storehouse of life.

Why did I stay? The moons were white and splendid, the nights velvety and long, the dawns new as only one who has been condemned, about to face the hangman's noose, can experience them. I stayed because I had to. Why else? He never beat me, but his abuses were unspeakable ravages of the soul. I did not merely endure them, I entered into them fully because they spoke a ghastly truth. Even their lies spoke a truth about fear and cowardice and the imploding nature of existence.

And Death was totally dependent. He had no means of living in the world of light and life and of human beings. He was forever imprisoned in a dark space where existence is an unthinkable torture and where one can only look on from the outside while human beings enter fully into living. The only experience he had of this living was through other people: through experiences of joy and pain, ecstasy and fear, of other people. Not his own. Never his own. Death was envious — of this and a lot more. Envious and sad.

Soon after we met he found it impossible to be away from my side for any time at all. And once after we had spent only a few weeks together he awoke in the night crying and calling my name. I had left the bed and had gone into the kitchen for a drink. An ordinary domestic occurrence. But for Death nothing was ordinary or domestic. Everything was possessed of apocalyptic significance. He was so afraid of being utterly destroyed, by what forces he alone knew. He knew death so intimately, he was it, after all, that he could not bear to contemplate losing even the small fraction of what he dared to call life.

What pleased him most was miniature life of all kinds. You could control it so effortlessly. One spring I planted some seeds in a box in preparation for my summer balcony garden. When the tiny plants came up, a thickly treed little forest, he laughed like a child and cut out dozens of tiny paper horses and unicorns to send them galumphing through the seedling forest. And once, in a more tropical climate, there was a flood in the rainy season and the rivers overflowed. We heard that all the river creatures had been washed out of their habitats and that in the middle of the island, right there on the roads surrounding the largest river, baby alligators were running wild. He could hardly contain himself. We got into the old car and tore off for the country. It was a magical day — wet and absolutely new after the flood. The Death I knew worshipped new beginnings.

By the time I met him, Death was utterly helpless. I was to be his sole means of existence while he took me at accelerated speed into the plains of nothingness. But he didn't look helpless to me — just temporarily disabled. I thought he needed only to regain his strength and that I could quickly spend a little time doing that for the sake of art and all the rest.

For Death was also an artist. He had savvy and more clarity than anyone else. He was never guilty of crooked thinking in matters of the world — always pure like a mountain spring. How could he fail to be? The world was outside him, he was never one of us. But he was impelled to confront his soul's deep eye again and again. It was an irresistible flirtation. He looked often, and couldn't help showing me too, a lagoon of such indescribable murkiness that I have often doubted since that one being could contain all of it. Even he, dark messenger, could not stand its depths.

Shalimar began to see physical changes in me. "You're not so old, and look at what is happening. Your mouth is drooping low, your face is strained all the time and your neck is creased. And you're tired. When was the last time you got a whole night's sleep? You're driving yourself to death. And for what?"

For Death, that's what. I didn't think I was driving myself anywhere. I only knew that there wasn't enough time for anything anymore. I was always on the go — doing all kinds of jobs, studying, cooking, cleaning, fetching and carrying from the beer and liquor stores, from the pharmacy, accompanying him to the hospital by day and also in the dead of night, having a few drinks with him in the evening and talking normally together and then falling asleep sitting upright in the middle of the conversation. He was deadly then: "Women have no stamina, they sleep as soon as you start to discuss something serious. They can't drink, they can't talk, they can't stay up with a man." Or he would try to hypnotize me, especially when I was in this twilight state. "Say my name, say it," I would often hear as I slowly swam out of a tiredness so great that I would sooner have sank there forever than make the effort it cost to swim.

One night Death stalked me. His intention to kill me was very clear and it was only because he was overpowered by that murky lagoon of his own mind that he was unable to do it. And what that did was to free me forever from the fear of death. I had never been particularly afraid of death, accepting it at a distance as part of life's cycle and knowing that when it fastened itself upon me — I would have to go. But not now, not soon.

On the night of his stalking, Death did not come to bed with me, but waited up alone for hours as he often did. I became aware of his presence in the room in an unfamiliar way because he was scrabbling at the door, trying to lock it. And our doors are tropical — we never lock

ourselves away at night. In my sleep I was alerted to strangeness. And then he sat at the edge of the bed as he often did for hours while he talked at me and I only answered sleepily. And in the middle of the incoherent ramble I heard something like, "I thought I could go alone but I have to take you with me." It had a familiar clichéd resonance, but where had I heard it before and what did it mean? I couldn't tell right away and my mind groped towards finding the meaning. My hands groped too, under the pillows, and closed around a long thin kitchen knife. It was my sharpest kitchen knife, used mostly for transforming cheap blade roasts into sandwich steaks. In the bed? My body froze into alertness. This calls for everything I have. I hid the knife on my side of the bed, and I talked and talked and talked and caressed him until he was the one being talked at and sleepily answering. But not before he had noticed the loss of the knife and had tried to pry it away from me. Because he was drugged and murky he couldn't cut a straight path through to my centre. Death lost. The knife under the pillow pried me away from his embrace.

But it wasn't easy to leave him. His Carriage had stopped for me, after all. And there was every reason for him to continue to be with me. Shalimar said: "You have to be ruthless. I always knew he reminded me of a vampire. He's a dark, I tell you, he sucks the light. Use your wits, you're still alive and somehow you must get out of this one. Otherwise you're dead."

This time I knew it was true. I didn't know how to do it though, and I had to learn everything from scratch like a very small child. But I knew it was either him or me.

When I was gone Death tried to die. But he couldn't. He had no means of reaching the state of readiness for dying because he was Death, you see. So he thought that the only way out was suicide and he tried that too. But always the promise of radiant dawns which he could never enter except through a joyous woman, kept him chained to life. Like a panting vampyr, he would watch the new day being born and only then slowly ebb into sleep.

Then he tried to kill his body from inside — he curled up and got very small. He didn't eat, and only drank. He collapsed in the street and awoke in a hospital bed, his arm twisted, his eyesight half gone. But alive. The nights are dark and fearsome, and for one who embodies the shadows, there is no tree, no rock, no shelter.

Chance brought him to something more in his line. Someone else stalked Death. She hunted him down and waited until he was laid utterly low. It was when, in the tropical heat of the day, the frenzy was most intense. It was the Spirit of Carnival who killed him. Her real name was Juniper. The spirit of the Carnival was tall and slim and wore dark clothing and a high headdress. She carried a green medicine bag. Her face was

masked by Carnival make-up and barely recognizable. But Death knew her well. They were familiars and had had numerous old battles between them.

The Spirit did it painlessly by persuading Death to ingest a substance. And as they sat together in his narrow room, Death wept and wept for life. He wept as only the demonic, consigned forever only to the carnal sensuality of the flesh, forever shut out of human joy, as only they can weep. As only they can long for and envy. The Spirit was patient. She waited. And as Death's speech grew slower and his eyes more languid, the Spirit laid him gently on his narrow bed. And, moving like a cat, delicately sealed every crack of the cell. Then she vanished, locking and bolting the door from outside.

In the end neither suicide nor forced implosion could do it. It had to be murder. The Spirit of Carnival murdered Death. And her tall headdress never lost Death's last smell of fear.

I didn't know what to feel when it happened. It was numbing and new to me, this vague sense of an absence. I had a strange feeling inside me now that he was no longer around in the world. And one night I had a dream. It was like in the early days when we had so much to say that we would spend the nights just talking. I was never tired then. I talked and talked in the dream and it was so close and exciting, like in the beginning. And then I became aware, slowly, that I was talking on the telephone and then, even more slowly, that the telephone jack was unplugged.

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After The Door Has Been Opened

by Ivy Williams

INTRODUCTION:

In Canada, as elsewhere, new settlers encounter obstacles in pursuing the goals which they and other Canadians value. Too often, newcomers, stigmatized because of their immigrant status, feel barred from what they perceive to be the mainstream of Canadian society. Alienation and frustration may result in poor mental and physical health. In recognition of these problems, and in response to the concerns of a number of national organizations, the Multiculturalism Sector of the Department of the Secretary of State, and Health and Welfare Canada, formed a Task Force to investigate mental health issues affecting immigrants and refugees in Canada, this "country of immigrants".

THE WORK OF THE TASK FORCE

The two-year mandate of the Task Force was straightforward:

1. to prepare a summary of relevant background and research literature dealing with mental health issues affecting immigrants and refugees;
2. to conduct national hearings to determine the environment for the mental health needs of newcomers, to understand patterns of settlement and adaptation, and to define the availability of and accessibility to care-

giving organizations as well as the characteristics of caregivers; and
3. to prepare a final report and recommendations.

THE APPROACH TO THE MANDATE

Completing the tasks proved far more complex than defining them. Working evenings and weekends, the group began its task by searching the research literature and reviewing unpublished reports. Members of the Task Force prepared analyses of topics within their areas of expertise. These materials were integrated at the offices of the Chairman at UBC to become the first report to the sponsoring ministries. This background paper, *Review of the Literature on Migrant Mental Health*, summarizes the Canadian and, to a certain extent, world literature on mental health and resettlement.

In preparation for the national hearings, the Task Force contacted more than 700 service agencies, ethnic organizations, immigrant and refugee self-help groups, universities and training institutions. The letters advised that a Task Force had been formed, described its nature, and invited oral and/or written submissions addressing mental health concerns of immigrants and refugees. Although the response to the invitations was gratifying, we could invite only a sample of agencies and individuals to make oral submissions.

On April 10 and 11, 1987, the Task Force received presentations by 19 Western Canadian organizations in Vancouver. The following month, on May 6 and 7, Task Force members reassembled in Toronto, where we heard from 20 organizations in central Canada; in Montreal, on May 8 and 9, we received 15 submissions from Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The public hearings were remarkable. Briefs were submitted on behalf of groups ranging from small, isolated ethnic associations to umbrella organizations representing large segments of our most populous cities. Submissions came from established social service and health agencies struggling to meet the needs of clientele they found difficult to understand, from institutions experimenting with new training programs for providers of care, and from self-help groups that lacked resources but not ideas. Since people who are busy delivering services typically have no time to write about their work, the opportunity to hear them describe innovations evolving throughout Canada proved particularly valuable. The insights derived from these experiences provided an important lesson. While it will not be necessary to create a new system of services to meet the mental health requirements of immigrants and refugees, existing

resources can and must become more accessible and responsive.

Other meetings took place outside the formal hearings. During one evening in Toronto, we convened an open public forum attended by about 100 persons. Some came because of personal interest, while others represented groups who had not been able to make a formal presentation at the hearings.

The Chairman also met with representatives of provincial ministries responsible for social, health and resettlement services in Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick to hear of government-sponsored initiatives to meet the mental health needs of newcomers.

A flood of written submissions was received, describing the problems migrants encounter in adapting to life in Canada, as well as creative attempts by community and government agencies to understand how best to meet the needs of newcomers and to develop programs to put this new understanding into practice.

CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Complex studies usually have a unique vocabulary which requires definition: one peppered with terms like **"mental health," "immigrants," "refugees"** and **"mental health services"** is no exception.

WOMEN: THE ISSUE

While self-help activities and lobbying efforts have been initiated on behalf of immigrant women over the past decade, significant progress has been slow. Being female does not in itself predispose to mental and emotional disorders. But, many immigrant women remain in high-risk situations due, on the one hand, to features of the cultures from which they come and, on the other hand, to Canadian policies and programs which disadvantage them.

RISK FACTORS

Several of the variables which increase stress at the time of migration affect female immigrants and refugees more than their male counterparts.

Among immigrants, men usually make the decision to leave a homeland. Several submissions noted that women typically emigrate to accompany or to rejoin male relatives rather than the reverse. As Figure 10.1 indicates, women entering Canada over the past decade were many times more likely than men to immigrate as dependent spouses, and much less likely to enter Canada in a category designated to participate in the labour force.

Once families enter Canada, men typically decide where to resettle. Immigrant families move to cities and provinces where the male breadwinner can find employment or where his relatives and friends have already settled. Women not only leave what is familiar more reluctantly than men; they must also resettle in surroundings which initially have less to offer them.

Separation from family members affects immigrants and refugees of both sexes, but women from traditional cultures tend to be more fully enmeshed in family networks than men and more devastated by their absence. The fact that women are also more likely to be unmarried at the time of migration further intensifies the impact of separation from relatives.

While married women enjoy the support of a family network, the burden of keeping the family together frequently falls on them.

In many immigrant families, the woman is primarily responsible for supporting her children and partner as they adapt to the new country. An immigrant woman has a tremendous responsibility to keep the family together and happy, and to transmit the family's culture and traditions. Yet she must accomplish these crucial family tasks often with little or no support for herself.

An immigrant woman, already answerable for the health and happiness of her family, must also assume the male role of providing for the family. The presence of her customary support network can make the difference between survival and defeat.

Migrants who speak one of Canada's official languages can cope more effectively with both the stresses of resettlement and the demands of the job market than those who cannot (Chapter Three). As Figure 10.2 illustrates, however, immigrant women are less likely than their male counterparts to speak French or English. Lack of language compounds the problems of resettlement and employment and deepens the dependency of women on their male relatives.

Any dependent relationship is subject to abuse and the immigrant husband-wife relationship is no exception. Although no community-based survey data are available, one analysis of clinical data revealed that over 30 percent of women seeking help from Manitoba's Immigrant Access Service had been victims of physical abuse (Submission: Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba). Without the traditional safeguards afforded by family networks, immigrant men are more apt to "take out their frustrations" on their wives, frustrations which usually peak when the men fail to find meaningful employment.
(Submission: O.A.S.I.S.)

The association between employment problems and marital problems applies both to Canadian-born and migrant populations. For migrants, however, either problem appears less remediable. If a migrant wife finds

work — and migrant women are more likely than Canadian-born women to be in the labour force — she will probably receive a very low income, lower than that of migrant men or Canadian-born women (Submission: Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization, 1985). Furthermore, her wage-earning role may deepen her husband's sense of failure and actually foster rather than alleviate marital discord.

The factors which create dependency in migrant women and permit abuse to occur also prevent women from escaping abuse situations (Wiebe, 1985). Cultures which socialize women to dependent roles also limit the circumstances under which they may leave their husbands. In the absence of her parents or other important family, a woman may be more vulnerable to abuse; she is also blocked from the one traditional escape route — back to her family — that she may know. Inability to speak the language of their new society reinforces immigrant women's dependency on men. It also prevents them from using and comprehending information or services which might assist them in either correcting or leaving abusive situations.

Language disability and ignorance of Canadian law lock many immigrant women into abusive work situations. Women are occupationally segregated, often employed doing piece-work in factories or in domestic service, situations which make them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. In particular, women who must support children or other dependents, either in Canada or abroad, are highly vulnerable to exploitation in working conditions, hours of service, employment benefits, and salary. (Submission: Changing Together)

Women from traditional cultures who are locked into marginal employment with other migrants and women who are unemployed have little opportunity to learn a new language.

> *We are from societies where "men and dogs roam, while women and cats remain at home." Unable to communicate fluently, the woman's apartment soon becomes her prison.*
> *(Submission: Immigrant Women's Group of P.E.I.)*

Over time, if her language disability remains constant, the isolation of an immigrant woman increases, tragically with respect to her own children who, sooner or later, do acquire English or French and may become unable or unwilling to speak their heritage language (Submission: Medicine Hat Society for Immigrant Settlement).

MITIGATING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Since the factors which create stress for migrants apply particularly strongly to women, policies and programs which address these factors are

of even greater importance for women than for men.

Orientation services assist migrant women in fulfilling their central role of shepherding family members through daily life. Many women, however, are unable to participate in orientation programs if they are offered only in English or French or if they do not offer childcare. Upon their arrival in Canada, refugee women are told that they may attend the initial orientation session only if they are the heads of households. (Submission: Working Women Community Centre)

Family reunification holds great significance for immigrant and refugee women, as do community development initiatives which help recreate culturally familiar and approved social support networks. In rural areas and regions with few immigrants of the same cultural background, offers of friendship between immigrant and Canadian-born women are particularly important. (Submission: United Church of Canada) At present, however, CEIC's Host Group Program applies only to refugees.

Official language training, the key solution to the problem of non-English or non-French-speaking persons, is far less accessible to women than it is to men. As Chapter Three notes, basic living allowances for Labour Market Access Language Training are not provided to members of the Family Class and Assisted Relatives. Since a majority of such persons are female (Figure 3.1) and because their income, however meagre, is often critically necessary, many migrant women never receive language training.

In the past decade, the problem of language education for women has been well documented in several studies and reports, and the same recommendations have been made repeatedly.

In 1981, the First National Conference on Immigrant Women (Toronto) recommended universal access to language training with childcare and transportation allowances.

In 1985, a national consultation commissioned by Multiculturalism Canada identified language training as the most urgent priority for immigrant women (*Beyond Dialogue*, 1985). In the same year, the Action Committee on Immigrant and Visible Minority Women again called for universal access to language training.

In 1986, the Annual Report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission noted that immigrant women are discriminated against in the provision of language training.

Briefs presented to this Task Force in 1987 suggest that little has changed; the need for universal access to language training is as great as ever.

For many migrant women, access to language training programs, like orientation programs, depends upon child care facilities as well as reimbursement for child care expenses.

The most immediate need for daycare is for the Canada Employment Centre's English as a Second Language program ... Although a child care allowance is provided, few immigrants are able to find daycare spaces. The natural and logical solution to this problem is on-site daycare or rented services from existing daycare centres to observe and serve all immigrant children upon arrival.
(Submission: Coalition for Immigrant Women in Nova Scotia)

Several submissions reiterated and endorsed the suggestion that language training for parents and pre-school children be offered together, at the same time and in proximity to one another (Chapter Nine). Programs such as those offered by the Centre local des services communautaires Côte-des-Neiges, are preventive in both the short and long term.

These programmes are preventive as they address the issues of linguistic (and therefore social) isolation of ethnic families. Furthermore, they are possibly reducing the risks of "parental children" who evolve as culture brokers interfacing with the host culture on behalf of their parents.
(Submission: Guzder)

After language training and employment opportunities, learning about women's roles and women's issues in Canada is of vital importance.

For Moslem women in particular, it would be most useful to establish specific programs with discussion groups on subjects of common interest to this clientele, such as divorce, childbirth, conflicting values, spouse abuse, etc.
(Submission: Centre Maghrebin de Recherche et d'Information)

Briefs from every region of Canada and virtually every ethnic group responding to the Task Force expressed a need for accurate information, and understanding of Canadian customs and laws as they apply to women. In particular, a woman's rights in Canada, both as a wife and as an employee, require in-depth clarification and discussion.

A misconception held by many is that individuals who migrate as dependent spouses will be deported if they leave their homes due to marriage breakdowns. In 1986, Employment and Immigration Canada attempted to dispel this and other myths by distributing a fact sheet on "Battered Immigrants and Immigration Status." As the submissions to the Task Force indicate, however, if it is to have the desired effect, such information must be delivered sensitively and personally, in a language understood by each woman.

CONCLUSIONS

For a number of reasons, immigrant and refugee women have, on the whole, more mental health needs than their menfolk.

Immigrant women suffer two types of educational disadvantage. Some are extremely highly educated but many more are illiterate. Barred from many jobs, the higher educated are prone to underemployment and the illiterate to dead-end jobs. They are also more likely to be cut off by migration from traditional sources of support, and to be constrained by tradition from developing new support networks. Despite these limitations, immigrant women rather than men are the ones most likely to be held responsible, and to feel responsible for the health and happiness of family members.

Immigrant and refugee women also tend to have special needs because of the differential impact on males and females of CEIC's official language training policy. By excluding members of the Family Class and Assisted Relatives from language training with basic living allowances, the policy obliges many women to cope with resettlement, enter the work force, and raise their children with little comprehension of the new world around them and less ability to communicate with it.

The higher incidence and intensity of risk factors, and the reduced access to mitigating factors, create special mental health needs for immigrant and refugee women.

Without exception, the recommendations made by the Task Force elsewhere in this report stand to benefit migrant women at least as much as immigrant men. In particular, implementation of the recommendation that all newcomers have equal access to official language education will significantly ease the stress of resettlement for women. It will also help break the vicious cycle of no language training leading to marginal employment, which in turn makes learning a language impossible. The result is that, without language, there is no chance to break out of the marginal employment situation. Finally, ability to speak English or French will decrease women's dependence on their husbands, employers and children; it will give women some measure of control over their own lives.

Chapter Five's recommendation concerning educational materials for immigrants on mental health issues and services is also of special relevance to women, the persons traditionally responsible for family members' well-being. Similarly, Health and Welfare's prioritization of immigrant Health Promotion activities will result in mental health programs to assist women (Chapter Six).

Beyond the needs met by these recommended policies and programs, the Task Force recognizes a need for immigrants and refugees of both sexes to know and understand Canadian laws and customs pertaining to women.

It recommends, therefore, that Health and Welfare, Secretary of State, and Status of Women Canada develop and provide multilingual educational materials on women's rights and roles in Canada for discussion at immigrant service agencies, general community service agencies and ethno-cultural organizations.

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Isabel Allende's The House of the Spirits: The Emergence of a Feminine Space

by Z. Nelly Martinez

Isabel Allende's celebrated novel *The House of the Spirits*[1] chronicles the vicissitudes of four generations of the patrician Trueba family, headed by Esteban, a wealthy landlord and mine owner. Although never fully acknowledged by the narrative voice, the action of the novel takes place in a setting unmistakably Chilean. Also unmistakably, it culminates in the military *coup* that overthrew the freely elected government of Salvador Allende in 1973, thus instituting a reign of terror which continues there even today.

Despotic, at times cruel, and always bent on control, Esteban Trueba epitomizes patriarchal power — a power aimed at repressing reality's potential for subversion and endless transformation. Clearly, Allende's *The House of the Spirits* is a denunciation of the negative aspects of patriarchy which here, inevitably, result in the cruel excesses of a totalitarian regime. By concentrating at length on the Trueba women, however, the novel also suggests the possibility of deliverance from the patriarchal prison-house.

In effect, although *The House of the Spirits* returns often to look at the imposing Trueba, it focusses primarily on four women: Trueba's

mother-in-law Nivea, his wife Clara, his daughter Blanca and his granddaughter Alba. Non-submissive and self-assertive, these women represent the "other side" of patriarchy; they embody a seldom acknowledged source of power which unfolds in all four although most explicitly in Alba. In effect, shortly after the *coup* Alba disappears and is raped and tortured by the military, and eventually sent to die in solitary confinement. The fact that she survives her ordeal and is drastically transformed by it, is vital to an understanding of Allende's aim. For in Alba's experience the author has symbolized the emergence of a recondite otherness which "aims" at undermining patriarchy and transforming the world. This also accounts for the fact that Allende makes Alba the narrator of the novel.[2]

It is on Alba's experience that this paper mainly focusses, although not exclusively, and it examines the experience in terms of an exploration of self — an exploration that involves both the acknowledgement of the arcane otherness and a practice leading to its unfolding, in this instance, the practice of writing. As illustrated by Alba, the power enfolded in the depths of her being is essentially the power of renewal, of transformation, of rebirth.

This paper argues that the exploration of the self centres, in fact, on the exploration of its otherness, an argument ultimately aimed at invalidating the traditional western dichotomy of self and other, and thereby all dichotomies. At the individual level, the other represents the unconscious as well as the repressed portions of the mind. At the social level, it points likewise to that which is unconscious and that which is repressed, and invariably stands for the second term in the infinite number of dichotomies with which western man has conceptualized and made (patriarchal) sense of the world. Obsessively reiterating the Law of the Father (the incontestable patriarchal Truth), the first term of all the dichotomies is regarded as pre-eminent and hence as wielding power over the other. Thus the acknowledgement and unfolding of the other sets in motion the dynamic and creative interrelatedness between traditionally separated entities, and this results in the release of a qualitatively different kind of power.

Finally this paper argues that this source of power, this otherness, is essentially feminine in nature, woman being not only the archetypal repressed and the archetypal other, but also the archetypal creator of life. Whatever its specificity, the otherness always reveals an overflow, an abundance of life, an irrationality of sorts, a chaos: it is an endlessly creative force that exceeds the western boundaries and threatens the subversion of the patriarchal order. In fact, the idea of an otherness, along with that of its unfolding, is intimately linked to the idea of subversion, of a "turning over", which exposes the traditionally repressed "other side" both of one's self and of the established order.

In Allende's novel this subversion ranges from the merely unorthodox stance of some of the characters, to the author's own defiance of the rules of logic and common sense. Allende repeatedly subverts the otherwise recognizable world she represents in her novel by venturing into the supernatural. The playful spirits inhabiting the Trueba mansion; Clara's divinatory and psychokinetic powers; the constant presence of the departed among the living: all these elements function as metaphors for a manifold "otherworldliness" western culture has consistently attempted to suppress. Not surprisingly, Alba's pivotal experience of confronting death and being reborn in solitary confinement is presented in a supernatural light. Her long dead grandmother, Clara, appears to her in the confining prison-cell, at the moment she is giving in to death, to urge her to rise and live, to celebrate life in the midst of death and despair.

This challenge to celebrate life and defy the totalitarian regime, which Alba accepts, climaxes in her decision not to avenge herself for the myriad humiliations she has suffered at the hands of the military. As she insightfully sees it, her revenge would only be "just another part of the same inexorable rite" (432), a mere re-enactment of the death-oriented, revenge-motivated rituals that have shaped patriarchy throughout the centuries, and that take on infernal proportions in a dictatorship. Alba's concluding remarks, "I want to think my task is life and not to prolong hatred" (432) leads us to view the novel in another light: not merely as a denunciation but also as a call to women as well as men to challenge all forms of patriarchal power by tapping a largely dormant otherness, a fountain of life and transformation.

To examine the concept of otherness I have resorted to a recently proposed trope, the "wild zone"; to a neglected symbol, the female cauldron; and to the archetypal images of the Witch and the Goddess, presently being re-appraised by feminists. Let me now expound briefly on these images and symbols.

Posited some years ago by the British anthropologist Edward Ardener, the concept of the "wild zone" originated with his observation of the women's world among the Bakweri people of western Cameroon — their rites of passage and fertility rites. Thus the "wild zone" designates the territorial world that falls outside the boundaries of patriarchal organization. "Where society is defined by men", argues the author, "some features of women do not fit that definition."[3] Thus the "wild", the untamed, points to the second term of the dichotomy Self/not-Self when the dichotomy, in Ardener's words, has been raised "to the level of society's own definition."[4]

Ardener's concept is versatile and bears further elaboration. The noted feminist Elaine Showalter, for one, has applied the notion to the realm of women's culture in general. In her view, the "wild zone" designates a female space which may be interpreted not only in experiential and

spatial terms, but in metaphysical terms as well, as "a projection of the unconscious."[5] Enfolding a perennial desire for transformation and renewal, the "wild zone" ultimately discloses a purposeful alignment and a full enjoyment of the vital forces inherent in reality and largely repressed by patriarchy.

In Allende's novel the "wild zone" is presented either as political subversion, as unbridled imagination or as magic. Whatever its manifestation, it always reveals a dangerous otherness, an immanent power undermining the patriarchal order. Fundamentally, however, the "wild zone" relates to woman's procreative power and to her link to the ultimate mysteries of creation. (Western man has carefully controlled this power and this link by carefully controlling woman's reproductive function.) The bond established in Allende's novel between Nivea, Clara, Blanca, Alba and the female child Alba is expecting as she begins to write the novel we read discloses a celebration of that power and an awareness of that link.

Woman's procreative power and her link to the ultimate mysteries of creation are also celebrated in the long neglected symbol of the female cauldron which is also suggested in the novel. Traditionally associated with the Witch and with witchcraft and hence devalued by patriarchy, the cauldron is fundamentally a symbol of the womb.[6] Lying at the foot of the World Tree (the Tree of Life at the Centre of the World), the cauldron represents that which the Tree paradoxically represses: the primordial chaos, the ocean of blood, the fount of life. These images clearly suggest the uterine environment while connoting regeneration and renewal.

With the advent of patriarchy and the worship of a male God, the cauldron was displaced and, like the Goddess Herself, turned into a pagan symbol, the stuff of legends and myths. The earnest re-appraisal of the symbol of the female cauldron taking place today relates to the re-appraisal of the archetypal images of the Witch and the Goddess, also symbols of regeneration and rebirth. In fact, the Witch, identified with the Crone, describes one of the three aspects of the Goddess. In the trinity Maiden, Mother, and Crone (creator, preserver and destroyer), pre-patriarchal mythologies symbolized the life force and allegorized its endless regenerative cycles. This cyclical interpretation devalues the patriarchal linear view of time as well as the understanding of death as finality while validating that of death as reabsorption and renewal. Let me now examine how these images and symbols help structure and semanticize the novel.

The saga of the Trueba family begins with the marriage of Esteban, the only son of the aristocratic Ester Trueba and her commoner husband (whose first name is not recorded in the novel), and Clara, the youngest daughter of Severo and Nivea del Valle. There is a marked contrast between the two families, for, while the Trueba women play their sexual

roles to perfection thus perpetuating the established order, the del Valle women challenge the traditional roles, thus threatening its subversion.

Nivea's unorthodox stance (her otherness) is inscribed within the social order and is politically motivated. Characteristically, she scandalizes her peers by espousing feminine causes and by becoming a dedicated suffragist. A feminist *avant la lettre*, Nivea challenges tradition by viewing herself in particular, and other women in general, as potentially autonomous human beings endowed with the power to take charge of their own lives. However rudimentary its articulation, Nivea's political stance is indeed empowering and creates a "wild zone" while starting a tradition of non-submissiveness among her female descendants which deeply affects their lives. In the Trueba women, Allende has epitomized women's potential for "nay saying" in a world where submission has been the rule for the female.

This tradition of non-submissiveness is further enhanced by Nivea's perception of herself as mother, a perception which challenges patriarchy, and which her female descendants also inherit. If woman has been traditionally regarded as the agent responsible for the child's socialization, Nivea seeks to counteract tradition by immersing her daughter Clara in a world all her own. This world is nourished by Nivea's capacity for storytelling which exalts the imagination and opens the way for creativity and rebellion. It is a magic territory that obeys no laws, respects no boundaries and makes everything possible. It is a wild zone that enfolds an infinite number of other worlds and that subtly challenges patriarchal closure as well as patriarchal claims to universality and eternity.

Moreover, the complicity Nivea establishes between herself and Clara creates a special bond between mother and daughter — a bond their female descendants replicate and perpetuate, thus validating a subtle matrilinearity that runs counter to patriarchal control. This special bond is intimated in a scene that shows Alba being gently placed "on the warm belly of her mother" (264) immediately after her birth. "Naked and embracing", remarks the narrative voice, "mother and daughter lay resting while the others cleaned up" (264). It is truly an uncommon sight within a culture which has worshipped solely the image of the Virgin Mother and her son. It is also uncommon in its allusions to bodily functions (childbirth and also pregnancy and lactation), which patriarchy has generally concealed under a cloak of silence. Alba herself illustrates this awareness and celebration of the female body by confiding that, like her grandmother Clara in the past, she can talk about menstruation as she talks about poetry.

By having the Trueba women thus, in fact, achieve freedom through mothering, Allende challenges the patriarchal norm which has regarded woman's biology and its control by the male as destiny, and institutionalized motherhood by declaring legitimate only the offsprings of a

known father. In Allende's novel, motherhood is presented not as passive regenerativeness but as lucid and liberating creativeness. Alba's words at the close of the novel — "I wait for better times to come, while I carry this child in my womb, the daughter of so many rapes or perhaps of Miguel (her lover), but above all my own daughter" (432, my emphasis) — suggest this liberating awareness.

Nivea's penchant for storytelling and for creating magic territories with her tales, on the other hand, appears to prefigure the wild imagination that literally possesses some of her female descendants during their creative moments. Whether their artwork is embroidery, ceramics or fresco painting, it clearly subverts the established canon and affronts the rules of (patriarchal) good taste. Admitting to being moved by potent forces strangely their own and yet not their own (a wondrous otherness), the women in Allende's novel fill their work with an endless array of impossible beasts and monstrous beings which defy the laws of nature, transgress patriarchal boundaries and mock patriarchal control.

Thus Clara's oldest sister, Rose, who is intent on embroidering the largest tablecloth in the world, "had begun with dogs, cats and butterflies but soon her imagination had taken over and her needle had given birth to a whole paradise filled with impossible creatures that took shape beneath her father's worried eyes."[6] Similarly, Alba fills her immense fresco with "a venusian flora and an impossible fauna of invented animals" (270) and Blanca, who begins her ceramic work by reproducing a number of recognizable animals, ends up by creating a collection of imaginary creatures in which various species merge — a merging which subtly intimates a return to chaos. Clearly these forces express a deep desire to subvert the consecrated order by exposing its otherness, an undifferentiated chaos which is, in fact, a source of renewal and transformation.

Nowhere in the novel is reality's otherness more blatantly displayed, however, than in the description of the world Clara creates within the confines of the Trueba mansion. Exhibiting since early childhood both divinatory and psychokinetic powers, Clara makes the paranormal her natural habitat: the mischievous spirits with which she perennially converses are but reflections of her own mischievous and disrespectful nature.

A bonafide "wild zone", Clara's world is captured by a canvas which shows

> a middle-aged woman dressed in white, with silvery hair and the sweet gaze of a trapeze artist, resting in a rocking chair that hangs suspended just above the floor, floating amidst flowered curtains, a vase flying upside down, and a fat black cat that observes the scene like an important gentleman (267).

Clara's magic realm is also symbolized by the additions she has made on the rear section of the Trueba mansion. Designed along purely classical lines, Esteban Trueba's house attests to patriarchal wealth and power and to the continuation of this order, as well as to its ideal of "order, and peace, beauty and civilization" (93). Trueba could hardly have anticipated that

> the solemn, cubic, dense, pompous house, which sat like a hat amid its green and geometric surroundings, would end up full of protuberances and incrustations, of twisted staircases that led to empty spaces, of turrets ... doors hanging in midair ... all of which were Clara's inspiration (93).

In the long run, the mansion is transformed into an "enchanted labyrinth" (93), a "magic universe" (281) haunted by mysterious forces which play havoc with the orderly and civilized patriarchal realm. Playful and irreverent, these forces subvert the kingdom of the fathers and render the world bewitched: not accidentally an irate prelate accused young Clara, who had candidly mocked his terrifying view of Hell, of being possessed by demons, of being herself a veritable Witch.

To the extent that the Trueba women embody subversive forces which threaten to undermine the social system, they all represent the Witch. They are non-submissive, wildly imaginative, dangerously eccentric. Blanca and Alba are renegades who defy the social hierarchy by falling for men below their station. Alba is also an underground agent earnestly helping those who are hounded by the military junta. That Allende makes Alba reach her peak experience in solitary confinement is certainly not surprising. For the doghouse, with all its implications of torture, rape and imminent death, functions as metaphor for patriarchy's death-orientation and inhumanity toward those who represent the undesirable and hence expendable "other". An ignominious tomb, hidden from the public eye, the doghouse epitomizes the darkest side of patriarchy.

Paradoxically, however, as Clara appears to Alba while she is in solitary confinement, urging her to rise and live, the tomb becomes a womb; a symbolic, life-bestowing cauldron. In this scene Clara, in fact, embodies the creative aspects of the Goddess, while Alba enacts both her destructive and creative aspects by symbolically dying and being reborn. In the final analysis, Alba's experience in solitary confinement may be said to reveal the power of the emerging Goddess: a power that decisively challenges the blood-thirsty patriarchal God.

Whether the otherness in Allende's novel is symbolized by a "wild zone", the cauldron or the archetypal Witch and Goddess, it points essentially to powerful forces which lie in fact within the self. In *The House of the Spirits* political subversion, wild imagination, female bonding and even the unlikely realm of playful spirits are presented as manifestations

and/or symbols of an inner power that seeks to transform the world by *transforming the individual self.* Thus the Witch and the Goddess may be said to dwell within the mind and the mind itself may be seen as a cauldron, a "wild zone" enfolding unlimited creative power — a creative power Alba unfolds in the act of writing her novel.

For, in effect, the exploration of the self and of its otherness, both at the personal and at the social levels, is fundamentally an exploration of language, and of its infinite potential to re-name and thus to re-create the world. The world as we experience it is fundamentally a linguistic creation and can gradually be transformed by a gradual linguistic recreation. *The House of the Spirits* attempts this recreation: to the extent that it allows for the emergence of forbidden *other* voices, the fictional space Allende creates is indeed subversive and, potentially, a source of transformation.

Unlike other contemporary writers who subvert grammar and syntax to force language to reveal its repressed otherness, Allende subverts language by wild metaphors and subversive imagery. *The House of the Spirits* is indeed an enchanted territory where one may hear the disturbing voices of the Witch and the ever-creative voices of the Goddess; a magic universe where words like "menstruation" take on poetic overtones; a "wild zone" presided over by the haunting image of a mother and a daughter, naked and embracing, and covered with blood. A most disturbing image indeed as it reveals a most disturbing otherness. For in that image Allende celebrates woman's unfathomable power to create and perpetuate life, and woman's potential to bond with other women to say "no" to patriarchal excesses, to say "no" to death.

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FOOTNOTES

1. See Isabel Allende, *La casa de los espiritus* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1982). There is an English translation, *The House of the Spirits* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985) trans. by Magda Bogin. Allende has published two other novels: *De amor y sombra* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1984), and *Eva Luna* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1987). There are English translations of both works: *Of Love and Shadows* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987) and *Eva Luna* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988). The page numbers regarding quotations from *The House of the Spirits* will be indicated in the text of this essay.
2. Protagonist and narrator, Alba draws upon her own experience and her grandmother's diary to compose the novel. Interestingly, Trueba himself participates in the writing as he authors a good portion of the text.
3. Edward Ardener, "The 'Problem' Revisited" in Shirley Ardener, ed., *Perceiving Women* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1981) 23.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
5. Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", *Feminist Criticism: Women, Literature and Theory* (New York: Random House Inc., 1985) 262.
6. For a detailed view of the symbolism of the cauldron the reader may consult "The Crone and the Cauldron" in Barbara Walker, *The Crone: Woman of Age, Wisdom and Power* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985). This book also examines the archetype of the Goddess and the cyclical interpretation of time.

Blackness: "An idea transcendant of colour"

by Angela Lawrence

Charting the Journey
Writings by Black and Third World Women
Edited by Shabnam Grewal, Jackie Kay, Liliane Landor, Gail Lewis and Pratibha Parmar
Sheba Feminist Publisher: pp. 315/$18.95.

Charting the Journey is an anthology of poems, short stories, essays, autobiographical and polemical pieces. Through diverse voices, the writers express their views and experiences regarding the idea of "Blackness." The concept of Blackness is defined as "an idea transcendant of colour." Hence, Black is seen as a political term used to represent all oppressed ethnic groups. Not only does it represent those of African ancestry, but also claims those of Asian, Latin American and Arab descents.

Black British feminist writers have long been neglected both at home and abroad. The reality of this neglect is discussed by Barbara Burford, a writer who cites that too often British publishers select market-tested American Black "product" over domestic talent. She remarks that this practice is obviously more profitable and easier on the white liberal conscience because they can read these books and later say, "But, of course, it's different here."

Burford emphasizes the power that literature has in creating a sense of belonging: "Black women writing in Britian at this moment share a commitment and need to leave a legacy, an investment, for all those young Black people whose only experience is life in Britian."

The work is divided into six chapters, each discussing a specific theme. The first chapter, "Alien Nation: Strangers at Home" is an excellent introduction to the conflicting worlds of British Blacks. In "Alien Nations", writers express the confusion created by being in a society that does not want to acknowledge their existence. In her essay "The Politics of Space", architect Shaheen Haque explains that, "Black people are not seen as permanent citizens. An acceptance of the permanence of the black presence would have a radical effect on the way architects, and white society in general, view the Black community."

One chapter that stands out in its depth is entitled "The Whole of Me" and contains many well written and memorable pieces. Unique for the directness of its personal accounts, this chapter breaks down the Black collective to reveal individuals with human needs, fears, joys and pain. This exposure is significant for it reveals a well guarded vulnerability induced by the fear that their society is eager "to split us wide open and into a myriad of little pieces."

In "The Whole of Me" writers openly grapple with their confusion about identity: "Do we identify ourselves by our colour or country, by our race or religion, by our sex or sexuality?" Being outcast is a theme frequently expressed by many of the writers in this anthology; the sense of never truly belonging to the nation of their birth or to their adopted "home." In the poem "I-Dentity" this sense of conflict is painfully summed up: "So I am trapped/Two halves of two opposite worlds." With few words, writer Prachi Momin creates a powerful statement of alienation and oppression.

Another notable work is Shabnam's poem "My Hair and I". In this poem, she reveals that she has come to terms with her hair which she allows to grow "fruitfully on my legs, my arms/in soft humid armpits." She vows that it will no longer be "torn off the face of its earth/with hot wax." Ironically, Shabnam writes of her own self-hatred: "Because it was black/and visible/and therefore ugly/and useless." Yet, she later expresses that she will no longer accept rejection, but will come to terms with who she is, unaffected.

The writers of *Charting the Journey* have created an excellent and diverse collection of perceptive insights into the lives of Black women in Britian. Unfortunately, much that is to be read, although articulate and well worth reading, is depressing and bleak. Fortunately, the bleakness of this anthology is alleviated by poems like Eveline Marius' "Let's Make History", that encourage pride and look toward a promising future.

Angela Lawrence was born in Britain and now lives in Toronto where she works in the magazine publishing industry.

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